

Assad's grandeur design

The events show that Syria's Assad is committed not only to a regional war with Israel, but to asserting his leadership of the entire region. While preparing for war, he is also making the necessary diplomatic and political compromises to ensure that whenever it happens, Syria won't stand alone. After manipulating the breakdown of negotiations between the PLO and Jordan last February, Damascus has now offered a reconciliation to the PLO leadership, including Yasser Arafat. For several months, Hafez's brother and security chief, Rifaat al Assad, who has kept a pro-PLO image, has been periodically deployed to Paris to meet with such PLO officials such as Arafat's number-two, Abu Iyad.

A Syria-PLO reconciliation? At what price? Damascus makes no secret that it is offering the Kingdom of Jordan to the PLO, provided they reach a compromise with Syria's pet Palestinians. Already, Hawatmeh, Habash, and a few others have sent feelers to Arafat.

Though Arafat is considered too shrewd a politician to accept from Syria a present it cannot deliver, the breakdown of the talks with Jordan and the disastrous economic situation on the West Bank make for an explosive mixture. On May 17, the Jerusalem correspondent of *Le Figaro* quoted West bank Palestinians saying that they "didn't need Ariel Sharon" to be reminded that Hussein's "Hashemite dynasty was put in power by the British" colonial forces, and that "Jordan is Palestine," according to the motto of one Sharon-connected Israeli extremist organization.

Assad looks to the next war not because he has any chance to win it. Rather, he knows that if he were to deploy his missiles against Israel, both Washington and Moscow will have to come to the rescue to avoid a wider and more devastating conflict. Though he doesn't expect Moscow to intervene militarily, a political intervention of Moscow will be in his favor, and will give his regime political stability. Negotiations, which are certain to ensue, would at minimum confirm Syria in its present position in Lebanon.

Israel's military debate

Assad's grey cells are working so hard that they seem to have been overheard in Tel Aviv. According to observers, Israel's Peres is to be believed when he says that Israel doesn't want a war with Syria—at least for now. Indeed, Peres is above all committed to his Marshall Plan proposal, and has gone very far in trying to appease, or rather, neutralize Assad.

"They are smelling quite a trap," says one source. Even a limited Israeli strike against terrorist groups in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley could be used by Assad to unleash a regional war. Israeli officials are thus convinced that if there is to be war, its aims cannot be limited. It must drive Syria backward 10 years and create enough social and economic chaos to overthrow Assad. That's food for thought, for Assad, and his delusions of regional grandeur.

Facts Behind Terrorism

Italy loosens its ties to Libya

by Paolo Raimondi

On May 10, Italian Prime Minister Bettino Craxi, speaking at the opening ceremonies for the new airport in Genoa, stated that "Tripoli knows already our decision to react with military means against any threat to launch an attack against us." This made it clear that Italy, under the pressure of events, had decided on its own to wage a serious fight against Libyan terrorism and to reject in particular Libyan dictator Muammar Qaddafi's blackmail.

The decision came after the Tokyo summit of May 3-6, which issued a hard-hitting resolution against terrorism naming Libya by name, but Italy had made up its mind days before, when it became obvious that Italian national sovereignty was mortally threatened by the provocations and insanity of Qaddafi.

A shift in relations

Although only the beginning, these steps represent a turning point in the compromised relations between Italy and Libya—which had been an Italian colony for several decades, until the close of World War II. If Italy, under pressure from pro-Libyan Foreign Minister Giulio Andreotti and the powerful Italian Communist Party, were now to return to the old compromises, this would mean a strategic backdown to Moscow.

The government is taking a series of quick and effective measures to stop the Libyan terrorist networks by exposing an incredible network of high-level Italian accomplices. The authorities have prepared contingency plans to evacuate all Italian diplomats and workers on Libyan territory. Of 12,000 Italians working in Libya at the end of last year, only 3,000 now remain.

Economic repercussions

Qaddafi has signaled his intentions to use the workers as potential hostages; recently, he expelled 25 Italian diplomats without any motivation. As part of the decision to break with Libya, the so-called economic repercussions are also being taken into account, to the tune of approximately \$800 million that could be lost by Italian firms.

The first step to prevent Qaddafi's terrorist provocations would be the complete dismantling of the Libyan, Syrian, and Iranian terrorist networks operating on Italian territory.

In mid-May, the Libyan consul in Palermo, Mustafa Mohammed Alakresh, was expelled as *persona non grata* for spying on the NATO military bases in Sicily, and in particular, the two at Comiso and Sigonella. Alakresh was recruiting Libyan agents and selecting potential assassins for special operations.

Libyan Arab Foreign Investment Co.

Interior Minister Oscar Scalfaro and the Digos, the political police, have opened an investigation in Rome into the broad-ranging operations of the Libyan Arab Foreign Investment Company (Lafico), which still controls 15% of the shares of FIAT, for more than \$2 billion. This company seems to be the center hundreds of other firms and companies which work under different covers but are parts of a terrorist and dope-weapons smuggling ring. A company connected to the Lafico is the so-called "Appeal for Islam," a cover for recruiting North African clandestine immigrants for Qaddafi's legions. The "Appeal" also controlled a network of Libyan-controlled publishing houses, Arabic papers, and private radio and TV stations located in Rome but also broadcasting into Sicily and into the Mediterranean and Arab countries. Two operatives of Lafico working in Sardinia under the cover of a publishing house, Editar, have been expelled for activities against Italian national security.

Both right and left terrorism funded

Many of these companies and people are part of the coordinating structure behind international terrorism. In fact the connections between Qaddafi and the black (right-wing) and red (left-wing) terrorists are known, and are resurfacing once again. The press has leaked word of a controversial dossier prepared by the Interior Ministry on Libyan-Red Brigades connections, although the existence of the file has been officially denied. Judge Ferdinando Imposimato of Rome, in his official papers to prepare the second trial of the assassins of former Prime Minister Aldo Moro, produced evidence to charge that Libya, Syria, and the KGB were involved in Italian terrorism. He cited the delivery to Italian terrorists of Kalashnikov automatic weapons from the Soviet Union, via Qaddafi.

Defense Minister Giovanni Spadolini said: "These links between Qaddafi and the Red Brigades have already been proven in the past," referring to training of Italian terrorists in Libya and delivery of "sterling" machine guns to the Red Brigades. Sen. Vincenzo Carollo, the vice president of the Christian Democratic caucus in the Senate, added that there is "official evidence of this connection, and a critical moment was the conference in Havana, Cuba, in January 1976 where terrorism was conceived as a necessary means to destabilize the democratic countries."

After this, Senator Carollo said, Libya and Syria became the operational bases of terrorism, and "training camps and

schools grew in large number in Bulgaria, Cuba, Hungary, and the Soviet Union." It has also been proven that the Libyan embassy in Rome financed the Nazi-Maoist organization "People's Struggle," as well as the Nazi terrorist Mario Tuti, whose name came out in the investigation for the Italicus train massacre, which was one of the biggest terror atrocities of the 1970s.

The Andreotti angle

Probably the most interesting and far-reaching results will come out of the investigations into the Libyan Arab Foreign Bank and related Libyan and non-Libyan financial interests involved in economic—and often also criminal—deals in Italy and in Libya. This bank has a large financial operation in several economic sectors, particularly oil. Recently, the bank took over the Tamoil company, which controls an oil refinery and 850 filling stations in Italy. On the Italian side, there are several public figures, including Mr. Mazzanti, former manager of the state-controlled ENI hydrocarbons corporation, who are charged with financial fraud, bribery, tax evasion, and illegal oil trade which resulted in several huge trials.

But the public-relations and promotion center of this beehive of business/criminal activity has been the Association for Italian-Libyan Friendship, which was created in 1981. The manager of this association, Elio Paris, proudly reported to the newspaper *La Repubblica* that the political leadership of this association, which mediated most of the deals with Libya, was always in the hands of Foreign Minister Giulio Andreotti's faction.

In fact, the first president of the association was Giuseppe Caroli, an "Andreottian" member of the Italian parliament, and later on, the post passed to his fellow parliamentarian Felice Cantu, also of the Andreotti group. They were backed by such Communist Party figures as Sen. Agostino Spataro (from Sicily), a partisan of stronger links with Libya.

Long-term protection of Qaddafi

Andreotti's role in the Libyan spiderweb has also been revealed by Gen. Ambrogio Viviani, head of the counterintelligence department of the SID secret service. Viviani, in an interview with *Panorama*, an Italian news weekly, said that since 1970, right after the coup that brought Colonel Qaddafi to power in 1969, the Italian government gave orders to the secret service to avoid any troubles with the Libyans and even to protect Qaddafi. The Italian prime minister at that time was Giulio Andreotti.

The investigations and revelations have brought up again the discoveries of Judge Carlo Palermo, who had gathered an impressive dossier for the courts on the "weapons and drugs" connection running through Italy, which involved the Bulgarians and the rest of the Soviet bloc, together with the Libyans and the Syrians.