

Trial by Silence
At war with the State

The Huseyin Baybasin Story

★

Mahmut Baksi
Translated by Sheri Laizer

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Author

Mahmut Baksi

Translated by

Sheri Laizer

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Prologue

By Mahmut Baksi

I don't remember how long it took us to reach Munich. On the back of a very tiring road journey the first thing I wanted to do was to find a place at the station near all those skyscrapers and drink some of that special soup we always drank back home. My friends who were with me must have had much the same notion as they accepted my suggestion without a murmur. When we reached the station, before enjoying the soup, I wanted to glance through a few of the newspapers and find out what had been happening as I'd got into the habit of doing over the last thirty or so years. As I approached the news stand with a few papers in Turkish I scanned the first pages of one of those in my hands. Almost all the newspapers carried the same headlines. There was a story everybody knew about the sinking of a boat out in the Mediterranean called the *Kismetin-1*. The hero of this adventure was a Kurdish businessman named Huseyin Baybasin. I'd heard his name on a number of occasions but hadn't really given much thought to what it was really all about. But this time it was different because the journey upon which we'd set out was to terminate in Istanbul, a place I'd last seen twenty-three years ago. Baybasin was also living in Istanbul and according to the headlines he was being hunted high and low. What's more, a short time after the *Kismetin-1* affair, a boat named the *Lucky-S* said to have been carrying several tons of heroin was seized and they were claiming that this boat also belonged to Huseyin Baybasin.

While enjoying my soup on the one hand, I carried on reading the papers and tried to extract all the details about this story from them. A little while after leaving the cafe I realised I'd left the papers behind because I was so preoccupied with events. Over a thirty year career I'd come across similar things a number of times in my lifetime. The difference this time was that only one person's name was being bandied about in connection with a big matter like this. After the mighty State had brought all its strength to bear, just a single name had been thrown up into the open. But the heroic aspect to the story was in no way immediately discernible. Throughout the journey I wrestled with these same thoughts. I can't remember the actual date that we set out but it was a day in December 1992. The weather was very cold and at various stretches along the road the rain and snow greeted us like a long lost friend.

After twenty three long years of missing the place I wanted to be able to spend New Year's Eve in Istanbul. My preference was for Istanbul because I was banned from visiting my birthplace in Kozluk of which Diyarbakir (*Amed* in Kurdish) is the capital. Good God, the moment I were to set foot there they'd carve me up like some sacrificial lamb! Knowing this all too well, I preferred to go to Istanbul! Actually it wasn't even really a case of this being a preference, it was a necessity which I hadn't even fully confessed to myself. In some sense Istanbul could now be considered a Kurdish city: millions of my people lived in this beautiful metropolis, some of them wealthy, others top level bureaucrats. But the majority of my fellows from home, yes, the majority - and God knows just why - struggled for survival in the back streets of Beyoglu, in shanties, under plastic shelters, and even under the bridges.

Here you have it then: these were the ones I was going to go and see. I longed to see them so much that I can hardly say just how I felt. I can't begin to tell you how much I missed them, how moved I was by it all and how passionately I felt. The

conditions in which they were living in Istanbul meant it was not like they were really living in Istanbul at all. It was more as if they were living in Amed, in Batman or in any other city or town in our own country.

Kurdish people had gathered and settled in specific quarters. Neither was Istanbul aware of them nor were they aware of Istanbul. They had not yet become cut off from their hopes, their longings and their ideas and what they enjoyed was manifestly clear... Two peoples, strangers to one another - one Kurdish, the other Turkish lived here as if side by side but apart from certain working circles there was really no point of contact between them.

In Stockholm where I'd been living for years as an exile it was like this too. Even the places where the locals shopped were different from where the exiles did their shopping. There was very little interaction between the Swedes and those who'd arrived to make their home there later. Even in Stockholm the foreigners kept to the suburbs they'd developed themselves and the Swedes to theirs. Wherever you find a person uprooted from his country, exile has the same appearance everywhere.

The Turks were living in Istanbul; our people as if still in their own land. Only these people were not strangers to one other; their bakeries were different, their butcher-shops, barbers, restaurants, even the mosques... people who attend the mosque like to follow their own sect faithfully and have their own *Imam*. The mosque at Fatih and the Blue Mosque were of little interest to our people because there an *Imam* of a different sect read out the prayers in a language different from their own. In Istanbul, our people had built the mosques they themselves needed and listened to their services in their own language.

Yes, indeed, after twenty-three years I was going to spend New Year in Istanbul. I felt all kinds of dark and troubled thoughts within me. I kept asking myself if I was doing the right thing. I was wondering whether a person surrendered himself to his

enemy for the sake of a single New Year's Eve. But I was not doing this to surrender, I was doing it to be reunited with my people. I was not going to spend a few pleasant days in Turkey by buying my way out of military service. I just wanted to be a part of whatever it was that was happening, or would happen to my people. I wanted to share the oppression they suffered every day, the torture, the beatings, the suffering, and if they were suddenly to rise up in action, I wanted to do as they did. For the past thirty years I'd striven so that one day they could be free; I'd stood up and represented my country's cause. In the old days under Kenan Evren and the military *junta* there'd been no possibility of going there. But now, even if only just a little, my handcuffs had been loosened and the chains around my wrists unfastened and I wanted to make the most of this possibility so long as it lasted. Because of this, I'd set out on the road in the middle of winter and with every possibility clearly before my eyes I was heading to Istanbul to spend a week in the New Year.

A friend of mine had an office in Beyoglu in the centre of Istanbul. We found the address and made our way straight there. It was afternoon and Istanbul was streaming with rain as if in a single unbroken bout of weeping. My friend was delighted to see us but I'd be lying if I said I didn't sense his undercurrent of apprehension on our coming face to face. He was right to feel this way from where he was standing because in the eyes of the State I was a person who could lose his head at any moment. I could be abducted at any time only to be found under a bridge where they'd dumped me three days later, my head carved from my neck. My friend was not afraid for himself, he was afraid for me. It was me he was nervous for and he didn't my work for my people to be cut short before it was done.

My friend said, 'Dear brother! I haven't booked a hotel for you yet because I know what you're like! I didn't want to do anything without speaking with you first. What hotel do you

want to stay in?'

Even though I had the money and the credit cards on me I wouldn't have wanted to stay in one of the Five Star hotels. I wanted to stay in a Kurdish-owned hotel and I'd already chosen that hotel on account of the feelings I'd had reading those Turkish newspapers at Munich Station. On top of this I'd been preoccupied throughout the journey and then I'd heard a name in the news I remembered as not having been foreign to me. The hero of the hour had been Huseyin Baybasin whose family I knew well and who had still been a child when I'd left the country. Yes, I knew the family closely. In the 'Sixties, this had been one of the few families amongst whom the words "Kurd and Kurdistan" would be currently spoken. Even back in those days Huseyin's family had supported the burgeoning Kurdish organisations just springing to life both financially and spiritually and because of this all kinds of things had happened to them. They suffered deeply; members of the family were imprisoned; lives were given, but they never took a step back. They pursued their own business and built up a fortune but they kept faith with the Kurdish cause at the same time and never mixed the two things.

Accordingly, the next words I uttered took my friend quite by surprise but also aroused his excitement. "Let's go straight to Huseyin Baybasin's hotel in Aksaray and take a room there. People who want to meet me, or to stay overnight and talk, can come to this hotel and stay or just meet me there as they choose." And so saying I named my chosen place.

All the European police and the CIA were searching for Huseyin and I wanted to demonstrate to all of them that for my part I was standing right beside him. The Turkish government and all its spooks were hard on Huseyin's heels. As a lesson to others, if they caught him the State would cut off his head and stick it on a bayonet in the centre of Lice's market. This would serve as a lesson to all businessmen helping the Kurds asking if

still, after this, they would be prepared to keep on battling for the liberation of their country and the defence of its interests? Would they be bold enough to risk it? This was the message the government wished to send out. But it was as if Huseyin Baybasin had become a phantom. They just couldn't catch him. I hoped that sooner or later Huseyin might establish contact with me when he found out I was staying in his hotel. But this was not to be. On the contrary, because of the people I was rubbing shoulders with during this period I came to the attention of the police. As soon as I'd leave the hotel with my friends our photographs would be taken and we'd be followed. Afterwards we'd be asked to produce our identity cards and every time we stepped outside thereafter this same procedure would be followed.

From then on when such situations arose I'd flash my international press card at them and cry, "I'm a journalist! I told you this yesterday, and I told you the same thing the day I arrived. There must be something very important going on here and you must be looking for someone in particular. This person's boat sank, the boat was seized and then he went missing. I want to meet this Kurdish businessman, I want to chat with him and I want to make the situation known to the Swedish people. That's my aim. Just as you try to do your job so I'm trying to do fulfil as a journalist living as a part of Swedish society. Naturally, my greatest wish is to be able carry out my duties and obligations!"

Of course, these fellows wouldn't swallow this sort of thing. But they couldn't find any way in either. This same comedy went on day in and day out every evening for exactly 45 days. Neither did they tire of me, nor did I become frightened of them. Neither did they manage to catch Huseyin Baybasin, nor did I manage to get to speak with him.

A number of my friends, even close friends including former ministers, MP's, top bureaucrats and business men were afraid

to even say hello to me and kept their distance from me. They all withdrew to their corners just waiting to read the news of my death in papers like *Hurriyet* and *Milliyet*. In their view, I was either very brave or very foolish. Was it a childish prank to be playing cat and mouse with the State so openly and yet making so little of it? They probably imagined I'd been living abroad so long that I hadn't grasped the enormity of the danger I was in. As if I didn't know how tyrannical the State was or how little it cared; how it had slaughtered any Kurd who'd embarked on the road to resistance and just dumped their bodies off the side of the road. How vile and underhand it was!

I knew people were thinking this because from time to time reports would come from them as if to say that if my own position wasn't enough to endanger me on top of it I went and stayed in Huseyin Baybasin's hotel as if to give an open invitation to death. "Go and tell him to leave that hotel as soon as possible and slip back quietly to Sweden!"

The people saying this were my one-time friends to whom I'd held out a hand in times of trouble and difficulty. Such an attitude as this however only served to make Istanbul's polluted, foggy, murky air even more foggy and polluted. In order to show that I was standing by my people, I'd set the dangers squarely in my sights but they were trying to frighten me into running away. When I saw the depths to which people had fallen who'd once considered themselves "revolutionaries" I sighed understanding that a person who called himself an "intellectual" was just living like a guru and nothing else.

In Istanbul a large percentage of the daylight hours were spent going around the areas so densely settled by those who'd left Kurdistan. Here I was able to get the feel of my homeland where I was unable to go and to see at first hand the kind of problems the Kurdish people suffered in Istanbul. In Fatih district in particular there was a quarter which had come to be known as 'Siirt Quarter' and here it felt exactly as if one was really

living in Siirt in Kurdistan. In this same quarter I'd go meet people, drink tea in their tea-houses, chat and play games of *tavla* (backgammon). The one language being spoken was Kurdish, the one music we listened to was Kurdish. The weddings, the places of entertainment, the cassettes, the chants, everything but everything was Kurdish.

Even those little casino-style places and the spots to which the local people went in their droves and where the new, young up and coming Kurdish performers were playing Kurdish music became utterly memorable for me. In Sweden where I was living, Kurdish language and Kurdish music were both free and open and a number of Kurdish singers lived there, but their music didn't have the same raw flavour that this did. The reason was perfectly obvious. Just as the late Yilmaz Guney, (the famous Kurdish actor and film-director) had said, "There's the *kuru fasulye* (stewed dried beans) they make in Paris, and there's the *fasulye* they make in Diyarbakir. This put the finger on the spot. These young artists were living here in this contradictory city with their finger on the very pulse of life. They were experiencing the war going on in their country and at the same time forging a new life from it. Naturally, all of this was reflected in the art they were producing and the music which was emerging was both refined and of a high quality. In the entertainment places where this music was being played, the Kurdish families would come along with their children and in doing so help prevent their children from becoming completely assimilated. I was done consciously.

As I wandered about and spoke with people in these same quarters I saw that the subject which had caught my attention that day at Munich Station was also very much on their agenda. In their eyes, Huseyin had given Turkey a good shaking and he seemed like some Kurdish hero of a modern-day saga. This business had refreshed their self confidence. In their eyes, a government which could not cope with Baybasin could

certainly not cope with them. Let it suffice for them to join in a spirit of unity and organise amongst themselves. It wasn't so much that the Turkish State was strong, it was we who were weak and they could recognise the difference. Just look at how the new Kurdish bourgeoisie was springing up in Istanbul, standing up for the national cause and employing only those alongside them who were Kurdish. This had become a source of pride as of hope.

The Kurds whom I'd left 23 years ago had come a long way. Whether at a political level, an economic level or from the point of their knowledge and awareness there'd been a real advance. For me this was a source of inspiration and came like a piece of news which portended an honourable future.

Everything I observed affected me so much that it felt as if I'd discovered a new world and I'd let myself become part of it. I wanted to stay here longer and turn the things I'd seen into a documentary. I was overwhelmed to find that my people who'd confronted such an assault and systematic oppression tantamount to genocide, who'd been driven from their homes and forced to abandon their villages had come to places like Istanbul and begun a new fight and had still been able to remain standing on their feet. I wanted all the world to be able to see this as I was seeing this. Everyone should be able to hear how my people's lifestyle had turned into such an honourable struggle.

In the past the Kurds had just cried in silence, had shed their tears amongst themselves and in so doing their voices had never been properly heard. At every time when their voices should most have been heard those who'd taken up their places alongside the sovereign power had never stood up and openly expressed their Kurdishness. Yet on the other hand they'd plagiarised and stolen their own people's history, culture, stories, songs and ballads to become writers themselves. This was what most nagging away at my mind and now enabled me to see that it hadn't really been true that my people had been degraded

as was bandied about. Who was it who'd really been degraded? Was it the Kurdish people whom despite all the attacks and pressures of the State had managed to remain standing on their feet in this jungle of Istanbul, who supported the resistance and stood up for their identity in the face of adversity? Or was it the so-called intellectuals, afraid even to mention their Kurdish origins openly, who served their sovereign masters and who plundered the culture of their own people to be able to enjoy their personal profits?

The Istanbul that these two distinct Kurdish groups inhabited was the self-same Istanbul. On one side there were those who gave testimony to the war raging in the mountains at home, living in the ghettos of Istanbul, and on the other there was the whirlwind of treachery and betrayal... After 23 years away I was witness to both these things when I came to Istanbul.

After 23 years away and now the days spent so intensely in Istanbul, I finally returned to Sweden. I didn't forget Huseyin, nor his hotel, the people I'd got to know there, or the old and new friends amongst whom I'd spent all that time. Nor shall I ever forget the Kurdish traitors so long as I live.

And those Kurdish suburbs! Every time I closed my eyes I saw them in front of me. For a long while afterwards I continued to be immersed in this state of mind and to see those same dreams. Nor did I want to emerge from it anyway.

In the meantime, a year, two years, went by I suppose. During this same period I was forced to contend with an old illness which had reared its unwelcome head again. Illness put me under a great constraint even to the extent of becoming house-bound. I tried to set all my reserves against this cursed illness, but nothing was the same as it had been before. Now I had to go back and forth to hospital. On almost every visit I'd be subjected to extensive examinations and from time to time these would end up taking my whole day. It was during one of these

periods of hospital treatment that Huseyin's telephone call finally came. I'd been waiting for it ever since I'd stayed in that hotel in Aksaray back in December 1992. He was calling from prison.

He told me he'd been arrested in Holland and incarcerated there.

"My dear brother, the Dutch Police arrested me without any reason and the court sent me to prison. If you can, I'll be very pleased if you can send a letter to the Dutch Ministry of Justice about my past, and about my family because you're well known in Europe as a Kurdish journalist," Huseyin was saying down the other end of the phone.

In the hell-hole that was Turkey at that time I'd wanted to be at Huseyin's side when they'd been looking for him but I hadn't managed it. Wouldn't I be there for him now?

I said, "Dear Huseyin, if it's useful I'll write straight away!"

And that's what I did. At once I composed a letter appropriate to the situation and sent it off. Whether it was useful or not I have no way of knowing, but if I'm not mistaken Huseyin was released about six months afterwards.

After Huseyin got out of prison that first time, the statements he made turned Turkey topsy-turvy. He spoke with real courage and backed up everything he said with documents. Through these documents he showed how the General Staff, Suleyman Demirel, Tansu Ciller, Mehmet Agar and certain commanders (whose names I can't recall), directors of MIT (Turkish National Intelligence Organisation), top ranking police officials and a whole number of bureaucrats had been colluding in the drugs trade... According to these documents, it was the State itself which was running the traffick in narcotics. Or how would it have been possible for a hapless child from Lice whose entire world had been confined to Lice to get an international operation like this off the ground? In reaction to Huseyin's revelations the Prosecutor of the Federal Republic of Germany brought a court case against Tansu Ciller. Before Huseyin had even made ten percent of all that he knew public, Turkey had

done everything in its power, including enlisting the support of NATO, to launch a new attack against him. With the collusion of the Dutch government, Turkey ensured that Huseyin would be locked away once again.

That phonecall marked the beginning of what would become a friendship down the years. Perhaps neither Huseyin nor I would have predicted this at the time. The first call was followed by a second, a third, and a fourth until we started to call one another several times most weeks and talk at length. In these calls we discussed various issues and events and exchanged points of view. Huseyin brought up the possibility of my writing up his recollections of his long-term relations with certain circles and asked my thoughts on it. I gave him my humble opinion. I knew that professionally speaking almost any journalist would have given his eye-teeth for such an opportunity.

After Huseyin first got out of prison our phone conversations grew more frequent and longer. Again, we discussed similar things to before. I began to understand that Huseyin was giving serious consideration to writing up his life story but that he was looking for someone he could trust because of the scope of what he had to relate. I guess at the time he couldn't find anyone suitable.

After he was arrested the second time our telephone communication was severed and we could only send word by way of greeting through the channels that remained open. During this time my illness further advanced and finally kept me house-bound to the extent that the hours when I wasn't in hospital were of necessity spent at home. I spent most of my time writing articles and working on my books.

Then word reached me that Huseyin had told some close friends he wanted me to turn his story into a book. It wasn't as if the idea didn't please me, but my illness had progressed so considerably that I couldn't imagine myself taking such a thing on. Despite having told myself this, quite out of the blue a

notification suddenly arrived from the post office to say a packet had arrived. I was mystified. Who would be sending a man like me who was ill and living alone, a packet? Who wanted to do such a thing to me? But still I was curious about this packet. Finally I asked a friend to go and collect it for me.

I'd resolved the difficulty of obtaining it but I wondered who could have sent it and what might be inside? The sort of mail people like myself usually received tended to be newspapers and magazines and these were just sent ordinary letter post and came in through the front door. But as for a packet! A person could become alarmed by the very name of it! Packet! Something shut in and self-contained with a secret object inside...

While I was still running these ideas around in my head, my friend arrived back from the post office carrying a large envelope in his hands...

I tore my way into it and found a thin envelope inside along with hundreds of hand-written pages. I opened the thin envelope first and found a letter addressing me. The signature at the end belonged to Huseyin Baybasin. I smoothed open the page with enthusiasm...

Here I was suddenly confronted by a lengthy discourse written by Huseyin in his own hand. In one sense I was faced with a sense of a *fait accompli* to the extent that I knew myself to be already half-way in. It so threw me off balance that not until that the pain wracking my body had become almost unbearable did I struggle into the kitchen to gulp down some of my medicine.

A little while after I'd begun reading again I realised I'd already started to plan the structure of the book. I knew there'd been no question of any decision having been taken over the writing of the book. With a book like this there can't be a decision: such a book just gets written.

After I'd got my ideas over the book straight I tried to clarify

the portrait I carried in my mind of Huseyin Baybasin whom I'd never met. He was a young and solitary man. Economically strong, he was also strong in his relationships. His ways were unique. It was said he could be hard, even unsparing at times.

He had been born in 1952 and left High School before finishing. When he got to Istanbul in 1972 he started in at the new school of life and began selling black market cigarettes. This was the very school which would lead him to the heart of the international drugs network.

Huseyin didn't try to hide any of this afterwards. He said quite openly that he'd been involved in the drugs trade. Nor did he deny that he'd been involved with the Mafia but he kept that period quite separate from the one he was in today. He would say, "I got caught up in the drugs business, but I wasn't in it alone. I handled the drugs which came through the channel of the Turkish Consulate in England. I was with the Mafia but I was carrying this out with the same Mafia group in which the rulers of Turkey were part."

It was all out in the open. He didn't try to hide his past. On the contrary, he was trying to come to terms with it. Of course the relations he'd put behind him he didn't carry over into the future. He was getting away from all those dirty dealings and once having refused to act as guard for the State as they insisted he do suddenly everything changed overnight. Huseyin summed it up in this way: "While I was carrying on that vile business all those years I was seen as 'good', but the moment I fell out with them, that was when I became a bad man!"

Huseyin reminded me of people I'd known in the past but these people had never actually been alive. They were the black and white heroes in the films in which Yilmaz Guney had acted or which he'd directed and who existed as stereotypes for me. Characters like Halil the crow, Balatli Arif, Cesi, Baba, or the Horse Thief Bannu. Each one of them had unique things about him, but what linked them all was their predisposition to

violence and the way they used this as a weapon against injustice. A great many of these characters were types Yilmaz Guney had come up against in real life and who'd made their mark on him. He was taking these unseen heroes and putting them up on screen as part of the fabric of life so that we could see them more clearly, and essentially, they were people who were living amongst us and who we carried around within ourselves. It was just that Yilmaz Guney could somehow see them more clearly than we could, and as if he had a special lens in his eyes which revealed these people more accurately. All Yilmaz Guney's heroes were alive, or at least, they survived within Yilmaz Guney's own personality.

In a conversation we once had on the set of his film, 'The Wall' he told me, "*We've entered such a period that I've started behaving like my characters. I knife two people at once and I go about the street with a pair of pistols. I've turned into the type of man who gets into brawls and throws punches just like the characters I've brought to life on screen. Everything's all become mixed up together.*"

Huseyin was just like this too, just like a Yilmaz Guney character whom everyone could see but who was not separate, or cut off, from real life...

After I'd got the book's structure clear in my mind I pondered for a long time over the kind of language and style which should be used in it. And then Behcet Canturk sprang to mind. A book had been published about Behcet's life - alas, only after he'd been killed, and that book too had been written by a journalist. From start to finish the language in it was as if Behcet had been telling someone his story whereas in actual fact it had been written on the basis of statements taken from him during interrogation under torture in the Martial Law Command in Diyarbakir. In all probability the writer of the book and Behcet Canturk had never known one another, yet one of them had had to write a book about the other as if Behcet was actually telling him about his life even though he didn't know him at

all. I'm not saying that the book shouldn't have been written, but the manner in which the book came to be written and the way in which the material had reached the writer should have been made clear. That's not what happened – rather, the statements taken when Behcet had been tortured were written up and turned into a book as if Behcet had been saying these things off his own bat.

For this reason I found it the most appropriate to compile my book from Huseyin's hand-written script and to try to tell the story in his own words. I established a chronological sequence of events from his notes and made him the main protagonist of the book as well as its narrator.

I scrutinised hundreds of news items, articles and commentaries about Huseyin Baybasin from the Turkish press and television, European newspapers, magazines and TV programmes. I watched hundreds of news reports and current affairs programmes on TV. Once I'd begun writing the book I wanted to make the most of these elements and documents for the sake of the book. But it wasn't until a good while afterwards that I realised that not one of the news items I'd referred to wouldn't be able to find its way into the reader's hands anyway. For example, when Suleyman Demirel was Prime Minister and Erdal Inonu his deputy, they sent Huseyin a telegram of congratulation at the opening of his factory; in other instances, Huseyin Baybasin would participate in his role as a businessman in Turkish State television programmes and those appearing afterwards would all commend him. All these were events which had happened publicly. Such things aside, the events described in the book and the claims made can all be investigated and proven to be accurate. There is more than just one witness to the events described therein. Indeed a great many of these people are still actively running the country.

Events, dates, places and persons described in the book were not inadequately drawn. But if such revelations may appear at

all limited it is only because a good deal of it had been made public before through various media channels. Accordingly, rather than bogging the reader down I chose to leave the press clippings and official documents out.

So saying here finally, I see it as my duty to begin the book by setting out that first letter which Huseyin Baybasin wrote to me at that time when he sent me his hand-written notes.

Mahmut Baksi

Stockholm, July 1999

Dear Mahmut *Agabey*,¹

While hoping to hear that you're in good health, I want to express my delight in hearing that you're a part of the freedom struggle. Those endowed with knowledge and information like you are must also do as you are now doing. Your display of this knowledge and of what you've learned is the common blood of brothers, the soul of brothers and the life of brothers. There's no price that can be put on such a display, no proportion that can be made from it – it can only be reciprocated. And it will be reciprocated too. To reciprocate is to see that the price is paid. The price to be exacted will be that of an independent and free homeland. If we cannot ensure independence then we will not be able to meet the price already paid by our brothers. When the Turkish State killed my brother I knew I'd be exacting the price for it but I didn't know how. I only know this now. When my brother was killed, he was just 19 years old. Everyone who has given their life for my country is my brother. It is a matter of honour to me and part of my humanity to exact the price for this; it is my duty. We will only be accomplishing our duty when we establish a free and independent country. We've suffered

¹ A respectful form of address, 'Agabey' is used when addressing an elder as a brother.

a great deal, but you've suffered more. Now in this war of ours we're going to get on top of the sufferings and the discomfort. By your meeting *Serok* (the PKK leader) in Rome and addressing our people with Sivan in Germany, through your column in *Ozgur Politika* and through the stand you've taken you can really be said to be "Mahmut *Agabey*". You are also my own Mahmut *Agabey*. Over and above your old illnesses, certain people used to come and go and take advantage of you for their own interests while leaving you in the shadows.

I don't know how much information you have about my situation. The attack against me represented the beginning of the plan to liquidate our national cause. If our friends had responded as necessary we would not find ourselves so out in the open including having to go through the latest international conspiracy we're faced with. We are forced to acknowledge that our knowledge did not enable us to stand up for our ourselves sufficiently. On the other hand, there's not a single shred of evidence against us either. We have proven how the bugged telephone conversations were deliberately pieced together. They're still doing it. Even if the phone conversations were authentic, still this would not be sufficient as legal evidence. There's no other reason for my telling you this than that I think you should be aware of it. I'm not complaining or anything. If it's down to me alone I'll set the State on its head. I want you understand that I don't intend to die until I've seen this through.

They used a Turkish police officer here as an interpreter and it was still accepted officially. They listened in to our telephone calls with the Turkish police and without authorisation. This is sufficient legal ground in itself for me to be released. Extraordinary pressures are being put on me here. It has even been prohibited for me to speak in Kurdish. But because neither my three old child nor my mother speak any other language but Kurdish they're not able to speak by phone with me at all. There are all kinds of similar unethical pressures being imposed

upon me. But I have no choice but to carry on to the bitter end just as in the old saying, 'the dog howls and the caravan marches on.' If we reach our goal (and this is indisputable) no other Kurd will be murdered like my brother was nor will become the helpless victim of attack as I have been.

Since I've been in here I've been sketching and writing. I'd like to see a film made, and for my book and pictures to be exhibited and the proceeds given to one of our own institutions. The film could be made in collaboration with a French or American company. I've now done some seventy pictures both large and small. I'd like to enlist your support and ask your opinion as to how to go about things in this regard. It will be of invaluable support and assistance to me on the one hand, and on the other it should also act as an incentive to many of our people to go about doing similar things. It would be good if you could find the time to help in these ventures if they're to be at all useful and give them your support. I have a few poems too. I don't think they're all that important but I can say that they do express my real feelings.

I regularly read your articles. I don't agree with the view that some of your hard-line articles are emotional. If we aren't tough we can't be taken seriously. In Holland, the Turkish State is going about freely selling its drugs. This I exposed on television and produced the documents to prove it. Holland grew wealthy from the slave trade and from plundering the riches of others. Today however they're helping the Turkish State commit its crimes in exchange for hard cash. It's our right to come out and speak up against this. If only there'd been some other way than to fight. But we have to understand we do have the right to stand up for ourselves even to the extent of arguing back. We also have to know and understand what the laws of these conniving countries are really all about and behave accordingly. It's important to encourage our people to reach such an understanding. "Is there no one who's going to spray the little

larvae about our house with insect killer? Are we just going to wait for them to sting us?" We can't win without a fight. It's death that way, it's death the other.

It's equally necessary to explain our determination to be free to our people in a way they can understand and to steer them accordingly. It would be untrue to say that the people already know it. The difficulty is in working for independence without being intimidated...

I don't want to tire you. A lot of things are incumbent upon you all to be able to show our people the way...

With my warmest respects,

Huseyin Baybasin

14 April 1999

Introduction

In the course of my life, I've had to stay in more than one prison and I've been subjected to some pretty rigorous tests in these places. These were not things perhaps that would constitute indispensable tests for a person's life but they made a considerable impact on me in terms of the need for survival. My imprisonment wasn't confined to Turkey alone: I also served a considerable stretch in England and in Holland.

At the time of writing, I'm being kept in prison in Holland despite there being no formal grounds for my detention. Because of this, I'm very well informed about the prisons in these three countries. Therefore, too, I'm also equally well informed about the prison systems in these three countries and by the kinds of activity that goes on in these prisons, about the legal mechanisms of the State and how they compare with one another.

The place where I was first detained in Holland was called 'Tehi'. It means "*temporary protection unit*" in Dutch. Because these places are unhealthy they are called "temporary" and were set up to house dangerous prisoners. In short until a new unit could be made ready in which to hold "*dangerous*" prisoners, such individuals were detained in this temporary section. However, once the new unit was ready having previously held the "*dangerous*" prisoners there, they continued to use this "temporary" unit to hold "*dangerous*" foreigners like myself.

I can truly say that that these "temporary" prisons are almost

certainly the worst in Holland although they're still a hundred years ahead of Turkish prisons. On the other hand, in comparison with English prisons, the conditions there are a hundred years behind.

Because I'm "dangerous" I stayed in the same category of prison in Turkey, England and Holland. In the prison in which I was kept in England, IRA operatives were detained who'd been engaged in the conflict with the British government. In that particular period (1984-1989) they'd attempted an assassination of the British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, and in a different operation had bombed Harrods department store in which attack policemen had been killed. Again, in the wing on which I was staying, a block, the Israelis who'd abducted the Nigerian petrol minister, the Palestinians who'd organised the attack against the Israeli Consulate, and hardened gangsters like Reggie Kray were being housed. I don't suppose there's any need for me to describe Bayrampasha Prison in Turkey as it's notorious in any case.

I can also say that I learned about humanity in the prisons in England. I came to know what the world was like, I found myself and discovered my true identity. This happened due to conditions in English prisons and because of those who worked there. But by virtue of the mechanism at work in the Dutch prisons and the system there I swear that I was made to loathe both myself and humanity. I soon understood in Holland that it was meaningless to presume any right to being human. From my children's letters being withheld from me; from not being allowed to see my three year old, six and seven year old children on the grounds that an investigation was underway and also having additional pressure applied when told that "*you may not speak in Kurdish with your wife,*" it wasn't hard for me to understand what the underlying aim of it all was. What they wanted was for me to perpetrate some offence or other so they could come up with a real reason for holding me and that accordingly I'd

be put in a 'guilty' position. It was an open provocation. On my part equally, it was necessary to put up some kind of defence in the face of this harassment - but not in the way they expected me to which was to go on the offensive and commit some crime, but in a way which involved collecting my thoughts together and looking for a way to deliver myself and my people from the humiliating stand being taken against us. In such fashion, my determination became all the stronger, "*that the direction I should proceed in was to return home and bring about such an eventuality.*"

What I experienced in the prisons in the Netherlands was that the Dutch State's attempts to punish me and my relatives had no other object than to prevent me from exposing the ugly activities of Turkey and those countries in active collusion with her. In a country like Holland which is reported to accord the utmost value to human rights(!) methods which recall those of Turkish prisons brought home to me the way how the rule of law counted for absolutely nothing at all.

At the end of my first detention (24 December 1996), the Dutch government tried to persuade me to leave their territory by unlawful means. In my failure to comply, it cost me dearly when I did not accept the bargaining. An attack was launched against me within the borders of Holland taking advantage of all the loopholes in the law and imposing no limits to serving the mutual interests of the Dutch and Turkish states.

Following my first detention, having gotten out of prison, I mediated in meetings between themselves and the PKK's Chief of Staff on the wishes of the Turkish Chief of Staff. This initiative was taken with the aim of finding a solution to the Kurdish Question and my role within it was to serve to prepare for my return to Turkey. Moreover, at exactly this moment in time documents had emerged concerning the Dutch and Turkish states collaborating in the profiteering from the sale of the chemical compounds of narcotics. With each passing day I came

across new documents concerning the division of the spoils and the bargaining going on over me by these two countries. In this regard, the Dutch government insisted, "Since you won't leave the country, then don't talk about Turkey," and having begun to threaten me I broke my silence and started to talk about the documents I had in my possession.

It is only those who are opposed to peace who'll suffer the consequences of these documents being exposed. First, the State's mob infiltrated their hitmen into Holland to try to have me killed off. On two occasions when these initiatives had failed, Turkey and Holland collaborated once more seeing to it that I was arrested a second time although there was neither proof, nor even any imputation of an offence having been committed on my part. All kinds of restrictions had been imposed on me the first time, but on this occasion real pressure and the extra condition of isolation was added. During this same period I was constantly provoked with the aim of getting me to commit some offence, and from time to time this harassment came to constitute open provocation. If I could be silenced in such a way, the peace initiative which the PKK had embarked upon with the Turkish Chief of Staff would be brought to a halt and the war-racketeers against whom I'd engaged in so bloody a struggle could continue to colonise my country in Turkey and that part of Medya once the cradle of civilisation and in terms of its natural resources a treasure trove unequalled in the Middle East to their heart's desire.

It was because of this that I wanted to clarify the reasons behind the Turkish State's drive to finish me off which had begun in Turkey and moved on to Holland. As time went by, the attacks against me, towards my family in England, and against everyone who knows me - Turkey aside - that defender of "human rights," Holland, violated every element of the legal system and transformed the law into a monstrous instrument of cruelty.

Civilisation, human rights and democracy in countries like

these merely serve to pay lip-service in the fulfilment of their vested interests and any implementation of rights there is to be relies on the fundamental element of the double-cross. My aim therefore is to share the ugly truth by documenting it for the public and to have the opportunity to explain why I could not condone it. It is my firm desire that our people should know that I'm not a legal detainee, have never been, and never will be.

Behind these assaults against me lies the fundamental aim of silencing me, because for years I've worked to prove how it is the gangsters who rule Turkey and how, in a real sense, I want to see the rule of law implemented and a government created which is really in control in Turkey and not the gangs. It is with this aim that I am talking now and that I'm investing all my means within my power in this endeavour. The things I mention in this book are things I've already made public in the past to various media organisations.

But in reminding the reader one more time about what I've gone through I also want to show how a country like Holland, which is seen as a model of civilisation, has detained and imprisoned me under conditions of isolation without any lawful justification, for the express purpose of keeping me from this struggle. My groundless detention in Holland and what I've had to endure in these prisons are the greatest proof of all of the workings of the Mafia State in Turkey and this same Mafia's links to European interests.

Or to put it another way, in short, it concerns the double-dealing ways of this self-styled 'civilisation' as it attacks those of us who want to live with human dignity while closing its eyes to the Turkish gangster state's crimes against humanity. I'm not going to be the one to leave so vile an inheritance to my children. My concern is not ultimately with who is profiting from all this but rather to go ahead and just do what is right and necessary.

We will doubtless fall prey to many more attacks and suffer the burden of a great deal more harassment but we will not be

dissuaded from living with human dignity. This situation will be our true 'Coming of Christ'.

So long as the attacks against us continue we'll work to safeguard the liberation of our people and clothe ourselves in humanitarian values. It will be the Turkish Mafia State and its collaborators which stand accused.

Huseyin Baybasin

Holland

Part One

STORY OF AN EXILE

The reason I abandoned my homeland and went into exile lies in the phase at the beginning of the nineties. During this period - whether in the Kurdish heartlands or in Turkey - some of the foremost Kurdish journalists, political figures and a great many thinkers and patriots were murdered by the Mafia gangs composed from within the framework of the State. The killers would steal up on our people from behind and gun them down in broad daylight right in front of everyone. But despite this no "known" person was ever arrested. It was said that the murders were committed by "persons unknown" but the Kurdish people knew their enemy very well. The war had not just begun today and what we were living through was a continuation of the long war that had endured across the centuries.

The phase in 1991 I'm referring to began when Vedat Aydin, a well-known Kurdish political figure, was abducted from his home and murdered in cold blood. This was the starting point for all the murders that were to follow and for the people who would suddenly disappear from their homes, or from out in the street, until it all became part of our way of life. During the period when such murders most intensified news began to be heard of how at the highest levels of the State anew initiative had been embarked upon and that this was to be one of utter