

Milan Suicide Crash More Pressure on Italy?

by Claudio Celani

Though Milan prosecutors might close their investigation on the April 18 plane crash into the Pirelli Building with the official finding that it was an “accident,” nobody will erase from the minds of Italians, the potential that April 18 was intended to be their “small” Sept. 11. This, when the United States and Britain need the backing of reluctant allies for an “anti-terror” war against Iraq.

The crash took but three victims, including the pilot, only because it occurred at 5:47 p.m., after most employees had left the building for the day. However, plenty of evidence indicates that it was no accident, but a “deliberate collision” (as Lombardy Gov. Roberto Formigoni put it) into the only skyscraper in Milan. “Il Pirellone,” built by the Pirelli corporation in the 1950s, is today the seat of the regional government and parliament, and a symbol of Italy’s industrial heartland.

Most noteworthy are the accounts of eyewitnesses who saw the Piper-class Rockwell ARC112 hit the Pirellone. One, Paolo Bedoschi, is himself a Piper pilot. He told the daily *Il Giornale* that he was walking, some 100 meters from the Pirellone when he heard the plane’s engine. “I told myself: ‘What a nice motor this plane has.’ It was going full throttle, I have no doubt. One second later, I saw it coming from the

right side, over the square: It was flying level, he was going neither up or down and I did not see it maneuvering to avoid the obstacle. I thought: ‘He is going right into it.’ He flew at about 80 meters altitude . . . straight into it, with level wings.” Bedoschi added that the landing gear were in flight position and there were no traces of smoke.

From the fireball and explosion which erupted on the building’s 26th floor, Bedoschi concluded that the pilot had fuel reserves of at least 200 liters. These details contradict the “accident” version, which assumes either a mechanical or human failure. It also contradicts evidence of a cover-up built up by the pilot himself, possibly as part of a suicide mission.

Not an Ordinary Pilot

The presumed pilot, Luigi (“Gino”) Fasulo, was a 67-year-old Swiss citizen living in Pregassona, who officially ran a one-man air-taxi firm, Playmatic Aviation. In reality, Fasulo was a smuggler and a money lender. He was known to both the Swiss and Italian police, who in the past had caught him smuggling art works, jewels, and even “soft” drugs. Fasulo was an experienced pilot with 5,000 hours of flight time, and several emergency landings, in his record. On April 18, he took off from Locarno airport, in Switzerland, telling his friends he was going to fill his fuel tank across the border in Italy, because the price was cheaper.

Within view of the Milan-Linate airport, Fasulo communicated his intention to land, and was directed to a different runway, and then reported problems engaging the landing gear. He was put into a holding pattern west of the airport, on the outskirts of the city. But instead, Fasulo moved *toward* the city, and cut radio communications. During the last 76 seconds of his flight, he covered the 5-7 kilometer distance to the Pirellone without anyone being able to stop him. Supporters of the “accident” version suggest that Fasulo might have been on automatic pilot, while trying manually to lower the landing gear; or, that fire and smoke developed on board and prevented his seeing the skyscraper; or that he became sick and lost control. But all such explanations are contradicted by Bedoschi’s and other witnesses, whose reports indicate that the pilot had full control of the plane.

“We must dig into his past and his connections, to understand who might have commissioned the suicide, and why,” *EIR* was told by a leading anti-terrorist investigator. “The nature of this case is not what its appearances would have us to believe. . . . The result they have achieved is that the population feels now totally vulnerable to terrorist attacks of this sort.”

A first glance into Fasulo’s past brings remarkable connections to the foreground. According to a report published by the daily *La Repubblica* on April 19, Fasulo started his financial activities through Orazio Bagnasco, a financier who was involved in the famous Banco Ambrosiano case. Bagnasco was vice president of Ambrosiano in 1982, when Ambrosiano was bankrupted and its president, Roberto Calvi, was “suicided” and demonstratively hanged under Black Fri-

ars Bridge in London. Bagnasco, who died recently, was eventually sentenced for fraud in the Ambrosiano trial. According to *La Repubblica*, Fasulo was “almost Bagnasco’s personal pilot,” and learned from Bagnasco’s secrets on how to make money. He became a smuggler and a money lender. His specialty was to cash checks of dubious origin, in exchange for the large proportion of the check’s value.

But despite his reputed personal fortune, on the morning of the crash, April 18, Fasulo had sought help from Italian police against people who had apparently bankrupted him. Early that morning, Fasulo and his son Marco crossed into Italy, and contacted the Italian police in Como. Fasulo told the story that a small-time Italian criminal named Sergio Landonio had robbed him of 1.7 million euros. “They have ruined us,” Fasulo’s wife told journalists on April 19. Yet Fasulo did not contact the Swiss police, the most natural thing to do. Did he not trust them? Or did he want to have a plausible story to explain a suicide mission to Italian authorities?

Later Fasulo’s son again called the Como police station, this time from Pregassona, Switzerland, saying: “I am being threatened, some people followed me and they are here, checking the house.” After the plane crash, Marco Fasulo told journalists that his father had “committed suicide.” But Fasulo’s second son, Giorgio, and his wife Filomena, who confirms they are bankrupt, do not believe it.

Pushing a Public Opinion Shift?

These circumstances have prompted popular TV newsman Emilio Fede to question whether someone could have exploited Fasulo’s financially desperate situation, by promising to provide for his family, in exchange for what he did. And the German daily *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* reported on April 22, that some sources insist Fasulo “might have acted on a mission for international terrorism, involving a high monetary compensation.”

Six days after the crash, Transport Minister Lunardi, whose experts are conducting an administrative investigation, stated: “The data which are emerging all converge on the suicide hypothesis. I have no doubts.” But that same day, prosecutor Bruna Albertini told the press, “The evidence produced so far excludes the possibility of suicide”! A higher political cover-up is suggested by Interior Minister Scaiola’s statement one day earlier, categorically excluding suicide, contrary to his colleague Lunardi. The Italian government may fear that admitting to a deliberate act, suicide, would manipulate an unsettled public mood, toward support for the U.S. “war on terrorism”—such as providing air bases for the war against Iraq.

As of now, unless something dramatic occurs, Italy is signalling its unwillingness to follow Washington in its war on terrorism. As with the truck-bombing of a Tunisian synagogue, which killed a dozen German and French tourists on April 11, the Pirellone crash, following the recent assassinations of two Italian government officials, may be part of “something dramatic”: a new strategy of tension.