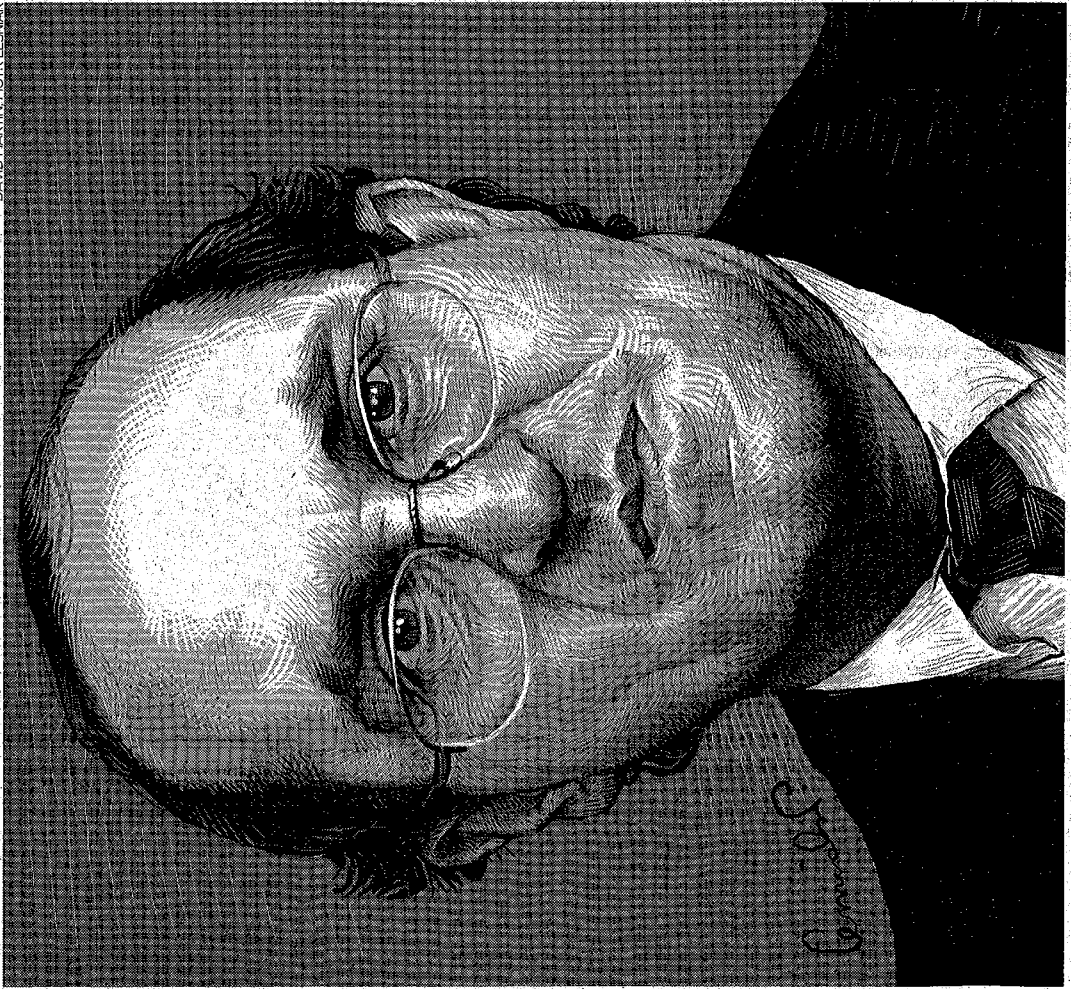


the face Courting controversy

DAVID MARTIN; POITR LESNIAK



To look at his client list, one can speculate that Giovanni di Stefano, an unremarkable-looking, purse-lipped, balding, Anglo-Italian lawyer and sometime jack of all trades who came to Britain, as a young boy, is a compulsive controversialist, a man who, by association, almost seems to like to roll around in the ugly notoriety of others, or at least feels at home in such company.

It's not just that he makes a living representing some of the most controversial characters, such as the property tycoon Nicholas van Hoogstraten, Ronnie Biggs or the former Iraqi dictator, Saddam Hussein. It's that he defends them to the public, extolling

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their charms. As a young man, Di Stefano met a Yugoslavian, Zeljko Raznatovic, who would later come to prominence as the Serbian paramilitary leader, Arkan. Together, they bought a second-division Serbian football team; within two seasons it was playing in the European Champion's League amid accusations of match-fixing, which Di Stefano has denied. In the years before Arkan was assassinated, Di Stefano acted as his spokesman and lawyer.

It was in Serbia, as the sales agent for Iraqi Airlines, says Di Stefano, that he met Saddam Hussein, whom he found to be "extremely logical and hard-working," and whose

attempted genocide against the Iraqi Kurds, could be excused, he said in 2002, on the grounds that it was "14 or 15 years ago". Di Stefano claims that it was during this period that he met Osama bin Laden, in 1998, in Iraq. A man, with "a wonderful smile. Aquiline nose that reminded me of Dante".

Who else has the 52-year-old represented? Jeremy Bamber (who was given five life sentences in 1986 for shooting dead his adoptive parents, sister and twin nephews); Jonathan King (convicted of sexual offences against young boys in 2001); Kenneth Noye (convicted of a road-rage murder in 1996) and Harold Shipman. It was via Di Stefano that Ian Brady applied last month to be moved to a conventional jail in which he intends to starve to death.

This week it emerges that Di Stefano is representing Ian Strachan, a businessman, and Sean McGuigan, jointly accused of having blackmailed a member of the royal family over an alleged drugs and sex tape. Di Stefano says that he was contacted by Strachan's mother while he was in Iraq representing Saddam Hussein's Deputy Prime Minister, Tariq Aziz.

STEFANIE MARSH

DANIEL GALVIN, OBE

"The Face" on October 26 about Daniel Galvin Jr was mistakenly illustrated in some early editions with a drawing of his father, Daniel Galvin, OBE. A photograph of Daniel Galvin Jr was substituted in later editions. We apologise to Daniel Galvin, OBE, for any embarrassment caused by this mistake.