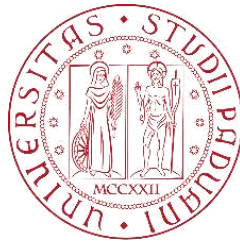


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**Master's degree in  
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TERROR BEYOND BORDERS: ASSESSING  
FRANCE'S RESPONSE TO CARLOS GROUP  
ATTACKS IN THE 1980s

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*Ai miei genitori,  
che mi prendono per mano  
ogni volta che mi perdo*

## **Abstract**

In the context of a bipolar world split by the influence of the two superpowers, a new element of destabilization entered the world's already intricate multilateral relations from the 1960s onwards.

Terrorist attacks began to hit European soil, challenging Western governments in their management and understanding of the roots and dynamics, thus making it necessary to counter this new phenomenon through international cooperation on the security front.

Particularly between the 1970s and 1980s, France was one of the most affected countries on European soil by transnational terrorism, hit by a wave of attacks perpetrated by the terrorist group headed by Ilich Ramirez Sanchez, known by the media as Carlos 'The Jackal'.

By analyzing the methods and motivations behind the bombings, grenade attacks, and hostage takings, the thesis sheds light on the unprecedented challenges these tactics posed for French security services. Moreover, through a comprehensive analysis of historical records, government documents, media reports, and scholarly literature, the research examines the French government's perception of this new breed of international terrorism.

The study investigates the socio-political context within which these policies were enacted, considering factors such as public opinion, diplomatic relations, and domestic security concerns. Furthermore, it aims at analyzing the adequacy and effectiveness of its counterterrorism policies by examining the government's response strategies, including legislative measures, intelligence operations, and international cooperation efforts, seeking to discern patterns in policy formulation and implementation. Did these measures adequately address the threat posed by the Carlos Group, or did France struggle to adapt its strategies to this evolving landscape of global terror?



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## **INTRODUCTION**

This research thesis, entitled 'Terror beyond borders: assessing France's response to Carlos group attacks in the 1980s', aims to investigate a phenomenon of great complexity: international terrorism.

International Terrorism has profoundly shaken the world's geopolitical dynamics, especially since the attack on the Twin Towers on 11 September 2001, but its roots can already be found in the 1970s, significantly marking the political history of Europe.

In effect, the existing literature on terrorism tends to focus on post-2001 events, leaving a significant gap in the study of the earlier period. In the 1970s and 1980s, Europe, and particularly France, was often the scene of terrorist attacks that had a profound impact on the domestic and foreign policies of the affected countries.

This thesis focuses on France's response to attacks by the group of Ilich Ramírez Sánchez, known as Carlos 'The Jackal', during the 1980s. France became one of the main targets of international terrorism during that decade, and Carlos's group was responsible for some of the most egregious and bloody attacks.

Through a detailed analysis of these events, the research aims to understand how the terrorist phenomenon entered and disrupted the international dynamics of the period.

The first chapter will provide an in-depth analysis of the definition of terrorism, a term that presents numerous problems in the search for an internationally accepted unambiguous definition. The various interpretations of the concept of international terrorism and the characteristics that distinguish it from transnational terrorism will be explored. Although these two phenomena are interconnected, it is

crucial to outline their differences in order to fully understand the dynamics at play.

Furthermore, the chapter will contextualize the historical period of the 1970s and 1980s, a time marked by the Cold War and tensions in the Middle East.

The geopolitical dynamics of this period not only influenced the foreign policies of Western states, but also favored the emergence of terrorist groups operating on an international scale. Particular attention will be devoted to France, its foreign relations and the terrorist phenomenon that had already affected it since the early 1970s.

The second chapter will be devoted to an analysis of the terrorist attacks that devastated France during the 1980s, making it one of the main targets of international terrorism. The attacks of 29 March 1982 on the Le Capitole train on the Toulouse-Paris route, of 22 April 1982 on the Al Watan Al Arab magazine headquarters in Rue Marbeuf in Paris, and of 31 December 1983 on the Saint Charles station in Marseilles will be examined in detail.

Media and public opinion responses will be analyzed, as well as investigative leads that led to speculation about the involvement of Middle Eastern countries as instigators of the attacks. This chapter will also explore the foreign political context of France and its involvement in Middle Eastern conflicts that may have influenced the terrorist attacks on its territory.

The third chapter will be divided into two macro-themes: the French government's understanding of the terrorist phenomenon and the political decisions taken to manage it.

It will analyze how France, along with other European countries, was confronted with a relatively new phenomenon, characterized by transnational and international dynamics that made it difficult to frame and manage terrorism effectively.

The chapter will explore the development of counterterrorism tactics, highlighting how these have evolved with the succession of governments

in power. The analysis of counterterrorism policies and their effectiveness will be central to this part of the thesis. Efforts to coordinate security agencies will be examined, as well as the difficulties encountered in standardizing the way information is exchanged, both nationally and internationally.

In summary, this thesis aims to fill a gap in the existing literature on international terrorism in the pre-2001 period, providing a detailed analysis of France's response to the Carlos group's attacks and contributing to an understanding of the geopolitical dynamics and counter-terrorism policies of the time.

Will the counterterrorism policies adopted by the French government prove effective in managing the phenomenon and preventing further attacks from devastating the French people?



# CHAPTER I

## **The emergence of publicity terrorism: exploring International and Geopolitical Roots**

### **1.1 Definition of terrorism: inside the conceptual framework to deeply understand the phenomenon**

Terrorism represents a complex and changing threat, the meaning and characteristics of which have been the subject of different and often conflicting interpretations.

Firstly, the interpretation of the term itself opens a wide debate: different scholars, but also various international organizations, have proposed different definitions, reflecting the different perspectives and interests involved in understanding this phenomenon.

In order to understand the roots, evolution and characteristics of the phenomenon, as well as the response by the affected actors, it is certainly necessary to analyse the main definitions proposed by the academic community, highlighting the conceptual challenges and practical implications related to the definition and understanding of this phenomenon.

The Title 22 of the United States Code, used by the U.S. Department of State to define terrorism, states that it is a “political motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience”<sup>1</sup>.

This definition involves the recognition of three key concepts that are fundamental in giving a specific characterization to terrorism: first of all, according to this definition an act of terrorism is always intended to reach a political goal or to deliver a political message, therefore with the intention of bringing about changes at government level, this certainly leads to the exclusion of all acts of violence that do not carry a political

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<sup>1</sup> United States Code, *Title 22, Section 1656(a)*, Retrieved From: [65464.pdf \(state.gov\)](#). (Last Access: 16/04/2024).

significance; the identification on a specific type of target is the second characteristic underlined by this definition, the noncombatants are the victims, in that way involving people from civil society that are not prepared to defend themselves, and excluding all the members of military services; the last criterion involves the recognition of the perpetrators as subnational groups or clandestine agents, which is a crucial aspect in identifying the act of terrorism as a clandestine activity, thus underlying the difficulty in anticipating and preventing it. The latter feature does not imply that national entities cannot conduct clandestine operations or provide financial and moral support to terrorist groups<sup>2</sup>.

Within a more psychological approach, based on the motivations behind a terrorist act, Abraham Kaplan focuses on the element of obtaining fear, rather than on the direct victims of the attack as much as on the audience, and thus to achieve a larger-scale effect on civil society<sup>3</sup>.

In a similar way Kent Layne Oots, in his article “Bargaining with terrorists: organizational considerations”, defines terrorism as intended to “create extreme fear and/or anxiety-inducing effects in a target audience larger than the immediate victims”<sup>4</sup>.

Along these same lines can be found the definition given to this phenomenon by the academic Martha Crenshaw together with Gary LaFree, according to whom: “it is useful to think of terrorism in terms of the meaning given to it by nineteenth-century anarchists: ‘propaganda of the deed’. The act of violence in itself communicates a political message to a watching audience”<sup>5</sup>.

This definition leads to the assumption that terrorism aims exactly at instilling terror, and for this specific purpose the choice of the civilians

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<sup>2</sup> Ruby, C. L. (2002), *The Definition of Terrorism*, in «Analysis of Social and Public Policy», pp.9-14.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Oots, K. L. (1990), *Bargaining with terrorists: Organizational considerations*, in «Terrorism», p.145.

<sup>5</sup> Crenshaw, M. and LaFree, G. (2017), *Countering Terrorism*, Washington D.C., Brookings Institution Press.

as targets is not causal or a “collateral damage” but it is precisely the deliberate choice of the terrorists. As well as the method of the attack that is decided, which is selected for its precise manner and power to be almost disturbing to public opinion<sup>6</sup>.

The authors of “Countering Terrorism”, also emphasizes the question of perpetrators: the phenomenon of terrorism in fact, can develop either as violent resistance against the state, or in the services of the state itself, which certainly sometimes implies involvement in the very organization of terrorist attacks, or at least in support for them on the part of the state structures of some governments<sup>7</sup>.

Indeed, the two authors choose to adopt the definition that emphasises the aspect of politically motivated violence, or the threat of violence, by non-state actors, although states may also be involved<sup>8</sup>.

Maxwell Taylor further contributed to the debate on the definition of terrorism by pointing out that there are three different perspectives through which a definition can be found: the perspective that sees the terrorist act from the point of view of legality; the second perspective from the aspect of morality; and the third perspective from the aspect of behaviour<sup>9</sup>.

Consequently, the author's most accepted perspective is the third, according to which an act of terrorism is considered as such in accordance with the behaviour of the perpetrators and considering both the legal and moral aspects as irrelevant: this approach seems to be the only one that enables the analysis of the phenomenon regardless of who measures it<sup>10</sup>.

While the debate on the definition of terrorism certainly remains open, however much common ground can be found in the various contributions made by both scholars and international organizations,

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ruby, C. L., *Op. Cit.*, p.12.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

the internationalization of the phenomenon of terrorism and the study of it represents a further topic of academic discussion.

## **1.2 Beyond national borders. Terrorism landing on International soil**

The simultaneous terrorist attacks that struck United States on 11<sup>th</sup> September marked the history of international relations, and the world geopolitical order.

The devastating terror caused by 9/11 has often been described as a “*bolt from the blue*” shedding light on the lack of foresight of the United States government, and more in general the astonishment of world public opinion<sup>11</sup>.

In terms of target, number of victims, ambitious scope, dimensions and impressive coordination the suicide attacks on the twin towers, on the Pentagon and upon rural Pennsylvania constituted an unprecedented event in the history of terrorism; however, looking at this event as a completely new phenomenon produces an inevitably distortion on its understanding<sup>12</sup>.

The exportation of terrorism into international soil can indeed be traced back considerably earlier than September 11<sup>th</sup>, as evidenced by the wave of terrorism spanning from the 1960s to the 1980s of Arab-Palestinian movements and later on of Islamic ones<sup>13</sup>.

One of the reasons for the lack of knowledge and awareness that emerged from the reactions to the attacks of 9/11 is the relative paucity of in-depth and systematic research in the field of terrorism.

As discussed, 9/11 served as a trigger to the development of a wide range of research and studies aimed at better understanding the roots, motivations and modus operandi of international terrorist groups.

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<sup>11</sup> Parker, C. F. and Stern, E. K. (2022), *Blindsided? September 11 and the Origins of Strategic Surprise*, in «Political Psychology», pp.601-630.

<sup>12</sup> Lomellini, V. (2023), *La Diplomazia del Terrore: 1967-1989*, Padova, Laterza, p.IX.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

It has been already pointed out regarding the debate around the definition of terrorism, similarly the concept of international terrorism also lends itself to a number of interpretations by the academic community. There have been a number of attempts to find a definition generally shared, but even this formulation remains complex and lends itself to different interpretations, which can however be considered as sharing a series of elements<sup>14</sup>.

In fact, there is a general consensus that international terrorism involves attacks that affect several countries or have an impact beyond national boundaries.

In his book "Inside Terrorism," political analyst Bruce Hoffman analyzes the rise of international terrorism, identifying the hijacking of El Al Flight 426 from Rome to Tel Aviv by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) as the attack that ushered in the modern era of international terrorism<sup>15</sup>.

Hoffman highlights that this attack was unique in that it transcended national borders for the first time. The perpetrators understood that an attack carried out on European soil far from their own homeland would resonate far more strongly with global public opinion, thereby bringing attention to their cause<sup>16</sup>:

For the first time, terrorists began to travel regularly from one country to another to carry out attacks. In addition, they also began to target innocent civilians from other countries who often had little if anything to do with the terrorists' cause or grievance, simply to endow their acts with the power to attract attention and publicity that attacks against their declared or avowed enemies often lacked. Their intent was to shock and, by shocking, to stimulate worldwide fear and alarm. These dramatic tactical changes in terrorism were facilitated by the technological advances of the time that had transformed the speed and ease of international commercial air travel and vastly improved both the quality of tele vision news footage and the promptness with which that

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<sup>14</sup> Badley, T. J. (1998), *Defining international terrorism: A pragmatic approach*, in «Terrorism and Political Violence», Vol.10, pp.90-107.

<sup>15</sup> Hoffman, B. (2017), *Inside Terrorism*, New York, Columbia University Press.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

footage could be broadcast around the globe. Accordingly, terrorists rapidly came to appreciate that operations perpetrated in countries other than their own and directly involving or affecting foreign nationals were a reliable means of attracting unparalleled attention to themselves and their cause.<sup>17</sup>

Moreover, according to the political scientist Gregory D. Miller, the peculiarity of international terrorism relies on three factors: the nationality of the perpetrator, the nationality of the victim, and the location of the attack. This classification is particularly useful in distinguishing an international terrorist attack from a domestic attack, since, the scholar points out, one refers to the second category when all three elements lead back to a single State; in all cases where one of the three variables is different, the attack can be classified as international<sup>18</sup>.

However, the author himself notes how this distinction is certainly useful in distinguishing the two categories but is equally too generalized to encompass the different categories of terrorism that go beyond this specific dichotomy<sup>19</sup>.

In the context of academic debate, there are scholars who, in fact, refer to terrorism that crosses national borders as transnational terrorism: In the article “Transnational Terrorism” Todd Sandler, Daniel G. Arce and Walter Enders refer to this phenomenon as the event in which the perpetrator, the victim and the soil of the attack are referable to two or more different States, as it is similarly considered as act of transnational terrorism an attack that starts in one State and terminates in another<sup>20</sup>.

Following the same line, Jack Wright and Silvia D’Amato had conducted a research intitled “Transnational Terrorism as a Threat: Cross-border Threats”, in which they focused the analysis on four dimensions of transnational terrorism: transnational terrorism as a cross-border

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Miller, G. D. (2019), *Blurred Lines: The New ‘Domestic’ Terrorism*, in «Perspectives on Terrorism», Vol.13, No.3, pp.63-75.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Sandler, T., Arce, D. G. and Enders, W. (2008), *Transnational Terrorism*, p.9.

movement for relocation as well as for implementing the attacks; transnationality of terrorism meaning the transnational connections among different groups and supporting activities of different organizations; the aspect of global financing of terrorist activities; finally the aspect of communication through internet and social media<sup>21</sup>.

In effect, the recognition of transnationality as the multiple international connections and collaboration among different groups and terrorist organizations represents, according to Lisa Bald e Laura Di Fabio the core distinction between international terrorism and transnational terrorism: Transnational terrorism specifically manifested itself by the collaboration between groups or individuals operating across national borders<sup>22</sup>.

As previously pointed out, in a context of relative neglect of terrorism studies, the study carried out by the two scholars and elaborated in the article “Perché indagare la lotta al terrorismo italiano in chiave transnazionale” is an important key in the understanding of the wave of terrorism that shook Europe from the 1960s onwards<sup>23</sup>.

In fact, together with the wave of international terrorism that, as american historian Walter Laqueur notes is often supported and/or sponsored by sovereign states, the so-called “rogue states”, during the 1960’s and 1970’s represented a phenomenon aimed at insert itself in a context of bipolar dynamics of the Cold War bringing an asymmetrical struggle that would weaken the two superpowers<sup>24</sup>. Moreover, another type of phenomenon shook European security agencies: the 1960s and 1970s were in fact characterized by that type of feature which, as already underlined, provided for a cooperation between European

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<sup>21</sup> Wright, J. and D’Amato, S. (2023), *Transnational Terrorism as a Threat: Cross-Border Threats*, in «Handbook for Management of Threats», pp.193-208.

<sup>22</sup> Bald, L. and Di Fabio, L. (2017), *Perché indagare la lotta al terrorismo italiano in chiave transnazionale. Nuove ipotesi e percorsi di ricerca*, in «Diacronie. Studi di Storia Contemporanea. Ponti fra nazioni e continenti: diplomazia, immaginari e conoscenze tecniche», No.30.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

armed militant groups and those located in the Middle East and Latin America<sup>25</sup>.

In this context, the wave theory of terrorism formulated by David C. Rapoport represents an important turning point, and a solid basis to understand this phenomenon.

According to his theory, the history of terrorism can be studied and analysed through the distinction of four waves; the third wave, also named as the “New Left Wave”, is of particular interest to the study of this thesis.

Originated in the 1960s and lasted until the end of the 20th century, it included groups of the Italian Red Brigades, the West German Red Army Faction, the French Action Directorate, and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO)<sup>26</sup>.

In order to understand the emergence of this phenomenon and its evolution, it is crucial to delineate the geopolitical background: a complex set of pieces forming a political puzzle of relationships between states which constituted a fertile terrain for the emergence of this phenomenon, that saw the 1960s imbued with bipolar dynamics whose equilibrium began to falter towards the end of the decade<sup>27</sup>.

At the beginning of 1969, Americans were manifesting and seeking for the end of the conflict in Vietnam that was now tearing apart not only the Vietnamese population but also the exhausted American armed forces for almost 15 years.

Almost one year before, the troops of Warsaw Pact, crossed the borders of Prague with the aim of invading Czechoslovakia and firmly affirming their influence<sup>28</sup>.

The two superpowers were trying to impose their influence over the critical areas across the world, however the governments witnessed the

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Walls, E. (2017), *Waves of Modern Terrorism: Examining the Past and Predicting the Future*, Washington D.C., Georgetown University.

<sup>27</sup> Lomellini, V., *Op. Cit.*, p.3.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

opposite answer they were expecting from public opinion: the support and approval towards them from civil society began to fade and a new Movement was inserted in the already complex dynamics of the Cold War.

The Movement of '68, named after its peak of expansion during 1968 in West Europe, became part of the complex puzzle of international relations, causing further disruption: within the Western world, and in particular in the United States it originated as a reaction of the population to the Vietnam War, the consumer society, capitalism and colonialism; simultaneously the Eastern world stood up to denounce the lack of freedom of expression and freedom of political choice.

The 5<sup>th</sup> of June 1967 the Israeli troops launched a large-scale surprise air attack on the territories of Sinai, initiating the Six Days War, that marked a new phase of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, but this event also meant the expansion of bipolar dynamics, “making the Middle East a new theatre of rivalry of bipolar hostilities”<sup>29</sup>.

Within the context of the alignments that saw Israeli troops clashing with Egyptian and Syrian forces, in the mid-1960s Moscow inserted itself into the conflict, initiating an extensive arms support for the two Arab States. This new alliance led the United States to regard Israel with growing interest as a potential ally, given the shifting dynamics in the region<sup>30</sup>.

In this intricate context of superpower relations, the system started to move away from a bipolar one to multipolar, through the insertion of new actors. As a consequence, National Liberation Movements carve out space in the international arena, radicalism and nationalism emerged as extreme and fervent responses triggered by the prevailing historical and political context<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>29</sup> Ivi, p.4.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Macintyre, R. R. (1975), *The Palestine Liberation Organization: Tactics, Strategies and Options towards the Geneva Peace Conference*, in «Journal of Palestine Studies», Vol.4, No.4, pp.65-89.

David C. Rapoport points out that these features constitute the main matrixes of the terrorist groups operating over the years which have characterized the third wave of terror: terrorist attacks were used to achieve political goals in trying to influence foreign policy of other states<sup>32</sup>.

To accomplish this goal and gain the international attention needed in pursuing an objective which certainly required the attention of states no longer only at a national level, the targets also required a change.

“Theatrical targets replaced the military targets of the second wave of terror”<sup>33</sup>: the reason for their selection was not only for their strategic or symbolic value, but also for their ability to capture media attention and provoke an emotional reaction in public opinion.

At this stage, terrorist groups try to maximize the impact of their attacks through spectacularization of the action in order to inflict material or political damage, but also and specifically to generate widespread fear and attract civil society attention to spread their message or cause. To this purpose targets are chosen among civil society, as underlined before, and not anymore among military subjects. Moreover, it was crucial the selection of specific tools, therefore hijacking together with kidnappings represent the dominant methods of the period: “Seven hundreds of hijackings occurred during the first three decades of the third wave”<sup>34</sup>.

The international slant of the attacks is evident in both the choice of targets and the terrain of action of the attacks, Rapoport reports that: “some groups conducted more assaults abroad rather than on their home territories”. Moreover, the author also emphasizes the character cooperation among different national groups<sup>35</sup>.

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<sup>32</sup> Rapoport, D. C. (2004), *The Four Waves of Terrorism*.

<sup>33</sup> Ivi, p.57.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

Between the late 1960s and the 1970s, the main movement that implemented the internationalization of its struggle was the Palestinian Liberation Organization, the PLO.

It emerged in 1964 as a political entity with the aim of representing Palestinian interests, sponsored since its birth by the Arab government that provided financial, military, political and diplomatic support<sup>36</sup>. Although its origin dates back to 1964, it was only after the Six-Day War in June 1967, the related defeat of Arab States by Israel and its occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, that the PLO began to be widely recognized as the representative of the Palestinians and came to promote a distinctively Palestinian agenda<sup>37</sup>.

As a result of the defeat, Palestinians sought greater autonomy in their struggle with Israel: in 1969 the armed Palestinian groups took over the PLO structure and implemented more militant activities<sup>38</sup>.

If it is to be identified a date that significantly represents the beginning not only of the armed attack and terrorist approach of the PLO, but above all the opening of the so-called publicity terrorism phase, it is necessary to refer to the terrorist attack perpetrated by one of the most violent and extremist factions of the PLO, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (FPLP).

The night of July 23 of 1968, the Boeing 737 of the Israeli company El Al took off from Rome Fiumicino International Airport en route to Tel Aviv with 38 passengers and 10 crew members onboard. Some Minutes after the air take-off, three members of PFLP burst into the cockpit, struck the First Officer on the head with a pistol grip<sup>39</sup>.

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<sup>36</sup> Rubenberg, C. A. (1983), *The Civilian Infrastructure of the Palestine Liberation Organization: An Analysis of the PLO in Lebanon Until June 1982*, in «Journal of Palestine Studies», Vol.12, No.3, pp. 54-78.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Porat, D. (2022), *The Hijacking of El Al Flight 426: The Advent of Air Terrorism*, «Journal of Contemporary History», Vol.57, pp.1072-1088.

The airplane landed safely at Algiers's International Airport, and the 21 Israeli passengers were separated from the other holding an American, Colombian, Danish, Italian and Libyan citizenship<sup>40</sup>.

In his article “The Hijacking of El Al Flight 426: The Advent of Air Terrorism” Dan Porat underlines how this major event marked the evolution of international terrorism, by borrowing the words of political scientist Bruce Hoffman according to which “the hijacking of El AL flight marked the advent of (...) international terrorism. Afterward, the nature and character of terror is demonstrably changed”<sup>41</sup>.

Moreover, the author continues affirming that before then, terrorism had only happened locally or regionally; suddenly, it was an international issue, it involved more than the country associated with the struggle. They had targeted hundreds of civilians from nations that were mainly unrelated to the opposing parties<sup>42</sup>.

### **1.3 Europe reacts: search for a common path to counter-terrorism**

The July 1968 hijacking of El Al flight 426 from Rome marked the entry of terrorism as an international actor, and as a new element of potential destabilization within the international system.

After the El Al hijacking, it was evident that attacks of this extent would draw attention to the Palestinian cause on a global scale. For the first time, as we've seen, a plane hijacking involved several different international individuals and organizations in addition to being a bilateral affair<sup>43</sup>.

Therefore, the perpetration of this terrorist attack played a pivotal role in shaping subsequent governmental responses and policies worldwide.

A new threat started to build its way into the concerns of the governments of the European continent, to the extent that “the Old

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

Continent became the theatre of struggle”<sup>44</sup>, demonstrating the possibility of terrorist attacks occurring on an international scale, highlighting the vulnerability of air transport and the ability of terrorists to act beyond national borders.

The concept of security now had to be recalibrated: the outbreak of this new historical era implied that the traditional concept of security was no longer sufficient. Security measures aimed at the traditional war scenario as the main cause of security issues for a state, were no longer sufficient to protect civil society from what were at best more complex attacks to manage and prevent<sup>45</sup>.

Terrorism had proven that it could strike at civil society at any time and in any place. This scenario certainly required a new formulation of security and called for the governments of European States to deal with this new threat: protection was no longer limited to that of national borders, but also included the prevention of terrorist attacks, crisis management, the protection of critical infrastructure and the fight against radicalism and violent extremism.

The intention of political and defence cooperation between European countries had appeared in later years, also embedded in a context of European integration that could have been a driving factor in this direction.

Indeed, on the afternoon of December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1969, the Hague Summit was opened: among the discussion focal points of the Conference was that concerning foreign policy cooperation between the member countries of the European Community<sup>46</sup>.

In terms of political cooperation, the conference opened with the best auspices and foresaw good prospects, so much so that in his speech, German Chancellor Willy Brandt expressed its full potential:

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<sup>44</sup> Lomellini, V., *Op. Cit*, p.6.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Guasconi, M. E. (2018), *L'Europa tra crisi e rilancio: il vertice dell'Aja del 1969*, in «Officina Della Storia», Retrieved From: [www.officinadellastoria.eu](http://www.officinadellastoria.eu). (Last Access: 02/04/2024).

In conclusion, a word about co-operation in the field of foreign policy. I know that in the past our governments have been very far from seeing eye to eye on this question and especially on its link with the accession of new members to the Communities. It therefore seems to me that the possibility of our taking a step forward with political co-operation depends primarily on progress in this matter of accession.

I therefore propose that we instruct our Foreign Ministers to draft an agreement on the gradual development of political co-operation amongst the Member States of our Community, on the assumption that the Community will be enlarged.<sup>47</sup>

Starting in January 1970, the political directors of the foreign ministries of the Six began to prepare documents for the spring meeting of foreign ministers<sup>48</sup>.

At the end of January, a German memo was published that became the starting point for the debate. This document proposed that the aim of the consultations between the participating states should be to progressively harmonise their policies, develop joint initiatives, promote a solidarity-based foreign policy and, in the long term, create a political union, but it appeared to be decidedly cautious and prudent as Schumann himself described it<sup>49</sup>.

While support for this prospect came from the Netherlands as well as Italy and Germany, France was strongly opposed from the outset, insisting on full membership and demanding that the creation of parallel bodies be avoided<sup>50</sup>.

It was precisely for this reason that the Italian proposal to set up a secretariat was rejected, instead it was established to build the cooperation on an intergovernmental structure outside the Community framework, specifically not institutionalized, in order to provide a flexible consultation mechanism, without procedures regulations and

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<sup>47</sup> Meeting Of The Heads Of State Or Government ( December 1969), *The Hague Summit*, The Hague, Retrieved From: [hague\\_1969.pdf \(pitt.edu\)](#). (Last Access: 01/06/2024).

<sup>48</sup> Guasconi, M. E. (2004), *l'Europa tra continuità e cambiamento. Il vertice dell'Aja del 1969 e il rilancio della costruzione europea*, Firenze, Edizioni Polistampa, pp.176-178.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

institutions that would have made the EPC a rigid and bureaucratic structure<sup>51</sup>.

The Davignon Committee (named after the viscount Etienne Davignon who had taken its reins) submitted the draft report to the foreign ministers, who met in Bagnaia on 29<sup>th</sup> of May. Despite this, no consensus was reached on the objectives of the political union or their definition. Furthermore, the question remained unresolved as to whether cooperation should be confined to foreign policy or include other areas<sup>52</sup>.

France remained cautious about derogating foreign policy powers. this was confirmed by the words used by minister Maurice Schumann:

Dobbiamo progredire sulle basi della realtà immediata, che è il modo migliore per creare un'Europa irreversibile. Vi è un pericolo: certo occorre definire le finalità politiche, ma spesso ciò offre un pretesto per non fare nulla di concreto.<sup>53</sup>

Following these consultations, the Davignon report was approved by the Council of Ministers, which met on 27 October 1970 in Luxembourg: it established that every six months the foreign ministers of the member states would meet to discuss international affairs, through the preparation of the meeting programme entrusted to the Directors of Political Affairs in a Committee, who met at least four times a year; in particularly serious cases, their meeting would be replaced by a conference of Heads of State and Government<sup>54</sup>.

Establishing a system of cooperation among Interior Ministries was a parallel development and the following step to the collaboration which involved the Ministries of Foreign Affairs<sup>55</sup>: Indeed, an informal forum for coordination and cooperation between intelligence services of a number of European countries was created, which took the name of the

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Lomellini, V., *Op. Cit.* p.8.

Swiss city where the first meetings were held, the Berne Club.

The strictly informal character was often reiterated in the reports of meetings<sup>56</sup>: the aim was to be able to exchange confidential information, which often included details about incomplete intelligence products, or the practice of sharing 'raw intelligence', almost telegraphic phrases that essentially took up the informants' details without any particular filtering or analysis done afterwards<sup>57</sup>.

What the representatives involved in the security services club wanted to achieve with the informality and absolute secrecy of the sources, was the guarantee that the same information would be used exclusively for investigation purposes, and thus avoid being used in the judicial context<sup>58</sup>. After all, setting up these sharing mechanisms involved the decision to share between the security agencies of the various states information that were not only confidential as such, but they often revealed the method of their acquisition too<sup>59</sup>.

Thus, it appears clear that the answer to terrorist attacks and the construction of a response and prevention strategy was a highly political issue, which certainly complicated the overall cooperation process.

The whole weakness and instability of the cooperation built during those years certainly came to light in the handling of the Munich Olympics attack in September 1972.

The Olympics returned to a German city for the first time since 1936, when they were held in Berlin, with the Munich Games. The choice of Munich was deeply symbolic and of a political meaning: after the horror that the Second World War had brought to light, Germany wanted to show its pacifist side and to represent the forum in which an event

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Guttman, A. (2021), *Turning oil into blood: Western intelligence, Libyan covert actions, and Palestinian terrorism (1973-74)*, in «Journal of Strategic Studies», pp.2-28.

<sup>58</sup> Lomellini, V., *Op. Cit.*, p.15.

<sup>59</sup> Guttman, A., *Op. Cit.*, p.7.

symbol of dialogue between states could interrupt the years of tension that the world caught up in the bipolar system was experiencing<sup>60</sup>.

In fact, since his coming to the government in 1969, Willy Brandt as the leader of the government coalition SDP-FDP, had pursued a policy of openness towards the eastern countries as part of his Ostpolitik, marking a turning point in German foreign policy and significantly contributing to the development of “détente” in Europe<sup>61</sup>.

Unfortunately, the Olympics turned out to be far from a peaceful event. Around 4:00 in the morning of September 5<sup>th</sup>, 1972, a commando of eight Palestinian militants, affiliated with the militant offshoot of the Palestinian group al Fatah, the Black September, broke into the Olympic village with the aim of kidnapping the members of Israeli team. Only an hour later, around 5.00 a.m., the Arab terrorists had killed two members of the Israeli team and captured nine. Due to the unexpected battle and chaos, the terrorists were unable to locate eight other team members in flats two, four and five. Two Israeli athletes had managed to escape and save themselves<sup>62</sup>.

Germany was confronted for the first time with a non-domestic threat, having to react to a crisis of an international nature: the attack was perpetrated on German soil, the terrorists were Palestinians, and the targets were Israelis.

Although a special committee had been set up to resolve the crisis, the management was completely ineffective. In fact, while no line of agreement was found between the European and Israeli leadership, the media broadcast live from outside the Olympic village, making the organization of the operations even more complicated<sup>63</sup>.

Between the police corps and security agencies was complete chaos, after a series of mediation attempts with the terrorists, all of which

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<sup>60</sup> Ivi, p.25.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Calahan, A. B. (1995), *Countering Terrorism: the Israeli response to the 1972 Munich Olympic massacre and the development of independent covert action teams*, Quantico, Marine Corps University.

<sup>63</sup> Lomellini, V., *Op. Cit.*, p.26.

failed, a group of German policemen was organized to block the terrorists, but once on site they refused to act, considering themselves as completely lacking the necessary preparation to handle the situation<sup>64</sup>.

As a consequence, the crisis that could potentially have had a different and certainly better ending with the rescue of the hostages, ended instead with the murder of the entire team.

The inability to respond cohesively between the various departments, the lack of cooperation and the clear misalignment between the European and Israeli governments led to the fatal conclusion of the episode. However, it was not only these elements that brought to light the obvious shortcomings in the security organs; to better understand this aspect, it is in fact necessary to take a step back to the fateful date of 5<sup>th</sup> September 1972.

Indeed, starting in October 1971, European security agencies had been inundated with reports of Arab terrorism; at the meeting of the Berne Club held in November of that year in Cologne, the members agreed that an assiduous exchange of information was necessary in order to prevent any disruptions during the Olympics<sup>65</sup>.

The awareness of a potential danger that would take place during the games on the part of European security agencies, months before the Olympics, reveals a complete lack of understanding of the phenomenon that was right before their eyes: in her book "Diplomacy of Terror", Valentine Lomellini points out that one of the central element of the underestimation of the Palestinian phenomenon lay in the bipolar vision imbued in European governments<sup>66</sup>.

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ivi, p.22.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

The confused view of the terrorist phenomenon led European countries to overlap very different phenomena and to consider the Soviet Union as the “sole centre of international terrorism”<sup>67</sup>.

The attacks during the Munich Olympics games, given their tragic outcome, marked a turning point in the understanding of the phenomenon of terrorism by security agencies and World Leaderships.

The governments of world powers realized they needed to create special units with the authority of decision-making, and the resources and experience to deal with these kinds of emergencies<sup>68</sup>.

Moreover, since the police failed to handle the media impact during the crisis management, it became necessary to understand how to control its impact, at least to minimize the related obstructive effects such as blocking roads or broadcasting the police’s plans of action to the world, and consequently also to the terrorists.

The inexistence of experience and proper training on the part of the German police and the inability of the security forces to provide a clear command and control structure also drew a lesson from the point of view of the operational techniques of the countries' respective national security, in this regard, too, the tragedy of Munich Olympics represented a critical juncture.

In the framework of the different countries there were established action corps specialized in this type of crisis and integrated in a system of standard operating procedures for hostage taking events: West Germany integrated the federal police force with a special hostage rescue team (GSG 9 der Bundespolizei); similarly French government instituted the Group d’Intervention de la Gendarmerie Nationale (GIGN), as part of its federal police<sup>69</sup>, moreover introducing 18 anti-terrorist commandos, each distributed in one city, specifically trained to handle high-risk operations and reporting directly to the Ministry of the

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<sup>67</sup> Ivi, p.23.

<sup>68</sup> Hobson, R. B. and Pedahzur, A. (2022), *The Munich massacre and the proliferation of counterterrorism special operation forces*, in «Israel Affairs», pp.625-637.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

Interior; in Italy an analogous body of 150 men was assembled<sup>70</sup>; the British Leadership, in the context of its premier military special operation forces, established the Counter Revolutionary Warfare Wing of the Special Air Service Regiment (SAS)<sup>71</sup>.

In the European framework during the meeting of Foreign and Finance Ministers of the MEC countries in September 1972, it was precisely the German Interior Minister Gensher who pointed out the need for security and anti-terrorism common measures between Western Countries and for more effective cooperation between security agencies<sup>72</sup>.

Within the General Assembly of United States during December of 1972 it was constituted an Ad Hoc Committee on International Terrorism with Resolution 3034 (XXVII) of 18 December 1972<sup>73</sup> entitled “Measures to prevent international terrorism which endangers or affects innocent lives or endangers fundamental freedoms, and to study the underlying causes of these forms of terrorism and acts of violence which grow out of misery, frustration, grievance and despair and which lead some people to sacrifice human lives, including their own, in an attempt to bring about radical change”<sup>74</sup>.

Moreover, in December 1975 it was held the summit of Heads of state and Governments, and a proposal was drawn up by the newly elected British Prime Minister Harold Winston, who underlined the necessity of a closer European coordination in the area of internal security.

Finally, during 1976 took place the first conference of TREVI (Terrorisme, Radicalisme, Extrémisme et Violence Internationale), an intergovernmental umbrella composed of police officials and interior

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<sup>70</sup> Lomellini, V., *Op. Cit.*, p.29.

<sup>71</sup> Hobson, R. B. and Pedahzur, A., *Op. Cit.*

<sup>72</sup> Lomellini, V., *Op. Cit.*, p.28.

<sup>73</sup> Blumenau, B. (2014), *The United Nations and Terrorism. Germany, Multilateralism and Antiterrorism efforts in the 1970s*, p.97.

<sup>74</sup> United Nations General Assembly (1973), *Resolution 3034 (XXVII)*, in «United Nations Digital Library», Retrieved From: [nr027064.pdf \(un.org\)](https://www.un.org/Depts/da/resolutions/res_3034.html). (Last Access: 04/04/2024).

staff of the European community members, with the aim of dealing with terrorism, immigration and asylum<sup>75</sup>.

During the first meeting a resolution concerning the objectives, modes of operation, modalities of action was adopted: it instituted a system of methodical exchange of information and experiences between ministries and security agencies, concerning counterterrorism, police technology, equipment, and training<sup>76</sup>.

On what it concerns the Club of Berna it emerged the urgency to a greater accuracy and immediacy concerning the exchange of confidential but also crucial information.

However, the development wasn't enough to make the members take a step further towards the institutionalization of the security group: Italy, France, Ireland and Denmark opposed to the proposal advanced by Great Britain of organizing preparatory meetings that would then lead to institute a Conference on the subject<sup>77</sup>.

During the following years, the political strategy pursued to combat international terrorism was to promote détente with Arab countries that were considered as sponsoring and supporting terrorism<sup>78</sup>.

The French case, however, was different: the Country became one of the main targets of international terrorism on European soil, a new type of international terrorism was emerging, and it was characterized by the involvement in the phenomenon of mercenaries and professionals of violence<sup>79</sup>.

In the 1970s, France found itself facing a series of international terrorist attacks, making it one of the main targets in the European

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<sup>75</sup> Coolsaet, R. (2010), *EU counterterrorism strategy: value added or chimera?*, in «International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)", Vol.86, No.4, pp.857-873.

<sup>76</sup> Oberloskamp, E. (2016), *The European TREVI Conference in the 1970s: Transgovernmental Policy Coordination in the Area of Internal Security*, in «Jean Monnet Frankreich, die Deutschen und die Einigung Europas», pp.29-45.

<sup>77</sup> Lomellini, V., *Op. Cit.*, p.29.

<sup>78</sup> Ivi, p.34.

<sup>79</sup> Ibidem.

landscape. Among the most notorious perpetrators of these attacks was Carlos Ilich Ramirez Sánchez, known by the pseudonym "the Jackal"<sup>80</sup>.

#### **1.4 Carlos Ilich Ramirez Sánchez. "The Jackal"**

Ilich Ramirez Sanchez a native of Venezuela, was born in Machilena on the 12<sup>th</sup> of October 1949. His first name was given by his father inspired by Lenin's patronymic, he was indeed a fervent Leninist, to the extent that his two younger sons were also named after the revolutionary Russian statesman, Vladimir and Lenin<sup>81</sup>.

He graduated in Caracas in 1966 and in the same year he moved with his mother and brothers to London, where he obtained a second degree from the London University Board. He decided to pursue his studies at a University in Moscow, the Patrice-Lumumba university, where he was educated to the theoretical sources of Bolshevism and from which in 1970, he was expelled<sup>82</sup>. In this context, he started to spend a lot of time with his Palestinian colleagues, most of them didn't hide their affiliation to various guerrilla groups, and to take part in unauthorized demonstration which eventually led to a worsening of his relationship with the institutions<sup>83</sup>.

At the time, his father had passed on to him his adherence to Leninism, but he developed his own ideas by later joining Islamic socialism, even if he recognizes the 1975 as the year of his actual conversion to Islam as religion<sup>84</sup>.

Although these two ideologies may appear initially unrelated, there is an explanation for the connection between them: his radicalization begins when he becomes aware of the reality of the Soviet System, finding in the Islamic religion of his comrades' fighters for the Palestinian

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Sanchez., I. R. (2012), *L'Islam Révolutionnaire*, M. Marsili (a cura di), *Lo Sciacallo. La vera storia di Carlos*, Milano, Termidoro Edizioni, p.30.

<sup>82</sup> Ivi, p.31.

<sup>83</sup> Smith, C. (2012), *Carlos: Portrait of a Terrorist. In Pursuit of the Jackal 1975-2011*, London, Penguin Group, pp.18-19.

<sup>84</sup> Sanchez, I. R., *Op. Cit.*, p.34.

question, the solution to the decadence of Western democracies. In fact, while he recognizes how Marxist theories provide to denounce the corruption, escalation of pleasures and excess of material wealth, he simultaneously highlights the lack of pragmatic action, accusing Western leftist movements of failing in their revolutionary mission and of becoming victims of the same “embourgeoisement”<sup>85</sup>. For this reason, he proposes a reinterpretation of the ideology in the light of Islamic law:

Cette alliance entre le politique et le sacré aurait l'avantage de donner sens à une vision binaire du monde, deux blocs opposés en mettant des freins au libre exercice du marché. La charia interdit le prêt à intérêt, les pratiques et les règles financières islamiques sont solidaristes, contraires au travail de l'argent, immoral et créateur d'injustice<sup>86</sup>.

By giving start to a new category of extremist revolutionaries in articulating their ideologies, which are explained through the application of Marxist-Leninist principles, and the traditions of radical Islam, Carlos affirms that: “L'islam et le marxisme-léninisme sont les deux écoles dans lesquelles j'ai puisé le meilleur de mes analyses”<sup>87</sup>.

As underlined by Yolène Dilas-Rocherieux in her analysis of the credo of Ilich Ramirez Sanchez: “It stems from the fusion of a revolutionary elite (a blend of new and old), a political-historical conjuncture, and suffering masses in search of identity”<sup>88</sup>.

The juncture between Marxist-Leninist ideology and the Islamic religion, and how it was perceived by the generation of Palestinian extremists from the late 1960s onwards, is a topic of great interest that is also dealt with by scholar Thomas Hegghammer. Analysing this topic, one can identify various facets that illuminate how different ideologies have

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<sup>85</sup> Dilas-Rocherieux, Y. (2004), *Communisme, révolution, islamisme. Le credo d'Ilich Ramirez Sanchez*, in «Le Débat», pp.141-146.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

intersected and mutually influenced each other in the context of the Palestinian conflict<sup>89</sup>.

In particular, Thomas Hegghammer's analysis highlights how Abdallāh ‘Azzām, a leading ideologue of transnational jihadism, perceived the fusion of Marxism-Leninism and Islam as one of the causes of the failure of the Palestinian struggle. Azzam argued that the adoption of communism by Palestinian extremists had corrupted the values and policies of the movement, leading to a loss of direction and the defeat of the Palestinian cause<sup>90</sup>.

The first was that the armed Palestinian resistance, in his view, had been hijacked by leftists. In ‘Azzām’s view, Israel could only be defeated by an army fighting under an Islamic banner. Communism, by contrast, weakens the faith and is responsible for the failure of the Palestinian resistance. Hostility to leftism and bitterness with the PLO are major themes in ‘Azzām’s ideological production.

In Azzam's view, the struggle for Palestine needed to be reoriented towards a purely Islamic ideology, which would make it possible to mobilize broader and deeper support among Muslims worldwide.

His critique of Marxism-Leninism, expressed in his book “The Red Cancer”, was not only ideological, but also practical: he believed that the commonality of religious values could create a more cohesive and motivated movement<sup>91</sup>.

Hegghammer's work thus offers us a curious and interesting insight into what appears to be a clash between two generations of Palestinian terrorism with a divergent range of values. It seems very interesting to quote a passage taken from Azzam's *The Red Cancer* which expresses the whole of this contestation<sup>92</sup>:

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<sup>89</sup> Hegghammer T., (2012), *Abdallāh ‘Azzām and Palestine*, Norwegian Defence Research Establishment.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

We saw them in their bases from up close, with their nicknames such as Abū Jahl, Abū Lahab, Mao, Guevara, and Ho Chi Minh!! And their passwords were curses of religion and the Lord. As for their food, they would shoot dogs with their guns and eat them, because for them there was no difference between dogs and sheep; the distinction was a superstition brought by a man from the desert named Muḥammad, peace and blessings be upon him. [...] We saw them; when Muslim, weapons carrying, striving youth made the call to prayer in the Fedayeen gatherings, the sons of Lenin and Mao Tse Tung would babble on and raise their voices saying ‘I don’t care, I am an internationalist Marxist-Leninist.’ [...] The socialist revolutionaries have no values or manners. They had so many mistresses!! They beguiled them in the name of Palestine.<sup>93</sup>

Starting the analysis from the ideology and values that Carlos shred with his comrades, provide a better understanding of the character's evolution and the development of his trajectory within terrorist groups such as the PFLP.

In fact, in 1970 he left Russia and moved to Jordan, where he began his training at an FPLP camp near Amman, in his autobiographical book “L’Islam Révolutionnaire” he claimed: “Being communist, I needed to move from theory to practice. Indeed, for me it was time to act.”<sup>94</sup>.

Ilich received also a military training at a PFLP camp in Lebanon in the summer of 1971, where he acquired working knowledge about the weapons typically used by Palestinians such as mortars, heavy machine guns, the Soviet RPG7 (rocket-propelled grenade), an anti-tank weapon, in addition to a certain number of lectures about bomb-making and pistol shooting<sup>95</sup>.

When he came back to Europe, towards the end of 1971 he was working full time for one of the cells of FPLP ran by Wadi Haddad, a military entity that was highly politicized and characterized by a strong internationalist approach<sup>96</sup>, and at the time under the command of

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Sanchez, I. R., *Op. Cit.*, p.33.

<sup>95</sup> Smith, C., *Op. Cit.*, p.41.

<sup>96</sup> Senato della Repubblica (2006), Commissione parlamentare d’inchiesta concernente il Dossier Mitrokhin e l’attività d’Intelligence italiana, *Documento conclusivo sull’attività svolta e sui risultati dell’inchiesta*, p.268.

Mohammed Boudia. It seems that it was precisely Boudia that gave him the Carlos identity, even if over the years he had access to a number of false identities and documents<sup>97</sup>.

Under Boudia the commando started to expand its connections in Europe to other European revolutionary groups, but also with Japanese Red Army cells previously moved to Paris<sup>98</sup>.

Contacts were also intensified with extremist cells in West Germany, in fact, in addition to the Rote Armee Fraktion, members to the other two extremist movements produced by West Germany, 2<sup>nd</sup> June movement and the Revolutionary cells, since 1974 started to be attracted to PFLP and its training camps. Parallely PFLP took advantage of a collaboration and numerous alliances with different groups to strengthen its struggle against Israel, given the difficulties in targeting Israelis<sup>99</sup>.

Haddad's cell disintegrated in 1978, after its leader died in March of that year. Alongside the dissolution of this dissident body, the Carlos group was being formed in a more enclosed way, between 1976 and 1978, into which some of Wadi Haddad's own men converged<sup>100</sup>.

The new group, while remaining strongly internationalist, began to be even more Europe-based, especially if a look is taken at the ranks of militants who joined it: several men from the Revolutionary German Cells, the Revolutionae Zellen (RZ) probably part of them originating from the RAF, from the Italian Red Brigades and other groups<sup>101</sup>.

As part of the investigation carried out in Italy by the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into the Mitrokhin Dossier, investigating links between the KGB and certain Italian political authorities, the report referred to the organization headed by Carlos Ilich Ramirez Sanchez as "Separat" and considered the following names among its militants:

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<sup>97</sup> Smith, C., *Op. Cit.*, pp.44-47.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Bacon, T. (2018), *Why Terrorist Groups Form International Alliances*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, p.95.

<sup>100</sup> Senato della Repubblica, *Op. Cit.*, p.274.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

Morucci Valerio, Bellini Giorgio, Santini Luigi, Girardi Alessandro, Breguet Bruno, Kroecher Tiedeman Gabriele, Kopp Magdalena, Frolich Margot Christa, Weirich Joannes, together with almost other 200 people<sup>102</sup>.

Among these, reference must surely also be made to Thomas Kram, who is mentioned in numerous documents of the Italian Chamber as an affiliate of Carlos, especially with regard to the investigation into the Bologna massacre of 2 August 1980<sup>103</sup>.

In fact, an example of this are the statements made in the course of the urgent interpellation by the Hon. Raisi on the destruction of the personal file of the German terrorist Thomas Kram, in which one can read<sup>104</sup>:

In sintesi l'ipotesi investigativa - e sottolineo sempre il termine «ipotesi» - si fonda sulla seguente scansione: Abu Anzeh Saleh viene arrestato dalle autorità italiane; il Fronte Popolare di Liberazione della Palestina minaccia rappresaglie, prima per l'arresto e poi per la condanna di Saleh; il Fronte potrebbe aver deciso di colpire l'Italia, e per questo di utilizzare la rete terroristica di Carlos alla quale è direttamente collegato e con la quale ha già operato; Carlos, sempre in base a tale ipotesi, incaricherebbe Thomas Kram che conosce l'Italia per avervi vissuto; Thomas Kram, stando a quanto riferiscono le autorità tedesche (basandosi sulle dichiarazioni di un collaboratore di giustizia) ha conoscenze solide nel campo delle armi e degli esplosivi, in particolare è esperto di circuiti elettronici<sup>105</sup>.

Finally, according to the conclusive document on the results of the investigation concerning the Mitrokhin dossier and Italian intelligence activity: "Carlos and his men allegedly received financial, logistical and weapons support from Syria, South Yemen, Libya, Algiers and, at least

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Camera dei Deputati (2009), Seduta dell'Assemblea del 22 gennaio 2009, *Interpellanza urgente n. 2-00238 dell'On. Raisi sulla distruzione del fascicolo personale del terrorista tedesco Thomas Kram*.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

initially, Iraq (in 1978, however, he would come under the protection of Syria and, in particular, President Assad's brother)"<sup>106</sup>.

### **1.5 France in the Target of International Terrorism**

During the 1970s France became one of the main targets of international terrorism on European soil, and in particular, subsequently in the 1980s, it became a target territory for terrorist attacks by the Carlos Group.

The French campaign of the Venezuelan terrorist began in 1974 when he was still under the command of Wadi Haddad.

On September 15<sup>th</sup>, the commando attempted the Publicis Drugstore in Paris, located in the district of Saint-Germain de Prés. This dramatic episode also marked the beginning of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing's seven-year term as President of the Republic<sup>107</sup>.

Armed with grenades, Carlos and his accomplices left a devastating trail of carnage in their wake, involving two dead and 34 persons injured. The selection of the target was not casual: a popular shopping destination frequented by locals and tourists, a crowded public place situated in one of Paris's most affluent neighbourhoods in the heart of the Capital, the armed group's purpose was to send a clear signal to the French government<sup>108</sup>.

In late July 1974, two months before the attack at the Drugstore Publicis, French authorities arrested at Orly airport an individual affiliated with the Japanese Red Army, known to have ties to the PFLP. He was en route from Beirut carrying a briefcase containing documentation of detailed planned terrorist operations in Europe, along with a significant amount of cash<sup>109</sup>.

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<sup>106</sup> Senato della Repubblica (2015), Commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta sul rapimento e sulla morte di Aldo Moro, *Copia Della Richiesta Di Archiviazione E Del Decreto Di Archiviazione Relativi Al Procedimento Penale N. 42808/07 I Della Procura Della Repubblica Di Roma*.

<sup>107</sup> Smith, C., *Op. Cit.*, pp.87-92.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

To obtain his release, the European branch of the PFLP, decided to stage a hostage-taking operation at the French embassy in the Netherlands, at The Hague. Three Japanese members of the Japanese Red Army/PFLP burst into the premises of the diplomatic representation on 13<sup>th</sup> September 1974, taking the French ambassador and members of the embassy's diplomatic and administrative staff hostage<sup>110</sup>.

The terrorists thought that French government would have taken a position in their favour, releasing the imprisoned man, which did not happen: the French authorities turned a deaf ear and refused to release him<sup>111</sup>.

The position of the Quai d'Orsay was clear: the line of resistance to terrorists would be followed, and the conflict would be transferred to French soil<sup>112</sup>. The attack on one of the most frequented neighbourhoods and clubs in the French Capital and a symbol of Parisian life was a direct reaction to the positions taken by the government.

The attack on the Drugstore Publicis opened a new season of terrorism on French soil and was among the first attacks that marked the beginning of the terrorist campaign carried out by the Venezuelan terrorist Carlos, "the Jackal", first under the direction of Haddad and later with the establishment of his terrorist group.

France was simultaneously beginning to reveal all its security shortcomings and inadequate counter-terrorism tactics that made it the perfect target for terrorist attacks.

It was only a few months later, at the beginning of 1975, that it was again targeted with one of the attacks that most shocked not only the French government but Europe in general, and one of the most remembered attacks perpetrated by Ilich Ramirez Sanchez.

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

On 13<sup>th</sup> January 1975, a double bombardment by rocket launchers took place at Orly airport of a Boeing 707 belonging to the Israeli company El Al and heading for Montréal, and a DC-9 belonging to the Yugoslavian company Jat. The commando was composed by four individuals affiliated to the FPLP and that claimed themselves as under the “Commando Boudia”<sup>113</sup>.

The French police had once again failed to manage the crisis, unable to stop the terrorists who had 'simply disappeared'<sup>114</sup>.

Only six days later, a group of three terrorists attacked the airport once again, on 19<sup>th</sup> January, striking another El Al plane: ten people were taken as hostages. After a whole day of silence, the attack was claimed in the morning of the following day as belonging, as the previous one, to the Boudia commando. Within a few days, the terrorists had managed to break through the airport's security measures<sup>115</sup>.

The negotiations carried out by the Egyptian ambassador in Paris resulted in the release of two hostages, and at the same time the promise to make an Air France Boeing 707 available to the commando, so that the terrorists could leave the country<sup>116</sup>.

Once they landed in Iraq for resupply, negotiations were carried out by the French ambassador Cerles, however, they proved unsuccessful as the terrorists refused to release the hostages.

France found itself in an impasse: the governments of the Arab Emirates, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Algeria, and Libya, Sudan and Egypt refused to let the plane land on their soil. After several pressures from Ambassador Cerles, the Iraqi government agreed to let the plane land back on its territory, at that point the hostages were freed<sup>117</sup>.

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<sup>113</sup> Central Intelligence Agency (1975), *Significant Fedayeen And Fedayeen-Related International Terrorist Incidents*, Retrieved From: [cia-rdp86t00608r000200080002-1\\_text.pdf \(archive.org\)](https://www.cia-rdp86t00608r000200080002-1_text.pdf). (Last Access: 01/06/2024).

<sup>114</sup> Lomellini, V., *Op. Cit.*, pp.34-35.

<sup>115</sup> Smith, C., *Op. Cit.*, pp.95-99.

<sup>116</sup> Lomellini, V., *Op. Cit.*

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

The attacks in France, starting with the attack on the Publicis Drugstore, and particularly the double attack on Orly airport, clearly marked France's foreign policy and underlined the shortcomings in the security systems, and in the capacity of the forces of law and order to handle this new type of crisis.

The Transalpine State found itself in the crosshairs of terrorist groups and this was the result of a number of factors, certainly including its position at European and international level regarding security and anti-terrorism cooperation.

A first step towards European cooperation in counter-terrorism had been taken through the drafting of the Montreal Convention, which provided for a commitment by states to ensure the detention of the perpetrator of a terrorist offense and to ensure that common law was applied.

The 1971 Convention at the time of the Orly attacks, however, had been signed in the European framework by the UK and Italy, and initiated by the German Federal Republic. With the event of the attacks on Orly airport, the Quay d'Orsay found itself in a deadlock, which would in any case not have given it the chance to request extradition to Iraq, since it was the French government itself that had provided the plane to the terrorist; on the other hand, it could not show a disinterest in the affair that would only have aggravated the already negative public perception<sup>118</sup>.

The effects of the 1975 attacks certainly cast doubt on the position with respect to extradition traditionally maintained by Paris, so much so that the country would adopt the Convention the following year<sup>119</sup>.

The French position on extradition marked Giscard's term, but it only anticipated the maintenance and reconfirmation of a political position established by Mitterrand, in the so-called "Mitterrand doctrine"<sup>120</sup>.

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<sup>118</sup> Ivi, pp.37-42.

<sup>119</sup> United Nations (1971), *Convention for the suppression of unlawful acts against the safety of civil aviation*, Montreal, Retrieved From: [volume-974-I-14118-english.pdf \(un.org\)](https://www.un.org/Depts/los/convention_agreements/convention_treaties/1971_montreal_08_23_71.pdf). (Last Access: 24/04/2024).

During his speech at the Palais des Sports in Rennes on 1<sup>st</sup> February 1985, the French President reportedly outlined the nature of this position:

Oui, j'ai décidé l'extradition, sans le moindre remords, d'un certain nombre d'hommes accusés d'avoir commis des crimes. Je n'en fais pas une politique. Le droit d'asile, dès lors qu'il est un contrat entre celui qui en bénéficie et la France qui l'accueille, sera toujours et a toujours été respecté (..) <sup>121</sup>.

As pointed out by Valentine Lomellini this position would have meant that efforts to deter terrorist acts would have been in vain: without the possibility of extradition, terrorists would have been able to take refuge in countries that guaranteed them impunity and freedom <sup>122</sup>.

French foreign policy was also impacted by the succession of terrorist attacks in the early 1970s: relations with Arab countries suspected of terrorism had generally improved.

Iraq's willingness, although with multiple requests, to take in the plane carrying commandos and hostages thus accepting its involvement in the crisis, represented an example of this attitude <sup>123</sup>.

Baghdad, moreover, by agreeing to let the plane land on its soil, was putting itself in a critical position: on the one hand it risked being accused of complicity, on the other hand, by imposing a severe measure on the terrorists it would gain international recognition.

Franco-Iraqi relations indeed improved, the same is not to be observed with regard to Israel.

The handling of the crisis by French authorities with the decision to provide a means of escape for the terrorists and the poor quality of airport security measures raised strong criticism from all Israeli

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<sup>120</sup> Lomellini, V., *Op. Cit.*

<sup>121</sup> Institut François Mitterrand (2004), *La France, l'Italie face à la question des extraditions*, Retrieved From : [La France, l'Italie face à la question des extraditions – Institut François Mitterrand](#). (Last Access: 24/04/2024).

<sup>122</sup> Lomellini, V., *Op. Cit.*

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

newspapers, which strengthened their condemnation towards the long-standing indulgence on the part of Paris.

Certainly, under indictment was also the fact that at the International Civil Aviation Organization conference, France had opposed proposals for sanctions against states offering support to terrorist organizations.

Moreover, the strengthening of the position of the Quay d'Orsay towards the PLO, and the strict defence of its leader Arafat, who was repeatedly accused of being responsible for the attacks on French territory, only further undermined Franco-Israeli relations<sup>124</sup>.

However, Chirac's government had clearly expressed its conviction that the PLO represented an important ally in improving relations with the Middle East, and in pursuing a solution with this geopolitical area: unofficial contacts with Arafat's organization were necessary, and this position was also shared by other European governments<sup>125</sup>.

In 1976, France was the objective of another attack, although it did not take place on its territory; an Air France flight departing from Tel Aviv and directed to Paris was targeted. Once again, the hijacking was traced back to a commando led by Carlos. By this time, it was clear that France had become the main target of Arab-Palestinian terrorism in the mid-1970s<sup>126</sup>.

However, this reality, given the cutting edge of French foreign policy, and in particular of the policy towards Middle Eastern states, seemed to be a contradiction.

Starting with Pompidou and continuing with Valéry Giscard d'Estaing's presidency, the Elysée had undertaken an attitude of progressive rapprochement with the more moderate wing of the Palestinian Liberation Organization<sup>127</sup>.

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Smith, C., *Op. Cit.*, pp.55-61.

<sup>127</sup> Hargrove, C. (1986), *Valéry Giscard D'Estaing*, in «Politique étrangère», N°1, pp.115-128.

It was a very clear orientation of the government, which was expressed on several occasions: firstly, through political support for the UN Resolution 3210 of 1974 concerning the PLO's participation as an observer at UN meetings<sup>128</sup>, and certainly also through Giscard's evocation of a 'Palestinian homeland' and the associated legitimate rights of its people<sup>129</sup>.

Probably this position was precisely one of the elements that contributed to the more extremist wings identifying the Nation on the Seine as the main target to contrast Arafat's progressive moderation.

Within the framework that made France the primary victim of international terrorism on European soil, the coexistence of several elements linked to the characterization of the French government's foreign policy in the 1970s, led to that dramatic outcome.

Libya, widely regarded by European countries as a primary sponsor of terrorist cells due to its historical and contemporary associations with extremist groups, emerges as a pivotal element in shaping France's international stance.

Previously a privileged partner in oil imports and exports, France instead found itself having to deal with a marked deterioration in its relations with the Libyans, also driven by President Giscard's alleged support for a coup d'état against Gaddafi<sup>130</sup>.

Moreover, Paris' involvement in the Lebanese internal conflict did not contribute to improving its position in the eyes of extremist factions located in the Middle East. On the contrary, France's action in the Lebanese context may have fuelled perceptions of external interference and partiality, exacerbating tensions and mistrust by extremist groups towards the Elysée<sup>131</sup>.

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<sup>128</sup> United Nation General Assembly (1974), *Resolution 3210*, Retrieved From: [ECF - Economic Cooperation Foundation: UN General Assembly Resolution 3210 - English Text](#). (Last Access: 02/06/2024).

<sup>129</sup> Lomellini, V., *Op. Cit.*, pp.51-56.

<sup>130</sup> Elhar, A. (2016), *Les relations Franco-Libyennes : entre permanence et instabilité (1969-2011)*, Grenobles, Presses Academiques Francophones, pp.122-139.

<sup>131</sup> Lomellini, V., *Op. Cit.*

In attempting to act as a mediator, Paris achieved an opposite outcome, exacerbating the extremism of those groups unwilling to compromise. The balanced position of the government of the Transalpine Country was also evident in the broader international context: Giscard moved between supporting the demands of European governments, which were necessarily key partners in the fight against terrorism, and between maintaining a stance of détente with countries in the Arab African world.

Among other aspects, this position did not improve relations with the United States and Israel, who, as previously pointed out, dissatisfied with the handling of terrorist crises by the French security services, demanded from the Quai d'Orsay a clearer stance against the PLO<sup>132</sup>.

It is possible with the analysis of the situation of the mid-1970's to draw some conclusions: in fact, it is evident that mainly two crucial elements emerge from the provided information.

First of all, the transformation of perpetrators characterized the wave of terrorism that targeted primarily the French State: previously, members of the PLO predominated as perpetrators; now, however, the stage is occupied by extremists on the fringes of the Resistance and by terror professionals, financed by state powers. This change highlights increasing complexity in the structure and motivation of terrorist groups.

Furthermore, in this framework the figure of Carlos, that by the time had become subject of an investigation conducted by the European security services club, symbolizes the interconnection between different terrorist actors from diverse geographical and political contexts.

The association of German terrorists with Palestinians, along with previous collaborations between Palestinian organizations and the Japanese Red Army, suggests the existence of an international network that was by the time crossing national borders.

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

Alongside a reorientation of the perception and understanding of transnational terrorism, it was now evident that national security structures were no longer adequate not only to counter, but especially to prevent the effects of this new phenomenon.

The need for stronger, closer and more determined cooperation among European security services was therefore looming, along with their full involvement.

However, this newfound awareness, as result of the terror of the mid-1970s that particularly struck Giscard d'Estaing's country, would reveal not sufficient to halt the new wave of terrorism in the 1980s, which once again saw France as its main victim.

## CHAPTER II

### **The early 80's and the terrorist attacks shocking France**

#### **2.1 The bombing on the train in the Toulouse - Paris route opens the new wave of attacks**

Sentenced to life imprisonment in first instance, the verdict of the Paris Special Court of Appeal on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2011<sup>133</sup>, marked a major turning point in what regards Ilic Ramirez Sanchez, Carlos “The Jackal”, the notorious terrorist: the sentence institutes legal justice particularly with regard to three attacks that shook French society between 1982-1983<sup>134</sup>.

In fact, Assize Court established that Carlos's involvement and coordination can be traced back to the 29 March 1982 attack on the Capitol train on the Toulouse-Paris route, the 22 April 1982 attack on the headquarters of the Lebanese newspaper Al Watan Al Arabi, and finally to the double attack that shocked the population of Marseille on the night of the year-end of 1983 at the Saint-Charles station and on the high-speed train on the Marseille-Paris route<sup>135</sup>.

The thread linking these attacks began to develop at the beginning of 1982: in February of that year, Magdalena Kopp and Bruno Breguet were arrested by the French authorities on the Champs Elysees. They were found in possession of weapons and explosive materials stored in their car<sup>136</sup>, particularly two kilos of Penthrite plastic explosive and two full gas bottles<sup>137</sup>, which were later confiscated.

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<sup>133</sup> Durand-Souffland, S. (13 May 2013), *Jugé en appel, Carlos récuse ses avocats*, in «Le Figaro».

<sup>134</sup> Thomas, S. (2015), *Yours in Revolution: Retrofitting Carlos the Jackal*, in «Culture Unbound», Vol.3, pp. 451-478.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Matassa, L. and Pelizzaro, G. P., (a cura di), (2006), Commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta concernente il “dossier Mitrokhin” e l'attività d'intelligence italiana, *Relazione sul gruppo Separat e il contesto dell'attentato del 2 agosto 1980*, Roma.

<sup>137</sup> Smith, C., *Op. Cit.*, p.191.

From the circumstances it appeared clear that in Paris the two were about to stage an attack in the heart of the city on behalf of Carlos, since the two declared themselves as members of the “Organization of International Revolutionaries” to the police<sup>138</sup>.

Shortly after the police arrest of Kopp and Breguet, at the end of February, French Interior Minister Gaston Defferre received a letter from Carlos, in which it was clear that he intended to issue an ultimatum to the government on the release of the two members of the terrorist group<sup>139</sup>:

M. Le Ministre, I am writing to inform you (...):

Following the decisions of our central direction I give you the following warning. We will not accept our comrades being in prison. We will not tolerate our comrades being extradited to any country, no matter which.

We demand:

1. An immediate halt to all interrogation of our soldiers
2. The release of our soldiers within 30 days of the date of this letter
3. That our soldiers should be released with all correct documents
4. That our soldiers should be allowed to travel together by a regular airline to a country and by route of their choice. They should have a French permit to leave.

We are now at war with Socialist France and I beg of you not to force us to be so. I assure you that the contents of this letter are considered to be a secret of the Organization. However, we have no objection to it being made public. We hope that this business can be brought to an early and satisfactory ending.

For the Organization of the Armed Arab Struggle – Arm of the Arab Revolution,  
Carlos

PS: I place below my thumbprints in order to identify this letter<sup>140</sup>.

The ultimatum was clear: Kopp and Breguet were to be released, otherwise the French population and high government officials at the Elysée Palace would be threatened.

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<sup>138</sup> Central Intelligence Agency (1982), Directorate of Intelligence, *Terrorism review*, 1982, Retrieved From: [CIA-RDP84-00893R000100050001-5.pdf](#). (Last Access: 15/05/2024).

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Smith, C., *Op. Cit.*, p.192.

The letter, initially delivered to the French embassy in The Hague, reached the offices of the French news agency AFP, making the prospect of a secret agreement between the two sides impossible<sup>141</sup>.

At the end of March, after receiving the letter, the Minister of the Interior declared that the 30-day ultimatum had passed without the two terrorists having been released as Carlos had requested, and nothing on the security front had moved<sup>142</sup>.

The Minister had ventured into an assessment that evidently arrived prematurely: at 8:40 p.m. on 29<sup>th</sup> of March, on the Capitol train leaving the Parisian station of Austerlitz and carrying 300 passengers in the direction of Toulouse, an explosion broke out on the train between Ambazac and La Jonchère-St-Maurice, just ahead of Limoges, location of next stop<sup>143</sup>.

By 11 p.m., a team of more than 200 rescuers, including gendarmes, firefighters, and municipal humanitarian emergency service personnel, tirelessly worked in the darkness to free the bodies entangled in metal and wreckage.

The train explosion resulted in 5 dead and 27 injured<sup>144</sup>; following a lapse of three hours, individuals identifying themselves as "friends of Carlos" announced their responsibility for the attack through the Agence France-Presse<sup>145</sup>.

The next day, the police headquarters also received a phone call seemingly originating from "Carlos's terrorist associates", followed by an identical call to AFP<sup>146</sup>.

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Milon, T. (March 22<sup>nd</sup> 2022), *Il y a 40 ans, l'attentat du train "capitole" près de limoges*, in «AFP», Fédération Nationale des Victimes d'Attentats et d'Accidents Collectifs.

<sup>144</sup> *L'explosion à bord du Capitole a fait cinq morts et vingt-sept blessés trois hypothèses*, in «Le Monde», 31 March 1982, Retrieved From : [L'explosion à bord du Capitole a fait cinq morts et vingt-sept blessés Une détonation dans la nuit \(lemonde.fr\)](https://www.lemonde.fr). (Last Access : 24/06/2024).

<sup>145</sup> *Pour Carlos, l'attentat du Capitole en 1982 visait Chirac, "c'est évident!"*, in «Le Point», 10 November 2011.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

The aftermath of the explosion was marked by a sense of urgency as emergency responders rushed to the scene to provide aid and assistance to the victims. The devastation caused by the explosion cast a dark shadow over the entire region, leaving the community facing the enormity of the tragedy.

As news of the attack reverberated across the country, it sparked widespread fear and uncertainty, prompting calls for heightened security measures to prevent further acts of terrorism.

Not even a month later, however, on the day of the first appearance before the Court of Magdalena Kopp and Bruno Breguet, another attack shook the centre of the French capital<sup>147</sup>.

At 9 a.m. on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> of April, an explosion occurred in Rue Marbeuf, a few steps from the Champs Elysees<sup>148</sup>.

In the meantime that the bomb exploded, teams of police, equipped with helmets and bulletproof vests, rushed to the courthouse in front of it: as mentioned, the 30<sup>th</sup> Court Summary was preparing to sentence Bruno Breguet, Magdalena Kopp and their French partner Michel Jacquot, a former accountant linked to members of the movement for Corsican Independence<sup>149</sup>.

It seems clear that the tension and concern over the release of Carlos' arrested comrades was very high, no doubt also due to the ultimatum issued by Carlos; as a consequence, preventive security measures were immediately triggered.

In the hours and days immediately afterwards, the news articles were dominated by headlines and accounts of the explosion by delving into the details of the attack in a vivid and evocative manner, with the intention of conveying the generalized terror that the Parisians and

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<sup>147</sup> Smith, C., *Op. Cit.*, p.194.

<sup>148</sup> Duquesne, J. (1982), *The onslaughts of fear*, in «Le Point», 26 April 1982, Central Intelligence Agency, Foreign Broadcast information service, Worldwide report. Terrorism, Retrieved From: [CIA-RDP82-00850R000500080026-0.pdf](https://www.cia-rdp82-00850R000500080026-0.pdf). (Last Access: 17/05/2024).

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

more generally the French Nation were facing shortly after the last bomb.

The pages of the 26<sup>th</sup> April edition of Le Point newspaper reported:

There is immediate panic: cars burn, a gas line explodes, a conflagration breaks out in a restaurant, shops signs and windows fall on passersby who are running in every direction, panic stricken and stained with blood. The damage is considerable, debris is scattered over hundreds of meters, the hand brake lever from the booby-trapped car will be found in the Europe 1 courtyard, far from here<sup>150</sup>.

The Rue Marbeuf incident caused one fatality, a 30-year-old woman named Nelly Guillerme, in addition to approximately 60 individuals sustained injuries, some of which were severe<sup>151</sup>.

When considering the significance of this attack, it is essential to underscore its particular objective: the offices of the Lebanese newspaper Al Watan Al Arabi were located in Rue Marbeuf; they were located, in fact, precisely in the building in front of which the bomb actually exploded<sup>152</sup>.

The newspaper's headquarters were transferred from Lebanon to Paris in 1976 due to Syrian threats, which occurred during the onset of the civil war: indeed, the newspaper had firmly taken a pro-Iraq stance in the context of the Iraq-Iran war that broke out in 1980<sup>153</sup>.

On the opposite side, Syria had started to develop an alliance with Iran based on common causes and common enemies, since 1979, the year of the Revolution<sup>154</sup>.

Moreover, in the context of the Lebanese conflict, the alliance between Iran and Syria significantly developed and shaped regional dynamics: the two influential powers combined their political and military

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Liscia, R., (11 January 1984), *La France cible N°1 du terrorisme*, investigation of Marchand J. and Saint-James F., in «VSD», French National Archives, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

<sup>154</sup> Goodarzi, J. (2010), *Iran and Syria*, in «United States Institute of Peace», Retrieved From: [Iran and Syria | The Iran Primer \(usip.org\)](#). (Last Access: 30/03/2024).

strengths to fortify their positions, develop a network of proxy militias, and thwart the objectives of their adversaries.

Their collaboration ensured that Saddam Hussein's Iraq, which bordered both nations, did not emerge as the dominant regional power, and they successfully expelled U.S. peacekeepers from Lebanon in 1984<sup>155</sup>.

As anticipated the alliance began following Iraq's invasion of Iran in 1980, during which Damascus offered crucial diplomatic and military aid to Tehran. This partnership was solidified in March 1982, when a high-ranking Syrian delegation, led by then Foreign Minister Abd al-Halim Khaddam, visited Tehran and signed several bilateral agreements on oil and trade, alongside a covert military pact<sup>156</sup>.

The pinnacle of their cooperation was observed after Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon and the subsequent defeat of Syrian forces. Syrian President Hafez Assad capitalized on Iran's sway over the Lebanese Shiites to conduct a campaign of subversion, terrorism, and guerrilla warfare against their shared adversaries in Lebanon, including the Christian-led government, Israeli occupying forces, and the U.S. and French peacekeeping forces<sup>157</sup>.

In this context of deployments, surely another element to consider is that Al Watan Al Arabi other than being itself overtly on the side of Iraq, counted among its staff, journalists who were the first in the Arab world to dare to open an investigation about the assassination of the French Ambassador in Beirut, Louis Delamare, at the hands of Syrian authorities on 4 September 1981<sup>158</sup>.

Considering these elements, it does not seem surprising that the newspaper office belonging to Walid Abu Zahr had already been the

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Duquesne, J., *Op. Cit.*

target of attacks only a few months earlier, on 19<sup>th</sup> of December 1981<sup>159</sup>.

The attack was, on the part of the security and government forces, hardly a surprise: several memos from the head of foreign security, the SDECE (Service de Documentation Extérieure et de Contre-Espionnage), reported to the Elysée Palace<sup>160</sup>.

Moreover, also memos delivered by police offices already days before the attack, informed the authorities of the possibility of a repetition of attacks following the train on the Toulouse-Paris route<sup>161</sup>.

Measures had been taken as part of precautionary tactics, and for the safety of the newspaper's headquarters and its editor; in fact, police patrols had been ordered to watch the residences of the heads of the newspaper and its headquarters. Those measures and precautions that evidently proved to be inadequate and inefficient<sup>162</sup>.

The development of the investigation led to the finding that the editor-in-chief of the newspaper, Walid Abu Zahr, was closely guarded at his entrances and exits by the terrorists, with a precise calculation of the minutes, as were his drivers and bodyguards, and also as well as the building housing the editorial office of Al Watan Al Arabi<sup>163</sup>.

An element that seemed crucial in the reconstruction of the facts during the investigation was the origin of the car packed with explosives that caused the attack: it was an Opel registered in Vienna and rented three days earlier from Hertz in Ljubljana, Yugoslavia, by a woman with false documents under a Swiss identity by the name of Magrit Staedelman<sup>164</sup>. This were the information held by the police and which they were able to trace during the investigation immediately following the bombing.

According to the Report on the Separat group and the context of the Bologna bombing of 2 August 1980, drawn up by the Investigation

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Matassa, L. and Pelizzaro, G.P. (a cura di), *Op. Cit.*, pp. 51-52.

<sup>164</sup> Duquesne J., *Op. Cit.*

Italian Committee on Mitrokhin Dossier in 2006, the identity of the woman under false documents would have been that of Christa-Margot Frolich<sup>165</sup>.

Frolich was arrested in Italy at Fiumicino airport two months later, on 18 June 1982: she was found in possession of a suitcase loaded with explosives<sup>166</sup>.

In the document, the sources from which this information is taken are referred to as follows:

With regard to the form of the documents examined by the French authorities, they are photocopies of a series of typed notes in various languages and some handwritten. It turned out that the original notes, seized by the Hungarian secret services from the flat of the Carlos group in Budapest, were translated and transcribed into Hungarian for the work needs of those services. These documents were later transmitted to the MFS for information and use at the end of a meeting between the services on 18 September 1985 - see doc. 86, DST report to investigating judge Jean-Louis Bruguière, dated 3 October 1995<sup>167</sup>.

According to information held by the security services, this was not the first time terrorists had travelled to Yugoslavia to retrieve equipment: the previous 20<sup>th</sup> of October, another bomb had exploded in Antwerp near the Portuguese Jewish synagogue, killing three people<sup>168</sup>.

The perpetrators were believed to be from Switzerland and Zagreb, and according to information gathered, the use of false Swiss passports with German-Swiss identities was a prerogative of the notorious Baader gang<sup>169</sup>.

As it is clear from both the journalistic narrative and the investigation documents, from the first months after the attacks, the international character of the terrorist wave emerged through several elements.

In addition to the already complex nature of the phenomenon, which stemmed precisely from the coexistence of elements that led to its

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<sup>165</sup> Matassa, L. and Pelizzaro, G. P. (a cura di), *Op. Cit.*

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> Duquesne, J., *Op. Cit.*

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

emergence as highly international, the French government certainly had to deal with speculation by the press and the anti-Syrian sentiment that erupted following the attack on the Al Watan Al Arab magazine<sup>170</sup>.

In effect, the creditable leads regarding the perpetrators or instigators of the terrorist attack and the rationale behind it led to the plausible assumption of Syria's involvement, even if indirectly.

First of all, as anticipated before, considering the context of the first Gulf War that broke out in September 1980 and set Iran, a theocratic state with a predominantly Shia Muslim population, against the officially secular, Sunni Muslim-dominated Iraqi Baathist government, with fears that the former would exploit sectarian tensions in Iraq to rally the Iraqi Shia majority against the government, Syria was supporting Iran.

Syria alignment with Iran during the Gulf War period reflected a complex geopolitical landscape, where regional powers navigated alliances based on strategic interests and ideological affiliations. Syria's backing of Iran underscored not only the intricacies of Middle Eastern politics but also highlighted the intricate web of relationships that shaped the dynamics of the Gulf region during this tumultuous period.

According to the French press, the Rue Marbeuf bombing was explicitly intended to silence the Arab newspaper, financed by the Baathist government and explicitly pro-Iraq, therefore considered to be Syria's mortal enemy<sup>171</sup>.

France, not only by representing the ground on which the newspaper was based, but also by directly entering the dynamics of the conflict, and militarily supporting Iraq, would have made itself a direct target of terrorism<sup>172</sup>.

Another decisive element seemed to be the investigation into the assassination of the French Ambassador in Beirut Delamare, already

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<sup>170</sup> Smith, C., *Op. Cit.*

<sup>171</sup> Liscia, R., *Op. Cit.*

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

mentioned above, which according to journalists belonging to Al Watan Al Arab was organized by the Syrians. In fact, French newspapers alluded to the fact that the car bomb was a direct response by Damascus to the TV documentary aired about the investigation into the Ambassador's murder<sup>173</sup>.

Another aspect to be taken into account was President Mitterrand's visit to Israel: in fact, in the aftermath of François Mitterrand's forty-eight-hour state visit to Israel in March 1982, the relationship between France and Syria became increasingly strained. Mitterrand's delegation included several key government ministers, and the visit was marked by significant events, including his speech to the Israeli Knesset on March 4<sup>th</sup>, where he praised the Camp David Accords and used cautious language supporting Israel's interpretation of UNSC Resolution 242 concerning territories occupied since 1967<sup>174</sup>.

Mitterrand remained convinced that this visit had also had the result to avert a crisis in Lebanon in the context of the ongoing civil war. However, the visit revealed precisely to be an element because of which France continued to experience repercussions: its involvement in the Middle East was thus bringing out its problematic issues on French soil<sup>175</sup>.

In fact, the increasing hostility from Syria was palpable, as Mitterrand's stance towards Israel was seen as a provocation. This animosity played a role in the terrorist attacks on the pro-Iraqi Lebanese newspaper Al Watan Al Arabi<sup>176</sup>.

The French press began to speculate about an intricate network of terrorism, suggesting that these groups were not operating in isolation but were instead interconnected, driven by the geopolitical dynamics of the region.

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<sup>173</sup> Smith, C., *Op. Cit.*

<sup>174</sup> Filiu, J. P. (2009), *François Mitterrand and the Palestinians: 1956-95*, in «Journal of Palestine studies», pp.24-41.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

The Elysée thus, had to confront an anti-Syrian sentiment in society that clamoured for decisive and meaningful action from their representatives: the government found itself in the position of having to show that something was being done to condemn the attacks and above all to protect the population from further danger<sup>177</sup>.

Two Syrian diplomats were therefore expelled from the country; Foreign Relations Minister Claude Cheysson would later explain in a press conference that the actions of these diplomats were not directly connected with the attacks, but certainly condemnable<sup>178</sup>.

One of them in fact, the military attaché, had organized an attack with knives and axes against Syrian opponents to the regime who were demonstrating in Paris<sup>179</sup>.

Syria's complicity in the attack, or perhaps the actual planning behind it, did not make the French government rule out Carlos' group as the direct organizer of the attack, but rather began to consider it in the same way as mercenaries in the service of countries that hired them for their own causes<sup>180</sup>.

In any case, it was the first time a European country had taken such an explicit stance following an act of terrorism as to expel two diplomats from the country<sup>181</sup>.

If this stance would have had its effect, the Quay d'Orsay would have discovered it shortly afterwards.

## **2.2 Not only Paris: the double attack in Marseille**

Once again, France found itself reeling from the devastation wrought by the detonation of not one, but two bombs; their explosions reverberated almost simultaneously. This time, however, the target was not the streets of the French capital, but the city of Marseille.

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Liscia, R., *Op. Cit.*

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Duquesne, J., *Op. Cit.*

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

It was the eve of New Year's, December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1983, at precisely 7:42 pm, in the hustle and confusion of Marseille's Saint-Charles station, chaos erupted as the first bomb exploded on the high-speed train 838 during its journey from Marseille to Paris<sup>182</sup>.

The deafening blast ripped apart train carriages and shattered the tranquillity of the evening, leaving in its wake a scene of terror.

The balance was dramatic: three lives lost, and countless others left injured. However, no one knew that the horror of the night was far from over<sup>183</sup>.

As the emergency responders were starting to rush to the scene, just twenty minutes later, at 8:09 pm, a second explosion shook the city, this time striking Saint-Charles station itself<sup>184</sup>.

The force of the blast became soon clear: two more deaths, and a multitude left injured, as a result a total of 41 people were reported wounded between the two attacks<sup>185</sup>.

The reconstruction of the attack on the TGV led to the ascertainment that the suitcase bomb had been deposited very close to the entrance in the luggage compartment occupying part of the aisle<sup>186</sup>.

In the overall horror of the attack, however, elements of luck came into play and prevented the attack from being even more fatal.

Firstly, most of the rented seats were only destined to be occupied by Lyon and a few hours before the start of the new year, France traditionally blocks traffic to prepare for the Réveillon<sup>187</sup>.

In addition, a few seconds before the explosion, the TGV had overtaken another train when the explosion could have caused a collision between the two trains; the TGV was travelling at just under 140 km/h, while in

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<sup>182</sup> *Les Assassins du Nouvel An*, in «Paris Match», January 13<sup>th</sup> 1984, French National Archives, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

<sup>183</sup> Liscia, R., *Op. Cit.*

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>186</sup> *Les Assassins du Nouvel An*, *Op. Cit.*

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*

other parts of the route it was approaching 300 km/h, which allowed it to brake without going off the track<sup>188</sup>.

On what it concerns the Saint-Charles station bombing, on the other hand, the bomb had been concealed in a suitcase or parcel and then deposited in the automatic locker room<sup>189</sup>.

This placement had pushed fragments from the metal lockers, thus multiplying its explosions and turning the entire room into a grenade<sup>190</sup>. The press conference organized the afternoon after the attacks by Prime Minister Pierre Mauroy highlighted two key aspects: the rhetoric skilfully used by the Prime Minister and the growing threat of terrorism<sup>191</sup>.

Mauroy, known for his eloquence, had to immediately address the subject of terrorism, dedicating the first few sentences of his speech to this crucial topic<sup>192</sup>.

Although a detailed analysis of anti-terrorist measures was expected, The Prime Minister limited himself to concise statements: “Tout sera mis en œuvre pour identifier les coupables et faire en sorte qu’ils soient punis”<sup>193</sup>.

This statement left room on the part of public opinion and mostly of the press interpretation as to the real operational capabilities and information in the government's possession<sup>194</sup>.

In fact, the Prime Minister statement, opened up two possible scenarios: either Mauroy was already aware of significant elements regarding the attacks, or he foresaw further imminent attacks. This raised questions about the transparency of information shared with the public and the actual strategies deployed by the authorities<sup>195</sup>.

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Thiollet, J. (3 January 1984), *Attentats : un 5<sup>e</sup> mort et une revendication*, in «Le Quotidien», French National Archives, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

What seems to be noticeable, reading the numerous newspaper articles in the days immediately following the attacks, is that the statements coming from the Elysée certainly did not reassure public opinion and instead instilled a feeling of mistrust towards what was communicated by the ministry<sup>196</sup>.

It also seemed, from the statements of the Prime Minister himself, that a feeling of surprise and astonishment at the terrorist wave had almost disappeared<sup>197</sup>.

Indeed, an account of the long list of attacks that had taken place in France during those years was beginning to be given.

Even the media were starting to realize that terrorist commandos more often than not struck indiscriminately, even though they sometimes used identical means, that France had not to deal with only one type of terrorism, but with a wide variety of different types<sup>198</sup>.

Throughout the course of the enquiry, investigators seem to have focused on an element that appears to be of fundamental importance, in order to understand the methodologies, the dynamics and the very characteristics of the perpetrators of the attacks.

This element is to be found in the analysis of the substance used to manufacture the bombs that exploded on San Sylvester Day<sup>199</sup>.

Several specialists were sent to the scene of the attack, among them the powder expert M. Calisti: the explosive used in the attacks weighed around 2/3 kilos<sup>200</sup>, the substance to fabricate them was Semtex, a pink-orange almond paste produced in Czechoslovakia for the Warsaw Pact armies, which was the weapon of choice of many terrorist

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<sup>196</sup> Carmouze, P. (3 January 1984) *Les trois stratégies des poseurs de bombes*, in «Le Quotidien de Paris», , French National Archives, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> *Carlos :la «pâte d'amande» tchèque et les pistes allemandes*, in «Libération», January 9<sup>th</sup> 1984, French National Archives, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

<sup>200</sup> Liscia, R., *Op. Cit.*

movements and which Carlos' organization was also known to have in its arsenal<sup>201</sup>.

Semtex is also described as an explosive as opposed to slower-acting explosive agents such as dynamite, in fact its detonating power is such, that it is difficult to recover even the smallest particle at the scene of an explosion<sup>202</sup>.

As a consequence, the use of these sophisticated explosives is a kind of signature in itself: the fearsome Smetex, a mixture of pentrite (47%) and exogen (47%) stabilized by a paraffin mix, it was not legally imported into France<sup>203</sup>.

Palestinians, West German terrorists or Italian, Irish, Armenian A.S.L.A.A. terrorists had in common the abundant availability of this explosive from cold countries, found in the composition of the bombs that struck in the terrorist attacks of Rue Copernic (October 1980), Le Capitole, Rue Marbeuf, and at the airport of Orly (July 1983)<sup>204</sup>.

Its use in France has never been ascertained with certainty, but the connection with Carlos's group is to be found also in the fact that at the time of their arrest Kopp and Breguet were found with 5 kg of Semtex in their car<sup>205</sup>.

It is clear how the analysis of the explosives alone reveals once again the elements of interweaving not only between different countries involved, making it a purely international phenomenon, but also the interweaving between different terrorist groups, which at the time already indicated a distinctly transnational character of this terrorism.

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<sup>201</sup> *Carlos: la «pâte d'amande» tchèque et les pistes allemandes*, Op. Cit.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>203</sup> Chambaz, J. (3 January 1984), *Ces explosifs qui sont une signature...*, in «Le Quotidien de Paris», , French National Archives, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>205</sup> *Carlos: la «pâte d'amande» tchèque et les pistes allemandes*, Op. Cit.

### **2.3 The responsibility of the attacks and the interweaving of tracks: Iran, Syria, Islamic Jihad and Carlos**

In the aftermath of the attacks, as with every event of national and international calibre, the press has spoken out in its analysis of the causes and responsibilities of the terrorist attacks.

Firstly, the attacks in Marseille represented a turning point in the understanding and narration of terrorism, considering that for the first time Gaston Defferre did not mention and consequently took into consideration the responsibility of far-right terrorists<sup>206</sup>.

For the first time in years, there was no mention of the delta commando or the Charles Martel Group. A few radio or television reporters hinted briefly at a possible 'black trail', but in this situation not even the Mayor of Marseille and Minister of Foreign Affairs, felt the need to respond to this type of provocation, sending out the message that the black track was completely discredited<sup>207</sup>.

In fact, speculation about the responsibility for the attacks started from the express claim the AFP office in Paris received: a phone call from an unknown person claiming responsibility from the group Organization de la Lutte Armée Arab (O.L.A.A.), a claim that was reported in verbatim by several newspapers in the following days<sup>208</sup>:

Nous revendiquons le triple attentat de la Saint-Sylvestre au sud de la France et au nord du Liban : nous nous adressons au peuple de France, nous vengeons nos martyrs et nos victimes des raids de l'aviation française contre nos foyers le 17 novembre 1983. Toute nouvelle agression ne sera pas impunie.

Organisation de la Lutte Armée Arabe<sup>209</sup>.

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<sup>206</sup> Meyer, J. (13 January 1984) *ou est passée la piste noire ?*, in a Magazine hebdo, , French National Archives, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Backmann, R., (6 January 1984) *Le Liban explose dans le T.G.V.*, in Le Nouvel Observateur, French National Archives, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

<sup>209</sup> Drahcir, J., *Terrorisme au profit de qui ?*, in «Revolution», French National Archives, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

Almost simultaneously, another interlocutor, speaking on behalf of the same organization, claimed responsibility for the attack in Tripoli (Libano), and a few days later in west berlin, a letter confirmed these claims to the AFP headquarters<sup>210</sup>.

Both claims therefore did not only refer to the double attack on New Year's Eve, but considered as part of the action a third attack which took place outside France, but which once again hit a symbolic target of the Transalpine Country: the first day of the new year, in January 1984, seven kilos of explosives destroyed the premises of the French Cultural Centre in Tripoli, Lebanon's second most populous city<sup>211</sup>.

Lebanon, as we have already seen in dealing with the 1982 bombings, was one of the key points in the terrorism affair that was affecting France and was certainly a crucial point in French foreign policy in the Middle East<sup>212</sup>.

Some newspapers headlines saw the New Year's triple attack as an extension of the war that was then ravaging Lebanon and in which France was now a party<sup>213</sup>.

Moreover, in Tripoli, French war veterans had protected the departure of Yasser Arafat and the PLO loyalists; it was where, according to people close to Arafat, an important branch of the Fatah revolutionary council had just been set up, led by Abou Nidal, a former Palestinian leader expelled by the leader of the OLP and later fled to Iraq and Syria, from where he was believed to have organized some of the most ferocious attacks of those years<sup>214</sup>.

The interesting element that can be noted from the narrative of the story in the following months is that, although the organization of the attacks by the Carlos group had been recognized and appeared certain,

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<sup>210</sup> Backmann, R., *Op. Cit.*

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>213</sup> Drahcir, J., *Op. Cit.*

<sup>214</sup> Backmann, R., *Op. Cit.*

speculation was rife that once again the commando had acted at the indirect hands of other powers.

This speculation added layers of complexity to the already intricate web of events, prompting questions about the broader geopolitical landscape and the interweaving of various actors.

Indeed, one could read in French newspapers how Carlos's O.L.A.A could act as a subcontractor for Islamic Jihad, or Islamic Amal, or both, or any other organization hostile to French policy in the Middle East<sup>215</sup>.

As for the Islamic jihad, the combination of a series of elements certainly seemed crucial: first of all, the organization that had been responsible for the attacks on the marines' headquarters and the French Drakkar post, which killed almost three hundred people in Beirut on 23 October 1982, had given the French contingent of the armed force until 31 December to leave Lebanon<sup>216</sup>.

Consequently, the coincidence of the dates, the technology used, the power of the charges, and the symbolic and spectacular nature of the chosen targets led to the assumption that France had certainly been hit by a powerful and experienced organization<sup>217</sup>.

The responsibility of Jihad appeared all the more suspicious considering its characteristics: an organization from the Lebanese Shia community and close to the Iranian regime, which provided it with substantial material and financial support<sup>218</sup>.

Here, Iran's position seemed crucial; a few weeks earlier, in fact, Paris had just expelled eight Iranians - three diplomats and fifty students - within a week on suspicion of subversive activities on French soil<sup>219</sup>.

According to French journalists indeed, the idea that the two attacks were carried out by Iranians was therefore quite widespread in the governance at the Elysée<sup>220</sup>.

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<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

It was considered that, in any case, the Iranians, thanks to their relations within the international terrorist community, had in fact commissioned the attacks on another group, leading to the intertwining of the Carlos and jihadist tracks<sup>221</sup>.

The other track referred to is that of Amal Islamist, a pro-Iranian Shia organization. Certainly, the statement by its leader Hussein Moussaoui after the attack on the French Drakkar post had caught the attention<sup>222</sup>:

J'approuve ces attentats et je suis prêt à en commettre. Je proclame haut et clair que ces attentats sont des actes valables et je salue bien bas l'héroïsme des kamikazes, quels qu'ils soient<sup>223</sup>.

In addition to this element, it was thought that Amal had good motives to take revenge on French territory for the victims of the French naval aviation's super entendard raid of 17<sup>th</sup> November 1983 on the city of Baalbek, in particular on a barracks where the organization's commandos were training<sup>224</sup>, the "Operation Brochet" launched by François Mitterrand as a consequence of the Drakkar bombing of the previous October 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Once again, the triple attack that shook France both directly on its soil and in Lebanese territory at the start of the New Year demonstrated the complex network that characterized terrorism in the 1980s, but which, as we have seen, particularly characterized the Carlos group's engagement of intricate and intertwined state interests.

In this network of connections in which various actors came into play, Defferre's governance had to untangle itself.

Newspaper articles report that as his first action after the attacks in the fight against terrorism, he carried out a Poniatowski-style raid on the fundamentalist Muslim community in Marseille.

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<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

The outcome was eighteen people arrested: nine of them were deported after an immediate trial before the Sixth Criminal Chamber of Marseille, while five were indicted for various offences, including the seizure of a gun and a sum of money amounting to 550,000 francs<sup>225</sup>.

This extremely strong reaction by the government was clearly not related to the political leaders' belief that these fundamentalists were linked to the New Year's Eve attacks.

Perhaps, once again, the Elysée wanted to give a signal to society, wanted to send a message of immediate reaction, although it was understood this was not in fact targeted. Perhaps it was once again a surface move on the part of the government, which in the meantime was trying to extricate itself from the complex situation.

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<sup>225</sup> Raoux, F. (23 January 1984), *Terrorisme: les expulsions pretextes de Marseille*, in «Le quotidien», French National Archives, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **Responding to Terror**

#### **3.1 Inside French Parliament: debate on positions and perceptions of international terrorism**

Already in the first half of 1982, two bloody attacks had shocked the French people, leaving a trail of pain and fear. These tragic events not only fuelled a fierce debate within civil society and in the media, but also triggered a deep division within the institutions, with the government and the opposition taking often confrontational positions.

In order to fully understand the nuances of this debate and the different strategies proposed to deal with the terrorist threat, it is crucial to carefully analyze the accounts of the public sessions of the French Senate at the time. These parliamentary debates offer a unique window into the complex reality of the time, revealing the concerns, fears and hopes of a nation grappling with an invisible enemy.

The heated debates in the Senate not only reflected the different views of the government and opposition on terrorism, but also the deep divisions that ran through French society at the time. The country was torn between those who called for security at all costs and those who feared that excessive repression could jeopardize civil liberties and the basic principles of democracy.

The analysis of the Senate debates thus offers a valuable opportunity to deepen the understanding of the terrorist phenomenon. Through these direct testimonies, we can grasp the nuances of the public debate, the different strategies proposed to deal with the terrorist threat, and the deep divisions that ran through French society at the time.

One of the leading opposition figures was certainly Charles Pasqua, who at the time belonged to the right-wing party founded by Chirac Rassemblement pour la République (RPR)<sup>226</sup>.

In particular, he was recognized for his stances on defense and security. For this reason, he did not fail to expose himself on such a sensitive and impactful topic as terrorism, ending up giving a voice to the entire opposition.

During the session of 29 April 1982, thus about a week after the attack in Rue Marbeuf on the headquarters of the Al Watan Al Arabi newspaper, the opposition pointed out all the problems and shortcomings the government had shown in its handling of the phenomenon. Especially considering that the attack in Rue Marbeuf followed only a few weeks after the explosion at the Le Capitole train on the Toulouse - Paris route.

During his speech, Pasqua dwelt on a number of aspects, first of all emphasizing the downplaying of the phenomenon that had transpired from the Prime Minister's statements to the Anglo-American press according to which: «La France ne bascule pas dans le terrorisme, bien au contraire. La politique de changement que nous avons engagée porte là aussi ses fruits»<sup>227</sup>.

The act of terrorism was described by the RPR senator as not an isolated act, and indeed accompanied by a list of attacks from the previous months and set in a phenomenon of violence that was affecting France as a whole<sup>228</sup>.

Moreover, it is clear from the senator's words that the opposition's idea was that France was no longer just the ground on which the attacks took place, but was itself the specifically chosen target of terrorist groups:

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<sup>226</sup> Sénat Français, *Charles Pasqua*, Retrieved From :[PASQUA Charles \(senat.fr\)](https://www.senat.fr/legislature/13/legislature13/legislature13_pasqua.html). (Last Access :17/06/2024)

<sup>227</sup> Sénat Français (29th April 1982), *Compte Rendu Intégral - 14° Séance*, in «Journal Officiel de la République Française».

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

C'est oublier surtout l'essentiel, à savoir que c'est bel et bien la France qui est visée désormais par les attentats terroristes. Elle n'en est plus seulement le lieu géographique, mais la cible privilégiée.

La bombe de la rue Marbeuf, placée délibérément en pleine rue, visait plus les passants que les locaux d'un journal arabe situés au quatrième étage.

La bombe du Capitole avait pour seul but de tuer aveuglément des ressortissants français. Et ceux qui n'ont pas hésité à assassiner l'ambassadeur de France à Beyrouth, à tuer deux employés de l'ambassade et à bombarder ses locaux, ceux qui s'en sont pris à plusieurs reprises au cours des derniers jours à des installations françaises en Autriche appliquent, à l'évidence, une stratégie anti-française concertée. Tout se passe comme si l'on avait déclaré la guerre à la France et à ses intérêts<sup>229</sup>.

What emerges from Pasqua's words is that decisive elements in the mismanagement of the phenomenon were the lack of means that Mitterrand's government eliminated: these include the death penalty, abolished just the year before by the law of 9 October 1981<sup>230</sup>, and the elimination of the State Security Court, a body that had the role of coordinating information from the various police and intelligence services<sup>231</sup>.

In addition to this, an attitude of discouragement on the part of the government towards the police is emphasized by the opposition: according to Pasqua, the fact that one of the first statements of the government officials was to denounce policemen accused of racism, anti-Semitism and beatings, made the police body feel little support from the institutions and even destined for public lynching, compromising its efficiency<sup>232</sup>.

Similarly, according to this position, it seems to have affected the work of the security and police organs, statements from the government's top

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<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Assemblée National (2010), *Loi du 9 octobre 1981 portant abolition de la peine de mort*, Retrieved From : [Peine de mort \(assemblee-nationale.fr\)](https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/peine-de-mort). (Last Access : 04/06/2024).

<sup>231</sup> République Française – Légifrance (1981), *Lois et décrets n° 0182 du 05/08/1981*, in «Journal Officiel de la République Française», Retrieved From : [Légifrance - Publications officielles - Journal officiel - JORF n° 0182 du 05/08/1981 \(accès protégé\) \(legifrance.gouv.fr\)](https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/lois/loi/1981/05/08/0182). (Last Access : 04/06/2024).

<sup>232</sup> Sénat Français, *Compte Rendu Intégral - 14° Séance*, Op. Cit.

leadership regarding respect for the hierarchy within the organs themselves, leaving this hierarchy to be challenged by ‘politicized organs’ such as the trade unions<sup>233</sup>.

The opposition concludes its speech by emphasizing the need to take as an example the experience and methods developed by Italian intelligence and the German BKA (Bundeskriminalamt- Criminal Police of the Federation)<sup>234</sup>: it is clear that the effectiveness of the counter-terrorism means activated in these two states (which had certainly been forged by tragic experiences of state terrorism since the early 1970s), were recognized and appreciated internationally, so much so that they prompted more assiduous collaboration with security agencies and police centers.

This intervention highlighted, at least according to the opposition to the government, the shortcomings in dealing with international terrorism. However, the Minister of the Interior’s reply was not long in coming: as can be seen from his speech in the Senate in response to Pasqua, the prime minister structured his reply by highlighting the strengths and strategies adopted by the current government to combat terrorism.

The intervention of the Minister of the Interior, Gaston Defferre, reflects what is the typical dynamic that occurs within a debate between government and opposition: light is shed on the victories and strengths of the strategies adopted to counter the phenomenon.

In particular, the Minister focuses on a number of aspects. First of all, the diplomatic plan seems to be of first importance, the government reports how France has adopted a policy of clear and strong communication with other countries, warning them that any attempt to bring terrorism into French territory would be dealt decisively and firmly<sup>235</sup>.

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<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

It is evident from these words that the French leadership also had it in mind that terrorist commandos did not act independently, but were often directed by state powers that targeted the transalpine country<sup>236</sup>. The perception, therefore, of mercenary and international terrorism is exemplified by the words that can be read in the compte rendu of the assembly; indeed, the Minister speaks precisely of international terrorism:

En ce qui concerne le terrorisme international, nous nous trouvons, comme tous les gouvernements, comme les vôtres, messieurs, face à une situation qui est à la fois particulièrement dramatique et particulièrement difficile.

Le terrorisme international peut être le fait d'hommes ou de femmes étrangers à la France, qui viennent régler leurs comptes sur notre territoire et qui font couler le sang français ; ou il peut être le fait d'organisations extérieures qui peuvent s'entraîner, trouver des armes dans un certain nombre de pays, notamment du bassin méditerranéen, dont vous connaissez tous les noms, qui n'acceptent pas la politique de la France ou qui, pour des raisons qui ne sont pas toujours décelées, veulent s'en prendre à la France<sup>237</sup>.

The allusion to foreign terrorist organizations in France is clear, which, although using non-explicit references, makes the government's knowledge of the operation of these organizations, in training and recruiting weapons in the Mediterranean states, seem clear<sup>238</sup>.

In this context, Defferre's words about the measures taken to counter the phenomenon seem crucial in the understanding of how the government has moved, whether it has moved only in terms of countering or also in terms of prevention.

One aspect certainly emerges, which has already been taken into account in reporting the attack on the Al Watan Al Arab newspaper: the French government decided to extend controls even to the diplomatic

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<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.



This aspect is clearly underlined by Defferre to support the position that the government was also moving in advance to understand the dynamics of development among the terrorist commandos<sup>243</sup>.

To better understand the position Defferre and Pierre Mauroy's government wanted to take in dealing with terrorism, it is certainly useful to analyze the criticism made by the Minister of the Interior against the previous government: the government of Jaques Chirac under the presidency of Valery Giscard D'Estaing.

In particular, in the parliamentary report reference to another crucial attack in the history of 1970s France is made, already described in detail above: the attack on the Drugstore Publicis in Paris in September 1974.

What had happened before the drugstore bombing, as already mentioned in chapter one, was that a Japanese terrorist Yukata Fuyaka had been arrested in France after being found in possession of detailed documents concerning terrorist plans on European soil, together with a large amount of money: it was known to the police that he was affiliated with the Japanese Red Army and had contacts with the PFLP. In fact, this was also confirmed by the Minister in his speech, stating that Carlos later requested his release<sup>244</sup>.

The release was not granted, which led Carlos to react violently with the attack in Saint-Germain de Prés; in addition to this, a few days later French citizens were taken hostage at the embassy in The Hague: in response, Chirac's government decided to release the Japanese terrorist in order to put an end to the attacks<sup>245</sup>.

The criticism levelled at the previous government is precisely on this aspect: the release on demand of the detainee and terrorist showed a weakness and renunciation of the governance that France, according to

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<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

Defferre, could not afford, and was even considered counterproductive by the latter.

Further criticism of Giscard d'Estaing's presidency is made by the Minister of the Interior regarding the arrest of Abou Daoud, who was involved in the Munich massacre in 1972, and who was released before the extradition procedure, initiated by the Germans, had been completed<sup>246</sup>.

It seems clear that the criticism levelled at previous governments and their handling of the terrorist urgency is motivated by a desire to approach the threat in a different way from the left-wing government of Mitterrand-Mauroy: if previously they had acted in such a way as to 'satisfy' the demands of the commando leadership in order to avoid further massacres, this was not the approach chosen by the government in office in 1982.

A position of firmness therefore emerges, the aim is not to give in to the terrorists' demands: this is reiterated by the Prime Minister, who emphasizes that the Elysée Palace would have also maintained a clear position on the arrest of Magdalena Kopp and Bruno Breguet, whose release Carlos had already requested, as mentioned above.

Defferre's words indeed leave little to the imagination:

Je ne rejette aucune politique — je le dirai tout à l'heure de façon plus précise — mais, enfin, ne croyez-vous pas que chaque fois que l'on cède ainsi à la menace l'on risque d'encourager de nouvelles menaces et de nouveaux attentats ? Je pose la question. Elle mérite d'être posée. Elle mérite que l'on y réfléchisse.

(...) Comment faire pour lutter contre le terrorisme international ? Il ne faut, à mon avis, renoncer à aucune méthode, je n'ose pas dire, dans une assemblée parlementaire, à aucun moyen<sup>247</sup>.

What emerges from the analysis of the debate is certainly an evolution of tactics for dealing with terrorism-related emergencies that varies from government to government.

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<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

The approach that Mauroy's government, in agreement with the Minister of the Interior, Defferre, appears to want to envisage in countering terrorism seems to be one of greater firmness and not yielding to the terrorists' demands, unlike the management mode that was put in place by Chirac's government following the attacks in the early 1970s.

This perspective already gives an insight into how a change in management methods was necessary, because those previously used had proved to be insufficient and at times counterproductive.

In fact, between the 1970s and the early 1980s, the phenomenon of terrorism had not diminished, but had perhaps worsened.

### **3.2 France: Target and Crossroad of International Terrorism**

The attacks between 1982 and 1984 represented, as we have seen, a renewed exacerbation of terrorism for which the shocked French population was clamoring for a prompt response from the government leadership.

In Parliament, already in the aftermath of the attacks, there were discussions about the best response and prevention strategies towards the phenomenon, but it certainly seems important for the purposes of understanding the tactics adopted, to understand the Elysée's level of understanding and analysis of the phenomenon.

To this end, not only the parliamentary reports, as already analyzed, are useful, but the report drawn up on behalf of the commission for the control of the conditions of functioning, intervention and coordination of the police and security services engaged in the fight against terrorism, emerges as particularly interesting on this aspect.

The Commission was created on 18 November 1983 when the Senate adopted the report drafted by Pierre Salvi on behalf of the Laws

Commission: the rapporteur was convinced that the facts dictated the creation of a real commission to combat terrorism<sup>248</sup>:

Les actes de terrorisme sont non seulement de plus en plus fréquents, mais également de plus en plus violents. Dans la plupart des pays européens, la lutte antiterroriste a entraîné une rationalisation administrative et une centralisation hiérarchique du commandement, il semble que la France se caractérise par la prolifération des centres de décision, le parallélisme des services et l'absence de réelle coordination.<sup>249</sup>

This document, written by Senator Paul Masson, is not only an important element to understand the counter-terrorism strategies and techniques adopted by the French government in the early 1980s, and to understand their possible efficiency, but also provides an insight into the perception of the phenomenon from the leadership of the French government.

In fact, the analysis of journalistic enquiries and parliamentary reports shows that the perception of the terrorist acts perpetrated on French soil was that the transalpine state was not faced with a terrorism of nationalist matrix and delimited by elements coming from a unique state or power, but on the contrary, elements had emerged from various aspects that led to characterizing the acts of violence as of international matrix: this implied an internationalization in the composition of the terrorist commandos, an involvement of foreign states as instigators of the attacks, an involvement of different states in the training of terrorist cells and in the supply of weapons and/or documents.

The theory of the internationalization of terrorism was intertwined with that of the existence of a terrorist international, according to which terrorist acts between the 1970s and 1980s were directed and indicated

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<sup>248</sup> Senat Français, Masson, P. (a cura di), (1984), *Rapport fait au nom de la commission de contrôle (1) des conditions de fonctionnement, d'intervention et de coordination des services de police et de sécurité engagés dans la lutte contre le terrorisme, créée en vertu de la résolution adoptée par le Sénat le 18 novembre 1983.*

<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

by a single state, which was also explicitly named in the works of the authors who supported this thesis: the Soviet Union<sup>250</sup>.

The above thesis, mainly supported by investigative journalists such as C. Sterling and E. Sablier, as quoted in the report, has been challenged countless times and assessed as baseless<sup>251</sup>.

However, it is the same Senator Masson who points out that journalists often have access to different types of information sources, which are often considered insufficient at government level to expose theories that assume the involvement of other states. It seems clear that this would explicitly undermine relations at the international level<sup>252</sup>.

Indeed, it is important to note that there are also theories supported by sources that can be considered of a certain authority and that underlines similar elements supporting the theory of Sterling and Sablier: among these in Italy during 1983, SISMI, the Italian military security intelligence service, draw a report to the Italian Parliament which dealt on the international connections of terrorist organizations both internationally and nationally based. In this regard, specifically the report affirms:

I collegamenti possono manifestarsi sia tra organizzazioni terroristiche a base nazionale o internazionale, sia tra organizzazioni terroristiche ed emanazioni statuali. Questa seconda ipotesi, già intuibile come conseguenza logica di una strategia dei blocchi opposti che preferiscono forme di guerra surrogata per creare difficoltà ai potenziali avversari sfruttando ogni possibilità che ne faciliti la destabilizzazione, si è arricchita nei tempi recenti, in varie circostanze, di evidenze che ne delineano la consistenza<sup>253</sup>.

In addition to the international connections that seemed to be undoubtedly credited by the Italian security agency, the report also

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<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

<sup>253</sup> Senato della Repubblica (1983), *Relazioni Di Minoranza Della Commissione Parlamentare D'inchiesta Sulla Strage Di Via Fani Sul Sequestro E L'assassinio Di Aldo Moro E Sul Terrorismo In Italia*, Roma.

mentions the role of the KGB in this context of interconnection between the various extremist groups<sup>254</sup>.

According to the rapporteurs Covatta, Martelli, Barsacchi, Della Briotta, Franchi, Marchio, Sciascia, Sterpa and La Valle, immediately after the kidnapping and assassination of Aldo Moro, the Red Brigades were contacted by elements of the Hyperion, ("A structure in Paris, which, under the cover of a language institute, had the task of coordinating the actions of the various subversive groups operating in Europe: IRA, ETÀ, NAPAP, RAF"<sup>255</sup>), in the context of which it was proposed to them to take part in a more international network of terrorism.

As far as the involvement of the Soviet service is concerned, it seems to emerge that its exponents were aware of the activities discussed within the French structure and that the network could be regarded as a KGB 'longa manus'<sup>256</sup>.

The report leaves no shadow of a doubt, based on statements also by turncoats according to SISMI:

Come riferito da più fonti, infatti, i servizi segreti dell'Est europeo, (KGB e Bulgari), con la mediazione palestinese, avrebbero contattato nel 1981 le B.R., ma già da prima, dicono numerosi pentiti, le organizzazioni straniere, in particolare KGB e OLP, avevano una fitta rete di rapporti, basati soprattutto sulla fornitura di armi, con le formazioni minori del terrorismo italiano<sup>257</sup>.

The sources therefore appear to be very solid, considering the fact that the statements of informants and former brigatists such as Savasta, Peci and Cianfanelli were seriously taken into account in the drafting of the report<sup>258</sup>.

Although the report drawn up by the Italian security agency can be considered a highly relevant document in the discussion on the international terrorist, the fact remains that, even as pointed out by

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<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

French Senator Masson, the elements on which the sources of the time were based were certainly institutionally considered insufficient to support the thesis of international terrorism, which is not to say that the government was not aware of the facts that certainly testified links between the various terrorist groups: among these, the logistical exchange, commando compositions and subcontracting of terrorist operations.

Proof of this is the arrest of Magdalena Kopp in Paris in February 1982, a German terrorist close to the Baader Meinhof gang, together with Bruno Breguet, who, as we have already analyzed above, were acting on behalf of the FPLP-affiliated Carlos group<sup>259</sup>.

According to the report, the links between the groups were facilitated by the training they all received in training camps located mostly in Lebanon, including Chatila and Baddaoui<sup>260</sup>.

The international connections on the terrorist front, therefore, only complicated the organization of the fight for European governments. In fact, it was particularly easier for commandos to obtain financial means, weapons and false identity documents<sup>261</sup>.

Moreover, movement between European countries was certainly much easier considering the connections and support points sown between states, which made capture operations particularly complex even in cases of immediate intervention by local police services<sup>262</sup>.

Therefore, while the theory of the terrorist international cannot be considered as having enough solid roots, it can be certainly seen that the leadership at the Elysée, but also in the rest of the European countries, had a well-founded awareness that the phenomenon they were facing during the 1980s, but already since the 1970s, was a purely international one.

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<sup>259</sup> Sénat Français, Masson, P. (a cura di), *Op. Cit.*

<sup>260</sup> Ibid.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid.

This involved, first of all, a network of close informal and personal contacts between domestic and international extremist terrorism, confirmed by the fact that French extremist commandos had more and more members of different nationalities (in the analysis of the connections between French extremist terrorism and international terrorism)<sup>263</sup>: within Action Direct there were also Italians<sup>264</sup>.

In addition to this, the Paris seemed to be a real strategic base for international terrorism, where members of terrorist organizations from different countries, Germans of the RAF, Lebanese, Syrians, Iranians, Italians converged<sup>265</sup>: the French Capital in the 1980s had thus not only become one of the targets chosen by commandos for their violent actions, but also became a real crossroads for extremist groups from different parts of the world, favoring exchanges not only on an ideological level but also on a strategic and material level, through the supply of weapons.

Thirdly, the characterizing element of this new phenomenon that was noted by French governance was a ‘crystallization’ of terrorism around the struggle of the Palestinian people<sup>266</sup>:

*Cette internationalisation du terrorisme semble s'être actuellement cristallisée autour du problème palestinien, la coopération entre les mouvements se traduisant par la création de commandos internationaux et par la fourniture d'un soutien logistique dans les divers pays, ceci étant souvent le fait de pays étrangers opposés aux démocraties occidentales<sup>267</sup>.*

According to the report, international terrorism had developed its ramifications from the conflict in the Middle East between Israel and Palestine and then extended its scope to western soil<sup>268</sup>.

In particular, the architect of this development had been the most extremist matrix of the organization for the Liberation of Palestine, the

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<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid.

Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, led by Georges Habbash, whose operations on international soil were directed by the Wadi Haddad commando<sup>269</sup>: this is what also emerged from the operational and ideological proximity of Carlos himself, engaged in the commando since the beginning of its operativity.

In fact, following the death of Wadi Haddad and the dissolution of his commando, Carlos maintained the same orientation by carrying on its activities through the Arab Armed Struggle Organization<sup>270</sup>.

It seems clear, therefore, that Mauroy's government was aware not only of the existence of the phenomenon, but also of its more specific characteristics, as well as of the conformation of the commandos: the report shows how AASO's cooperation included those with the Japanese Red Army, the German, Italian and Swiss extreme left-wing organizations, and some French and South American individuals<sup>271</sup>.

Indeed, this was also evident from the conformation of the commando itself; already at the time of the attack on the Publicis Drugstore in Paris, the close cooperation between the Japanese terrorist organization and Haddad's commando had become evident.

The intertwining of links not only between the various commandos but also on a personal level between the various components, represented both the crucial element of this phenomenon, but above all the most critical element for the security services in their penetration and neutralization action<sup>272</sup>.

One aspect of particular interest is that the government seemed to have strong convictions that international terrorism could not be self-sufficient but needed to be supported by countries that provided it with aid in various forms<sup>273</sup>.

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<sup>269</sup> Ibid.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid.

Le terrorisme international serait cependant difficilement viable sans le support que certains pays lui apportent sous diverses formes<sup>274</sup>.

These countries included not just some Islamic countries such as Syria, Libya, South Yemen and Iran, but also some eastern countries.

Support took five different forms, according to Masson's report: material support through the supply of weapons, equipment, explosive material such as Semtex and false documents; technical training in training camps; ideological training; development of international contacts; establishment of connections between terrorist groups and special services of states<sup>275</sup>.

It should also be noted that the report emphasizes how the Soviet Union was involved by acting through satellite countries or the Arab countries, without being directly involved, the only exception being the formation of numerous Palestinians in the USSR during the 1970s and 1980s<sup>276</sup>.

This is a reality that Carlos himself recounts in first person in his autobiography, in which he states that it was in Moscow that he began to approach the ranks of the FPLP<sup>277</sup>.

The analysis of the report drawn up by Senator M. Paul Masson on behalf of the commission to monitor the conditions of operation, intervention and coordination of the police services engaged in the fight against terrorism, is therefore decisively relevant in outlining the government's position in the aspect of understanding the terrorist phenomenon that was striking French soil in the 1970s and 1980s.

In May 1984, the date of the report, the Elysée was aware of the dynamics that characterized the organizations responsible for the attacks during those years, there was a decisive awareness of the international composition of the commandos, of the relations between the various extremist organizations both national and international, of the material but also ideological exchanges and in particular of the

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<sup>274</sup> Ibid.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid.

<sup>277</sup> Sanchez, I. R., *Op. Cit.*

involvement of states that can be considered as sponsors of terrorist activities.

In addition to this, it was clear that France was the chosen target of terrorist attacks given its positions in the Middle East, and the report itself refers in particular to three scenarios: French policy in Lebanon that irritated Syria; the presence of French troops in Chad that was not tolerated by Libya; and French aid to Iraq that involved, as previously pointed out, a clash with Iran, an opposing faction in the war that was upsetting the two states.

Regarding the first scenario, it has already been anticipated how the ongoing war in Lebanon had brought out Syria's enmity towards France<sup>278</sup>.

Syria, which had been present on Lebanese territory since 1976 as part of the Arab deterrent force, aimed to maintain its influence in the region by supporting the PLO presence in the region<sup>279</sup>.

On the other hand, the French intervention in the context of the Multinational Force in Lebanon in the summer of 1982, which had become necessary following the Israeli invasion, was aimed at supervising the evacuation of the PLO<sup>280</sup>.

Tensions between Syria and France increased when the MNF (Multinational Force) sought to stabilize Beirut and support the fragile Lebanese government, objectives perceived by Syria as direct threats to its interests<sup>281</sup>.

Historically, the rivalry between Syria and France, besides being based on opposing sides, was also fueled by the different visions on the future of Lebanon: Syria wanted a Lebanon under its influence, while France

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<sup>278</sup> Tarrabain, A. M. (1990), *The Four Powers Multinational Force In Lebanon 1982-84: Peacekeeping or Intervention*, Canterbury, University of Kent.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid.

promoted a sovereign and independent Lebanon, in line with its colonial heritage<sup>282</sup>.

On what it concerns the second scenario, since 1960, the year of independence from France, a colonial power, Chad has experienced a development of armed clashes, resulting in a civil war that divided the country throughout several phases between the 1960s and 1980s<sup>283</sup>.

Starting in 1980, with the invasion of Libya, the civil war was inevitably internationalized: Gaddafi's aim was to expand his influence and control over the Aozou Strip, thereby securing a government, and thus supporting the rebel forces, that would sustain and keep the region under Libyan influence<sup>284</sup>.

France, on the other hand, being a historical colonial power, was strongly interested in maintaining stability and integrity on the territory, inevitably leading to opposition to Libyan interventionism: it was in fact clear that Gaddafi's involvement was interpreted by Paris as a threat to its influence on the African continent, and to regional stability<sup>285</sup>.

It is also important to emphasize that once again, conflicts involving certain areas of the world, particularly Africa and the Middle East, are always to be seen within the dynamics of the conflict involving states at a global level, the Cold War.

Once again, in fact, the enmity between France and Libya reflected a broader context of confrontation in which, on the one hand, the former anti-imperialist force and ally of the Soviet Union, sought to impose its influence in Chad; on the other hand, France sought to limit Soviet influence on the continent and maintain its own post-colonial sphere of influence.

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<sup>282</sup> Ibid.

<sup>283</sup> Joffe, E.G.H. (1982), *The International Consequences Of The Civil War In Chad*, in «Review of African Political Economy», pp. 91-104.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

<sup>285</sup> Rondos, A. (1985), *Civil war and foreign intervention in Chad*.

Thirdly, as the Iran-Iraq war broke out in 1980 as a consequence of Saddam Hussein's invasion of Iran, once again, international dynamics and the opposition of various states were involved.

Among them, the enmity between Iran and France manifested itself through a series of indirect tensions and clashes, fueled by diverging geopolitical interests and opposing alliances: France had in fact sided with the Iraqi country since the outbreak of the war<sup>286</sup>.

Indeed, France and Iraq had had a close commercial partnership and political relationship since the 1960s, but apart from with the invasion of Iraq had just been preceded by the Iranian revolution, which had disturbed political opinion not only in France but more generally in the western states: Iran was transformed from an ally of the US and western Europe into a fervent anti-western state<sup>287</sup>.

For this reason, an alliance with Saddam Hussein represented not only the defense of commercial interests but also a move to preserve a strategic point of influence in the Middle East on the part of Paris, and certainly because this war represented a bulwark against the perceived threat of the Islamic revolution<sup>288</sup>.

To draw some conclusion, the report is crucial to understanding the French government's perception of the terrorist phenomenon in the 1980s.

This document clearly highlights the government's understanding that terrorism was an international phenomenon, characterized by commandos composed of members of different nationalities.

This understanding reflected the reality of transnational terrorism, in which extremist groups collaborated across national borders, sharing resources, information and strategies.

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<sup>286</sup> Ashton, N. and Gibson, B. R. (2013), *The Iran-Iraq War. New International Perspectives*, Routledge, Oxon.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid.

<sup>288</sup> Macleod, A. (1999) *French policy toward Iraq since the Gulf War: A realist Dream Case?*, Montreal, University of Quebec.

Furthermore, the report emphasized the direct involvement of some states that supported terrorism in various forms, such as the supply of weapons, training and logistical support. As analyzed, countries such as Syria, Libya, and Iran were identified as key actors that had specific interest in engaging terrorist groups to further their geopolitical goals. This awareness shows how France saw terrorism not just as a series of isolated violent acts, but as part of a wider network of operations supported by sovereign states, making the fight against terrorism a complex and multilateral issue.

### **3.3 The approach to counter-terrorism pre-1982 and the Sanctuary Doctrine**

In the previous chapters, it has been discussed how France was not new to the phenomenon of terrorism, having been affected by it since the 1960s mainly in relation to nationalist movements a terrorism linked to colonial conflicts, an early example being the Front de Liberation National (FLN) in the context of the war in Algeria, and later from the 1970s onwards as far as far-left terrorism was concerned.

However, according to a number of studies, including one conducted in 2003 by Jeremy Shapiro and Benedicte Suzan on the French experience in counterterrorism, although the transalpine country was not new to this phenomenon, security agencies up to 1980 did not seem to be particularly interested in understanding and investigating terrorism of international origin.

In fact, it is reported by the two scholars how the accounts of the introductory sessions for the new leadership of the French Foreign Intelligence Agency, the Service de Documentation Exterieur et de Contre-espionage (SDECE), barely contained any reference to the problem of international terrorism<sup>289</sup>.

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<sup>289</sup> Shapiro, J. and Suzan, B. (2003), *The French experience of Counter-terrorism*, in «Survival», Vol.45, No.1, pp.67-98.

This lack of interest in international terrorism seems to be connected to a more general approach applied by the French leadership, which at the time found itself having to deal with the consequences of terrorist attacks and a public opinion that was certainly increasingly sensitive to the issue<sup>290</sup>.

Indeed, it seems to emerge from the authors' analysis of "The French experience of counter terrorism", a doctrine of response, or perhaps better said non-response on the part of Elysée, named the sanctuary doctrine<sup>291</sup>.

According to this doctrine, adopted by the governments in power until around 1980, France would have been made a sanctuary territory "both for and from international terrorism"<sup>292</sup>, so governments would have maintained a mostly neutral stance in relation to everything concerning international terrorism<sup>293</sup>.

The objective of the French leadership at the time was to avoid creating circumstances in which France could become a target for terrorist groups. To achieve this goal, they adopted a specific strategy: to avoid provoking terrorists while ensuring that France was not perceived as a direct threat or enemy<sup>294</sup>.

In practice, this meant that France aimed to maintain a relatively low profile in international matters that could attract negative attention from terrorist groups.

At the same time, the French authorities implemented a policy of non-interference with terrorist groups as long as their activities did not directly involve French territory. This stance implied that France would not actively pursue members of terrorist groups operating outside its borders, provided they did not plan or execute attacks on French soil.

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<sup>290</sup> Ibid.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid.

<sup>292</sup> Ibid.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid.

This approach was, in part, a pragmatic measure to ensure internal security. Recognizing that an aggressive policy against terrorist groups could provoke retaliatory attacks, the French leadership opted for a strategy of passive deterrence: the idea was that if terrorists did not perceive France as a direct threat or a priority target, they would be less inclined to organize attacks against it<sup>295</sup>.

As a result, France became, in a sense, a "safe haven", as Shapiro and Suzan define it a "sanctuary" for terrorist groups<sup>296</sup>.

As the events of 1982 proved, and as analyzed in previous chapters, this policy undoubtedly resulted to be inefficient and led to even more negative outcomes: France was perceived as weak and easily manipulated.

Indeed, between 1982 and the late 1980s, terrorist violence in France reached its peak. This occurred as Middle Eastern state-sponsored terrorist groups targeted French interests amid East-West tensions generated by the Cold War<sup>297</sup>.

The easy capitulation of the Élysée during the 1970s had created a situation where terrorist groups knew they could act directly on French soil whenever their objectives required a direct challenge to Paris. This approach not only failed to deter terrorists but actually encouraged them to exploit the lack of a decisive response.

A striking example of this inefficiency was highlighted by Interior Minister Gaston Defferre. Once in office, Defferre pointed out how the policy of non-interference with terrorist demands, primarily adopted by the Chirac government, had been completely ineffective<sup>298</sup>.

A notable incident was the Publicis Drugstore bombing in 1974. Prior to this attack, the government had acceded to Carlos the terrorist's request for the release of Japanese extremist Yukata Fuyaka<sup>299</sup>. This

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<sup>295</sup> Ibid.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid.

<sup>297</sup> Rault, C. (2010), *The French Approach to Counterterrorism*, in «CTC Sentinel», Vol.3.

<sup>298</sup> Sénat, *Compte Rendu Intégral - 14<sup>°</sup> Séance*, Op. Cit.

<sup>299</sup> Smith, C., *Op. Cit.*

concession not only failed to quell terrorist actions but seemed to legitimize them further in the eyes of extremist groups.

Thus, this policy of appeasement was viewed as a weakness, giving terrorists the impression that France was fertile ground for their operations whenever demonstrative or retaliatory actions were needed. The lack of a resolute strategy and the propensity to yield to terrorist demands contributed to an increase in terrorist activities on French soil, undermining national security and state authority.

Moreover, France's policy of non-interference and its quest for balance on the international stage further antagonized the more extreme factions of certain movements.

An example is represented by France's closeness to Yasser Arafat, which caused significant discontent within the ranks of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), particularly among the factions controlled by Abu Nidal and Carlos<sup>300</sup>.

These extremist groups viewed France's diplomatic stance as hypocritical and believed that it undermined their cause. The frustration and anger within these factions often translated into violent actions against French targets, further illustrating the failure of France's diplomatic balancing act<sup>301</sup>.

In addition to these factors, it is important to bear in mind that since the 1980s, as already analyzed before, France found itself immersed in international conflict contexts that had a significant impact on its national security.

As mentioned, one of these notable conflicts was the war in Lebanon, where French presence as part of the UN peacekeeping forces brought it into direct contact with local armed groups, increasing the risk of targeted terrorist attacks against its interests<sup>302</sup>.

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<sup>300</sup> Smyrl, M. (2007), *European anti-terrorism policy: a trans-atlantic perspective*, in «Politique Européenne», No.23, pp.115-132.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid.

<sup>302</sup> Tarrabain, A. M., *Op. Cit.*

Furthermore, French involvement in the Chad conflict, supporting the government against rebels backed by Libya's Gaddafi, escalated tensions with this North African state<sup>303</sup>.

Libya, under Gaddafi, viewed France as a political adversary due to its support for the Chadian government, further fueling motivation for terrorist attacks<sup>304</sup>.

The Iran-Iraq conflict, during which France maintained economic and political ties with both warring nations, posed additional risks. Iran and Syria, regional allies, were suspected of supporting terrorist groups, which had previously targeted French interests<sup>305</sup>.

These contexts of international conflict made France a potential target for states and terrorist groups who viewed French actions as a cause for hostility.

France's growing presence in these areas and its ties with controversial regional actors like Israel and UN peacekeeping forces contributed to making the country vulnerable to targeted terrorist attacks.

### **3.4 Evolving Counter-Terrorism: How the New Wave of International Terrorism Changed the French Approach**

Starting in 1982, with the worsening of the phenomenon, a change of course in the way it was combated is also witnessed at government level. In fact, the terrorist threat was first of all taken over and defined as the primary responsibility of the French security services.

This period marks the beginning of a series of reforms and the introduction of new strategic and operational measures to tackle the growing danger posed by international terrorist groups.

The French government, recognizing the inadequacy of previous non-interference and balancing policies, decided to adopt a more confrontational and proactive approach.

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<sup>303</sup> Joffe, E.G.H., *Op. Cit.*

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>305</sup> Ashton, N. and Gibson, B. R., *Op. Cit.*

In this context, it is useful to analyze the existing means of combating terrorism and the measures introduced since 1982, highlighting their strengths and weaknesses.

First of all, since 1982, the terrorist threat had become the primary responsibility of the French security services<sup>306</sup>.

Certainly, in the fight against terrorism, there are two fundamental aspects that make up the set of counter-terrorism measures: contrast and prevention.

Contrasting the terrorist attacks involves the direct actions taken to neutralize or eliminate terrorist threats and activities.

This includes tactical operations conducted by specialized military and law enforcement units to apprehend or eliminate terrorists, as well as intelligence operations aimed at uncovering and disrupting terrorist networks.

Counter-terrorism efforts often involve the use of surveillance, infiltration, and the collection of human and signals intelligence to track and dismantle terrorist cells.

Additionally, counter-terrorism encompasses the legal and judicial measures taken to prosecute and penalize individuals and organizations involved in terrorism: this can involve strengthening anti-terrorism laws, enhancing the legal framework for dealing with terrorist suspects, and ensuring that justice systems are equipped to handle the complexities of terrorism-related cases.

Prevention, on the other hand, focuses on addressing the underlying conditions and factors that contribute to the rise of terrorism, thereby preventing radicalization and recruitment before they occur.

Indeed, the aspect of prevention in the context of terrorism had long been neglected or given only marginal importance. This can certainly be attributed to the conception of the phenomenon by governmental leadership, not only in Paris but also in other European capitals.

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<sup>306</sup> Senat Français, Masson, P. (a cura di), *Op. Cit.*

For many years, counter-terrorism strategies primarily focused on reactive and combative measures, such as intelligence operations and military actions, with the main goal of neutralizing immediate threats. However, these measures, while crucial, did not address the underlying causes of radicalization and terrorism: prevention, which involves a long-term approach to reducing the likelihood of radicalization and limiting support for terrorist groups, was often undervalued.

In the case of France, we can observe a significant shift in approach starting from the pivotal year of 1982: it marked a turning point for French counter-terrorism policy, as the intensification of terrorist attacks highlighted the gaps in purely reactive strategies.

First of all, within the gendarmerie, a "terrorism" cell was created as an operational section of the General Directorate of the Gendarmerie: the goal was to centralize this intelligence service<sup>307</sup>.

This initiative marks a significant shift in the approach to counter-terrorism, emphasizing the importance of a coordinated and unified effort in combating the threat.

The Gendarmerie, structured in a decentralized manner at the cantonal level, has a unique advantage due to its close and direct contact with the population. This decentralized structure allows gendarmes to gather a wealth of detailed and localized information on potential terrorist activities and threats within their specific cantons<sup>308</sup>.

Given this capacity for detailed local intelligence gathering, the creation of a centralized "terrorism" cell aimed to bridge the gap between localized knowledge and national security strategies: composed of 5 sub-officers of the gendarmerie therefore had the task of synthesizing all the information that the unit collected <sup>309</sup>.

The intent behind establishing this specific cell was rooted in the need for a more streamlined and efficient system of information sharing: by

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<sup>307</sup> Ibid.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid.

centralizing the data collected from various cantons, the General Directorate of the Gendarmerie could be able to analyze and synthesize this information, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the terrorist threat landscape across the country.

Moreover, on 2 April 1982, decree No. 82-306 took over the activities of the External Documentation and Counterintelligence Service (S.D.E.C.E.), which in turn had been created in 1946, in the name of the establishment of a new security unit: the General Directorate of External Security (D.G.S.E.), annexed to the Ministry of Defence<sup>310</sup>.

The Direction Générale de la Sécurité Extérieure (D.G.S.E.) is in charge of gathering and analyzing information on the potential and intentions of foreign powers that might threaten France's sovereignty or security, working closely with the Direction de la Surveillance du Territoire (D.S.T.) and other relevant security services<sup>311</sup>.

In practice, its role encompasses several key functions: to provide the government with detailed information on the activities and intentions of foreign countries in the political, economic, social, scientific and military fields to support foreign policy decisions; to detect and counter any hostile action, including foreign special services, that might threaten France; and to carry out any external action that the government entrusts to it, to protect national interests<sup>312</sup>.

The dossier compiled by Senator Masson on the situation in France in the fight against terrorism, offers an interesting insight: it seems that at the time (speaking of 1984) despite these extensive responsibilities introduced, the DGSE was poorly equipped to gather information on international terrorism<sup>313</sup>.

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<sup>310</sup> République Française – Légifrance (1982), *Décret n°82-306 du 2 avril 1982 portant création et fixant les attributions de la direction générale de la sécurité extérieure*, 1982, Retrieved From: [Décret n°82-306 du 2 avril 1982 portant création et fixant les attributions de la direction générale de la sécurité extérieure. - Légifrance \(legifrance.gouv.fr\)](https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/eli/decree/1982/04/02/82-306). (Last Access: 21/06/2024).

<sup>311</sup> Senat Français, Masson P. (a cura di), *Op. Cit.*

<sup>312</sup> Ibid.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid.

Indeed, as it had just been established, this was not its main research objective, and consequently it had few human resources specialized in this field<sup>314</sup>.

Moreover, its sources of information were often outside the circles involved in terrorism, thus limiting the depth and accuracy of the information gathered: this was what its guidance notes reflected<sup>315</sup>.

On what it concerns the structure entitled of contrasting the phenomenon and responding to the attacks it was the Central Directorate of the Judicial Police (DCPJ) the main body responsible for the repression of terrorist activities in France<sup>316</sup>.

It was in charge of coordinating investigations and repressive operations in cooperation with the intelligence services and other competent bodies. The 6th section of the DCPJ had a key function: it centralized all information and documentation related to terrorism, directed the 18 regional judicial police services and coordinated repressive actions at national level<sup>317</sup>.

This flexible approach allowed a rapid mobilization of the various territorial services in response to specific targets when needed<sup>318</sup>.

At the local level, each regional judicial police service (SRPJ) had officers specialized in combating subversive activities<sup>319</sup>.

It seems however, that despite the importance of their function, relations between the judicial police and the gendarmerie were not always harmonious.

The gendarmerie, excelling in judicial intelligence and maintaining close relations with the judiciary, was often in a difficult position when it came to dealing with terrorism: its traditional methodologies and the need to operate in uniform limited its ability to conduct surveillance

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<sup>314</sup> Ibid.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid.

and infiltration operations, which were essential in the fight against terrorism<sup>320</sup>.

The operational limitations of the gendarmerie became clear after the Rue Marbeuf attack. Consequently, a circular of the Garde des Sceaux, dated 18 May 1982, recommended that the courts preferentially refer terrorism cases to the judicial police services<sup>321</sup>.

This circular aimed to centralize information and coordinate investigations within the specialized service, ensuring that criminal cases could be grouped together and handled effectively before the same jurisdiction<sup>322</sup>.

Moreover, the creation of a centralized computer system to manage information on terrorism was announced by the President of the Republic in 1982<sup>323</sup>.

This system, an extension of an earlier archive called 'violence' managed by the Renseignements Généraux, aimed to collect and synthesize all information on terrorist acts, regardless of their origin. This archive, which contained approximately 2,000 references, was mainly focused on domestic terrorism<sup>324</sup>.

With the introduction of the new system, efforts were made to improve the effectiveness of counter-terrorism operations through a more centralized and coordinated management of information<sup>325</sup>.

In the 1980s, despite efforts to strengthen the security structure, there were still significant shortcomings in the management of international terrorism.

One of the main problems lay in the internal organization of the country's security, which was characterized by strong decentralization.

This resulted in overlapping competences and responsibilities between the different agencies involved in the fight against terrorism. In practice,

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<sup>320</sup> Ibid.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid.

different security agencies, such as the secret service, the police and the armed forces, had similar or even identical mandates and objectives, but operated independently of each other<sup>326</sup>.

Decentralization thus led to operational inefficiencies: for instance, the lack of centralized coordination meant that counter-terrorism operations were sometimes duplicated or, worse, countered by competing initiatives of the various agencies<sup>327</sup>. This operational fragmentation resulted in a less effective overall response to terrorist threats.

Besides the lack of coordination, a further problem was the poor communication between the different security agencies. Crucial information gathered by one agency was often not shared with the others, thus preventing a complete and timely view of impending threats<sup>328</sup>.

This lack of information sharing not only slowed down operations to prevent and counter terrorism, but sometimes also put the operations themselves at risk, as agencies worked with incomplete or outdated data<sup>329</sup>.

Managing the terrorist phenomenon was thus made extremely complicated by the lack of an integrated strategy and the difficulty of establishing effective dialogue and cooperation between the different entities involved.

In practice, the fight against terrorism was fragmented and disorganized, compromising the country's ability to respond adequately and timely to threats.

In addition to these complications, there was also a mistrust between the agencies, whereby the Minister of the Interior himself had refused to

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<sup>326</sup> Shapiro, J. and Suzan, B., *Op. Cit.*

<sup>327</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>328</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>329</sup> *Ibid.*

share sensitive material concerning terrorism with the foreign security agency, the DGSE, in 1981, considering it a “den of Soviet spies”<sup>330</sup>.

The problem of the lack of cooperation between the French intelligence services had become apparent from the outset, and certainly had not prevented France from being the chosen target of international terrorism.

The full inefficiency had become apparent, if only from the very attacks perpetrated by the Carlos Group. In this regard, the French government certainly made a deep reflection in the years to come to understand the shortcomings that had allowed such tragic attacks to take place<sup>331</sup>.

In this context, the interview with the national prosecutor for counter-terrorism, Jean-François Ricard, and his adjoint, Jean-Michel Bourles, dating back to 2021, seems interesting<sup>332</sup>.

Ricard stated in fact:

(..)dans les affaires qui concernent Carlos, celui-ci va commettre quatre attentats en 1982 et 1983 particulièrement meurtriers. Chacun de ces dossiers va être instruit et géré par le tribunal local selon les lieux concernés : le Capitole à Limoges, la gare St Charles à Marseille, la rue Marbeuf à Paris, etc... Chaque parquet se saisit avec son service local de police judiciaire. La décentralisation en la matière a été un échec absolu. Il est en effet indispensable d’avoir toutes les procédures en main pour faire des rapprochements.

On constate aujourd’hui que la tendance à la centralisation des contentieux spécifiques va bien au-delà du terrorisme, mais la centralisation et la spécialisation doivent être tempérées car il faut éviter une coupure avec l’activité juridictionnelle générale<sup>333</sup>.

Each attack was therefore handled by the local court corresponding to the location of the event: this decentralized approach proved highly ineffective<sup>334</sup>.

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<sup>330</sup> Ibid.

<sup>331</sup> Mégie, J., Ortin, J. and Salas, D. (2021), *Entretien avec le Procureur national antiterroriste, Jean-François Ricard et le Procureur adjoint, Jean-Michel Bourles*, in *Les Cahiers de la Justice*, No.2, pp.209-223.

<sup>332</sup> Ibid.

<sup>333</sup> Ibid.

<sup>334</sup> Ibid.

The fragmentation of competences between different local law enforcement agencies prevented proper coordination and hindered the sharing of crucial information. Without a centralized vision, it was difficult to link the various terrorist incidents and develop a coherent and effective law enforcement strategy<sup>335</sup>.

As time went by, the need to centralize the handling of terrorism cases became increasingly evident. This need for centralization also began to extend to other types of litigation, going beyond the boundaries of the fight against terrorism<sup>336</sup>.

The law of 9 September 1986 marked a turning point in this context, introducing the centralization of investigations and judicial procedures in the Paris courts, specializing judges in terrorism-related investigations and trial: this ensured better protection of the magistrates involved and allowed for more effective management of terrorist threats<sup>337</sup>.

Although the law allowed for concurrent jurisdiction with other jurisdictions, it established a centralized approach as necessary to deal more effectively with the phenomenon of terrorism<sup>338</sup>.

This new organizational set-up represented an important step towards greater efficiency and coordination in the fight against terrorism, addressing the shortcomings and inefficiencies that had characterized decentralized management in previous years<sup>339</sup>.

### **3.5 The strategic nature of international cooperation**

An analysis of counter-terrorism policies in France reveals how the country was facing a growing phenomenon with a gradual understanding of its characteristics. This process of understanding led to the evolution of counter-terrorism tactics and the introduction of

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<sup>335</sup> Ibid.

<sup>336</sup> Ibid.

<sup>337</sup> Ibid.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid.

<sup>339</sup> Ibid.

prevention policies that were adapted to the political lines of the governmental leadership of the various times.

Initially, national efforts focused on the coordination of domestic security agencies. However, these efforts proved insufficient in the face of a phenomenon as complex as terrorism, characterized by the international and transnational nature of terrorist groups.

As a result, France soon realized that European and international cooperation between security agencies was indispensable to effectively counter terrorism:

Les seules dispositions nationales, aussi fermes et déterminées soient-elles, ne correspondent plus aujourd'hui à un phénomène dont les aspects multinationaux s'accroissent irréversiblement. La lutte antiterroriste suppose donc obligatoirement une prévention et une réplique coordonnées et renforcées dans leurs dimensions internationales<sup>340</sup>.

This need for international cooperation was already evident from the 1970s, a period marked by tragic events such as the Munich Olympics bombings in 1972, the attack on Orly airport and the hostage-taking at OPEC in Vienna in 1975. These episodes prompted European states to look for ways to cooperate in counter-terrorism, recognizing that a unified response was essential to deal with the threat.

During the 1980s, France intensified its international cooperation efforts, actively participating in multilateral conferences and treaties that aimed to improve the prevention and suppression of terrorism.

These changes were driven by the realization that terrorism could not be defeated by a single state, but required a concerted international response.

France, along with other European countries, worked to create a network of cooperation that included not only governments, but also police forces, intelligence agencies and international organizations.

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<sup>340</sup> Senat Français, Masson, P. (a cura di), *Op. Cit.*

One of the problems in international cooperation that had already emerged during the 1970s concerned the sphere of international law, in particular an obstacle seemed to be legislation concerning extradition.

In fact, the increasing intensity of terrorism and the simultaneous strengthening of international legal measures to combat it highlighted its limitations: even in the early 1980s, a vast network of bilateral extradition treaties and multilateral conventions existed to ensure that terrorists were handed over to the victim state, this legal structure thus created the illusion of an impermeable system<sup>341</sup>.

In reality, the numerous agreements, based on regional criteria, were theoretically meant to prevent international criminals from escaping justice<sup>342</sup>.

It seems to be that there were two main obstacles to the effective implementation of these measures. Firstly, states that refused an extradition request often extensively invoke the concepts of political infraction and asylum<sup>343</sup>.

This practice often allowed international criminals to avoid trial in the country where they committed their crimes.

Secondly, many states feared that the extradition of a suspect may lead to reprisals against them. This fear led some governments to avoid handing over terrorists, thus ignoring the needs of the global fight against terrorism<sup>344</sup>.

This situation reflected a short-sighted attitude that did not take into account the importance of a unified and concerted international response against terrorism.

Within the framework of international cooperation, two conventions appeared crucial: the International Convention for the Suppression of

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<sup>341</sup> Ibid.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid.

<sup>343</sup> Ibid.

<sup>344</sup> Ibid.

Unlawful Taking of Aircraft in The Hague on 16 December 1970<sup>345</sup>, followed by the Montreal Convention of 23 September 1971, aimed at combating unlawful acts against the safety of civil aviation<sup>346</sup>.

These two agreements required signatory states, which included several European countries, to provide for severe penalties and to favor the extradition or prosecution of those guilty of civil aviation crimes<sup>347</sup>.

Once again, however, there were a number of limitations that make the system rather weak: indeed, extradition was not automatic and penalties for states that do not comply with the conventions were lacking<sup>348</sup>.

Of primary importance was cooperation at the police level; this aspect as analyzed had emerged as being of strategic importance in the national context and therefore could only assume a role of necessity also at the international level.

The mixed nationality and origin of the commandos from different extremist groups (the Carlos group represents an emblem) meant that information was distributed among the various security agencies of the mainly European countries.

Cooperation between European intelligence services had already emerged as fundamental during the 1970s and this, we have seen in the previous chapters had already produced results at the level of establishing international security units.

In this context, the Berne Club and the TREVI group were the fulcrum centers of the international anti-terrorist fight.

But a strengthening of security agency cooperation in the 1980s, with the new wave of terrorism, seemed even more necessary to the French leadership:

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<sup>345</sup> United Nations Treaty Collections (1970), *Convention for the suppression of unlawful seizure of aircraft*, The Hague.

<sup>346</sup> United Nations Treaty Collections (1971), *Convention for the suppression of unlawful acts against the safety of civil aviation*, Montreal.

<sup>347</sup> Senat Français, Masson, P. (a cura di), *Op. Cit.*

<sup>348</sup> Ibid.

Celle-ci est certes indispensable pour riposter de façon systématique aux actes criminels commis. Mais la lutte contre le terrorisme implique d'abord une connaissance de ses objectifs, de ses moyens et de ses mobiles. L'obligation de prévention des attentats constitue ainsi dans les relations entre États et singulièrement en Europe occidentale où les frontières des États sont très vulnérables une nécessité absolue, qui ne saurait être menée à bien par les seuls moyens d'action nationaux<sup>349</sup>.

Despite the manifest willingness to cooperate and share information between European security agencies, there was always a thin layer of mistrust that complicated relations. The sensitive nature of the information handled, especially during the investigation phases, made precautions in its disclosure crucial. This fear was amplified by an awareness of the risks associated with national security.

At the French national level, there were already difficulties in standardizing the way information was exchanged between the different agencies.

This heterogeneity made international coordination between the various European countries even more complex. In addition to procedural and regulatory differences, language barriers represented a further obstacle. The need to translate and interpret information correctly, without losing sight of the context and precise meaning, added a layer of complexity to transnational cooperation.

Moreover, the dynamic and immediate nature of terrorist threats required not only rapid and efficient exchanges of information, but also a harmonization of investigative and operational strategies. This required continuous adaptation and improvement of cooperation protocols in order to effectively address the ever-changing and global challenges posed by international terrorism.

Finally, the success of multilateral cooperation depended not only on the willingness to share information, but also on the ability to overcome cultural, political and legal differences between the countries involved.

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<sup>349</sup> Ibid.

The creation of an environment of mutual trust and respect for national regulations were essential to ensure that cooperation between European security agencies was effective and sustainable in the long term.



## **CONCLUSION**

Between the 1970s and 1980s, France became a prime target for international terrorism. This phenomenon was closely linked to the country's international position and its interventionism in key conflict contexts such as the war in Lebanon, the war in Chad and the Iraq-Iran war. French foreign policy had in fact aroused the enmity of countries known to be logistically and economically supporters of international terrorism, in particular Syria, Gaddafi's Libya and Iran.

Specifically, the Transalpine country had made itself the target of certain extremist groups of Palestinian origin. It emerged that certainly its moderate policy of rapprochement with Arafat's PLO had in fact contributed to making it particularly attractive as a target for the most extremist wings of the Palestinian struggle movement.

France's military and political actions at the international level thus proved crucial in making it the main victim of this new phenomenon on European soil.

Already since the 1970s, France had specifically become the operating ground of the group of Venezuelan-born international terrorist Ilic Ramirez Sanchez, known in the media as Carlos the Jackal.

Brought up and educated according to Leninist ideologies, Carlos, once he moved to Europe and embarked on university studies on Soviet soil, further developed his understanding and connection to various revolutionary movements. His time in Europe and the Soviet Union exposed him to a multitude of radical ideologies, allowing him to deepen his knowledge in the Islamic extremist milieu. This diverse ideological environment significantly influenced his political beliefs and strategic thinking.

In particular, Carlos developed a profound ideological closeness to the values and struggles of the Palestinian people. His exposure to the Palestinian cause, both through direct interactions with Palestinian activists and through his broader revolutionary education, led him to

sympathize deeply with their plight. Carlos began to see the Palestinian struggle not just as a regional conflict, but as part of a larger global fight against imperialism and Western dominance. This ideological alignment drew him closer to various Palestinian militant groups, and he began to integrate their objectives and tactics into his own revolutionary agenda.

This ideological evolution was fundamental in the formation of his group, which attracted members with different extremist backgrounds and experiences. Indeed, Carlos's group was distinguished by its multinational composition, with members from various extremist groups, including European, Middle Eastern and Latin American. This heterogeneity not only strengthened the group, but also allowed it to operate on a global scale with an extensive and diverse support network.

The three attacks perpetrated by the group, which particularly shocked France, took place between 1982 and 1983.

The first attack occurred on 29 March 1982, when a bomb exploded on the Le Capitole train, which was travelling on the Toulouse-Paris route, causing numerous casualties. The second attack occurred on 22 April 1982, when a bomb exploded at the headquarters of the magazine *Al Watan Al Arab* on Rue Marbeuf in Paris. The third attack occurred on New Year's Eve 1983, at the Saint-Charles station in Marseille, where another bomb caused further casualties and injuries.

The organizational and operational dynamics of these attacks once again revealed the strong international connections of the terrorist network. Indeed, the use of high-quality explosives, such as Semtex, sourced from Yugoslavia, and the rental of vehicles for the attacks, also in Yugoslavia, indicated an extensive network of international contacts beyond state borders.

Additionally, the analysis of the attack dynamics highlighted the use of the same explosive materials and similar organizational methods that were observed in the operations of various extremist groups in Europe.

Furthermore, the group's ability to acquire and transport explosive materials across international borders without being intercepted by authorities underscored the significant challenges that security forces faced in combating transnational terrorism.

The strongly international nature of the terrorist attacks thus revealed a dense and developed network, which represented the greatest obstacle for European governments. Initially, this made it difficult for them to understand the connections between various terrorist groups and the types of relationships these groups established with certain states. Consequently, this also made countering and, even more so, preventing the phenomenon particularly challenging.

For its part, France adopted a responsive attitude whose development depended on the policies implemented by the leadership in power. In particular, it can be observed that the governments in power until the early 1980s adopted a relatively passive and often yielding approach towards terrorist demands.

However, with the advent of the socialist government in 1981, France's approach to terrorism changed radically: under socialist leadership, France adopted a more aggressive and confrontational tactic towards terrorist groups.

This new policy was clearly manifested in the government's refusal to comply with Carlos the Jackal's demands to release his accomplices, Magdalena Kopp and Bruno Bréguet, who were arrested in February 1982. The refusal to give in to terrorist demands marked a turning point in France's counterterrorism strategy, which became more intransigent and focused on the prevention and repression of terrorist groups.

This shift was accompanied by strengthened internal security measures and increased cooperation with other European countries in the fight against terrorism.

Indeed, the limitations in managing the emergency by French security agencies stemmed from the novelty of this phenomenon and from logistical and structural gaps within the system. A significant limitation was the lack of coordination and the overlapping of competences among the various units, which led to the fragmented handling of sensitive information. This fragmentation hindered the ability to reconstruct a unified picture and, consequently, to respond effectively to international terrorism.

Moreover, during the 1970s, it had already become clear that such a complex and interconnected phenomenon required a response that transcended national borders.

International cooperation proved crucial in the fight against terrorism, but it was not always easy to achieve. Different operational practices and issues of national sovereignty often complicated coordination efforts among various security agencies.

However, the importance of a coordinated and multilateral response became increasingly evident, and France continued to work on improving its collaboration with other European countries and international organizations.

The lessons learned by France in the 1980s remain relevant today, in an era where international terrorism continues to evolve and threaten global security. The necessity for international cooperation, a coordinated response, and a proactive strategy remains fundamental in the fight against terrorism. Only through continuous commitment and effective collaboration among countries can we hope to prevent future attacks and protect populations from this persistent threat.

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