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An Underestimated Criminal Phenomenon: The Calabrian 'Ndrangheta

1. A FEW HISTORICAL NOTES ON A WORD AND A PHENOMENON

The criminal phenomenon named '*ndrangheta*' is understood as an aggregate of mafia² families – according to the latest police inquiries they should be about 85³ – whose base is in Reggio Calabria province and in its environs and their ramifications in Italy and abroad.⁴

Only after World War II did the word '*ndrangheta*' undergo a 'process of criminalization' and started to be used to name organized crime of Calabrian origin.⁵ With almost absolute certainty, the term itself comes from the Greek word *andragaos*, (which means a courageous and brave man). Up to few decades ago, most of the population of Reggio Calabria province used it to indicate a high degree of heroism and virtue, which was embodied in a superior *élite*, the '*ndranghetisti*'. In the Calabrian dialect, '*ndranghetista*' used to mean 'member of the *Onorata Società*' (Honoured Society) and there are some judicial documents of the second half the XIX century that confirm the existence of coalitions of '*ndranghetisti*' active in

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 2. Ministero dell'Interno, *Rapporto annuale sul fenomeno della criminalità organizzata per il 1993* (Roma 1994) p. 212.
 3. Unless otherwise specified the term mafia is used in the whole paper with a broad meaning, not necessarily referring to the Sicilian phenomenon. When it implies the confederation of Sicilian criminal families named Cosa Nostra, the term will have a capital M.
 4. The phenomenology of organized crime in the two other provinces of the region, the Cosenza and Catanzaro ones, can be mostly referred to the gangster group ideal type and, except for some mafia families which are active in some villages close to the boundaries of the Reggio Calabria province, the rest of the criminal manifestations cannot be considered to belong to the '*ndrangheta*'. Even though the cultural background of these criminal associations is similar to that of the mafia families of Reggio Calabria, as shown by the codes found and the rituals that are similar in the two contexts, the criminal groups found in Catanzaro and Cosenza provinces depart considerably from those of southern Calabria in terms of organizational principles, degree of penetration into the national and international illegal markets, availability of capital, ability to influence political decisions, and connections with the criminal groups of other regions and centres of illegal power. Furthermore it must be considered that, except for some well delimited areas in the Catanzaro provinces, in both Northern districts the appearance of a criminal issue of large proportions is quite recent, as it dates back only to the mid-1970s. Other researchers, however, have adopted an extensive definition of the term '*ndrangheta*' and therefore use it as a synonym of criminality of Calabrian origin. See, for instance, E. Ciconte, '*Ndrangheta dall'Unità ad oggi*' (Bari 1991).
 5. P. Martino, *Per la storia della 'ndrangheta* (Roma 1988), p. 15.

many centres of Reggio Calabria province.⁶ More generally however, the term referred to a 'man of honour', that is any brave man who scorned danger, knew no scruples and was ready for anything.⁷ The key concept in the 'ndranghetista's *Weltanschauung* was *omertà*, that is the 'ability to be a man' (in Italian *uomo*) and honour, no matter how attained and defended, was the unit that measured his value.⁸

Since the areas of Southern Calabria (as well as of Western Sicily), where mafia culture originally developed, were characterized by a clash of market mechanisms with the traditional cultural structure, insofar as they have defined a 'society of permanent transition',⁹ the men of honour acted as an element of control and regulation:

'the mafia – Piselli and Arrighi write – set the duties which the partners of commercial transactions had to comply and bound the free play of supply and demand to the respect of precise social relationships and ethical norms. It protected the market, but it prevented its expansion. It guaranteed the functioning of the local market and its links with the world market and at the same time it prevented the subordination of the first to the the second'.¹⁰

Indeed, in regions where the authority and the effective power of the national state had been rather weak for many decades after the Unification, the *mafiosi* were invested by a variety of public functions. As Arlacchi states,

'*mafiosi* become the civil and the criminal judges, mediators, protectors, arbitrators, subsuming in themselves many delicate functions normally exercised by the power of the state. Honour transformed itself into authority, and finally into le-

6. E. Ciconte, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-138 (n. 4).

7. P. Arlacchi, *Mafia Business. The Mafia Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Oxford 1986 [Bologna 1983]) pp. 5-8. See also P. Arlacchi, *Mafia Peasants and Great Estates. Society in Traditional Calabria* (Cambridge 1983 [Bologna 1980]) pp. 111-121. According to other sources however, the term 'ndrangheta 'does not have a noble origin': it refers to those gestures which, together with the clap of hands, accompanied the dance of the *tarantella* in some areas of Calabria. 'The 'ndranghetisti are therefore described as male dancers, without backbone, almost fools, in comparison with the old men of honour who are offended by the assimilation with the 'ndranghetisti'. See S. Di Bella, 'Ndrangheta, la setta del disonore' (Cosenza 1989), p. 8.

8. Much has been written on the values and norms of the mafia subculture; see, among the many, H. Hess, *Mafia* (Bari 1991 [Tübingen 1970]) pp. 65-106; L. Lombardi Satriani, 'Sulla cultura mafiosa e gli immediati dintorni', *Quaderni del Mezzogiorno e delle isole*, 1977, n. 42-43, pp. 41-57; M. P. Di Bella, 'L'onore in Sicilia e l'onore nella mafia. Convergenze e divergenze', in S. Di Bella, ed., *Mafia e Potere. Società civile, organizzazione mafiosa ed esercizio dei poteri nel Mezzogiorno contemporaneo* (Cosenza 1983) pp. 229-238.

9. P. Arlacchi, *Mafia Peasants ... cit.*, pp. 111-121 (n. 7).

10. F. Piselli and G. Arrighi, 'Parentela, clientela e comunità', in P. Bevilacqua e A. Placanica, eds., *La Calabria* (Torino 1985) pp. 367-493.

gitimacy. The legitimacy, then in its turn, turned into a further source of confirmation and amplification of honour'.¹¹

Since the late 1950s, when the broader process of modernization of the whole country had been eroding the basis of traditional mafia power, and the equivalence between honour and wealth had become a common value even within the traditional Calabrian and Sicilian social environment, the *mafiosi* and their families started to get involved in – licit but mostly illicit – economic activities, in order to maintain, though on a partially different basis, their power and legitimacy over society itself.

The expansion of the *'ndrangheta* has been consistently facilitated by a general underestimation: considered to be less important and less dangerous than the Sicilian Mafia, Calabrian criminality has been given less attention not only by Italian public opinion, but even by the institutions set up to fight against criminal organizations and the majority of social researchers.¹² Up to a very short time ago, the Calabrian events were reported by mass media only when typical crimes – such as kidnappings – were committed, whereas the numerous killings were interpreted as the most fierce expression of local feuds in the struggle to gain control over locally limited criminal activities.

2. THE FAMILY

The Calabrian mafia family is usually referred to with the following words in dialect *'ndrina* or *fibbia*.¹³ Its nucleus is usually made up of a blood family, around which a wide network of natural and artificial relations develops.

The *'ndrina* exerts its influence over a well-defined territory which usually corresponds to a town or a village; only in big urban agglomerations – such as Reggio Calabria and a few others – is there a division in quarters. Since Reggio Calabria province is made up of 97 municipalities, it is easy to realize that the 85 'mafia jurisdictions' or families are very close in number to the legal administrative districts. The bond to the territory is so close that the affiliates usually define the family as 'locale', which means 'place' in Italian.

The numerical dimension of the *cosca* is a fundamental element in order to establish the

11. P. Arlacchi, *Mafia Peasants ... cit.*, pp. 114-115 (n. 7). Lombardi Satriani has given an anthropological interpretation of the mediatory function accomplished by the *mafiosi* between classes, between market mechanisms and the traditional cultural structure. It is a reading, furthermore, that already prefigures its entrepreneurial transformation. He states that there is 'a formal coincidence between mafia values and the folkloric ones' but at the same time he points out that 'mafia culture assumes folkloric values but it exploits and twist them deeply, giving them goals that are heterogeneous. Mafia culture is a middleground, a phenomenon with two faces; with the face turned to the subordinate classes, its values are formally the same as the folkloric ones and it can say to be popular; with the face turned to the power classes, its true counterparts, it transforms (...) the popular values, inserting them into a project of individual or group hegemony, which is not very far away from the ethic implicitly proposed by capitalistic custom and is deeply functional to that ethic'. Lombardi Satriani, *loc. cit.*, p. 56 (n. 8).

12. Yet in 1992 the historian P. Bevilacqua writes that: 'In the Liberal Italy Calabrian criminality did not have the importance of a specific criminal phenomenon (...) and it was limited into the dimensions and the characteristics of mostly rural crimes, either with an individual or a group form, which were spread in the South as well as in the North of the country ... The *'ndrangheta* does not have noble and far origins but as a phenomenon of social importance it dates back to the last decades of this postwar period'. See P. Bevilacqua, 'La mafia e la Spagna', *Meridiana*, (1992) pp. 105-127.

13. E. Ciconte, *op. cit.*, p. 20 (n. 4).

power of the mafia family, since it determines its military strength, in terms of personnel available for a gunfight, as well as its capability of controlling the territory and influencing the life of the community. The most powerful mafia groups are those with the highest number of affiliates: the smallest *cosche* have from five to ten adult males, the middle ranking ones have 20 to 30 and the top positions are held by *cosche* which have more than 50 affiliates. Some of the strongest families – like, for instance, the Pìromalli *cosca* of Gioia Tauro – are composed of more than 200 adult male units.¹⁴

The real strength of the family depends, however, on the dimensions of its core, the one or two biological families and their network of artificial kinships that are at the centre of the *cosca*. As a mafia member who is now cooperating with the judges stated:

‘among the *’ndrangheta* affiliates, there are many people who are obsessed by the idea of having many sons (...); as a matter of fact, it is the birth of sons that gives the human material necessary to replace the unavoidable losses and to get on with revenge, which, not taking into consideration feuds, is one of the pillars of the Calabrian underworld. A large number of sons, or anyhow of men linked by direct family kinships, provides the family chief with more power in the criminal sphere’.¹⁵

The analysis of the internal composition of some of the most powerful *cosche* of Southern Calabria shows that none of them, in its inner nucleus, is made up of less than three brothers. Out of 20, six of them are centred on four biological families of four brothers, four are based on five families of brothers, five *cosche* are composed by nuclei of six brothers and, finally, four are based on families of seven brothers.¹⁶ Indeed as Pino Arlacchi found out a decade ago, ‘groups built around a single individual – however adept he may be at weaving networks of friendship or clientelism (...) – have an inherent fragility, and tend to decline and disappear rather quickly’.¹⁷

In order to strengthen the cohesion of the inner nucleus, the practice of intermarriage between first cousins is strongly encouraged and marriages are also used to cement alliances with other groups in the immediate neighbourhood.

In many small villages of Reggio Calabria province, the tendency of maximizing the number of descendents and of endogamic marriages has altered the demographic pattern of the local community, negatively influencing electoral choices and the quality of public life. Many non-mafia families have seen themselves being surpassed by the fertility and the clannish cohesion of the *’ndrangheta* families. During the last two decades, the Calabrian

14. The families belonging to the *’ndrangheta* do not seem to have yet undergone the process which has touched the mafia families associated to Cosa Nostra. In response to the anti-mafia investigations and the growing number of witnesses in fact, these ones have progressively started to narrow the criteria of affiliation and reduce the number of the men of honour. In 1989 for instance, Francesco Marino Mannoia, a *pentito* belonging to the Palermitan family of S. Maria del Gesù, stated that ‘the judicial repression against Cosa Nostra has caused a thinning out, meaning that the number of men of honour has consistently decreased and the personnel has been carefully selected. In our family for instance, while before we were around 120, so that not even I myself knew everybody, now there are surely less than 50’. See Tribunale di Palermo, *Processo verbale di interrogatorio dell’imputato Francesco Marino Mannoia*, 1989.

15. A. Zagari, *Ammazzare stanca. Autobiografia di uno ’ndranghetista pentito* (Cosenza 1992), p. 11.

16. Ministero dell’Interno, *Rapporto annuale sul fenomeno della criminalità organizzata per il 1992* (Roma 1993) p. 162.

17. P. Arlacchi, *Mafia Business op. cit.* p. 133 (n. 7).

mafia families and their *entourage* – which often includes up to ten times the number of the affiliates – have become a real ‘mafia social class’, endowed with considerable stability in time and capable of influencing the social and political life of entire communities.¹⁸ It has been estimated that in small and medium-sized municipalities, the ruling mafia family – considering the extension of the economic activities and the network of interests and obligations owned by the chief of the *cosca* – can control up to 40% of the votes, while this percentage decreases to 15-20% in the larger towns.

The familistic structure of the ‘*ndrangheta*’ has been sometimes regarded as primitive and rough as compared to the sophisticated mechanisms of selection of the Sicilian Cosa Nostra but, indeed, it has proved to be one of its major assets. The high degree of internal cohesion, the involvement of relatives in illicit activities shelters the group from betrayal and delations: the *omertà*, the keeping of silence is particularly strong within the ‘*ndrangheta*’ and very few are the *mafiosi* who decide to cooperate with the police and the judges. Out of more than 700 Justice collaborators, the Calabrian *pentiti* account for only 10%, as against 50% of the Sicilian ones.¹⁹ Abandoning the ‘*ndrangheta*’ means, in fact, not only repudiating a way of life and an environment where one has been brought up, but also betraying one’s own father, brother, uncle or cousin.

It should also be pointed out that the familistic structure of the ‘*ndrangheta*’ assigns a very influential role to women, much more important than the one women have in the Sicilian mafia. Already in the traditional ‘*ndrangheta*’ the woman was, in fact, the keeper of the values and the continuity of the family and in some cases of particularly praiseworthy behaviour she could be formally associated to the *cosca* with the title of ‘sister of *omertà*’.²⁰

In the last 15 years however, the wives and the sisters of mafia bosses have started to take up a function which is less and less extraneous and subaltern to male illicit activities. Recent investigations have shown that women belonging to ‘*ndrangheta*’ families often supervise the organization of racket, collect the *pizzo*, are the official owners of the family properties, keep the contact with the fugitives and with the imprisoned bosses, carrying their orders outside of the prisons to the lower-rank members, and provide logistic support during kidnappings. At the end of an extensive inquiry on one of the most important mafia coalitions of the city of Reggio Calabria, the Judge for Preliminary Investigations of the Reggio Calabria Tribunal felt bound to highlight:

‘the qualitative jump of female action within mafia associations; thanks to the women’s profitable activism, in fact, the groups often do not enter the logistic crisis to which they would be condemned because of the physical elimination or the hiding (voluntary or not) of the male components’.²¹

A typical expression of the ‘*ndrangheta*’ is the survival of feuds (*faide*): they are inter-family conflicts, characterized by extreme ferociousness and destructivity, which break up for the

18. *Ibidem*, pp. 137-140 and E. Ciconte, ‘Mafia, ‘*ndrangheta* e camorra: un processo di unificazione’, unpublished typescript p. 6.

19. Ministero dell’Interno, *Relazione semestrale sull’attività svolta e i risultati conseguiti dalla Direzione Investigativa Antimafia nel secondo semestre del 1993* (Roma 1993) p. 156.

20. See the debate on ‘Il ruolo della donna nella mafia’, published in *Quaderni del Mezzogiorno e delle isole* (1977) n. 42-43 pp. 101-112 and A. Zagari, *op. cit.*, p. 12 (n. 15).

21. Tribunale di Reggio Calabria, *Ordinanza di custodia cautelare in carcere nei confronti di Imerti Antonino + 44*, 28 novembre 1990 pp. 13-14.

most diverse reasons, such as theft, an offence, a fight for the control of territory or of an illicit traffic. Feuds derive from the principle of retaliation which is a core institution of mafia culture as it was of the folkloric one. The duty to retaliate is a supreme one: the case has been reported of a woman of Ciminà, a small village in the Locride, who, once she became a widow and lost all her sons in a mafia feud, found a lover in order to be able to avenge her relatives and 'to be faithful – a radical and metahistorical faithfulness – to memory and death, to her role of keeper and trustee of cultural continuity'.²²

The recent feud between two mafia families of Siderno, a village on the Ionian Coast, for instance, originated from a theft of some guns in the house of a *cosca* chief perpetrated by some affiliates of the rival family. The fight lasted five years, from 1987 to 1991, and it altogether caused 34 deaths.²³

The cohesion and the stability of Calabrian groups is also reinforced by an extensive use of rituals, symbolism and a normative apparatus. The *'ndranghetisti* also have a wide range of special words, which make up a local slang, known as *baccagghiu*.²⁴

Even nowadays, copies of secret codes are frequently found: these are the transcription of the rites and esoteric formulas, with which, since the second half of the XIX century gangsters were affiliated to the Honoured Society.²⁵ The entry into a mafia family takes place with the ceremony of baptism: the candidate, who becomes a *picciotto*, swears faithfulness to the *'ndrina*, cutting himself and shedding a few drops of blood and is entrusted to five god-fathers. Blood has a big relevance in mafia rituals – as well as in folkloric culture – and it symbolizes a sort of artificial kinship to which the members belong.²⁶

According to the legend which is taught to new members, the origins of the *'ndrangheta* go back to the trip undertaken by three Spanish knights, Osso, Mastrosso and Carcagnosso at the end of the 14th century: they arrived at the Sicilian island of Favignana and from there travelled in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, founding respectively the Mafia in Sicily, the *'ndrangheta* in Calabria and the camorra in the area of Naples.²⁷ The *'ndrangheta* is symbolically represented by a big leafy tree, at the base of which there is a tomb and it is usually defined the 'tree of Science'. The tree is made up of trunk, embranchment, branches, twigs and flowers, which correspond to the hierarchical roles of the *'ndrangheta*, that is respectively *capo di società* (i.e. chief of the association), *vicecapo* (vice-chief), *camorrista*, *picciotto* and *giovane d'onore*, which is the title granted to the young sons of the men of honour.²⁸

For a long time, while the majority of criminologists and social researchers shared the view that mafia was a form of behaviour and a kind of power, but not a formal organization,

22. M. Meligrana, 'Giuridicità popolare e potere mafioso. L'istituto della vendetta', in S. Di Bella, ed., *op. cit.* p. 246 (n. 8).

23. Tribunale di Reggio Calabria, *Ordinanza di custodia cautelare in carcere nei confronti di Archinà Rocco Carlo* + 44, 8 gennaio 1993.

24. G. Falcone, 'Strutture organizzative, rituali e "baccagghiu"', della *'ndrangheta*', in S. Di Bella, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 251-270 (n. 8).

25. P. Sergi, *La 'Santa' violenta*, (Cosenza 1991) pp. 47-55; S. Gambino, *La mafia in Calabria* (Reggio Calabria 1971) pp. 7-28 and E. Ciconte, *op. cit.* p. 21-45 (n. 4).

26. L. Lombardi Satriani, *loc cit.*, p. 41-57 (n. 8).

27. L. Malafarina, *La 'ndrangheta. Il codice segreto, la storia, i miti, i riti e i personaggi* (Reggio Calabria 1986) pp. 88-92 and E. Ciconte, *'Ndrangheta ... cit.*, p. 7 (n. 4).

28. Procura della Repubblica di Milano, *Richiesta di ordini di custodia cautelare in carcere nel procedimento contro Flachi Giuseppe* + 138, 7 giugno, pp. 194-199. See also S. Gambino, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-66 (n. 25).

these rituals and norms were almost regarded as folkloristic heritage of past traditions.²⁹ Recently however, their importance has been re-valued also because the Calabrian *pentiti* have confirmed that they still regulate the inner life of the families and the behaviour of their members.

3. THE DEVELOPMENT OF HIERARCHIES

Unlike the Sicilian families belonging to the Cosa Nostra confederation, for a long time the Calabrian *cosche* have not succeeded in establishing an effective mechanism of conflicts regulation such as the Palermo's Provincial Commission and the Regional Commission of Cosa Nostra. According to some recent investigations however, after the end of the 'second mafia war' (1985-1991), the '*ndrangheta*' is believed to have adopted an organizational model which is similar to that of the Provincial Commission of Cosa Nostra, thus abandoning its traditional 'horizontal' structure.³⁰

It is quite likely that emissaries of Cosa Nostra may have influenced and contributed effectively to the creation of this body and that Cosa Nostra itself may have played a critical role in putting an end to the war that produced much bloodshed in Reggio Calabria province between 1985 and 1991. As a matter of fact, an important confirmation of the role played by the Sicilians emerged from the investigations carried out on the killing of Antonio Scopelliti, the Substitute Attorney General of the Supreme Court, which occurred in a small outlying ward of Reggio Calabria in August 1991. Although the first-degree trial is now taking place in the Reggio Calabria Tribunal, the Prosecutors of the Reggio Calabria *Direzione Distrettuale Antimafia* (Anti-mafia District Office) support the thesis that the murder of Scopelliti, who was to be the Prosecutor in the revision of the Court Ruling on the Palermo's *maxiprocesso*, was the reward asked by the Sicilian Mafia for its own pacifying intervention in the conflict within the '*ndrangheta*'.³¹

According to the statements made by two Justice collaborators, the first action undertaken by the new body was to fix the territorial boundaries of each *locale* (that is family) of the province. The 'commission' also confirmed the principle according to which any controversy between the *cosche* should be submitted to the attention of the collegial body before taking up weapons, whereas smaller conflicts arising within the same '*ndrina*' would remain under the jurisdiction of each family chief. Where the decisions of the 'commission' are ignored by one of the parties involved, all the groups belonging to the '*ndrangheta*' are expected to line up against whoever has violated the collective decision.

The agreement among the *cosche* led to a reasonable decrease in killings over the last two years: compared with 1991, intentional homicides in Reggio Calabria province have gone

29. Among the many - as far as the Italian phenomenon is concerned - see for instance H. Hess, *op. cit.*, (n. 7); A. Blok, *The Mafia of a Sicilian Village, 1860-1960: A Study of Violent Entrepreneurs* (New York and Oxford 1974); J. Schneider and P. Schneider, *Culture and Political Economy in Western Sicily* (New York and London 1976) and P. Arlacchi, *Mafia Business op. cit.*, pp. 137-140 (n. 7). Of the last one see also his recent admission that the mafia is also a formal organization in *Idem, Uomini del disonore. La mafia siciliana nella vita del grande pentito Antonino Calderone* (Milano 1992) p. VII.

30. Procura della Repubblica di Reggio Calabria, *Richiesta di ordini di custodia cautelare in carcere nel procedimento contro Morabito Giuseppe + 161*, 12 luglio 1993.

31. Tribunale di Reggio Calabria, *Ordinanza di custodia cautelare in carcere nei confronti di Riina Salvatore + 20*, 20 aprile 1993.

down 62.8% in 1993, while those due to mafia conflicts have lowered by an astounding 77.4%.

Table 1. Intentional and mafia murders in Reggio Calabria province (1984-1993)

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Intentional murders	69	82	107	126	161	158	213	191	74	71
Rate per 100,000 inhabitants	11.7	13.9	18.1	21.3	27.2	26.7	36	33.9	13.1	12.6
Mafia murders	15	15	48	50	88	111	110	142	42	32
Rate per 100,000 inhabitants	2.5	2.5	8.1	8.5	14.9	18.8	18.6	25.2	7.4	5.7

Source: ISTAT, various years and CED, Ministero dell'Interno, 1994.

In previous years, the Reggio Calabria province had recorded a very high rate of fatal violence: since the beginning of the 'second mafia war' in November 1985 up to 1991, there had been 1,038 murders, more than half of which (564) being certainly attributable to mafia conflicts. Over those six years, even though accounting for only 3.6% of the Italian population, Calabria region had a share of 16.4% of the killings which had occurred throughout the whole country. Even more impressive is a comparison of the rates for Reggio Calabria province alone: considering a percentage share of 1% over the Italian population, the killings in Reggio Calabria represent 11% of the murders which occurred on the whole of the national territory.³²

The establishment of a control mechanism to settle internal conflicts has led investigators and experts to re-examine the declared horizontal structure of the 'ndrangheta. In particular, the assumption according to which the 'ndrine represent monads, that are totally autonomous from one another, has been questioned.

Police investigations have revealed the existence of agreements and alliances among some *cosche* of the province. One of them for instance, demonstrated the:

'existence, almost at the centre of the Ionian area of Reggio Calabria province, of a structure, or rather of "headquarters" of criminal activities which managed and even planned the most important criminal events occurring in that area'.³³

According to the reconstruction made by the Anti-mafia District Office of the *Procura della Repubblica di Reggio Calabria*, in fact, the main families of San Luca, Plati' and Natile di Careri, three villages at the core of the Aspromonte mountain chain, had jointly organized

32. It is worthwhile pointing out that, in spite of the strong drop in murders which have occurred over the last two years, the Reggio Calabria province continues to record rates of violent conflicts which are much higher than those reported for other areas with a long tradition of criminal activity. In 1993, for instance, 71 homicides took place in Reggio Calabria province, 32 of which were certainly caused by mafia conflicts, and the rates per 100,000 inhabitants were respectively 12.6 and 5.7. In Palermo and Naples provinces instead, there were respectively 31 and 124 killings, 5 and 62 of which were mafia ones, and the rates were respectively 2.5 and 0.4 for the Palermo province and 4.1 and 2.1 for the Naples one.

33. *Procura della Repubblica di Reggio Calabria, Richiesta di rinvio a giudizio e di archiviazione nei confronti di Barbaro Francesco + 52*, 16 luglio 1993.

and run at least 19 extortion kidnappings during the 1980s and had then reinvested the proceeds from that unlawful operation in the trade of heavy drugs.

The myth of absolute autonomy and self-sufficiency of the Calabrian *cosche* was rejected even by Justice collaborators. Their accounts suggest that even in the Reggio Calabria province there has always been some form of managing group at the top, though not as strong and not as powerful as the Provincial Commission of Cosa Nostra.³⁴ According to them, the body established in the early 1990s was not something marking the end of a traditional set-up and the beginning of a new one; but it rather resulted from the refinement of organizational modules that had been somewhat rudimentary up to that time. As was stated by Giacomo Lauro, former head of a Reggio Calabria mafia family:

'the Commission has always existed, but it had less power in interfering with local affairs: the body set up in 1991 was given new and different powers, so much so that it was instrumental in bringing to an end the hostilities between *cosche* in the Reggio area'.³⁵

This new information has prompted a re-evaluation of the traditional periodical meetings, called *crimini*, that the mafia chiefs used to hold and still hold every year near the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Polsi during the September Feast in the Aspromonte region. In 1969 the police raided a meeting of the Reggio *cosche* near the Sanctuary, in the Montalto locality, and captured several bosses. There is also information about another meeting held at Ponte Calanna, always on the Aspromonte mountains, in September 1960.³⁶

Even though most experts attributed an exclusively religious and ritual meaning to these meetings, in actual fact they have been operational meetings for a long time, where the representatives of the *'ndrine* of Reggio Calabria province would plan the most important criminal deeds to be accomplished, settle disputes and punish the culprits, at times even removing them from the position of chiefs, in the case of severe offences.

It is obvious, however, that these primordial mechanisms for settling disputes were not very successful given that Reggio Calabria province has always been characterized by an extremely high level of mafia conflicts, much higher than any other *Mezzogiorno* region. Even more than in Sicily – as the Investigating Judges (Giudici Istruttori) of so-called 'first Calabrian *maxi-processo*' wrote a few years ago –

'all the issues amongst the *cosche* and within each *cosca* are "normally" settled with bloodshed. Murder is the usual means used for re-asserting one's strength and for eliminating one's opponents'.³⁷

With regard to this matter, it must be recalled that the mafia war of the 1985-1991 period was preceded by a just-as-bloody conflict in the 1974-1976 period which had produced tens of casualties and had brought about a radical change in the existing mafia equilibria, with the downfall of the *cosche* led by the old bosses of the province, like Antonio Macri', Giuseppe

34. Tribunale di Reggio Calabria, *Ordinanza sentenza di rinvio a giudizio contro Albanese Mario* + 190, 1988.

35. Procura della Repubblica di Reggio Calabria, *Richiesta ... contro Morabito Giuseppe* + 161, *cit.*, p. 27 (n. 30).

36. E. Ciconte, *op. cit.* pp. 318-320 (n. 4).

37. Tribunale di Reggio Calabria, *Ordinanza ... contro Albanese Mario* + 190, *cit.*, p. 147 (n. 34).

Zappia and Domenico Tripodo³⁸ and the coming to the fore of new personalities like the two brothers Giorgio and Paolo De Stefano.³⁹

4. THE ENTREPRENEURIAL MAFIA

As in Sicily, the entrepreneurial activities of the Calabrian *cosche* have consistently expanded and diversified over the last quarter of a century.

Yet, extortion – notwithstanding being a traditional and not very remunerative activity – continues to constitute one of the most substantial sources of illegal earnings and represents a major source of revenue for the lower ranks of the criminal associations. Indeed, it is quite possible that the greater incisiveness of anti-mafia action in the last two years may have revalued the attractiveness of extortion in the eyes of criminal groups, thus leading to its extension.

Moreover, one must not forget that extortion is one of the instruments that enables the mafia organizations to exercise a particularly close control over the territory, imposing a visible tribute to their power.

According to the Advocate General of Reggio Calabria, 'each and every business activity in town and in the province is subjected to the extortion racket: industrial plants, commercial businesses, farms, and even the professions'. As occurs elsewhere, the bribe may be represented by payment in money or in kind, by the imposition of a false body guard (*guardiania*) or the hiring of non-existent personnel, it may take the form of compulsory participation in the public works that the extorted company has been contracted for.

The intimidation climate is such that the denunciations presented to the police are not representative of the situation: in 1993 for instance, there have been 85 denunciations in Reggio Calabria province and 217 in the whole region. The Parliamentary Anti-mafia Commission has recently estimated that they only account for less than 10% of the extortions actually carried out.⁴⁰

The *pizzo* racket is taken for granted to such an extent that a simple phone call is often enough to collect the payment and there are even cases in which the entrepreneur enquired as to whom he was to contact to pay his share even before receiving an explicit request.

It is kidnapping, however, that represents the main means through which the Calabrian *cosche* have accomplished their 'primitive accumulation', which allowed them to start more profitable business. With the money of the ransoms, the mafia bosses were able to buy the trucks and the mechanical equipment necessary to enter the market of public works and to buy large lots of narcotics to get into the wholesale drugs trade.⁴¹

According to data published by the Italian Ministry of the Interior, between 1 January

38. See S. Gambino, 'Il carcere non mangia gli uomini. Biografia giudiziaria di Don Mico Tripodo', *Quaderni del Mezzogiorno e delle isole* (1977) n. 42-43 pp. 91-100.

39. Tribunale di Reggio Calabria, *Sentenza a carico di De Stefano Paolo + 59*, proc. n. 1/79, 1979. For a press report of what has been defined the 'first mafia war', see L. Malafarina, *Il canto della lupara* (Reggio Calabria 1981).

40. Commissione Parlamentare d'inchiesta sul fenomeno della mafia e sulle altre associazioni similari (henceforth Commissione Parlamentare), *Relazione sulla Calabria*, 12 ottobre 1993, p. 4.

41. Some other times however, the money was invested in the building sector: the one million lire ransom of the Paul Getty Junior kidnapping was at least partially used to build a quarter, which is still named after the famous hostage, in the town of Bovalino. See E. Ciconte, *op. cit.*, p. 326 (n. 4).

1969 and 23 June 1989, 620 kidnappings have taken place in the whole of Italy, 120 of which were accomplished in Calabria.⁴² The number of cases organized by 'ndrangheta families has been much higher because they often kidnapped the hostages in Northern-Central regions and then brought them to the Aspromonte, the high mountain chain in Southern Calabria.

Nonetheless, profit does not seem to have always been the primary reason – at least in the second half of the 1980s – for the organization of a kidnapping. According to some researchers, it was the need to control the territory that obliged the *cosche* to keep organizing this kind of hateful and archaic crime,⁴³ while others – more soundly – hypothesize a more subtle strategy in order to divert the attention of police forces and judges from more profitable activities.⁴⁴

Since the end of the 1980s however, the *cosche* carried out mostly kidnappings of not very wealthy individuals, living in Reggio Calabria province, characterized by shorter terms of imprisonment and less burdensome ransoms. This pattern appears to have been at least partially caused by a law, approved in the early 1990s, according to which the assets and property of the family of the kidnapped individual are frozen: this regulation appears to have induced mafia clans to plan short-lived and easier-to-run kidnappings in which the paying of the ransom is agreed upon with the hostage himself and it is paid upon his release.

One of the perverse effects of the new law, however, has been that the negotiations between the kidnappers and the hostage's family have become more and more clandestine. In addition, the *Procura della Repubblica of Locri* has recently started an investigation into some of the cases, that caused a bigger social alarm, where the Secret Services might have surreptitiously contributed to the payment of the ransom with reserved funds.⁴⁵

The most important mafia families, however, appear to have lost interest in 'this type of criminal activity which is so negative in terms of the alarm prompted in the public opinion, and turn instead to other less conspicuous and more remunerative activities'.⁴⁶ According to the Prosecutors of the *Procura della Repubblica of Reggio Calabria* two stages in the development of criminal activities can be identified: a first stage during which drug trafficking was merely a means for transforming the proceeds from kidnappings, and the second stage, starting in the late 1980s, when drug trade took the place of kidnappings as the main line of activity of the groups.

The drugs traffic has also substituted the smuggling of cigarettes, which has been traditionally very extensive in Campania, Sicily and above all in Puglia. According to the Head of the Calabrian District of the *Guardia di Finanza*, tobacco smuggling has now 'a marginal relevance' in Calabria.⁴⁷

Many elements confirm that the involvement of the 'ndrine in narcotics trade underwent great expansion during the 1980s and has now reached very large proportions. Concerning the contacts with suppliers, the presence in the upper levels of the national and international

42. Ministero dell'Interno, *Sequestri di persona a scopo di estorsione* (Roma 1989).

43. S. Luberto e A. Manganeli, *I sequestri di persona a scopo di estorsione* (Padova 1984) p. 32.

44. Commissione Parlamentare, *Relazione di minoranza presentata dall'On. Violante ed altri*, 18 gennaio 1990, par. 27. See also V. Macrì, 'La 'ndrangheta in Calabria', in F. Occhiogrosso, ed., *Ragazzi della mafia* (Milano 1993) pp. 102-104.

45. La Repubblica, 'Sequestri di mafia, riscatto di Stato', 9 novembre 1993, p. 7; L'Unità, 'Sequestro Ghidini, risatto pagato con i fondi neri?', 8 novembre 1993, p. 7.

46. Procura della Repubblica di Reggio Calabria, *Richiesta ... Barbaro Francesco* + 52, cit. p. 9 (n. 33).

47. Giuseppe Fortuna, Head of the Calabrian District of the Guardia di Finanza, *Statement* included in Commissione Parlamentare, *Hearings*, 29 gennaio 1993, p. 36.

distribution network and ramification of exports, the Calabrian *cosche* appear to be in a position by no means lower than that of the main Sicilian families. An important investigation carried out by the Anti-mafia District Office of Reggio Calabria, for instance, revealed that starting from 1989 a 'cartel' of *cosche* of Reggio Calabria province handled several lots of heroin totalling 500 kg and cargoes of cocaine of up to 300 kg at a time.⁴⁸

Another inquiry run by the same judicial institution pointed out that during the last decade an organization of immigrated Calabrian criminals coming from Siderno and other neighbouring towns, called the 'Siderno Group', has been running the circulation of large amounts of heroin in Europe, North America and Australia.⁴⁹ Also in Piedmont it was discovered that, in collaboration with Turkish and Pakistani traffickers and with the support of individuals from the Centre-North of the Country, a group of immigrants from Plati had organized and financed the import of very large lots of heroin (500-600 kg for each transaction) and of tens of tons of hashish, subsequently distributing the drugs on the main Northern markets.⁵⁰

The larger '*ndrangheta*' families also appear to have set up excellent money-laundering channels. Since the mid-1970s they have established solid contacts with many of the credit institutions operating in the region, especially the small, provincial ones.⁵¹

In the last decade however, the *cosche* have been able to diversify their channels of money laundering, exploiting non-banking financial institutions and foreign intermediaries.⁵² An investigation carried out by the Procura della Repubblica of Locri has shown indeed that a 'criminal entrepreneur' living in Locri, officially with no property, was successfully laundering huge amounts of money of illicit origin on behalf of major mafia families. Through a network of financial institutions registered in the name of figure-heads based in Pescara, Padua, Ferrara and Milan, Salvatore Filippone carried out transactions for various billions of rubles and millions of dollars, carrying out speculative operations in the Russian Republic or in the former Soviet Republics.⁵³

The entrepreneurial dimension of the '*ndrangheta*' could not be well depicted if we limited our attention to its involvement in illicit activities. As Judge Saverio Mannino recently stated, the '*ndrangheta*' must be thought of as 'a structure capable of managing at the same time licit and illicit activities, in a single, intertwined and indivisible context'.⁵⁴ A similar assessment

48. Procura della Repubblica di Reggio Calabria, *Richiesta ... contro Morabito Giuseppe* + 161, cit. (n. 30).

49. Tribunale di Reggio Calabria, *Ordinanza ... Archinà Rocco Carlo* + 44, cit. (n. 23).

50. Tribunale di Torino, *Ordinanza di custodia cautelare in carcere nei confronti di Marando Pasquale* + 51, 15 ottobre 1993.

51. In the first big trial against Tyrrhenian *cosche*, the Investigating Judge Agostino Cordova highlighted the 'absolute unwillingness of the banks to cooperate with the law' and then he cited an interesting example of the special treatment received by a Reggio mafia chief: 'In drawing up the instrument of credit, a clerk at the Banca Nazionale del Lavoro in this city noted that, "We do not have the usual information about the borrower's estate, since it did not seem appropriate to demand this, as we are dealing with people very well known in the city - sensible people, who command respect ... Therefore considering what is appropriate given the particular environment in which we operate, where Signor De Stefano exercises a strong influence, we suggest that we give a favourable reply to the application made to us". The manager did not dissent: "We agree, considering the above opportunity reasons we authorize the loan". See Tribunale di Reggio Calabria, *Ordinanza di rinvio a giudizio a carico di Paolo De Stefano* + 59, 1979, pp. 22-23.

52. Commissione Parlamentare, *Relazione al Parlamento prevista dall'art. 32 legge 13 settembre 1982, n. 646, relatore Abdon Alinovi*, 16 aprile 1985.

53. Tribunale di Locri, *Ordinanza di custodia cautelare in carcere nei confronti di Filippone Salvatore* + 12, 30 ottobre 1993.

54. S. Mannino, 'Il problema e la risposta: istituzioni e magistratura di fronte alla '*ndrangheta*', *Meridiana* (1991) pp. 271-292.

was expressed by the Prosecutors of the *Procura della Repubblica of Palmi*, who pointed out that the '*ndrangheta*' has succeeded in creating new entrepreneurial roles, the so-called 'mafia-shareholded' enterprises, where there is a unified management of clean and dirty capital:

'...the Calabrian mafia is now able to act through enterprises and companies which, in different ways (...) are controlled and which, taking absolutely legal forms, can use all the technical-judicial means to make mafia presence invisible'.⁵⁵

The legal activities are in fact functional to the laundering of dirty capital accumulated in the illegal sphere. But the so-called 'mafia enterprise', that is an enterprise active in the legal markets, usually in the public works, but run by mafia entrepreneurs and financed by dirty capital,⁵⁶ accomplishes at the same time other functions. With the involvement in licit activities in fact, mafia entrepreneurs usually get very high rates of profit, because they adopt mafia methods in the organization of work within the company and in its relationships with the external environment. What is most important, they increase their power in the local community, thanks to a strong control – in some cases a monopoly – of the labour market. The considerations elaborated by the Anti-mafia Commission of the XI legislature on Cosa Nostra can be easily extended to the '*ndrangheta*':

'With the hands on public contracts, Cosa Nostra can control the essential aspects of the political and economical life, of the territory, because it conditions entrepreneurs, politicians, workers, and professionals. This aspect contributes to strengthen the domination on the territory, consolidates social consensus, empowers the single mafia families in the territory, in the society and in the political and administrative environment'.⁵⁷

The involvement of the '*ndrangheta*' families in controlling public contracts for the provision of goods and services goes back to the early 1970s when the main '*ndrine*' used threats and intimidation as a means for having the subcontracts assigned to companies they had control over. In the construction of the Gioia Tauro port and V Steelwork for instance, the mafia entrepreneurs rejected the proposal of getting 3% extortion money on the contracts which the large building firms had obtained from the State. They succeeded, instead, in getting the subcontracts of the public works, obtaining directly 70% of them and controlling indirectly the rest by imposing an 8% extortion contribution on each subcontract which was granted to non-mafia companies.⁵⁸

Recent investigations have shown that '*ndrangheta*' groups are now well beyond this first stage of infiltration. As evidenced in the lengthy and laborious work carried out by the Pro-

55. Procura della Repubblica di Palmi, *Richiesta di rinvio a giudizio, di misure cautelari e di archiviazione nei confronti di Galluzzo Vincenzo Rosario* + 81, 15 novembre 1993.

56. P. Arlacchi, *Mafia Business ... cit.*, pp. 88-105 (n. 7).

57. Commissione Parlamentare, *Relazione sui rapporti tra mafia e politica*, 6 aprile 1993, doc. XXIII, n. 2, p. 71.

58. Tribunale di Reggio Calabria, *Sentenza ... De Stefano Paolo* + 59, *cit.* For a sociological analysis see P. Arlacchi, *Mafia Business ... cit.*, pp. 83-116 (n. 7) and for a journalistic description see L. Malafarina, '*Ndrangheta alla sbarra*' (Roma 1981) pp. 86-209.

secutors of the *Procura della Repubblica of Palmi* on the works for the construction of the Gioia Tauro Power Plant, the '*ndrangheta*' took part in the direct management of the works and entered into agreements with officials of the public body, of entrepreneurs and of political groups. Mafia conditioning does no longer take place only at the end of the economic process of public investment – subcontracts and extortions – but, indeed, more deeply, at the beginning of that process, with decisions that were taken jointly by the Italian Electrical Company (ENEL) and the national building companies which are involved in the largest tranches of the works. On the matter the Prosecutors stated that 'there is a ramified intertwining between mafia and political corruption. The relationship between official economy and mafia economy is organic'.⁵⁹

The case of the Gioia Tauro Power Plant does not represent an exception. The capability of exerting a strong influence over the expense trends of the local and national administrations is spread among all the *cosche* of the province. Although at lower levels, even the Northern settlements of the '*ndrangheta*' families seem to be involved in the manipulation of public contracts. An association of Calabrians were identified in Turin and Novara who had carried out numerous dynamite and fire attacks for extortion purposes against building companies to induce them to withdraw or not to participate in bids for the submission of contracts, hence favouring their own companies.⁶⁰

The '*ndrangheta*' intervention in public works has certainly been fostered by the spread of illegality and the proliferation of political-administrative corruption. Examples of this are provided by the investigations concerning Reggio Calabria municipality on the bribes paid to politicians and public officials in order to get public contracts in the building and service sectors. According to Agatino Licandro, the former mayor of the town, who collaborated with the judges and subsequently had to leave Reggio Calabria and hide in Northern Italy in order to escape the revenges and the contempt of his former colleagues and of a wide part of the population:

'We live in a system which, without bribes at the right moments and places, would paralise. (...) The turn-over of public works, projects, directions of the works, in a word the money that would have come to the city on which there have effectively been or had been programmed stealings and other mechanisms, however useful, to make the bribe-system works, exceeded 1,200 billion lire'.⁶¹

The connections between corruption and mafia have been at least partially unveiled by the investigations on the murder of Hon. Ludovico Ligato, former President of the *Ferrovie dello Stato* (State Railway), who was killed in Reggio Calabria, on 27 July 1989. In December 1992 the Judge for Preliminary Investigations issued warrants of arrest for four well known Calabrian politicians and seven mafia bosses, suspecting that they decided together the kill-

59. *Ibidem*, 1688.

60. G. De Gennaro, *Intervento alla I Convenzione Nazionale delle Associazioni Antiracket*, Roma, 21 luglio 1993, p. 12.

61. A. Licandro and A. Varano, *La città dolente* (Torino 1991), pp. 4-5.

ing of Ligato – and the *cosche* materially executed it – because Ligato was trying to offset their secret pacts for controlling the flux of public expenditure coming to Reggio Calabria.⁶²

The laundering and reinvestment of dirty capital is not limited to the sector of public works. More than their counterparts in Sicily, the Calabrian bosses have maintained particularly strong links with their own native territory and, especially on the Tyrrhenian side, they have bought extensive plots of land, compelling the old owners to sell it very cheaply and taking the place of the old landed aristocracy.

In spite of its entrepreneurial evolution in fact, the *mafioso* still has very close ties to particular territory and the control of it has become indeed compulsory in order to accomplish the full range of illegal activities of the family. Recent investigations for instance proved that in the municipalities of Castellace and Oppido Mamertina on the Tyrrhenian coast, 'the Mammoliti-Rugolo *cosca* has over the years started and achieved a progressive territorial expansion, gaining, in different ways, the ownership or the usufruct of wide plots of land'. In order to convince the owners to sell the land, the mafia members have adopted 'a wide range of legal and illegal techniques, and, particularly, the poisonous methods of mafia intimidations of the victims, such as damaging, fires, thefts, dynamite attacks, attempted murders' up to the murder of the most stubborn owners.⁶³

During the 1980s the mafia bosses also started to buy commercial businesses, insurance companies, real estate agencies and building societies. It has been proved, for instance, that the very first supermarkets in Reggio Calabria were established with proceeds of illicit activities, while in Locri the shops of big national franchizing chains were bought by the local *cosca*.⁶⁴ Indeed as historian Barone highlights, the involvement of 'ndranghetisti in licit activities has started 'some processes that deeply changed the economic physiognomy of a consistent portion of the province'.⁶⁵

5. EXTENSION OF THE 'NDRANGHETA: PERIPHERAL UNITS AND CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER CRIMINAL ASSOCIATIONS

The *cosche* of Reggio Calabria province have set up a very large national and international network thanks to the migration movements of the 1950s and 1960s which involved many individuals belonging to 'ndrangheta. As stated by the Parliamentary Anti-mafia Commission in its recent report on the mafia settlements and infiltrations into 'non traditional' areas, referring in particular to Lombardy,

'in these years the initial power ratio has been overthrown: today there is a much more massive presence of Calabrian mafia families, even though the Sicilian organizations have not completely disappeared'.

62. Tribunale di Reggio Calabria, *Ordinanza di custodia cautelare in carcere nei confronti di Battaglia Piero* + 10, 1 dicembre 1992. See also E. Ciconte, 'Ludovico Ligato', in N. Tranfaglia, ed., *Cirillo, Ligato e Lima. Tre storie di mafia e politica* (Bari 1994) pp. 101-183.

63. Tribunale di Reggio Calabria, *Ordinanza di custodia cautelare in carcere nei confronti di Mammoliti Saverio* +13, 31 luglio 1992, p. 9; 63.

64. Tribunale di Reggio Calabria, *Ordinanza ... Paolo De Stefano* +59, cit. p. 246 (n. 39).

65. L. Barone, 'L'ascesa della 'ndrangheta negli ultimi due decenni', *Meridiana*, 1989-1990, n. 7-8, p. 256.

And talking about Piedmont the Commission adds:

'The 1975-1985 decade was characterized by the presence in Piedmont of criminal organizations from Catania and Calabria which had entered into an operational pact (...). After this period and following the heavy sentences inflicted on major representatives of the Catanian clans, the Calabrian criminal associations took over most of the management of illegal business in Piedmont. Other criminal organizations can do their business in this region only on the basis of an agreement with the Calabrian *cosche*, otherwise they only can if the latter allow them to'.⁶⁶

These considerations can be extended to other regions: there are Calabrian mafia settlements in Liguria, Emilia Romagna, Veneto, Trentino, Friuli Venezia Giulia, the Aosta Valley, Marche, Lazio, Umbria, Abruzzo e Tuscany. Altogether there are more than 150 members of criminal organizations originating from Reggio Calabria province that are known to the police, active in those regions, to whom at least the same amount, which are not yet known and have a clean record must be added.⁶⁷

As a recent investigation has shown for two of the most powerful groups of the Milan hinterland, the Calabrian clans operating in the Centre-Northern regions usually consist of a restricted circle of people bound by kinship, which are often formally affiliated to the '*ndrangheta*, and are surrounded by a more numerous group of people, who are not always necessarily Calabrian.⁶⁸

In spite of their longstanding exposure to different cultures and lifestyles, the main exponents of the Calabrian groups operating in the North remain loyal to the traditional cultural values of the '*ndrangheta*. They do not hesitate to use violence and to commit murder to avenge an offence or to assert their dominion over another individual or group, being defiant and showing contempt for the public authorities. Their ties with the *cosche* of origin are very tight and it would be a bad analytical and investigative mistake to consider the Northern units as being independent from their parent *cosca* in Calabria. They are only the outermost branches of the primary mafia families and their strength and power derive from the power of the latter and from the respect that their bosses enjoy. An episode may be sufficient to understand their degree of dependence: even though the two strongest Calabrian groups operating in the Milan area, the Papalia and Sergi families, had been competing against each other for quite some time in the struggle for supremacy over the illegal markets of the city, an open clash was postponed because of a precise order which came from Calabria, since the two families belonged to the same formation in the mafia war of the second half of the 1980s.

The trips back and forth to Calabria are very frequent and there is an unceasing sharing of human, financial and military resources between the home seat in Calabria and the Northern settlements. Action groups often come from Calabria to carry out an attempt, an assassination, or a kidnapping while, in turn, the Northern communities provide hospitality and shelter to criminals on the run, as well as assistance to the Calabrians imprisoned in the Northern

66. Commissione Parlamentare, *Insedimenti e infiltrazioni di soggetti ed organizzazioni di tipo mafioso in aree non tradizionali*, 17 dicembre 1993.

67. Ministero dell'Interno, *Rapporto ... per il 1992*, cit., p. 166 (n. 16).

68. Tribunale di Milano, *Ordinanza di custodia cautelare in carcere nei confronti di Agil Fuat + 164*, 2 ottobre 1993.

prisons, and send weapons and hands to the South to participate in the feuds and in the intra-mafia clashes.

Moreover, most of the illegal economic activities are carried out together. At the time of kidnappings in the Centre-Northern regions, the locally based Calabrians would run the first stage of the operation, namely identify and kidnap the victim which they would then transfer to Aspromonte.⁶⁹ The formations operating in Lombardy also have the task of laundering the ransom.⁷⁰ In order to achieve that end and to make profitable investments of capital of licit and illicit origin, since the mid-1970s the 'ndranghetisti living in the North started to import large amounts of light and heavy drugs (in particular cocaine), made contact with many foreign traffickers and started the direct management of refineries in Italy (in the Bergamo surroundings) and abroad (in Argentina). In addition, they distribute the drugs coming from Calabrian on the large metropolitan markets.

Given their geographical location, the Northern ramifications of the Calabrian groups also purchase weapons in neighbouring Switzerland or from traders of the former Eastern bloc (in particular from former Yugoslavia) and hence send most of these arsenals to Calabria to meet the military needs of the *cosche* they belong to.

In the municipalities where they are extensively present, the Northern groups have imposed a very tight control over the territory. At Corsico, Buccinasco and Trezzano sul Naviglio, three small towns of the Milan hinterland, evidence shows the presence of surveillance squads that generally consist of young boys from the neighbourhood who work for a 'ndrangheta affiliate. There is also evidence of punitive actions, which in some cases have ended in the assassination of those who had questioned the supremacy of the *cosca* over the territory.

Where the community of Calabrian origin is larger, the criminal groups have succeeded in getting into the public administration, by sponsoring the election of relatives or people they can trust and by threatening opponents. Again, in the Corsico and Buccinasco municipalities, the Papalia and Sergi groups have managed to place people tied to them in top positions of the local public administration bodies, hence exercising a direct influence on public contracts and on urban planning.⁷¹

Settlements of Calabrian mafia families are known in some European countries as well as in North America and Australia. A strong presence of the 'ndrangheta, for example, has been found in Germany and especially in the Länder of Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, Hesse and Nordrhein-Westphalia. The 'ndranghetisti that live there are more than 100 people and they are involved in car thefts and smuggling, cocaine and heroin trafficking and robberies. In the sector of laundering and reinvestment of money, they manage a great number of small and medium commercial and tourism establishments (restaurants, pizzerias, ice-cream shops and garages, etc.). Between 1989 and 1991, 62 investigations concerning Italian organized crime groups were started in the Federal Republic of Germany, eight of which concerned Calabrian *cosche*.⁷²

Calabrian bosses have also been recently arrested and extradited from Holland, France,

69. This is the pattern followed for the kidnappings of Cesare Casella, Carlo Celadon and Roberta Ghidini.

70. In 1988 a citizen of Andorra was stopped at the Domodossola border and the 360 million lire he was carrying and which came from the payment of ransoms paid for 9 kidnappings organized by the Calabrian *cosche*, were seized. In his statements as Justice collaborator, the courier indicated a representative of the Milan 'ndrangheta as the person who had entrusted the money to him and which he was to give to some Colombian drug traffickers. See Procura della Repubblica di Reggio Calabria, *Richiesta ... Barbaro Francesco + 52, cit. (n. 33)*

71. Tribunale di Milano, *Ordinanza ... Agil Fuat + 164, cit. (n. 68)*

72. Ministero dell'Interno, *Rapporto ... per il 1992, cit. pp. 166-167 (n. 16)*.

Switzerland and Spain. A 'ndranghetista recently caught in Germany was on his way to Poland and, as already stated, there is proof of laundering of the dirty money of the Calabrian families in Russia. Furthermore according to the FBI, at least 65 members of the 'ndrangheta are active in the United States.⁷³

Canada and Australia are, however, the two countries where the presence of Calabrian *cosche* is more extended. In Australia since the 1920s a Calabrian extortion ring, known as 'Mano Nera' ('Black Hand'), was denounced in Queensland among the sugar-cane growers. In a report produced in 1964, known as the 'Cusack Report', it was estimated that only in the Victoria State, 300 members of the 'ndrangheta were active, 200 of whom residing in Melbourne, while another 500 lived in New South Wales. In the following decades, the Calabrian clans, besides being involved in a wide range of illicit activities – such as frauds, heroin and cocaine drug trafficking, extortion, control of prostitution, illegal gambling, and arms smuggling – established a monopoly of cannabis production in Australia.⁷⁴

The Calabrian settlements in Australia seem to have maintained the normative and organizational structure of their home seats: recently, the police forces have even found several copies of codes, containing the rituals, written in Italian, for the admission to the secret society.

According to the Australian authorities, the 'ndrangheta is responsible for at least 28 homicides committed between 1974 and 1990. Among them, there are two 'excellent' murders: the disappearance, in 1977, of Donald McKay, a candidate for the Australian Parliament who had been running a campaign against the cannabis plantations owned in New South Wales by some *mafiosi* originating from Plati, a village in the Aspromonte mountains; and the assassination, in 1989 of the Vice-Chief of the Federal Police, Colin Winchester.

At least since the 1950s there are known 'ndrangheta cells in Canada, in the cities of Toronto, Hamilton and Ottawa. A 'Board of Control' is believed to have been operating in the State of Ontario since the early 1960s, made up of the six most important bosses of the local *cosche*. This institution was inspired by the two most influential Calabrian bosses of the American La Cosa Nostra, Frank Costello and Albert Anastasia, who wanted to prevent conflicts between the ramifications of their criminal society and the 'ndrine.⁷⁵ The 'Board of Control' therefore exercised a double function, coordinating the activities of the Calabrian families within Canada and connecting them with the Italian, US and Australian sectors of Cosa Nostra and of the 'ndrangheta itself. As in Italy, the Board is called by the affiliates 'crimini', and its president, who is elected periodically by the family chiefs, has the title of 'capo di società'.

According to the Canadian and Italian police, the most dangerous organization is actually the so-called 'Siderno Group', because it is mainly composed of people coming from Siderno, a village in the Locride on the Ionian Coast. Besides Canada, it has ramifications in the United States and Australia. The foreign branches of the 'Siderno Group' still have very close links with the home seat in Calabria, thanks to strong blood and marriage links, adhere to the same models of behaviour and keep the same organizational structure. It is meaningful that a secret code, written in Calabrian dialect, which was found at a 'ndranghetista's place

73. *Ibidem*, p.166.

74. Australian Federal Police, National Assessment Unit, Strategic Branch, *La criminalità organizzata italiana e l'Australia*, quoted in Ministero dell'Interno, *Rapporto... per il 1992*, cit. pp. 166-167 (n. 16).

75. Royal Canadian Mounted Police, *Study of the R.C.M.P. analysts licensed on 25 February 1987*, quoted in Ministero dell'Interno, *Rapporto... per il 1992*, cit., pp. 166-167 (n. 16).

in the United States in 1971, was proved to be identical to the one recovered in Australia in the house of another *mafioso*.⁷⁶

The geographical extension of the 'ndrangheta and the wideness of its operating range are strongly enhanced by the network of illegal relationships, in which it is involved.

Since the 1960s, the Calabrian families have been establishing ties and contacts with representatives of the Sicilian mafia in relation to cigarette smuggling and then drug trafficking. For a long time it was believed that the 'ndrangheta was in a subordinate position in such activities, restricting itself to providing safe shelters for the goods unloaded from the ships. Indeed, this may have been so for the time period between the early 1960s and the mid-1970s. From that date onwards, however, some families from Southern Calabria started acquiring more and more power and autonomy until the relations between the criminals on the two sides of the Strait reached a situation of parity. Recent investigations, for instance, confirmed that some Calabrian *cosche* – and in particular the Iamonte from Melito Porto Salvo and the Tegano from Archi families – had been in contact for some time with the mafia groups of Eastern Sicily – especially with the Catania's Santapaola family, which is associated with Cosa Nostra – with the aim of carrying out joint arms and drug trafficking operations and of imposing levies on large national companies involved in the construction of public works.

Moreover, according to the some *pentiti*, the major representatives of the 'ndrangheta are ritually affiliated to Cosa Nostra. According to Tommaso Buscetta for example, this practice goes back to the 1950s when Albert Anastasia, the Calabrian boss who was then the chief of the Gambino family in New York, asked the cooperation of some influential members of the Sicilian Cosa Nostra and that of Lucky Luciano who was then living in Italy, in order to establish some mafia families in Calabria.⁷⁷

Indeed, many episodes are known and for which evidence was produced in Court, which prove the existence of close ties between Mafia groups and Calabrian clans. As an example mention can be made of the involvement of two Sicilian mafia gangsters, Tommaso Scaduto and Antonio Di Cristina, in a massacre which took place on the Locri market-place on 23 June 1967 and the surrender of Antonino Salamone, one of the historical bosses of the Mafia of the 1960s and 1970s at the Africo *Carabinieri* police-station in 1983 (a locality where Riina is said to have spent part of the period when he was on the run disguised as a priest). As already pointed out, the close ties between the two associations have also been reconfirmed by the findings of the investigation on the assassination of Antonino Scopelliti, Deputy Attorney General at the Supreme Court.⁷⁸

Close and organic relations are also documented between the mafia *consortia* of Reggio Calabria, in particular the group headed by Paolo De Stefano, and the Neapolitan camorra, above all the Raffaele Cutolo's *Nuova Camorra Organizzata* (NCO):

76. Tribunale di Reggio Calabria, *Ordinanza ... Archinà Rocco Carlo* + 44, cit. (n. 23)

77. P. Arlacchi, *Addio a Cosa Nostra. La vita di Tommaso Buscetta* (Milano 1994) pp. 53-55. See also the statements made by another Justice collaborator, Leonardo Messina, when he was heard by the Anti-mafia Commission in Commissione Parlamentare, *Audizione del collaboratore della giustizia Leonardo Messina*, 4 dicembre 1992, pp. 541-542. Indeed even the Director of the Direzione Investigativa Anti-mafia, a police force specialized in the fight against organized crime, stated in front of the Anti-mafia Commission that there are grounds to believe that 'in Calabria there are families associated to the Sicilian Cosa Nostra, in the same way as it happened in Campania with the camorristic groups'. See Commissione Parlamentare, *Audizione del Direttore della DIA, Gianni De Gennaro, sul fenomeno della 'ndrangheta*, 19 gennaio 1994, p. 3505.

78. Procura della Repubblica di Reggio Calabria, *Richiesta ... contro Morabito Giuseppe* + 161, cit., pp. 25-26 (n. 30).

'the Cutolo-De Stefano connection - Vincenzo Macrì and Antonio Lombardo, the Investigating Magistrates in the trial against Mario Albanese + 190 state - was the main feature of organized crime throughout Southern Italy for a long time (1977-1983), and had to do with all the main crimes like assassinations, drug trafficking and kidnappings'.⁷⁹

According to a sentence of the Tribunal of Vibo Valentia, which accepted the statements of one of the first Calabrian *pentiti*, 'there was a *'ndranghetista* derivation of Neapolitan Cutolo, whose career started with a baptism and then continued with promotions up the hierarchy decided by a Calabrian synedrion (Piromalli, Mammoliti, De Stefano)'.⁸⁰ Another Justice collaborator reports that it was in 1974, in the Sant'Efrasio criminal lunatic asylum that Cutolo thought he might 'establish a new camorra according to the pattern of the Calabrian *'ndrangheta*, adopting its structure and even its rituals. Before this, the Neapolitan camorra knew nothing of all this, it was a pack of unrestrained dogs'.⁸¹ Finally it is worth recalling that it was Cutolo himself who, on behalf of Paolo De Stefano and for the sum of 200 million lire, organized the assassination of don 'Mico', Domenico Tripodo, leader of the opposite group at the time of the first bloodshedding mafia war.

Just as strong is the influence exercised by the NCO and the *'ndrangheta* on the development and consolidation of the *Sacra Corona Unita* (Sacred Unified Crown) in Apulia, whose organizational structure and whose rituals are fashioned according to those of the above-mentioned criminal organizations.⁸²

6. THE POWER DIMENSION

Even though over the last twenty years the Calabrian *cosche* have undergone an impetuous entrepreneurial transformation thanks to which they have taken on important roles on the main illicit national and international markets and have succeeded in hoarding unprecedented profits, they cannot be reduced to the idealtype of enterprises that look for the maximization of profit. As a matter of fact they are polyvalent units: at the same time as accumulating wealth through extortion and monopoly, they act as centres of illicit power, which try to influence public decision-making and, in the areas where they are more deeply-rooted, they pretend to 'become State', controlling and influencing almost every aspect of public life.

Particularly in Reggio Calabria province (but not only there as we have already seen) the mafia families exert a heavy influence over public life. The former mayor of Reggio Calabria, Agatino Licandro, who has cooperated with the Judges on several political corruption investigations, stated in front of the Anti-mafia Commission, that in the Reggio Calabria council 'at least 10-15% of the members have been knowingly elected with the votes of the mafia'.⁸³

79. Tribunale di Reggio Calabria, *Ordinanza ... contro Albanese Mario + 190*, cit. p. 187 (n. 34).

80. Tribunale di Vibo Valentia, *Ordinanza-sentenza di rinvio a giudizio contro Mancuso Francesco + 200*, 1985.

81. Tribunale di Reggio Calabria, *Ordinanza ... contro Albanese Mario + 190*, cit. p. 189 (n. 34).

82. Ministero dell'Interno, *Rapporto ... per il 1992*, cit., p. 197 and Tribunale di Lecce, Corte di Assise di Appello, *Sentenza n.1/92 contro De Tommasi Giovanni + 104*, 1992 pp. 107-117.

83. Commissione Parlamentare, *Relazione sulla Calabria*, cit. p. 58 (n. 40).

Indeed it must be recalled that, as stated by the Parliamentary Anti-mafia Commission of the XI Legislature,

'The mafia could not carry out some of its plans without a network of complicity and without benefiting from the poor supervision of the public authorities: contracts, Community frauds, interference in the general trade distribution network, take-overs of companies, laundering of the proceeds from these activities and subsequent reinvestment, are all activities that could not be carried out without the connivance, collusion and backing from the outside. (...)

The intertwining between politics and '*ndrangheta*' is, as elsewhere, a sign of the pervasive presence of the *cosche* which are not a separate body but which tend to introduce themselves in all institutional bodies and at all levels of society and to gain and wield power, influencing public life and confirming their identity as a closed system of power'.⁸⁴

An indicator of the ability that the mafia families have in influencing the public life of the communities they belong to is represented by the number of municipality councils that have been dissolved because of mafia infiltrations. Since May 1991, when the Law was enacted, eight town councils have been dissolved in Reggio Calabria province of which four in 1991, two in 1992 and two in 1993; four public bodies were subjected to a similar decision in Catanzaro province while no public body was wound up in Cosenza province. Amongst the town councils that have been dissolved, of special importance are those of Gioia Tauro, Rossano and Taurianova in Reggio province and Lametia Terme in Catanzaro province. According to the Chief Prosecutor of Palmi, Agostino Cordova, for instance 'Rossano municipality was a pure administrative projection of the mafia'.⁸⁵

At the same time, over 400 public administrators have been charged with serious offences such as mafia association, murder and drug traffic. Furthermore it must be recalled that during the XI legislature, the Reggio Calabria Prosecutors requested from Parliament the authorization to proceed against four Calabrian Members of Parliament (Dep. Riccardo Misasi, Dep. Sandro Principe, Dep. Paolo Romeo and Sen. Sisimio Zito) on the ground of suspected criminal mafia association.⁸⁶

The investigation on the 'exchange vote' initiated by the Chief Prosecutor of Palmi, who seized electoral material from the homes of well-known mafia bosses during the political elections of 5 April 1992, confirmed the interest that mafia families have in engaging in electoral campaigns so as to have candidates elected who will offer protection and support to their criminal activities.⁸⁷ In the rare cases, when they do not succeed in 'peacefully' conditioning public affairs, the *cosche* attack the public administrators with intimidations and threats thus compelling them to yield to their will.

84. *Ibidem*, pp. 62-63.

85. Statement reported in F. Forgione e P. Mondani, *Oltre la cupola. Massoneria, mafia e politica* (Milano 1994) p. 111.

86. Camera dei Deputati, *Domande di autorizzazione a procedere in giudizio contro i deputati Sandro Principe* (doc. IV, n. 49 and n. 437), *Riccardo Misasi* (doc. IV, n. 256) and *Paolo Romeo* (doc. IV, n. 465), and Senato della Repubblica, *Domanda di autorizzazione a procedere in giudizio contro il senatore Sisimio Zito* (doc. IV n. 30).

87. For a detailed account of the relationships between mafia bosses and Calabrian local and national politicians, see F. Forgione e P. Mondani, *op. cit.*, pp. 121-154 (n. 85).

It must be highlighted that over the last two decades the mafia families have strongly increased their political power and, thanks to their increased economic funds, have set their relationships with the political world on a complete equal basis. The rise of the entrepreneurial mafia has done away with the old subordination of the local *mafioso* to his political patrons. Mafia bosses have frequently gone into partnership with politicians (behind the cover, often of men of straw) to run a wide range of businesses. This change was clearly pointed out by the Prosecutors of the *Procura della Repubblica of Palmi* with regard to the investigation on the bids for the ENEL Power plant contracts at Gioia Tauro:

‘The *’ndrangheta* has more and more the need to have relationship of an “organic identity” with politics in order to secure opportunities for reinvestment and safe channels for re-accumulating “mafia funds” through contracts for public works.

This economic-mafia cycle is so well integrated and organic that it can be stated without fear of being proved wrong that today the mafia has outgrown the historic stage in which it was “subordinate to politics” ... This type of relationship is no longer based on compromise but on a real system of government, founded on a close-knit intermingling of politics and business and of votes procured by the mafia’.⁸⁸

Quite frequently the *’ndrangheta* bosses succeed in directly having their affiliates or acolytes take on important offices within the Public Administration so that their businesses can be better protected. This phenomenon, which has spread very fast in the last ten years, has been defined “internalization of representation”.⁸⁹ As a Substitute Prosecutor of *Procura della Repubblica of Reggio Calabria* stated in front of the Anti-mafia Commission,

‘often when we talk about the relationships between mafia and pieces of the State, of politics, of professions (physicians, lawyers, engineers and so on), we think that the mafia is on one side and all these other realities on the other and that these relationships are almost like rivers that are set up between these two entities. But, there are no rivers, because it is the same thing.

The mafia has its own physicians, its own lawyers, its own politicians and perhaps its own pieces of State institutions. There is no need to imagine a relationship. (...) The mafia has inside all these characters, it shapes them, they are its own, it does not need to get close to them or to entrap them, in order to get, and consequently give, favours’.⁹⁰

These connections are not only at the local levels but can even reach the highest ones. In the XI Legislature, the Reggio Calabria Prosecutors asked the Parliament to give permission to proceed for suspected criminal mafia association against the Hon. Paolo Romeo of the Partito Social-Democratico Italiano (PSDI). According to the statements made by two *pentiti*, Hon.

88. Procura della Repubblica di Palmi, *Richiesta ... Galluzzo Vincenzo Rosario + 81*, cit. pp. 1688-1689 (n. 55).

89. P. Arlacchi, *Mafia Business ... cit.* pp. 174-180 (n. 7).

90. Roberto Pennisi, Sostituto Procuratore della Repubblica, Procura della Repubblica di Reggio Calabria, *Statement* included in Commissione Parlamentare, *Hearings*, 29 gennaio 1993, pp. 122-123.

Romeo is said to have been in the top management of the De Stefano clan and to have been one of the promoters of the peace negotiations in 1991.⁹¹

The 'internalization of representation' has the advantage of simplifying the relationship with the political power, overcoming the necessity to reach agreements and alliances with politicians who are external to the 'ndrina. The disadvantages, instead, are represented by a too evident political exposure and a concentration of power which can be counterproductive at critical moments, when there is a confrontation with public opinion and judicial institutions.

A complementary factor alongside its influence over public institutions is the social consensus that the 'ndrangheta arouses. While in many respects it is only a seeming support, it being the result of an atmosphere of intimidation and terror that the mafia groups produce, it is also true that, as two Investigating Judges of the so-called 'first *maxi-processo*' against the Calabrian *cosche* write:

'civil society and the public institutions have shown a very weak, uncertain and inadequate opposition, which is symptomatic of a civil conscience which has been weakened and become addicted to decades of mafia arrogance. Moreover, in some cases there is the sensation that not only an attitude of supine acceptance of the mafia presence is widespread, but indeed there is a full identification with the mafia values (or better disvalues), which are taken as life and behaviour norm'.⁹²

Evidence of community backing can be found in the people's unwillingness to cooperate with the police, even during the mafia war when killings took place in the town centres in the presence of tens of people.⁹³ The small number of denunciations of extortion cases that are presented every year, notwithstanding the fact that the phenomenon seems to be systematically spread all over the province, is another indicator of this support. As a matter of fact, the attitude of the whole Calabrian entrepreneurial class seems to be inspired to resignation and distrust of the repressive action of public institutions. The courageous denunciations of the Anti-racket Association of Cittanova, a small village at the foot of the Aspromonte, which enabled the judges to sentence the members of the local *cosca*, have remained an isolated case in the region's panorama.

The distrust of the repressive action of the State is enhanced by the structural and personnel deficiencies of the Judicial institutions. Since there are always delays and difficulties in penal and especially civil procedures, it can often be easier for the average citizen to turn to the local mafia boss, who therefore acts as a veritable justice of the peace.⁹⁴ This state of affairs produces the re-emergence of one of the more traditional traits of mafia power, whose weakening during the 1960s had raised hopes about the disappearance or at least a permanent reduction of the 'ndrangheta's social prestige.

In actual fact, it must be acknowledged that, compared to Sicily, in Reggio Calabria province the process leading up to the rejection of the 'ndrangheta and its mafia values by the communities has been much slower and much more uneven and it has involved smaller proportions of the population. Indeed it was only in summer 1992, that for, the first time, a great

91. Camera dei Deputati, *Domanda di autorizzazione ... contro il deputato Paolo Romeo*, cit. (n. 86).

92. Tribunale di Reggio Calabria, *Ordinanza ... contro Albanese Mario + 190*, cit., p. 194 (n. 34).

93. *Ibidem*, pp. 228-229.

94. Ministero dell'Interno, *Rapporto ... per il 1992*, cit., p. 174 (n. 16).

array of citizens, young people and representatives of the associations and trade unions convened together to march in a big demonstration against the mafia.

The power of the 'ndrangheta families is also enhanced by the membership of some of the most influential mafia bosses in secret Freemasonry lodges, which are an important point of contact between them and politicians and members of the Public Administration. In this connection the Anti-mafia Commission has stated that:

'As in Palermo and Trapani, in Calabria as well, the lodges may be acting as a "clearance house" for a variety of business, political and economical interests, which converge around objectives of profit-making and power. At the local level the pattern appears to be similar to that of the most famous secret lodge, the P2 headed by Licio Gelli, which on the basis of the same mix of business, politics, high finance and entrepreneurship designed and implemented subversive plans, plotted in view of acculumating power and adopted unscrupulous policies of alliances, also with far-right terrorist movements'.⁹⁵

Freemasonry is particularly deeply-rooted in Calabria and the Calabrian affiliates represent a third of those of the whole *Mezzogiorno*. Compared to the population, in Calabria the numerical consistency of the Freemasonry appears to be two times bigger than in Sicily and four times bigger than in Campania.⁹⁶

Furthermore the investigators believe that in Calabria there are also secret lodges at work, even though they point out how difficult is to assess the size of the phenomenon and the true extent to which such lodges are separate from the regular ones. Indeed, there does not seem to be a clear cut distinction between the two types of lodges. In his appearance before the Anti-mafia Commission, the then Chief Prosecutor of Palmi, Agostino Cordova, said that:

'there are statements of secret affiliation of which only the head of the lodge is aware of (*all'orecchio*), there are "sleepy" members (*in sonno*), who have either discontinued their relationship or have slipped from transparency to secrecy even though they go on being active'.⁹⁷

The Procura della Repubblica of Palmi has found evidence of contacts between 'ndrangheta bosses and important administrators of the dissolved P2 lodge. Besides, the wiretapping of a phone-call revealed that an important boss of the Tyrrhenian *cosche* was going to ask the intervention of Licio Gelli in order to obtain the revision of a trial.⁹⁸

The Reggio Calabrian *cosche* also appear to enjoy consolidated relations with terrorist movements, especially those of the far-right. According to two *pentiti* for instance, since the Reggio revolts of 1970 Hon. Romeo used to be a *trait-d'union* between the De Stefano *cosca* and the extra-parliamentary right circles.⁹⁹ He is said to have also organized a meeting in 1970

95. Commissione Parlamentare, *Relazione sulla Calabria*, cit., p. 64 (n. 40).

96. Ministero dell'Interno, *Relazione semestrale ... cit.*, p. 129 (n. 19).

97. Commissione Parlamentare, *Relazione sulla Calabria*, cit. p. 65 (n. 40).

98. F. Forgione e P. Mondani, *op. cit.*, pp. 129-132 (n. 85).

99. During the whole of 1970, Reggio Calabria was in more or less open rebellion against the central government because of the decision to elevate the rival town of Catanzaro as the seat of the new Regional Government. See J. Walston, *The Mafia and Clientelism. Roads to Rome in post-war Calabria*, (London and New York, 1988) pp. 207-214 and V. Cappelli, 'Politica e politici', in P. Bevilacqua e A. Placanica, eds., *La Calabria*, cit., pp. 577-580.

between Prince Junio Valerio Borghese, who was then organizing a *coup-d'Etat*, and the De Stefano brothers in order to secure the 'ndrangheta support for the subversive plan. It is well known that Romeo helped Franco Freda, the right-wing terrorist involved in some of the slaughters of the 1970s, when he was in hiding in order to escape the trial of the Piazza Fontana massacre, and that Romeo was subsequently arrested for abetting.¹⁰⁰

Contrary to what was expected up to now, the 'ndrangheta may also have set up relations in the past with terrorist groups of the far left. In fact the *Procura della Repubblica of Milan* is investigating the statements of a *pentito*, deemed to be quite reliable, who has reported that he has found out that the Platì mafia boss, Antonio Nirta, nicknamed '*due nasi*' (two noses), took part in the via Fani ambush when Aldo Moro was kidnapped and his police-escort slaughtered in March 1978.¹⁰¹

Therefore it is clear that the 'ndrangheta cannot be analyzed only in terms of its entrepreneurial activities, nor can its dangerousness be assessed only on the basis of its economic size. As Cosa Nostra, it must also be regarded as a secret society which has its own political aims. This point was stated clearly by the Chief Prosecutor of Florence, Pier Luigi Vigna, who some years ago wrote that:

'in order to extend its economic power, the mafia has set up relations with other criminal groups and become increasingly sensitive to the State's political asset... the mafia now has its own political plan'.¹⁰²

7. AN UNDERESTIMATED PHENOMENON

The legend according to which the Calabrian mafia has fewer economic, military and political potentialities than Sicilian Cosa Nostra was produced by the laziness and disattention of the media for the Calabrian events and it represents a perverse byproduct of the attention devoted by public opinion and investigative forces to the Sicilian mafia.¹⁰³

As a matter of fact, the 'ndrangheta appears in many respects to be just as, if not more, 'equipped' than the Sicilian Cosa Nostra to play in the international criminal society and to face the pressure of law enforcement agencies. With respect to Sicilian mafia families, the Calabrian groups are more impermeable to police investigations because of their more compact structure, based on close-knit clans and groups of blood-relatives. This has allowed them to efficiently curb the crisis opened elsewhere by the multiplication of *pentiti*: as already mentioned, the Calabrian Justice collaborators are much fewer than the Sicilian ones.

In addition, the members of the 'ndrangheta and their acolytes account for a very large percentage of the whole population of the Reggio Calabria province. According to some estimates made by the *Direzione Investigativa Antimafia*, in the whole region there are 2.7

100. Camera dei Deputati, *Domanda di autorizzazione ... contro il deputato Paolo Romeo*, cit. (n. 86).

101. Tribunale di Milano, *Ordinanza ... Agil Fuat + 164*, cit. pp. 402-435 (n. 68).

102. In this statement Vigna was referring to the role played by Cosa Nostra in the '904 train slaughter' of December 1984 but his assessment also fits for the Calabrian mafia. Quoted in Commissione Parlamentare, *Relazione ... tra mafia e politica*, cit. p. 42 (n. 57).

103. For a similar assessment see E. Cicone, *op cit.* p. 364 and P. Arlacchi, 'Braccati e feroci', *La Repubblica*, 20 gennaio 1994, pp. 1-2.

known members of crime groups every 1,000 inhabitants, while the same ratio of crime groups affiliates on the overall population is 1.2 ‰ in Campania and 1.0 ‰ in Sicily.¹⁰⁴

The network of the *'ndrangheta* outside its region of origin both at a national and at an international level is even more extensive and ramified than the one developed by Sicilian mafia families.

The share of illicit markets the *'ndrine* have earned, and the quality of the methods the Calabrian *cosche* use to get their portion of public resources have nothing to envy from the methods employed by the Sicilians in drug trafficking and in rigging public tenders.

The strength of the *'ndrangheta* also emerges in the area of illicit lobbying. The contacts and the wicked pacts between the criminal world and political circles have been established more in Calabria than in Sicily, through the network of the secret Freemasonry lodges.

Whatever point of view one takes, the danger of the Calabrian mafia today is comparable to that of Cosa Nostra. Even the consideration that Cosa Nostra represents a greater danger because it is the only criminal confederation that has the arrogance to defy the State, organizing slaughters in Sicily and in Continental Italy, seems only partially true.

First of all, the hypothesis put forward by the investigators working on the explosions which took place in 1993 in Rome, Milan and Florence, must be taken into consideration. They believe that:

'organized criminal groups of a different origin have worked with Cosa Nostra in planning and implementing the recent acts of mafia terrorism. The designs behind Cosa Nostra's strategy seem to be shared by other major Italian criminal groups'.¹⁰⁵

A process of integration is in fact taking place in the Italian criminal society. Especially outside the regions tainted by more deeply rooted mafia traditions, criminal groups originating from Sicily, Calabria and Campania and, to a minor extent, from Apulia seem to have interwoven a thick network of illicit businesses, exchanging favours and different kinds of services with a relatively peaceful *modus vivendi* established in each large territorial area. The thickening of commercial exchanges has enhanced communication networks and brought about the transfer of organization methods, rituals and strategies from one criminal consortium to the other.

Besides, it must be recalled that some Justice collaborators suggest that there are liaison bodies at the regional level and that there is a national structure consisting of representatives from the regional bodies.¹⁰⁶

Therefore it could be probable that the *'ndrangheta* families might have participated in the organization of the 1993 attempts. In fact it is obvious that also the *'ndrine* have a strong in-

104. Ministero dell'Interno, *Relazione semestrale ...*, cit., p. 154 (n. 19).

105. This likelihood was also recently confirmed by the confessions of a high-ranking representative of the Apulian organized criminality. This *pentito* reported to the Parliamentary Anti-mafia Commission that, back in 1992 he had come to know about the planning of subversive acts of terrorism from members of Cosa Nostra and other criminal associations detained in his prison. The notices of investigation served upon three members of the camorra clans charged with the crime of attempted massacre in relation to the bomb explosions which occurred in Rome at the end of July 1993 seem to confirm the soundness of these assertions. These notices of penal investigation show how the investigators do not exclude the participation of more criminal associations in the organization of recent attempts. See Ministero dell'Interno, *Rapporto ... per il 1993*, cit., p. 8 (n. 2).

106. Commissione Parlamentare, *Audizione ... Leonardo Messina*, cit., pp. 523-528 and *Audizione del collaboratore della giustizia Tommaso Buscetta*, 16 novembre 1992.

terest in hindering society's acceptance of law-enforcement efforts against the mafia and to induce the State to tacitly revise the new detention regulations and to restrain the judges from using the confessions of the *pentiti*.

It must be also pointed out that, although the Calabrian *cosche* have always seemed to prefer a low profile attitude, in the recent past they have nonetheless planned and carried out some outstanding murders – such as the killing of Ludovico Ligato, former president of the State Railways Company in 1989 and that of Antonio Scopelliti, Deputy Attorney General of the Supreme Court in 1991. Besides, these brutal killings are not absolute novelties in the history of their relationship with the political, investigative and judicial institutions and with civil society.¹⁰⁷

Taking into account all these elements, the *Direzione Investigativa Antimafia* (DIA) has recently put forward the thesis that some sections of the '*ndrangheta* might harbour – independently or together with Cosa Nostra – an autonomous political project.¹⁰⁸ The connections with other illicit centres of power, such as secret Masonic lodges and terroristic groups, seem to support this hypothesis.

A further confirmation of this thesis comes from the extensive availability of weapons that the '*ndrangheta* seems to enjoy. Lately the Calabrian *cosche* have been increasingly purchasing sophisticated and expensive weapons in the international illicit market: today, not only do they have access to automatic weapons but also to explosives and military-type weapons (missiles, recoilless guns, perforating rounds, etc). These arsenals do not seem only to be useful in inter-clan conflicts but they could also be suitable for terrorist goals.¹⁰⁹

The subversive potentialities of the '*ndrangheta* families are also confirmed by the several attempts, which were luckily foiled, against several Prosecutors of the *Procure della Repubblica of Reggio Calabria, Palmi and Locri* and others from the neighbouring *Procura della Repubblica of Messina*.

If mafia groups are not going to be able to come to terms with the new Government and if the law enforcement activity keeps the same levels it has reached in the last two years since the assassinations of Judges Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino,¹¹⁰ the adoption of a subversive strategy – independently or jointly with the other major criminal consortia – may represent a ferocious reaction by the Calabrian *cosche* which – after being left relatively undisturbed for three decades – have all of a sudden had to face a determined attack by the State.

107. On 3 July 1975 in downtown Lametia Terme, Francesco Ferlino, State General Advocate, the second Italian Judicial Authority after the General Prosecutor, was murdered. On 10 December of the following year, Giuseppe Vinci, the coordinator of the student committee in Cittanova highschool, was murdered; on 12 March 1977, Rocco Gatto, representative of the Communist Party in Gioiosa Marina, was killed; Giuseppe Valarioti, secretary of the local PCI section at Rosarno, was murdered on 11 June 1980 and ten days later Giovanni Lo Sardo, Communist, alderman at the Cetraro commune, was killed. See Commissione Parlamentare, *Relazione ... relatore Abdon Alinovi, cit.*, 1985, p. 23 (n. 52).

108. Ministero dell'Interno, *Relazione semestrale ...*, cit., p. 129 (n. 19).

109. For instance, in May 1994 the police seized a lorry coming from Lebanon, which was carrying 119 *kalashnikov* and two rocket launchers. See *Il Messaggero*, 'Sequestrati i kalashnikov della '*ndrangheta*', 21 maggio 1994, p. 5.

110. Over the last two years, the law enforcement agencies have succeeded in setting up an effective and determined reaction against the overwhelming power of the '*ndrangheta*, which - without the uproar of the press and the television - have struck deadly blows on almost all the most powerful *cosche* of Reggio Calabria and the most stable political-masonic-mafia aggregations. During 1993 for instance, the DIA alone carried out 12 operations against the '*ndrangheta* which led to the arrest of almost 700 individuals and to the identification of the authors of 165 murders, thus disrupting local hierarchies and external terminals of the criminal associations. See Ministero dell'Interno, *Relazione semestrale ...*, cit., pp. 146-154 (n. 19).