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# Déjà Vu and the Kurdish Question.

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On Friday, one of the attorneys for inmate terrorist leader Abdullah Ocalan claimed, "Ocalan's hair samples were tested and the results showed that he has been chronically poisoned." This reminded us of another claim that was raised around this time last year that Ocalan had had a heart attack in Imrali prison. We therefore needed to once again check our "lighthouse" to see whether she was writing similar things last year before Ocalan had the "heart attack." Bingo! In addition, to Ocalan, Diyarbakir Mayor Osman Baydemir too was in the spotlight last year, just as he has been brought into the spotlight again this year.

After reminding you what we wrote last year on this subject, we would like to bring the "poisoning" story to your attention. In our column on Feb. 2, 2006 we analyzed several developments in the Kurdish questions:

Here is what we wrote last year:

"Let's first recollect the recent developments, before attempting to analyze them.

"1) The mayor of Diyarbakir paid a visit to the U.S. from Feb. 5 to 16, which took place shortly after Iraqi Kurdistan region leader Massoud Barzani's visit. He's the first Kurdish figure -- from Turkey -- to visit the U.S. and we assume that this move was made in large part because of its psychological impact in Turkey. It obviously hasn't made much of a splash in the U.S. Except for his meetings with Chris van Hollen and David Filner, two not particularly prominent Democratic Party congressmen in Washington D.C., Osman Baydemir didn't receive much attention in Washington.

"2) On Feb. 7 the Associated Press falsely reported that terrorist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) leader Abdullah Ocalan had a heart attack but survived. This report has an interesting background dating back to last December. On Dec. 13, one of the ultranationalist columnists [the 'lighthouse'] wrote, "Note this: Before March 2006 there will be a new development regarding Ocalan." At the end of December and around the middle of last month, the same columnist wrote twice on the same topic, and asked, 'What if Ocalan's health gets worse now?' In addition to that, in December some magazines also reported that in the first couple of months this year, 'Ocalan's health will get worse.' Surprisingly, on Feb. 6, an ultranationalist (Ulusalci, Kizil Elmaci) webpage reported that Ocalan had a heart attack. A day after that, AP cited as sources for its report the webpage, which was again interesting because the page is not particularly known to be followed by AP every day, and a government official. As soon as the AP report came out, Ocalan's lawyers and the PKK started capitalizing on Ocalan's health condition to urge its supporters to join the protests on Feb. 15 to mark the seventh anniversary of Ocalan's capture. The Justice Ministry immediately denied the report. In reality, Ocalan had had no such heart attack.

"3) On Feb. 15, Ocalan and his lawyers had a scheduled meeting. But the lawyers couldn't visit Ocalan because local gendarmerie told them that the boat used to transport the lawyers to Imrali Island, where Ocalan is imprisoned, was 'out of order.' In response to this

development, people in Cizre, a town in the southeastern Sirnak province, organized a massive violent street demonstration, which was otherwise unlikely to have been held by them."

Here is how we analyzed these developments last year:

"Despite the fact that Kurdish people in the region are getting more politicized, it's also true that they are fed up with violence.

Therefore, they don't welcome the PKK's violent tactics. However, the PKK is also aware that without violence and its oppressive strategy, and without terrorizing the region, there is no way they can maintain their political power...

"...Baydemir's visit to the U.S. is an important development for the Kurdish issue as well. This visit, we believe, is somehow related to the question of why people in Diyarbakir didn't obey the PKK's calls to protest on Feb. 15. Although we accept the fact that the urbanization process in Diyarbakir had a positive impact on diminishing terrorism, the latest surprising silence toward the PKK's call in Diyarbakir cannot be fully explained by the urbanization theory. This is so because the city's urbanization process is too new to absorb the immigrants and change people's attitude. Yet Baydemir's visit to the U.S. could be the very reason behind the city's silence.

While he was in the U.S., it was very likely for Baydemir to show the Bush administration that he had as much power as Ocalan to control the Kurds. In addition, he might have wanted to have demonstrated to the U.S. that he has no record of involvement in terrorism. By sending such a signal and by showing his power against Ocalan on the anniversary of his capture, he proved to the biggest player in the region, to the U.S., that he was willing to and capable of leading the Kurdish movement. His modest statements to Voice of America are indicative of his ambitions to lead the Kurdish movement. On the other hand, hardliner PKK terrorists accused mayors and municipalities of being responsible for the failure of the demonstrations, which could be interpreted as another sign of Baydemir's ambition."

"...Ocalan's false heart attack news was obviously an attempt to agitate his sympathizers for the Feb. 15 demonstrations. Once this plan failed, after the Justice Ministry's pre-release denying the news, it seems that Plan B was initiated. Coincidentally, on Feb. 15, on the day of the demonstration, the boat was broken and Ocalan's lawyers could not make it to their scheduled meeting in the prison.

As a result, the people of Cizre were outraged and organized the biggest and the most devastating demonstration of the day after hearing the 'agitating' news that the lawyers weren't allowed to meet with Ocalan."

Here is what various commentators have written about Baydemir and Ocalan this year:

On Feb. 22 Fehmi Koru, a renowned journalist under pen name Taha Kivanc, raised his concerns about Osman Baydemir's situation, based on information he obtained in Washington. Here is what Koru had to say: "The information that I heard about Osman Baydemir in Washington irritated me and prompted me to ask whether the state security forces are guarding Mr. Baydemir. After I enquired, I found out that that despite the General Directorate of Security's demand to appoint guards for Baydemir, necessary guards have not been appointed yet. An insider told me that interesting traffic between Iskenderun and Diyarbakir

is going on, just as the traffic between Trabzon and Istanbul before [Armenian-origin journalist] Hrant Dink was assassinated." Koru concludes, "If I were in a decision-making position of, I would guard Mr. Baydemir against possible assassination attempts."

Of course, you might wonder what our "lighthouse" wrote about possible developments for this month.

Here is what she wrote on Feb. 22: "It seems that the next two months will be very difficult, especially March. Aside from chaos scenarios, intelligence reports predict that on the day of Nevruz, March 21, the supporters of the PKK and other separatist groups will ignite the fire on streets in Istanbul, Diyarbakir and Mersin. What measures will the Istanbul police take against these dangers? Keeping the emergency situation aside, the police in Istanbul aren't even capable of securing streets against everyday crimes."

Perhaps someone has "pushed the button" in Washington! (Remember, the Ulusalcilar argue that Washington controls everything) After Ocalan's lawyer came up with the "poison" claim, the fires on the streets of Istanbul have been ignited. Here is the result: During the last three days, PKK supporters have burned four buses in Istanbul with Molotov cocktails.

The remaining question now is when an assassination attempt against Osman Baydemir will take place.

Like us, are you too waiting to see Ulusalci groups' further agitation attempts in the cities mentioned above?

Then, we are confused: Should we say thank you to our "lighthouse" for keeping us informed, or should we blame people in her circle for pushing us into that deja vu feeling once again?

What we are saying is that PKK is losing ground. Thus, Ocalan's lawyers want to use such false reports to mobilize their constituencies for Nevruz celebration on March 21. What we cannot understand is the attitudes of some circles in Ankara that show some parallels with the attitudes of Ocalan's side.

After all, it is time to remember the words of the Turkish Sun Tzu, Sabri Uzun, who said, "If the thief is in the house, locking the door will not prevent theft."

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