

Kurdish Extremism and organised crime : the Kurdistan Workers Party

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Before I begin this presentation, I will make two preliminary remarks.

The first one concerns the Kurdish question. It is a delicate and complicated problem which raises passionate reactions. Specially with the influx of Kurdish refugees we just know.

I'll make a point saying that the question I'm going to develop does not concern the majority of the Kurds, be it their national problem or their political claims, when they are expressed in a peaceful and democratic way.

I will talk about the PKK, the "Kurdistan Workers Party". It's a violent abnormality amongst the Kurdish demands. The PKK must be considered as it is, as a misled or degenerated guerrilla, a guerrilla turning criminal.

My second remark is that organised crime is changing. Not that it's becoming less dangerous. No, it's becoming different though even more dangerous.

The guerrilla, the "partisan", the irregular, the mujahid, the resistor, the terrorist, seems to have been the quintessential fighter of the cold war era.

The ideology of the partisan, the depth of his roots in the movement, the urban or rural milieu in which he operates, the size, mobility, and aggressiveness of his forces are all factors that may vary; but not his political core, which alone used to distinguish him from the mercenary or the brigand.

During the Blocs System, the partisan operated within the "territory" of either bloc. The rival superpower gave him both the ideological point of reference that shaped his political nature, and the means to fight. And so until 1989.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the prevailing opinion was that once they fell out of style and were cut off from resources, the guerrillas would quickly collapse.

So, what happened ?

Today, instead of extinguishing insurrections, the absence of outside support has actually fanned their flames to such an extent, that enormous areas have slid into chaos in almost no time.

The phenomenon grips countries emerging from serious conflicts, such as Ethiopia, Angola, Afghanistan, or disintegrating, nation-States such as Somalia and Zaire. Therefore, some Third World guerrilla movements have survived, and even grown, with some, or all, of the following characteristics:

- 1- An ideology that most often is Maoist and autarkic, advocating "reliance on one's own forces";
- 2- A simultaneous control of sanctuaries.
- 3- Following the Lebanese "model" of civil war, the guerrillas are turning criminal off "their" territories and off the local civilian populace practising all kinds of transnational traffics;
- 4- The establishment of a control over the Diaspora communities settled in the developed world, especially in Europe. The guerrilla groups turned criminal practice extortion, so called revolutionary tax, and in their midst set up networks that engage in drug trafficking, money laundering, and illegal alien smuggling.

One illustration of this trend is shown by this symbolic example : in June 1976, the US. Ambassador to Lebanon, Francis Meloy, another diplomat, and a driver, were kidnapped and then killed by the Lebanese cohorts of the terrorist Wadi Haddad. In May 1994, one of the killers was found. He was in prison, in Beirut. Arrested in March 1993 in possession of three kilos of heroin, former terrorist Bassam al-Forkh was serving three years for... drug trafficking.

“Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam”, the Philippine’s “New People’s Army”, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, the “Farc”, “Sendero Luminoso”, in Peru, the “Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance”, the “Sikh guerrilla movement fighting for an independent Khalistan”, even the “Khmer Rouge”...

Their shared feature is to fuel political activism with criminal activities and this mafious degeneration of political guerrilla groups is a major emerging threat for our societies.

One thing that should be stressed is the extreme harmfulness of these entities, once political but having now turned to crime, yet maintaining their ideological trimmings for public consumption.

They are getting more dangerous because they haunt both the world's shadowy no-man's-lands and the large urban centres, in the Third World as well as in the developed world, particularly the European capitals. They excel in leading a double life: passing themselves off as national liberation movements, while carrying on profitable drug trafficking operations with the Cosa Nostra, the Triades, or the Turkish mafia. They are getting more dangerous because of their mobility.

However, some only want to see the consequence of low intensity conflicts that would not call for a strategic reflection, whereas these mutations generate a significant risk.

Why? Because it's not there a simple enterprise of diversification but the transmutation of these groups and that worsens their harmful effect in an exponential way.

Among these mutating terrorist groups, the Kurdistan Workers Party, the PKK ¹, is today one of the most active and dangerous ones. As a matter of fact, behind a political process that would appear constructive, even altruistic, if we believe what Ocalan said in a long speech on October 13th 1997, but the PKK kills... and finances its guerrilla with criminal activities.

Some doubt, others even feel sympathy; the PKK itself outrageously denies, and always puts forward its "revolutionary" nature as an absolatory excuse for all its crimes.

But, in Germany, Belgium, Great Britain, Luxembourg, France and elsewhere, some see the PKK as a sophisticated criminal entity.

Considering its members, its subsidiary organisations and the companies it controls, the PKK gathers all the necessary components for this statement : murders, extortion, illegal immigration, children trafficking, all types of influence on the Kurdish Diaspora, drug trafficking and money laundering.

One can say the PKK has set up as a system the methodical exploitation of Europe considering it the means tank fuelling its "cause".

A "cause" that mostly consists, with heavy guerrilla and blind terrorism, in shaking a country, member of NATO and associated with European Union. As, for the PKK, "*Kurdish revolution* means, at the same time, a revolution in Turkey" ².

So, I'll present in a first leg the "political" PKK, its background and its guerrilla activity, then, the "criminal" PKK, its violence in Europe and its narcotrafficking.

I- The "Political" PKK

A- PKK's background

The PKK appears with the Maoist wave that hits Turkey at the end of the Sixties. Turkish "Maos" go either with fighting communist organisations, like "Dev. Sol",

¹ : "Partiya Karkaren Kurdistan"

² : 5th congress of the Party, "Resolution on Revolution in Turkey...", January 8-27 1995. Cf. also "PKK's 4th national Conference" May 1-15 1996.

today, DHKP/C³ or the “Revolutionary Left”, either with Kurdish-nationalist Marxist-Leninist groups. It’s from that last trend that come - in 1974 - PKK’s founders.

Their leader is Abdallah Ocalan, known as “Apo”. His goal, in a rigid Marxist-Leninist way - until quite recently⁴ - is to get the Kurdish people rid of its tribal system and found an independent Communist State in Turkey as well as in Iraq, Iran and Syria.

According to the last PKK program -that has just been translated⁵ -, the revolution in Kurdistan is “*national and democratic*”. There are two fundamental aspects, namely one national and one democratic. The national aspect takes aim at the rule of colonialism in the political, military, economic, and cultural spheres. The second aspect of the revolution is democratic. This aims to “*defeat social contradictions which have been in place since the Middle Ages*” and is founded on the unity between workers and peasants. For the PKK, the leadership which should bring victory is the ideological, political, and organisational leadership of the working class.

The revolution is also founded on the long-term vision of the struggle and the broad mobilisation of popular forces.

But one fundamental characteristic of PKK’s revolution is that it is not limited to Kurdistan, rather it wants to have an influence on its surroundings and on the entire region. Its goal is to have an influence at the global level as well.

But globally, the message is getting more and more confusing. Even if in a November 1996 interview⁶, the fluctuating Ocalan refers to a “federalism”, the Party’s line as defined in May 1996 is still “revolution in Turkey”, “liberation war”, “People’s democracy” and “Red Power”... In January 1997, he calls for a “Revolutionary Front” and claims an independent State for the Kurdish people⁷, and in last October, seeking for a wide political alliance with the other Kurdish parties and trying to look more moderate, Apo declares in a Med-TV interview : “*As long as Kurdistan exists, Kurdistan in struggle will exist*”.

Bloody methods, crude nationalist Leninism, cult of the leader, ferocity inside as outside the organisation, dogmatic stiffness - “Apo” even rules the sexual life of the militants⁸ - peasant basis, rural and urban guerrilla. The PKK is a copy of Gonzalo Abimaël Guzman’s “Sendero Luminoso”.

³ : “Devrimci Halk Kurtulus Partye”.

⁴ : Cf. Ocalan’s interview by David Corn, “Serxwebun”, April 1995.

⁵ : January 1998.

⁶ : “Le Figaro”, November 20, 1996. Cf “Serxwebun”, ibid.

⁷ : “Arm the Spirit”, January 3, 1997.

⁸ : “Hurriyet”, 9/30/96.

Upstream, the PKK created a National Liberation Front in 1984, the ERNK⁹, also supervised by Ocalan. The official speaker stays in Athens since 1985. This Front should have gathered Kurdish patriotic associations but has not really encroached upon the others moderate groups. Anyway, its line seems to be close to PKK's one if we believe its European spokeswoman, Semsî Kilik who said in an interview published by "Jungle Welt" on February 6th : *"...we will continue our work at all levels, including the military level..."*

Downstream of the PKK, the Kurdistan Popular Liberation Army (ARGK), under the command of Cemil Bayik¹⁰, leads the armed struggle in Turkey¹¹. ARGK, which PKK developed during the course of the war, has now, according to Ocalan, 15 000 fighters, including 4 000 women, and is "stationed in all the strategic regions of Kurdistan". The militants are rather young and little or not educated : workers, peasants, unemployed. They are recruited sometimes willing, sometimes not and trained at the guerrilla in the Party's camps, abroad¹².

According to a classical pattern, the PKK uses its foe's reactions :

- locally, with psyops that are supposed to bring populations on its side¹³;
- further, with a propaganda that should sensitise Europe and the US to the "war damages" endured by the civilian Kurdish populations¹⁴.

B) PKK's guerrilla

Since the end of the eight month "unilateral cease-fire", August 15, 1996, the anniversary of the beginning of the armed struggle in 1984, there is no week, nearly no day without violent engagements in the South east of Turkey. Engagements that look more and more like heavy military operations, even more since June 1997 when the PKK started using surface-to-air missiles.

- Active rural guerrilla, but also urban terrorism... For instance, three suicide-bombings from July to October 1996, all of them committed by young women, allegedly pregnant. They were following the instructions of the PKK's "4th National Conference" of May 1996, when Ocalan exhorted his militants, "in the

⁹ : "Eniya Ruzgariya Netwa Kurdistan"

¹⁰ : in an interview with the "American Kurdish Information Network" - AKIN - 1/97, he deliberately explains his political and military strategies.

¹¹ : According to Ocalan, the ARGK would have 15 000 fighters, including 4 000 women.

¹² : in the uncontrolled zone, north of Iraq, in Iran (these camps was exposed by a Turkish delegation visiting Teheran, "Sabah", 9/30/96) or at the confines of Armenia and Azerbaïdjan. Some fighters, according to Ocalan, would be trained in Greece and some German "revolutionary" militants would also help the PKK, including Andrea Wolf, wanted in Germany (Reuter, 11/23/1996, quoting "Der Spiegel").

¹³ : Cf. Ocalan on MED-TV, 6/15/97, exhorting village militias to lay down their arms.

¹⁴ : for instance "The European, 1/11/1996.

way of Hamas”, to “become human bombs”. Threat that was, once more, repeated in October 1997 ¹⁵

- Urban guerrilla too, as the destruction of the Kirikkale ¹⁶ weapon plant, the largest in Turkey, 13rd of July 1997, held by ARGK’s “Urban attack Detachment” - or “Urban Revenge Unit”-.

Moreover, in an interview with Med-TV, 14th October 1997, PKK official Semdin Sakik ¹⁷, regarded as number two “political” leader, said that they would bomb the energy, textile and transport sectors. *"We will attack energy transmission lines all over Turkey, bridges, factories, airports, oil and gas installations and textile factories"...* he said. *"We will attack every sector that provides money for the treasury..."* Sakik also said the guerrillas would target leading bureaucrats and civil servants as well as the families of high-ranking military officers. *"Civilians might die because only guns can speak when the bullets are being fired."*

- “Classical” is also the constant threat against tourism : it’s the leitmotiv-black-mail of Ocalan and the PKK to say that tourist targets would also be included in the attacks. According to Semdin Sakik again : *"We will attack tourist sites, especially in the Mediterranean region in order to put an end to tourism in Turkey. Our target is not the tourists, but destroy tourism and the flow of money in Turkey"*. ¹⁸

- Active guerrilla, and bloody guerrilla... One thinks that there are more than 27 000 casualties since the beginning of PKK’s armed struggle on August 15, 1984 ¹⁹.

On January 1, 1998, like last year, the Press Office of the Headquarters of the People's Liberation Army of Kurdistan (ARGK) released its balance for the “war in Kurdistan” in 1997 ²⁰.

From the period of January 1, 1997 to January 1, 1998, they claim a total of 2,306 armed clashes between the ARGK, the Turkish military, and KDP peshmergas. The ARGK said it carried out 540 ambushes and 216 raids. There were also 24 attacks, 451 firefights, 97 acts of sabotage, 98 roadblocks, and 272 other actions. This leads to the lost of a total of 8,439 men. 5 helicopters, including 2 Super Cobra attack helicopters, were shot down and 315 military vehicles were destroyed. I won’t go further in details.

¹⁵ : Semdin Sakik, Med-TV interview, Reuters, October 15, 1997 : “If necessary, ... we will attach bombs to ourselves and launch suicide attacks”.

¹⁶ : AP, 7/5/1997

¹⁷ : known as "Fingerless Zeki" after blowing a thumb off while firing a rocket in northern Iraq.

¹⁸ : Reuters, 15 10 97

¹⁹ : in comparison, ETA would be responsible for 760 victims since 1968 (AP, 5/20/1996) and the IRA 1800 since 1970 (AP, 5/17/1996).

²⁰ : Source: Kurdistan-Rundbrief, No.3, Vol.11, 10.2.1998

These heavy operations, using huge and increasing means, call for legitimate questions about their funding.

It is true that the PKK has - or had - regional alliances with several liberation organisations, like the ASALA, for instance. Either some States, unsteadily, may help it : Iran, Syria, Libya but also Greece and... Russia ²¹. But details would take too long.

Another explanation comes from its criminal activities in Europe and from the income they produce.

²¹ : Since its founding, the PKK has maintained privileged ties with Hafiz al-Asad's Syria, an alliance illustrated by the fact that the PKK leadership settled in Damascus after the 1980 coup in Turkey, then in Syrian-controlled Lebanon in 1987. Because of al-Asad's promises to Turgut Özal (then Prime Minister of Turkey) in 1987, these ties are now somewhat weaker.

Similarly, the PKK has always been on good terms with other movements (guerrilla or terrorist groups) that have been close to Damascus. First and foremost, there have been the Palestinian groups. Around 1972-74, certain elements of the future PKK collaborated with the Special Foreign Operations Command of the PFLP [Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine], led by Wadi Haddad. It was then that future members of the PKK and of ASALA [Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia] first met. The inconvenient fact that 70 percent of "historical Kurdistan" and "historical Armenia" overlap did not prevent the PKK from allying with ASALA in April 1980 in Lebanon. This curious alliance survived the Turkish military operation in northern Iraq in May 1983, enabling ASALA to toughen up its troops in the "PKK liberated zone. "

In 1986-87, reliable sources reported contacts between the PKK (still Marxist-Leninist) and the Islamic Republic of Iran. In Lebanon, contacts then became more frequent between PKK cadres and Hizballah. In October 1989, the Turkish press vehemently protested the existence of two PKK camps in Iranian Azerbaijan. Naturally, Tehran self-righteously denied it.

Then there are the ties between the PKK and Saddam Husayn. By September 1989, rumours of a secret alliance between the PKK and the Iraqi Government were gaining enough credence for the Iraqi Foreign Ministry to "deny" them "categorically." Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz denied them again in September 1991. According to the DPK and the PUK, the PKK had been supplying Baghdad with intelligence on the other Kurdish parties since 1988, in exchange for money and weapons. In September 1990, Ocalan openly sided with Saddam Husayn, who "was fighting American imperialism." That strategic choice was confirmed by one of the PKK military leaders, who said at the time: "For us, the important thing is the revolution in the Middle East, and we will fight alongside any revolutionary State or force in the region." He went on to state that the PKK had had contacts with the Iraqi military in the Zakhu region since August 1990. As rumours grew of massive arms shipments from Saddam to the PKK, Ocalan justified himself, in interviews in late 1991, by maintaining that the weapons had been "left behind by the Iraqi Army," and recovered by his men.

Thus the PKK's regional strategy took shape, i.e., never put all your eggs in one basket and take turns playing Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria off against one another. Among the PKK's other dubious contacts in the Mediterranean Basin were those between Ocalan and Muammar Qadhafi:

- *June 20, 1995, 11 p.m., GMT, "Voice of the Great Arab Nation," Tripoli, Libya:* "In a telegram to the Brother Leader of the Revolution [Qadhafi], brother Abdallah Ocalan, Secretary General of the PKK, affirmed the complete solidarity of the Kurdish people with the Great Jamahiriya, bulwark and beacon of the Arab and Islamic liberation movement, victim of a dastardly Imperialist plot." This "brotherhood" enables the PKK to racketeer with comparative ease among the (wealthy) Kurdish émigré community in Libya.

II - The “criminal” PKK

Guerrilla in Turkey, but PKK’s other important target is Western Europe : political goal... not only.

A) “Criminal violence”

The resumption of the guerrilla in Anatolia in 1984 launches a violent offensive in Europe. Ruthlessly, the Party begins to take the matters in hands, intimidating and eliminating - even within its own ranks - all that are suspected to collaborate with Turkey. In Sweden, Switzerland, Germany, Denmark and France, the bodycount is around twenty between 1985 and 1987. And already in 1984, 18 PKK activists are deported from Sweden

The steering idea of the PKK is to control and exploit the Kurdish community as well as Europe’s wealth using all its system’s weaknesses and joints : political activism based on mafious methods.

The primary target of the PKK is Germany where the heart of the “European Front” was set, “ERNK-representation in Europe”. First legally, then clandestinely since its ban - on terrorism matters - in September 1993. Then the PKK moved towards Belgium.

PKK is also active in France, commonly demonstrating for any matter. Forbidden in 1993 too, the PKK’s screen associations, the “Comité du Kurdistan” and “Yek Kom” reconstruct themselves under the names of “Centre d’information du Kurdistan”, “Association culturelle des travailleurs kurdes en France” et “Comité national de solidarité avec le peuple kurde” : always playing confusion.

The PKK is settled in Sweden, Denmark, Great Britain, Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, Italy and is “persona grata” in Greece since 1985. PKK’s propaganda is also very active in the US ²² and Canada.

But everywhere, one can notice numerous cases of arson, extortion, murders, as one can see with the last and controversial case of Fayçal D., also known as Kani Yilmaz, former official of the PKK and convicted of arson, one death and damage to property in 30 towns in Germany, along with more than 200 accomplices, according to the police.

Propaganda also, PKK choose Europe to perform its roving “Kurdistan Parliament in exile”. Its preliminary commission met in Brussels at the end of February 1995, in presence of Turkish DEP MP’s. The first actual session was held in The Hague, April 12, 1995. It gathered 65 representatives, allegedly elected by the “Kurds of the Diaspora”, according to the Chairman, Yasar Kaya. Among them, 12 members

²² : Cf. AKIN, the “American Kurdish Information network” which is always well informed about PKK’s activities.

of the ERNK, the others looking a lot like PKK stooges. Since, this "Parliament" has met in many European capitals ²³.

However, behind this national liberation will and People's representation, one can foresee a new powerful mafia-type group.

B) PKK's Narcotrafficking

Let's listen to what the US DEA wrote in 1995 :

"It has been established that the PKK now has the perfect arrangement to produce, transport, and traffic in opiates and cannabis throughout Europe. Moreover, material evidence and intelligence sources have shown that the PKK is also engaging in laundering money from drug trafficking. The funds thus recovered are then funnelled back into that terrorist organisation." ²⁴

In fact, the charges are serious. The PKK leaders themselves vehemently deny accusations of drug trafficking, and do not hesitate to use violent scare tactics to prevent the European Media from broaching the subject.

First, there is indeed massive trafficking in narcotics from the "Golden Crescent" to Europe via Turkey, the Balkans, and the former Eastern Bloc. This trafficking involves numerous Turkish nationals, often natives of south-eastern Anatolia, or "Turkish Kurdistan". Furthermore, impartial sources, INTERPOL for instance, report that most of these traffickers operate for the benefit of Turkish-Kurdish revolutionaries or separatists, and most of these "dealers/militants" have ties to the PKK.

Finally, there is an undeniable, enduring, and mutually profitable complicity between the Party of Abdallah Ocalan and the Kurdish crime clans, which may be likened to the "families" of the Sicilian Mafia. The ties between these clans and the PKK are so close that it is impossible to separate one from the other.

The natural route for the "Golden Crescent" ²⁵ heroin goes through parts of Turkey where the PKK has a strategic position. From there comes PKK's leading part in narco-traffic, in spite of Ocalan's continuous denials.

The PKK's heroin traffic works through politico-criminal connections between the Kurd separatists and many guerrillas of the region : Chi'ite clans from the Bekaa valley, Balouchistan rebel tribes... The members of the PKK settled in Iran also play an important part.

²³ : with permission or not : Vienna, Moscow, Copenhagen, Rome, Oslo...

²⁴ : United States Department of Justice, **Drug Enforcement Administration**, *Confidential investigative report of June 23, 1995, distributed to all DEA offices in Europe and Pakistan.*

²⁵ : main source for Europe, 80% according to British sources.

Towards Syria and Lebanon, near the borders of Turkey, Nakhitchevan and Iran, this traffic can develop the shape of a triangular barter : luxury cars, stolen in Europe, are exchanged for heroin which in turn is changed into cash and arms.

Towards Europe, the bartering works too : PKK's heroin could have been exchanged for Italian luxury clothes by the Calabrian 'Ndrangheta.

In Turkey, the circulation of heroin, management of the laboratories and transport of precursor products are taken up by the PKK logistics in preference to its guerrilleros. This traffic is made possible by the alliances with Kurdish criminal clans sharing common interests with the PKK.

A clannish society, as the one of which Kurdistan is made and, as a paradox is Ocalan's enemy, creates a symbiotic existence between people.

This symbiotic relationship links the PKK to the crime clans of south-eastern Anatolia, who in turn resemble the Mafia "families" of Sicily: a tradition of rebellion against the State, secrecy, and impermeability obtained by an intermingling of biological and criminal ties. There are about a dozen of these clans: the Aksoy, Aydinli, Baybasin, Canturk, Guven, Kitay, Kocakaya, Koylan, Ozdemir, Polat, Sakik, Toprak, Ugur, and Yildirim, among others. In Europe, some of them sell approximately 50 times more the heroin that they buy in the "Golden Crescent". Others control the entire process, from producing the powder from Asian morphine base all way to running the "street dealing" in Western Europe, always in sizeable quantities. In a former document, we have portrayed several of these clans, with evidences of their trafficking and their known ties to the PKK ²⁶.

For instance, the links with the Sakik clan. On June 16, 1994, "Servet Ipek," born in 1964, was arrested for murder in Germany. The investigation showed that "Ipek's" real name was Seyyar Sakik, born in Mush, in 1962, wanted in Turkey, and on the lam in Germany. It also uncovered that the murder was the end result of the trafficking of 190 kilos of heroin between Turkey and Germany. Seyyar Sakik's brothers are Sirri Sakik, a former DEP Deputy, and Semdin Sakik, the PKK's leader whose threatening intentions I quoted earlier. In Germany, Iris Sakik, a cousin of the former, is in charge of wholesale heroin sales. In Turkey, the Sakik Clan is known for its pro-PKK militancy.

What now about PKK's activities in France ?

Even though not alone in the "Turkish" crime rainbow, its militants are, for quite a long time, linked with drugs trafficking.

²⁶ : Terrorism & Political Violence, Notes & Studies of the Paris Institute of Criminology, Paris, June, 1996, Two typical degenerate Guerrilla Groups : The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and the Kurdistan Workers' Party, .p30-33.

The dissolution decision of “Yek Kom” and “Comité du Kurdistan” was based on their violent and political nature as they “*indulge, on the French territory or from it, in manoeuvres leading to terrorist actions in France or abroad*”.

But, as early as 1985, Omer O... was held for questioning in Paris for "violating narcotics laws." In January 1990, the Versailles Police arrested Gengiz K... , Emirsak Y... , and Adem and Unal B... for the same reason. In July 1990, Mehmet U... was arrested in Annemasse, Haute-Savoie Department, also for drug trafficking. All of these people were known PKK militants.

From 1990 to 1995, 82 Turkish nationals were questioned in France for possession of both firearms and significant amounts of heroin. In 21 of these cases, the amount involved was more than one kilo. In 35 cases, the heroin was from the Golden Crescent; in 8 cases, it was from Lebanon; and in the other 39 cases, the source was either someplace else, or unknown.

On March 17, 1994, the “OCRTIS”, Office for Halting Illegal Narcotics Trafficking released a document entitled “*Judiciary Police Fourth Division Questioning of Three Turkish Nationals belonging to a Drug Trafficking Network: Seizure of three Kilos of Heroin.*”

The day before, at Saint-Ouen and Paris, three individuals were stopped for questioning : Musa C..., born in 1956 at Akcaday, Turkey, an unemployed political refugee; Mehmet S..., born in 1963, in Bingol, Turkey, unemployed; and Orhan T..., born 1963, another unemployed political refugee. The latter was carrying three one-kilo packets of heroin, delivered by the other two, who had recently arrived from Metz. “*It should be noted,*” emphasises the document, “*that T... is known by General Intelligence as a fund-raiser for the PKK and that he is suspected of having engaged in drug trafficking to replenish the coffers of that movement.*” This is the proverbial “tip of the iceberg.”

1994 too, a report by the Criminal Investigation Department of Nice, South of France, tells us the “Textbook case of Hussen A...”. The whole story would be too long, but what’s interesting is that he told the Police that he was working for the PKK and that from 1989 till his arrest in 1991, he smuggled approximately 300 Kilos of Heroin from Turkey to Western Europe...

October 29, 1996, several persons, mostly of Turkish nationality, are arrested in the Paris suburbs. That is the end of a fraud ²⁷, linked with Belgium, concerning about 150 victims, completed by weapons and... narcotics trafficking. The fraud is estimated 40 millions F.; the seized heroin, 6 kg, 20 millions. According to the investigators working on that case for eighteen month, it’s an evidence that the benefits of all these operations were assigned to the PKK.

²⁷ : “Intex” company an a dozen of others.

Early 1997, the presumed fund-raiser of the PKK for the South of France was arrested for having send money to Turkey, allegedly proceeding from drug trafficking.

Moreover, in the same way as in Belgium and Great Britain, there are more and more trade companies created by Kurds. It looks like this method is now favoured because of a better penetration of the community and better exploitation of its advantages rather than associations that have a greater political look and are less operational. But this shows PKK's fast flexibility and will of penetration.

And, in other European countries, there are similar evidences of the same trafficking ²⁸.

As this criminal side dominates , what's left of the political so-called honourability ?

But it seems that 1996 has been an important turning point in the PKK's involvement in Europe. It shows its involvement as a fully beneficiary entity.

Actually, the routes taken by money are a tracking system for narcotics and other trafficking. In Europe, the PKK's turnover amounts to millions of US dollars, running through many bank accounts. It was important to have a good look at this.

On September 18, 1996, Scotland Yard and the Belgian police, acting simultaneously in Brussels and London, started operation "Sputnik". This large-scale operation aimed at Med-TV, the PKK Turkish TV channel, at the Kurdistan Committee, some elements of the "Kurdistan Parliament in exile" and at the homes of many Kurdish activists, including those of some Turkish ex-MP's of the now-forbidden DEP. Similar operations took place in Germany and Luxembourg.

What's interesting for us is the juridical foundation : money laundering. The criminal part of this hybrid entity is no longer hidden by its political "aura".

Med-TV, which has important funds, considers itself as a private firm. Always denying its links with the PKK, Med-TV has continuously worked for it, broadcasting its official statements, such as Ocalan's speeches -including those boosting armed struggle or suicide bombings. On June 15, 1997, when answering a phone interview, Ocalan was still calling for an increased guerrilla. And he's still interviewed on regular basis as well other PKK or ERNK officials.

Terrorism of words and actions do not seem to dissuade Med-TV. While insisting upon being independent, it claims it was created by the initiative of the Kurdish community in Europe, "whose many members support the nationalist movement

²⁸ : Terrorism & Political Violence, Notes & Studies of the Paris Institute of Criminology, Paris, June, 1996, Two typical degenerate Guerrilla Groups : The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam an the Kurdistan Workers' Party, p. 32-34

without having institutional links with it”²⁹. These are ambiguous and cynical words. As we’ll see later, this support is not always self-willed.

But we have to notice that the intervention of authorities was not due to opinion or censorship elements.

The “Sputnik” operation followed the seizure of 350 millions of BF deposited in Luxembourg, on a bank account in the name of Med TV. According to the police, this money came from drugs, arms and human beings trafficking.

In February 1996 a Canadian businessman was jailed in Luxembourg. According to the Luxembourg police, he tried to launder some money coming from drugs traffic, transferring cash from a Cypriot bank to the “Continental Bank”. He confessed he had acted on the behalf of Med-TV, for a commission.

These operations allowed the discovery of many documents, arms records, money and... children. Some records mention the names of Turkish businessmen and societies submitted to extortion by the PKK. Would that be the so-called revolutionary tax ? This is maybe how Med-TV conceives “support”...

It seems that the PKK manages its activities through many companies in Belgium, which are used for laundering the illegal money. For the authorities, the “delocalisation” comes from both the interdiction of the PKK in Germany, since 1993 and from Belgium’s relative benevolence.

The “respectability” which sheltered the PKK and its members is now jeopardised as well as its communication antenna, its “Parliament in exile” and its various associations and screen companies. And this movement which started in spite of pressures, threats, indignation, difficulties and denials, seems to continue as recent searches in France, Germany, Switzerland and Netherlands tend to show it.

If the PKK has attracted some ones, if he made some imagine that it was the defender of the Kurdish cause, what is its real image today ? What is its legitimacy ?

Like some of you, probably, I was shocked when I read that Mr Kay Nehm, the German Federal Prosecutor, esteemed that the PKK was no longer to be considered as a terrorist organisation.

Then I thought that here was a kind of logic... that maybe was not Mr Nehm’s. At the “Institut de Criminologie de Paris”, and now at the “Centre for the Study of the Contemporary Criminal menace”, we never stopped saying that political guerrilla movements were changing into mafious criminal groups, losing their so-called honourability. Even if, juridically speaking, it is inconvenient for the severity of the sentences, this assessment, that was long time founded, has no bearing on the ban of the PKK in Germany. The party, according to Mr Nehm,

²⁹ : Amir Hassanpour, MED-TV, “Britain and the Turkish State : a stateless Nation quest for sovereignty in the sky”, Freie Universitat Berlin, November 7, 1995.

will still be outlawed because of evidences linking it to extortion, arms offences and other illegal activities.

So, it's now plainly a juridical reality : in Germany, the PKK is classified mostly as a criminal organisation.

Far from the Marxist-Leninist revolution, it is going to be more difficult for it to legitimise its violence.

I will finish with a question : isn't it time that we start treating PKK, which considers our countries as it's home base and provider of resources, for what it really is in Europe, a criminal organisation ? Couldn't that be "the way forward" ? ■