

the voluntary element does not exclude at all the guilt element, which is caused by negligence, imprudence, or even just un-cleverness.”

Berlusconi pointed to “the irregularity of a checkpoint which was lacking signal mechanisms that would make it clearly visible,” and to “a checkpoint placed in the dark, shortly after a curve, certainly in conditions barely indicated to guarantee security both of the soldiers and the incoming drivers.” This truth, Berlusconi said, has been implicitly recognized by the U.S. report, which recommends review of signals, rules of engagement, and post-accident procedures.

Berlusconi then tried to downplay the dimensions of the crisis, in order not to admit a defeat of his Iraq policy in front of the government opposition. “The result of the investigation has nothing to do with the quality of our relationships with the United States,” he said, and “we have no intention of establishing any connection between the evaluation of the events in which our official lost his life and the role of our country in Iraq.” Italy maintains 3,000 troops, mostly military police (Carabinieri), in the relatively peaceful Shi’ite area around Nassirya, in southwest Iraq. Those troops did not participate in the 2003 invasion and have a formal peace-keeping mandate. However, public opposition to the presence of these troops in a theater of war has increased so much in Italy, that opinion polls are no longer conducted.

### ‘Moral Reparation’ and Troop Withdrawal Demanded

The connection between the Calipari case and Italy’s presence in Iraq, nevertheless was noted by the opposition. On May 4, the day before Berlusconi’s statement, former European Union chairman Romano Prodi, who is a candidate for the premiership in the general elections next year, had urged his coalition to issue a joint call for the withdrawal of Italian troops from Iraq. During the Parliamentary debate May 5, this call was issued by Piero Fassino, who is the Social Democracy (DS) Secretary General and a leading member of Prodi’s coalition. Fassino also urged the government to “demand an act of moral and political reparation from the U.S. government,” as “a fact of dignity” for the nation and “of justice towards the Calipari family and Italy.”

“We believe that the U.S. government must offer its apology,” Fassino said. “So far, this expression from the U.S. government has not come.” Fassino was indirectly referring to a phone call between George W. Bush and Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi the previous day, in which Bush expressed “regret,” but nothing more.

The request for a public apology had also come that day from the leading Italian daily, *Corriere della Sera*, in a front-page editorial, in which columnist Ernesto Galli della Loggia used unusually harsh tones in condemning the “callous insensibility” with which the U.S.A. had so far managed the Calipari case. This left open, della Loggia wrote, “a question of enormous proportion: What is the sense of any country having

a close relationship of friendship with the United States?” In order not to confuse the alliance with a de facto feudal relationship, della Loggia said, “it is necessary that Washington has, among other things, constant concern for the public sentiment of the ally, starting from the latter’s sense of national dignity and the interests it represents.” He noted the several U.S. Presidents who were able to keep the standard even in the harsh times of the Cold War, stating that President Bush “does not seem either willing or able to do the same thing.”

Bush “must be therefore informed . . . that all this cannot continue without consequences, and if he is justly concerned for the morale of U.S. soldiers deployed in Iraq, for us Italians, the morale of our soldiers deployed in Afghanistan and Nassirya [Iraq] is at least as important; those soldiers, we have reason to believe, were not happy with the way the Calipari investigation was conducted on the American side. And we were not happy either.”

*Corriere della Sera* is not a leftist newspaper, but represents Italy’s traditionally pro-Atlanticist liberal establishment. Therefore, such an editorial is a serious indication of compromised relationships between the two countries.

Brig. Gen. Gerardo Serravalle, a former commander of the Stay Behind organization of the Italian military intelligence, agrees fully with the content of the *Corriere* editorial. Speaking with *EIR*, he criticized the U.S. decision not to hand over the names of witnesses and patrol members to Italian state prosecutors, and for a policy which is “first saving their men, then caring for the rest.” However, he also regrets that intelligence agencies of both countries did not conduct a “dialogue with each other.”

Serravalle indicated that a troop withdrawal from Iraq was the obvious consequence the Italian government should draw, in respect of national dignity. However, such a withdrawal could take place just by keeping the terms of the mandate, which expires at the end of this year. On Jan. 1, 2006, withdrawal could start. “That is the most ‘military’ solution,” Serravalle said, indicating that the contingent must necessarily be gradually pulled out, in order to maintain a framework of security.

On May 11, Italian Foreign Minister Gianfranco Fini announced that Italy will withdraw its contingent in February 2006.

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