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# Identity in Flux: The Mafia, Antimafia, and Sicily's Discovery of New Italian Unity

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**Identity in Flux:**  
**The Mafia, Antimafia, and Sicily's Discovery of New Italian Unity**

An Honors Thesis  
Presented By  
Samuel B. Lindo

To The Department of Italian  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
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Connecticut College  
May 2008

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**Abstract:**

In discussions about Sicily, one often hears how culturally different the region is from the rest of Italy. “We’re not Italian,” Sicilians love to say. “We’re Sicilian.” Indeed, the island has its own government, its own dialect, and, many say, its own mentality. It also has the aspect for which it is perhaps best known: its mafia, *Cosa Nostra*. That the Sicilian mafia has a tremendous impact on island life has long been established. Through extortion, political corruption and murder, the deeply rooted criminal organization has written its presence in bold. The strong antimafia sentiment that has developed in response to it, however, has only recently been acknowledged for the immense cultural and social impact it has begun to have. Only in the past few decades, to be sure, has the antimafia matured into an organized, nationwide movement based on solid understandings of mafia methods and structure. With increasing influence unlike anything known until recent years, the movement has made significant defeats against the mafia and the broad public resignation that allows it to flourish, instilling the important notion that criminality must no longer be passively accepted.

With few exceptions, past antimafia scholarship has focused only on what the movement has *done* – its individual accomplishments and myriad setbacks – without recognizing what it is *doing*. Such a narrow focus, that is to say, has excluded wider discourse on the effect *Cosa Nostra* and the antimafia are having on broader national unity. This thesis sets out, therefore, to provide a new, deeper examination of the mafia and antimafia’s dialectical interplay, and the increasingly significant impact that the latter is having on the cultural and ideological connection between Sicily and the rest of Italy. Through an analysis of personal interviews, newspaper and journal articles, anthropological studies, political essays and films, it reviews Sicily’s historical relationship with the mainland and considers the fundamentals of *Cosa Nostra* operations and control. It expounds the significance of important antimafia prosecutions in the 1980s and 1990s, and illustrates their impact in sparking a more potent antimafia movement nationwide. Finally, it looks at the movement’s successes and failures across Italy, especially in recent months and years, and demonstrates how the spread of antimafia sentiment has allowed for a new, gradual national unity that early attempts at forced assimilation were never able to provide. *Cosa Nostra*, it concludes, has colored the lens through which Sicilian culture is considered, and the antimafia movement born in response is emblematic of increasingly apparent common national values.

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## Introduction

Throughout Italian history, Sicily as a region has always held a position apart from the rest of Italy. Beyond the immediate physical sense of being an island, there exist several cultural and social divisions. The largest island in the Mediterranean, Sicily has often been called one of the most conquered lands in history. “This island, a thousand times invaded,” as the well known Sicilian author Leonardo Sciascia once described his homeland, has been controlled by several of the world’s historical superpowers – the Greeks and Romans ruled for 500 and 600 years respectively, followed by the Vandals and Goths from north-eastern Europe and the Byzantines from westernmost Asia (Sciascia, La Sicilia come metafora 49). The Muslims from North Africa had a turn, and the Normans and Spanish followed, until Sicily joined the Kingdom of Italy in 1860 (Benjamin xii). Understandably, each imposing civilization left its mark on the island, impacting both its cultural fabric – much of which is still felt today – and its architectural diversity of villas, temples, cathedrals and mosques – many still visible – leaving a look and feel significantly different from the rest of the Italian peninsula (Dickie 37). The region has its own government, its own dialect, and, many say, it’s own mentality. It also has the aspect for which it is perhaps best known outside, and even within, Italy: its mafia, *Cosa Nostra*.

Prior to the eight months I spent from 2006 to 2007 in the eastern Sicilian city of Messina, I had often heard how different Sicilians are from other Italians. “We’re not Italian,” I was told they loved to say. “We’re Sicilian.” But how true could this really be, I asked myself, now, in the new millennium? I knew something of the complex history noted above, yet how true could it be that, after roughly a century and a half since Italian unification, Sicilians still felt like such a different people, and why? How different were the entities really, and how much of the divide was merely fabricated in the famously creative Italian subconscious? In preparation

for a yearlong research endeavor, these were the questions with which I set out, and they colored the lens through which I viewed my time there. My academic experience at the University of Messina, and my subsequent work experience in Rome with *Libera*, the most influential antimafia organization in Italy, together demonstrated how complex the answers to these questions truly are. One must consider many of the ideological bridges and barriers that have been erected, and the dirty money with which they were built. One must consider the perception that many Italians have promoted of the island since the unification of Italy – that of the backward land, or the ball chained to the leg of the south, which weighs down the country and impedes national progress.

One must also consider the impact of *Cosa Nostra*. Though fabled in folklore and films like *Goodfellas* and *The Godfather* trilogy, there is a lot more to Sicilian mafia than what usually makes international headlines. Many aspects of Sicily, in fact, are more complex than what the world often suggests, especially in recent decades. In consideration of a region that many have long called the detriment of Italy, it is thus important to illuminate what if any truth does exist in such negative attitudes, and give credit to the criminal organization that has had so great a role in keeping Sicily on a separate track. *Cosa Nostra*, it should be clarified, is not some disorganized group of low-life bandits teaming up to bring down society, nor is it a group of bloodthirsty murderers bent on killing for the sake of killing. It is not even the only mafia group in Italy; the *Camorra* of the Campania region, the *Sacra Corona Unita* [United Holy Crown] of Puglia, the *'Ndrangheta* of Calabria, and, to a certain extent, *Stidda* from elsewhere in Sicily, all exert tremendous influence over their respective areas, and are themselves topics of much scholarly research, particularly in recent years.

*Cosa Nostra* does, however, exercise immense control over the goings on of Sicilian society. Murders do occur, sometimes at disturbing rates, and extortion and criminal silence run rampant, leaving many Sicilians in withdrawn resignation. “To be Sicilian,” writes one commentator, “is to carry inside oneself a consciousness formed by history but also, and inevitably, to require to confront the more negative consequences of that history” (Farrell 40). For the purposes of this study, then, it is the presence of *Cosa Nostra* and the ‘antimafia’ reaction to it that has matured in recent decades that will form the primary foundation for my analysis. What effect, my research question therefore becomes, have *Cosa Nostra* and the antimafia had on the cultural and ideological connection between Sicily and Italy?

The anthropological study of Sicily and its mafia is nothing new. Several scholars, within Italy and internationally, have for several years written at length about the ties between the two. Notably, Jane Schneider and Peter Schneider, Alexander Stille, John Dickie, Alison Jamieson and Leoluca Orlando – to name only a few – have brought focus and clarification to the global understanding of the mafia phenomenon. As with most cultural phenomena, however, the state of the mafia in Italy and in Sicily is constantly changing, particularly in recent decades, and even day by day. In particular, the Italian antimafia movement – though long in existence in one form or another – has since the mid-1990s developed remarkably in size, method, and intellect. Past attempts by the government to bring down *Cosa Nostra* had come off as tyrannical assaults on Sicilian values. Today, the state moves more carefully against the mafia through its judicial and police arms, while the antimafia movement is much more cultural and social in nature, operating with petitions instead of guns, and schools instead of prisons. It sees the fight against the mafia not as an attack on Sicilian culture, but as a tribute to it: We are better than this, now let’s prove it.



The antimafia, too, has been the subject of study, yet too often as an afterthought. With some exceptions, even books devoted specifically to the subject have noted only what the antimafia has done, without realizing how much it is doing. The focus, that is, has been on individual accomplishments and events, and the myriad setbacks faced in making ‘real progress.’ What is being overlooked is that the antimafia, despite hurdles and challenges, is unwittingly forging the bonds between Sicily and Italy that had been sought in the past in all the wrong ways. My own contribution to the established scholarship regarding the mafia and Sicily is thus to outline, however roughly, the mafia and antimafia’s dialectical and ever-developing impact on the interweaving of cultural mentalities between Sicily and Italy. Though the five Italian mafias have different methods of operation, different structures, and different home turf, after all, they share the values that the antimafia was born to combat. Now, an ideological connection constructed of shared values and goals – justice, trust, and legality – is finally in place to gradually bridge the cultural gaps that left so many Sicilians so adamantly un-Italian.

As the state’s arm of antimafia prosecutions have gathered strength in recent years, increasing restrictions in Sicily and southern Italy have forced mafia enterprises northward, toward eased rules and freer reign, yet also to a greater population opposed to its exploitation, and a newly ignited base increasingly willing to speak out against it. As this happens, the mafia becomes no longer a Sicilian, or even southern, phenomenon. No longer does it fuel the mystical aura over Sicily as backward and unmanageable, but rather illuminates for Italy the identifiable issues in need of tackling, and highlights old Sicilian qualities in new ways, celebrating Sicilian uniqueness without stubbornly over-protecting the less desirable parts. Sicily, indeed, is at a cultural crossroads, and the antimafia movement has been one of its most powerful engines in bringing it there.



Nothing in Italy, of course, is ever quite so simple. ‘Culture’ does not refer merely to societal attitudes, and as I will explain, there are innumerable factors – persons, places, and events – that have contributed to the present circumstances in Italy. In the chapters that follow, I will therefore attempt to offer an overview, sufficient to provide the general understanding vital to seeing the broader picture I hope to display. In Chapter One I will provide a deeper background of Sicily’s relationship with the mainland, and account for the development of its mafia roots. In Chapter Two, I will then explain the fundamentals of *Cosa Nostra* itself – how it operates, why it operates, and the dire effect its operation has had on Sicilian development. I will note understandings and misconceptions, and describe the political and judicial corruption that has been so monumental in the mafia’s prosperity. I will discuss mafia psychology, and the powers of resignation, extortion, and the almighty *omertà*, the Sicilian word for the criminal silence that renders mafia control so dominant.

With this foundation laid, in Chapter Three I will discuss the tremendous work of Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino, arguably the two most important prosecutors in the history of the fight against the mafia, whose collective work has proven revolutionary, and whose assassinations in 1992 provoked grief in Italy comparable to that on September 11, 2001 in the United States. I will also discuss the significance of Tommaso Buscetta, the ‘*boss dei due mondi*,’ or ‘boss of both worlds,’ who agreed after his capture to collaborate with the state, and whose statements in the maxi-trials of Palermo have frequently been called the Rosetta Stone of mafia testimonies. In Chapter Four, I will expound the significance of the tremendous societal, grassroots antimafia movement that has arisen over the past two decades, describing the progress and setbacks that have so characterized the fight against the mafia. It is here that I will make

particular mention of my work with *Libera*, completed during the summer of 2007 under the auspices of some of the most inspirational public officials in Italy, most notably Don Luigi Ciotti, president of the organization.

In Chapter Five, finally, I will expand my context to a more overarching understanding of how the circumstances described above have come to so greatly impact the ideological interchange between the island and the mainland. I will take into account myriad national developments that have emerged in the years, months, and even days leading up to the time of this writing, noting how recent successes in Sicily's fight against *Cosa Nostra* have illustrated the powerful capacity of social consensus in bringing about societal change. Such consensus, I will argue, must inform Italy's reaction to similar struggles that have, particularly in recent months, gained tremendous traction across the rest of Italy.

In explaining the above phenomena, I hope to illustrate the significant impact that *Cosa Nostra* and the reactive local, regional, and national antimafia sentiment have had on the interplay between Sicily and the mainland, focusing not only on what can be seen and documented, but also on what can be felt. While largely sustaining the unique cultural characteristics that Sicilians still embrace with such pride, that is, the developments of recent decades have triggered a gradual rejection of the criminal tendencies that have so plagued the island, chipping away at a long-held basis for isolationist sentiment. The antimafia response to mafia control, I will thus conclude, is indeed a significant new background against which the cultural relationship between Sicily and Italy can be viewed.

## Chapter 1: Historical Context

Sicilian history is complex in its own right, yet interpretations of its significance are all the more intricate. “If I were to say that the Sicilian is Greek, Arab, Spanish and French, in addition to being Italian, I would be speaking truth, but only a piece of it,” former Palermo mayor Leoluca Orlando once said. “We never really drove out the many invaders who conquered us through the millennia; we just absorbed them and turned them into Sicilians” (2). The island’s multifaceted past shapes not only its tangible traditions, such as architecture and cuisine, but also the mentalities of those who live there. While Sicilians may not wake up every morning fully conscious of their historically influenced attitudes, certain residual suspicions and hostilities toward foreign governments are nonetheless evident (Stille 15).<sup>1</sup>

Notes Orlando, “Sicily was always a place to be exploited more than governed... The state itself was atrophied and defective in Sicily, and the people, conquered repeatedly by outsiders, never expected to receive justice from “the system” (10-11). After having invested their political ambitions in Italian unification, it is apparent, any expectations the people did have were soon stifled. “The Sicilians... were infuriated by what they saw as the arrogant refusal by the government to permit their access to power – the power they needed to resolve the problems of the island” (36). On the part of the islanders, then, there was reason to be incensed. Framing the issue through a broader north/south perspective, one Sicilian I interviewed explained:

The North not only didn’t bring the South the changes it expected, it actually worsened the situation. It left the south passive, dependent, practically parasitic –

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<sup>1</sup> In consideration of Sicily’s deeply nuanced societal composition, I must emphasize that not all Sicilians are alike. In several different areas of study, one could identify myriad societal differences, from city to city, family to family, and person to person. These contrasts are influenced by factors as specific as access to television (on which shows are broadcast in Italian, rather than the Sicilian dialect that is so widely spoken), and as vast as shifting trends in migration (see, for instance, Cole, *The New Racism in Europe*). This said, with my particular focus on the mafia and antimafia’s dialectical influence on national unity, the use of more broad categorizations such as “Sicilians” and “the islanders” becomes both convenient and appropriate. It is in this context, after all, that the larger cultural divide has been portrayed since Italian unification, and thus it is in this context that such divides can be most effectively addressed.

always second best to the rest of Italy. With all the problems the South may have had prior to Italian unification, it was still an independent nation. It had strong industries. It had its own international commerce. Afterward, it was left behind in every sense. (Martella, Personal Interview)

Indeed, the history of Sicily and the mainland often gets merged with discussions of Italy's north/south conflict, for their collective struggles do frequently overlap. As emphatically noted by antimafia organizer Tonio Dell'Olio, however, "*La Sicilia è un altro Sud*" – Sicily is a different South. "It has different history, different traditions, and different mentalities." Its relationship with the mainland since Italian unification, then, must be considered in its own context, as well.

While Sicily had long suffered difficulties of varying degree, it was upon unification that it received its most significant and enduring problems: those passed down from Italy itself. "From the beginning," a friend once told me, "Sicily was treated as a problem. It should have been considered a part of the body – one that needs to be helped, healed, and stimulated. Instead, it was left to fester passively." In the psychological sense, Sicily became a scapegoat, as blame for broader national troubles funneled down the peninsula. "For all its desolate beauty," Italian historian John Dickie argues, "the interior of Sicily was a metaphor for everything Italy wanted to leave behind..." (38). As for regional infrastructure and economic growth, the Italian government withheld funds and assistance necessary for the island's development. Struggling to control the island from afar, the state simply apportioned command among Sicilians with already apparent clout and governance capabilities, often putting criminal officials in power. "When it supplanted feudalism," Dickie writes, "the modern state was supposed to establish a monopoly on violence, on the power to wage war and punish criminals...[so as to help] create the conditions in which commerce can flourish... The state had fallen catastrophically short of this ideal" (57).

The origins of the Sicilian mafia are complex, and several scholars have illuminated several contributing elements.<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of this study, however, a general understanding will suffice, and the above discussion of Italian unification is an appropriate point of departure. Many Italians, after all, had hoped that the island's organized crime was merely a symptom of poverty and backwardness that would vanish upon national unification in 1860 (Dickie 38). Instead, the state actually legitimized several corrupt local leaders who had seemed to keep Sicily under control, even if in their own unorthodox way, with the result that local illicit power only grew (505). It was these men, usually born of the wealthiest aristocratic families (Orlando 10), who thus so often came to be seen as most 'respectable' – the very term that characterized the earliest mafia foundations. “[Sicilians] looked to the charismatic *uomini di rispetto* [men of respect] to fulfill the functions that bureaucratic governments served everywhere else in Europe,” explains Orlando, and so it was that “the mafia networks of the nineteenth century gradually took on the functions of the state: collecting taxes, providing a hierarchy of leadership, and raising little armies to enforce its ‘laws.’ Political and economic life adjusted to these arrangements and accepted them as reality. Later on, when legitimate government tried to assert its authority, it would first have to redefine this reality as ‘criminal.’ This was a monumental task” (11).



Despite all we now know today about the origins of *Cosa Nostra*, only in recent decades has Italy been in a position to publicly acknowledge the mafia as much more than a matter of folklore. Indeed, mafia presence had previously been so easily and effectively denied that its activities merely contributed to the disapproving conception of a backward, almost malevolent island. “Many preeminent scholars [used to insist] that the mafia, if it existed, was not an

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<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, Dickie, *Cosa Nostra*, chapters 1-3.

organization but an anthropological phenomenon, a set of values and attitudes common in Sicily. The stories of initiation rites, highly structured mafia “families,” with *capi* [bosses] and *consiglieri* [advisors] – were nothing more than the fantasy of Hollywood and the sensationalist press, they said” (Stille 28). Organized crime was viewed not as a contained structural unit, but rather was passed off as simply a series of individual, isolated crimes, thus making the islanders seem all the more untamable.

In describing his own understanding of the word mafia, former Palermo mayor Leoluca Orlando explains that, “...during the years of my youth, ‘mafia’ was almost never said. I was aware that it existed – both the word and the reality it stood for – but I apprehended it the same way that one catches a faint aroma on the wind, something familiar yet not quite identifiable” (9). Adding to the confusion, of course, was the fact that ‘mafia’ didn’t always carry the same connotations it does today. The word and the criminal aspects now associated with it were born individually, not connected. “In Palermo dialect the adjective ‘mafioso’ once meant ‘beautiful’, ‘bold’, ‘self-confident’. Anyone who was worthy of being described as a *mafioso* therefore had a certain something, an attribute called ‘mafia.’ ‘Cool’ is about the closest modern English equivalent...” (Dickie 60). The name *Cosa Nostra* didn’t even become associated with Sicily’s mafia until recent decades. So it was, then, that as negative views developed toward the island’s ‘mafia’ attitudes, Sicilians were understandably put on the defensive.

Most Italians were resigned to the idea that Sicilians had their own unspoken laws. They were a people that did things in their own way, it seemed, and this made them appear all the more different – all the more backwards. The reality, it can now be said, is much more complex. “The mafia has been, from the beginning, very sophisticated in the way it infiltrates the high sectors of the Sicilian economy, and equally sophisticated in adopting and adapting sources of

loyalty within Sicilian culture, that it could use for its own cruel ends. The mafia, in other words, is anything but backwards” (Dickie 83). Since Italian unification in 1860, however, it has taken well over a hundred years to prove it.

It was not until the 1980s and early 1990s that concrete evidence was finally presented to Sicily, to Italy, and to the world, of the existence and cohesive structure of *Cosa Nostra*. The work of a small number of Sicilian prosecutors, most notably Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino, tore the proverbial cover off this criminal organization, perhaps the most influential, most recognized, and most denied of the modern era. Collaborating with *pentiti* – state mafia witnesses such as “boss of both worlds” Tomasso Buscetta – the prosecutors’ work unearthed the hierarchical reality of Sicilian organized crime. It identified not only individual criminals, but intricate groups, with strategic purposes and organized operations. Almost suddenly, the mysterious conception of Sicily had a specific structure attached, with particular people involved who, with enough time – numerous as they were – could be identified, eliminated, and shown as an example not to follow. Almost suddenly, fighting organized crime was no longer just about controlling or impeding attacks and individual crimes. It was about eradicating, piece by piece, an entire system of illegality and corruption, profoundly permeated in specific parts of society. To be left in its place would be a new word, and a new mentality: legality.

To those outside the Sicilian psychological climate, the significance of this notion, and even this story, may seem a bit overly romanticized. Hollywood has done plenty to perpetuate the process. As put by Alexander Stille, however, “The extent of mafia control of daily life in Sicily is something that people outside of Italy cannot quite fathom. The American mafia is a parasitic phenomenon operating at the margins of society. In southern Italy it plays a central role in almost every phase of economic and political life” (10-11). Those who live with it, then,



understand that the word ‘legality’ has a real power - one that I will argue is saturating Sicilian society for good, like a termite nibbling at the roots of *Cosa Nostra*’s foundation. This is the role of what is called the antimafia, the leaders and members of which are at the forefront of a dramatic societal shift, challenging conceptions of mafia permanence and working to plant seeds of positive social resistance. Comprised of groups, organizations, individuals and ideas, the antimafia movement operates on myriad levels. Most broadly, though, I assert that its activities contribute to a new understanding of long-clouded cultural links between the island and the Italian peninsula, operating on a social front while sustaining the state in its judicial process of finding and quashing criminals and illicit businesses. It fights not only the mafia of violence, that is to say, but also that of indifference, of silence, of what Italians call ‘*omertà*.’

“Sicily’s cultural origins construct such a rich, important heritage,” Tonio Dell’Olio once explained to me. “They have an innate ability to open themselves up – to welcome – to meet people authentically. They have such gorgeous potential that could turn the region into one of the most beautiful and most important in Italy. In this sense, the mafia has weighed tremendously on Sicilian history.” Indeed, while *Cosa Nostra* is hardly the only factor shaping relations between Sicily and the rest of Italy, I propose that it has always been the mafia that most dominantly influences the cultural connection. Just as everything has its opposite counterpart, then, it is now the antimafia that is steering that union in a more positive direction. It seeks not to assimilate the island into some larger arbitrary ‘Italian culture,’ but to celebrate its differences as part of an entire country made up of distinctive parts, with communal values of peace and growth. Of course, its task is a complicated one, and it will surely require much time to carry out. “When you have an enemy on the outside, it’s easier. You know who to fight,” noted a friend of mine. “When you’ve got an enemy in your own society – your neighbor, your

relative, inside your very self – it becomes very difficult” (Martella, Personal Interview). The mafia is largely still the status quo in Sicily, so much that even those who hate it are hesitant to see it attacked. Just as Giovanni Falcone often said, however, the mafia is a human phenomenon, and like all human phenomena, it had a beginning, and it will have an end (Lano, 143).

## Chapter 2: Understanding *Cosa Nostra*

When people describe the Mafia they often use terms such as ‘octopus’ or ‘cancer.’ Nothing could be further from the truth. The use of these expressions makes the Mafia seem mysterious, omnipotent, uncatchable – precisely the image that the *Mafiosi* want people to have about their organization. [The] reality is rather different. (Luciano Violante, “Foreward” in Jamieson ix)

The history of the mafia is a history of resentment and denials, of cover-ups and unspoken agreements. Most of all, it is a history of intentional and inadvertent misunderstandings, across a multi-faceted developmental process. In analyzing the various layers of the mafia past, even high-ranking *Cosa Nostra* officials have been misinformed of particular details. ‘Boss of both worlds’ Tommaso Buscetta himself was convinced that the mafia had been around since the Middle Ages (Dickie 38). Since the mafia’s actual beginning after Italian Unification in the mid 1800s, several different phenomena have emerged to sustain its development. Most notable among these are scholarly misinformation, societal complacency, criminal silence or *omertà*, powerful extortion rackets, and political and judicial corruption. It is through understanding these elements that one can best comprehend Sicily’s fundamental relationship with the mafia, and its subsequent impact on national unity.

*Cosa Nostra*’s operations permeate several avenues of Sicilian society. Simply stating that the mafia dominates island life, however, does not necessarily make it so. Indeed, for as long as the mafia has existed, there has been a percentage of the Sicilian and Italian public that has lamented its illicit activities, decrying what seemed like an obvious, thoroughly organized parasite on Sicilian prosperity. Too easily, however, these arguments were brushed aside or refuted, often by some of the highest authorities. Leonardo Sciascia, for one, had a particularly pained perspective. In his famed mystery novels, *Cosa Nostra* was the author’s subject of choice. Books like The Day of the Owl and Equal Danger are still considered unforgiving

commentaries on the mafia's detrimental influence, and indeed, Sciascia was one of the organization's most vocal critics. "In [his] eyes, the mafia were a pollutant of the very springs of life in Sicily, poisoning Sicilian history, society and culture," writes Sciascia scholar Joseph Farrell. "They were a force which had kept Sicilians in subjection and poverty, which had distorted and brutalized the view Sicilians had of themselves and which other people had of them..." (14). His lamentations and accusations, it should be noted, extended to his fellow writers, as well. Authors he otherwise admired were in his mind guilty of distorting the truth about the island's mafia presence, creating "a polluted cultural environment in which the criminal element specific to Sicily could not be mentioned" (14).

If Sciascia's contemporaries were at fault, their weaknesses were founded on a history of scholarly inaccuracies with regard to the mafia. Writing at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, for instance, esteemed Sicilian folklorist Giuseppe Pitrè insisted that:

The mafia is neither a sect nor an association, and has neither rules nor statutes. The Mafioso is not a robber or a brigand... The Mafioso is simply a brave man, someone who will put up with no provocation; and in that sense, every man needs to be, indeed has to be, a Mafioso. The mafia is a certain consciousness of one's own being, an exaggerated notion of individual force and strength... (Arlacchi, Mafia Business 6).

Even as late as the 1970s, some popular scholarship considered the mafia a mere "collection of shared assumptions, tacit understandings and conventions" (Farrell 13). Without structure or organization, the argument went, how could such a loose idea really be so detrimental to Sicilian life?

Such skepticism was not entirely without merit. "Despite the astonishing level of corruption," notes Alexander Stille, "during the last forty-five years Italy has enjoyed its greatest period of peace and prosperity since the time of the Roman Empire. Never before have so many Italians experienced such a widely distributed level of well-being. Even in the south, problems

like hunger, malaria and illiteracy have been virtually eliminated” (10). Stille is quick to point out, however, that “these achievements have come at a very high price: the region has come under near-total domination of the mafia” (10). Indeed, today we know the truth of Sciascia’s notions – enough, anyway, to understand just how potent and structured the mafia as an organization has been.

Specific realities are hard to overlook: some of Sicily’s most treasured landmarks have been stained by the mafia’s bureaucratic corruption. The ancient Greek temples at Agrigento, among the most famous archaeological sites in all of Europe, are now surrounded by roughly six hundred illegal buildings, in direct violation of zoning laws, with no one willing to speak out against them (Stille 12). Teatro Massimo, the largest theater in Italy and the third largest opera house in Europe, was closed in 1974 for “urgent, immediate repairs,” to be completed within half a year. Instead, the project unraveled into a twenty-three-year endeavor, “as most of the many billion lire earmarked by the Italian government for the renovation disappeared – with the complicity of local officials and politicians – into the pockets of contractors linked to Mafia bosses” (Orlando 3).

For *Cosa Nostra*, social control means not only doing as it pleases, but also intertangling the Sicilian public into its activities to as great an extent as possible. “The strength of the mafia,” writes Stille,

depends on a degree of popular consensus that goes well beyond the 5,000 or 6,000 “made” members of Cosa Nostra. Some estimate that between 100,000 and 200,000 Sicilian families (in an island of 5 million people) depend directly on some form of illegal activity sanctioned by the mafia; traffickers in drugs, underground lottery tickets, contraband cigarettes, bootlegged audiotapes and videotapes, even the ubiquitous pushcart peddlers selling bread without a license. Moreover, billions of dollars of drug money was being recycled into hundred of apparently legitimate businesses: construction companies, restaurants, clothing stores, supermarkets (157-158).

Finding the border between victim and participant in mafia activities, Giovanni Falcone confirms, is often the greatest challenge of all. “Often we witness the process by which a businessman begins as the victim of the Mafia and then actually becomes a *Mafioso* himself...” (Jamieson 154).



Like the illicit tobacco it once so profited from, the mafia has thrived in Sicily’s fertile cultural soil. It has spoiled the ground that nourishes it, making it difficult for antimafia seeds of legality to take root and grow. “*Cosa Nostra* has different characteristics in various parts of Sicily,” notes a major antimafia organizer in Rome. “*Cosa Nostra* in Catania is one thing. It’s another thing in Agrigento, and another in Palermo. The mechanisms and motives, though, are the same” (Ciotti, Personal Interview). In recognition of *Cosa Nostra*’s Sicilian base, however, we must be careful to remember that organized crime is not an intrinsically Sicilian phenomenon. “A culture where resignation is a value,” explains Tonio Dell’Olio, “where the more you keep your mouth shut, the better, because that way you avoid trouble – clearly that’s an environment that favors the mafia, and often fosters its development. That doesn’t mean, though, that the mafia is a fundamental part of Sicilian identity.”

Indeed, the islanders are not some collective group, violent by nature, in search of an outlet for its malicious intentions. The percentage of those directly involved with organized crime, in fact, is hardly as profound as its dominance would seem to suggest. If the mafia meant in practice only the violence and criminality plastered in national headlines, it would be fair to assume that most Sicilians would want it extinguished, as would other Italians with respect to crime groups like the *Camorra*, *Ndrangheta*, and *Sacra Corona Unita*. National antimafia groups are convinced, however, that ‘mafia’ is more than just organized crime. An organization

it may be, but it has a social and cultural reach. It lends favors that aren't always so hated, and provides services the state has faltered on, to the extent that some consider the mafia indispensable. In Naples, for instance, the mafia gives out loans, albeit at exorbitant rates, to those who banks have turned away (Dell'Olio, Personal Interview). In Sicily, it provides jobs and social agency. "If you have influence, or if you know someone, then you have power," noted a Sicilian I met. "You can manipulate even the littlest of things. Otherwise, if you don't know anyone, you're nothing. You can't do anything."

Moreover, the mafia has a charm and appeal to it that can be quite alluring – founded, Falcone understood, on certain values that by themselves are not at all bad: courage, friendship, and respect for tradition (Stille 113). For all its faults, then, many have seen *Cosa Nostra* as a truly honored society, and even today, the term 'men of honor' still has profound meaning for some. "Belonging to *Cosa Nostra* offers the same advantages as does belonging to other organizations," explains Dickie, "including the achievement of aspirations, an exhilarating sense of status and comradeship, and the chance to pass responsibility, moral or otherwise, upwards in the direction of their bosses. All of these things are ingredients of mafia honor" (30). These are the aspects that contribute to what some call a *mentalità mafiosa*, or 'mafia mentality.' "In the south," explained a Sicilian friend of mine, "you see it so deeply rooted that even little kids – five, six, seven years old – already think and act like miniature *mafiosi*. You see them and they act like adults – threatening you, and walking around like little gangsters." It is with this foundation that we may begin to understand the extent to which the mafia in Sicily is both tolerated and even embraced. Leonardo Vitale, a *pentito*, or captured mafioso who testified for the state, explained "My sin is having been born into a mafia family and of having lived in a society where everyone is a Mafioso and is respected for it, while those who are not are treated

with contempt” (Stille 176). It is not only *Cosa Nostra* that the antimafia movement seeks to undo, then, but the acceptance, silence, and even reverence that has allowed it to thrive as long as it has.

*Omertà*, beyond its narrow translation as ‘criminal silence,’ is an entire societal phenomenon in Sicily. It is, some would say, a lifestyle, and it has meant everything to the mafia’s survival. *Omertà* means not talking about – or not even seeing – the mafia activity one sees. It means finding excuses, making exceptions, and fearing for your life and loved ones if you don’t. It means, in the end, utter resignation to *Cosa Nostra*’s control, and the understanding that the only one to get in trouble if one complains is one’s self. In such a setting, the mafia becomes not only tolerated, but essential. So it is that an eight-year-old girl and her grandfather could be mistakenly assassinated in broad daylight, and not a single witness, even anonymously, was willing to step forward (Jamieson 157). So it is that, some time later, officers arrived at the scene of a murder from the night prior, and found the victim’s father “trying to cart off his son’s badly mutilated corpse... Rather than reporting his son’s murder to the police, the father was trying to remove evidence of the crime” (Stille 150). So it is that the wife of a mafioso who collaborated with the state set fire to his house and that of his parents, and refused any offer of state protection, despite having two young children (Jamieson 230). This is the environment that allows and encourages the culture of mafia ‘cool,’ where a certain *sentire Mafioso* – the attraction of the Mafia identity – begins to flourish at an early age. For the young southern male, overcoming it is a very slow and very difficult process (157).

For many, *Cosa Nostra* can be seen as a state-within-a-state. The mafia so thrives, after all, by inserting itself into the voids where the Italian government is absent. In its own illicit ways, it “substitutes itself for the state in functions such as the maintenance of public order, the



use of force, economic regulation and the administration of justice wherever public institutions are weak or absent... It commands respect because it operates in a more efficient and timely way than its institutional counterpart” (Jamieson xxi). The mafia even handles the death penalty the way a state does. It cannot kill anyone, noted Tommaso Buscetta, unless an overarching council decides that death is warranted and necessary. *Cosa Nostra* does not murder, in other words; it executes (Dickie 97).

Like the state, the mafia also collects its own form of taxes: *il pizzo*, or extorted ‘protection money.’ By some estimates, over eighty percent of Palermo residents pay *pizzo*, and projections are similarly high elsewhere in Sicily. Literally translated as ‘the lace,’ *il pizzo* has a fundamental role in mafia social control. “*Non può essere mafia senza il pizzo*,” antimafia activists sometimes say: “Without the *pizzo*, the mafia can’t exist.” It is not the modest revenue *pizzo* provides, however, that makes it so vital. Generally used merely for legal fees and to financially support families of arrested *mafiosi*, the income *Cosa Nostra* gathers through extortion pales in comparison to the wealth it attains through illegal contracts and drug money (Orlando 141). *Il pizzo*, rather, provides social control that money can’t buy. Simply put, everyone must pay it. So doing, everyone must submit to the mafia’s higher authority and control. Those who don’t are made examples of.

“A brave man named Libero Grassi ... had a small business in a Mafia-saturated area in Palermo,” tells ex-mayor Leoluca Orlando:

He not only refused the pressing demands of the local boss, but agreed to appear on television where, looking straight at the camera, he almost spelled out the words: “Mafiosi, I will not pay!” Grassi also appealed to all the other businessmen of his area to follow his example, reminding them that if they *all* held firm, if they *all* stood united in their refusal to pay, the Mafia would be powerless, and they themselves would be less at risk. Early one morning as he went to buy his daily newspaper a few steps from his house, one of *Cosa Nostra*’s killers shot Grassi in the head. (142)

One of the more extreme examples, perhaps, Grassi's fate was by no means unusual. As I will discuss later, only recently have his efforts toward a collective resistance taken root with any notable success.



Throughout my time in Sicily and Rome, the phrase I most often heard used to explain the mafia's enduring power was "*La mafia è politica*" – mafia is politics. *Cosa Nostra*'s most successful survival tactic, that is, is its talent for corruption: finding favors where necessary, and establishing a political environment friendly to its activities. Explains a Sicilian friend of mine, "When you talk about the relationship between mafia and politics, you have to remember that it isn't politics that rules down here and finds an agreement with the local mafia. It's the opposite. The mafia commands, and it's politics that needs the mafia to operate and govern local territory." Indeed, Palermo Chief Prosecutor Diego Tajani proclaimed back in 1871 that, "The mafia in Sicily is not dangerous or invincible in itself. It is dangerous and invincible because it is an instrument of local government" (Dickie 73). The situation today, it should be noted, differs only in that such infiltration has expanded to a national scale. "By the end of 1993," tells Dickie, "one third of all members of the Italian parliament were under investigation for corruption..." (315). While *Cosa Nostra* does not have any particular political views or tendencies of its own, its survival and prosperity has come in large part from its skilled penetration of whatever party or authority is in control at the given time, at the local, regional, and national level. It lends its influence, of course, to the party it sees most likely to facilitate its activities, but in the end, it corrupts whatever powers it can.

The mafia's stance toward the judicial system and other public offices is not dissimilar. Winning a criminal case against a *mafioso* is difficult enough, considering the mafia's talent for intimidating, threatening, and even killing witnesses. Getting a conviction to stand up under appeal is another challenge altogether; *Cosa Nostra* is infamous for its ability to corrupt or sway judges. Indeed, "corruption practiced by organized crime aims not so much to obtain favors as to bind a public official to crime in a permanent way," says Luciano Violante, former Chairman of the Antimafia Commission. "[The] main object of the exercise is not the favor itself, but the individual, in the form of a public functionary. Organized crime bosses know that sooner or later they are bound to need a policeman, a judge, a clerk in the finance ministry and so on..." (Jamieson x-xi).

Even today, several examples are of note. Seven-time Italian Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti, for instance, has come under repeated accusation of mafia collusion. For decades, he was considered 'untouchable,' and even Tommaso Buscetta, who before his death fingered Andreotti for mafia ties, refused for extended periods of time to even address the mafia's political ties. Italy simply wasn't ready to hear it, he maintained, as "the people I would have to talk about have not yet left active public life" (Jamieson 226). In 2002, however, Andreotti was finally convicted and sentenced to twenty-four years imprisonment for his role in the 1979 murder of Mino Pecorelli, a journalist who had spoken out against Andreotti's ties to the mafia ("An Extraordinary Verdict"). While the conviction was ultimately overturned on appeal in 2003, later that year Andreotti was also acquitted – rather dubiously – of criminal charges for having ties to the Mafia (Popham, 2003). The latter acquittal, to explain, helps illustrate the complexities of Italian justice: the court had in fact established the ex-Prime Minister's strong ties to the mafia until 1980, which he used to further his political career. The charges were

overturned, though, simply because, under Italian rules, too much time had elapsed since the crime was committed. After the trial, Andreotti was quoted as saying that, "In a trial, what interest me are the final results. These results are positive" (Barber, 2003). In 1991, he was made a *senatore a vita* – senator for life – and is now serving out the rest of a life term in the senate.

After his initial conviction, one of Andreotti's most outspoken supporters was Silvio Berlusconi, three-time prime minister and head of the media conglomerate *Mediaset*, who himself has been unable to escape questions of corruption. His *Forza Italia* party received tremendous mafia voter support [knowingly or unknowingly], with top *Cosa Nostra* bosses firmly believing that *Forza Italia* would be "the savior of the *Mafiosi*," according to witness Filippo Malvagna (Jamieson 63). Some in Italy also call into question the coincidental nature of the April 2006 capture of Bernardo Provenzano – the famed mafia 'boss of all bosses' who had been on the run for 46 years – just before the end of Berlusconi's second term in office.<sup>3</sup> Someone who eludes capture for so long, the argument goes, does so only with the help of very powerful protectors. Having been officially accused on twelve different occasions, it should be stipulated that Berlusconi's only two convictions were overturned on appeal. As he passed a law in 2003 granting him immunity as long as he remained in power ("Italy immunity law..."), however, many of the other ten cases simply dead-ended when the six-year statute of limitations expired. Describing the magistrates who had consistently brought charges against him, the Prime Minister is quoted as saying, "To do that job you need to be mentally disturbed, you need psychic disturbances... If they do that job it is because they are anthropologically different from the rest of the human race" ("Berlusconi stuns Italian judges").

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<sup>3</sup> For documented discussion of such questioning, see, for instance, "The real godfather, behind bars," *The First Post*, April 11, 2006.

During his second term, Berlusconi was a champion of the project to build a bridge across the Straits of Messina, joining Sicily with the rest of Italy. The project, long rumored, has gained considerable momentum in recent years, yet has caused tremendous division in public opinion over its merits. While it would ease transportation, ostensibly facilitating the cultural connection between the island and the mainland, the project would also require the destruction of entire neighborhoods in Messina, would put hundreds of ferry workers into unemployment, and would cost billions of Euros to complete. Some southerners suggest the project should be embraced, if only because it is the first effort in recent memory to devote significant funds and infrastructure to the south instead of the north. A significant population of Sicilians, however, has decried the project from the beginning, aghast at the notion of spending such vast sums on a bridge that isn't even necessary.

“It would be like a building a cathedral in the desert,” suggested one of my Sicilian co-workers. “A beautiful bridge surrounded by nothing. We have the worst infrastructure in Italy – poor railways, highways that haven't been finished in thirty years. If you want to do something about underdevelopment, fix those. Don't build me a bridge.” Many, moreover, suspect the construction contracts would go straight to illicit mafia builders, inclined to make a fortune from the state financing, and likely to drag the project out over several years. Luigi Croce, Messina's chief prosecutor, argued that “the bridge would be a way for *Cosa Nostra* in Sicily and the *Ndrangheta* in Calabria to get rich” (“Bridges and other promises”), and even mafia boss Bernardo Provenzano was rumored to have gloated, “If they build that bridge, there will be enough money for everyone!” (Longrigg, “Close family ties...”). Although plans for the project died when Romano Prodi took over as Prime Minister in 2006, Prodi's government fell in January 2008, and Berlusconi, despite being set for trial in Milan for corruption charges

(Pomeroy, 2007), was re-elected three months later. Campaign promises from his new party – *Popolo della Libertà* – once again included plans for a bridge.

While Andreotti and Berlusconi are two particularly notable cases, other examples abound. In the 1980s and early 1990s, Judge Corrado Carnevale was known in mafia circles as *amazzasentenze* – the ‘sentence-killer’ – in light of his apparent disposition for over-ruling mafia convictions on the slightest of technicalities. In 2001 he himself was convicted for mafia conspiracy, though his six-year sentence was overturned the following year. Even as recently as January 2008, Sicilian President Salvatore [Totò] Cuffaro was forced to resign, after being sentenced to five years imprisonment for divulging confidential information about antimafia investigations (“Sicily’s governor gets...”). Initially, Cuffaro had adamantly refused to resign. His case is still on appeal, he pointed out, and he was not convicted of the more serious charge of aiding and abetting the mafia, as it could not be proven that he specifically knew the people to whom he divulged antimafia secrets to were themselves *mafiosi*. Outraged that ‘only in Sicily’ could a political figure be convicted of corruption charges and still remain in power, however, a petition for his resignation quickly circulated, and after being photographed celebrating his lesser conviction by handing out *cannoli* pastries around his office, he was finally pressured to step down. “A conviction and a five-year prison sentence shouldn't be cause for celebration,” noted Gianfranco Micciche, president of Sicily’s General Assembly (Scherer, 2006).



In consideration of the above factors, one can begin to understand the extent to which the mafia dominates Sicilian society. Be it by means of misinformation, resignation, *omertà*, extortion, or corruption, the mafia has written its presence in bold. However detrimental it may

be, *Cosa Nostra* is nonetheless the status quo on much of the island, and so great is the difficulty of uprooting it that, for most of the mafia's existence, the majority of Sicilians have remained in a state of resigned complacency. Said Leonardo Sciascia, "When I speak out against the mafia it also makes me suffer because within me, as within every Sicilian, the residue of *Mafioso* feeling is still alive. So when I struggle against the mafia I'm also struggling against myself; it is like a split, a laceration" (Dickie, 2). So it is that fighting individual criminals cannot suffice in the larger fight against the mafia. It is the mass acceptance and the visage of impenetrability that must be undone. It was the work of magistrates Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino, to be discussed in the next chapter, which has begun to make that process possible. It was they, to be sure, who provided the very conditions under which the new Italian unity I discuss could be approached.

### Chapter 3: Falcone, Borsellino, and Buscetta

Skeptics about the potency of the present-day antimafia movement abound. They often unite behind the argument that for as long as there has been a mafia in Sicily, there has also been an antimafia. There have always been persons who have opposed mafia activity, who have spoken out against it with vigor, many at the cost of their lives or livelihoods, but whose impact was, in the end, negligible. These considerations are hardly inaccurate, and indeed it is difficult not to be saddened by stories of figures who dedicated their lives to fighting a force so much greater than their own, or of mafia collaborators whose efforts proved fruitless. There is something to be gained from these stories, however. Together, they form a whole much greater than the sum of its parts, ultimately laying the foundation for more substantial widespread efforts, the way a falling domino can quickly trigger several others in an ever-widening pyramid.

Giuseppe Impastato, for instance, is the subject of a brilliant 2000 film entitled *I Cento Passi* [*The Hundred Steps*], the true story of a young Sicilian from the western town of Cinisi, disillusioned by the mafia nature of the family he was born into. ‘Peppino,’ as he was called, was fifteen years old when his uncle, local mafia boss Cesare Manzella, was killed in a mafia hit against his life; the blast from the exploded *Alfa Romeo* Manzella was in was so powerful that pieces of his body were found stuck to lemon trees hundreds of meters away (Dickie 272). Over the years that followed, Peppino denounced his father’s lifestyle and dedicated himself to making a positive difference through community organizing. He founded a socialist newsletter called *L’idea Socialista*, and created *Musica e Cultura* – a group that organized debates, film, theater and music shows in Cinisi. He opened a radio station, and was the host of its most popular program, called *Onda Pazza* [Crazy Wave], in which he used satire to mock politicians and *mafiosi*. Among his targets was local mafia boss Gaetano Badalamenti – “Sitting Tano,” as



Peppino called him – who lived a mere hundred steps from the Impastato household (Behan, 2008). Peppino inspired local youth, led rallies for local justice, and ultimately ran for public office in 1978. For his efforts, he was thrown out of his house by his father, and ultimately blown up on a train track in a murder masked as a terrorist attack gone awry.

In the aftermath, local authorities projected Peppino himself to be the criminal. Despite all evidence and logic to the contrary, the *carabinieri* [military police] officially concluded that he and his activist friends had planned a terrorist suicide, and that Peppino's bomb had prematurely exploded. It wasn't until 2002 that "Sitting Tano" Badalamenti was finally convicted of organizing the assassination. As Peppino's younger brother Giovanni Impastato later noted,

It seems that Badalamenti was well liked by the *carabinieri*, as he was calm, reliable, and always liked a chat... If anything, we were subversives who made nuisances of ourselves... [It] was a widely held belief that Tano Badalamenti was a gentleman and it was us who were the troublemakers... I often used to see [the *carabinieri*] walking arm in arm with Tano Badalamenti and his henchmen. You can't have faith in the institutions when you see the police arm in arm with *mafiosi*. (Behan, 2008)

At the time, many locals saw Peppino as just another casualty to a hopeless cause not worth fighting for. At the time, however, Italy couldn't yet grasp how complex *Cosa Nostra* really was. Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino had not yet been assigned the initial cases that would go on to change the way the mafia was understood, investigated, and prosecuted.

The antimafia movement of today is different from past efforts. Today, on a level far surpassing anything three decades ago, *Cosa Nostra* is understood, or at least understandable. This is hardly to suggest that authorities know everything about the mafia, so that defeating it is just a matter of taking apart the pieces. Clearly the task is far more complicated. What was before an unspoken presence, however, is now identifiable. Crime operations that were once

encountered as individual instances, with individual criminals, are now understood and demonstrable as parts of a collective whole, the structure and endgame of which are largely comprehended. The strength of this accomplishment can be seen not only in patterns of arrests and a surge in *mafiosi* turning themselves in as witnesses, but also in schools, communities, and national organizations now able to identify a common foe.

Certainly, hundreds of prosecutors and other figures around Sicily and Italy merit enormous credit for their own additions to this understanding. To mention only a few, Rocco Chinnici,<sup>4</sup> Antonino Caponnetto,<sup>5</sup> Carlo Alberto Dalla Chiesa,<sup>6</sup> Pio La Torre,<sup>7</sup> Leoluca Orlando,<sup>8</sup> and Gian Carlo Caselli<sup>9</sup> all deserve mention. Their collective efforts, however, were most significant in light of the contributions they made to the work of Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino, who collaborated on and off from 1980 until 1992. Their work explored several avenues of the mafia's operations, and it was they who were most responsible for fitting together both new and long-known components into a more whole, appreciable picture.

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<sup>4</sup> From November 1979 until his murder in July 1983, Chinnici was the Chief Prosecutor at the Palace of Justice in Palermo. He was the creator of the Antimafia Pool, which included Giovanni Falcone, Paolo Borsellino, Giuseppe Di Lello and Leonardo Guarnotta ("Il Pool Antimafia di Palermo").

<sup>5</sup> Caponnetto replaced Chinnici upon his death as the head of the Palermo Antimafia Pool, ultimately helping to organize the first Maxi-trial in Palermo ("Il Pool Antimafia di Palermo").

<sup>6</sup> Dalla Chiesa was Palermo prefect from May 1982 until September of that year, when he was gunned down for his work in the fight against the mafia ("Shock Therapy...").

<sup>7</sup> La Torre was the original designer of what became known as the Rognoni-La Torre law (Virginio Rognoni co-sponsored the bill), an immensely important piece of legislation that made it officially illegal to be a member of any mafia-like group or association. "The organization is of the mafia type," the bill noted, "when its components use intimidation, subjection and, consequentially, silence (omertà), to commit crimes, directly or indirectly acquire the management or the control of businesses, concessions, authorizations, public contracts and public services to obtain either unjust profits or advantages for themselves or others" (Santino, "The Laws Regarding..."). The bill finally passed in 1982, two years after the mafia gunned La Torre down for his work on the law, later utilized by Falcone and Borsellino during the Maxi-Trial. In March 1996, a subsequent law (109/96) was passed to allow the state to confiscate mafia property and other wealth acquired through illicit means, whereby confiscated goods were then re-allocated to local communities to promote social growth, an apt antithesis to the way the mafia had utilized them previously.

<sup>8</sup> Orlando was mayor of Palermo from 1985 to 1990, and again from 1993 to 2000, and has been a consistent voice against Cosa Nostra.

<sup>9</sup> In the aftermath of Falcone and Borsellino's murders, Caselli took over as chief antimafia prosecutor in Palermo, having moved all the way from Turin – one of the northernmost cities in Italy. It was under his direction that some of the most notable *mafiosi* were arrested, including Giovanni Brusca, who detonated the bomb that killed Falcone (Lano 150).

Explains Luciano Violante,

Until Falcone there was no antimafia fight; individual crimes like murder, extortion and dynamite attacks were pursued but the organization itself was untouched. Falcone and his chief Rocco Chinnici realized it wasn't enough just to look for the authors of individual crimes and that in any case they would never even be arrested unless Mafia association was understood and pursued as a crime in itself. (Jamieson 30)

While neither Falcone nor Borsellino had ever intended to fall into the roles they did as antimafia prosecutors, both were ultimately assigned cases whose scope broadened exponentially as their investigations progressed. After each suffered the mafia assassination of a colleague, they became ensnared into the disturbing mafia assignments that eventually became the full focus of their work (Stille 51).

The particular skills of Falcone and Borsellino led on February 10, 1986, to the beginning of the biggest trial that had ever been brought against Cosa Nostra, which came to be known as the *Maxi-Processo*, or Maxi-Trial. The trial took place in a bunker built especially for the occasion, lasted nearly two years, and included 470 accused suspects. The forty-volume, 8,607-page indictment was lauded as “an essential X-ray of Italy today...the contradictions of which are hard to grasp if you don't take the mafia into account... illegal business activities, the power of its wealth and its relationships with those who profit from it, its complicity with people in government, its organizational structure and military power, its internecine wars of hegemony, and its political assassinations, but also of its language and customs...” (Stille 177). As journalist Corrado Stajano put it, Italy finally had “a reconstruction of the mafia phenomenon in all its complexity” (Stille 177).

Over the course of the trial, the prosecutors used with unprecedented success the testimony of *pentiti – mafiosi* who had either been arrested or turned themselves in, and agreed to testify for the state against others from among their ranks. Principal among these was ‘boss of

both worlds' Tommaso Buscetta, captured in Brazil in 1983. Buscetta, though never actually a true *capo*, received tremendous respect within Cosa Nostra because of his intelligence and connections in Europe and the Americas. "He had the personality and presence of a boss," former Palermo mayor Leoluca Orlando once explained, "and over the years had become a charismatic and commanding figure in Cosa Nostra, acquiring an international reputation" (Orlando 86). Following a failed suicide attempt after his capture, Buscetta decided to collaborate with Falcone, and expounded with vigor the mafia's inter-workings. "In the interest of society, of my children and other young people," he told Falcone, "I intend to reveal all that I know about the cancer of the mafia, so that future generations can live in a more human and dignified way" (Stille 100).

While it eventually became clear that Buscetta was not fully forthright about the extent of his own role in assorted mafia activities, the overall foundation he laid was monumental.<sup>10</sup> His in-depth knowledge about specific activities of specific people and specific families was significant in its own right, yet it was the detailed outline he provided of Cosa Nostra's hierarchy and distribution across Sicily that proved invaluable, prompting some to refer to him as the Rosetta Stone of mafia testimonies (Dickie 24). "Buscetta gave us innumerable confirmations of the structure, the recruitment techniques, the functions of *Cosa Nostra*," Falcone was quoted as saying (Jamieson 31). "[He] gave us a broad, wide-ranging, global vision of the phenomenon.

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<sup>10</sup> It should be established that Buscetta was not actually the first mafia informant to tell of the mafia's inner-workings. It was his unique credibility, however, that made his contributions so valuable. In 1973, for instance, a *mafioso* named Leonardo Vitale underwent a spiritual crisis and turned himself in to authorities. "Not only did he confess to a long string of crimes," Alexander Stille clarifies, "he implicated more than a hundred other *Mafiosi*, including the future boss of bosses Salvatore Riina. Vitale's story checked out to the smallest detail... And yet judges were skeptical of Vitale because of his mystical, religious crisis...but also because of a stubborn belief that *Mafiosi* don't talk. The Palermo Court of Appeals overturned the convictions of the *Mafiosi* he had implicated and placed Vitale into an asylum for the criminally insane" (92). "Five years later, in 1978," adds Leoluca Orlando, "Giuseppe Di Cristina – a boss, not a soldier like Vitale – made his confessions to the carabinieri. He too was ignored at the time, although the chilling and detailed picture he painted of the Corleonesi was resurrected later on when this faction began its inexorable move to power and when Buscetta arrived on the scene" (87).

He gave us an interpretative key, a language and a code. He was for us like a language professor who allowed us to go among the Turks without having to try to communicate with our hands” (Stille 121). Most importantly, he laid out a detailed explanation of Cosa Nostra’s rules of governance, providing what has been called “a precise organizational map of Cosa Nostra from the lowliest ‘man of honor’ to the Commission that stood atop the pyramid of mafia power” (Stille 100-101). No murder could be carried out at the hands of Cosa Nostra, it was explained, without the Commission specifically ruling on its necessity – a point that would prove largely significant in convicting known Commission members otherwise un-connected to a given crime or killing.

In December 1987, 360 of the 470 accused were finally convicted, 119 in absentia, in what was considered a tremendous blow to Cosa Nostra. Within two years, however, only 60 of those remained in prison. The rest had been released on appeal, their convictions overturned on particularly suspicious grounds by sentence-killer Corrado Carnevale, who, as one commentator argued, “simply acted as if the last eight years of mafia cases did not exist” (Stille 276). In his decision, Carnevale rejected the notion that mafia families were linked as part of a cohesive whole, and instead asserted that the mafia was actually “a plurality of criminal associations,” that were “autonomous in their nature, [operating] without any dependence on hierarchical links to the commission” (Stille 267). As maxi-trial public prosecutor Giuseppe Ayala summed up, “There was not a shred of evidence that supported this thesis and thousands of pages of trial testimony that directly contradicted it” (Stille 267). Only in 1992 did the Italian Supreme Court reverse Carnevale’s decisions, putting most of those released back in prison, and affirming Falcone and Borsellino’s great success.

Said success, it is important to stipulate, was only one in an ever-continuing sequence of endeavors against Cosa Nostra and the other Italian mafias. It was particularly significant, however, in laying down three specific precedents. Writes Alison Jamieson in The Antimafia: Italy's Fight Against Organized Crime, “it established *Cosa Nostra*'s existence as an organization with a single, unified structure; it upheld the principle of joint responsibility within the Commission; and it confirmed the validity and the possibility of objective corroboration in a court of law of the testimonies of state's witnesses, thereby ensuring that legislation to protect and encourage future collaborators would follow” (8). Indeed, the foundation laid by the work of Falcone and Borsellino made room for much other progress, both before, during, and after the Maxi-trial. Having recognized the importance of pooling resources, the Italian government finally granted the Palermo Palace of Justice the manpower and machinery – including the important novelty of computers – to wage a serious battle against the mafia (Stille 91). “The methods of the Palermo anti-mafia pool were bearing fruit across Sicily and not just in Marsala,” as well, notes Stille. “Prosecutors in the Sicilian cities of Messina and Agrigento had mounted important maxi-trials of their own, receiving important backup support from the prosecutors in Palermo” (247).

From 1988 to 1990, significant ground was lost when Antonino Meli was made Palermo's chief prosecutor on grounds of seniority, despite his utter void of experience dealing with antimafia prosecutions. While few accuse Meli of any intentional wrongdoing, he nonetheless dismantled the antimafia pool, blocked off important inter-departmental communications, and made a mess of several antimafia investigations. His time in power was a significant, sad, and extremely frustrating time in the history of the antimafia, and an example of how quickly progress can be undone when power is placed in the wrong hands. Fortunately,

Falcone in 1991 was made President of the Penal Affairs Section of the Ministry of Justice, based in Rome, where he was able to pass legislation reversing the defeat the antimafia pool seemed to have suffered. “Through this legislation,” notes Stille, “Falcone would regain in a single stroke all of the ground that he had lost in 1988-90 when chief prosecutor Antonino Meli had scattered the anti-mafia pool’s cases among the provincial offices of rural Sicily. Three years after being dismantled in Palermo, the model of the anti-mafia pool would be applied in cities across Italy” (Stille 336).



On May 23, 1992, Falcone was driving through the town of Capaci on his way to Palermo from Punta Raisi Airport when a 350 kg dynamite explosion blew up the highway underneath him, killing him, his wife, and three members of his escort. Three months later, Borsellino met the same fate, falling victim to a car bomb parked in front of his mother’s apartment, where he stopped to visit every Sunday. The attacks, on their surface, were clearly meant to wipe out two of Cosa Nostra’s biggest obstacles to sustained prosperity. On a deeper level, however, other messages played out. “At first glance, [Falcone and Borsellino’s] murders seemed an assertion of total invincibility,” writes Stille. “The mafia was showing that it was prepared to kill anyone – no matter how important or well protected – that the state might send up against it” (7). Such large-scale public killings from an organization used to silence, however, were indicative of something different. Indeed, “Buscetta understood that the killings of Falcone and Borsellino were symptoms of a profound crisis within the mafia itself” (8).

The blow was a powerful one, and shockwaves were felt all across Italy. Ironically for the mafia, however, it also provided a tremendous focal point for antimafia sentiment around

Italy. If the deaths of Falcone and Borsellino were national tragedies, to be sure, the reactive outcry and solidarity must be noted as something of a silver lining. “The murders of the two judges were experienced by thousands of Italians with a sense of deep personal loss, as if friends had been killed,” writes Allison Jamieson (128). Falcone’s funeral was broadcast on live television, while thousands in Palermo stood in the rain for hours outside the Church of San Domenico (Stille 356). “The murder of Borsellino immediately after... produced a collective shame for a country which was so wretchedly unable – or unwilling – to protect its finest representatives” (Jamieson 128).

Particularly affected was Rita Atria, a 17-year old from the Sicilian province of Trapani. Having grown up in a mafia family, she had witnessed the murder of her father in 1985, and after the loss of her brother some years later, she broke ways with her family and decided to collaborate with the state. Rita met Paolo Borsellino, and was transferred under police protection to a hideout in Rome, where she began giving secret testimony that led to the arrests of major mafia figures from her town. “She began to see Borsellino like a father – like the father the mafia had stolen from her,” explains antimafia organizer Davide Patti. “Then, in 1992, the mafia stole Borsellino, too, and she couldn’t take it anymore.” Disowned by her mother and now suffering the loss of her only friend and protector, Rita leapt to her death from her third floor balcony. She left behind a diary, in which she stated that the first mafia we need to defeat is the mafia within ourselves. Later, at Rita’s funeral, twelve women carried her casket, “yet her mother, unrepentant, later desecrated her grave” (Jamieson 133).

Despite the weight of the tragedies, the years immediately following have been described as a “magic moment” in the antimafia movement (Stille 406). *Pentiti* began turning themselves in to local *carabinieri* in disgust, while social movements started around Italy to combat the



apathetic, resigned mentality toward the mafia that had apparently allowed the tragedies to occur.

Magistrates had unprecedented success, as

Italian police dismantled entire criminal organizations, arrested mafia figures who had eluded capture for decades, broke up money-laundering rings, foiled assassination attempts, seized billions of dollars in illegal assets and indicted scores of businessmen, politicians, magistrates and police officials accused of protecting known *Mafiosi*. Prosecutors enjoyed the full support of both public opinion and the power of the central government in Rome. For the first time, investigators had the resources, the tools and the organizational structures they needed to attack the mafia in a coordinated, global manner... (Stille 406-407).

While the successes did not last at such a pace forever – and indeed, considerable mistakes have continued to be made since – they were nonetheless a sign of what the Italian government and populace are capable of doing when determined.



Myriad stories like that of Peppino can be recalled all over Sicily, and even Italy.

Remarkable individuals have given their lives standing up for a cause or principle that they held dearly, while others have suffered merely for having been caught in the crossfire. Every year for the past thirteen years, there has been a national antimafia rally in a different town in Italy on the first day of spring – signifying a re-birth. Every year, the names of those who lost their lives as innocent victims to mafia violence are read, and every year the list grows a little longer.<sup>11</sup> In recent years, hundreds of thousands of people have been in attendance, in a tribute to the collective disgust that has become more and more concretized since the careers of Falcone and Borsellino came to such a tragic early end. The annual rally is a testament to just how influential the magistrates' work has been. They exposed for the first time the inner-workings of a well-

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<sup>11</sup> For the full list, dating back to 1893, see “*Nomi da non dimenticare*” [Names not to forget], <http://www.libera.it/leggi.aspx?pg=3>

oiled, intricately structured mafia machine, winning significant symbolic defeats over Cosa Nostra. In so doing, they exposed too the mafia's most vulnerable Achilles' heel: its aura of impenetrability, and the heavy force of resignation and indifference. The antimafia movement that has surged, if cautiously, in the decade and a half since their deaths has been emblematic of how important those contributions have been.

#### Chapter 4: The Antimafia, *Libera* and Progress

If present-day antimafia rallies around Italy have had success, their good fortune has been built upon a growing foundation of critical sentiment that has developed substantially in the years since the deaths of Italy's most famous '*cadaveri eccellenti*' [excellent cadavers.]<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the movement that has arisen since the killings of popular prefect Carlo Alberto dalla Chiesa and his wife on September 3, 1982 and, of course, the 1992 assassinations of Falcone and Borsellino, has been of a different mold than any previous prototype. The two great 'waves of emotion' after their deaths sparked tremendous solidarity, turning "citizens into demonstrators and protagonists of a cause," and triggering significant new legislation to support the work of antimafia prosecutors (Schneider and Schneider, Reversible Destiny 174). Perhaps most significantly, Sicilians fed up with a cultural environment that permitted such travesty have finally opened themselves to a national antimafia discourse. Whereas any broad criticism of *Cosa Nostra* had previously left islanders on the defensive against what they too often perceived as a general attack on their culture, Sicilians have become more willing and more able, albeit gradually, to focus on the particular issues at hand, appreciating a broader Italian effort to uproot organized crime, wherever it may be (J. Schneider, Italy's Southern Question 245).

Much of the shift has stemmed from the antimafia's recognition that any criminal proceedings against suspected members of organized crime would be, in the larger picture, useless, without a broader social component of public support. Invoking the image of a two-wheeled antimafia 'cart,' former Palermo mayor Leoluca Orlando has often noted that the legal fight against *Cosa Nostra* is only one wheel in the campaign against lawlessness, while "[the]

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<sup>12</sup> 'Excellent cadavers' is the term used to distinguish the victims of particularly important assassinations, such as those of Falcone and Borsellino.

other is culture. If one wheel turns without the other, the cart would go in circles. If both turn together, the cart [goes] forward...” (6). Continuing the metaphor, he explains,

If the wheel of justice turns without cultural and social development, the people will say (as some did during the worst days of the antimafia struggle), ‘We were better off when we were worse off.’ But if the wheel of civil society turns without justice, the risk is that an appearance of social vitality will mask the Mafia’s operations. The two wheels must turn together and at the same speed if the cart is to go forward rather than in circles. (103)

The period after Falcone and Borsellino’s deaths may thus have been a ‘magic’ time indeed. Previously overturned life sentences were re-confirmed for several *mafiosi* by the Italian Supreme Court, and laws were upheld criminalizing mafia membership. A relative flood of *pentiti* turned themselves in to prosecutors out of disgust at their own organization’s attacks, and the judicial wheel was set in motion. It wasn’t long before cultural headway became evident as well. On the nights Falcone and Borsellino were killed, for instance, a small Palermo feminist revolt began, in which a gradually growing number of women began to hang sheets from their balconies, painted with antimafia rules and slogans. Eventually known as *il Comitato dei Lenzuoli*, or ‘the Committee of the Sheets,’ the group produced t-shirts and TV advertisements, and set up various local events where they distributed a self-designed code of behavior to fight criminality in everyday life, laid out in a pamphlet entitled ‘Nine uncomfortable guidelines for the citizen who wants to fight the Mafia’ (Jamieson 131-132).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> The rules were:

- 1) Learn to do your duty, respect your environment and preserve it from vandalism and destruction.
- 2) Educate your children to legality, solidarity and tolerance.
- 3) At work: if you suspect bribery or corruption don’t hesitate to take action, go to a judge if necessary. If you are a teacher take every chance to talk about the Mafia and the harm it does. If you are a student, insist on punctuality from your lecturers, report them if they are absent and protest about favoritism.  
     If you are in business, and you receive strange offers of protection or requests, turn to one of the anti-racketeering associations. If you’re already paying, go to these associations as well.
- 4) When dealing with public administration, insist on transparency. Don’t ask for favors but for your rights.
- 5) Always ask for a receipt from your doctor, mechanic or in a restaurant.
- 6) If you witness an attack, help the authorities with their enquiries.

Since then, expanding antimafia sentiment has found a home in burgeoning antimafia associations and organizations, formed to provide growth and cohesive structure to an important, yet otherwise uncontained sentiment. Varying in size, location, and often even in methods, the groups maintain a common moral and apolitical goal of promoting public aversion to mafia presence and activity. Paramount for much of this activity has been the education of children, and grass-roots education projects have been increasingly utilized in elementary schools around the country. The efforts base themselves on the promotion of very simple principles, and have a double-edged intention. First, they seek to diminish the mafia's pool of potential recruits, by encouraging youth to know and respect the law, and, second, they seek to stem 'mafia mentalities' and antagonism towards public institutions that could lead to a life of crime (Jamieson 148). Given the mafia's adept capitalization on public feelings of apathy and resignation, however, antimafia groups have made it a mission to reverse these sentiments as well, instilling anti-mafia instincts from an early age so as to stop the vicious cycle of indifference that has permitted mafia presence to endure.

Beyond going into schools, local projects have also been undertaken to restore public areas, and to highlight the architectural beauty that once defined areas since overrun with overcrowded mafia-tied construction projects. In the late 1980s and 1990s, for instance, Palermo mayor Orlando concentrated significant efforts on cleaning and renewing public spaces. It was under his direction that Teatro Massimo finally reopened, and that Palermo's 158 churches, 400 palazzi, 55 monasteries and 7 theaters were marked for restoration (Orlando 194). Of particular significance for local youth was the creation of the 'Adopt a Monument' program, though which

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- 7) Boycott Mafia business – explain to drug-takers that their behavior is only doing the Mafia a favor; don't buy contraband cigarettes.
  - 8) Refuse to exchange votes for any type of favor.
  - 9) Intervene to prevent young people from acquiring a Mafia mentality; discover solidarity.

local schools and classes ultimately ‘adopted’ over 160 local monuments, with over 60 percent opening to the public once again (197). With great fervor, local students researched their particular monument, interviewed experts and locals, and raised funds for the restoration of their monument. Notes Orlando,

In the United States this would be a heartwarming little story about community spirit. It was that for Palermo, but it was also something more profound: a story of people long denied a map to their lives now regaining control of their own territory, reclaiming it from enemy hands... As soon as the citizens begin to take control of public space, the *capomafia* [mafia boss] knows that his time is past. (197)



Not surprisingly, some prominent promoters of peace and community cohesion have come from the church, using religious precepts to champion a cause so closely tied to general foundations of social justice. Perhaps most significant among these has been Luigi Ciotti, founder in 1995 of the organization *Libera*, which now serves as a parent organization for over a thousand smaller associations, groups and schools all across Italy, as a means of pooling resources and efforts against the mafia. Having set up *Gruppo Abele*<sup>14</sup> in 1966 at age 21 to help struggling social groups such as trafficked women, AIDS patients, alcoholics, ex-prisoners, and the homeless, Don Ciotti<sup>15</sup> was ordained as a priest in 1972 by Cardinal Michele Pellegrino, who, knowing the nature of his social work, made a novel move and assigned him “the streets” of Turin as his parish (Lano 78). Don Ciotti began to focus specific efforts against Italy’s mafias in 1993, with the creation of a monthly newsletter entitled *Narcomafie*. The publication was set up in four sections: *mafie e criminalità organizzata* [mafia and organized crime], *droghe e*

<sup>14</sup> Directly translated, *Gruppo Abele* means “Group Abel,” referencing the biblical son of Adam. For more information, refer to <http://www.gruppoabele.org>.

<sup>15</sup> The term “Don,” in Italian, is used as a sign of respect, and contrary to popular American belief does not necessarily make reference to “mafia dons.”

*dipendenze* [drugs and addiction], *geopolitica e narcotraffico* [geopolitics and narcotics trafficking], and *cittadinanza e diritti* [citizenship and rights].<sup>16</sup> Together, they helped combat the mafia's 'psychology of dependence,' whereby aspects of life that "should have been taken for granted as rights, such as health care, fairness in job recruitment practices and in the allocation of housing, the freedom to set up a business, are [instead] seen as favors to be obtained through other people in Mafia-controlled areas" (Jamieson 143).

*Libera* in particular has recognized the value of schools in the fight against the mafia, embracing education about crime prevention as a necessary partner to crime repression. Not specifically religious in nature, the organization has involved itself with schools all over the country, particularly in the south, running courses for teachers and providing questionnaires for students to test their awareness of issues of legality and organized crime (Jamieson 144). *Libera* also took early charge of the campaign to pass law 109/96, which effectively bolstered the Rognoni-La Torre law so as to allocate confiscated mafia assets toward the local social benefit – a direct contradiction of their original use, and therefore all the more significant a blow to the mafia. Publishing an editorial in 23 daily newspapers nationwide, Don Ciotti appealed to the public for signatures, eventually surpassing his goal of one million (Jamieson 144). Within two years of the law's passing in March 1996, sixty-two properties had been assigned to local communities for a total value of US \$16,277,280 (144). Now, over 3,000 pieces of real estate have been confiscated in the 11 years since the law passed, and in 2006 alone the Palermo financial police carried out 430 seizures of mafia goods, for an estimated value of 490 million euros, including 248 pieces of real estate, 132 cars, and 49 companies ("Palermo, 490 MLN...").

The law's tremendous importance, it should be noted, lies not merely in the good it does in surrounding communities, but for the blow it delivers to *Cosa Nostra* and the other Italian

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<sup>16</sup> For a full explanation, see <http://www.narcomafie.it/chisiamo.htm>.

mafias. Davide Patti, *Libera*'s director of *Beni Confiscati* [Confiscated Goods], explained in a personal interview,

The confiscation of mafia goods is incredibly important because it is able to strike the mafias right at their centers of strength. Keep in mind that criminal organizations have as their primary objective the accumulation of wealth, which they acquire in the ways they see most favorable...that is, with violence, with intimidation, and with omertà... Stripping them of that wealth has an obvious impact.

Indeed, arresting an individual criminal for his or her particular crime often does little, if anything, to weaken the larger organization; some even wear a prison sentence as a badge of honor within their particular group or family. When one takes away the very wealth acquired from those crimes, however, one begins to hit the larger organization where it hurts. The blow is then compounded when that wealth is re-allocated for the social benefit, with mansions turned into schools and hospitals, and farms whose products' proceeds are turned over to local communities, etc.

It was at *Libera*'s head offices in Rome that I interned during the summer of 2007. In the time leading up to and during my summer with *Libera* I was able to sit in on private organizational meetings in Turin, attend a national conference in the Emilia Romagna town of Savignano Sul Panaro, and partake in a *Libera*-led rally in the Calabrian city of Polistena, with roughly 100,000 people in attendance. Among the experiences that most impressed me was the weekend I got to spend working on one of the confiscated vineyards in the town of Mesagne, the birthplace of the Puglia region's mafia, *Sacra Corona Unita*. The cooperative that ran it was associated with *Libera Terra* [*Libera Land*], the organization's division dedicated to selling the wines, sauces and pastas made from mafia-tied vineyards and farms. The goods are produced under legal, healthy conditions, and workers receive the full benefits they were previously denied, while all profits go back to supporting local communities. It was difficult not to be



impressed by the courage and solidarity of the organizers who have dedicated themselves to operating the cooperative, despite repeated threats, and occasional theft and arson. They worked on in spite of the risks, and, while I was there, even invited local children to come work the vines for an hour, so as to teach them about the confiscation process and show them the fruits of their efforts.

Perhaps most impressive of all, however, is Don Ciotti himself: an impassioned, indefatigable figure, who brings to mind an American Martin Luther King Junior, albeit for a different cause. His shoulders slightly slouched as if under the weight of the enormous role he has taken on, his convictions have led him to give talks all over Italy and the world. He speaks not with bitter generalizations against the mafia, but with insightful, candid and coherent commentary, calling for specific, structured action, denouncing political corruption, while inspiring generations from all corners that something can, and indeed must, be done. The subject of multiple assassination attempts, Don Ciotti travels everywhere he goes with an armed escort, yet his energies seem limitless. Even convicted *mafiosi* have reported being awed by his ardor, having gone to watch him speak any time he was in their area. He sees his work as a necessary stimulus to encourage others' involvement, rather than as a point of personal pride, to the extent that, at a national conference, he mocked and criticized those who have in the past offered him prizes and awards for his labors, without offering to make their own contributions to the efforts he leads.

Always cognizant of how far Italy has left to go in its fight against the mafia, Don Ciotti nonetheless emphasizes ideals, as if they were realities not to be reached but rather uncovered, dug out from the muddle that has accumulated over them. It is remarkable, for instance, that among the interviews I conducted with local children, adults, and top *Libera* officials, only Don

Ciotti was willing to suggest that one could really discuss the relationship between Sicily and the mainland without also discussing the mafia. While others flatly rejected the notion, citing the corruption, criminality, and deaths that have so plagued the entities' societal relationship, Don Ciotti looked beyond these factors. Hardly ignorant of their troubling presence, he nonetheless opted to highlight the treasures of Sicily, and the greatness it has brought Italy since Italian unification. "We have a millionaire heritage, now, made up of history, of art, of culture, of traditions." Part of freeing Sicily from its restraints, he seems to suggest, requires focusing the conversation on the positive – on the good that should be emphasized, rather than the bad that usually is.



"Since 1992," according to some reports, "the antimafia movement has been responsible for raising the number of cultural associations in southern Italy to levels similar to those in the center and north: about 6,400 associations, or three for every 10,000 inhabitants" (Jamieson 152). Members of the mafia itself have been quick to pick up on the implications. *Pentito* Leonardo Messina testified before Italian parliament, for instance, that though mafia was not necessarily disappearing, "the people who used to revere us and used to identify with the mafia, now tolerate us because they are afraid... People in Sicily are beginning to believe in the state because now even the son of a street sweeper or a shoemaker may go to university and no longer wants to be subject to the mafia" (Stille 411).

These details do not count for everything, but they certainly count for something. Antimafia activists and ordinary citizens alike now have an actual basis on which to ground their hopes for a future free of organized crime. Indeed, "[the] fact that southern Italy has shown itself

capable of such widespread mobilization against organized crime marks an important break with tradition, and one not to be underestimated by those who have never lived in the *mezzogiorno* [southern regions of Italy]” (Jamieson 153). Circumstances are arising that, only a few decades ago, many in Sicily and even in Italy would have never thought possible. Bookstores are now laden with publications about *Cosa Nostra* that would have previously been unimaginable (153). Antimafia rallies draw annual crowds of over a hundred thousand people from all around the country. *MTV Italia* holds antimafia concerts with *Libera* to sellout crowds, featuring some of Italy’s most popular artists performing in cities like Corleone, the birthplace of some of *Cosa Nostra*’s most powerful bosses (“Thousands turn out...”). The newcomers’ portion of the 2007 San Remo Music Festival<sup>17</sup> was even won by 32-year-old Fabrizio Moro, whose song, ‘*Pensa*’ [‘Think’], denounced the mafia in no uncertain terms and called for societal response.<sup>18</sup>

As *Cosa Nostra*’s grip on social indifference has slipped slowly away, so too has it begun to be weakened in other important ways – most noticeably by the public attack on the *pizzo*. A new organization called *AddioPizzo* [Goodbye *Pizzo*] has, at the time of this writing, begun to make a real impact. Started four years ago by a group of young Palermo entrepreneurs who had hoped to open a pub but feared having to pay *Cosa Nostra* ‘protection money,’ *AddioPizzo* began with an activist movement in June 2004 that plastered Palermo with stickers reading, “A whole people that pays the *pizzo* is a population without dignity.”<sup>19</sup> Since then, the group has developed into a powerful web-based campaign to rid Sicily of extortion. Business owners around Palermo are joining forces, stepping out no longer as individuals but as a collective, adding their names to a growing list of enterprises that refuse to pay. Now, over nine thousand

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<sup>17</sup> San Remo is an Italian music festival, sometimes compared to *American Idol*, but which has been running since 1953. Previous winners include some of Italy’s most esteemed artists, such as Domenico Modugno, Laura Pausini, and Andrea Bocelli.

<sup>18</sup> See full lyrics and translation in the appendix at the end of this thesis.

<sup>19</sup> For more information, visit <http://www.addiopizzo.org/english.asp>.

Palermo residents and three thousand people from elsewhere all over the world have registered their support for the site, and though the 241 listed businesses are still relatively few in comparison to the total number of shops in Palermo, the group's success thus far is nonetheless unprecedented.

In an illustration of 'preparation meets opportunity,' *AddioPizzo* has particularly prospered in recent months, after the arrest of Salvatore Lo Piccolo – the reputed successor to Bernardo Provenzano's position as *Cosa Nostra's* boss of all bosses – whose seized assets included a log book with extensive notes on local *pizzo* payments. A powerful industrialists' association, *Confindustria*, has now made its membership contingent on joining the list ("Sicilian businesses strike back..."), and they have been contacting businessmen named in the log, threatening expulsion from the federation ("Italy conducts mobster sweep"). In addition, a shop recently opened in Palermo called *Punto Pizzofree* [*Pizzo-free Point*], where all products and staff are 100 percent guaranteed mafia-free, supplied by stores and producers that have refused to pay extortion (Kington, 9 March 2008). Beginning at the end of March 2008, the market launched a national tour, beginning in Rome's *Campo dei Fiori* and traveling across 22 Italian cities, selling foods and wines produced on land seized even from top Mafia bosses like Salvatore Riina ("Protesting the Pizzo...").

The history of the antimafia in the past few decades, it can thus be conceded, has certainly included its problems. Tribulations have been consistently encountered, from continued political corruption, to occasional attacks on vocal activists, including members of *AddioPizzo*. What has changed, however, is the way the public has reacted. No longer does Sicilian indifference allow such obstacles to be met silently. Challenges are seen as a sign that progress is being made, and news articles emerge daily from around the world about the setbacks

being faced by *Cosa Nostra*, within Italy and abroad. The difficulties being faced, antimafia activists are realizing, are side effects to be expected from a movement that is truly making progress. The present situation in Sicily, to be discussed in the next chapter, is a strong reflection of that.

## Chapter 5: Successes, Role Reversals, and Uncertainties

Sicily's road toward a mafia-free society has never been a smooth one. Even when social and judicial efforts are advancing, obstacles lurk, and no progress can be taken for granted. This said, it is nonetheless significant to recognize that, especially in recent months, things are going about as well as perhaps they've ever gone for the island in its fight against *Cosa Nostra*. While it is important not to get ahead of one's self, Sicily is showing several promising signs of real societal change.

*Omertà* is gradually breaking down. Beyond the remarkable movement of Sicilians standing up collectively against the *pizzo*, *pentiti* have played an immensely significant role in recent arrests of top mafia figures. In January 2008, for instance, a Palermo judge dealt sentences totaling over 400 years to 38 *mafiosi* linked to ex-Corleone boss Bernardo Provenzano ("400 years for Mafia dons..."). Local business people, too, are beginning to speak up. The arrests of a group of 21 *Cosa Nostra* bagmen in mid-March 2008 "were believed to be the first time police have apprehended such a large group of alleged crime syndicate operatives based on the word of the people on which they had been preying" ("Italy conducts mobster sweep").

In February 2008, a transatlantic crime raid was carried out in Sicily and the US, the likes of which hadn't been seen since successes of the 1980s. Thirty suspected *mafiosi* were arrested in Palermo, while eighty seven were rounded up in the New York area. The operation, named 'Old-Bridge,' was no coincidental mass-capture, but rather a long-planned project designed to stem the re-establishing of cross-continental mafia ties, generally understood to have frayed in recent decades. What is more, of all the hundreds of arrests that have taken place in recent months, persons apprehended have included not only low-level criminals but top *Cosa Nostra* figures, as well. "According to national anti-mafia prosecuting chief Piero Grasso, 'the heads of

the 13 Sicilian Mafia families' are now all behind bars," notes a January 2008 article in the *Independent Online* ("400 years for Mafia dons..."). As of November 2007, moreover, *Cosa Nostra's* 'Cupola' had been dismantled. Coded notes found upon the arrest of Bernardo Provenzano revealed that only Salvatore Lo Piccolo, Antonino Rotolo, and himself were left on the famous ruling commission of mob bosses. All of those are now behind bars ("Italian anti-Mafia official..."). Indeed, according to Italian intelligence officials, *Cosa Nostra* is "in a serious crisis as it struggles to find new leaders," as it suffers a "lack of suitable successors because its surviving cadres are second-raters" ("Italy's intel says...").

The above developments are significant, yet we must remain cautious in our optimism. In the same way that the mafia's specific detrimental influences were so poorly understood before the work of Falcone and Borsellino, today the positive antimafia activities and societal developments that we as observers appreciate through a specifically considered context can still, in everyday Italian life, feel like isolated individual incidents. For many people in Sicily and on the mainland, then, successes that on paper look like progress can in real life feel entirely insignificant, or even detrimental. Despite initially constituting the single most important breakthrough in the prosecution of the mafia, for instance, the vast increase of *pentiti* willing to testify has developed into a huge management burden (Schneider and Schneider, Reversible Destiny 291). As illustrated by Jane and Peter Schneider,

Given that each one is capable of reconstructing fifteen to twenty years of mafia history, investigators feel overwhelmed – "like going fishing with a bomb instead of a line and sinker," one prosecutor told us. "How could we ever prosecute all the fish that come floating up?" The very logistics of finding courtrooms, assembling the accused from different prisons, trying some Mafiosi for multiple crimes (299 times for Riina!), are daunting challenges, calling for new procedures. (291).

'Old Bridge,' too, was, despite its remarkable success, an indication that *Cosa Nostra* is indeed rebuilding its networks in the United States, developing and repairing alliances damaged

in the 1980s (Fraser, 2008). However much the roundup and other arrests may have hurt the mafia, then, subtle implications indicate that it is too early to celebrate. The successes Italy achieved in the aftermath of the 1992 attacks, after all, subjected *Cosa Nostra* to harsh measures and social isolation, which provoked several reactive structural changes (Jamieson 226-227). “The organization has become less hierarchical and more impermeable,” writes Jamieson, “with smaller, tightly structured cells whose membership is unknown to all but a few...” (226-227). Responding to the most recent successes, Italy’s interior minister Giuliano Amato encouraged patience and continued composure. “The Sicilian Mafia operates like a business,” he noted, “and while its leaders can be removed, it can regenerate itself like no legitimate organization in Italy” (“Minister: Mafia operates...”).

Context thus considered, these are nonetheless promising times for Sicily, and credit must be given to the growing societal consensus that has finally gained enough weight as to make a real difference, in spite of continued obstacles. Blunders and setbacks, still common enough, are at last being met with vocal opposition and calls for reform from top public officials. Recently, for example, the son of famed *Cosa Nostra* boss Totò Riina was released from prison two years early on a technicality. Having been incarcerated on charges of extortion, money laundering, and mafia association, authorities were forced to let him go after only six years because his trial took too long (“Italy blames slow justice...”). Upon his return to his hometown of Corleone – forever linked to the mafia by *The Godfather* films that featured a family of the same name – Giuseppe Salvatore Riina expected a hero’s welcome (Kington, 3 March 2008). Instead, he arrived to condemnation and calls to leave town, even from the city council, which insisted that times had changed since the ex-boss’s reign. “We don’t want him here,” mayor Antonio



Iannazzo was quoted as saying in a March article in *The Observer*. “Corleone does not forgive him and wants to push on with the process of change” (Kington, 3 March 2008).



If Sicily has had success in its battle against the mafia, other regions in Italy have not been so fortunate. As if to fill the void left in *Cosa Nostra*'s absence, the *Camorra* mafia of the Campania region has made international headlines in recent months with the horrendous trash pileups it has been linked to in Naples, while Puglia's *Sacra Corona Unita* has been tied to tainted wine being distributed all over the country (“Mafia blamed for...”). Italian officials have determined that Calabria's *Ndrangheta* is on the rise as well, concurrently developing into Italy's most dangerous organized crime body and a significant international threat.

That the mafia deals in ‘waste management’ is often considered a metaphor for more loathsome activities, yet it also has its basis in fact. Trash collection is a relatively easy industry to control, and its actual operations require very little training or know-how at all, making it a very profitable and convenient avenue for the mafia to involve itself in legitimate or semi-legitimate business. The *Camorra* in and around Naples has illustrated this all too well, having made billions of dollars over recent decades through illicit waste management practices. When the city took the local dumps from their control in 1994, they simply adapted, refocusing their interests to waste transportation. Now, they import industrial waste from all over Italy, then dispose of it in the surrounding Campania countryside, poisoning the southern soil so that sending regions like Tuscany can remain pristine (Pomeroy, 9 January 2008). For a stretch of time in early 2008, the pileups moved into Naples itself, as dumps filled and vile mountains of

garbage mounded up around the city. Several of the piles were set on fire, sending toxic fumes into the sky and emitting an awful stench, while occasionally violent protests ignited in reaction.

As of April, 2008, the Neapolitan streets have mostly been cleared. Residual difficulties, however, are still proving a major detriment nationwide. Tourist rates in Naples have plummeted, damaging the economy and causing the famous *Caruso* restaurant to shut its doors indefinitely (“Italy: Rubbish crisis...”). Shipments of buffalo mozzarella, one of the region’s most prized exports which averages half a billion dollars annually, have recently been discovered tainted with dioxins from the garbage, leading countries like Japan, South Korea, and for a short time, France, to halt their imports of the Italian cheese (“Italy to withdraw tainted cheese”). Some even attribute the fall of Romano Prodi’s government in early 2008, at least in part, to his failure to address the issue appropriately. “Prodi had allowed the governor of Campania to stay afloat despite his failure to manage the trash emergency,” writes Roberto Saviano, author of Gomorra, an exposé of the *Camorra* that has landed him under 24-hour police protection. “The Prime Minister didn’t see the situation in Naples for what it really was: a chilling lesson that government ends up cornered and powerless if it yields even tacitly to criminal interests” (Saviano, 2008).

In Calabria, the situation is no better. A recent 230-page report by the Italian parliamentary anti-mafia commission details how the region’s *Ndrangheta* clans have begun to extend their influence across much of the rest of Italy, and, following emigration by financially troubled Calabrians to other parts of the world, even as far as Australia. Comparing it to a more internationally known organization, the report argues that the criminal organization spreads “in the same way as al-Qaeda, with an analogous, tentacular structure, without a strategic leadership, but characterized by a kind of organic intelligence [and] the vitality of cancer” (Hooper, 2008).

The ‘*Ndrangheta* is not a new organization, nor are its illicit dealings particularly more gruesome now than they have been in past decades. They are expanding, however, drawing much greater national and international attention. Early investments they made in cocaine markets have finally begun to flourish as the drug has increased in popularity in recent years, surpassing the heroine *Cosa Nostra* so profited from earlier on. They’ve invested millions of Euros abroad, too, in property, gastronomy, and on the stock markets in countries like Belgium, Holland, Spain and France (Witten, 2008). In August 2007, six young Calabrians were shot in front of a pizzeria in Duisburg, Germany, in a startling illustration of the ‘*Ndrangheta*’s global reach. The organization’s activities are not unprecedented, but they are reaching the public eye in ways unusual for an area used to keeping quiet about its problems with organized crime. “In Sicily, strong social movements have raised a collective voice against *Cosa Nostra*, as seen in the recent drive by business leaders to stop paying extortion money,” Guy Dinmore explains in a February 2008 *Financial Times* article. “But in Calabria there has been little public protest against a criminal organization that keeps a lower profile and has so effectively corrupted local politicians” (Dinmore, 2008).

The above is not to suggest that Calabria and Campania are devoid of any social activity or protest against their respective mafias. Significant arrests have been made, and community movements have occasionally made their presence felt, as well. In Naples, for instance, a group of university students created a tourist map that showed the location of all the murders that had taken place in recent years, as a means of denouncing the *Camorra*’s grip on their city, showing “that Naples is not only a city of beautiful monuments but also a crime capital” (“Naples students produce...”). *Libera*, too, recently created a branch called *Libera Internazionale*, seeking to

coordinate efforts at the international level against crime groups like Campania's *'Ndrangheta*, whose influence has extended beyond Italy's borders.

Notwithstanding these activities, the broader organized crime challenges facing Italy remain, and are seemingly indicative of a broader shift in the societal interplay between Sicily and the mainland. Recalling a history of consistent criticisms of the former by the latter, always willfully ignorant of their own role in the island's woes, Italy is finally being forced to stand up to its own challenges, while Sicily slowly moves forward on its own, no longer a viable scapegoat for the nation's crime problems. Clearly, the picture is not as black and white or simple as one region thriving while the other fails, yet the glimmers of situational reversal are nonetheless striking. Sicilians are finally standing up as a collective against *Cosa Nostra* and the previously pervasive mafia mentalities it spawned, while, as globalization drags Italy into the new millennium, Italians are increasingly reminded of the national troubles they face, reacting tensely when called to action. Roberto Saviano, the author of the *Camorra* exposé, for instance, reflects that despite having been praised for his bravery and good faith, "[no] one will forgive me for what I did. I gave attention to a world that creates problems for the honest part of my country. And also some of the honest ones in my country hate me because I spoke of crime" (Fisher, 2007).



Moving forward, it is increasingly apparent that antimafia efforts must progress as a collective, national endeavor. Sicily has certainly made significant headway, yet it should not be assumed that its advancements will continue at their present pace without sustained national assistance, lest *Cosa Nostra* find a way to regroup. Nearly three decades ago, Leonardo Sciascia

argued that “the problems of Sicily are those of Italy, and I don’t believe that it is possible to resolve them if we don’t resolve the collection of Italian problems” (Sciascia, La Sicilia come metafora 52). Today, his words seem to contain a deeper significance.

The challenges that lay ahead are of a relatively common breed nationwide. There are certainly particulars to consider, such as the insufficient and problematic witness protection services that have triggered a gradual decline in the number of people willing to give evidence implicating the mafia (Falconi, 2008). The re-activation of confiscated territories must be accelerated, as well, re-employing now jobless laborers who had previously been forced to accept criminal wages. With regard to the broader focus, however, it is politics that ultimately becomes paramount. Indeed, every major antimafia organizer I interviewed described the movement’s biggest obstacle as the lack of political will to take on the mafia problem. A 2007 report by the Italian business association *Confesercenti* estimated that, together, the Italian mafias generated more than \$125 billion of annual revenue – roughly 7% of the national GDP, and more than double the annual income of Italy’s entire agricultural sector (Saviano, 2008). These are problems that must be addressed with a national, government-led response, then, yet they must also be sustained by popular support. As with the fruitful aftermath of the tragic Falcone and Borsellino murders, the government must once again capitalize on recent societal successes, allowing Sicily to lead the way as an example of the power that social movements can have on a wider level.

With this in mind, it is certainly an interesting result that, as of April 14, 2008, Silvio Berlusconi has once again taken over as Italian Prime Minister, replacing the fallen government of Romano Prodi’s *L’unione* party. During his campaign trips through southern Italy, Berlusconi made important pledges to fight mafia control. He vowed to resolve Naples’ trash crisis, and

took credit for the capture of Bernardo Provenzano during his second term in office (“Mafia in Spotlight...”). Berlusconi’s antimafia assurances are significant indeed, yet they are occasionally called into question by external factors. His party’s candidates for the Senate, for instance, include Totò Cuffaro, the ex-president of Sicily, who was recently ousted from power after a five-year sentence for aiding and abetting known *mafiosi* (“Bridges and other promises”), as well as *Forza Italia* co-founder Marcello Dell’Utri, sentenced in December 2004 to nine years’ imprisonment for complicity with the mafia (Popham, 2004). Berlusconi’s former Minister of Infrastructure, Pietro Lunardi, moreover, famously proclaimed that the mafia couldn’t be beaten, and so Italians should learn to live with it. “For the people who have worked against the mafia, for the people who have given their lives, and for their families” notes a *Libera* co-worker, “to hear something like that is an insult. An obscenity.”

In the week leading up to the national election, Marcello Dell’Utri told a political website that, should their party win, he and Berlusconi planned to revise school textbooks in Italy. At present, the books are too leftist, Dell’Utri argued, and they too freely valorize mafia *pentiti*; instead, they need to extol “forgotten heroes of the right,” such as Vittorio Mangano, a former Berlusconi employee, who died in prison in 2000 after having been convicted of a mafia murder (Owen, 2008). In what was perhaps a maneuver of political opportunity, Berlusconi’s main opponent, Italian Democratic Party leader Walter Veltroni, broke Italian political tradition and seized on such concerns, vigorously speaking out in late March 2008 against the mafia, and, in particular, calling out Berlusconi for his reputed mafia ties. Whereas the 2006 general elections witnessed both Prodi and Berlusconi dismiss questions about the mafia as irrelevant, Veltroni blamed the former Prime Minister’s *Forza Italia* party for Sicily’s troubles, and even went as far as to compare Berlusconi to Achille Lauro, a famously corrupt mayor of Naples in the 1950s

(Moore, 2008). Though hardly a simple matter of mafia vs. antimafia, then, the 2008 election was nonetheless revealing of how such criticisms were received.

Roberto Saviano, for one, is convinced that “[it] doesn’t matter who will govern the country after April; the Mob has already identified which candidates it can deal with on either side of the political divide” (Saviano, 2008). Sounding off on the irony of Italy’s prominent world status, he argues that

...a political system so prone to manipulation and myopia is incompatible with an advanced democracy. Is it an advanced democracy if scores of local city councils have been dissolved in recent years because they had been infiltrated by the Mafia? Or where 3,100 people have been killed by the Mob since 1992? That is more victims of violence than in Beirut during the same period.

At the time of this writing, headlines in newspapers around the world make mention almost every morning of some new occurrence or development in Italy’s fight against organized crime. It seems clear, then, that this is hardly the time for definitive conclusions about the country’s future with the mafia. Important questions can be raised, however. What impact will Berlusconi’s victory as Prime Minister have for Italy’s focus on fighting organized crime? What lessons can Italy’s other mafia-infected regions learn from Sicily’s latest successes? And perhaps most significantly, what impact have these recent developments had on the cultural connection between Sicily and mainland Italy? In my own reflection on the above circumstances, it seems increasingly evident that the dialectical relationship of the mafia and antimafia with the island and the mainland has become of fundamental importance.

## Conclusion

Over the past twenty years, various commentators have noted that Italy stands at a crossroads in its fight against the mafia. To make a similar conclusion here would not be inaccurate, but nor would it be sufficient. Recent successes in Sicily, it is true, are encouraging signs of the impact that social consensus can have, especially in conjunction with similar judicial progress. These advancements are indeed a positive example for other mafia-laden regions to follow, particularly now that organized crime groups like the *Camorra* and *'Ndrangheta* have only reaffirmed their potency in recent months. If we widen our focus, though, an examination of struggles against Italy's mafias becomes indicative of a broader cultural shift. *Cosa Nostra* may still contribute to Sicily's less-developed feel from much of the mainland, to be sure, just as the island may still suffer from deeply rooted criminal difficulties. These are long-term concerns that the antimafia movement will continue to address, in tow with its other laudable activities, such as education for legality and the use of confiscated mafia wealth toward the social good. The phenomena that spawned such conditions, however, have been outed. Whatever mafia mystique or aura of impenetrability that left Sicilians so detrimentally different in the Italian subconscious has finally been unmasked.

There are still many who view Italy's antimafia efforts with tremendous skepticism. In a March 2008 article in *Time Magazine*, Roberto Saviano argued that public antimafia discussion "never goes beyond expressions of solidarity with the victims, praise for the valiant police, and generic appeals to morality...[all] of which leads nowhere" (Saviano, "Maimed by the Mob"). Indeed, the 'only words' argument does have a basis in broad public sentiment, and it must not be entirely discounted. Words, however, do lead somewhere. They console, they encourage, and they inspire. Words provoke thought and reflection, and they challenge resignation, striking



away at the core of the mafia's endurance. Their existence on today's broad antimafia scale, and the fact that they are being so widely embraced, is unprecedented. Don Luigi Ciotti's calls for political action may not uproot crime in their own right, then, but they serve as a reflection of widespread discontent, sparking a collective reaction from a populace long left in silence. In Sicily, this response is particularly striking.

In a broader context, we must remember that Sicily is an island that, too often, has been treated as just that – an island – left isolated and considered different. A shop owner in Messina once expressed his frustration to me, exclaiming, “They look at us as an island. We're not an island! Vulcano, Lipari, Salina – those are islands.<sup>20</sup> Sicily is more substantial than that, and they need to start treating us like it.” Indeed, the feeling that the region has been treated as secondary, or worse, as a problem, has persisted across decades. Mafia presence has only furthered that conception, having stained some of the island's most splendid characteristics, while remaining secretive enough to elude legitimate understanding.

The developments surrounding the careers of Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino revolutionized these circumstances. Under the light of their efforts, *Cosa Nostra* became suddenly vulnerable. Specific criminal structures were identified, and the judicial and social responses triggered in reaction have been, all things considered, a remarkable occurrence. Beyond exposing such criminal weaknesses, however, magistrates also unveiled the complexities of Sicily's mafia affliction. The intermeshing of criminals with participant victims was clarified, and the means by which mafia influence remained so profound – misinformation, extortion, corruption and *omertà* – were outlined in detail. With necessary particulars identified, islanders needed no longer defend themselves from perceived general attacks against Sicilian culture, for

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<sup>20</sup> Vulcano, Lipari, and Salina are three of the seven Aeolian Islands, a cluster of small islands off the northern coast of Messina, on the east coast of Sicily. The other four are Panarea, Stromboli, Filicudi and Alicudi. Together, the seven cover an area only slightly larger than Palermo.

fear of turning their backs on, or appearing to reject, their own roots (J. Schneider, Italy's "Southern Question" 245). Instead, they too could now target their frustrations at a common organizational enemy.

Such reactive processes do not happen overnight. Even today, antimafia activity suffers challenges of cultural sensitivity, and flows of antimafia sentiment over the years have certainly waxed and waned. As the balance of mafia control has gradually shifted, though, the larger process has illuminated Sicilian qualities in new ways. While it should not be suggested that Sicily is being forced to assimilate to Italian culture, the island has found an enhanced capacity to celebrate its distinctions, while finding new unity with Italy through common goals and values. Despite Sicily's vast cultural history, accordingly, former Palermo mayor Leoluca Orlando himself commented that, "ironically, to meet our true identity, we needed finally to take up arms against the one part of us that seemed most intrinsic, but was actually most foreign of all: the Mafia and its culture of death" (2).

If Sicily is at a crossroads, then, it is of a broader, more societal nature than usually suggested. So it is that the largest changes being observed are occurring over years and decades, rather than weeks and months. Indeed, the antimafia sentiment that engendered such shifts still faces important national obstacles. It is true, for instance, what Jamieson tells us:

Outstanding results have been achieved in the...years since 1992 but the political battle against organized crime is in limbo. Sadly, without the spectacle of 'illustrious corpses' there is little political capital in maintaining a rigorous antimafia front. Industrialists, bankers, politicians and all those anxious to promote Italy's investment potential do not want to be reminded that the Mafia still exists, that it is far from defeated and that some areas of the country remain under the effective control of organized crime. But only continuity will prevent it from regaining the ground wrested from it by the Antimafia (234).

The political front is a complicated last frontier in the antimafia movement's struggle against organized crime. Notes Davide Patti at *Libera*, "Associations and cooperatives have been born all over Italy, schools are going forward with projects for education on legality, and we've provided a perception that Sicily, like other regions, can really change if we change a certain way of politics. The youth are there, the associations are there, and the schools are there. Now we need the political will." Fighting corruption is a task in and of itself, to be sure. For nonpolitical organizations to persuade politicians they must take charge on an antimafia front – addressing extremely unpopular issues - has not surprisingly proven all the more difficult. These are the changes that must be made, however, for the cultural interaction between Sicily and the mainland to advance beyond its present state.

It remains to be seen what, if anything, will change after Berlusconi's recent election as Prime Minister. He must take significant steps, we can be sure, if he truly intends to follow through on his antimafia claims – measures that will require more than mere arrests. "The problem isn't *mafiosi* in Italy," *Libera* president Luigi Ciotti explains. "It shouldn't be possible that millions of Italians are hostages of a few thousand criminals, yet the real issue isn't the fish. It's the basin of water in which the fish swims." The Italian government itself, then, must make its own adjustments. As Palermo prefect Carlo Alberto dalla Chiesa noted before his murder, that which the mafia offers as a favor, the Italian state needs to be able to guarantee as a right (Patti, Personal Interview).

Italy's antimafia certainly has generational nuances. Youth, for instance, are often more receptive to the movement's intrinsic optimism. Projects of education for legality are thus incredibly important, for, when shown the mafia's detrimental influences in a condensed context rather than being left only to experience them first hand, students can better appreciate the

argument that this isn't how it has to be. The word 'corrupt' is not only an adjective, but a verb, and they too must be careful to eschew mafia influence. The projects' significance, however, transcends the gradual generational shift. As a Sicilian friend of mine explained, "I believe that the majority of Sicilians, if they were helped by the state and by public institutions, would want to end this mafia mentality, even if they have it within themselves. If they saw signs that things can really change... I think ninety per cent or more of those people in the long run would sign on to this pact for social renovation." The schools' foundation of legality, it is the antimafia's hope, will serve as exactly such a sign.

In reflection on the above, *Cosa Nostra* and the antimafia can thus be said to have had a fundamental influence on the changing relationship between Sicily and mainland Italy. Through subtle assertions of the mafia's strengths, and through public discoveries of its weaknesses, *Cosa Nostra* has colored the light in which Sicilian culture is considered elsewhere in Italy, and the antimafia movement that has been bred in response is emblematic of the common national values being made increasingly apparent. Efforts like those led by Peppino Impastato are becoming embraced nationwide, with collective expressions of cultural identity being hailed as a sign of public solidarity. Young Rita Atria, too, has in death emerged as a symbol for the social responsibility of all Italians – everybody with their own role. The coming months and years, then, will determine what transpires in the national fight against *Cosa Nostra* and the other Italian mafias. The context in which these developments occur, however, is sure to be of a significant new nature.

## APPENDIX

**'Pensa' di Fabrizio Moro<sup>21</sup>**

Ci sono stati uomini  
che hanno scritto pagine  
Appunti di una vita dal valore inestimabile  
Insostituibili perché hanno denunciato  
il più corrotto dei sistemi troppo spesso ignorato  
Uomini o angeli mandati sulla terra  
per combattere una guerra  
di faide e di famiglie  
sparse come tante biglie  
su un isola di sangue  
che fra tante meraviglie  
fra limoni e fra conchiglie...  
massacra figli e figlie  
di una generazione costretta a non guardare  
a parlare a bassa voce  
a spegnere la luce  
a commentare in pace  
ogni pallottola nell'aria  
ogni cadavere in un fosso

Ci sono stati uomini che passo dopo passo  
hanno lasciato un segno  
con coraggio e con impegno  
con dedizione contro un'istituzione organizzata  
cosa nostra... cosa vostra...  
cos'è vostro?  
è nostra... la libertà di dire  
che gli occhi sono fatti per guardare  
La bocca per parlare le orecchie ascoltano...  
Non solo musica non solo musica  
La testa si gira e aggiusta la mira  
Ragiona  
A volte condanna a volte perdona

Semplicemente  
Pensa prima di sparare  
Pensa prima di dire e di giudicare  
Prova a pensare

(continuato sotto...)

**'Think' by Fabrizio Moro<sup>22</sup>**

There have been men  
of which pages have been written  
Notes on a life of immeasurable bravery  
Irreplaceable because they denounced  
The most corrupt systems too often ignored  
Men or angels sent to the earth  
to fight a war  
Of feuds and of families  
scattered, like so many balls  
On an island of blood,  
that among so many wonders  
Between lemons and seashells...  
massacre sons and daughters  
Of a generation forced not to look  
To speak in a whisper,  
To put out the light,  
To comment in silence...  
Every bullet in the air...  
Every body in a ditch

There have been men that little by little   
Have left a mark with courage  
and with commitment   
With devotion against an organized institution   
*Cosa Nostra* [Our thing]...your thing...  
what is yours?   
It's ours...the freedom to speak   
That our eyes were made to watch   
The mouth to speak, the ears listen   
Not only to music, not only to music   
The head turns and adjusts the aim.  
Use reason.   
At times condemn; at times forgive...

Simply  
Think before firing  
Think before speaking and judging.  
Try to think.

(continued below...)

<sup>21</sup> Italian lyrics adapted from *Angolo Testi*, online:  
[http://angolotesti.leonardo.it/F/testi\\_canzoni\\_fabrizio\\_moro\\_10052/testo\\_canzone\\_pensa\\_453085.html](http://angolotesti.leonardo.it/F/testi_canzoni_fabrizio_moro_10052/testo_canzone_pensa_453085.html), (March 26, 2008).

<sup>22</sup> English translation adapted from *ItalyLogue: Italy Travel Guide*, online:  
<http://www.italylogue.com/italian-news/pensa-by-fabrizio-moro-song-lyrics-translated-to-english.html>, (March 26, 2008).

Pensa che puoi decidere tu  
 Resta un attimo soltanto un attimo di più  
 Con la testa fra le mani

Ci sono stati uomini che sono morti giovani  
 Ma consapevoli che le loro idee  
 Sarebbero rimaste nei secoli come parole iperbole  
 Intatte e reali come piccoli miracoli  
 Idee di uguaglianza idee di educazione  
 Contro ogni uomo che eserciti oppressione

Contro ogni suo simile  
 Contro chi è più debole  
 Contro chi sotterra la coscienza nel cemento

Pensa prima di sparare  
 Pensa prima di dire e di giudicare,  
 Prova a pensare  
 Pensa che puoi decidere tu  
 Resta un attimo soltanto un attimo di più  
 Con la testa fra le mani

Ci sono stati uomini che hanno continuato  
 Nonostante intorno fosse, tutto bruciato  
 Perché in fondo questa vita non ha significato  
 Se hai paura di una bomba o di un fucile puntato  
 Gli uomini passano e passa una canzone  
 Ma nessuno potrà fermare mai la convinzione  
 Che la giustizia no... non è solo un'illusione

Pensa prima di sparare  
 Pensa prima di dire e di giudicare,  
 Prova a pensare  
 Pensa che puoi decidere tu  
 Resta un attimo soltanto un attimo di più  
 Con la testa fra le mani

Think that you can decide   
 Wait a moment... Only a moment more   
 With your head between your hands

There have been men that died young   
 But they were aware that their ideas   
 Would last for centuries as important rhetoric   
 Unbroken and real, like little miracles   
 Ideas of equality, ideas of education   
 Against every man that exercises oppression

Against anyone similar,  
 Against anyone weaker  
 Against he who buries his conscience in the cement

Think before firing  
 Think before speaking and judging.  
 Try to think.  
 Think that you can decide   
 Wait a moment... Only a moment more   
 With your head between your hands

There have been men that have persevered   
 Even though everything around was burning   
 Because in the end this life has no meaning   
 If you fear a bomb or a pointed gun   
 Men will come pass, and a song will come to pass  
 But no one will ever be able to stop the conviction   
 That justice is not only an illusion

Think before firing  
 Think before speaking and judging.  
 Try to think.  
 Think that you can decide   
 Wait a moment... Only a moment more   
 With your head between your hands

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