Take one film actor already widely known for his roles in various pornographic films. Dress him up in flying gear so that he looks like one of those “kamikaze” pilots who specialised in suicide attacks on United States warships in the latter stages of World War 2. Throw in such traditions as a last-minute radio call of “Long live the Emperor” and then show his plane crashing in flames.

It may sound like a very bad “B” grade movie, but it is just one of the strange, real life events of the Japanese section of the Lockheed scandal.

The basic fact of this scandal is that the Lockheed Corporation has bribed business representatives and politicians in many countries both to ensure orders for aircraft and a favorable political climate. Naturally, the recipients of bribes have been the most conservative forces. The target for the “kamikaze” attack in Japan was the home of a man named Kodama. He was ill in bed when the plane crashed into his house but survived. The incident has been portrayed as a reaction by a young rightist to the “shame” he felt when he learned that such an important conservative leader was implicated in the Lockheed scandal. This “explanation” might have been a convenient way to brush aside the scandal, particularly if the mission had been a success and Kodama liquidated.

New facts coming to light suggest something much more sinister. Kodama built a fortune out of Japan’s military exploitation of China before World War 2 and was jailed as an “A-class war criminal” by the Allied Occupation Forces. After a brief period in prison he was released to work with the General Headquarters of the Occupation Forces. Such changes in fortune were common for both German and Japanese war criminals when the United States determined that the main “enemies” were the Soviet Union and China.

During the Korean War, Kodama, together with other former Japanese army officers co-operated actively in American military operations. He was a supplier to Japanese “military civilians” who were involved in the war and shipped war materials to the US Eighth Army. His fortune increased.

There is some evidence that Kodama was recruited as a CIA agent in Japan and that this connection is the one causing concern now that Japan is to investigate the bribery of Japanese citizens by Lockheed. It is one thing for Kodama to be named a ringleader in the taking and giving of bribes but if the bribes are shown to be connected with intelligence and espionage the repercussions could be enormous, and sufficient reason to plan the liquidation of Kodama so that the investigation can be confined.

In keeping with the scripts of “B” grade movies, it has now been confirmed that the young film actor, Maono, who crashed the plane into Kodama’s house, had studied drama at the University of California between 1967 and 1970. During this time his patron was John Wayne who is as well known for his rightwing political views as he is for riding off into the dusk at the end of his many cowboy movies. Maono also had some relations with the Mafia. He made several trips to the United States after 1970. In 1974 he took up flying and after visiting the United States in December 1974, he undertook some special flight training.

On the night of March 23, police made a house search of Kodama’s home claiming that an assassination threat had been brought to
their attention. The plane incident took place next morning. A close associate of the Maono has said that he was "asked" to kill Kodama on March 2, and one Japanese newspaper, published on the day of the incident, carried an account reporting that "an instruction came from the United States to Japan in early February ordering the assassination of Kodama".

The "kamikaze" attack was made on the day before an agreement was signed to hand over to the Japanese authorities investigating the Lockheed scandal the American materials on the case. In fact, the materials so far handed over do not include the unpublished materials held by the US Senate or other materials held by the US government. Many Japanese political forces believe that a great white-wash is under way. Thirteen national organisations including the Communist, Socialist and Komei parties and the General Council of Trade Unions have joined forces to fight for a full and public inquiry.

Each new disclosure of bribery in various countries confirms the connection between multinational corporations and CIA intervention in internal politics. US imperialism does not confine itself to military operations to ensure that governments will remain compliant or be replaced. The role of the multinational ITT and the CIA in destabilising the Popular Unity Government of Chile is well known. Japan and Italy are the two countries where, to date, the Lockheed scandal has surfaced. In both countries, a strong communist party has developed a strategy of combining militant mass action with a wide unity against the most conservative forces. In Italy, the ruling Christian Democrats stagger from crisis to crisis. In Japan, the ruling Liberal Democrats are divided and disoriented. Both countries are vitally important to United States imperialist strategy. Kissinger has recently announced that the US won't tolerate a communist presence in an Italian government, illustrating once again that the United States continues to suffer from the illusion that it has the right to determine election results or changes in the social system in other countries. Unfortunately, as Chile showed, the United States has considerable power to turn these illusions into ghastly realities.

The case of the suicide pilot, Maono, may seem fantastic, but there is no ground for considering that Japan or Italy or, for that matter, Australia, is an exception when it comes to US intervention and dirty tricks.

- M.R.

Discussion

Pat Vort-Ronald's article on the Italian Communist Party (ALR No. 50) is a very partial view. Her article expresses views which are contradicted in the daily debate and activity of communists and other forces in Italy today.

Space does not allow a full treatment of Vort-Ronald's article but several of her assumptions and conclusions demand comment. Vort-Ronald claims that "the PCI's strategic program abandons socialist revolution as a foreseeable goal" opting instead for a "gradualist parliamentarist road which begins with reforms". I believe this conclusion is drawn from a misreading of PCI documents and actions.

Enrico Berlinguer, General Secretary of the PCI made some relevant observations on the occasion of the 80th birthday of Spanish communist Dolores Ibarruri last December. He said that communists and marxists must have the audacity and intelligence to liberate themselves from any scholastic application of doctrine, dogma, and orientations which are not adequate to our experience and historical conditions. He argued that communists must advance to socialism along paths which are as yet partly unexplored without allowing ourselves to be paralysed by the risks which are in every new development. These can be overcome, he claimed, when innovative courage is accompanied by steadfastness to great principles and ideals. (1)