



Who wanted to kill John Paul II?



Who really was Yuri Andropov?

Rome, Vatican city

1 June 1979

A message to the Pope from 2 French counter-espionage officials

The Pope could be the victim of an **assassination attempt** during his scheduled **trip to Poland!**



Was John Paul II informed?

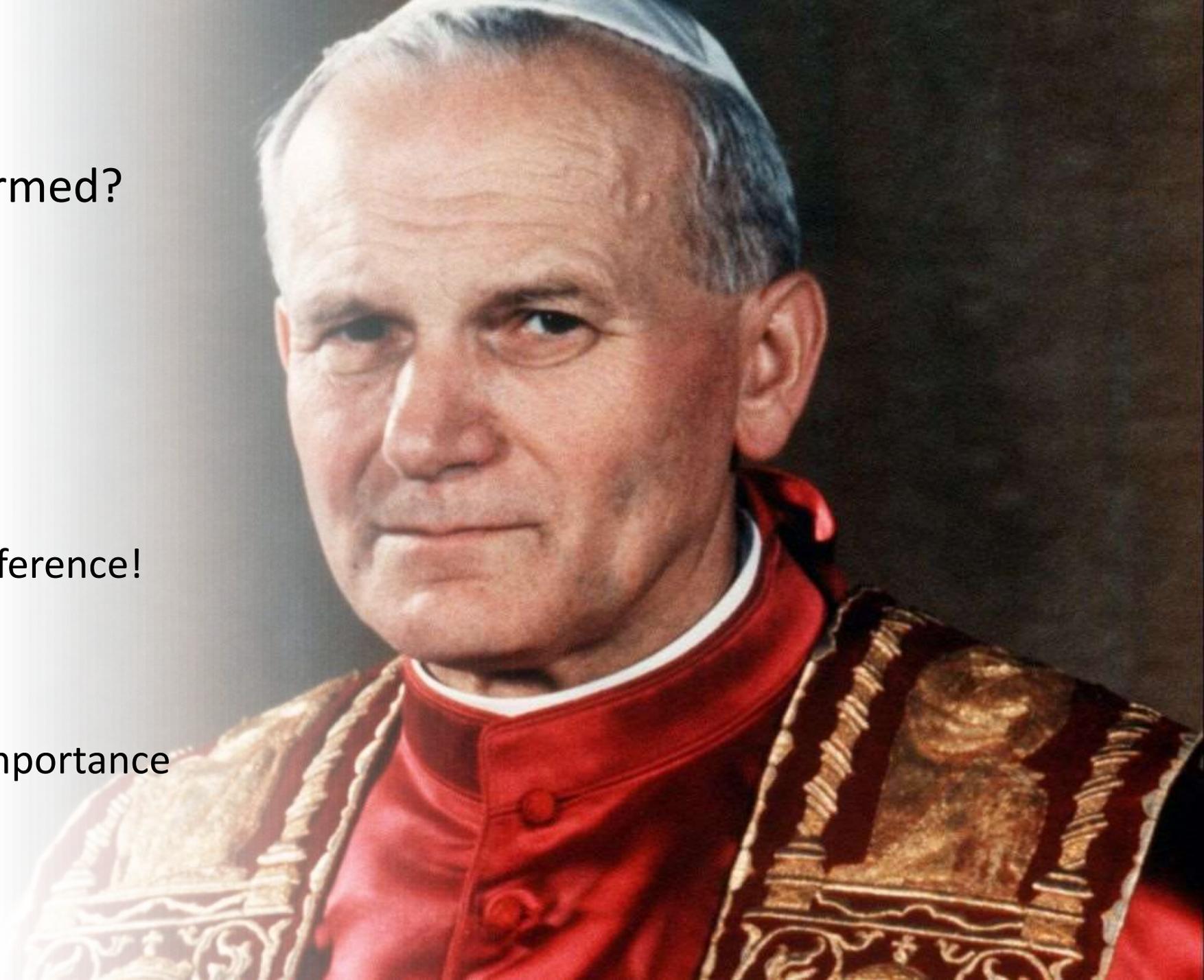
No!

What if he had?

It would have made no difference!

No proofs

Visit to Poland of primary importance





Visit to Poland
2-10 June 1981

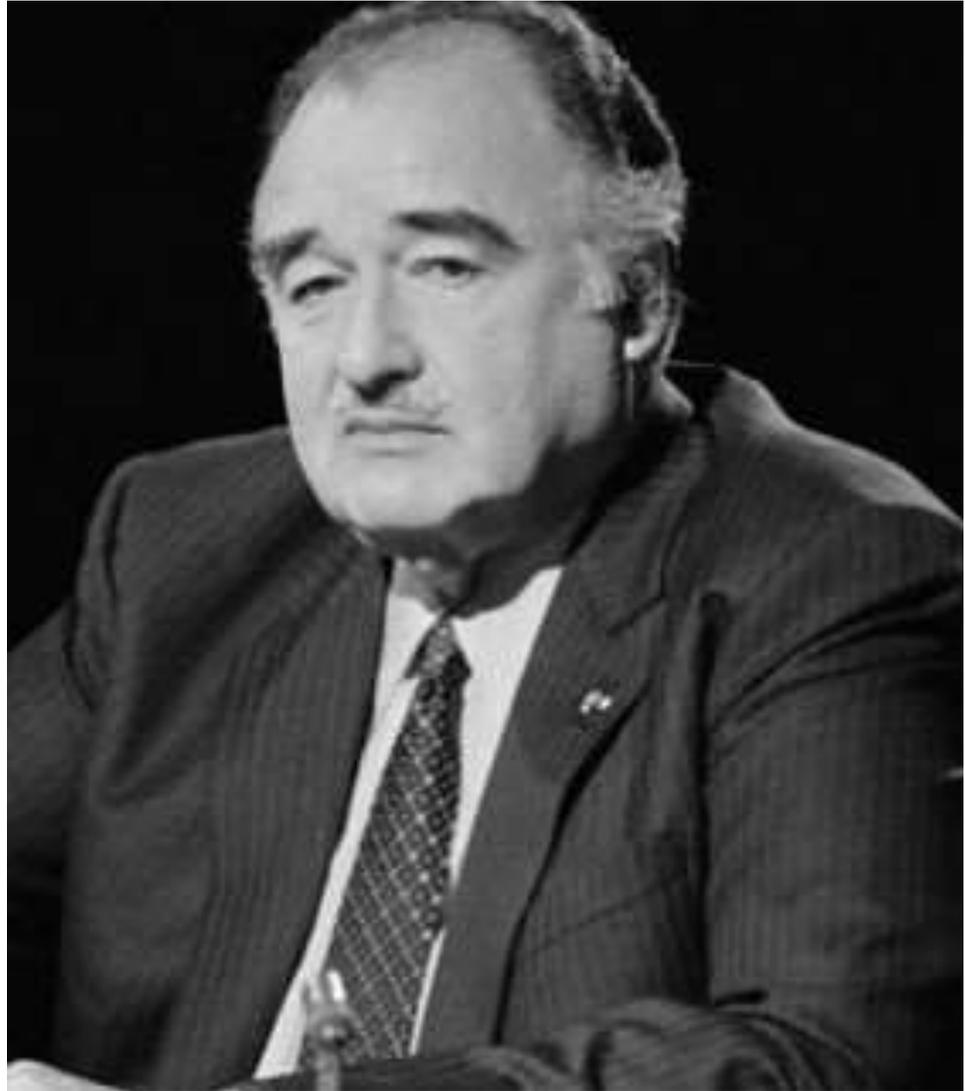
A triumph
NO assassination attempt
BUT...
Visit: a cause for concern in
Moscow!

Confidential sources

Moscow most displeased

“Certain” services preparing the
physical elimination of Pope John
Paul II

A mysterious “*Romanian source*”



Rome, Vatican city

21 April 1981

Another 2 “urgent” messages from the French counter-espionage services:
A KGB conspiracy is targeting the Pope’s life

No proofs, no reliable sources





10 May 1981

The election of François
Mitterrand
A Socialist

Vice-President Bush in Paris to voice concerns

The U.S. concerned over the
inclusion of 4 Communists in
France's new government

*Bush: "The position of the U.S. on
the subject of Communist
participation in the governments of
our allies is well known. This
participation is bound to cause
concern"*





France “a faithful ally”

Mitterrand: *“France’s policy is that of France and will remain that of France”*

BUT

“France is a faithful and loyal ally of the U.S. and on that basis we have many, many things to discuss”



A new Director for the French counter-espionage services

Pro-Soviet sympathies

Threat against Pope's life deemed
not credible

Rome, **13 May 1981**

Pope lunched with a delegation from the Cracow's university to discuss the situation in Poland

Pope's customary visit among the faithful gathered for the Wednesday General Audience







Meanwhile, a few meters
away...

2 armed men waiting

Mehmet Ali Ağca

Oral Celik

Ağca: 2 shots

Celik: 1 shot



Pope shot in the
abdomen, right arm and
left hand

Pope quickly driven to hospital
(8 minutes)

Lost consciousness upon arrival





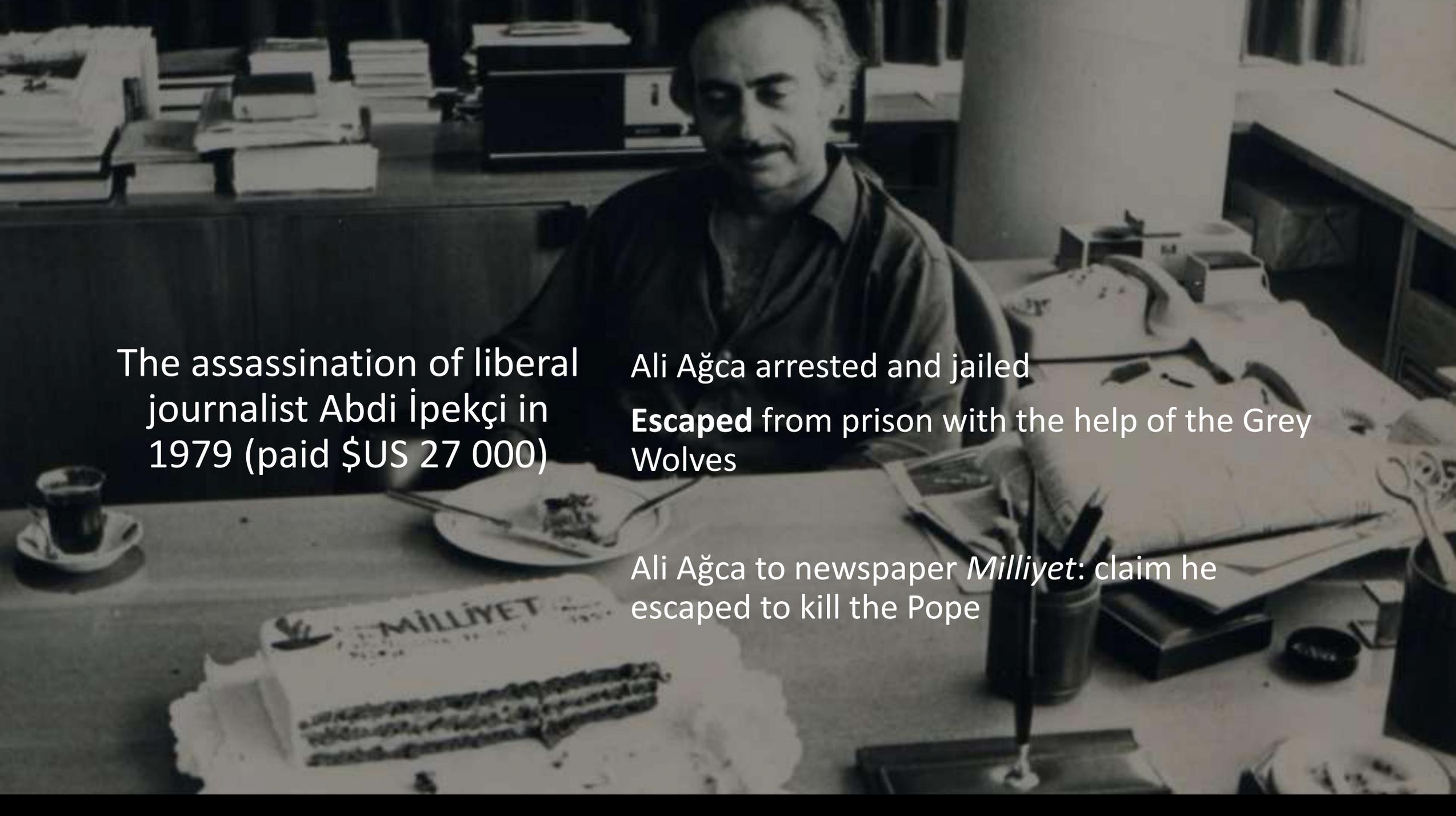
Mehmet Ali Ağca arrested

Born in Turkey (1958) – Poor background

Violence at home

Easy prey for extremist, terrorist or mafia groups

Enrolled as teenager by paramilitary youth organization (« *Grey Wolves* ») financed by local mafia



The assassination of liberal
journalist Abdi İpekçi in
1979 (paid \$US 27 000)

Ali Ağca arrested and jailed

Escaped from prison with the help of the Grey
Wolves

Ali Ağca to newspaper *Milliyet*: claim he
escaped to kill the Pope



John Paul II's visit to
Turkey (November 1979)

No incident: Ali Ağca
promptly forgotten

Ali Ağca condemned to death
(military tribunal of Istanbul)



Flight to **Iran** (Islamic Revolution)

Fake passport

Sent to Europe by the “Grey Wolves”
(various trafficking via **Bulgaria**)



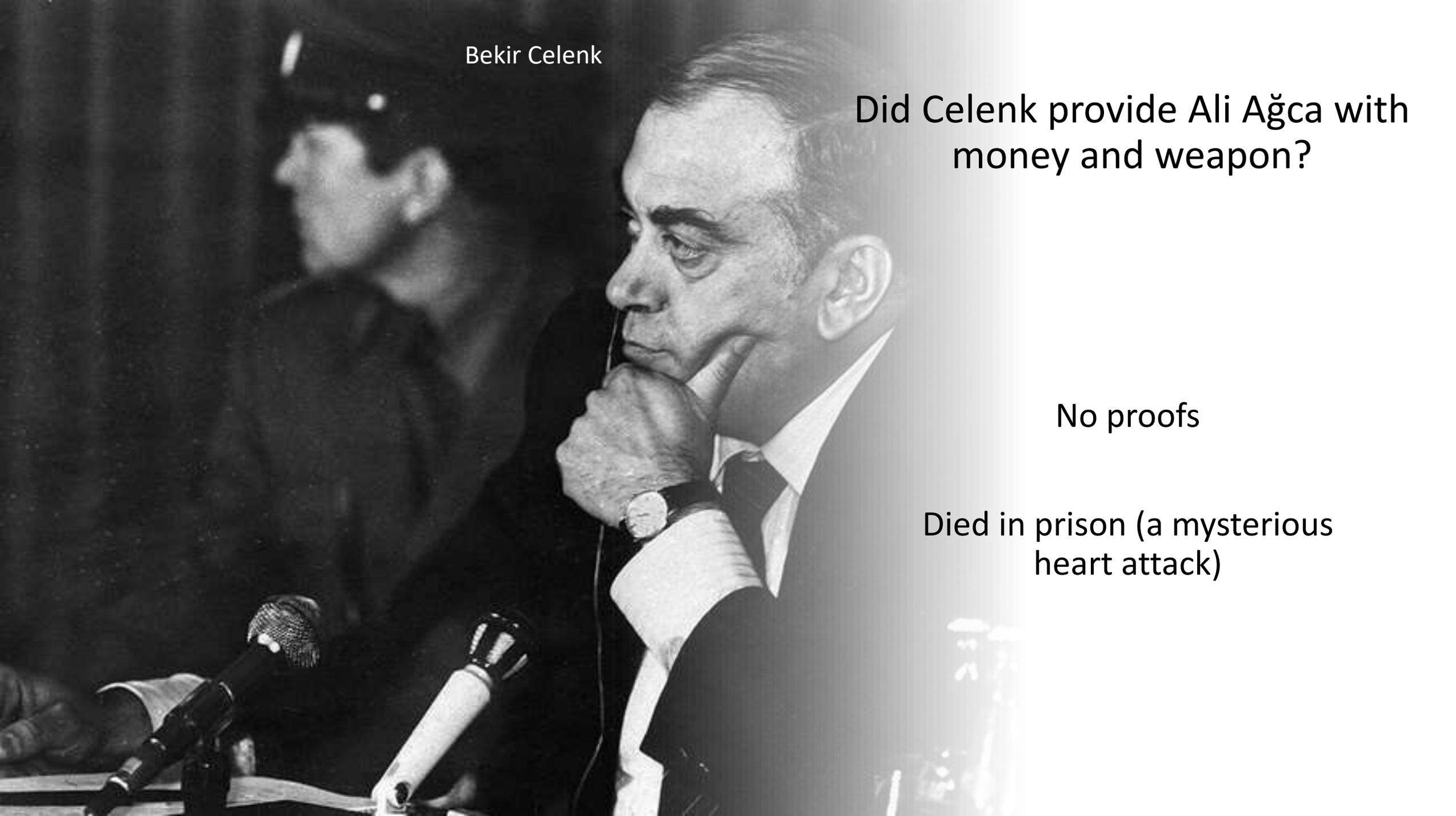
Indian fake passport

Sofia (Bulgaria): crossroad of all sorts of trafficking between Eastern bloc and Western Europe

Meeting with **Bekir Celenk** (leader local mafia)

Weapons

Drugs



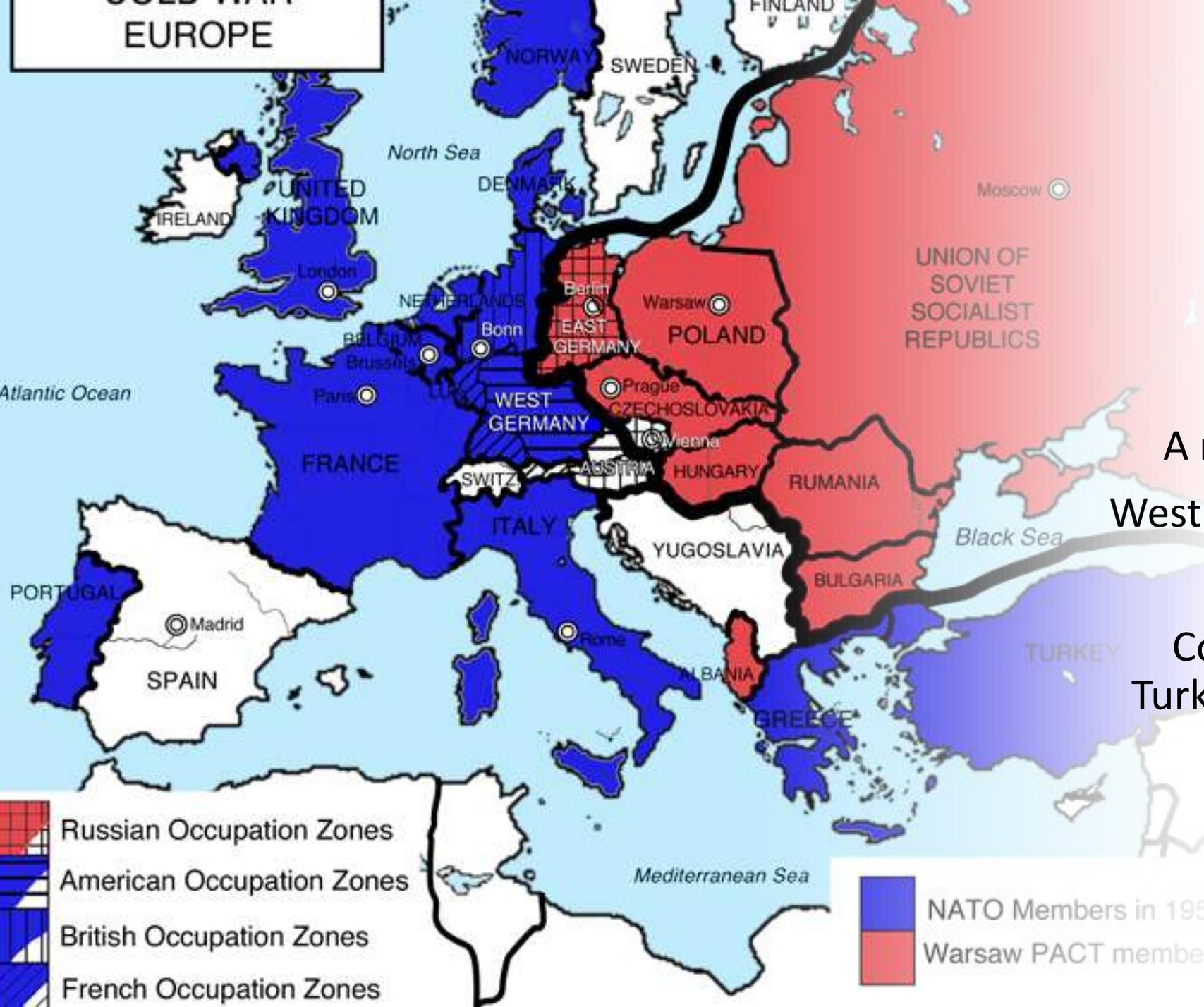
Bekir Celenk

Did Celenk provide Ali Ağca with
money and weapon?

No proofs

Died in prison (a mysterious
heart attack)

COLD WAR
EUROPE



31 August 1980

A new Turkish passport
West Germany via Yugoslavia

Contacts with far right
Turkish group linked to the
mafia

- Russian Occupation Zones
- American Occupation Zones
- British Occupation Zones
- French Occupation Zones

- NATO Members in 1952
- Warsaw PACT members



General Kenan Evren

Military coup in Turkey

KGB neutrality
CIA complicit

**1947: the founding of the
Central Intelligence Agency
(CIA)**

Extensive power to conduct
foreign intelligence operations



The history of the CIA & U.S.
foreign policy intertwined



The CIA accused of masterminding **covert operations** overseas

Covert operation: a **secret operation** intended to conceal the identity of the sponsor (permit a plausible denial)





The recruitment of former Nazis

The **Gehlen Organization** (intelligence agency established in 1946 in U.S. occupation zone -Germany)

4 000 members (former Wehrmacht, SS & Gestapo)



Reinhard Gehlen: former chief of German Foreign Armies East military intelligence unit

Secret agreement: Gehlen's organization to cooperate with the CIA

Hundreds of former Nazis liberated



2002-2005: CIA archives declassified

5 of Adolf Eichmann's closest aides cooperated with the CIA

The CIA knew Eichmann's whereabouts as early as 1958 but did not share info with the Israelis

Hans Globke (racial Nuremberg Laws of 1935): key advisor to German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer

Acted as **intermediary** CIA-West German government



The CIA: mediocre results
(New York Times, 1951)

The 1948 “Prague coup”

The 1956 Hungarian Revolution



1950s: the CIA had to prove
its efficiency



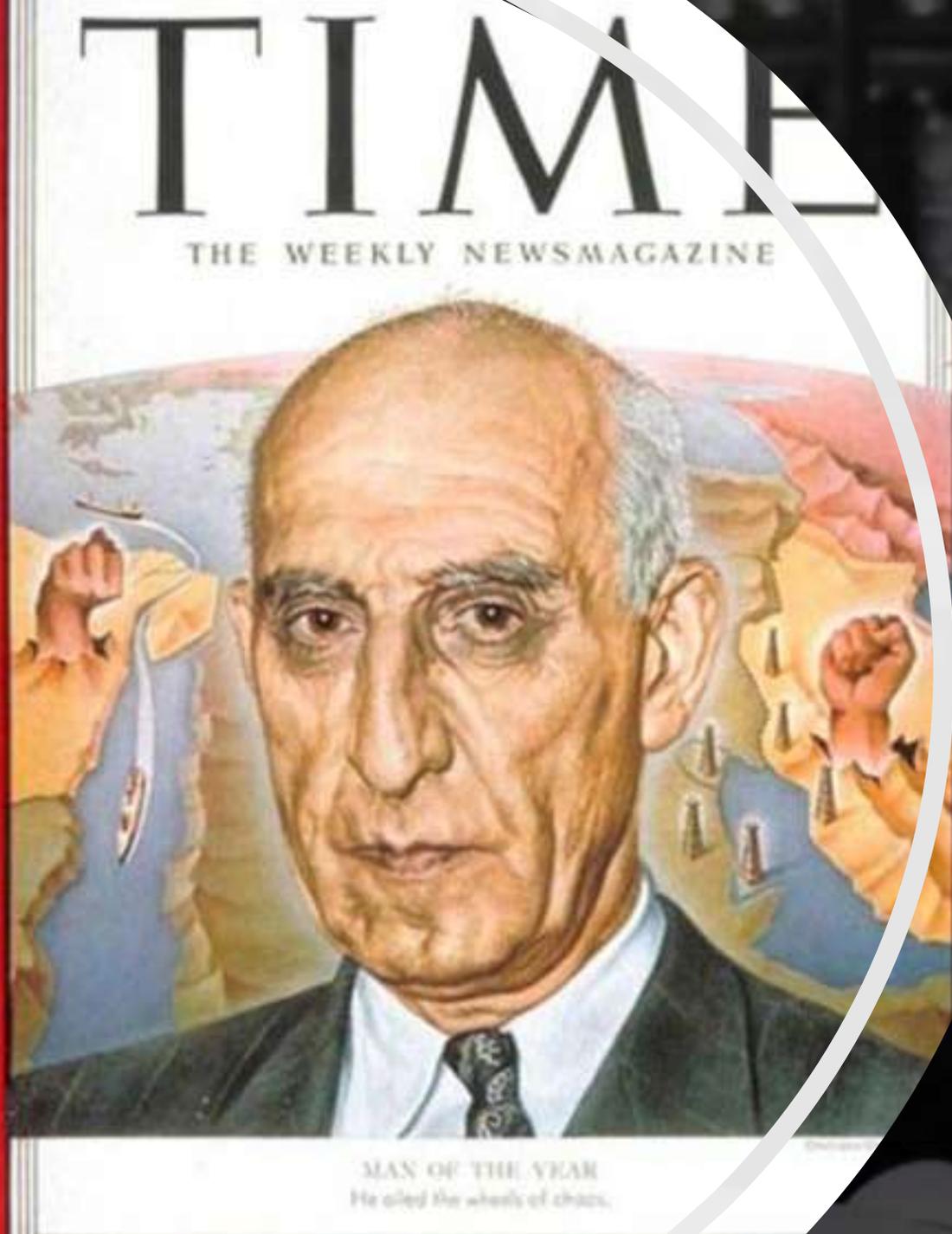


Iran 1953: a country on the verge of becoming a democracy

Mohamed Mossadegh: a symbol of Iranian independence

Iran: control over its own resources (oil)

Iranian oil controlled by Anglo-Iranian Oil Company



Iranian Parliament nationalized
oil

Winston Churchill to the U.S.:
Mossadegh is leading Iran towards
communism



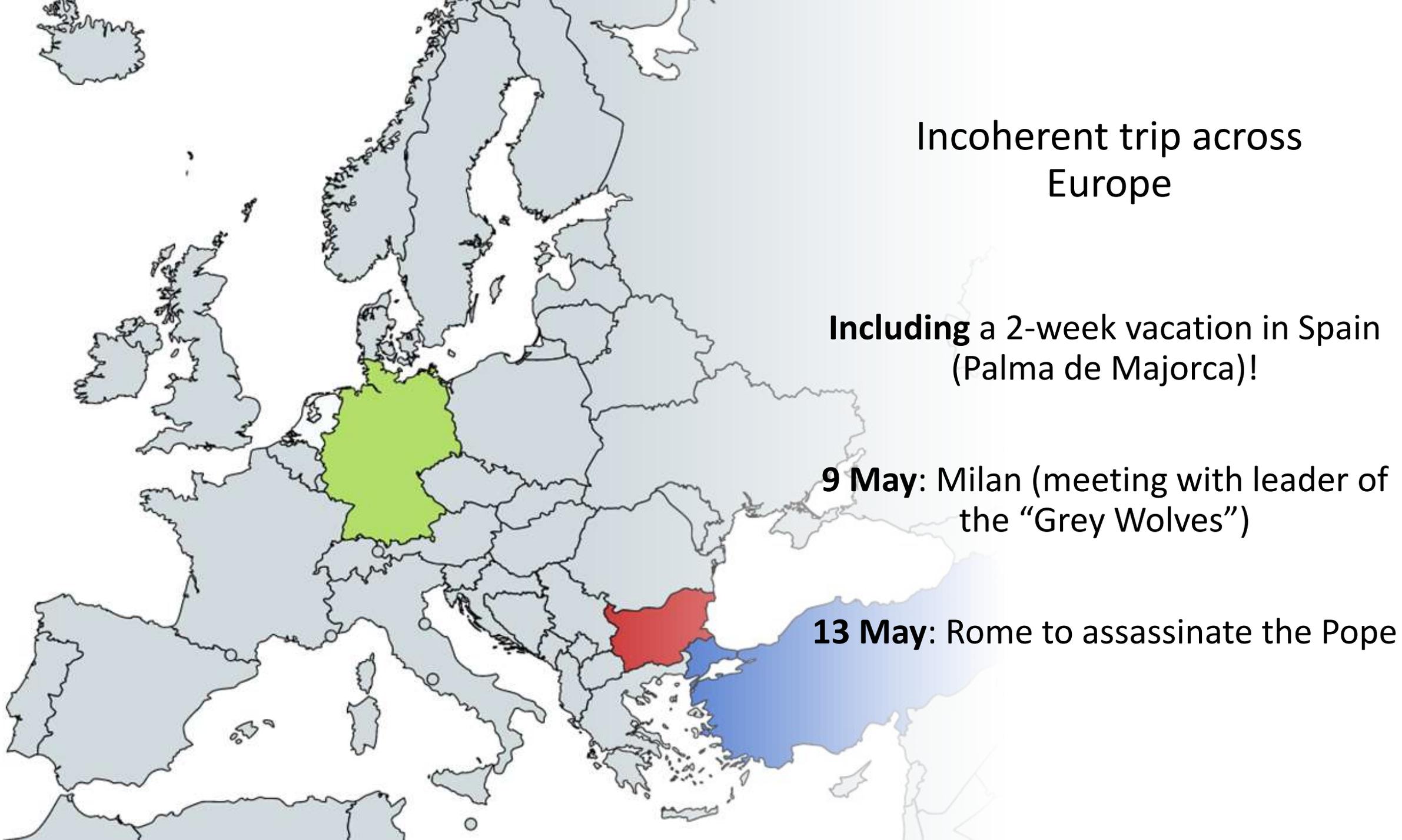
The Vietnam War

CIA operatives in Indochina since the early 1950s

The Phoenix Program

"To attack and destroy the political infrastructure of the Viet Cong"

To assassinate communist leaders
20 000 to 40 000 victims



Incoherent trip across Europe

Including a 2-week vacation in Spain (Palma de Majorca)!

9 May: Milan (meeting with leader of the “Grey Wolves”)

13 May: Rome to assassinate the Pope



24 September 1981

The end of Mehmet Ali Ağca's trial

Numerous “grey” zones and unanswered questions

Did he act alone?

Was there a conspiracy?

Who was to benefit from the Pope's assassination?

Contradictory, incoherent statements by the accused
Self-proclaimed himself *“the greatest Turkish terrorist”*



**A mysterious note found
his hotel room in Rome**

**Project to assassinate the Pope “*to protest
against the UN and Western imperialism*”**

Official conclusion: **Ali Ağca** declared mad
Condemned to life in prison

Why a short trial?



**New spectacular
statements from his
prison cell**

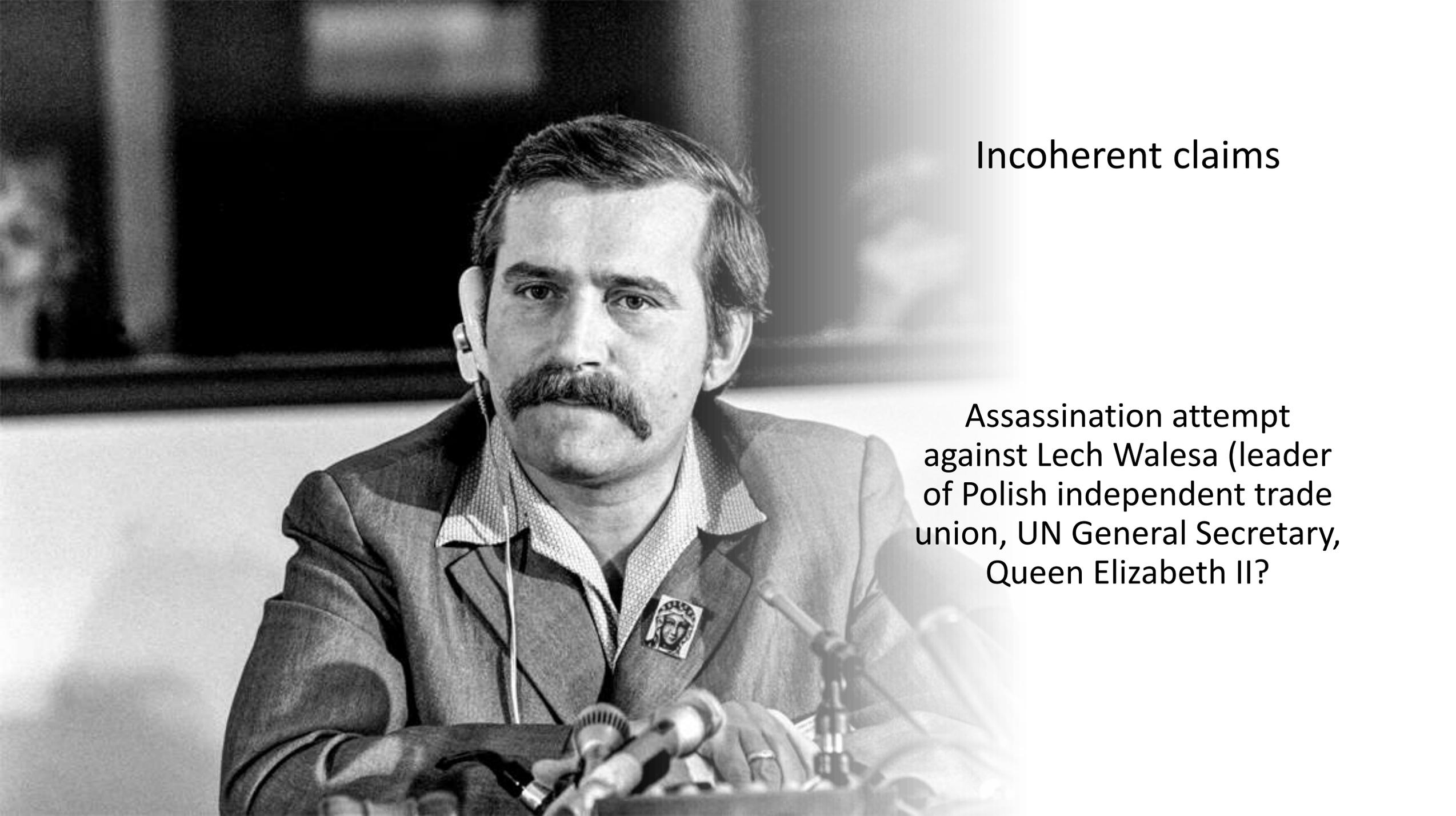
A new inquiry

The freemasons?

The CIA?

The “Red Brigades” (far left terrorist group)?

None of the statements could be verified...



Incoherent claims

Assassination attempt
against Lech Walesa (leader
of Polish independent trade
union, UN General Secretary,
Queen Elizabeth II?)



The KGB's shadow

The **KGB** (political police and security)

December 1917: the foundation of the **All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution and Sabotage (Cheka)**

The first Soviet security & intelligence agency

A **repression tool** against political opponents

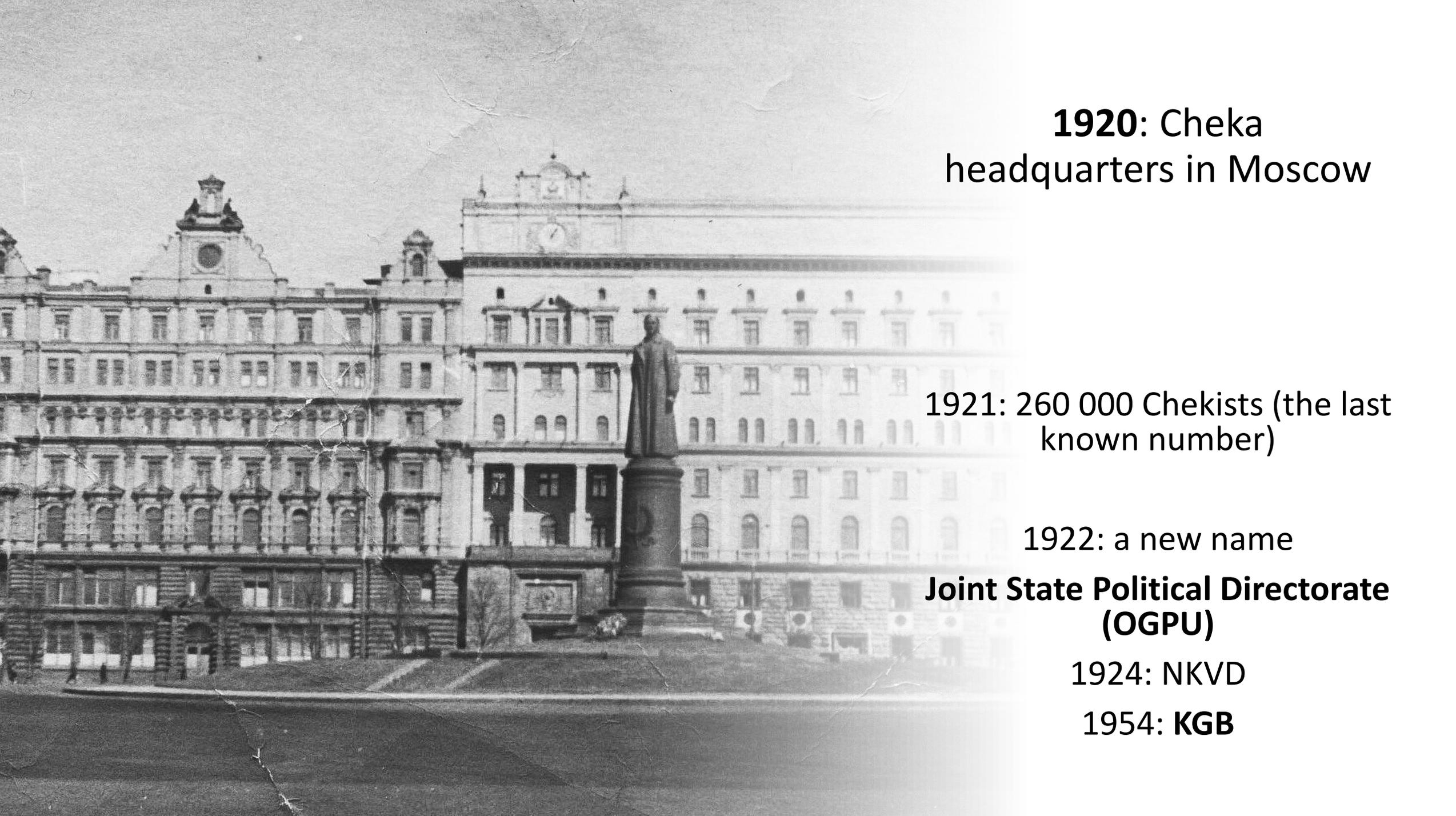




The legacy of Czarist
Russia

Pre-revolution
underground “assets”
(living under **false
identities**): the “**illegals**”

December 1920: a **foreign department (INO)** to
direct operations beyond Soviet borders



1920: Cheka
headquarters in Moscow

1921: 260 000 Chekists (the last
known number)

1922: a new name

**Joint State Political Directorate
(OGPU)**

1924: NKVD

1954: **KGB**



The Pope in danger?

A Slavic pope who encouraged
dissidence in Poland and within
the Soviet Eastern bloc



Remember Ali Ağca's time in Bulgaria?

Bulgarian secret services known to be close to their Soviet counterparts

Lack of reactions in the West (including from the U.S.)



An ailing **Leonid Brejnev**

His likely successor at the helm: **Yuri Andropov** (head of the KGB)

To accuse the KGB of planning the assassination of John Paul II could have paved the way to negative consequences (East-West relations)



Who was Yuri Andropov?

10 November 1982: the death of Brejnev

Yuri Andropov (age 68): General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party

Information pertaining to his background: empty file!

The Hungarian Revolution (1956)

The key Soviet bureaucrat behind
the bloody repression in Budapest



A close-up portrait of Yuri Andropov, a Soviet politician and KGB leader. He is shown from the chest up, wearing a dark suit, a white shirt, and a patterned tie. He has short, light-colored hair and is wearing dark-rimmed glasses. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. The portrait is overlaid on the right side of the slide, with a jagged, torn-paper edge separating it from the background image.

His mission

A wide-angle photograph of the KGB building in Moscow, a large, multi-story, classical-style building with many windows and a central clock tower. The building is set against a dark, overcast sky. The foreground shows a street with some parked cars and trees. The image is dimly lit, with a dark overlay on the left side where the text is placed.

To modernize the KGB destabilized
by Khrushchev's "Secret Speech"
(1956)

Key word: efficiency

1964-1980: a silent war against
"dissidents" hostiles to the Soviet
system

16 August 1982

*“Who wanted to kill the
pope?”*

The ***Bulgarian connection***

Reader's Digest



The Bulgarian connection:

Ali Ağca not a lone fanatic

A killer recruited by the Bulgarian secret services (in the shadow of the KGB)



May 1982: new statement

A new “Repentance Act” to be voted
(reduced jail time)

Ali Ağca revealed he acted on behalf of
Bulgarian secret services

29 October 1982

Sergei Antonov's arrest

A representative in Rome of Balkan Airlines
(Bulgaria's state-owned airline)

Ali Aĝca's accomplice on behalf of the
Bulgarian intelligence services?

Two other Bulgarians in the Bulgarian
Embassy in Rome named as co-conspirators :
Zhelyo Vasilev (the secretary of the military
attaché) and Todor Aivazov (accountant at
the embassy)

Sergei Antonov



Sergei Antonov

Detailed information shared by **Ali Ağca**

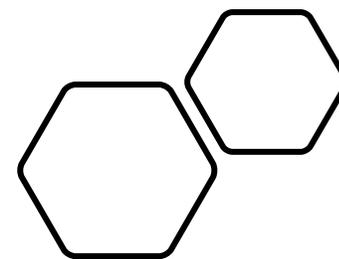
Description of the apartment where
assassination plot was conceived

4 years of detention in Italy for Antonov

Irrefutable proofs?

Maybe not...





Doubts...

Why would the KGB or Bulgarian secret services leave Antonov in Rome (over 1 year after the attempt) if he had been involved in such an operation?

Had he been the “brain” behind the plot, he would have been removed

Antonov: a Bulgarian “super-agent”? No knowledge of English or Italian...
And what about his poor health?

Sergei Antonov



Doubts...

Ali Ağca received numerous discreet visits in his cell from fellow prisoners associated with the mafia (manipulated by Italian and American secret services)?

Details of the Roman apartment: a sliding door between 2 rooms
Except it was a curtain!



Doubts...

A sliding door between 2 rooms in
the apartment above

Apartment occupied by a priest (CIA
informant!)

Sergei Antonov





31 October 1984

“lack of evidence” (Bulgarian connection)

Ali Ağca announced in court the end of the world (no longer taken seriously)

Antonov released from detention in 1986



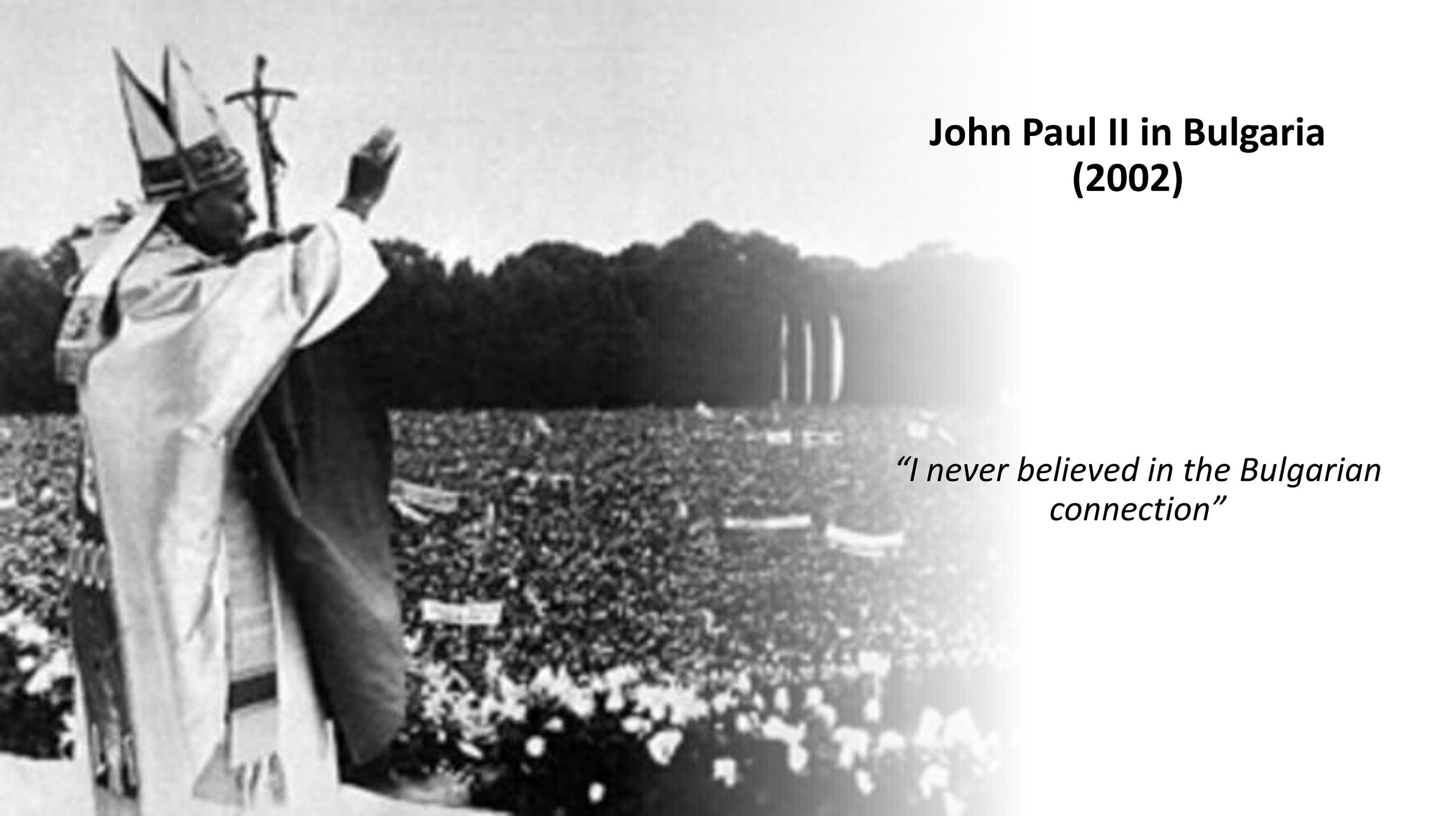
“Bulgarian connection”: NO proofs
ever found



December 1991

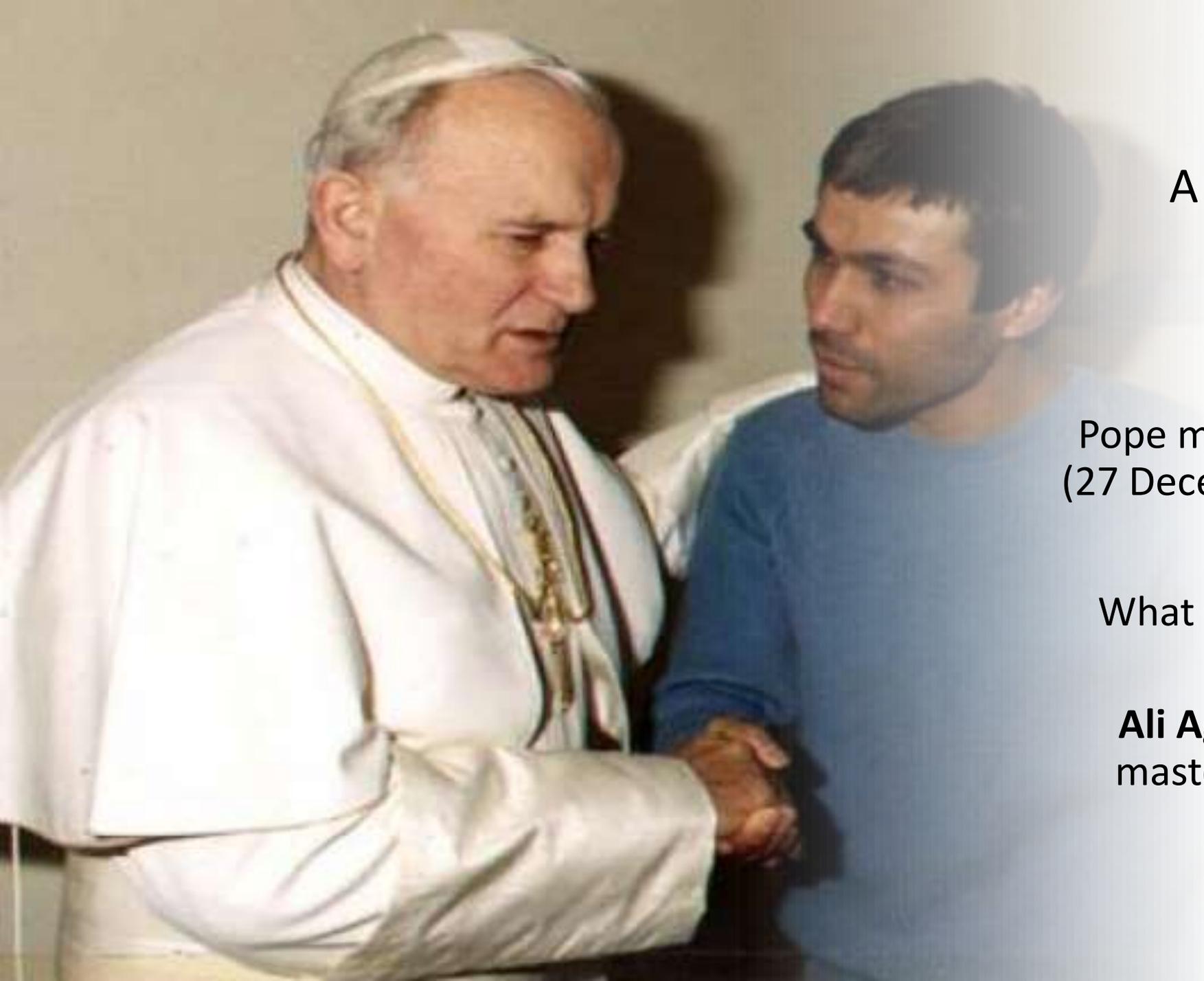
The dissolution of the Soviet Union

The opening of the Soviet archives: still **no proofs**



**John Paul II in Bulgaria
(2002)**

*“I never believed in the Bulgarian
connection”*



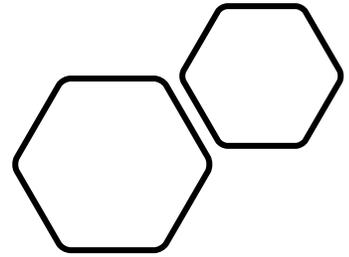
A spectacular visit

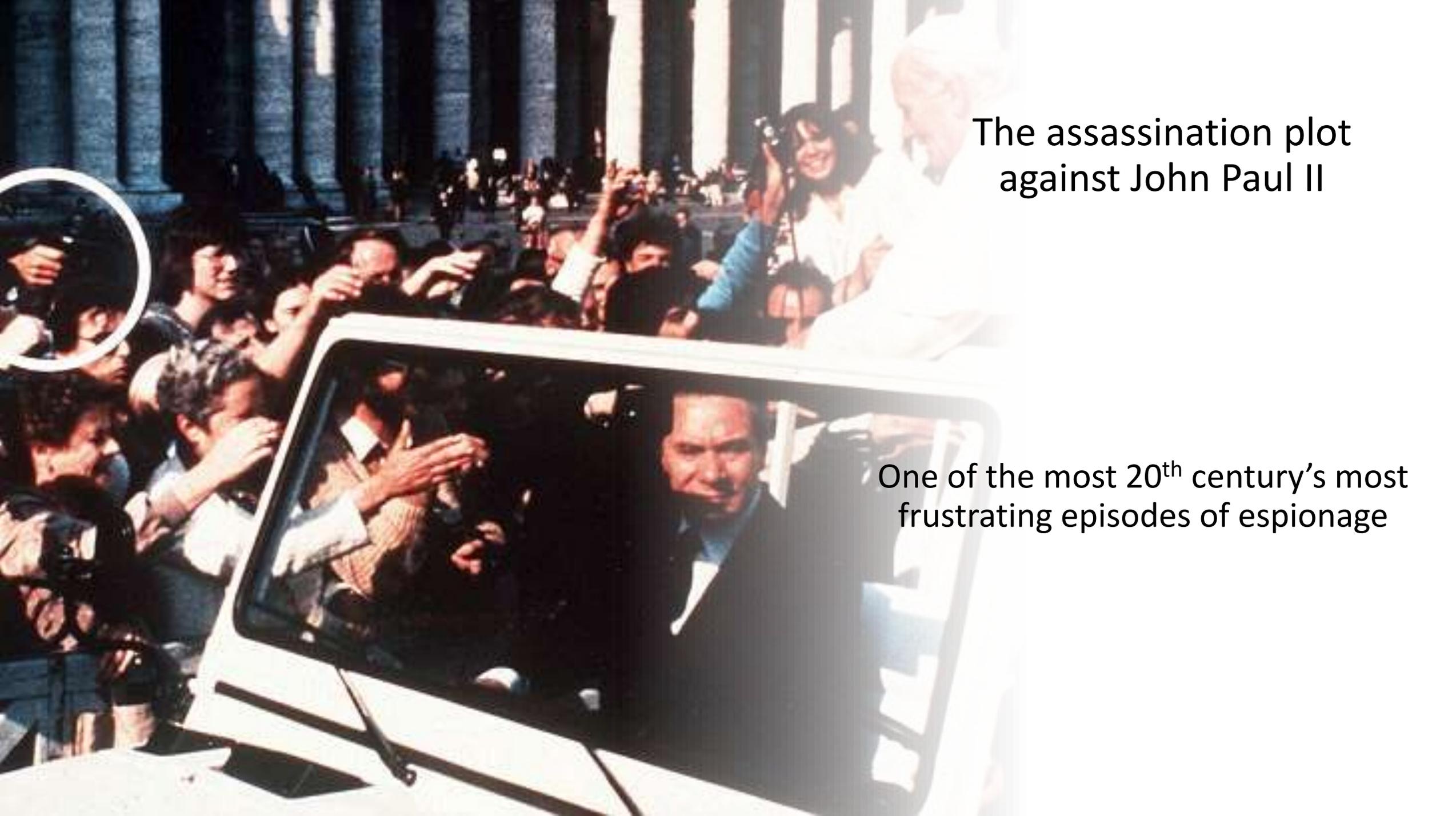
Pope met with **Ali Ağca** in his cell (27 December 1983) to forgive him

What did they discuss? No one knows...

Ali Ağca never revealed who masterminded the operation







The assassination plot
against John Paul II

One of the most 20th century's most
frustrating episodes of espionage