

40. Death in Rome

Since Di Napolitano's kidnapping, the atmosphere at UNSDRI remained tense. Two uniformed militia men, young conscripts, stood at the entrance, their automatic weapons slung over their shoulders. This did not stop them though, from smoking and chatting with each other. The few cars that came by, usually dark colored government vehicles were made to slow to a snail pace and their drivers were questioned. Dennis found it very uncomfortable to come into the office, to be looked up and down by the several guards and various couriers and functionaries, and hangers on, as he bounded up the steps and into the great old building.

It was the morning of March 16 1978. It was a day that Dennis would remember for many years to come. As he entered the great hall, he heard the voices of his twin bosses echoing down the corridor. They were louder than usual, and he guessed that it would not be long before they went out to Ferrapotti's car to drive round and round the block arguing. Andrea emerged from her office looking distraught, yet dignified in her carabinieri colors. She turned towards Di Napolitano's office, but then looked away and came to the Dennis.

"What's going on?" Dennis asked, "are you OK?"

"Haven't you heard?"

"What?" The fact was, Dennis never watched the news on TV because he didn't have one, and generally never even looked at the headlines of the newspapers. The whole world could be coming to an end and he would not know it. He was too much absorbed into the "*carpe diem*" of Italian life. Enjoy today, tomorrow may never come.

Andrea stepped aside as though to let Dennis pass. “Aldo Moro has been kidnapped!” she cried.

“Who’s he?” asked Dennis, very much the Aussie.

“You don’t know? He’s the most famous politician, was the prime minister of Italy! They cornered him on Via Fani, shot all his guards and drivers and took him away.”

Dennis stepped back into his office. “Oh! That’s terrible. What is the world coming to?” was all he could think of to say.

Andrea hurried towards Di Napolitano’s office. She met Ferrapotti half way.

“I knew this would happen,” he said, “I told them so. They wouldn’t listen to me.”

Dennis came out of his office. “Is there anything I can do?” he asked.

Ferrapotti looked at him with his usual grin. “No...er...ah...” He fumbled in his pocket for a cigarette. “Got a light?” he asked.

“Sorry, don’t smoke,” answered Dennis.

“Oh.. Er... ah... He’s had it. They’ll kill him, you wait, I know those people. It’s a Red Brigade faction. Di Napolitano was just a trial run. This time they’ll kill their victim.”

“You think so?” asked Dennis.

“Oh.. Er.. Of course, they will issue ridiculous demands. But you wait and see. They’ll kill him. They can’t risk keeping him alive. Besides he’s an ardent anticommunist. Believe me, I know. I have very good contacts.” Ferrapotti looked sideways and all around as if he were worried someone was eavesdropping.

Dennis looked around too, then realized how silly it was. “Will the carabinieri negotiate with them?” he asked trying to show concern and interest.

Andrea replied, “my father says that they will do their best but that there is a rule that they never negotiate with terrorists.”

“Your father?” asked Dennis in disbelief.

Ferrapotti replied, with his biggest grin, “her father is Director General of the Carabinieri, and a very good friend of mine.”

#

There followed 55 days of negotiations and debacles. As they did in the Di Napolitano kidnapping, the Red Brigade put Moro on “trial” the charge being, generally, that he headed an immoral, unjust and corrupt imperialist party (The Christian Democratic Party), and demanded that Moro be exchanged for a number of prisoners. Moro wrote a letter to the Pope asking him to negotiate on his behalf. In response the Pope gave a speech asking the Red Brigade to return Moro to his family without conditions. Moro took this to mean that the Pope had abandoned him because it meant that the Pope would not negotiate. Most journalists, especially the *Corriere della Sera* took a hard line.

Ferrapotti marched up and down the hall of UNSDRI talking to anyone who came by, informing them that the day chosen for the kidnapping was the day on which the PCI (Italian communist party) for the first time would gain an active part in the Italian government. Ferrapotti was so concerned that he had packed his bags and already sent his wife and children to Puerto Rico. He was sure that there would be a major insurrection any time now. As he said, over and over, he had his sources.

Di Napolitano, for his part, stayed away from the limelight, even though he was the most obvious one to consult, having had the personal experience of being kidnapped by the Red Brigade (though some argued that it wasn't really the Red Brigade but a different faction). He shrewdly refrained from giving any advice, saying that this situation was quite different from his own, since he was not directly involved in politics or government, as was Moro. Ferrapotti agreed with him, for once, though they differed on whether the government should negotiate. In fact, unbeknownst to any of the UNSDRI staff, including Di Napolitano, Ferrapotti, a psychiatrist after all, had offered

to negotiate with the terrorists, since he understood, he claimed, their thinking. When this became public knowledge, Ferrapotti received a hurried phone call from his patient Calvi warning him to stay out of it, that certain parties saw it as a soft way to let the Red Brigade get away with murder, since they had, after all, killed all five of Moro's guards and drivers. Ferrapotti argued that he was not looking to go light on the kidnapers, indeed, once he got them to give up Moro, the government could do whatever it liked with them. He was only interested in saving Moro's life. Moro did not deserve the death penalty on any grounds.

In any event, no resolution could be found and the kidnapers whether tired, confused or both, stopped communications. On May 8, 1978, Moro's body was discovered in the trunk of a Renault 4, in Via Michelangelo Caetani, a tiny street just around the corner from UNSDRI and not far from the building that housed the growing Italian Communist Party. Moro had been shot ten times.

#

"If only they had listened to me," complained Ferrapotti.

"There's nothing you could have done, Franco," cried Di Napolitano. "Believe me!"

"I tell you, there's even worse to come. Mark my words!" warned Ferrapotti.

"I know, I know, you have your sources," quipped Di Napolitano.

"No, no. There is also a secret committee, Ugo, that I am chairing, set up by Cossiga, Minister for Interior. We will get to the bottom of this."

"What bottom could there be? What can you tell them that they do not already know, which is next to nothing?" asked the prosecutorial Di Napolitano.

"We can figure out what will be the next move of the Red Brigade," countered Ferrapotti.

Di Napolitano looked up from his desk, adopting his

serious magistrate's expression as though delivering a judgement. "What is required is a tough, no nonsense prosecutor and then the courage to administer the required punishment."

Ferrapotti was about to respond when he suddenly thought that maybe it would be interesting to have a third or even fourth opinion, so he called out down the hallway for Dennis the Aussie and for Andrea to come.

Andrea came running of course, her notepad in hand. Dennis at first did not respond, as he had never before been called upon. So he waited a little until he heard his name called clearly, this time by Di Napolitano, whom he considered not actually to be his boss, but anyway knew that he had to respond.

The two appeared in Di Napolitano's office standing uncomfortably aside, while Di Napolitano sat back in his large office chair, and Ferrapotti walked up and down in front of the desk.

"Oh..er..ah..should there be a special committee of experts to assess the operations of the Red Brigade in the Moro case?" asked Ferrapotti.

Andrea did not hesitate. "They should all be tried and found guilty and then be shot, just like they shot Moro!"

"You mean," said Di Napolitano looking a little superior, "that we don't want a committee, just a trial and its aftermath?"

"In my opinion a trial is not needed. Just take them out and shoot them," insisted Andrea. "The same way they shot the body guards, three of whom were carabinieri. That's what my father says anyway, and who could disagree?"

"Oh.. Ah..er.." Ferrapotti turned to Dennis, but just as he did so, a loud explosion, or crack of a gun, sounded throughout the corridor and office, and the noise of shouting followed. Di Napolitano jumped up from his chair, crying, "someone has a gun!" The noise of shouting continued, but there were no more gun shots. Di Napolitano led the way, taking big brisk steps. "The noise is coming from

downstairs at the entrance. Someone must have tried to break into the building.”

Downstairs at the entrance pandemonium reigned. The two armed military conscripts stood at the ready with their automatic weapons. They looked very young, blushing perhaps, and very frightened. Just inside the doorway on the cold stone steps lay the body of a well dressed young man, sprawled on his back, blood pouring from his chest, his eyes staring blankly, through the lids slowly flickering.

“What happened?” asked Di Napolitano, the judge, and proper person to take charge.

The official guard stepped forward, gun in hand. “I thought he was trying to sneak in. I told him to stop. He didn’t seem to understand spoke some crazy language. He put his hand inside his jacket, I thought he was a terrorist pulling out a gun. So I shot him.”

Ferrapotti called out “make way, move back! I’m a doctor. Get back I tell you!” He kneeled down to examine the body and felt his neck for a pulse. “He’s alive, just! Call an ambulance!”

The body’s eyes slowly opened, and mumbled, “*Ego te quidem Anglorum...*”

Ferrapotti stood back, aghast. He felt inside the body’s jacket pocket and withdrew a letter typed on UNSDRI letterhead.

Di Napolitano took over crowd control. “Come on now, move along. There’s nothing to see here. Give the poor fellow some air.” He turned to the conscript soldiers, “come on now, get everyone moving away.”

Dennis remained in the background, inclined to sneak back to his office where it was safer. But he had heard something of what the assailant had muttered. It was Latin, but he heard not enough of it to translate, though then again, had he heard it clearly there was a good chance that he would still not have been able to understand it.

Ferrapotti looked at the letter, then down to the assailant, whose eyes now remained open, dead.

“Mio Dio !” he muttered, “it’s the Englishman!”

Dennis was aghast. He jumped down the few steps and pushed his way to the front of the onlookers. “Dr. Ferrapotti, did I hear you right?” he asked with timidity.

“Er.. Ah.. Oh.. That’s what this letter says. It’s the letter I wrote a long time ago.”

“That makes sense,” said Dennis. “Those Cambridge types all learn Latin, and that’s what he was saying. He said, if I am not mistaken, ‘I’m your Englishman.’ He probably thought that his Latin was near enough to Italian.”

Ferrapotti looked down at the lifeless body. “Oh.. Er..ah..Well, here is one more innocent victim of the murderous Red Brigade.”

