

Report from Paris by Katherine Kanter and Sophie Tanapura

The Francisci aftermath

The Socialist government has cracked down on certain mafiosi, so their competitors can take over.

On Jan. 15, the body of Marcel Francisci was found in the garage of his Paris residence. He had been murdered. Sources including U.S. and French drug-enforcement and customs viewed Francisci as the "French Connection" boss.

He came to the attention of Americans when he sued *Time* magazine in 1963 for linking him to dope traffic. Francisci, head of a Sicilian clan, lost, and paid *Time* \$30,000 in damages.

But despite the evidence confirming *Time's* charges, Francisci was never touched by the law—until his death. The law, in this case French Interior Minister Gaston Defferre of the Socialist Party, came to everyone's mind when Francisci's body was discovered.

The murder occurred amid renewed mob-warfare in France and elsewhere. In France, the mob warfare began shortly after François Mitterrand's Socialists took power.

The assassination signifies what may be a major reorganization of French organized crime, the first since the 1960s "Casinos Wars," when Francisci wiped out the competing Guerini clan.

Gaston Defferre was previously Mayor of Marseilles, the French dope entrepôt. No sooner did he have the police at his disposal than Francisci's establishments began to be hit. The Cercle Haussmann's operating license was withdrawn. The Eghien casino near Paris lost licenses. The Mayor of Nice, Jacques

Medecin, linked to Francisci, was tied to the Ruhl casino, and it was shut down.

Le Monde, the Paris daily, suggested that Francisci's death was in fact connected to the "change in regime." The Corsican correspondent for the newspaper *Quotidien de Paris*, Jean-Claude Lefrenchi, also said as much.

Most of Francisci's friends were on the majority in France. According to Lefrenchi, it was no secret that Francisci had important Socialist friends who benefited from his links with the Giscard government. Some observers were surprised, continues *Le Quotidien*, when instead of returning the favors, Francisci started having problems with the new authorities.

Many published sources on international drug traffic have confirmed that Gaston Defferre's 30-year mayoralty of Marseilles made it an international heroin center after the Second World War. British intelligence—which oversees the traffic from Indochina, China, and its Hong Kong financing—hand-picked Defferre to be ruler of Marseilles. For years, Defferre was working in this connection with the Guerini clan, which organized his "security" in Marseilles.

Meanwhile, the press campaign that led to the close of Jacques Medecin's Ruhl casino was organized by a Socialist Party official in Nice, Max Gallo. Next, British intelli-

gence agent Graham Greene, author of "espionage novels," announced publication of a new book exposing Medecin's mafia connections. He called upon Interior Minister Defferre to finish Medecin off.

That was in the nature of an order. It was British intelligence that organized the Socialist mafia, out of the "Brutus" resistance network during World War II, run by Defferre—and by the Guerinis.

Francisci was based in Tangiers between 1948-52, shuttling between Saigon, Beirut, and Marseilles. Reportedly, he took a major share in the Casino du Liban in 1958. Its suspected holder was Yousef Beidas, formerly of Barclay's Bank, a "respectable" British money laundry for the dope trade. Beidas now heads Intra Bank de Lebanon, an institution associated with Mideast dirty-money flows.

In 1962, Francisci moved into the British markets, acquiring a share in several London casinos. Three Francisci brothers and a close associate, Yousef Kheida, moved to London. Kheida, a friend of Yousef Beidas, runs Cercle Haussmann, Francisci's Paris casino, and is involved with France's number-one casino at Divonne les Bains, which is partly owned by Ely de Rothschild.

At the height of the 1960s casino wars, the British banned Francisci from England. But his elimination of the Guerini clan made him pre-eminent in France. Now the Socialists and their British friends appear to be turning the tables.

It is also rumored that Francisci's relations with Meyer Lansky had grown strained over a recent period.

This column was contributed by Christine Juarez of our Paris bureau.