

Stefano Della Chiaie

Portrait of a Fascist

Stuart Christie

1987

A karate blow by a young Venezuelan policewoman to an escaping suspect brought an ignominious end to the career of the world's most lethal terrorist. Stefano Della Chiaie is the machiavellian figure behind numerous murderous outrages in Europe, Africa and Latin America over three decades.

Delle Chiaie, taken in a raid on an apartment in a suburb of Caracas in March of this year, had been living there under an alias for three years. After interrogation by Venezuelan security agents, 51-year-old Delle Chiaie was rushed to Caracas airport where he was handed over to waiting Italian agents. Captured with him were two boxes of documents, Delle Chiaie's archives. He was put on a flight to Italy, where he was being tried in his absence for the 1980 Bologna railway station bombing in which 85 people were killed and over 200 badly injured. Other Delle Chiaie outrages include the December 1969 bombing in Milan's Piazza Fontana which left 16 dead, the murder of a magistrate in 1976, and at least three attempted coup d'etats.

His identity disguised by false passports supplied by powerful patrons grateful for his lethal services, Delle Chiaie traveled the world unhindered. On his own admission he visited Italy on four occasions. In 1977 a raid on one of his safehouses in Rome yielded a surprising haul—a suitcase containing his used airline tickets in more than twenty aliases. Many of these appear to have involved stopovers in London. It is no coincidence that suspects in the Bologna and other bombings, killings and robberies were being safehoused in London by British supporters of the Black Orchestra, as Delle Chiaie's multinational gang was known. It was only in 1982, when the magistrate investigating the Bologna massacre issued a warrant for him as principal suspect that moves were made to locate him.

Post-War Fascism

Born in 1936 into a fascist household in Rome, Delle Chiaie became the prototype neo-fascist of post-war Europe. Like many young fascists of his generation the late 1950's saw him grow increasingly contemptuous and impatient with the older and more jaded generation of fascists.

The failed politics student turned insurance underwriter was apprenticed into terror during Italy's crisis ridden summer of 1960. He and his friends were recruited by the Ministry of the Interior to carry out expeditions against anti-fascist and left-wing demonstrations. Under Delle Chiaie's leadership these fascist gangs became a disciplined organization, Avanguardia Nazionale. While never more than 500 strong, this network of alienated middle class youth was to be the breeding ground and epicentre of neo-fascist terror for the next two decades. Supported by right-wing industrialists and protected by the Italian security establishment, the fortunes of Avanguardia Nazionale flourished.

A turning point in Delle Chiaie's career during this period was his introduction into the demi-world of fascists spawned by nazism, the cold war and colonial wars of Africa and the Far East.

This same period saw the beginning of a campaign of murder and “disappearances” of many leaders of the anti-colonial struggle, such as Ben Barka, the organizer of the Tri-Continental Congress, who disappeared in Paris in late 1965.

According to an associate of Delle Chiaie, Mario Merlino, he and Delle Chiaie were “trusted agents” of Aginter Press—the shadowy organization responsible for eliminating suspected anti-colonial leaders. Merlino later confessed he and Delle Chiaie planted a bomb in the South Vietnamese embassy in Rome on the instructions of Aginter leader Yves Guerin-Serac in order to “blame the left.”

Psychological Warfare

Under the tutelage of his friends among the French OAS exiles and Italian military intelligence organization, SI FAR, Delle Chiaie developed his own ideas on “psychological” (terror) warfare.

Between 1966 and 1969 he traveled in Europe building an international network of followers who were prepared to turn his theories of psy warfare into practice -the so-called “strategy of tension.”

A series of bomb attacks beginning in April 1969 at Milan’s Trade Fair and railway station, signaled the beginning of Delle Chiaie’s terror offensive. It continued unabated for twenty months. The bloodiest outrage of this campaign was the Piazza Fontana bombing in Milan in December 1969 which killed 16 people and injured 88. While police leaks to selected journalists blamed anarchists for the massacre, within days a secret report by counter-intelligence agent Stefano Serpieri named Delle Chiaie and Mario Merlino, as having passed themselves off as anarchists so that suspicion would fall on others.

The final act in the “strategy of tension” which aimed to “create conditions of chaos thereby destroying the structure of the democratic state under the cover of communist activities” was an attempted coup d’etat by Italian naval war hero Prince Valerio Borghese. Leading a unit of 50 armed neo-nazis, Delle Chiaie occupied the Interior Ministry in Rome for a few hours on December 7, 1970. The plot was aborted and both Borghese and Delle Chiaie fled to Franco’s Spain with about 100 accomplices.

Spain provided new opportunities for Delle Chiaie, with his skills and small army of dedicated followers. Nazi paymaster, Otto Skorzeny and Mariano Sanchez Covisa, godfather of the Spanish death squads—the notorious “guerrillas of Christ the King”—took them under their wing. Working with Skorzeny’s “Paladin” organization—a “security consultancy”—Delle Chiaie and his men carried out over 1,000 attacks on anti-francoist activists in Spain and across the French border. It is estimated they were behind 50 murders, inflicting injuries on hundreds of anti-fascists.

Fascist Outrages Escalate

The year 1973 saw an escalation in neo-fascist outrages. In May 1974 a bomb at an anti-fascist rally in Brescia killed 8 and injured 102 people. A few months later another bomb ripped open the crowded Rome Munich express in a tunnel near Bologna, killing 12 and injuring 48. During the investigations into this bombing a magistrate stumbled across a connection between the masonic lodge Propaganda Due (P2) and the perpetrators of the outrages of that spring and summer. They were the initial stages of a coup d’etat in which the military would step in to restore order when social tension had reached the breaking point.

The magistrate, Vittorio Occorsio, was subsequently shot dead in Rome with a machine gun given to Delle Chiaie in Spain by an officer of the Civil Guard Intelligence Service. Two of Delle Chiaie’s closest henchmen later admitted the killing. They told magistrates that another member of Delle Chiaie’s “Black Orchestra,” was responsible for the train bombing itself.

With the death of his protectors Skorzeny and Franco and the collapse of the Greek and Portuguese dictatorships, it was obvious to Delle Chiaie that it was time to move to a more secure base. His hand was forced when Spanish police raided an arms dump in Madrid and discovered the machine gun which killed Judge Occorsio.

Traitor to the Nationalist Cause

Meanwhile, the tensions and way of life imposed by an exile created an unbridgeable gap between Delle Chiaie and the new generation of neo-fascists at home. As stories of his compromised relationships with government agencies and criminals spread, the neo-fascist movement turned on him as a traitor to the nationalist cause and a tool of the establishment.

By 1977, his credibility among his power base evaporating and pressure growing for his arrest, Delle Chiaie moved his base of operations to Latin America where his expertise was offered to the Third World authoritarians. Moving first to Santiago, he was given an office by the Chilean secret police, DINA, from which, posing as a news agency, he ran an operation specializing in killing exiled opponents of the junta. Between 1977 and 1980 Delle Chiaie traveled in Europe and Latin America consolidating his position as the star of the ultra-right. Collaborating with old guard nazis such as Klaus Barbie (who provided him with an entry into the terror network of the security establishments of U.S. client states in Central and South America), he turned his neo-fascist network into an efficient narcotics distribution and enforcement chain with the name "Fiances of Death."

Delle Chiaie became, in the words of one of his lieutenants, "the number one international middleman between the Sicilian Mafia and the Latin American cocaine producers." Bolivian drug prince Roberto Suarez recruited Delle Chiaie and his gang to collaborate in the coup which overthrew Bolivia's elected government. A U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency official remarked at the time, "For the first time ever the drug mafia has bought itself a government."

The Fiances of Death—an assortment of European psychopaths, racists and misfits obsessed with the vision of a world purged of anti-western values—tortured and murdered those they believed to be opponents of their patron regimes as well as independent cocaine dealers. They provided the core of the Bolivian, Argentinian and Salvadoran death squads, brutalizing and murdering the length and breadth of Latin America. In a rare interview with an Italian journalist on the edge of the Amazon forest, he explained that he and his cohorts had come to Latin America "not in a mercenary role, but rather as political militants who know how to win esteem and respect."

Sinister and Lethal Mysteries

In March 1982 an Italian intelligence officer made a statement to the magistrate investigating the 1974 Bologna railway station bombing, stating that Delle Chiaie had been commissioned to carry out the bombing by Licio Gelli, Worshipful Master of the exclusive and highly secret masonic lodge, Propaganda Due (P2), to divert public attention from a massive fraud involving a major Italian industrial group. In December 1982, a month after the warrant for his arrest was issued, the government of his Bolivian protectors collapsed and the new democratically elected government prepared to arrest the so-called Fiances of Death. Bolivian and Italian security forces orchestrated a series of ambushes. Delle Chiaie, forewarned or lucky, managed to escape and disappear from public view until his arrest along with a number of other Italians and Venezuelans in Caracas. Some speculate that U.S. agents may have played a role in warning Delle Chiaie.

For 27 years his connections with ultra-right elites gave Delle Chiaie the reputation of being untouchable. His arrest appears to have shattered that myth, and comes as an embarrassing inconvenience to those who utilized his expertise. Like his more fortunate colleague, masonic lodge P2 master Gelli, who escaped, and those like bankers Michele Sindona and Roberto Calvi, who failed, and the Italian secret service generals and colonels currently on trial for the carnage at Bologna, Delle Chiaie is among the few capable of casting some light on the sinister and lethal mysteries which have disfigured the political life of postwar Italy and Latin America.

The question many of the Colonel Frankensteins in the intelligence world who played their role in creating this monster must be asking themselves is if it is expedient for a man with such secrets to be permitted to come to trial. The enthusiasm with which he appears to be giving evidence to the magistrates from Rome, to Brescia and Bologna, suggests that there may be a third option other than poisoned coffee or being spirited over the walls—a rigged acquittal!

One final point: Given the contradictory trends of increasing state power on one hand and demands for democratization of social life on the other, it is inevitable that the strong arm tactics of the state would be carried out

by agents apparently unconnected with the democratic facade of the state and the economic institutions it serves. Though a repulsive psychopath himself, it is Delle Chiaie's masters who ultimately must be swept away if the world is to be free.

Stuart Christie has been active in the British and international anarchist movement for over 20 years. He has served prison terms in English prisons for his activity and in a Spanish prison for an attempt on the life of the dictator, Franco.

Christie has followed the violent career of Delle Chiaie and is the author of his biography, subtitled *Portrait of a Black Terrorist*. It is available from Soil of Liberty, Box 7056, Powderhorn Sta., Minneapolis MN 55402

[Related: an online version of *Portrait of a Black Terrorist* is available at <https://libcom.org/history/stefano-delle-chiaie-portrait-black-terrorist-stuart-christie>]

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