

At Agca trial the plot won't thicken

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Bulgaria and its big brother the Soviet Union are now on trial in Rome, charged with trying to murder Pope John Paul II. The star prosecution witness and sole source of these charges, Mehmet Ali Agca, has lately taken to proclaiming himself Jesus Christ and issuing a dizzying tarantella of accusations and lies.

Agca's lunatic antics have greatly dismayed proponents of what I call Terrorism Industries. Led by writer Claire Sterling, they have woven a rich tapestry of intrigue and nefarious machinations designed to link the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Syria, Libya, the PLO, the Shiite Lebanese, Iran and just about anyone else they don't like into a massive, clockwork conspiracy.

But as Agca's trial unfolds, sounding daily more like the *Arabian Nights* than a judicial process, it is becoming painfully clear that the prosecution's case is falling apart. In North America the case would likely have long ago been thrown out of court and Agca packed off for psychiatric treatment. So much, it seems, for the KGB-Bulgarian plot to kill the Pope.

Is Agca really mad? Perhaps not. One might suspect that Agca has had his life threatened and is now acting demented in order to negate his earlier, rash charges. Listening to Agca speak, I was intrigued by the elegant, literary Italian being used by this supposedly demented Turkish terrorist.

Even when asserting himself to be Jesus Christ, Agca used orotund phraseology and words not common to everyday speech — particularly not the type of Italian Agca could be expected to learn in jail. Who was coaching him?

Charges have been made, and they are quite plausible.

Then there is another intriguing possibility. Suppose Agca was originally telling the truth? What would happen if the Italian court found Bulgaria and, by inference, the Soviet Union guilty of trying to kill the Pope — the most monstrous act of terrorism in modern times.

The United States, clarion-voiced denouncer of terrorism, and a lot of other tough-talking nations, would be put in a painful quandary. It's one thing to verbally scourge terrorism or to strong-arm small nations like Libya, Syria or Nicaragua, as Washington has lately done. But what happens when the terrorist turns out to be the mighty Soviet Union?

Will the U.S. bomb the Soviets, as it did in Lebanon? Not likely. All that anyone will do is huff and puff and hope the whole nasty business will be quickly forgotten. The Soviets need only sit tight, tell the outraged West to go take a jump and watch the capitalists squirm.

Can we imagine, in the event of a guilty verdict, Canada breaking relations with the Soviets, stopping trade, or even sending troops to eradicate that nest of terrorists in downtown Moscow? All of this sounds just about as likely as Mehmet Ali Agca really being Jesus Christ.

The point here is that few nations want to see the Rome court find Bulgaria and the USSR guilty. Western nations would then be in the unfortunate position of having to kick the biggest, meanest bully in the block hard on the shins. Perhaps some of these nations have also put pressure on Agca to discount his claims. The truth, if there is any in Agca's charges, is simply too difficult to face.

sible in light of Italy's recent incredible record of plots and scandals, that Agca's accusations against the Bulgars and Soviets were cooked up by a branch of Italian military intelligence, the SSMI. The deputy commander of this outfit is now himself in jail, charged with organizing an attempted rightist coup against the government. Involved in this subplot were the secret Masonic P2 Lodge of Licio Gelli that I have written about before, Roberto Calvi the murdered banker, other senior military and intelligence officers and — somehow — the Vatican. Even the Sicilian Mafia and the Neapolitan Camorra were implicated not to mention a bizarre group in northern Italy linked to Agca, atomic arms and movie star Rossano Brazzi.

All of this defies brief or even rational explanation. Italy's ruling circles are like some baroque chest, convoluted and intricate on the outside and rotten with decay inside. Agca could well have been used as a cat's paw by any of these groups. It is also just conceivable that some people in Italy involved in the Vatican-Banco Ambrosiano financial imbroglio may have wanted to get revenge on Pope John Paul. Italy, the land of smiles and sunlight, is also a place of deep, sinister shadows where the implausible sometimes becomes reality.