

# Poison bomber offers secrets for sanctuary

by Shyam Bhatia in Mexico and Leonard Doyle

ONE OF THE world's most dangerous bombers has revealed that terrorist groups on three continents have developed poison bombs to attack civilians — in an extraordinary confession to the *Observer* from a secret hideout in Greece.

Seydo Hazar, 31, a Kurdish-born German resident who is on the run, says he and his group were protected by the shadowy November 17 Revolutionary Organisation and funded by elements close to the Greek security services while preparing terrorist outrages in London and on European tourists in Turkey.

The Greek government says it does not believe the claims. But Western intelligence agencies are taking the allegations seriously. He has offered

to trade his information for sanctuary and a new life.

Hazar has gone public because he is disgusted by the targeting of civilians by a splinter group of the PKK.

The planned attacks include the use of chemical bombs against civilians and the poisoning of beaches and city water supplies. They also involve targeting British interests in Turkey and even in Britain itself, in revenge for the Government's extradition of a Turkish Kurd leader to Germany this summer.

He also says that his organisation, the deadly PKK, has links with the Greek Marxist November 17 terror group, German neo-Nazis, the Palestinian Hamas organisation, and Tamil Tigers fighting the government in Sri Lanka.

His claims provide the most complete picture of the close collaboration between international terrorist organisa-

tions, as well as disturbing evidence that one Nato power may have been harbouring militants from a group waging a war against the government of another Nato member.

One of the bomber's most dramatic claims is that 11 stinger missiles, manufactured under licence in Greece, were sold by his group to the Tamil Tigers and subsequently used to shoot down military transport planes over Sri Lanka. Two weeks ago a Sri Lankan Air Force plane was shot down by a missile believed to be a stinger, killing 80 servicemen.

Since talking to the *Observer*, Hazar has escaped from Greece. He has detailed descriptions of at least 12 powerful bombs disguised variously in Nesquick boxes, video cassettes, shampoo and ketchup containers and designed to cause maximum civilian casualties. Hazar said



Seydo Hazar: reveals plans of chemical-bomb attacks.

his bombs also contain rat poison, which can be used as a crude, but deadly, chemical device. He says that the splinter unit of the PKK in Greece has the means to destroy entire population centres, as well as contaminating beaches and fresh produce in pur-

clude the nerve agent sarin and laboratory facilities for producing the E-Coli and botulism bacterias.

Hazar came under suspicion from his PKK cell when one of his bombs detonated prematurely in the Turkish resort of Bodrum last July, killing the woman who was planting it. Another bomb hidden in a video-cassette failed to explode a few weeks later. He was accused of being a saboteur, disarmed and threatened with execution.

He fled from his handlers six weeks ago while they were celebrating the seventeenth anniversary of the PKK's declaration of war against the Turkish army.

The allegation that Athens has been turning a blind eye to PKK guerillas using its territory for training and crossing to Kurdish frontline areas has surfaced before, only to be flatly denied in Athens as Turkish propaganda.

On Friday, the *Observer* gave the Greek government the specific locations of the two sites identified by the bomber as the weapons dumps. As it turned out, PKK arms had already been discovered at one of the locations

and three people taken away for questioning. There were no arrests, however.

This time no weapons or explosives were found, according to Athens. In a statement to the Greek ambassador to London, Vassilis Zaffropoulos said 'an immediate and thorough investigation had found no justification to substantiate the allegations'.

Similar information about PKK training camps in Greece surfaced last year and resulted in a formal demarche by the US ambassador to Greece Thomas Niles. The US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, is also understood to

have raised Greece's support for Kurdish militants on her most recent visit to Athens. In confirmation hearings before Congress, Washington's incoming ambassador to Greece, Nicholas Burns, put the war against terrorism as a top priority.

Should Washington now conclude that Greece has been sheltering PKK guerillas or find evidence that stinger missiles have been provided to the PKK, Athens could find itself in danger of being branded a state sponsor of terrorism, liable to economic and diplomatic sanctions.

Bomber on the run, pages 14-15

## THE REPENTANT TERRORIST

# Bomber on the



**Shyam Bhatia on the Greek island of Naxos meets a fearful Kurd who predicts a wave of terror across Europe**

**F**OR THE past four weeks a dark young man in blue shorts and green bandanna has wandered the Greek islands, trading jokes with the German and Scandinavian tourists who throng the Aegean at summer's end. None guessed that Seydo Hazar is a desperate man who fears death at the hands of the terrorists he served as a bombmaker, who imagines an executioner in every bar and hotel corridor, and wants to trade his secrets for a new life.

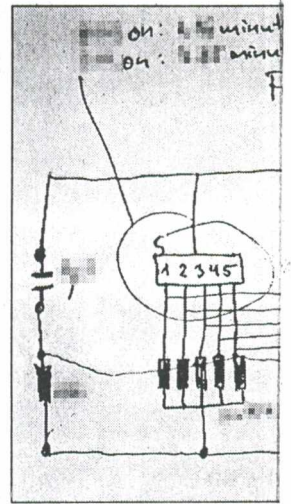
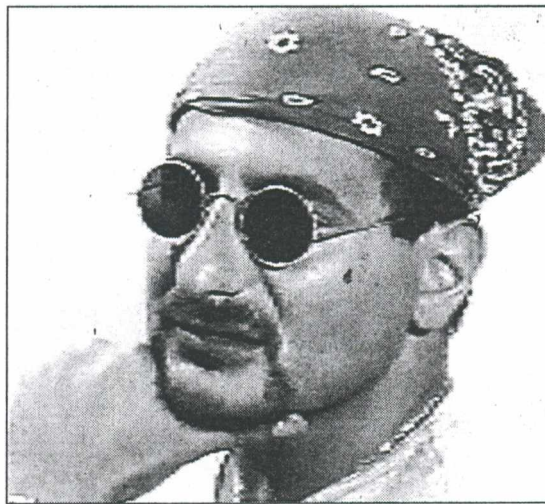
He sits on the bed of his simple hotel room on the island of Naxos and talks of a career that has resulted, he says, in the murder of 60 fellow Kurds and of a young woman killed when one of his bombs exploded in the Turkish holiday resort of Bodrum in July. He warns of a ruthless new round of terrorist attacks aimed at tourists, including Britons, which may involve chemical weapons.

He chain-smokes and his

dark hooded eyes glance restlessly round the room. His paranoia is infectious. He catches my arm and, saying we are both in mortal danger, insists that we toss a coin to decide who goes through the door first.

The patio outside is empty, but he regards the most innocent encounter with suspicion. When South African holidaymakers invite us to join them for a drink, he looks petrified and scurries away. Only when he is reassured that they are tourists does he join us briefly to watch the dusk descend on the island that has given him brief sanctuary but no peace.

In the past 48 hours he has managed to leave Greece and is now believed to be hiding for his own safety somewhere in western Europe. He contacted the *Observer* through an Irish intermediary, insisting he wanted to reveal how his former terrorist masters had now switched their targets to civilians, and that a



**PKK defector Seydo Hazar and a sketch of a bomb circuit he drew for the *Observer* to print**

new wave of atrocities was planned to begin as early as next month.

His identity and terrorist connections have been verified by a number of security sources in Europe.

**T**HE STORY of how Hazar, 31, became involved with what is reputed to be one of the deadliest terrorist organisations in the world has elements of the classic Faustian bargain. The master from

whom he is fleeing is the Kurdistan Workers' Party, the PKK.

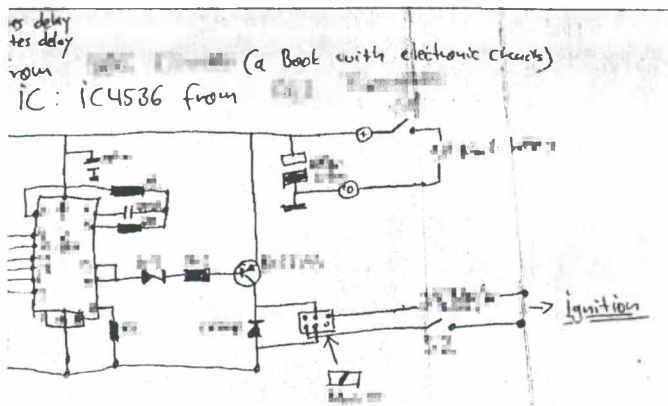
Since the early Seventies, this Marxist-Leninist group has sought a separate Kurdish state in south-east Turkey. Its reputation is that it uses terror without compunction, settles its own internal quarrels with summary violence and controls many of Europe's drug cartels.

He believes he is being hunted by two other deadly enemies. The first is the little-

known but highly dangerous 17 November left-wing Greek terrorist group, which he says has been involved with the PKK in training Kurds in Greece for missions in Turkey. In 1975 it murdered the CIA's Athens station chief, Richard Welch, and it has since killed about 20 more people, including three other American officials, two diplomats from Turkey and 13 Greeks.

The other enemy is the Greek secret service, the GYP

# e run has



over his bona fides. The drawing has been altered to make it useless as a bomb design.

(pronounced Kip), which stands to be seriously embarrassed by Hazar's disclosures. It has been waging a secret war against Greece's traditional enemies, the Turks, by helping the Kurds with their bomb-making and weapons training.

According to Hazar, a retired Greek naval officer pays all the Kurds' expenses in Greece and even acts as an informal censor of their newspaper, *Voice of Kurdistan*, 'so as not to spoil the good relations between Greeks and Kurds'.

Washington has been incensed by Greece's toleration of the PKK and its failure to penetrate the 17 November because its activities undermine a key Nato and regional ally. Last year the US formally warned Greece, a fellow Nato member, that if these activities continued it might be declared a 'state sponsor of international terrorism'.

The US is increasingly sensitive about Turkey, which will provide outlets for the next oil bonanza from Central Asia's landlocked republics. Ankara has also earned Washington's gratitude by allowing its air bases to be used to police the no-fly zone over Saddam Hussein's Iraq.

To avoid harsh US economic sanctions, Greece was reported to have given assurances that PKK activities would be curtailed and its bases and training camps in Greece closed.

**H**AZAR'S assignment with the PKK began 18 months ago, but its origins go back much further. Hazar is a German-educated Kurd from Stuttgart whose father is a well-known Kurdish lyricist; his sister Meryem is a celebrated member of the PKK forces based in Damascus. In his present crisis he expects sympathy from neither. He is divorced from his German wife.

How he acquired his skills as a bomb-maker, as a computer analyst and in chemical and biological weapons, Hazar refuses to say, but his interest arose at an early age.

He says: 'To be a bomb-maker you need to be a little bit crazy. Just dropping a crystal of the igniter can blow you up. As a 14-year-old, I was making gunpowder and selling it. I started with explosives and then switched to chemical and biological things.'

He left school near Düsseldorf at 15 and was imprisoned the following year for his role in a bank robbery. But he is ambivalent about where he spent his time between 1987, when he left prison, and 1994 when he acquired his first full-time job as a highly paid interpreter for the German courts.

He claims his sympathy for the PKK began when, in his role as interpreter, he would

visit terrorist suspects in prison in Germany, where the organisation is proscribed. 'They treat our people like dogs,' he says.

He does not deny suggestions that he was picked up and trained by the secret police of the former East Germany before the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Hazar will admit only that he has lived in Poland.

He also shared a prison cell with neo-Nazis and says that, of all the extremist groups active in Europe, they are the only ones who have a bomb-maker as proficient as himself in designing conventional explosives, chemical and biological weapons.

Hazar was persuaded to leave Germany and go to Athens by an inner elite within the PKK, known as the 'home office' (*Ulke Burosu* in Turkish). It claims to be a law unto itself, operating independently of the PKK's leader and founder, Abdullah Ocalan. He told them he was willing to 'give up six months of my time

**'They said so many innocent Kurds had died, it made no difference if innocent Turkish and foreign civilians died as well'**

to help our people' and offered to write a book on civil defence, to help Kurdish victims of the Turkish forces.

In Greece he worked with three 'home office' operatives he refers to as Sait, Piro and Cekdar — and with the movement's senior representative in the Balkans known by the code name of Mettin. He believes the ultimate controllers are in Amsterdam.

Soon after his arrival in Athens last February he was taken to a farm near Triada, north of the city. This was a training camp run by a Greek called Dimitri and his partner Martha. Hazar believes Dimitri to be the leader of 17 November and that the couple also have good connections with the Greek secret service.

In outhouses he found a large amount of mercury fulminate, alcohol spirit and fuse wire, and explosives such as TNT and Amonal. In the mountains beyond, he says, the Greek authorities were training and equipping Kurdish guerrillas for missions in Turkey. 'The Greeks are afraid of the Turkish army

and would like to see it bogged down in a long war of attrition with the Kurds,' Hazar says.

Soon his friends from the 'home office' abandoned the pretence of a book on civil defence and asked if he could produce plastic explosives. 'They wanted something that would be spectacular and movable. When I said I could produce a bomb that could fit into a box of Marlboro cigarettes, they were fascinated.' They told him to focus on timers and in 'making the explosives better'.

The first test, carried out in open country about an hour's drive from the farm, involved Amonal and a cooking gas cylinder of the kind used by campers. It was so successful — and so loud — that Dimitri warned him it might attract the attention of the local police.

Hazar insisted more tests were needed. A small flat was found for him near the Hotel Pefkalia in the village of Drosia, about 12 miles north of Athens. Here he made a device in a Nesquik box another in a box of iced-tea powder and a third in a bottle of ketchup. He did not connect the timers 'because I didn't want them to explode in the hands of people who didn't know how to use them', he says.

Worried that the operation had been compromised, he suggested to his controllers that the unprimed bombs be given to three separate couriers to see which one was caught, or if any in the PKK group in Greece had betrayed them. His proposal was ignored.

'I was told what happened to the bombs was not my concern. Perhaps they were aware of my qualms about the targets. I didn't mind at all about hitting the Turkish army because that was a legitimate military target.'

But his controllers were talking about killing civilians. 'They said so many innocent Kurds had died, it made no difference if innocent Turkish and foreign civilians died as well.'

They had already made a list of targets that terrified Hazar and included Mediterranean beaches. A chemical bomb was planned for Antalya, close to where former Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Ciller's family owns a holiday resort. Another bomb was planned for the beaches of Marmaris, popular with British tourists.

The most lethal device in preparation was half a litre of sarin, a deadly nerve agent used by Aum Shinrikyo terrorists in the Tokyo subway in 1995, which Hazar says was intended for the Ankara mausoleum of Kemal Atatürk, founder of modern Turkey, where dignitaries gather in his memory each 28 October.

Hazar vaded requests for chemical bombs made of po-

# The cold killers of

## Leonard Doyle examines the role of the Greek intelligence service

**E**VER since the Greek terrorist movement named 17 November gunned down the CIA station chief in Athens a few days before Christmas 1975, the shadowy organisation has managed to strike with impunity at its chosen targets. Western intelligence agencies have long suspected 17 November of acting at the behest of prominent left-wing Greek politicians.

The little that is known about the organisation is that it is nationalistic, left-wing

and likes to issue rambling communiqués that quote Balzac. But in Washington and London it has long been suspected of being the cat's paw of a radicalised Greek intelligence service, the GYP.

Washington made its frustrations with Athens clear in its most recent world terrorism survey where it stated: 'The Greek government continues to make no headway in its pursuit of Greek terrorists, in particular, the Revolutionary Organisation 17 November that is responsible for



The sign of the group whose business is assassination.

numerous attacks against US interests, including the murder of four US officials.'

Until today's *Observer* revelations, a direct link between

# 17 November who always go free

17 November and the Greek secret service had not been established. The Kurdish bomber Seydo Hazar has told the *Observer* that:

- 17 November leaders work hand-in-glove with elements of the Greek intelligence service

- Police were kept away from PKK training camps by 17 November leaders who checked the identity of car number plates with Greek officials.

- Funds were obtained and distributed to the PKK by a retired naval commander who lives on a military base and is a well-known sympathiser of 17 November.

The organisation is the most feared group in Greece

and often referred to as the deadliest terrorist group in Europe. Since 1975 its members have executed 21 people, without anyone being arrested, charged or convicted. Indeed, a close analysis of 17 November's actions down the years, points to a remarkable set of coincidences in which Greek government interests are seen to have been furthered by individual attacks.

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transit through Greece without direct government backing.

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The name 17 November comes from the day in 1973 when the Greek Colonels sent tanks and soldiers to smash a student uprising at Athens Polytechnic University, killing 34 young people. It was Europe's Tiananmen Square and out of it grew a terrorist organisation.

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ment, anti-US, anti-Turkey, anti-Nato; it is committed to removing US bases and the Turkish military presence from Cyprus, and to severing Greece's ties to Nato and the European Union.

17 November's operations are always planned and carried out with military precision. First there is the 'hit', carried out with the same small collection of Colt 45 and Smith and Wesson revolvers. The Colt 45 that dispatched the CIA man, Robert Welch, in 1975 was used again last June to murder Costi Peraticos, scion of a Greek shipping family, which bought the privatised Elefsis Shipyards in 1992.

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men and interests have also been singled out by 17 November, most recently the HMS Ark Royal which was targeted with rockets when it docked in Piraeus in 1994 with a crew of 1,000. Heavy rain prevented the rockets detonating, but there were other successful rocket attacks that day against American and German interests.

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This summer, the US government renewed the reward for the capture and conviction of 17 November terrorists (it is now worth \$2 million), implicated in the deaths of four Americans, injuries to 28 other Americans and a rocket attack on the US embassy compound in February 1996.

What distinguishes 17 November from other terrorist organisations is that in 22 years not a single member of the group has been arrested. Indeed, the identity of no member of 17 November is said to be known to Greek, American or European police and intelligence agencies. It is a claim no other terrorist group can make.

A bombing in Athens, the work of the extreme-left 17 November group, which has been teaching terror techniques to members of the Kurdish PKK in Greece for use in Turkey.

# 'Danger' for tourists in Turkey

## Jailed leader denies poison bomb plan, writes Denis Staunton in Berlin

**K**ANI YILMAZ, the jailed European spokesman of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), is outraged at the accusation that his organisation intends to use poison bombs against tourists as part of its guerrilla campaign against the Turkish government.

But he issued a chilling warning to European tourists planning to holiday in Turkey. Tourist income finances the war against the Kurds, he said, and the Kurds had appealed to people not to travel to the beaches of Anatolia.

'Tourists are not targets for us, but tourists must be aware that they are visiting a region affected by war.'

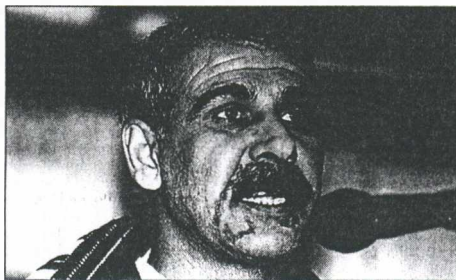
Speaking through his lawyer from Celle prison in northern Germany, he insisted there were no circumstances in which the organisation would use such weapons.

'We are absolutely opposed to the use of chemical weapons,' he said. 'If we had dispensed with the use of

legitimate means in our struggle and used weapons of mass destruction, we would have succeeded long ago. We are a principled movement, and it is unthinkable for such a movement to use inhumane methods.'

Yilmaz was on his way to the House of Commons in October 1994 to address an all-party meeting about the Kurdish conflict in Turkey when he was arrested outside Westminster underground station. A plain-clothes immigration officer, accompanied by six policemen, told him he had been admitted to Britain by mistake and would be detained on grounds of national security.

Yilmaz was confined in Belmarsh top-security prison, Woolwich, for almost three years, for much of the time in isolation and in conditions described by his German lawyer as scandalous. He was held pending extradition to Germany, where he is accused of orchestrating arson attacks on Turkish



**Kani Yilmaz: furious at suggestions PKK will use chemical weapons in its guerrilla war.** Photograph by Mark Campbell

businesses. When Home Secretary Jack Straw approved the German extradition request last month, Yilmaz's lawyer, Hans-Eberhard Schultz, began negotiating with the German authorities.

'I am confident a solution will be found that will be acceptable to Kani, that he will not be convicted as a terrorist, that he will not have to make a confession and that he will leave prison within the foreseeable future,' Schultz said.

Yilmaz dismisses the latest allegations from the PKK

master-bomber Seydo Hazar as an exercise in black propaganda engineered by Turkey. 'We just laugh at these ridiculous suggestions. These lies have often been spread about us. This information from Greece comes directly from the Turkish secret service.'

The charge of Kurdish involvement in the drug trade is an old one and, although the German authorities have mounted numerous investigations into the PKK since 1988, they have found no evidence to support it. In fact, drugs intelligence officers

have told the *Observer* that the evidence points to Kurdish leaders under Turkish government control as the main conduit for the drugs that arrive on British shores.

'The drugs trade is a crime against humanity. We condemn such actions,' Yilmaz said. 'We have often offered to co-operate with every country in Europe against the drugs trade. It is obvious that 80 per cent of the drugs distributed in Europe come from Turkey. It is clear that the Turkish secret service has special units involved in this.'

There is evidence the PKK has used intimidation to extract donations from Kurds living in Germany and Yilmaz's lawyer concedes some donors may not be beyond reproach. 'What is true is that millions of PKK supporters give donations, 99 per cent of the time voluntarily, and the possibility that some of these donors may be involved in the drugs trade cannot be ruled out,' he said.

Yilmaz claims the PKK is committed to finding a political solution to the Kurdish conflict, but that Turkey's refusal to negotiate has made armed struggle inevitable.

have contacted the 'home office' only once. They told me to return within 24 hours or face the consequences.'

He says he left behind in the village of Drosia a substantial cache, including 10 pieces of Bulgarian TNT, 170 sticks of Amal, 10 timers, plenty of potassium cyanide and the means to cultivate biological agents such as *E. coli* and botulism, as well as chemical weapons such as sarin and mustard gas.

**H**AZAR knows it is 'already too late' for him. 'I can never go back and they will hunt me to the day I die.' He wants foreign governments to know of the cache in Drosia and to share information about the PKK's links with other terrorist groups.

'They may not like me very much or trust me, but the information I have will save many lives and provide the intelligence services with the biggest breakthrough they have ever had against the PKK.'

A particularly close relationship exists now with the Palestinian terror group Hamas, and he said the PKK had a liaison officer in Damascus dedicated to working with Hamas. He also claims the PKK was given sophisticated weaponry, including Stinger missiles, by the Greeks. In Sri Lanka, the rebel Tamil Tigers used a Stinger missile to bring down a military aircraft this summer.

Britain has a vital interest in Hazar, following his disclosure that PKK militants had been briefed on attacking British targets in Turkey as well as London.

Hazar says the top echelons within the PKK are furious with London for imprisoning their spokesman in Europe, Kani Yilmaz, who was arrested two and a half years ago at the request of the German government.

The case of Yilmaz, who was deported last month to Germany, where he has been charged with possessing firearms, has enraged the PKK and strengthened party demands for revenge. While he was working on his bombs, Hazar says, his PKK minders told him: 'It's time to teach a lesson to the motherfucking British gays who think they still rule the world.'

tassium cyanide. He said it would evaporate too easily and that its distinctive smell of bitter almonds would alert people. He suggested rat poison instead. He made six bombs, one laced with rat poison, in a Thermos flask.

Hazar fell under suspicion when the devices went wrong. The first exploded at the Turkish beach resort of Bodrum last July, killing a young girl. Hazar refused to say if she was a member of the PKK group or just an innocent bystander.

In the second mishap, last month, Hazar had specified that there would be a 30-minute time delay before a bomb placed outside a Turkish military base went off. But the PKK told its operative for his own protection that the delay would be 15 minutes. When it failed to go off in that time he went back and tam-

pered with the switches. Hazar insists this was the reason for its failure, but his expertise, loyalty and commitment were now in doubt. Days later Sait and Mettin drove him to a dam. They asked him for his Browning revolver and Hazar realised something was wrong.

Mettin said one of his bombs had not exploded. They asked him if he was working for the Germans, Mossad or the Turks. Mettin got angry and said enough money had been invested in him. It was time for results - or else it would be considered 'sabotage'.

'He said he had been instructed to interrogate me and put me on trial. Then he told Sait to take me closer to the dam, to a quiet place where they could "deal" with me.

'I was scared, but I didn't think they would kill me because I was still too valuable

to them. Mettin was talking a lot on his mobile telephone. He turned to me and said it had been decided to give me one last chance to prepare five more bombs under supervision. If even one bomb failed, 'we will shoot you like a dog. We have wasted enough time and money on you.'

Hazar returned to Drosia and was given a 21-year-old

apprentice who knew nothing about bomb-making but alarmed him with his demands. He wanted to target the valuable Turkish vegetable export market and suggested bombs should be distributed through post offices. When Hazar argued against killing innocent civilians, he replied: 'Everyone has to make sacrifices.' The ideas got

'more and more crazy'. His 'minder' discussed using biological weapons, including the *E. coli* bacteria to contaminate the beaches.

'I didn't say yes or no, but I was frightened. I had seen how they had treated others they suspected of disloyalty. I myself feel responsible for the interrogations and deaths of 60 people.'

He refuses to say when or where these incidents took place, nor would he elaborate on how he arranged for these suspects to be killed. He does insist that he killed nobody himself.

'On 15 August I knew everybody would be busy marking the seventeenth anniversary of the PKK's declaration of war against Turkey, so I planned my escape for that day. Pretending I was asleep, I picked up my clothes and left for the islands. Since then I



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