

Investigation Proves Bush-Cheney Illegal Activities in Italy

by Claudio Celani

Italian prosecutors in Milan have renewed an extradition request, blocked by the previous government of Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, for 26 CIA agents accused of having organized the kidnapping of Egyptian citizen Abu Omar on Feb. 17, 2003, on Italian soil. Abu Omar was seized in broad daylight on the streets of Milan, driven to the U.S. airbase in Aviano, Vicenza, and flown to the U.S. airbase in Ramstein, Germany, and thence to Cairo and delivered to Egyptian police. Eventually, Omar was able to contact his family in Milan and report that he had been imprisoned and tortured.

The warrants issued by Milan prosecutors Armando Spataro and Ferdinando Pomarici concern, among others, former CIA station chief in Rome Jeff Castelli, former CIA station chief in Milan Robert Seldon Lady, and agents Sabrina de Sousa and Ralph Russomando. Also the head of Italian military intelligence (SISMI), Niccolò Pollari, is being investigated as an accomplice in the kidnapping, together with SISMI counterintelligence director Marco Mancini and Mancini's predecessor Gustavo Pignero.

Investigators have plenty of evidence on the kidnapping, consisting of cellular telephone conversations between the CIA team, their chief in Rome, and even headquarters in Langley, Virginia. The commando team felt so safe that it used their own credit cards to rent cars and pay hotel bills. They were even caught speeding by police cameras, as they drove through the streets of Milan.

This is the first time in which an "extraordinary rendition," i.e., illegal kidnapping implemented by the U.S. government under the Cheney-Bush "war on terror" doctrine, has been solidly documented. It is expected that the current Italian Justice Minister, Clemente Mastella, contrary to his predecessor, will file an extradition demand with the U.S. government.

The Italian government shall clarify whether it knew about the CIA illegal activities and whether it authorized SISMI to collaborate. SISMI head Pollari has already declared that, when he was requested by the CIA to help in such practices, he refused and threatened to resign if he was pressured to do so. Now, he has added one detail: The Italian government, Pollari says, has documents proving that SISMI did not participate in the kidnapping; however, he cannot reveal the content of such documents, because they are classified. Such papers, according to Pollari, were transmitted by

the former Berlusconi government to the office of current Prime Minister Romano Prodi.

Whereas Pollari's position remains to be clarified, SISMI counterintelligence head Mancini has already confessed to the role he played in the kidnapping. In 2003, Mancini was SISMI's counterintelligence head in Milan, and acted under orders from Pignero, who was director of counterintelligence. Mancini reported that his role was to help in surveilling Abu Omar, and supply support, short of the kidnapping itself. For the kidnapping, the CIA was helped by an Italian citizen, a police agent named Luciano Pironi who wanted to join SISMI and who had been recruited to the operation by a former colleague and a friend of Mancini's. Pironi performed a key role, as he stopped Abu Omar in the street, identifying himself as a policeman and asking for Abu Omar's ID papers. This created a favorable situation for the kidnapping team to grab Omar, pull him into a van, and drive him to "nowhere."

An 'Independent Cell'?

Presuming that SISMI head Pollari was unaware of the involvement of his counterintelligence section, Milan prosecutors have spoken of an "independent cell" inside SISMI, obeying outside orders. The background of both Pignero and Mancini support such a conjecture, showing connections to past infiltrations of synarchist networks in Italy's intelligence apparatus. Both Pignero's and Mancini's careers developed under the protective wing of a person who has been in the middle of several key terrorism investigations, all of which are affected by intelligence manipulations and cover-ups. This person was Col. Umberto Bonaventura, a *Carabinieri* (military police) officer, whose team Mancini joined in the early 1980s, in the Pastrengo *Carabinieri* division in Milan. The Pastrengo division had a high density of members of the secret Propaganda-2 (P2) freemasonic lodge, among its officers.

Eventually, Mancini followed Bonaventura to SISMI, where Bonaventura became head of the First Division (counterintelligence). When Bonaventura left SISMI, he was replaced by Pignero, who was then replaced by Mancini in 2005.

It happens that Bonaventura was involved in key terrorism investigations, all of which involved manipulations of some sort. The most important is the case of the "Moro Memorial," the records of Aldo Moro's interrogations by the Red Brigades terrorists, which were found by Gen. Carlo Alberto Dalla Chiesa's men in Milan, in 1978, a few months after the assassination of the Christian Democratic chairman and former Prime Minister. Bonaventura, a captain on Dalla Chiesa's team, removed the papers before they could be put on the record, copied them, and gave them back with a number of pages missing.

It was Bonaventura himself who confessed this before the Parliament Investigating Committee chaired by Sen. Giovanni Pellegrino in May 2000. Bonaventura acted on behalf

of circles who feared that Moro could have revealed NATO or other military secrets in those writings. Bonaventura's action was unknown to Dalla Chiesa, a respected law enforcement officer who was killed by the Mafia in 1984.

Colonel Bonaventura also managed the "Mitrokhin dossier" on alleged KGB spies in Italy, received through the British intelligence service MI6. A couple of days before his planned testimony to the Parliament's "Mitrokhin" Committee, Bonaventura was found dead of "natural causes" in his apartment, on Sept. 7, 2002.

Bonaventura's protégé Mancini has had an astonishing career, considering that he is a non-commissioned officer and has become the number 2 of military intelligence. This is highly unusual and has raised some questions. Journalist Guido Olimpio, a counterterrorism expert, wrote in the daily *Corriere della Sera* that, "former CIA head George Tenet allegedly wrote a letter to support Mancini's promotion." Whereas this allegation is not confirmed, the fact is that the Italian government has been, in some form, aware of the CIA illegal activities on Italian soil.

The Abu Omar story came after the "Nigergate" scandal, also involving Italian complicity in fabricating the false documents on Saddam Hussein's alleged possession of enriched uranium from Niger. The involvement of SISMI in that fabrication has never been proven. It might be that the Pignero-Mancini group is not extraneous to that conspiracy, whose strings were apparently pulled by Michael Ledeen of the American Enterprise Institute, and an old friend of the *piduisti* (P2 members).

The invoking of "state secret" protection by SISMI head Pollari indicates that by publishing documents in possession of the Italian government, the involvement of a foreign agency would be revealed. Opponents of the investigation, such as former State President Francesco Cossiga, a protector of the synarchist P2 networks, has warned that the Milan investigation is threatening to jeopardize future collaboration between Italian and "allied" intelligence agencies. If he means collaboration in the Bush-Cheney "war on terror" or "preemptive warfare," "regime change," "clash of civilizations," or "extraordinary renditions" policies, such a disruption would be welcomed!

For more information on the role of the Italian and allied secret services, see "Strategy of Tension: The Case of Italy," *EIR* March 26, April 2, April 9, and April 30, 2004. The series was reprinted in a 282-page LaRouche in 2004 Special Report, **The Synarchist Resurgence Behind the Madrid Train Bombing of March 11, 2004.**