

Masonic friends in private industry, so be it. These men may not be the backbone of the civil service, but they constitute several ribs.

Knight went more dangerously off-course with a second KGB theory: that Italy's P2 Masonic Lodge conspiracy was a KGB plot.¹¹ He was fed this idea by someone whom he described as 'an impeccable source within British Intelligence', but his strongest *evidence* appears to have been the perverse fact that of all Italy's leading political parties, 'only the Communist Party had no links with P2' and so could exploit the P2 scandal with impunity. 'From the beginning,' he continued, 'Lodge P2 was a KGB-sponsored programme aimed at destabilizing Italy, weakening NATO's southern flank, sweeping the Communists into power in Italy, and sending resultant shock waves throughout the western world.'

Even when *The Brotherhood* first appeared, this seemed an unlikely story. Five years later it is clear that Knight's 'impeccable source' had filled him with disinformation. To understand this government spook's motives we have to explore the P2 story from several angles, but first a brief summary of P2.¹²

In March 1981 two Milan magistrates were investigating the fake kidnapping in 1979 of a swindling Sicilian-born international banker, Michele Sindona. They were also probing his role as financial adviser to the Vatican and his links with the Mafia. They discovered that, while hiding in Palermo, he had travelled 600 miles north to Arezzo to visit a textile manufacturer named Licio Gelli. They promptly ordered a search of Gelli's premises. On 17 March finance policemen discovered 962 Italian names on lists kept in his office safe and a suitcase. The names belonged to members of a Masonic Lodge named Propaganda Massonica, also known as P2. Gelli was its Venerable Master.

What astonished the investigators was that the names on the lists amounted to a state within a state. They included forty-three MPs (among them three cabinet ministers), forty-three generals and eight admirals (including the current heads of all the armed forces), security-service bosses, hundreds of public servants and diplomats, the police chiefs of Italy's four biggest cities, industrialists and financiers, television stars and twenty-four journalists, including the editor and publisher of *Corriere della Sera*. Sindona was a member. So was another controversial banker, Roberto Calvi, who would later be found hanging under London's Blackfriars Bridge.

But who was Gelli? In succeeding months the magistrates discovered that this seeming small-town industrialist was a fascist war criminal who had opportunistically betrayed his colleagues as soon as he realized Germany was going to lose the war. A few years later his past caught up with him, so he fled to Argentina and made valuable political friends such