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The cat-and-dog life of the Vatican

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The arrest of Paolo Gabriele, a Butler of Pope Benedict XVI, did not stop the leaks into the media of documents from the private correspondence of the pontiff. Some anonymous "friends of Paoletti" published hundreds of letters threatening to expose the "crow's nest" of the Vatican, allegedly tasked with killing the Pope and the subsequent transfer of an Italian cardinal to the rank.

One of the first letters leaked into the media exposed the plot to kill the Pope. It is a letter of Colombian Cardinal Dario Castrillon Hoyos in which he reported that the Italian Cardinal Paolo Romeo, Archbishop of Palermo (Sicily), has just completed a trip to China, during which he allegedly said: "The Pope will die within 12 months." Castiglione wrote that Cardinal Bertone

would be killed as well, and Cardinal Angelo Scola, archbishop of Milan, would be elected a successor as head of the Church.

From the outset it was clear that the Vatileaks were not the work of a butler but much more high-ranking officials. Who is at the helm of the whistleblowers? There are two theories. One was voiced by the Italian newspaper *La Repubblica* that suggested that the leak of information was the result of collusion between the private secretary of Pope, Father *Georg Gänswein*, and Vatican secretary of state Tarcisio Bertone. The paper stated that there was a constant stream of confidential correspondence from the personal archive of Monsignor *Georg Gänswein*, addressed to Cardinal Bertone. However, the paper provided no evidence of the tandem's actions. This is supposedly a theory of a "friend of Paoletti" who told *La Repubblica* that the letter of Bertone to *Gänswein*, was signed, but the actual letters were missing.

Spanish *El Pais* has quite a different opinion that suggested that Padre Georg was innocent and fell victim of the clever butler who stole the archive containing letters and faxes from the personal correspondence of Benedict XVI. A customer was the abovementioned cardinal, an Italian Tarcisio Bertone.

The first person in this story is the pontiff's personal secretary and confidant - 57-year-old German priest *Georg Gänswein*, who was called "George Clooney" by *Vanity Fair* for his resemblance to a "true Aryan". He receives and reads letters and faxes addressed to Benedict XVI. Monsignor Georg has been with the pontiff since 1996, when then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (the former Inquisition), called him into his service. In recent years his influence on the Pope has increased dramatically, possibly due to frailty of the latter. It was he who initiated the arrest of the butler who was accused of stealing mail from the archive.

In the immediate vicinity of Benedict XVI, in addition to *Gänswein*, there is one more secretary for domestic issues, a Maltese priest *Alfred Xuereb*, four nuns, Sister Birgit who helps to deal with letters, and the abovementioned butler - Paolo Gabriele, who served and helped with household problems and accompanied the pontiff in all public and private visits. Of course, Paolo with dual Italian and German citizenship was an obvious candidate for a "scapegoat." He was arrested on May 22 "for the theft and publication of classified documents."

Finally, the third suspect in the intrigue is an old friend of the Pope and his right hand, the Vatican secretary of state, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone. However, in recent years, according to Italian press, he distanced himself from the Pope and even became a target for criticism from the rest of the Cardinals. He was accused of ambition, dangerous relationship with the Italian authorities and even for getting under the influence of the Masonic circles. To the advice to

replace Cardinal Bertone the Pope sadly replied: "I am an old Pope ...," wrote *ElPais*. He tried to reconcile the Cardinals but in vain. The struggle became fiercer.

Do any of these individuals have grounds for the removal of the Pope? Not Paoletti, whose ancestors served in the Vatican, whose post will be inherited by his children, and whose family has a great deal of material privileges. Why would he risk his well-being and reputation? Another thing is power struggles and financial flows. Some media outlets wrote that it was a "typical Italian game." Indeed, the Italian cardinals have been out of work since 1978. The Polish Pope (John Paul II) was the head of the Church from 1978 to 2005, and then he was replaced by a German pope (Benedict XVI). From this perspective, the Italian Bertone is a prime candidate for the role of the customer, and the German *Gänswein* is above suspicion. Even the letters condemning Bertoni fit this theory, for example, a letter of Cardinals Ruini, Scola, and Bagnasco. They were published in order to divert suspicion from him.

Today is indeed an opportune moment to raise an Italian into the ranks. Among the 122 cardinals eligible to vote in the conclave 67 are Europeans, 30 of which are Italians, and only six are Germans. It should be noted that the influence of the European cardinals is overwhelming. At the last consistory on February 18, there were no African cardinals and only one of Latin America, although it accounts for 47 percent of Catholics around the world. In addition, virtually all positions of responsibility related to finances are in Italian hands. But what happens if the rank is given to an able-bodied ambitious non-Italian?

Pope Benedict XVI is hunted on all fronts. A more significant event was the dismissal of Ettore Gotti Tedeschi, president of the Institute for Religious Works (IOR), known as the Vatican Bank. Tedeschi was prosecuted for "suspicion of violating rules against money laundering", and he remains one of the few faithful to the Pope. What about the Pope? After several days of silence, he commented on Vatileaks. First, he reminded of the betrayal of Jesus 20 centuries ago, and then accused the media of exaggerating non-existent problem and confirmed that all his employees, including Cardinal Bertone, will continue to work at their posts.

In matters related to the Vatican, we may never know the truth. The Catholic Church for centuries has been developing methods of behind the scenes struggle and feels comfortable in the dark. Recently one of the cardinals said on the issue of conflict within the Church: "We had the same problem in the thirteenth century ..."