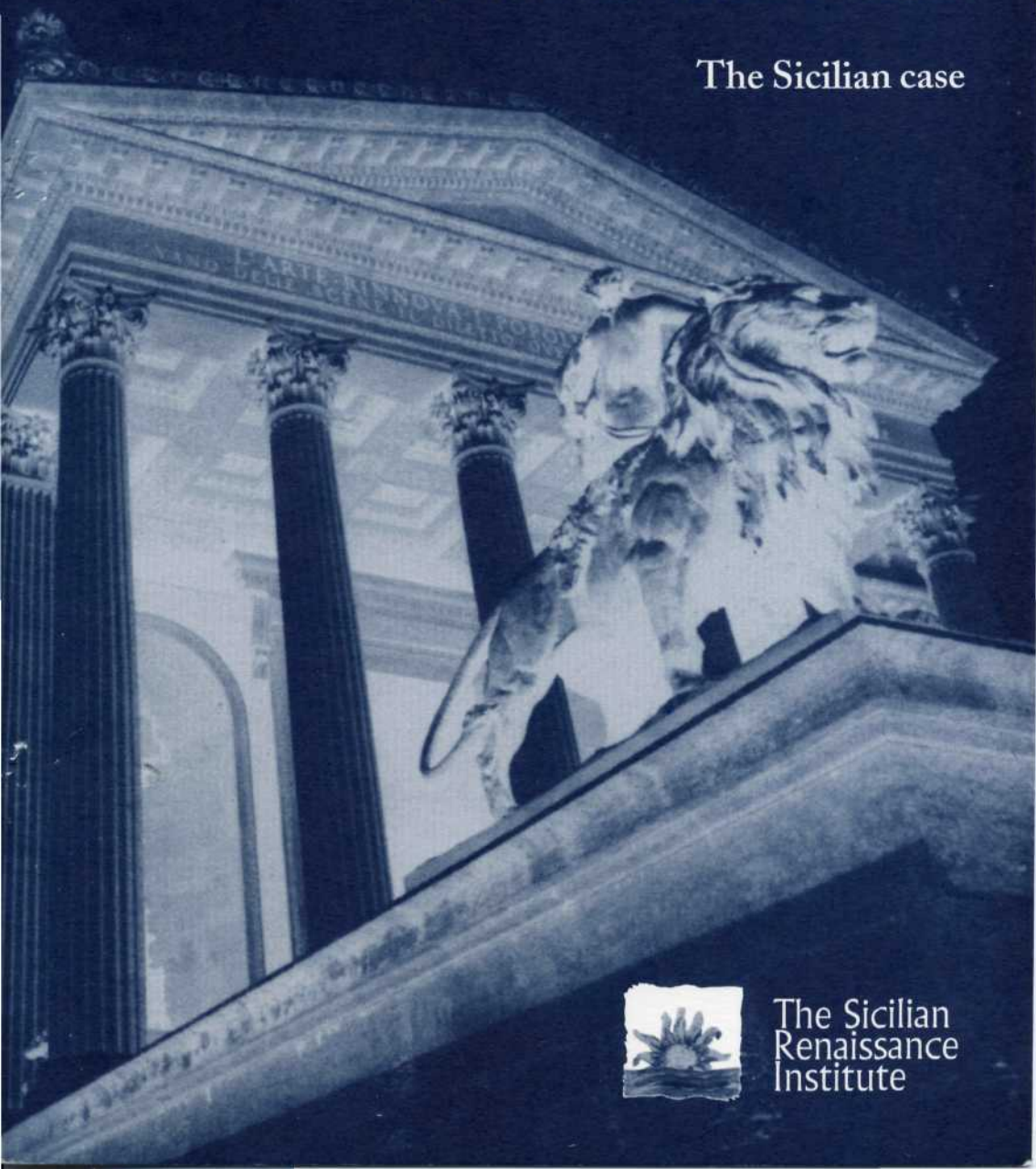
CULTURE OF LAWFULNESS

The role of the mass media

The Sicilian case



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The Sicilian Cart

by Leoluca Orlando
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Culture of legality seems a play on words, words that express different realities: wholesome and warm the former, cold and angular the latter. An astounding play on words.

It is the priority choice of the United Nations Organization in the matter of crime prevention in the world in 2002 and for the next four years.

But the astonishment goes further. The United Nations indicate the rebirth of Palermo as model and symbol for the promotion of the culture of legality in the fivecontinents.

What happened in Palermo and, more generally, in Sicily during the last few years of the century and the millennium?

The citizens sought to oppose a violent and uncivil phenomenon like the Mafia without themselves becoming violent and uncivil.

Their NO to the death penalty to the point of conferring honorary citizenship upon the condemned (of any country and no matter what the reason: nobody may kill, not even a state!) and honorary citizenship for the 14th Dalai Lama, the concert of solidarity for the oppressed Kurdish people and honorary citizenship for David Trimble and John Hume, both winners of the Nobel Peace Prize, but also the re-opening of the Massimo Theatre and the construction of tens of new school buildings, and the rehabilitation of the city's immense and most beautiful centre, completely abandoned for so many years... all these, far from being episodes of protagonism of a peripheral administration, were part and parcel — like the tesserae of a mosaic — of a precise and harmonious cultural project.

Our experience proved to be a theory and a model, and not only a vitalistic and precarious experience made up of unemployed asking for work by protesting on the roofs of the palaces of power, or of garbage bins overturned by demonstrators, made up of traffic jams and continuous exhortations to do better (a kind of "io speriamo che me la cavo"[1]; or as we would put it in our Sicilian dialect, "agghiurnò... ora speriamo ca scura"... "we have seen the day break... let's hope we'll manage 'til the evening").

That experience is today making the rounds of the world, a foundation — The Sicilian Renaissance Institute - has come out of it and promotes positive leadership towards the tandem democracy-legality.

If it is true that there is a relationship between democracy and peace, it is also true

that peace is far too important for it to be entrusted solely to the military. Palermo reminds us that there is a relationship between democracy and legality, but that legality is far too important to be entrusted only to policemen and public prosecutors.

The model is the Sicilian cart, the traditional Sicilian cart with its two wheels, the wheel of culture and the wheel of legality.

Two wheels that have to turn at the same speed, otherwise the cart won't move forward, will simply wheel in circles.

If only the wheel of culture is turning and the wheel of legality remains still, there is the risk of organizing a fine concert of Sicilian music in honour... of some Mafia boss.

At the beginning of my work as mayor (in the second half of the 'eighties) I seemed to be - just like many other mayors of Sicilian cities — a policeman, a public prosecutor: I almost invariably talked about crime and trials... the cart stood still, both its wheels had sunk deep into the bog of fear and collusion... but a start had somehow to be made, the cart had to be got moving again.

Thanks to the dedication of courageous policemen and magistrates, the wheel of legality eventually started moving again and I could therefore concern myself with the other wheel, making sure that the two wheels would turn at the same speed.

And so it was, the two wheels began to turn at the same speed, and Palermo, once a handicap, became a resource, something shameful was turned into a model.

Midway through the 'eighties we had some 240/250 Mafia killings in Palermo (and solely in Palermo!) each year. In 2000 we had just eight murders in Palermo, none of them connected with the Mafia.

Midway through the 'eighties they said there was democracy and free market in Palermo. I don't know what kind of democracy and what kind of free market they had in mind, seeing that the whole of the economy was controlled by the Mafiosi and that every Palermitan had either a relative or a friend who had been killed by the Mafia, either because he opposed that criminal organization or was actually a member of it!

In 2000 we can really speak of democracy and free market in Palermo: democracy in Palermo lives the hopes and the ills — and the latter unfortunately are not by any means few — of Italian politics as a whole and in Palermo it has become possible to live, work and do business without coming up against the Mafia.

At the beginning of my term as mayor, midway through the 'eighties, the municipal administration neither had a regular budget nor an inventory of public property; in 2000 Palermo's municipal administration obtained an Aa3 rating from Moody's, an international financial reliability rating that put it on par with the administrations of Stockholm, Boston and San Francisco, and better than such cities as New York or Chicago, to say nothing of Rome, Milan and Turin.

Am I saying that the Mafia no longer exists in Palermo? Certainly not!!!

The Mafia exists, even in Palermo.

But today the Mafia no longer controls - as it did in the past - the heads and the purses of Palermo's citizens.

Though the Mafia — I am referring to the new and winning Mafia — still seeks to control both heads and purses, it no longer does so by invoking and distorting such traditional values of culture as honour and family, but rather by evoking and distorting liberty and success, the emerging values of Italian culture.

Today in Palermo both the "old" and the "new" Mafias are present and operating.

There is the risk that the old Mafia, the Mafia bound up with the politics of the so-called "First Republic" — which should have been swept away by the explosion of the moral question in the 'nineties — will now become flanked by a new Mafia, the Mafia that tries to get its foot into the politics of the so-called "Second Republic": the Mafia of the First Republic bound up with the distortions of the economy of unearned income, the Mafia of the Second Republic bound up with the distortions of the economy of profit.

This experience is today becoming a model and surpasses the confines of the reality conditioned by the Mafia.

In the past the Mafia was a "genus"; and this genus coincided with the Sicilian Mafia.

The Mafia was the Sicilian Mafia - the Mafia was Sicily, Sicily was the Mafia.

Today it is being realized that the Sicilian Mafia is only a "species"; the Russian Mafia is another, so is the Chinese variety, and the Colombian one is yet another.

Reflecting about the different Mafias in the world today, we can affirm that the genus is not Mafia, but rather what is called "identity illegality", i.e. an illegality connected with a cultural identity.

When we are attacked by a robber who wants to deprive us of our money, all we have to do is to call the police, the public prosecutor.

But when we are attacked by a robber who wants to deprive us of money by invoking Corsican pride, Basque identity, the teachings of Mahomet or the words of Christ or of Yahweh... it is no longer enough to call the police or the public prosecutor... what we need is the second wheel of the Sicilian cart, the wheel of culture. In other words, school, the world of information, the men of religion, civil society.

And thus every time we think of violation of human rights by bandits and terrorists, no matter what their cultural identity, we always come back to the wheel of culture, the wheel that at Palermo contributed to freeing the heads of the citizens from the hegemony of the Mafia.

Culture, as should be clear by now, is music, is dance, but first and foremost is

consciousness of one's individual and community identity and its link with the respect of the human person, every human person.

Every cultural identity is exposed to the risk of mortifying (humiliating) the human person, the fundamental rights of every human person. It is the phenomenon, the theory that, basing myself on Salman Rushdie's famous book and the experience of Palermo's renaissance, I call "satanic verse".

When a value, a cultural sign is used to mortify human rights, that value, that cultural sign is turned into satanic verse. Honour and the family were thus used by the Mafia as satanic verse to kill and rob... in the name of honour, in the name of the family.

And likewise Basque, Catholic-Irish or Corsican pride have been used by Basque, Catholic-Irish and Corsican terrorism to kill and to rob... in the name of that selfsame pride.

And in just the same way the German people's respect for the law was used by Nazism to obtain obedience for the racial laws... in the very name of that traditional German respect for the law.

And in just the same way freedom, security and wellbeing can be used as satanic verse whenever they are invoked to kill, to rob, to violate rights of the human person.

It is Palermo's experience that tells us all this. And we Sicilians have a great experience that we ought not to boast about... indeed, George Bernard Shaw reminded us that experience is the name we give to our mistakes... and we Sicilians have great experience because we have made many great mistakes.

The Mafia still exists: violent and weakened the one that uses honour, family and friendship as "satanic verse"; enchanting and go-getting the one that uses liberty, success and wealth as its "satanic verse".

Though equally criminal, both these mafias can be resisted: that is the lesson that comes from Sicily. With the two wheels of the Sicilian cart, with respect for law and identity, with the culture of legality born in Sicily amid sorrow and fear, rage and hope, it is possible to resist all the Mafias in any part of the world, as also all the manifestations of "identity illegality[1]".

That lesson, which the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations adopted and made its own, has affirmed itself as a strategic choice for the prevention of crime throughout the world. But that lesson stands in need of being continuously updated and vivified to avoid that distortions of the economy of unearned income and capitalism without rules, isolation and mortification of the operators of justice and loss of sense of responsibility could bring about, and not only in Sicily, a return to the terrible season of massacres.

1) A schoolboy's completely ungrammatical, but also untranslatable way ofsaying "let's hope I'll get by" rendered famous by the book of a teacher published in Italy some years ago.

The role of the mass media
The Sicilian case

A Palermitan diary
Twenty years of reporting at the foot of Italy

by Attilio Bolzoni

I had previously seen special FBI agents only at the cinema. And I had not particularly liked them. They seemed to be mass-produced, all exactly equal, with their grey and always perfectly pressed suits and those mirror-like glasses to cover their eyes, detectives ever ready to frame somebody or to hide something, somewhat Fascist in their ways and arrogant, far too overbearing to be to the liking of a twenty-year-old who was discovering another world within the one in which he had lived until then.

I had come to Palermo a bare two weeks before, a newcomer to reporting, a volunteer without a contract to try to tell the stories of a city I had never known. "Lo stanzone", the "big room" of "L'Ora", a Palermitan daily, was situated on the first floor of a building that was all glass, where the first warm winds of the summer seemed to enter from all sides, old steel desks, off-green in colour, heavy and noisy typewriters lined up on a large table, the floor covered with the dummies that the chief editor would crumple and then kick away in expectation of the very last moment to close his front page. That was in June 1979. My Palermitan adventure was supposed to last until September, or Christmas at the very most. As it turned out, however, I had come to stay. It was right there, in the big room of the reporters, that I met the man who was to make me change my mind about those special FBI agents whom I had thought so obnoxious in second-rate American films. He was a policeman. His name was Boris Giuliano. At that time head of Palermo's Flying Squad.

I remember his drooping moustache and his big eyes ever ringed by the signs of tiredness. I remember him one day in the door of that big room with a couple of journalists who were listening to him with a pensive air - one was Nino Sofia, the other Alberto Stabile - while he talked about some bank robberies that were causing him a great deal of concern. He said that they were not the work of the usual scoundrels, he said there was more behind that gang of bank robbers who came from Corso dei Mille. When he left the paper, I began to listen to what the reporters in the big room of "L'Ora" were saying about him. They were talking about him like a friend. They were talking about him as if he were one of them. It seemed a little strange to me that day. I just couldn't understand why "left-wing" journalists - "L'Ora" was a daily controlled by the Communists and at that time almost all its editors were Party members - should be so close to a policeman, why they should be so enamoured of a "cop" who by culture and mentality was far removed from those reporters in the frontline, who for years had lived

and worked against the mainstream. I just couldn't understand - for me policemen were simply those who always charged the students in procession, who afterwards filed them in the archives of their Political Office - what kind of bond could bring together men who were so basically different. I thought about it for a few days and then, ever more intrigued, began to ask questions. One of the senior reporters in that big room told me: "Boris Giuliano is an extraordinary policeman, because he is very different from lots of other policemen. He does his job extremely well, but above all he is a normal man, one who is always on the side of decent people". And then he added: "It's his instinct that makes him nervous, he knows that something terrible is about to happen here in Palermo".

During the weeks that followed I tried to learn a little about my work by running here and there to get news for my paper. Shadowing the trucks of the street-cleaning service while running their nightly relays between the city centre and the Bellolampo dump, interviews with the attendants on a wildcat strike at the Brancaccio petrol depot, the protests of bathers at Addaura on account of the noise of the nearby skeet-shooting range that seemed to stress even the fish, a rock concert at the Favorita Stadium, articles and items that reporters always entrust to young apprentices anxious to write something, anything. And then by chance - we were at the beginning of July by then - I met Boris Giuliano another couple of times.

One afternoon I saw him in his room, seated behind his desk and flicking through a dossier about the bank robberies I had heard so much about. All of a sudden his lips moved to make him pull a wry face, he got up and moved over to the widow that looks out on Piazza Vittoria, seemingly to contemplate the long and slender palms that line the gardens below. Then he told me that he had been in Virginia, at Quantico, headquarters of the FBI, He told me he had been one of the first Italian policemen to "do the course" on the other side of the Atlantic, invited by the American Federals, told me that he had learnt a great deal from them, that they had become friends, that he trusted them more than anybody else, that they always called him to know how things were going down here in Sicily. The policeman in front of me had a sad air the while he told me about his "American" experience. I sensed that his mind was elsewhere at that moment. I imagined that his thoughts were wandering who knows where and the thoughts were gloomy. But he kept on talking about Quantico with such force and conviction that when I left his room an hour later, he had made me change my mind about the FBI and its men. Boris Giuliano had made me change my mind about an entire world.

The evening of 20 July 1979 the news editor realized that "Entertainments" had not sent anybody to San Nicola L'Arena, a little village about twenty kilometres from Palermo, where a singer called Loredana Berté was to give a midnight show at a night club called "Il Castello". As the last to arrive at the paper, it fell to me to fill that gap and

get ready for interviewing her. I called a photographer and, using his car, we set out on the road to Bagheria. Half an hour later we were at the "Castello".

There were ugly faces everywhere, both outside and inside the club. As soon as I said I was a journalist and worked for "L'Ora", I felt hostility all around me. I couldn't understand why, we were there only for an article about the show given by a singer. The ugly faces accompanied me everywhere, they followed me like my own shadow. Even in the dressing room where we photographed and interviewed Loredana Berté. It was only years later that I discovered the reason for this hostility. But it was only a few weeks later that I learned that those in the night club were Mafia types, men who had decided to kill a policeman the morning after. My interview of Loredana Berté was never published. The day after I had no time to look through my notes and write the sixty odd lines for the "Entertainments" column.

"L'Ora" was an afternoon paper. It arrived at the kiosks round about 2 p.m., the less lazy editors started to fill the room of the reporters shortly after eight in the morning. The early birds were always the same, always the same two. One of them was old Gianni Lo Monaco, a court reporter, who kept an immense archive and had an altogether incredible memory. Gianni suffered from insomnia. The other was myself, the last cog on the wheel, because - like all others in that position - I never wanted to be late for work. So Gianni and I were alone in that big room when the police radio began to crackle and somebody yelled that there was a red alarm at the Lux Bar in Via Francesco Di Blasi. Gianni turned pale, began to tremble and mumbled something. Then he started caressing Pallina, his little dog, whom he never left and always brought with him to work. He said: "Let's go to the Lux Bar, on the radio they're screaming... they say that Boris Giuliano has been killed". He first put Pallina into his rusty old sports car and then shoved me in beside her. His face had got even paler and his voice reduced to a whisper. When we arrived at the Lux Bar, we saw only about a dozen uniformed policemen and some curious bystanders. Shortly after came Boris Giuliano's friends, his colleagues of the Flying Squad. Some were sobbing openly, others made a beeline for police headquarters. Gianni and I moved over to the bar. A police officer shouted something and ordered the shutters to be pulled down. The officer (who many years later came to be mixed up in an ugly bribery affair) refused to let anybody into the bar, refused to let people see Giuliano's body stretched out on the floor. One of Boris's friends told us: "They shot him from behind" Another added: "That's the only way they could kill him". An eyewitness said: "The assassin's hands were trembling when he started firing".

We went back to the paper. Red eyes and a profound silence. For the first time they all put their names at the bottom of the page, nobody signed his "piece". Fear was abroad, and there was a great deal of fear also at our editorial offices that morning of 21 July 1979. Some of the senior and more expert colleagues told me that the story of Palermo was changing. I didn't know it yet, but my own story was also about to change.

That day I wrote my first article for the crime column. I would never have imagined that the months and years to come would see me write thousands more. In those early weeks of the summer of 1979 we reconstructed the last investigations of Boris Giuliano and his movements. The suitcase full of dollars he had confiscated at the airport of Punta Raisi. The hideout in Via Pecori Giraldi that had sheltered Leoluca Bagarella, the subsequently convicted Mafioso, who then turned out to be the assassin whose hands had trembled as he fired. The summit meetings that the Corleone gang would always hold at the "Castello" night club in San Nicola L'Arena. The bank robberies organized by another Mafia clan, the one of Corso dei Mille. The trip of two Sicilian-American bosses who were preparing something in Sicily. Michele Sindonas stay in Palermo while a fugitive from justice. The contacts that Boris Giuliano had with Tom Tripodi, his friend of the Drug Enforcement Agency, who was tracking the mafia bosses in the States. Drugs that started from Palermo and dollars that arrived from New York. Boris Giuliano had found the proof that he had sought for such a long time. The Palermitan Mafia of Stefano Bontate and Totò Riina's Corleone clan were all agreed to kill the policeman who had "studied" at Quantico. They held a top-level meeting and all said: "He's the one that's bothering us, all the others make out that they don't understand or take their orders from us". He was alone. And so they struck him down. Even though I had lived in Sicily for many years, it was only after the 21st July of 1979 that I discovered the Mafia. All of a sudden.

I had the archive of Gianni La Monaco and was possessed by a fury, the fury of youngsters who saw nothing but good on one side and all the evil on the other. But what turned out to be particularly precious in those months (and also in the years to come) was something that I did not have in Palermo: I had no friends, I no longer had any professional points of reference (many of the more expert colleagues with whom I had worked decided to leave Sicily), I knew nothing about how certain things had gone even in the very recent past. I was in the best possible conditions for becoming totally immersed in a city that - as many people had told me - was changing. Nobody knew exactly what was going to happen. Nobody could have imagined just how greatly Palermo was to change. Six months after the crime at the Lux Bar they killed Judge Cesare Terranova. Six months later they killed Piersanti Mattarella, President of the Regional Council. Ten months later they killed a Carabinieri, Captain Emanuele Basile. Thirteen months later they killed Chief Prosecutor Gaetano Costa. And Palermo, wrapped in the silence of fear, no longer seemed Palermo. Every day I would leave the office and under the arcades in Piazza Ungheria I could already hear newsvendors screaming: "L'Ora... L'Ora... Dead and injured... Read all about it...".

There were some fifty of us journalists at the Courthouse that day, perhaps even more. We didn't know where they were questioning them, but we didn't want to miss

them: Nino and Ignazio Salvo, rulers of Salemi, two of Sicily's most powerful men. I had heard a great deal about them. But I had never seen them. Some months before I had written a short article for "Repubblica" - my adventure with "L'Ora" had come to an end by then and I had become the Palermo correspondent of this Rome paper - in which I had talked about a search carried in the tax offices run by the Salvos. The Financial Police were looking for documents regarding a fraud suffered by the Region, which they eventually found, and "Repubblica" used the headline "Palermo is trembling, the Salvo tax offices searched for heroin". But the only one to tremble in Palermo was I. That overhasty and erroneous headline had made me very restless and nervous. And that restlessness was to stay with me for a long time. Paradoxically, I realized that being a journalist in Palermo was easier than elsewhere, all you had to do was to see and hear and then write. The mysteries of Palermo were such - at least so it seemed to me - because nobody wanted to reveal them. There was a silence that suffocated the entire city and all its inhabitants. It was easy even to get scoops in that city, a wholly unexplored hunting ground. What is more, there were few colleagues who really wanted to see and hear and then tell. But that morning in June 1982 seemed altogether special. There was a great deal of agitation among the journalists who had come to the Courthouse. And for many reasons.

At long last they came out of Judge Giovanni Falcone's room... It was not yet mid-day when Nino and Ignazio Salvo, sunburnt and smiling - surrounded by a host of reporters who followed them as if the were Hollywood stars - were ready to face the microphones and the notebooks. They said that they had clarified everything there was to clarify with Judge Falcone and then, between one laugh and the next, went on to say that there was absolutely nothing to be clarified. Before they disappeared into their armour-plated Alfa Romeo, Nino Salvo threw me a sinister look, that quickly changed into a sneer. Then he passed his arm under mine, took me a few yards away from all the other colleagues and then hissed: "Just remember one thing, that I never forget..." He paused for a moment, and then went on: "You know, the papers are like a jukebox... they play the music we want, they play the music wanted by those who put the money in...". That was the only time I saw Nino Salvo face to face.

Two months later the front page of "Repubblica" was wholly dedicated to him and his cousin Ignazio, who had just been officially advised that they were being investigated for criminal conspiracy. Blow for the Mafia, said the main headline. And that was probably the beginning of the end for Salemi's all-powerful tax collectors.

That summer I got myself a motorbike. I had never had one before, had never ridden one. So I learnt. I needed that motorbike: fast and agile, it helped me in my work. And my work was to go and see the dead "in situ" and then to tell my readers what had happened. There were so many assassinations in Palermo that with a taxi I never managed to cross the city from one side to the other before the undertakers took away

the victims killed in the streets at Brancaccio, in Via Oreto, in Corso dei Mille, at Maredolce, at Santa Maria di Gesù, in Via Giafar, at Croceverde Giardina. A veritable slaughterhouse. It lasted for almost two years. At the end of the Mafia war I sold the motorbike to a friend.

I still remember the sweetish smell of blood that pervaded the air, especially when spring had ushered in the first warm days. I remember the clusters of people that formed around the corpses, the fathers who took their sons under the arm to show them their man lying there on the ground. I also remember the faces of the eyewitnesses. Who seemed to be wax statues. I spent two summers like that, chasing corpses in Palermo's suburbs. The scene of the crime was always the same. And then the silence of those who had seen, the silence of the policemen when they arrived, the silence of Palermo, of all Palermo. And after having reconnoitered the assassination site I would hasten to police headquarters. There I always knocked at the door of the same commissioner, whom I would find buried under his files, his desk heaped with paper, and each file had a cross on it. They were the dossiers of Palermo's dead that Commissioner Francesco Accordino accumulated on his table: each cross stood for a corpse. The Commissioner knew perfectly well that all these crimes were interconnected, but there wasn't even a shred of evidence to put before a judge. The war between the "families" raged on, all the old bosses of the Mafia aristocracy, one after the other, fell victim to a shotgun or a kalashnikov, Totò Riina's Corleone clan were sowing terror in half of Sicily. Dead, dead, and more dead. Palermo had really changed. It had become sombre, had become an ugly and evil city.

Telling about the crime was a simple exercise, telling all the rest complicated your life. The Palermo in which I had been living for almost three years was not just black and white, it was grey, above all. I think that my most attentive readers must have been certain lawyers who in the corridors of the Courthouse would barely bother to nod as they passed me. Every now and again, however, they would become unusually courteous. They would approach me, smile, offer me advice, possibly even comment my latest report or article. Those were the moments when the nervousness I mentioned before would become even greater, moments when I would feel an anxiety that even today I find difficult to describe. An unexpected smile or a cup of coffee offered with excessive courtesy has always frightened me far more than an anonymous 'phone call or a threatening letter.

There were lawyers who played their hands openly and there were others who moved only in the shadows. Many of them were taking their orders from the butchers who were firing in the streets, some for money, others for fear. Then there were those who believed themselves to be omnipotent. They were on good terms with the chief prosecutors and the attorneys general, had many politicians among their friends, kept

the company of police superintendents and prefects. One of them, when two of his important clients were advised that investigations had been opened against them, even arrived at saying: "It's time to put an end to these slanders and ignominies, the Mafia is an invention of the newspapers in the North". Another of these princes of the courts stopped me in the street one day and pulled some old and yellowed papers out of his briefcase. He wanted to convince me that all the misadventures of Michele Greco, a Mafia boss known as "the Pope", had sprung from the error of a police sergeant who - according to him - was semi-illiterate. Seemingly in a kind of delirium, this famous lawyer then whispered to me: "He is not the Pope of Ciaculli, but their daddy in the good sense[1]... that's what they call Michele Greco in his home village on account of his kind-heartedness... the police sergeant made a mistake and then they created the monster". Almost all the lawyers who in the 'eighties were considered to be "friends of the friends" ended up by being investigated fifteen years later for collusion. But almost all of them got away with it and managed to avoid charges.

But it was not only the criminal lawyers who defended the "honour" of Sicily and Sicilians in those days. There were also many magistrates. They never found proof of anything, their drawers were full of police reports that were left there to rot. And even if a mafia member ended up on trial, he would be acquitted for lack of evidence. "The proof, Your Honour, where is the proof?", the lawyers would thunder in court. And the judges never had the proof in their drawers. I remember that in those years I dedicated some weeks to searching the records to see how many of the major bosses had ended up in jail or, in any case, had been sentenced to some significant prison term. I found that there was just one who had been deprived of his freedom: Luciano Liggio. The exception that proved the rule.

The Mafia war was coming to an end and almost all the dead were on one side only. The Corleone clan had suffered practically no losses at all. The noise of the arms was followed by the first great police round-ups, the first great investigation, the first trials. Palermo's journalists suddenly moved from the suburbs to the courts. By then the "motor" of the Mafia investigations was in the Courthouse. But it was decidedly a two-speed motor. We all realized this right away. In the foreground there was the Prosecutor's Office that amid uncertainties and prudence had been obliged to proceed with investigations in a Palermo terrorized by the Mafia. Almost all of them were magistrates of the "old school", bound hand and foot to those most excellent judges who for at least twenty years had never seen or heard anything around them. But for some time past, in a small bunker almost hidden among the dusty archives, there had appeared as if by magic some young investigating judges who had a new "method" of inquiry and a new culture, technique and passion that in the space of a few years were to lead to a revolution in the truest sense of the term both inside and outside the courthouses. The investigating judge who had "invented" that new method of anti-Mafia inquiry was

Giovanni Falcone. We began to report his inquiries. And so another great war started in Palermo. A war of smoke-screens and diversions, misinformation, underground manoeuvres, blackmail, more or less interested press campaigns. The papers and the journalists found themselves at the centre of all this. They divided and took sides. The anti-Mafia had been born in Palermo.

But it was only the beginning of a war that was to be fought for many years to come in the name of the Mafia and the anti-Mafia. It was also too early to talk (and, above all, to write) about a clash that was only just taking shape. The old Palermo was still resisting. Resisted even within the Courthouse where everything - notwithstanding Falcone, notwithstanding the pool of investigating judges - seemed immobile, where nothing ever changed. There was one trial that shook me more than any other and made me understand how things were going. There were three accused.

I saw them every morning seated on a wooden bench while they were laughing and joking with their attorneys. They were always well dressed and well kempt. One resembled a South American Indian and was called Armando Bonanno. The tallest and most taciturn was Giuseppe Madonia. The third was chubby, had a bull-like neck and the face of a clown: his name was Vincenzo Puccio. They were charged with murder, the assassination of a captain of the Carabinieri, commander of their Monreale company, Emanuele Basile. The captain was in the midst of the crowd that formed the procession of the Holy Cross, with his baby girl in his arms. The three approached him and shot him down. That was on the evening of 5 May 1980. They were taken there and then. From the moment they had been locked up their "families" tried in a thousand ways to get their trial "fixed". They first tried with the police doctor, then with investigating judge Paolo Borsellino, and then with the help of an attorney. They failed and the three ended up on trial. I followed their first trial for several months. Right from the first hearings I realized that it was not a real trial. It was a farce. Several Mafia turncoats were to confirm this years later, Gaspare Mutolo being the first. But it was obvious even at the time: all you had to do was to be present without blocking your ears. The trial of the assassins of Captain Basile was unexpectedly annulled on account of an incredible expert report about some mud on a pair of boots, It was re-commenced several months later and ended as it had to end. All three were acquitted because the charges had not been proven. Setting down the reasons for the sentence, the judge who set them free wrote literally: "... it would have been easier to find the accused guilty if there had been less evidence against them..." After being set free, the three assassins of Captain Basile were sent to three villages in Sardinia on obligatory residence. Then they just disappeared. Their trial was re-manipulated several times, right through to the Court of Cassation. That was the Palermo I was writing about and was to continue writing about for several years.

It was during the months of the Basile trial that I got to know two very special

police officers. One was Beppe Montana, the other Ninni Cassarà. The former was responsible for hunting down fugitives from justice and often complained that the Procurator's Office did nothing about his reports. The other was an excellent investigator and very courteous in his ways. He felt alone. Alone when giving evidence at a trial. When he was investigating some bosses. When he was trying to find some link with a powerful person close to the mafia. And Ninni Cassarà was really alone, alone with the men of his squad. They first killed Beppe Montana. Then it was Ninni's turn. Many of the men that I met day after day for my work as reporter were not there any more. They had killed them all.

The first time I met him I was struck by his tie and his way of speaking. The tie was very flashy, green and red flowers on a yellow and orange background. A blob of colour that contrasted with the grey of his suit and, above all, the colour of his face. He was sitting of a divan. He did not get up, just held his hand out limply and then sneered. His voice was hoarse and rasping. He said: "Journalists like you are rather like the cops...". I suddenly lost my breath and made no reply. I listened to him with interest for a few minutes, and then began to feel ill at ease. When he accompanied me to the door, I took my leave saying: "Excellency, it's been a real pleasure making your acquaintance". I was lying, of course, and he knew it. Knew it only too well. I was already outside the door of his room, when a hiss issued from the mouth of Chief Procurator Salvatore Curti Giardina: "The next time you publish some reserved documents, I'll create more trouble for you than you've ever had in your life". And he kept his promise. Two months later the Chief Prosecutor signed a warrant of arrest for me and Saverio Lodato, Sicilian correspondent of "Unità". Salvatore Curti Giardina was Chief Prosecutor in Palermo for three and a half years. And in three and a half years he placed his signature under just that one warrant. The one that ordered the arrest of Saverio and myself. That was at the end of the winter of 1988.

Something had happened in January, something very grave. One evening two assassins had killed Giuseppe Insalaco, a former mayor of Palermo, formerly also private secretary of Franco Restivo, Minister of the Interior. Insalaco was a man with an obscure past, but for some years had been fighting a personal battle for transparency in public tenders. Ex-mayor Insalaco left a "memorandum" with a list of "good" and "bad" that distinguished politicians, magistrates and policemen who sought to change Palermo from those who had their fingers in the pie. One Sunday morning this list was printed on the front page of "Repubblica" and "Unità": and that unleashed an earthquake. Palermo's powerful rose in revolt, threatened slander actions and lots of other things, the polemic became red-hot, there was a great scandal. In that incandescent climate Giovanni Falcone closed a major investigation into the Sicilian Mafia only a few weeks later.

The investigation had been triggered by the revelations of a Mafia turncoat named Antonino Calderone. Almost two hundred Mafiosi were arrested, but the names of numerous political bosses also came to the fore in the course of the inquiry, first and foremost those of Salvo Lima and Aristide Gunnella. The "papers" of Falcone's investigation were once again published by "Repubblica" and "Unità" within a few days of the arrests. It was at this point that Chief Prosecutor Salvatore Curti Giardina signed his one and only warrant of arrest while holding that office. One morning - on 15 March 1988, to be precise - he drew up the warrant with the help of his clerk. And under the legal dispositions of his ordinance he lined up three names: one was that of Saverio Lodato, the second was mine, the third was that of Francesco Vitale, a colleague who worked for "L'Ora" and had limited himself to quoting in an afternoon paper what had been published by "Repubblica" and "Unità" in the morning. Someone convinced the Chief Procurator to strike out that third name. They told him: "Two journalists is alright, but if we arrest three that would turn it into a criminal conspiracy". The paranoic charge that the Public Prosecutor's Office had formulated against Saverio and myself was "embezzlement in complicity with a public official". The photocopies of Calderone's revelations - which were never found during any of the endless searches carried out in our homes and offices - were considered as "State assets", goods belonging to the State. The crime of embezzlement enabled the Chief Prosecutor to attain two objectives: the first was the possibility of arresting us (mere violation of an official secret would have excluded arrest), the second was to vilify us with a charge that would have led the less attentive among the public to think of corruption and money in connection with two journalists close to what with a certain disdain was called the "anti-Mafia". And thus on 16 March 1988 I passed my first-ever night in a cell of a maximum-security prison. Ten yards down the corridor there was another cell that housed Saverio.

The corridor of the prison at Termini Imerese - a prison that until a few years previously had been used to detain the most dangerous terrorists of the Red Brigades - was dark at night. All of a sudden all the lights came on and the armoured doors of our "rooms" were opened. It must have been three or four in the morning. An armed warder took up position in front of my cell, another did likewise in front of Saverio's. We were already awake. Saverio yelled: "What do you think they're doing?". We found out a week later, when we were set free again. Those strange nocturnal movements were due to a 'phone call that Franco Magagnini, Editor-in-Chief of "Repubblica", made to Nicolò Amato, at that time director of the prison. Without mincing his words, Magagnini had told him: "Be very sure that nothing happens to the two boys you have there, otherwise..." The warders were there to protect us. The "prison radio", of course, had immediately made it known that two journalist had just been locked up in the last wing, two journalists who kept on writing about the things that had made the other prisoners end up in there.

Our questioning was little more than a formality. The Chief Prosecutor did not bother to come. In the meantime he had been submerged by the ferocious criticisms of the entire Italian press (sole exceptions "II Giornale di Sicilia" and a leading article in "II Messaggero") and left the task to his deputy, Piero Giammanco. He asked us the name of our informant, the person who had first passed us Insalaco's memorandum with the list of the "good" and the "bad" and then the Calderone documents. Naturally, both of us pleaded professional secrecy. Then I told him with a smile: "I can't give you those names, but if you wish, I'll give you the names of all my informants in the Courthouse. Are you ready to fill a book the size of a telephone directory?". Giammanco pulled a wry face, picked up his things and went away. At the Prosecutor's Office they kept pen-pushing and gaining time for another week, while Salvatore Curti Giardina and three or four faithful assistants became the targets of a persistent press campaign. Even the judges of Magistratura democratica went on record against the Procurator, the Minister of Justice, Giuliano Vassalli, expressed his 'disappointment', Judge Falcone gave an interview in our defence, and Gerardo Chiaramonte, Chairman of Parliament's Anti-Mafia Committee, came to visit us in prison, where we received thousands of telegrammes, including one from Nilde Jotti, Speaker of the Italian Chamber of Deputies. The Review Court discussed our case and, trying to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds, ordered our release to avoid being dragged into the polemics, which were getting rather violent, but without completely belying the Procurator. Curti Giardina publicly announced that he would appeal to the Court of Cassation, but in the meantime Saverio and I were free again. He announced his intention to appeal, but took good care not to do so. He just prosecuted the case. A year later an investigating judge acquitted us of the charge of embezzlement and sent us to stand trial for violation of an official secret, as the law required him to do. We were sentenced (as many times in the past) to a small monetary fine. A year later I had the chance of reading the entire documentation of the proceedings that led to our arrest. The Chief Procurator sustained that we had to be arrested "because we were dangerous". A shiver came over me when I read that phrase, but then I smiled, thinking: "The Chief Procurator is perfectly right, we are really dangerous. For him and all those like him". Indeed, there is one thing I have forgotten to tell you: Salvatore Curti Giardina was the presiding judge of the assize court that tried the three killers of Captain Emanuele Basile, the three who absconded after their acquittal. It was he and his court who motivated their "not proven" verdict by saying that it "it would have been easier to find the accused guilty if there had been less evidence against them...".

I took a week of vacation after being set free. I was living near a popular market at that time. My relations with the stall keepers had always been limited to a mere nod of greeting, but in those days I realized that I had suddenly become very popular. At the bar there would always be someone to offer me my morning coffee, on two occasions

the vintner did not let me pay for my whiskey, the fishmonger treated me most royally, and even the barber would not accept remuneration after he had finished his work. They all smiled and then said with a knowing wink: "You behaved well, Governor, you didn't spill the beans". The fact that I had not revealed the source of my information (the least a journalist can do) and had suffered that short imprisonment with "dignity" had - in the eyes of the people of that suburban area and the market - brought me nearer to their way of thinking and living. I had kept my mouth shut. That's what mattered. Nothing else. Palermo was like that.

The arrest of two journalists in those months was a signal that went beyond our journalistic scoops and far beyond the part that Saverio and I were playing. It was a direct signal for the other Palermo, for all those in the city who were up in arms against the dominant power of the Mafia and, above all, the overbearing arrogance of the friends of the Mafiosi. Palermo was once again changing. Following the massacres and the great fear that went with them, there was now the desire for clean air, the will to turn Palermo into a new city. The first signs of a re-awakening had been noted several years before, at a time when the dead were still littering the streets and Sicily's capital seemed suffocated by a pall of silence and fear.

The re-awakening was taking place in the political parties and the papers, in the judiciary offices, among the police, and in the heads of many Sicilians. For some years Palermo had also been living the extraordinary experience of a "springtime" triggered by Leoluca Orlando, the city's rebel mayor, and his 'coloured' team of administrators. Orlando had declared war on the Christian Democrats, the party from which he came. "Either I or Lima", he said. Above all, however, he had declared war on a system founded on pacts and blackmail. I interviewed him one night at Palazzo delle Aquile, he was like a river in spate. My paper came out with a front-page headline saying: "Palermo's mayor: the Mafia has the face of the institutions". Palermo was cleft in two, Italy was cleft in two between Mafia and anti-Mafia. The polemics about the "anti-Mafia professionals" opened by Leonardo Sciascia, the famous writer, in the "Corriere della Sera" had been raging for months, and many interested personages lined up behind this famous author, who had launched criticisms of a certain anti-Mafia style, citing Orlando and also Prosecutor Paolo Borsellino. There were many people who used Sciascia's reflections as instruments for attacking the anti-Mafia and forgetting the Mafia. But an unprecedented ferment was making itself felt also in the courthouses, especially the one in Palermo. On one side there were Judge Giovanni Falcone, Judge Antonino Caponnetto and their pool of investigating judges, on the other a Prosecutor's Office that was trying to put the brakes on anti-Mafia action. When Caponnetto reached the age limit and left his office, the Supreme Council of the Magistracy appointed Judge Meli, an old magistrate without any experience of Mafia affairs, to take his place. Their

choice had destabilizing effects. One day Saverio Lodato and I went to Marsala to find Paolo Borsellino. We put some questions to him, and he was outspoken in answering them. He denounced the end of the pool, Falcone threatened to resign, and the revolt of the anti-Mafia judges forced Italy's President, Francesco Cossiga, to intervene. For months and months I had to keep my readers informed about the poison that was circulating in Palermo's courthouse.

These were reports from the frontline, the frontline of a Palermo suspended between past and future. The first "poisoned meatballs" were beginning to circulate and the first false dossiers, many of them sent directly to me in a closed envelope, always anonymously, of course. Pressure was beginning to be exerted on all sides, together with manoeuvres that sought to create smoke screens and misinformation. Somebody started to circulate slanderous rumours in the endeavour of dividing the journalists engaged in the anti-Mafia battle. Months of inferno. Months of suspicion, broken friendships and public dramas that here in Palermo somehow became transformed also into private dramas. It was no longer as easy to be a reporter in Sicily as it was before. Once nobody talked about the Mafia, now everybody talked about the Mafia. And talked far too much. From a deadly silence to deafening noise. I saw mayors who were friends of the friends leading anti-Mafia processions adorned with their tricolour sash. I saw police superintendents and prefects, once regulars in certain drawing rooms beneath all suspicion, make public speeches about collusion. I saw magistrates still obsessed with the pool of investigating judges that by then had practically ceased to exist. That was Palermo once again on the point of changing. A Palermo that sought to live or to survive. A Palermo that resisted on all sides. Reporting or describing this Palermo had become a nightmare.

We got up from table when it was already late afternoon. It was a fine and sunny winter day, one of those days when clean air renders the colours stronger. The sea at Ognina was slightly ruffled, the restaurant stood at the very edge of a cliff overlooking Catania's Fisherman's Bay, the fish was fresh and good, and he had been doing practically all the talking. We were listening and taking notes. We had invited him to lunch at mid-day and he had accepted, subject to the condition that we were not to ask any questions. He knew perfectly well that things wouldn't go like that, and we knew it just as well. That was the last time I had a long chat with Giovanni Falcone. Two colleagues and I had gone to Catania, where Judge Falcone was to testify in the hearing of the appeal against the conviction for the assassination of Public Prosecutor Gaetano Costa, our conversation at table became transformed into an interview about what he wanted to do in Rome to develop an anti-Mafia strategy for the courts. Giovanni Falcone had just become Director General of Penal Affairs at the National Ministry of Justice. 23 May 1992, the day of his assassination, was only a few months off.

There had been a season of surreal silence until then. Until one morning they killed Salvo Lima. That day I wrote an article that was never published due to a wildcat strike at "La Repubblica". My article about the death of Salvo Lima began with the words "At Palermo nothing will ever be again as it was before...". The reports about that crime continued for weeks, there was a great anxiety abroad that foreshadowed other dramatic events. A few weeks later there came the massacre at Capaci. At the editorial offices in Rome (as in many others) there arrived an anonymous letter that made everybody tremble. Rather than a letter, it seemed a "treatise", a document of a "highly sophisticated mind" that explained what had happened - the death of Lima, the killing of Falcone - and, above all, what could still happen in Sicily. There was talk of large numbers of Mafiosi who wanted to turn state evidence, of Totò Riina, the boss of bosses, who was to give himself up, of immense deals that were being arranged by unnamed personages of high finance and the secret services. There was not enough time to decipher all the messages contained in that long anonymous letter before Paolo Borsellino was likewise killed by a bomb explosion.

Those Sicilian massacres - as also the assassination of Salvo Lima and the bomb attempts in Rome, Florence and Milan - represented the beginnings of a kind of dialogue between Mafia factions and factions of the State that has continued to this day.

These last ten years - at least within the limits of the possible - I tried to tell the story of this "negotiation". Procuring documents, collecting evidence, reconstructing obscure happenings, reinterpreting small and big fact as necessary and then offering them to public opinion. I accumulated quite a few slander actions and claims for damages. Some of these have already seen me come out clean (and free), but there are others in which I am still involved and only God knows for how long.

One of the stories that really stirred up more trouble for me than any other is the story of the capture of Totò Riina. In my paper and in a book - always alone or with some colleague like Saverio Lodato or Francesco Viviano - I tried to explain that things did not go as they tried to tell us. Breaking through the wall of official truths was a really difficult undertaking. The state apparatuses proved to be stronger and more impermeable than expected, a great part of the press showed a certain indolence in scratching beneath the surface of certain happenings and preferred to accept the somewhat wrangled versions immediately offered in the form of the usual handouts and the usual briefings. Even after twenty years of Palermo, I still can't get accustomed to the circumspection of certain papers and certain journalists.

The story of Totò Riina's hideout is bound up with others, I consider it to be a kind of mortgage on what has been the struggle against the Mafia from 1993 onwards. It is a story that I tried to link with all the rest that happened in the years thereafter: the great war between the special units of the Carabinieri and the pool of Prosecutor Gian

Carlo Caselli; the cyclical polemics about the major public-sector contracts and the investigations that some magistrates are said to have covered up; the extravagant inquiries recently started about the so-called "other instigators" of the bomb massacres at Capaci and in Via D'Amelio. I tried - let me say it once more: within the limits of the possible - to reconstruct these scenarios. Sometimes I had the feeling to have discovered something that was leading me towards some concrete evidence, far more often I found myself suspended in a void. These last few months even my way of being a journalist has come up against a rubber wall. The episodes are always the same and the personages are always the same. I am referring to the famous "negotiations" supposed to be going on between Mafia bosses and big shots of the Italian state. Viviano and I have published pages and pages regarding this aspect, denials have arrived by the dozen, always and unfailingly. We know that the "negotiations" are going on and that Cosa Nostra is staking everything on getting on top again. But at times - face to face with the scepticism of so many people and a silence that seems once again to be weighing on Sicily - I am wondering if it would not be better to forget all about these "negotiations" once and for all. Recently I found myself talking to some young colleagues who were asking me for information about some of the principal assassinations in Palermo these last twenty years, all they wanted was information about the instigators of about a dozen of the assassinations that form part of this city's history of crime. I realized that I know nothing. I vainly searched my memory. After twenty years I don't know - and, to be quite truthful, have never known and, who knows, may never know, none of us may ever know - who really wanted the death of Piersanti Mattarella. I don't know who really wanted the death of Pio La Torre. I don't know who wanted the death of Carlo Alberto Chiesa and Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino, who wanted to eliminate Rocco Chinnici and Prosecutor Gaetano Costa, who wanted the death of Salvo Lima. The court sentences reveal fragments of small or, rather, minute truths. There was a season - the years between 1992 and 1999 - when the pool of Prosecutor Caselli tried to dig deep down into the recent and distant past of Palermo. It was not long before his office, especially after it had begun to investigate not only the Mafiosi who actually did the firing, but also their entrepreneur and politician accomplices - became submerged by absurd accusations and mud-slinging. For some years I told my readers "from within" about this attempt reconstruct a history of Palermo that was a little closer to the truth than the one we had known, but then things went the way they did, the public prosecutor who would not be intimidated by anybody left Sicily and his deputies nowadays feel adrift and abandoned. Pietro Grasso, a magistrate whom Giovanni Falcone always wanted at his side, has taken Caselli's place, has to contend with a heavy heritage and, above all, an environment that seems ever more like the Palermo of twenty years ago. Floppy, silent, hidden. And I, a journalist, likewise feel a little like twenty years ago, in expectation of something that is about to happen, though I can't imagine what it might be. Yes, indeed,

I feel just like twenty years ago, only a little more tired of getting always involved in the same things. I realize this even at this moment, realize it even while I am writing this brief diary of Palermo.

I move around the city in search of stories to tell the readers of my paper and in the streets I see the same ugly faces that I had not seen there for many a year. I see that the old politicians have returned and with them the old dealings, I see the streets that have become dirty again and the water that is lacking, I see a Palermo that I knew a long, long time ago. I believe that Palermitans have grown a lot these last twenty years, but their masters seem to be always the same.

The Mafia has stopped shooting. The invisible Mafia does not make the headlines. You can describe it two or three or four times, but then you no longer have a "story"; silence suffocates, silence extinguishes, silence buries. After twenty years I have almost run out of ink. Recently I have had occasion to work away from Palermo, even outside Italy. I have been in the Balkans to report the wars and the tragedies of millions of refugees. I spent last winter in Kabul. When I came back, friends and colleagues asked me the usual questions about those worlds far away. For once I agreed to have a press conference: the theme was the war in Afghanistan. They presented me to the public as a "war correspondent". The chairman spoke of me as a "frontline reporter". I felt a little embarrassed and even lost, mumbled something and then started talking about what I had seen down there. When the meeting came to an end, I had to think about the way they had presented me: a war correspondent. I worked for more than twenty years in a Palermo at war and nobody ever thought of applying that term to the journalists who worked here, at the foot of Italy. It's funny, but that's how it is. The war in Palermo has never been recognized as a war. It is as if people wanted to remove a part of our history. As if they wanted to bury that long season of drama and hope once and for all in the folds of memory. In silence. In a silence that at times can do more harm than arms.

1) A play on words in Italian: Papa = Pope, papà «father, daddy, the two words differing only by virtue of the stress, which is placed, respectively, on the first and the second syllable.

A way of taking sides...

by Maurizio De Luca

Seeing the rocks and the sea near Punta Raisi, it always seemed that they belonged to me; I would feel the wind brushing against the mountains and it was always my wind; all around me there were odours and colours that seemed to come directly from my memory, even when it happened that I smelled or saw them for the first time. Palermo was the home of my family. I did not know the city well, but it always seemed to me that I was recognizing places. It had always been like that for me. At least since 1953, when I was ten years old, the first and only time I had come to Palermo with my father, who had been born in Via Maqueda and, ever since I was little, had enchanted me with his impassioned and enticing description of the architecture of a Sicilian cassata with its sugars, candies and cream cheese or the account of a sun that, as he put it, we could not even imagine at Florence, where I was born, the sun with its unmistakable and overpowering red, with those contradictory and strong sensations that it transmitted all at the same time, to invite to life and at times also to sap and prostrate, to suggest overwhelming passions and joys to the spirit, but also great tragedies.

My father had left his city as a small boy, when the first decade of the twentieth century had not yet come to a close. He had brought with him the sounds of Palermo and its theatres, the melodies of romantic operas and memories of horse-drawn carriages that accompanied to the bottom of the staircase of the Massimo Theatre those he kept on calling "i signori", the rich gentlemen. The ranks of the carriage people had also included some of our ancestors, men of law, of elegance and vast estates, a King's prosecutor, an attorney, a great grandmother who as a dramatic soprano had dedicated her finest trills to Norma and therefore to Bellini, and, as my father would put it, a theatre impresario who had been sufficiently imprudent to transform those vast family lands into cash that barely sufficed to settle the losses produced by his shows. My father would become all soft and tender the while he recalled these things, when, for example, he spoke of that uncle of his, a lawyer well known for his severe seriousness, who behind the gold-lettered volumes on the bookshelves of his study (as his relatives were to discover after his unexpected death) kept cannoli filled with fresh cream cheese and perfectly matured prickly pears.

My father did not feel regret for the estates that were no more. He lived with the pride of memories and the firmness of the principles of his family history, physically epitomized by no more than a few oil paintings by famous authors and some finely

worked silver he had received in heredity. He took pleasure in telling me that even the impresario of long ago, notwithstanding his continuous financial disasters, had died without debts, without ever having to ask a loan. Above all, he was proud of **the** magistrate among our ancestors who had directly and courageously concerned himself with the Mafia, so much so that one evening, while the family was spending the summer in the country, a sawn-off shotgun had fired from the dark at the bottom of the garden, fortunately making only a great din without doing harm.

And thus it was that I, a boy fan of Gino Bartali, diligent at school, great collector of marbles and animal picture cards, a good cyclist in descent (but never uphill on account of an absolute lack of agility and a certain obesity that was beginning to make itself felt), had come to insert in the vocabulary of my consciousness words and facts that, geographically at least, were seemingly far removed from my Florentine world, **but** which aroused family emotions in me. I began to use the words evoked by my father **for** my work when, many years later, I chose to become a journalist. I wrote them for the first time when, **though** remaining far away from Palermo, I interviewed a Sicilian attorney who defended some authentic Mafia bosses standing trial in Florence at that time. His professional choice, of course, was wholly legitimate, and not only on the formal level. But the fact was that to me, a young apprentice journalist, he described **the** part he played with the self-sufficiency, the brazenness and the laborious arrogance of a man of great power who knows the way things go in the world and felt himself strong, perhaps even invincible. So, at least, it seemed to me. Before deciding to follow the career of a reporter, I had studied law and had greatly racked my brains about the problems of conscience that the defence of full-blown delinquents would have involved if I had set out on the road of advocacy. I had the suspicion that the professional man with whom I was talking about themes that I felt strongly at the time and which I was to put before the readers of the daily with which I was then working had really **not** just chosen to perform the commendable function of a defending counsel: it seemed to me that in actual fact he was not a professional lawyer who in the name of the code, i.e. the rules, had shouldered the task of doing his best in defence of rights that behove to every citizen, but had in the truest sense of the term become a cynical and lying ally of his clients, whose display of power he obviously shared. He even denied that the Mafia existed, did not limit himself to exercising on behalf of his client what I had learnt to know by the name of technical defence, based only on the law codes and the principles established by the sentences of the Court of Cassation, but immediately dived into politics, speaking of persecutions of a clearly identifiable colour against those who were accused of being the leaders of Mafia clans. He despised trade unionists and attacked what he called the demagogy of the people and those who claimed to represent them. I hoped at the time that I had come across an exception. But I was soon obliged to change my mind.

In the meantime I had moved to Milan. My father was no longer alive. There remained his words, his values. Midway through the 'seventies I had those selfsame words slung into my face in an office in New York, I don't remember on exactly what floor of a Park Avenue skyscraper, by an Italian banker, a malefactor who had escaped from Milan and had arrived in the States as a wanted person. The banker's name was Michele Sindona. Lamberto Sechi, director of the weekly for which 1 worked at the time, had given me the task of reconstructing his doings and secrets. Over the years I had learnt what the Mafia really was by reading history books and novels, articles and journalistic reconstructions and perusing literally dozens of trial records. As a reporter, I had told my readers about the arrest in Northern Italy of Luciano Liggio (or Leggio according to the judges), the great Mafia boss from Corleone, who in Milan had set up the criminal web known as Anonima sequestri (Kidnapping Limited). At the trial I had seen some notebooks of Liggio and his accomplices that were full respectable names. Well impressed on my mind I had the delusion of which the investigating judge in charge of the Liggio case had talked to me at length after returning to Milan from a trip to Palermo: in Sicily he had found only tightly shut mouths, the negation of even the most obvious facts, a code of silence to the point of challenge. In short, silence, quagmire, complicity spread far and wide, beyond all imagination.

I, too, had gone to Palermo many times, with my notebooks and my memories, to rummage among the many who didn't want to say anything. And there I kept on hearing to the point of exasperation the words and the theses that an attorney and man of power had rattled off that day in Florence. In those years I concerned myself with inquiries into the Mafia, freemasonry, had written some books. I was beginning to get better acquainted with the people in Palermo who had set themselves the task of openly opposing organized criminality. They were getting ever more numerous. It was known that courageous judges at the Palermo Courthouse, without emphasis and amid a thousand difficulties, were reconstructing maps of the Mafia clans and the story of their assassinations and ferocious attack against all the rules of democracy. And then there started the bloody and terrible and seemingly uncontrollable Palermo slaughter. Assassinations of top level judges, men of state, prefects and officials, policemen and priests. All people who, given my work, I had come to know personally and, in quite a few cases, had become close friends of mine, not least in view of the fact that we clearly and passionately shared the common objective of putting an end to every compromise with criminality. I, too, went to many public meetings, to give voice to judges and students, to listen to greatly committed teachers and other militants, to share the anguish of the offspring and relatives of the victims. Many stories of civil closeness quickly became transformed into fervent private friendships: I came to know and feel a great deal of affection for many people who had seen their loved ones disappear under the attack of the Mafiosi in arms. And began to understand ever more clearly that what inspired

these meetings, this will not only to resist, but to counterattack with the law and for the law, recuperating people and territories for freedom, was the Municipality, the Mayor and some of his Aldermen, a few city councillors. The people who came and went at Palazzo dei Normannil no longer were just the shadowy figures concerned with contracts, members of obscure congregations, those who by profession were seeking to share out public funds and the spoils of office. Their place in the waiting rooms of the office of the Mayor and many other city administrators was being taken by groups of young people (and not only youngsters) who had never before set foot in these places. Notwithstanding signs of fragility and obvious disorganization, one felt that the territory of the government palaces had been reconquered in defence of legality. Blue suits were getting ever fewer and T-shirts kept going up in proportion. Often there was the chaos of spontaneity. As one could readily sense, there was a somewhat excessive and enthusiastic atmosphere of social frontier posts. I remember the nights of sweat spent at Palermo or in some arena at Mondello to discuss and remember in public. With an audience that applauded, became touched, kept renewing the unwritten pact of common intransigence in the face of the Mafiosi. All of them were showing, and not only on those occasions, that they could look into Palermitan society. It was not easy to tell people outside Palermo what was happening there, amid the palms and the sculptured stone. It was not easy to get people to understand the profound civil renewal that was taking place there, amid the carved seats that in the past had often been occupied by men of unavowable compromise. At Palazzo delle Aquile there was a great deal of public talk about the future. One evening I myself was sitting in a chair from which, as they told me, Vito Ciancimino had governed the city. It was an evening when the administrators of Palermo, together with the city's most representative men of justice, were interviewing a number of journalists in a somewhat unusual confrontation called in order to try and understand each other: that evening, too, there was no lack of polemics and signs of uncertainty. But all of us felt beyond that line of demarcation - always difficult to pinpoint - of the territory of legality. And one felt that we were all committed with conviction to this end. There was no illusion. We understood that anger for the distortions of the past had become combined with a widespread will to be engaged and committed with a passionate rigour capable of providing the right terrain for what seemed an indispensable work of political reconstruction. Seemingly, at least, nobody thought that he would still have to live and co-exist with the criminal organizations, or that it would be possible for him to do so. The objective to which that society declared itself to be dedicated was the definitive defeat of disreputable dealings. And one felt that it was succeeding.

But Palermo was not just living emotions. There were new men, there were ideas, there were dreams, there were testimonies. All of a sudden those who had been complacent and had remained silent with the old criminal powers, had not even

attempted the eradication of the Mafia families, found themselves relegated to the sidelines. All around there was an atmosphere of boldness and gaiety, severity and cleanliness.

One day I went to a school in the suburbs of Palermo to talk to the students. I relied on the fact that I had two sons, by then both grown up, with whom I had often had occasion to talk about the themes of ethics and declared commitments. I had been educated and was trying to educate for legality combined with freedom. That day I and the youngsters talked about just men and stories of long ago, about memories and the future, until a young girl with a profound look about her got up and told us, not without anger, that what she had heard that day, there, in the entrance hall of the school steeped with benches, were not the same things she had heard for years at home, from her parents and grandparents: they had always told her to keep mum, to make out that criminality did not exist, never to talk about these things. "What shall I do now?", was the question she fired at me point blank. Trying to answer her, I sought to toe the thin line that passes between confirming values and indispensable civil choices for constructing a community freed from criminal blackmail and respect for family affections, the strengthening of sentimental bonds that nevertheless must not condition one's conscience. I suggested an undoubtedly difficult road, but one that - to my mind - could (and can) lead to results of widespread civil progress if it is followed with watchful sensitivity and correctness. The girl was moved, had tears in her eyes when she took leave of me. Years later I heard myself called by name one day when I was in Palermo and about to enter a bookshop in front of the Massimo Theatre. It was the same girl who had stood up that day in the school in the suburbs of Palermo. She had become a woman. But still had that profound look in her eyes. She only wanted to tell me that her children would never have to ask the question she had put to me that morning: "Not even", so she said, "as regards the position their grandparents. For after that morning I managed to convince even my parents. All of us are consciously mobilized against criminality. Without the need for proclamation and notwithstanding some bitter delusions. Thanks for everything".

I passed through the streets of Palermo when white sheets with anti-Mafia slogans were hanging from many windows and balconies. They were not just words. They were not just the gestures of a kind of folklore anti-Mafia. In those very years (the last decade of the century was about to begin) I was at the head of a group of daily papers in the Veneto: a friend of mine in Padua, a writer and often an acute commentator of what was happening in society, objected and told me that, according to him, it was no more than an exhibition. A way, so he said, of showing yourself to be a respectable person without risking very much. I told him about the girl in the school that day, about her doubt. I told him about Palermo's former silence. I told him that in my opinion that was a way of taking sides, apartment block by apartment block, against criminality. It was light, as

compared with shadows. It was noise, as compared with silence. I sustained that it was another strong sign of the liberation of a territory. I reminded him that on the day of the funeral of Pio La Torre there had been many, far too many closed windows in the streets of Palermo's city centre through which the funeral procession had passed. I recalled that on that very day I met out in the streets a well known judge with an escort of some ten armed men and that all these men kept their eyes fixed upwards most of the time, kept looking at the windows and balconies. That from these windows there are now displayed the white sheets of people who in this way express their anger against the assassins, so I said, may seem excessively theatrical. But it is an important fact. It is certainly not a decisive proof of redemption, as I added. But it remains a proof of love for legality. My interlocutor agreed and with conviction offered his excuses to Palermo. There, in that study in Padua brimful with ideas and books, I was taken by a feeling of personal pride. And understood for the first time that Palermo had become a profound part of myself, and this not only on account of the private history of my family, but above all on account of a duty. The duty of conscience of someone who, like myself, does a job that turns him into a witness and who wants to be civilly conscious of what he happens to experience and write about. Even today, notwithstanding everything.

Palermo's "Segno"

by Nino Fasullo

1. The first issue of "Segno" (Sign) saw the light of day in Palermo in November 1975. It did not have at its back a real editorial program, fruit of studies and specific analyses: the new paper had been decided in the space of a few weeks in substitution of another. But behind it there was an experience and, certainly, also very clear ideas about the renewal of the Church and politics: indeed, the paper kept steering its course on the twin rail of the Christian faith and commitment in society.

However, the ideas of "Segno" had not been born right in Palermo. They came from the Vatican Council. The paper thus drew its origin from the most important ecclesial event of the century. The experience and the passions, on the other hand, were altogether Sicilian or, better, Palermitan: they assumed form and color in a city that, though immobile and backward, was also rich in energies that always seemed on the point of erupting.

In actual fact "Segno" was born in Palermo in the house of the Redemptorist Fathers in Via Badia, rising from the ashes of another review, "II Cristiano d'Oggi" (The Christian Today), which ever since the end of 1972 had aroused quite a few perplexities and reserves in the Church environment and the political environments associated with it.

Of this story we shall here underscore only two points: the essential characteristics of the review and its links with Palermo. The latter aspect is somewhat particular, inasmuch as "Segno", even though it was situated in and always concerned itself with Palermo, never enclosed itself in the city or in Sicily: its space was the country, with an ever-open eye for the problems of international life.

2. The period and the ideas amid which "Segno" saw the light of day are thus those of the 'seventies and, in their turn, were prepared by the previous decade. Years that from the ecclesial point of view were marked by the Council, and therefore by Gaudium et spes and the explosive force of the liturgical reform, which had brought the spontaneous ecclesial groups to life.

At the social and cultural level, on the other hand, those years were marked by don Lorenzo Milani's Lettera ad un professoressa (Letter to a schoolmistress) and the Letter to Pipetta, by 1968 in the universities, the war in Vietnam and guerilla warfare in Latin America, with the theology of liberation associated with it. And therefore by critique of politics.

However, all these things happened beyond the Straits and never disembarked on the island, where the ferments of renewal were few and far between. What little existed in the ecclesial field was wholly within the tradition, made to measure as it were. Seemingly, at least, Palermo was a Church out of time and standing still. Within it there never happened anything that was new or, drawing on the Council, resembled a break with the past or a lunge forward.

3. Until at long last, in February 1973, the silence was broken by the review of the Redemptorist Fathers that later was to give rise to "Segno". It promoted an initiative that was as simple as it was courageous: it invited a number of exponents of the Council theology and political Catholicism, including some non-Italians, to come to Palermo. It was a kind of coming out of immobility and isolation, the search for a link and an exchange with what was being debated and experimented outside the island. And thus it happened that two personalities of the conciliar Church came to talk in the Church of Santa Maria del Perpetuo Soccorso in Via Badia. The first was Father Bernhard Häring, likewise a Redemptorist and possibly the greatest of twentieth-century moral theologians, who had been a "specialist" at the Council. The second was Father Ernesto Balducci, a Piarist and man of great culture, and also an uprooter of useless traditions and commonplaces.

Their impact on the city was explosive. The Redemptorist community suddenly became the reference point for progressive Catholicism, a meeting place for young people, intellectuals, politicians, who in large numbers sought to understand the great changes that were taking place in the Church, in society and politics and to participate in them. The next to come were Raniero La Valle, editor of "L'Awenire d'ltalia" during the Council, Dom Giovanni Franzoni, Abbott of Saint Paul Outside the Walls and a Council Father, one of the most committed to setting the Italian Church on her way along the Council roads; and José Maria Gonzalez Ruiz, a Spanish Bible scholar, whose works were widely read, and not only in Italy.

By then we were already in 1974, year of the referendum about the divorce law, a time when the ecclesial and political temperature in Italy often came close to boiling point.

4. "Segno" at Palermo - though at that time still called "II Cristiano d'Oggi" - was at the centre or, rather, the promoter of these ferments and the debates that accompanied them. With one point that was clear to all: in Via Badia, at the house of the Redemptorist Fathers, there had been consumed, propitiated by the Council, the break-up of the political unity of Palermitan Christians. There it had become pacific and accepted that a Christian did not have to be a Christian Democrat, that he could militate in a party of the left, because politics were lay and secular, autonomous with respect to

the faith. The fact was significant and promising not because the Council had said "the political unity of Catholics is abolished", but rather because it had "commanded" the Church to leave herself free of all mundane concerns of wielding power - be it even indirect, be it even for good purposes, for example, safeguarding democracy and the interests of the Church — in order to concern herself full-time with the Gospel, and therefore with the poor. In the end the Council had left the Church with the possibility of having but one party: the party of the poor. And if she had acquired authority and civil and cultural force, these had to be wholly spent for the poor.

It will readily be understood just how new and subversive an approach of this kind must have seemed in Palermitan Catholic environments, that it aroused reserve and in some cases even hostility.

"Segno", which in the meantime had come to life, found itself in the midst of the tempest. Quite a few people, understanding the sense of its cultural commitment and the issue at stake, sympathized with the review, that is to say, with the perspective of freedom and democracy that, from within the Church, it represented for Palermo and Sicily.

5. One characteristic of "Segno", possibly a specific one, was its laity. The review was constituted — in the house of the Redemptorist Fathers, but independent and autonomous of them - as a monthly of "Catholics and laymen". An intentionally ambiguous, but correct description. Because, even though historically "laymen" and "Catholics" in Italy represented two line-ups that were not only different but also hostile, today Catholics who base themselves on the Council can also be "laymen" without ceasing to be Catholics. The differences and dividing fences of former days have disappeared. Without traumas and in all tranquillity a Catholic can also be a layman. Rather, he cannot but be such, for example, in politics or in proposing or voting a law to regulate the phenomenon of divorce. Laity, as far as the review is concerned, no longer means, obviously, opposition to the Church, but simply responsible use of critical reason in all fields of knowledge and morality, society and politics. In Palermo and Sicily, "Segno" was de facto the expression of a group of men and women committed to common objectives that were really shared by believers and non-believers. Who is a believer? was the question asked in those years. Those who in words profess the faith, or those who concretely further the teachings of the Gospel? Who is a Catholic politician? Those who frequent the curias and are presented and sustained by the bishop at election time, *or those* who are effectively committed in favor of justice, liberty, peace, the dignity of the poor, of women, and for a future of freedom for the young?

6. The *editorial group* of "Segno" used Chapter 25 of the Gospel according to Saint Matthew as the criterion for reading the history of the Church. It was also

sustained by the evangelical parabola (Mat 21, 28-32 of the father who has two sons, but who is effectively obeyed only by the younger, who is seeming disobedient in words. What collapsed in those days was a Catholic pseudo-culture and the seemingly massive and often artificial wall that divided believers from non-believers: all of whom were invariably seen as "left-wingers". There came to be experimented a cultural and operative co-existence that changed not only the ideology, but also - and more concretely - everyday practice.

One of the most significant effects of this position was the unitary character of the anti-Mafia movement of the 'eighties. The fact that in Palermo there was but one anti-Mafia movement, where believers and non-believers found themselves committed side by side to the attainment of one and the same objective: putting an end to the dominion of the Mafia and the culture that characterizes it. And this was yet another of the Council's qualifying teachings that "Segno" promoted by its various initiatives.

In short, "Segno"'s Catholics took the Council as their guide. It was not by chance that in those years the young readers of the review were reading some of the Council's documents each week. The "segnisti" were laymen to the hilt, because they distinguished between faith and reason and assumed the responsibility of science and culture, as also of actual practice. They freed God of all responsibility that really behoved men.

7. "Segno" was a review of critique. A review that criticized in order to rejuvenate, to push towards new comprehensions and responsibilities. Passion for change was the most intimate spring of the cultural and political activity of "Segno". Purely Christian passion, as one might say. To the point of legitimately holding that a Christian who did not commit himself to changing the world in a progressive sense would not be a Christian. In this sense, for whatever meaning there may attach to this term, "Segno" was culturally a paper of the left. But only if left is not taken to mean, as it must not be taken to mean, atheist and unbelieving. As far as "Segno" was concerned, man or woman of the left meant only a seeker of freedom, especially for the poor, justice, equality, truth and peace: in the sense of Pacem in terris of John XXIII, a notoriously left-wing manifesto.

8. The central category of Chapter 25 of Matthew's Gospel is practice. Tell me what you do, what side you are on, the things and the people you are in favor of, and I will tell you whether you are a Christian. Not that orthodoxy is of no importance, quite the contrary. But it is life, practice and behavior that resolve and settle questions, sometimes even the theoretical ones. At least according to the Gospel. Another parabola that "converges" with the teachings of Matthew is that of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10, 30-37), which in Palermo, in Via Badia, was the theme of a memorable talk given by Dom Giovanni Franzoni. The doctrine of the parabola is clear: you cannot pass beyond

the problems of men, pretending not to see them. You have to stop, take them in, and come to grips with them. Consequently, the Christian faith, rather than being a mere title for saving oneself, is a force for liberating others. The faith has to be spent in the city. Spent in the sense of consumed, run through, employed to the very last drop.

With these convictions it was inevitable that "Segno" should confront itself with the problems of the city. It seemed beyond all doubt that the gravest and most urgent problem of Palermo and Sicily was the Mafia. We could not ignore it. Unlike the overwhelming majority of the Church, who behaved as if the Mafia did not exist, who would not perceive the infernal fire that burnt the men of Cosa Nostra and the city, "Segno"'s little group began to thunder against the Mafia and to say that the Mafia phenomenon was radically anti-Christian and that failure to oppose it was gravely sinful. "Segno" was the first Catholic review after the Council to say all this. While others remained silent. Or distinguished or understood, but passed on. To be precise, "II Cristiano d'Oggi" had already begun to talk about the Mafia in the 'sixties. In issue No.42, with a leading article entitled Without prophets, it had openly denounced the silence of the Church. Isolated, we were looking for contacts. There was no lack of collaboration, even from some (but very few) priests.

9. In the last thirty years, practically the entire life of "Segno", the fight against the Mafia has de facto been the review's principal commitment. But only because the Mafia was the dominant problem. "Segno" was not conceived as a periodical of Mafia questions. The review found the Mafia there without looking for it. And thus there was practically no issue of the 'eighties that did not speak about the Mafia. It was the fault of Cosa Nostra if in those terrible years we did not succeed in publishing an issue that did not talk about the Mafia. In "Segno" there is everything: the anger, the sorrow, the indignation, the weeping, the desperation, the humiliation, the anguish, the widows, the orphans, the funerals, the homilies of the Archbishop, the press communiques of the trade unions, the parishes, the police unions, Catholic Action (but never of Opus Dei or Communion and Liberation), the political parties, first and foremost the Italian Communist Party. And integral documents with date, place and time of publication. And then studies and reflections: precise, rigorous, documented. In this way "Segno" was the expression not only of the little editorial group that for almost thirty years has written its leading articles only after having discussed, read and approved them. But rather the review of a large number of men and women who wrote, subscribed and met to fight a phenomenon and a power that offends Palermitans, Sicilians, Italians, humanity. You cannot understand "Segno" apart from this choral consent, ample though not vast, and not only Sicilian.

10. There is an aspect of the Palermitan anti-Mafia that the review often underscored and promoted: the fact that the civil and cultural opposition to Cosa Nostra cannot be a matter of principle, words, sterile, with the risk of running dry within itself. Attention was always concentrated on the propositional contents. De facto the paper fought specifically for constructing something new: legality. It was a question of introducing esteem for the law into civil ethics, understanding the law as a common asset of primary importance, so that every care had to be dedicated to the acquisition of a proper sense and appreciation of it. A revolution in the fullest sense of the term. Opposing the Mafia does not just mean repudiating the violence of others, but promotion of observation of the law by all. If being Mafiosi means feeling and being concretely exempt from and outside the law, being anti-Mafia must mean publicly observing the law. Submission to the law as practice of non-Mafia culture. More practice of the law, less Mafia. More Mafia, less law observed. In this, as in many other things, Leonardo Sciascia, was a great master. The great writer kept affirming that the Mafia had to be fought with law.

11. The concrete experience of this motive was initiated in August 1987, when Leoluca Orlando formed his "pentacolor" government: the event was probably the most positive that Palermo had known in the second half of the twentieth century. "Segno", never given to easy infatuations and political fideisms, was among the first to grasp the importance of this experience understood as an exceptional opportunity for the city that could not be wasted. In fact, it constituted a turning point in the history of Palermo and the fight against the Mafia. It was not by chance that against it there came to be unleashed the opposition of political and cultural forces that have to be described as - to say the least — short-sighted. And of men and groups incapable of understanding ideas and processes not forming part of their own schemes. Apart from the results, undoubtedly open to question and at times disappointing, that Palermitan political experience, which turned Italy upside down, remains possibly the most significant the city has ever known. "Segno" sustained it, albeit not uncritically, dedicating it several monographic issues and numerous studies.

12. Another characteristic of "Segno" is its discretion. It lives precariously in the mist of hardships. It arrives more or less everywhere. Having sent out one issue, we start thinking about the next. It has known some moments of success, but all very ephemeral.

Its financial sponsors are its subscribers, among whom Father Giuseppe Pugliesi was one of the most faithful. And then Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino, willed into the Courthouse by Rocco Chinnici. It can rely on excellent collaborators, among

them the late Marcello Cimino and Giuliana Saladino, who prepared the index of the first ten years of the review.

Let us recall some of the important issues that made (albeit little) history. First of all "Segno" 35/1982, Sul fronte di Sagunto (On the front of Saguntum), the issue published immediately after the assassination of General Dalla Chiesa, which documents the mobilization of civil society and the first significant commitment of the Church. In it you can also find the answers that 26 leading Catholics gave to some questions posed by the review, the first of which asked (remember that the date is 1982!) "whether the Mafia was a problem that the Church had to face". The issue also contains the report that G. Falcone and G. Turone made to the Castelgandolfo meeting in June 1982 and which we gave the title The Mafia in the sanctuary of the banks, though it was originally entitled Inquiry techniques in the Mafia field: we had obtained the text from Rocco Chinnici, who asked Giovanni Falcone for it. The other important document of that issue was the famous pastoral letter of Cardinal Ernesto Ruffini, integral text, entitled The true face of Sicily, in which the Archbishop denounced the "three factors that more than any others... have contributed" to the organization of "a grave conspiracy to dishonor Sicily [...]: the Mafia, the Gattopardo, Danilo Dolci".

Another important issue was "Segno" 45/1983, Verso la signoria dei missili (Towards the dominion of the missiles), dedicated to the movement for peace, not only in Sicily, against the installation of the missiles at Commiso. It also contains an important study by the historian Carlo Marino, Pacifist movement and popular struggles at the beginning of the 'fifties.

"Segno" 66/1986, Processo alia Mafia (Mafia on trial), published the most significant parts of the ordinance of the investigating magistrates of the Court of Palermo that was to give rise to the maxi trial commenced on 10 February 1986; and also Cronaea di una mattanza (Account of a slaughter), the dramatic story of the dead who had stained Palermo with blood in those years.

"Segno" 53/1984 published an Article by Aurelio Grimaldi, Viaggio in un girone della città violenta (Voyage in a circle of the violent city), on which Marco Risi based his film Mery per sempre (Mery forever).

"Segno" 93/1988, Palermo oltre Sagunto (Palermo beyond Saguntum), was the issue of Palermo's political turn guided by Leoluca Orlando, but prepared by decades of democratic struggle by the left for the liberation of the city and Sicily from Mafia dominion.

"Segno" 101/1989 published a correspondence between the Vatican Secretariate of State and Cardinal Ruffini on the theme of the Mafia and the Ciaculli massacre of 1963.

"Segno" 209/1999 was a great monographic issue dedicated to Leonardo Sciascia.

13. In 1995 "Segno" brought to life the Alfonsian Weeks, an initiative of a cultural character that takes place each year in the last week of September. They are opened in the Sala delle Lapidi (Hall of the Inscription Tablets) of Palazzo delle Aquile, to underscore that the event is closely connected with the city. In actual fact, however, they could be opened anywhere and maintain the same significance.

The first Alfonsian Week was dedicated to the them Una cultura mite per la città (A gentle culture for the city), a request for peaceful civic relations, governed by reason, liberated from the acrimony that tends to poison them. The year after it considered trust, understood as the fundamental virtue of civil life. The 1999 topic was repentance, seen as an anthropologic force that cannot but concern all of us. The 1997 theme was Religione violenza vangelo (Religion, Violence, Gospel). A number of priests had kept visiting an arrested Mafioso to convert him: a behavior that was equivocal and specious and brought out some not very convincing aspects of a pastoral practice that was far from transparent. It was sustained that there was a difference between religion and Gospel. As if to say that a Mafioso could be religious without having anything in common with the Gospel. The theme Dio, chi è, dov'è? (Who is God, where is he?) was tackled by the fifth Week , the interlocutors including, among others, the great Lutheran theologian Jiirgen Moltmann. In September 2000 we talked about the poor: because the poor come immediately after God. In 2001 we came to grips with the theme of the "uselessness" of Christianity, to draw attention to the delicacy of and respect for the mystery of God, which nobody should ever dare to put into his service, not even for so-called good purposes.

Among the rapporteurs of the Alfonsian Weeks we have had Massimo Cacciari, Marciano Vidal, Gherardo Colombo, Massimo D'Alema, Furio Colombo, to cite only a few of the best known and appreciated personalities.

14.Today the review is face to face with new and difficult problems. The Mafia question, though terribly identical and monotonous, has relatively new and elusive characteristics, as is typical of all complex phenomena. The Mafia has a long history and it is simply impossible not to be on one's guard and suspicious where this criminal organization is concerned. One must be particularly careful to avoid the facile vice of illuminism applied to the Mafia. An almost unpardonable ingenuity that nobody, especially a Sicilian, must ever commit.

Lastly, "Segno" is a useful review: and that is one thing that can be said without any shadow of doubt. Whoever wants to know in detail what happened in Palermo in the course of these last thirty years, must necessarily turn to it. There he will find a world of passions and intelligence, at times exalting. Above all, however, he will find the dream of an island and a world free of the humiliating power of the Mafia.

The years of "Classroom reporting"

by Giovanni Pepi

Classroom Reporting was born in Buseto Palizzolo, a tiny little municipality near Trapani. The place has few resources. But one of these is altogether extraordinary: its wood. It is called Arconaci and takes its name from the barons who ruled the place in the seventeenth century and brought the wood to life by planting cork trees over an area of some thirty hectares. In the course of the years, then, it became enriched with oaks and ilex. And pines and eucalyptus. A fine wood that in summer attracts the many tourists who stay in the villages by the sea. An African sea. Raked by a scorching sun. The wood is surrounded by rocky hills and marble quarries. White and incandescent. The most common plants are dwarf palms and agaves. Elegant and very beautiful. But far too low to create shade. And thus this wood at Buseto Palizzolo becomes a unique place. Preceded by vineyards and cane groves, it offers a passage from the heat of Africa to a coolness that recalls the mountains, and yet with the perfumes of the coastline and the ever-changing odours of the countryside.

I, too, spend my holidays in those parts every year. At San Vito lo Capo, just a stone's throw from Buseto. I discovered the village and its wood when the principal of the school invited me to talk about the usual things that teachers think interest their students: how you put together a newspaper. How you write an article managing to be objective and impartial, and so on.

I got there early in the morning. It was a beautiful day, typical of Sicily's winter. Light breezes of cool air. A very hot and dazzling sun discharged bursts of light through the large window of the small classroom in which I gave my talk. I was tense. I had only just taken charge of "Giornale di Sicilia" and wanted to make a good impression. Carefully following my prepared outline, I explained being complete, considering all the aspect of the fact you wanted to describe. I said that a good journalist should always try to faithfully put to paper what he sees and feels. I tried to trace the difficult borderline between reporting facts and comment. Two very different functions. Comment is opinion, point of view, judgment. It demands complete freedom of the person who writes. Reporting the fact, on the other hand, is search for truth, rigorous assessment of the elements of a news item. It therefore calls for a great deal of restraint. You are free to write that an orange is tasty or otherwise, but not that it is red or yellow, seeing that it is only red.

The children were listening, But they seemed passive and distracted. Only one of

them, just one, struck me on account of his concentration. He sat in the second row of the central block and wore a green pullover. Rather, really loud green. His face, rather strange, was a kind of triangle with two equal sides. White, almost wan. His eyes were small. But very lively and black. And really pierced me whenever I encountered his look. He kept his eyes fixed on me. And that pleased me. I illuded myself that I had found a sympathizer among my audience...

When I finished, there was some polite applause. The principal thanked me with lots of compliments (mere pleasantries, of course). Then he asked the class to ask questions. Lots of hands were raised to ask the floor. To my surprise, however, the boy in the green pullover didn't make a move. He kept looking at me and always with the same expression the while he listed to the answers I gave to his companions. There were many questions. Probably prepared and agreed between the students and their teacher. Nothing very original. They obliged me to repeat the themes I had discussed in my introduction, using the same concepts and almost the same words.

Then the bell began to ring, announcing the morning break. The principal smiled at me to tell me that it was all over. At this point - and to my great surprise, though this time I was not the only one to be surprised - the arm of the boy in the green pullover shot up. The principal looked at me almost as if he wanted to excuse himself. I nodded my head to tell him to let the boy ask his question. Which was: "But if you want us students to get to know the newspaper, why don't you let us write? Why don't you give us a column in which we, and only we, can write what we think and want?". It was the shortest question asked that morning. And also the least trite. I replied that we hadn't thought of that yet. I added that undoubtedly we should have done so, but hadn't yet stumbled onto the right idea, that I would continue to think about it.

I took my leave of the principal, thanking him., and got into the car. At that moment there flashed through my mind a slogan and a title, just like splashes of water in pond struck by a stone. Why not, I began to ask myself, open up as yet unexplored ground. I started imagining the various publicity passages. Coming into school... with a striking announcement: "We're not bringing you a paper made for you, but a paper made by you... So, my friends, why don't you do "your own" Classroom Reporting..." From that moment onwards I kept thinking about the project practically every day.

The question assumed concrete shape a few years later. Antonio Ardizzone, director and publisher of the paper, called a meeting of the top-level executives of the company and the editorial offices. The paper was not doing particularly well. Certainly, "Giornale di Sicilia" was still the oldest and most widely read paper in the island. We still sold more copies than any other. We also had a very close relationship with our readers. With the territory and its history. Francesco Renda, one of Sicily's leading historians, had written that "for good or ill, it fitted the island's history like a glove". Like all Italian papers, however, we found it difficult to grow. We just kept fluctuating between small

upturns of sales and similarly small decreases. All said and done, we kept our old readers, but couldn't find new ones. Antonio traced a very clear line of policy, concluding that we had to invest in the young generation. Get the paper read in the schools. But the youngsters were not doing a great deal of reading. And that was the rub. We could not but share his analysis. Its logic was quite undeniable.

For many years the situation had been as described by Censis in a detailed report. Not more than 19 out of a 100 youngsters opened a daily paper, 49 watched television, 21 listened to the radio. A third of these 19 dedicated a mere 10 minutes to a quick look at headlines and news items. And only 7% of them were interested in politics, 26% followed sport, 23% the horoscope column, and 20% general news. And we were still not doing any better today. The newspaper sector was simply holding its own. Far from satisfactory. Today this was being said quite openly by Luca Cordero de Montezemolo, President of Italian newspaper publishers and also director of the Ferrari racing team. The situation was altogether disastrous in Southern Italy. If 131 copies were sold in the North and 124 in the Centre, sales dropped to no more than 56 in the South. Adults read very little, and the youngsters even less. But there was no alternative. The only way was to stimulate the taste for reading in the young, turn newspaper reading into a pleasure.

We were all agreed at that meeting. And all of us were wondering what we could do, how we could do it. And somebody came out with a wisecrack: "we're all wondering what kind of water we should give the horse to drink, but the horse just doesn't want to drink!". And that was the point where I piped in with: "Sure, the horse doesn't want to drink. Could it be that it wants something other than water?". Which caused everybody to say: "What do you mean?" "That if we want to involve the youngsters, perhaps we ought to think of something that will induce them to write for our paper rather than read it. I often visit schools. I have the impression that the youngsters are more interested in being journalists than in reading the papers". And Antonio, confirming his sure flair, lost no time in coming up with his: "Sure, we could try that. But the idea is not enough. Come to me with a project". And that made me get down to work.

I clearly realized that I had landed myself with a really great headache. And yet it thoroughly thrilled me. But, even though my problem was to pass from idea to project, for many days I seemed to remain stuck at the starting tape. Make them write, o.k., but how? There was one thing I felt quite sure about: it was easier to convince a student to write for the paper than to read it. I firmly believed that the greater part of the youngsters thought just like the boy at Buseto with the triangular face and the green pullover. I had learnt that in my own years as a youngster. I was active in student politics. I was editor of the journal of my institute. During the interminable meetings of our editorial committee each one of us was pursuing a permanent dream: to see his own name under an article published in a paper enjoying a large readership. But the

difficulties were of an organizational nature. How could one reach the youngsters? How could one collect their articles? And how should one select them?

I talked about this with the many teachers among my acquaintances. I consulted the Education Superintendent, the topmost local authority as far as schools are concerned. But the right idea came by pure chance. As almost always happens. A student, the son of friends of mine, told me the story of how he had formed the editorial committee of the journal published by his school. Each class elected two representatives. These constituted a kind of editorial assembly and elected a smaller group that became the "Working Committee" and had the task of getting out the paper. The "Working Committee" also appointed the Editor. I thought of linking my paper with the schools in a somewhat similar manner. Promoting at each school the formation of a group of students capable of writing within a certain number of days the articles to be published on the page the paper would dedicate for this purpose each day. So I went to see Antonio. The project convinced him. But we both wondered how we should get in touch with the schools. What instruments could we use to forward our request to the various institutes and obtain their consent. Antonio at this point suggested that I should set up a special team of colleagues, bringing together expert journalists and freelancers, each of whom had first-hand experience of working with schools. And that's what I did.

I put together one of my top executives, one of the best copywriters and many aspiring journalists who were collaborating with me. The executive was a good man, but sceptical. He simply didn't believe in the youngsters. The copywriter was enthusiastic, but not very expert. And all the others wanted, absolutely wanted the project to be a success. And I have to confess that I was just like them. I explained the programme. I said that the publishers considered it to be strategic for the future. And added that I would personally play the game to the end, committing myself to playing my part in the necessary teamwork. We held several meetings. And always came back to the principal question: how could we contact the schools as a body. The idea of setting up working groups in each school convinced everybody. But who was to set them up and how?

As always, the answer came from the most sceptical colleague. I still remember the scene. He suddenly got up, snorting, and said almost angrily: "Alright, I'll tell you what to do. As long as we stop having these meetings". So?, we all asked him. "All we have to do is to take the steps of a staircase one by one. That's how we'll get there". Which staircase are you talking about? "Of the organization, gentlemen, the organization. The school organization, I mean. It's ramshackle and chaotic, I quite agree, but in the end it works". We didn't understand, none of us understood. Still snorting, he at last explained himself. "Let me say it once more. School has an organization, not particularly efficient, sure, but nevertheless guided by an established hierarchy. This project can be realized at a minimum cost in just one way. We first have to get the consent of the Education Superintendent. The Superintendent can then get the consent of the principals. The

principals that of their teachers and these, in turn, will pinpoint the students who can write for us in the various classes". We listened to him in silence, all ears.

We had arrived at a concrete turning point and looked at each other with a satisfied air. But our sceptical colleague cooled our enthusiasm right away: "That solves the problem of the writing. But not the problem of the reading". In what sense?, I asked him. "Simple. The students will write their articles under the tutelage of their teachers. But will they then read the paper that publishes them? And how many will read it? Unless we decide to give it to them free of charge". I'll get Antonio to approve that, I replied right away. Objection: "That would be a waste". I replied: "No, that would be an investment. There's something I remember. I was in politics when I was a student. One day a little-read afternoon paper with a small circulation had the idea of inviting a group of students from various schools to a debate, and I was one of them. We spoke of the relations between school and political power, dirty classrooms, inconvenient timetables, precarious structures, and so on. I published the debate on two pages of our paper and had it distributed in the classes. It was a success. Everybody read it. Some to look at the picture of a classmate, others to criticize, yet others to praise. But they all read it. Do you understand? All."

That was the day of the miracle. We managed to outline a complete project. The youngsters were to write their articles authorized by their teachers, who would be stimulated by their principals who, in their turn, would be approached by the Superintendent. The articles would be published each day on a special page of the paper and the paper with that particular page would be distributed free of charge to everybody in the schools attended by the students who had written the articles. At a rough estimate, that would involve some 2000-3000 copies a day. Not exactly a small cost. I spoke to Antonio about it and was told to go ahead. In less time than I had expected. So I spoke to the Superintendent. He liked the idea. He promised me an assembly of teachers where I could explain the project to them: "If you manage to convince them, you'll have won your battle, but it all depends on you and only on you". He would not commit himself to more than that.

The meeting was called a few weeks after that encounter. I admit that I trembled a little. Palermo's schools have excellent teachers. But the greater part of them lack proper motivation. Like most people in Italy, they have great responsibilities and small salaries. As in all public services, there are no incentives to stimulate the best. Not even prizes to reward the most capable. Classroom Reporting would have meant extra work for them, but no extra pay. Not an easy thing to ask.

The meeting was held in a very large hall on the road that links Palermo with its airport. Not a very comfortable place. The microphone system was far from good. I could only make myself heard by shouting and said more or less this: "Ladies and Gentlemen, I am asking you to help me bring the paper into the schools to enable you

and your students to come into the paper. Why do we want to do this?, you might ask. We do it for ourselves, of course. The newspapers are in crisis. TV is a winner. But it is a crisis that should cause as much concern to you as it does to us. Many people think that it is an incidental crisis, something that will pass. Due to circumstances that can be overcome. I am convinced of the contrary. It is connected with an even greater and more profound crisis, the crisis of the written word. The reason is easy to see. The message of TV is simple, comfortable, omnipresent and invading. You can bump into television news even when you don't want to either listen or watch. All you have to do is to go into a bar, a shop or any place where a television set is switched on. Certainly, as the director of the Treccani Encyclopaedia recently acknowledged, it may happen that you listen without hearing, somewhat as in certain American films, where a television set sends out images that nobody sees and broadcasts words that nobody listens to. But it is always there, solid and irremovable. A segment of news. A fragment of truth. A shred of information. Is it something good or ill, according to you, that television should prevail over printed paper, that images should prevail over the written word?"

I saw that they were listening. Through the corner of my eye I looked at the senior colleague by my side. He nodded to reassure me. I went on: "It is only right and proper to reflect about some valuations that Censis have put before us. This overdose of TV is said to provoke not by any means negligible behavioural problems in the young watchers. TV makes them feel more alone, it distracts them, it informs them, but does not constitute company for them. It pushes them towards modes and tastes that are not fruit of relations with companions of their own age. Is that what we want?"

"Authoritative sociologists tell us that images undoubtedly inform. They show us a raped woman. A sidewalk ripped open. A bin full of garbage. A road in disrepair. But the images do not explain the reason for all this. Often they create a kind of habituation. They do not stimulate a critical spirit. Reality can become mere representation of things that we do not live or experience. The tragic may lose its impact, decline into something trite. Is that what we want? We journalists and you teachers are both suffering this crisis. Neither of us manages to do anything to involve our youngsters in the pleasure of the written word".

"With Classroom Reporting our paper can undoubtedly do something for itself. It is strategically important to spread the newspaper habit among the young. But we can also give a hand to you and sustain your everyday efforts. Just think what would happen if you were to succeed in getting your students to write about the things they feel and want in a major paper, a paper that is read each day by thousands of Sicilians. Just think what would happen if you were to succeed in getting them to write about everything, thoughts, drives, stories of things they have lived, denunciations, joys and passions. With them, with their voice, with their articles, the whole of school will come out of its shell. Hitherto ignored problems and questions will become visible. Without even considering

the didactic usefulness of a newspaper when it comes to educating for writing. Because a newspaper has mobile and elastic spaces. A student can be invited to write about the same concept first in ten lines and then in forty. And lastly, a very important thing: just reflect about the political utility of this operation. We could give the students and all people concerned with school a space for talking to the public institutions. To express needs and problems in full legality, to open a dialogue with government members at the various levels". I convinced them. The applause made that clear. Short but warm. The Superintendent, who was sitting next to me, jugged me with his elbow and whispered into my ear: "You've done it!". After which he invited the teachers to ask questions. Many of them put their names down to speak. From the things they asked I realized that they were fully convinced. The first part of the battle had been won.

The second part of the battle took place in one of Palermo's best known secondary schools, the Liceo Garibaldi. A comfortable school. Two buildings, one for the middle school, the other for the secondary school, with a green space between them that served as an open-air gymnasium. The meeting with the students was held in the Great Hall, normally reserved for the great cultural occasions. The teachers had decided to have one representative of every class attend the meeting. They all came. Nobody, neither the Superintendent nor the teachers, gave me any advice as to the things I should say. But I well knew that the battle was as risky as the one with the teachers. I was very frank. I said: "With Classroom Reporting our paper wants to give you something that you have always asked. Is it not true that you have always said that you want to be protagonists of the things that concern you, that you want space of autonomy and liberty? Well, we want to give it to you. Every day one page of our paper is to be got out by you. You can freely write whatever you want".

"You see, I was once a student at this same school and edited the students' own paper. I am now the editor of Sicily's largest daily newspaper. I have always had a passion for journalism, and I have realized my dream. I think I am therefore qualified to tell you a few things. You have a great newspaper at your disposal. Don't waste the opportunity. I am asking you to write not only what you are thinking, but also to make it interesting by reporting facts. Don't get involved in lengthy sermons, comments or preachings, in long dissertations about what you think is good or bad, right or wrong".

"Remember that a newspaper is read only when it tells things that are of interest, things that make headlines. Let me give you an example: if one of you wants to protest against the inefficiency of some public service, he can write an article of forceful denunciation. Sure. But, believe me, few people will listen to him in a world where everybody protests. He could also do it by telling his readers about a place where overfull garbage bins are concentrated or about how late a bus arrived at a specific place on a specific day. That would serve his purpose better. It would be more convincing and arouse more interest".

"There is another thing, just one more, that I have to tell you. We shall give you full freedom to write. You can tell whatever facts and stories you may wish. Your freedom has no constraints other than that of truth and completeness. You must talk about things you have seen and experienced, indicating all the sources from which you have obtained the news you relate. You may make mistakes, of course. In that case you must clearly and unhesitatingly acknowledge your mistake. Our paper is the only one in Italy to have instituted a column entitled "Our Mistakes" that gives as much prominence to the retraction as was enjoyed by the mistaken information. Whenever appropriate, this column will appear even on the front page. Nobody else in Italy does this. A good paper is not the one that never errs, for that is quite impossible. But rather the one that does not hesitate to admit its mistakes. And then, you can often give some good news when you correct a mistake. And that, given the times in which we live, is not by any means of little importance". They smiled. Then all took their turn in speaking. Each one already had in mind the article he wanted to write. And I realized that they were anxious to write it. Classroom Reporting had got off the mark.

The first page was published on 14 October 1996. That was a Monday. The times were sad. Tough polemics between the Minister of Justice and the magistrates committed in the fight against corruption, the famous "Clean Hands" operation. The pharmacists were protesting against the new taxes imposed by Parliament. Thefts and bag-snatching were rampant. The only good news: the Pope, at that time confined to hospital, had recited the Angelus from the window of his room and seemed to be in good spirits.

But Classroom Reporting saw the light of day in happy circumstances. Luigi Berlinguer, Minister of Education at the time, signed the leading article to wish the aspiring journalists success in their work. He wrote: "I am sure that there will be an enrichment also for the readers, who can discover how young eyes and minds filter our everyday reality with a freshness - without demagogy - that adults often lose". He proved a good prophet. The first page written by the students was full of that "freshness, without demagogy", no doubt about that. Two seventeen-year-old girl students wrote about the curious phenomenon of the "immigrants" who "emigrated". They explained: "Palermo's Santa Chiara Institute, which assists needy immigrants and is directed by a priest, Don Meli, is about to close its doors after ten years of activity: the greater part of them have obtained residence permits and have moved to the North". In a poor Sicily not even the poor can find a way of surviving. The next day another girl student denounced the case of Vincenzo: "... He is left alone with his disability. And his parents have to take turns in assisting him..." That happened in a secondary school in the city centre. There was no entrance for the disabled. The work of making one had been interrupted ten years before. His father and mother had to leave work to accompany him to school. And there were stories about public malfunctions every day. "There are many beautiful churches in my neighbourhood, but we see far too many rats".

Or: "No heating at the Benedetto Croce School. We have to come to class with jackets and scarves". Again: "The Protonotaro Middle School has no gym, and we have our gymnastic classes in the courtyard".

We are now in the sixth year. I never liked drawing up balance sheets. They can do a lot of harm, and are best left to the end. But we want to continue. Above all, the students and teachers want to continue. But I often ask myself what we are really doing with Classroom Reporting. For the students, for the paper, and — why not? - for Sicily and Palermo. We make the rounds of the schools, propose articles and meetings, act in some way like information salesmen, but what are we really doing?

The first answer that always comes to my mind is this. We manage to get better knowledge of Sicily and Palermo and make them better known. This in the sense that we are laying bare very live and often hidden aspects. Palermo, Sicily's ancient capital, can boast a millenary civilization. In history it has known the dive from glory to degradation. Today it toils and plods towards uncertain development objectives. It is a complex and contradictory city. Any visiting tourist can see spots of third-world poverty and opulent areas more or less next door to each other. A generous and violent city, where many citizens are open to corruption and collusion with the mafia. But also many men and women up in arms against this. Often these are closed realities. Islands surrounded by fences. Worlds that do not communicate with each other. Classroom Reporting, coming into the schools week after week, facilitates relationships, contacts, communication between different areas.

One particular circumstance made this very clear to me. The encounter between the students and the Commander of the Financial Police in a school tucked away between Capo and Ballarò, the city's principal popular markets. A clean structure with run-down and dilapidated houses all around. And a recently renovated mosque in front of it. I more or less remember the figures the teachers gave me. Almost sixty out of their 600 pupils were not white. Seventy percent of the children had an unemployed parent. Thirty percent a father who eked out a living with occasional work, fifty percent had a member of the family in prison. It was my first impact with a reality I was not very familiar with. A ten-year-old got up and asked: "If one of us works to help the family, does he have to pay tax?".

At the end of the meeting the principal told me: "There are children who bring home the little money that makes the family get by, working as errand boys in shops. We've reached an understanding to avoid their becoming full-time truants. Half the day at the school, the rest of the day at the shop. But quite a few of them are worn out when they reach their desks and just fall asleep".

More than a few of the questions that day revolved around criminality, the lack of work, the inefficiency of the public services in the poor quarters, the numerous risks run by children who have to live in the streets. The Commander was a good man.

He understood the situation right away and spoke accordingly. In simple words he explained the illusory nature of the seemingly easy solutions. That sooner or later you came to pay for crimes like theft and bag-snatching. Above all, how difficult it was to rise from such a social condition by means of illegal shortcuts. But that officer knew his onions. He did not hide that the youngsters in many parts of Palermo lacked adequate examples.

He recalled the day he had to arrest a married couple for cigarette-running at Brancaccio, an industrial area well known as a mafia stronghold. He said: "It was early morning and still dark. The noise woke up two children like yourselves. I am accustomed to arresting people, but their bewilderment moved me. We called a relative to look after them. An uncle came and we asked him to get them ready for school. But he replied: "What's the use of sending them to school?". I confess that I would willingly have taken him to prison with me. And I kept on thinking what future there could be in store for children with parents who were smugglers and an uncle who thought there was no point in sending them to school".

After the meeting that day two of the teachers took me aside in a corridor that led to the exit. They told me: "Among the audience listening to you and the commander today there was a boy whose father is in prison for drug-peddling. He was listening in silence, paying sincere attention. At long last he was hearing people talk about what for him was the other part of the world. At the Carnival party organized by the school he wore the costliest costume. When we asked him who had given it to him, he replied: "Uncle". It was not his uncle, obviously. Not the brother of his mother, and not the brother of his father either, but the man of the 'Organization' who assists the family of the father in prison".

I shall never forget that day. I discovered that I had come to a borderline. A kind of invisible curtain beyond which the children lived outside legality. In the fullest and most devastating sense. Strangers to the culture of the good. Devoid of the most elementary sense of legality. They live beyond a frontier. But that day they received and read a newspaper. They found themselves face to face with a man of the law, a military man. They talked to him. Perhaps that was the first time they had ever set their foot on the other side of the fence. And that day these children could be seen by the other Palermo, the inhabitants of the opulent city, who knew nothing of the poor and poverty.

And then, in some way, Classroom Reporting brought out in front of my eyes a submerged world that would never have come to light if our paper had not urged the students to talk, had not given them a previously lacking space to make their denunciations. When I advised the students of the Garibaldi School not to limit themselves to protesting or affirming abstract principles, I hardly imagined that I was to obtain such extraordinary news items from our classroom reporters. Let's call them even scoops. Like the one when two little girl students of a school in a well known "risky"

area told us how they had discovered some school companions of their own age whom they had not seen for several days: behind the stalls at the Ballarò market, selling fruit and vegetables. That headline made the rounds of the world. It even brought a BBC troupe to Palermo. And afterwards we published many similar denunciations. Let me cite one of them: "We saw an eight-year-old boy sell salt, lemons and the like. And, just like him, we see many other children of our own age work in bakeries, shops and bars, sometimes bearing very heavy loads. How is it that these people who exploit the work of minors are not fined or even arrested?". A very proper question. For me it had the effect of a slap in the face. We adults knew about this reality. We saw it but were not outraged. It really shook me. I immediately asked one of our reporters to look into the matter and answer the question. What came out was really chilling: Italy's arms against child labour are thoroughly blunt. The laws exist. But they are hardly ever applied. They only provide for ridiculous fines that don't frighten anybody.

Classroom Reporting also showed me a Palermo that is changing. Day after day, year after year, we publish outspoken articles against drug-peddling and the mafia, lots of them. A very clear and visible change. But if people abroad are to understand this, I first have to go back a few years. After Prefect Alberto Dalla Chiesa had been killed by the mafia, RAI, the public radio, asked me to arrange a broadcast on organized crime in which listeners could intervene. I invited Emmanuele De Francesco, Dalla Chiesa's successor, to come to the studio. Listeners called and asked questions. But they were afraid of coming into the open. None of them gave their name and surname. A few mentioned a first name, probably false, anyway. That was the situation in Palermo at the beginning of the 'eighties.

Ten years later in Sicily we had lots of youngsters who published their pieces with name, surname and photograph. To speak clearly and forcefully against the mafia. And to write, let me quote again: "First objective, defeating the mafia. What we need is the courage to denounce crime". Or: "School must line up against the clans". And again: "We need more courage in the face of the mafia". Without forgetting the denunciation of specific facts.

Classroom Reporting also brought the industrious world of the volunteer organizations into the limelight. Hosts of youngsters working in silence to help the weak and needy. Setting up hostels to provide accommodation for indigent parents who have to come to Palermo from the provinces to have their children hospitalized in the city. Organizing reception centres to help men and women afflicted by Aids to get out of the drug habit. Accompanying disabled youngsters on their sad journeys to Lourdes. Bringing to life recreation centres where poor children can play after school. Promoting the reception of Georgian children as guests of Sicilian families under the slogan: "A smile for those who suffer on account of war". Collecting funds to send to third-world children.

But in some way Classroom Reporting also succeeded in rendering the students protagonists of reality. Quite a few of the problems raised by them have been solved. A strong relationship has now been formed between the students and the institutions. Examples? A little girl attending an elementary school in the city centre asked Nicola Cristadi, Chairman of the Regional Assembly, why the island did not have a flag of its own. He replied: "For three thousand years Sicily has had the Trinacria as its symbol. I promise you that it's now going become Sicily's official flag". And the notoriously slow Sicilian Parliament succeeded in putting the promised law on the statute book within a few weeks. Stimulated by the students of the Noce quarter, Palermo's mayor, Leoluca Orlando, transformed a degraded open space into a garden. Through Classroom Reporting we discovered a school where the students maintained a refuge for abandoned dogs and cats. We publicized the fact and other students followed their example. A playing park has been created in Cefalù. And at Bagheria they re-opened the doors of a villa that had been closed for years.

This capacity of becoming protagonists induced us to raise the stakes. This year we have changed things. The driving centre of Classroom Reporting is no longer our daily page with the articles of the students. We are now relying more on what we call Forums, interview-encounters between the students and representatives of the institutions. We are publishing one of these every week. With them we are playing a kind of "government game". We are stimulating mayors, aldermen, prefects and representatives of the magistracy and the armed forces to make specific and concrete pledges, to indicate possible solutions. In the course of the year both the students and the teachers can use their articles to check whether and how these pledges are being honoured and comment what has or has not been done. And our readers can do likewise.

Two reasons suggested this change. First of all, we want to give new lustre to the relationship between the youngsters and politics by stimulating a dialogue about concrete things. And we also want to render visible the creative powers of a democracy. We can have what we want by using the legal spaces of a city, a region. And the "government game" works. Ten Forums have already been held at the time I am writing this article. We have already obtained numerous commitments and are keeping tabs on them by means of appropriate journalistic initiatives. Salvatore Cuffaro, recently elected head of the island's government, has promised to transform an old and abandoned bathing establishment into a youth hostel. Fabio Granata, regional alderman responsible for cultural assets, has promised to open new museums and has already found a place for one of them: at Monreale, the township famous for the magnificent cathedral built there by the Normans. Calogero Corrao, city councillor responsible for education in Palermo, has pledged himself to find specialized personnel to take care of disabled students in the very near future. Diego Cammarata, Palermo's new mayor, has brought public lighting back to the Noce quarter, which had remained in the dark after rats had destroyed the

local lighting system. Ettore Cittadini, a scientist now in charge of the island's health system, is committed to employing more anaesthetists to cut down the long waiting times associated with surgical operations. The mayor of Termini Imerese is due to improve the port structures. And Enrico La Loggia, national minister for regional affairs, has promised to increase the anti-racket fund set up to reimburse shopkeepers who refuse to pay protection money to the mafia.

Fernando Savater wrote in an authoritative Italian daily that he had been impressed by an advertisement published in the Spanish press. It said: "Osama Bin Laden, engineer". And underneath: "forming technicians is easy, the difficult thing is to form citizens". And Savater went on as follows: "Indeed, technical preparation is not worse than in the past, if anything it is now better. The trouble is that it stops there doesn't go any further. We confer diplomas and degrees on asocial beings who don't concern themselves with anything other than their rights, never with their duties. Or fanatics readily given to intransigence and demagogy. What is lacking is preparation as citizens". All said and done, Classroom Reporting, even though it did not set out to do so, can also claim the following as one of its effects: it is making students become citizens who know how to use legal spaces for protesting, denouncing, stimulating and proposing. Thus rendering the climate at Palermo less grey.

Things are changing in the city and the island. But old vices still linger on. The latest news from Sicily is not by any means uniform. Legality seems to be at the centre of a tug-o'-war. It can happen, as it did the other day, that a police patrol trying to arrest three young dope peddlers at the Vucciria, the famous market painted by Guttuso, has to face the protest of a multitude of other youngsters. But it can also happen that the police manages to capture the perpetrators of an armed robbery at a jewellery shop thanks to the spontaneous collaboration of numerous eyewitnesses. There are many students in Cefalù who, replying to an opinion poll of the local church, say that there is no harm in asking a boss to put in a good word for you. But there are also "Mothers Courage" who denounce the dope peddlers to whom their children fell victim, with name, surname and all. There are students in Gela who say that they consider it normal for protection money to be included among the normal costs of a business. But there are also the wives who denounce the clandestine videopoker network where their husbands dissipate their salaries, well knowing that behind this network there is the mafia. No doubt, in Palermo, in Sicily, legality is still suspended at the centre of a tug-o'-war. But there is one thing of which I am fully convinced: Classroom Reporting is pulling in the right direction.

Just a few days before writing this article we had a fine initiative to record. A student at the "Ignazio Florio", a school in the San Lorenzo quarter, a suburb grown too quickly and without spaces for children, where a little boy was killed in the 'eighties because he "had seen too much", wrote an article in which he denounced the "sense of

inferiority and shame" felt by Sicilians. And asked those who have government responsibility to restore to the people "their pride of being Sicilians". His appeal was taken up by a teacher, a former headmistress of another middle school, the "Sandro Pertini", an outpost of the battle for legality in a quarter only a few hundred yards from Brancaccio, where the mafia assassinated a priest, Father Pino Pugliesi. After reading the article, she launched a rather singular competition: to take the letters of the word mafia and turn them into the first letters of other words that transmit positive values, composing phrases that launch messages of love, peace and friendship. The students took up the cudgels with enthusiasm. And the result were simple and profound phrases like "MAFIA. Mostriamo Ancora Fiducia Impegnandoci Attivamente" (Let's still show confidence by active commitment); or "MAFIA. Manifestiamo Apertamente Fraterno Invincibile Amore" (Let's openly show invincible fraternal love); and the gentle and loving "MAFIA. Mamma Abbracciami Fino In fondo aU'Anima" (Mamma hold me tight to the bottom of my soul). Sure, Classroom Reporting is undoubtedly pulling in the right direction. And Sicily will see sunnier times.

The Sicilian Reinassance Institute

Statement of purpose

Sicily is undergoing a remarkable transformation. Following decades of Mafia control, Palermo and other communities over the island have been making in recent years a significant comeback to lawfulness and democratic culture, based on a revival of citizenship participation and commitment. In a world where organized crime and corruption have become major impediments to democratic, political and economic development, the renaissance process which is going on in Sicily even through difficulties and resistances is a shining example of how communities can work together to reduce crime and corruption and enhance the quality of life of their people.

The Sicilian Renaissance Institute (SRI) is designed to foster civic renewal throughout the island and to provide information and inspiration to interested regions and communitites around the world. Specifically, the Institute will: facilitate an understanding of the recent Sicilian experience in this field through publications, audiovisual material, seminars and educational exchange; and co-operate with institutions, communities and individual in Sicily and elsewhere to encourage the adoption of civic initiatives designed to strengthen a culture of lawfulness and democracy aiming at preventing and mitigating the effects of crime and corruption.

The Sicilian Renaissance Institute (also named *Istituto per il Rinascimento Siciliano)* was founded in Palermo on November 29, 1999 as a nongovernmental, nonprofit organization by a group of Italian and American civil society leaders. The SRI is based in Palermo, Italy, and it maintains an office in Washington D.C., USA. Its policy and direction is set by an international Board of Directors.

The members of the current SRI Board of Directors are:
President: Hon. Prof. Leoluca Orlando, member of the Sicilian Parliament; former Mayor of Palermo and member of the European and Italian Parliaments;
Vice President: Dr. Rita Borsellino, Vice President of LIBERA (Italian national consortium of civic associations);
Counselors: Prof. Roy Godson, President, The National Strategy Information Center, Washington, D.C.; Professor at the Georgetown University; and Andrea Scrosati, President, Media Network (Italian national public relations firm).
Honorary President is Cardinal Salvatore Pappalardo, Palermo Archbishop Emeritus.
Honorary Director for Culture is Prof. Wole Soyinka, Nobel Laureate in Literature and Professor at Emory University.

Activities completed

Ever since its foundation the SRI has carried out an intense research and documentation activity on the ongoing process of civic renewal in Sicily, and has subsequently disseminated worldwide its findings about the principles that have inspired the initiatives undertaken in this field by the various components of Sicily's civil society, as well as their effective practices and the results obtained.

This knowledge-spreading effort was made first of all by means of two publications that the SRI prepared, printed and distributed on a worldwide scale to international organizations; government agencies; public bodies; foundations; civic, religious and educational associations; newspapers and journals; as well as to individual politicians, educators, trade unionists and other civic leaders in many countries interested in the promotion of a culture of lawfulness as an effective complementary strategy to prevent and reduce the effects of crime and corruption..

The first of these, originally published and distributed in February 2000, was printed in two 34-page versions (one, in Italian, entitled *"// Rinascimento di Palermo: Fatti e opinioni";* the other, in English, entitled *"The Palermo Renaissance: A Real-life Civics Course").* This publication was subsequently updated and reprinted in October 2000, with a total run of 16,000 copies for each version.

The second was a 70-page publication, likewise printed in two versions (in Italian,*"Per un cultura di legalità: il Rinascimento di Palermo";* in English, *"Creating a Culture of Lawfulness: The Palermo, Sicily Renaissance")* distributed since December 2000 in more than 5000 copies.

The contents of the latter publication, together with other information, were also inserted in the SRI Internet site, www.sicilianrenaissance.org.

In addition to the above, the Sicilian experience in the promotion of a culture of lawfulness was also illustrated and discussed by SRI representatives at numerous high-level international conferences, seminars and meetings. Among these mention might here be made of the following:

- the Tenth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime held in Vienna in April 2000;
- the biannual Convention of the American Federation of Teachers, held in Philadelphia in July 2000, in the course of which the SRI President, Leoluca Orlando, received the AFT Human Rights Award "Bayard Rustin";
- the Georgetown University's Executive Leadership Seminar on the theme "Strategic

Approaches to Transnational Crime and Civil Society", held in Washington, DC, in July 2000;

- the International Leaders Forum of the National Democratic Institute of the United States, held in Los Angeles in August 2000;
- the First National Conference on "Building Sound Communities in the Transition of Mexico" held in Mexico City in January 2001;
- the meeting of the Young President's Organization International held in Venice in June 2001;
- the eighth edition of the *"Rencontres Internationales du Memorial pour la Prevention des Conflits"*, on the theme *"Trafics et mafias: les Etats impuissant?"*, held in Caen, France, in October 2001;
- the ceremony held at St. Petersburg, Russia, in October 2001, during which the SRI President was awarded with the Puskin Prize 2001;
- the symposium on the theme "Fostering a Culture of Lawfulness on the Island of Ireland" held at Gleneagles, Scotland, in November 2001;
- the participation to the United Nations experts meeting on crime prevention, held in Vancouver, Canada, January 2002;
- the participation to the series of seminars and conferences on "Culture of lawfulness: the Sicilian model" organized by the German Universities in February 2002;
- the participation to the conference "Europe: a cure against the mafia", held in Antibes, France, in March 2002;
- the participation to the memorial ceremonies of the six months anniversary of the tragic events of September the 11th: "Response, Rebuilding and Reconciliation", organized by Columbia University, New York on the 11 th -12th of March 2002;
- the participation to the international conference "Building Sound Communities-Security: a commitment for everybody" organized by the cultural Institute "Ludwig von Mises", Mexico City, 14th-18th of March 2002;
- the participation to the Eurasian-American Seminar on crime and terrorism prevention: "the spaces of crime, corruption and terrorism" organized by the magazine Limes, Rome, May 2002;
- participation to the seminar "Enhancing democracy: transatlantic perspectives of the role of educators", a joint initiative by The National Union of Teachers of England and Wales and American Federation of teachers, Stokerochford, UK, July 2002;
- participation to the European Conference on "Tackling terrorism - the role and the responsibilities of local Authorities", organised by the Chamber of local authorities of the Council of Europe, Luxembourg, September 2002;
- the lesson on "Culture of lawfulness and crime prevention: the role of the public administration" held at the Faculty of Economy of the Havana University in the framework of the training course for public managers, Cuba, September 2002;

- participation to the II Euromoney Conference, organised by Euromoney Istitutional Investor, Dubrovnik, Croatia, October 2002.

The concrete results obtained in Palermo in the struggle against organised crime were recognised by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations: in the last guidelines for the prevention of crime (February 2002) it indicates the necessity of actively promoting culture of lawfulness as a tool in this field.

Our method of intervention is both simple and innovative: it is based on the "simple" communication of an experience without any direct intervention in the countries concerned: we rely on bilateral exchanges to enable social operators, journalists, teachers and religious authorities to become familiar with what has already been done in Palermo, assess these experiences and study possible ways in which they could be autonomously applied in their own reality.

The sending out of our delegations or the presence of foreign delegations in Palermo and Sicily, appropriate publications and debates and seminars are the instruments for spreading knowledge of what has been done in Palermo, are moment of confrontation, stimulus and mutual enrichment, but always in the perspective of respect for and valorisation of the different cultures, the different reference values.

A similar activity of illustrating the Sicilian experience in matters of education for lawfulness has also been performed by SRI representatives on numerous occasions when foreign leaders (government representatives, politicians, educators, professionals, businessmen, journalists, etc,) visited Palermo either in official delegations or working groups.

The SRI also organized - either directly or in collaboration with supporting institutions — the following events intended to encourage the adoption of civic initiatives against organized crime in countries particularly at risk:

- a five-day seminar on the theme of "The Cultural Approach in the Fight Against Crime and Corruption" held in Palermo in May 2000 for an official delegation of the Republic of Georgia;
- an international three-day symposium on "The Role of Civil Society in the Fight Against Organized Crime: Global Implications of the Palermo Renaissance" held at Palermo in December 2000 as part of the official program of the High-Level Signing Conference for the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime. Detailed reports on this theme were presented not only by leaders of the Sicilian renewal and the Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations, but also by authoritative representatives of such countries as Hong Kong, Botswana, Georgia, Mexico and the United States;

- a five-day seminar on "Countering Crime Through Culture" held in Palermo in September 2001 for an official delegation from Mexico.

In particular, intense activities were undertaken in the various cities of the United States of Mexico: indeed, in the light of the Palermitan experience, the Mexican government, basing recently decided to render the teaching of the culture of legality obligatory in all the elementary and basic schools..

Lastly, the Institute has carried out a series of activities intended to encourage civic renewal in other parts of Sicily, and in January 2000 promoted — making also a considerable contribution to its actual organization — a meeting in Palermo of representatives of Italian civil society that sought to maintain a high level of attention in the fight against the Mafia.

In the course of 2002, the Institute is intensifying its activities aimed at promoting a culture of lawfulness in all parts of Sicily and, further, to expand the dissemination abroad of the effective practices and results of the cultural anticrime initiatives that have been, and will be, undertaken in this island by means of publications, audiovisual materials and other informational channels.

The SRI is also planning a series of educational exchanges (in the form of seminars to be held in Sicily or participation of representatives of Sicily's civil society in conferences held abroad) with countries particularly interested in adopting a similar cultural approach in their struggle against organized crime, terrorism and corruption, among them Peru, Nigeria, El Salvador, Vietnam, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Albania.

Furthermore, the Institute intends to collaborate with global institutions, as well as with governmental agencies and NGO's of other countries, particularly in the European area, with a view to adopting joint initiatives aimed at promoting civic education and a culture of lawfulness in various regions of the world.

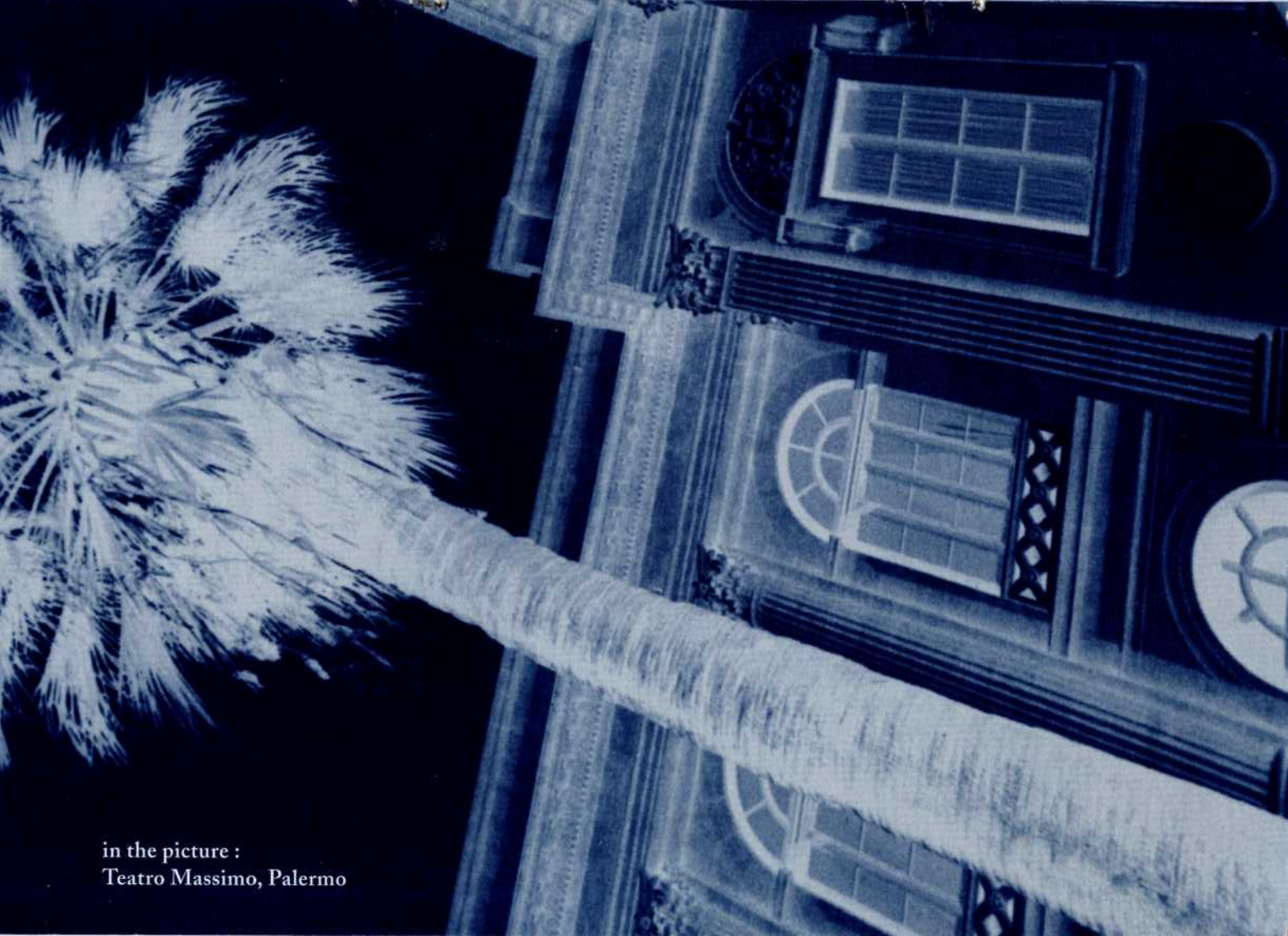
Biographies

Attilio Bolzoni, 47 years of age, first reporter of "L'Ora", a Palermo daily, then special correspondent in Palermo of "La Repubblica", a national daily. Was a first-hand witness of Sicilian affairs for more than twenty years.
Together with Giuseppe D'Avanso is author of *"II capo dei capi"* (the boss of bosses), Mondadori, 1993; *"La giustizia è Cosa Nostra"* (Justice is Cosa Nostra), Mondatori, 1995; *"Un delitto tra amici"* (A crime among friends), Mondatori, 1996; and, together with Saverio Lodato, of *"Cera una volta la lotta alia Mafia"* (Once upon a time there was the fight against the Mafia", Garzanti, 1998.

Nino Fasullo, Redemptorist Father, taught philosophy and pedagogy in teacher-training colleges. At present is editor of *"Segno"*, a review of political and theological culture that he founded in 1975. Among others, he prepared some of the shorter works of Alfonso de Liguori (1696-1787) for publication: *"Degli obblighi de' giudici, avvocati, accusatori e rei"* (About the obligations of judges, attorneys, prosecutors and the guilty), 1998; *"Maria Nostra Avvocata"* (Mary Our Attorney), 2000. For the last eight years has organized the Alfonsian Weeks at Palermo each year.

Maurizio De Luca, journalist and former editor of the local dailies of the "Espresso Group" in the Veneto. Has written books and theatre plays and has produced television investigation programmes regarding the Mafia, the P2 Lodge, terrorism and various political and financial scandals.

Giovanni Pepi, born at Agrigento in 1947, attended the Faculty of Jurisprudence at the University of Palermo. As holder of a Ceses scholarship, prepared two studies of the Italian Communist Party. Was among the founders of the review *"Controcorrente"* published in Venice.
Joined *"Giornale di Sicilia"* in 1972, where he acted as political and trade union reporter and leader writer. Eventually became the paper's editor-in chief, and as such created the linkage between the editorial offices of the paper and the television structure for the production of the *Telegiornale di Sicilia* (Sicilian Television News), for which he acted as commentator and compere.
Today is Co-Director responsible not only for the *"Giornale di Sicilia"*, but also for the Sicilian Television News, the Internet site of the paper and the radio news bulletins. Is also consultant for Sicily's first information gateway "Sicily on line".
Author of political essays published in books and reviews and co-author of a book entitled *"Pappalardo, un vescovo tra* »óz"(Pappalardo, a bishop in our midst).



in the picture :
Teatro Massimo, Palermo