

A PARALLEL CONTAGION

Is mafia entrepreneurship
exploiting the pandemic?



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ORGANIZED CRIME

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, which at the time of writing had claimed the lives of almost 120 000 people worldwide, there is increasing concern about mafia activity both during the outbreak and in its aftermath. This risk, which is felt across Europe, is perhaps greatest in Italy, the country that has suffered one of the highest numbers of COVID-19-related deaths, where the pandemic is having a significant impact not only on public health but also on the country's social fabric and economy. With thousands of establishments put out of business in the past month – including bars, restaurants and shops – business owners and workers alike have been deeply affected by the lockdown. To compound the suffering, the estimated 3.3 million workers engaged in the country's vast informal economy – which has an estimated value of up to €211 billion – are effectively excluded from government financial support. Italy's mafia groups have, in response, sought to consolidate their social support by distributing food for free in the community.

Concerned with this development, the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC) has had the privilege of bringing together four leading figures in Italy's fight against the mafia for a virtual roundtable to discuss how the mafia is repositioning itself during the pandemic, what the implications are and how the Italian government is responding.¹

WE FEATURE INTERVIEWS WITH:

- **Franco Gabrielli**, Italian Chief of Police and Director General of Public Security
- **Nicola Gratteri**, Public Prosecutor of Catanzaro, Calabria
- **Federico Cafiero de Raho**, Italian National Anti-Mafia and Counterterrorism Public Prosecutor
- **Nicola Morra**, Chairman of the Parliamentary Anti-Mafia Commission

The interviews were led by Sergio Nazzaro, a journalist, writer and adviser to the Parliamentary Anti-Mafia Commission. Since November 2018, Nazzaro has served as the spokesperson for both the president of the Parliamentary Anti-Mafia Commission and Italy's Deputy Minister of the Interior. In January 2020, he was appointed voluntary spokesperson for Italy's Deputy Minister of Health for the duration of the COVID-19 crisis. Nazzaro is a member of the GI-TOC Network of Experts.

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Public Prosecutor of
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Nazzaro: Colleagues, please explain why it is we should be concerned to see the mafia out on the streets, actively helping communities survive this period of great stress. Could it not be considered a good thing?

Nicola Gratteri: There is a huge section of the population, from Valle d'Aosta to Sicily, that lives and has always lived as informal workers. Especially in the central and southern regions of the country, these people earned 30 euros a day working in marketplaces, in pizzerias, in fields. But these 30 euros are no longer there. And so the mafia becomes almost like a benefactor – they behave like the Red Cross – for which a certain portion of society is grateful. And they will remember it at the ballot box.

Nicola Morra: The mafia like to portray themselves as having reassuring qualities at times where state authority is perceived to be weaker. The pandemic is not being treated with the necessary urgency by some countries, both in terms of the health impact and the socio-economic impact. As a result, the mafia don't present themselves with their usual violent and bloodthirsty demeanour, but rather as reassuring and helpful figures to which people can turn to recover their lost economic and social lives.

Prosecutor Gratteri pointed out that in those particularly deprived areas, offering even 30 euros a day could be a lifeline for those suffering from the tragedy. The mafia understand this, and they are able to respond much more quickly and efficiently than some states. The mafia does not save everyone indiscriminately, but rather only those that can be useful to them – they will provide welfare to the people, distributing basic necessities, demonstrating their ability to react more quickly than the state, and thus gaining social consensus and authority.

Federico Cafiero de Raho: Indeed, it is more than in the midst of the current pandemic, with all economic activity except essential services all but shut down, business owners find themselves in great difficulty. It is my hope that the necessary support will be provided by the state and by the banks to these businesses, because if they begin to fail it will be the mafia that they turn to. The only tap that is always open and willing to supply water is the one belonging to the mafia.

Nazzaro: But is it new for us to see the mafia behaving in such a strategic way during a crisis? What are the implications of their behaviour?

Federico Cafiero de Raho: There is nothing new here – in fact this is a well-established strategy by the mafia that they have followed in multiple places.

Following the fall of the Berlin Wall, recordings document the mafia's interest in investing in that area of Germany. One recording documents a conversation between two mafia associates on the subject of investing in Berlin. 'Go to Germany immediately and invest – invest in that part of Berlin.' The second associate, confused, replies, 'What do you mean? Invest in what?', to which the first replied, 'In everything. Invest in everything, everywhere. Put your money everywhere, because it will only multiply. It is there that we must invest.'

There are many other examples of mafia investment in poor places, or those emerging from conflicts or political transitions: in Romania, for example, and many other areas in eastern Europe.

Franco Gabrielli: As the pandemic continues, the risk of citizens becoming involved with mafia groups will only continue to increase. In some regions in the north, for example in Lombardy, Piedmont and Emilia-Romagna, where the virus has been concentrated but which we don't think of as being as vulnerable to mafia influence, some individuals have been found with briefcases full of money. Local businesses are already seeing an opportunity to breathe a lifeline into their business and perhaps ensure an economic recovery in the sectors that might not otherwise have been able to survive through legal credit channels alone.

Given these past experiences, we must remain on high alert. All those who are considering mafia help as an opportunity need to understand that what may appear on the face of it to be a shortcut, is in reality a path that will always end badly. It's not the solution to their problems, it's the beginning of the road leading to

extortion. From this point of view, therefore, particular attention must be paid to small and medium enterprises, that if not supported adequately, will be easy prey for criminal organizations.

Nicola Gratteri: This predation on vulnerability and crisis presents a serious risk. We know that the 'Ndrangheta, for example, is very much present in a number of sectors, including construction and catering, among others, and that in such countries like Germany and Italy, where legitimate business operations have been halted by the pandemic, it is clear that certain business owners may very well turn to moneylenders in the mafia to help them survive.

And when that time comes, the game is up. Because the usurers from the 'Ndrangheta initially come in with offers of low interest rates, because their end goal is to take over the business, via usury, and use it to launder their illicit proceeds. Whereas a normal lender is able to guarantee the safety of their loan via collateral, the 'Ndrangheta lenders don't need to take collateral. The 'Ndrangheta know that their collateral is the borrower's life. And therefore, not requiring collateral actually allows the 'Ndranghetista to be seen as more convenient than traditional credit channels. It is only after that they realize that it represented the beginning of the end for them as business owners.

As such, we have an 'Ndrangheta that is constantly gaining territory. Not only because they are taking

concrete economic action, by taking over businesses and then laundering money, but because they are able to reinforce their desired image and their credibility. In other words, these criminal organizations are present and active. Meanwhile, the state's institutions are still sat around discussing. But while the state discusses, these groups have already begun with their extortion-ate moneylending.

Nicola Morra: Exactly. The mafia always targets goods and services that create a consumer dependency on the providers.

As numerous magistrates have pointed out, drug prices, and in particular cocaine, haven't plummeted in the slightest. This just shows that there is no economic principle of demand and supply that would precipitate a variation in price. Prices are in fact inelastic, because they are imposed by forces that have monopolized the sale of these substances.

Given the enormous financial resources they have at their disposal, mafias can infiltrate the formal economy more than ever, acknowledging nevertheless the need to adapt, because there are a number of sectors – tourism, entertainment, catering – that will need a boost in the coming months and years to recover from the pandemic. For example, in Italy, but also in Spain, mafia groups have long sought to run tourist villages, nightclubs and meeting places where the attraction was the huge opportunity to socialize and interact with one another,

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Nicola Gratteri

now during this pandemic, when people need to avoid socializing as much as possible, these industries will be so much more vulnerable to infiltration.

Federico Cafiero de Raho: All of this is part of a 'grand design' – to infiltrate these various sectors and attain more and more important positions therein. The wealth that these mafias have at their disposal is enormous. The 'Ndrangheta alone are able to generate 30 billion euros from the cocaine trade a year. But of this vast income, only a portion is reinvested in the trafficking of narcotics. The rest of it is invested in the formal economy, in the sectors offering the greatest prospective returns.

The 'Ndrangheta, the Sicilian mafia and the Camorra exploit the legal economy not only to generate a profit, but almost primarily to hide the proceeds of their illegal activities. And so, merely the ability to gain a foothold in the formal economy is a positive result for the mafia, because it is precisely the camouflaging and the recycling of illicit proceeds in the formal economy that is a win for the organized criminals.

Mafia groups invest in places they consider will present the greatest opportunities, and very often this is not in Italy, but abroad. The mafia has always, in times of emergency, proven unrivalled in their ability to invest their wealth in opportune places. In Italy, this is primarily in the construction sector, where they control every single aspect, even the cement, and most notably in earthquake epicentres, where the Camorra sought to

divert public funding flows. In doing so, they were able to infiltrate all major public contracts with their own companies. Another example is the waste-management sector, whereby mafia-controlled companies acquired the public contracts for waste collection in order to export the waste, as Italian landfills were no longer accepting the waste. Indeed, in this sector too, they have derived great wealth.

The mafia act essentially as the middlemen in a plethora of sectors, including waste management and facilitating illicit trafficking. In Italy, we see them active in the agri-food sector, in the large-scale fruit and vegetable distribution business. Again here, it is almost as if they predicted that in a situation of emergency, only some sectors would be able to continue operating, and it is precisely in these sectors that they decided to invest. Another example is the healthcare system, from which, together with the construction sector, the largest flows of public expenditure transpire.

I believe that our greatest challenge today is preventing the mafia from taking hold of slices of the legitimate economy, of the clean economy, of the economy that provides prosperity to all. And if this economy is not defended by all means necessary, in such a period in which economic activity has all but shut down, then it is clear that they will simply be providing the mafia with plenty of opportunities, who are just waiting for the opportune moment to intervene and invest their wealth.

Nazzaro: You mention the mafia is also involved in the healthcare sector. Is that a new trend in response to the coronavirus crisis?

Nicola Gratteri: Healthcare has always been a field in which various centres of power and mafia groups have gone to graze. In every region in the country, healthcare is always the sector assigned the biggest budget. So, it is inevitable that there will be huge interest in the sector, given the turnover and power it concentrates. When we talk about the mafia, we estimate that 2–4% of 'Ndrangheta bosses make their wealth via the infiltration in the healthcare system.

But the attraction isn't simply the sale of medical products, but also opportunity to influence the appointment of medical practitioners and executives.

It therefore isn't only an economic matter, and to consider only the financial advantages would be somewhat reductive.

Federico Cafiero de Raho: The mafia have long captured contracts in the public-health sector. More recently, mafia groups have also turned their attention to the pharmaceutical industry. All you need to do is look at what the sons of mafia bosses study at university: a huge number of them choose to pursue a degree in medicine!

Look also at the number of individuals associated with the *cosche* (clans) who are in leadership positions or other positions of great responsibility – managers of the Azienda Sanitaria Locale (the local health authority) or other healthcare companies. Similarly, individuals linked to the mafia have also been identified in the veterinary industry.

Nicola Morra: Unfortunately, in Calabria we have had to dissolve no fewer than five local health authorities for mafia infiltration. After more than 10 years of our regional health service being run by a special commission as a result of mafia infiltration, we are still yet to witness a return to good health of the system.

Mafias that fight against public spirit have always encouraged individualistic and libertarian policies. What has happened in social politics in recent decades, namely the attacks on the idea of a state-guaranteed, universal public health system, coincides perfectly with the mafia's

desire to invest in private companies that would work alongside, and replace, public providers.

Magistrates and analysts argue that the inefficiencies in the system are down to the regional ruling classes' lack of interest in serving the public good, as opposed to the private. A typical scheme of 'Ndrangheta origin is to ensure that medical services that are expensive and usually run at a loss are kept in public hands, whereas those that generate a profit are transferred to the private sector.

It is very compelling: if you give the patient the choice between dying in the public system or surviving in the private, everyone of course opts for the private. Abuse of the health services deserves to have a specific chapter dedicated to it in the history of criminality in Calabria, of which the assassination of Francesco Fortugno should be a major part.²

Nazzaro: You all speak of the mafia as attacking the state – do you think the goal of the mafia is to destroy democracy?

Federico Cafiero de Raho: Mafia groups are opposed to any form of democracy. Granted, they operate from within democracies, but they certainly do not work to actively sustain democracies. The mafia act only out of self-interest, to enrich themselves. It is their own interests that must be fulfilled. A democracy is the reflection of the people's wishes, of all their desires expressed via a democracy's institutions. The mafia tend instead to foster relationships only with those in whose hands power is concentrated.

So, as we expressed earlier, their investment strategies are intended in part also to establish relationships with those who really matter. This is why they target sectors of strategic importance, like healthcare. The fact that the mafia infiltration is an ostensibly economic infiltration, and therefore is able to also improve the social welfare of people, is somewhat forgotten. But the truth is, this infiltration acts solely as a guarantee of power to enact things that, if carried out by the representative institutions of a democracy, are intended for the collective good, but if influenced or even conditioned by the mafia, end up oriented towards satisfying the needs of mafia interests instead.

This must push us, therefore, to reflect on the danger the mafia poses to the erosion of democracy, the erosion of freedom in particular at this time. It is, after all, freedom that is the most fundamental basis of a democracy. Mafias simply act to exercise their own control. So long as the mafia is able to infiltrate themselves into democratic institutions, through corruption or other forms of relationships, they can present themselves as adhering to the rules of the game. But as soon as the mafia faces an obstacle, they reveal their true nature. They are the denial of democracy, the denial of freedom, they embody the perennial risk that the people's free choices be undermined by their – often violent – methods.

Nicola Gratteri: The mafia will never substitute the state, in the strictest of senses. The mafia feeds off popular consensus – it is among us – and it feeds off us, with its men embedded within our institutions. So, the mafia doesn't see democratic institutions as an opponent. The bureaucrat, the government official, the politician: these are just interlocutors with whom to find common ground.

Nazzaro: Would it be an exaggeration to argue that the state apparatus is in some ways the last line of defence of the democratic order? And that if it were to collapse, so too would the mafia?

Nicola Gratteri: No, the mafia would not collapse. Because at the end of the day, they live off illicit activity. We're talking about cocaine traffickers with their own market here. And so, even if for some absurd reason the state were to collapse – which it will not – the mafia's links to public administration in the services domain would of course collapse, but they would still have the trafficking of narcotics as a guarantee of income.

Federico Cafiero de Raho: In countries where the need is greatest, some authorities look at the wealth that is invested as a potential means by which the entire social fabric of the country can be uplifted. This is the insidious trap that allows the mafia to enter new territories, because even those who hold important institutional positions see that wealth as a means of attracting prosperity in their country. Because mafia infiltration comes first and ostensibly only as economic infiltration, and therefore is able to improve the social welfare of people, sometimes the original motives are forgotten.

But we should not forget the true nature of the mafia. The truth is this infiltration warps governance and institutions intended for the collective good and orientates them towards satisfying the needs of mafia interests instead.

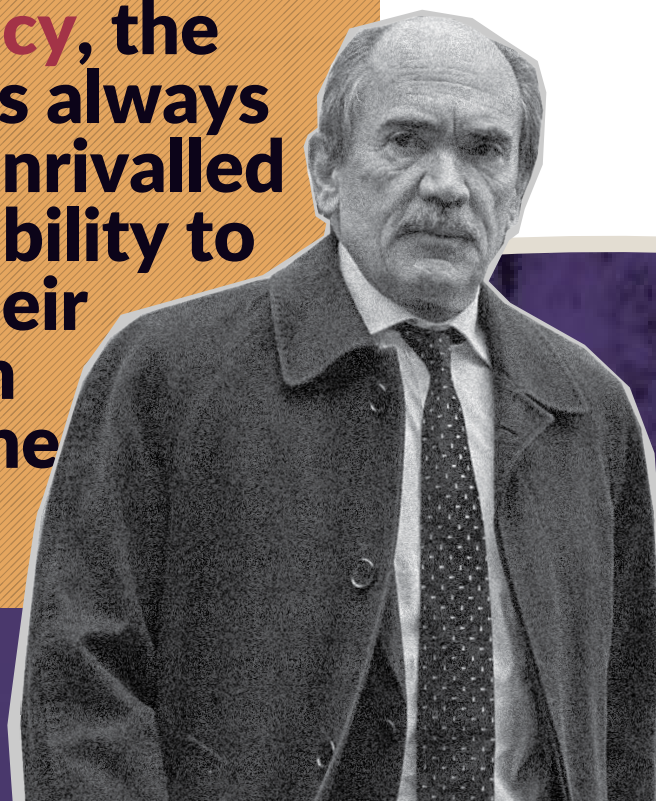
This is the great danger, which cannot be detected immediately. There are important countries, such as the

United Kingdom, in which there is a great appreciation of investment and economic activity. What is important is not who is engaging in the economic activity, but simply the activity itself. And so, even individuals from certain countries that have carried out, or are associated with, criminal activity are not scrutinized as subjects of interest. As long as they make investments and stimulate economic activities, they can continue to work without any problem. But importing mafia wealth into a country is a source of corruption of the economic fabric. It appears on the face of it to be a source of prosperity, but it remains nevertheless an infiltration of individuals representing mafia groups, whose rationale is completely different.

The mafia's rationale is not to invest for the sake of investing, but is instead to establish fronts for narcotics trafficking, for example, or a stronghold in which to invest illicit proceeds. Through thorough investigative work, you later discover that an individual has established their business operation only as a front for their mafia group, who are in the meantime engaging in the trafficking of cocaine, heroin, other narcotic substances, arms and so on.

We must understand that the mafia are supported and concealed by the very same corrupted economy that is built on the reinvestment of illicit proceeds, and on this I want to be absolutely clear. The legitimate economy is composed of a huge number of businesspeople who are

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Federico Cafiero De Raho

committed, who make sacrifices, who keep their sectors going and who create a considerable number of jobs. But there are also criminal entrepreneurs who simply rely on the financial reserves that are generated by their illegal activity. They are able to maintain their position in the market even when they are not making huge profits,

because they can, at any moment of need, call upon their illicit proceeds and conceal them within the formal economy once again. These economic agents are always in a position to meet the needs of the mafia groups to which they belong.

Nazzaro: An article in the German newspaper *Die Welt* provoked a lot of debate in Italy, as it questioned whether the EU should help Italy recover, when there is the risk that the mafia would take primary advantage of the so-called 'coronabonds' to enrich themselves.³ What did you make of the article?

Nicola Morra: I would just like to remind people of some key points in this debate and around the fight against the mafia at the European level. When the Berlin Wall came down in 1989, investigations prove that Italian mafia groups travelled to Germany and invested in absolutely everything, and not even only in East Germany. In 2007, there was the Duisberg massacre as a result of the San Luca feud. In other words, 'Ndrangheta presence in Germany has been around for decades.

It is clear that the *Die Welt* article is offensive to all of the victims – far too many victims – of the mafia in Italy, starting with the magistrates and the police. A political scientist on the television recently said that 'investors are not afraid of the mafia, they are afraid of Italian magistrates – wild dogs who will do anything'. These are just more nonsensical and meaningless words. I deplore it when people discuss the mafia but do not understand its true extent. Everyone wants to have their say, but without actually studying the issue.

Mafia signifies illicit wealth. So we also have to look at where these immense illicit funds end up. That's the question from which we must begin.

Federico Cafiero de Raho: Indeed. The problem of the mafia is by no means restricted only to Italy. The mafiosi are 'citizens of the world', and they invest their profits across Europe.

They take hold in foreign territories, they immediately learn the language, they foster relationships with their new communities, and they engage in those activities that are most lucrative, or those they deem to be of greatest local significance. For example, in the Netherlands, they ran a number of flower import-export businesses, as well as a real-estate agency. Real estate is important because it is an integral part of the local economy. If you are in the real-estate business, you know the value of the market, you know the dynamics of market, especially commercial property, in terms

Mafias present themselves with a reassuring face, while suppressing the culture of rights that is necessary in a democratic society.



of who is buying and selling, and you are able to build relationships with key people.

As a result of increasingly active judicial cooperation between EU member states, we are now able to fully understand the extent to which the mafia is present, and is able to move, expand and often colonize various territories. Investigations show that the 'Ndrangheta already has operations in the Netherlands, Germany and Belgium, to name just a few – and they are able to move people, money and operations easily between different countries.

We know the ability of mafia groups to move themselves and their money throughout the European continent, from one city to another; this isn't just Italy's problem. This is all of Europe's problem.

Franco Gabrielli: At this point, it's not even just a European problem, it's a global one. Taking a European perspective in terms of the strategic analysis of the phenomenon would be to take a somewhat local perspective – we must absolutely have a global outlook.

To paraphrase Charles V: the sun never sets on crime. It opens with the Tokyo stock market and closes with that of Melbourne.

Nazzaro: Why did the COVID-19 pandemic prompt the Italian government to establish a new situation room to investigate mafia infiltration?

Franco Gabrielli: Italy's extensive experience with the mafia shows that at times in which the formal economy has suffered, and will continue to suffer, a significant shock, two important consequences will materialize. Firstly, the business and economic environment will suffer greatly. Many businesses will collapse, thus becoming extremely attractive targets, as we have witnessed in the past, to criminal organizations that are looking to dispose of huge sums of money. These groups can easily invest without the need to go through legal credit channels. Secondly, given that the state is already injecting money to try to support the economy, criminal organizations have every incentive to intercept these financial flows.

So Italy's experience, which perhaps other countries in Europe do not have to the same extent, is that the fight against the mafia must entail two fundamental elements: an analysis of the phenomenon, and the preparation of a strategy to combat it.

The analysis of the phenomenon must absolutely involve a coordinated and constant exchange of information. In this regard, our security apparatus – often viewed by those who are not familiar with it as involving an excessive number of agents – is in fact a system in which the plurality of agents is a major strength. This point is made with reference to two main components

of law enforcement in our country: the Guardia di Finanza (a law-enforcement agency falling under the Ministry of Economy and Finance) and the Polizia Penitenziaria (prison police corps). These are two forces that have both a significant information-gathering capacity with regard to the business environment, and a great ability to harvest information from within the prison system respectively, via the Counterterrorism Committee for Strategic Analysis. Because prisons are not only criminal environments, but they are also where criminal strategies are devised and developed.

For all these reasons, we decided to establish the COVID-19 situation room at the Direzione Centrale della Polizia Criminale (criminal police directorate), which is where the entire system of international cooperation resides, including where, for example, INTERPOL and EUROPOL converge. So, of course it is domestically oriented, but with an important recognition of the international dimension as well.

The situation room is not only limited to the standard components of law enforcement, but also, and perhaps above all, is tasked with monitoring all aspects outside of Italy too, including, therefore, non-state actors that are in a position to provide information, knowledge and input, in particular in the investigation and analysis phase – which is the preparatory phase for the elaboration of a combat strategy.

Nazzaro: Do you get a sense that other police forces – both in Europe and beyond – are concerned by the risks posed by organized crime during this pandemic?

Franco Gabrielli: Absolutely. In fact, INTERPOL are about to publish an important report on the pandemic that really highlights the fact that the police are a lifeline in this stormy sea that is the fight against the mafia. This demonstrates that the issue of the fight against criminal organizations is at the forefront of the minds of police forces in other countries too.

But, of course, it is clear that there are different interests and concerns among different nations. On some issues there are countries that appear to be playing games that do not necessarily coincide with the interests of everyone else. But nevertheless, the fact that INTERPOL has intervened demonstrates that awareness of the issue is not limited to Italy.

Nicola Morra: The mafia doesn't thrive only in our country. Mafia assets, and therefore mafia centres of power, move freely across Europe, in Germany as well as the Netherlands. And it's made easy for them, because these countries they have no anti-mafia legislation, they haven't adopted the prevention and confiscation measures that for a long time our magistrates have been calling for. We should be striking at their cities – that is where their real power lies – and yet, we are not.

When you think of the money, you realize that this is truly a global problem. For however much our country may sometimes be criticized for not always being fully engaged in the fight against the mafia, Italy has anti-mafia legislation that allows, for example, for asset seizure. There have been numerous occasions in Italy where arrests are followed by the seizure of assets belonging to mafia members, because there was a noticeable discrepancy between the income declared and the size of the assets seized.

These preventative measures are a formidable instrument with which to attack mafia assets. But only Italian legislation provides for them. And so, in these times of major financial crisis, it makes far more sense for the mafia to transfer their assets to countries in which the legislation does not allow for asset seizures.

Franco Gabrielli: The criminal dynamics are global. With regard to cybercrime, and to economic and financial transactions, we have to take a global perspective, because if we were to take a strictly territorial and national approach, our ability to enact our strategy would be severely restricted.

Considering help from the mafia as an opportunity may appear to be a shortcut, but in reality it is a path that will always end badly.



Franco Gabrielli

Nazzaro: And what advice would you give to people who are worried about their jobs and their future? How should individuals respond?

Nicola Morra: I remain convinced that political and democratic institutions, starting with states, need to immediately act in solidarity with the population. The more these resources are delayed, the more ineffective they will prove to be. Not only must the resources be extremely vast, but they must also, and perhaps most importantly, be immediate. The fact that more than 20 days after the lockdown in Italy started the EU is yet to recognize the need for a pan-European policy to deal with the pandemic is, unfortunately, a bitter observation to have to make.

The mafia is embedded in the state apparatus but does not in any way represent the democratic spirit from which these structures emanate. The mafias present themselves with a reassuring face, while striving to suppress the culture of rights and duties that are necessary in civil and democratic society.

Therefore, the objective of these mafia groups is to build a halo of credibility around themselves, in order to gain social consensus, in contrast to political institutions that are perceived as increasingly detached and slow at providing the answers that civil society strives for.

Federico Cafiero de Raho: I believe that every citizen has a crucial role to play, and that is to come together and collaborate. When I say collaborate, it goes without saying that I am not referring to collaboration with criminal actors, or engagement in criminal activity. I am talking about reporting to the authorities. In the business world, when a new and unknown figure enters the market, people know about it, because people talk. If one day someone starts purchasing all the shops in your area, that's likely to suggest that something

strange is occurring. Now, clearly this is not proof of wrongdoing, nor even a factor that may persuade a legitimate businessperson to file an official complaint or lawsuit, but they may perhaps file a report instead. And sometimes, a single report is enough to form the basis of an investigation into the criminal landscape from which a criminal charge may stem.

We, as the National Directorate, can do a great deal at this moment in time. We have the instruments that allow us to investigate activity, via a number of anti-mafia directorates, together with the help of the business world, trade associations and individual citizens, which can help in the rapid identification of new criminal infiltration in the economy at a time when the pandemic has made us so vulnerable.

Nicola Morra: Individuals can also use some of their time indoors to read, to study, to learn the values of the fight against the mafia. As Paolo Borsellino used to say, the defeat of the mafia will come only at the hands of a people's movement, not an intellectual's one.⁴ Many intellectuals have supported this battle, but we have so much more work to do to make it a universally shared awareness, such that every individual feels incentivized to study it.

The Italian poet and writer Gesualdo Bufalino said that the mafia will only be defeated by an army of schoolteachers. At a moment when charlatans and conspiracists – in particular online – run wild and expend energy that should be directed elsewhere, the best antidote against the mafia remains a combination of education and culture.

BIOGRAPHIES

FEDERICO CAFIERO DE RAHO is the Italian national Anti-Mafia and Counter-Terrorism Public Prosecutor, a post he has held since November 2017. Initially a prosecutor in Milan, De Raho then moved to Naples, where he carried out the role for 22 years, during which time he conducted numerous investigations into the Camorra, and in particular the Casalesi clan. He was a key figure in the Spartacus maxi-trial, which led to the prosecution of 115 individuals thanks to the testimony of the first state witness (*pentito*) Carmine Schiavone. In 2013, De Raho moved to the top of the Reggio Calabria public prosecutor's office, where he coordinated the investigations that led to the arrest of 'Ndrangheta fugitives, some of whom had evaded arrest for more than 20 years.

FRANCO GABRIELLI is the Italian Chief of Police and Director General of Public Security, a position he has held since 2016. During his time as Director of the Counterterrorism Service, Gabrielli collaborated in the investigation that led to the arrest of one of the perpetrators of the failed 21 July 2005 London bombings, as well as leading the investigations into the Via dei Georgofili bombing in Florence in 1993. From 2006 to 2008, he was the director of the Italian civil intelligence service AISI and its predecessor SISDE. He subsequently assumed the role of Head of the Civil Protection Department, before being appointed Prefect of Rome in 2015.

NICOLA GRATTERI is the Public Prosecutor in the Calabrian town of Catanzaro, a position he has held since 2016. As a result of his fight against the 'Ndrangheta, Gratteri has lived under police protection since 1989. As well as coordinating important investigations into the 'Ndrangheta, including that on the 2007 Duisburg massacre, Gratteri led the recent Rinascita-Scott maxi-operation that resulted in the arrest of over 260 individuals linked to the mafia group, the largest ever operation against the 'Ndrangheta.

NICOLA MORRA is an Italian politician, a Five Star Movement senator and, since 2018, the Chairman of the Parliamentary Anti-Mafia Commission. Born in Genova, Morra later moved to Calabria, where he lectured in history and philosophy, before becoming a senator in 2013.

The Parliamentary Anti-mafia Commission (Commissione Parlamentare Antimafia) is a bicameral commission of the Italian Parliament, composed of members from the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. The first commission, formed in 1963, was established as a body of inquiry tasked with investigating the Sicilian mafia. Subsequent commissions expanded their scope to investigate all mafia-type organized crime, which included other major criminal organizations in Italy, as well as foreign ones. The commission's goal is to study the phenomenon of organized crime in all its forms and to measure the adequacy of existing anti-crime measures, both legislative and administrative, according to their results. The commission also has judicial powers: it may instruct the judicial police to carry out investigations, it can ask for copies of court proceedings, and it is entitled to request any form of collaboration that it deems necessary. Those who provide testimony to the commission are obliged by law to tell the truth. The commission can also submit reports to the Parliament as often as desired, but does so on at least an annual basis.

SERGIO NAZZARO writes investigative reports, mainly on national and international organized crime, with particular reference to the mafia of African origin. He has written many books, the most recent being *Castel Volturno: Reportage on the Mafia African* (Einaudi, 2013) and *Nigerian mafia: The first investigation of the anti-trafficking task force* (Città Nuova, 2019). For the Italian *Wired* magazine, Nazzaro broke the story on the last secret NATO bunker in Italy. In 2013, he was awarded the 'Peace Witness - Press section' prize.

Nazzaro is also an adviser to the Anti-Mafia Parliamentary Commission as a Camorra expert and foreign-mafias expert, with particular relevance to those of African origin. Since November 2018, Nazzaro has served as spokesperson for both the President of the Anti-Mafia Parliamentary Commission and also as the spokesperson for Italy's Deputy Minister of the Interior. In January 2020, he was appointed as the voluntary spokesperson for Italy's Deputy Minister of Health for the duration of the COVID-19 crisis.

NOTES

- 1 The four interviews were conducted separately between 7 and 10 April 2020. The conversations were held in Italian and all interviewees were asked the same set of questions. Their responses have been transcribed and translated into English and have been edited together as if contemporaneous for clarity and readability.
- 2 Francesco Fortugno was an Italian politician who was assassinated while Vice-President of the Regional Council of Calabria. Fortugno was killed in 2005 as he was coming out of the ballot booth, having just voted in the Italian general election. He was a surgeon, as well as a politician, and he was cleaning up the healthcare system in Calabria, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/jan/01/italy.mainsection>.
- 3 See Zoe Tidman, Italy demands apology after German paper said 'mafia waiting for EU coronavirus money', *The Independent*, 9 April 2020, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/coronavirus-eu-money-die-welt-italy-countries-europecoronavirus-eu-money-die-welt-italy-countries-a9458641.html>; and Christoph B. Schiltz, Frau Merkel, *bleiben Sie standhaft!*, *Die Welt*, 9 April 2020, <https://www.welt.de/debatte/kommentare/article207146171/Debatte-um-Corona-Bonds-Frau-Merkel-bleiben-Sie-standhaft.html>.
- 4 Paolo Borsellino was an Italian judge and prosecutor. As a member of the so-called Anti-Mafia Pool, he spent most of his professional life fighting the Sicilian Cosa Nostra. Thanks to the Maxi Trial held in Palermo in 1986–1987, Borsellino and other members of the Anti-Mafia Pool indicted 475 mafiosi for various crimes. On 19 July 1992, Cosa Nostra assassinated Borsellino with a car bomb near his mother's home in Palermo.



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