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## NOTE DE L'ÉDITEUR

Translated from the French original by Philip Liddell

- <sup>1</sup> Bertil Lintner, based in Bangkok since the 1980s for the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, has established himself as a leading expert on the Golden Triangle, on the origins and the repercussions of the drugs traffic in Burma and Thailand. His earlier books offered brilliant contemporary accounts of how various states were making profitable use of the criminal economy<sup>1</sup>. Having discovered in the course of his enquiries the full extent of regional and international interaction in crime (whether organised or not), Lintner decided to widen his analyses to East Asia and Oceania. *Blood Brothers* is the fruit of this research over a five-year period, from 1997 to 2001. Having carried out a number of his own field studies across the Asia-Pacific region, and being supported by his long experience of investigative journalism, Lintner has also taken full advantage of the English-language literature on the subject—which makes the generous bibliography published at the end of the book a veritable *tour de force*.
- <sup>2</sup> So *Blood Brothers* has fulfilled absolutely its own ambitions and is an essential source for all those interested in the murky connections linking political and economic power at the different levels of the criminal world. The first chapter, focusing on Shanghai of the Opium War until its post-1949 recovery, is a fine illustration of this question which, while offering nothing new for the expert, will provide useful instruction for the layman.
- <sup>3</sup> By contrast, the second chapter is an innovative and up-to-date analysis of Macao's role as a platform for money-laundering, and of the links between this business and the supervising powers, whether colonial or mainland Chinese. By placing recent

developments within their historical context, Lintner enables us to understand the diplomatic skill of those real arbiters of local politics, the magnates Stanley Ho and Henry Fok. Thus Macao, which is both a gambling den and a paradise for organised crime, has made itself complementary to Hong Kong as an important financial base for the “Triads” and their use by the Chinese state. The “Donorgate” scandal, during which the Chinese administration attempted to influence the re-election of President Clinton in 1996, implicated several Macao individuals, whose links with the Chinese authorities, the “tycoons” and the underworld are here set out in detail.

- 4 The same care to balance the most recent developments with their historical background is to be found in the following two chapters, devoted to Japan and Siberia. In addition to an account of the now well-known connections between the Japanese Yakuza and the financial and property bubble of the 1980s<sup>2</sup>, there are memorable pages devoted to the career of the ultranationalist Sasakawa. They recall how in 1939 he hailed Mussolini as “. . . a first-class person, a perfect fascist and dictator” and how after the war he became a champion of the World Anti-Communist League, a billionaire closely linked to the underworld, a sponsor of powerboat races and, via his foundation, a generous donor to Harvard, Princeton, Oxford and many other universities.
- 5 Russia’s Far East, its history recalled through episodes in the Civil War and the Kolyma camps, is brought up to date as an important base for the “Mafiya”. Lintner describes how it exerts its control over the exploitation of natural resources, the economy and local politics; and how it profits at the same time from the opening of the Chinese frontiers, from its closeness to North Korea and its involvement in the drugs trade, and from the local presence of the Yakuza, whose activities range from a lucrative sex-trade to importing stolen cars.
- 6 Chapter 5, devoted to the Indochinese Peninsula, reveals mainland China’s growing control over local affairs, whether legal or illegal, with the expansion of mass tourism and illegal immigration, the latter particularly coming from Cambodia. Chapter 6, entitled “The Pirate Republic”, describes the links between Indonesia’s underworld, army and state, going back to the colonial period, to independence and to the massacres of 1965. This approach helps us to understand the role of the militia in East Timor, how they were mobilised against the Chinese community at the time of Suharto’s fall in 1998 and how they became progressively Islamicised during the prolonged crisis of the regime. The disintegration of the licensed kleptocracy under Suharto led, as it turned out, to the proliferation of decentralised criminal activities, among which piracy, illegal migration to Australia, extortion and Islamic terrorism were the most violent manifestations.
- 7 Australia and the Pacific Islands have not been overlooked, as Chapter 7 demonstrates. The rapid growth of migration from Vietnam, China and Lebanon has reinforced the pragmatic collaboration between business, politics and the underworld. Moreover, the Pacific Islands, lost in the middle of the ocean, have neither the resources nor the political will to ban money-laundering. The examples of Vanuatu, which acquired for itself the reputation of the “Caymans” of the Pacific, and Nauru, through which passed, in 1998, 70 billion US dollars from Russian funds in flight from the taxman, illustrate the extent of the money-laundering. The Island of Niue, an autonomous territory freely associated with New Zealand, has 2,103 inhabitants and 6,000 shelf companies accounting for 80% of the annual budget, the rest being provided by exporting sweet potatoes or selling Internet domains ending in the “.nu” country code. The traffic

extends even, as in Tonga, to consular appointments abroad, much appreciated in Chinese underworld circles when immunity is sought.

- 8 The last chapter is given over to illegal Chinese immigration to the United States, which is a particularly lucrative business backed up by powerful networks. But is it right to conclude from that, as Bertil Lintner does, that “without the backing of the criminal underworld on its side, it would be almost impossible for Peking to extend its writ beyond its frontiers, and that is what makes the new nexus between the Triads and China’s present leaders so dangerous for the rest of the world?” Certainly not. And the writer goes further in the same vein, maintaining against all the evidence that “China is, even more than North Korea, a state that feels that it has to engage in criminal activities, such as drug running and the printing of counterfeit dollars to survive”.
- 9 This mistaken perspective illustrates to some extent the weakness of an otherwise remarkable book, which accumulates a considerable mass of facts and information showing how organised crime has spread across Asia in the post-Cold War period. The fact that the Chinese state may, as do most states, use the services of the international underworld in its information and counterespionage activities does not mean that it is dependant upon it. Here we touch upon the question: what is the real impact of organised crime on present-day globalisation? Even if, in addition to the drugs trade, the sex trade and gambling—the “traditional” activities—we take into account the new markets for extortion, plundering of natural resources, illegal immigration and trafficking of all other imaginable kinds, the influence of the underworld is still marginal compared with the official economy. Its investments, speculative as they are, may play a role in some financial crises<sup>3</sup> but its political influence, well established in many countries, contrasts with its relative weakness in the economic sphere. This influence is exerted in numerous different ways, as Lintner shows. It can be reflected in a real investment in forestry, as seems to be the case in Russia’s Far East. Or it can take the form of “functional” synergies, as in Thailand or Cambodia where business communities are knowledgeable about the legal—as well as the illegal—economy; in Japan too the Yakuza influence derives from the fact that legal means of arbitration are insufficiently developed and that their implicit arrangements with the political parties are respected.
- 10 The case of China (which from the domestic and present-day point of view is only sketchily reported in Lintner’s book<sup>4</sup>) illustrates another variation, in which organised crime can prosper on condition it stays in the shadow of the central power, that is to say under its potentially repressive supervision, rather as in Mexico<sup>5</sup>. Macao is still the perfect example of these developments.
- 11 An extended analysis of the various ways and means by which criminal networks operate, taking Lintner’s rich book as a starting point, would be valuable. It would help us to correct any errors in perspective to which his accumulated evidence of the growing impact of criminality might leave us exposed. Thus, *Blood Brothers* may claim to mark a significant stage in our thinking on one of the negative aspects of globalisation: it calls on civil society to counter effectively the threats posed to democracy and economic development.

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## NOTES

1. Bertil Lintner's books, such as *The Rise and Fall of the Communist Party of Burma* (Cornell University, 1990), *Burma in Revolt: Opium and Insurgency since 1948* (Silkworm Books, Chiang Mai, 1991) are in the direct line of the pioneering analyses of Alfred W McCoy (*The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia*, 1972; *The Politics of Heroin: C.I.A. complicity in the Global Drug Trade*, 1991).
2. Cf. Guilhem Fabre, *Criminal Prosperity: Drug Trafficking, Money Laundering and Financial Crisis after the Cold War*, RoutledgeCurzon, 2003. Chapter 5, "The Yakuza Recession", has been updated in a study published in the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, January 17th 2002.
3. Ibid.
4. Happily, the recently published work of Professor He Bingsong (*You zuzhi fanzui yanjiu* [Research into organised crime], Peking, 2002, Zhongguo fazhi chubanshe) has answered a good many questions in this field.
5. Cf. the studies by Christian Geffray on the relationship between the state and criminal networks, in *Globalisation, Drugs and Criminalisation: Final Research Report on Brazil, China, India and Mexico*, scientific direction: Christian Geffray, Michel Schiray, Guilhem Fabre, UNESCO/UNDCP, 2002. Available on the website: [http://www.unesco.org/most/globalisation/drugs\\_1.htm](http://www.unesco.org/most/globalisation/drugs_1.htm)