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The ghost of Machiavelli: An approach to operation Gladio and terrorism in cold war Italy

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Abstract. In 1990, a document was made public in Italy that shed new light on the secret aspects of the Cold War in Western Europe. The document, dated 1 June 1959, had been compiled by the Italian military secret service SIFAR and is entitled “The special forces of SIFAR and Operation Gladio”. It explained that a secret stay-behind army linked to NATO had been set up in Italy for the purpose of unconventional warfare. Ever since, there have been allegations in Italy that the Gladio stay-behind army was linked to acts of terrorism during the Cold War. Despite their importance for criminal, legal and social investigations into the secret history of the Cold War, these questions have received next to no attention among the English-speaking research community since the documents’ discovery, partly due to language barriers. With no claim to deal with the stay-behind armies in an exhaustive manner, this essay attempts to analyse and contextualise the Italian data.

1. Introduction

In the summer of 1990, Venetian judge Felice Casson discovered the existence of a hitherto unknown so-called “stay-behind army” linked to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) while investigating mysterious acts of right-wing terrorism in Italy. The documents proving the existence of these clandestine forces were found by Casson in Rome in the archives of the Italian military secret service SISMI (Servizio Informazioni Sicurezza Militare, previously known as SIFAR, Servizio Informazioni Forze Armate). Casson found that it was the military secret service who directed the secret stay-behind army which in Italy operated under the code-name “Gladio”, the “Sword”. Casson found evidence that similar structures existed also in numerous other countries in Western Europe. For a few weeks in late 1990, the Gladio discoveries led to a political scandal in Italy and beyond, with the British daily *The Observer* claiming that the “the best-kept, and most damaging, political-military secret since World War II” had been discovered.¹

Following the discoveries in Italy the parliament of the European Union (EU) debated the legal, social and political implications of the discovery. In a special resolution passed on 22 November 1990 the EU parliament made it clear that it “Condemns the clandestine creation of manipulative and operational networks and calls for a full investigation into the nature, structure, aims

and all other aspects of these clandestine organisations or any splinter groups, their use for illegal interference in the internal political affairs of the countries concerned, the problem of terrorism in Europe and the possible collusion of the secret services of Member States or third countries". Due to the prominent role of the Pentagon and NATO in the secret operation the EU parliament in its resolution stressed that it "Protests vigorously at the assumption by certain US military personnel at SHAPE and in NATO of the right to encourage the establishment in Europe of a clandestine intelligence and operation network". As the EU parliament itself had no authority to investigate security affairs which remained in the sovereign domain of each EU member state it urged that further investigations into the affair should be carried out in all countries concerned. Therefore its resolution requested "all the Member States to take the necessary measures, if necessary by establishing parliamentary committees of inquiry, to draw up a complete list of organisations active in this field, and at the same time to monitor their links with the respective state intelligence services and their links, if any, with terrorist action groups and/or other illegal practices".²

In 2000, exactly one decade after the EU parliament had passed its resolution, it became clear that only very little progress had been made in this field of research. Only three countries, namely Italy, Belgium and Switzerland, had carried out a parliamentary investigation into their secret armies and presented a public report.³ The parliamentarians who had tried to shed some light on this largely unknown aspect of modern European history found it extremely difficult to gain access to the facts and in some cases suffered from mental and physical strain. Senator Carlo Schmid, the president of the Swiss parliamentary investigation into the Swiss secret army P-26, lost several kilos of weight during the investigation and declared when the task was completed: "I was shocked that something like that is at all possible", adding that he was glad to leave "the conspiratorial atmosphere" which during the investigations had weighed upon him "like a black shadow."⁴

As the parliamentary reports of Switzerland, Belgium and Italy were published in German, French and Italian respectively, and as furthermore all other countries had failed to investigate their secret armies, international research into NATO's secret armies progressed only very slowly. Even experts on international law, criminal law, European history and cold war history had great difficulties relating to the topic, as next to no English books or scientific articles had been published on the topic in the 1990s.⁵ While it had been alleged in Italy in 1990 that similar secret armies existed also in other countries of Western Europe, this claim was only confirmed officially for Switzerland and Belgium. The links to the US Pentagon, to NATO, to the US intelligence service CIA and the British intelligence service MI6 remained mysterious and

unclear. Above all, it remained also completely mysterious whether the secret armies had been linked to crime, terror, torture and coup d'états.

In the absence of further efforts of the EU parliament to clarify the facts and the history of NATO's secret armies the author has researched fifteen different countries and in January 2005 published his findings.⁶ The reader will find the detailed international story of NATO's secret armies in that book, while this essay focuses on Italy specifically. All in all, the research confirmed that secret stay-behind armies had indeed existed in the NATO countries Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Belgium, France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Greece and Turkey, as well as in the neutral countries Sweden, Switzerland, Finland and Austria. They had been set up after World War Two and trained to become operational as a guerrilla army in case of a Soviet invasion or in case of a takeover of power of the communist parties in the democracies of Western Europe. The data available confirmed as well that NATO's Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) in Mons, Belgium, coordinated the secret stay-behind armies through two clandestine committees, the Allied Clandestine Committee (ACC) and the Clandestine Planning Committee (CPC) in which the CIA and MI6 regularly met with representatives of the European military secret services. Last but not least the data confirmed that in a number of countries links to crime, terror, coup d'états and torture were either confirmed or alleged.

In today's world, which is greatly concerned with international terrorism, such disquieting findings should presumably have led to a thorough investigation of NATO's secret armies and all alleged or proven links to terrorism by all NATO members. For NATO today, under the leadership of the administration of George Bush junior, has declared that fighting terrorism ranges amongst its most important tasks, with ongoing military operations in both Afghanistan and Iraq. Yet NATO's secret armies and their links to terrorism are not being investigated, and both parliamentarians and academics encounter great difficulties when attempting to tackle this research field. Many of the original documents were destroyed after the discovery of the stay-behind networks. Furthermore, documents that were not destroyed remain classified and inaccessible to historians and political scientists. FOIA requests to the CIA regarding access to Gladio documents by both the Washington-based National Security Archive (NSA) and the author were turned down.⁷ The author has also requested from NATO access to documents relating to the stay-behind network via the embassy of his native Switzerland, but this request was also rejected.⁸

Given this difficult research context, the most valuable original historical document on Operation Gladio and NATO's stay-behind armies still today remains the one found by Felice Casson in the archives of the Italian military

secret service SIFAR. It is dated 1 June 1959 and is entitled: “The special forces of SIFAR and Operation Gladio”. Combined with the parliamentary reports which were published in Italy the country remains therefore still today one of the key theatres in which NATO’s secret armies can be studied and I shall therefore in this paper focus on this most valuable document and deal with Italy only. Without claiming to deal with NATO’s stay-behind armies in an exhaustive manner my attempt is to offer a close reading and contextualisation of the 1959 SIFAR document, which I have translated from Italian into English and which is contained in the appendix, and relate it to secondary sources in order to contribute to a better understanding of both NATO’s stay behind armies, Italy’s secret Cold War history, and the ongoing so called “war on terrorism”.

2. The CIA in Italy

The CIA was active in Italy during the entire Cold War period. Indeed, Italy was the first country in the world where the newly-founded CIA in 1948 secretly carried out a covert operation to prevent the Italian Communist Party PCI (Partito Comunista Italiano) from winning the first national elections. Throughout the Cold War, the CIA fought the strong PCI with various means and strategies, until the PCI was dissolved in February 1991.

The Italian left is convinced to this day that it was due to this secret war of the CIA that the PCI, despite its strength in national elections and in parliament, never reached executive power in Italy during the Cold War. On the other side of the debate, Italian Conservatives, including former members of the US-supported Christian Democrats (Democrazia Christiana Italiana, DCI), insist that CIA operations in Italy were a reasonable response to the fears engendered by Communist subversion during the Cold War, pointing out that it was only the security framework provided by Washington that allowed Italy to become one of the most advanced and richest societies in the world.

The historical evidence now available confirms that the battle between the CIA and the PCI followed the global Cold War fault lines very closely. Washington knew that Moscow was providing large sums of money to the PCI, while Moscow also knew that Washington was providing financial support to the DCI. Therefore, when Italian communists, like Gianni Cervetti, confirmed after the end of the Cold War that the PCI had received ample funds from the Soviet Union, they highlighted at the same time that the Christian Democrats had had the same relationship with Washington.⁹

This Cold War division of the country had its origins in the years that followed the defeat of Italy in World War II and the death of fascist leader

Benito Mussolini. According to the Jalta agreements reached by Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin in February 1945, Italy was to be integrated into the anti-Communist alliance of western democracies. Nevertheless, US President Harry Truman and his newly-founded National Security Council (NSC) were greatly concerned about the strength of the Italian Communist Party. The PCI was the largest Communist party in Western Europe and enjoyed much popularity and respect in Italy for its resistance against the fascist dictatorship of Mussolini and the alliance of Italy with Hitler. For the first national elections on 16 April 1948, the PCI had united with the Italian Socialist Party (Partito Socialista Italiano, PSI) to form the Popular Democratic Front (FDP, Fronte Democratico Popolare). Observers expected the FDP to gain the majority in the Italian parliament, as the FDP had shown its muscle in municipal elections preceding the national vote, routinely assigning the US supported anti-communist DCI to second place.

It was in this context that the CIA was given the straightforward task of preventing the Italian Communist party from winning the 1948 elections. The first numbered document issued by the National Security Council, NSC 1/1 of 14 November 1947, summarized the threat as follows: "The Italian Government, ideologically inclined toward Western democracy, is weak and is being subjected to continuous attack by a strong Communist Party."¹⁰ Therefore, the National Security Council in one of its first meetings on 19 December 1947 adopted directive NSC 4-A, which ordered CIA Director Roscoe Hillenkoetter to undertake a broad range of covert activities to prevent a Communist victory in the coming Italian election. NSC 4-A was a top-secret document, as US covert activities in Western Europe were particularly sensitive. There were only three copies, one of which Hillenkoetter had "closely guarded in the Director's office, where members of his own staff who did not 'need to know' could gain no access to it."¹¹ The "reason for so great secrecy was altogether clear", the official CIA history records, for "there were citizens of this country at that time who would have been aghast if they had learned of NSC 4-A".¹²

In its covert operation, the CIA supported the DCI with US\$10 million. At the same time, Communists and Socialists were targeted with smear campaigns. Among other operations, the CIA issued anonymous pamphlets with sexual and personal defamations of PCI candidates, as well as smearing them with the Fascist and/or anti-Church brush. This tactic of targeting specific seats to give control to the DCI, rather than going for a complete sweep, was successful in all but two of the 200-plus seats selected. In the final round of elections, the DCI won 307 seats with 48 per cent of the vote, while the leftist FDP coalition unexpectedly won only 31 per cent of votes, and was left defeated with only 200 seats.¹³ Protests by the public and the left were

answered with heavy-handed repression, leading to a “strikingly high number of victims during demonstrations and land occupations.”¹⁴

The great success of the covert action operation in Italy led president Truman to expand the powers of the CIA to a global scale. Only two months after the manipulation of the Italian vote, on 18 June 1948, the NSC passed another directive (NSC 10/2) that authorised the CIA to carry out covert action operations in all countries of the world, which created a covert action branch within the CIA under the name of “Office of Special Projects”, a label soon changed to the less revealing “Office of Policy Coordination” (OPC). NSC 10/2 directed that OPC was to “plan and conduct covert operations”. With “covert operations”, NSC 10/2 referred to all activities “which are conducted or sponsored by this government against hostile foreign states or groups or in support of friendly foreign states or groups but which are so planned and conducted that any US Government responsibility for them is not evident to unauthorised persons and that if uncovered the US Government can plausibly disclaim any responsibility for them.” Specifically, according to NSC 10/2, covert action operations “shall include any covert activities related to: propaganda; economic warfare; preventive direct action, including sabotage, anti-sabotage, demolition, and evacuation measures; subversion against hostile states, including assistance to underground resistance movements, guerrillas and refugee liberation groups, and support of indigenous anti-communist elements in threatened countries of the free world.”¹⁵

After the defeat of the Communists and the Socialists at the polls, Italy joined NATO as a founding member on 4 April 1949 under the rule of the DCI. In order to enhance the stability of the country, Italy’s first post-war military secret service was created on 30 March 1949, just days before Italy joined NATO. Under the control of the Defence Ministry, the military secret service SIFAR (Servizio Informazione Forze Armate) was staffed with staunch anti-Communists, with General Giovanni Carlo as its first director. With its superior financial means, the CIA greatly influenced the SIFAR throughout the Cold War, a well-known fact within the Italian security establishment. As Paulo Taviani, Italian Defence Minister from 1955 to 1958, put it, the Italian military secret service had always been given orders and financed by “the boys in Via Veneto”, i.e. the CIA in the US embassy in the heart of Rome.¹⁶

While the Italian right welcomed this protection by Washington, the Italian left criticised that the SIFAR was just a puppet of the CIA. This divide between the political left and the political right characterises much of the historical debate in Italy to this day. In this ongoing debate, not only the specific operations of the CIA in Italy during the Cold War remain controversial, but above all also the interpretation of these operations, with the Italian left regularly arguing that the CIA crippled the Italian

democracy through manipulation and terrorism, and the Italian right insisting that the CIA saved Italy from becoming a totalitarian satellite dominated by Moscow.

3. The discovery of Gladio in Italy in 1990

While the CIA manipulation of the 1948 national Italian election has been known and investigated by researchers for more than two decades, the details of operation Gladio, arguably a much larger anti-Communist covert operation of the CIA in Italy, are only gradually beginning to emerge. Investigations started in January 1990, when in order to re-evaluate a mysterious right-wing terrorist attack in the village of Peteano in 1972, Italian judge Felice Casson requested permission from the highest Italian authorities to extend his research to the archives of the Italian military secret service. In July 1990, Italian Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti consented and allowed Casson to research in the archives of Palazzo Braschi, the headquarters of the Italian military secret service in Rome.

It was in the archives of Palazzo Braschi that Casson discovered SIFAR documents that proved for the first time that a secret CIA-linked army of the Italian military intelligence existed in Italy under the codename “Gladio” – “Sword”. The data found by Casson suggested that this secret army was linked to NATO and seems to have manipulated Italian politics in a number of covert action operations during the Cold War in order to weaken the political left. This knowledge meant that Casson was in serious danger for some time, as right-wing hit squads had assassinated Italian judges before: “From July until October 1990, I was the only one who knew anything [about Gladio]; this could have been unfortunate for me”, the judge later recalled to the press.¹⁷

Casson confidentially informed the Italian parliamentary commission that already had been investigating for several years, under the chairmanship of Senator Libero Gualtieri, mysterious acts of terrorism that Italy had suffered from in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Gualtieri and his fellow senators were greatly worried by the Casson’s findings and agreed that the investigation into the Gladio secret army had to be included in the work of the commission, for it seemed to represent the key to both the terrorist attacks and the reasons why they had remained mysterious for so many years. On 2 August 1990, the senators therefore ordered the head of the Italian executive, Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti, “to inform the parliament within sixty days with respect to the existence, characteristics and purpose of a parallel and occult structure that is said to have operated within our secret service of the military with the aim to condition the political life of the country.”¹⁸

The next day, on 3 August 1990, Prime Minister Andreotti took a stand in front of the parliamentary commission and, for the first time in Italy's post-war history, confirmed as an acting member of the Italian government that a NATO-linked secret security structure had existed in the country. Andreotti assured the senators that he would present a written report to the parliamentary commission on the secret security structure within sixty days: "I will present to the Commission a very precise report which I have asked the Defence Department to prepare. It is about the activities based on NATO planning that have been started for the eventuality of an attack and occupation of Italy or parts of Italy."¹⁹

The Italian senators were greatly interested to learn whether this secret army still existed and what operations exactly the Italian military secret service had carried out during the Cold War. While it was well known that SIFAR had engaged in a number of illegal domestic operations throughout the Cold War, and had been forced to change its label first to SID (Servizio Informazione Difesa, 1965 to 1977), and then again to SISMI (Servizio per le Informazioni e la Sicurezza Militare, since 1978) after several scandals, most of its covert action operations remained in the dark. Rumours and leaks, two legendary components of Italian political culture, had long claimed that a top-secret parallel military unit existed within the Italian military secret service, a so-called "parallel SID", but specifics on these mysterious Italian special forces had been lacking.²⁰

In his first reply to the senators in early August, Andreotti had claimed that the secret army had long been dissolved: "As far as I have been informed by the secret services, such activities have continued until 1972. After that, it was decided that they were no longer necessary."²¹ The year 1972 had been chosen with much care by Andreotti, because in 1974 as acting defence minister, he had gone on the record as stating to a judicial inquiry investigating right-wing massacres: "I can say that the head of the secret services has repeatedly and unequivocally excluded the existence of a hidden organisation of any type or size."²² In 1978, Andreotti had offered the same testimony in front of judges investigating a fascist bombing in Milan. If Andreotti had confirmed to the senators in 1990 that secret special forces still existed within the Italian military secret service, he could have been accused of having offered false or misleading testimony in 1974 and 1978.

Yet Andreotti's claim that the secret Gladio army had been dissolved in 1972 had a very short life only, and the cover story collapsed already two months after he had offered it to the senators. On 9 October 1990, a construction worker redecorating an apartment in Via Montenevoso in Milan removed a plaster panel under a window in one of the rooms and discovered a secret cache containing money, arms and documents. The documents consisted of

416 photocopied pages of handwritten letters of Aldo Moro, the leader of the Christian Democratic party, who in 1978 had wanted to include the PCI for the first time in the Italian government, against the fierce opposition of the United States, and thereafter had been kidnapped and killed, allegedly by the left-wing terrorist group Red Brigades.

The discovery of Via Montenevoso raised a number of questions. The police had already discovered in 1978 that the apartment had been used by the Red Brigades, and after its discovery, the apartment had been “taken apart, wall by wall, brick by brick”, as an official confirmed to the press.²³ While nobody could explain how the sensitive material could have been overlooked at the time, or who could have deliberately planted it years later and why, all agreed that the letters of Moro were genuine and contained information not previously known, including on the secret Gladio army. In one of his letters, Moro explicitly referred to the top-secret stay-behind network and the training for guerrilla activities “to be carried out against occupying enemy forces or counter-guerrilla activities to be undertaken against enemy forces operating as such on our territory.”²⁴ This destroyed Andreotti’s claim that the secret army had been dissolved in 1972.

Moro in his letters was very critical of the CIA’s financing of the Christian Democrat party (DCI), despite the fact that he himself was a member of the DCI, and lamented DCI member Andreotti’s close relations “with his colleagues in the CIA” and the fact that Andreotti had directed the secret services both as Defence Minister and as Prime Minister “for longer than anyone else.” Moro, in captivity and expecting his assassination by the terrorist Red Brigades, bitterly concluded that if he survived, he would certainly resign from the DCI party, because, as Moro saw it, the DCI under Andreotti and Cossiga deliberately refrained from freeing him from the Red Brigades because of his plan to include the PCI in the government. Moro felt that he had been bitterly betrayed. In 1978, Andreotti was serving as Prime Minister and Francesco Cossiga as Interior Minister. “I’ve been killed three times over” captured Moro wrote to Cossiga. “By inadequate protection, by your refusal to negotiate, and by weak statements that enraged my captors.”²⁵ In his last letter, Moro asked that nobody of the Christian Democrat party be present at his funeral. After his dead body was found, he was buried in the presence of his family and closest friends only.

The Christian Democrats Party (DCI), which had been created by the United States after World War II as a bulwark against the PCI and had controlled executive power in Italy for half a century, was left strongly discredited by the Montenevoso papers and was dissolved after the end of the Cold War in 1993. Moreover, as far as the stay-behind evidence was concerned, the Montenevoso papers forced Prime Minister Andreotti to reconsider his

now-discredited claim that the secret Gladio army had been closed down in 1972.

On 24 October 1990, Andreotti handed a ten-page report entitled “The so called ‘Parallel SID’ – The Gladio Case” to the Senate investigative commission under Senator Gualtieri, in which he corrected himself, explaining that the secret army had not been closed down in 1972, but was still active and operational. Unwilling to shoulder the far-reaching accusation of conspiracy alone, Andreotti insisted on the same day in front of parliament that “each chief of government has been informed of the existence of Gladio.”²⁶ This compromised among others former socialist Prime Minister Bettino Craxi (1983–1987), former Prime Minister Giovanni Spadolini of the Republican party (1981–1982), who in 1990 was acting President of the Senate, former Prime Minister Arnaldo Forlani (1980–1981) who was acting secretary of the Christian Democrats Party, and above all former Prime Minister Francesco Cossiga (1978–1979), who was now the Italian President. The high-ranking magistrates drawn into the scandal by Andreotti reacted with confusion. Craxi claimed that he had not been informed, until he was confronted with a document on Gladio that he had signed himself as prime minister. Spadolini and Forlani also suffered from general amnesia, but later had to make smaller amendments to their statements, while Spadolini explained that there was a difference between what he knew as former defence secretary and what he knew as former prime minister.²⁷ Only Francesco Cossiga, Italian president since 1985, said that he was “proud of the fact that we have kept the secret for 45 years.”²⁸

In his written 10-page report, Andreotti explained that Gladio was the Italian branch of a secret stay-behind army that had been set up after World War II by the CIA and SIFAR as part of a network of clandestine resistance within NATO countries to confront a potential Soviet invasion. In case of invasion, the stay-behind armies would have operated behind enemy lines and set up a resistance movement. The secret stay-behind armies were supervised and coordinated by two secret unconventional-warfare centres of NATO named ACC and CPC, as Andreotti revealed: “Once the clandestine resistance organisation was constituted, Italy was called upon to participate . . . in the works of the CCP (Clandestine Planning Committee) of 1959, operating within the ambit of SHAPE [NATO’s Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe] . . .; in 1964 the Italian secret service also entered the ACC (Allied Clandestine Committee).”²⁹

While Andreotti admitted that the Gladio special forces had not been dissolved years ago, but were still active, he stressed in his report that the Italian military secret service in general, as well as the Gladio members in particular, had nothing to do with the terror that Italy had suffered from

during the Cold War. He explained that all members of the Gladio network had gone through intensive testing before their recruitment and were chosen based on the “rigorous application” of the Secret Service Act to ensure their “scrupulous fidelity to the values of the anti-fascist republican constitution” and to exclude anyone who held administrative or political office. Andreotti in his report insisted that “the pre-selected subjects do not have a penal record, do not partake in active politics, nor participate in any sort of extremist movement.”³⁰ However, when challenged to reveal the names of the Gladiators, the prime minister regretted that these had to remain secret, as the “operation, on account of its current forms of organisation and application – as foreseen by NATO directives and integrated into its related planning – is to be carried out and refined in a framework of absolute secrecy.”³¹

In order to be able to operate independently of regular forces in case of a Soviet invasion, the secret stay-behind army controlled independent arms caches. According to Andreotti, the equipment had been provided by the CIA and was hidden in 139 arms caches across the country in forests, meadows and even under churches and cemeteries. The Gladio arms caches included “portable arms, ammunition, explosives, hand grenades, knives and daggers, 60-mm mortars, several 57-mm recoilless rifles, sniper rifles, radio transmitters, binoculars, and various tools.”³²

As the names of the Gladiators were not revealed, the Italian press focused on the arms caches and started a nation-wide search. Padre Giuciano recalls the day when the press came to search for the hidden Gladio secrets in his church with ambiguous feelings: “I was forewarned in the afternoon when two journalists from ‘Il Gazzettino’ asked me if I knew anything about arms deposits here at the church. They started to dig right here and found two boxes right away. Then the text also said a thirty centimetres from the window. So they came over here and dug down. One box was kept aside by them because it contained a phosphorous bomb. They sent the Carabinieri [Italian paramilitary police] outside whilst two experts opened this box, another had two machine guns in it. All the guns were new, in perfect shape. They had never been used.”³³

The Italian press, above all on the left, was very critical of the Gladio revelations. The daily *La Stampa* commented: “No *raison d'état* could be worth maintaining, covering up, or defending a secret military structure composed of ideologically selected members – dependent upon, or at least under the influence of, a foreign power – that allegedly serves as an instrument of political struggle. It cannot be defined as any less than high treason and an attack on the Constitution.”³⁴ In the Italian Senate, representatives of the Green Party, the Communists, and the Independent Leftist Party accused the government

of having used the Gladio units for domestic surveillance and acts of terror to condition the political climate.

Above all, the Italian Communist Party PCI was convinced that not foreign armies, but they themselves had been the true target of the Gladio armies during the entire post-war period: “With this mysterious Parallel SID, conjured up to head off an impossible coup by the left, we have seriously risked making a coup d’état by the right possible . . . We cannot accept that . . . this super-SID was passed off as a military instrument destined to operate ‘in case of enemy occupation’. The true enemy is only and has always been the Italian Communist party, i.e. an internal enemy.”³⁵ The PCI challenged the CIA to confirm that Gladio had been an instrument to control the Italian left during the Cold War, and in December 1990 Admiral Stansfield Turner, director of the CIA from 1977 to 1981, was asked in a television interview about the sensitive Gladio army. Turner, however, strictly refused to answer any questions about Gladio. When the journalists persisted with regard to the victims of the numerous non-clarified terrorist attacks in Italy, the former CIA director angrily ripped off his microphone and shouted: “I said, no questions about Gladio!” whereupon the interview was over.³⁶

4. NATO and operation Gladio

Beyond the political battle and the emotional agitation surrounding the scandal in Italy, calm and detailed scientific analysis of operation Gladio has progressed only very slowly. This is mainly because historians and political scientists have had very limited access not only to primary documents from the CIA, but also to data from the Italian military intelligence service. A notable exception to this rule is the now publicly accessible Gladio document of the Italian military secret service SIFAR found by judge Casson with the title “The Special Forces of SIFAR and Operation Gladio” dated June 1 1959. The 13-page document is in Italian and classified top secret, its English translation is contained in the appendix of this paper.

The 1959 SIFAR document notes that “The possibility of an emergency situation, either through domestic upheaval or through military invasion forces, that involves all or some of the territories of the NATO countries, has for some time already been the subject of studies and preparations. Some of these studies and preparations have been carried out on the level of NATO, others have been carried out on a national level.”³⁷ The most important insight offered by this paragraph is the confirmation that NATO prepared for a twofold threat during the Cold War: First, a Soviet invasion; this threat and the respective preparations has already been the subject of numerous academic books and

analysis. Yet secondly, the document also confirms that NATO also prepared for a second scenario which involved an emergency situation resulting from “domestic upheaval”. This domestic threat, unlike the threat of a Soviet invasion, has gained only limited attention so far among the research community, largely because it was not clearly known whether NATO had prepared for it, and how.

The crucial phrase “domestic upheaval” in the Italian original reads “sovvertimenti interni”. While “interni” clearly must be translated with “domestic”, the word “sovvertimenti” covers a larger semantic connotation and ranges from “upheaval”, to “insurgency”, “coup”, “revolution”, “erosion”, and “uprising”. In each case, a change of power within Italy is implied. As the SIFAR document explicitly differentiates between a military invasion and a domestic upheaval, one might by implication assume that the domestic threat had nothing to do with the Soviet Red Army but focused on an internal fight among Italians. Within the Cold War context, this domestic threat as seen by NATO and the National Security Council in the United States was above all the Communist party of Italy. At times, as certain findings in the German stay-behind context suggest, the threat perceived by NATO may also have included the European Socialist parties.³⁸ The code word “Gladio” of the secret operation was hence well chosen, for it is derived from the Latin word “gladius” for the short Roman sword that is double-edged and literally cuts both ways: against a domestic and against a foreign enemy.

The Generals who directed the Italian secret army Gladio met regularly with representatives from foreign countries, as a rule the directors of the other secret armies in Western Europe. In order to coordinate the operations of the secret armies NATO’s SHAPE had set up two secret committees, the CPC (Clandestine Planning Committee) and the ACC (Allied Clandestine Committee), which were used for the secret international meetings of the representatives of the secret armies. According to the accounts of two former members of the Italian military intelligence service, the atmosphere and working conditions varied greatly in the ACC and the CPC. Italian General Paolo Inzerilli, who commanded the Italian Gladio stay-behind force from 1974 to 1986, and later wrote a book on the topic, highlighted that the “omnipresent United States” dominated the CPC. According to Inzerilli, the United States, together with the other nuclear powers France and Great Britain, formed a so-called “Executive Group” within the CPC that presided over the other NATO nations within the secret meetings. The CPC, as Inzerilli confirmed, had been founded “by order of the Supreme Commander of NATO Europe. It was the interface between NATO’s Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) and the Secret Services of the member states as far as the problems of non-orthodox warfare were concerned.”³⁹

After France had expelled NATO from its territory, the new European NATO headquarters, including the CPC, were set up in Belgium. “The meetings were held on average once or twice a year in Brussels at CPC headquarters, and the various problems on the agenda were discussed with the ‘Executive Group’ and the Military”, Inzerilli related.⁴⁰

General Gerardo Serravalle, a former Italian military intelligence operative who as predecessor of Inzerilli had headed the Gladio secret army from 1971 to 1974, related in his book on operation Gladio that “in the 1970s, the members of the CPC were the responsible officers of the secret structures of Great Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Luxemburg, the Netherlands and Italy. These representatives of the secret structures met every year in one of the capitals.”⁴¹ Serravalle had represented Italy in the CPC and confirmed the dominance of the US highlighted already by Inzerilli. Allegedly, the US dispatched officers from the CIA and the US Special Forces to the meetings. “At the stay-behind meetings, representatives of the CIA were always present”, Serravalle remembered. “They had no voting rights and were from the CIA field office in the capital in which the meeting took place.” Also, “members of the US Forces Europe Command were present, also without voting rights.”⁴²

The ACC, which was created after the CPC, seems to have been a much less formal and hierarchical organisation. Inzerilli claims that “relations in the ACC (Allied Clandestine Committee) were completely different” from those in the CPC. “The atmosphere was clearly more relaxed and friendly compared to the CPC”. The ACC, founded by “a specific order from SACEUR to CPC”, supposedly “became a sub branch” of the CPC.⁴³ Apparently, the body served above all as a forum in which know-how on stay-behind operations and secret warfare was exchanged between the numerous heads of intelligence: “The ACC was an essentially technical committee, a forum where information on the experiences made were exchanged, where one spoke of the means available or the means studied, where one exchanged information on the networks, etc.”, Inzerilli recalls. “It was of reciprocal interest. Everybody knew that if for an operation he lacked an expert in explosives or in telecommunications or in repression, he could request them from another country without difficulty, because the agents had been trained in the same techniques and used the same materials.”⁴⁴

The last phrase of Inzerilli’s statement raises the delicate question of whether the secret stay-behind armies limited their Cold War operations to training and were otherwise waiting for the Soviet invasion, or whether they were given orders to become active in times of peace in order to counter or prevent “domestic upheavals”. Inzerilli’s reference to “experts in repression” can be read as to imply domestic operations. Also General Serravalle was aware of the delicacy of the notion of a secret army operating in times

of peace against a domestic threat, and lamented with much regret that indeed at times some Gladio members “could pass from a defensive, post-invasion logic, to one of attack, of civil war.”⁴⁵ When he was asked in a BBC interview why, given this manifest danger, he did not decide to close the network down, Serravalle replied: “Well, closing down is a political decision, it is not in my sphere of competence to close down the Gladio operation.”⁴⁶

General Serravalle was not the only Italian who had emphasized that he was in no position to terminate Operation Gladio. General Vito Miceli, a former senior member of the NATO Security Office and director of the Italian military secret service SID from 1970 to 1974, made a similar point when he refused to accept any personal responsibility, and instead blamed the White House in the United States. In the context of investigations into right-wing terrorism in Italy in 1974, Italian judge Giovanni Tamburino had taken the unprecedented step of arresting SID director Miceli on charges of “promoting, setting up, and organising, together with others, a secret association of military and civilians aimed at provoking an armed insurrection to bring about an illegal change in the constitution of the state and the form of government.”⁴⁷

During his trial, a furious Miceli declared on 17 November 1974: “A Super SID on my orders? Of course! But I did not organise the coup d’état myself. It was the United States and NATO who asked me to do it!”⁴⁸ Thereafter Miceli lost his position as chief of the Italian military secret service, was released on bail and spent six months in a military hospital. When sixteen years later Miceli heard how Prime Minister Andreotti had revealed the Gladio secret before the Senate, he could hardly believe it. Shortly before his death in October 1990, Miceli angrily protested: “I have gone to prison because I did not want to reveal the existence of this super-secret organisation. And now Andreotti comes along and tells it to Parliament!”⁴⁹

This necessarily distorted data from personal memoirs underlines that above all, two categories of NATO documents would be of particular interest to future research into stay-behind organisations. First, the NATO strategic stay-behind doctrine, which according to General Serravalle is entitled “Directive SHAPE”, which allegedly was the official reference, if not the proper Allied Stay-Behind doctrine”. Secondly, the transcripts of the ACC and CPC meetings would be of significant interest. Serravalle said that he had read some of the minutes of the CPC during his career. Some may have been destroyed, others remain classified and “relate to the training of Gladiators in Europe, how to activate them from the secret headquarters in case of complete occupation of the national territory, and other technical questions such as, to quote the most important one, the unification of the different communication systems between the stay-behind bases.”⁵⁰

5. Gladio headquarters CAG on Sardinia

The 1959 SIFAR document explains that within the military secret service SIFAR the section SAD of the Office R was responsible for operation Gladio and cooperated closely with the CIA on the basis of written bilateral agreements between the two secret services. When the Italian Senators, attempting to shed some light on this secret international cooperation, demanded that the director of the Italian military secret service, Admiral Fulvio Martini, gave them the secret documents on the cooperation with the CIA the latter strictly refused. “The agreement between SIFAR and the CIA of 1956 concerning the stay-behind organization can not, as of now, be made public, as it is a bilateral agreement classified top-secret”, Martini explained to the startled Italian senators, who protested his decision, saying that SIFAR was answerable to the Italian legislative and not to the CIA. “The declassification of the document, which I have already requested on 13 December 1990,” Martini insisted, “is necessarily dependent on the agreement of the other party involved”, and as the CIA declined the request, the Italian senators could do little more than voice their protest against Italy’s limited sovereignty and this bizarre distortion of democratic checks and balances.⁵¹

Among other operations the CIA and SIFAR cooperated closely in order to set up an operational base for the secret army on the Italian island of Sardinia in the Mediterranean sea off the coast of Italy, as the Senators found. The CIA had “confirmed its support for the base ‘which is being included in the war plans of the United States’”, the 1959 document noted. It is now known that the Gladio base on Sardinia was the most expensive and prestigious project of SIFAR in the 1950s. SIFAR Director Giovanni de Lorenzo, flush with CIA funds amounting to several million lira at the time, charged SIFAR Colonel Renzo Rocca, Chief of Office R, with supervising the construction of the new Gladio base.⁵² The Gladio headquarters, dubbed the “Saboteurs’ Training Centre” (Centro Adestramento Guastatori, CAG), was located at Capo Marraggiu near the village of Alghero. Behind walls and high-security electric fences, a little harbour was built, underground bunkers were constructed, strong long-distance radio transmitters were set up, underwater facilities were installed for training frogmen, and two small runways for airplanes and a helicopter landing pad were built. Several other specialized buildings were added for shooting and explosives training as well as for indoctrination.⁵³

“I was at Capo Marraggiu for the first time in 1959”, Gladiator Ennio Colle testified after the end of the Cold War. He explained that members of the secret unit were kept in the dark on the larger international framework and at the time did not even know where they were trained: “I didn’t know where I was because we were transported in planes with blacked-out windows.” Decimo

Garau, a Gladio instructor at CAG on the island Sardinia who had been trained in Great Britain, confirmed to journalists that Italian Gladiators were literally kept in the dark: “They arrived in an unmarked plane and were transferred to an unmarked coach. They were then dropped off in front of their quarters. Then training would start.”⁵⁴

6. The Gladio stay-behind network

The 1959 SIFAR document does not only explain that within the Italian military intelligence service section SAD was responsible for Operation Gladio, but specifies as well that SAD was subdivided into six units: First, a central command, presumably located within SIFAR headquarters in Rome. Second, the Gladio training centre and operative stay-behind base CAG on the island Sardinia. Third, a directive group labelled “first group” with responsibilities for “general organisational matters”. Fourth, a “second group”, responsible for “special organisational matters”. Fifth, a “third group”, responsible for running the secret radio transmission system. The sixth and final part of SAD was the “fourth group”, responsible for logistical support of the secret army with airplanes and air transport. Some members of SAD were instructed abroad, as the document confirms: “elements of SAD had followed training courses at the schools of the American secret service”, without specifying the exact school and location.

Presumably the Italian Gladio officers were instructed by both the CIA and US Special Forces of the Pentagon. Maybe they were trained at the most prominent CIA paramilitary school, Camp Peary, located in Tidewater, Virginia, in the United States, which everyone in the Agency simply called “the Farm”. They did cooperate with the US Special Forces, including the Green Berets, for they would have had to join forces behind enemy lines in case of a Soviet invasion, according to NATO planning. US Special Forces were created in the United States at about the same time that a secret army was set up in Italy. After the dissolution of the US wartime intelligence service, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), at the end of World War II, it was not until the summer of 1952 that the US Special Forces were reborn with headquarters at Fort Bragg, Virginia, and the first special forces unit, somewhat misleadingly called the 10th Special Forces Group, started its training under Colonel Aaron Bank. As early as November 1953, the 10th Special Forces Group erected its first overseas base in a former Nazi SS building in Germany that had been set up during Hitler’s reign in 1937, in the Flint Kaserne at Bad Tölz in Bavaria.

Italian Gladio commander General Serravalle related that as directing officer, he had visited the Green Berets in Bad Tölz in 1972.⁵⁵ “I have visited

the 10th Special Forces Group at Bad Tölz at the old former SS barracks at least twice. Their commander was Colonel Ludwig Fastenhammer, a Rambo ante-litteram”.⁵⁶

The SIFAR document specifies that in order to limit the potential damage to the entire network, the secret army was divided into five larger units, which in turn were subdivided into a number of nuclei or core units. The members of the core groups did not know each other and were only connected through the central SAD command. According to the SIFAR document, the five larger units carried the names “Alpine Star”, “Marine Star”, “Azalea”, “Rhododendron”, and “Broom”. As charts at the end of the SIFAR document show, each unit was made up of operational personnel “ready for action”, and a second group of men who had been contacted and could be recruited in times of need, designated as “to be mobilised”.

According to the SIFAR document, “Alpine Star” consisted of 1,000 men ready for action, plus 1,000 men who could be mobilised, for a united total strength of 2,000 men. “Marine Star” had 200 men ready for action, plus 200 to be mobilised, totalling 400 men. The “Rhododendron” consisted of 100 troops on standby and 100 to be mobilized, thus 200 in total; the same applied to the “Azalea” and “Ginestra” groups. Taken together, the numerical strength of the Italian Gladio standby force amounted to 1,500 men, with an additional 1,500 men that could be mobilised in case of need, giving a maximum numerical strength of 3,000 men. Facing the Soviet army, that would amount to a small group, yet within the context of an Italian civil war between the political right and the political left 3000 armed and trained men with an operation base, equipment and communication gear can have a significant impact.

7. Operation Gladio and terrorism

The most difficult and most sensitive area of all stay-behind research concerns the field of domestic subversion and Gladio terrorism. The 1959 SIFAR document, as seen above, explicitly stressed that besides the stay-behind task, the secret army had also been set up to carry out domestic control tasks in case of an “emergency situation” created by a “domestic upheaval”. Given this context and Washington’s well known opposition to the Italian Communist party, observers in the press have rushed to the conclusion that Gladio was used during the Cold War to fight the PCI through domestic subversion and terrorism.

But did the Gladio structure indeed figure in right-wing coup plots from the mid-1960s to the early 1980s? And if so, what was its role? Did SIFAR cooperate with right-wing terrorists, or were Gladio personnel involved in

the right-wing terror bombings? Were plastic explosives or other ordnance from secret Gladio arms caches used in these bombings, and if so, how did this equipment find its way into the hands of the terrorists? If Gladio was indeed implicated in right-wing coup plots and terrorism, how much did the US Pentagon and the White House know about these activities, and how was NATO involved? Since even Italian judges have great difficulties in answering these questions satisfactorily today, it remains impossible for an academic to deal with them in an exhaustive manner. As they have surfaced repeatedly in the Gladio debate, however, they cannot be neglected and shall be approached here at the conclusion of this paper, offering indications where further research is needed.

The most famous right-wing terrorist that SIFAR had cooperated with was Vincenzo Vinciguerra, a member of the Italian fascist organisation Ordine Nuovo. In many ways, Vinciguerra started the Gladio scandal, for he killed three Carabinieri in Peteano with a car bomb in 1972. This terrorist attack had for many years discredited the Italian left because SIFAR had blamed the extreme left-wing terrorist organisation *Brigate Rosse* for the crime. But in 1984, judge Felice Casson had reopened the long-dormant Peteano case, after having discovered with surprise an entire series of blunders and fabrications surrounding the Peteano atrocity. Casson found that there had been no police investigation on the scene. He found that the anonymous call to the police that had implicated the Red Brigades two days after the attack had never been verified. He also discovered that claims in the police report at the time to the effect that the explosive used in Peteano had been the one traditionally used by the Red Brigades were false, and that Marco Morin – like terrorist Vinciguerra a member of the Italian right-wing organisation “Ordine Nuovo” – as an expert for explosives of the Italian police had deliberately provided the fake expertise. Judge Casson was able to prove that contrary to Morin’s expertise, the explosive used in Peteano was C4, the most powerful explosive available at the time, also used by NATO and stored in the Gladio arms caches.

These findings, which were both sensational and disturbing, led Casson to continue his research in the SIFAR archives in Rome where, in the summer of 1990, he discovered Operation Gladio and forced Prime Minister Andreotti to take a stand in front of the Italian Senate commission, as described above. “I wanted new light to be shed on these years of lies and mysteries, that’s all,” Casson told journalists years later in his tiny office in an 18th century courthouse on the banks of Venice’s lagoon. “I wanted Italy for once to know the truth.”⁵⁷

Right-wing terrorist Vinciguerra was arrested in 1984 in the context of the Casson investigation and testified that in 1972, it had been comparatively easy

for him to escape from the security forces because not only the SIFAR, but large segments of the Italian security apparatus had supported crimes that discredited the left. After the bombing, “a whole mechanism came into action”, Vinciguerra recalled, “that is, the Carabinieri, the Minister of the Interior, the customs services, and the military and civilian intelligence services accepted the ideological reasoning behind the attack.”⁵⁸ The SIFAR, Casson found, had deliberately followed a so-called “strategy of tension”, through which it had manipulated political violence. “As far as the secret services are concerned, the Peteano attack is part of what has been called ‘the strategy of tension’”, Casson explained in a BBC documentation on Operation Gladio. “That is to say, to create tension within the country to promote conservative, reactionary social and political tendencies. While this strategy was being implemented, it was necessary to protect those behind it because evidence implicating them was being discovered. Witnesses withheld information to cover right-wing extremists.”⁵⁹

“With the massacre of Peteano”, Vinciguerra explained at his trial in 1984, “and with all those that have followed, the knowledge should by now be clear that there existed a real live structure, occult and hidden, with the capacity of giving a strategic direction to the outrages.” The structure, he said, “lies within the state itself. There exists in Italy a secret force parallel to the armed forces, composed of civilians and military men, in an anti-Soviet capacity, that is, to organise a resistance on Italian soil against a Russian army.” It was an extremely far-reaching testimony, for it revealed Operation Gladio in Italy for the first time. Vinciguerra added that what he was describing was “a secret organisation, a super-organisation with a network of communications, arms, and explosives, and men trained to use them.” Vinciguerra claimed that this “super-organisation [which], lacking a Soviet military invasion which might not happen, took up the task, on NATO’s behalf, of preventing a slip to the left in the political balance of the country. This they did, with the assistance of the official secret services and the political and military forces.”⁶⁰

After this testimony Vinciguerra immediately lost all higher protection he had enjoyed during the previous twelve years and was imprisoned for life. In jail, reporters asked him why the Gladio network had been used for terrorist attacks: “You had to attack civilians, the people, women, children, innocent people, unknown people far removed from any political game” Vinciguerra reasoned behind prison bars. “The reason was quite simple. They were supposed to force these people, the Italian public, to turn to the state to ask for greater security. This is the political logic that lies behind all the massacres and the bombings that remain unpunished, because the state cannot convict itself or declare itself responsible for what happened.”⁶¹

If it is true that SIFAR cooperated with right-wing terrorists and Operation Gladio in terrorist attacks, then due to the very close cooperation between SIFAR and CIA, the questions arise how much the CIA and the White House knew about these crimes, and whether they either attempted to prevent SIFAR from this deviation, or even supported the strategy? According to the testimony of General Gerardo Serravalle, who had directed the Gladio secret army from 1971 to 1974, the CIA had urged SIFAR to focus more on domestic operations than on the Soviet threat. “When I took over command, I noticed that the American financing agreed in bilateral accords, and in particular the shipping of material and armaments to us had stopped“, Serravalle angrily recalled the disruption of the supply that had occurred in 1971.

Serravalle said that in order to voice his protest, he had later asked the CIA chief of station in Rome, Howard Stone, to come to the Gladio headquarters CAG in Sardinia. Stone came with CIA officer Mike Sednaoui, and Serravalle (according to his own testimony) said to them: “This is our training etc., you could help us achieve our full potential. So why cut your aid? If this is your government’s position, we accept it. But you owe us an explanation.” Thereafter he allegedly realized “that the CIA interests, as represented by these officials, weren’t really concerned with the level we had reached in training, but rather on the subject of internal control. That is, our level of readiness to counter street disturbances, handling nation-wide strikes and above all any eventual rise of the Communist Party. Mr. Stone stated, quite clearly, that the financial support of the CIA was wholly dependent on our willingness to put into action, to program and plan these other – shall we call them – internal measures.”⁶²

In March 2001, General Giandelio Maletti, the former head of Italian counter-intelligence, went even further and suggested that the CIA had directly promoted terrorism in Italy. Shortly before Christmas 1969, four bombs exploded in public places in Rome and Milan, killing 16 and maiming and wounding 80, most of them on the Piazza Fontana in Milan. After the massacre, the Italian secret service had planted bomb parts in the villa of well-known leftist editor Giangiacomo Feltrinelli in order to blame the terror on the Communists and the extreme left. Only years later was it revealed that the Italian extreme right had carried out the atrocity in order to promote the strategy of tension.

“The CIA, following the directives of its government, wanted to create an Italian nationalism capable of halting what it saw as a slide to the left, and, for this purpose, it may have made use of right-wing terrorism” Maletti testified in the Piazza Fontana trial. “The impression was that the Americans would do anything to stop Italy from sliding to the left,” the General explained, and added: “Don’t forget that Nixon was in charge and Nixon was a strange man,

a very intelligent politician, but a man of rather unorthodox initiatives.“ In retrospect, the 79-year-old Maletti offered criticism and regret: “Italy has been dealt with as a sort of protectorate” of the United States. “I am ashamed to think that we are still subject to special supervision.”⁶³ Following these far reaching claims Maletti was sentenced to 31 years of prison which he did not serve, however, as he had set up his home in South Africa beyond the reach of the Italian justice system.

According to the research of Italian judge Guido Salvini, arguably the leading expert on terrorism in Italy, medical doctor Carlo Maria Maggi helped the CIA and NATO to link up with Italian right-wing terrorists. One of Maggi’s men was Carlo Digilio, a CIA agent and expert for explosives. “As an expert for weapons and explosives and as an agent of the CIA I had the task to support the units in the handling and storage of the material” Digilio explained. “But the members of the units of course did not know that, for they were not really friends of the Americans. They wanted a military dictatorship as the one in Spain or Greece, or the system of Mussolini, whereas we wanted to preserve liberal democracy.” Digilio stressed that everything was carried out under the strictest secrecy procedures. “Actually only Maggi knew of it, and I knew it because of my special position as an expert for arms and explosives.”⁶⁴

If Digilio’s claim that the CIA was supplying Italian right-wingers with arms and explosives is correct, then the questions remains whether the CIA knew that these explosives were being used to promote terrorism in Europe. “One evening in Mai 1974 . . . a group of men who knew each other met for dinner at the restaurant of Marcello Soffiati and his father in Colognola ai Colli close to Verona. Regular guests in this restaurant included American military officers” who were stationed at the NATO military base in Verona as Digilio explained. “On this evening next to Maggi, the two Soffiati and me also Sergio Minetto was present. Minetto was an important person, for the outside world he was just a man who fixed refrigerators. But in reality he was a CIA agent and worked on a higher command level as the contact man among the Americans and our boss Maggi. This evening Maggi told Minetto that another large bomb attack was going to take place in a few days.” Digilio according to his own testimony on this specific conspiracy, had to check whether the bomb was operational. It was and exploded on May 28 1974 in Brescia in the midst of an anti-fascist demonstration, killing eight and injuring and maiming 102. According to the testimony of Digilio the CIA indeed promoted terrorism in Europe.⁶⁵

While more research is required, in Italy and internationally, into these sensitive criminal operations and their links to SIFAR and Operation Gladio, another crucial research focus concerns the question of whether Gladio personnel

or equipment were also involved in the failed coups d'état that had taken place in Italy during the Cold War. Much of this debate focuses on the role that the Gladio headquarters CAG played during the "Piano Solo" silent coup d'état in 1964. Within the political struggle in Italy during the Cold War, the leading members of the ruling DCI party were well aware of the secret Gladio headquarters on Sardinia. "To the men of Gladio from Giulio Andreotti", read a shiny brass plate hanging above the billiard table at the Gladio headquarters CAG in Sardinia, reminding the conspirators of their powerful high-level cover. The plate was removed in 1990.⁶⁶ But could the DCI have ever used the base and the Gladiators against their political opponents, the Communist PCI and the Socialist PSI, if these two parties challenged the DCI?

The 1959 SIFAR report noted that the CAG "is protected by a particularly sophisticated security system and is equipped with installations and apparatus designed to be employed in case of emergency." This passage of the document has led to considerable irritation and criticism in Italy, for it can be read to imply that the Sardinia Gladio training base could in case of an emergency also be used as a prison for political opponents, for its high walls and barbed-wire fences did not only protect the base from the outer world, but could also prevent people inside the base from leaving it.

After the CIA-manipulated elections of 1948, the DCI effectively controlled the Italian executive for numerous years. This changed in the Italian national elections of April 1963, when the CIA's worst fears materialized: The DCI fell to 38 percent of votes, its worst result since 1948, while the PCI polled 25 percent, and together with the PSI's 14 percent, secured an overwhelming victory for the Italian left. US President John F. Kennedy was firm in his conviction that the PCI, despite their strength at the polls, could not be allowed to gain ministerial posts in the Italian executive. But Kennedy, despite the opposition of parts of his administration, was equally firm that it was now time to allow the Italian Socialists to enter the Italian executive for the first time since the end of the war. To highlight his commitment to change, Kennedy paid a visit to Italy, with his plane touching down at Rome's airport Fiumicino on 1 July 1963. The Italian Socialists were delighted, and Pietro Nenni, the leader of the Italian Socialists and a veteran of the Spanish Civil War, spoke enthusiastically of Kennedy: "He is a wonderful person. He seems much younger than his real age. He invited me to visit the United States!"⁶⁷

After Kennedy's assassination in Dallas in November 1963, the Italian Socialist ministers lost much international support, and within Italy, the CIA and SIFAR prepared to remove the Socialists from government. William Harvey, the CIA chief of station in Rome, urged Colonel Renzo Rocca, chief of SI-

FAR's office R, which ran Operation Gladio, to use "his action squads" to "carry out bombings against Christian Democrat Party offices and certain newspapers in the north, which were to be attributed to the left."⁶⁸ When the Socialists remained undisturbed, General De Lorenzo, who had directed the SIFAR from 1956 to 1962, started Operation Piano Solo on 14 June 1964 and, in an atmosphere of great political tension, entered Rome with troops, tanks, armoured personnel carriers, jeeps, and grenade launchers, while NATO forces staged a large military manoeuvre in the area.

Whether Piano Solo was indeed an Italian Cold War coup d'état, or whether it was more of an opera buffa, remains contested within the academic community. Paul Ginsborg claimed that De Lorenzo's "scheming, although obviously dangerous, had that incomplete and in some respects farcical character which has characterized all the plots against the Republic since 1964".⁶⁹ Italian scholar Franco Ferraresi was more critical of the coup and condemned "the plan's truly criminal nature", lamenting that Piano Solo had had an immense influence "in obstructing and voiding the content of the first Left coalition – perhaps the only genuine attempt at a reformist government in the entire post-war period."⁷⁰ Meanwhile, Bernard Cook labelled Piano Solo "a carbon copy of Gladio".⁷¹

Even today, due to the neglect of intelligence records, many scholars would mistakenly argue that unlike in Greece or Turkey, there was never a coup d'état in Italy during the Cold War, despite the fact that US scholar Richard Collin gave a fairly good description of the events already in 1976.⁷² Piano Solo arguably was clearly a coup d'état because the Italian government was changed through military pressure. At the same time, it is true that it was a "soft" coup, because not a single shot was fired and the operation remained secret for numerous years. But behind the scenes, a "highly unusual meeting between a Prime Minister in the midst of a political crisis and a General planning to replace him with a sterner regime" had taken place in the summer of 1964.⁷³ Aldo Moro, the DCI prime minister, had been pressured by General De Lorenzo to replace the critical and outspoken Socialist ministers in his government with more moderate Socialists. Moro, aware of the manifest military threat, abided and formed a new more moderate government. "Suddenly, the political parties realized that they could be replaced. In case of a power vacuum resulting from the failure of the Left, the only alternative would have been an emergency government", Pietro Nenni of the Socialist party recalled years later; "in the reality of this country, this would have meant a right-wing government," he added.⁷⁴

The Italian senators investigating Operation Gladio suggested in their final report in 1995 that General De Lorenzo had threatened the Moro government and the Socialists with the Gladio prison in Sardinia. "There is no doubt

that the operation corresponded to the interests followed by sectors of the administration of the United States”, the senators criticized, and pointed out that the CAG on Sardinia would have served as a political prison for up to 1,200 people designated by SIFAR proscription lists if Moro had not given in. When the senators demanded to see the 1964 proscription lists as part of their Gladio investigation SIFAR refused to make them available. “This is a very grave situation,” the senators concluded, “for one can assume that the list contains the names of parliamentarians and political functionaries, and the publication of it would withdraw any basis from the claim that the events of 1964 had been cautious operations in order to prevent public disturbances”.⁷⁵ Another Senate investigation into Gladio in 2000 went even further and questioned the Gladiators directly. Gladiator Manlio Capriata, who as a general had directed office R within the Italian military secret service SIFAR from February to June 1962, testified to the senators: “I confirm that the V section, and therefore the S/B [stay-behind] organisation, and therefore the CAG [Gladio centre Centro Addestramento Guastatori in Sardinia] had an anti-subversive function in the case that the forces of the left should come to power.”⁷⁶

8. Conclusion

A close reading of the document “The Special Forces of SIFAR and Operation Gladio” and its contextualisation have led to a number of findings on the secret history of the Cold War in Italy. Foremost among these findings is the fact that a secret army codenamed “Gladio”, or “Sword”, had existed in Italy during the Cold War. Secondly, it was established that this secret army was strategically directed against both a Soviet invasion and domestic upheaval, and thus, by implication, against the strong Italian Communist party or parts of the Italian Socialist party. Thirdly, it emerged that this secret army had cooperated with and was supported by the US foreign intelligence service, the CIA. Fourth, that this secret army was linked to NATO through the Clandestine Planning Committee (CPC) and, according to the testimony of former members of the Italian military secret service, to the Allied Clandestine Planning Committee (ACC). Sixth, that secret stay-behind armies existed in other Western European countries, too. Seventh, that in Italy, the secret army had a maximal strength of 3000 men and was hidden within the military secret service SIFAR, where the section SAD commanded the network. And the last but not least of these findings was that as of the second half of the 1950s, the secret army was running its own training and command centre CAG on the island of Sardinia.

Most delicate, of course, remain all questions with regard to the links of the secret NATO army to acts of crime and terrorism. After having heard numerous witnesses and analysed a considerable amount of classified documents, the official Italian Senate investigation into Gladio and the massacres concluded its work in 1995 and presented a 370-page final public report. “The final picture that emerges from the analysis is one of a country that for more than 40 years has lived through a difficult frontier situation”, the senators noted. “Obviously, the tensions which have characterised these 40 years and which were the object of the analysis also had social, and therefore internal, roots. However, such tensions would never have lasted as long and they would not have taken on such tragic dimensions as they did, and the path towards the truth would not have been blocked so many times, if the internal political situation had not been conditioned and supervised by the international framework into which Italy was integrated.”⁷⁷

This vague formulation, it is interesting to note, resulted from the structure of the discourse within the parliamentary commission. It is notable that the “frontier situation” label did not only apply to Italy during the Cold War, but also to the parliamentary commission itself. In the commission the communist and socialist senators of the left strongly disagreed with the Christian Democratic senators of the right on how to interpret the Italian Cold War and the role of the United States in Italy, on how to deal with certain highly sensitive topics including left-wing terrorism, massacres, and right-wing terrorism, and on how to phrase and publish what they had found.

All senators agreed that the Italian Cold War was particularly violent by comparison with other countries of Western Europe. The overall death toll of the terror of the 1970s alone is estimated at several hundreds killed, with right-wing commandos responsible for the majority of killings. Given this tragic situation many Italians expected more clarity from the Senate investigation into Gladio. “Many commentators have accused the commission on the massacres for not having produced, after so many years of research, a clear understanding of why Italy was the platform for such tragic and inexplicable events”, journalists therefore asked Senator Giovanni Pellegrini. “Do you think this is a well-founded accusation?” The senator conceded that “all reference to the international contest” had been excluded from the scope of his commission’s investigation as well as from the reports it had produced in 1995 for much too long. Above all, as Pellegrini explained, the role of the United States in Cold War Italy and its support for the secret army had not been addressed in frank terms by the Senate commission. “The great limitation of our culture was therefore that we did not contextualize the internal events with the framework of the international Cold War.”⁷⁸

In order to correct this deficit of the 1995 Gladio report, eight senators, most of whom belonged to the Democratic Left Party (Partito Democratico della Sinistra, PDS), which had replaced the Italian Communist party after the collapse of the Soviet Union, continued their research under the chairmanship of Senator Giovanni Pellegrini, heard witnesses, saw documents, and presented their own 326-page report without the consent of the entire commission in June 2000.⁷⁹ The former Communists concluded in their final Senate report that – apart from preparing for a Soviet invasion – during the Cold War the secret Gladio army had, together with the CIA, the Italian military secret service, and selected Italian right-wing terrorists fought the Italian Communists and the Italian Socialists for fear that the latter would betray NATO “from within”. “Those massacres, those bombs, those military actions had been organised or promoted or supported by men inside Italian state institutions and, as has been discovered more recently, by men linked to the structures of United States intelligence”, the Italian commission under Senator Pellegrini concluded.⁸⁰

To support their far-reaching findings, which linked the United States to terrorism in Italy, the senators included in their report testimonies of several witnesses who had been closely involved in Operation Gladio. Gladiator Giuseppe Tarullo, who had entered the Italian military secret service SIFAR in 1961, had testified to the senators that besides invasion preparations, their task had been to control the Italian Communists: “Among ourselves, we also spoke of the internal task of Gladio. It was said that the structure and its foreign connections would also have been activated against domestic subversion with support by the Special Forces. We understood “domestic subversion” to mean a change of government that did not respect the will of the ruling authority.”⁸¹ Gladiator Giuseppe Andreotti had testified to the senators during the interrogation: “The Gladio structure was the answer to an internal logic, in the sense, as I have already said, that it had to react against the rise to power in Italy of regimes hated by the population . . . thus dictatorships of the right or the left.”⁸²

These testimonies confirm what a close reading of the 1959 SIFAR document had revealed, i.e., that besides a post-invasion task, the stay-behind network also had a domestic control function. This domestic control function was carried out in a grey area in which illegal operations were planned and carried out, presumably by US military personnel from the NATO base in Verona, representatives of the CIA and SIFAR in cooperation with Italian right-wing terrorists. In the context of today’s US lead so-called “war on terrorism” it is particularly disturbing to find allegations that the United States might have sponsored terrorism in Europe and in Italy through clandestine operatives might have been involved in the Piano Solo

coup d'état in 1964, the Piazza Fontana Massacre in 1969, the Peteano terror attack of 1972 and the Brescia terror attack of 1974. These suspicions must therefore be rigorously investigated in a joint effort of the US and the EU in order to clarify these matters as requested by the EU parliament in 1990.

“In order to keep the power, one has to use terror sometimes”, the Italian philosopher Niccolo Machiavelli suggested 500 years ago.⁸³ Today, most observers would agree that this is a highly problematic strategy. Not only Italians, but citizens across the globe witness that state-sponsored and private terrorism have returned with a vengeance. Yet which part of the ongoing global terror is private, thus for instance “Al Qaida terror”, and which part is state sponsored so called “false flag terrorism” which poses as private Al Qaida terror, is one of the most difficult questions to answer. Controversial claims continue to surface in numerous countries on the alleged or proven involvement of military secret services in recent terrorist attacks. In Indonesia, for instance, on the third anniversary of the bombing that killed 202 people in Bali on October 12, 2002, former Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid said that he had grave concerns about links between Indonesian authorities and terrorist groups. Wahid claimed that the bomb which destroyed Bali's Sari Club was state sponsored terrorism. Asked who he thought planted this bomb, Wahid said: “Maybe the police . . . or the armed forces.” The former president insisted that these were not private Muslim terrorists acting alone. “The orders to do this or that came from within our armed forces, not from the fundamentalist people,” he said.⁸⁴ Wahid seemed to suggest that the ghost of Machiavelli haunts the planet.

Appendix

Translation of the 13 pages long document *Stato Maggiore della Difesa. Servizio Informazioni delle Forze Armate. Ufficio R – Sezione SAD: Le forze speciali del SIFAR e l'operazione GLADIO. Roma, 1 Giugno 1959* from Italian to English by the author. The document has been published by Mario Coglitore (ed.): *La Notte dei Gladiatori. Omissioni e silenzi della Repubblica* (Padova, 1992), pp. 118–130.

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General Staff of the Defence Ministry
Military Intelligence Service [SIFAR]

Office "R" – Section "SAD"

Rome, 1 June 1959

The "Special Forces" of SIFAR and Operation "Gladio"

I. The possibility of an emergency situation, either through domestic upheaval or through military invasion forces, that involves all or some of the territories of the NATO countries, has for some time already been the subject of studies and preparations. Some of these studies and preparations have been carried out on the level of NATO, others have been carried out on a national level.

On the NATO level the following activities must be noted:

1. The activities of the C.P.C. in Paris (Clandestine Planning Committee), created by SHAPE, with consulting functions during times of peace; and, in times of war, with the task to define the possible participation of the special services of the allied nations to the actions of SACEUR in the field of special operations.
2. A number of meetings between the S.M.D. [Italian General Staff] and AFSOUTH [NATO Allied Forces Southern Europe Command in Naples, Italy] in order to study the possible organization of the Italian clandestine forces.
3. The several years old invitation of SHAPE to the national SS.MM. for the planning of non orthodox warfare.

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In above activity number 1. the SIFAR [Italian Military Intelligence Servizio Informazioni delle Forze Armate] participates through its representative, namely the director of office "R".

In above activity number 2. the SIFAR has participated presenting information and suggesting programs.

Above activity number 3. is above all of interest to the General Staff of the different FF.AA. [Armed Forces, Forze Armate] as this activity concerns non orthodox warfare to be carried out by regular branches of the military.

All in all, these activities linked to NATO remain, for the moment, mostly on the level of analysis and planning."

II. On the national level, the possibility of an emergency situation as described above has been and continues to be the reason for specific SIFAR activities.

Section SAD of Office "R" is in charge of these special activities, created on October 1, 1956 with the specific task to "carry out special studies and trainings of personnel for particular emergencies."

Aware of the necessity to implement efficient preparations for the eventuality of an emergency situation jeopardizing the integrity of the territory or the national authority, the acting director of the military intelligence service decided, on the basis of what his predecessors had already accomplished, to tackle the delicate problem and to move it towards a solution with the creation of the new section "SAD".

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Parallel to this decision which was taken by the intelligence service, the director of SIFAR decided, with the approval of the Defence Minister, to re-confirm the previous agreements between the Italian intelligence service and the US intelligence service with respect to the reciprocal co-operation in the context of the S/B operations (Stay Behind), in order to realize a joint operation.

The contract which certifies such a plan was agreed upon with date of November 26, 1956 (see attachment number 1) and entitled "Agreement between the Italian intelligence service and the intelligence service of the U.S.A. with regard to the organisation and activity of the Italian-American clandestine post-occupation network (Stay Behind)". It constitutes the basis document of Operation "Gladio" (name given to the operations developed by the two secret services).

The agreement clarifies the tasks of the two intelligence services with regard to the organisation and implementation of the joint operation and is based on the condition of the U.S.A. that "the Italian Chiefs of Staff plan for the activation of all means in order to keep control of the island of Sardinia" where the base of the operation is located. The intelligence service of the U.S.A. in turn has furthermore confirmed, with date of October 7, 1957, that it's support for that base "is part of the war plans of the U.S.A."

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Operation Gladio, apart from the necessities which derive from the threat of an emergency or an occupation, is based on the concepts as codified by the theory and the technique of S/B [Stay Behind] operations (see attachment number 2 entitled "Aims and organisational principles of stay-behind operations",

as well as attachment number 3 containing the draft of the “Stay Behind Manual”).

Fundamental documents of Operation “Gladio” are the following:

- the plan of the S/B operations (see attachment 4)
- the S/B organizational plan (see attachment 5)
- the S/B security plan (see attachment 6)
- the S/B recruitment program (see attachment 7)
- the S/B training plan

III. The importance of the “GLADIO” preparations are twofold:

1. The first is of an objective kind and concerns the territories and inhabitants who unluckily would have to get to know occupation or upheavals. These territories and inhabitants would receive incitement to resist and support from operation “GLADIO”.
2. The second is of a subjective kind and concerns the legitimate authority of the state, who, in case of grave offences against its integrity, would be equipped with such well-timed and necessary preparations that guarantee to the state the prestige and the ultimate capacity to act and to govern.

The extraordinary political significance (in the real sense of the word) which a S/B activity of this kind takes on in the hands of the SIFAR follows plainly from this, because such an activity puts at the disposal of the Defence Minister, in case of an emergency, a far reaching and efficient tool with which to encourage the liberation of the territory and to re-establish the legal powers and institutions.

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[one line illegible]

the SIFAR would fail in one of its genuine functions if it did not take on this delicate and pre-eminent task and either leave the initiative in this field to chance, or to other uncontrolled groups, or to services with political interests.

IV. The section “SAD”, as said above, is in charge of the task. It is an organism that is still in the state of consolidation, but which now has a clear structure and is operational. It is structured in the following way:

– Central Command	with the task to coordinate Operation “GLADIO”;
– 1st Group	responsible for general organisational matters with regard to the support and activation of the STELLA ALPINA and the STELLA MARINA, two organisations which are included in “GLADIO”;
– 2nd Group	responsible for special organisational matters and functioning as a permanent secretariat of the “GLADIO” organization, responsible for the activation of the operative branches of “GLADIO” (Information – Sabotage – Propaganda – Evasion – Guerrilla Warfare) and the activation of the rapid deployment units (Rododendro, Azalea, Ginestra);
– 3rd Group	responsible for technical matters and radio transmissions in order to support the short range and long range connections between “GLADIO”, and responsible for the radio center [three words illegible]
– 4th Group	responsible for airborne activities and logistic and operational air-support for operation “GLADIO”
– C. A. G.	Saboteur’s Training Camp [Centro Addestramento Guastatori on the island Sardinia] for “training and experimental activities”. C. A. G. is the operative training base of operation “GLADIO”

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This is therefore an organisation through which the SIFAR has the command over the “special forces”, as well as over the organisational and training apparatus and the logistics which are necessary for the operation.

Altogether, the organisation was developed in the past, and continues to be developed now, in the following way:

1. Organisation of the central command structure (the entire section SAD) and the general planning of the operation;
2. Organisation and fine tuning of the training base, selection of the instructors, the training doctrine, and the training facilities (the Saboteur’s Training Camp [Centro Addestramento Guastatori on the island Sardinia]) which in the future can also be used as the operative base;
3. Organisation of the communication centre, in support of the operative base, which is capable of communicating over long distances with the operative units, and can function as well as a propaganda radio station and a station for electronic warfare [attività radio di propaganda e di disturbo; then one line illegible];

4. Planning of the fundamental elements of the organization, such as:
 - security plan for the organization;
 - plan for the recruitment of the personnel;
 - plan for the training;
 - organisational plan (adapted to the real possibilities of implementation);
 - documentation of the territory, the context, and the objectives
5. Training of officers of the section SAD at the school of the US secret service [in the USA] and joint trainings on the training base [on the island Sardinia];

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6. Activation of the operative branches by setting up 40 core groups (each consisting of two or three “operative men” and two radio operators), namely:
 - 6 core groups for information gathering (“I”)
 - 10 core groups for sabotage (“S”)
 - 6 core groups for propaganda (“P”)
 - 6 core groups for evasion and escape operations (“E”)
 - 12 core groups for guerrilla warfare (“G”)

sharing the tasks “operative missions and radio transmission”, these units were already set up during times of peace, instead of launching or infiltrating them only in times of an emergency or an occupation;
7. Setting up of rapid deployment guerrilla units in selected geographical areas, namely:
 - The “ALPINE STAR” [STELLA ALPINA] in the Friul [part of northern Italy bordering Austria in the north and Slovenia in the east], which linked up with the already existing organisation “OSOPPO”, of a present size of about 600 men and tending towards 1000 units of rapid activation, as well as an additional 1000 men that could be mobilised;
 - The “NAVY STAR” [STELLA MARINA, two words illegible], linking up with the already existing units “GIGLIO” and “GIGLIO II”, of a scheduled strength of 200 units;
 - The “RODODENDRO” [two words illegible], of a scheduled strength of 100 + 200 units;
 - The “AZALEA” [two words illegible] of a scheduled strength of 100 + 800 units;
 - The “GINESTRA” [two words illegible] of a scheduled strength of 100 + 200 units;

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8. The preparation and distribution of the necessary equipment for the various units, preferably in store rooms of the secret service and in hidden caches, namely:
 - For the core groups “I” – “S” – “P” – “E” – “G”, specially prepared equipment in containers which can be hidden [in the soil], and radio systems which are able to communicate over long distances;
 - For the rapid deployment units, equipment, arms and munitions of the traditional kind, though selected for the specific task, as well as radio systems for communication over short and long distances;
9. Training and qualification for the tasks of the core groups and the rapid deployment units;
10. Inspection on site and by airplane of those geographical zones of particular interest;
11. Collection of the cartographic and photographic data of the territory, the environment, and specific objects, as well as collection of the documentation on the special operations carried out during the Second World War;
12. Training carried out mainly on the Saboteur’s Training Camp [Centro Addestramento Guastatori on the island Sardinia] in the three areas of possible deployment:
 - Air (air operations and parachute jump)
 - Water (water operations and diving)
 - Earth (operations in difficult territories)

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V. At the present time, operation Gladio, [three words illegible] central organisations, is developing in the outskirts in order to set up the above described core groups “Information” – “Sabotage” – “Propaganda” – “Evasion and Escape” – “Guerrilla” and rapid deployment units.

The organisational plan is directed first of all at setting up arrangements for Northern Italy (zones I and II), and, of secondary importance, plans to extend the network into the regions of central and southern Italy (zones III and IV).

The division of the Italian territory into different zones does not imply a fixed structure, but is but an organisational tool.

Thus, the organisational plan of operation Gladio foresees the use of the following contingents of men:

Theoretical Plan	Organisers Central or Zone	Organisers Functional (including R/T)	Organisers Total
1. For the core groups “I”, “S”, “P”, “E”	4	20	24
2. For the core group “G”	4	4	8
Total	8	24	32

Performance ratio:

$$\frac{\text{Organisers}}{\text{Core Groups}} = \frac{32}{172} = \frac{1}{5,38}$$

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In practice, keeping in mind also the organisational need of the rapid deployment units, and in order to achieve the best performance, the theoretical plan can be cut back in the following way:

Practical Plan	Central or principal Peripheral	Secondary peripheral or Functional (including R/T)	Total
1. For the core groups “I”, “S”, “P”, “E”	2	8	10
2. For the core group “G”	1	2	3
3. For the rapid deployment units	2	–	2
Total	5	10	15

Performance ratio:

$$\frac{\text{Organisers}}{\text{Core Groups}} = \frac{13}{172} = \frac{1}{13,23}$$

$$\frac{\text{Organisers}}{\text{Rapid Deployment Units}} = \frac{2}{1500} = \frac{1}{750}$$

During the implementation small variations of the above figures are possible.

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S/B Core Groups	Number of the Core Groups	Operative Personnel	Radio Personnel	Total
“T”	6	$6 \times 2 = 12$	$6 \times 2 = 12$	24
“S”	10	$10 \times 2 = 20$	$10 \times 2 = 20$	40
“P”	6	$6 \times 2 = 12$	$6 \times 2 = 12$	24
“E”	6	$6 \times 2 = 12$	$6 \times 2 = 12$	24
“G”	(*) 12	$12 \times 3 = 36$	$12 \times 2 = 24$	60
Total	40	92	80	172

(*) Another 10 core groups are planned in non specified role for the eventuality of a further development of the program.

Rapid Deployment Groups	Rapid Deployment Personne	Personnel that could be Lmobilised	Total
STELLA ALPINA	1000	1000	2000
STELLA MARINA	200	200	400
RODODENDRO	100	100	200
AZALEA	100	100	200
GINESTRA	100	100	200
Total	1500	1500	3000

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VI. Altogether, the organisation which the Section SAD has been trusted with, amounts to about 1 500 000 000 Lira, including furniture, installations, material and equipment, as indicated in attachment number 9.

The provisional budget of the operation amounts, all in all, to 225 million per year, of which around 125 million are part of the classified budget and 100 million are part of the ordinary budget, excluding the expenses for the military personal.

Conclusion

Operation Gladio is the answer to an urgent need and ranks today amongst the most important elements of the preparation of the defence of the country.

This need, although not entirely ignored in the past, has only during the last years been tackled systematically and brought towards a solution.

At the present time, the organisation has reached a good level, both in the field of planning as well as in the field of realization: Steps which have been prepared long ago are now leading to the growth of the peripheral organisation.

The operations and training base [CAG in Sardinia] is a characteristic element of the organisation [one line illegible] In terms of its function as a training centre it represents a novelty in the history of the Italian secret service, for never in its history has the service had its own specialised school, be it with regard to the equipment, be it with regard to the instructors, be it with regard to the doctrine, which can be adapted to the circumstances, and according to which the agents are trained to carry out clandestine operations.

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In its function as an operative base, the Saboteur's Training Camp [Centro Addestramento Guastatori on the island Sardinia] is protected by a particularly sophisticated security system and is equipped with installations and apparatus designed to be employed in case of emergency. An essential element of the base is furthermore its radio communications centre [three words illegible]. Once the construction has been finished, this latter element shall be of the utmost importance.

These structural elements of operation Gladio underline the high level of technical sophistication on which the operation is being carried out.

Nevertheless, of primary importance remains the human factor, be it with regard to the skills that must characterise the directive members of the operations, be it with regard to the operative members and their dedication to the S/B program.

By observing the reasons which have led to the realization of the operation, one notes, on the preceding pages, the important political role which this organisation could play in the hands of the defence minister in case of war or an emergency.

Thus operation Gladio contains in itself, faced by today's international situation and events that could threaten the integrity of our country, the germ of the fight for liberty and independence which is always alive.

Notes

Note: The sources are drawn from a number of different languages. All quotations in this article other than from English originals are translations by the author, who bears sole responsibility for their accuracy.

1. British daily *The Observer*, 18 November 1990.
2. Resolution of the European Parliament on the Gladio Affair, November 22, 1990.

3. The Swiss report is: *Schweizer Parlament: Bericht der Parlamentarischen Untersuchungskommission zur besonderen Klärung von Vorkommnissen von grosser Tragweite im Eidgenössischen Militärdepartement*. Bern. November 17, 1990. The Belgian report is: *Enquête parlementaire sur l'existence en Belgique d'un réseau de renseignements clandestin international, rapport fait au nom de la commission d'enquête par MM. Erdman et Hasquin*. Document Senat, session de 1990–1991. Brussels. In Italy two parliamentary reports were published: *Senato della Repubblica Italiana. Commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta sul terrorismo in Italia e sulle cause della mancata individuazione dei responsabili delle stragi: Il terrorismo, le stragi ed il contesto storico-politico*. (hereafter quoted as: Italian 1995 Senate report on Gladio and the massacres). And: *Senato della Repubblica. Commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta sul terrorismo in Italia e sulle cause della mancata individuazione dei responsabili delle stragi: Stragi e terrorismo in Italia dal dopoguerra al 1974*. Relazione del Gruppo Democratici di Sinistra l'Ulivo. Roma June 2000 (hereafter quoted as: Italian 2000 Senate report on Gladio and the massacres).
4. Unnamed author: *Schwarzer Schatten. Das eidgenössische Gegenstück zu den Geheimsoldaten der NATO hiess P26 – eine private Truppe, heimlich finanziert aus der Bundeskasse*. In: German news magazine *Der Spiegel*, December 10 1990.
5. There were only two publications in English that deal with Gladio in the 1990s. First, in 1994, the essay of Arthur Rowse: *Gladio – The Secret US War to subvert Italian Democracy*. In: *Covert Action Quarterly*, Summer 1994. And thereafter in 1996 the dissertation of Jeffrey Bale, submitted at the University of California, Berkeley: *The 'Black' Terrorist International: Neo-Fascist Paramilitary Networks and the 'Strategy of Tension' in Italy, 1968–1974*. UMI Dissertation Services. UMI Number 9529217 (Michigan: Ann Arbor, 1996).
6. Daniele Ganser: *NATO's Secret Armies. Operation Gladio and Terrorism in Western Europe* (London: Frank Cass, 2005).
7. Malcolm Byrne, Deputy Director of Research at the National Security Archive at George Washington University in Washington, filed a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request with the CIA on 15 April 1991. Speaking in the name of the academic research community and Cold War scholars, he asked the CIA for “all agency records related to . . . The United States Government's original decision(s), probably taken during the 1951–55 period, to sponsor, support, or collaborate with, any covert armies, networks, or other units, established to resist a possible invasion of Western Europe by communist-dominated countries, or to conduct guerrilla activities in Western European countries should they become dominated by communist, leftist, or Soviet-sponsored parties or regimes.” Byrne highlighted: “With reference to the above, please include in your search any records relating to the activities known as ‘Operation Gladio’, particularly in France, Germany, or Italy.” Byrne correctly pointed out that “any records obtained as a result of the request will contribute significantly to public understanding of United States foreign policy in the post World War II” area, “as well as the role of intelligence information, analyses, and operations in United States policy-making at the time.” Yet the CIA turned down the request on national security grounds on 18 June 1991. Byrne appealed the refusal, but his appeal was also rejected.

The author submitted a FOIA request to the CIA on 14 December 2000 and requested Gladio and stay-behind documents. The CIA declined, stating that: “The CIA can neither confirm nor deny the existence or non-existence of records responsive to your request.” The author appealed this decision of the CIA and argued: “The documents that were withheld must be disclosed under the FOIA, because the secrecy exemptions (b)(1) and

(b)(3) can only reasonably refer to CIA operations which are still secret today.” With his research data, the author proved that this was no longer the case, and concluded: “If you, Mrs. Dyer, raise FOIA secrecy exemptions (b)(1) and (b)(3) in this context, you unwisely deprive the CIA from its voice and the possibility to take a stand in a Gladio disclosure discourse, which will take place regardless whether the CIA decides to participate or not.” In February 2001, the CIA replied: “Your appeal has been accepted and arrangements will be made for its consideration by the appropriate members of the Agency Release Panel. You will be advised of the determinations made.” At the same time, the CIA stressed that the Agency Release Panel deals with appeals “on a first-received, first-out basis”, and that at “the present time, our workload consists of approximately 315 appeals.” Three years later, the CIA Agency Release Panel has not yet answered the author’s information request.

8. In the summer of 2000, the author contacted NATO archives with a request for more information on Gladio, and specifically on ACC and CPC. NATO replied: “We have checked our Archives and cannot find any trace of the Committees you have mentioned.” When the author insisted, NATO’s archive section replied: “I wish to confirm once more that the Committees you refer to have never existed within NATO. Furthermore the organisation you refer to as ‘Gladio’ has never been part of the NATO military structure.” Thereafter the author contacted NATO’s Office of Security and was advised to submit questions relating to Gladio in writing via the embassy of his home country. The Swiss Observation Mission at NATO in Brussels forwarded the author’s questions to NATO, but Swiss Ambassador Anton Thalmann regretted that: “Neither I, nor my staff have any knowledge of the existence of secret NATO committees, as mentioned in your letter.” “What is the connection of NATO to the Clandestine Planning Committee (CPC) and to the Allied Clandestine Committee (ACC)? What is the role of the CPC and ACC? What is the connection of CPC and ACC with NATO’s Office of Security?”, the author had inquired in writing, and on 2 May 2001, he received the following reply from Lee McClenny, head of NATO press and media service: “Neither the Allied Clandestine Committee nor the Clandestine Planning Committee appear in any literature, classified or unclassified, about NATO that I have seen.” He added: “Further, I have been unable to find anyone working here who has any knowledge of these two committees. I do not know whether such a committee or committees may have once existed at NATO, but neither exists at present.” The author pressed the issue and asked: “Why has NATO senior spokesman Jean Marcotta on Monday November 5 1990 categorically denied any connections between NATO and Gladio, whereupon on November 7 another NATO spokesman had to declare Marcotta’s statement of two days before had been false?” to which Lee McClenny replied: “I am not aware of any link between NATO and ‘Operation Gladio’. Further, I can find no record that anyone named Jean Marcotta was ever a spokesman for NATO.” There the matter rested.
9. Cf.: Gianni Cervetti: *L’Oro di Mosca: La Verità sui Finanziamenti Sovietici al PCI Raccontata dal Diretto Protagonista* (Milano Baldini and Castoldi, 1993, second edition 1999). And Valerio Rima: *Oro da Mosca. I Finanziamenti Sovietici al PCI dalla Rivoluzione d’Ottobre al Crollo dell’ URSS* (Milano: Mondadori, 1999).
10. Christopher Andrew: *For the President’s Eyes Only. Secret Intelligence and the American Presidency from Washington to Bush* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1995), p. 171.
11. Arthur Darling: *The Central Intelligence Agency. An Instrument of Government. To 1950* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990), p. 245.

12. Darling, *Agency*, p. 246.
13. William Corson: *The armies of ignorance. The rise of the American Intelligence Empire* (New York: The Dial Press, 1977), pp. 298 and 299. As the operation was secret, the money had to be laundered first. Corson explains that this was done by first withdrawing US\$ 10 million in cash from the Economic Stabilization Fund, laundering it through individual bank accounts, and from there “donating” it to a variety of CIA front organisations.
14. Stuart Christie: *Stefano Delle Chiaie* (London: Anarchy Publications, 1984), p. 175.
15. NSC 10/2: *National Security Council Directive on Office of Special Projects. June 18, 1948*. Formerly Top Secret. Contained in full in Etzold and Gaddis, *Containment*, p. 125. The fundamental importance of NSC 10/2 for the secret anti-Communist armies in Western Europe has been noted by almost all Gladio scholars, compare: Jan de Willems (ed.): *Gladio* (Brussels: Editions EPO, 1991), p. 145; Jens Mecklenburg (ed.): *Gladio: Die geheime Terrororganisation der Nato* (Berlin: Elefant Press 1997), p. 17 and 51; Leo Müller: *Gladio – das Erbe des Kalten Krieges. Der Nato-Geheimbund und sein deutscher Vorläufer* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1991), p. 63.
16. British daily *The Observer*, 18 November 1990.
17. No author specified: *Spinne unterm Schafsfell. In Südeuropa war die Guerillatruppe besonders aktiv – auch bei den Militärputschen in Griechenland und der Türkei?* In: German news magazine *Der Spiegel*, Nr. 48, 26 November 1990.
18. Mario Cogliatore (ed.): *La Notte dei Gladiatori. Omissioni e silenzi della Repubblica* (Padova, 1992), p. 131.
19. Quoted in Cogliatore, *Gladiatori*, p. 132.
20. The directors of the Italian military secret services during Italy’s First Republic (1945–1993) were: General Giovanni Carlo (1949 to 1951, SIFAR), General Umberto Broccoli (1951 to 1953, SIFAR), General Ettore Musco (1953 to 1955, SIFAR), General Giovanni De Lorenzo (1956 to 1962, SIFAR), General Egidio Viggiani (1962 to 1965, SIFAR), General Giovanni Allavena (1965 to 1966, SID), General Eugenio Henke (1966 to 1970, SID), General Vito Miceli (1970 to 1974, SID), General Mario Casardi (1974 to 1978, SID), General Giuseppe Santovito (1978 to 1981, SISMI), General Nino Lugaresi (1981 to 1984, SISMI), Admiral Fulvio Martini (1984 to 1991, SISMI), General Sergio Luccarini (1991 to 1991, SISMI), General Luigi Ramponi (1991 to 1992, SISMI), and General Cesare Pucci (1992 to 1993, SISMI).
21. Quoted in Cogliatore, *Gladiatori*, p. 132.
22. British daily *The Guardian*, 5 December 1990.
23. Italian magazine *L’Espresso*, 7 August 1988. Quoted in: Philip Willan: *Puppetmasters. The political use of terrorism in Italy* (1991), p. 290.
24. Italian magazine *L’Unita*, special supplement, undated. Quoted in Willan, *Puppetmasters*, p. 291.
25. British daily *The Observer*, 26 October 1990.
26. Leo Müller: *Gladio. Das Erbe des Kalten Krieges. Der NATO-Geheimbund und sein deutscher Vorläufer* (1991), p. 27.
27. Müller, op. cit., p. 27.
28. *Reuters* news agency, 12 November 1990.
29. Franco Ferraresi: *A secret structure codenamed Gladio*. In: *Italian Politics. A Review*. 1992, p. 30. Ferraresi quotes directly from the document that Andreotti handed over to the parliamentary commission. The Italian daily *L’Unita* published both the first and the second version of Andreotti’s document in a special edition on 14

- November 1990. Jean Francois Brozzu Gentile also gives the full text of Andreotti “Il SID parallelo – Operazione Gladio” (in French translation). See Gentile, *Gladio*, Appendix.
30. Ferraresi, *Gladio*, p. 31, quoting directly from the Andreotti document.
 31. Ferraresi, *Gladio*, p. 31, quoting directly from the Andreotti document.
 32. Ferraresi, *Gladio*, p. 30, quoting directly from the Andreotti document.
 33. Padre Giuciano testifying in front of his church in Allan Francovich: *Gladio: The Puppeteers*. Second of three Gladio documentaries by Francovich, broadcast on BBC2 on 17 June 1992.
 34. As quoted in Ferraresi, *Gladio*, p. 31.
 35. Norberto Bobbio as quoted in Ferraresi, *Gladio*, p. 32.
 36. British daily *The Independent*, 1 December 1990.
 37. *Stato Maggiore della Difesa. Servizio Informazioni delle Forze Armate. Ufficio R – Sezione SAD: Le forze speciali del SIFAR e l’operazione GLADIO. Roma, 1 Giugno 1959*. The document is contained in the appendix of Mario Coglitore (ed.): *La Notte dei Gladiatori. Omissioni e silenzi della Repubblica* (Padova, 1992), pp. 118–130. Translated into English it is contained in the appendix of this paper.
 38. In 1952, a German stay-behind group called “Technischer Dienst Bund Deutscher Jugend (TD BDJ)” was revealed. According to German police investigations, the TD BDJ included former Nazis and other right-wing extremists and was supported by the CIA. One of their members, former SS officer Hans Otto, testified to the police that they had considered both the German Communist Party as well as the German Socialist Party to be their enemies and potential threats to the nation. Cf.: Leo Müller: *Gladio – das Erbe des Kalten Krieges. Der NATO Geheimbund und sein deutscher Vorläufer*. Hamburg: Rowohlt 1991.
 39. Inzerilli, Paolo: *Gladio. La Verità negata* (Bologna: Edizioni Analisi, 1995), p. 61.
 40. Inzerilli, *Gladio*, p. 62.
 41. Gerardo Serravalle: *Gladio* (Roma: Edizione Associate, 1991), p. 78.
 42. Serravalle, *Gladio*, p. 79.
 43. Inzerilli, *Gladio*, p. 63.
 44. Inzerilli, *Gladio*, p. 63.
 45. International news service *Associated Press*, 20 November 1990.
 46. BBC reporter Peter Marshall interviewing Serravalle for the *Newsnight* special report on Gladio of 4 April 1991.
 47. British political magazine *Statewatch*, January 1991.
 48. Jean-Francois Brozzu-Gentile: *L’affaire Gladio*. (1994), p. 105.
 49. Italian political magazine *Europeo*, 16 November 1990.
 50. Serravalle, *Gladio*, p. 78.
 51. Italian periodical *Europeo*, 18 January 1991.
 52. Belgian periodical *Fire*, January 1992, p. 59.
 53. Belgian periodical *Fire*, January 1992, p. 62.
 54. Allan Francovich: *Gladio: The Puppeteers*. Second of three Gladio documentaries by Francovich, broadcast on BBC2 on 17 June 1992.
 55. Mecklenburg, *Gladio*, p. 50.
 56. Gerardo Serravalle: *Gladio* (Roma: Edizioni Associate, 1991), p. 90.
 57. British daily *The Observer*, 18 November 1990.
 58. Hugh O’Shaughnessy: *Gladio: Europe’s best kept secret – They were the agents who were to ‘stay behind’ if the Red Army overran Western Europe. But the network that was set*

- up with the best intentions degenerated in some countries into a front for terrorism and far-right political agitation.* In: British daily *The Observer*, 7 June 1992.
59. British daily television news program *Newsnight* on BBC1 on 4 April 1991. British journalist Peter Marshall produced a documentary on Gladio in which he also interviews Felice Casson.
 60. Ed Vulliamy: *Secret agents, freemasons, fascists . . . and a top-level campaign of political 'destabilisation': 'Strategy of tension' that brought carnage and cover-up.* In: British daily *The Guardian*, 5 December 1990.
 61. British daily *The Observer*, 7 June 1992.
 62. Allan Francovich: *Gladio: The Puppeteers.* Second of three Gladio documentaries by Francovich, broadcast on BBC2 on 17 June 1992.
 63. Philip Willan: *Terrorists "helped by CIA" to stop rise of left in Italy.* In: British daily *The Guardian*, 26 March 2001. Willan is an expert on US covert action in Italy. He published the very valuable book *Puppetmasters. The political use of terrorism in Italy* (London: Constable, 1991).
 64. Regine Igel. *Strategie der Spannung. Italiens Terror und die CIA.* In: *Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik*, Heft 7, 2004, p. 828. Igel indicates that her source are the original testimonies of Carlo Digilio to judge Guido Salvini.
 65. Regine Igel. *Strategie der Spannung. Italiens Terror und die CIA.* In: *Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik*, Heft 7, 2004, p. 831. Igel indicates that her source are the original testimonies of Carlo Digilio to judge Guido Salvini.
 66. British daily *The Observer*, 19 November 1990.
 67. Roberto Faenza: *Il Malaffare. Dall' America di Kennedy all' Italia, a Cuba, al Vietnam* (1978), p. 356.
 68. Willan, op. cit., p. 38. His source is Faenza, op. cit. (1978), p. 369.
 69. Cf.: Paul Ginsborg: *A History of Contemporary Italy. Society and Politics, 1943–1988.* Penguin Books, London 2003.
 70. Franco Ferraresi: *A secret structure codenamed Gladio.* In: *Italian Politics. A Review.* 1992, p. 41.
 71. Italian 1995 Senate report on Gladio and the massacres, p. 87. Bernard Cook: *The mobilisation of the Internal Cold War in Italy.* In: *History of European Ideas.* Vol. 19. 1994, p. 116.
 72. Cf.: Richard Collin: *The De Lorenzo Gambit: The Italian Coup Manqué of 1964* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1976). Collin, who graduated from Harvard, lectured in Maryland, specialised in military affairs and served as an officer of staff of the US Secretary of the Army, as the advisor to the defence attaché at the US Embassy in Rome, and later as a consultant to the Saudi Defence Forces. He offers a remarkably good early narrative of Piano Solo in his 60-page booklet, but unfortunately almost completely excludes the role that the US played behind the scenes. These facts were already quite well known at the time after the investigations into the coup in the late 1960s and early 1970s.
- The silent Gladio coup would never have been exposed without the work of investigative journalists. Starting in spring 1967, journalist Raffaele Jannuzzi (who later entered parliament to represent the Socialists) in the political magazine *Espresso* informed a startled Italian public that they had only narrowly escaped a coup d'état (*Complotto al Quirinale*, *Espresso*, 14 May 1967). De Lorenzo's attempt to silence journalist Jannuzzi with a defamation suit was counterproductive, as in the process such a large quantity of evidence surfaced that the government was ultimately forced to concede a full parliamentary investigation into "the events of 1964" (*Italian Senate. Commissione Parlamentare D'Inchiesta*

Sugli Eventi del Giungo -Luglio 1964. Findings published in two volumes (Majority and Minority Report) in Rome in 1971).

73. Collin, *Coup*, p. 60.
74. Collin, *Coup*, p. 60. His source is the Italian political magazine *Avanti!*, 26 July 1964.
75. See: Italian 1995 Senate report on Gladio and the massacres, p. 89.
76. Italian 2000 Senate report on Gladio and the massacres, p. 42.
77. Italian 1995 Senate report on Gladio and the massacres, pp. 242 and 364.
78. Giovanni Fasanella, Claudio Sestieri, and Giovanni Pellegrino: *Segreto di Stato. La verità da Gladio al caso Moro* Einaudi Editore. Torino 2000, p. 6.
79. *Senato della Repubblica. Commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta sul terrorismo in Italia e sulle cause della mancata individuazione dei responsabili delle stragi: Stragi e terrorismo in Italia dal dopoguerra al 1974.* Relazione del Gruppo Democratici di Sinistra l'Ulivo. Rome, June 2000. The 8 members were: Valter Bielli, Antonio Attili, Michele Cappella, Piero Ruzzante, Alessandro Pardini, Raffaele Bertoni, Graziano Cioni, Angelo Staniscia. Quoted in the following as "Italian 2000 Senate report on Gladio and the massacres".
80. Italian 2000 Senate report on Gladio and the massacres, as quoted in: Philip Willan: *US 'supported anti-left terror in Italy'. Report claims Washington used a strategy of tension in the Cold War to stabilise the centre-right.* In: British daily *The Guardian*, 24 June 2000.
81. Italian 2000 Senate report on Gladio and the massacres, p. 41.
82. Italian 2000 Senate report on Gladio and the massacres, p. 41.
83. Niccolò Machiavelli: *discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio* (1531).
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