

Spectre of kidnapping always hanging over rich in Europe

ROME (AP) — The rich in Europe are being forced to live with bodyguards and take other safety measures as the idea behind Italy's "Kidnapping, Inc." spreads to other countries.

The number of Italian kidnappings for ransom in 1977 reached a record 63 Tuesday when three armed men seized Pietro Fiocci, a munitions factory owner and town official in Lecco. The men pushed him into a waiting car as he left work in the northern Italian town and drove away.

Monday, an armed gang grabbed Duke Massimiliano Grazioli as he toured his estate near Rome. The abductors demanded a \$12-million ransom for the duke, who police said did not follow the cardinal rule of kidnap prevention—varying his daily routine.

More significant than the number of Italian kidnappings is the fact that the crime has spread elsewhere.

A few of the kidnapers in other countries had political motives, but most of them demanded, and got, high ransoms of the order that has netted Italian abductors millions of dollars a year. Italians were suspected of involvement in some kidnappings in other countries.

Switzerland, long seen as a safe place, had its first recorded kidnapping this year: that of Graziella Ortiz, five-year-old grandniece of Bolivian tin king Antenor Patino. She was freed on a \$3-million ransom. Police said they suspect Italian professionals were to blame.

In France, Luchino Revelli Beamont, chief executive of Italy's Fiat auto company in Paris, was freed in July after 89 days in captivity and payment of \$2 million. A gang of Argentines was arrested after his release. French police are trying to discourage kidnappings by preventing ransom payments.

The Netherlands had its first kidnap-

ping when real estate magnate Maurits Caransa was seized Oct. 28. He negotiated his own release last Wednesday with a \$4.16-million ransom. Police said his kidnapers spoke English "with a Mediterranean accent."

Police in Portugal blamed Italians and Latin Americans for the kidnapping of a Canadian and a Nicaraguan last summer, the first such cases there in recent memory. They were freed with a \$200,000 ransom.

In Spain, rich Basque industrialists have long used bodyguards against the Basque Land and Liberty terrorist group, which has carried out kidnappings for both political reasons and money. A radical leftist group called Grapo joined in this year with the abduction of two Spanish officials, later released without bloodshed.

The latest kidnapping reported in Spain was last Thursday, when a jeweller in

Salamanca was seized by four men. Police said there seemed to be no political motivation.

The main motive behind the kidnapping of West German industrialist Hanns-Martin Schleyer was political, with a band of **Red Army Faction** terrorists demanding the release of 11 prisoners. But the kidnapers also demanded \$478,000 in ransom. Schleyer was killed Oct. 18 after 43 days of captivity after the government refused both demands.

The first victim of what came to be known as Italy's Kidnapping Inc. was a Sicilian baron, Francesco Agnello, abducted from his home in 1955 for a 60 million-lire ransom, worth nearly \$100,000 at the time.

The new-found industry was limited to Sicily and Sardinia in those early years, but it moved to Italy's mainland in the 1970s.

Since the oil-wealthy family of J. Paul

Getty III paid a \$2.7-million ransom in 1973, the figures have been frequently near the \$1-million mark. Getty was freed but had an ear cut off.

Authorities estimate more than \$60 million was paid in the more than 200 kidnappings for ransom in Italy until this year, while unofficial estimates of ransoms paid so far this year total nearly \$16 million.

There have been at least seven confirmed deaths at the hands of kidnapers since 1970, the latest that of a Milan man found in a lake Oct. 8. More than 30 persons are listed as missing, some of them since 1974.

The number of kidnappings in Italy dropped from a record 62 in 1975 to 48 in 1976 as courts moved to block ransom payments. The pace picked up this year after kidnap gangs and victims' families apparently perfected means for passing ransom money through Swiss accounts.



Pietro Fiocci