

What's Behind The Priebke Case?

An independent writer follows the "Nazi Chase" and the Jewish-American offensive against the Swiss banks.

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"It is sad that the tragedy of the holocaust has become such a lowly matter of money," the Swiss press wrote in July of 1998. These same words were used, a year earlier, by Carlo Taormina, the Defense Counsel for former SS Captain Erich Priebke imprisoned in Italy for events which happened more than half a century ago during World War II: "What's behind the Priebke case"?

Mario Spataro, the author of *Rappresaglia* [Reprisal] his earlier work on the Priebke case, has another book relating to this same topic, entitled *Dal caso Priebke al Nazi Gold*, a work which is quite impressive for the extensiveness of its meticulous documentation.

The book begins with a look at the pathetic reality of the Italian resistance during the Second World War, explaining the events in Rome on the 23th and 24th of March 1944, when a communist attack (a bomb hidden inside a litter basket) killed people in the via Rasella.

At least 42 German soldiers were killed and not 33, as affirmed by Italian historiography, and 10 Roman civilians who were passing by, and who brought about the fierce German retaliation in the *Fosse Ardeatine* [Ardentine caves] in which 335 hostages died.

The author reveals that it was the SS commander of Rome who officially reduced to 33 the number of Germans killed there, and that there were at least 9 dead people who were secretly buried. In doing that, commander Herbert Kappler avoided a retaliation which, according to a Hitler order, could have brought to death at least 420 hostages.

In his work, Spataro emphasizes the actual purposes of the communist attacks, which were certainly not "accelerating the liberation of Rome": rather it was carried on instead

to cause a dreadful retaliation which would have brought on the shooting of hundreds of non-communist antifascists who were prisoners in German jails. With these shootings, the Germans would have unintentionally helped the communists by freeing them from those political and military exponents who, at the end of the war, would have been competitors in the race for power. In fact, the notorious "error" which caused the shooting of 5 people beyond the scheduled 330 occurred inside the offices of the Italian police, according to the testimonies collected by Spataro. That was due to a confusing amount of frantic telephone calls that imposed exclusions, additions, and substitutions in the list of the people to be shot: and all was done to save communists from death (they in fact had only three killed) and that was also done to have the Germans shoot as many anticommunist-antifascists as possible.

Spataro appeals to the Hague Convention, and to the military laws of every nation - laws which foresaw retaliations over civilian population in case of treacherous attacks made by people who are not wearing uniforms. As a confirmation, this book reminds us that reprisals have occurred in every army, including the Italian, and the author reproduces a manifesto of the French troops in Germany that in 1945 threatened to shoot 50 civilians for every French soldier killed by German snipers: which is a ratio far heavier than the one (10 to 1 judged "equitable" by the Nuremberg court), and which was adopted by the Germans at the Ardeatine.

Another fact, which until now has not been mentioned in any book, is the mechanism which the victors used over the vanquished in 1945 to condemn the German soldiers, to supersede the principle of the non-responsibility of a soldier in execution of an order: that principle of non-responsibility, had existed in the American and British armies too. Well, to avoid that the accused Germans could appeal to American and British laws, these laws were repealed. But - they were reinstated in 1948 after the trials against the Germans!

The more conspicuous parts in this book, other than this, however, is dedicated to the judicial vicissitude of Erich Priebke and Karl Hass, SS officers found "guilty" of having taken part in the reprisal in obedience to their precise orders.

In this regard, Spataro analyses the details of those irregularities which caused Argentina to extradite Priebke in 1995. Then he points out the judicial cavils by which the Italian justice system was able to condemn to life imprisonment two people accused of the same crime for which five of their colleagues were released in 1948. And he describes the unbelievable and quite ridiculous testimonies thanks to which, the Italian justice system sentenced two 90 year- old people to life imprisonment.

Particularly meaningful, was the case of Karl Hass who was promised freedom if he would accuse Priebke. But when Hass testified in favor of his former colleague, there

was a request from the Wiesenthal Center of Los Angeles California (a Mr. Shimon Samuels of the Simon Wiesenthal Center stated "The pact has been broken"), whereupon the Italian judiciary turned him from a witness into an accused and finally sentenced him to life imprisonment.

In fact the Wiesenthal Center and other Jewish-American groups were the actual and hidden directors of this entire case. The Italian state merely executed someone else's projects. But the aspect which Spataro underlines in his work is that the organizations themselves which for decades were devoted to chasing ex Nazis and which during the 1990s inspired the Priebke-Hass case, attacked in the same way the Swiss banks too. The question which the Spataro book clearly asks and obviously leaves without an answer is this:

"Without the visibility and the credibility due to decades of Nazi chases and recently revived because of the Priebke case, could those organizations proclaim themselves benefactors of the survivors and of the victims of the holocaust which happened over half a century ago"?

It is strange, the Author observes, that the Priebke case came out just before the expiration of the term that would have permitted the Swiss banks to appropriate the "Nazi gold" and those accounts which had been opened during the Second World War.

And these are not trivial matters: this forced transaction which allowed those organizations to appropriate 1.25 billion dollars from Switzerland and that, by very entitled people, was called "blackmail," was followed by similar maneuvers against Swiss, German, Austrians, French, Italian and even English and American banks, industries and insurances. Briefly, an incredible amount of money transactions which perhaps will never stop.

When Mario Spataro met Erich Priebke for the first time, that 80 year- old prisoner desperately asked him: "Why - after all this time, do they now remember me? Why me?". The answer - which may be cruel, was: "You are just a pawn inside a maneuver far bigger than you. They won't hesitate to sacrifice you for their own business."

Thanks to intensive research work, this book constitutes an admirable effort to approach a certain embarrassing truth and a precious reconstruction of some aspects of the Second World War: an important effort for an historical revision, which began some time ago - and that which will follow one day in future generations, to the tracing back to events which today appear censored or contrived.

Mario Spataro - Dal Caso Priebke al Nazi Gold
Edizioni Settimo Sigillo - via S. Veniero 74/76 - Roma 00192
Telefono 06/39722155 - Fax 06/39722166
Circa 1200 pagine in due volumi - Oltre 150 illustrazioni
Lire 140.000

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