

7 Born from the Left

The making of the PKK

*Joost Jongerden
and Ahmet Hamdi Akkaya*

The movement known as the PKK movement, which emerged after 1972, is not an organization; it is an ideological and political movement. That movement has the intention to unite [the divided revolutionary left in Turkey].

(Kemal Pir, Court Defence, 1981)¹

Introduction

In 1953 Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai took part in peace negotiations held in Geneva to end the war in Korea. Being co-founder of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), a guerilla-war veteran, and one of the architects of the People's Republic, he was asked what he thought about the French Revolution of 1789. Zhou Enlai replied: 'It is still too early to tell' (Sick 1995; Žižek 2007). The French Revolution, he implied, was not simply history, but continuing to extend its effects, and any evaluation of its meaning would therefore be premature. This tactful reply from Zhou Enlai told by Slavoj Žižek in his book on Robespierre, came to mind when working on this chapter on the Kurdistan Workers' Party, the PKK, which, grammatically, is not even situated in the past tense, as is the French Revolution, but in the present. This makes it even more difficult to evaluate the PKK. Rather than trying to assess the social and political meaning of the PKK, this chapter will discuss its becoming. In so doing, the main focus will be on the process of ideological group formation (1973–7), party building (1978–9), and the organization of revolutionary violence as a means to political change (1980–94). It will show how the PKK not only took its orientation from the revolutionary left in Turkey, but also built on its (armed) experiences.

In the first section we briefly introduce the PKK with a few words about its significance and its objectives and methods. In the second section, we go back to the 1970s and discuss the Kurdish political spectrum at that time, with the PKK as one of the many political parties taking up the issue of Kurds and Kurdistan.² In the third section, we take a closer look at the PKK process of group formation, and its relationship to the left in Turkey. Finally, in the fourth section, the issue of revolutionary war and the left in Turkey is discussed (but not the course of the war).³ Analysis of the history of the PKK is relevant today, not only because the PKK is present tense, but also in the context of discussions about the PKK emerging after the imprisonment

of its leader, Abdullah Öcalan, in 1999. It has been argued that the party lost its way and betrayed its own past (Özcan 2006). A close analysis of the establishment of the PKK however, shows that it did not emerge from a mere Kurdish nationalist political tradition, but from the left in Turkey, and thus, in fact, has always had a strong orientation to Turkey too.

Background

The Kurdistan Workers Party or PKK is one of the most important secular insurgent political movements in Kurdistan and the Middle East. Unlike most Kurdish political parties, which adopted a rather conservative outlook and were organized around tribal leaders and structures, the PKK originated from the left in Turkey and drew its leaders, members and militants from the disenfranchised. Following its incubation during the 1970s and after ample preparation, the PKK initiated a prolonged guerilla war in 1984, and by 1990 the 'liberation of Kurdistan' had become not at all unthinkable. The threat posed by the PKK to the political system and territorial integrity of Turkey has been recognized as the most serious faced by the Republic since its establishment in 1923 (Özdog 2003: preface).

The PKK is widely known for its strategic employment of violence, the party name being commonly used as a synonym for its guerilla army. Although the PKK uses violence to obtain its goals, however, it would be wrong to characterize it as a military organization. The PKK is a political organization using violence to reach its objectives (Barkey and Fuller 1998: 26), and might best, therefore, be considered a 'militant political organization'. In fact, the use of violence was prompted by the narrow political space and should be considered instrumental and rational, in the sense that it was guided by and based upon a political programme (intended to change the social and political status of the Kurds and Kurdistan) in circumstances in which there was no alternative avenue of genuine political expression (Bozarslan 2004: 23).⁴

Initially, the political objective was the liberation of Kurdistan through a process of creative destruction: the simultaneous destruction of colonialism and the creation of an independent state. In its 1978 manifesto, *Kürdistan Devrimin Yolu* (The Path of the Kurdistan Revolution), written by (or at least accredited to) Abdullah Öcalan, the PKK made itself known as a 'national-democratic' and 'revolutionary' movement. A destruction of colonialism (not only Turkish colonialism, but also the colonialism of the other occupying state-forces in Kurdistan) and the construction of a democratic and united Kurdistan, based on Marxist-Leninist principles, were to be effected from an alliance of workers, peasants and intellectuals. During the course of the evolution of the PKK, Abdullah Öcalan tried to develop his own version of socialism, breaking away from conventional Marxist-Leninist principles and replacing pan-Kurdish aspirations with a new political agenda, namely, a commitment to the idea of a constitution of Kurdish rights under the principles of 'radical democracy' and 'democratic confederalism'. A territorial strategy (the creation of liberated land) and state-building seems to have been replaced by an institutional strategy, which aims at the development of a civil society recreating Kurdistan 'bottom-up'.⁵

The Partiya Karkêren Kurdistan (PKK) was formally established on 26–27 November 1978. At its founding congress no name was attached to the party. At the beginning of 1979, publications of the organization were still signed with the name Kurdistan Revolutionaries (Kurdistan Revolutionaries 1979). The name PKK was given to the organization only a few months later, in April 1979 (Akkaya 2005: part 8), and its existence announced soon after that, in July 1979, with a daring assault on someone considered to be a 'comprador landlord'.⁶ The party seemed to take time in planning its actions, and this was certainly not something out of the blue. A process of *group-formation* had started years before, as early as 1972–3, and by the time the PKK was formally established the party was already organized throughout the Kurdistan region in Turkey, led by a committed member with strong convictions. In the course of the 1980s the PKK would develop into the only Kurdish political party of significance in Turkey, attracting many who had previously been members or sympathizers of rival parties.

Several Kurdish political parties were active in the 1970s. The oldest of these parties was the Türkiye Kurdistan Demokratik Partî (TKDP; the Turkey Kurdistan Democratic Party). Established in 1965, the TKDP was probably the only and certainly the most influential such party up to the beginning of the 1970s. In the 1970s, several Kurdish political parties came into being, partly as a result of a crisis in the TKDP, and partly influenced by an emerging left in Turkey. At the time of the military coup (12 September 1980) the most important Kurdish political parties were the following: KÎP and KUK (both successors of different wings or fractions within the TKDP), at least three different Kawa fractions, Rizgarî and its break-away Ala Rizgarî; TKSP; (the Socialist Party of Kurdistan Turkey) and the PKK. Some other, smaller groups also existed, such as Tekoşîn (Struggle), Stêrka Sor (Red Star) and Pêkanîn (Realization).

Looking at the backgrounds of these parties, we may classify them as follows. First, there were the political parties established under the hegemony of or inspired by the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) (and later also the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, PUK) from Iraq, such as the TKDP and its successors KUK and KÎP, and the left-wing cleavages of Kawa, Rizgarî and Ala Rizgarî. Second, there was the Türkiye İşçi Partisi (TİP; the Workers Party of Turkey), to which Kawa, Rizgarî and Ala Rizgarî were sympathetic. The TKSP was very close to the legal left, its leader Kemal Burkan had been a prominent member of the TİP. Third, there were Tekoşîn, Stêrka Sor and the PKK, which had their roots in the (illegal) revolutionary left in Turkey (Ballı 1993; Jongerden 2007; Güclü 2008).

Although illegal, these parties were still able to establish legal platforms for political action, however. Kawa, Rizgarî and Ala Rizgarî published journals under the same name, and the TKSP was widely known by the name of its journal, *Özgürlük Yolu* (Path of Freedom, Kurdish *Rîya Azadî*). In addition to these journals, most of the illegal political parties organized legal fronts in the form of associations. The most important of these associations was the Devrimci Doğu Kültür Derneği (DDKD; Revolutionary Cultural Associations of the East – the word 'Kurdistan' was carefully avoided). The DDKD was dominated by the left wing of the TKDP, also known as Şiwancılar (after its leader Dr Şiwan). In Ankara, the founders of Rizgarî played an important role in the establishment of the DDKD,

but it was the Şiwancılar who actually controlled the association. Later, Rizgarî founded the Anti Sömürgeci Kültür Derneği, ASKD (Anti-Colonial Cultural Association) and the TKSP established the Devrimci Halk Kültür Derneği (DHKD; Revolutionary People's Cultural Association) (Aslan 2006; Gündoğan 2007). The group that would later establish the PKK, was neither active in these Kurdish associations nor attempted to establish its own, but was active in ADYÖD, an association related to the revolutionary left in Turkey (see below).

Reviewing the early history of the PKK, it is clear that the party distinguished itself from most other Kurdish political parties in several ways. In respect of its political positioning and distinctive ideology, for example, it was unusual or unique. Most importantly, the PKK did not emerge from 'Kurdish politics': its members did not have significant previous relations with any of the Kurdish political parties active in the 1970s. For this reason the PKK is often depicted as a party 'without history' (Güçlü 2008).

Group formation

The PKK does not have its political background in Kurdish politics, it was not a party without history, but born from the revolutionary left in Turkey.⁷ At the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, the revolutionary left in Turkey gained momentum, getting morale and inspiration from revolutionary struggles elsewhere in the world – from Cuba to Vietnam, Laos to Angola, Mozambique and Guinea, and Algeria to Palestine. Several left-wing political associations and parties were established and became active in Turkey during this period. When we say the PKK has its roots in the left in Turkey therefore, we should be precise in determining which left. At the time, the left in Turkey, as elsewhere in the world, was composed of many different factions, with very distinct ideologies and practices.

Two main currents of thought can be distinguished. One held that capitalism had advanced in Turkey, and a transition to socialism was possible. The main representative of this current was the Türkiye İşçi Partisi (TİP; Workers Party of Turkey), a legal party adhering to parliamentary democracy. The other current of thought held that Turkey was still a semi-feudal society and not fully independent, but dominated by the United States. Accordingly, therefore, a national-democratic revolution (the Milli Demokratik Devrim, or MDD thesis) was necessary, one in which workers, peasants and progressive forces within the bourgeoisie needed to work together, to be followed by a socialist revolution. Adherents to this school were a minority faction within TİP, and received most response from the youth organization Dev-Genç. The national-democrats were convinced, furthermore, that an armed struggle was necessary to bring forward change (Lipovsky 1992). Crucially, those who established the PKK had been close to Dev-Genç, while other Kurdish political parties had been close to TİP.

The parties by which the PKK was inspired were the Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Ordusu (THKO; the People's Liberation Army of Turkey) and Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Parti-Cephesi (THKP-C; the People's Liberation Party-Front of Turkey). THKO and THKP-C were politico-military organizations, in the sense that they

practised the idea that only an armed struggle, guided by a political party, could bring the necessary changes to Turkey. However, the leadership of both parties was killed, through the passing of death sentences and in military operations in 1972. The leaders of the THKO, Deniz Gezmiş, Yusuf Aslan and Huseyin Inan, were arrested at the beginning of 1971, and were executed on 6 May 1972. Most of the core members of the THKP-C, among them their leader Mahir Çayan and two members of the THKO, were killed in Kızıldere, Ankara, on 30 March 1972, having been trapped in the course of a hostage operation in which they had intended to exchange military personnel against the convicted, but as yet unexecuted, THKO leaders.

Mass protests took place in Turkey against the upcoming execution of Deniz Gezmiş and his comrades and the killing of Mahir Çayan and his fellow fighters. Abdullah Öcalan, too, was involved in these protests. In interviews, Öcalan affiliates himself with the THKP-C as a sympathizer. Moreover, he explained on several occasions that the PKK was developed from the experiences – or rather, the mistakes – made in the organization of the armed struggle by the revolutionary left in Turkey during the early 1970s.⁸ The reason these revolutionary parties had been defeated such a short time after their establishment, Öcalan argued, was that they had rushed into a direct confrontation with the state while they were still weak. With this insight, the group around Öcalan, decided to organize itself thoroughly before entering into such a conflict (Sayın 1997: 71–83).

The core group establishing the PKK was carved out from a student environment in Ankara in the 1970s. Initially, many of them were active in the student organization Ankara Demokratik Yüksek Öğretim Derneği (ADYÖD; Ankara Democratic Higher Education Association). The association was established by Türkiye Sosyalist İşçi Partisi (TSİP; the Socialist Workers Party of Turkey), but revolutionary students, THKP-C and THKO sympathizers, took control of ADYÖD within a short time. In this context, close relations should be noted between ADYÖD and Dev-Genç (Revolutionary Youth), an important revolutionary youth organization close to THKP-C and THKO. Among the members of ADYÖD at this time were those students who would play an important role in the establishment of the PKK, including Abdullah Öcalan, Haki Karer, Baki Karer, Kemal Pir, Ali Haydar Kaytan, Duran Kalkan and Cemil Bayık. Among the most influential were Haki Karer and Abdullah Öcalan, who were part of the *de facto* ruling body of ADYÖD.⁹

Initially, the group around Abdullah Öcalan was mainly a loose network of students. In 1973, the core group consisted of Öcalan himself, Kemal Pir, Haki Karer, Ali Haydar Kaytan, Duran Kalkan and Cemil Bayık – three Kurds (Öcalan, Haydar Kaytan and Bayık) and three Turks (Pir, Karer and Kalkan). Öcalan had met Pir and Karer at the end of 1972, after his release from prison. Öcalan had been imprisoned between April and October 1972, for his role in organizing a boycott at the Political Science Department, protesting the death of Mahir Çayan and his friends. Looking for a house to stay in, Öcalan was introduced by a friend to the two revolutionaries from the Black Sea region (Pir was a sympathizer of the THKP-C and Karer of the THKO), who lived in the Emek district of Ankara. They stayed in the house for about a year, to the end of 1973 or the beginning of 1974,

after which they dispersed to houses in other parts of Ankara, in which there were dense networks of parties from the revolutionary left (Dikimevi, Anittepe and Tuzlucaýır). Tuzlucaýır, in particular, is much mentioned in PKK historiography. At the time, in the mid-1970s, Tuzlucaýır was a poor, 'gece kondu' neighborhood with a large proportion of (Turkish) Alevi and Kurdish inhabitants. It was a very important area of activity for the group and maybe the only place other than universities in which a considerable number of the members were recruited.¹⁰

ADYÖD was important as a platform where the group members could meet people of like mind. However, more important than ADYÖD for the organization of the PKK were the house meetings, of which tens or maybe hundreds must have been organized between 1973 and 1977. Sometimes two or three meetings a day took place, with up to around 10 or 20 participants. The frequent, long and intensive discussions at these meetings contributed to the carving out of a distinctive ideology, the enlisting of new recruits and the forging of a close camaraderie. Kemal Pir would later say about this period: 'We were busy convincing people to work with us; that was the kind of work I was engaged in.' For that, they took their time. 'If three hours were needed to convince people, we would be busy for three hours, if 300 hours were needed to convince them, we would be busy for 300 hours. We were working to convince people'.¹¹ New people were introduced to the group through these house meetings. For example, Cemil Bayık was a friend of Pir, who introduced Bayık to Öcalan. Bayık then introduced Duran Kalkan to the group. Apart from Cemil Bayık, Haki Karer recruited, among others, Mazlum Doğan, a celebrated PKK martyr.¹²

Doğan was clearly impressed by Haki Karer. 'I admired him and over time this admiration changed in acting together, in making their ideology my own,' he is quoted as saying (Doğan 1994). At this stage there was a clearly a developing approach, but it had not yet coagulated into a cohesive whole. 'At the time I did not know if these persons were a group, a movement or something else,' said Doğan, 'I only wanted their approval, I wanted them to entrust me with duties' (Doğan 1994). The group around Öcalan was organized as a fluid network. The rented houses, which were changed frequently, and in which ideological group formation and recruitment took place, provided a space for the development of the group.

Finally, at the beginning of 1975, the group around Öcalan detached itself from ADYÖD. This followed the closure of the association in December 1974, after a police raid which resulted in 163 students being taken into custody.¹³ Although a new association was soon established, under the name Ankara Yüksek Öğretim Derneği (AYÖD; Association for Higher Education in Ankara), Öcalan, Karer and others from their network did not become a part of it. They thought the association had lost its dynamic, and the 'Kurdistan revolutionaries' decided instead to develop their loose network itself, into a coherent, independent organization (Sayın 1997). Actually, the split seems to have been mutual, with the founders of AYÖD not wanting the group around Öcalan to become active in the association either: Haki Karer, a former board member of ADYÖD was not allowed into AYÖD meetings (Yüce 1999: 244–6). In 1975, the house-room network around Öcalan took shape. They settled on a name, '*Kurdistan Devrimcileri*' (the Kurdistan Revolutionaries,

Şoreşgerên Kurdistan in Kurdish), although some knew them as 'Apocu', followers of Apo, the nickname of Abdullah Öcalan ('apo' is also Kurdish for 'uncle'), or else '*Ulusal Kurtuluş Ordusu*' (National Liberation Army).¹⁴

The Kurdistan Revolutionaries did not consider the student and urban environment in Ankara to be well suited for the further advancement of their political and social struggle. They decided to disassociate from Ankara and establish themselves in (Turkish) Kurdistan (or, what is referred to as the Kurdish region in Turkey).¹⁵ This decision was taken at a gathering in Ankara at the beginning of 1976, known in PKK circles as the 'Dikmen meeting' (after the neighbourhood where the gathering took place), and referred to as a 'return' (Yüce 1999: 261; Akkaya 2005). Turkish Kurdistan was considered the most appropriate area to start a political and armed struggle for revolutionary change in Turkey. It was also decided at the Dikmen meeting to establish a centre (*merkez*) of the movement, of which Abdullah Öcalan would become the chairman. Haki Karer was also member of the centre, and assistant to Öcalan, becoming the second person in rank in the organization.

The 'return' decided upon at Dikmen involved the Kurdistan Revolutionaries first moving to different provinces in the Kurdistan region in Turkey to investigate the situation. This marked a major change in the political geography of the movement. Between 1973 and 1977, the period of ideological group formation, recruitment activities had been mainly concentrated in Ankara. Together with the first group activities in Kurdistan, the recruitment of new members now started to take place in regions other than Ankara. On the eve of 1978, as the political struggle of the movement gathered pace, the movement gained momentum in the regions of Dersim/Tunceli, Maraş-Pazarcık, Batman, Antep and Urfa. In Dersim/Tunceli, for example, the teacher training school was a recruitment focus of the movement. Several students in this school from different parts of Turkish Kurdistan participated into the movement.¹⁶

At the end of 1976, nearly a year after the Dikmen meeting, another meeting was held, this time in the Dikimevi area of Ankara. The results of the move out of Ankara were evaluated, and it was decided to progress with the new strategy. Two more decisions were made at Dikimevi: the first to present the movement to the different parties and factions in the revolutionary left in Turkey, and the second to present the group to the people in Turkish Kurdistan.¹⁷

In order to introduce the organization to the revolutionary left, the Kurdistan Revolutionaries organized a meeting at Türk Mühendis ve Mimar Odaları Birliği (the Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects) in Ankara, referred to as the TMMOB meeting.¹⁸ The leftist organization Kurtuluş (Liberation) helped the Kurdistan Revolutionaries to find the meeting place, and some of its members actually participated in the meeting. Other members from other leftist political parties also participated in the meeting, in which the Kurdistan Revolutionaries presented themselves.

In order to introduce the organization to the people in Turkish Kurdistan, the Kurdistan Revolutionaries organized a series of meetings there in 1977. Abdullah Öcalan and some associates visited Ağrı, then Kars, Dersim, Karakoçan, Diyarbakır and finally Antep. Together, the two meetings at Dikmen and Dikimevi, the

decisions taken and activities embarked upon as a result, signified the transition of the Kurdistan Revolutionaries from an ideological group to a political organization. The Kurdistan tour, however, ended abruptly. On 18 May 1977 Haki Kaker was killed in a coffeehouse, allegedly by Alaadin Kaplan, one of the leaders of Stêrka Sor. Inspired by Maoism and having been active in the revolutionary movement since the beginning of the 1970s, Kaplan was well known in Antep at the time. The Kurdistan Revolutionaries declared Stêrka Sor a satellite organization of Turkey's intelligence services.

The death of Karer was a cause for much unrest in the organization (the Antep branch of the Kurdistan Revolutionaries fell apart, with most of its members joining Tekoşin). The Kurdistan Revolutionaries responded with two decisions following the killing: first, that it was impossible to do political work without armed protection, and second, that they needed to organize themselves more tightly, and to establish a political party. The killing of Karer thus became instrumental in the decision to become a political party for the liberation of Kurdistan. As such, the formation of the PKK became the promise to continue the struggle of the martyr Haki Karer, as well as a symbol for Turkish-Kurdish brotherhood (Karer being a Turk).¹⁹

The PKK, revolutionary war and the left in Turkey

After 1978, the PKK entered into a period of party construction and the development of armed struggle. Party construction and armed struggle have always been intertwined in PKK history. Previously, until 1977 (the death of Haki Karer), the PKK had defended armed struggle ideologically but without any serious attempt to organize one. After 1977, the organization of the armed struggle became important as a means of self-defence, and also to overcome 'obstacles'. Among these obstacles were the local feudal clans exercising dominance over people and territory. The struggles in Hilvan in 1978 and in Siverek in the Urfa province in 1979 were particularly relevant from this perspective. Indeed, the struggle in Siverek against the Bucak clan denoted the declaration of the foundation of the PKK (above, note 8).

Serious preparations to organize a guerilla war started a few months before the military takeover in Turkey. From the beginning of 1980, the PKK began to train its first group of militants (some 40–50 people) in Lebanon. The aim was to send these trained militants back into Turkey in order to develop the armed struggle in the Kurdistan region. With the military coup, however, that plan had to be changed, and the PKK straightaway withdrew its militants back from Turkey. Training continued, in Lebanon, and by 1982, the PKK had built a force of some 300 guerilla fighters. From September 1982 onwards, these militants were sent to Southern Kurdistan (Northern Iraq), close to Turkey (the central Iraqi government had no control over this territory at that time due to the ongoing war with Iran and emerging strength of Iraqi-Kurdish organizations). Therefore, but also as a result of an agreement with the Partîya Demokrata Kurdistan (the KDP, Kurdistan Democratic Party), the PKK was able to construct bases in the mountainous area in southern Kurdistan. Until 1984, the PKK mainly undertook reconnaissance activities,

infiltrating into northern Kurdistan (eastern and south-eastern Turkey) in small groups of three–five guerilla fighters.

On 15 August 1984 guerilla units of the PKK attacked the towns of Erüh (Siirt province) and Şemdinli (Hakkari province).²⁰ In Erüh one soldier lost his life and six were wounded. In Şemdinli officer housing and a military guard post were shot at with machine guns and rockets. Several soldiers and officers were killed and wounded. The guerillas handed out leaflets in the coffeehouses and hung up banners with slogans and martyrs of the liberation army.²¹ This was a large-scale, daring and well-coordinated twin attack. With this operation, the start of the people's war under the leadership of the PKK against what was called a colonial and fascist Turkish state was announced. Of course, in the years ahead, armed actions had been executed in Turkey (Kurdistan), but against people collaborating with the state. State institutions themselves and their representatives had not yet been the direct target of armed operations of the PKK (Çelik 2000: 71).

The authorities in Turkey were caught by surprise. Yet they could have known. In court in 1981, both Mehmet Hayri Durmuş and Kemal Pir had announced during their defence that the PKK would start a people's war when the conditions were in place and the means available. The following excerpt is from the interrogation at the court (translation by the authors):

MEHMET HAYRI DURMUŞ: We believe in the necessity of uniting all forces that are on the side of independence and democracy, in the necessity of creating a people's army and in this way will be able to create a strong and unified people and people's front [. . .] we believe in the creation of a people's army and by making a prolonged people's war will be able to liberate our country.

Kemal Pir entered into further detail:

KEMAL PIR: Because the revolution in Kurdistan is a revolution of national liberation, because it targets the colonial political and economic structure, we are working towards a prolonged people's war.

COURT JUDGE: How will it be, this people's war?

KEMAL PIR: The PKK has a military wing. [. . .] This is not an organization appropriate for the strategic objectives of the PKK. This is for the protection of the movement, of the people, for protecting itself. [. . .] But when it organizes itself for a people's war it will be different. [. . .] That is aiming at a professional army, an armed organization. [. . .] The PKK could not do this yet. [. . .] If it had done it, we would have been with less people here [in court] and we would have heard stronger voices. [. . .] It could not do it because either it did not found the right conditions, or it could not do it because it did not have the means. [. . .] But our aim is to do it. We will do it. After 10 years, after 20 years.

It did not take 10 or 20 years to start a people's war, but only three.

In PKK historiography '15 August' is celebrated as a turning point, a day of awakening. It is believed that through the dual attack, which marked the start of

the armed struggle, the chains of submission and assimilation were broken, and Kurds rediscovered themselves. In the decades before, PKK historiography says, Kurds felt ashamed of their Kurdishness, and were in a process of forgetting their culture and language. The first bullet shot on 15 August thus hit Kurdish enslavement and colonial dictatorship simultaneously.²² It is as if we hear Sartre speak. In his preface to Frantz Fanon's book *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Sartre had written that in the colonies, the violence perpetrated by the colonizers seeks to dehumanize the colonized. Everything is done to wipe out the traditions and culture of the colonized and to replace their language with that of the colonizer. Sartre argued that no gentleness can efface these marks of colonial violence – and that colonial violence could only be destroyed by counter-violence. Without hesitation he argued that to shoot down a colonizer is to kill two birds with one stone, at the same time to both destroy an oppressor and the man he oppresses. What remains are a dead man and a free man. This counter-violence is 'man re-creating himself' (Sartre 1961). The twin attack on Şemdinli and Erüh was considered such an act of re-creation, from out of non-entities were born Kurds (Barkey and Fuller 1998: 12).

The liberation struggle (people's war) was neither implemented nor framed in ethnic or nationalist discourses. In the statement published at the time of the 15 August attack, the PKK directly addressed the revolutionary left in Turkey, calling them to join forces and to fight against dictatorship. It emphasized that the struggle was not just a Kurdish cause, but also in the interests of Turkish people. The statement implored the Turkish people to make the struggle their own, as part off the struggle of the working class against fascism:

Democrats and revolutionaries in Turkey, laboring Turkish people, the HRK [the name of the armed wing of the PKK at the time] is fighting the barbarity which lays as a dark cloud over your life and over your future. (Çelik 2000 496–7, translation by the authors)²³

This approach was later confirmed by Öcalan in interviews with Mahir Sayın, a prominent leader of the left in Turkey (member of THKP-C, co-founder of *Kurtuluş*, and leading member of ÖDP and SDP):

This [the struggle by the PKK] is not a war of liberation for the Kurds. The day the Kurds will be free, the Turks will be free too. [...] The national liberation struggle of the Kurds is also a liberation struggle of the Turkish people. [...] This is what I mean to say. Some announce they will make a similar step as the PKK did. It is not necessary to make such a step; that step has already been made for you. Ha! But you can add something to our struggle, make a contribution. (Sayın 1997: 40, translation by the authors)

Actually, when we look at the history of the PKK post-1980, we see several attempts of both the PKK and the left in Turkey to come to terms with each other and establish a united front. This is not surprisingly, since there were personal

linkages between the PKK and the leftist parties from the period when they had been active in Ankara, among others in ADYÖD (many of these parties also had their roots in the THKO or the THKP-C). We will not attempt to give a full overview of the efforts to create united fronts, but mention a few of the most important, as judged in terms of the number of parties signing a protocol of collaboration, or in terms of concrete results at operational level.

In 1982, the PKK together with several parties from the left in Turkey established the Faşizme Karşı Birleşik Direniş Cephesi (FKBDC; Unified Resistance Front Against Fascism) (Aslan 2005: 72–9). The parties participating were: the PKK, Dev Yol (Devrimci Yol, Revolutionary Path), Türkiye Komünist Emek Partisi (TKEP; the Communist Labor Party of Turkey), Türkiye Emekçi Partisi (TEP; the Labour Party of Turkey), Devrimci Savaş (Revolutionary War), THKP-C-Acilciler (People's Revolutionary Party-Front of Turkey), Sosyalist Vatan Partisi (SVP; the Socialist Fatherland Party) and Türkiye Komünist Partisi/İşçinin Sesi (TKP/İS; the Communist Party of Turkey / Workers Voice). In terms of strength, the PKK and Dev-Yol were the most important political parties in the front against fascism, and as such they took the lead. However, Dev-Yol had to cope with serious difficulties. Some of its members had stayed in the Middle East, and prepared a return to Turkey in order to organize the armed struggle, while other members had fled to Europe, mainly Germany, and were supposed to provide financial and logistical support to the guerilla. For a few years, Dev-Yol guerilla units were active in rural Turkey, but the party was seriously hit by arrests. Meanwhile, the attempt to organize financial and logistical support from its organization in Europe failed, and the guerilla collapsed (Aslan 2005). Other than the PKK, no organization in the FKBDC was able to organize significant resistance, and eventually, in 1986, the FKBDC dissolved (Jongerden 2007: 60).

In 1993, the PKK together with several leftist parties created the Devrimci Demokratik Güç Birliği (DDGB; the Revolutionary Democratic United Force).²⁴ The DDGB remained a coalition only on paper, however, and gradually dissolved over time, the main reason being that the small leftist parties could not gain momentum and become significant players in the political arena in Turkey. In 1996 a protocol for cooperation was signed between the PKK and DHKP-C. In addition to a shared history in ADYÖD in 1974, members of both parties had received education in the Beka'a valley in Palestinian training camps (in separate camps, but very close to each other). At the operational level, combined guerilla operations of the armed wing of the PKK, the ARGK, and units of the DHKP-C took place in Tokat. This was in accordance with the PKK strategy to expand the revolutionary struggle in Turkey. However, in other areas, collaboration failed to materialize. At the political level, cooperation did not develop well. The DHKP-C accused the PKK of preferring collaboration with so-called 'reformist' parties, such as the ÖDP (DHKP-C 1998). In 1998, the year the collaboration with the DHKP-C ended, the PKK formed a platform with a number of parties from the left in Turkey called Devrimci Birleşik Güçler (DBG; Unified Revolutionary Forces).²⁵

In reality, the united fronts agreed upon had little more than a symbolic function. They gave the impression of a united revolutionary left, but attempts at collaboration

by the PKK and the revolutionary left in Turkey largely failed to materialize, politically or militarily. Only with the Devrimci Halk Partisi (DHP; Revolutionary People's Party) and the Türkiye Devrim Partisi (TDP; Revolutionary Party Turkey), did the PKK enter into close collaboration. At the operational level, joint guerilla units were established – known under the name Birleşik Kuvvetler (United Forces) – which were active in the Black Sea coast area, including the mountainous Mesudiye region. The TDP, however, which had emerged as a break away party from TSİP in 1978, dissolved at the beginning of the new millennium, and the DHP, a party newly established in 1993, was not able to develop itself. Many of its members were arrested in 1994, after a central committee member became a police informer. Also, its close relationship to the PKK made it vulnerable to the accusation of being a mere satellite party.²⁶

It would be wrong to look at collaboration between the PKK and the revolutionary left just at the level of parties. Individual members of the revolutionary left in Turkey also participated in the PKK guerilla movement. In 1984, when guerilla operations began, the PKK had informal relations with, among others, Mucadele Birlik/Emeğin Birliği (Unity in Struggle/Labor Unity), a party which had its roots in the THKO. One of its members (codename Kerim) was active in the guerilla unit under the command of Mahsum Korkmaz, responsible for the 15 August attack (Çelik 2000: 80). There were more from the Turkish left, who would join the PKK and its armed organization, including people from the SVP. Others were trained by the PKK, as is the case with militants from Devrimci Karargah²⁷ (Revolutionary Headquarters, an armed organization from the left which emerged in the 2000s and has its roots in the THKP-C tradition).²⁸

Finally, we should not forget cooperation in the legal domain. In 1995, Halkın Demokrasi Partisi (HADEP; the People's Democracy Party) entered the national election in coalition with other leftist parties under the name of Emek, Barış ve Özgürlük Bloku (the Labour, Peace and Freedom Block). The Block would have had 34 members in parliament, had the Turkish election system not included its threshold of 10 per cent (of the national vote). In the national elections of 2002, a collaboration was entered into between Demokratik Halk Partisi (DEHAP; the Democratic People's Party, successor to HADEP), Emek Partisi (EMEP; the Labour Party) and Sosyalist Demokrasi Partisi (SDP; the Socialist Democracy Party). This would have secured 53 MPs, but again the 10 per cent threshold left the Kurdish-Leftist coalition with no representation in parliament. In local elections, legal parties of the left in Turkey (i.e. those which were not closed down by the state) and the party close to the PKK party complex collaborated, and managed to get a strong position in the Kurdistan region, and some small pockets in Turkey outside this area. Finally, the breakthrough for Kurdish-leftist representation at national level came in the July 2007 parliamentary elections, when the alleged legal wing of the PKK, Demokratik Toplum Partisi (DTP; the Democratic Society Party, successor to DEHAP), in merger with Demokratik Toplum Hareketi (DTH; Democratic Society Movement), collaborated with legal leftist and revolutionary parties in Turkey, EMEP, SDP, ÖDP and some independents. Success was achieved by candidates running as independents, and thereby circumventing the threshold.

Presenting themselves as '*Bin Umut Adayları*' (the Thousand Hope Candidates), 22 of these 'independents' were elected to parliament, with all but one then going on to form a DTP faction in parliament.²⁹

Final remarks

In this contribution, the period 1973–7 has been depicted as one of ideological group formation, with the period 1977–9 portrayed as the stage of party construction. The period 1979–84 may be characterized as the time when the guerilla warfare was prepared and organized. Initial preparations to enter into armed struggle in northern Kurdistan / the south-east of Turkey in 1979–1980 were interrupted by the military coup in, followed by a retreat of PKK militants south, to southern Kurdistan (Syria) and Lebanon. The period September 1982–August 1984 was marked by preparations to organize a prolonged people's war and to return. Guerilla units were mainly concerned with developing a network of support and reconnaissance activities. 15 August 1984 marks both the end of these preparations and the beginning of a prolonged people's war.

The main argument of this chapter is that in the process of party formation and building, the PKK was clearly influenced by the revolutionary left in Turkey. Not only did its personnel emerge from the revolutionary left in Turkey (and Ankara in particular), but it was also crucially informed by the discourse of the revolutionary left in Turkey, which played a central role in the process of group formation. The militants considered themselves Marxists engaged in making a revolution with Kurdistan as their focal area. Linkages with 'traditional' Kurdish parties did not exist and for this reason it is not surprising that these parties were not familiar with the PKK's process of party formation, and regarded the party as one 'without a history'. Of course, the PKK had a history, but a very different one from the other parties involved with the issue of Kurds and Kurdistan. It took its orientation from the left, and built upon the experiences of the left (in particular, the experiences of THKP-C and THKO with armed struggle).

In the process of party formation and party building, and in the implementation of revolutionary violence, the PKK aspired to collaboration with the revolutionary left in Turkey, although such collaboration never bore fruit. In the legal sphere, however, collaboration between the lawful political party close to the PKK party-complex (DEP, HADEP, DEHAP, DTP) and permitted revolutionary parties has been more successful. The legal party close to the PKK managed to establish long-standing collaboration with leftist parties, and, although this never resulted in crossing the election threshold of 10 per cent, it has managed to win the popular vote in eastern and south-eastern Turkey, securing representation at national level and gaining municipal control in several areas at regional level. All in all, we may conclude that historically the PKK is firmly rooted in the revolutionary left in Turkey, and, in this respect should be considered a political party of Turkey.

Appendix

PKK Congresses 1978–86

Throughout its history, the PKK has held ten congresses, the last one on 21–30 August 2008. In this appendix we include only the first three congresses, because only these are relevant for the period covered in this chapter.

First Congress or Constitutional Congress (foundation of PKK)

26–27 November 1978

Fis (Ziyaret), Liçe district of Diyarbakır province

At the meeting in a village in the northern Liçe district in Diyarbakır, delegates were to discuss the establishment of a political party and its programme. The name of the party was proposed later, in April 1979, at the meeting of the Central Committee.

Some 24 people were called to the meeting, but only 22 were able to participate.¹ It was not a random gathering. Those who attended represented a particular region, and were to be considered delegates (for example, Cemil Bayık, Sakine Cansız and Huseyin Topgider represented Elazığ whereas Mehmet Şener and Ferzende Tağaç represented Batman; etc.).²

At the meeting several decisions were made, among others to become a party (although the party was not yet given a name). It was decided that the delegates at the meeting and the revolutionary martyrs were the party's first members. A document named 'the Way of the Revolution in Kurdistan' was accepted as the party programme. Abdullah Öcalan was elected General Secretary, and Mehmet Karasunğur and Şahin Donmez as members of the Central Execution Committee. After Karasunğur resigned, Cemil Bayık replaced him. In 1979, the number of members of the Central Committee increased to seven, including Öcalan, Bayık, Donmez, Mehmet Karasunğur, Mehmet Hayri Durmuş, Mazlum Doğan and Baki Karer. Mehmet Karasunğur, who led the armed struggle of the party in Siverek-Hilvan, was elected as responsible for the party's military affairs. However, within a year positions were reallocated because of arrests.

Second Congress

20–25 August 1982

Palestinian Camp on the Jordan–Syria border

In this particular congress the PKK determined its guerilla strategy. Three phases in guerilla warfare were distinguished: strategic defence, strategic balance and strategic offence. Small units returned to Kurdistan for making armed propaganda. It was decided to start with guerilla actions – the second phase of strategic defence

– in the autumn of 1983. However, preparation took longer than expected and this phase actually started on 15 August 1984 with the attack on the towns Semdinli and Erüh. Together with this attack the establishment of the Hêzên Rizgarîya Kurdistan (HRK; Kurdistan Liberation Units) was announced (Çelik 2000).

The congress was overshadowed by the Çetin Güngör incident. Güngör criticized the lack of internal democracy, and did not back off when he had left. In public meetings he agitated against the dogmatism and lack of democracy within the party. On one of these meetings in Sweden in 1985 Çetin Güngör (Semir) was killed by a PKK militant. Baki Karer left the PKK in 1984, and became one of its most bitter critics.

Third Congress

25–30 October, 1986

Helve Camp (Mahsum Korkmaz Academy), Beka'a Valley, Lebanon³

In this particular congress it was decided to advance the armed struggle (from guerilla actions to strategic balance), the size of the guerilla units was increased and the size of the area these units were deployed increased. The HRK was dissolved and the Arteşa Rizgarîya Gele Kurdistan (ARGK; Kurdistan People's Liberation Army) was founded. At this congress a so-called military draft law was approved (which obliges every family to send someone to the guerilla forces: the implementation of this decision was heavily criticized at the Fourth Congress). For political and military instruction the Mahsum Korkmaz Academy was established, which became the new name of the Helve Camp.

The Enîya Rizgarîya Netewa Kurdistan (ERNK; Kurdistan National Liberation Front) was founded, a popular front which had been viable mainly in Europe. The ERNK was officially recognized by the Central Committee of the PKK.

Foundation of HPP (internal intelligence) and TEVSAL (external intelligence).⁴

Foundation of the Kürdistan Yurtsever Kadınlar Birliği (KYKB; Union of Patriotic Women in Kurdistan) for the organization of women.

Cemil Bayık, one of the founders of the PKK, however qualifies this congress as the congress at which internal accounts were settled. Öcalan had severely criticized those responsible for the guerilla forces during 1984–6, in particular Duran Kalkan and Selahattin Çelik. According to Öcalan they missed many opportunities to enlarge the guerilla force and were too dependent on the KDP in terms of logistics. In addition there was harsh 'self-criticism' in the congress in the form of personality analyses with the motto '*What hereby is analysed is not the person but the society and not the moment but the history*'. ('Burada çözümlenen kişi değil toplum, an değil tarihtir'). The personality analysis was directed by Öcalan and surged through the whole organization. In general terms, it can be said that in this congress the PKK was transformed from a Leninist organization into one in which Öcalan gained special status. After the congress, Öcalan was referred to as the party leadership (*Önderlik*).

Appendix Notes

- 1 The persons who participated in the congress were:
 - 1 Abdullah Öcalan (Prisoner at the İmralı island in Turkey)
 - 2 Cemil Bayık (Active in the PKK, holding a leading position)
 - 3 Şahin Dönmez (after arrested, cooperates with the police and betrays his former comrades. Found a Kemalist organization in prison, killed by the PKK in Istanbul in 1990)
 - 4 M. Hayri Durmuş (died in a hunger strike in Diyarbakır prison in September 1982)
 - 5 Mehmet Turan (killed in 1979 in Mardin by the PKK on the accusation of being a Turkish agent)
 - 6 Mehmet Cahit Şener (founder of PKK-Vejin, killed by the PKK in Qamislo on November 1, 1991)
 - 7 Ferzende Tağaç (left the PKK and active politics)
 - 8 A. Haydar Kaytan (Active in the PKK, holding a leading position)
 - 9 Mazlum Doğan (member of the central committee of the PKK, committed suicide at 21 March 1982 as a protest against the torture and inhuman treatment he and the other political prisoners were submitted to)
 - 10 Sakine Polat /Cansız (Active in the PKK, holding a leading position)
 - 11 Hüseyin Topgider (left the PKK in 2000, lives in Germany)
 - 12 Ali Gündüz (works with the Turkish security forces)
 - 13 Kesire Öcalan/Yıldırım (left the PKK, alive)
 - 14 Duran Kalkan (Active in the PKK, holding a leading position)
 - 15 Ali Çetiner (lives in Germany)
 - 16 Faruk Özdemir (Prisoner, released and left active politics)
 - 17 Abbas Göktaş, (Unknown)
 - 18 Abdullah Kumral (killed by Israeli troops when they invaded Lebanon in 1982)
 - 19 Baki Karer (fled from the PKK in 1984, lives in Sweden)
 - 20 Result Altınok (killed in 1984 by PKK)
 - 21 Suphi Karakuş (was killed in 1985 by PKK)
 - 22 Seyfettin Zogurlu (killed in combat in 1986)

Alaattin Zogurlu (killed by the police in Diyarbakır in 1987), younger brother of Seyfettin, was responsible for security.

Mehmet Karasungur (killed in 1983 by the PUK) and Kemal Pir (died in prison in a hunger strike in 1982) were called to the congress, but were not able to participate. Mehmet Karasungur at that time was in the Hilvan-Siverek region, where the organization was engaged in an armed resistance against tribes supporting the state. Karasungur was coordinating the armed struggle in that region. Kemal Pir had been arrested and was in prison.
- 2 The congress in the Fis village in the Lice district of Diyarbakır province was hosted by the family of İsmet Zogurlu. Of his sons at the meeting, Seyfettin was among the delegates and Alaattin was responsible for security. Seyfettin and Alaattin Zogurlu left Turkey after the coup and received military training in Lebanon. Seyfettin Zogurlu was taken prisoner by the Israel Defence Forces while resisting the Israeli invasion in 1982 in Lebanon. After his release, he returned to the PKK and was active in a unit which is operational along the border between Iraq and Turkey. In 1986 he was killed in a clash with Turkish troops in Uludere. His older brother Alaattin was killed on 11 June 1987 in Diyarbakır (Melikahmet quarter), together with another militant, when the apartment they were staying in was surrounded and attacked by the police.
- 3 At the time of his death, Mahsum Korkmaz was the highest commander of the HRK. Together with Abdullah Ekinci he had been responsible for the daring attack on Eruh and Şemdinli in 1984, which announced the beginning of the guerilla war against the

Turkish state. Mahsum Korkmaz was killed in 1986 in Şirnak in an ambush by Turkish armed forces.

- 4 It is disputed whether these two institutions have been really founded. Former members of the PKK claim that internal intelligence is mainly organized in the form of written self-critique and critique, which PKK members are obliged to write and which directly go to Abdullah Öcalan. External intelligence allegedly also runs through Öcalan, who sometimes simply used the phone for getting information.

Notes

- 1 See <http://www.diyarbakirzindani.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=65&Itemid=39>.
- 2 Kurdistan refers to a geographical region in the Middle East covering large parts of south-east Turkey, northern Syria, northern Iraq and north-western Iran (the territory regarded as the homeland of the Kurds and claimed politically for a pan-Kurdish nation-state).
- 3 For a treatment of the war between the PKK and the Turkish Armed Forces, see Jongerden 2007.
- 4 During the 1920s and 1930s, the newly established Republic of Turkey imposed its authority over the Kurds and annexed Kurdistan, and, at the time of the emergence of the PKK, the south-east of Turkey, or the northern parts of Kurdistan, had been ruled under martial law and emergency regulations since 1927. Until 1952, the area, or more specifically Bitlis, Diyarbakır, Elazığ, Hakkari, Mardin, Siirt, Urfa and Van, was administered by an Inspector General, an office established in 1927 to bring order and discipline. In 1935, two further Inspector Generals were appointed to administer 'Kurdish' areas, one for the 'Murat and Munzur' region, covering Dersim (Tunceli), and the other for the northern part of the South-east, covering Ağrı, Çoruh, Erzincan, Erzurum, Gümüşhane, Kars, and Trabzon (the two other Inspector Generals – of five in total – administered Thrace in the north-west and Antakya in the south). The South-east was closed to foreigners until 1965, and the region ruled under state of emergency from 1980 to 2002 (Jongerden 2007). The Turkish state refused to accommodate Kurdish aspirations or enter into political discussions on the matter. In the Republic, 'citizenship' was considered to be equivalent to 'Turkishness', and in practice Kurds were required to qualify themselves thus, as cultural/ethnic Turks (Barkey and Fuller 1998: 10).
- 5 For a discussion, see Chapter 8, this volume, on the PKK in the 2000s (Akkaya and Jongerden).
- 6 On 30 July 1979 the PKK made an attempt to kill Mehmet Celal Bucak, a high-ranking member of the conservative Justice Party and an exploitive landlord, who owned thousands of hectares of land with more than 20 villages including the town and district of Siverek in the south-eastern province of Urfa (Jongerden 2007: 55). Bucak was not only targeted for what he represented – an exploitative landlord class and a repressive state – but also for what he did. As the co-founder of a society for the struggle against communism, Mehmet Celal Bucak had announced that he would not allow the left to gain support in Siverek and boasted he already had drawn up a black list of leftists to be killed (Büyükkaya 2008: 39, 100). His position as a bad landlord and ally of the state, and his reputation as an anti-leftist roughneck made him an ideal target for the PKK. The assassination failed, however. Mehmet Celal Bucak was wounded, though his son of eight was killed, while the PKK lost one of its prominent members in the Siverek-Hilvan region, Salih Kandal.
- 7 There are several books in which PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan, together with others, looks back on the seventies, the period in which the organization was formed. Such discussions of PKK history and the political situation in the 1970s were undertaken largely by leaders of the revolutionary left. See, among others, Sayın 1997 and Öcalan and Belli 1999.

- 8 Not only the THKP-C and THKO, but also the historical Türkiye İşçi ve Köylü Kurtuluş Ordusu, TİKKO (the Workers and Peasants Liberation Army of Turkey) led by İbrahim Kaypakkaya.
- 9 In the official records that had to be handed to the police the names of board members were different.
- 10 Among them, Rıza Altun (who still is a high-ranking PKK member, and has been member of the PKK Central Committee and Chairmanship Council). Others are Şahin Kılavuz, İbrahim Bilgin (of Turkish origin), Doğan Kılçıkaya (of Turkish origin), and Haydar Altun, who were killed in different clashes in Kurdistan after 1982.
- 11 See <http://www.diyarbakirzindani.com/index.php?Itemid=39&id=65&option=com_content&task=view>.
- 12 Mazlum Doğan was born in 1955 in Teman, a village in the Karakoçan district of Elazığ province. Doğan studied to be a teacher at Eskişehir and Balıkesir before starting a course in economics at Hacettepe University in Ankara in 1974. He committed suicide by hanging on the evening of the Kurdish New Year, 21 March 1982. In PKK historiography, it is said that before killing himself, he lit three matches (symbolizing the fire of Newroz, a major ritual celebration for Kurds, public observance of which was banned). His act of suicide is celebrated as an act of resistance against the torture he and others detainees were submitted to in Diyarbakir prison, regarded as a symbol not to surrender to the daily tyranny or conform to humiliating prison regime (PKK prisoners refused to wear prison uniforms, sing the national hymn or repeat the oath that one is 'proud to be a Turk').
- 13 The raid took place after a clash with students.
- 14 In their court defense, Mazlum Doğan, Kemal Pir, Hayri Durmuş reject both the names 'Apocu' and 'UKO'. Available online at <http://www.diyarbakirzindani.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=category§ionid=6&id=16&Itemid=39> (accessed 20 August 2008).
- 15 The usage of names here is obviously politically prejudicial (and cannot be otherwise). The leaning of this text is henceforth toward the Kurdish bias, employing the perspective of its subject, the PKK. More profoundly, however, any reference to ethnicity in specifying territory implicitly assumes a nationalist discourse, with all that might imply. See Jongerden (2007: 29–30) for a brief discussion.
- 16 Among them were Cuma Tak, Mehmet Sevgat, Şeymus Yiğit, Veysi Badem and Seyfettin Zogurlu, who took part in the armed struggle and were killed in different clashes, and Nizamettin Tas, a long-time member of the PKK Central Committee and Chairmanship Council who separated from the PKK and established a new political party, Partiya Welatparez'e Demokratik (PWD; Patriotic Democratic Party).
- 17 The group had a central emphasis on the Kurdish question, but this was not in the form of nationalist framework. Cemil Bayık, one of the founders of the PKK explained this as follows: 'We gained national understanding through socialism; not vice versa. First we became familiar with socialism, and through this we comprehended the national question' (Akkaya 2005: Part 3).
- 18 The meeting took place at the Chamber of Architects head office, at Konur Sokak, Kızılay, in the centre of Ankara. As the translation of its name perhaps suggests (with 'union' for 'birliği' rather than, say, 'association') this professional body is also actively political, with a leftist leaning (e.g. see its current declaration of 'Fundamentals', at <http://www.tmmob.org.tr/images/eng.htm>).
- 19 There is also a dissident reading of the killing of Haki Karer. According to Baki Karer, the brother of Haki, Haki was killed after a conflict with Öcalan. The reason for this political murder, Baki Karer argues, is Abdullah Öcalan's close relations with a person known under the code name of Pilot and suspected of being an intelligence agent. Others within the party were agitated by the relationship between Öcalan and Pilot, and Baki Karer, as member of the political centre of the movement, allegedly raised the issue in a personal meeting with Öcalan, at which Haki is said to have announced an investigation into the

- issue. It was on the following day that Haki was killed. Accordingly, the death of Haki was (and is) symbolic of the way Öcalan led (leads) the party (Karer 1999). However, this account and interpretation of the events surrounding the death of his brother was only made by Baki Karer after he had left the party in 1984, seven years after the killing.
- 20 15 August was planned not to be a twin but a triple attack. The third town was Çatak in the province of Van, but the commander of the unit cancelled the operation. The decision to start the armed struggle against the state was already taken at the second congress of the PKK in 1982. Tactical preparations had taken much time. Eventually, on 22 July 1984 Abbas (Duran Kalkan), Fuat (Ali Haydar Kaytan), Fatma (Kesire Yıldırım), Ebubekir (Halil Ataç), Cuma (Cemil Bayık) and Selim (Selahattin Çelik) unanimously gave the green light to the military operation in which the two towns were attacked (Çelik 2000: 73).
- 21 The name Hêzen Rizgarîye Kurdistan (Kurdistan Liberation Units) was used. This name resembles the name given by General Giap to his army in Vietnam, the Vietnam Liberation Units.
- 22 On a PKK-related website, it was written: '15 Ağustosla patlayan ilk kurşun bu anlamıyla herşeyden önce Kürt köleliğine sıkılan bir kurşundur. (. . .) [S]onra da sömürgeci zorbalığa sıkılmıştır': <<http://www.rojaciwan.com/haber-39286.html>> (accessed 18 August 2008).
- 23 See also Sayın (1997: xx).
- 24 TDP, TKP-ML Hareketi, TKP-Kıvılcım, MLSPB, TIKKO, TKEP, and Ekim.
- 25 With TDP, MLKP, DHP, TKP-ML, DABK, TKP-Kıvılcım and Dev Sol (which had split off from the DHKP-C).
- 26 See <http://www.gomanweb.com/2008_gomanweb/Yazarlar/Tayfun_isci/tayfun_isci21.htm>, and PKK Nereden Nereye (PKK from Where to Where) in the Özgürlük journal, at <<http://www.ozgurluk.org/kitaplik/webarsiv/kurtulus/eskisayilar/H-icin84/pkk.htm>> (accessed 3 October 2008).
- 27 See <<http://www.devrimcikarargah.com>>.
- 28 See <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3UEvvAVk69w>>.
- 29 The exception being an ÖDP member, who went his own way.

References

- Akkaya, A. H. (2005) *Ateşten Tarih*, DVD documentary, Dusseldorf and Brussels: BRD/ROJ.
- Aslan, R. (2006) Kürt Legal Hareketinin Tarihsel Gelişimi. *Bir*. Sayı 5: 8–22.
- Aslan, Y. (2005) *Devrimci Yol. Kavgamız Bitmeyen Sevdamız. Bir Dönem 1980–1985 yılları*, Ankara: Arayış.
- Balı, R. (1993) *Kürt Dosyası*, İstanbul: Cem Yayınevi.
- Barkey, H. and Fuller, G. E. (1998) *Turkey's Kurdish Question*, Boston: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Bozarslan, H. (2004) *Violence in the Middle East: From Political Struggle to Self-Sacrifice*, Princeton: Marcus Wiener.
- Büyükkaya, N. (2008) *Kaleminden Sayfalar*, İstanbul: Vate Yayınları.
- Çelik, S. (2000) *Ağrı Dağını Taşımak*, Köln: Zambon Verlag.
- Doğan, M. (1994) *Toplu Yazılar*, Köln: Agri Verlag.
- ERNK (n.d.) 'A Brief History of the Kurdistan Workers Party'. ERNK document.
- Güçlü, I. (2008) Personal communication, 19 June.
- Gündoğan. (2007) *Kawa Savunması ve Kürdlerde Siyasi Savunma Geleneği*, İstanbul: Vate Yayınları.
- Jongerden, J. (2007) *The Settlement Issue in Turkey and the Kurds: An Analysis of Spatial Policies, Modernity and War*, Leiden & Boston: Brill Academic.

- Karer, B. (1999) *PKK Nedir, Ne Değildir*, Stockholm [publisher unknown].
- Kürdistan Devrimcileri. 1979. Maraş Katliamı üzerine bir Değerlendirme. *Serxwebûn* Special Issue 2.
- Lipovsky, I. P. (1992) *The Socialist Movement in Turkey 1860–1980*, Leiden, New York, Köln: Brill Academic
- Öcalan, A. (1994) *Kurdistan'da Halk Kahramanlığı*. Köln: Weşanên Serwebûn.
- (1999) *Declaration on the Democratic Solution of the Kurdish Question*, London: Mesopotamian Publishers.
- and Belli, M. (1999) *Büyük dönüşüm*, İstanbul: Alternatif Yayınları.
- Özcan, A. K. (2006) *Turkey's Kurds: A Theoretical Analysis of the PKK and Abdullah Öcalan*, Oxon: Routledge.
- Özdağ, Ü. (2003) *The PKK and Low Intensity Conflict in Turkey*, Ankara: Frank Cass.
- PKK (n.d.) *1976–1984 PKK Direniş Şehitleri Albümü*, n.p.
- (1995) *PKK 5. Kongre Kararları*, Köln: Weşanên Serwebûn.
- (2005) *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan PKK Yeniden İnşa Kongre Belgeleri*, İstanbul: Çetin Yayınları.
- Sartre, J.-P. 1963 [1961]. 'Preface', in: Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, London: MacGibbon and Key
- Sayın, M. (1997) *Erkeği Öldürmek. Abdullah Öcalan ne diyor?*, Basel and Köln: Toprak Yayınevi.
- Sick, G. (1995) 'Iran: The Adolescent Revolution', *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 49, No. 1: 145–66.
- Yüce, M. C. (1999) *Doğu'da Yükselen Güneş, Cilt I*. İstanbul: Zelal Yayınevi.
- Zizek, S. (2007) 'Robespierre or the 'Divine Violence' of Terror'. Available online at <<http://www.lacan.com/zizrobes.htm>> (accessed 12 August 2008).

Website resources used

- <<http://emkurdin.awardspace.com>>
- <<http://www.diyarbakirzindani.com>>
- <<http://www.gomanweb.com>>
- <<http://www.kizilbayrak.net>>
- <<http://www.ozgurtutsak.com>>
- <<http://www.rojaciwan.com>>
- <<http://www.tbmm.gov.tr>>
- <<http://www.devrimcikarargah.com>>
- <<http://www.youtube.com>>

PKK web sources used

- <<http://www.hpg-online.net>>
- <<http://www.gerila.tv>>
- <<http://www.kongra-gel.org>>
- <<http://www.pajk-online.com>>
- <<http://www.pkk-info.com>>

8 The Conti

Ahmet
and Jo

Introduction

The Kurdistan W
secular political i
(with its view of
tion, both of Ku
determination th
war, and its lack
state but also ag
collaborators) h
Kutschera 1994;
Öcalan, the focus
PKK's political c
period throw off
(Özcan 2006)? O
an organization l
2002)?² In this cc
in the period folk
itself through a s
PKK has experie
tion. And we ar
Kurdistan nor its
trying to accompl
into marginality,
and an important

In this chapter
perspective. Data
texts and the 'pr
reports and form
we discuss the de
which Abdullah
20 years and was
part, we take a c
Öcalan. We cons