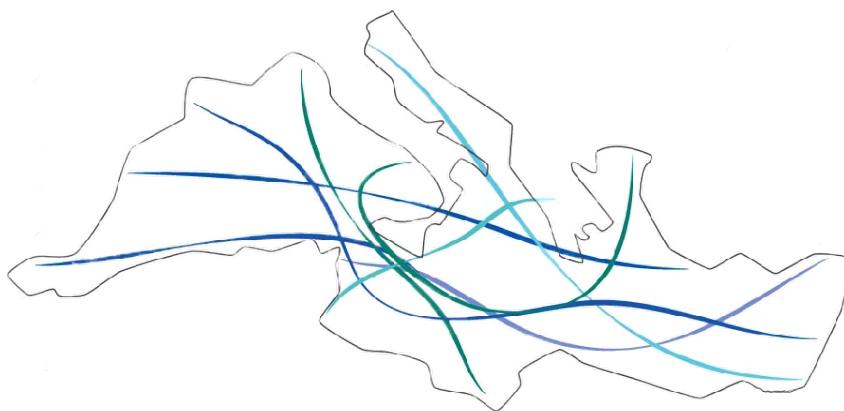


# JOURNAL OF MEDITERRANEAN KNOWLEDGE

Editor in Chief, Giuseppe D'Angelo

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*The First Mafia War. When the narcotics  
changed Palermo's mobs (1962-1969)*



ISSN: 2499-930X



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**MEDITERRANEAN KNOWLEDGE**  
International Centre for Studies & Research  
[www.mediterraneanknowledge.org](http://www.mediterraneanknowledge.org)

Cassarà, V. (2022). "The First Mafia War. When the narcotics changed Palermo's mobs (1962-1969)". *Journal of Mediterranean Knowledge*, 7(2), 163-193. DOI: 10.26409/2022JMK7.2.02  
Retrieved from  
<http://www.mediterraneanknowledge.org/publications/index.php/journal/issue/archive>

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Article received: 2 October 2022

Accepted: 24 November 2022

On the cover: *Routes* by ISIA Roma Design

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Via Giovanni Paolo II n. 132, 84084 Fisciano, Italy



- Peer Reviewed Journal

INDEXED IN  
DOAJ

## The First Mafia War. When the narcotics changed Palermo's mobs (1962-1969)

### Abstract

The first conviction of Cosa Nostra, as is well known, took place at the Maxi Trial (1986-1987). However, not everyone knows that many bosses had already been arrested twenty years earlier following the "First Mafia War" (1962-1963), a feud between clans culminated in the Ciaculli massacre (June 30, 1963). The martyrdom of seven soldiers was followed by the police first reaction, which in Palermo, in that summer, arrested two thousand people. This first anti-Mafia season faded so soon that, at the end of the legislature, the chairman of the parliamentary commission of inquiry delivered to Parliament a report of just three pages. In the wake of the failure to reach political conclusions, in the two trials in Catanzaro (Dec. 22, 1968) and Bari (June 10, 1969) nearly all the defendants, including Totò Riina, were acquitted for insufficient evidence. The author reconstructs in detail the internal conflict within the cosche to the point of outlining their political and judicial failures.

Keywords: Palermo, Mafia, War, Ciaculli, Anti-Mafia, Trials

## La Primera Guerra de la Mafia. Cuando el narcotráfico cambió a las bandas de Palermo (1962-1969)

### Resumen

La primera condena de Cosa Nostra, como es bien sabido, tuvo lugar en el Maxi Proceso (1986-1987). Sin embargo, no todos saben que muchos capos ya habían sido detenidos veinte años antes, tras la "Primera Guerra de la Mafia" (1962-1963), una contienda entre clanes que culminó con la masacre de Ciaculli (30 de junio de 1963). Al martirio de siete soldados siguió la primera reacción de la policía, que ese verano detuvo a casi dos mil personas en Palermo. Sin embargo, esta primera campaña antimafia se desvaneció tan rápidamente que, al final de la legislatura, el presidente de la Comisión de Investigación entregó al Parlamento un informe de tan solo tres páginas. Ante la imposibilidad de llegar a conclusiones políticas, en los dos juicios posteriores de Catanzaro (22 de diciembre de 1968) y Bari (10 de junio de 1969) casi todos los acusados, incluido Totò Riina, fueron absueltos por falta de pruebas. El autor reconstruye detalladamente el conflicto en las bandas y, seguidamente, expone los fracasos políticos y judiciales.

Palabras clave: Palermo, Guerra, Mafia, Ciaculli, Antimafia, Juicios

## La prima guerra di mafia. Quando gli stupefacenti cambiarono le cosche palermitane (1962-1969)

### Sinossi

La prima condanna di Cosa Nostra, come è noto, avvenne al Maxi Processo (1986-1987). Non tutti sanno però che molti boss erano già stati arrestati vent'anni prima, in seguito alla "Prima guerra di mafia" (1962-1963), una faida tra clan culminata nella strage di Ciaculli (30 giugno 1963). Al martirio di sette militari seguì la prima reazione della polizia, che a Palermo, in quell'estate, arrestò quasi duemila persone. Questa prima stagione antimafia svanì però così presto che, al termine della legislatura, il presidente della Commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta consegnò al Parlamento una relazione di appena tre pagine. Sulla scia del mancato raggiungimento di conclusioni politiche, nei due successivi processi di Catanzaro (22 dicembre 1968) e Bari (10 giugno 1969) quasi tutti gli imputati, compreso Totò Riina, vennero assolti per insufficienza di prove. L'autore ricostruisce nel dettaglio il conflitto interno alle cosche fino a delineare quindi i fallimenti politici e giudiziari.

Parole chiave: Palermo, Guerra, Mafia, Ciaculli, Antimafia, Processi

## ***The First Mafia War. When the narcotics changed Palermo's mobs (1962-1969)***

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Bosses such as Totò Riina, Bernardo Provenzano or Tommaso Buscetta became known to the general public in the 1980s, following the outbreak of the Second Mafia War (1981-1982) and the Palermo Maxi Trial (1986-87). Their violence gave rise to some of the most virulent massacres in Italian republican history, from the murders of politicians such as Piersanti Mattarella (1980) and Pio La Torre (1982), president of the Sicilian Region and communist regional secretary, respectively, to that of Carabinieri General Carlo Alberto Dalla Chiesa (1982) to the Capaci and Via D'Amelio massacres, where Judges Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino lost their lives (1992). Not many, however, know the names of these men of honor had been included in judicial records as early as the 1960s, when they had been protagonists of a First Mafia War (1962-1963).

To outline the context, it must be immediately specified that the conflict took place at the height of the economic boom (Crainz, 2003), when the prevailing public opinion considered the Mafia phenomenon a remnant of an ancient agricultural and feudal past and it would disappear with the economic and civil progress. Contrary to this perspective, the Mafia was instead in a decisive phase of transformation, so people not only had to suddenly realize that it was not inevitably attached to an archaic model, but the balances that had governed it up were literally blowing up: a sudden evolution in the use of violence, in fact, in the first half of 1963 turned Palermo into the battleground of dozens of mobsters, whose ambushes took place in broad daylight and in crowded streets with

machine guns and TNT even going to use new terrorist forms such as the car bomb.

To better understand the affair, it should be emphasized that an initial change in the strategy of Cosa Nostra had already taken place with the “sack of Palermo,” the violent urban speculation (Inzerillo, 1984; Pedone, 2019) that so changed the urban context that even Eric J. Hobsbawm (1995) took it as an example of the rapidities and vastness of the social transformations in the twentieth century. The case of the Sicilian capital, in postwar Italy, was certainly not the only of abnormal urban expansion, only think of the campaign against the sack of Rome (Natoli, 1954), important journalistic investigations (Cederna, 1956) or literary works (Calvino, 1957). Unlike other cities, however, Palermo exhibited a peculiarity all its own, the Mafia “variant”: thanks to compliant master plans approved in violation of urban planning regulations, in fact, builders were able to shift the city’s axis northwestward, razing the many Art Nouveau villas and burying so many parks and gardens. Over four thousand building permits issued between 1959 and 1964 went to five pensioners who had nothing to do with construction and who acted as front men for third parties: the most striking case was of Francesco Vassallo, a builder who arose from nothing and who, thanks to impressive political-banking protections, within ten years became the city’s biggest speculator (Bevivino Report, 1963).

By inserting themselves into the construction boom, the Mafia families had a way of forging relationships with the local political-administrative class. They realized a fundamental passage in their history, because the management of the suburban territories allowed the division of the numerous contracts practically without conflict, aided by the territorial structure of the cosche. Why, then, did the balance suddenly shift? It all began in 1946, when Lucky Luciano was repatriated to Italy. The notorious “boss of two worlds” was able to build little by little a massive global heroin market, to which he called Sicilian families to contribute. Consider that business had continued so undisturbed throughout the 1950s: in October 1957, for example, an American delegation headed by Joe Bonanno landed in Palermo to preside over a narco-trafficking convention at the Hotel delle Palme. When Luciano died in 1962, however, the Sicilian

commission in charge of coordinating the sorting, set up on American advice, ceased to function: in a plurality of groups such as the Palermo Mafia was, control of these international-scale deals became practically impossible. The Greco family, which controlled the area east of Palermo, and the La Barbera brothers' clan, established in the central-western area, opposed each other and their respective allies. The conflict of power and interests between the two sides had been simmering for some time because the former, members of a family of ancient Mafia origin, resented the latter, regarded as *parvenus* who only through Luciano's protection had managed to the top of the Mafia. A fraud over a shipment of heroin, therefore, lit the fuse of confrontation. A disconcerting frequency of bombings and westerns - reconstructed in detail throughout the essay - would habituate the people of Palermo to corpses lying on the asphalt, until the Ciaculli massacre on June 30, 1963, surpassed these episodes in violence. Indeed, the death of seven law enforcement men from a car bomb explosion ended the indifference. Probably no one will ever know whether the target of the attack was the Grecos or the representatives of the institutions (the prevailing opinion is the Giulietta with TNT wanted to hit the Mafiosi and, only by chance, hit the Carabinieri), but the massacre clearly and peremptorily affirmed that the Mafiosi did not just kill each other.

The second part of the work so reconstructed the reaction of the State, which put in place the first resolute action against the Mafia since Fascism. On the investigative level, a real storm hit Cosa Nostra: the climate was such that the families even dissolved the commission. The investigations were led by investigating judge Cesare Terranova, who accurately identified the structure of the organization, the division into families, the existence of a commission, the involvement in drug trafficking and its ties with some businessmen and public administrators. His investigations led to the Catanzaro trial, the so-called "trial of 117" against the Palermo Mafia (1968), and the Bari trial against the Corleone-based Mafia (1969). As it will be seen, although the numerous acquittals ended up thwarting the magistrate's efforts, these two extensive and very detailed verdicts constitute the mainstay of this historical

reconstruction. The court documents represent documents about the Mafia and not of the Mafia itself, but a comparison with them is inevitable. Considering that, apart from the so-called “pizzini” of the latest generation, Cosa Nostra does not produce its own written documentation and, therefore, no Mafia hand sources are available.

It must also be pointed out that the very establishment of the parliamentary antimafia commission immediately following the massacre demonstrates the uncertainties of the political class and, in particular, of the governing class. Although it had been called for by leftist oppositions since the 1940s, it was endowed with little investigative powers. Despite the center-left promising to support the inquiry, the result was that outrage against the Mafia faded so quickly that the existence of the criminal association would not be certified until thirteen years later, in 1976. The Antimafia, therefore, became the longest-running parliamentary inquiry in the history of Italy.

It is important to note, moreover, that although some mafia groups dissolved as a result of widespread police activity, others simultaneously acquired an international dimension: suffice it to think of the path of another “boss of two worlds” such as Buscetta, who first went to Mexico, then to Canada and, finally, to the U.S., where in the 1970s made contact with the bosses of the American Cosa Nostra who find it convenient to delegate to him and the other “escapees” certain crucial functions in the international drug trade (Zuccalà Report, 1976). The strength of the Sicilian Mafia, in fact, has always consisted of its ties with the American Mafia and viceversa, namely its transnational character (Lupo, 2008).

In conclusion, the release of hundreds of Palermo and Corleone bosses by the courts of Catanzaro and Bari, respectively, would allow the clans to reorganize and open a new phase in their history. Back in the city, in fact, these would settle their accounts on the evening of December 10, 1969, with the Viale Lazio massacre. This umpteenth episode of violence is symbolically important, not only because it definitively closed the accounts with the First Mafia War, but because it opened a new chapter in the history of Cosa Nostra: the firing group, in fact, included the Corleonesi who, from that moment, would give the rise to the top of the so-called “Cupola.” Under Riina’s direction, Palermo would thus see the fall in the years



between the 1970s and 1980s of its representatives of institutions, politicians and men of law enforcement. And from these tragic events, thanks in part to Buscetta's later collaboration, would originate the most important repressive season of the Republican era. Ultimately, since many of the 467 men of honor at the Maxi Trial had already been arrested twenty years earlier following the Ciaculli massacre, the writer believes that a present-day reinterpretation of the First Mafia War can also give a better understanding of the subsequent events, when the rise of the Corleonesi would reach its climax, thirty years later, in the Mafia massacres of 1992-1993.

### *1. The heroin business and the rise of the La Barbera brothers.*

The history of drug trafficking starts when, during World War II, the U.S. government asked for Lucky Luciano's cooperation in tracking down some German spies who had infiltrated Manhattan dockworkers in order to sabotage some Navy ships. By virtue of this tacit agreement, known as "Operation Underworld," some historians later fueled the myth the Italian-American boss was also involved in the landing in Sicily in 1943 (Casarrubea, 2005; Costanzo, 2006), while others refuted the thesis (Lupo, 2004). Without going into the merits of the issue, here it is important to point out that the American judiciary, in debit for services rendered, pardoned Luciano in 1946. In the U.S. they were convinced that doing so would render him harmless. In great secrecy, however, the godfather tacked on the heroin business. Indeed, at what may be considered the mob's first world conference, in Cuba, on December 22, 1946, he instructed the American bosses on his plan: first, opium crops were to be pushed to the East, where governments pretended not to see the plantations; refining was up to the Marseillais, whose laboratories were capable of disappearing in a few minutes; finally, money laundering required the approach of expert banking technicians. The center would become the Caribbean island, where Fulgencio Batista would meanwhile play the part of hidden partner. An international

crime holding company was thus born Sicilian in name and American in structure (Marino, 2014, p. 136).

Desiring the Mafia families become “one,” the boss called on Sicilians to contribute as well. To better facilitate business, undesirables of the caliber of Frank Caruso, Nick Gentile, Carlos Marcello, Tony Accardi, Gaetano Badalamenti, Frank Coppola, Joseph Gambino, Joe Profaci, Angelo Di Carlo and Cesare Manzella repatriated from the U.S. Salvatore Lupo wondered why heroin passed right through Sicily, considering that up to that time the island had nothing to do with either the raw material and its processing or, even less, with consumption, at that time all American. A first answer has to be found in its location, which had always been a strategic pole at the center of the Mediterranean; it was above all the ancient connection between the “cousins” of the old and new worlds that favored transoceanic exchanges, however, because with a “sprinkling” method the postwar resumption of migrations allowed travelers to quietly hide drugs in their trunks. Exploiting the network of family and/or business-criminal links, it was therefore the *cosche* west of Palermo that specialized in drug trafficking: think of the Cinisi couple formed by Manzella and Badalamenti or the Bonanno (New York) and Magaddino (Buffalo) families, both originally from Castellammare del Golfo (Lupo, 2008).

In order not to arouse suspicion, *anima*, Luciano settled in Naples. Running the business in Palermo remained the trusted Rosario Mancino, who went from being a simple longshoreman to soon becoming a major smuggler. His shipping agency, officially, handled the shipment of canned food but, in reality, served as a front for constant foreign travel. Sicilian trawlers would cross off-shore with boats from Turkey and Syria, disembark at night on the island and transport the drugs to their friends’ citrus groves (La Barbera Investigation, 1964). It was no coincidence many smugglers were located in Marseille, Frankfurt and Hamburg, the main marketplaces for Sicilian oranges. Suggestor of the routes was another man from Palermo, Pietro Davì, known as “Jimmy the American” because he had traveled so much that he was indicted in Germany and by police in South American countries for cocaine trafficking. With the contacts of the most aggressive smugglers such as the Burms of

Tangier, Morocco, and Pascal Molinelli, a Corsican trafficker, he created the largest tobacco smuggling organization in the Mediterranean (Zuccalà Report, 1976). Another key role was played by Salvatore Greco, known as “the engineer” because he was in close contact with Marseilles smuggler Elio Forni. The Grecos, citrus growers in the Conca d'oro, mixed real oranges in their boxes with specially made-up wax oranges. This is the account of their technique by Michele Pantaleone, a journalist and frontline intellectual on the anti-mafia front (2013):

The oranges, empty inside, weighed 115 grams each and measured 27 centimeters in circumference and belonged to the type of export commonly called “90,” because of the number of oranges contained in each export crate or cage. Into each of these rigged fruits, through a 4-millimeter hole cleverly camouflaged in the basal pad, 110-120 grams of drugs were injected, so that each “pregnant” orange reached a weight of 225-235 grams, corresponding precisely to the normal weight of a real orange of the “90” type. Each cage contained 19-20 kilograms of oranges of which 11 kilograms were pure drugs. Only 5 boxes of “pregnant” oranges were placed in the wagons destined for this very unusual transport, with a total weight of over half a quintal of drugs, the value of which was about 4 billion liras. (p. 204)

The advent of heroin, in essence, radically transformed the lives of Palermo's mobsters. From 1949 to 1960 the Guardia di Finanza seized 400 kilos of it, but taking into account that the ratio of seizures to escaped loads was one to ten and that the price paid was \$3,300 per kilo, traffickers were paid at least fifteen million dollars (Catanzaro, 1988). The Sicilian men of honor thus discovered a world before not even imagined, made up of continuous pleasures and solace of all kinds. And consider that their presence in the drug trade, until the mid-1950s, was still marginal.

Brothers Salvatore (1922) and Angelo La Barbera (1924), from the Partanna-Mondello township, participated in this drug trade. Starting from modest economic conditions (their father collected firewood in the nearby Pallavicino neighborhood), the two soon became linked to the Piana dei Colli gangs (Coco, 2013). They became so inseparable with Mancino that, together with their families, they all went to live in the same building. Their *cursus honorum* had begun in their teens, when Salvatore was arrested for

armed threats and aiding and abetting in 1940, while Angelo for aggravated rape in 1942. Their criminal records were filled with indictments of various kinds (theft, illegal carrying of firearms, extortion, and murder), until the quaestor of Palermo subjected the older to a two-year reprimand in 1948, to reinforce the measure, after an attempted murder, in police confinement. To the proposing office, moreover, it appeared that through the sending of threatening letters the two brothers extorted money from the owners of villas in Mondello, promising a “guardianship” of the buildings now better known as “pizzo” (Individual Mafiosi, 1971).

Upon his brother’s arrest in 1949, Angelo La Barbera embarked for the United States, where he found employment at the port of New York. He found there Antonino Marsiglia, who instructed him in the *modus operandi* of the American Cosa Nostra. He later repatriated with him in 1952 upon the death of Giuseppe D’Accardi, boss of the Palermo-center family. Since Antonino Butera, who was considered too mild in the milieu, was being appointed as the new mob boss, he began to put into practice the gangster rules learned overseas. Together with Gaetano Galatolo, known as “Tanu Alatu,” he joined the trucking company of Eugenio Ricciardi and then killed him on December 20, 1952. Acquitted for insufficient evidence, he repeated threats to his son until forced him to hand over the company to him and thus start his own entrepreneurial activity. From the cottages, the La Barberas would move on to impose their protection on the city’s many construction sites. We have already pointed out that those were the years of the “sack of Palermo,” so the La Barberas were also counted among the construction entrepreneurs: since theirs was a modest business, Terranova noted (La Barbera Investigation, 1964) they certainly could not derive their large amount of money from this activity. This could not be the qualification that allowed them frequent travel, expensive extramarital affairs and assiduity to the most luxurious hotels or nightclubs in Milan.

Angelo La Barbera, in fact, unsurprisingly fell victim to an initial ambush which wounded him in the leg, on April 17, 1954. He told magistrates he had been in the wrong place at the wrong time, not having to deal with the unknown perpetrators of the shooting. It

was, instead, the prelude to the clash between the Garden Mafia and the Acquisanta Mafia for control of the fruit and vegetable market, first located in the Zisa district and then moved near the port, so crucial to smuggling (Report on Wholesale Markets, 1970). After the killing of his old associate Galatolo, in order to avoid bloodshed the police headquarters proposed him for assignment to confinement. However, the provincial commission blocked his application, deeming a two-year admonition sufficient. In some institutional quarters, evidently, someone was secretly supporting him, because neither the authorization to return to the domicile at twenty-two o'clock nor the request for his brother Salvatore's acquittal from all bonds would otherwise be explained (Individual Mafiosi, 1971). The point is that in 1955 Angelo La Barbera became head of the Palermo-center Mafia cosca: Butera had ceded the role to Marsiglia, who, reduced to "wreckage" by polio, had then left the field open to the deputy. With Salvatore's subsequent appointment as head of the mandamento (the head of three families of Borgo Vecchio, Porta Nuova and Palermo-centro), the La Barbera's ascent could be considered complete (Torretta Investigation, 1965).

To enrich the spectrum of their alliances, they lacked only the hookup with the municipal administration. Before 1963, in fact, mafiosi used to flaunt their relationships with politicians and viceversa, so their presence at polling stations was brazen and aggressive (La Torre Report, 1976). Fundamental to understanding these dynamics are the testimonies of Buscetta, who in 1992 shed light on political-mafia exchange voting. He told judges "the Honorable Salvo Lima was the son of a man of honor" and his father Vincenzo was affiliated with the La Barbera<sup>1</sup>. They had met when they were very young and, since the young DC member could not speak to the crowd, it was he and his big bosses voters who orchestrated his campaign. On his tours through the city in 1956, Lima was therefore surrounded by a "queue" of men of honor who, by their mere presence, communicated to the people of the neighborhoods he was an expression of Cosa Nostra. It was from that moment that Lima's

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<sup>1</sup> Vincenzo Lima had been arrested and tried for attempted murder, various extortions and criminal conspiracy in 1931, to be released and suspended from his employment as archivist at City Hall until 1938 (Coco & Patti, 2010, p. 35).

political moves were decided collegially, in meetings attended by “the best of the Mafia intelligentsia of the time” (Andreotti Indictment, 1999). The instant the young Christian Democrat established himself together with Giovanni Gioia and Vito Ciancimino, the link with Cosa Nostra became in practice so organic that it would no longer be possible to distinguish one side or the other, who was the politician and who was the mafioso (Catanzaro, 1988).

It should be added that just twenty days after his election Lima was already appointed alderman for Public Works. In 1958, at only twenty-eight years of age, he then became the youngest mayor of a large city like Palermo. As early as June 23, 1964, Terranova wrote that the La Barberas were with him “in such relations as to ask him for favors.” When questioned, the mayor could not hide he knew Salvatore in particular, although he attributed a “superficial and casual” character to this acquaintance. Another judge, Aldo Vigneri, took the deposition on August 14, 1965, of Filippo Gioè Imperiale, a Mafioso who obtained a license for a gasoline pump thanks to the intervention of La Barbera, who told him “the mayor is my thing, you will get what you want and then you will have to deal with me.” Lima’s contacts with the La Barberas, according to Terranova (La Barbera Investigation, 1964, p. 524) constituted evidence of Mafia infiltration into public life even then.

Although the heroin shipped to America was beginning to be substantial, the Italian police continued to ignore the problem. In the U.S., at the same time, an immediate reaction was being called for, so Luciano was now being referred to as “the archenemy” from the old world attacking the health and morality of young Americans (Lupo, 2008). After a year of investigation, a commission of inquiry chaired by Democratic Senator Estes Kefauver (1953) admitted the existence of a crime “syndicate” branched out across America with two cartels, one in Chicago and the other in New York. U.S. authorities introduced into their legislation the Narcotic Control Act, which instituted severe penalties up to life imprisonment for traffickers. It was from the mid-1950s, therefore, that American bosses entrusted the responsibility of material trafficking to Sicilians. Facilitating the fall back on Sicily, moreover, was the Cuban Revolution, because Fidel Castro deprived the Americans of their

important sorting center. To agree on a common line Joseph Doto, the well-known "Joe Adonis," moved to Milan. His apartment, until the 1970s, would be one of the city's most frequented salons (Zuccalà Report, 1976).

As part of the intensification of contacts between the two organizations, three sessions were promoted, the first two, in October 1956 and March 1957, in the United States. The preliminaries in Sicily were set up by Luciano with Giuseppe Genco Russo, the head of the Mussomeli mafia who, although he was not interested in the new frontiers of illicit activities, was considered crucial because his cousin Santo Sorge was the American who controlled the revenues. In an unprecedented meeting at the Hotel delle Palme in Palermo, October 12-16, 1957, the two branches of Cosa Nostra paraded (Sterling, 1990; Zingales, 2003). The police headquarters sent agent Nicolò Malannino to investigate, who merely drew up a "little report" in which those present were barely mentioned: in addition to Luciano and Sorge were Joe Bonanno, head of the New York family, along with deputies Carmine Galante, John Bonventre and councilman Frank Garofalo; Joseph Palermo, of the Lucchese family; Vito Di Vitale and John Di Bella, of the Genovese family; Gaspare Magaddino, head of the Buffalo family; and Vito Vitale and John Priziola, of Detroit. Of the local delegation it was ascertained only along with Genco Russo there were "also five or...perhaps twelve Sicilians" never identified. If those strangers had been identified, the Antimafia Commission would write years later (Zuccalà Report, 1976), the picture of the new mafia linked to drug trafficking could have been outlined much earlier:

We would have been clearer about the succession that was being prepared, in the mid-1960s, in the Mafia organization and the role of great importance that the new and more ruthless bosses, the La Barberas, Leggio, the Badalamentis would play in it - because the "strangers" who accompanied Genco Russo to discuss together with Joe Bonanno to Magaddino, to Bonventre, could not have been "gregari," men of a lower order, but prestigious "picciotti" from the ready-made rise and usable better and more than the old feudal capimafia bosses toward the new international adventures of drugs and smuggling, with the maneuvering of the great profits that came with it. (pp. 285-286)

Such underestimation not only detects the insipience of the police, but also created the conditions for an increasingly aggressive development of the phenomenon. A Supreme Court cancellation on January 29, 1959, of the special surveillance of Angelo La Barbera should be interpreted in this light. Consider that it was Alfonso Di Benedetto, a liberal deputy in the Sicilian Regional Assembly, who urged the case with a letter to the quaestor. Reissued his passport, the boss obtained that Spain, Portugal, Canada and Mexico be added to the countries allowed and, upon renewal, also China, Japan, Afghanistan, Nepal, Colombia, Pakistan and Israel. Such a request should have at least made Questore Massimo Iacovacci suspicious, who without any problem instead granted a clearance for expatriation to a “tourist “ who showed a good knowledge of the “geography of drugs” (Individual Mafiosi, 1971, pp. 157-160).

## *2. Palermo as Chicago in the Roaring Twenties*

To understand the reasons of the First Mafia War it is necessary illustrate the vigor with which the La Barberas exercised their “territorial lordship” (Chinnici & Santino, 1989). To upset the balance, in fact, after years of their unchallenged domination, in 1959 Vincenzo Maniscalco and Giulio Pisciotta, two sellers of household appliances who intended to expand their business, asked the builder Salvatore Moncada for the sale of some premises in Via Notarbartolo. Perfectly familiar with the technique of breaking into a territory and expanding from within through threats and attacks, the La Barberas clearly enjoined him not to accept the proposal. As Maniscalco reiterated the demands, he was the victim of a shooting on Sept. 14. He was wounded, but in the hospital he refused to give any indication as to the identity of the perpetrators, so upon his discharge he was arrested for aiding and abetting. Three days later Filippo Drago, one of his trusted men, was killed. During the shooting, Giuseppina Savoca, an innocent 12-year-old girl who was in the line of fire a few meters away, was shot. The death of the young girl obviously made a huge impression, because a belief of the time used to recite the Mafia did not kill children. In any case, the La



Barberas awaited Maniscalco's release from prison, only to have him disappear, swallowed up by the "white lupara," on May 9, 1960. Identical fate, on Oct. 2, befell Pisciotta and Natale Carollo. On Oct. 8, Pietro Teresi left home without returning. On Nov. 12, on a downtown street and in the middle of the afternoon, a machine gun discharge felled Giovanni Scalia, seriously wounding two bystanders. The victim, a killer of the La Barbera family, had dared to take sides against his bosses by refusing, because of an old acquaintance, to kill Maniscalco. Finally, on February 13, 1961, the brothers Salvatore and Pietro Prester disappeared: although the former belonged to their group, at the moment they decided to eliminate the latter, affiliated with their rivals, the La Barberas did not hesitate to sacrifice one of their own men. A trivial case of economic competition, as it can be seen, provoked this first series of nine deaths (Individual Mafiosi, 1971).

Although the La Barberas agreed with the other families on a *pax mafiosa*, Luciano's sudden death on January 25, 1962, isolated them permanently. Peace was broken on Dec. 26, when two individuals shot Calcedonio Di Pisa, head of the Noce Mafia. In his pockets investigators found a diary on which were noted the telephone numbers of Stefano Bontate, Rosario Mancino, Salvatore Greco and the La Barberas: all members of the Sicilian cartel had been buying and selling drugs around the world for years. The *casus belli* dated back to several months earlier, when the committee had financed the purchase of a consignment of heroin that, from Egypt, was later found in the waters of Porto Empedocle. Having picked up the merchandise, Di Pisa and his friend Rosario Anselmo had transported it to Palermo to entrust it to Bruno Martellani, a waiter on an ocean liner leaving for the United States. Upon arriving in Brooklyn, the latter had delivered the cargo to two strangers who, as a sign of recognition, had shown him the missing part of a ticket issued to him in Palermo. Everything had gone as planned, except the money that had arrived from overseas did not correspond to the agreed amount. Since they had let it be known from America they had paid for the amount received, a few kilos had gone missing on the trip from the Sicilian channel to New York. An investigation had been promoted within the commission until, in the presence of all

the members, Di Pisa and Anselmo convinced almost everyone of their correctness with the exception of Salvatore La Barbera. Left unprotected by Luciano, he and his brother had become convinced the Grecos wanted to exclude them from business, so, strong in their being handcuffed with politics and boasting they could deploy an army of 250 men, they decided to hit Di Pisa in defiance of the majority decision (Report of majority, 1976).

Naturally, the La Barberas were careful to immediately neutralize those who might seek revenge. From a moving car, on Jan. 8, 1963, two hitmen shot Raffaele Spina, who, saved by a miracle, gave no clues in the hospital to trace the perpetrators of the ambush. Two days later an explosion destroyed the soda warehouse of Giusto Picone, Di Pisa's uncle. He too claimed to have no idea why he suffered the attack. Recognizing the hand of their rivals, the Grecos organized the reaction. By his behavior, in fact, Salvatore La Barbera had cast doubt on the commission's ability to self-regulate, judge and punish, giving reason for Salvatore Greco "Cicchiteddu" and Manzella to promote an alliance joined by the increasingly enterprising corleonesi (Lupo, 2004). The answer came on January 17, when the eldest of the La Barberas disappeared under mysterious circumstances: his Giulietta was found destroyed by fire and reduced to scrap metal on a road under construction in the province of Agrigento (Individual mafiosi, 1971). Soon afterward his brother and Rosario Mancino also disappeared, so at first they were thought to have suffered the same fate. Instead, the two taken refuge in Rome, from where, on February 4, they gave an interview (Ugolini, 1963):

We have never escaped from Palermo. We have been moving here to Rome for about a year, even making regular declarations of residence at the registry office, because we have an important and extensive land subdivision program for building construction in the province of Rome. We have no reason to hide from anyone.

In an environment such as the Mafia, however, revenge constituted the only remedy to save honor. At dawn on February 12, the township of Ciaculli was thus awakened by a car bomb that nearly destroyed the home of "Cicchiteddu" Greco. The following week Giacomo Sciaratta, another uncle of Di Pisa, disappeared. On

March 7, a car stopped in front of the Isola delle Femmine slaughterhouse. Three men armed with machine guns, shotguns and pistols got out, intimidating all those present, about 20 butchers and shopkeepers, to stand with their backs to the wall and hands in the air. They were looking for someone so definite that, when one pointed to the veterinarian, another shouted "No, it's not him, he doesn't have a mustache" (Catanzaro Judgment, 1968, p. 873). Unable to complete the expedition, the three fled in a Fiat 1100 stolen a few days earlier from Oscar Montez, the Palermo soccer coach. The man sought was Antonino Porcelli, believed by La Barbera to be a double agent because he had been the last to be seen in the company of his brother.

One of the most shocking episodes occurred on the morning of April 19, when, in the style of 1920s Chicago, on Via Empedocle Restivo some men fired from a Fiat 600 running in the direction of a fish market. In the crosshairs were owner Stefano Giaconia, Angelo La Barbera and Vincenzo Sorce. The store was facing the street, so the two guests made it in time to find escape in the back and make an hasty escape. In the store the investigators found an arsenal, so it had been by chance there had been no victims. Terranova wrote (La Barbera Investigation, 1964) that the indiscriminate use of firearms on a busy street undoubtedly constituted an attempt on the lives of an indeterminate number of people, so qualified the act as a massacre:

Let it not be said that the perpetrators of that blind shooting calculated the time so as to avoid hitting strangers, because the tragic killing of little Giuseppina Savoca and other innocents amply demonstrates that the mafioso, for the achievement of his criminal objective, has not the slightest regard for the lives of others, even if they are children. (p. 575)

Three days later two hitmen shot down Vincenzo D'Accardi, boss of the Capo district. On the morning of the western, in an interview at the fish market, the elderly boss intimated to La Barbera not to exacerbate the confrontation because even some of his loyalists such as Rosolino Gulizzi intended to refrain from any further killing. Having finished his "reasoning," La Barbera had gone to the fish market, where half an hour later the shooting occurred. The action

had evidently been prepared in detail, since at the time of the ambush Giaconia had just been called on the phone to remain stationary, standing, and offering an easy target. The boss thus felt betrayed. Although there were numerous witnesses at the scene of the murder, none made the slightest contribution to investigators. Identifying the element from which to start, in order to the chronicler of *L'Ora* (Perrone, 1963) was therefore by no means simple, because in the milieu D'Accardi had been "heard and respected" since 1917:

He had been implicated, by police and carabinieri, in so many complaints that the clipboard headed to his name in the judicial archives had turned into a voluminous dossier, compiled according to a monotonous pattern of close dates of the most disparate crimes. Violence, resistance, receiving stolen property, thefts, contraventions, illegal carrying of weapons, bankruptcies, criminal conspiracy, extortion, robberies, murders, possession of explosives, admonished, confined, under special surveillance, armed robberies, convictions, acquittals for insufficient evidence, new convictions, rehabilitation in 1945 and again offenses, warnings, proposals for confinement unfold on numerous folders from yesterday afternoon to the examination of those charged with working on the D'Accardi case.

On April 24 Rosolino Gulizzi, the driver of the car in which Di Pisa's killers had fled, was assassinated. At dawn on April 26 a roar rattled Cinisi, a town thirty kilometers from Palermo. The explosion, which came from a citrus grove where a Giulietta filled with TNT had been planted, killed Cesare Manzella. This crime also qualified as a massacre because, although it occurred in a private driveway, it could have posed a danger to public safety. In the bloody history of the Mafia, moreover, it was the first time such heinousness had occurred (La Barbera Investigation, 1964, p. 579).

Manzella, as we have seen, had been repatriated from the United States in 1947. He had maintained contact with American gangsterism through Gaetano Badalamenti, the future head of the Commission arrested in 1987 for the so-called "Pizza Connection," the trafficking of narcotics on the Palermo-Rome-New York route. A brief digression on the Punta Raisi airport, built right in the territory of Cinisi, is therefore necessary. The story began in 1953, when it was decided that the city airport of Boccadifalco, a military base open to civilian transport, was no longer suitable to guarantee the

demand of Palermo travelers. Founding the Autonomous Palermo Airport Consortium, the government had funded an initial allocation of five billion to begin preliminary studies. Two locations had been considered for site selection, one along the southeastern strip, between Aspra and Acqua dei Corsari, and one toward the northwest, at Punta Raisi. The engineers would have preferred the former, not only because it was easier to reach, but also because the latter, facing the sea and subject to wind gusts, was deemed unsuitable for hosting takeoffs and landings. Ignoring the technicians' opinion, the Consortium chose Punta Raisi, whose airport, eighteen months ahead of schedule, had been inaugurated on January 2, 1960 (Dino, 2013). For Cosa Nostra, the airport would have represented the launching pad to the billions guaranteed by drug exports. In the guise of "landlord," Manzella thus was a point of reference for drug traffickers. During the inspection of his corpse, in a shred of his pants was found a diary sheet, dated December 26, on which was written, "85871 Villa Florio behind 7 o'clock was Totò." If the date alluded to the murder of his friend Di Pisa, the number corresponded to the license plate of a Fiat 600 registered to Sorce, while Villa Florio was exactly behind the place of the murder; the "Totò" alluded to in the "pizzino", therefore, could only be Salvatore La Barbera (La Barbera Investigation, 1964, p. 580).

It was basically Angelo La Barbera who wanted the boss's death. Despite he had everyone against him, he wanted to show his revenge would hit those responsible for his brother's disappearance. Such a crime could not go unanswered, however, he soon turned from hunter to prey. Abandoned even by loyalists like Buscetta he took refuge in Milan, where on the night of May 23-24 he was ambushed. He was shot in various parts of his body (face, neck, right flank, lower limbs) but managed to save himself. Since a series of warrants of arrest had been issued against him in the meantime, however, the move from the hospital to San Vittore prison was a natural consequence. In confirmation of their increased importance, it should be noted that two Corleonesi participated in the ambush (La Barbera Investigation, 1964).

Law enforcement agencies reported several defendants for conspiracy, murder and other crimes in the so-called "report of the

thirty-seven.” Contrary to expectations, however, La Barbera’s arrest did not restore calm in the city, but opened a war of succession. Faced with a power vacuum, in an area where strong economic interests were concentrated, the families could not agree on a new chief because the Grecos, in order to designate elements they trusted, were taking their time. Promoters of their candidacy for chief and deputy chief were Pietro Torretta and Tommaso Buscetta, who had meanwhile switched to the winning faction. The hesitation of the Grecos was due precisely to a possible rise of the latter, because not only was his aggressive temperament known, but he was also suspected of having betrayed La Barbera by personally participating in the Milan ambush (Individual mafiosi, 1971).

The war resumed on the evening of June 19, when Torretta sent his wife and children out of the house to reason with Girolamo Conigliaro and Pietro Garofalo. It was a trap, because two men, hiding in the living room, weapons in hand and without shoes, barged in behind the visitors. Several gunshots attracted the attention of Antonio Pintabona, a carabinieri on duty at the nearby neighborhood barracks, who, having taken a few steps in the direction of the gunshots, saw a young man desperately trying to save himself jumping off a balcony. Someone appeared from above, however, firing more shots at him, so Conigliaro arrived at the hospital already dead. Garofalo’s body was found in the apartment. On June 22, Bernardo Diana was murdered by three unknown men - according to the verbalizers Buscetta, Sorce and Pietro Badalamenti - who shot him from a running Giulietta. Five days later Emanuele Leonforte, a supermarket manager who was the head of the Ficarazzi mafia, was killed. All the victims were linked to the Grecos. Finally, on June 30, two more massacres occurred. At 1 a.m. a Giulietta full of TNT exploded in front of the garage of Giovanni Di Peri, boss of Villabate. Pietro Cannizzaro, the janitor, and Giuseppe Tesauo, a harmless baker who was passing through on his way to work, died (Torretta Investigation, 1965). Around eleven o’clock in the morning Francesco Prestifilippo, a relative of the Greco family, telephoned the Carabinieri because near his villa there was another Giulietta with a flat tire, the doors open and, visible on the back seat, a fuse ignited to a gas cylinder. Calling for the intervention of the army sappers,

the police and carabinieri had the area cleared but, when they removed the bomb in the afternoon, a second device hidden in the trunk exploded killing everyone present: Carabinieri lieutenant Mario Malausa<sup>2</sup>, chief marshal Calogero Vaccaro, Eugenio Altomare and Marino Fardelli, police marshal Silvio Corrao and soldiers Giorgio Ciacci and Pasquale Nuccio died.

### *3. From police repression to political and judicial failures*

The Ciaculli massacre made a huge impression on public opinion, because it had not been since the days of the bandit Salvatore Giuliano that law enforcement men had been assassinated. It made it clear the Mafiosi were not just killing each other and the people of Palermo, for months now, had been witnessing a growing of murders that it were increasingly sensational in their staging. The theater of war had become practically the entire city, because anyone who was shopping in a supermarket, fish market or simply walking down the street could have been shot. In a timely briefing to the Chamber of Deputies, Interior Minister Mariano Rumor immediately framed the incident within the “dastardly criminality” known under the name of the Mafia<sup>3</sup>. He attended the funeral honors on July 3, along with regional authorities, Police Chief Angelo Vicari, Deputy Commander of the Carabinieri Francesco Pontani and a hundred thousand citizens who witnessed their execration (Frasca Polara, 1963). The city councils of Catania, Naples, L'Aquila and Milan immediately expressed themselves so the parliamentary anti-mafia commission would begin its work as soon as possible<sup>4</sup>. Since nothing came from the Palermo city council, even the national press emphasized the only road to

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<sup>2</sup> The Carabinieri lieutenant sent a report of extraordinary acumen in which he explained the organization chart of the Palermo Mafia family by family, outlining the personal histories of several bosses. He had been especially attentive to the political aspects, as many had since merged into the DC.

<sup>3</sup> Discussions, July 1, 1963, in Acts of Parliament (henceforth AP), Chamber of Deputies, Leg. IV, pp. 145-146.

<sup>4</sup> Telegrams to the Ministry of the Interior, July 1, 1963, in Central State Archives - Rome (henceforth ACS), Presidency of the Council of Ministers, 1962-1964, Public Order, b. 1.1.2, f. Palermo.

take was the political sacrifice of those who had allowed such a gangster climate (Nasi, 1963). Such absenteeism on the part of those who administered the city, journalist Emilio Radius (1963) pointed out, was not the best way to ward off *Certain Suspicions...*

The First Mafia war thus turned into the first war “against” the Mafia (Stille, 2007, p. 133). For Cosa Nostra it was a disaster: the La Barbera clan had been annihilated, while the Grecos, in order not to be arrested, fled to Venezuela; Buscetta began a long wandering would lead him to Switzerland, Mexico, Canada, the United States and Brazil, where he would be arrested in 1984. Spectacular repression materialized in Sicily the specter of Prefect Cesare Mori (1932), when Fascist repression, culminating in a series of *ante litteram* maxi trials, led to the conviction of hundreds of Mafiosi in defiance of every individual right and procedural norm (Patti, 2014). Numerous were the townships awakened by night raids, tanks, illuminating flares and searched inch by inch. Rumor reiterated the Viminale’s intention at the end of the summer: “Let the criminal associates have no illusions,” he told the Chamber of Deputies, “in the challenge that is engaged between them and the State, the State will certainly not be the first to tire”<sup>5</sup>. The Mobile Squad and the police organs were placed on a general mobilization plan through the dispatch of specialized personnel and the most modern means of radio connection, which brought the personnel to a quantitative and qualitative level of the first order. The action was carried out with coordination not only within the provinces of Palermo, Trapani, Agrigento and Caltanissetta, but also nationally and abroad thanks to the collaboration of the police adhering to Interpol<sup>6</sup>. Consider that as early as July 31 there were two hundred people arrested. The “report of the fifty-four,” which denounced Torretta and fifty-three others, was therefore merged with the “report of the thirty-seven” already pending on La Barbera and thirty-six others, and a single criminal case was instituted against them (Torretta Investigation, 1965). From October to December nearly two thousand people were

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<sup>5</sup> Speech by Rumor, Sept. 18, 1963, in Historical Archives of the Senate of the Republic, Mariano Rumor Fund, Ministry of the Interior, General Directorate of Public Security (henceforth ASSR, FMR, MI, DGPS).

<sup>6</sup> Memo from Rumor, October 23, 1963, in ASSR, FMR, MI, DGPS.



arrested. The police forwarded 731 of them to the special surveillance authority, 580 of whom were assigned to forced residence; the judiciary issued 548 special surveillance orders, while the Supreme Court, out of 333 appeals filed, rejected 286 (Coco, 2020). According to Buscetta's testimony to Pino Arlacchi (1994, p. 144), at that time one could not even collect the pizzo so much "the police seemed to have gone crazy."

Significant is a comparison with some readings given in previous years by the prefects of Palermo. As late as June 1959, Giuseppe Migliore noted, for example, that, although in series, most of the murders should be considered episodes in their own right, being "by mere coincidence" they occurred at an unusual pace in the space of a month<sup>7</sup>. In a memo to Minister Paolo Emilio Taviani, on March 10, 1962, Pietro Rizzo presented the need to strengthen the police force but, since their action could be limited only to containing crimes, he accused the leftist parties of "fantastic constructions of mafias and sub-mafias"<sup>8</sup>. Marking a clear line of discontinuity, in September 1963 Prefect Francesco Boccia credited the Sicilian Communists with the anti-Mafia awareness campaign, since they were the first and had for years already been strongly advocating its eradication<sup>9</sup>.

The discussion was in the context of the Cold War. On the pro-government side, both regionally and nationally, many argued that delinquency was there in Sicily, but like everywhere else; on this front one of the most influential representatives was Cardinal Ernesto Maria Ruffini (Stabile, 1999). According to the Christian Democrat ruling class, the Mafia was not a criminal organization, but a folklore attitude, a remnant of an archaic anti-statist culture that, in the long run, would fade away (Lupo, 2018). For over fifteen years, however, the leftist parties were the only ones to fight for the promotion of a parliamentary commission of inquiry, which was

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<sup>7</sup> Prefect Report to the Ministry of the Interior, June 12, 1959, in ACS, Ministry of the Interior, Cabinet (henceforth MI, GAB), 1957-1960, b. 279, f. Palermo.

<sup>8</sup> Prefect Memo to the Ministry of the Interior, March 10, 1962, in ACS, MI, GAB, 1961-1963, b. 22, f. Palermo.

<sup>9</sup> Prefect Note to the Ministry of the Interior, September 3, 1963, in ACS, MI, GAB, 1961-1963, b. 309, f. Palermo.

always rejected by the DC to avoid political implications (Petruzzella, 1993; Tranfaglia, 2008). Having counted dozens of deaths during the claims of the peasant movement, the communists therefore greeted the convening of the Antimafia “with vigilant confidence”<sup>10</sup>. It must be considered, moreover, this could have been operational as early as 1958 in the aftermath of the attack on *L’Ora*, when a bill presented by a group of socialist senators led by Ferruccio Parri had been rejected<sup>11</sup>. What had changed, in the meantime, was that the milazzism experiment - an autonomist faction that had sent the DC into opposition in Sicily - had ended, so Christian Democrat Giuseppe D’Angelo was able to initiate, in September 1961, the country’s first center-left government<sup>12</sup>. It was a prelude to what would happen shortly after in Rome, when Fanfani formed a government with the outside support of the PSI. Although the new political season was not accompanied by a debate comparable to the national one, as the local DC did not have the adequate depth to participate in the turmoil that animated the party in the rest of Italy, the formation of the D’Angelo government had strong reflections (Pumilia, 1998). On the side of the fight against the Mafia, for example, when the ARS voted for the establishment of the commission of inquiry, on March 30, 1962, it clearly indicated to the government and the national DC that its establishment could no longer be postponed<sup>13</sup>.

Moreover, the pastor of the Waldensian church, Pietro Valdo Panascia, had a poster posted deploring the massacre that, while not explicitly referring to the Mafia, marked the beginning of a change (Stabile, 2013). In his speech for the opening of the judicial year in 1964, the Attorney General at the Court of Cassation denounced how necessary it was to have a thorough understanding of the Mafia phenomenon (Poggi, 1964). In the same days, the Attorney General at the Court of Palermo complained that the judicial tools were inadequate (Garofalo, 1964). In this regard, the PCI signaled the

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<sup>10</sup> Text of the appeal of PCI Sicilian Regional Committee, nd., in Sicilian Gramsci Institute Archives, Girolamo Li Causi Fund, b. 37, f. 7.

<sup>11</sup> Bill No. 280, Nov. 27, 1958, in AP, Senate of the Republic, Leg. III, vol. IX.

<sup>12</sup> Parliamentary Reports, September 7-9, 1961, in Sicilian Regional Assembly (henceforth ARS), Leg. IV, pp. 971-977.

<sup>13</sup> Parliamentary Reports, March 30, 1962, in ARS, Leg. IV, pp. 1007-1013.

advisability of changing criminal legislation by proposing to the Senate an amendment to a government bill containing the introduction of criminal association for those suspected of Mafia activities and connivance. The communist proposal intended to consider association alone a crime in itself, because it was true that the means employed by the mafiosi reached the crime, but it did not consist only of that. Particularly important was that persons recognized as such should be deprived of those assets, movable or immovable, procured through illicit activities<sup>14</sup>. The government, however, incorporated only the part concerning preventive measures (special surveillance and prohibition or obligation to stay). The "Provisions against the Mafia" (Law No. 575 of May 31, 1965), would thus accentuated exclusively the repressive character of the measures, without accompanying them with measures capable of affecting the economic-social roots. Moreover, the measure of compulsory residence, in most cases, would have entailed sending numerous Mafiosi to northern cities, achieving the paradoxical result they would exported their activities throughout the country. To give the measure of how much the problem was devalued, consider also that in the inaugural reports of the following judicial years, the mentions of the Mafia would be, if not fleeting, often reassuring: the phenomenon was described as being in the process of "slow but steady" elimination in 1967, while, with regard to forced residence, in 1968 prosecutor Antonio Barcellona considered a Mafioso outside his environment "almost harmless" (Marrone, 1981).

After the 1964 crisis, the reform thrusts of the center-left had survived as an empty governing formula, ending up representing those years "a period of sterile immobility and irresponsibly wasted time" (Lanaro, 1992, p. 330). The same can be said of the fight against the Mafia, because D'Angelo would be isolated by the DC and forced to resign and his successor, Francesco Coniglio, would take the regional government so far backward that there was talk of a "counter-reform." The initial hopes aroused by the Antimafia, therefore, were soon succeeded by such indifference that the issue turned into the "abstract rage of a few dreamers" (Menighetti &

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<sup>14</sup> Papers, Jan. 29, 1964, in AP, Bicameral Inquiry Commissions, Leg. IV, p. 143.

Nicastro, 1998, p. 151). Before the Antimafia finally made its findings known, thirteen years would pass. Not even the internal inquiries were published, so much so that even the director of a pro-government newspaper such as the *Giornale di Sicilia* (Mariotti, 1967) accused Donato Pafundi of “reverse omertà.” Despite he himself had spoken of the archives of the Antimafia as a “santabarbara” ready to explode, in 1968 the Christian Democrat president would close the legislature with a report of just three pages. The outrage provoked by the Ciaculli massacre ultimately faded so quickly that it is possible to recount the Antimafia affair as “a monumental anticlimax” (Dickie, 2007, p. 338).

Things would not get any better on the judicial front either. In a Palermo court ruling (June 25, 1968), Chief Justice Nicola La Ferlita wrote:

[...] it cannot be said, *sic et simpliciter*, that the Mafia is a criminal association. Certainly, the Mafia is an anti-judicial fact, insofar as it aims to superimpose and oppose its own law to the state legal system, thus assuming a criminal character, but not for this reason associative. [...] In this sense, it can safely be said that the Mafia, very often, more than from an associative bond, is a state of mind, a sort of “hypertrophy” of the ego, an entirely individualistic way of feeling of men and peoples who, having, at other times, lost faith in public power, do not believe except in themselves, in their own strength, in their own law. It follows that being mafia does not mean being associated to commit crime. (pp. 1116-1118)

At the “117 trial,” held per *legitima suspicione* in Catanzaro, Terranova reopened the controversy (La Barbera Investigation, 1964):

It should be emphasized, with full adherence to the reality of the moment, putting aside fanciful romanticizations of the past, that the Mafia is not an abstract concept, it is not a state of mind nor a literary term but is essentially organized crime, efficient and dangerous, articulated through societies or aggregates or groups or, better still, *cosche*. (p. 512)

The judge shared the need for a comprehensive analysis, so as to give greater meaning to individual episodes. He is credited with one of the first descriptions of omertà (Torretta Investigation, 1965):

Omertà is one of the most solid pillars of the Mafia, because the Mafioso's greatest strength consists precisely in the knowledge that his victims will not denounce him, that the possible spectators of his nefarious deeds will reveal nothing of what they have seen or heard or even anything that may have the remotest connection with the affair, consists, in other words, in what may be called "the certainty of impunity." (p. 666)

The Terranova's investigations, however, were only partially accepted, because the Catanzaro court, on December 22, 1968, found the elements of guilt insufficient to issue a judgment of conviction. Suffering the harshest sentence was Torretta for 27 years, then La Barbera 22<sup>15</sup>, Gnoffo 14, Sorce, Greco and Buscetta 10, Giaconia 9. Others suffered lesser sentences for conspiracy, but, having awaited trial under arrest, they were released due to the accumulation of pre-trial detention; the bulk of the other defendants were acquitted due to insufficient evidence. Since the rules and methods common to all affiliates were not identified, the Mafia was not framed as a single structure but as a collection of many independent associations. If, from a legal point of view, the ruling told how difficult it was to build a convincing image before Buscetta began cooperating with Falcone, for Cosa Nostra it was another demonstration that even the most difficult trials could be "fixed." In partial exoneration of the Calabrian court, however, it must be said the ruling had mostly objective reasons because, consistent with the evidence gathered, numerous acquittals were issued with the dubitative formula (Di Lello, 1994).

At the Bari Court, on the other hand, the trial of the Corleonesi took place in June 1969. The defendants here were sixty-seven, practically the entire cosca, because apart from Bernardo Provenzano and Calogero Bagarella, already fugitives, also Luciano Leggio and Riina were in prison. Crucial in this case had been the confession of Luciano Raia, a killer with several murders behind him who since January 1966 had confessed to the investigating judge everything he knew. The evidence seemed so overwhelming that the prosecution asked for three life sentences and more than three

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<sup>15</sup> La Barbera was later stabbed to death in 1975 in Perugia prison. From her meetings with the boss, Italian-English journalist Gaia Servadio (1974) published: *Angelo La Barbera: the profile of a Mafia boss*.

hundred years in prison. When the court entered the council chamber, however, it was delivered some letters from Corleone all signed with an eloquent black cross:

You Barians have not understood or, rather, do not want to understand what Corleone means. You are judging honest gentlemen, whom the carabinieri and police have denounced on a whim. We would like to warn you that if a gallant man from Corleone is convicted, you will be blown up, you will be destroyed, you will be slaughtered as well as your family members. We believe we have made it clear. No one must be condemned, otherwise you and your families will be condemned to death. A Sicilian proverb says “man forewarned, half saved.” All that remains for you now is to be judicious (Bolzoni & D’Avanzo, 1993, p. 75).

Openly threatened, the judges issued sixty-seven acquittals for insufficient evidence. The ruling practically destroyed the entire accusatory structure based on the depositions of Raia, who had undeservedly been attributed the status of superwitness; he was deemed mentally unstable and, because he was homosexual and depraved, had him interned (Bari Judgment, 1969). Those were still the years, it is evident, in which a Mafioso could be considered such only if he was omertoso, whereas if he spoke out he was either not really or was simply a madman (Chinnici et al., 1992).

### *Conclusions*

In light of the two sentences in Catanzaro and Bari, the contribution made by Buscetta in 1984 would have been of enormous importance, because not only would he have determined once and for all the structure of Cosa Nostra (the family, the mandamenti, the commission), but also other elements such as recruitment techniques, the code of conduct and the oath. He would not have been the first to allow a reading of Cosa Nostra from the inside, because in addition to Raia there had already been Leonardo Vitale, who in 1973 would also be taken for insane and locked up in an asylum, and Melchiorre Allegra, a doctor from Castelvetro who in 1937 had declared he belonged to a criminal association joined in 1911 in identical ways. Since in the meantime, however, the necessary legislative changes had been made with the introduction

of Article 416-*bis* (Turone, 1995), even if he was not the first turncoat or pentito Buscetta would have provided Falcone with a key to instructing his Maxi Trial.

The Catanzaro and Bari verdicts, on the other hand, nullified the efforts made by Terranova, who in 1972 would therefore accept a candidacy in politics being elected deputy as a leftist independent. As a parliamentarian he would bring all his experience to the Antimafia Commission, where, working closely with Pio La Torre, he would be the promoter of the Minority report. Disappointed by the lack of political will to fight the criminal organization in depth, he would finally resume his judicial activity in June 1979, returning to Palermo as an investigating counselor. Even more feared than before for the knowledge he had gained in Parliament, he was assassinated three months later, on Sept. 25. The instigator of the murder was Luciano Leggio who, acquitted at the Bari trial, had first fled the Roman clinic where he was being treated and then moved as a fugitive to Milan. In Sicily, Riina would from that moment definitively insert the Corleonesi into the affairs of the Palermo Mafia, making himself available to eliminate Michele Cavataio, believed by many to be the real culprit in the Ciaculli massacre. According to Buscetta and the other turncoat Antonino Calderone (Arlacchi, 1992), in fact, it would have been the Acqusanta boss who wanted Di Pisa dead, sure that suspicion would fall on La Barbera. The car bombs would have been planted by him, whose plan would have been to set everyone against everyone in order to remain, in the end, the unchallenged master of the Mafia: nothing different from what Riina himself would do years later, on the occasion of the Second Mafia War.

I am not in a position to judge on the veracity of this thesis, moreover, all internal to Cosa Nostra, but it must be considered that Buscetta's retrospective narrative would have been on this aspect lacunose and deliberately misleading: he violated the rule of silence, in fact, only because of his status as a loser in the intra-mafia clash and, against all evidence, he would have declared himself extraneous to the events even denying any involvement of Calcedonio Di Pisa in narco-trafficking (Lupo, 2018). The only thing that is certain, in the final analysis, is that accounts with the First Mafia War would be closed by the Viale Lazio massacre on December 10, 1969, when

five killers disguised as police officers broke into the offices of the builder Moncada to kill five people, including Cavataio. From that moment the Corleonesi would open the season of “excellent corpses,” making Palermo the bloodiest city in Italy.

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