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Manuscript: International Terrorism - The Russian Background and the Soviet Linkage

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ILLEGIB

INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

**The Russian Background
and the Soviet Linkage**

by

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The author is currently a Fellow of the Woodrow Wilson Center for Scholars at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, 20560. -- This paper has been prepared for presentation at the annual meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association in Ottawa, 9 June 1982. It should not be reproduced or cited before the date of this meeting.

I

Among the more peculiar contradictions of our times is the persistent and pervasive skepticism of people who otherwise pride themselves on their critical faculties--especially journalists and academics--about the likelihood that the Soviets might be playing an important role in encouraging and supporting international terrorism. A rich variety of rationalizations is repeatedly offered to dismiss the possibility of Soviet involvement or minimize it. Over and over again speculation and circumstantial evidence of Soviet charitableness toward terrorism are met with the protest, "But there is no proof!" There is a disinclination to search for evidence, or even to entertain hypotheses that a particular chain of subversive and violent consequences could be the result of some degree of Soviet encouragement and support, if not original initiative. The "Terrible Secret" syndrome seems to be in operation here.*1 Extreme formulations about terrorism are dismissed as absurd, e.g. "Assertions that most terrorists belong to a worldwide network taking orders from some secret, high-ranking power center are childishly far-fetched."*2 Probably true...but all too often then there is a leap to the opposite pole--because there is obviously no single power center, it is claim that there can be none at all. Objectively both hypotheses are untenable--and there is no evidence for either extreme view.

The subject needs to be approached with less emotional bias, a keener sense of history and greater analytical rigor. What reason is there to expect that a system which rests on the world's most extreme and sophisticated security practices refined over a period of 65 years would permit evidence of support of subversion and terrorism abroad even to be created in a form which would constitute proof, let alone become readily available

abroad? The search for documentary evidence, for a long time to come, is unlikely to prove fruitful. It is, after all, not a new problem for students of the Soviet Union and communist systems. Documentary evidence on the most sensitive aspects of the workings of all totalitarian systems eventually becomes available primarily as the result of accident or disaster. There are lessons from previous experience in dealing with the most odious aspects of the Soviet system. The extraordinary gullibility of some intellectuals in the 1920's and 1930's is well known.*3 The capacity to disbelieve was most strikingly demonstrated in connection with two related phenomena: the great purges and the GULAG system.

There was a remarkable degree of reluctance to recognize the scope and depth of the purges of the 1930's, even in the face of publicity and partial evidence at the time. The notion was nurtured that perhaps, after all, most of these people had actually been engaged in treasonable plotting with the Nazis or with exiles or other anti-Communist forces.*4 And the concentration camps--perhaps they did exist, but weren't they intended primarily for re-education, for reforming society?*5 The first comprehensive documentary study of them was too impressive to be dismissed lightly*6, but it still met with skepticism. The chain of revelations which Khrushchev set in motion three years after the death of Stalin finally provided evidence which destroyed the cumulative body of apologetics and rationalization that had been produced during the previous two decades about the purges and the forced labor system. The monumental works of Robert Conquest*7 and Alexander Solzhenitsyn*8 have exposed these appalling features of the Soviet system in such detail that it is no longer possible for an honest observer to ignore them.

These past experiences should be taken into account when we examine the possibility of Soviet sponsorship and support for various kinds of subversive activity during the past two decades. Elementary prudence calls for reserving judgment, however severe the lack of current hard evidence may be. The clean bill of health some current writers are so ready to grant the Soviets may be badly compromised by the revelations of defectors or even of future Soviet leaders who, like Khrushchev, may see it in their interest to reveal some of their predecessors' misdeeds and excesses.

II

Let us go back a bit, however. No people should be held hostage to its history, but history is relevant. To a degree far beyond anything that can be found in Western democratic tradition or experience, political intrigue, brutality, terrorism--"the habit of violence"*9--have been characteristic features of the Russian political scene. While Western Europe and the United States were evolving in the direction of more open, participatory societies in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Russian evolution was tragically in the direction of greater entanglement in terror and intrigue on the part of both the state and its enemies.*10

Marx was not as opposed to terror as some authors have preferred to think.

In the wake of the events of 1848 he wrote:

"There is only one way to shorten the murderous death agonies of the old society, only one way to shorten the bloody birth pangs of the new society...only one means--revolutionary terrorism."*11

The degree to which Marx and Engels approved of terror in subsequent years will always be subject to debate, but at the very least it can be said that Marxist ideas, as they became part of the ideological ferment which infected

the Russian Empire during the second half of the 19th century, contributed to formation of the view that violent change was going to be needed to set Russia on a path toward change and progress. Bakunin, Kropotkin, Nechaev, the People's Will, the Social Revolutionaries, along with the extraordinary double agent Azeff, are all part of a line of development which culminated in Lenin, "the High Priest of Terror."*12 This course of development was not inevitable--the historical balance was tipped in very delicate ways at crucial junctures during the years before 1917--but in the end Lenin and Bolshevism triumphed and this is the legacy that is most relevant for the history of the Soviet Union and the problems it represents for the world today.

"The centrality of Lenin to modern terror is now beyond dispute... Lenin believed capitalism to be violence; the revolutionary use of violence was not more than a wholly proper counterviolence."*13

It is the same argument used by the Baader-Meinhof gang and the Italian Red Brigades. Most of the philosophy of these and other modern terrorist groups can be found in Nechaev's Catechism of a Revolutionary. Is it merely accidental?

Lenin wrote in Iskra in 1901:

"In principle we have never rejected terror nor can we reject it. Terror is one of those military means that can come in handy and be even necessary at a certain moment of a battle, when the troops are in a certain shape under certain circumstances..."*14

After seizing power in November 1917, Lenin rapidly applied these principles. Terror became the main method by which the Bolsheviks consolidated their hold on Russia and did in their rivals for power.*15 Class war meant then, as it has meant ever since, resort to terror when it was waged at full intensity:

"The operative word in what Lenin called the class war was not class but war. This involved not merely an acceptance of terror and a loving concern with the idea of its application, but also a pedantic elaboration of terroristic methods that distinguished him from other socialist leaders."*16

The notion that it was Stalin who brutalized the Soviet system is an illusion. Solzhenitsyn's Gulag Archipelago makes clear that it was Lenin, not Stalin, who got the system going.*17 The history of Soviet Russia falls into periods of terror, relieved by periods of relative relaxation, with regional variations. In the country as a whole, terror dominated during collectivization and with only a brief period of relaxation intensified again during the period of the great purges. Substantial internal relaxation became necessary to enable the country to defeat the Nazi invasion, but terror was reimposed even before the war's end when several nationalities considered collaborators were uprooted and deported to Central Asia and Siberia,*18 and continued through the dispatch to forced labor camps of millions of returned prisoners of war, laborers and alleged traitors (primarily Russians and other Slavs) and the purging of the Baltic states and the Ukraine in the period 1945-50.

Since Stalin's death, terror as a tool of domestic management has been applied in more differentiated, subtle and sophisticated ways, but it has never been absent from the Soviet internal scene. Only through periodic application of violence has the USSR been able to maintain control over the captive peoples of Eastern Europe.

None of this history proves, of course, that the Soviet Union has been supporting international terrorism, but it has to be accepted as an essential part of any honest discussion of the subject. A system relying

on deliberate and continual application of techniques of subversion and violence to maintain itself in power over its own population would naturally resort to similar methods for protecting its interests and extending influence abroad. This becomes all the more likely because of continued adherence to the concept of the universality of the Soviet communist system and the desirability--indeed, historical inevitability--of extending it to the entire world through revolutionary means.

III

Covert activity abroad has been a feature of the Soviet system from its earliest days with varying patterns of collaboration, avoidance and rivalry between party and intelligence instrumentalities. There is a large memoir literature dealing with the period preceding WWII*19, expanded enormously after 1946, and several comprehensive studies of Soviet intelligence and subversive operations*20 which take most of the defector memoirs into account. This material leaves no doubt that the Soviet Union has devoted enormous resources to clandestine operations, expanded its capabilities continually, extended its geographic range of operations and refined its techniques. There is no basis for an assumption, in global terms, that the Soviets have ever downgraded the priority or restricted the momentum of clandestine operations in spite of periodic exposures and temporary setbacks in several countries, some of which are well documented. The dominant characteristic of these Soviet activities has always been persistence, perseverance and effort in depth. Eastern European intelligence services which were rapidly built up as the Russians consolidated control over these countries were already given important auxiliary tasks in the 1950's.

During the 1950's it was already apparent that operations conducted within

the formal government structure enjoyed higher priority than those undertaken through party channels. This trend has continued. It has made possible the support of non-communist, nationalist and even rightist groups. Power considerations have long since outdistanced ideology as a criterion for judging the worthiness of instrumentalities and individuals for support. The Soviets have often displayed remarkable imaginativeness--and opportunism--about manipulating and camouflaging raw power considerations under various kinds of ideological cloaks which make them more respectable in the Third World and among intellectuals everywhere.

Western reaction to the Korean invasion in 1950 was a shock from which Stalin never recovered. Khrushchev, once he had gained a firm hold on power, was daring about competing with the Free World for influence on a much more flexible basis but he suffered a severe setback when Kennedy forced him to back down during the Cuban missile crisis. East-West competition during the past 20 years has been profoundly affected by decisions the Soviets took in the period immediately following this 1962 humiliation. These may well have been Khrushchev's decisions, even though he was unable for long to maintain his hold on power.

The former Czech general, Jan Sejna, who fled in 1968, maintains that the Soviet Union had committed itself by 1964 to a vast, long-range expansion of covert operations in all major countries of the Free World and that this plan included expansion of East European surrogate capabilities.*21 It also involved encouragement of Castro's ambitions to revolutionize Latin America and the entire Third World. The Tricontinental structure--AALAPSO--came into operation in 1966 and rapidly expanded as a propaganda and operational instrument for encouraging anti-Western revolutionary ferment wherever the ground looked even mildly fertile. Castro had no financial means

of his own. Cuba was totally dependent then, as it has been ever since, on Soviet funding and material--including arms--support for every major foreign operation it has undertaken.*22 Che Guevara was prominent in this early phase, first in Africa, then in Bolivia, where he met his demise and in the process discredited romantic revolutionary adventurism.*23

Lessons were learned from all these experiences. And more were learned from the student and intellectual ferment which welled up throughout the Free World in the late 1960's. There is evidence of direct Soviet involvement in some of these activities*24 They encouraged and publicized most of them through overt and covert propaganda channels. A wide variety of surrogate arrangements were used. Many countries proved amenable to Soviet purposes: Syria, South Yemen, Iraq and Libya, all of which were used, e.g., along with Cuba, for support of Eritreans and other anti-Ethiopian activities in the late 1960's and early 1970's. North Korea was especially useful in areas where the Russians were competing with the still active Chinese Communists for influence on liberation movements and guerrilla organizations. The Palestinians began to be developed as a major operational force in the late 1960's, when they were especially susceptible as a result of the Israeli victory in the 1967 war. By this time, the controlled intelligence services of Eastern Europe had reached a relatively high degree of effectiveness. The best were the East Germans, Czechoslovaks, Bulgarians and Hungarians. The Soviet capacity to exploit the Czechoslovak service seems to have increased, rather than declined, in the wake of the invasion at the end of the summer in 1968.

It was at the turn of the decade that a shift from relatively diffuse agitational and propaganda activity toward more tightly organized conspiratorial and violent operations occurred: terrorism in its more dramatic and alarming forms. Cuba had encouraged hijackings of aircraft from the US and Latin American in the late 1960's. Hijackings spread in the 1970's. Palestinians had a natural affinity for risk-taking and Qaddafi, very soon after he consolidated his hold on Libya, displayed a strong desire to achieve impact in a much larger arena.

During the 1970's most of the long-standing clandestine broadcasting operations which the Soviet Union had sponsored since the 1950s were terminated. By the end of the decade, only those broadcasting to Turkey (two stations) and Iran (one station in two languages) remained. (Both played important roles in the political deterioration which affected both countries in the late 1970's.) Meanwhile evidence of intensified Soviet effort in the field of disinformation, subversive propaganda and forgery began to accumulate. Some of this material was designed to serve specific purposes. Most of it was aimed at undermining confidence in Western governments and at disrupting US relationships with allied and friendly governments.*25 In the broadest sense, its purpose was to foster alienation, suspicion and resentment in free world societies, fan tensions and help build a climate where terrorism and violent destabilization would seem credible and natural as manifestations of acute political dissatisfaction.

During a period when US leadership wavered and faltered, NATO was beset by increasing strain, economic crisis spread following the 1973 Israeli-Arab war and OPEC oil price increases, violence spread. This was a time

when most democratic countries were coping with social and political strains resulting from efforts to achieve more complete democracy, broader social justice and rectification of economic, ethnic and regional imbalances. Some form of terrorism developed in most free democratic countries. It reflected local causes in many specific instances and fed on indigenous grievances and frustrations. There nevertheless often seemed to be insidious processes of exacerbation at work. Though generally leftist in ideological underpinnings and rationalizations and sometimes declaredly fighting rightist groups and ideas, terrorists' ideological motivations became more vague in direct proportion to their propensity for violence. The most dedicated terrorists seemed often to come from the most affluent levels of society. Extreme nationalism was a factor in some cases, but was often entirely absent. A curious form of abstract internationalism, devoid of real humanitarianism and nihilistic at its core, was the most characteristic motivation. More often, it seemed to be mere lust for power, self-dramatizing adventurism.

What was most surprising was that attitudes toward the Soviet Union were seldom hostile, often equivocal, sometimes surprisingly indulgent in the light of other goals the terrorists claimed to be pursuing. Such equivocation and generosity was almost always reciprocated by the Soviets themselves. They showed remarkable understanding, sympathy and at times open enthusiasm for disaffected "revolutionary" groups working to destroy Western societies in spite of the fact that both sides knew that the most benign actions of the same kind in Moscow or Minsk would provoke immediate KGB repression.*26

As Claire Sterling notes, the terrorists

have never tried to dismantle a society under Soviet sponsorship. They haven't lifted a finger against some of the most appalling tyrannies on record, either. Uganda under the maniac rule of Idi Amin did not make their list. (In fact, Palestinians volunteered to act as his personal bodyguard.) Nor did the Central African Empire under the cannibal reign of Emperor Bokassa... Yet the nearly empty desert sultanate of Oman has been high on their list and so has a stretch of Saharan sand staked out by the Polisario guerrillas, demanding statehood for a population of eighty thousand...*27

To a remarkable extent, there is a common denominator in a very large percentage of terrorist activity: it supports direct or indirect Soviet political or ideological objectives. When Ethiopia was a western-oriented country, dependent on the US for its principal military support and offering modest military facilities for US use, the Eritrean insurgency was sustained by Communist and radical Arab countries, Libya prominent among them. All of these countries have discovered that the Eritrean insurgency is not a genuine "liberation" movement since the USSR fully embraced the Ethiopian Revolution in 1976 and Eritreans now depend on conservative Arabs for most of the support they receive. Castro, who has no independent resources with which to support the Eritreans in any case, has shown some reserve which by some has been interpreted as residual moral commitment, but may simply represent a convenient reinsurance policy against the possibility that the Soviet-Ethiopian alliance might turn sour and return to support of anti-Ethiopian violence would again become desirable.*28

Increased emphasis on human rights in American foreign policy during the 1970's coincided with with steadily mounting terrorism--the very antithesis of human rights. This was also a time of especially gruesome manifestations of vengefulness toward dissidents and critics of oppression in countries ruled by Communists.*²⁹ / Mounting resentment of

exploitation and repression in Communist-ruled countries, however, did not result in outbreaks of comparable mass or individually-oriented violence there, but instead in the evolution of more humane, constructive and politically sophisticated forms of resistance and pressure for reform, of which the best known example is the massive country-wide labor union, Solidarity, in Poland.

An enormous amount has been written about political dissent, violence and terrorism in free societies during the past decade. It would be impossible even to try to summarize all of it here. Let us take a brief look at developments in two important Mediterranean countries as a means of gaining more understanding of the problem and some insight into the Soviet stance toward it: Italy and Turkey.*30

IV

Italian President Pertini hit a tender Soviet nerve when, in an interview over French television in January 1981, he voiced his suspicion that the Red Brigades were directed from abroad:

"I don't know, I only suspect it, and therefore I can only express my suspicion. How is it that terrorism was unleashed in Turkey, in a land that has a 1000-km. common border with the Soviet Union? How is it that it is so strong in Italy, which is a democratic bridge between Europe, Africa and the Near East?"*31

A few days later the Soviet foreign ministry summoned the Italian ambassador and protested Pertini's remarks. Moscow's sensitivity provoked an extensive debate in Italy. The confessions of captured terrorists shed more light on the origins and support of extremism in Italy as they became available in the press last year. Claire Sterling analyzed some of this material in a chilling article in the July 1981 Encounter in which she demonstrated that the Red Brig-

ades were far from an accidental development or merely the consequence of the irrationality and contradictions of Italian society.*32

The intellectual formulations that produced them were provided by a celebrated political science professor at the University of Padua, Antonio Negri. Until his death in March 1972 while trying to blow up an electric pylon, the famous leftist publisher Giangiacomo Feltrinelli provided a funding channel, protection and, along with Negri, lent an aura of chic respectability to what was in effect a scheme not only for destroying democracy in Italy, but also^{for} trying to ensure that only the most radical political alternative would follow./*33 The terrorists aimed to undermine the moderate leadership of the Italian Communist Party--at odds with Moscow ever since the Czechoslovak invasion in 1968--and prevent the party from participating as a respectable political force in an Italian government. This position would accord with the position of the most conservative elements in the Soviet Communist hierarchy.

The elaborate and highly professional structure which was created to support the Red Brigades--the "Organization"--was brought into being in Rome in September 1971 by a small group attending a congress of the most doctrinaire leftist elements of the PCI. This was hardly contrary to the desires of the USSR, then or later. All through the 1970's Red Brigade members continued to go to Czechoslovakia for training, as Feltrinelli had frequently done before his death. Could anything of this sort happening in Czechoslovakia after the Soviet invasion have been contrary to Soviet desires? It would hardly have been the result of Czechoslovak initiative... Red Brigade defectors have testified that they received large quantities of weapons shipped via Hungary and Austria

from Czechoslovakia*34 while Czechoslovak diplomats were repeatedly expelled from Italy for involvement in subversion throughout the 1970's. It is remarkable that the Italian government gave little publicity to these expulsions and took no retaliatory measures against Czechoslovakia. Indulgence did not pay. There is also evidence of many kinds of links between Red Brigades and Palestinians, South Yemenis and Libyans. Though the illusion was created that Italian terrorists financed themselves with extortion and bank robberies, hard evidence is lacking. The actual situation, if and when fuller data become available, may turn out to be similar to that in Turkey—where vast sums of money were obviously provided from outside the country. There is some evidence of encouragement of rightist terrorism in Italy as a foil for the left, and with the aim of encouraging wider destabilization and demoralization. The famous Bologna railway station bombing in August 1980 may fall into this category—its instigators have never been uncovered.

While Turkey experienced a hiatus in terrorism and subversion during the years which followed the 1971 military mini-intervention, and violence did not again become a marked feature of the Turkish political scene until the latter part of the 1970's, Italy endured a steady escalation. By 1975 there were 702 terrorist incidents in the year. The rate increased steadily until 1980: 1976 - 1198; 1977 - 2124; 1978 - 2365; 1979 - 2750.

Until 1977 the official Italian Communist position was that the Red Brigades were merely an extension of neo-Fascist conspiracy. Party spokesmen had conceded the leftist nature of the Red Brigades*35 shortly before the shocking kidnapping and murder of Aldo Moro in

Also Prof!

March 1978. This act was directed not only against the Christian Democrats but against the PCI itself--to prevent formation of a government with Communist backing. When Moro's body was found it had been deposited half way between the headquarters of the PCI and the Christian Democrats!*36 Within days the Soviet propaganda machine began suggesting US links to Moro's murder. Propaganda fabrications were used to provide "substantiation" for new allegations. An article in Problems of Peace and Socialism in December 1978 alleged that the Red Brigades were manipulated through pro-Fascist organizations (a position the PCI had now abandoned) organized by the CIA! The technique is a familiar feature of Soviet practice. It was applied shortly after the May 1981 assassination attempt against the Pope when the Soviets' Italian-language USSR Oggi featured a Novosti article filled with insinuations that Mehmet Ali Agca had been acting at the instigation of the US.*37

Red Brigades activity leveled off in 1980 but has by no means ceased. The Italian security authorities have been gathering rich additional information from a spate of prisoners and defectors. The full story remains to be told. Let us shift to Turkey.

V

Turkey is an easier case study than Italy because it experienced two distinct waves of terrorism, both of which were brought to an end by military intervention and a systematic round-up of terrorists whose interrogations produced an enormous amount of information on their organization, motivation and sources of support.

As in much of the Free World, student agitation and intellectual ferment developed in Turkey in the late 1960's. Initially mild in method, these movements soon fell under the influence of the extreme left and became stridently anti-US and anti-NATO, attitudes which did not correspond to any significant body of public opinion in the country.*38 Riots and disorders escalated into terrorism in 1969 with the emergence of the "Turkish People's Liberation Army" and other extremist groups who found the means to carry out bombing attacks, assassination attempts, kidnappings and hijackings during the next two years. They were encouraged by two Soviet-sponsored clandestine radio stations.

An episode involving the kidnapping of four US airmen precipitated a government crisis in March 1971 when military leaders suspended the constitutional process, installed a civilian national-unity government and proclaimed martial law. It took the better part of a year (and several more spectacular terrorist incidents) before violence was halted. Over 4000 terrorists and supporters had been arrested, interrogated and tried and more than 2000 imprisoned by the summer of 1973. Extensive evidence of external financial and arms support from Communist sources was assembled, issued in a massive classified study and summarized in a smaller White Book.*39 Elections in October 1973 resulted in formation of a weak coalition government early in 1974 with socialist-leaning Bülent Ecevit as prime minister. One of his first initiatives was to secure from parliament an amnesty releasing most of the terrorists who had been incarcerated during the previous three years.

Strong circumstantial evidence of Soviet and Soviet-surrogate support for subversion in Turkey as well as a good deal of specific evidence of arms shipments and direct contacts between Communists and Turks

came for all practical purposes to be forgotten or ignored during the next three years when Turkey became preoccupied with Cyprus, strains with Greece and the US arms embargo and then fell into chronic political and economic crisis.*40 Ecevit's amnesty for terrorists had been based on a widely held belief among Turkish intellectuals, which remained current through the 1970's, that terrorism was the natural result of sociological processes and political immaturity. Generosity toward young people who had gone astray was thought likely to wean them from violence. By 1976, however, some were found to be returning to their old ways.

During the period 1977-80 Turkey experienced a second wave of subversion and terrorism several times as destructive and with much more far-reaching ramifications than the first. Terrorism by rightists became a major feature of the situation.*41 Though US personnel and installations were deliberately attacked, the main focus of the second terrorist assault wave was Turkish society itself. By 1978 left-right clashes were disrupting life in many parts of the country. High schools and universities were crippled by clashes but their problems were overshadowed by the commotion and tension which infected religious sects, labor unions, professional associations, tribal and ethnic factions and the political parties themselves. Unemployed youth became a major recruiting ground for terrorist organizers. By 1979 police and security forces were frequent targets of violence. Terrorism became increasingly irrational as the level of violence increased. "Liberated areas" came to be proclaimed in urban slum districts—and from somewhere funds and arms had arrived to operate them. Terrorism contributed to economic decline, but was not itself the result of economic strain. Radical

unions, who represented a very small part of the work force, called strikes to disrupt production. After the economic stabilization program which has already proved so successful was announced in January 1980, the level of violence increased markedly. When killings reached the level of 28 per day in the late summer of 1980, the military leadership took control of the country. The need to prevent economic reform from being undermined by terrorism was an important consideration in the military decision to take power.*42

Massive arrests of terrorists and surrender and confiscation of arms, followed by interrogations and investigations which are not yet completed, are producing the largest and most extensive body of data on country-wide terrorism which has yet come to light anywhere. Sociology is inadequate as an explanation for what has been uncovered. It is clear that Turkey was the target of one of the most intense and sophisticated foreign-instigated destabilization operations the world has known. More than 800,000 hand weapons had been collected by the end of 1981, conservatively valued at \$300 million--and almost all of foreign origin. Vast quantities of ammunition, explosive material and many other kinds of arms--mines, grenades, mortars, rockets, bombs--have also been gathered. 30,000 terrorists and supporters have been incarcerated and are still in various stages of being dealt with; another 10-15,000 have fled abroad.

These people were generously supplied with funds for travel, communications, propaganda, payments to agitators and, of course, their own living expenses. The myth that terrorists of this kind live from bank robberies, extortions and proceeds from sale of stolen goods has been

discredited by what is known in Turkey. Security and police had kept careful records of all such robberies and thefts. Extortion was rare. Total funds terrorists could have netted in such fashion during the years 1977-80 accounts for less than 2% of the total of \$1 billion estimated as required to finance terrorism during this time: for this entailed not only all the costs already mentioned, but the cost of vast amounts of arms and ammunition expended, the costs of transporting them to Turkey and within the country.

The left and right, in spite of intense rivalry and destructive infighting, have been found to have drawn on similar—sometimes essentially identical—sources of arms and funds. There are many other intriguing facts of this situation on which I have written elsewhere at greater length*43 and additional information continues to be published in the Turkish press almost daily. Everything points to the Soviet Union as the only plausible source of the funds and initiative that sustained this massive effort to destroy democracy in Turkey, the country's economy and Turks' confidence in themselves.

Before, in conclusion, I offer some general hypotheses about the Soviet relationship to international terrorism—none of them provable in an absolute sense, but all (as worthy) of consideration, I contend, (as the proposition that the Soviets do not support terrorism or are opposed to it—let me summarize the conclusions I have reached to date in a continuing investigation of the most spectacular and mysterious terrorist action of our era—Mehmet Ali Agca's attempt to assassinate what the Economist called "The Ultimate Target", Pope John Paul II.

Both
left and
right

VI

When shots rang out in St. Peter's Square on the sunny afternoon of 13 May 1981 and the Polish Pope collapsed in a pool of blood while shocked bystanders helped police seize a young Turk, Mehmet Ali Agca, there was a rush to judgment. Some journalists delivered themselves of exactly the conclusion the sponsors of this act must have desired:

"Agca is a cold-eyed fanatic--a Turkish ultra-nationalist and religious zealot who hates the West and Christianity and sought the most effective way to attack them."

(Georgie Ann Geyer in the Washington Star, 15 May 1981)

"At the root of this terrorist attempt against the Pope is a turbulent Islamic society, pregnant with nasty surprises. The lesson is that those who look to the Moslem world as a sure supplier of oil or a steady ally against Moscow do so at their peril."

(Joe Kraft in the Washington Post, 19 May 1981)*44

The Palestinian apologist, Rev. Hilarion Capucci, had hurriedly called a press conference in Rome on 15 May 1981 to deny any Palestinian support for Agca and the Christian Science Monitor reported from Rome two days later a theory that Qaddafi during his visit to Moscow the previous month had offered to oblige the Russians in bringing Poland to heel by arranging to have the Pope assassinated so that he could not carry out his vow to return to his homeland to support his countrymen if the Russians invaded.

Nevertheless, on the basis of what evidence it is not clear, Joe Harsch announced in the Christian Science Monitor on 2 June that there could be

"...no serious suggestion that the deed was motivated from Moscow or the man trained by Moscow or its agents."

Hugh Sidey was much less sure. He came out with a chillingly realistic but admittedly hypothetical account of Agca as the chosen instrument in

a master plot of the KGB's Department of Wet Affairs: "Playing an Assassin Like a Fish", Washington Star, 14 June 1981. It presents a set of hypotheses which the passage of a year's time, the investigation, interrogation and trial of Agca, the interrogation and trial of several accomplices in Turkey, the work of journalists, academic researchers and police and security authorities in several countries have done nothing to discredit.

Agca, though young (he only turned 24 this past January), was not without a past. He had already assassinated a leading public figure in Turkey, the highly respected editor of the liberal newspaper Milliyet, Abdi Ipekçi. Ipekçi had been gunned down on his way home from work in February 1979 as the result of a carefully pre-meditated plot, which involved accomplices. Agca was not caught until 25 June 1979, when police apprehended him in an Istanbul cafe and he quickly confessed to the Ipekçi murder but revealed very little about the supporters behind him in the course of five months of interrogation and trial before he escaped on 23 November 1979. His escape was the result of a carefully organized operation which could have taken place only as a result of organized effort and plentiful money. He was driven out of prison in a soldier's uniform. He did not surface again until the shots rang out in St. Peter's Square.

If the Agca story were simple and clear-cut it would be much easier to write about than it is. I have been engaged in an intermittent effort for a year to pull all the strands together and am far from having the task finished. What follows represents the conclusions of a 70-page report which I completed in December 1981; this report, in turn, rested on an earlier 30-page study I had finished in September 1981.*45 In

the course of these researches I have spent two periods in Turkey and several days in Italy. I have had the co-operation of Turkish officials. I have interviewed Agca's family and reviewed a large quantity of documentation. I plan to continue this work later this year. What I set forth below are the conclusions I reached last December. Though additional information has come to light since then, it does not alter these conclusions in any significant way.

It is possible to say quite definitely what Agca is not—he is not

- *a Muslim fanatic, or religious at all.
- *demonstrably anti-Christian.
- *an active rightist/nationalist in Turkish terms.
- *stupid, ignorant, mentally unbalanced.
- *a psychopath.

There is no evidence that Agca began his career as an assassin under blackmail or some identifiable form of pressure that forced him to act against his will. There is a great deal of evidence that demonstrates that he possesses an unusually keen intelligence and alert mind. He had a consistent record as an outstanding student at every level of his studies. During his student years, Agca was a loner, serious, mildly introverted, with some reputation for arrogance and cocksureness. He was ambitious and worked hard from an early age to earn money to help his family and himself.

It is difficult to get a clear picture of Agca's ideological orientation and of influences that shaped his political attitudes. He appears to have gone to considerable length (and perhaps even some physical risk) to avoid engagement in student political turbulence in both high school and university. On what this passionate above-politics attitude rested

is not clear. It has not yet been possible to determine what books he read during this time and what periodical publications influenced him during his university period.

There are, nevertheless, intriguing indications of leftist orientation in what we have of his writing: his note attacking the Pope's visit to Turkey after his escape in 1979 and the note left in his hotel room when he went off to shoot the Pope (claiming that he was acting to further freedom in Afghanistan and El Salvador); as well as in parts of his confession written after his 1979 arrest.

There is no evidence of training with rightist or leftist groups in Turkey itself. Agca acknowledged that he had had PLO training (presumably in Lebanon) during his initial interrogation in Rome and then retracted the admission after Rev. Capucci had denied it. As far as we know, he has not acknowledged Libyan training. There is no confirmation of the dramatic story that appeared in the Turkish press last fall of KGB training in the USSR. If Turkish authorities have confirmation of training in Bulgaria, they have not yet released it.

There can be no doubt about organizational backing and generous supply of funds. The assassination of Ipekçi required careful planning and Agca deposited what for his circumstances was a sizable sum in his mother's bank account before he committed that crime. Everything we have learned and deduced about the assassination attempt against the Pope demonstrates extensive professional organizational support. Agca exchanged foreign funds in Italy shortly before he attempted to kill the Pope and had cash totalling nearly \$20,000 on him when he was apprehended in St. Peter's Square.

Agca appears to have been playing a leftist role, camouflaged as a rightist and supported by mechanisms embedded in part in Turkish rightist organizations, both in the country and among Turks in Germany. Agca's own motivation may not have been primarily political. He may have been acting out of expectation of monetary gain and some form of fame. His sponsors, detecting intense ambition and judging it exploitable, may have capitalized on his megalomania to compromise as well as inspire him, from one step to another, into a condition of malleability. In the final analysis, there is no plausible motive for Agca's attack on the Pope except an "Eastern" one. No country, faction or group could expect to benefit from the elimination of John Paul II in any clear-cut and obvious way--except the leaders in the Kremlin.

Deeper examination of the Ipekçi murder in Turkey makes it appear less and less likely to have been instigated by the right. While Soviet backing for it need not be postulated to explain it, neither can it be ruled out. It had the effect of demoralizing the country at a time when destabilization was already well advanced.

Would Agca have known that he was working for the Russians? It is conceivable that his awareness of his ultimate backing may have been very limited in the beginning. It is difficult to believe that he could have maintained the illusion so completely as planning for the attack on the Pope progressed--he was simply too intelligent--but it is possible that he had been flattered/deluded into believing that he was serving some supra-national cause.

The attack on the Pope has been officially declared by the Italian court which tried Agca to have been the result of an organization-backed

conspiracy. Whatever the specifics of this conspiracy, our best source on them has to be Agca himself who, unlike Lee Harvey Oswald, is still alive and must be going through some process of reflection and self-examination as he endures solitary confinement in a succession of Italian high-security prisons. It is possible, however, that even Agca might not be able to shed full light on the background of the operation in which he was the key figure. If the KGB did mount it with the approval of the highest authority in the Kremlin, we must expect a mission so important to have been carried out with the highest degree of clandestine skill: compartmentation, decoy and ruse tactics, cut-out and fail-safe support mechanisms. There is fair evidence that all of these were indeed used. No one involved except "master control" would have known the full plan.

But we should also not lose sight of the fact that Agca, after all, bungled the job given him. He did not kill the Pope. His attempts to confound his interrogators, though imaginative, have not really succeeded. He has given away enough to make himself not credible in the role his sponsors apparently envisioned for him if caught: a Turkish Muslim fanatic who would be seen in himself as sufficient explanation for the foul deed that was to have been committed or, perhaps, a mentally unbalanced psychopath. Everything that has been learned about Agca belies these notions. There is, furthermore, no basis for rancor against the Pope in Turkey either as a Catholic Christian or as a Pole. Such considerations have been absent from the concerns of Turkish rightists and religious conservatives. And, of course, Agca was not a religious conservative, never had any religious concerns, has no record of any pre-occupation that could in itself have led him to devote 18 months

to mysterious travels through more than a dozen countries in preparation for killing the leader of the Roman Catholic Church and the single man who commands more respect in today's world than any other...

Moscow has been largely silent about Agca. From time to time odd tales that look like disinformation crop up. The Munich tabloid Bildzeitung, e.g., came out with a story in October 1981 which tried to depict Agca as a partner of German neo-Nazis; he had allegedly spent six months training with a group of them in Bavaria. It doesn't fit anything else known about him. Allegations of Nazi links are a time-worn KGB ploy.

There is much more to be learned about Agca. It is to be hoped that further investigation in Italy, additional work by European security services, deeper investigations in Turkey will all gradually fill in the partial picture we now have.

VII

In the final analysis, Agca cannot be understood in isolation from the phenomenon of terrorism in Turkey. The more we learn about it the more likely it appears that it was

*deliberately fomented and supported on a massive scale by the Soviet Union, utilizing surrogates such as Bulgaria and Syria as principal channels for arms, and that

*the Soviet modus operandi included multi-faceted infiltration and build-up of rightist groups to serve as a foil for the left and accelerate the destabilization process.

The pattern has parallels with what has been happening in Italy and elsewhere in the Free World. Terrorism in Turkey merits greater study than it has yet received and the material for such study is fortunately becom-

ing available. The same is true of terrorism in Italy and a great many other countries, including Germany, Spain and northern Ireland.

The initial question to be asked is, of course: Is all this violence merely a manifestation of infection by a socio-political virus that is naturally generated by democratic systems, ^{or} by the ferment of modernization, the ordeal of change and adaptation? An easy yes is not enough. Who are the terrorists? What is their organizational structure? What common denominators are there from one country to another? Where does the money really come from? What are their links abroad? Are surface appearances substantiated by deeper probing? That is merely the first phase. Then we have to ask: CUI BONO? Soviet charitableness toward terrorism and violence is sufficiently well demonstrated, and KGB involvement has been frequently enough exposed, to justify more systematic testing of the possibilities of Soviet support. It is like the search for the cause of pernicious disease. We see the disease around us. The results are apparent. There have to be causes and contributing factors. Facile, comforting explanations^a of them will not enable us to find a cure. All possible causes and contributory considerations ought to be examined. What is wrong with putting the burden of proof on the Soviets from time to time?

How to
be done?

The Free World has been trying to come to terms with the Soviet Union since World War II. The effort has not been notably successful. Experience has demonstrated that the challenge the Soviet Empire represents for the rest of the world is not effectively met if we permit our approach to the problem to rest on illusions. One of the most comfortable ways to deal with a seemingly intractable^a problem is to pretend

that it does not exist. This phenomenon has been apparent in recent months in the debate over mounting evidence of Soviet use of lethal chemical and biological substances against Third World peoples resisting Soviet-backed subjugation—the "Yellow Rain" controversy. The Wall Street Journal's editorial of 30 December 1981, "Denial", defines the issues sharply.

The mere possibility that Soviet leaders have been systematically abetting terrorism as a means of undermining rapidly developing and advanced societies carries too many implications for our own security and well being to be dealt with lightly. The questions raised by the Agca case dramatize the problem as nothing else could. His is the most mysterious crime since Lee Harvey Oswald murdered John Kennedy. Oswald has never been convincingly explained as anything other than a lone assassin. Agca was no lone assassin. It is clear that an organization recruited and supported him in the effort to kill Karol Wojtyla, Pope John Paul II. The who and the why of this case can tell us a great deal about the nature of the world in which we live and the problems we must overcome to ensure continuation of the way of life we prefer. We can fail to pursue these issues only at our own peril.

Washington, DC - May 1982

FOOTNOTES

- 1 - The reference is to the reluctance on the part of the outer world, including Jews themselves, to recognize the truth of the Nazi holocaust. The phenomenon has been documented and analyzed in detail by Walter Z. Laqueur in The Terrible Secret, New York/London, 1980, and summarized in Encounter, "Hitler's Holocaust", July 1980.
- 2 - Political Terrorism, Facts on File, New York, 1975, p. 6.
- 3 - The best recent compilation of material recalling this tendency is Paul Hollander's Political Pilgrims, New York/London, 1981. A selection of highlights appeared in Encounter, "Pilgrims on the Run", October 1981.
- 4 - For a striking example, see Frederick L. Schuman, then Woodrow Wilson Professor of Government at Williams College, in Soviet Politics at Home and Abroad, New York, 1946, pp. 263ff.
- 5 - Schuman, op. cit., pp. 340-343.
- 6 - David J. Dallin and Boris I. Nicolaevsky, Force^d Labor in the Soviet Union, New Haven, 1947.
- 7 - The Great Terror, Stalin's Purge of the Thirties, New York, 1968.
- 8 - The Gulag Archipelago, New York, 1973 and following.
- 9 - Crane Brinton as cited in Alexander Dallin and George Breslauer, Political Terror in Communist Systems, Stanford, 1970, p. 23.
- 10 - See Tibor Szamuely, The Russian Tradition, London, 1974, esp. Chapter 18, "Discipline and Terrorism".
- 11 - Neue Rheinische Zeitung, 5 November 1848, as cited in Albert Parry, Terrorism, from Robespierre to Arafat, New York, 1976, p. 71.
- 12 - Parry, op. cit., pp. 131-145.
- 13 - Parry, op. cit., p. 131.
- 14 - Parry, op. cit., p. 137.
- 15 - Parry, op. cit., pp. 146-160.
- 16 - Bertram Wolfe, An Ideology in Power--Reflections on the Russian Revolution, New York, 1969, p. 173.
- 17 - Parry, op. cit., p. 131.
- 18 - The best account, which originated as samizdat, is Aleksandr M. Nekrich, The Punished Peoples, New York, 1978.

- 19 - Outstanding examples include: Grigory S. Agabekov, OGPU, the Russian Secret Terror, New York, 1931; W.G. Krivitsky, In Stalin's Secret Service, New York, 1939; Jan Valtin, Out of the Night, New York, 1940.
- 20 - E.g. David J. Dallin, Soviet Espionage, New Haven, 1955; John Barron, KGB, the Secret Work of Soviet Secret Agents, New York, 1974.
- 21 - Claire Sterling, The Terror Network, New York, 1981, pp. 290-292.
- 22 - Cf. Sterling, op. cit., pp. 247-257.
- 23 - For a discussion of this aspect of the revolutionary mystique see Melvin J. Lasky, Utopia and Revolution, Chicago/London, 1976, pp. 140-145.
- 24 - Much of it is included in Barron, op. cit.
- 25 - These developments are dealt with in the works by Barron and Sterling already cited and documented in detail in Soviet Covert Action (The Forgery Offensive), a report of Hearings before the Subcommittee on Oversight of the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, House of Representatives, 96th Congress, 2d Session, US Government Printing Office, Washington, 1980.
- 26 - See Herbert Romerstein, Soviet Support for International Terrorism, Foundation for Democratic Education, Inc., Washington, DC, 1981.
- 27 - Sterling, op. cit., p. 17.
- 28 - Bereket Habte Selassie, Conflict and Intervention in the Horn of Africa, Monthly Review Press, New York/London, 1980, himself a late convert to the Eritrean cause, presents remarkable confirmation of earlier Soviet support for Eritrean insurgency in attacking the Soviets for their "duplicity" in shifting to support of Mengistu.
- 29 - See, e.g., Kyrill Panoff, "Murder on Waterloo Bridge--the Case of Georgi Markov", Encounter, November 1979; also Pierre de Villemarest, "Les Tueurs du K.G.B." in Historia, Paris, January 1982.
- 30 - I have covered this material in greater detail, and provided much more extensive references, in "Goal: Destabilization - Propaganda Instability and Terrorism in Italy, Greece and Turkey", a monograph issued by the European American Institute for Security Research, Marina del Rey, California, 1982.
- 31 - Die Welt (Hamburg), 24 January 1981.
- 32 - Claire Sterling, "Italian Terrorists - Life and Death in a Violent Generation", Encounter, July 1981.
- 33 - Vittoriofranco S. Pisano, "The Structure and Dynamics of Italian Terrorism", International Association of Chiefs of Police, Gaithersburg, Maryland, 1980; Vittoriofranco S. Pisano, "The Red Brigades: A Challenge to Italian Democracy", Institute for the Study of Conflict, London, July 1980.

- 34 - Sterling, The Terror Network, pp. 289-91.
- 35 - Rinascita, 20 January 1978.
- 36 - Sterling, The Terror Network, p. 212.
- 37 - New York Times, 27 August 1981: "US Protests Soviet Innuendo on Shooting of Pope".
- 38 - The Communist Party, illegal in Turkey, has always existed only abroad as a small pro-Soviet exile group. Legal leftist parties in Turkey, of which there have been many, have never attracted significant mass support. See George Harris, "The Left in Turkey" in Problems of Communism, July-August 1980.
- 39 - Türkiye Gerçekleri ve Terörizm (Facts about Turkey and Terrorism), Prime Ministry, Ankara, 1973.
- 40 - A thoughtful retrospective examination of the evidence was published by Cuneyt Arcaylırek in Hürriyet in September 1981, "Beyaz Kitap Herşeyi Açıklıyordu ama..." (The White Book Made Everything Clear but...)
- 41 - Extremist groups on the right (for which there is a potentially much larger following in Turkey than there is for leftists) had hitherto indulged in political agitation and propaganda--see Jacob M. Landau, Radical Politics in Modern Turkey, Leiden, 1974, pp. 171-232--but only occasionally in violence. The Facts on File world survey, Political Terrorism, issued in 1975 considered only leftist terrorism in Turkey worthy of note--pp. 271-274.
- 42 - Aydın Yalçın, "The Sources of Terrorism in Turkey", Wall Street Journal, 22 June 1981; Paul B. Henze, "Turkey--Pulling Itself Together", Christian Science Monitor, 13 August 1981; Kenneth Mackenzie, Turkey in Transition, Ankara, 1981.
- 43 - Paul B. Henze, "The Long Effort to Destabilize Turkey", Wall Street Journal, 7 October 1981; Paul B. Henze, "An Optimistic Turkey moves Closer to Democracy", Christian Science Monitor, 24 December 1981; Paul B. Henze, "Turkey, the Alliance and the Middle East--Problems and Opportunities in Historical Perspective", Wilson Center Working Paper ISS-36, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, December 1981.
- 44 - After visiting Turkey in February 1982 and reviewing evidence on Agca with many Turks, Joe Kraft revised this view and, in a column entitled "The Shooting of the Pope: A Byzantine Mystery", discussed some of the evidence and circumstances that make Soviet sponsorship conceivable; Washington Post, 23 February 1982.
- 45 - These studies, "Mehmet Ali Agca - Whose Agent?" and "From Malatya to Rome - the Evolution of an Assassin", have not yet been published but have been made available to US and Turkish government officials and a few individual researchers working in this field. They will form the basis, along with additional information I am collecting, for publication during the coming year.