

**December 15, 1982**  
**Telegram, Reinert to Gen. Axen, Gen. Sieber, and  
Gen. Krolikowski**

**Citation:**

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**Summary:**

The Bulgarian Communist Party rejects allegations from Italy and other Western powers that Bulgaria was involved in the attempted assassination of Pope John Paul II.

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Recipients: gen. Axen, member politburo, central committee SED

Gen. Sieber, director IV, central committee SED

Gen. Krolikowski, state secretary mfa

As commissioned by the Central Committee of the BCP, Comrade Stanischew informed the ambassadors of the RGW states about the current anti-Bulgarian campaign directed particularly by Italy with the request that this information be conveyed to the leadership of the brother parties.

After a short fact-based presentation of the allegations against the PRB raised by the Italian side regarding the participation in or inspiration for the Pope assassination attempt, Comrade Stanischew emphasized that the mass media in the USA and in a range of Western European countries have been attempting for months to suggest to the public the version that Pope assassination attempt took place with an active Bulgarian party. At the same time, the opinion was disseminated that this crime took place with the agreement and by the order of Moscow.

In this context, Bulgaria is presented as the center of international terrorism. The thus represented version of Bulgaria's active cooperation with the "red brigades" is also characteristic of this. Additionally, the PRB is presented as the center of international weapons, narcotics, and drug trafficking. The BCP assesses that this entire campaign is not only about the attempt to undermine the international reputation of the PRB and its party and state leadership but is also an organized, well-prepared and coordinated major political provocation by the class enemy with far-reaching objectives.

The representative of the Social Democratic party, Longo, called on the Senate to reevaluate the relations between Italy and the socialist countries in general. The representative of the liberal party, Sanone, expressed himself in a similar manner. The suggestion was made by the radicals to cease every credit for the PRB and also cut diplomatic relations with them. It is also characteristic that the Bulgaria topic currently is center stage in the American mass media. An editorial article of the 'Washington Post' published under the title "Heroism in Italian" was assessed as orientation for this. Here the Italians were praised for their resolve, more concretely said, as it pertains to the struggle against terrorism. In this, the 'Washington Post' clearly took on the role of coordinator of the anti-Bulgarian campaign in the USA and in the capitalist abroad.

This entire development illustrates that the 'Operation Antonow' is being used against the PRB and socialism as a whole. It shows that the goals of the campaign go beyond the frame of bilateral relations. It is about an attack on the socialist countries as a whole.

The BCP proceeds from the fact that it is necessary to oppose such a well-organized campaign against socialism with a well-organized joint defense and rebuttal by all socialist brother countries. In its reaction heretofore, the Bulgarian side has acted with the maximum tact, soberly and in a reserved manner, with the stated goal of exposing the nature of this campaign.

So it is no coincidence that this campaign was orchestrated at a moment where new possibilities for the resuscitation of the process of détente have presented themselves in international life. The goal of these actions consists clearly of sabotaging these possibilities and discrediting the peace policies of the Soviet Union and of the socialist community of states as a whole. Beyond that, the basis for cooperation between the socialist countries and the capitalist countries is to be undermined. The bubbling up of this campaign is also not coincidentally tied with the new leadership of the USSR. Its goal is to sow distrust in the peace policies of the Soviet Union. At the same time, one must consider that the topic "pope assassination" is being played up at a time when the process of consolidation in the PRP is proceeding and the domestic political situation in Poland is developing more

conveniently. Beyond this, the campaign is also about mobilizing new forces in the struggle against socialism and the anti-military and peace movement in Western Europe and the USA. It should also serve to distract from the consequences of the worsening economic and social crisis of capitalism.

A further important aspect is that the USA Foreign Minister Shultz consulted with President Pertini and Foreign Minister Colombo together about "the Bulgarian case" on September 13 in Rome. At a subsequent press conference, Shultz labelled the Italian investigations as very thorough. Colombo suggested that the entire issue be voted on with the NATO partners.

The discussion in the Italian senate is also characteristic of the anti-socialist direction of this campaign. Here, the representative of the socialist party, Bonifer, declared that the Italian government must take rigorous measures vis-à-vis Bulgaria, even breaking diplomatic relations if necessary.

At the same time, the BCP is following with interest the reaction and support that is bestowed on the socialist brother countries by the mass media and expresses its thanks for this.

At the same time (considering that the Bulgarian foreign broadcaster does not reach Italian territory), the BCP would be thankful for all additional help from the brother countries. In particular, the request is directed to the central committees of the SED, PVAP, and the KPC to disseminate the Bulgarian arguments and evidence for the repudiation of this campaign in the foreign radio broadcasts of these countries in Italian. The basis for this could be the corresponding foreign material of the BTA.

Finally, Comrade Stanischew shares that a press conference will be held on December 17 at 11am in Sofia, at which the Turkish citizen accused of complicity, Celenk (phon.), will appear.

Overall, the Bulgarian side hopes that it will not come to a break of diplomatic relations between the PRB and Italy.

The Bulgarian ambassador in Rome currently finds himself in Sofia for consultations. The Italian government has requested that he not return to Rome before the whole matter is cleared up.

NS: The written text from Comrade Stanischew of a summary of his information is conveyed on December 17 via pilot post.

Reinert

December 15