

8. The Italian Secret

Hanging in the Balance

The select and secret committee on the prevention of terrorism met only twice over the coming year. One would have thought, though, that it was constantly in session, since the halls of UNSDRI were full of Ferrapotti's incessant talk, telling visitors and staff alike that he was off to his secret committee on terrorism. Not only that, he had a theory concerning the bombers. He was sure that one of the Red Brigade terrorists, possibly its main strategist, was a criminologist just like him.

Well, not ideologically, of course. He had formed this opinion after the bombing in 1972 of Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, famed publisher and activist, and claimed that it was his followers who assisted the kidnapers of his friend and colleague Di Napolitano in 1975. He insisted that the careful planning of the kidnapping, especially the communications with the Italian press, followed well known procedures of terrorist organizations, and that these could not be carried out successfully without contacts in the media. And Feltrinelli was an expert and owner of such media. Further, when Di Napolitano's kidnapers were interrogated, it was clear that they would not have been capable of carrying out the procedures by themselves. They had to have the help of someone who was much smarter and educated than they. One who understood the mind of the terrorist. He therefore suggested to the secret committee that it was most likely an academic, a criminologist in a university somewhere other than Rome. He was the top criminologist in the University of Rome and knew all others in the university very well, so it had to be a criminologist from somewhere else.

The secret committee listened politely to his theories, but declined to act on them. One of the committee, whom Ferrapotti suspected was in bed with the CIA or some other intelligence organization, hinted that Feltrinelli's demise

was not the accident of a clumsy attempt to set off a bomb, as was the popular theory, but that he was assassinated by someone else. How could it be that Feltrinelli, a brilliant man, well versed in terrorist procedures, would blow himself up, when he had contacts who were bomb experts to do the bombing for him? And as well, why would he choose a power pylon that was on his own property as the target?

Ferrapotti did not listen to these criticisms. In fact, he never heard criticisms, because he was too caught up in his own theories, not actually theories, but simply talk. It was talking that Ferrapotti did all the time. Incessant talk. That was what drove his friends and colleagues everywhere a little crazy.

Yet, events that followed were to prove him right. Or seemingly so. His star patient, Roberto Calvi, while he did not manage to keep his appointments every week, did show up at least every few weeks for his therapy session. And on a hot and sultry day of July 1980, met Dr. Ferrapotti in his clinic at the Vatican. They sat as usual, Calvi on the couch, and Ferrapotti on the wicker chair.

"I'm afraid that this will be my last session for some time," announced Calvi, clearly in an agitated condition.

"You seem upset," said Ferrapotti, "what is the trouble? Michael has spurned you?"

"No, not at all, although I am upset that I must go away for a while, I'm not sure where it will be yet," said Calvi with an air of mystery, or perhaps resignation.

"Oh, I see. Something has happened?" asked Ferrapotti looking around the room as though he were concerned that someone was eavesdropping.

"Well, yes and no. They are after me, going to pin the blame for the collapse of the Banco Ambrosiano on me. There was money involved, lots of it. Some sent overseas, some coming in from unknown sources. I can show that I personally had nothing to do with it. But they will not believe me. I am sure of that. And you may have seen the leaks in the media."

"That you embezzled a huge amount? I read that and dismissed it as disinformation by someone," said Ferrapotti the therapist.

There was a light knock on the door. It would be Michael.

“Just one moment,” called Ferrapotti.

“I just want to warn you. The CIA and MI6 are now involved. They have tremendous resources. I am sure they are targeting me, for some reason I cannot fathom,” said Calvi.

“Now, Roberto, you’re getting paranoid. Are you taking your medication?”

“No. I decided not to take it. Too risky. Besides it makes me drowsy and numbs my senses. And I need all my faculties as sharp as ever, otherwise I will slip up and the CIA or whoever will get me.”

“I find this hard to believe. Are you sure of this?” Ferrapotti leaned forward from his chair.

“I am very sure. I must take my leave, you will not see me for some time. But don’t worry, I will not succumb to depression. Strangely, now that I am being pursued, it keeps me positively active, no time for dark thoughts.”

Calvi got up to leave. The faint knock at the door sounded once more.

“Coming,” called Ferrapotti as he stood quickly and muttered, “please be careful. I am here to talk whenever you want.” Then he added, unable to stop himself, “you know, I’m on the secret government committee on terrorism prevention. There’s a CIA member on the committee, I suspect. I could talk to him.”

“It’s too late for that,” Calvi replied. “Besides you may become a target yourself. But I leave you with these last words. Watch out for Bologna. There’s something big coming down. It will convince you that I am not imagining all of this.”

Ferrapotti opened the door to Michael who entered on tip-toe it seemed, dressed impeccably in a gray suit, carefully fitted shirt and tie. Calvi put out his hand and they shook. Then he turned quickly and left, putting his arm around Michael as they departed.

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Ferrapotti, more agitated than usual, paced up and down the halls of UNSDRI, peering into Di Napolitano’s office, going into every office, his voice streaming away. “I have to call a special meeting of the secret committee,” he kept saying to whoever would stop and listen. “Something

big is going to happen. I know. I have my sources.” Finally, Di Napolitano came out of his office, put his arm around Ferrapotti and said, “Franco, you need some rest. Why not go home and have a good nap this afternoon?”

Ferrapotti stopped and pulled himself away from his dear friend. “It has to be a criminologist. There’s just one. Of course, I know who it is!”

Dennis came out of his office, and Andrea too hurried up. The supreme Director, had departed on mission, back to his homeland of the Congo. Ominously, he had sold his Mercedes just before he left.

“Ferrapotti!” called Di Napolitano, “I have no idea how you have reached this conclusion. Be sensible. What evidence do you have?”

“I have my sources!” said Ferrapotti, defiant. “I must call a meeting of the secret committee immediately. There’s no time to waste.”

He ran into his office and made several phone calls, none of them successful. The truth was that he did not know whom to call, as the secret committee always called him to notify him of the meeting. He tried calling the defense Minister Cossiga, but of course, could not get past his secretary. This, even when he shouted that there was going to be a terrorist attack in Bologna. He had also remembered the name of a criminologist in Bologna. It was Aldo Semerari.

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At 10.25 CEST, August 2, 1980, a bomb exploded in the waiting room at the Bologna train station. 85 people were killed and some 200 injured. On August 26, Semerari and others were arrested and interrogated, but were released from prison in 1981. In 1987 many persons were charged and prosecuted in lengthy trials. There were convictions, followed by appeals. The trouble was that, as later became clear, the various Italian intelligence agencies (SID etc.), assisted by the CIA and MI6, conducted complex and successful disinformation campaigns, including counterfeit documentary evidence, resulting in arrests and prosecutions of right wing fascist operatives together with left wing Red Brigade operatives. Each, it seemed impossibly, masquerading as the other.

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Ferrapotti enjoyed being right. He had partly predicted the bombing in Bologna. However, the secret committee never met again, so he was denied the satisfaction of being able to say, “told you so.” He was, however, concerned about the whereabouts of his star patient, Roberto Calvi. He had received a note from Michael that Calvi was actually living in an apartment in Rome, but Calvi had not contacted him at all. Ferrapotti made inquiries of his sources (though the information was freely available in all the daily newspapers) and discovered that, in the heat of the various investigations and accusations made against Calvi in respect to his failed Banco Ambrosiano, and especially the apparent (though later “exonerated”) involvement of the Vatican Bank, Calvi had disappeared. Investigators (we do not know whether one can call them “police”) pursued him to Venice, thence to Zurich and finally London, where the trail ended.

Meanwhile, the “scandal” of P2 (Propaganda Due) erupted in Italy. Why right then, is a bit of a mystery since its existence was well known, though supposedly its members were not. However, in the course of collecting evidence concerning Calvi’s involvement in the collapse of the Banco Ambrosiano, investigators once again visited Licio Gelli’s house and found a list of members of the P2 secret organization. On the list were many top officials of public companies, not to mention key political posts in the government and out of it. One of the members listed was Franco Ferrapotti. Licio Gelli, the individual you may remember who briefly acknowledged Ferrapotti’s UNSDRI name tag in Milano, was the purported head of the lodge. The members of this mysterious masonic lodge referred to each other as “*frati neri*” (black friars). It was Gelli, according to popular media, who was the real perpetrator of the collapse of the Banco Ambrosiano, and who had funneled the money into the Vatican coffers. Even today, in the 21st century, the list can be found easily on the Internet. Ferrapotti was then informed (actually it was Calvi’s friend Michael) that Calvi had fled to London, where he stayed at a safe house that was provided him by Licio Gelli.

Then on Friday June 18, 1982, a person walking across Blackfriars Bridge in London noticed something hanging from the scaffolding beneath the bridge. The Police were

called, and it turned out to be Calvi, hanging by the neck , his clothing and pockets filled with bricks and \$15,000 dollars in various currencies. The death was ruled a suicide, according to London's coroner.

When Ferrapotti read of the death of his patient, he immediately thought that it was consistent with Calvi's depressive state. However, the results of two separate investigations each 10 years apart was that the injuries to Calvi's neck were not consistent with hanging. Ferrapotti's sources informed him in latter days that it was of course, the work of all three intelligence agencies of the CIA, MI6 and SID and its variants. Why exactly they would collude to do this, and what if any Calvi's death had to do with the warring factions of terrorists from right and left did not appear to bother anyone. The media speculated that it and the major Bologna bombing were the result of the concerted efforts of all three intelligence agencies' disinformation campaign to undermine the authenticity of both right and left terrorists, especially left terrorists, and that the Bologna bombing especially, though actually probably, were carried out by right wing terrorists, but attributed to the Red Brigade and its ancillaries. Thus, by disinformation, the communists were defeated in Italy. It was not until 2020 that it seemed the actual person behind the Bologna bombings was none other Licio Gelli, according to the Italian weekly *L' Espresso*. But then, who could believe that?

