
Switzerland

Sanctuary for the world's terrorists

by Thierry Lalevée

Interviewed on French-language Swiss television on Sept. 14, French investigative journalist Jacques Derogy warned his listeners that "Switzerland is now playing the same role as during the Second World War. During the war, it was the sanctuary for all intelligence services; today it has become the sanctuary for all international terrorist organizations." This statement received scant attention. However, intelligence sources report that a faction fight behind closed doors is now rocking the Swiss political and military establishment. As in previous such crises, the dividing line is, to what extent Switzerland can allow its so-called neutrality to serve as a cover for terrorism. The debate has been further intensified by the fact that Switzerland is beginning to have its own share of low-intensity warfare. The principal target is Switzerland's central nervous system: the banks and major international companies. Many threats have been received, and some carried out. Considered as "non-political terrorism," it has not been widely reported.

The Swiss public has been little informed, that the finger has been pointed at Switzerland, and Zurich in particular, as the location where the Sept. 5-6 Karachi and Istanbul massacres, as well as the present terror wave in France, were planned. This fact has been underlined by parallel but related intelligence investigations in the United States, France, and Italy.

Zurich has become since last May the scene of a series of international terrorist meetings. Held in a rented apartment close to the Limat River, the gatherings featured the Shi'ite and Sunni organizations generally based in Teheran, Tripoli, and Damascus. According to American intelligence estimates, a "holy alliance" for a new "terror strategy" was defined in these quarters, which had been rented by the Zurich-based representation of the Iranian-created Hezbollah party. Swiss-based intelligence sources confirmed that since 1984, the Hezbollah have established their own base in Zurich and created clandestine Iranian "Islamic Centers." Officially Zurich only hosts one mosque, belonging to the Ahmadiyya Muslim sect.

The hard core of the participants belongs not only to the Hezbollah, but also to George Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Abu Nidal orga-

nization. The Zurich gathering paralleled similar conferences, held at other levels, in Damascus or Tripoli during the same period, and led to the creation of no fewer than 20 new organizations in Lebanon between May and June. Most do not represent functioning organizations, but rather a small core of two or three persons, ready to act as commandos and be killed, or simply to disappear.

The choice of Zurich, rather than Berne where all embassies are conveniently located, or Geneva close to the French border, was reportedly made on two grounds. First, its immediate proximity to West Germany, where the Iranians and the Hezbollah benefit from facilities in Hamburg, Cologne, Frankfurt, and Munich, notably through the Islamic Centers and the Iranian Airlines offices. Second, because Zurich has become the financial headquarters of these groups.

A case in point is the French terror bombing perpetrated by the Solidarity Committee with Arab Political Prisoners, which is urging the release of George Ibrahim Abdallah, the Marxist leader of the Lebanese Armed Revolutionary Factions (FARL). According to French intelligence sources, both the FARL and the SCAPP were created by Brig.-Gen. Ghazi Kanaan, the director of Syrian intelligence in Lebanon. Over the last six months, one Frederich Oriach has provided a crucial liaison between Syrian intelligence and the operations of the SCAPP. Condemned to four years in jail in 1982 for participation in terror actions, and already suspected of being a liaison between Direct Action and the FARL, Oriach was released in early April 1986. He immediately traveled to Spain, where he was taken in hand by Syrian intelligence, then to Damascus, where he met with Vice-President Abdel Halim Khaddam and Gen. Ali Duba, chief of Syria's intelligence services. Coinciding with the Zurich gatherings, Oriach has been shuttling between Zurich and Damascus over the last six months. Though there is no conclusive evidence yet that he was privy to or a participant at the Zurich terror planning sessions, his repeated presence in the city cannot be a mere coincidence.

Oriach was often seen in the offices of the Crédit Suisse bank where the FARL is known to have five numbered bank accounts, totaling \$1 million. Further investigation shows that the money is transferred from Beirut to Geneva, then to Zurich. The Geneva banking agency transferring funds to Crédit Suisse is still unknown, though the Geneva branch of the Beirut-headquartered Universal Bank S.A.L. was regularly transferring funds to the Paris headquarters of the Crédit du Nord, to pay the rents of some of Abdallah's safehouses in Paris. Not surprisingly, investigations into the Geneva nexus have turned up known names: François Genoud and Ahmed Ben Bella. Both entertained close relations to FARL's founder Abdallah. Another connection goes through Oriach's lawyer, Jacques Vergès, a long-standing associate of both. Switzerland, its banks, and some of its political networks are now under very close scrutiny by numerous world intelligence services.