

U.S.-Rome axis plan is no longer secret

by Paolo Raimondi

On July 15, in an interview with the Italian daily *Corriere della Sera*, U.S. ambassador to Rome Peter Secchia announced publicly for the first time what has been an open secret for some time now: U.S. geopolitical strategy calls for Italy to be put into line as a key player in enforcing the New World Order in the Middle East and the Balkan regions. "The borders of the West have been moved; the center of gravity of NATO is moved from Berlin to Italy. The Arab world begins on the other side of Sicily and you will see greater attention toward [Italian] cooperation with the American military organizations due to Italy's proximity to points of potential ferment," Secchia stated.

Just to ensure that the more independent-minded Italian political forces understand the message, the U.S. ambassador added that the details of "Operation Gladio," in which the CIA maintained terrorist capabilities in Italy and throughout Western Europe, as well as the pact signed between Italy and the United States in the 1950s known as "Stay Behind," will remain secret unless Italy wants to bear the full consequences of violating a pact. In other words, the United States is saying that a secret agreement is still operating which gives Washington the right to intervene into Italian internal affairs in the context of strategic NATO interests.

Over the past few months, the fight over the dismantling of the terrorist Gladio networks, which were supposed to intervene with the support of the CIA in order to rebuff an external or internal communist threat, became the political instrument in an attempt by some political forces in Italy to establish a sovereign national policy oriented more toward continental Europe than toward the Anglo-American axis. But such a political direction runs directly contrary to the new U.S. strategy, first elaborated by the Bush administration in February, which shifts the focus from Central Europe to Southern Europe. While U.S. military presence in Europe is slated to be slashed to one-third of the present levels by 1994, large new U.S. military bases are being built in Italy and in Turkey. In Italy, the Crotona air base in Calabria is supposed to become the main coordination center for the East Mediterranean and the Balkan region for rapid deployment operations.

The Munich daily *Süddeutsche Zeitung* reported from the NATO headquarters at Mons, Belgium on July 16, that NATO will transfer tanks and artillery stocks from Central Europe mainly to NATO's southern flanks. The Turkish bas-



Italian Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti

es will receive 1,050 main battle tanks of the U.S. M-60 and German Leopard I types, and an additional 600 armored vehicles. The Greek bases will receive 700 tanks of both types, plus 150 armored vehicles. Other tanks and matériel will be transferred to Portugal, Spain, and Italy.

New coverup of the Ustica 'crash'

In tandem with this, a major intelligence reorganization has been just completed within the Italian military establishment, with the appointment of Gen. Luigi Ramponi to be the new head of the Italian Military Intelligence (SISMI). Ramponi's immediate predecessor, Adm. Fulvio Martini, had consistently opposed Bush's strategy of a quantitatively and qualitatively upgraded U.S. role in the Mediterranean theater. General Ramponi, who commanded Italy's Guardia di Finanza, the border and financial police, was formerly Italy's military attaché in Washington, where he received an American Legion of Honor award for his work.

Ramponi's appointment is expected to be critical in efforts to quash investigation into the mysterious crash of an Italian DC-9 aircraft near the Italian island of Ustica in 1980. New proof has emerged that the plane had been shot by a U.S. missile, and a number of Italian military officers who knew the true circumstances of the Ustica incident have died mysteriously.

There are also indications that the bizarre collision of three Italian jets at the Ramstein air show in Germany in 1988, where 70 people were killed, may fit into the Ustica picture. Two of the three Italian pilots killed at Ramstein had been on flying duty in the vicinity of Ustica at the time of the 1980 crash.