

Deputy Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit, Turkey, press conference on Feb. 11, quoted by the *Turkish Daily News*, Feb. 12:

Ecevit charged that Britain is manipulating the United States on behalf of its policy of fragmenting Iraq. Ecevit's press conference follows charges he made on Feb. 9, that the U.S. and Britain were plotting to create a Kurdish state in northern Iraq, which would threaten Turkish national security.

Following the interview, the U.S. ambassador to Turkey protested that that is not U.S. policy.

Asked about this U.S. response, Ecevit said that whatever the consequence of the coming military action may be, it will further the partition of Iraq, and make its reintegration more difficult. He added, "They [the U.S. government] may be sincere. Americans are frank people. I take their word seriously. But they can themselves be manipulated. England is the closest ally of the U.S. They do whatever the U.S. asks them to do. At the same time, they can manipulate the U.S. in the direction of their own will, and drag them into games and set ups."

Ecevit added that the main problem is that the United States has no real policy toward Iraq, and has no idea what to do in the aftermath of a military strike. "It is of course worrying us. This would mean a superpower like the United States is entering a war, without predicting its consequences. It is a grave situation if true. That poses dangerous consequences for our part."

To deal with this problem, Ecevit called on the United States to "make its Iraq policies with Turkey."

President Suleyman Demirel, Turkey, quoted by Anatolia News Agency Feb. 10:

President Demirel said that Turkey's support for U.S. air strikes is not guaranteed. "Let nobody say that Turkey is in anybody's pocket," he added.

China

Foreign Minister Qian Qichen, telephone conversation with U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright on Feb. 5, reported by Xinhua:

Qian told Albright that President Jiang Zemin "is deeply concerned" about the crisis over Iraq. He told Albright of China's support for active, ongoing diplomatic efforts to resolve the crisis, and emphasized that China does not favor the use of force against Iraq.

While calling on Iraq to "fully cooperate with the special UN committee," Qian Qichen also said that Iraq's state sovereignty, national dignity, and security concerns must be respected appropriately. Qian Qichen said that he had also sent a verbal message, via China's UN ambassador, to Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz, asking Iraq to agree to negotiations.

Secessionists pose serious threat to Italy

by Claudio Celani

The Italian Parliament will soon be called upon to vote on whether to lift the immunity of Umberto Bossi and other leaders of the separatist Northern League, clearing the way for them to be prosecuted for an "attempt against the national state." The allegation refers to the League's open secessionist program and actions, including the establishment of a government and a parliament of the imaginary northern Italian state of Padania, as well as the staging of military training exercises in the context of organizing secession. The request to lift immunity was made at the end of January by Verona Prosecutor Guido Papalia, who concluded an almost two-year investigation of the League and its paramilitary organization, the Padania National Guard (GNP), also called the "Green Shirts," with a request for the indictment of Bossi and 40 other leaders of the League and the GNP. Under Italian law, the crime for which Bossi and company are accused, is punishable by life imprisonment.

Indicating the seriousness of the allegations, Prosecutor Papalia declared in an interview that the League's paramilitary GNP organization is comparable to the neo-fascist National Front, a subversive organization active in the 1970s, whose members were also part of the Armed Nuclei for the Defense of the State, a secret and illegal section of the NATO "Stay Behind" operation known by the codename "Gladio." In the past, Papalia himself had conducted an investigation of the National Front, which was involved in several terrorist acts, including an aborted military coup.

British control

What Papalia did not say, is that the National Front was controlled by British intelligence. The same is true of the hard-core secessionist structure. Not by chance, many League leaders, and especially those responsible for the paramilitary League organization, have a similar neo-fascist background: many come from the same circles as the National Front neo-fascists, and sometimes they are former members of the National Front. Enzo Flego, general commander of the GNP, is also leader of the "Padan Right," a right-wing current inside the League. Inside the GNP itself, which is organized along territorial sections, Flego is the commander of the "Campaign for Liberty," based in Verona,

which forms the “hard core of Padan Independence,” according to their own propaganda.

It is probably this entity which, on Feb. 10, sent a death threat to Papalia under the signature, “National Front Nucleus, section J. Goebbels.”

The picture emerging from Papalia’s investigation is one of an armed militia in the initial phase of its construction. Although not yet able to deploy an insurrectionary force, the militia has to be stopped now, before it is too late. That is why Prosecutor Papalia, who is said to be backed by the government and by State President Luigi Scalfaro, has decided to undertake an unprecedented action aimed at practically dissolving a mass-based political party.

Bossi: ‘They must use their fists’

Among the evidence Papalia has gathered, are wiretapped conversations between Bossi and other League leaders, in which Bossi discusses the necessity of preparing the GNP for a clash with the police. In a conversation with the Northern League leader in Venice, Bossi says: “We will all have a machine gun in our hand. . . . It will be an enormous satisfaction to send to hell as many as possible out of this living shit. . . . They are living shit, they must be cancelled.” The object of Bossi’s outburst was State President Scalfaro, who had just paid a visit to Venice. Bossi, the conversations reveal, was particularly frustrated because the Venice organization had not been able to put together a militia group capable of disrupting Scalfaro’s rally. In the same conversation, Bossi says: “Those who go into the streets, they must know that they must use their fists. . . . The League now belongs to those who are conscious of the historical moment and who are determined.”

In another conversation, Bossi solicits GNP head Flego to test the “determination” of his men. “We are ready,” Flego answers, pointing to the necessity of building up the militia numerically: “See, Umberto, we have to count ourselves, because you cannot send three hundred Green Shirts to fight against six hundred policemen.”

This and other material, including League dropouts who have become witnesses for the prosecution, has helped Papalia make a case against Bossi and company of having “committed actions aiming at dissolving the unity of the Italian state, through the disintegration of its territory, and to create a new state entity, called ‘Padania,’ and composed of a federation of states including all northern Italian regions and their territory, through the realization and the concrete effectiveness of a complex and articulated military structure called ‘Green Shirts’ or ‘Padania National Guard.’ ”

But, the bulk of Papalia’s argument involves the political strategy of the League, within which the militia phenomenon must be situated. Correctly, Papalia goes after the very idea of secession, and reconstructs the steps through which the League has so far moved to challenge the Italian state. The League idea of a northern Italian nation, Papalia writes, is “artificially justified by a supposed ‘Padanian’ national iden-



Northern League leader Umberto Bossi (right) with former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. Italy’s Parliament will be asked to lift Bossi’s immunity, clearing the way for his prosecution as a threat to the state.

tity, as distinct from and counterposed to the Italian one—of which in various places the representative agencies have been formed and organized, openly qualified as ‘government’ and ‘Parliament of the Padanian Federal Republic’; with the eventual publication of an official gazette, containing the collection of ‘Padania institutional records’; organizing, after some attempts to achieve international recognition of the new artificially created entity, apposite ‘padanian elections,’ thus calling to vote all Italian citizens living in the northern Italian territory to elect, according to the rules of a so-called ‘regular’ electoral competition, and after the presentation of several lists of candidates, the representatives of the so-called ‘Parliament of Padania.’ ”

A few days before Papalia presented his request for the indictments, the Italian secret services warned of secessionist dangers. On Jan. 24, it was announced that the quarterly Report to the Government on Internal Security, drafted by both the military and the internal intelligence offices, warns against the growth of a separatist threat “similar . . . to the birth and the growth of political extremism in the early 1970s.” “More extreme circles,” says the report, “thoroughly pursue aims of disrupting national unity,” and “the extreme hypothesis of secession is actually feasible.” The secessionist danger, the report says, is concentrated in northeastern Italy, but it could spread to other regions.