

Italy's slain anti-terrorist chief was investigating Mafia funders

by Vivian Freyre Zoakos, European Editor

The Sept. 3 Mafia murder of Italy's leading anti-Mafia investigator, General Carlo Alberto Dalla Chiesa, opened a new phase in the ongoing destabilization of the country. Not since the 1978 assassination of former Prime Minister Aldo Moro was the country so shaken by the assassination of one of its leaders. Knowledgeable sources predict that the Dalla Chiesa affair, together with other developments to occur in the near future, will force another government collapse, leading to early elections and probable takeover of the government by the Socialist Party—one of the leading terrorist supporters, whose chief, Bettino Craxi, has ambitions to become the new "Duce."

It is certainly true that the murder is rebounding against the newly formed government of Prime Minister Giovanni Spadolini. When Spadolini and eight of his ministers went to Palermo, Sicily, to attend the funeral, Sicilian Cardinal Pappalardo refused to shake the cabinet members' hands. The Cardinal proceeded to deliver a stinging sermon castigating the government for refusing to launch an all-out war against the Mafia, as Dalla Chiesa had demanded. Later, Dalla Chiesa's daughter looked at the government ministers and declared for all to hear that possibly the man who ordered her father's murder was one of them.

The Spadolini government was hastily pulled together following its collapse last month by the Socialists. It is viewed by its own creators as a stopgap to keep the Socialists out of power a little while longer. However, as the European bureau of the *Executive Intelligence Review* warned in a telegram sent to Italian President Pertini at the end of August, Italy is scheduled to undergo a massive destabilization, and nothing short of "martial-law" tactics against the terrorist-Mafia complex will suffice to achieve national stability.

The problem with the Spadolini government, as Dalla Chiesa recognized, is that by its very nature as a compromise affair it continues to harbor some of the terrorist controllers inside the cabinet itself.

Lack of political backing

The father of General Dalla Chiesa's wife told interviewers following the assassination that the entire family began to worry about a possible hit against the General following his most recent return from Rome "with practically empty hands. He was supposed to coordinate personnel and resources which he was not given." In effect, as *Corriere della Sera* correspondent Alfonso Madeo has noted, "What Dalla Chiesa

feared was the possibility that the 'high Mafia' might finally arrive at the conclusion that he was nothing more than . . . a target to be hit without [the Mafia's] running the risk of compromising useful alliances, underground political links."

From the moment Dalla Chiesa was shown to have lost his political backing, when he returned to Palermo unable to secure the passage of decrees handing him extraordinary powers to deal with the Mafia effectively, he was a targeted man. This is coupled with the fact that, despite the restraints placed on him, he was employing a highly effective method for entrapping the upper echelons of the Mafia.

This method, essentially the same as that used with enormous success by the anti-terrorist magistrates in Italy, was to start at the top and reconstruct the Mafia organization, rather than pursuing the lesser foot soldiers. Specifically, Dalla Chiesa was investigating the Mafia's channels of money-laundering: a plethora of "legitimate" business interests in collusion with politicians who handed over government contracts to the "legitimate" Mafia firms. He had just received a list of 2,300 names from the Guardia de Finanza (treasury police) of individuals and firms believed to function as Mafia fronts, and was beginning to correlate these with the lists of contracts handed to private companies by Sicily's various municipal governments.

The immediate political repercussions of Dalla Chiesa's dramatic assassination have been such that his successor has been handed many of the extraordinary powers the General had requested. Emmanuele de Francesco, the new super-prefect of Palermo, arrived on the island following the government's passing of decrees extending his powers.

This in itself will not suffice to launch a serious crack-down against the Mafia in all its ramifications, however. Certainly over and above the formalities of specific powers will remain the question of the political decision at the top whether to sanction action against the leading oligarchical families and certain leading politicians for whom the Mafia is a political tool.

Exemplifying the problem is current Defense Minister Lelio Lagorio, a Socialist. Lagorio, who played a significant role in circumscribing Dalla Chiesa's capabilities by denying him the requisite support of the military and secret services, is himself a high-level terrorist controller. He was one of the chief collaborators of Giovanni Senzani on the magazine *Città e Regione*. Senzani was arrested following the Moro assassination for his role as a controller of the Red Brigades.