

1 Murder in London

London, June 18, 1982, 7:30 a.m. Anthony Huntley, a young postal clerk at the Daily Express, was walking to work along the footpath under Blackfriars Bridge. His daily commute had become so routine that he paid little attention to the bridge's distinctive pale blue and white wrought iron arches. But a yellowish orange rope tied to a pipe at the far end of the north arch caught his attention. Curious, he leaned over the parapet and froze. A body hung from the rope, a thick knot tied around its neck. The dead man's eyes were partially open. The river lapped at his feet. Huntley rubbed his eyes in disbelief and then walked to a nearby terrace with an unobstructed view over the Thames: he wanted to confirm what he had seen. The shock of his grisly discovery sank in.¹ By the time Huntley made his way to his newspaper office, he was pale and felt ill. He was so distressed that a colleague had to make the emergency call to Scotland Yard.²

In thirty minutes the Thames River Police anchored one of their boats beneath Blackfriars' Number One arch. There they got a close-up of the dead man. He appeared to be about sixty, average height, slightly overweight, and his receding hair was dyed jet black. His expensive gray suit was lumpy and distorted. After cutting him down, they laid the body on the boat deck. It was then they discovered the reason his suit was so misshapen. He had stones stuffed in his trouser pockets, and half a brick inside his jacket and another half crammed in his pants.³ The River Police thought it a likely suicide. They took no crime scene photos before moving the body to nearby Waterloo Pier, where murder squad detectives were waiting.⁴

There the first pictures were taken of the corpse and clothing. The stones and brick weighed nearly twelve pounds. The name in his Italian passport was Gian Roberto Calvini.⁵ He had \$13,700 in British, Swiss, and Italian currency. The \$15,000 gold Patek Philippe on his wrist had stopped at 1:52 a.m. and a pocket watch was frozen at 5:49 a.m. Sandwiched between the rocks in his pockets were two wallets, a ring, cuff links, some papers, four eyeglasses, three eyeglass cases, a few photographs, and a pencil.⁶ Among the papers was an address book page with the contact details for a former official at the Banca Nazionale del Lavoro; Italy's Socialist Finance Minister; a prominent London solicitor; and Monsignor Hilary Franco, who held the honorary title of Prelate of the Pope.⁷ Police never found the rest of the book.

A city coroner arrived at 9:30, two hours after the body's discovery, and took it to London's Milton Court morgue.⁸ There they stripped the corpse, took his fingerprints, and prepared for an autopsy. Their notes reflect that the dead man oddly wore two pairs of underwear.⁹

London police quickly learned from the Italian embassy that the passport was a fake. And it took only a day to discover the false name was simply a variation of the dead man's real one: he was sixty-two-year-old Italian banker Roberto Calvi, chairman and managing director of Milan's Banco Ambrosiano, one of Italy's largest private banks. He had been missing for a week. A judge there had issued a fugitive warrant because Calvi had jumped bail pending the appeal of a criminal fraud conviction the previous year.

A Roman magistrate and four Italian detectives flew to London to help British police cobble together a personal dossier.¹⁰ Calvi had risen from a middle-class family to become the chief of the Ambrosiano. He had turned a sleepy provincial bank into an aggressive international merchant bank. The magistrate informed his British counterpart that Calvi was no ordinary banker. He was involved with some of Italy's greatest power brokers in a secret Masonic lodge and he was a confidant of the Vatican's top moneymen.¹¹

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