

Mafia-Gelli ties would implicate U.S.

by Leonardo Servadio

The name of Licio Gelli, grand master of the Propaganda 2 masonic lodge, who has been tied to every destabilization in Italy for two decades, has come up again in connection with this year's assassinations of Christian Democratic political leader Salvo Lima and Judges Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino in Sicily.

Gelli served time (not much) after a long evasion and a bizarre escape from a Swiss prison, in the wake of the 1981 exposure of P-2. In 1981, a partial list of P-2 members—over 900 prominent politicians, government bureaucrats, bankers, military commanders, and important professionals—was exposed. P-2 was outlawed as a conspiracy to steer Italy independent of, or even against, its constitutionally determined institutions. Now the slippery grand master is out on parole, but due to several ongoing investigations, has no passport.

The possibility that he may have Mafia ties was brought up by Senate President Giovanni Spadolini in a newspaper interview in late July. In an interview published by Milan's daily *Indipendente* on Aug. 15, Gelli bragged, "I was a middleman for some \$15 billion." Asked whether he had ties to the Mafia, and Gelli rejoined that he did not need the Mafia, since he had the credentials of "sovereign states."

The next day, Interior Minister Nicola Mancino gave a speech in a Sicilian town, Capo d'Orlando: "Licio Gelli . . . moves amounts of money in the order of 500 or 600 million [liras] with great ease. Well, don't we want to check this money? Don't we want to verify to whom it belongs, where it comes from, who gave it to him?" Asked whether there might be links between Gelli and Mafia money, Mancino replied that there was no proof, but P-2 is still illegal and "possible connections are always a risk."

Since March, magistrates in Gelli's native Arezzo have been probing large-scale banking operations carried out on Gelli's behalf by a lawyer in an Arezzo bank. *Corriere della Sera*, which reported on Aug. 18 that a local magistrate criticized the interior minister's "leaking" of the investigation, added that there is more than one probe into dirty money recycling and Masons.

Last March 18, a sweep by the Italian police in Palermo, Modena, and Milan revealed a "broad criminal organization dedicated to illicit financial activities in collusion with Mafia people." This ring recycled at least 500 billion liras (around \$500 million) operating from Bolivia to the former Soviet

Union. Some of its members, like Giovanni Lo Cascio, were part of a masonic lodge in Palermo. Gelli was named in several phone calls recorded by the Italian investigators before the arrests. One such call was made by a German engineer from Miami to Palermo—two cities notorious in the drug traffic.

Giuseppe Ayala, an ex-magistrate in Palermo now in the Italian Parliament, in an interview in *Corriere*, pointed to a Mafia role in past attacks on the state, like Prince Junio Valerio Borghese's coup attempt in 1971. He recalled that Tommaso Buscetta, the Mafia kingpin turned state's evidence, "said that in the course of the preparation of the Borghese coup, he came with Salvatore Greco, called *Cicchiteddu*, a big Mafia boss who for years had been living in South America, to Catania, where Luciano Liggio was staying. . . . Buscetta, by the by, was living in the United States, which says a lot."

"Says a lot" may refer to the ease with which these mafiosi moved around; or to the notorious cohabitation of Mafia and U.S. intelligence ever since World War II. Prince Borghese, commander of the X Mas flotilla in Mussolini's Salò republic, was in league with the CIA's James Jesus Angleton. Ayala mentioned the ties uncovered between a masonic lodge in Palermo, and the Mafia. "Naturally," added Ayala, "we refer not to the official Masonry, which as far as I know does not have criminal tendencies, but deviant parts."

Spadolini and Ayala are both members of the Italian Republican Party, which is no virgin when it comes to the CIA. Some Catholic press, like the weekly *Il Sabato* and the monthly *30 Giorni*, have gone further in drawing the strategic implications of a Gelli-Mafia link. The current *30 Giorni* interviews Christian Democratic ex-parliamentarian Tina Anselmi, who had headed the commission investigating P-2. She says, "Let us not forget that the puppet master of Arezzo [Gelli] is the only Italian who was invited to the inauguration of three U.S. Presidents." *Il Sabato's* editorial called P-2 "a lodge which guaranteed American interests" in Italy.

Meanwhile, the political friends of the drug lobby are busy. Justice Minister Claudio Martelli, a Socialist, hinted that it might be time for drugs to be legalized, in order to take the black market out of Mafia hands.

Legalized drug consumption would in fact increase Mafia revenues, in bigger and safer markets. On a deeper level, it would imply a total cultural change, rejecting what is called "western" culture for an "oriental" culture of passivity and lack of personal responsibility. As sociologist Franco Alberoni wrote on Aug. 17: "Drugs have become an instrument to realize experiences which once were found in religion and in prayer . . . drugs have now become a constant component of the social and spiritual life, as once metaphysics or religion was." Alberoni, who hatched the Red Brigades terrorists at Trento University in the 1960s, calls for a cultural change, which allows drugs to be part of modern culture.