

The 1981 attempt on the Pope: What's behind the new polemics?

by Umberto Pascali

"The Pope had to be killed because he tried to anticipate the collapse of Yalta nine years before its time, while that collapse was not supposed to take place before 1989. This is, in my opinion, the key to understanding the attempt in St. Peter's Square. To try to end Yalta in 1981 spelled troubles for both sides, East and West. He had to be stopped!" The Roman insider agrees to share his views with *EIR* on the condition that his identity not be revealed. The discussion is on the new polemics concerning the May 13, 1981 assassination attempt against John Paul II, popularly known as the "Bulgarian Connection."

Days before this conversation, on June 3, the daily *Il Giorno* had exploded a "bombshell" by printing the "transcript of the confession by the former 'head of the DS' [Bulgarian intelligence], Konstantin Karadzhev, concerning the events of May 13 in St. Peter's Square." That piece provoked, for the first time in history, a simultaneous denial by both the CIA and the KGB. It was the first time the CIA had commented publicly on an article about the attempt on the Pope. Strangely enough, though part of this story had already been published in the Bulgarian magazine *Podkriepa* by the journalist Ruman Hinkov, the same who gave the "original tape" to *Il Giorno*, the day after, on June 14, an apparently angry Karadzhev told the Italian GR2 radio news that he wanted to sue the newspaper for publishing false information.

The two heads of Yalta

The story published by *Il Giorno* was not in contradiction with the general lines of the "Bulgarian Connection" scenario. The hit had been decided by the Soviet leadership and the KGB had selected Bulgarian intelligence to handle the operational side, because of its loyalty. The decision was provoked by the activities of Polish trade union Solidarnosc, seen as a deadly threat to the Soviet empire. But there was a new element: The CIA knew. In the Karadzhev confession, the papal assailant, Ali Agca, had informed the agency and had been told to go ahead with the plan, but not to kill the Pope, just to injure him.

On the same day, Karadzhev denied the story, which indeed presented some contradictory aspects. It was not clear

why he did not deny the large part of the story that had already been published in the Bulgarian press. But while denying the gist of the story, he also confirmed some of the allegations. First, he was a friend of the treasurer of the Bulgarian embassy in Rome, Teodor Ayazov, and had been his guest in Rome in September 1982. Second, he had met, through Ayazov, Sergei Antonov, the manager of Bulgarian Balkan Air, in Rome. Third, he had met in jail in Sofia the Italian Paolo Farsetti, accused of spying by the Bulgarian authorities and arrested on Aug. 26, 1982 in Sofia.

Ayazov, his embassy colleague Vassiliev, and Balkan Air's Antonov are the very Bulgarians tried in Rome for the attempt on the Pope and acquitted for "lack of evidence." And Paolo Farsetti? He was freed exactly when the Italian authorities allowed Antonov to leave his cell and to be detained under house arrest. It is generally believed that this was a swap and that Farsetti was one of the few persons who had direct knowledge of the plot. But one month before the article appeared in *Il Giorno*, Farsetti died in a mysterious car accident.

"He wasn't the only one. He died when the spotlight focused again on the Bulgarian hypothesis," says the Roman insider. "At that very same time, a Bulgarian general, one deeply involved with this story, was killed by a car in downtown Sofia. These coincidences surprised me. Also you must take into account that at the moment of the revolution, gigantic fires destroyed the archives of the Communist Party. And there disappeared a chunk of history.

"When I saw the article in *Il Giorno*, do you know what came to my mind? The words of C. Zanussi [the Polish movie director]. He has written a screenplay for a movie that was never made. It was a transposition of the life of St. Paul into modern times. There is no Corinth or Antioch, but Paris, Berlin, London. . . . And the modern Rome is Washington-New York. The play is the story of the assassination of St. Paul by a crazy assassin in New York. All the secret services knew, but nobody lifted a finger, because everybody had an interest in letting him be killed. And they watched in silence the preparation and the execution."

But now Karadzhev has denied the story, at least in part.

“Yes, there are weak points in that story, though the idea that both sides knew, makes a lot of sense. One could think that the story was shaped intentionally in a way that it could have been denied.” How? “Well, imagine that someone expected something to come out along those lines; what better way to kill possible revelations than to discredit them beforehand? It is the classic strategy of mixing truth and falsehood, so that what is true also becomes false. As the late Catholic philosopher Augusto Del Noce said: With Yalta a monster was created, a monster with two heads that spit on and assaulted each other continuously, but only up to a point, because after all, they belonged to the same body.”

The Bulgarians, Terpil, Shackley, Bush . . .

But was it really necessary to prove Karadzhev's tale, in order to indicate a line of investigation involving the “two heads”? An analysis published June 6 in the biggest and most authoritative Italian Catholic daily, *Avvenire*, demonstrates the contrary. “The ‘revelations’ published these days are years old,” the article points out, leading the reader into a tunnel that extends from Ali Agca not only to the KGB, but also to . . . George Bush!

“Two Americans had trained Agca, Edwin Wilson and Frank Terpil (‘Major Frank’ in Agca’s confession), two former CIA agents. The two exploited their experience, giving classes in terrorism and sabotage to groups of would-be assassins, both right-wing and left-wing (Palestinians, agents of the Iranian Savak secret police, neo-fascist Turks). The training took place in Syria and Libya: Agca was trained there. So were they two defectors? So said the U.S. government. But author Gordon Thomas, who dedicated years of investigation and two books to the story, came out with a different thesis. Frank Terpil at the CIA was one of Theodore Shackley’s men, who was deputy chief of the CIA for ‘Operations,’ known for having conducted in Cambodia and Vietnam a series of ‘dirty’ activities (from drug traffic to political assassinations) in which the CIA was not supposed to appear officially. And he did it with too much enthusiasm. Thus, under the Carter presidency, he was forced to resign together with other 800 agents. They went into ‘private’ activities, starting investigative agencies, small air companies ready to transport anything, or becoming mercenaries of terrorism like Terpil and Wilson. But remaining at the disposal of the CIA which used them more than once for operations to be conducted outside the U.S. control. It has been proved that former agents were used ‘privately’ by the Americans in the Iran-Contra affair.”

At this point, *Avvenire* introduced George Bush, who, as *EIR* readers know, has been very close to Ted Shackley. “George Bush was director of the CIA; he has often been suspected of involvement in the Iran-Contra affair. . . . On May 13, 1981, when Agca fired his gun in St. Peter’s, Bush was ‘surrogate President’ in place of Ronald Reagan, who had also been wounded in an attempt 44 days before; and the

deranged killer, John W. Hinckley, was a friend of the Bush family. . . .

“It is a fact that then-Vice President Bush asked to be received suddenly by the Pope, on Feb. 8, 1983 and, according to Gordon Thomas, ‘suggested to John Paul II not to pursue too energetically his interests in the story.’ Why this intervention? Because—says the pro-Bush theory—now that Andropov had become the supreme chief of the Soviet Union, if it were proved that he had intended to kill the Pope, it would have precipitated a huge international crisis. But obviously, one can make a less benevolent hypothesis.”

The name of Frank Terpil had already come up several times in the Italian press. Last December, Mehmet Ali Agca, the Turkish killer, was interrogated again in jail in Rome by the magistrates investigating the attempt (Rosario Priore and Antonio Marino), and by two other magistrates investigating the kidnaping of two little girls whose families work for the Vatican, for whose ransom the abductors had demanded Agca’s freedom. The terrorist was asked explicitly about “Major Frank Terpil” and the training he received from him in Libya. At the same time, the investigations moved to France, where, also suddenly, the accomplice of Agca in St. Peter’s Square, Oral Celik, was located.

There is no lack of witnesses and connections, once the “political block” is overcome. *Avvenire* on May 13 (the anniversary of the attempt) called attention to the famous terrorist Maurizio Folini, a key supplier of weapons for the Italian Red Brigades from Libya. There is an international arrest warrant out for him for having shot an Italian judge, for weapons trafficking, terrorist training (in Libya), armed robbery, etc. But when he was arrested in Athens in June 1987, “all this was not enough to convince the Greek magistracy to extradite him. The Italian magistrates wondered what kind of protections Folini might enjoy.” Wrote *Avvenire*, “Perhaps the same which allowed him to keep in contact with left-wing terrorists and KGB agents, but also right-wing terrorists like the Grey Wolves and Ali Agca!”

In fact, Folini met Agca, a wanted terrorist who had stated publicly that he intended to kill the Pope, at the Hotel Vitosha in Sofia on July 5, 1980. Folini and a Turkish accomplice gave Agca a passport to enter Italy. Folini met Agca two more times. He organized for Agca to go to a training camp in Libya. “Folini knows former CIA agent Frank Terpil, Agca’s most important trainer. The last time Folini met Agca was in Perugia, on April 17, 1981. Agca was with Teslin Tore, who, according to the CIA, is the go-between for the KGB and the Grey Wolves.”

Strong signals from the ‘sacred rooms’

Expectations for the truth on the assassination attempt to finally come out, increased markedly at the beginning of 1991. It was the 10th anniversary of the shooting in St. Peter’s Square; moreover, the collapse of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe suggested that previously sup-

pressed evidence could now become available.

On April 3, at a conference in Sofia, a spokesman for the new Bulgarian President, Zehlyu Zhelev, and Prof. Allen Weinstein of the Washington-based Center for Democracy, announced the "creation of a Center for Democracy-organized international commission which will examine the 1981 assassination attempt on Pope John Paul II." Weinstein will be given all the support he needs by the Bulgarian authorities. Already he has received 36,000 documents. Weinstein is one of the founders of the National Endowment for Democracy, and many of the top CFD directors are closely intertwined with Project Democracy, under whose auspices Oliver North conducted his Iran-Contras shenanigans.

The initiative to let a private organization, sponsored by people close to a specific part of the Anglo-American elite, play the role of judges, while there is still an open investigation in Italy, cannot be considered totally proper.

At the same time, a number of Catholic representatives came out with surprisingly bold statements, showing no intention to give up on the search for the truth. A magazine considered very close to the Pope, *Il Sabato*, wrote in its May 11 issue, under the title, "1981, Too Soon for Yalta. The Pope Wanted to Anticipate '89. For This They Stopped Him?": "The strict official 'no comment' does not mean that in the Vatican certain moral certainties have not been reached long since, concerning the many mysteries surrounding the attempt. Nobody in the sacred rooms thinks that Ali Agca acted as a lone madman. The hypothesis of the international conspiracy plotted by an international organization of professionals is decidedly considered the most plausible. But on the Bulgarian Connection, opinions seem to diverge. . . . The difficulties found in the search for the truth induced some churchmen to think about a possible complicity of the other superpower in the management of the attempt. At least *post factum*, in concealing the truth."

One week earlier, the Papal Nuncio in Sofia, Msgr. Mario Rizzi, stated: "I never believed that the Bulgarian authorities were responsible for the attempt." And Cardinal Edouard Gagnon, one of the cardinals who knows best the Roman Curia: "At a certain point, one had the impression that the confusion over the investigations was deliberate, was wanted by both sides." And Cardinal Silvio Oddi: "It was not in the plans of that time to find the culprits. Nobody was interested in changing the equilibrium reached in the relationships between the two superpowers." In 1982, Cardinal Oddi had received a letter from Agca.

Il Sabato quoted an anonymous source: The Pope had become "a destabilizing element both for the East and the West." And concluded: "For the love of his nation and of truth, the Slavic Pope dreamed in the dramatic Polish summer of 1980 to be able to challenge the order of Yalta. Nine years earlier than the plans of those who really decide the shifts of world politics. Too many also for a pope."

Interview: Dr. A. Rob Moodie

Harvard Study Team reports devastation in postwar Iraq

Dr. A. Rob Moodie, a medical doctor, was part of the Harvard Study Team whose eyewitness account, Public Health in Iraq after the Gulf War, has shaken the American public since its publication on May 22.

An Australian, Dr. Moodie is working toward a Masters of Public Health which he expects to get in 1991 from the Harvard University School of Public Health. He has served as medical officer for Save the Children Fund in Gedaref, eastern Sudan, 1979-80; medical coordinator, Médecins Sans Frontières, in Wad Kowli, Sudan, 1985; and senior medical officer, Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, Australia, 1985-88.

The interview excerpted here was conducted by Mariana Wertz on June 18.

EIR: Your report was addressed to United Nations Secretary General Javier Pérez de Cuellar. Has he responded yet?

Moodie: Not as yet, as I understand, although several of the ambassadors to the U.N. have.

EIR: Can you go into any detail on the responses?

Moodie: Not other than to say that we're meeting with several of them about the issues.

EIR: What about the U.S. Congress?

Moodie: We have had meetings with staff people. We didn't actually write to them. We did write to the State Department, to [chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff] Colin Powell and to Secretary [of State James] Baker. They haven't yet responded, although we've written again to the State Department.

At the U.S. Congress we've been working with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

EIR: Do you expect there may be some hearings on the question of the sanctions?