

Italy Paid No Ransom To Kidnappers

Regardless of the Italian version of the Calipari incident, on March 10 some neo-con and right-wing U.S. media published nasty attacks on the Italians, indicating that Rumsfeld's friends intend to run a coverup of what happened on March 4, to make the case that there is no reason to change any aspect of U.S. military occupation policies in Iraq. Leading the charge was the Wall Street Journal, which suggested that the Italians had paid a ransom for Sgrena's release, a "policy of deliberately aiding terrorists." The Journal also repeated the lie that the car was speeding up to the checkpoint.

In an interview with Claudio Celani on March 11, the head of the Defense Committee of the Italian House of Representatives (Camera dei Deputati), Rep. Luigi Ramponi, rejected the Journal's allegations. Ramponi knows what he is talking about: He is a four-star general and was the head of SISMI in 1991-92. Given his institutional role, Ramponi cannot be too outspoken, and some of his thinking must be read between the lines.

EIR: Mr. Ramponi, how do you answer the *Wall Street Journal* allegations that a ransom was paid to liberate Giuliana Sgrena?

Ramponi: I answer by saying that Italian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Gianfranco Fini has publicly stated yesterday that neither the Italian government nor anyone on



*Representative:
Ramponi: "The Italian
government has been
against any form of
blackmail."*

its behalf has paid a ransom. This is the official truth, supported by all Italian political forces, who do not challenge it. It is also known that the Italian government position has been firmly against any form of blackmail.

That having been said, it is clear that intelligence agencies open contacts with all possible channels. Italian agencies do that, all other agencies do that, including U.S. intelligence agencies, as I know personally from my past experience as head of SISMI, and as such, a collaborator of allied intelligence services. This is done in order to open all avenues which could lead to a solution of the problem.

EIR: What do you think, when U.S. media repeat the initial U.S. version, even after Fini and Berlusconi reported a different reconstruction of events in the Italian Parliament?

Ramponi: In my opinion, all versions are premature. The shooting occurred at night, many things are unclear, and facts cannot be hastily interpreted. We will know the truth when the protagonists confront one another. In my opinion, those who choose a version do that in an imprudent way.

Italian Foreign Minister Fini, in his speech in front of the Parliament, stated that “there are contrasts between the Italian and the American version.” This is a fact. However, if the U.S. authorities were so sure about the facts as they have reported them, why have they started a “supplementary investigation,” as they did?

EIR: Some media report that there is indeed a communications and security foul-up, but that this was the case long before Calipari’s death, and concerns the results of Defense Secretary Rumsfeld’s centralization of those functions in the Pentagon, rather than the CIA. Somebody says that SISMI informed the CIA, according to procedure, but that the CIA did not inform the Pentagon.

Ramponi: It is true that there is a lack of coordination among U.S. agencies. It is also true that, as the Americans know very well, the Commission report on 9/11 proposes a coordinator for U.S. intelligence bodies.

It is true that the CIA, being in charge of foreign intelligence, runs the main contacts with agencies with similar functions in other countries. In Italy, it is SISMI which has a preferential relationship with the CIA. When I was head of SISMI, and I travelled to Washington, I spent one hour at the FBI, half an hour at the DIA, one hour at the Pentagon, and . . . four hours at the CIA.

It is true, there is a lack of coordination among U.S. intelligence and security agencies. It is certainly possible that what occurred at the Baghdad airport on March 4 is the result of a lack of coordination and communication between what the CIA knew and what the Pentagon agencies knew.

However, I am very cautious, because it could be that Calipari directly contacted the military. The investigation shall find that out.