

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE

A1

NEW YORK TIMES
28 May 1985

Prosecutor Asks Broader Inquiry In Trial of Agca

By JOHN TAGLIABUE
Special to The New York Times

ROME, May 27 — The trial here of eight defendants accused of plotting to assassinate Pope John Paul II opened today with an appeal by a prosecutor that the state seek evidence from suspected Turkish drug traffickers and terrorists jailed in several European countries.

The session today was also marked by an episode in which Mehmet Ali Agca, the state's key witness against five Turks and three Bulgarians, began shouting: "I am Jesus Christ! I am omnipotent, and I announce the end of the world!"

Later, Mr. Agca, a Turkish national who has been convicted of wounding the Pope in 1981, began a thoughtful and measured account of how he obtained the gun he used to shoot the Pope. He gave testimony until a breakdown of the courtroom's public address system forced the judge to suspend hearings until Tuesday.

The Prosecutor's Appeal

The prosecutor, Antonio Marini, in an impassioned appeal, asked the court to notify the justice authorities in France, Switzerland, West Germany and the Netherlands that the court was "intensely interested" in taking evidence from suspected Turkish terrorists and drug merchants in jail in those countries.

The appeal reinforced the image, which has emerged in pre-trial investigations, of Turkish drug trafficking channels stretching from the Middle East through Bulgaria to Western Europe and involving many of the Turks and Bulgarians Mr. Agca has implicated in the conspiracy to kill the Pope.

The trial that opened today is the second to deal with the shooting of the Pope in St. Peter's Square on May 13, 1981. It is regarded as an especially sensitive undertaking for the Italian Government. The implication of the prosecution's case is that the Bulgarian Government, with the possible collusion of the Soviet Union, was responsible for the plot against the Polish-born Pope. Italy has been trying to improve its relations with the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc, and the Soviet and Bulgarian Governments have strongly denied involvement in the purported plot.

The trial will test Mr. Agca's contention that he was not a lone assassin but that a conspiracy was planned in Bulgaria and that a suspected Turkish racketeer offered Mr. Agca the equivalent of \$1.2 million to kill the Pope.

Mr. Marini, the prosecutor, said the Turks imprisoned elsewhere in Europe might shed further light on events described by Mr. Agca, the state's key witness, who was sentenced to life imprisonment in July 1981 for having shot and wounded the Pope and two American women in St. Peter's Square.

Uniformed members of the Italian paramilitary police silenced Mr. Agca when he tried to intervene after Judge Severino Santiapichi began the identification of the prisoners, only four of whom are in custody. Although Mr. Agca, 27 years old, is the state's chief witness, he is charged in this trial also with smuggling into Italy the 9-millimeter Browning pistol used in the shooting.

Mr. Marini urged the court to voice its interest to Dutch authorities in questioning a Turk arrested in the Netherlands this month. The man, identified as Samet Aslan or Arslan, was carrying a loaded Browning 9-millimeter pistol that Mr. Agca says is one of four guns he and his associates obtained in Vienna, including the one he used to shoot the Pope.

Turk Held in West Germany

Mr. Marini said the court should also seek to examine Yalcin Oezbey, a Turk detained in West Germany on Feb. 28 and imprisoned in Bochum on charges of using forged identity papers. The prosecutor said information from the German police seemed to indicate that Mr. Oezbey "shared a criminal past" with Mr. Agca and that he, and not Mr. Agca, was guilty of the 1979 killing of a Turkish newspaper editor, Abdi Ipekci, a crime for which Mr. Agca was sentenced to death by a Turkish court.

The prosecutor said the court should notify French officials of its interest in Abdullah Catli, another Turk he said was in prison in France on charges of heroin smuggling and who collaborated in obtaining the forged passports that enabled Mr. Agca to travel to Bulgaria and back to Italy for the attempt on the Pope's life. In Switzerland, he said, the Italians should seek to hear Mehmet Sener, a Turk on trial in Basel on charges of heroin smuggling.

In what was taken as criticism of justice officials elsewhere in Europe, Mr. Marini said Italian officials should act quickly while the whereabouts of the Turks were still known. Several Turks, including Mr. Catli, Mr. Sener and Mr. Oezbey, have been detained in the past and released.

Earlier in the day, Judge Santiapichi denied a plea by defense lawyers that charges against two of those being tried in absentia, Todor S. Alvasov and Maj. Zhelyo K. Vasilev, be dropped because of diplomatic immunity. Both worked at the Bulgarian Embassy but are in Sofia. The judge also rejected a request by Ann Odre, a Buffalo, N.Y., resident who was shot and wounded with the Pope, that she be admitted as a civil plaintiff.

Agca Seems Relaxed

Mr. Agca, dressed in a light blue suit, his shirt collar casually open and his hair cropped close, seemed relaxed, almost cocky, standing in his white steel cage for much of the trial. By contrast, Sergei I. Antonov, 36, who is the only Bulgarian defendant in Italian custody and who is a slight man with a mustache and horn-rimmed glasses, seemed startled and frightened by photographers and television crews who jammed the area in front of his cage.

Under questioning by Judge Santiapichi, Mr. Agca said in elegant if hesitant Italian that the shooting of the Pope was "a most grave crime" and "also the greatest tragedy in human history."

"I am a man completely sane mentally," he went on, evidently trying to dispel the image of disbalance projected by his earlier shouting. "I am a rational person, rather intelligent,

even though many define me as unpredictable and crazy."

Exulting at Mr. Agca's outbursts were 50 Bulgarian observers, most of them diplomats and reporters but also including Mr. Antonov's 62-year-old mother, Ivanka, his sister, Tania Gheorghieva, 33, and his daughter Anna, 14. Mr. Antonov's defense lawyer, Giuseppe Consolo, suggesting that the outbursts would be used to discredit Mr. Agca's testimony, said, "It shows that he's psychologically unbalanced."

Judge Santiapichi will continue questioning Mr. Agca when the court reconvenes Tuesday.