Italy Today
The sick man of Europe

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Map of Italy's regions

1   A 'sick man' in Europe

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THE MAKING OF THE SICK MAN[1]

In October 2006 the popular TV programme *Le Iene* (The Hyenas) scheduled a documentary on the Italian Members of Parliament (MPs) and their use of cannabis and cocaine. About 50 MPs (secretly and involuntarily) were tested by *Le Iene* journalists, and 32 per cent appeared to use these illicit drugs. However, the Italian Privacy Authority refused permission to screen it, and the Public Prosecutor's office in Rome confiscated all the material – including the drug tests. A few days later, the 'revenge' of *Le Iene* was to test MPs' general culture knowledge:

> Who is Nelson Mandela?
> 'I am not really aware of this'; 'There are different opinions on Mandela's figure'; '[He is] the South-American President [...], he is Brazilian.'
> What is Guantanamo? Have you ever heard about Guantanamo?
> 'No.'
> Where is Guantanamo?
> 'In Afanistan.'[2]
> Where?
> 'In Afanistan!'
> Who is Venezuela's current President?
> 'Gomez.'
> Who?
> 'Comez.'
> Where is Darfur?
> 'It is the Lebanon's issue.'
> And what about the Darfur drama?
> 'Unfortunately this is not an Italian "moda" [fashion] [...]. We [Italians] should not have it. We are a country of "style", a country of good food [...]. [The Darfur] is a lifestyle, a type of behaviour [...], [the Darfur] is for food.'

Such striking answers were provided by some MPs interviewed in front of the national parliament in Rome.[3] With the exception of a few newspaper articles, not many questioned the surprising lack of knowledge of part of national party representatives.

This peculiar 'status' of the parliamentary elite echoes some of its historical precursors. In Liberal Italy, as Christopher Duggan reminds us, 'a Tuscan, Ferdinando Martini, was horrified by the ignorance of his fellow deputies and recalled an occasion when the Minister of the Interior, Giovanni Nicotera (a southerner and a former Mazzinian revolutionary), repeatedly referred to "King Teodoro" of England in a speech after misreading a note that had been slipped to him about "the Tudors"' (Duggan 2008: 311).

Yet, Italy's problems go much deeper than its parliamentarians' lack of knowledge. In general, this country – well-known as a nation of art, culture and beautiful landscapes – has a long history of unsolved issues and long-term problems that still characterize its relatively young democracy. For instance, Italy is known as a country with a weak sense of nationhood, a high degree of politicization of social life, a multitude of quarrelsome political parties, unstable or unproductive government coalitions, constant inequalities between regions, the dramatic presence of powerful crime organizations, widespread corruption in public life, and growing xenophobic stances. The wide array of these and other critical issues seems to have reached a critical mass that has transformed Italy into the 'sick man of Europe': a country still struggling between modernity and backwardness, between the need/will to change and the fear of losing some local or specific privileges.[4] In such a context, Italy, as already noted, became an interesting 'laboratory' for democracy as it copes with a series of political and social challenges that have a wider, European significance (Lazar 1997: 4).[5]

The country is therefore facing a tangible decline to which its economic, social and political elite have no answers. These ruling elites do not seem ready to cope with the crisis of Italian society and politics. They are distrusted by most of its citizens and affected by a worrying lack of renewal and meritocracy. Linked to this last point, it is clear that many of these elites are selected through a self-referential process which influences access to several professions, including journalism, public service and bureaucracy, university professors, and professional politicians (Floris 2007b; Iezzi 2009; Carlucci and Castaldo 2009); and it is often regulated by personal networks or political links rather than proven and effective know-how.

This naturally developed an in-group narrow mentality, one in which the *raccomandazione*, the 'preferential' treatment, is the only certain way of getting a job, social position and favour. Journalist Giovanni Floris, for instance, called it *Mal di Merito* and highlighted the social impact of this system (with the inherent loss of human capital) as well as the 'epidemic of recommendations which is paralyzing Italy' (Floris 2007a). A recent survey by the Luiss University of Rome showed that the economic impact of this non-meritocratic system costs each Italian citizen between €1,080 and €2,671 each year (Iezzi 2009: 23). This obviously contributes to an overall inefficiency and to the low growth of the economy, but it also affects the quality of the education system. For example, the 2006 Programme for International Student Assessment – which tests the knowledge and skills in mathematics, science and literature of 15-year-old pupils in 57 countries –from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) certified that 50.5 per cent of Italian students are unable to understand what they read

(the average in the OECD area is 42.2 per cent). While some countries showed significant improvements in student performance since 2000, Italy had a further drop of 5 per cent. If the best expertise and 'brains' are thus 'lost' due to the *raccomandazione* system, who is consequently dealing with the most crucial issues and domestic predicaments?

Some of these crucial issues should be pressing enough to stimulate an open public debate involving all political, social and intellectual forces. Yet, this debate is simply not taking place.[6] There is instead a superficial, and often demagogic, discussion in which chronic problems are mainly used as rhetorical tools for one party or another. Similarly, mass media are hardly shaping this debate – and this is by no means surprising as, according to several international bodies, Italy does not allow the mass media enough freedom. The perverse outcome of this is that the intellectual (academic) milieu, or other non-leading opinions, which have no real party or media links are often confined to the local or marginal press. Although there is an understandable and justifiable tendency to associate Italy's lack of media freedom with the figure of an industrialist such as Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, this is instead another 'legacy' and traditional negative domestic feature.[7]

One of the rhetorical tools often used as an alleged solution for current national troubles is the creation of a stronger executive branch and the weakening of the powers of elective Chambers. Recently Berlusconi similarly questioned the usefulness of parliaments with a large number of deputies, and seemed to suggest a re-balance of power in favour of the government as well as a new institutional structure. To balance the failure of Liberal Italy and the outcomes of the First World War, some thought the solution to the domestic quandaries lay with the implementation of a fascist dictatorship. Obviously, those were different historical times and conditions, though Fascism still remains alive in the Italian collective memory, architecture and politics (Mammone and Veltri 2007; Mammone 2006). Indeed, setting aside the controversial approach of the now extinguished Alleanza Nazionale (AN), deputies like Alessandra Mussolini, the well-known granddaughter of Benito and leader of the neo-fascist and anti-immigrant Azione Sociale (Social Action) or newly elected MPs like the editor Giuseppe Ciarrapico never denied their respect for the Duce or the fascist regime.[8]

This is particularly worrying in a country that is currently facing an alarming rise of far-right culture and so-called soft-core racism, including citizens' (and some neo-fascist) squads against local crime (mainly attributed to immigrants), the proposed fingerprinting of gypsies (including children) living in camps, the violence against the Roma population,[9] or the creation of separate school classes for young non-Italians. Recently, a group of parents in Rome proposed to withdraw their children from the local school because 'there are too many immigrants', but glossing over the fact that these *immigrati* were, in reality, born in Italy and speak perfect Italian, and are thus completely integrated into the local community (Martini 2009: 20). Rather than criticizing this, some leading politicians and ministers similarly affirmed that a multi-ethnic Italy 'is not our idea' or proposed that 'some Milan Metro carriages should be reserved for Milanese only' (Owen 2009), declared that the government will send boats full of immigrants back to

the African coasts (De Zulueta 2009), and even argued that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) displays an 'inhuman and criminal behaviour' (Ruotola 2009: 4).

As one of *Italy Today*'s editors recently suggested, these events are showing a deeper trend, as the

> focus on immigration encourages the distraction of public opinion from an economy in serious trouble, and politics and society in general in crisis.
>
> In Italy, crimes committed by immigrants can be discussed for weeks. Yet in May 2008, some neo-fascists in Verona murdered an Italian because he refused to give them a cigarette. This story disappeared from most newspapers after no more than a few days. *Il Giornale*, a daily newspaper which supports Berlusconi, even disputed that those arrested belonged to the far right [...].
>
> The night before Obama's capture of the White House, a group of young neo-fascists burst into the Rome headquarters of the RAI, the Italian public television station, to threaten journalists who had reported on violent attacks by neo-fascist thugs on high school students demonstrating against the government's education policy [...].
>
> In such a climate, with mainstream politicians apparently unwilling or unable to stand up to racist violence and xenophobia, and some even prepared to justify these reprehensible acts, it is hardly surprising that right-wing extremists are not afraid or embarrassed to show their true, violent faces [...]
>
> (Mammone 2009: 15)

Despite this, groups like the Lega Nord or politicians like Alessandra Mussolini are not perceived as potential threats to the functioning of an Italian society that is increasingly becoming multi-ethnic and multicultural. The most controversial point is that these forces are currently governing the nation. The same grand-daughter of the Duce can even proudly claim that, along with her neo-fascist party, she is one of the founders of the recent Popolo della Libertà (PDL), the biggest Italian party, led by Silvio Berlusconi.[10] A rightist bloc was thus created without any serious internal debate but only on the base of the leader's will (it also includes the 'post-fascists' of the AN). Outside Italy, this overall process and strategy looked so worrying that a much respected British newspaper wrote the headline, 'Fascism's shadows', and commented that:

> Mr Berlusconi has used his political career and power to protect himself and his media empire from the law [...]. The Italian left, in particular, has failed to mount an effective opposition. Yet Mr Berlusconi's latest action – the merger into his new People of Freedom bloc [...] of his own Forza Italia party with the Alleanza Nazionale which derives directly from Benito Mussolini's fascist tradition – may leave a more lasting mark on Italian public life than anything else the populist tycoon has done.
>
> Unlike Germany, postwar Italy never properly confronted its own fascist legacy. As a result, while neofascism has never seriously resurfaced in Germany,

in Italy there were important continuities [...]. Those continuities have just become stronger. It is a day of shame for Italy

(*The Guardian* 2009: 30)

The Italian Ambassador in London protested against this article. In his view – and despite widely accepted evidence – it was generally false that Italy has been unable to cope with its fascist legacy and criticisms towards Berlusconi were mainly based on ideology, because he 'was democratically elected three times' (Aragona 2009: 35).

Thus, there should be a direct legitimization of the leader that comes from the popular will, roughly as a modern monarch is legitimized by a religious divinity. This should prevent others from criticizing the personalization of party politics, the governmental political strategies, the erosion of some basic constitutional rights, the lack of media freedom, the continuous attacks of the judicial system or, given the perceived weakness of the state, the alarming tendency to recognize the need of a 'holy saviour' for Italy's problems.

Studying the *Italia malata*

Italy has also been under the spotlight of the international mass media for quite some time now: its economic decline or the political predicaments united with the flamboyant figure of Berlusconi and the recent 'daily racism' constituted an easy target for a wide array of (foreign) critics. At the same time, some scholarly production focused on some of these themes, with the addition of the always-salient one of Italian organized crime. Such attention has been welcomed and has served the function of unveiling some 'shadows' affecting Italian society, but at the same time it constitutes a constraint to a more holistic approach to the current crisis of the whole country.

Setting aside these few studies, there is, nonetheless, little scholarly literature systematically dedicated specifically to Italy's 'shadows'. On the one hand, traditional studies tend to focus on elections or political actors and systems. On the other hand, after the *tangentopoli* (Bribesville) scandal in the 1990s, operation Clean Hands, and the collapse of the so-called Prima Repubblica (First Republic) and existing party system – due to political corruption, widespread bribes and illegal financing of parties, as well as the 'hubris, excess and venality of its leaders' (Gilbert 1995: 1) – much of the literature focused on the scandals and the political and institutional 'transition' to the Seconda Repubblica (Second Republic). A good example of this is the special edition of *West European Politics* edited by Martin Bull and Martin Rhodes in 1997 and entitled 'Crisis and Transition in Italian Politics',[11] or Routledge's edited volume on *The New Italian Republic* by Stephen Gundle and Simon Parker in 1996. At that time, public expectations were high, and most Italians were optimistic that a new and much better phase in Italy's political history was about to begin. Indeed, *tangentopoli* and the *witch hunt* of 1992–1994 looked like real earthquakes and the only comparable, even if approximate, event seemed to be the fall of France's Fourth Republic which

'occurred in the context of a colonial crisis and potential civil war' (Gundle and Parker 1996: 1). Yet Bull and Rhodes (2007: 659) made it clear that the:

> [A]pparent or real overhaul of parties and political alliances that accompanied the *tangentopoli* corruption scandals was a critical moment to be sure; but in and of itself it could not have resolved the crisis. Rather, it changed the guard – which had been part agent and part victim of the system's problems – and raised the prospect that a new modernising political class might emerge to manage the structural crisis and steward a wider-reaching process of reform.

This alleged transition thus turned into a never-ending process that has led to a general sense of disillusionment. It is now 'fair to speak of a feeling of dashed expectations. The much-vaunted "Second Republic" has clearly not arrived, even if the "First" is apparently clearly no longer with us' (Bull and Rhodes 2007: 660).[12]

In sum, in the early 1990s it seemed that the birth of a new and unstoppable political and ethical renovation was on the horizon, but in reality the 'new politics' never started, or at least not as desired or claimed. In its political scandals the new Republic revealed dangerous continuities with the pre-*tangentopoli* system. The crisis of the early 1990s did not bring a genuine change, and many of Italy's most serious structural and civic–cultural problems remained unsolved. These are the shadows that continue to hang over Italian society (and which obviously have not come from out of the blue).

Some of these shadows were partially highlighted in a comparative study of Italy and Japan edited by Jean-Marie Bouissou and Marc Lazar and published in the *Revue Française de Science Politique* in 2001.[13] Their key idea was that despite different geographical locations and culture, Italy and Japan shared many traits such as political fragmentation, corruption, *clientelismo*, the de-legitimization of ruling elites, popular dissatisfaction with politics and organized crime. The contributors carefully rejected the sort of exceptionalist approaches that would portray the two countries as anomalies or deviations from an idealized model of North American democracy. Instead, they considered Italy and Japan as genuine, fully legitimized and effectively operative political systems (Bouissou and Lazar 2001: 533). Similarly, even if form our standpoint Italy appears to be suffering from a specific 'malaise', we reject a narrow analytical framework or parochial reading of local history. What we do argue is that Italy shows some particular and specific features that can certainly be compared with similar countries, but which nevertheless appear to be incongruous to most other functioning Western democracies.

Particularly scarce also is the Italian academic production on contemporary domestic problems. The ground is indeed left to investigative journalists and that is also the reason why they are here often quoted as primary sources of Italian current affairs. One might even argue that this is in itself a 'dark shadow'. Indeed, one of the greatest shortcomings of public debate in Italy is the very limited contribution of the academic community, and in particular of social scientists.

The result is that these complex problems are often addressed in superficial and rhetorical terms. The academic community might instead have an important role to play in proposing effective solutions and helping policy-makers make informed choices for the several problems that still afflict society, politics, collective memory and the economy.

However, what appears clear is that the whole country for a long time was not aware of its own difficulties and decline. Indeed, even when the current world financial crisis was coming to the fore, many (Italian) politicians instead called for an unclear Italian 'exceptionalism' – and specifically to some economic and financial strengths. Although in the early 1970s a former social-democrat minister had already published a book with the title *Italia malata* (Preti 1972), it is only in the past ten years that the image of a country 'in trouble' and faced by constant difficulties as well as an 'agitated' political history became more recurrent, and book titles frequently refer either to a population of 'discontents' (Ginsborg 2003), or to a 'dark' national 'heart' (Jones 2003), or else suggest that Italy is 'not a normal country' (Andrews 2005) and faces a range of negative legacies (Stella and Rizzo 2008). The word 'decline' has consequently (but confusingly) been at the centre of public debate in both the 2006 and 2008 Italian elections. All parties and candidates acknowledge – often only in a populist and propagandist way – the particular difficulties facing Italy; and in the foreign press Italians were then described as depressed or too worried about the present to think about the future of their country (Owen 2007; Lachman 2006; Singer 2007).

In sum, a remarkable process seems to have occurred in public debate in Italy. First, in the last twenty years, Italian society has experienced a condition that in the case of individuals is known as 'cognitive polyphasia' (Moscovici 1961), that is to say the co-existence of rarely compatible representations. What was generally perceived to be an exceptionally high standard of living co-existed with an awareness that long-term problems and contradictions that have been ignored for a very long time were actually assuming dramatic new proportions and gravity (this produced a variety of Italian paradoxes, including that of having one of the highest turnouts in a general election in Europe and at the same time one of the most chaotic and inefficient political systems in the EU). However, setting aside the non-academic accounts or a general growing 'hostility' towards politicians, in part due to the increasingly wide coverage of political scandals in the Italian press (Cepernich 2008), a systematic public discussion about the most serious of these problems has never really taken place. Indeed, the most frequent reaction has simply been to blame Italy's decline on external factors without taking account of Italy's failure to address the long-term problems that it seems unable to shake (Tremonti 2007).

It is hard to deny the role of global economic and social processes in shaping the fortunes of each nation, and globalization has certainly played a role in the Italian economic crisis. Indeed, Italy's decline is generally analyzed only in economic terms or linked to the incapacity of national capitalism to face the challenges of globalization (see for example Galli 2006; Petrini 2004; Toniolo and Visco 2004). The loss of competitiveness of the Italian industrial system and the below-average

growth of the GDP compared with the rest of the EU have also attracted much attention. And for the first time since the flamboyant and 'swinging' (Italian) 1980s and the confused, hectic and uncertain 1990s, an awareness of political, economic and social decline has spread like wildfire as have perceptions of a sudden fall in the quality of life (see Bastasin 2007; Cerruti 2007; D'Argenio 2007; Floris 2007a; Masci 2007).

Globalization should not, nevertheless, account for the wider chronic 'fatigue' that seems to afflict Italian society. Symptomatic of such fatigue is the never-ending story of underdevelopment of Southern Italy. The so called Mezzogiorno has lost centrality in national politics, which are more interested in supporting federalist reforms or, in the case of parliamentary opposition, the re-conquest of the lost 'northern' votes (Mammone 2008). A Mezzogiorno in which the billions of euros provided by the European Union for the period 2007–2013 appears like the very last chance to fill the gap with other EU areas (but only the 36.5 per cent of former financed EU projects have been realized: see also La Spina 2007).

This part of the country is (unfortunately) appearing in the international headlines only for the dramatic rise of its organized mafias. This is the case, for example, of Calabria's virtually unknown (outside Italy) but very powerful *'Ndrangheta* that has become a genuine global illegal enterprise with ramifications in Northern and Continental Europe (see the famous Duisburg's killings in Germany) and Latin America; or the violence and *degrado* developed by the more famous Neapolitan Mafia, namely the Camorra, described in Roberto Saviano's highly acclaimed *Gomorrah*. So, how can we explain the ongoing predicaments of a significant Italian territory still influenced by political corruption, unclear links between mafia and politics, managerial inefficiency, and where, in Sicily, the job of magistrate (a category generally and often criticized by Italy's prime minister) is so unpopular and risky that only four people applied for the 55 unfilled positions?[14] Can we blame this on external factors or globalization, or should we simply believe that organized crime is no longer *the* central problem in contemporary Italy?

In such a context, like the damage produced by the circulation of unrestrained toxins, the old (and new) problems have weakened Italian society's capacity to react to the new challenges posed by global socioeconomic processes as well as to its own internal conflicts.

Beyond Berlusconi

This book aims to provide an overview of the systemic crisis of Italy. The idea behind this volume was to collect a number of studies that would tackle chronic or relatively new critical issues that have been usually scarcely investigated, at least as a whole. Some of them have played an important part in shaping and influencing the construction of contemporary Italian identities, politics and society – and, once more, they can also help to explain the crisis the country is facing.

A quick look at the table of contents shows Silvio Berlusconi as the 'ignored elephant in the room' of this volume. This is in spite of the fact that the rise of

this media magnate represents probably the main, and most controversial, change in domestic society since Fascism, and his 'figure' and presence well reflects the current 'drift' of a country with an 'unpredictable' future (Lazar 2006: 142). Indeed, his impact on the Italian peninsula is sharply described as another local anomaly (Stille 2007). Beside the several significant accounts of Berlusconi's biography and rise to power (Ginsborg 2005), it is the explanation of his popularity in contemporary Italy that should also represent another crucial issue. The most acclaimed explanation is that the current Prime Minister is benefiting from a long-term influence on the views of Italians gained through thirty years of mass-media dominance. This is what has been labelled as 'Berlusconismo' – or the invasion of what Perry Anderson (2009b) has rightly defined as 'the cultural counter-revolution of Berlusconi's television empire, saturating the popular imaginary with a tidal wave of the crassest idiocies and fantasies'. According to *The Economist* (2009), for example, Berlusconi's control and ownership of media has 'changed attitudes and even the meaning of words. When he entered politics in 1994, few gave credence to his claim to be a victim of conniving communist judges; now it is widely believed'. Hence, the Berlusconization of Italy and its culture is, in reality, an object of study in itself. On the other hand, to fully understand this phenomenon as well as the 'environment' which allowed its growth, it is equally important to uncover and map the number of unsolved problems that helped to shape what is contemporary Italy.

Thus, by not denying the importance of an analysis of Berlusconi and of Berlusconismo – and with the partial exception of this introductory chapter – *Italy Today* decided to focus on something else to avoid the strong and recurrent temptation to place all of Italy's faults on Berlusconi's shoulders. It is now clear that, to use Lazar's (2006: 138) metaphor, the 'doctor Berlusconi' has not helped to recover this key *malade* of Europe, and one might pertinently wonder if this Mediterranean *sick man* has worsened since his arrival. But, although there are few doubts that Berlusconi's major conflicts of interest and influence might have aggravated some of the dark shadows over the country, many such problems were already part of the Italian social fabric (in this sense, there is no need for a sterile repetition of an already widely studied phenomenon). For example, Berlusconi has often been accused of being more interested in preserving his financial empire than in governing the country. However, to some degree, it was already clear in 1992 that Italy was emerging as a modern 'cleptocracy': 'a state whose leading political figures were running the country into the ground for their own profit' (Gilbert 1995: 5). Assuming Berlusconi's interest is only in his own personal business (Anderson 2009a: 3), would this politician's approach be a new 'phenomenon' or simply an unfortunate repetition of some (recent) historical patterns? Further, Romano Prodi's short-lived and quarrelling centre-left government did not perform any better than previous centre-right executives. Setting aside a few positive results, it did not represent a real break from 'Berlusconistan' – as Italy was recently labelled by some of the foreign media – at least not in people's eyes. To use Alexander Stille's (2008: 59) spiky words:

One of the few things Prodi managed to pass was an amnesty for criminals that had been pushed heavily by Berlusconi and that was designed quite clearly to keep Berlusconi's chief corporate lawyer, Cesare Previti, who had been convicted of bribing judges, out of prison. And so, early in Prodi's tenure, the Italian public watched the unedifying spectacle of 26,000 criminals going free, many of whom returned quickly to stealing, raping, and killing [...].

Similarly, the Prodi government passed another law, again with the enthusiastic help of Berlusconi and the right, to make it illegal for prosecutors to use criminal evidence gathered against members of parliament who turned up on police wiretaps. [...].

Thus an administration that had promised a clean-government alternative to Berlusconi appeared no more willing than its predecessor to take on corruption or the system of patronage or Mafia infiltration of the state. [...].

Disillusioned, many Italian voters concluded that there was little difference between the politicians of the left and the right and that taken together they were simply a corrupt, self-perpetuating 'caste'; not only did its members enjoy extraordinary privileges and absurdly high salaries, they appeared to be not merely useless but a significant drain on public resources as well.

In such a frame, Berlusconi's figure, with all its contradictions and oligarchic tendencies, often diverted the attention from deeper and older issues affecting Italy, a country that has never been an outstanding example of a widespread sense of civic duty and democratic maturity. Similarly, as the cover image of this volume shows, Berlusconi is only a piece of a wider puzzle.

Italy Today: an overview

To summarize, this volume generally represents an example of different methodological frameworks – often cross-disciplinary – applied to the study of social phenomena, organizations, political parties, governments, economic systems, cultures and sub-cultures, and collective memory that are among the key topics in many of the social sciences and the humanities. But, as suggested, the specific rationale behind *Italy Today* is that the Italian decline can be understood only through systematic analysis of some concrete problems – even if for space constraints we left out other critical issues, such as the predicaments of the national health system, the somewhat Jurassic judiciary system, the politicization and violence of some *Serie A* stadiums, or the regrettable *fuga dei cervelli* ('brain drain').

Although far from exhaustive, *Italy Today* tries to offer a wide range of these critical 'shades'. These are divided into macro- and micro-areas whose boundaries are not fixed and therefore the chapters interact with each other. Politics deserve a special mention because it is from there that we are supposed to derive solutions to most of the country's problems – and politics is often the backdrop of the stories told by contributors. Within this context, Roux challenges the use of federalism as a solution for Italy's problems, showing its paradoxes and

arguing that it is not a popular demand but rather a process driven by the elite. Political elites and coalitions also often converge in strategies and programmes regardless of their ideological pledges, according to Conti's chapter. In spite of this, Moury argues that the performance of Italian politics is controversial, with a lack of governance. But domestic politics also contains an increasing populist and xenophobic element as well, as illustrated by the example of the Northern League analyzed by Avanza. This somewhat institutional(-ized) racism is an element that is recurrent in the recent debate about Roma and Sinti communities as argued by Sigona, and also, as Garau suggests, in the controversial approach of some of the Catholic Church.

Collective memory and the reconstruction of national history play a fundamental role in contemporary times. Cento Bull argues that the country's inability to successfully complete the transition from the First to the Second Republic and renew its political institutions is, at least in part, due to the country's failure to deal with its problematic legacy of (terrorist) conflicts and ideological confrontation of the 1960s and 1970s. Another example of unsolved conflicts in collective memory is Fascism, and Joshua Arthurs' contribution examines the presence of the Fascist past in Italy through the lens of the built environment, focusing on the case of the Foro Italico in Rome.

If politics and collective memories look problematic, society appears equally affected by a certain 'illness'. In general, Carboni argues, the ruling elite are more and more mistrusted and a democratic 'malaise' is affecting Italian society: this is consequently leading to a widespread pessimism and cynicism that creates a vicious cycle. As such, the Italian public sphere is not only influenced by some ineffective leading elites, but is also shaped a by a bizarre mass media system with a peculiar 'history' that goes beyond Berlusconi and that is here analyzed by Hanretty. Similarly, the public sphere along with policies, social structures and people's every day lives, are also strongly influenced by the powerful presence of the Vatican, as highlighted in Bernini's chapter.

When talking about politics and society, it would be impossible to overlook the never-ending troubles of Southern Italy. The focus in *Italy Today* is on the most dramatic presence of organized crime, but also on the missed opportunity of economic development. The Allums, for example, give a detailed historical account of the rise and fall of 'hopes' following the election of Antonio Bassolino as the mayor of Naples: the reality is that not a lot has changed and crime and 'clientelism' has gained strength. Linked to this, this volume offers one of the few accounts of what Italian police consider as the dominant Mafia, namely the *'Ndrangheta* from Calabria. Parini analyzes its structure and its ability to forge alliances with corrupt politics, economies and various professions.

The troubles of economic development of Southern Italy are also crucial in two other chapters. Iona, Leonida and Sobbrio show that the Italian economy has 'two long-run equilibriums', which are essentially due to the different level of industrialization between the regions located in the centre-north with respect to those located in the Southern regions. On the other hand, Milio's contribution focuses on the use of European Union structural funds and shows the significant

8 The legacy of the strategy of tension and the armed conflict in a context of (non)reconciliation

Anna Cento Bull

Summary

This chapter argues that Italy's apparent inability to complete successfully the transition from the First to the Second Republic and renew its political institutions is, at least in part, due to the country's failure to deal with its problematic legacy of political conflict and ideological confrontation. Italy went through a period of violent conflict in the late 1960s and 1970s which has left a legacy of bitter divisions, antagonisms and recriminations. The conflict also prevented a truth recovery process about past crimes and the achievement of full justice through the courts. Indeed, since the collapse of the First Republic, Italy has shown extremely high levels of political conflict and mistrust. The chapter argues that there are strong resistances to truth recovery from various social and political actors, and that in this situation, many appear to favour a form of 'collective amnesia'. Yet it is precisely the use of lies and amnesia that is preventing the emergence of tolerant identities and is fuelling mutually exclusionary narratives and interpretations of the conflictual past, as well as cultures of victimhood.

Introduction

This chapter raises the question of whether the Italian inability to bring its never-ending transition to a successful completion is partly due to the country's failure to deal effectively with its problematic legacy of ideological confrontation and violent political conflict. The analysis considers the growing literature on post-conflict national reconciliation, especially as regards historical memory, justice and truth-telling. While this literature is generally applied to countries, notably in Africa and Latin America, which have experienced a transition from an authoritarian regime to a liberal democracy, coupled with the occurrence, in their recent history, of a bloody and prolonged civil war, it has been recently been extended to cover democratic European countries, including the UK (Northern Ireland) and contemporary Spain.

In the Italian case, the parallels are obvious, albeit with some important caveats. While the country has gone through a traumatic political transition since the early 1990s, this has involved a move from one form of democracy to another, rather

than a full-blown process of democratization. Furthermore, even though Italy also experienced a period of violent conflict in the late 1960s and 1970s, this had ended well before the crisis of the First Republic, thereby seemingly reducing the urgency of overcoming past divisions at the same time as reaching a consensus over institutional reforms and constitutional renewal. In reality, however, pacification is not the same as reconciliation. Without the latter, old enmities can persist and even rekindle. The violent conflict of previous decades has left an enduring legacy of divisions, recriminations, and 'politicization of victimhood', occasionally even spilling over into physical violence, as at the Genoa world summit of July 2001, where violent clashes between demonstrators and the police left one person dead and several wounded, amid allegations of police brutality. More recently, in October 2008, a few episodes of violence involving student demonstrators, extreme-right militants and the police, briefly marred the peaceful protests against Berlusconi's government educational reforms. In addition, recent polemics around historical revisionism, especially in relation to fascism/anti-fascism and the place of the Italian Resistance in the national memory (see Arthurs in this volume; Mammone 2006), have shown that ideological confrontation remains as strong today as it was during the First Republic. To what extent can this situation be attributed to the fact that Italy has not embarked on a process of national reconciliation? Conversely, has the country attempted such a process but failed? If so, what are the reasons for this failure?

This chapter therefore examines whether (and how) Italy has addressed its divisive past of ideological contraposition and political violence or whether it has opted instead for a 'collective amnesia' of its recent history. This raises a further issue: whether the literature on conflict resolution and national reconciliation offers tested and recognized 'best practices' in coming to terms with a divisive past, whether these practices involve remembering or forgetting the bitter divisions and violent deeds of recent decades, who should initiate such acts of remembering and/or forgetting, the role played by the judicial process in dealing with the perpetrators and victims of violence, and indeed who is included among the victims.

Ways to approach national reconciliation

There are three contrasting approaches to achieving national reconciliation after a period of deep internal divisions erupting into violent conflict (Rigby 2002). The first approach is through retributive justice, whereby the violent crimes are prosecuted through the courts and the rule of law is upheld and applied. For many scholars and experts this is the only approach that can bring both truth and justice to the victims of political violence and must precede any attempt at national reconciliation. As Boraine (2006: 19) put it: 'No society can claim to be free or democratic without strict adherence to the rule of law'.

However, critics argue that retributive justice is not appropriate for transitional processes, for both moral and practical reasons. Morally, because of its adversarial nature which puts the victims under considerable pressure while often not

succeeding in redressing their grievances, and because it exacerbates conflict relations, thereby running the risk of re-opening violent confrontations. Practical reasons include the difficulty of ensuring justice through the criminal courts when the old elites retain power in the new regime or there are no clear winners emerging from the collapse of the old regime, but there is instead a relatively equal balance of power. Where the state has played a part in the political violence of the past, it is also very difficult to achieve justice through the courts, because of its determination to deny the truth and cover it up (Rolston 2000).

The second approach is based on collective amnesia, often accompanied by amnesty, which is predicated on the need to ensure a peaceful transition to democracy, build new political institutions and guarantee the respect of civil and human rights. As these are the overriding goals, they should not be put in jeopardy through any well-intentioned but misplaced pursuit of retributive justice or a public search for truth and redress in relation to past violence. As Mendeloff (2004: 372) argued, 'lies, distortions, or amnesia in the service of tolerant, non-self-glorifying, non-victimizing national identities are preferable to truths that can fuel victimization myths, scapegoating, and intolerance'.

For the advocates of this approach, Spain has provided the best example of a country where the decision not to confront and re-open its history of violence clearly paid off, allowing a stable and secure democratic system to emerge out of the old authoritarian regime. Yet Spain is also often cited as a case where collective amnesia has proved short-lived, due to increasingly vocal requests for truths about the civil war (Blakeley 2005), the persistence of political grievances and violence, and mistrust for democratic institutions (MacDonald and Bernardo 2006). Recently, amnesia in Spain was all but broken, with the Zapatero government passing a law on historical memory that honours republican victims, and the Church responding by beatifying 498 priests and nuns killed in the Spanish Civil War.

Finally, the third approach, which has become increasingly important following the end of the Cold War, relies on the idea of 'restorative justice' and focuses on achieving reconciliation through a process of truth-telling about past violent acts and violations of human rights, accompanied by reparations and apologies to the victims, and the construction of a shared narrative of the conflictual past. In 1995, South Africa led the way by establishing a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which 'was charged with investigating gross human rights abuses that occurred between 1960 and 1994' (Graybill and Lanegran 2004: 5–6). Since the emphasis was on promoting reconciliation and healing, an amnesty was promised to those perpetrators who fully disclosed and acknowledged their past crimes, even though it was granted selectively. Inspired by the South African example, numerous 'commissions' have been set up, mainly in Latin American and Eastern Europe, with mixed results.

On the one hand, this approach is seen by many as a more effective and moral way to achieve justice, truth and a stable democracy during a transitional period than either retributive justice or amnesia (Hayner 2001). According to Barkan (2006: 7–8) 'since 1989 countries that embraced a process of redress are more

likely to have a strong democracy than those which have not'. According to the critics, however, 'alternative' paths to reconciliation present notable risks, particularly in terms of securing the accountability of perpetrators through identification and/or punishment (e.g. Abrams 2001). In addition, what constitutes the 'truth' is contested: 'the history that is revealed by truth commissions can only be a partial truth. The very process of uncovering a part of the truth and granting it the status of official, public and authoritative record can serve to cover up other aspects of the past' (Rigby 2002).

In short, none of the three main approaches is devoid of risks and failings. Indeed, most commentators are at pains to point out that each nation-state must be able to work out its own path to reconciliation, taking into account its own history, local conditions, political pressures and groups dynamics. What appears to be important is that a consensus is achieved as to which path to reconciliation is followed. Such a consensus must include the political elite and also, as much as possible, civil society and grass-roots organizations, including victims' associations. The latter must at least acquiesce to the strategy agreed on by the political leaders.

The Italian case is interesting because it shows a lack of consensus on dealing with the past both among the elites and among civil society, with the result that all three main approaches to national reconciliation outlined above have been attempted and largely failed. Retributive justice has only obtained partial results, and even these have largely gone unacknowledged or have been hotly contested; amnesia is probably the preferred option of the political elite but is constantly threatened by new revelations, memoirs, conspiracy theories, and what is known as 'dietrology' (the search for the hidden truth behind an event); restorative justice has been advocated/attempted by isolated public figures but largely boycotted by the political elite.

One of the reasons for the lack of a clear strategy on dealing with the past is that there is little agreement in Italy as to what kind of political violence the country experienced in the 1960s and 1970s. For part of the political elite and the media as well as for many protagonists it is possible to talk of a 'creeping' or 'low-intensity' civil war raging in the country in those years, with escalating episodes of ideology-inspired guerrilla violence involving both extreme-left and extreme-right armed groups, often fuelled deliberately by foreign bodies in the context of the Cold War (Fasanella *et al.* 2000; Fasanella and Pellegrino 2005). For others, however, this definition represents a gross exaggeration, promoted by those who have an interest in exonerating themselves from public blame. Furthermore, on the political right there is a widespread conviction that the neo-fascist groups never seriously contemplated a 'revolutionary war' against the state, whereas this was systematically attempted by the extreme left (Ilari 2001; Scipione Rossi 2006).

As for more sinister acts of violence, known as *stragismo*, which involved bombing attacks against civilians in crowded places, starting with a bombing attack in Piazza Fontana, Milan, on 12 December 1969, these are still hotly contested. On the left, political elites, the media and the grassroots organizations continue to claim, with the support of judicial findings, that these acts were carried

out by neo-fascist groups as part of a wider 'Strategy of Tension' masterminded by other forces, including state bodies, and aimed at weakening and discrediting the Italian Communist Party. On the right, political elites, the media and the grassroots dismiss such interpretations as unfounded and argue either that the Strategy of Tension is a leftist invention or that it was masterminded by state bodies to discredit the neo-fascist party, the MSI. The Italian Judiciary has been caught up in these political controversies, since on the right there appears to be a general consensus that most magistrates have been (and still are) biased in favour of the left, while on the left there is a prevailing opinion that the highest Judicial Court, the Court of Cassation, has been manipulating the outcomes of criminal trials so as to avoid incriminating rightist groups.

In this context, the trend in Italy towards public acts of remembrance in relation to the recent violent past, including political terrorism and its victims, appears to have taken on a peculiar meaning: remembering refers not to the need to remember the violent conflict with its publicly recognized, (judicially) assessed, truth(s) regarding victims and perpetrators; rather, it refers to the need to remember *what is not yet known or properly acknowledged*. It is the act of violence itself that is remembered (lest it be forgotten), while both the perpetrators and the circumstances remain unknown (and in most cases the source of endless conspiracy theories). In short, public acts of remembrance simply underline that the truth has not been ascertained either through retributive or restorative justice while amnesia is itself impossible to achieve. Let us consider the different paths to reconciliation that have been tentatively followed and assess their successes and, above all, their failures.

The limits of retributive justice in Italy

Considering episodes of political violence and terrorism involving both extreme-left and extreme-right armed groups, but excluding *stragismo*, the judicial process can be deemed to have been fairly successful, bringing many perpetrators to justice and ascertaining the full facts surrounding these events. The main exception concerns the kidnapping and assassination of Aldo Moro in 1978, for which five separate trials, established that the Red Brigades were guilty and had acted alone. As is well known, Moro was at the time President of the DC and was on his way to Parliament where a new government with the external support of the PCI was to be sworn in. The outcomes of these trials have been refuted by many commentators, part of the media and most of the left, on the basis that behind this episode lurked various obscure forces which, for political reasons linked to the logic of the Cold War, were strongly opposed to Moro's strategy of the Historic Compromise and wanted him dead. To this end they facilitated the actions of the Red Brigades, for example through the use of infiltrators, or by obstructing the investigations of the police during the 55 days in which Moro was held prisoner. Despite some experts dismissing all conspiracy theories surrounding this episode (Satta 2003 and 2006, Drake 2006), many others (Flamigni 2003, Accame 2005, Zedda 2005) give credit to the numerous puzzling circumstances and unanswered

questions which have ensured that numerous books, films and documentaries on the topic have appeared since Moro's death.

Retributive justice has unveiled much of the truth behind *stragismo*, but, in the face of repeated episodes of deliberate obstruction on the part of state bodies, especially the intelligence services, it has been unable to secure clear-cut verdicts on individual perpetrators. In addition, the length of the judicial process itself, due in no small part to these episodes of obstruction, has been detrimental to the pursuit of justice. It was only in 2005 that the long and tortuous search for justice through the courts for the 1969 Piazza Fontana bombing, which left seventeen people dead and eighty-four wounded, came to an end, with an ambiguous verdict. The final sentence recognized that the extreme-right organization Ordine Nuovo (New Order – ON) had been responsible for this attack, but also acquitted, on the basis of incomplete evidence, neo-fascist defendants Carlo Maria Maggi and Delfo Zorzi, respectively ex-leader and ex-member of ON in Venice-Mestre, as well as Giancarlo Rognoni, ex-leader of the Milan-based La Fenice extreme-right group. Despite retrospectively establishing that both Franco Freda and Giovanni Ventura, of ON in Padua, had indeed been responsible for this massacre, the courts were unable to prosecute them, since they had already been acquitted in 1987. In 2004, the final verdict for a trial concerning a 1973 attack carried out at the Milan police headquarters, in which four bystanders had been killed, ended with a similar ambiguous verdict, and hence with the acquittal of Maggi, Zorzi and Francesco Neami, all of ON, who had been charged with planning and organizing this crime. As in the retrial for Piazza Fontana, however, the Court of Cassation established that ON as a group was responsible for the massacre.

Following these verdicts, the media declared the trials a failure, since after 36 years from the first bombing massacre only a handful of perpetrators had been found guilty. Of these, only Luigi Ciavardini, Giuseppe Valerio Fioravanti and Francesca Mambro, of the neo-fascist group Nuclei Armati Rivoluzionari (NAR) had been found guilty (for the 1980 Bologna station massacre, which left 85 people dead and more than 200 wounded) on the basis of the evidence amassed by the investigating magistrates. Others, such as Gianfranco Bertoli, the material perpetrator of the 1973 Milan attack, or ex-ON member Vincenzo Vinciguerra, sentenced to life in prison for an attack carried out in Peteano in 1972, in which three *Carabinieri* were killed, were self-confessed culprits. Even these guilty verdicts, however, have left a trail of suspicion and widespread feelings that justice has not been done.

With regard to the Bologna massacre, there are lingering concerns that the judicial evidence relied on the testimony of dubious witnesses. For their part, Ciavardini, Fioravanti and Mambro have always proclaimed their innocence. As for the 1973 attack in Milan, the material culprit, Bertoli, had always proclaimed himself an anarchist. With the final acquittal, in 2005, of Maggi, Neami and Zorzi, there thus appeared to be one vital missing link between this crime and neo-fascist leaders, despite the Court of Cassation ruling that the massacre was to be attributed to ON as a group. Finally, as regards Peteano, Vinciguerra had confessed to the attack in an attempt to 'put the State on trial' and force the full truth regarding the

Strategy of Tension to be revealed through the courts. By his own admission, he failed in his goal, for which he blamed the attitude of the Judiciary, which in his view connived with other bodies in covering up for the state (Vinciguerra 1989, 1993, 2000).

Retributive justice has not ended its course with these sentences: in November 2008, 34 years after the bombing of an anti-fascist demonstration in Brescia on 28 May 1974, which left eight people dead and 108 wounded, a retrial began in the city. As in the Milan trials, ON representatives were among the main defendants: Zorzi, Maggi, Maurizio Tramonte, as well as the ex-leader Pino Rauti. However, it is generally believed that this trial will not be able to achieve a sentence, as it largely relies on the same witnesses and the same evidence brought forward in the Milan trials.

Given the unsatisfactory and patchy outcomes of the judicial trials on the bombing massacres carried out between 1969 and 1980, those fragments of truth that have emerged through the courts, which in themselves are not inconsiderable, have gone largely unacknowledged by the media and the political world. As the literature on national reconciliation tends to stress, establishing the truth through the courts is one thing, acknowledging it is another: reconciliation involves precisely a public process of acceptance of the (often unpalatable) truth about the violent past. By contrast, in Italy the ambiguous nature of many verdicts has allowed different political actors to construct, and give resonance to, their own particular truth. This attitude has been at the roots of the failure of the second approach, based on restorative justice.

Restorative justice: a non-starter?

The impossibility of reaching a political consensus over the need for a process of truth-telling was especially in evidence during the works of the Parliamentary Commission on Terrorism in Italy and on the Failed Identification of the Authors of the Massacres, particularly during the period 1994–2001. Originally set up by Law 172, on 17 May 1988, the Commission was chaired first by Senator Libero Gualtieri, of the Republican Party, and later, from 1994, by Senator Giovanni Pellegrino, of the Left Democrats (DS). Its main task was investigating the reasons which had prevented the identification of those responsible for massacres and other acts of subversion since 1969. According to D'Agnelli (2003: 3), Pellegrino aimed deliberately at 'the construction of a comprehensive historical-political judgement', including a shared judgement on recent historical events. In the early years of his chairmanship, in a climate strongly conditioned by the fall of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of the Italian First Republic, and the renunciation of both Marxism and fascism by the communist and neo-fascist parties – as exemplified by their change of names – seemed to indicate that this aim would succeed.

However, following a hardening of attitudes, partly due to the appearance of Silvio Berlusconi on the political stage, which refuelled long-standing animosities, as well as to the right's bitter reaction to the Clean Hands investigation into systematic corruption during the First Republic, any hope of reaching a

consensus evaporated. Despite repeated attempts by Pellegrino to convince the various political party representatives on the Commission to agree on a shared interpretation of the past, its works came to an end in 2001 with the publication of eighteen separate reports. Interpretations of the past varied dramatically. The reports by representatives of the Northern Alliance put the entire blame for terrorism, including the bombing massacres, on the left, specifically identifying Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, editor and ex-leader of the Gruppi di Azione Partigiana, as the mastermind behind the Strategy of Tension, supported by Eastern intelligence services. Conversely, the report produced by the Left Democrats put the blame for the massacres upon the neo-fascists in connivance with various state forces and Western intelligence and military organizations.

Soon after the folding of the 'Commission on the Massacres', in 2002 a new Parliamentary Commission, the 'Mitrokhin Commission' was set up by Berlusconi to investigate the links between the KGB and representatives of the left parties during the Cold War. The Commission relied on the classified material brought to the West by former KGB archivist Vasilif Mitrokhin. Widely considered by the left to be a crude political instrument based on unreliable information and used to discredit the opposition, the Commission ended by producing two reports in March 2006. One report was presented by the Chair, Forza Italia's Senator Paolo Guzzanti, and supported by the representatives of the centre-right parties, while the other was supported by the representatives of the centre-left parties. Needless to say, the former emphasized the role of Eastern intelligence services and Italian and foreign extreme-left groups in the bloody events of the Cold War period, including the 1980 Bologna massacre, for which it suggested that Palestinian terrorists had been the culprits. By contrast, the centre-left report largely dismissed these interpretations as unfounded and based mainly on hearsay.

The numerous political memoirs and autobiographies produced by the protagonists of the events of the 1960s and 1970s also failed to throw light on them. Such memoirs fall largely into two categories: those that could be defined as 'conversion stories', in which the narrators/protagonists acknowledge their responsibility for past violent deeds, and 'justification stories', in which the narrators view their past deeds either in a heroic light or as the outcome of a process of victimization, thus shifting the blame upon others, including the police, the state, the extreme left or extreme right, or indeed the *cattivi maestri*. While varying greatly in terms of their sincerity, moral viewpoint, degree of repentance and interpretations, these memoirs have not provided any new understanding of Italy's bloody terrorist acts and 'political mysteries', but have tended to address a specific audience (right-wing or left-wing). Furthermore, they have not gone far in offering redress for the victims, with a few commendable exceptions.

The only consensus for some form of restorative justice seems to be around the need to establish official Days of Remembrance for the victims of political violence and terrorism. In May 2007, a new law established that 9 May, the day when Moro was found dead, was to be dedicated to honouring the victims of terrorism and massacres. The text also made explicit reference to the need to 'construct a shared historical memory in defense of the democratic institutions'.

Given that the law was approved by the Lower Chamber almost unanimously, with 420 votes in favour, only one against, and 46 abstentions (from communist parties), the political elite were agreed on this act of reconciliation. Similarly, 27 years after the downing of a civilian plane at Ustica – which is widely believed, but has never been officially proved or acknowledged, to have been hit by American fire during a military operation against Colonel Gaddafi – a Museum of Memory was officially opened in Bologna, on 27 June 2007, with the aim of honouring the victims.

However, as mentioned in the Introduction, the consensus among the elite did not extend to a process of truth-telling. Rather, as argued below, the preferred option by the political elite in recent years seems to consist of a combined process of honouring the victims on the one hand, and promoting collective amnesia regarding the perpetrators and the circumstances surrounding the political violence of the 1960s and 1970s, on the other. This leaves just a few voices advocating the creation of some form of Truth Commission to deal with the country's violent past: Pellegrino himself, Guido Salvini (the main prosecutor in the Piazza Fontana re-trial), and representatives of the associations of the victims of terrorism, including the President of the Brescia Association, Manlio Milani. While Salvini asked for a special Commission of judicial experts and historians,[1] Milani hoped that the truth – he no longer seemed to expect justice through the courts – would emerge from the new Brescia trial:

> Nowadays I expect [from the trial] at least a wide reconstruction of the history of those years, the path that led to those tragic events, the reasons why they happened. We want to know if statesmen acted against the State rather than defending it [...] The institutional credibility of the present hangs on those events.[2]

Collective amnesia: fuelling victimization myths

During the First Republic, collective amnesia appeared to be the main preoccupation of the Italian State, concerned with concealing its own involvement in the Strategy of Tension: it is in this light that many trials have interpreted the episodes of obstruction of justice, which included withholding or destroying sensitive information, producing false information, helping defendants escape abroad, threatening potential witnesses for the prosecution and other dubious, even criminal, acts.

Following the collapse of the First Republic, and the impasse reached by the Commission of Inquiry on the Massacres, more recent indications point towards all the main parties favouring an end to the search for the culprits and to confronting the history of political violence during the Cold War. This approach can be gauged from the decision, taken in 2006, to 'securitize' the documents gathered by the Mitrokhin Commission, together with some material viewed by the Commission on the Massacres, preventing external public access for the next twenty years. As 34 Italian historians stated, in an official complaint sent to the Presidents of the

two Chambers on 26 December 2006, 'This decision, if confirmed, risks to lead to a paradoxical result: the works of these two commissions, rather than bringing us nearer to the truth, could contribute to create a thicker and more lasting veil of ignorance upon some crucial nodes of our history' (www.loccidentale.it/node/327).

According to one of these historians, Fulvio Cammarano, the decision must be understood in the light of the prevailing fear among the political class, both on the left and on the right, of 'an exasperated public use of history with which, in Italy more than elsewhere, each side tries to delegitimate its opponent for the sake of a few electoral decimal points' (www.loccidentale.it/node/329). This seems a likely account of the current tacit understanding among the political elite in favour of a strategy of truth-evading. The problem with this strategy is that it appears to be more conducive to mutual antagonism and to conflicting constructions of victimhood than to reconciliation.

Recent studies of the political narratives and self-narratives produced by supporters of AN have shown the existence of a strong practice of counter-memory as regards the political history of the country and the role of neo-fascism (Catellani *et al.* 2005, Cento Bull 2007). The neo-fascists are systematically represented as a brave but persecuted 'community', used as scapegoats by sinister forces, criminalized by the state, constantly attacked by the extreme left (Baldoni 1996, Adinolfi 2005). On the left, there is a comparable tendency to subscribe to the concept of a 'civil war', with reference to the guerrilla violence of the 1960s and 1970s, in ways which absolve all protagonists of moral responsibility and 'agency', turning them into victims of a generalized climate of violence or, alternatively, of a deliberate brutal repression by the (fascistic) state (Capanna 1994, Bermani 2003, Segio 2003). In this way the condition of victimhood is being claimed by and for each of the groups responsible for the conflict. One of the effects of these reconstructions is to deprive the real victims of the political conflict and the massacres of proper recognition of their status, which the recent acts of public remembrance can only partially compensate for. Indeed, the real victims feel aggrieved and insulted, resenting the increasing status of celebrities in which the ex-terrorists appear to have been cast and claiming, by contrast, that they have had no voice (Fasanella and Grippo 2006).

Conclusion

The never-ending institutional transition discussed in the Introduction is neatly paralleled by a never-ending impasse of national reconciliation. Italy has not been able to adopt a clear and consensual strategy to achieve this end, with the result that various approaches have been attempted with only partially successful results. There are various reasons for this, and especially for the absence of a sustained and meaningful process of truth-telling and truth-acknowledgement. The main reason, as recognized in the literature on national reconciliation, is to be found in the manner in which the First Republic ended, that is to say, without a clear winner and with the survival of most of the political class of the previous regime.

Admittedly, old parties have disappeared and new ones have emerged, however, many of the 'new' parties are reincarnations of old ones or incorporate the political elite of old parties. The emergence of a delicate and unstable balance between the centre-right and the centre-left coalitions is a further factor, predicating against the disclosure of difficult truths about the past which can have damaging and unpredictable repercussions on some of the parties within each coalition. In this context, it is tempting for the political elite to opt for a policy of continuing concealment of the past, so that no one wins or loses credit with the electorate. Third, it is possible that part of the political class is genuinely concerned about the destabilizing effects of a process of truth-telling, and is therefore acting in the name of the general good. Fourth, while truth-telling is avoided, the plight of the victims is being increasingly acknowledged by both sides of the political spectrum and redressed through public acts of remembrance.

It may be possible to argue that Italy is gradually finding its own specific way of dealing with its divided past and coming to some form of national reconciliation. However, the high degree of antagonism between the different political coalitions, the conspiracy theories and victimization myths which promote mutually exclusive attitudes and beliefs among the parties, with contrasting constructions of 'heroes' and 'villains', suggest otherwise. Intolerance and sectarianism thrive upon 'politics of victimhood', and political violence is never far removed. In addition, the non-disclosure of the truth about the recent historical past creates an unhealthy situation in which the political elite can use their knowledge selectively for reciprocal 'blackmail' or, conversely, to foster deals and agreements behind closed doors, not unlike the First Republic.

Constitutional revision and institutional design are without doubt essential components of a successful transition to a new and stable democratic regime. However, redress and reconciliation after a period of violent conflict are also increasingly recognized as essential elements of a healthy democracy. If Italy is finally to end its transitional phase, it needs to take into account all three dimensions. Recent steps towards acts of remembrance indicate that this is now happening, but, as for the other two dimensions, mutual antagonism and fear of giving the opponents an unfair advantage seem to block any decisive drive along this path. In this context, moral decline and political decline go hand in hand.

Notes

1 See *Corriere della Sera* on 9 May 2009.
2 For a full reference see: www.informazione.it/a/b271a127-afc4-4afe-bc52-ba036a1b8c33/Piazza-della-Loggia-il-nono-processo-Milani-liberiamo-la-memoria?v.

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9 Fascism as 'heritage' in contemporary Italy

Joshua Arthurs

Summary

This contribution examines the presence of the fascist past in Italy through the lens of the built environment. Focusing on one well-known case – the Foro Italico in Rome – it considers the historical processes and debates that led to the survival of the regime's monuments after the Second World War; recent political and aesthetic controversies about their present-day function; and their significance as 'symptoms' of a more fundamental crisis afflicting contemporary Italian society. The Italian far right, which often uses these spaces as memorials to the fallen regime, has aligned itself with architectural preservationists who emphasize the monuments' importance as exemplars of interwar Rationalist architecture. In this way, the protection of fascist remains has become a vehicle for the aestheticization, heritagization and normalization of the *Ventennio Nero*, integrating Mussolini's regime into a depoliticized representation of Italian history. On one level, this chapter addresses questions about the memory and continued resonance of the fascist past in contemporary Italy; at the same time, it engages with broader and comparative analyses of the use and re-use of physical space in moments of political and social transformation; the history of vandalism, *damnatio memoriae* and ideological violence; and the politics of heritage conservation and memory.

Introduction

In his first press conference since winning Rome's mayoral election in April 2008, Gianni Alemanno laid out the goals of his new administration (*La Repubblica* 2008; Brunazzo and Gilbert 2008). In keeping with the themes of his campaign, Alemanno – the candidate of the 'post-fascist' Northern Alliance with a long history on the more extreme fringes of the Italian far-right – promised a tougher approach to crime and public safety, economic development and a crackdown on illegal Roma encampments.[1] Alongside these pledges, he added another important priority: the dismantling of the new museum housing the Ara Pacis, a monument built in 13 BCE to honour the Roman emperor Augustus. The building in question, designed by the renowned American architect Richard Meier, had been inaugurated only two years earlier under the stewardship of Alemanno's predecessor and rival, the centre-leftist Walter Veltroni. Built in glass, steel and white travertine, the structure is an aggressively modernist presence in one of Rome's oldest neighbourhoods. Since it was originally conceived, Meier's project has divided architectural critics, inflamed political passions and been derided as a 'cesspit', 'a real disgrace' and 'a genuine act of violence committed against the city' (Sassi 2006, Frischia 2006).

What elicited such vitriol? Even allowing for the tremendous importance that Italians assign to public architecture, the outrage seems hard to fathom. Why would the demolition of an archaeological pavilion be such a pressing concern for mayor-elect Alemanno only two days after his electoral victory? The answer lies not so much in concerns over design or archaeological preservation, as in the historical and political subtext that surrounds the Ara Pacis and its adjacent area. The monument was originally excavated in the late 1930s by Mussolini's fascist regime, and was installed in its present location as part of a massive Augustan *mise-en-scène* that also included the emperor's mausoleum, a large square (Piazzale Augusto Imperatore) and several new buildings (Kostof 1978). The message – driven home not only by the juxtaposition of ancient and modern construction but by inscriptions and reliefs extolling martial virtue and imperial conquest – was clear: the site demonstrated the rebirth of the Roman spirit (*romanità*) in fascism and the capacity of Mussolini's 'New' Italy to reclaim and regenerate the classical heritage of the Eternal City. The controversy surrounding the Ara Pacis Museum was therefore not only aesthetic but political, an expression of profound and longstanding debates over the significance of the fascist past. As much as its jarring modernism, the building's offense was that it challenged and disturbed a cityscape that for decades had been intimately tied to the memory of Mussolini's regime. This association was reinforced at the museum's public unveiling in April 2006, which was disrupted by skinheads from the neo-fascist Movimento Sociale-Fiamma Tricolore (*La Repubblica* 2006). To date, opposition to the project has come overwhelmingly from the right, from Alemanno to the flamboyant art critic Vittorio Sgarbi to Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi.

The Ara Pacis episode – which, at present, remains unresolved – powerfully demonstrates the long and disquieting shadow that the *Ventennio Nero* still casts over contemporary Italy. More than six decades after its demise, Mussolini's regime remains a source of intense controversy, a frame in which enduring conflicts are played out. In part, this is due to the persistent presence of the far right in political life. Italy was the first European country after World War II to witness the emergence of a major neo-fascist party (the MSI), and its successor – the 'post-fascist' Northern Alliance – has been an important partner in Silvio Berlusconi's recent coalition governments. Scholars have also pointed to the post-war Republic's failure to undertake a significant de-fascistization of Italian society, from the judiciary and civil service to basic 'mentalities' (Pavone 1995, Dondi 1999, Domenico 1991).

Reminders of Mussolini's regime are not confined to the realms of party politics or state bureaucracy, but are inscribed in the quotidian landscape of towns and cities across the peninsula. Even more than in many other European countries,

daily life in Italy tends to take place in the public sphere. The *piazza*, more than the private home, is the central venue for social interaction, political participation, commerce and religious community (Isnenghi 1994). Mussolini's regime was fully cognizant of the power of the *piazza*, and sought to overcome the liberal distinction between public and private; its goal was a 'totalitarian' society that subjugated the individual to the collective (Berezin 1997). The public square therefore became a venue for mass ritual and political spectacle, as well as a space in which to collect, discipline and observe crowds. The built environment was also an important showcase for the achievements of fascism. Through an aggressive programme of urban renewal, new construction and archaeological excavation, it sought to negate old stereotypes of Italian backwardness and indolence, and present a dynamic and youthful nation to the rest of the world (Gentile 2007, Horn 1994).

The physical remains of this 'anthropological revolution' remain ubiquitous today, from the 'New Towns' of Pontine Marshes to the gleaming neo-classical structures of Rome's EUR district. In the present contribution, I reflect on the significance of these sites. What does it mean that so much of contemporary life – from morning commutes and football matches to the postal service and government bureaucracy – takes place against a backdrop designed during the fascist *Ventennio*? Should we concur with Robert Musil's famous dictum that 'there is nothing in the world as invisible as monuments [...] they are erected in order to be seen [...] but at the same time they are somehow impregnated against attention [...]' (Musil 1986: 320)? Or do these architectural remnants embody an unresolved past and enduring tensions? Iconoclasm and the refashioning of public space have long been crucial instruments of political and social transformation (Bevan 2006, Levinson 1998, Gamboni 1997); why does this process not seem to have taken place – at least not in a concerted, coherent and consistent manner – in Italy, and what problems does this failure pose?

In answering these questions, I focus upon one well-known case – Rome's Foro Italico – as a lens through which to consider contemporary attitudes towards interwar architecture and, by extension, the fascist past itself. I provide a brief overview of the site's history and development, and then explore more recent debates over its current position in Italian life. The chapter concludes by looking at how responses to the Foro Italico connect to larger debates over the meaning of fascism in present-day Italy, and by suggesting a possible way of negotiating its architectural legacy in the future.

Mosaics, marbles and memories: the Foro Italico

Of all the monuments built during the fascist *Ventennio*, arguably the most emblematic and evocative is the Foro Italico (formerly the Foro Mussolini) in Rome. Situated just north of the Vatican, west of the Tiber and at the foot of Monte Mario, it was built between 1928 and 1938 as the main athletics centre for Rome and, by extension, for the entire nation (Masia *et al.* 2007, Caporilli 1990, Comitato dei Monumenti Moderni 1990). In keeping with this sporting function,

it also housed the headquarters for the Opera Nazionale Balilla, the regime's main youth organization, as well as those of the Italian Olympic Committee (a function it still performs today). The complex consists of several major elements (Figure 9.1).

The largest and most prominent is the Piazza dell'Impero, a long square stretching from the Tiber to the main stadium. It is decorated with mosaics depicting scenes from Roman mythology and the history of fascism from the exploits of the early *squadristi* to the conquest of Ethiopia. Towards the Tiber, it is framed on one side by a large marble obelisk inscribed with the words 'Mussolini' and 'DUX', and on the other by a series of marble blocks commemorating important dates on the fascist calendar, like the anniversary of the March on Rome, the 'Battle for Grain' and the proclamation of Empire (Figure 9.2).

Close by is the Stadio dei Marmi, an oval athletics field with a racing track, surrounded by marble neo-classical statues of nude male athletes (Figure 9.3).

The Foro is framed by a series of buildings that include an Academy of Physical Education, an aquatic centre, a tennis stadium, a fencing academy and a youth hostel. Whereas most of the site is cast in strongly classical tones with gleaming white marble, these structures are built in an angular, Rationalist style that was meant to demonstrate the regime's commitment to modernist aesthetics. As its iconography and designated purpose suggest, the Foro was envisioned as a space in which to train, strengthen and discipline young bodies and build a new generation of muscular, dynamic Italians – and therefore one of the most vivid and complete expressions of fascist ideology and its aspirations for future generations.
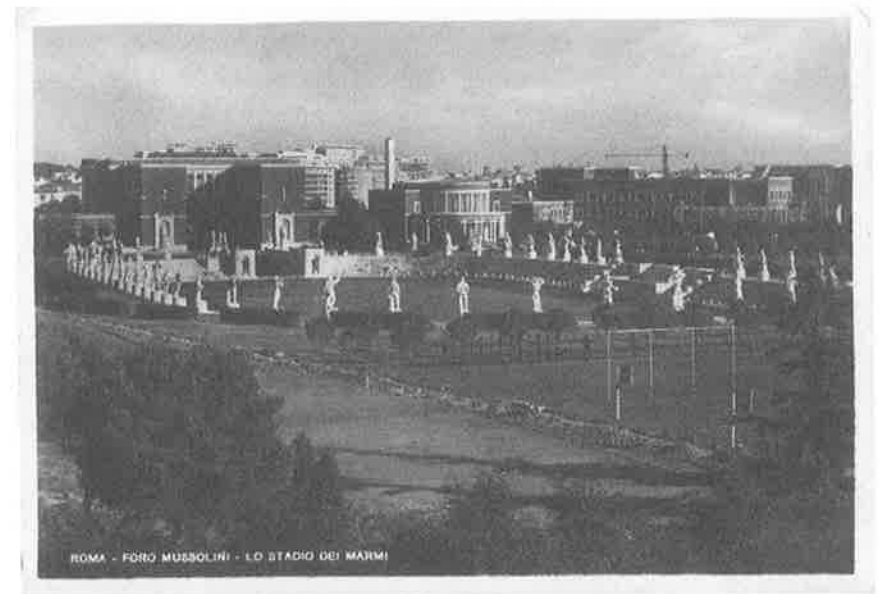

ROMA - FORO MUSSOLINI - LO STADIO DEI MARMI

Figure 9.1 The Foro Mussolini
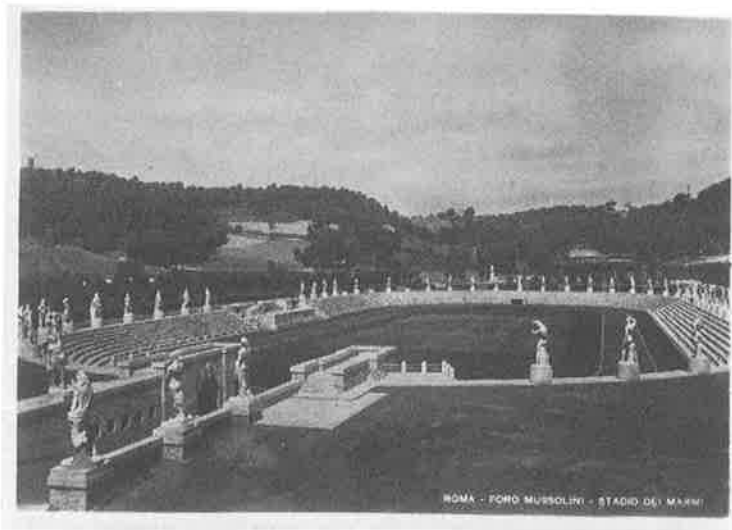
Figure 9.2 The Mussolini Obelisk

Figure 9.3 The Stadio dei Marmi

Until quite recently, the Foro Italico has remained precisely as its designers intended, with little disruption to the slogans and iconography on display. To account for its longevity, one must first consider the immediate circumstances surrounding the demise of Mussolini's regime. In the days following the Duce's removal from power on 25 July 1943, Italians took to the streets to celebrate the end of a regime that had led them into a disastrous war abroad and economic hardship at home (Aga Rossi 2000). Across the peninsula, crowds tore down posters and chiselled the *fascio littorio* from public buildings; significantly, the target of such activities was most frequently representations of Mussolini himself, as opposed to the regime in general or aesthetic representations of fascism (Luzzatto 2005: 35–9). Rather than direct their ire against an entire system – one closely entwined in the daily lives of most Italians – they staged a symbolic ritual murder of the man whose very person had come to embody the experience of the past twenty years, foreshadowing the very real desecration of the Duce's corpse two years later at Piazzale Loreto. Still, the initial popular reaction to 25 July should be seen primarily as a spontaneous emotional release, a venting of frustrations and resentments rather than a coordinated political response (Gallerano 1988: 316–321).

However, this early flurry of iconoclasm was brief and limited. The military administration soon repressed anti-fascist demonstrations with brutal force, out of the concern that they would become increasingly revolutionary in nature (Gallerano *et al.* 1969: 15–37). With the armistice of 8 September 1943, Italy became a battleground for the occupying Allied and German armies as well as for a civil war between partisans and the fascist loyalists of the Repubblica Sociale Italiana (Italian Social Republic – RSI; also known as the Republic of Salò). Given the void in legitimate civil authority and the fracturing of the peninsula (Pavone 1988), there seems to have been little opportunity or political will for a comprehensive and coordinated campaign of *damnatio memoriae*. Significantly, the Foro Italico escaped these early upheavals unscathed, and its survival was assured in June 1944 when it was used as a rest centre for the Fifth Army following the Allied liberation of Rome. The symbolism of this designation was not lost on the site's new occupants, and soldiers were encouraged to tour the remains of Mussolini's vainglorious fantasies (US Army Rest Center 1944). Allied troops ceded the site, now renamed the Foro Italico, to local authorities in 1948.

Years of military occupation had damaged the Foro, but it remained in use throughout the 1940s and 1950s as a sporting venue and the headquarters of the Italian Olympic Committee (CONI). Given the infrastructural and economic damage inflicted during the war, it is unsurprising that recovery efforts focused more on using available resources than on demolishing the traces of the previous regime. Certainly, the early post-war period did see a steady condemnation of fascist architecture by critics and commentators. The monumental aesthetic favoured by the regime was roundly dismissed as little more than 'a pseudo-modern mask for classical megalomania' (Zevi 1993: 164); a popular refrain was 'basta con i balconi!' ('enough with the balconies'), suggesting that buildings themselves were in some way to blame for the demagogy of the past twenty

years. To the architectural theorist Bruno Zevi, the symmetry and modularity of classicism made it inherently totalitarian, stultifying and rhetorical (Zevi 1994). To overcome this burden, post-war planners had to think democratically and on a human scale; vernacular forms began to replace classical monumentality (Doordan 1989: 64).

Despite such criticism, the Foro Italico escaped significant controversy until the late 1950s when it was designated as one of the main venues for the Rome Olympics of 1960 (Caporilli 1990: 136). To accommodate the Games, the organizers renovated some of the crumbling infrastructure and built a new Olympic Stadium adjacent to the Piazza dell'Impero. CONI also restored the fascist-era mosaics, murals and inscriptions, and even employed the same company that had originally designed these decorations (Pirani and Tozzi 1998). Unsurprisingly, this move provoked an outcry from the Left. The restoration of the Foro Italico was a 'lost opportunity', wrote the communist magazine *Vie Nuove* (Natoli 1960: 30). Instead of using the Olympics as the occasion to remake and revitalize the area, the authorities had spent millions only to 'realize the "imperial" projects of twenty years ago' (ibid.). To hold the Olympics against a fascist backdrop would be an embarrassment to Italy, a troubling message to foreign visitors and an insult to the memory of the Resistance. Provoked by this initial incident, *Vie Nuove* undertook a campaign, 'L'Italia da Cancellare' ('The Italy to Erase'), in which it catalogued the physical remnants of the regime across the peninsula (*Vie Nuove* 1960). In the view of the communists, the prominence of fascist monuments and inscriptions materially demonstrated the failures of the post-war Republic, its abandonment of anti-fascist values, and the reluctance of the Christian Democratic government to confront an uncomfortable past. In the end, they argued, there was little to differentiate between the Olympic triumphalism of 1960 and the imperial posturing of the 1930s.

Curiously, the Christian Democrats did make some minor modifications to the iconography of the Foro Italico. To assuage traditional sensibilities, or possibly to avoid scandalizing tourists, bronze fig-leaves were placed over the genitals of the statues at the Stadio dei Marmi (Marbles Stadium) (Benton 1999); evidently full-frontal nudity was more offensive than slogans like *Molti nemici, molto onore* ('Many enemies, much honour') and *Duce, vi dedichiamo la nostra giovinezza* ('Duce, we dedicate our youth to you'), which remained in public view. In addition, the government added three new dates to the marble blocks in the Piazza dell'Impero, marking the end of the regime in 1943, the proclamation of the Italian Republic in 1946, and the new Italian Constitution in 1948. Instead of purging the site of its fascist associations, the goal seems to have been to superimpose new layers of symbolism that supplemented, rather than replaced, its original iconography. In this way, the post-war Republic could lay claim to the Foro without engaging in a controversial and potentially revolutionary act of iconoclasm. This was reinforced in the Games' promotional materials, which often celebrated the classical tenor of the complex without touching upon its original significance. According to the official Olympic bulletin, the Stadio dei Marmi had 'a classic touch [...] it was indeed an excellent idea to have these enormous white

statues standing out in the sun against the dark green of the Monte Mario cypress trees' (CONI 1957: 11); however, the publication studiously avoided mentioning whose idea this had been in the first place.

Since the 1960 Olympics, the Foro Italico has continued to serve as one of Italy's main sporting and entertainment venues. It hosts the Italian Open tennis competition, is home to both of Rome's professional football teams, and was the venue for the 1990 World Cup final. Yet in recent years, it has once again become an object of social, cultural and political controversy. The smooth surfaces of the Piazza dell'Impero have made it the focal point of Rome's skateboarding scene, and its marble blocks and walls are frequently covered with graffiti (Figure 9.4). For the most part, these should probably be understood as generic vandalism – random acts of defacement, without expressly political content – rather than purposeful iconoclasm (Gamboni 1997). They suggest that, at least for some young Romans, the Foro's monumental aura has been extinguished and that the site has simply been incorporated into the quotidian cityscape. At the same time, however, the declining condition of the site has also reinvigorated its symbolic significance. In recent years, neo-fascists have begun to use the Mussolini obelisk as a shrine to the Duce and the 'Martyrs' of Salò, and see the Foro Italico as a testament to the achievements of the regime. One impromptu far-right group has even published a website on which it tracks acts of vandalism and exposes skateboarders and taggers who 'violate' this sacred space.[2]

Figure 9.4 Neo-Fascist memorials at the Mussolini Obelisk

Figure 9.5 Neo-Fascist memorials at the Mussolini Obelisk

In an interesting turn of events, neo-fascists have made common cause with historical preservationists in agitating for the site's upkeep (Figure 9.5). Since the 1980s, critics have begun to reappraise the architectural legacy of the *Ventennio*. In the words of one organization, enough time has passed for the Foro Italico to be recognized as a testament 'to the richness of ideas and inventiveness of our twentieth century' and 'an exceptional monument [...] for the clarity and breadth of its urban design' (Comitato dei Monumenti Moderni 1990: 7, 24). Even Giorgio Armani has praised the statues of the Stadio dei Marmi as 'proud and magnificent, radiating glory, honed and powerful, every muscle in clear relief even when inactive', and in 1985 modelled his homoerotic Emporio Armani advertising campaign on these nude figures (Mott 2003). The entire complex was eventually recognized as a protected artistic and historical property by the national government, 'notwithstanding its ideological orientation' (report by the Ministero per i Beni Culturali e Ambientali, reprinted in Marchetti 2004: 142). Despite these measures, in 2000 the state proposed that the complex be privatized to help reduce the national debt and CONI's budget deficit (Stanley 2000). The announcement prompted massive outrage from right-wing parties and architecture lovers alike, who likened the sale of the Foro to privatizing the Colosseum or Piazza Navona. Figure 9.6 shows a poster calling for the preservation of the Foro Italico.

Although the government eventually scaled back its plans, portions of the venue have been turned into a private recreational facility, and for most of the past five years much of the Foro has been covered with scaffolding for repairs and cleaning. Even these restorations have met with disapproval: in recent months, the heritage group Italia Nostra has expressed concerns that sandblasting would permanently damage the marble surfaces, and that the advertising posted over the Mussolini obelisk detracts from the dignity of the monument. Even worse, with privatization, a site built 'to celebrate physical and athletic education is now a spot for sweaty dancing, fatty hamburgers, beer and Coke, and blaring music' (Bari 2008). At last reporting, renovations had ground to a halt under the orders of Rome's new mayor. As with Richard Meier's Ara Pacis Museum, Gianni

Figure 9.6 Alleanza Nazionale poster calling for the preservation of the Foro Italico

Alemanno has signalled his commitment to blocking any major re-workings of fascism's architectural legacy.

Just a monument? heritagizing the fascist past

If contemporary Italy is indeed the sick man of Europe, then the Foro Italico and other fascist-era monuments can usefully be understood as symptoms, as indicators of a more profound crisis afflicting the body politic. This diagnosis follows several interlocking lines of interpretation. First, as the story of the Foro Italico suggests, contemporary controversies about the fascist past are intimately tied to the chaotic and divisive experience of the Second World War. Italy's particular war experience – as Axis power, occupied territory and divided nation – meant that there was no possibility of a comprehensive agenda of *damnatio memoriae*. The lingering social and ideological conflicts originating in this era have made it all the more difficult to find the necessary political will, as has the reluctance of post-war Italian society to confront its fascist past. As seen in the debates surrounding the 1960 Olympics, the problem of fascist architectural heritage was used as a political weapon between Left and Right, rather than being approached as a mature process of national introspection and reconciliation (for a related debate, see Cento Bull in this volume).

The continued use of the Foro Italico in the decades after World War Two also demonstrates the extent to which post-war society remained dependent on infrastructure built during the fascist era. The *Ventennio Nero* was a period of

dramatic transformation for the peninsula, and in many ways signalled the arrival of the twentieth century in Italy. However, this last point also has a more troubling corollary – namely that the fascist vision of modernism and modernity retains a powerful grip over the Italian imagination. For better or worse, Mussolini's was the only regime to impose a modernist aesthetic on Rome and attempt a dramatic remaking of its urban fabric; since 1945, successive governments have been careful to act as preservationists rather than interventionists. The disciplined, muscular and aggressive symbolism on display at the Foro Italico represents one of the only viable counterpoints to the historical panorama of the Eternal City. Because of this enduring appeal, the idea of a 'modernizationist' regime is frequently invoked by apologists on the far right. In a recent interview, Alemanno insisted that fascism's 'historically positive' aspect lay in its development of the country's infrastructure, land reclamation and innovative construction (Follain 2008). Nor has praise for the regime's architecture been limited to neo-fascists: against prevailing orthodoxies that deny the merit of interwar design, the left-wing architecture critic Giorgio Muratore has repeatedly insisted that the *Ventennio* was 'among the richest periods of our architectonic culture' and that, for the sake of 'history, documentary value, and objective urban and aesthetic qualities', it should be conserved (Comitato dei Monumenti Moderni 1990: 23–24).

Muratore's argument that fascist architecture forms an integral part of Italy's architectural heritage presents both promises and challenges. The possibility of assessing interwar architecture without the burden of ideological judgment is certainly encouraging. There is no denial that Mussolini's regime favoured aesthetic diversity and gave opportunities to innovative architects of every stripe. At the same time, however, the notion that the Foro Italico should be accepted as just another layer in Rome's architectonic strata, as much as the Roman Forum or Saint Peter's, could also be viewed as a dangerous form of passive acceptance. It is somewhat disingenuous to aestheticize or depoliticize what was a profoundly political project; the exemplary Rationalist architecture manifested in the Foro Italico was not built despite fascism, but because of it. It is no accident that the voices most eager to 'remove politics' from the discussion tend to belong to Mussolini's ideological heirs. A similar 'normalizing' or relativizing tendency has been evident in other aspects of Italian cultural life over the past decade. The recent popularity of historical newsreels has resulted in a representation of the fascist era under the rubric of 'come eravamo' – innocent nostalgia for 'the way we were' that avoids mention of the daily violence, corruption and coercion perpetrated by the regime (Fogu 2006: 159). Such a 'colour-blind' presentation of the past offers ample opportunities for distortion and misrepresentation (Mammone and Veltri 2007). One of the most egregious expressions of this tendency is the Right's current attempts to draw an equivalency between anti-fascist partisans and the Nazi-backed fighters of the RSI in the 'civil war' of 1943–1945 (Pezzino 2005; Miller 1999). The Resistance has increasingly been undermined as the moral basis of post-war Italian democracy, though Berlusconi and his allies have yet to offer a legitimate alternative. In the same way, 'heritagizing' fascism's monumental remains offers uncritical legitimation and the valorization of a deeply troubling

past. More profoundly, it creates a space – both discursive, and, as we have seen, physical – for the re-emergence of illiberal, xenophobic and nihilistic currents in Italian society. While historical and aesthetic revisionism can usefully foster the critical re-examination of outdated orthodoxies, it also runs the risk of debilitating moral relativism and muddying the waters of public perception (Mammone 2006).

Conclusion

What, then, should be done? How should contemporary Italians negotiate the presence of the fascist past? As the controversies surrounding the Ara Pacis and the Foro Italico suggest, interventions that substantially recast the regime's architectural legacy seem fated only to intensify conflict and provide a platform for Mussolini's apologists. The window of opportunity for a campaign of *damnatio memoriae* has long since closed. Conversely, the inaction of recent decades suggests that mere passivity will do little to dispel the shadows cast by the *Ventennio*. While considerably more work needs to be done to resolve this problem, I would like to advance one possible avenue for negotiation. Many other societies have had to reckon with the material remains of a problematic past. Germans today wrestle not only with reminders of the Nazi era but those that recall decades of national division and communist rule (Rosenfeld 2000, Ladd 1997); the monuments and symbols of the Confederacy remain controversial in the United States, generations after the Civil Rights movement (Levinson 1998). While debates persist in both these countries, there has nevertheless been a more thoughtful and deliberate reckoning with architectural remains. An instructive example can be found at the Nazi Party rally grounds in Nuremberg (Macdonald 2006). Concerned about the implications of 'heritagizing' or 'mythologizing' this site, local authorities decided on an intriguing policy of 'calculated neglect'. By deliberately allowing the stadium to crumble under the weight of time, they hoped to demonstrate the absurdity of Hitler's 'Thousand Year Reich'. At the same time, planners erected a Documentation Centre, encouraging visitors to approach the site with the critical lens of history rather than the admiring gaze of heritage.

Might such 'critical preservation' (Bevan 2006: 175–201) work at the Foro Italico or other reminders of the *Ventennio Nero*? At the very least, inserting some form of explanation – as through labelling, panels or museum display – might have the salutary effect of mediating between fascist iconography and its contemporary audience. It might also strengthen the didactic value of these sites in both historical and aesthetic terms, and provide a meaningful justification for their preservation. As long as these sites are devoid of deliberate and reasoned commentary, and are allowed to speak for themselves, they will continue to debilitate a nation that has become the 'Sick Man of Europe'.

Notes

1 While Alemanno positioned himself as a 'mainstream' conservative during the campaign, he is one of the leading exponents of the radical stream Destra Sociale (Social Right), as well as a protégé (and son-in-law) of Pino Rauti, the neo-fascist

leader who rejected the moderate turn of AN in the mid-1990s. During the election, he also caused a stir by openly wearing the Celtic cross, a symbol commonly associated with neo-Nazi and white supremacist groups.

2 See www.foroitalico.altervista.org.

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13 The strongest mafia: *'Ndrangheta* made in Calabria

Ercole Giap Parini

Summary

The *'Ndrangheta* is the mafia originally developed in Calabria and represents one of the oldest and most diffuse criminal organizations in Southern Italy. It has long been underestimated by judges, police forces and political institutions – and only with the killings in Duisburg (Germany) many have realized the growing importance, and menace, of the phenomenon. The *'Ndrangheta* has spread its illegal activities well beyond the Italian borders. Moreover, it has reached a European leading position in many criminal activities including the drug trafficking (due to its strong links with similar groups in Colombia and elsewhere). This chapter analyzes the internal, rigid and 'traditionalist' organization of the *'Ndrangheta* and its control over Calabria's territory; the changing nature of its illegal activities over recent decades; and its ability to consolidate strategic alliances with mainstream politics, the 'legal' economy, professions, and part of the public administration.

Introduction

On August 2007, Duisburg, a German town of 495,000 inhabitants in the North Rhine-Westphalia, was the scene of a showdown between two *'Ndrangheta* families originally coming from San Luca, a village on the Ionian coast of Calabria (near Reggio Calabria): six people were killed at the end of a party in a restaurant owned by the family of the victims. On that occasion, German people had evidence that *mafiosi* coming from the 'profound South' of Italy carried out an apparently backward bloody feud in their territory. Internationally, there was evidence that the *'Ndrangheta* had spread its illegal activities well beyond the Italian borders.

Actually, the *'Ndrangheta* is the mafia organization originally developed in Calabria; in the Italian *mafioso* scenery it represents one of the oldest and most diffuse criminal organizations of this type. Despite its power and its deeply rooted traditions in the original territories, and despite the ability to extend its activities all over the world for half a century, the *'Ndrangheta* has long been underestimated by judges, police forces and political institutions, since it has

been considered a marginal criminal phenomenon if compared to the *Cosa Nostra* or the *Camorra*.[1] For a long time in the Italian public understanding, it had the flavour of a pastoral declining world, rather than of an organization rooted in criminal affairs. Probably, this estimation is partially due to the marginal role played by Calabria in the Italian political and economic system. And, probably, it is just this underestimation that has allowed this mafia organization to become one of the world's most dangerous.

Regarding the undervaluation of the *'Ndrangheta*, Nicola Gratteri and Antonio Nicaso state (2007: 13):

> For decades the *'Ndrangheta* has been considered a raggedy and homely version of the Sicilian mafia, a typical phenomenon of a backward society, only interested in kidnappings. And this long-lasting and dangerous undervaluation has helped it become a truly transnational holding, able to influence not only politics, but also social models, lifestyle and consumption.

In fact, the *'Ndrangheta*, together with part of the regional political and administrative sector, has created an underground network of power particularly able to subjugate the most important economic resources that in Calabria are widely dependant on the public sector (see Chapter 16 by Milio concerning the damage to the EU funding allocation caused by the patronage system of power in the southern regions), owing to a long-lasting condition of marginality of the local entrepreneurial class.

Consequently, it has been a surprise for many that in Calabria there are more than 150 *cosche* (clans), comprising about 15,000 people (a significant number, since this territory is a little bigger than 15,000 km², with a population of nearly 2 million) whose activities, at the international and local levels, produce revenues of about €35–40 billion. What is the secret for the criminal success of such a mafia organization? The answer should be found by investigating the mixture of what is 'ancient' and what is 'modern', where an apparently backward organization is consistent with the newest forms of illicit trafficking and where the local and international strategies are functionally linked together.

This chapter starts by describing the inner organization of the *'Ndrangheta*. It then focuses on the local level of its power, which is a kind of authority exercised through a mixture of menace and people's consensus. Finally, it takes into account the relevance of the international traffic of the *'Ndrangheta*, also giving evidence of the functional links with the local level of power.

A rigid and 'traditionalist' organization guarded by secrecy and rites

The *'Ndrangheta* maintains a more traditional internal structure than the other mafia organizations. What makes it unique in the general mafia phenomenon is the reciprocal independence of the different cells constituting the *'Ndrangheta*. These cells, known as *'ndrine*, are based on blood families. This represents an

element of stability, since the turnover is largely inside family-based relationships. For instance, there is a kind of 'marriage strategy' by which the bosses of the *'Ndrangheta* create blood ties with individuals capable of criminal activity. (Ciconte 1992, 1996, Paoli 2000, Gratteri and Nicaso 2007).

The fact that the word *'ndrina*, which defines a single cell of the organization, represents the root of the word *'Ndrangheta*, defining the whole organization, testifies the importance of the units to the organization. The only exception to the federative nature of the *'Ndrangheta* is represented by the peculiar role attributed to the *'ndrina* of San Luca, symbolically considered the mother of all the *'ndrine*, due to the fact that it is the most ancient in Calabria.

It is worth mentioning that the organization is strengthened by secrecy and by a formal and ritualistic entering of the new adepts into the 'honoured society'. In the report that a former Minister of the Interior, Nicola Mancino, presented to Parliament in the 1990s, rites to access the organization are described as crucial in the Calabrian mafia:

> The 'Ndrangheta, differently from Cosa Nostra, has always relied heavily on written codes, rites and symbols. Still now, during inspections and raids by the police in Calabria 'secret codes' are often found, and these are the copies – mainly written in dialect, with clumsy handwriting, by semi-literate people – of the rite and the esoteric formula through which it is possible to enter the 'honoured society'. In these 'codes' internal hierarchies were outlined; tasks and characteristics of the affiliated were predicated, together with the rules of behaviour and sanctions to the adepts
>
> (Mancino, quoted in Minuti and Nicaso 1994: 215)

The 'codes' represent the *summa* of all these aspects, and characterize the entire history of the Calabrian mafia.[2]

Enzo Ciconte (1996) asked how it was possible for an organization based on an apparently primitive structure to succeed in becoming a chief player in major illicit worldwide trafficking, and, locally, in the functioning of democratic institutions. The answer has to be found precisely in the characteristics of that structure. The significance of those rites, myths and legends defines the secret character of the organization. This plays a twofold role: (1) it strengths the faithfulness to the organizations among the adepts (see Paoli 2000, 2004); and (2) it gives a fashionable aura to the *cosche*, so crucial to attracting new adepts to the organization.

It is worth mentioning that in the last few years something is changing in the inner structure of the organization. Due to the growing dimension of the affairs and the necessity to diminish internal conflicts, coordination among *'ndrine* has been introduced. To satisfy this condition a new structure called *provincia* has been introduced and it is supposedly very similar to the Cosa Nostra's 'commission' (Gratteri and Nicaso 2007: 16).[3]

The present day power of the *'Ndrangheta*: the local level

In Calabria, the *'Ndrangheta* is particularly able to penetrate the whole economic, social and political fabric, not unlike the Camorra, whose strategies have been described in this volume by Felia and Percy Allum.

This is particularly true for many of the Calabrian territories traditionally settled by the *'ndrine*. In order to carry out this type of control over the territory, the *cosche* are engaged in an arrogant practice aimed at subduing entrepreneurs and shopkeepers, by imposing on them the '*pizzo*', that is the squeeze[4]. In 2006, more than 400 cases of squeezes were denounced in Calabria. Since these account for only a small part of the phenomenon (the victims are very often reluctant to denounce them), in order to understand the level of violence and menace over entrepreneurs, investigators monitor the acts of intimidation against them, such as damage and arson. In 2007, incidents of damage against firms or shops accounted for more than 12,000 in Calabria; the number of acts of arson were almost 1500 (DIA 2008).

Many experts and judges affirm that the control over the commercial and entrepreneurial fabric is so widespread that in many areas no one can avoid paying the *pizzo* to the local *cosca*. Many Calabrian entrepreneurs have internalized the fear brought by the continuous menace and even institutionalized it in their daily activities. Sometimes the *pizzo* is taken into account as a balance sheet item by many enterprises, even among the most important ones.

In its last report, the Antimafia Parliamentary Commission stated:

> where organized crime is deeply rooted, a parallel economic system is created; this attracts human and financial resources while subtracting them from the legal economy; as a consequence, illegality is generally known as the sole resource to make money; from this, a vicious circle stems in which 'the low economic growth produces low employment or unemployment that pushes human capital towards the illegal economy'
>
> (Antimafia Parliamentary Commission 2008: 15)

Unfair competition, collusion of public servants with the *'Ndrangheta*, and control over the economic fabric represent the perfect scenario for the so-called *Tamburo* and *Arca* judicial inquiries. These gave an impressive evidence of the *cosche*'s interests in controlling the public contracts for the modernization of the A3 highway, the principal highway branch in Southern Italy. This investigation was initiated by the DIA (the Italian Antimafia Agency) in 1999 and lasted until 2002. It revealed that a number of *cosche*, in particular the ones operating between the Gioia Tauro and the Lamezia Terme territories: Perna, Ruà, Di Dieco and Presta (from the last names of the bosses), used to exact 3 per cent of the contract from the legitimate companies, and forced them to hand over the subcontracts to firms belonging to the *cosche*. At the end of the investigation not only were *'Ndrangheta* men arrested but also functionaries of the ANAS (i.e. personnel working for the highway trust).

These inquiries suggest, the control over the economic fabric is only part of the local mafia power. The other is represented by *'Ndrangheta*'s ability to consolidate strategic alliances with mainstream politics, 'legal' economy, professionals and with part of the public administration.[5]

In the last decades, due to the mafia infiltration, thirty-eight municipal councils have been dismantled by decree of the President of the Italian Republic. The strength of this system is evidenced by the fact that for three of them the dismantle decree was applied twice. This testifies to the high level of penetration of the *'ndrine* in the Calabrian political sector, which jeopardizes the possibility of the citizens to fully exert democratic rights.[6]

Such pervasive control is of capital importance for the general strategy of a mafia organization.[7] In the 1970s, in order to consolidate strategic alliances, the *'Ndrangheta* started to connect with some of the Masonic lodges, particularly strong in Calabria's professional and political fabric. Through this alliance the local mafia seeks full social legitimacy and a stronger integration in the economy and politics (see Forgione 2008: 25).

In their traditional territories *'Ndrangheta*'s power is represented as a network of interests and complicities: at the very centre of it there are the strongest and most colluded meshes, for instance the alliance between a mafioso and a politician. The former, in fact, exerts influence on the voters (a mixture of violence and respect) which is useful for the politician to be elected. The politician, once elected, will be a loyal servant of the boss's interests. Starting from this, one encounters the so-called 'gray area'. This is constituted by colluding professionals (such as lawyers, physicians, financial consultants, and so on) for whom providing professional services to the *cosche* is imperative, and this is of crucial importance to reproduce the mafia's power. In exchange, they have the possibility of managing part of the huge revenues of the *'Ndrangheta*, and getting more power in their affairs by 'spending' some of the 'mafia aura', which is so significant in a context where the *'Ndrangheta* plays such an important role. A more exterior area of the network is populated by people who receive only minor advantages from the *'Ndrangheta*, such as a job or a council house and so on; it would be impossible to give all the examples of a marginal economy based on and controlled through the exploitation of the people's basic needs. At the most external areas of that net there are people not colluded in the mafia affairs at all; nevertheless, they are fond of a quiet life and are resigned to living in a place controlled by the *cosche*. The role of this part of the population is so crucial because they are tolerant to the *mafiosi* and provide them with a kind of social protection by repelling any attempt at social change, for instance by hindering social or political opposition to that system.

The alliance with politicians at different levels assures political and social protection to the *cosche* that overcomes the Calabria borders: from a local town councillor the *mafiosi* are able to get meet with Italian or EU deputies or public authorities. This strategy is crucial for providing a kind of political protection that men of the *'Ndrangheta* can use to influence the administration of justice, for instance in the *aggiustamento* (i.e. arrangement) of a trial.

Generally, the alliance between the *'Ndrangheta* and the politicians is carried out without conflict. Nevertheless, due to the crucial role that the group's control has over politics – and consequently over the public administration – local politicians and public administrations are often under menace. In Calabria, every year a number of violent attacks (including bombings, firebombs, and so on) are perpetrated against local administrators and civil servants and this is a true and continuous menace for democracy in many areas of the region.

Sometimes the *cosche* exceed all boundaries. On 16 December 2005 the Vice-President of the Regional Calabria Council, Francesco Fortugno, was killed in Locri, a town of 5,000 inhabitants in the Ionian coast of Calabria, traditionally controlled by the *'Ndrangheta*. After sixteen years, it was the first murder of such a high-level politician and the shock was great in Calabria and in Italy (in September 1990 Ludovico Ligato, the former chief of the Italian Railways, and an important representative of the Christian Democrat party, had been killed by a man belonging to the 'family of Condello', nearby Reggio Calabria area). The sensation linked to this bloody event testified that something was going wrong in Calabria's social peace between the mafia and politics.

The investigations following the murder were geared towards the affairs of the local ASL (Azienda Sanitaria Locale – Local Health Office) in Locri, where Francesco Fortugno had been a top manager. What emerged through this inquiry was a network of interests and complicity,[8] where the local *cosche* wanted to access the huge economic resources connected to the management of the health system in that area. This murder testifies that the *'ndrine* are easily inclined to violence whenever the core of their power is seriously compromised.

The global contemporary power of the *'Ndrangheta*

The *'Ndrangheta* is becoming one of the most important and aggressive crime organizations both at the national and the international level.

In Italy, *'Ndrangheta*'s activities are indeed diffused far from Calabria. This could be a deliberate strategic expansion of its activities or the result of 'unintentional' factors, such as the escape of the bosses from their lands of origin due to internal conflicts within the *cosche* (see Sciarrone 1998, Varese 2006). For instance, Piemonte, Veneto, Valle d'Aosta and Lombardia (especially around Milan) have been invaded by Calabrian *mafiosi* since the 1970s, in particular for the control of the local drug traffic. In the Milan area there are neighbourhoods where the *cosche* control the commercial structure in ways similar to Calabria. This is the case of the Quarto Oggiaro neighbourhood, considered completely in *'Ndrangheta*'s hands. The former president of the Antimafia Parliamentary Commission, Francesco Forgione, by emphasizing the importance of Milan in *'Ndrangheta*'s strategies, has stated that it is the 'real *'Ndrangheta* capital'.[9] In that territory this 'mafia made in Calabria' is able to make affairs and form alliances with local politicians, and the judges suspect that the *cosche* are trying to become involved in the businesses of the 2015 Milan Expo.

Nevertheless, the international level reached by this criminal organization's affairs is impressive. Even in the 2002 report, the members of the Parliamentary Commission highlighted that the Calabrian mafia had gained primacy among the other mafia organizations and was central to global illicit trafficking.

In Europe the presence of the *cosche* is very pervasive. The above-mentioned incident in Duisburg shows that Calabrian *mafiosi* are leading an expansion of their interests and some change in their strategies; in particular, they are spreading their control over financial activities and spreading conflicts traditionally managed in Calabria at a European level. It is worth mentioning that in Germany at least 300 commercial activities, particularly restaurants, are directly owned by men of the *cosche*. According to the German Intelligence Service (BND) another and more lucrative way to launder money is through stock exchange investments (Gratteri and Nicaso 2007: 213). Other European areas of diffusions are the ex-Soviet countries, Spain, Switzerland and the UK.

One of the reports presented by the DIA (2007) states that:

> In the global scene, the drug traffic management still remains the prominent and most profitable criminal activity for the Calabrian mafia organizations. These have strengthened the ability to maintain relationship with the South American 'narcos' organizations and they managed to put themselves among the most prominent in the control of cocaine import flows (Bolivia and Colombia over all) and routes from the production places to Europe
>
> (DIA 2007)

By observing the *'Ndrangheta*'s activities all over the world, the evidence emerges that we are facing a global strategy.

The *'Ndrangheta*'s criminal effectiveness in international trade is due to the *cosche*'s brokerage abilities. In September 2008, the representative in Italy of the DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration), Mr. Richard Bendekovich, pointed out the centrality of the *'Ndrangheta* in the control of the US drug market, in relation to its close connection with Colombian narcos and Mexican gangs who control the traffic across the border between Mexico and the US.

It is worth mentioning that *'Ndrangheta*'s growing importance in this kind of trafficking is connected to a change inside the Italian *mafioso* scenery. In the last decade, many of the activities in which other Italian mafia organizations were involved are now under the control of the Calabrian mafia. To understand that, it is necessary to recall the Cosa Nostra crisis following the state and civil society reaction to the 1992 slaughters in which judges Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino were killed. In a period characterized by a strong reaction by the state's institutions against mafia power in Italy, the *'Ndrangheta* showed a stronger ability to resist to this attack if compared to Cosa Nostra. In fact, a synchronous action from different sectors of the state – politics, judges, investigators and civil society – seriously challenged the Sicilian mafia that simultaneously experienced a lack of protection and of wide social consensus. Furthermore, the presence of a huge number of 'super pentiti', 'supergrasses' (inside informers), compromised

the Cosa Nostra inner structure and its abilities to deal with illicit international trafficking. A greater stability of the *'Ndrangheta* has been ascribed first of all to the negligible presence of the supergrasses. In fact, the structure of this mafia, based on blood ties, became an extraordinary defence against their emergence. While stigmatizing its oppressive influence upon the territory, the drafters of the 2003 Antimafia Commission report quoted the words of Antonio Zagari, a former *picciotto* of the Gioia Tauro area, on the Calabrian coast:

> For the people born in such surroundings and trained to silence, it is not easy to denounce their friends and be considered dangerous enemies. To cause the arrest and the imprisonment of relatives brings to moral and psychological problems that are worse than the fear of revenges and retorts.
>
> (Parliamentary Antimafia Commission 2003: 30)

Starting in 2000, the *'Ndrangheta* obtained the monopoly of the European cocaine market. A number of men of the *cosche* live permanently in Colombia in order to maintain stable relationships with narcos and paramilitary armies. That *'Ndrangheta* members have a high regard for that country is testified by the strong ties between the *cosche* of the Reggio Calabria area and Antonio Mancuso, the chief of the AUC (Autodefensas Unidas Colombia) paramilitary army who managed to obtain, jointly with the *'Ndrangheta*, huge cocaine shipments to finance his paramilitary and political activities. The AUC is a paramilitary organization engaged in a long-term conflict with the insurrection forces, especially the Marxists, such as the FARC and the ELN, for the control of many Colombian areas and defence of the richest sector of Colombia's people (land owners and middle bourgeoisie).

The international affairs of the *'Ndrangheta* are still linked to drug traffic management that accounts for about 70 per cent of its international revenues. Nevertheless, other illicit trades are becoming more relevant. For instance, by illicitly organizing the disposal of dangerous waste coming from industrial production, the *cosche* offer a much requested service to the legal economy. In a competitive global economic system, many companies are eager to take the opportunity to keep the costs connected to this activity low, even at the risk of being involved in criminal activities.[10] Concerning this, investigations are in progress in Italy on nuclear waste traffic coming from a very important Italian institute of research and directed to Somalia.[11]

In conclusion, these facts confirm that the *'Ndrangheta* is becoming a true financial holding of crime, able to move organizational and financial resources towards all profitable opportunities and through the newest technical apparatuses. Besides this, it is clear that this mafia, originally from Calabria, rather than being a mere disturbing element, is playing a crucial role in the shaping of the global economy.

A 'deeply and traditionally rooted' international attitude

The *cosche*'s bent for international affairs shows that the local and the international levels are not separate in the mafia's strategies. The local level benefits from an international money flow that needs to be laundered; through this huge amount of money the Calabrian *cosche* can fund local criminal activities as well as legal economic enterprises. By doing this, the local bosses consolidate their power upon a territory whose economy is particularly weak. In turn, the men of the *'Ndrangheta* who carry on offshore activities need the social and political protection provided by the network of consensus built up by the local *cosche*. For instance, when they are escaping from international police they can go to Calabria for a place to hide. Besides that, the *mafiosi* playing at the local level exert a deep control over the workforce; in fact, they are able to provide trusty men devoted to the mafia's causes to the bosses working at the international level. This reconfirms an attitude to maintain strong control over human resources even in the international arena, where the risk of being too exposed to external forces is great.

Despite widespread opinion, the relevance of the international traffic is not something new for the *'Ndrangheta*. This is testified by the facts connected to the so-called 'Siderno Group' activities. The town of Siderno is considered one of the most important for the mafia's strategy on the Ionian coast of Calabria. Starting from the 1950s to the mid-1970s, the undisputed boss of that village was don Antonio Macrì, whose influence overwhelmed the town's area (Antimafia Parliamentary Commission 2000) even reaching Messina in Sicily. While living in Siderno, Macrì created a thick network of power and consensus that allowed him to control the local politicians who, in exchange for electoral backing, gave him easy access to public works. His influence was so strong that even high prelates took part in his power gathering. He was a true authority in Siderno, Macrì was more concerned to maintain peace and order than the police itself.

Moreover, Macri's strategy aimed to extend his power to an international level by controlling a number of criminal activities abroad and by relying on trustworthy Calabrian emigrant families (Minuti and Nicaso 1994: 84–87). In the early 1950s Michele (Mike) Racco, a poor baker endowed with enough ability and ambition, had been initiated to the local *'ndrina* of Siderno and then sent by Macrì to Canada. In Toronto he started an important pasta factory to give himself an honest 'front', while secretly working to build up a criminal organization that in a short time became the centre of a big criminal business, relying on a trusty workforce of about fifty people, all from Siderno. Group activities were smuggling, extortion and gambling. Though the organization managed to gain a very high level of income from these activities, the *mafiosi* maintained tight links with the poor southern Italian village of Siderno.

The case of the Siderno Group is particularly relevant since it shows, even in the vocabulary used to name a mafia phenomenon abroad, the contiguity with an apparently insignificant town belonging to Southern Italy.

Besides that, in the territories of their original settlements, such as in Siderno, *mafiosi* had for a long time been engaged in minute criminal activities (cattle

stealing and extortion mainly) (Ciconte 1992, Sergi 1991), therefore, this example explains how these criminals were able, through a stable organization and bold expansion strategies, to create an extended international criminal network. In other words, there are the roots of a phenomenon that has become the 'strongest mafia'.

Conclusions

In this book, while describing the Italian elite, Carboni focuses on the 'public life as a mere function of private and individual interests'. In Southern Italy, and in Calabria in particular, parts of the elites are strictly connected to the mafia's interests and constitute, together, a hidden and underground power system in which what is public is growingly appropriated inside the private sphere. Far from being a process regarding only political and social elites and the mafia, humiliation of public life becomes a widespread custom, where common people are involved as well, in a big network of connivance. The result of this process is a deterioration of public life and the compromise of social and economical innovation.

This fact also highlights that the *'Ndrangheta*, like other mafia organizations, is not merely criminal phenomenon, since it permeates social, economic and political spheres. Consequently, it has to be fought not only through judicial inquiries and police strategies: as a social system of power it has to be fought by truly democratic opposition forces that can be found in the civic society and in the political sector; as an economic phenomenon it has to be fought by giving better conditions to entrepreneurs to freely compete; as a criminal phenomenon it has to be fought by empowering police forces and prosecutors. Nevertheless, to produce this synchronous action, a true and consistent will is necessary to break a social and political equilibrium, and this appears to be still lacking in the whole Italian political agenda.

Notes

1 In reference to the Camorra, Felia and Percy Allum's chapter in *Italy Today* provides evidence of its peculiarities among the mafia organizations. From a general perspective, it focuses on the need for us to distinguish among the different organizations which are too often taken as a homogenous totality.
2 According to Malafarina (1978), the first 'code' was found in the 1930s in the village of San Luca by the legendary *carabinieri* marshal Giuseppe Delfino.
3 The Cosa Nostra's cupola is composed of the representatives of the different Sicilian mafia *mandamenti* (a *mandamento* represents a territorial-based cell). It has the function of resolving conflicts inside the organization and giving direction in the managing of criminal affairs among the different mafia families.
4 This is a classical example of the so-called 'industry of protection' (Gambetta 1993).
5 This strategy has something to do with the dynamics of a deviant subculture (see Cohen 1955, Cloward and Ohlin 1960).
6 Among many contributions to that issue, it is worth mentioning Siebert's monograph *Mafia e quotidianità* (Siebert 1996b); here the author focuses on the erosion of democracy in the territories where the mafia has settled (see also Siebert 1996a). The

menace to democratic institutions is not specific of the Italian mafia. In his study on the community of Cape Flats, Standing (2006) points out the 'threat to democracy' coming from criminal governance.
7 See in particular Santino 2001. The author evidences the crucial role played by the relationship between politicians and *mafiosi*, in order to define the characters of the mafioso power. Links between OC and politics are a steady element in order to define criminal strategies all over the world.
8 On 2 February 2009 four people were condemned to life imprisonment for the Fortugno murder. The first stage verdict strengthens the inquiring hypotheses that, at that time, the politician tried to stop the situation of corruption and mafia connivance at Locri's ASL.
9 On this see *Il Sole24ore*, 'Le rotte della 'ndrangheta un anno dopo', 13 August 2008.
10 In September 2008, in the Milan suburbs, a 65,000 m^2 piece of land turned out to be a big dump for industrial dangerous waste. In this area, 178,000 m^3 of toxic waste were deposited from different firms of the Bergamo and Brescia areas which were in service to *'Ndrangheta* men, namely Fortunato Stellitano and Ivan Tenca.
11 These facts have emerged from the investigation on the homicide of Ilaria Alpi, an Italian journalist investigating weapons and toxic waste traffic in Somalia.

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14   Revisiting Naples

Clientelism and organized crime

Felia Allum and Percy Allum

Summary

Naples and the Campania region have always been labelled one of the heartlands of corruption, clientelism and organized crime; all of which polluted the local economy, civil society and politics. The Tangentopoli crisis of 1993–1994 was believed to mark an important turning point: the direct election of Antonio Bassolino as mayor of Naples was intended to introduce a new form of leadership as the premise for the rebirth of the city. Fifteen years on, despite some modest successes, little has really changed. This chapter examines the reasons for this failure: the success of clientelism and organized crime.

> 'S'il y a bien un lieu, une ville où les vautours peuvent être repus c'est bien Naples.'
> Tahar Ben Jelloun, 1992

> 'Le clientele, le avevano tutte, comunisti compresi.'
> Geronimo [P. Cirino Pomicino], 2000

Introduction

In his first public speech as President of the Republic, in June 2006, the Neapolitan Giorgio Napolitano, declared that Naples was experiencing 'the worst days of its history'. However, despite the *Camorra* war of 2004–2006, the situation was no worse, in terms of homicides, than it had been in the 1980s, even if the 'refuse crisis' is responsible for a potentially dramatic public health situation.

This said, the President's *cri du coeur* poses the question: what, if anything, changed during the much-vaunted 'Renaissance of Naples' of the 1990s? This can be analyzed in two, arguably contiguous, areas of activity: political and criminal. In these, the city can be seen to exhibit, perhaps in a more extreme form, processes and activities endemic to other parts of Southern Italy and, indeed, the country as a whole.

In this sense, the Neapolitan situation mirrors aspects, not only of southern politics, but also to some extent, of national politics in the decade of the Second Republic and hence is a major element in understanding the country's