

Book Review

The 'Unspeakable Truth' Behind International and National Terrorism

by Claudio Celani

Intrigo Internazionale

by Giovanni Fasanella and
Rosario Priore

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Rosario Priore, one of Italy's leading state prosecutors, has dealt with major terrorism cases since the early 1970s: from neofascist bombings to leftwing terrorism; from the kidnapping and assassination of Italy's former Prime Minister Aldo Moro (1978) to the attempted assassination of John Paul II (1981), to his last major investigation, the blowup of the Itavia civilian airliner over Ustica, Sicily, in 1980.

Giovanni Fasanella is an investigative journalist who has written several books on terrorism, including *Segreto di Stato* (State Secret) and *La Guerra Civile* (The Civil War) with Giovanni Pellegrino, who has chaired a Parliament Investigating Committee on terrorism; and the groundbreaking *Il Misterioso Intermediario* (The Mysterious Intermediary) on the Moro case.

Now, the two have written a book, *Intrigo Internazionale* (International Intrigue), in the form of a dialogue between the authors. The book, in Priore's words, is an effort to establish the "unspeakable truths" concerning the history of postwar terrorism in Italy. The numerous judicial investigations and trials, have often succeeded in identifying and sentencing the material executors of terrorist actions, but there are higher truths than "judiciary truth," Priore says. There is a "political truth" and a higher one, the "historical truth." Often, such higher



truths have not been told, because their publication would have had uncalculable consequences at the international level. Hence, the "unspeakable truths."

Traditionally, terrorism "experts" in Italy are divided among those who exclude an international input, and reduce all terrorist events to a domestic conflict, and those who recognize the international factor, but consider the United States to be the origin of all terrorist violence. This book aims at showing that both factions are wrong. "There is a national context that, in a certain sense, determines the growth of rightwing and leftwing

subversive organizations, and their operations. But there is also an international context; rather, there are several contexts on the international level, which affect our domestic events, or exploit them dutifully." However, the two contexts, the national and the international one, are not equal: "The precedence must be given to interpretations of international nature, because international events have a bigger influence on our history."

On the international level, the Cold War/East-West conflict, between the United States and the Soviet Union, was, doubtless, the "planetary game, the one involving the whole globe. However, I never cease to repeat that there are other strategically important areas, where we are placed. And I would put the Mediterranean in the first place," Priore says. The main players in this theater, at least until the fall of the Berlin Wall, were "above all, Italy, which has always wanted to play its game, however, forgetting that this sea was no longer 'ours,' but had become a British sea over the centuries,

a sea dominated by the Mediterranean Fleet, one of the many fleets of the 'Lady of the Oceans.' Great Britain controlled access to the Mediterranean (the Gibraltar Strait and the Suez Canal), the main pillars of internal routes (Malta and Cyprus), North African and Middle East coasts. Therefore, it could not only prevent East-West moves, but also North-South moves."

The "happy paradox" is that Italy, defeated by Britain in the Second World War, "succeeded in strongly downsizing the British presence in the postwar period." The two main players were Enrico Mattei (founder of the state energy company, ENI, and a leader of the Christian Democratic party), who "implemented a policy of power and expansion in the whole area," through his anti-colonial oil policy, and Aldo Moro, Mattei's successor "in terms of political achievements." Mattei's and Moro's initiatives "conflicted with all those who had strong and consolidated interests in the Mediterranean." This means Britain, but also France, a junior partner of Britain in the Entente Cordiale.

According to Priore, Mattei's and Moro's policy was to achieve "influence in North Africa; control over large Mediterranean islands, such as Malta and Cyprus, and, if possible, access points, such as Gibraltar and the Suez Canal. "De facto, the aim was to replace France and Great Britain." However, this would not be possible without consent from the United States.

The United States supported such a policy, Priore says. The key episode is the 1956 crisis,¹ when the U.S. prevented a Franco-British war against Egypt, whose leader Gamal Abdul Nasser had nationalized the Suez canal. "The British strengthening in the Mediterranean would have meant a de facto return to the prewar state; that phase of history in which British domination was undisputed. . . . The Americans feared that the British could reestablish the monopoly of strength which would add to, thanks to the entente with France, control over oil sources. This is what they most feared, because the whole oil region, from Iraq to Algeria going through Egypt and Libya, at the end of the war was under Anglo-French control. For this reason, the United States wanted Italy to grow. First, because it could play a con-

1. For an exhaustive treatment of U.S. support of Mattei's anti-British policy since 1956, see the author's "Mattei and Kennedy: The Alliance Killed by the British," at http://www.larouchepub.com/eiw/public/2009/eirv36n22-20090605/eirv36n22-20090605_044-mattei_and_kennedy_the_strategic.pdf

tainment role on the Eastern Front. . . . And then, naturally, to play a containment role of the Entente Cordiale as well, which was still very solid."

The U.S. interest in a strong Italy meant also that Washington always defended Italy's territorial integrity. When, in 1945, the French occupied the Aosta region, "the U.S. sent their tanks to roll them back." The U.S. also rejected French aims over the Elba island. And between 1945 and 1954, when Yugoslavia's Tito had territorial claims on the northeastern Italian regions of Friuli and Venezia Giulia, the Americans opposed that—whereas the British sided with Tito. The U.S.A. also supported Italy against Austria on the latter's claims over South Tyrol.

"The United States has always ensured that Italy was not weakened, did not lose portions of its territory, had oil supplies, and was respected." In this context, we must place the so-called "strategy of tension" of terrorist bombings from 1969 to 1974, Priore says.

The Libyan Issue

The conflict with Britain developed around Libya. Both the United States and Russia wanted part of Libya, an oil-rich country, and former Italian colony, to remain under Italian protection after the war. But Britain insisted on taking over the country and won. However, King Idris, the British puppet, was overthrown in 1969, in a coup d'état carried out by young colonels led by Moammar Qaddafi.

"The coup was organized in a hotel in Abano Terme," in Italy. "As soon as Qaddafi took power, we sent him shiploads of tanks for the military parade; entire divisions, even dismantling our border defenses." The first move by Qaddafi was to close British military bases. Qaddafi also expelled the Italians, but "despite that, Italy soon became Qaddafi's main economic partner. Whereas the British, by losing Libya, de facto were kicked out of the Mediterranean. Because, soon after, they were forced to leave Malta and Cyprus."

According to an hypothesis, Priore says, the British reacted to the coup by organizing the terrorist bombing in Piazza Fontana, Milan, which is considered the beginning of the "Strategy of Tension."² "First of all, the date, December 1969, was shortly more than three months after the Tripoli coup. Then, the connection be-

2. See the author's "Strategy of Tension: The Case of Italy," at http://www.larouchepub.com/other/2004/3117tension_italy.html



Authors Rosario Priore (above), one of Italy's top state prosecutors, and Giovanni Fasanella, an investigative journalist, write in their new book, that there is a higher truth than "judicial truth" or "political truth," and that is "historical truth." They examine the postwar history of Italy from that standpoint.



tween the Italian neofascists accused of organizing the bombing, and Prince Junio Valerio Borghese, indicated by rightwing historians themselves, as a man linked to British secret services since the last months of the Second World War. Furthermore, the fact that the expression 'strategy of tension' was created by the British press itself, in that very month of December 1969. That expression still weighs like a stone on our history, because it is still the interpretation key to not only Piazza Fontana, but of the whole *anni di piombo*³ period.

"Another element must be recalled: the explicit allegation, at that time, against the British by State President Giuseppe Saragat. A few days after the massacre, when British newspapers again spoke of the 'strategy of tension' to point at Italian-only responsibilities, Saragat reacted, turning the accusation back against the British, referring to the connections between the British services and the circles where the terrorist attack had matured."

However, the British did not withdraw from Libya. Shortly more than a year after the coup, they organized a secret military expedition, called "Operation Hilton."

3. Literally "years of lead," meaning the bloody period of rightwing and leftwing terrorism in Italy, throughout the 1970s and mid-'80s.

But the operation failed, because the Italian services intercepted the mercenary ship in the port of Trieste and warned Qaddafi. The failure of the operation, with the loss of Cyprus and Malta later on, was the "graveyard" of British ambitions in the Mediterranean. England was left with only Gibraltar. "Italy, instead, acquired political prestige and military weight. Our fleet grew bigger than the British one and NATO recognized our merit, appointing Admiral Gino Birindelli as commander of Southern Mediterranean."

Even if defeated in the Mediterranean, the British "did not lose sight of the Italian situation," Fasanella remarks. "In fact, according to diplomatic records in British archives, recently declassified, the British government even planned a coup d'état [in Italy], to be pulled in 1976."⁴ Priore says he was not surprised by such revelations. "I have read the Foreign Office papers, and I am convinced that the project was not just a purely theoretical simulation, as some in Italy insisted." Britain wanted to prevent a government with the Italian Communist Party (PCI), which

would have increased the pro-Arab and pro-Libyan character of Italian foreign policy. The coup was blocked by German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, who vetoed it.

Ustica

The last part of the book is dedicated to one of Priore's most important cases: the explosion of a civilian airliner over Ustica island, off the coast of Sicily, on June 27, 1980. All 81 passengers on board died. Priore led the investigations, which lasted many years, and concluded that the Itavia airliner had been hit in the course of a real air battle, involving at least two foreign "parties."

Ustica is "a case covered by international *Omertà*" (silence) Priore says, borrowing the terminology of the Mafia. That is, all those who know, do not speak. This involves institutions of "Allied" countries such as France and Britain, as well Italian institutions themselves. The *Omertà* has extended to criminal acts of suppression of evidence, and even of assassination of witnesses.

4. See http://www.larouchepub.com/eiw/public/2008/eirv35n04-20080125/eirv35n04-20080125_034-brits_wanted_military_coup_in_it.pdf

Surprising to all victims of anti-American propaganda, Priore says that the United States was the only country which helped in the investigations. Thanks to U.S. military experts, traces of other planes could be found on radar records, and such planes could be identified as fighters. Most probably, the Itavia airliner was caught in the middle of a fight involving French fighters and Libyan jets. The Libyan planes were flying in the “shadow” of the Itavia plane, to avoid detection by radar. The French aircraft launched a missile aimed at the Libyans, which hit the Itavia airliner by mistake.

Why did the French do that? Again, Priore reconstructs the larger “Mediterranean” context.

That year, 1980, there were strong international tensions and real wars on the African continent, such as the civil war in Chad, between the pro-French faction led by Hissene Habre, and the pro-Libyan faction led by Presidente Gukuni Ueddei. Qaddafi had occupied the Aouzou land strip in the north, which was rich in uranium. The French government deployed huge forces in Chad, and the Libyans, in order to gain air supremacy, asked Italy to supply planes and train their pilots. Italy even agreed to having Italian trainers fly the planes. Officially, the Italian trainers were retired officers, but this was the gimmick used to avoid having Italy officially involved in the war.

But Qaddafi was not only active in Chad. Shortly after, he called on the inhabitants of Réunion Island, a French protectorate, to launch a liberation movement. And in January 1980, he tried to topple the Francophile Tunisian government, led by Habib Bourghiba. The attempt failed, but France broke diplomatic relations with Libya. Libya increased tensions also with Egypt, after the Camp David agreement, mobilizing troops at the border. Qaddafi “pursued a real policy of expansion, I would say an imperialist one,” Priore writes.

Qaddafi’s “activism,” however, isolated him in the Arab world, and made him vulnerable. Also, Qaddafi’s traditional protector, the Soviet Union, had just invaded Afghanistan, and was “distracted” on that front. And, in the United States, Jimmy Carter, who was not hostile to Qaddafi, was in trouble in an election year. Carter’s position became even more critical with the “Billygate” scandal, which involved his brother’s trafficking with Libya.

Thus, the decision was taken to kill Qaddafi and overthrow his regime. The night of June 27, 1980, Qaddafi was supposed to fly over Italy, to an Eastern



“Strategy of Tension”: According to Priore, one hypothesis is that the British reacted to Italy’s support for the September 1969 coup in Libya, led by Moammar Qaddafi, by organizing the terrorist bombing in the Piazza Fontana, Milan, in December. Shown: the Italian daily *l’Unità* headlines its coverage: “Horrendous attempt in Milan: 13 dead and 90 wounded,” adding that 3 bombs exploded in Rome at the same time, with 16 wounded.

Europe destination. The two Libyan fighters flying on the shadow of the Itavia airliner were coming from Yugoslavia, and were supposed to meet Qaddafi’s jet somewhere between Libya and Sicily, to escort him to his destination. The plan was to destroy the escort, and then Qaddafi’s plane. However, someone warned Qaddafi of the danger, and his plane turned back over Malta.

Two Italian F-104 Fighter planes were close enough to the crime scene that night to witness some of these events. The two Italian pilots sent an alarm signal to the base, but did not use the radio, in order not to be intercepted by the other “parties.” They flew back to the base and reported, in shock, of a “war episode.” Those

two pilots, Mario Naldini and Ivo Nutarelli, were members of the “Frecce Tricolori,” the elite acrobatic team of the Italian Air Force. Eight years later, Priore called them as witnesses, but could never interrogate them, because they died in the famous “accident” at the Ramstein air show. Other witnesses, about ten in total, died in mysterious circumstances, Priore says.

“The elimination of Qaddafi over Ustica would be just the first phase of a broader and much more complex project that included land operations in Libya. The fall of the regime in Tripoli would have as consequence a change in the whole North African and ‘Sub-Saharan’ balance of power and a new division of influences in this areas rich in mineral resources.”

The ‘Salus Rei Publicae’

In the final chapters of the book, Fasanella and Priore deal with concepts such as national interest and reasons of state, which deserve to be addressed here.

In his investigation on the Ustica case, Priore found a “total blackout” from the French authorities, “in all epochs and from all governments: Both Valery Giscard d’Éstaing and François Mitterrand insisted on the policy of absolute protection of state secrets.”

But even Italian institutions, which should have collaborated in finding out the truth, sabotaged, destroyed evidence, and created false information. The reason is that, “had we succeeded in demonstrating the responsibility of those states at the judicial level, the Italian government could not close its eyes: It would find itself in the uneasy condition of declaring, at least at the political level, the responsibility of certain friendly countries. And, in some cases, [might even be required to give] an adequate answer at the level of international law. But our government would have had neither the power, nor the will to do that, also, because, we ourselves had moved with a certain ‘impudence,’ beyond our limits and our borders.”

Therefore, judicial truth was blocked by Italian institutions (intelligence services) in the name of “reasons of State,” or *realpolitik*. Those state institutions, however, in doing that, engaged in a war with another state institution, the judiciary. Such a war “has lasted much longer than the Thirty Years War,” says Priore ironically. Other countries do not have such a war; they seem able to reconcile reasons of state with judicial truth, Priore says. The reason for that is to be found in the fact that Italy is a young state, born in 1871, and

“has not yet reached the primary aims of a national community, such as the creation of a ruling class, homogeneous and prepared to deal with the realities of the contemporary world, the welding of economic interests, a durable foreign policy based on the geopolitical constants of our peninsula. In other words, we are still tremendously provincial.”

The mark of such an unfinished nation is the fragility of the concept of “*salus rei publicae*” (the general welfare) a “meta-juridical law which is based on a good, which is also its purpose and which is the *conditio sine qua non* [essential condition] for the existence and the use of all other goods.” In Italy, the concept of *salus rei publicae* is a “very relative concept, of ephemeral life, depending on regimes and political majorities, different from other democratic countries in the West. In the United States, for instance, the concept of ‘public welfare’ has lasted since the proclamation of independence. In France, Great Britain, and Spain, maybe for more centuries, since the birth of the respective national states, or of strong national confederations.”

Such a weakness of the Italian nation has led to a situation where Italy “has always had several ‘parties’ inside and within state institutions,” including intelligence services, “parties with national roots, but also strongly linked to foreign interests and supranational ‘networks.’ In other words, the saying ‘*Franza o Spagna, basta che se magna*’⁵ has its historic reason, and has been true for centuries. . . . Strong political personalities like Moro were able to control this phenomenon inside the intelligence [services]. Weaker government leaders, instead, lost control of the situation, and conflicts exploded again.”

The Principle of Westphalia

Priore and Fasanella’s cry for the “unfinished nation” that is Italy, is noble and motivated by patriotic ideals. However, a few specifications are necessary, to help steer the debate in the most productive direction.

Throughout the book, the international context that generated terrorist violence in Italy seems to be presented as the inevitable reality of international relationships, based on the concept of geopolitical interests and “balance of power” schemes. However, even if this is a

5. “France or Spain, what matters is that one eats.” A popular saying in pre-modern Italy, when the country was subject to foreign domination.



Enrico Mattei (left), a statesman and industrialist, and Prime Minister Aldo Moro, both leading figures in Italy's ruling Christian Democratic party, challenged the domination of the British-French "Entente Cordiale" in the Mediterranean. Mattei was killed in a suspicious plane crash in 1962; Moro was kidnapped and murdered by the Red Brigades terrorists in 1978.



perfectly describe the first system, defined by impulses of former colonial powers whose "national interest" has been perverted under an imperial projection of power. This system of international relations

pursues the creation of "spheres of influence," where relations are not among equals, but among a dominating power and dominated countries. That is the case with the Entente Cordiale policy in the Mediterranean, with which the Italy of Mattei and Moro came in conflict.

Was Italy, too, pursuing the same policy? Was Italy seeking its "sphere of influence" at the costs of its rivals Britain and France? Yes and no. To understand better, the largest power of all, the United States, must be

pulled into the picture.

Fasanella and Priore hint at the answer, when they describe the role of the United States throughout their tale, as one promoting Italy's development, security, territorial integrity, and even ensuring that Italy was "respected" on the international scene. And in the Ustica investigation, as the only country providing full assistance in the investigation. However, Priore says, at one point, the United States, in its postwar strategy, was moved by "interests" and not by philanthropy. That is too little.

America's interest in a strong Italy had for sure a geopolitical component: Italy was a front-line ally in the East-West conflict, and of course, the U.S.A wished to reduce the control of the Entente Cordiale over oil supplies. However, with the victory in World War II, under the Franklin Roosevelt doctrine, the United States had forcefully introduced into the system of international relationships, the element of the Westphalian principle, embedded in the American Constitution, and in the history of American foreign policy, starting with the original intent of the Monroe Doctrine. Roosevelt had made it clear to Churchill that the United States

definite dynamic in history, there is another historical dynamic which determines process, and this is the concept of international relations based on the Westphalian principle of "promoting the good of your neighbor." The effort to define a national interest and a mission—such as the effort that Italy should make in order to become a "finished" nation—has two different and opposite results, depending whether it is located in the former or in the latter context.

In the reconstruction of the strategic conflicts which provide the context for terrorism, Priore and Fasanella

would not tolerate the perpetuation of colonial power, and this was the idea behind the creation of the United Nations.

With the death of Roosevelt, there was an abrupt pro-British shift under Truman, and the American military involvement in Indochina and in the British-engineered East-West conflict sabotaged Roosevelt's design. Nevertheless, elements of FDR's impulse for a policy based on principles were kept, and re-emerged full-fledged in periods of crisis, such as the 1956 Suez war. President Eisenhower's attitude towards Mattei is evidence of this, as is the support given by the Kennedy Administration to Mattei's "neo-Atlanticist" agenda.⁶ Italy's policy under the influence of Mattei and Moro was also strongly dictated by a policy based on principles, as defined by the Italian Constitution and the statutes of Mattei's and Moro's party, the Christian Democracy, developed under the leadership of future Pope Gianbattista Montini (Paul VI).

Thus, there were moves to break with the oligarchical tradition, proving that the Westphalian impulse is actually in the best interest of any nation which does not harbor colonialist impulses, i.e., if a nation wishes to pursue the true self-interest of its people, it will not follow a colonial policy; it will seek out cooperation for development, and alliances that allow for combatting those powers who wish to block development merely in order to maintain their imperial, financial power. This does not mean that old Italian colonialist impulses did not play a role, but that in general, they were not prevailing. This changed after the death of Aldo Moro.

Italy's True National Interest

What is the implication of this for the current situation? Today, Italy has an urgent need to define what its long-term national interest is, the more so as, this is indispensable to make the correct choices in the middle of the most serious world economic crisis in modern history. A definition of Italy's interest, however, must be consistent with an international system of law which is contrary to the current system of globalization. In other words, any attempt to define reasons of state and national interest in the current, Hobbesian international system of the fight of all nations against all nations, is doomed to fail. In the current system, the rule is that

your interest goes against the interest of another country. This is the road to fascism.

At the same time, the recognition and the pursuance of a national interest is impossible in the sub-system of globalization which Italy is part of: the European Union. By definition, and by un-natural law imposed through the Lisbon Treaty, the European Union has replaced the national interest of all member countries with a theoretical "European interest," which means imperial rule of financial interests against the interest of all member nations. The European Union today is the new form of rule of the financial power behind those colonial powers which, as Priore and Fasanella show, have prevented, including with the use of terrorism, Italy from pursuing its natural place in the Mediterranean region. Italy must become aware of this and draw the consequences, in terms of bold actions.

The imperial system of globalization with its sub-sectors must be replaced by a system of "community of interests" among perfectly sovereign nation-states. National independence must be re-established as the supreme good of a people, and international relationships must be ruled by treaties based on the principle of the Peace of Westphalia: that the good of my neighbor is also my good. This means that Italy must see in the development of all nations in the Mediterranean region, its own interest.

This corresponds to a very basic economic law: if my neighbors are rich, they can buy my products. Italy has no raw materials and no fossil energy sources, but does have a unique capacity for scientific discovery, engineering, and manufacturing since the time of Leonardo da Vinci. Due to its industrial potential, Italy can issue credit for its own development and for the development of its neighbors. There is no limit to this, except the availability of two production factors: manpower and equipment. But in order to do this, Italy must abandon the European Monetary Union, and regain sovereignty over its currency and credit.

Since this is impossible in a world that is going to Hell, Italy must campaign for LaRouche's "Four Power" strategy, i.e., that United States, Russia, China, and India reach a treaty agreement based on the principles of Westphalia. Only such a constellation of power can defeat the power of globalization and bring about a new system of financial, economic, and political relations in the world. In such a new system, Italy can find a leading place.

6. *Op. cit.*, "Mattei and Kennedy."