

Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D.C. 20505

28 August 1984

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Assessment of Responsibility for Papal Assassination Attempt

1. The Italian Prosecutor General's report concerning the alleged Bulgarian plot to kill Pope John Paul II lays out a case for a conspiracy in which the convicted Turk, Mehmet Ali Agca, carried out the attack with the sponsorship, direction, and assistance of Bulgarian official personnel and members of the "Turkish mafia."

[Redacted]

(b)(1)
(b)(3)

2. Did Agca Act Alone? Mehmet Ali Agca probably did not act alone in his attempt to assassinate the Pope in May 1981. One year after his arrest, Agca repudiated his initial testimony that he had acted alone, and began to claim that he was part of a wider conspiracy. Although the credibility of Agca's testimony has been weakened by numerous retractions and admitted lies, a number of witnesses have attested to the presence in St. Peter's Square on the afternoon of the shooting of another individual involved in the attack. Italian authorities possess a photograph of an individual running from the Square with a gun in his hand.

3. [Redacted]

(b)(1)
(b)(3)

All portions classified ~~SECRET~~

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

(b)(3)
(b)(3)

~~SECRET~~

[Redacted]

(b)(3)

~~SECRET~~ [REDACTED]

(b)(3)

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[REDACTED] The Italian Prosecutor General--in his recommendation last spring that Agca and eight other persons be brought to trial on charges of conspiring to kill the Pope--contended that Agca received funding and direction from a number of "Turkish mafia" members and Bulgarian diplomatic personnel. [REDACTED]

(b)(1)

(b)(3)

(b)(1)

(b)(3)

4. The Turkish Connection. When Agca recanted his early testimony and began to claim that he had not acted alone in the shooting, he reconstructed his travels and contacts during the two years before he turned up in St. Peter's Square. In so doing, he implicated a number of Turkish and Bulgarian nationals. Agca claimed to have met with three of the accused Turks in Zurich in late March 1981, at which time they allegedly perfected the final plan for the attack on the Pope and agreed upon a payment of three million German marks. [REDACTED]

(b)(1)

(b)(3)

5. The Bulgarian Connection. None of the three accused Bulgarians has ever admitted to having met Agca. According to the prosecutor's report, Agca has provided accurate and detailed descriptions of the various personal characteristics of the accused Bulgarians. Agca claimed that he had met one of the Bulgarians, Todor Ayzov, in Sofia in 1980--at which time the plot allegedly was hatched--and that he met the others, Zhelvo Vassilev and Sergey Antonov, in Rome later that year. [REDACTED]

(b)(1)

(b)(3)

[REDACTED] Agca maintained that Antonov's automobile was to be used to transport him and his alleged Turkish co-conspirator Oral Celik to the Bulgarian Embassy.

6. Agca and Celik were then to leave Italy in a TIR (Transport International Routier) truck. The prosecution maintains that the Bulgarian Embassy made unprecedentedly urgent demands for the Italians to clear the TIR truck for departure from the Embassy, rather than at the customary inspection site, an hour after the shooting. [REDACTED]

(b)(1)

(b)(3)

7. On Balance. Much of the Italian Prosecutor General's case alleging East Bloc complicity in the Papal attack appears to be dependent solely on the testimony of Agca, and he has not always been truthful or consistent over the period of his

~~SECRET~~ [REDACTED]

(b)(3)

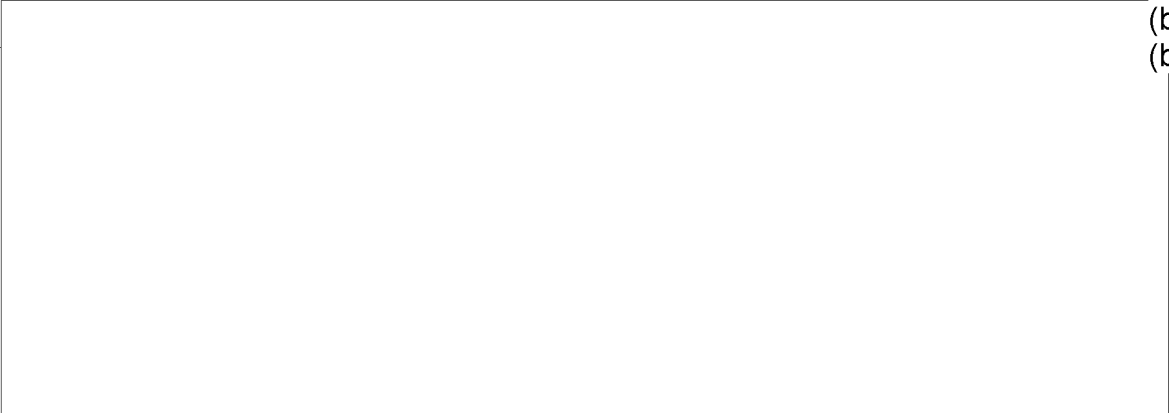
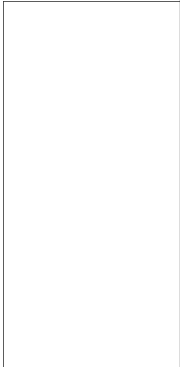
~~SECRET~~ [redacted]

(b)(3)

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incarceration. Further, Agca himself has stated that he had access to television and newspapers and even telephone directories since the end of 1981, which, while in conformity with rules of the Italian penal system, enabled him to obtain information relevant to the case. Even if Agca did have contacts with the accused Bulgarians, they may have involved narcotics or "grey arms" dealings rather than a Papal assassination conspiracy.

8.



(b)(1)
(b)(3)

9. The next move in the case rests with Magistrate Martella, who must decide whether the case should be tried. If it does go to court--and this seems likely--the trial of the alleged conspirators would probably begin late this year or in 1985.

~~SECRET~~ [redacted]

(b)(3)