

NEWS

Anti-globalization priest receives death threat

By Martin Penner
ANSA

ROME: A storm was still raging on Monday around Father Vitaliano Della Sala, the maverick southern priest sacked for his active support of anti-globalization activists, gay rights campaigners and anarchist squatters.

A day after parishioners bricked up the door to the local church to stop anyone else taking his place as priest of Sant'Angelo della Scala, near the southern city of Avellino, the 39-year-old cleric on Monday received a death threat.

"On Dec. 7 you will be dead," announced a small notice pinned to the door of the parish church his superiors want him to abandon after 10 years. The threat, which referred to the date of a planned anti-globalization demonstration in the town, was accompanied by a photo of late Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini and a few swastikas.

On Nov. 28, Father Vitaliano received transfer orders from his diocesan superior, Monsignor Tarcisio Nazario.

The abbot of Montevergine, who has

become increasingly impatient with his underling's exploits over the years, said Father Vitaliano had "neglected his parish duties."

The abbot also accused the priest of seeking to set up an "alternative" church, and blasted him for appearing on television wearing a Che Guevara T-shirt and supporting "Communist" squatters demanding homes.

Father Vitaliano, who was banned from Mexico for life after attending an anti-globalization rally there last year, confirmed on Monday that he would obey the order to leave even though he considers it unfair.

In an interview published Monday in the left-wing daily L'Unità, Father Vitaliano also said that powerful secular forces, presumably political ones, had played a key role in his sacking last week.

Father Vitaliano's replacement, a recently ordained Argentinean priest, has yet to arrive. In the meantime, parishioners were reportedly adopting the do-it-yourself approach to coming Christmas festivities, organizing Advent prayers in a disused nursery school instead of the church.



Father Vitaliano Della Sala is cheered at a CGIL union conference in Naples last Friday.

A new nude calendar that sells courage, not cars

By Philip Pullella
Reuters

ROME: Calendars in Italy use bare breasts to sell everything from cars to coffins.

Now, a different calendar uses photos of nude women who have had breast reconstruction to sell a very simple but vital message — that there is life for women after breast cancer.

"Calendars in Italy are usually associated with female beauty and we wanted to send a message that courage is beautiful too," Dr. Simonetta Franchelli told Reuters on Monday.

Franchelli and her colleague Marisa Muggiano, both of whom work at the Genoa Tumor Institute, came up with the idea to encourage women who have undergone radical mastectomy and reconstructive surgery to lead normal lives.

The calendar, which will go on sale throughout Italy next week, will raise funds for the Italian League to Prevent Tumors.

Franchelli said in a telephone interview from the hospital that it was not difficult to find the six women patients who allowed themselves to be photographed naked after surgery. The women each represent two months.

"Still, they are courageous women because there still is too much of a stigma attached to breast cancer and reconstructive breast surgery," she said.

In one of the pictures, a woman is wearing only a black bow tie and a white silk scarf. She is smiling broadly.

In another, a woman contemplates her reconstructed breast in a meditative pose and in a third, a romantic red rose rests on one of the reconstructed breasts.

"These pictures are artistic, nothing shocking and no one was trying to be sexy," Franchelli said.

"We were trying to give a voice to our patients so that women can tell other women that they too can cope with something as traumatic as breast cancer," she said.

Franchelli, a 40-year-old plastic surgeon at the northeastern city's cancer hospital, said some people had complained the calendar was in bad taste, but most calls had been supportive.

She said she got the idea from a patient several years ago who was mentioning how pin-up women are used in Italian calendars.

To show that breast cancer can strike women of all ages, the patients photographed ranged in age from 30 to 68.

"It is by women and for women, and essentially the message is that you can return to a normal life. We are not trying to be sexy, we are not trying to be vulgar. We are trying to be women," she said.

Travel

Alitalia pilots have scheduled a four-hour strike beginning at midday on Wednesday, Dec. 11.

Air traffic controllers have scheduled a four-hour strike starting at 10 a.m. on Thursday, Dec. 12.

State railway workers are planning a 24-hour strike starting at 9 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 14.

Local transportation workers are staging a 24-hour walkout on Monday, Dec. 16.

DAVID From Page 1

tor's allegations regarding the poor quality of marble, highly atypical for a Michelangelo piece. Traditionally, he was so fastidious over his materials that he once spent nearly nine months in the Carrara marble quarries seeking out the perfect block for the tomb of Pope Julius II.

He was reputedly furious with the marble provided by Florence. Not only was the block long and narrow, making it difficult to work with, but it had already been hacked at in parts. According to the tests, the stone was also particularly porous and consequently more susceptible to water and atmospheric pollution.

Drawbacks aside, Michelangelo created a marble nude considered a paragon of male beauty since its completion in 1504. "In spite of the opposition of a committee of fellow artists, I insisted that the figure should stand before the Palazzo Vecchio, as a symbol of our republic. I had my way," he wrote in his diary. "Archways were torn down, narrow streets widened ... it took 40 men five days to move it. Once in place, all Florence was astounded."

The David was only moved from his original location in Piazza della Signoria in 1873 after riots damaged its left wrist. The tests confirmed that this was



A detail of Michelangelo's David.

only one of several pieces of damage inflicted over the years. The most recent of these was in September 1991, when a disturbed man took a hammer to the David's left foot, shattering its second toe.

The missing appendage has been recast in structured resin and powdered marble, while the fragments of shattered marble were kept aside and have proved invaluable during the recent examination.

The last attempt to shine up David,

whose gleam had turned a slightly nacreous yellow in parts, dates back to 1843, when well-meaning if misguided authorities bathed him in a noxious solution of concentrated hydrochloric acid. The marble was damaged, irreparably in some sections.

The beauty treatment awaiting David this time follows 11 years of painstaking research culminating in the recent tests, in order to ensure that the planned cleanup will be more beneficial than harmful.

Agnese Parronci, 38, a Michelangelo specialist and a graduate of the Opificio delle Pietre Dure restoration workshop, has been selected to do the honors. Every night until Easter, she will lie on a special hydraulic platform built by car-maker Fiat, suspended in mid-air somewhere next to the surface of the towering nude.

Following the cleanup, which will remove the lingering traces of wax, eggs and casein erroneously applied as protection by earlier generations, the Accademia hopes the David will return to its former resplendent glory, as described by its creator: "A civic hero, he was a warning ... that whoever governed Florence should govern justly and defend it bravely. Eyes watchful, the neck of a bull, the hands of a killer ... the body, a reservoir of energy. He stands poised to strike."

People

Teresa Fumarola of Puglia had quite a few candles on her cake on Monday: 113 to be exact. Fumarola, thought to be the oldest living woman in Italy, was born on Dec. 2 1889 in San Marzano di Giuseppe, a small town near Taranto in Puglia. Working alongside her husband, **Donato Ligorio**, Fumarola also had 10 children, five of whom are still alive and range in age between 71 and 92. The matriarch of five generations, Fumarola has 150 grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren. Although she currently suffers from arthritis and has some problems with her vision, family and friends say that she is still sound of mind and a lively talker. She celebrated her birthday with a party organized by the town of Fragnano, near Taranto. She also received birthday wishes from President **Carlo Azeglio Ciampi**.

Almost two centuries after Italian and British explorers first begun feuding over a submerged Mediterranean island, their descendants are quibbling over which country can call the Ferdinandea island its own. On Sunday, **Richard Price**, a direct descendant of Humphrey Senhouse, the first British man to claim the island as England's own, dove down to the island's surface and supplanted an Italian plaque with a British flag, renaming the place Graham Island. Two years ago, an Italian related to the Bourbon royal family placed a plaque on the island saying that it had always belonged to Sicilians. France and Spain have also made claims on the island. The stakes, like the island, are rising. According to geologists, Ferdinandea may not stay under water for much longer. With the recent activity on Sicily's Mount Etna, the submerged island has risen substantially and is now only 5.7 meters below the surface. But an international court may get the final word: At 23 miles off the Italian coast, the Ferdinandea island is outside Italy's 12-mile jurisdiction.

Comment

Will sinking Venice raise our ambitions?

By Dominic Standish
Special to Italy Daily

While I am often critical of the current Italian government, it has to be commended for approving initial funding for Project Mose in Venice.

Project Mose consists of 79 mobile gates that would rise above the sea's surface to reduce its flow through the three entrances into the lagoon when high tides are predicted.

On Nov. 29, the Inter-ministry Committee for Economic Programming (CIPE) earmarked €450 million over three years for Project Mose. Critics have highlighted current problems with the government's budget deficit and the high ratio of debt to gross domestic product as reasons not to implement the project.

Such a negative approach fails to consider the potential economic benefits of Project Mose. In the short term, the construction work will boost local jobs and businesses. Tourists will continue to flock to Venice and the gates should not hinder the port's €1 billion annual business in the long term. The sea continues to be a great resource for Venice and Project Mose should help change the current perception that it is a threat.

Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi has vowed to make Project Mose part of his government's infrastructure plans that will see Italy "transformed into a big building site." This includes building the world's longest suspension bridge connecting the Italian mainland to Sicily and significant road construction. Such ambition contrasts with the attitude of the previous center-left government that postponed Project Mose and

brought road building to a virtual halt.

In "Venice Against the Sea," (2002), John Keahy quotes an observer who raises concerns about members of this government as "optimism mongers" with their "can do" attitude towards Project Mose.

I find such a positive approach a breath of fresh air in our pessimistic times. If the government is to be criticized, it should be for not being ambitious enough. The €450 million is for the final design stage and initial work on Project Mose until the end of 2004. It is only part of the estimated €3.5 billion required for the completion of the whole project, predicted in 2010. A really ambitious government would have ensured all funds were in place to complete the project; €3.5 billion may sound like too much for a government to spend on one project. Yet it is only double the amount spent on refurbishing Rome for the 2000 Holy Year Jubilee and is just over one fifth of the cost of building the Channel tunnel connecting Britain and France.

In addition to budgetary criticisms, Project Mose has faced mounting objections from environmentalists. It was the previous government's Environment Ministry that delayed a decision on the project before the current government gave its approval in December 2001. Indeed, the pessimism of environmentalists is more profound than that of skeptical economists as it is based on anti-change sentiments, not mere budgetary disagreements.

It is maybe forgotten that Project Mose was already blocked in December 1998 for its inefficient environmental impact in maintaining the equilibri-

um of the lagoon's ecosystem," was how Stefano Lorenzi of the Italian World Wildlife Fund greeted the CIPE €450 million funding.

Many environmentalists believe that the gates will damage marine life because they will rise so often that the lagoon will become stagnant. Such claims are based on predictions of rising sea levels due to global warming by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

Yet the IPCC has revised down its estimated range of total sea level rise until the end of this century from 38 to 35 cm to 31 to 49 cm. Bjorn Lomborg, author of "The Skeptical Environmentalist," (2001), and others claim that the IPCC's revised predictions overestimate global temperature warming by about 20 percent.

The source of environmental opposition is that Project Mose is significant human intervention that will change the lagoon. But intervention is exactly what Venice needs to counter the rise in relative sea level. Project Mose will not save the city indefinitely, but it is the best option for the foreseeable future.

The creation of Venice in a lagoon was an incredible human achievement. Wooden poles were driven down into the mud to support foundations. The development of Venice into one of the world's leading cities was based on great human endeavor. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, have we got the ambition to save this great city?

Dominic Standish is conducting PhD research on Venice and environmentalism. Comments can be addressed to dstandish@europe.com

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temp	min c/f	max c/f
Bologna	6/43	8/46
Bolzano	2/36	6/43
Brindisi	11/52	15/59
Cagliari	9/48	13/55
Catania	8/46	16/61
Florence	7/45	11/52
Genoa	9/48	12/54
Milan	2/36	8/46
Naples	8/46	14/57
Palermo	13/55	15/59
Rome	8/46	13/55
Trieste	11/52	12/54
Turin	1/34	8/46
Venice	8/46	10/50

TODAY

TOMORROW

temp	min c/f	max c/f
Bologna	6/43	10/50
Bolzano	2/36	7/45
Brindisi	10/50	14/57
Cagliari	9/48	14/57
Catania	8/46	16/61
Florence	6/43	12/54
Genoa	8/46	13/55
Milan	1/34	10/50
Naples	7/45	14/57
Palermo	13/55	15/59
Rome	8/46	15/59
Trieste	12/54	12/54
Turin	1/34	8/46
Venice	8/46	11/52

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