

Vatican by Augustinus

The Secretariat of State and Libya

How badly the Secretariat misunderstood the U.S. actions, was confirmed by the scandal around Ambassador Wilson.

As we already stated in previous articles, the Vatican Secretariat of State's policy is totally out of phase with the strategic situation and recent developments in the Mediterranean region. This confusion in the upper spheres of Vatican diplomacy is confirmed by the recent scandal involving the U.S. representative to the Holy See, Ambassador William Wilson, who is now stepping down from his post.

Wilson, with the aid of the State Secretariat and the Italian foreign minister, Giulio Andreotti, had organized a personal meeting with Muammar Qaddafi, in Libya, in January of this year—unbeknownst, it is said, to the White House, which during that same period was accusing Tripoli of participating in organizing the terrorist atrocities at the Rome and Vienna airports in December 1985.

The story has many twists and turns, and involves several governments. According to newspaper accounts, Wilson, already in 1982, when he was not yet officially named ambassador, because of the absence of full diplomatic relations between Washington and the Holy See, which were only set up in 1984, had begun to establish contacts with high officials of the Libyan government. At the time, it is said, these had to do with oil deals.

The personal envoy of the U.S. President to the Pope apparently was taking care of the Libyan business affairs of an American oil company, Pennzoil, of which he had been a top executive. From business to diplomacy, Wilson became the go-between

for a peace plan pasted together by Italian Foreign Minister Andreotti and the Vatican Secretariat; on Jan. 15, the *Malta Times* revealed that the American ambassador to the Vatican had given Maltese Prime Minister Bonnici a message for the Libyan dictator, which had a tone of détente and the content of reaching an understanding to avoid a military clash in the Mediterranean.

All this occurred while the American government had broken off contact with the Libyan government, and President Reagan had decreed a ban on all American citizens traveling or staying in Libya, and the military operation against Libya was being readied. At that point, the "parallel diplomacy" of the enterprising, or perhaps naive, Ambassador Wilson was too embarrassing: His resignation arrived immediately afterward.

It remains to be clarified how in the world William Wilson, a personal friend of President Reagan, and first American ambassador to the Holy See after more than a century of difficult relations, should have gotten mixed up in such a scandal. Is it personal bad faith which pushed him to go against official Washington policy, or are we dealing with the latest victim of the cynical policy of Mr. Andreotti and his protectors at the Vatican Secretariat of State?

Of personal interests and obscure deals tacked together in the shadow of the pro-Libyan foreign policy of Minister Andreotti, there has been plenty of talk in the last period. According to an Italian daily, had developed "reciprocal relations of

esteem with Andreotti" which the Vatican viewed with great appreciation. Mr. and Mrs. Wilson's "entrées" in the exclusive "Circolo della Caccia" (Hunt Club), a notorious stomping ground for the blackest Roman nobility, and frequented by the pro-Libyan Prince Alliata di Monreale, are well known.

Also not to be ruled out is the Venetian-Benedictine angle. It is known that Ambassador Wilson had formed solid ties with the monks of the Benedictine monastery of San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice.

The reason for the blunder of the Secretariat of State remains to be clarified. Possibly, the supple Vatican diplomats did not know about the imminent American intervention in the Mediterranean—or why would they have attempted a mediation, destined to fail, via the poor American ambassador to the Holy See?

There could be many answers, but one thing is sure: A strange traffic tangle allowed the Vatican "intelligence" capability to be blinded in particular in regard to the Middle Eastern area. One key to reading this could be represented by the tight relations running between Vatican diplomats and the unsavory "Anti-Defamation League" of Kenneth Bialkin and Nathan Perlmutter. The League, best known for its connections with various drug runners of the Robert Vesco variety, was actually chosen to represent the Jewish faith in the celebrations of the 20th year of the promulgation of the encyclical *Nostra Aetate*.

The gaffe committed by the U.S. Ambassador William Wilson forced him to resign; how many other diplomatic incidents will we have to await from Cardinal Agostino Casaroli and from Monsignor Achille Silvestrini before the Pope decides to ask for their resignations?