

Princess Diana: murder by Fiat?

by Jeffrey Steinberg

Dramatic new developments in the probe into the death of Princess Diana and Dodi Fayed buttress *EIR*'s case that the Princess of Wales was a victim of an assassination plot—not a drunk-driving traffic accident.

On Feb. 13, French police confiscated a Fiat Uno, owned by a paparazzo at the time of the Aug. 31, 1997 fatal crash in the Place de l'Alma tunnel in Paris. The car, which had serious rear fender damage and had been hastily repainted, had been sold in November 1997 to a Fiat dealership in Tours, about 120 miles southwest of Paris. The car was apparently recently resold to a buyer in the Paris area.

Since the day of the crash, French authorities have known that the Mercedes 280-S carrying Princess Diana and Dodi Fayed, had been rammed by a second car, and that the collision held the key to the fatal crash. Within days, police had determined that the second car, which fled the tunnel and apparently disappeared from the face of the earth—along with its driver—was a Fiat Uno turbo model, manufactured sometime between 1983 and 1987.

The Feb. 13 move to confiscate the car was apparently forced by news reports, from CBS radio and the Associated Press in Paris, earlier in the day, that Pierre Ottavioli, a former chief of the French Criminal Brigade, now employed as a consultant to the attorneys for the Ritz Hotel, had found the missing Fiat and had alerted police to its whereabouts several weeks ago. According to AP, on Feb. 11, an attorney for the Al Fayed family had, furthermore, sent a letter to chief investigating magistrate Hervé Stephan, informing him that the car was now in the Paris area. In the letter, the attorney expressed outrage that the police had never questioned the man who had owned the Fiat at the time of the crash.

EIR has learned that the owner of the confiscated Fiat was a Frenchman, James Andanson, a paparazzo employed by the Sygma photograph agency, who had been stalking Diana and Dodi, during their vacation in Sardinia in late August 1997. It was from Sardinia that Diana and Dodi flew to Paris on the afternoon of Aug. 30, 1997. Andanson was not among the nine paparazzi who were detained by police at the crash site, but he may now be charged with manslaughter. However, Andanson had already been accused by the Al Fayed family of invasion of privacy. Attorneys for the Al Fayed family and the Ritz Hotel (which is owned by Mohamed Al Fayed, father of Dodi), Georges Kiejman and Bernard Darteville, had filed

formal complaints against him, according to AP, citing a source inside the French judiciary.

Despite Andanson's record of stalking Diana and Dodi, French police are already dismissing the idea that the seizure of the car is significant. A police official, speaking to AP on condition of anonymity, commented that the car "is of no interest to the investigation." Within moments after the car was confiscated, police were already telling reporters that the car's paint did not match the paint found on the side of the Mercedes. Police had not had the opportunity yet to ship the confiscated car to the National Police Institute of Criminal Research, where such testing is done.

A second Fiat?

French police had earlier located another Fiat Uno that had also been repaired and repainted 24 hours after the crash. Through a series of eyewitness accounts and fortunate coincidences, the French authorities, in late November 1997, arrested a second-generation Vietnamese man, Le Van Thanh, who owned a Fiat Uno that had been repainted on Aug. 31—just hours after the crash. Police were alerted to this as the result of eyewitness information, provided by a Paris couple, identified so far only as "Georges and Sabine D." The couple were returning home from dinner near the Place de l'Alma at the moment of the crash. Their car was nearly rammed by a battered white Fiat Uno, which came speeding out of the tunnel onto a roadway where they were merging with tunnel traffic. On Sept. 18, "Georges and Sabine" went to the police with a description of the car and the driver. They said that the driver was alone in the car, except for a large dog in the back seat. They gave police a partial license plate number of the car, which focussed police investigators on the Haut-de-Seine region on the western outskirts of Paris.

Police got a second break, when Thanh's car, driven by his brother, showed up at a Paris police prefecture. The brother was there to appear in traffic court for a minor infraction. Police noted the car, and alerted the Criminal Brigade, the unit assigned to probe the crash.

Thanh was held by police for six hours and interrogated about the car and about his whereabouts around midnight on Aug. 30-31. Thanh, who owned two large dogs, which he admitted he often brought to work, claimed he was at work as a security guard with six other employees from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. on the night in question. Police, according to a story published in the London *Sunday Times* on Jan. 25, 1998, released Thanh after they found that the paint on his Fiat did not match the paint found on the side of the Mercedes 280-S. According to the *Times*, they never even attempted to verify his alibi.

However, sources familiar with the police file have told *EIR* that both the paint and rear bumper of Thanh's Fiat Uno *did* match the forensic evidence taken from the Mercedes. The sources suspect that Thanh may not have been driving the car on the night of the crash, but that another person—possibly a relative—may have been.

Mohamed Al Fayed speaks out

In a second, dramatic development, Mohamed Al Fayed gave an interview to the London *Daily Mirror*, which appeared on Feb. 12 and 13. Speaking about the car crash, he declared: "I believe 99.9 percent it was no accident. There was a conspiracy, and I will not rest until I have established exactly what happened. I will find the person who caused this accident. . . . I believe there were people who did not want Dodi and Diana to be together."

He added: "What I am saying is 200 percent true. The British Establishment are happy to try and ridicule me and I believe many of them are happy that Diana and Dodi were killed but I'm telling you that I was there at the hospital and what I am saying is true."

Al Fayed stated that he had been told by Dodi that he had proposed marriage to Princess Diana and that she had accepted. While in Paris, during the afternoon of Aug. 30, 1997, the couple had gone to the former home of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, now owned by Mohamed Al Fayed, to meet with a decorator who had been hired to prepare the home for them. Al Fayed told the *Mirror* that Diana had first gotten the approval of her sons, Prince William and Prince Harry, before she agreed to the engagement with Dodi. Therefore, the Windsors, including Prince Charles, would have almost certainly been informed about the engagement *prior* to the Paris trip.

Al Fayed also told the *Mirror* that he had been approached at La Pitié Salpêtrière Hospital by an operating room nurse, who had been part of the emergency team working on Diana. The nurse told him that Diana had briefly regained consciousness in the operating room and had asked that her sister, Sarah, play a role in raising the two princes.

In the second segment of the interview, Al Fayed focussed attention on the House of Windsor. He recounted that he had never received a word of condolence from either Prince Charles or Prince Philip. Nor did he receive a note from Earl Spencer, Diana's brother.

Al Fayed drew a distinction between Queen Elizabeth II, from whom he received a personal letter, and Philip and Charles. "I gave the two princes [William and Harry] one of the happiest holidays of their lives, but Prince Charles couldn't even bring himself to talk to me or write to me. I think that is disgraceful." Al Fayed described his longtime friendship with Queen Elizabeth: "She sent me a letter from Balmoral which was very kind and understanding and from the heart. I appreciated that very much. I have always found her charming, intelligent, and very easy company." He then referred to the decision, announced in January 1998, that Harrods, the premier London department store which he owns, would no longer be asked to



It seems that some British law enforcement officials are taking EIR's probe of the murder of Princess Diana and Dodi Fayed seriously, as this letter indicates.

sponsor the Royal Horse Show at Windsor. "I do not believe she was behind the decision to end my sponsorship," Al Fayed told the *Mirror*. "It would have been those terrible establishment types in her household, the people Diana hated most. They represent all that is bad about the out-moded British attitudes which have held this country back."

Al Fayed's decision to go public with his belief that Diana and Dodi were victims of an assassination triggered an immediate, angry response from the Royal Household. A spokesman for the Windsors said that the claims of a murder plot were "causing a lot of stress to the family. And it's not necessary." In early February, Queen Elizabeth, Prince Philip, and other members of the Royal Family had met with their key advisers, and top officials of MI6, to plan out the direction of the monarchy. The Way Ahead Group, as the inner circle of royal policymakers is known, had been scheduled to meet on Sept. 2, 1997 to develop a strategy for breaking up Princess Diana's relationship with the Al Fayed. The head of MI6, according to an Aug. 31, 1997 *Sunday Mirror* story, was to report to the gathering at Balmoral Castle in Scotland, on MI6's progress in finding dirt on Dodi Fayed. Prince Philip was described by the *Mirror* as most adamant that Diana and Dodi had to be driven apart. At the time of her death, Princess Diana had resumed her public attacks on the Windsors, including her assertion that Prince Charles, her ex-husband, was unqualified to be King.