

V. EUROPE

The drug scene in Europe⁶² seems to be organized around two characteristics of the same dominant trend: polydrug consumption and polydrug trafficking. Polydrug consumption today seems to constitute part of European consumers' morals, even if there are differences regarding products and consumption methods between Western and Eastern Europe. In Russia, for example, heroin and cocaine are now part of the widely-used substances taken in conjunction with "traditional" narcotics, frequently of synthetic origin. This explains the temptation to make scapegoats of users, whereas the important trafficking operations originating notably in Central Asia are consistently expanding.

Within the European Union, drug prevention and reduction policies (concerning essentially heroin, but increasingly MDMA as well) have begun to be coordinated, despite resistance (especially political) within certain member countries (France, Portugal, etc.). This burden has hampered the actions of those working in cooperation with regional and municipal authorities. An essentially local response to drug addiction in all member countries is being sought today, though it may mean at times falling into the trap of "gadgetization." In Europe's former communist countries, when policies are set up and applied to confront the significant rise in drug addiction, very big disparities exist between the various policies and they are not considered, for the time being, a priority.

Polydrug consumption and the disparity between European antidrug policies are behind the new trafficking methods. Large criminal organizations linked to drug trafficking seem increasingly to consider all of Europe as one big common market. They use haven countries (Spain, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Russia, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Romania, etc.), from which they distribute an increasingly diversified range of products. Wholesale and retail distribution are more and more coming under the responsibility of small semi-professional structures stemming from transnational narco-tourist networks which have over time come to specialize in drug running. Numerous circuits constituting the "Balkan Route" leave Turkey, which was formerly specialized in heroin but today has turned to multi-drugs.

Alongside Turkey is the Albanian-speaking region (comprised of Albania, southern Macedonia, and the Serbian province of Kosovo), which seems to be increasingly playing the part of a dispatching center for the whole of Europe, in particular for the German-speaking countries. In Turkey itself, the importance of trafficking and the actions of mafia organizations have become so widespread that the military, the traditional "guardian of the Republican institutions" under Kemalism, has ended up defining political crime (the Gray Wolves, PKK, etc.) and the links it has forged with traditional political parties as the biggest threat to the Republic.

⁶² Russia and the countries of the former Soviet Union (Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan), Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Turkey, Cyprus, Syria-Lebanon, Israel, the Netherlands, France, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, Italy and Spain were covered in *The World Geopolitics of Drugs, 1995-1996*

RUSSIA

The financial storm in Russia since late summer 1998 is a result of the mafia's grip on the banking sector. It also sheds light on the increasingly obvious failure of the state, symptoms of which include the absence of tax collection and the non payment of wages. Although the chaotic situation fosters a boom in drug trafficking and consumption, it also means that the scope of these phenomena cannot be estimated with a satisfying degree of precision. This did not prevent an interior ministry person to maintain, in June 1998, that the number of users of all drugs had increased by 60 % in 1997 to 2 million people, of whom about 10 % are addicts. But like most Russian public officials, the latter failed to provide factual evidence to back his claims. Thus, in February 1998 another interior ministry official had mentioned that Russia numbered 4 million drug users.

Data on trafficking activities can at least give a rough idea of the situation because they are based on seizures statistics. According to a report by Russian Customs' State Committee (GTK), narcotics trafficking is also steadily rising on the borders of the Russian Federation. Customs officers note that in 1997 the amount of cannabis derivatives seized on the country's borders declined, while those of more expensive hard drugs increased. Heroin seizures increased two and a half times compared to the previous year, whereas 26 million pills and vials of diverse synthetic drugs were confiscated, or four and a half times more than in 1996. Also in 1997, Russian Interior Ministry (MVD) statistics report 190,000 drug-related offenses. MVD operations resulted in the confiscation of 60 metric tons of narcotics and the dismantling of 848 secret transformation laboratories. The deteriorating situation was accelerated during the first half of 1998. Drug-related crime rose by 16% and the number of identified narco-organizations by 7% compared to the same period in 1997. Some 61,000 metric tons of cannabis and poppies plants were destroyed.

The GTK underlines the increased "professionalization" of criminal groups operating on Russian territory, the most powerful of which have a national or ethnic base — Chinese⁶³, Korean, Nigerian⁶⁴ and Tajik. The report also stresses the increasing use of military transport aircraft belonging to the Russian armed forces by trafficking networks for shipping Central Asian drugs.

It was against this background that the first federal law on "narcotics and psychotropic medications" finally came into effect on April 15, 1998. But, paradoxically, the law completely neglects trafficking aspects and instead attacks consumers, in a very conservative manner.

The Professionalization of Heroin and Hashish Networks

The years 1995 and 1996 were marked by the arrival of large criminal organizations in drug trafficking in Russia. The two previous years witnessed the professionalization and sophistication of their *modus operandi*, transforming this activity into a powerful industry integrating banks, enterprises, transport companies, and offshore firms for laundering profits. Large deliveries of opiates and hashish coming from Central Asia are made increasingly through a network of transport companies operating under cover of shipping legal merchandise to prosperous companies.

⁶³ On the Chinese networks, see OGD: *Diaspora et réseaux vietnamiens de trafics de drogues en Europe*, Paris: Institut des Hautes Études de la Sécurité Intérieure, 1998

⁶⁴ On the Nigerian networks, see "Moscow's Nigerian Networks" in *The Geopolitical Drug Dispatch*, n°78, April 1998.

The shipment of heroin from Afghanistan via Tajikistan, for example, functions along these lines. The networks along this route are under the near-complete control of a few traditional Russian mafia groups collaborating with the Tajik narco-mafia, themselves under the tutelage of high-ranking Tajik military officials. This circuit attempts to eliminate the Russian-Uzbek networks, which established themselves first on these same routes. Heroin from Afghanistan is now delivered not only to Moscow and large cities of European Russia, but also to regions which up to now have not been particularly affected by heroin addiction, in Siberia and the Russian Far East. It is not surprising that several extremely discreet and well organized Tajik mafia groups have set up shop in Moscow. Law enforcement authorities know little of these groups, except that they specialize in heroin deliveries and enjoy protection from the highest levels of the Tajik government and administration.

The Tajikistan-Afghanistan border remains the principal crossing point for opium and, increasingly, heroin headed for the CIS countries. The head of Russia's Federal Border Guards, Ivan Buraka, announced in June 1998 that his men seized over two tons of drugs in 1997 and that they had confiscated five times more heroin during the first five months of 1998 than during the whole of 1997.

The Bishkek (Kirghizstan)-Moscow train has been confirmed as one of the principal routes used by smugglers to send opiates and hashish to the Russian capital. Shipments can reach up to several dozen kilograms. Generally the couriers are people who do not attract the attention of Customs officials, such as women and elderly persons. They are followed without their knowledge throughout the whole journey by a member of the criminal organization which owns the drugs being delivered. The merchandise is hidden in secret caches fitted inside the railway cars. Sometimes the drugs are unloaded in the middle of the trip, then forwarded on to their destination by truck or private automobile. Numerous arrests were made in 1997 in the Urals and in the Volga region during transshipment operations. Intervention by the authorities is not without risks for the militia troops employed in them, and several have lost their lives. The diversion of drugs by a rival group can also erupt into extremely violent armed confrontation. Nevertheless the economic and social crisis in Russia allows the mafia to recruit "auxiliaries" without the slightest difficulty, and from all social classes, from workers to medical doctors.

Couriers also use regularly-scheduled flights on Russian and Central Asian airlines. Moreover Tajik couriers have begun to use the methods of their African counterparts, swallowing heroin-filled condoms. The arrest of a Tajik national in Moscow in possession of several kilograms of heroin has remained under wraps up to now. According to information given to OGD by Customs sources, the arrested man was in fact a well-known singer of popular Tajik folk music. A Tajik Guard commander allegedly came in person to Moscow by air to pay a large sum in US dollars to free the woman from prison. According to other sources, this same commander is reportedly also implicated in heroin deliveries on Russian territory by Tajik military helicopters. It was already known that Russian pilots were involved in this type of trafficking in Tajikistan.

According to Turkmen authorities, of the 40 tons of narcotics seized in the Republic of Turkmenistan in 1997 (of which 37 tons were hashish), the vast majority was destined for shipment to Russia. One of the means used was importing hashish-laced, hollowed-out logs from Afghanistan through Moscow-based companies whose names figured on the bill of lading. Hashish was also confiscated hidden within goods destined for Germany, Romania, Belarus, Albania, and South Korea. In the opposite direction, chemical re-agents headed for use in the manufacture of Afghan heroin transit Turkmenistan (more than 10 tons of acetic anhydride were seized in 1997). The majority of large seizures of drugs or precursor chemicals are the result of tip-offs to the authorities by rival clans.

Two-Way Drug Flow

In late 1997 and early 1998, a serious blow was struck to a powerful Azeri criminal organization specialized in the import of synthetic drugs produced in Western Europe. Its leader was one Timur Mamedov, who fled Moscow on learning of his eminent arrest. He controlled several night clubs in the Russian capital where drugs were distributed. Officers from the FSB and the MVD's Investigation Committee became interested in this so-called "Dutch" network in early 1994. It was in pursuing this investigation that in late 1997 they arrested a gang importing large quantities of LSD and ecstasy into Russia. A Polish and a Russian national, working for Azeris, were arrested and sentenced to ten years in prison. Then, in February 1998, men of the FSB (the MVD's Investigation Committee) dismantled another network headed by a Russian disc-jockey working in Moscow's best-known night clubs. According to the MVD, this was the largest seizure made over the past few years, turning up several thousand "hits" of LSD, "ecstasy" (MDA), and amphetamine all imported from the Netherlands.

In the other direction, heroin, cannabis derivatives, and cocaine are exported to the West. Two regions bordering on Ukraine, the Smolensk and Briansk *oblasts* (districts), particularly worry Russian law enforcement authorities. They are the headquarters for secret warehouses and transit territories. The drug mafia in the Briansk region includes more than 700 people, and has close contacts with narco-mafias in Ukraine and other countries of the former Soviet Union. In the Smolensk region, the so-called Solntsevo mafia (named after a posh Moscow neighborhood), headed by Serguei Mikhailov (who is awaiting trial in a Swiss prison, his country of residence where he was arrested in October 1996⁶⁵) has created a veritable operations base. Local authorities have been bought off by this organization, resulting, for example, in the dismissal of local militia members and Customs officials who tried to enforce the law. The appearance of this mafia in the Solntsevo region is allegedly connected to the establishment of cocaine deliveries arriving from Costa Rica and Venezuela. One seizure in 1997 netted 200 kg of cocaine in Russia. Over the past few years, several front companies have been created in Venezuela by Russian nationals which supply cocaine to Russian couriers. They transport quantities ranging from one to two kilos on *Aeroflot* flights transiting Cuba. MVD specialists believe they have noted a drop in the influence of the Solntsevo mafia in Moscow since the arrest of Mikhailov in Geneva and the appearance of the Tajik groups. But other sources believe that the group's low profile may be explained, on the contrary, by the fact that it has integrated into large criminal structures in order to become a true mafia organization, in the sense of the term used in other areas of the world.

The April 15, 1998 Law: Addicts Beware

Concerning the law on narcotics and psychotropic medications, it took no less than five years of scheming and dealing in the aisles of the Duma to reach a result which still appears to be inadequate (the debate about the law on money-laundering, which started in October 1997, does not seem close to reaching a conclusion). To take up the comment of Duma member Nikolai Guerassimenko, the president of the Parliamentary Committee on Health Matters which produced the bill: "The law's first and foremost objective is to attack 'narcomania', not the 'narcomafia'". This is why the law (art. 40) reintroduces prohibition of the use of drugs and psycho-active substances without a medical prescription.

During the Soviet period drug use had been made an offence only as of 1987 and in 1991 the two articles of the penal code covering the subject were deleted, as were those of the administrative code at

⁶⁵ See GWD (1995-1996), p. 108.

the same time as the prohibition of homosexuality was lifted. General Alexander Sergueev, the chief of the interior ministry's antidrug department (OUNON), was the first to rise up against such liberalization. Indeed, in the police view the depenalization of drug use has only led to an increase in drug addiction, especially among young people (the health ministry estimates that the number of drug users under 18 doubles each year). Furthermore, as far as General Sergueev is concerned it is obvious that drug users sooner or later become drug dealers.

The new law toughens the clauses of the penal code which came into force on January 1, 1997, lowering the thresholds above which drug possession can be prosecuted (three years in prison for possession without intent to sell of 0.05 gram of heroin). The media were among the first to condemn such a repressive approach, which shows a tendency to consider that drug traffickers and users are one and the same thing — there are an estimated 2 million drug users in Russia (see below). During a press conference in mid-January 1998, the authors of the law tried to demonstrate that they were nevertheless concerned with the health of drug users and prevention. They stressed that the law included provision for a (tough) kind of forced treatment: article 44 says that any individual suspected of being on drugs must take a test. If it is positive, then magistrates order the person to be admitted to hospital. While some specialists question the soundness of such a procedure, the fact that private medical establishments have been banned recently from offering detoxification treatments and that most public health facilities for drug addicts have closed down make it more likely that the law will be unworkable.

Moreover, with the excuse of avoiding publicity for drugs in the media, article 46 bans all debate on legalization and depenalization. Apart from the fact that it strikes a serious blow to freedom of expression, this article could bring to nought the efforts of specialists in the fields of information and prevention targeted at drug users. The World Health Organization has blamed the “boom” in the number of HIV-positive people in Russia observed for the last five years on a policy of silence and denial. Visibly embarrassed by such criticism, the lawmakers remain vague about how the new clauses will be enforced. Thus, some legislators maintain that drug use will merely be sanctioned by fines which will be defined in the administrative code at a later stage (under a mechanism comparable to that for public drunkenness). By contrast, others announce the imminent adoption of prison sentences for drug use.

At a time when a trend toward depenalizing soft drug use seems to be setting in Western Europe (as with for instance the Belgian justice ministry's directive of April 17, 1998 on legal proceedings for possession and retail sale of illicit drugs), Russia seems to be opting for “singaporization”, that is an antidrug policy where the tree of harshly punished drug use would hide the forest of international trafficking and money laundering. However, there is every reason to believe that reducing the number of drug users will not be enough to curb narco-activities in Russia (see below).

True, provisions against trafficking are not completely absent from the new rag-bag legislation. Articles 51 and 52 provide for the compulsory liquidation of firms producing or distributing narcotics or laundering drug profits and the prosecution of their leaders. But are law enforcement services, which sorely lack resources, likely to venture into investigating legal entities or will they prefer to boost statistics by cracking down on drug use and small-scale trafficking? Another provision is questionable: the police and customs will now have to have “enough elements” to search parcels, baggage and goods. While the respect of individual rights does not appear to be a priority for Russian legislators they have taken great care to protect private property...

The other major objective of the new legislation was to restore the state monopoly over all the activities related to the licit market for narcotics and psycho-active substances – drug plant crops,

manufacturing, marketing, importing and exporting, destruction – and to set the control mechanism for these activities through a system of licenses. Only state-controlled firms should be allowed to manufacture psycho-active substances for medical use, the bill said. But recalling that large privatized pharmaceutical firms produce 70% of the medicines available on the Russian market, the Council of the Federation (the upper house of the Russian parliament) stressed the lack of coherence of such a restoration and rejected, in April 1997, the first version of the bill approved by the Duma. As a result, the legislation passed a year later has established a system of licenses for private firms manufacturing psycho-active substances. But it is still not clear who, and under what terms, will grant the licenses against a background of increasingly widespread corruption.

TURKEY

Faced with an avalanche of scandals, Turkish civil society used to mobilize and citizens switched off their lights for a minute every night “until light is shed on the Çatli-Susurluk scandal”. But public opinion finally wearied. The “affairs” implicating politicians in organized crime, drug trafficking, official corruption, terrorist activities in Anatolia and Central Asian countries, etc., were used as a weapon of choice in the fratricide war between the lay parties – relayed by the press groups supporting each of them – and in the conflict opposing the military to the now banned Refa islamist party

Under these circumstances, the Turkish military has radically changed its national security policy since the beginning of 1997. A confidential military staff document, entitled “For a National Security Policy” and codenamed MGSB, expresses the view of Turkey’s National Security Council and is indicative of the armed forces’ policy change. The document reveals that the standard list of “domestic threats”, which includes the Far Left and in particular the separatist Kurdish movement, has expanded to include “fundamentalists supported by the West”, “nationalistic Turkish racism” (the Ulkücu mafia), and “the Gray Wolves mafia”. The report’s conclusions are significant. The entire spectrum of right wing parties forged agreements with Far Right mafia groups after 1945 and are responsible for the current catastrophic situation in the country. The report continues that foreign intervention since the Cold War, in particular by the United States, whose Central Intelligence Agency infiltrated the Turkish intelligence services, has provoked a tactical alliance with the Gray Wolves and the Far Right mafias which continues today. For the Turkish top brass it is time to clean house, beginning with the military intelligence department itself (the MIT).

Confidential Reports as a Weapon

The hard ball being played by political parties, intelligence services, and the army was quickly ended with an avalanche of revelations big enough to bring discredit upon the political class as a whole, especially since they were echoed in several European countries (Germany in particular), and contributed to delay the process of Turkey’s integration into the European Union. The Turkish secret services, while deeply involved in the scandals and rocked by internecine strife themselves, are at the source of this political Aunt Sally by fuelling the politicians and the press with “confidential” reports.

Such was the case, for example, with two MIT top-secret reports. One was dated 1996 and it shed light on the dealings of Abdullah Çatli, a prominent Gray Wolves leader and mobster trafficking in heroin in Turkey and Azerbaijan; and another, which was transmitted to President Suleyman Demirel in December 1997, revealed to those who did not already know the involvement in the March 1995 coup

attempt against Azerbaijan's President Gaydar Aliev of Tansu Çiller, then Turkey's Prime Minister; Ayvaz Gökdemir, State Minister; Mehmet Agar, the Interior Minister who had to resign after the Çatli-Susurluk scandal; Abdullah Çatli and Korkut Eken, the founder of the Kurdish Special Forces used by the Turkish military as a paramilitary force in Kurdistan. The coup failed after President Demirel himself warned his Azeri counterpart. The 1997 confidential report, ostensibly meant for the Turkish president's eyes only, was in fact secretly destined to be leaked to the press.

No-one was spared by the revelations. Not even the Refa party whose short-lived government was as much marred by corruption as its predecessors, including collusion with some sectors of the Gray Wolves involved in drug trafficking; forceful infiltration of members into the civil service; and imposing as Minister of Justice Sevket Kazan, the lawyer who defended the perpetrators of the 1993 slaughter of intellectuals in the town of Sivas. This indecent exposure of the dirty deeds of the elite during the last two years eventually numbed civil society. Citizens now view daily corruption, gang law and the growing importance trafficking in drugs and human beings has assumed in Turkey as commonplace. Few Turks continue to be outraged by the involvement of some Istanbul police officers, through increasingly lucrative bribes, in the trade in "livestock", as are called would-be illegal immigrants to Europe.

Everyone knows that the networks smuggling immigrants are the same as those shipping heroin. Not many people are surprised by the fratricide wars that break out here and there between the owners of travel agencies, tourist infrastructure and intercontinental means of transport. Indeed, the existence of connections between heroin trafficking and transport companies was reported several years ago, in particular by OGD. Quite apart from the flux of illegal immigrants, Turkish legal immigrants make up one of the main immigration flows to Western Europe. Discreet and efficient networks transporting people and goods in buses, collective taxis, charter planes and ferry-boats, have hooked onto Turkish migration. After the downfall of the Soviet block, the same companies started operating eastward to Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iran and the Central Asian republics; westward to the Balkans; and, spurred by the phenomenon of economic tourism, northward to Russia, Ukraine and Central Europe. It is no wonder that *maffya* organisations are fighting with one another for control over these routes. The casualties are the passengers of the transport firms whom the networks' owners view as hostages guaranteeing the safe passage of their merchandise.

Relocating Labs and Casinos

In order to wage their wars, large-scale criminal organizations have to come out into the open. And what they do, as well as who does it, are clues as to what protection they enjoy and what they are fighting for. Thus, a mere interior-pages news item, a bloody score-settling between two Turkish owners of transport firms near the Turkey-Greece border resulted in the arrest, on January 13, of two police officers and six *maffya* members, all of whom were more or less closely linked to Çatli's "anti-terrorist" organization which is itself very close to the Çiller clan. The killers arrested included Cemil Andimark, a former member of the police Special Forces who used to work as a bodyguard for Mehmet Agar, the former Interior minister; Onder Topbas of the Kucukcekmece police headquarters; Selahattin Buyukoztekin, a.k.a. "Bull", who was sentenced to death 5 times for 56 murders but was still free at the time; and Ercüment Gedikil, who murdered 7 members of the Workers' Party (TIP) in 1978. The latter two had been leaders of UGD (Gray Wolves) and Gedikil, a partner with Çatli in the *Promesse Medical Equipment* firm, had worked with Korkut Eken, an influent adviser of the national police. These men attacked a Poland-to-Turkey bus belonging to the *AVAR Turizm* company on the Istanbul-Edirn highway — a road always under strict police and military control. They shot six passengers as

retribution for a seizure of 78 kilograms of heroin in Poland for which *baba* Gafur Çalistan – the owner of the confiscated drugs – blamed the boss of *AVAR Turizm*. The killers also took US \$2.8 million from their victims as “compensation for the heroin lost”.

A week earlier, at the other end of the country, Turkish police at the Sharp Turkey-Georgia border post had made an all-time record-breaking seizure of nearly half a metric ton of heroin from another bus linking Baku, Azerbaijan, to Istanbul. The sheer size of this heroin shipment means that it must have been “insured” and therefore its confiscation indicates that the stakes are up several notches in Turkey today. While the police is quite vague about the origin of the drugs netted at Sharp (they were allegedly manufactured in “a republic of Central Asia”), according to information obtained by OGD it is becoming increasingly obvious that the Turkish *babas* have started relocating their laboratories to Azerbaijan a year ago.

Azerbaijan is again in the sights of “political criminals” and one of the preferred targets of the money launderers working for them. It took the High Court nearly a year to rule that casinos should be banned in Turkey and this pushed some businessmen to invest afresh into the heroin trade in order to create favorable conditions for the quick relocation of their casinos in Central Europe, northern Cyprus and Central Asia. The competition is, indeed, fierce in the region: Lebanese businessmen have opened an exclusive casino recently in Erevan, Armenia, while not long ago Azerbaijan’s Foreign Minister, Hassan Hasanov, was fired for embezzling public funds (from international aid) in order to build a casino in Baku in partnership with Topal, a murdered casino baron (also very much involved in drug trafficking according to MIT). Topal’s violent death is perhaps not unrelated to the fact that he had lent \$500,000 to Islan Aliev, the son of the president of Azerbaijan, and demanded the money back. Conscious of the stakes, Azerbaijan’s presidency seems determined to put its house in order, but the floor is slippery. Neighboring Georgia and Armenia are showing clear signs of instability, at a time when the United States’ natural allies in Turkey (the Çiller clan) are out of the game, and Russia is more and more upset by the arrangements presiding over the exploitation of Caspian oil resources, of which the Americans intend to become the masters.

Clan war

From the *mahallas* (traditional neighborhoods) of the towns of Central Asia to the hotels and casinos of the Turkish and Cypriot Mediterranean coast, there is such confusion between state structures and Turkic-speaking clan networks that the clans end up operating without any regard for the repercussions of their criminal actions on their geopolitical environment. These “families” have survived the regime of Kemal Ataturk and Soviet communism. More recent times have provided ample evidence of both their political influence and their involvement in heroin trafficking. For instance, the henchmen of former Turkish prime minister Tansu Ciller were behind both an attempted coup d’état in Azerbaijan and the murder – worthy of a gang of highwaymen – of passengers in a bus carrying the proceeds from sales of a batch of heroin (see above).

More generally, diplomatic maneuvering concerning oil from the Caspian Sea has been complicated by conflicts of private interests aiming to control trafficking in opiates. When Roger Tamraz, an American citizen of Armenian-Lebanese origin, went to Tansu Ciller in 1995 to “sell” proposals for an oil pipeline linking Baku to Ceyhan, he felt he was relaunching a Turkish dream that had been stymied by two simultaneous events: the palace revolution in Azerbaijan in 1992, when the pro-Turkish president, Abulfaz Elchibey, was overthrown and replaced by Gaydar Aliev; and the flare-up of the PKK (Kurdish Workers’ Party) guerrilla movement in Kurdistan in 1993. Roger Tamraz had his own interests at heart,

and was doubtless also anxious to please his friends in the CIA (who had got him into the White House and introduced him to President Clinton, so that he could plead for the cause of the pipeline). He did not realize to what extent his proposals were going to upset the Caucasian balance of power — for the project required the normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, an end to the conflict in eastern Turkey, and increased official support from Washington for the Turkish government's oil policy. The latter had suffered since Ankara had given Iran a part to play in its oil projects as a way of gaining a foothold in Turkic-speaking areas.

As the pipeline plan had failed in the eyes of Ciller's supporters in 1993, mainly because of machinations by the PKK and the Aliev clan, Roger Tamraz's proposal to bring peace to Anatolia and to neutralize, or even eliminate, in Baku itself, those who opposed Turkey's plans in Azerbaijan, was priceless. Thus Kurdish feudal leaders such as Sedat Bucak, the *babas* and other mobsters on the far right, such as Abdullah Çatli, secret service and "special ops" agents like Major Kasif Kozinoglu, who is close to the CIA, became the natural enforcers of the Ciller policy. As these warlords were sure of enjoying absolute impunity, they carried on a ruthless struggle on four fronts: in Anatolia against the PKK; in Turkey itself ; all over Europe against rival criminal organizations suspected of collaborating with the PKK (or laundering money for it); and finally in Azerbaijan against the Aliev clan.

Getting rid of criminal gangs and PKK structures is one thing; taking over their "business" is another. But this major step was made easily enough in 1993, and the trafficking networks of the new allies spread further. This situation could continue as long as the Ciller clan and its associates were operating under the supervision of the Turkish army and cultivating its Kemalist sensitivity, and as long as the palace intrigues in Azerbaijan did not call into question the Caucasian balance and Russian interests. But when Ciller forged a coalition with Moslem fundamentalists of the Refah and Russia was weakened by the war in Chechnya (during which Turkey more or less openly offered the nationalists a rear base), the Ciller clan was weakened: everyone began to perceive it as dangerous, particularly because of its opposition to the moderate policies of President Aliev and to investors, who were anxious not to offend Russian sensibilities.

For Tamraz's proposals required a rapprochement between Turkey and Armenia in order to reach a solution to the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. The fact that the route of the pipeline passes through Armenia ought to consolidate any territorial agreements reached between Yerevan and Baku. But this new situation would deprive Moscow of its main lever in the Caucasus. The Armenian president, Levon Ter Petrossian, who has been making an increasing number of goodwill gestures toward Turkey, has been destabilized by it and has been replaced recently by the strongman in Nagorno-Karabakh, Robert Kocharian.

Not only did the Susurluk car crash scandal reveal the close ties between the Ciller clan and gangs involved in drug trafficking, money launderers, and far-right movements; it also highlighted the scale of their operations and the force of their presence in Azerbaijan. For example, Major Kasif Kozinoglu, a member of the MIT's anti-terrorist branch (which has close ties with the American services) was in Azerbaijan from the start of the 1990s (the Elchibey era) and, along with Çatli and Nevruz Emi, the security boss in the Azerbaijani town of Toguz, was heavily involved in drug production and the heroin routes that cross the republics of Central Asia. These shadowy figures had forged ties with Uzbek warlord Rashid Dostom in Afghanistan, and had introduced him to Turkish President Türgüt Ozal (through Kozinoglu, a very special agent with activities throughout the region, including the Chinese autonomous region of Xinjiang Uighur). Together they set up, through the *First Merchant Bank* officially registered in northern Cyprus and operating in both Azerbaijan and Italy, the means to launder

the profits from this trafficking. Their “invisible” partners included Mehmet Agar, the Turkish interior minister forced to resign by the Susurluk scandal, and very probably Mikail Göleli, a Gray Wolf and heroin *baba* who is very active in Nakhichevan.

In addition, it is now known that in 1996 the Ciller clan acquired a way of putting pressure on the Aliev clan. Ilkham Aliev, a son of the Azerbaijani leader, had been lured into one of the Istanbul casinos owned by Lufti Topal – the appointed money launderer of the Ciller-Bucak-Agar network who has been sentenced for drug trafficking on several occasions – and gambled away \$6 million. Topal was subsequently executed by Çatli (who died in the Susurluk crash). The Azerbaijani foreign minister, Hassan Hassanov, paid off Aliev Junior’s debt and even bought him a villa in Baku, believed to be worth about \$20 million. But this magnificent gift had strings attached: the villa had to be converted into a luxury casino, and this was duly done. Since February, the new Turkish prime minister, Mesut Yilmaz, has been organizing leaks about the deal, based on a secret service report. The resulting scandal led to the resignation of the Azerbaijani foreign minister and put President Aliev in a precarious position — only a few months ahead of the September elections when his chief rival will be Elchibey, the Nakhichevan man who was ousted by the Russians in 1992 because they felt he was too close to Ankara. To parry this blow, President Aliev declared that he wanted to ban casinos in Azerbaijan, claiming that they went totally against the country’s culture and traditions. The Turkish “investors” then turned to the Turkish region of Antalya, which is exempt from the law banning casinos, and where real estate investments brought Topal into conflict with the Ciller clan in 1996. But it is chiefly in the northern part of Cyprus, where Topal had already opened the *Jasmin Casino* – advertised as the biggest in Europe – that the investors have chosen to go into business, even though on the face of it the environment seems inhospitable. About 20 casinos are scheduled to open there by the end of 1998.

But these cloak-and-dagger activities do not conceal other, far more effective, laundering mechanisms. It seems, as some sources of the MIT says, without giving any practical evidence, that the fundamentalist movement, such as the religious organization headed by the *Nur Tarikati* (spiritual leader) Fetullah Gülen, is responsible for laundering hundreds of millions dollars via the Persian Gulf countries and Pakistan. The funds, after successful laundering, are then invested in lucrative businesses (including banks, mass retailing, holding companies, etc.), but also in religious learning institutions, in particular in the Central Asian republics, in the Asia-Pacific region (China, Indonesia, etc.), and even Russia.

SWEDEN

Sweden joined the European Union in 1995 after long and heated internal discussions about whether the country should give up its independent position. Ironically, alcohol, drugs and tobacco were among the most hotly debated issues. The alcohol debate focused on whether membership would imply that the country abandon part of its policy where alcohol sales are the monopoly of the state and restricted to certain times and places. Discussions about tobacco evolved around *snus*, a type of chewing tobacco which is very popular in Sweden but banned in principle in the European Union. The debate over illegal substances focused fears: that EU membership would mean more drugs entering Sweden and a consequent increase in drug abuse, and on the other hand that the country would be forced to give up its restrictive drug control policy.

Sweden has become more “European” during the 1990s, a decade of change characterized by an economic recession threatening prosperity and the welfare state; a rise in unemployment leading to more

racism; and a lack of prospects for a large number of young people. This “Europeanization” was also felt in the field of drugs. The last few years have seen a marked increase in recreational drug use among youth and also in the use of hard drugs like heroin. The international trend toward the use of synthetic stimulants such as LSD, MDMA and amphetamine among the rave crowd has hit Sweden.

The amount of drugs seized in Sweden is fairly small compared to other European countries. This can be explained both by the small size of the Swedish population (8.8 million), and therefore of the consumer market for banned substances, and the country’s geographical position in the north of Europe. During the last few years, annual seizures averaged 500 to 600 kilograms of cannabis products, 20 kg to 30 kg of heroin, 50 kg of cocaine and more than 200 kg of amphetamine.

Amphetamine Consumption

When they were introduced in the late 1930s, amphetamine tablets could be bought legally over the counter. The substance was used to increase physical or mental capacities or as a slimming drug. By 1940, 200,000 people, or about 3% of the general population, used the drug one to four times a year, including an estimated 3000 abusers who took five to ten tablets a day. Gradually, increasing abuse led to the legislation becoming more restrictive, but a black market soon developed to supply users.

Like most other countries of Europe, Sweden experienced a rise in drug use during the 1960s. But while the recreational and utilitarian use of amphetamine tablets is still widespread and only rarely abusive, intravenous use of the stimulant has appeared in marginalized sectors of society often connected to criminal activity.

During the 1970s and 1980s it was said that most of the amphetamine available in Sweden came from the Netherlands, but over the last few years it has come essentially from Central and Eastern Europe. The “street” price of a gram is 300 kronor, or about US \$37. When 10 grams or more are purchased, the price per gram is normally half that amount, \$18.50. Usually, sales do not take place in the street but in apartments and illegal bars where users stock up for several days, unlike heroin addicts who often “score” one or two doses at a time. Amphetamine use among addicts is often irregular and use is followed by periods of rest mostly dedicated to making up for lost sleep. The period during which the drug is used may vary from three to ten days, depending on the individual’s mental and physical condition. Abusers inject amphetamine from four to six times per 24-hour period during which they are hyper-active and sleep little or not at all.

The Swedish authorities estimate that there is little cocaine consumption in the country. If this is true and if there are no “protected” users in Sweden contrary to the rest of Europe, the reason would probably be that another highly efficient stimulant, amphetamine, has cornered the market.

Heroin and Hashish Trafficking and Consumption

On average between 20 kg and 30 kg of heroin are seized in Sweden each year, mainly coming from Southeast Asia. No.4 heroin (“smack”) is probably smuggled by Chinese gangs obtaining supplies in Thailand and to a lesser extent the Philippines. The couriers are Asian and Swedish. The activities of the latter are made easier by a boom in Swedish tourism to Asia and Swedish and Scandinavian communities living in Thailand and the Philippines. New trafficking routes to Sweden seem to have been opened recently via China, Russia and then Finland or the Baltic states. Most addicts prefer white, No.4 heroin to “brown sugar” (No.3) because it is less complicated to inject. Injection is the most common form of

taking heroin in Sweden. However, because it is cheaper, brown heroin is winning market share especially as it can be melted in lemon juice.

A few years ago, 15% to 20% pure white and brown heroin were sold at similar prices of about \$60 for a 0.2-gram capsule and \$185 per gram. The lower prices currently observed for brown sugar are attributed to the activities of new importers, such as Kosovo Albanians, Iranians, Kurds, Turks and Yugoslavs, who are closer to the source than Swedish traffickers. According to the police, there are three main routes: the Eastern European route through the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Scandinavia; the Russian route; and the route used by African couriers via the airports of Dar es-Salaam and Nairobi.

Brown heroin in particular is conspicuously present on what has been Sweden's largest drug market for twenty years, Sergels Torg Square in central Stockholm, also known as the *Plattan*. The dealers come from various ethnic backgrounds, but in recent years Gambians have dominated the scene, notably because they have cut down the price of a dose of brown heroin from \$61 to \$37 and of a gram from \$185 to \$98.50. Because Gambia is a destination popular with Swedish tourists, a small Gambian community has settled in Sweden. Amphetamine, cannabis, methadone (\$24.50 a tablet), *Rohypnol*[®] (\$1.25 a tablet) and syringes can also be bought on the *Plattan*, which is a hangout for poorer drug users. Better off people buy drugs in apartments and use cellular phones.

During the last few years it was noted that some amphetamine addicts have switched to heroin. One possible explanation is that the long-term effects of amphetamine are exhausting, both mentally and physically. Furthermore, heroin has become more widely available, and use is developing not only among former amphetamine addicts but also as the drug of choice among young urban ghetto-dwellers.

The most commonly available cannabis derivative is Moroccan hashish, which reaches Sweden via various European countries, especially Denmark, the Netherlands, Germany and Spain. It often arrives in private automobiles smuggling batches of 20 kg to 50 kg at a time. The hashish available in Sweden is much more adulterated than in Denmark. The wholesale price of hashish in Sweden is around \$4400 a kilogram, and slabs of 100 grams to 125 grams sell for \$5 to \$6 a gram. At retail level, a gram costs \$7.50. As a result of tougher law enforcement, hashish sales have gradually left the streets and now take place in apartments.

A Drug-Free Society?

As early as 1977, the Swedish parliament adopted the objective of a "drug-free" society. Since, the policy implemented has grown in harshness. In 1989, simple use was penalized and in 1993 it was made punishable by 6 months imprisonment. Police were allowed to force people to undergo a urine test. At first sight, there seems to be a large consensus among the population in favor of a restrictive drug policy. However, this approach has recently come under attack from scientists, especially criminologists who have serious doubts about the social price to be paid for a drug-free Sweden.

By comparison to many other countries, drug use is not widespread in Sweden, even though the number of addicts has not stopped growing since its 1992 level of 17,000 (up from 12,000 in 1979). In 1996, 8% of schoolchildren admitted to having tried drugs at least once in their lifetime (in France the percentage is probably twice as high). Strangely, but perhaps explaining the fairly low prevalence of drug use among children, Sweden is the only country in Europe where the prevalence of solvents is higher than that of "classic" drugs. Surveys have shown that recreational use of drugs like LSD, ecstasy (MDMA) and amphetamine has increased among youths. Another recorded trend is the rise in the use of

smoked heroin among the poorer sectors of large cities. Although the authorities are still pursuing the goal of a drug-free society, it seems increasingly difficult to achieve.

SLOVAKIA AND THE CZECH REPUBLIC

The Czech Republic, largely because of its strategic location between eastern and western Europe, felt the effects of international trafficking and its repercussions on local consumption before its neighbor, Slovakia. Not only is Slovakia now “making up for lost time”, it has also witnessed the emergence of a new phenomenon common to both countries: joint ventures between traffickers of different nationalities or different ethnic backgrounds. In the Czech Republic, this primarily concerns agreements made between Arab suppliers and Czech groups relating to distribution within the domestic drug market. Czech nationals are also used by Turkish and Albanian mafia groups as couriers to take drugs from the Czech Republic to Western Europe. Slovakia has undergone a division of its distribution territories between Slovak, Ukrainian, and Kosovo Albanian criminal organizations. While Asian organized crime groups have yet to take pride of place, particularly in drug trafficking, they are nonetheless a potential threat not only inside the country, but, in the near future, for all of Europe⁶⁶.

Dividing Up of Drug Markets in Slovakia

The justice minister, questioned by OGD correspondents, said Slovakia had moved from being “a country for the transit and storage of narcotics to a country of consumption”. His words echoed the alarm raised by drug addiction centers, who have scant resources to cope with the problem. In 1996, the health ministry counted 2136 drug addicts, 892 of them hooked on heroin, but experts believe these figures are actually ten times higher. According to a poll conducted in June 1997, 10% of Slovaks and 20% of minors have tried drugs at least once in their lives. The scale of the problem is confirmed by the number of overdoses recorded. In the capital, Bratislava, ten addicts died of overdoses in the neighborhood of Petržalka alone in 1996 — double the figure for the previous year. In the country as a whole, the number of fatal overdoses rose from 10 in 1994 to 13 in 1995, 22 in 1996 and 7 in the first quarter of 1997.

The market for heroin (the most widely used drug) is supplied by networks from the Balkans route. Cocaine – an essential ingredient of the trendy parties given by intellectuals and artists – also comes from Turkey or is brought from Italy by Albanian clans. Several investigations have shown that ecstasy imported from Hungary can be found in the discotheques and nightclubs of big cities such as Bratislava and Kosice. Marijuana is also widely used, as shown by the seizure near the capital of 740 kilograms intended for the internal market. It is popular among secondary school pupils.

As for trafficking, police have so far arrested only a few small-time dealers, most of them gypsies. The wholesalers, who belong to criminal gangs, are out of reach – although it is known that in the Petržalka neighborhood they work out of apartments where practically anyone can walk in and buy drugs. According to some accounts, these gangs are in collusion with certain police officers. Meanwhile the “godfathers” remain in the shadows, organizing the division of their “territories” among gangs of Slovaks, Ukrainians, and ethnic Albanians from the Serbian province of Kosovo. Slovak drug and

⁶⁶ The activities of Nigerian networks in the Czech Republic were covered in WGD (1995-1996), pp. 75-76.

money laundering gangs control gambling clubs, brothels and security companies. This was the case of Robert Holub, the presumed leader of the Kosice mafia, who was shot dead on October 5, 1997 after escaping three earlier attempts on his life, and of Jozef Sykora, dubbed “il capo di tutti capi”, who was killed in a shootout outside Bratislava’s *Holiday Inn* in February.

A number of cases show that Slovakia has also become a transit territory for narcotics. In April 1997, an organization trying to import 7.5 kg of cocaine from Curaçao was dismantled. The drugs were to have been re-exported to Austria. On January 9, 1998, two Germans were arrested in possession of 11.39 kg of heroin while preparing to cross into Austria at the Petrzalka-Berg border post near Bratislava. The largest seizure took place on January 29, 1998, and involved nearly 13 metric tons of marijuana. The drugs were seized near the Slovak capital in a container loaded on a truck and declared as having come from Atlanta, Georgia in the United States. Those arrested in the case included two Slovaks, one Czech, and a Colombian. The marijuana was to be stored in a warehouse belonging to a farming cooperative in Mojmirovce. Police were able to reconstruct the drugs’ route: The Colombian-grown marijuana was transported to Florida via Panama. It was discharged in the German port of Bremen and loaded onto the Slovakian truck before its seizure.

Arab Dealers and the “Czech Underworld”

The Czech Republic is several years ahead of its neighbor in dealing with all the problems caused by drugs, and is better organized to cope. On August 7, during “Operation Chodec”, Czech police arrested one of the leading figures in Prague drug trafficking circles, a 28-year-old Serb who was supplying heroin to about 20 Arab wholesalers (Lebanese, Palestinians and North Africans) near central Wenceslas Square. About 100 Czech dealer-users were working for the wholesalers and the Serb gang supplied around 2000 daily doses to this network.

A few months earlier, as part of “Operation Bila Cesta”, police dismantled another network made up of Albanians, Arabs, Germans and Czechs who were selling heroin and *Pervitine* (methamphetamine) in Prague and several German cities. Police investigations and a series of similar operations led to a number of worrying findings. During the first half of the 1990s, Arab dealers had moved from selling cannabis derivatives (mainly hashish) to heroin and *Pervitine*. The gangs, who from the boss to the dealers on the street used to be all Arabs, are now working increasingly closely with the Czech underworld: they employ Czech dealers, hire the services of Czech chemists to produce *Pervitine* for the local market and use Czech couriers to transport the drug, especially when it is imported from North Africa. On the other hand, Arab gangs act as go-betweens for Balkan trafficking organizations. Arab-Balkan organizations are now tending to expand their activities outside the Czech Republic, mainly to Germany and other European Union countries. These new joint ventures in the drug business have the advantage of being able to react to market demands with a great deal of flexibility, and of being stronger in the face of increasing competition.

Balkan Networks and Czech Subcontractors

“Operation Channel”, the result of cooperation between the Czech police and their British and Norwegian counterparts, was brought to a conclusion in May 1998. Not only did it lead to the seizure of 470 kilograms of heroin over seven years (including 120 kg in the Czech Republic); it also provided a wealth of information about changes that had come about on the Balkans Route during the same period.

The heroin was taken from Turkey to the Czech Republic in large trucks, then transferred to Czech trucks – less likely to arouse suspicion than if they had come from Turkey – and driven to the United Kingdom. What was new about this is that the last stretch of the route was controlled by Czechs who had reached a long-term agreement with the Turkish maffya. In the United Kingdom, the drug was delivered to Turkish networks. This method confirmed the lessons learned during “Operation Original” in 1997, when the Czech police uncovered a gang made up only of Czechs specializing in the transportation of heroin from the Czech Republic to Germany and Switzerland. Although trucks are the means of transport most commonly used, Czech travel agencies are also beginning to make buses available to carry drugs.

Meanwhile, European police have established that the “mixed-nationality networks” are also very active in the east of central Europe, operating out of Poland and Hungary and controlled by nationals of both countries. The division of labor along the Balkans Route has therefore become both systematic and very professional.

There are various other ways of getting heroin across the Czech Republic. Large quantities are taken on board vehicles which do nothing but cross the country along the northern branch of the Balkans Route — although this method is being used less frequently nowadays. On the other hand, it is becoming more common for large quantities of heroin to be taken into the Czech Republic by truck before being divided into smaller packets of between 5 kg and 10 kg and given to couriers to take into Schengen Europe. Some gangs prefer to split the drug between about ten couriers, often Turks or ethnic Albanians from Kosovo, in order to minimize the risks.

The role taken by the Czech Republic in transporting drugs along the Balkans Route and the possibility that the country may join the European Union have meant that many traffickers, both large and small, are trying to move there. A favorite way of doing this is through marriages of convenience, which can be arranged for between US \$3000 and \$6000. Another method is to open a business in the country. Police suspect that many people who make and sell Albanian gold jewellery are actually drug traffickers. It has also been noticed that such individuals have a tendency to get involved in the world of Czech politics and finance. The first wave of traffickers have now invested in legal businesses after making their fortune from drugs. This is reportedly what happened to five “businessmen” from Kosovo whom police suspect of being behind campaigns led by some politicians and newspapers against certain officials in the drug squad. These suspicions were confirmed with the breaking up of one of the primary Kosovan heroin trafficking networks in mid-June 1998. Within the framework of “Operation Magar,” some 20 persons, mostly from Kosovo, were arrested. Most of the arrests took place in the Czech Republic, but also in Germany, and 40,000 doses of heroin were seized. Among those arrested was the head of the gang, a Kosovan businessman from Kosovo living for many years in the Czech Republic, as well as Czechs, Polish, and Bulgarian nationals.

Asian Narcotics Networks

Vietnamese immigration to the Czech Republic was initially organized by the governments of the two countries beginning in 1975 within the framework of the Assistance Program to Suffering Vietnam. It was a means for Vietnam to pay for the large amounts of military aid extended to it by the Czech Republic during Vietnam’s war of liberation. The appearance of the first Asian criminal networks followed the establishment of this program, which involved the immigration of some 100,000 Vietnamese. While the first “volunteer labourers” were youths relatively well prepared for their tasks in the Czech Republic, by the second half of the 1980s the difficulty with finding qualified workers forced

the Vietnamese government to send juvenile delinquents picked up on the streets of Hanoi and Saigon. The workers were paid only a portion of their salaries in the Czech Republic. The remainder was paid to them on their return to Vietnam. As a result, many workers quickly sought additional work, in particular smuggling and the sale of Asian goods.

Beginning in 1989, many of the Vietnamese who should have returned to their country decided to stay in the Czech Republic, or to emigrate to Western countries. They were in turn joined by a new wave of immigrants from Vietnam. Some lived underground, while others acquired Czech citizenship through arranged marriages.

Though many of these Vietnamese are trying hard to integrate into the society, gangs made up of from three to 20 members have nevertheless sprung up among the community. But there are also “imported” gangs coming from the United States or other East European countries, such as Russia and Ukraine. Between 10 and 15 of these Vietnamese groups are estimated to be operating in the Czech Republic as a whole. The best known are Black Son, Nguyen Van Hien, and the Flying Dragons. The latter, made up of Vietnamese of Chinese origin (Viet Chings), are probably a branch of the New York organization with the same name.

The “soldiers” making up these gangs are subject to numerous pressures on the streets, from the police and from rival gangs. Many have sought an escape through drug consumption. As this trend took off, Vietnamese dealers specialized in the purchase of small quantities of drugs (marijuana, hashish, and *Pervitine*) from Czech, Arab, and Balkan distributors for sale within the Vietnamese community. They eventually worked their way up the trafficking hierarchy to become distribution middle men. They purchase, for example, heroin from importers of Balkan origin, then sell this on to Arab or Czech street dealers. In addition, Chinese Triads (in particular the Red Sun and 14K) have made Prague their bridgehead for penetrating Western Europe, in preparation for the Chinese takeover of Hong Kong. Unlike in Moscow, the Triads do not have to compete with a powerful local mafia in Prague. The Triads’ spheres of activity include illegal laborers, prostitution, and drug trafficking. They invest their profits in real estate. The arrival of the Chinese on the wholesale drug market has consolidated the Vietnamese’ position. The Chinese can deliver from 10 kg to 15 kg of heroin each week, hidden inside legal imports of consumer goods, to the Vietnamese groups. In general, since the early 1990s, Vietnamese have been recruited by the Chinese to fill different roles: translators, handy men, vendors, etc. But, slowly, the Vietnamese have acquired their independence and deal with the Triads on equal terms in order to divide up the control of territory or spheres of activity. They could serve as a bridgehead for a new wave of Asian immigration to the Schengen states of Europe.

FRANCE AND FRENCH ANTILLES/GUYANA

After several years of resistance and foot-dragging, France now seems to be moving towards harmonizing its prevention and risk reduction policies with those of other European countries. The many programs put in place to distribute substitute products (mainly buprenorphine) have already had a positive impact on heroin consumption, and the Central Office for the Repression of Illicit Drug Trafficking (OCRTIS) reports that seizures of heroin have fallen for three years running.

The socialist government has nonetheless taken some time to implement its drug control measures. It took 15 months to nominate magistrate Nicole Maestracci to head up the Interministerial Drug and Addiction Control Mission (MILDT), which coordinates the various aspects of the antidrug war — and

this only after the prime minister assured the conservative president that decriminalization of cannabis was not on the agenda.

But several ministers, backed by at least two expert reports, are now raising the issue of the “comparative danger” of some banned substances as against legal drugs: tobacco, some psychotropic medications – of which the French are the world’s biggest users – and alcohol. They are calling for a debate with a view to “improving the 1970 drug control act”.

While the data on falling heroin consumption, which is the main concern of enforcement agencies, are encouraging, the figures also show an increase in the abuse of all other drugs, especially stimulants such as cocaine and cannabis derivatives. All the agencies involved in combating addiction agree that polydrug use and trafficking⁶⁷ are on an upswing. A survey carried out by OGD in the Greater Paris region showed that the increasingly general use of several drugs is opening up new markets for heroin traffickers, who are mainly Turkish nationals based outside France. They sell the drug to smaller wholesalers supplying middle-class users who are not identified as drug addicts and do not live only in the run-down neighborhoods of Paris and its suburbs.

Risk reduction agencies concentrate mostly on heroin, which leaves them less time to think about crack use. The fact is that this cocaine product, which is far and away the most popular drug in France’s Overseas Departments (DOM) in the Antilles, has never made a significant breakthrough in the capital. The very widespread use of crack in the Antilles brings with it a host of public security problems, forcing local enforcement officers to concentrate on the domestic market. This means that not enough attention is paid to clamping down on big-time trafficking in the region, which is the major entry point for cocaine hydrochloride into French territory.

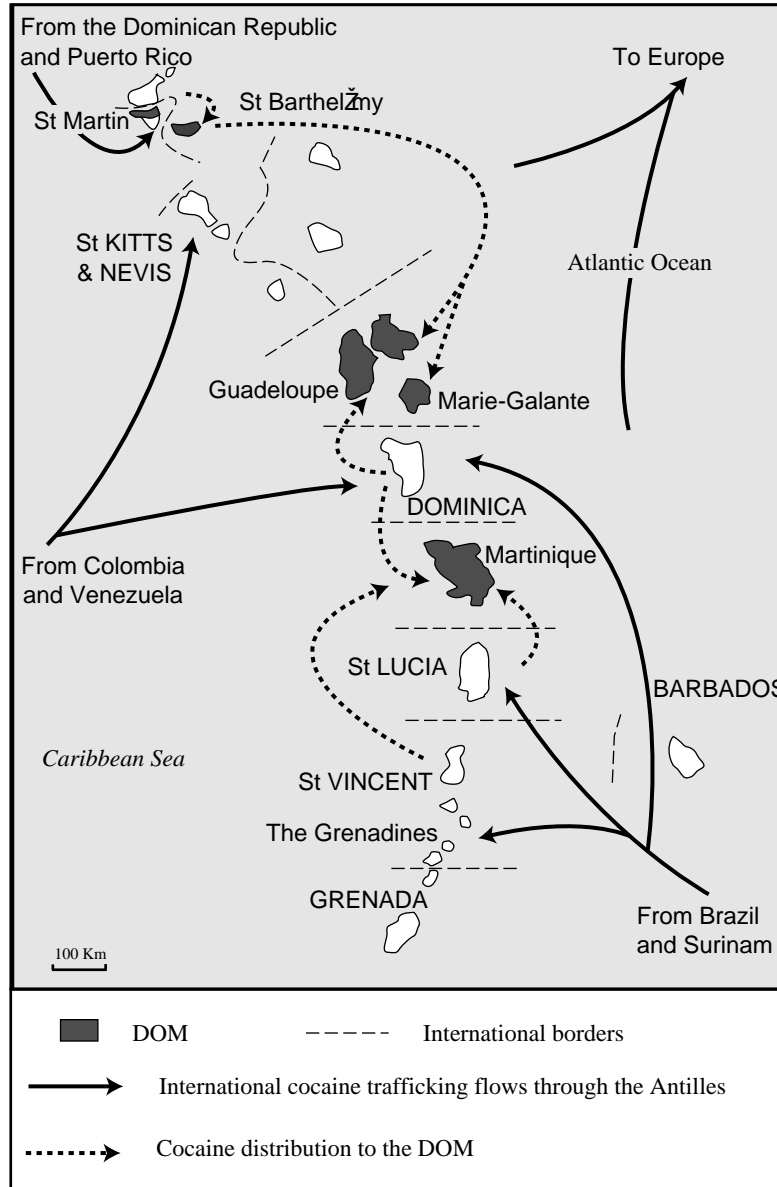
A Changing Attitude to the Drug Problem

While the number of users arrested keeps on climbing (to more than 70,000 in 1997) and account for 80% of all those arrested on drug-related charges, important changes are taking place in the prevention and risk reduction effort. The first concerns the drug control community itself, which at a series of seminars and meetings during 1997 made common cause in urging the state to follow a policy that is more coherent and puts more emphasis on prevention. The full range of independent institutions, NGOs and bodies working in the health-care sector stressed on several occasions that there was a need to reform the relevant legal framework, especially the 1970 basic law, which they said was “too focused on enforcement structures and had been overtaken by events”. In a parallel move, non-profit and medical organizations involved in risk and harm reduction policy got together in June 1997 to create the French Association for the Reduction of risks linked to drug use (AFR) with the aim of coordinating the whole sector and bolstering regional and local efforts. But it must be noted that these bodies work almost exclusively on the admittedly very important, but by no means only, issue of dependence on heroin and synthetic opiates, and the problems encountered in providing substitutes for them.

Debate within the state apparatus, including the presidency, the government and the senate, which had previously been muted, has now turned into an open conflict between those who believe that any discussion of alternatives to prohibition is premature and dangerous, and those who want to see changes in the 1970 basic law. A leading light among the reformers is health minister Bernard Kouchner, who has found support for his views in a report on comparative drug hazards by Professor Bernard Roques, a

⁶⁷ See the chapter on “PolydrugTrafficking and PolydrugUse in the United Kingdom: A Model for Europe?”.

member of the French Academy of Science, which shook up conventional wisdom on the subject. The report suggests a new scale for assessing the dangerousness of drugs, on which alcohol and psychostimulants figure only slightly below heroin but on the same level as cocaine, and cannabis use involves fewer risks than smoking tobacco.



Map 8: Drug trafficking and international borders in the Lesser Antilles

The debate in France now includes discussion of the overconsumption of medication (which swells the social security budget deficit as well as endangering those who abuse the drugs) and of performance-enhancing substances such as nandrolone, stanozolol, methandrostenolone and testosterone, which are now used not only by top athletes but also by polydrug users⁶⁸.

Prevention policy is increasingly less focused on the Paris region: several others, including Nord-Pas de Calais (near the Benelux border), which has high addiction levels, have either included a drug strategy in their urban management policies or are carrying out in-depth epidemiological studies and strengthening their prevention structures (Seine-Saint-Denis in the Paris suburbs, Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur in the southeast, and regions in the southwest and east of the country).

The development of an effective risk-reduction policy and the results of several studies showing the steep rise in polydrug use indicate that consumption patterns in France are shifting. Multi-drug use by its nature indicates that consumers seem to be reacting in an increasingly opportunistic way to what drugs are available on the market. They are no longer taking just one drug because they are dependent on it but choosing what to take according to what they are doing (work, sex, sport, partying, etc.). Polydrug use is thus leading to a "utilitarian" mentality, the first consequence of which is to minimize the importance of drug-taking. No product is ruled out *a priori* by such users. This tendency to try anything, which for some users is a kind of "drug gastronomy", is contributing to a fragmentation of supply networks. OGD, aware that the drugs market is now extremely fragmented, has launched a survey in the Paris region. The results, although preliminary, still give some pointers to new trends in supply.

The Paris Drugs Market

Several general observations should be made first of all: in the 20 *arrondissements* (districts) of Paris, from the most blue-collar to the classiest, all drugs can be found, ranging from the day-to-day to the "exotic" such as mescaline, DMT (dimethyltryptamine) and Amazonian ayahuasca. There are still street dealers in the "problem" districts in the north and east (10th, 18th, 19th and 20th) and even in the well-off west, south-west and center of the capital. But the general trend throughout the city, even in the "problem" districts, is towards selling from apartments and home delivery. Along some major subway and bus routes (see map) sales apartments have been set up, usually dealing in a combination of drugs: most often heroin/cocaine/cannabis derivatives, but also heroin/speed (amphetamine sulphate), cannabis derivatives/amphetamines, etc. The apartment dealers, even if they generally handle only one product, such as heroin for smoking or sniffing, can usually quickly get hold of another drug, especially cocaine, if customers ask them. They may also vary their range, selling heroin one month, then switching to another drug with very different effects, such as cocaine or speed. Cocaine hydrochloride and crack are complementary; when there is a shortage of crack, hydrochloride is processed on the spot, but dealers switch back to crack when it becomes available again.

As our analysis "Heroin Networks and Markets in Europe" shows⁶⁹, large volumes of all products are usually stockpiled outside France. Small-time wholesalers, regarded as "upscale narcotourists", generally restock once a month, or they may make special trips as representatives of a group of consumers. The "Amsterdam model" now operates between France and Spain (Catalonia and the Basque country), Portugal, Switzerland and the United Kingdom (often in both directions in this case). But supplies of relatively small quantities also come from the Antilles (cocaine), Tunisia and Egypt (heroin and synthetic

⁶⁸ See GWD (1995-1996).

⁶⁹ See the chapter on "Heroin Markets and Networks in Europe" and map.

drugs) and Central Europe – the Czech Republic and Hungary – especially for synthetic drugs, and MDMA in particular, usually produced in the Netherlands. So the market is supplied from many sources, some as far away as sub-Saharan Africa: for example, tourist countries such as Senegal and Côte d’Ivoire, where “family” structures operating in just one neighborhood buy and sell drugs and launder the profits (see map).

Sometimes, dealers organize stockpiles within France to avoid being picked up on the most closely watched routes between Paris and the frontiers, using cities with good access to the Paris region, such as Tours, Auxerre and Nantes, as storage depots.

Although large numbers of narcotourists are intercepted crossing the borders with the Benelux countries carrying a few grams of drugs, those smuggling amounts of between 100 and 300 grams of cocaine or heroin are rarely arrested, because they are very well organized, use perfectly planned hiding places, do not travel over weekends when police and customs officers are on the lookout for narcotourists, and are prepared to make long detours, through Germany for example.

The consumers questioned by OGD investigators are usually in the mid-salary range (8000 to 15,000 francs a month — US \$1300 to \$2500), are socially integrated, and regularly use most drugs, with a preference for smoking or sniffing heroin (at least twice a week). They use drugs in a very utilitarian way; an extreme example is the techno music creator who uses speed to compose aggressive numbers, heroin for more rhythmic sounds and hashish for “softer” music.

This diversity of products and supply sources contributes to creating tightly closed-off neighborhood “pockets” which can only be identified by looking at the prices charged — which in general are moving steadily down. For example, an apartment dealer in the 18th arrondissement near place de Clichy, who has been in the business for more than 10 years, sells marijuana and hashish semi-wholesale, plus half a kilogram each of heroin and cocaine per month. This type of dealer buys in Rotterdam and sells retail in Paris at the following prices:

Moroccan hashish: FF300 (\$50) for 12 grams; FF500 for 25 grams, FF3500 for a 250-gram “bar”; and FF10-12,000 per kilo.

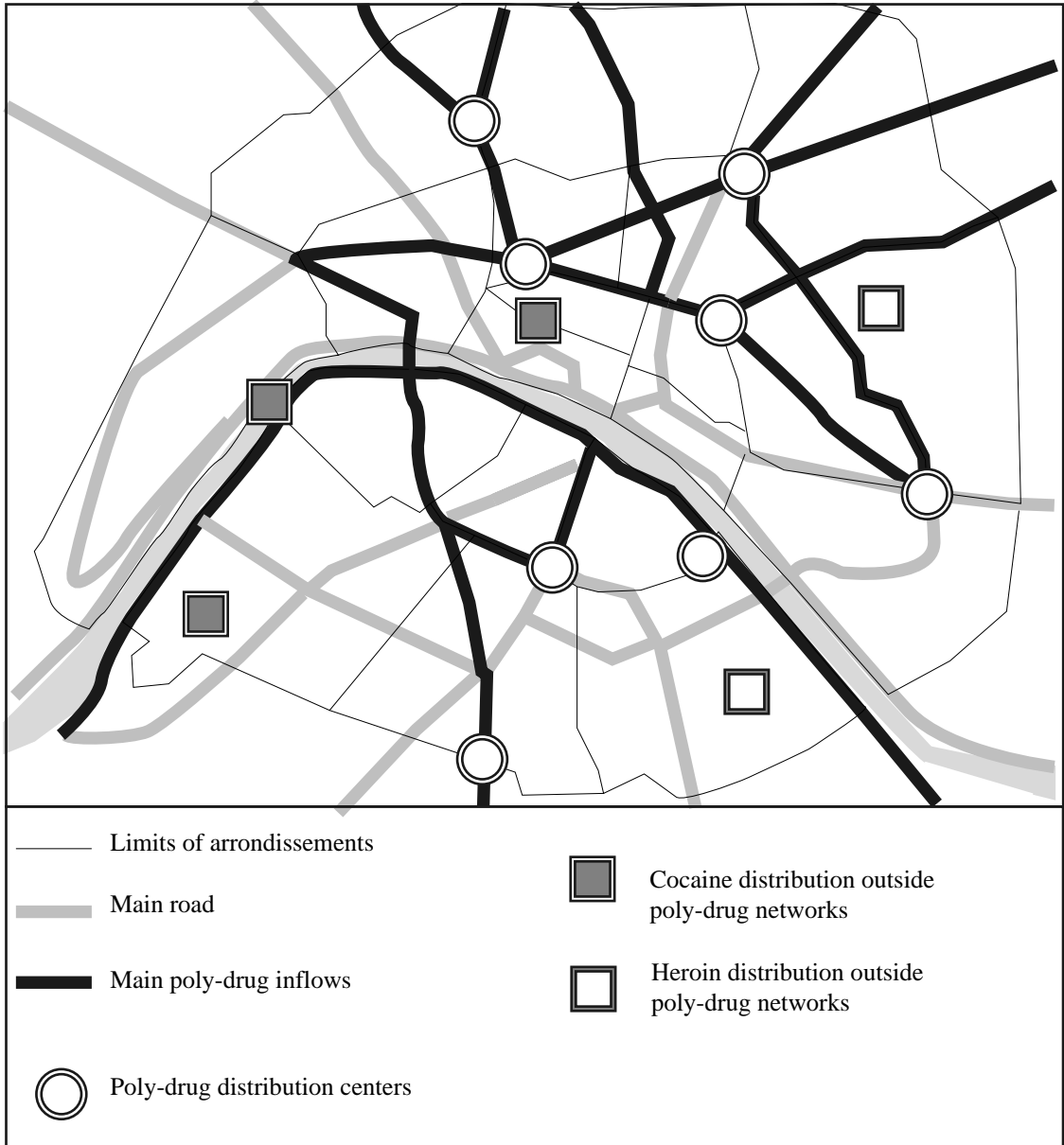
Heroin (brown sugar): FF300 gram; FF1000-1200 for 5 grams (“standard” quality); and FF6000 for 25 grams of high-quality “rock” heroin.

Cocaine: FF500 a gram; FF2000 for 5 grams; FF4000 for 10 grams; and FF15,000 for 50 grams.

This type of dealer gives accurate weight and the products are good quality and not cut.

His cocaine prices are not very different from those of street dealers in, for example, the nearby Barbès neighborhood (FF500 a gram), but this street cocaine is very impure and a “gram” never weighs more than 0.6 gram. Heroin can be found in Barbès for FF350 per so-called gram, but it is 50 % adulterated.

Another dealer, who “turned professional” by force of circumstance when his fellow-consumers tapped him to supply them, and who operates in the République area of the 10th arrondissement, sells very pure cocaine at FF400 a gram and charges just FF3500 for 10 grams. He now has a steady clientele and moves at least a kilogram a month. But he never ventures outside the République area. He buys in Barcelona, Spain, at FF60,000 per kilogram. He can provide white heroin if asked, but only in small quantities, at FF500 per (real) gram.



Map 9: Poly-drug networks in Paris

OGD has many such examples. They show clearly that suppliers nowadays very often provide a range of drugs and that a majority do not restrict their trade to the three staples (heroin, cocaine and cannabis derivatives) but also sell speed, MDMA, and even anabolic steroids. However, they always limit their operations to one neighborhood or to a known group of consumers. This does not prevent a gradual standardization of prices, but product purity is not necessarily uniform. The situation is different in some towns close to Paris, such as Versailles, where heroin seems to be at least 20% dearer but cocaine (sold in 100-gram deals), MDMA and speed are comparatively cheaper.

This non-exhaustive OGD survey, which aimed to map drug prices in Paris, has thus brought to light a population of consumers that fall outside previously-recognized patterns. OGD suspects that traffickers are now alert to consumption trends and are broadening their product range. The survey also showed that almost all the consumers questioned had already had brushes with the police, but only for using cannabis, and that not one of them had ever been in trouble for using heroin or cocaine. First results from another survey begun in 1998 in provincial cities (Strasbourg, Lille and Toulouse) indicate that the situation described in Paris seems to be duplicated in other French cities. In contrast, the scene is very different in cities in the Overseas Departments (DOM), especially in the French Antilles, where OGD also carried out a survey in 1998.

Crack Diverts Attention

Seizures of cocaine in the Antilles point to two apparently contradictory trends, according to the OCRTIS annual report. On the one hand, the number of seizures (especially of crack) in Guadeloupe, Martinique and Guyana is rising. They are mostly small or middling hauls of drugs intended mainly for the local market. On the other hand, there are fewer and fewer big hauls comparable to those made in the first half of the 1990s.

And yet cocaine trafficking is intensifying throughout the Caribbean region. According to Jean-Michel Louboutin, head of the French regional criminal police department (SRPJ), out of the 10-12 tons of cocaine that are shipped from Latin America to the United States and Europe every week, nearly 10% passes through the Antilles/Guyana DOM, most of it bound for the Schengen area. The problem is that so much crack is being used within the region, especially by young people, that the 4500-odd police, gendarmerie, customs and navy officers engaged in the fight against drugs have been forced to most some of their attention to the local market, which explains their lackluster results in stemming the large-scale transit traffic.

The fact is that in just ten years, the region has been transformed from a transit area into a significant consumer market. In 1997, of the 908 people convicted of drugs offenses in the Antilles/Guyana departments, 263 were user/retailers and 424 were simply users. And most of the 221 traffickers arrested were couriers supplying the local market. While five years ago, crack consumption was restricted to the depressed “suburban ghettos” like the Boissard neighborhood in Guadeloupe, suffering massive unemployment (there are more than 50,000 jobless in Guadeloupe itself, or one worker in three), now the drug is used in almost all the department’s islands. Grande-Terre, one half of the butterfly-shaped island, is no doubt the most badly-affected area, but the more residential areas in the other half, Basse-Terre, are no longer spared. Worse still, the OGD special envoy investigating towns such as Capesterre and Grand-Bourg on Marie-Galante, a peaceful island far removed from the problems of the capital, Pointe-à-Pitre, met schoolchildren who had been smoking crack since the age of fourteen. The same goes for Saint-Barthélemy and Saint-Martin, but in these two islands, even though they have a flourishing tourist industry and thus less unemployment, the pressure of trafficking is so

heavy that the problem can be “explained”; the French sectors of Saint-Barthélemy and Saint-Martin seem to be support bases for the international cocaine trade targeting Guadeloupe’s now considerable crack market.

During a well-attended multidisciplinary seminar on crack organized by the Ministry of Employment and Solidarity at Pointe-à-Pitre in June 1998, all the government departments and NGOs involved in reducing supply and demand painted a somber picture of the situation. Pierre Poirret, the Pointe-à-Pitre chief prosecutor, said: “It all depends where you’re standing. From the sea, Guadeloupe looks like a paradise; on land, it’s a hell. Paradoxically, the legal system has not really come into contact with crack until now, apart from dealing with the increase in violence, thefts and murders that are in part attributable to it”. The police, overwhelmed by this flood of violence, are increasingly involved in a struggle to limit the effects of drug abuse and dealing that penalize the whole population, and are unable to commit themselves fully to drug-control operations as such. While there is a regional police squad dealing almost exclusively with this public order problem, there is as yet no specialized unit to combat drug trafficking. Jean-Michel Louboutin believes the problem stems from the environment of the Overseas Departments. He said: “Collaboration within the European Union works, more or less, but the same does not go for the independent islands, the offshore tax havens, where we often come up against passive resistance and almost systematic blunt refusals to cooperate. It is no coincidence that men involved in financial scandals in France, such as Didier Schuller and Patrick Balkany, take refuge there”. Located on the trafficking routes from Surinam, Dominica, the Dominican Republic and especially Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (incidentally a big cannabis producer) and Saint Lucia, the DOM have to deal with fragmented smuggling by fishermen/couriers in ultra-fast boats who are often paid in kind. It seems therefore that Guadeloupe is paying the price for the body-blows dealt to the organized cartels (it was at Pointe-à-Pitre that Pablo Escobar was for the first time symbolically convicted, in his absence).

Almost all the large hauls involving several tons were the result of international police cooperation, especially with the US DEA, whose priority target was the Colombian cartels. All the agency’s enforcement resources and all the information it communicated were therefore aimed at bringing down the barons of Medellín and Cali. After the blows they suffered in 1993 and 1995, the cartels gave a slice of the trafficking action to a host of operators who barter their “local knowledge” for a share of the cocaine — admittedly a small share, but enough to supply a market that the couriers are charged with expanding. Their smaller-scale structures attract less interest from the DEA. At the same time, the United States, after putting considerable pressure on the government of Colombia to break up the country’s two major cartels, seems less inclined to exert the same amount of effort in Mexico, Brazil or the Central American countries which have taken over the redistribution of cocaine, often via the Caribbean region. Despite the strong commitments made in the June 1998 final declaration of the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on fighting drugs, the Caribbean offshore states are being subjected to far less pressure than the Colombians. The DEA operations targeting them produce only one-off, if sometimes spectacular, results that do not challenge the outlaw status of the French Antillean departments’ neighbors. And some of the DEA’s anti-trafficking operations come close to provocation of the French authorities; one French fisherman’s vessel was inspected using strong-arm methods by a DEA helicopter in French territorial waters, without any warning.

Crack Goes into Orbit in Guyana

The fragmentation of the market and its takeover by local operators, most of whom are still nationals of countries near the French Antilles, has thus had negative consequences for the DOM. Crack processed

locally from imported hydrochloride is now sold for FF40-50 a rock. While the vast majority of the crack users arrested are unemployed or from problem families, as shown by many epidemiological mini-studies in problem neighborhoods and prisons by institutional and NGO workers, they are not the only ones affected by the drug. In more protected social circles, such as the schools and even the military, there are clear signs that no-one is really immune from the epidemic. For example, several soldiers, some of them in the Foreign Legion, have been discreetly sent back home, and the networks supplying them from Guyana have been identified. The local justice and social affairs departments and some NGOs have pointed out that implementation of a local prevention and risk reduction policy is blocked by the fact that in France all resources are mainly targeted on heroin and that there is no substitute product for crack. In this context, the fact that cannabis, which is the drug of choice for 70% of users questioned in the abovementioned studies, is increasingly giving way to crack is the most disturbing trend. According to Dr Klein of the Saint-Laurent-de-Maroni hospital, the inhabitants of the Guyanese villages along the border with Surinam, who traditionally smoked cannabis, have now turned to using crack almost exclusively. Although crack is the major threat, that has not prevented the emergence of other, more discreet, consumption habits; among the Antilles/Guyana drug users arrested in 1997, 21% smoked crack but 10% were cocaine users. Some doctors treating socially integrated patients say that smoking or sniffing heroin is no longer an exceptional practice. There are now a small number of addicts who also abuse this drug.

BELGIUM

Caught in a vice between the two countries with the most extreme antidrug policies of the European Union, Belgium opted for a “third way” in mid-April 1998. Though very similar on many points to the Dutch policy, Belgium’s new initiative nevertheless allows it to transcend the persistent antagonism between the Netherlands and France. On the basis of long reflection within the Parliament, whose first efforts were concluded in June 1997, the Minister of Justice distributed a constraining directive to all Belgian Public Prosecutors’ Offices reaffirming the criminal nature of cannabis possession for personal consumption in Belgium. There will thus be no *stricto sensu* legalization of cannabis in Belgium. But at the same time the directive insists that law enforcement authorities give this offense “the lowest priority.” In practice, cannabis consumers and those in possession of the drug for personal use are no longer subject to criminal prosecution, with the Courts nevertheless reserving the right to intervene in the case of a “problematic consumer” (defined as “persistent, regular use, dependency, addiction, deficient socio-economic integration or crisis situations”) or when arrest is accompanied by “social disturbance or the likely risk of social disturbance” (“pollution, disturbing the peace, verbal abuse, harassment, public narcotics consumption and/or being under the influence of narcotics while in public”). According to an appendice to the Justice Minister’s directive, the quantity of cannabis which should be considered for personal use seems to be under “seven grams of grass.”

Criticism from All Sides

Belgium differed considerably from the Netherlands in refusing, with large parliamentary support, any initiative calling for the creation of coffee shops or the controlled sale of cannabis by a government agency. The idea of limited and assisted sales of cannabis, under the responsibility of social aid community centers, has been dropped in Belgium. But through the criteria of “social disturbance”, Belgium answered the wishes of nearby Dutch towns, which want to get rid of narco-tourists, mainly

Belgians, who are considered a problem in the Netherlands and bring into doubt even the continuing operation of coffee-shops there.

Taking into account such delicate but necessary aspects as “deficient socio-economic integration”, and not wishing to be dragged into the drug legalization debate, the Belgian Justice Minister’s directive in effect makes parents and teachers responsible, without however widely distributing the results of the parliamentary debate which preceded the decision to the public. Reactions were varied, ranging from misunderstanding to radical opposition. Supporters of greater liberalization of illegal substances, and not only of cannabis, also made their dissatisfaction known. They considered that the politicians (and in particular the Flemish Social-Christians who opposed a straight-forward legalization at the last minute) had blocked a wider-ranging reform of Belgium’s antidrug policy. As no challenge held up the application of the directive, it was extended with the simultaneous writing of a pilot parliamentary bill by the Secretary of State responsible for Road Safety. The pilot bill focused on the detection of driving while under the influence of any drug (whether legal, illegal, for medical purposes, or not). Along the same lines, the pilot bill aimed at determining the impact threshold of various narcotic substances on driving, as well as to produce test equipment allowing law enforcement to detect possible infringements. As the pilot bill does not take into account the use of drugs, but instead only their influence on driving an automobile, Belgium could thus move toward the beginnings of standardization in the use of certain narcotics.

Cannabis is Not Alone

Is the process irreversible? While the Belgian directive received the blessing of the then Justice and Interior Ministers, another, unrelated, event (the brief escape from jail of the pedophile Marc Dutroux) resulted in the simultaneous resignations of the two ministers one week after the entry into force of the new text law was scheduled to take place. Two months later, the new Interior Minister, opposed to both his predecessor (though both share similar political ideas) and to his own parliamentary group, announced his personal opposition to the adopted law. The minister, who has little previous experience in narcotics matters, has nevertheless not announced a formal action aimed at returning to the *status quo ante*.

From a legal point of view, and without complicating matters by considering the prison situation or the simple administration of Public Prosecutors’ Offices, the current Belgian policy appears difficult to reverse. Olivier H., a small cannabis user arrested while in possession of a very small quantity of that drug, refused to pay the settlement offered him by the Brussels Public Prosecutor’s Office. He consequently found himself appearing in a criminal court, before the publication of the Justice Ministry’s directive. At that point the debate rapidly focused on the particular prejudice suffered by Olivier H. compared to a user of alcohol, or any other legal substance, if he was to be convicted. An interlocutory question was at that moment addressed to the Arbitration Court, which to date has not yet given its response. The Olivier H. court proceedings, along with any other proceedings of that type, are as a result suspended until at least 1999, this hypothetical date having been set in connection with the accused’s claim for a trial.

With Belgium’s antidrug policy remaining unchanged, even reinforced, regarding enforcement of the sale, sale to minors, trafficking, and any criminal activity linked to drugs, it is frequently ignored that the April directive also concerns “other illegal drugs”, and not only cannabis and its derivatives. Belgium now considers that the “limited possession” of these drugs (heroin, cocaine, ecstasy, etc.), with the intent to use them a single time or only occasionally, must lead (after the writing up of a report) either to

a closing of the case with a referral of the user to the existing aid services, or to the termination of the public proceedings after financial settlement. Cases where the accused “is or risks becoming a problematic user” are excepted from this.

Cannabis was not the sole subject of the national debate. Following the examples of Switzerland and the Netherlands, the controlled distribution of heroin to heavy heroin addicts under the pretext of scientific research was the subject of an initial university study for the cities of Antwerp, Brussels, and Liege. In Liege the project was to wind up in the autumn of 1998, and was supported by a strong community consensus. But not taken into account was the double opposition based on legal and safety issues. Objection on legal grounds surfaced from the start and took on an official nature. Without displaying any deep-rooted opposition, the Liege Public Prosecutor’s Office seems to have tripped up on a legal obstacle in which the pretext of “scientific experimentation” proved thin in regard to the real expectations of participants and the needs of drug addicts.

The opposition displayed by the new Minister of Interior at the end of the initial study in July 1998 was much more radical. The minister was unable to veto the partial green light given by his predecessor for the initial study. But nothing forced him to breath life into the project either. The abrupt end to the project was all the more brutal in that it resulted from a personal decision, and does not reflect the real differences in Belgium’s parliamentary or partisan debate.

The Debate Remains Open

However the end of the project may not be definitive. A political, social, and scientific willingness to see the project through to the end continues, as witnessed by the existence of projects in both French- and Flemish-speaking areas of the country and Brussels. In addition, the Interior Minister’s portfolio is to be re-assigned in June 1999 at the latest. Another factor is the availability of budget funds. Liege registered its project within the framework of “Security Contracts”, held by the Interior Ministry for essentially financial reasons. For lack of immediate budgetary means, the Department of Health has demonstrated its firm desire to become involved in the controlled distribution of heroin. It is thus possible that a similar project, on a smaller scale, could come to fruition with funding from another budget. Whatever the result, Liege, Antwerp, and Brussels have lost at least one year in establishing the project.

The renewed popularity of this project nevertheless depends on a solution to another, this time communal, problem which returned to the scene when the Liege project was halted. The classic administration of methadone does not enjoy a large consensus in Belgium’s Flemish-speaking Flanders region. Several Flemish voices were consequently raised to force a new debate on the subject, before any moves were made on heroin. A rocky road lies ahead, as the spectrum of political opinions on drug issues is much broader in northern Belgium, from the ultra-repressive attitudes of the far right to the more assertive ecologists, and not forgetting the Socialists, whose radicalism and determination in drug matters are not found in Belgium’s French-speaking territories.

Beyond the debate on narcotics and their consumers, drug trafficking has been a little less intense in Belgium. The spectacular seizures of large amounts of heroin (over 100 kilograms), cocaine (up to 2 metric tons), and cannabis (27 tons) seem limited to the first half of the decade, though the increase in the number of mobile laboratories capable of producing synthetic drugs have represented an ongoing threat for nearly the past five years. Police and parliamentary efforts now focus on criminal organizations active on Belgian territory. These groups are alleged to total 162, among which those labeled as

“Russian” or Italian are a police priority. Current events in Israel confirm the existence of a strong link between Tel Aviv and Antwerp elements active in cocaine and synthetic narcotics. Despite a large investment by the Belgian Senate for a study on organized crime and the existence of a legal consensus in Europe, the two assemblies of the Belgian Parliament have not yet been able to agree on the text of a law which covers Mafia activities entirely, and is also respectful of civil liberties and human rights. A vote is possible in autumn 1998.

PORTUGAL

The geographical situation of Portugal, a small country sandwiched between Spain and the Atlantic in the extreme south-west of Europe, has discouraged any major criminal organization from establishing an operational base there. The westward and southern expansion of gangs in the ex-communist countries has reached only as far as Spain. But on the other hand, Portugal’s relative inexperience in drug control makes it a weak link in the policing of Europe’s frontiers. Some criminal organizations, in particular the Galician clans, are taking advantage of this to move large volumes of cocaine and hashish through the country.

The fall of the Salazar dictatorship and Portugal’s entry into the European Union ended its isolation from the continent’s major social phenomena. The emergence and spread of heroin abuse on a relatively large scale has been encouraged by two factors: the large number of Portuguese working abroad, particularly in France, and a colonial heritage that has left the country with a marginalized population of African origin that supports small-scale dealers, mainly from the former colonies of Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau, who supply the domestic market with heroin. But all the other drugs that are fashionable in the rest of Europe can be found: cannabis derivatives – the most widely used substances – plus cocaine and synthetic drugs such as LSD and ecstasy. Portugal, a microcosm of drugs consumption, is also a potpourri, on a very small scale, of the gangs that distribute them: Spaniards, Gypsies, Chinese, Turks and Nigerians.

International Trafficking Networks

A number of factors make Portugal an ideal point of entry into the European drug market: a long coastline with many inlets for unloading illicit cargoes; the proximity of Morocco, a major producing country, and Spain, a multi-drug distribution hub; special links with important Portuguese-speaking drug-smuggling countries like Brazil, Angola, Mozambique and Macao and with countries with sizeable Portuguese populations such as Venezuela; and territorial outposts in the Atlantic – the Azores and Madeira – which lie on the main air and sea routes from Latin America and which can be used for stockpiling.

In 1997, cocaine seizures totalled more than three metric tons, shipped, in descending order, from Venezuela, Brazil and Colombia. This put Portugal in third place in the European league, behind Spain (18.516 tons) and the Netherlands (7.283 tons). Most of the cocaine was intended for the Spanish market. The record haul was nearly 2 tons of cocaine brought in by sea, which was found in late October at a farm in the Salvaterra de Magos area north-east of Lisbon. Ten days later, 800 kilograms of the drug was confiscated near the northern town of Braga. Several Spanish nationals were arrested. In the first half of 1998, 276 kg of cocaine were seized, about the same amount as in the first six months of 1997.

In contrast to Spain, there are virtually no Latin American traffickers in Portugal, and the transit traffic is controlled by Galician gangsters based near the northern border. In November 1997, the members of what was dubbed the “Luso-Galician” cocaine network were sentenced to jail terms of between 6 and 13 years. Other organizations are also active. In June 1998, Spanish and Portuguese police broke up a Lisbon-based network operating in Spain, Portugal and France, which as well as dealing drugs also smuggled luxury cars stolen in France. The Spanish interior minister said the gang had a boat used to ship hashish from Morocco and a jet ski to keep watch while the drug was being transshipped. Of the 26 suspects arrested in Spain, 17 were Spanish, four were French and one Brazilian. Four other traffickers were arrested in Portugal: one Portuguese, two Colombians and a Venezuelan. The operation netted 21 kg of cocaine, 12,000 tablets of ecstasy, 698 doses of LSD and 400 grams of hashish.

In 1997, 19.6 tons of hashish were confiscated and in the first half of 1998 the haul was 5.3 tons. The members of a Luso-Spanish gang of hashish smugglers were sentenced in November 1997 to between 2 and 12 years in prison. More than a ton of Moroccan hashish was found in 1996 on a trawler belonging to one gang member. About 50 containers of hashish that were part of a cargo ditched at sea by traffickers in 1997 are still waiting to be salvaged by the authorities. They are lying near a sandbank about 100 miles off the coast of the southern Algarve region.

In 1997 and 1998 respectively, 15 kg and 2 kg of No. 4 (Chinese white) heroin were confiscated. The police believe, although they are not absolutely sure, that the drug brought from Thailand by Macao-based Chinese triad members was in transit. The Portuguese authorities fear that when Macao reverts to China in 1999, a flood of Chinese with Portuguese passports will smuggle white heroin for consumption in Portugal alongside that of brown sugar (N°3 heroin).

A Market Diversifying and Taking Root

Estimates of the number of heroin addicts in Portugal vary in a wide band between 50,000 and 100,000. The primary way of assessing the size of the market is to look first at the figures provided by the enforcement agencies. When heroin confiscated in Portugal comes from Spain, the Netherlands or other European countries, it is almost always for domestic consumption. Thus in 1997, 42 kg of brown sugar were seized, compared with 37 kg for the first six months of 1998 alone. The number of people arrested for drug offenses – 3458, most of them on heroin charges – shows that most of them are small-scale dealers or users.

The number of overdose deaths is another indicator: from just 48 in 1998, the figure rose to 156 in 1992, fell off over the next two years, and then started climbing again, to 198 in 1995 and 232 in 1996. Opiates, taken alone or in combination with other substances, are responsible for more than 90% of such deaths. At the same time, the number of people seeking treatment in public clinics for drug-related problems rose from 4156 in 1995 to 5318 in 1997, an increase of 27.9%.

Cannabis derivatives are the most widely used drugs. Soldiers of the expeditionary forces sent to Mozambique and Angola between 1972 and 1975 first popularized the use of marijuana. Moroccan hashish then took over as the main source of supply for a market which, as in the rest of Europe, expanded rapidly. Police estimate that of the 9.6 tons of Moroccan hashish confiscated in 1997, nearly 8 tons were intended for local consumption. Police also seized 72 kg of marijuana, most of it from Angola but some supplied by expanding cultivation in rural areas of Portugal.

Cocaine users, as elsewhere in Europe, are mostly well-integrated members of society, which makes it more difficult to put an accurate number on them. The drug squad estimates that of the 3 tons of cocaine

confiscated in 1997, 450 kg were intended for the local market. The Public Security Police report that in the first half of that year, 17.242 kg were confiscated in busts of small transactions in Lisbon alone. Some cases of crack use, probably by returning expatriates, have been reported in Oporto. The market for cocaine, in contrast to heroin and cannabis derivatives, is concentrated in the big cities.

Consumption of synthetic drugs, especially ecstasy, is also relatively difficult to detect. This is why the results of a 1995 survey among high school students⁷⁰ came as a surprise for the government agency that ordered it. They showed that 0.5% of respondents took ecstasy; while the percentage is admittedly low, it is still equivalent to the percentage of heroin users. The number of tablets confiscated fell from nearly 4000 in 1996 to 524 in 1997, and turned up again in the first half of 1998, to 876. The drug seems to come mainly from Spain.

One feature of the heroin market in Portugal is that since 1992 it has been steadily expanding throughout the country and that consumption and trafficking are growing more rapidly in rural areas than in urban centers. The latest available study⁷¹ mapped this phenomenon. Until 1992, the districts (administrative areas) of Lisbon and Oporto were the main centers of trafficking/consumption. After that date, it spread progressively into the coastal and frontier regions, then throughout the interior of the country. The survey also showed that while the number of users in the coastal region, which includes Lisbon and Oporto, grew by 133% between 1987 and 1995, the figure for interior regions was 635%.

There are several possible explanations. The first is the lifting of controls on the border with Spain, which runs down the interior regions and across which pass almost all the drugs for the Portuguese market, apart from hashish, which is shipped directly from Morocco as well as via Spain. The authorities also believe that the effectiveness of enforcement in the large urban centers has forced a number of dealers and addicts to move to towns and villages in the interior, which in this country are never far from the coastal cities. The new arrivals then “contaminated” some inhabitants of these areas. The third reason could be connected with the return of young migrant workers after the job market dried up in France, where they had become habituated.

Networks Supplying the Domestic Market

During the 1980s, The heroin market was first supplied by the Indo-Pakistani population in Mozambique through its networks in Portugal, but they were later pushed out by an alliance of Cape Verdean and Turkish traffickers. The main source of heroin consumed in Portugal is the Netherlands and the most active networks are run by Cape Verdeans. In 1997, 47 of them were arrested for drug trafficking, representing 30% of foreigners held, way ahead of Spaniards (27) and Guinea-Bissau nationals. In the first half of 1998, 31 more Cape Verdeans were arrested. Although some people from the former colonies have Portuguese nationality, the vast majority of those held during the same periods were mainland Portuguese: 1800 and 796 respectively.

This specialization stems from the fact that Portugal is host to the greatest concentration of Cape Verdean expatriates in the world, and the Netherlands has the second-largest exile population. The same family often has members in both countries. There are two types of network: Cape Verdeans working on their own account who buy their supplies from Turkish networks in the Netherlands; and Turkish

⁷⁰ *Student Survey in Secondary Schools (1997)*, Lisbon: ESPAD/Gabinete de planeamento e de coordenação do combate à droga..

⁷¹ Catarina Leal Guerreiro (1996): *Distribuição geográfica dos presumíveis infractores por tráfico/consumo de droga no período de 1987 a 1995*, Lisbon: ESPAD/Gabinete de planeamento e de coordenação do combate à droga.

traffickers who use Cape Verdeans to distribute heroin in Portugal. The Turks have no criminal organization in the country, but they sometimes send in hit-men when they have not been paid by their customers or employees; there have been several executions of “recalcitrant” Cape Verdeans. Guinea-Bissau nationals take advantage of their large presence in Spain to buy heroin there, and they can also get supplies from Cape Verdeans in Portugal or the Netherlands.

The mini-hubs for both wholesale and retail drug distribution throughout the country are in what are known as the “degraded neighborhoods” inhabited mainly by second- and third-generation immigrants. The most important of these are in Lisbon, its twin city across the Tagus, Setubal (Casal Ventoso, Curraleira and Cambora) and Oporto (Sé). There is strong ethnic solidarity in these neighborhoods and the inhabitants usually back up the traffickers, with young children serving as lookouts and private houses used for temporary stashes. For many residents, drug dealing and associated activities are their only source of income. While the market is split up between a host of gangs who control at most a street or a sector, the police have noticed that they are using ever more sophisticated methods; they are better armed (with automatic weapons, for example), listen to radios that can pick up police wavebands, and have legal advisers that steer them clear of some risks. Short-staffed enforcement agencies, who do not even have informers among these minorities, cannot penetrate their networks. In contrast, the traffickers usually have advance warning of police raids. These neighborhoods have become supply centers for European narcotourists, as is evidenced by the currencies such as Dutch guilders and French francs confiscated from dealers.

Gypsies play a large part in the spread of trafficking into rural areas from smaller urban centers such as Faro, Braga, Aveiro, Évora and Braganza; they are mobile and can get supplies from Gypsy distributors in Spain. But it may be that the importance attached to their role has been blown out of proportion. In March 1998, a court in Braga tried the brother of the patriarch of the Oleiro Gypsy community and 12 clan members. The raid on their camp was run like a military operation, codenamed “*Cavado II*”. The 120 officers found 800 grams of heroin, 12 grams of cocaine and 5 grams of hashish, plus some stolen gold objects, some pesetas and Swiss francs, and firearms. This trafficking by some bands of Gypsies has heightened the traditional xenophobia directed against the ethnic group as a whole, sparking some conflicts with the sedentary population⁷².

⁷² For money-laundering in Portugal, see GD (1996), pp. 105-106.