Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino
(Tony Gentile/Laura Ronchi)

PROLOGUE

In 1876, a young member of parliament from Tuscany, Leopoldo Franchetti, traveled to Sicily to report on the strange island that had quickly become the most troubled and recalcitrant part of the newly united Italian state. Franchetti was enchanted by the beauty of Palermo, the majesty of the baroque palaces, the exquisite courtesy and hospitality of the people, the languorous, sunny weather, the exotic palm trees and the intoxicating perfume of the orange and lemon blossoms of the Conca d'Oro's fertile citrus groves.

> Someone who had just arrived might well believe . . . that Sicily was the easiest and most pleasant place in the entire world. But if [the traveler] stays a while, begins to read the newspapers and listens carefully [he wrote], bit by bit everything changes around him. . . . He hears that the guard of that orchard was killed with a rifle shot coming from behind that wall because the owner hired him rather than someone else. . . . Just over there, an owner who wanted to rent his groves as he saw fit heard a bullet whistle past his head in friendly warning and afterwards gave in. Elsewhere, a young man who had dedicated himself to setting up nursery schools in the outskirts of Palermo was shot at . . . because certain people who dominate the common people in that area, feared that, by benefiting the poorer classes, he would

> acquire some of the influence on the population that they wanted to reserve exclusively for themselves. The violence and the murders take the strangest forms. . . . There is a story about a former priest, who became the crime leader in a town near Palermo and administered the last rites to some of his own victims. After a certain number of these stories, the perfume of orange and lemon blossoms starts to smell of corpses.[1]

The perfume of orange and lemon blossoms began to smell of corpses during one of my first trips to Palermo. I went to visit Domenico Signorino, one of the prosecutors who worked on the "maxi-trial" of Palermo—the largest mafia trial in history. Signorino appeared more open and cordial than most prosecutors, especially in Sicily. During a long, pleasant interview, he spoke with great nostalgia and affection about the trial and of his colleagues who had been killed in the war against the mafia. A few days later, I saw Signorino's photograph on the front page of the Palermo newspaper *Giornale di Sicilia* with the headline: "Palermo judge suspected of collusion with the mafia." Two days after that, Judge Signorino took a pistol and shot himself.[2]

It is still not clear whether Judge Signorino was guilty or not. The *mafioso* who accused Signorino has proven a reliable witness and it seems hard to believe that someone with a clear conscience would commit suicide. But the prosecutors who worked with Signorino swear by his innocence, saying that he had a fragile psyche and insisting that the trauma of public humiliation for a person used to universal respect and approbation can be overwhelming. Some also found it highly suspicious that of the five judges accused of collusion only one name, Signorino, had been leaked to the press. Perhaps Signorino was the victim of a cleverly orchestrated maneuver.[3]

People in Sicily were unsure which possible scenario was worse: that a judge entrusted with the most delicate mafia cases had sold himself to the enemy or that an honest man had been destroyed by an occult hand. Some suggested a third possibility, that Signorino was not guilty of outright collusion but that he had committed some impropriety, accepted some favor, met or knew certain people of dubious reputation, which would invariably create an appearance of guilt with which he could not live. We will probably never know. The case was closed with the death of the suspect, taking its place among the infinite mysteries of Palermo.

Sicily is a place where almost nothing is what it seems. A few days after meeting Signorino, I went to interview Palermo's new police chief, who appeared to be an energetic crime fighter, having recently seized the assets of one of the city's main mafia clans. Several months later, he, too, was accused of having taken bribes when he worked in Naples. No one knows what to believe.[4]

Survivors of twenty-five hundred years of foreign invasions and of countless violent and corrupt rulers, Sicilians are a skeptical people. When I asked a Sicilian friend why he didn't trust a local politician with a reputation as an outspoken anti-mafia crusader, he replied: "He's alive, isn't he? If he'd really done anything against the mafia, he'd already be dead."

Death is the only certain truth. It lifts the disguise—if only briefly—from the Pirandellian world of Sicilian politics, where appearance and reality are easily confused and where the face of the mafia may hide behind the respectable mask of lawyer, judge, businessman, priest or politician.

A body found on the sidewalk can reveal secret alliances or conflicts, economic interests or changes in strategy. The notion that only the best investigators are killed is a brutal and often unfair equation for the living: when one Palermo police officer miraculously survived an ambush in which two others died, he was suspected of collusion, a taint that was not removed from his name until the mafia killed him a few years later. The importance of a given prosecutor or politician may not become fully apparent until he is gone.

The moment of truth came for Judge Giovanni Falcone on May 23, 1992, when he, his wife, and three bodyguards were killed by a massive explosion that ripped apart the highway leading from the airport at Punta Raisi to Palermo.

It came just two months later, on July 19, for Falcone's close friend and fellow prosecutor, Paolo Borsellino, and five bodyguards—blown up as Borsellino arrived for a Sunday visit with his mother in downtown Palermo.

In massive popular demonstrations, solemn funeral orations and candlelit processions, the two prosecutors were universally hailed as national heroes, as Cosa Nostra's most implacable and

dangerous enemies—the heart and soul of the Palermo anti-mafia "pool," a small team of magistrates who had taken the war against the mafia further than anyone had ever dared.[5]

Falcone and Borsellino took their place among the city's other martyrs. People in Palermo can tick off the dates of major assassinations as easily as the feast days of Sicily's patron saints: September 25, 1979, Judge Cesare Terranova; January 6, 1980, Piersanti Mattarella, president of the Sicilian Region; August 6, 1980, Judge Gaetano Costa; April 30, 1982, Pio La Torre, head of the Communist Party in Sicily; September 3, 1982, General Alberto Dalla Chiesa, prefect of Palermo; July 29, 1983, chief prosecutor Rocco Chinnici; August 6, 1985, Antonino Cassarà, deputy chief of police.[6]

These are some of the city's "excellent cadavers," a term used in Sicily to distinguish the assassination of prominent government officials from the hundreds of common criminals and ordinary citizens killed in the course of routine mafia business.

But in the spring and summer of 1992, the mafia appeared to have taken a quantum leap forward with a new political/terrorist strategy. In March, Cosa Nostra had interrupted the election of a new parliament by killing an important political figure. Then, in May, as the country was busy trying to select a new president, they killed Falcone. Finally, in July, with a recently formed government trying to enact stiff new anti-mafia provisions and survive a growing government corruption scandal, they killed Borsellino.

The mafia appeared to be sending a message to the government in Rome by killing Italy's two most famous mafia prosecutors, the architects of the maxi-trial of Palermo—arguably the greatest mafia trial in history. Murders are carried out not only to eliminate a dangerous adversary but to make a clear, unequivocal statement when more subtle forms of communication have been ignored. "Everything is a message, everything is full of meaning in the world of Cosa Nostra, no detail is too small to be overlooked," Falcone wrote in an autobiographical memoir he published the year before his death. Because of strict prohibitions against discussing or even acknowledging the existence of Cosa

Nostra, the *mafioso* communicates indirectly through actions, gestures and silences. "The interpretation of signs," Falcone added, "is one of the principal activities of a 'man of honor' and consequently of the mafia-prosecutor."[7]

The meaning of the spectacular murders of Falcone and Borsellino was not immediately clear.

At first glance, their murders seemed an assertion of total invincibility. The mafia was showing that it was prepared to kill anyone—no matter how important or well protected—that the state might send up against it. By killing Falcone in Palermo and not in Rome, where Falcone worked during the last year of his life, Cosa Nostra declared that it and no one else was in charge in Sicily. It would have been easier to kill Falcone in Rome, where he often moved around without bodyguards: by blowing up an entire, bulletproof motorcade on one of the most heavily traveled stretches of highway in Sicily, the mafia made a spectacular demonstration of its complete control of its territory. But underneath the surface of these more obvious messages, more subtle semioticians of Cosa Nostra life saw something quite different. "The mafia is on its last legs," declared Tommaso Buscetta in an interview from his hideaway in the United States, where he is in the witness protection program. "The mafia is not used to these kinds of large-scale public killings. It is used to silence. I think it is fighting for its survival." It was Buscetta—in his capacity as witness—who had taught Falcone to decipher the behavior of the mafia. His interpretation of the Falcone-Borsellino assassinations was greeted with skepticism at the time, but proved remarkably clairvoyant.[8]

The killings stunned the Italian state into its most vigorous anti-mafia campaign in decades. The Italian parliament quickly passed many of the tough anti-mafia measures Falcone and Borsellino had been pushing for years: greater incentives and protection for mafia witnesses, tougher prison conditions for mafia defendants, streamlined procedures in mafia trials. Moreover, it took the extraordinary step of sending 7,000 army troops to Sicily to set up roadblocks, guard judges and politicians, and free up the police to concentrate on investigative work.[9] The results of the next two years were nothing short of revolutionary: several hundred *mafiosi* turned against Cosa Nostra and offered to cooperate with police. The Italian police dismantled entire organizations

overnight and tracked down more than three hundred longtime mafia fugitives, including several of the most powerful bosses, and, in particular, the "capo di tutti i capi" Salvatore (Totò) Riina, who had eluded arrest for twenty-three years.[10]

One of the signs that convinced Tommaso Buscetta that the mafia was in trouble was an earlier and much more puzzling assassination. In March 1992—during a national electoral campaign—*mafiosi* in Palermo killed Salvatore Lima, arguably the most powerful Christian Democratic politician in Sicily and a close friend and ally of then prime minister Giulio Andreotti. The murder was a complete mystery since Lima was one of the politicians rumored to be one of the mafia's closest friends in government.[11]

Buscetta understood that the killings of Falcone and Borsellino were symptoms of a profound crisis within the mafia itself. Lima's killing represented the breakdown of the long-standing alliance between the mafia and certain parts of the Christian Democratic Party. Cosa Nostra was striking at the highest levels of the state because the political world in which the mafia had thrived was coming apart at the seams and was no longer able or willing to continue protecting it.

The new terrorist strategy of Cosa Nostra must be understood in a broad historical context. In 1992, the Italian political class that had "tolerated" mafia power in southern Italy was turned upside down by two parallel scandals: the investigation into massive government corruption known as Operation Clean Hands, and the revelations about political collusion with the mafia that followed the killing of Salvatore Lima. While separate, the two investigations are related. The same system of party patronage that lent itself to massive bribery in northern Italy has been highly porous to mafia infiltration in the south.

The back-to-back assassinations of Falcone and Borsellino mark a pivotal moment in the demise of the political class that ruled Italy from World War II until 1994. As the twin scandals of corruption and mafia collusion progressed, one-third of the national parliament and one-half of the Sicilian parliament came under some form of criminal investigation. The two most powerful figures of Italian political life—the Christian Democrat Andreotti and Socialist leader Bettino Craxi—were driven from the political stage. (Craxi because of the overwhelming evidence of his central role in highly systematic corruption. Andreotti because of mounting charges of mafia collusion.)

"For more than forty years there has been an unwritten law in Italy that corrupt politicians didn't go to jail, *mafiosi* didn't talk and you couldn't have a government without Giulio Andreotti," said Vittorio Foa, who was a member of Italy's first postwar parliament and retired from the senate in 1992. "Now we have a government without Andreotti, corrupt politicians are going to jail and *mafiosi* are talking."[12]

The radical change in Italy's political climate is due in good part to larger international developments. Perhaps more than any country in Western Europe, Italy has been dominated by the politics of the Cold War. With the largest Communist Party of any democratic country, its political life was polarized between the two opposing forces of the Christian Democrats and the Communists. "Because of the presence of a large Communist Party, the Christian Democratic Party remained in government for forty-seven years," said Pietro Scoppola, a professor of political science at the University of Rome and a Catholic scholar close to the Christian Democratic Party. "The normal alternation of governments in Italy was impossible. The DC [Democrazia Cristiana] was forced to use its power to consolidate its electoral position, through patronage. And the passage from patronage to corruption and from corruption to mafia is a quick one."[13]

Until very recently, Italian voters tended to consider corruption and complicity lesser evils compared to a government headed by the Communists. "Hold your nose and vote Christian Democrat," conservative editor Indro Montanelli advised his readers in the mid-1970s when the Communists were on the verge of overtaking the Christian Democrats as Italy's largest party.[14] But with the evaporation of the Communist threat, the stench of corruption suddenly became intolerable. Almost overnight, a nation that preferred to ignore corruption began pursuing it with the zeal of the recent convert. Crowds cheered as once-untouchable party chieftains were dragged off to jail. The traditional parties hemorrhaged votes and fought for their survival. "Either we change or we die," Vincenzo Scotti, a senior Christian Democrat leader, said. That the Christian Democrats' power depended on the presence of the

Communist threat was made clear when the party collapsed and was forced to change its name just two years after the Italian Communist Party did so in 1991.[15]

Until the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the U.S. government was also keenly interested in keeping the Christian Democrats in power and the Communists out. In the 1940s and 1950s, the CIA funded the Christian Democrats, just as the Russians funded the Italian Communist Party. And during the late 1970s the U.S. government openly stated its opposition to Communist participation in the government. U.S. policy has been schizophrenic. American law enforcement officials have worked closely and effectively with prosecutors like Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino, creating a model of international cooperation. At the same time, however, the United States' closest political allies continued to be many of the same politicians suspected of being in league with the mafia. It is one of the unfortunate accidents of history that many of the mafia's bravest opponents locally were in the wrong camp internationally. Pio La Torre (the head of the Communist Party in Sicily who was killed by the mafia in 1982) led both the fight for tougher anti-mafia legislation and the campaign to keep NATO cruise missiles out of Comiso, Sicily. The installation of the cruise missiles was the greatest priority of Reagan administration policy in Italy, and some consider it the turning point that convinced the Soviets to abandon the arms race and begin glasnost. For such a price, the United States was more than prepared to overlook the unsavory associations of some of its closest friends.

Despite the astonishing level of corruption, during the last forty-five years Italy has enjoyed its greatest period of peace and prosperity since the time of the Roman Empire. Never before have so many Italians experienced such a widely distributed level of well-being. Even in the south, problems like hunger, malaria and illiteracy have been virtually eliminated. But these achievements have come at a very high price: the region has come under the near-total domination of the mafia.

The extent of mafia control of daily life in Sicily is something that people outside of Italy cannot quite fathom. The American mafia is a parasitic phenomenon operating at the margins of society. In southern Italy it plays a central role in almost every phase of economic and political life. There are still many places in Sicily

where people are forced to buy their water from private wells owned by the mafia—an almost feudal situation.

For many years, most people underestimated the power of the mafia, considering it a primitive, archaic organization that would gradually disappear as Italy modernized and the economic level of Sicily approached that of the rest of Italy. Instead, the mafia has proved an extremely vigorous and mutable virus that has adapted itself in almost perfect symbiosis with the modern Italian welfare state. Political parties in Italy control almost every aspect of economic life, running vast industries and divvying up hundreds of thousands of jobs from the mightiest bank president to the lowliest street sweeper. As the parties expanded their sphere of influence, government spending came to occupy 52 percent of the gross national product. In southern Italy, where the figure is an incredible 70 percent, political clout is the key to wealth and power.[16] "In Sicily the mafia controls all public contracts," a recent report of the parliament's anti-mafia commission declares starkly. "In my area, you can't move a pin without Cosa Nostra," Leonardo Messina, a former *mafioso* from the town of San Cataldo, Sicily, recently told the commission, barely able to hide his residual pride.[17] To create electoral consensus, the government funded pharaonic and often useless building projects—superhighways leading to nowhere, dams without water, seaports without ships, factories that never opened. These projects created jobs, enriched a series of unscrupulous entrepreneurs and provided a perfect vehicle for mafia infiltration.

Forty-five years of mafia-influenced government in southern Italy have transformed the countryside and cities. They almost all share a common physiognomy in the helter-skelter collection of cheap, cement-box buildings that clutter the skyline; in the filth of the streets and lack of basic services. Pork barrel politics have made Italy the world's largest per capita consumer of cement, and yet much of southern Italy still has a substandard infrastructure. Many of Sicily's most beautiful beaches have been covered over with cement, but the highway between Palermo and Messina—under discussion for thirty years—remains incomplete.

Artistic and archaeological sites that are among the most important and beautiful in all of Europe have been degraded almost beyond recognition. Some six hundred illegal buildings crowd the

archaeological area around the magnificent Greek temples at Agrigento—to the benefit of highly suspect economic interests.[18] And although they are in direct violation of strict zoning laws, no one has had the courage to order their demolition. In any other European country, the sumptuous aristocratic villas and parks of Bagheria (outside Palermo) would be a mecca for tourists from around the world. Instead, the corrupt and mafia-infested town administration has reduced it to a squalid slum; illegally constructed concrete buildings surround the villas, while many of the architectural monuments have fallen into decay through looting and neglect.[19]

In many places, democracy as we know it has ceased to exist. In 1992 and 1993, the Italian Ministry of the Interior dissolved the elected governments of more than seventy towns and cities because their city councils were found to have been polluted by the mafia. For several years, the town of Platì in Calabria had no city council whatsoever because people were too afraid to run for office or to vote. In other places, politicians negotiate to buy packets of votes from organized crime bosses.[20]

The maintenance of this extraordinary degree of social and economic control requires the constant threat of violence. An estimated ten thousand people were killed by organized crime in southern Italy during the 1980s—three times as many as have died in twenty-five years of guerrilla warfare in Northern Ireland.[21]

Sicily, as the great novelist Leonardo Sciascia said, is a metaphor.[22] Because of its violence and extremity, Sicily contains in highly concentrated doses and highly dramatic form Italy's virtues and vices. Honor, friendship and family can take the form of great dignity, warmth and hospitality or become perverted by mafia culture. The mafia allegiance to the clan is an exaggerated form of a national disease that sociologists have called "amoral familism." Because of hundreds of years in separate states and principalities, most Italians identify to a greater degree with their region, town, neighborhood and family than with the national government. Italy is an extremely young nation, just over 120 years old, in which identification with the abstract concepts of state, law and the public good have been slow to take root. Personal relations are fundamental in Italian life. The length to which many Italians will go for their friends and relatives is extraordinary. The willingness

of most Italians to discard bureaucratic rules and look at each situation in strictly human terms is often highly appealing. But it also lends itself to the current patronage system. A cumbersome bureaucratic process that might normally take months of paperwork is resolved in minutes by a friend in the right place. Getting a telephone installed or a hospital bed in timely fashion can often be accomplished only with the right connections. Jobs are reserved for *raccomandati* (those with the right recommendations). Public offices of all kinds—from the heads of museums and theaters to the local garbage collector—are treated like the private fiefdoms of Italy's political parties. Because so many things are decided by connections, most Italians seek the protection of some "clan," a political party or a faction within a party, a religious organization, social club or a secret society such as the Freemasonry or the mafia. The war against the mafia in Sicily is not a local problem of law and order, but, as Leopoldo Franchetti understood in 1876, the struggle for national unity and democracy in Italy.

ONE

The history of the mafia and of the modern Italian state begin together. Soon after Garibaldi and the troops from the northern region of Piedmont invaded Sicily in 1860 and united it with the rest of the new Italian nation, they encountered the problem of rampant crime. In the chaos that followed the war of unification, bandits terrorized the countryside, murdering government troops, while criminal bands tried to control the sale and renting of land, placing their own men as guards on the lush gardens and groves in and around Palermo. The northern Italians were struck by the Sicilians' refusal to cooperate with the new government, the stubborn silence of even innocent victims, their tendency to take justice into their own hands. The word "mafia" entered the Italian vocabulary at this time to describe the peculiarly tenacious kind of organized crime the northern Italians found deeply embedded in Sicilian life.[1]

Unlike bandits or common thieves who live outside respectable society, most *mafiosi* continued to work at regular jobs, using force or the intimidating power of the organization to extort advantage from others. Many of the early *mafiosi* were armed guards or administrators who ran Sicily's great rural estates for their absentee landlords in Palermo. Traditionally, the *mafioso* put himself in the role of intermediary, keeping the peasants in

line and guaranteeing that the harvest would be brought in, while using his control of the land to extract concessions from the landlord. In a place where government has never been particularly effective or well liked, mafia groups usurped many of the functions of the state—administering justice, settling disputes and dividing up resources. Although *mafiosi* have often cultivated the image of being modern-day Robin Hoods who rob the rich and give to the poor, they have always been dedicated to the task of self-enrichment, never hesitating to use violence and murder in defense of their own interests.

Centuries of corrupt and brutal government by foreign conquerors taught most Sicilians to regard government with suspicion and hostility. Justice was frequently administered not by rule of law but by the private armies of Sicily's feudal landlords. The mafia draws on a code of behavior—the refusal to cooperate with police authorities, the preference for private rather than public justice, even the practice of extortion—that can be traced back centuries. While it has its cultural roots in feudal Sicilian life, the mafia, as a form of organized crime, appears to be a product of modernity, of the new freedom and opportunity of unified Italy. There was little room for organized crime in the highly static world of feudalism, where the landowners had a virtual monopoly of both economic resources and the use of violence. The breakup of the great feudal estates and the expansion of trade opened up possibilities for the lower classes to participate in the confused grab for wealth that followed unification. With no tradition of law or public administration to fall back on, violence or the threat of violence became the easiest way to gain a leg up on the competition. As Paolo Borsellino once observed: "The desire to prevail over the competition, combined with a lack of a credible state, cannot bring about a normal marketplace: the common practice is not to do better than your rivals but to do them in."[2]

Crime in Sicily reached such epidemic proportions that in 1874 it became the subject of an enormous national debate. The conservative government proposed emergency police measures to regain control of the island, which prompted Leopoldo Franchetti's trip to Sicily two years later. In the end, the question brought down the government and brought the Left to power for the first time in Italian history. Public order in Sicily was restored through a typi-

cally Italian compromise between mafia and government that set the pattern for the future. The mafia helped police track down and arrest the bandits who were the most obvious threat to public security, and in exchange the government allowed the mafia to continue its own more subtle form of economic crime. This ability to co-opt and corrupt public authority has characterized the mafia from its beginning and has guaranteed its impunity for more than 130 years of history. The advent of democracy and the expansion of voting rights gave organized crime new opportunities to acquire political influence. By controlling substantial blocks of votes, mafia groups helped elect politicians who, in turn, helped them.

Even in Franchetti's day, the disastrous consequences of this compromise were evident. "Italy, annexing Sicily, has assumed a grave responsibility," he wrote. "The Italian government has the obligation to give peace to that population and to teach it the meaning of the law, and to sacrifice any private or political interest toward that aim. Instead we see Italian ministers of every party setting the example by engaging in those 'interested transactions' that are the ruin of Sicily, by recognizing and negotiating with those local powers they ought to try to destroy in order to get their help at election time. The chief of police in order to obey his superiors ends up imitating them and thus forgets the purpose of his mission. . . . While the *carabinieri* [Italian military police] and army soldiers are marching up hill and down dale under the rain and snow, the chief brigand is passing the winter peacefully in Palermo—and not always hidden. . . . People scheduled to be arrested are warned even before the warrants have been signed and the troops who come to arrest them find them gone three or four days earlier."[3]

It was not until Mussolini's fascist regime that a first serious, if bloody, attempt to suppress the mafia was made. Between 1924 and 1929, Mussolini's "Iron Prefect," Cesare Mori, conducted mass arrests, surrounded and besieged entire towns, took hostages and destroyed property and livestock in order to track down suspected criminals. To some extent, the campaign was a success: according to government figures homicides in the province of Palermo dropped from 278 to only 25 in 1928. Grateful landowners wrote letters to Mori in which they reported that after being "freed" from the mafia the value of their land had skyrocketed,

with rents doubling, tripling and in some instances increasing by 1,500 percent.[4] But if he appeared to reduce criminal activity, Mori did little to cut the social roots of the mafia. His campaign of terror, by using brutal and illegal tactics and indiscriminately arresting hundreds of innocent people along with the guilty, turned *mafiosi* into persecuted victims who enjoyed popular sympathy. The fact that the regime also used the operation to eliminate some of its own political opponents further undermined its credibility. Moreover, as the rent figures show, the chief beneficiaries appear to have been the landowners. By contrast, agricultural wages dropped by some 28 percent during the late 1920s and early 1930s. The Fascists appeared not so much to have eliminated the *mafiosi* as to have replaced them by acting as the new enforcers for the Sicilian landowning class. After Mussolini recalled Mori in 1929, saying his mission had been completed, the regime had to pretend that the mafia no longer existed and ignored signs that the *mafiosi* were cautiously coming back out of the woodwork.[5]

With the fall of fascism and the liberation of Sicily by Allied troops during World War II, the mafia was ready to emerge in full force. There is a widespread belief in Italy that the Allied landing was prepared with help from the mafia, which was then rewarded with important positions of power. According to this theory, the American government contacted the Sicilian-American gangster Lucky Luciano, who enlisted the cooperation of his Sicilian counterparts to pave the way for a rapid Allied victory.

While colorful (and politically useful), the story appears to have little basis in fact. But, as with many legends, there is a grain of truth. Naval Intelligence did contact Lucky Luciano for information about German saboteurs in the docks of New York. But Luciano, who had left Italy as a boy, denied any role in the Sicilian landing: "At home, I didn't have any contacts," he said.[6] After the war, either as a quid pro quo or as an expedient attempt to rid themselves of known criminals, the United States deported Luciano and some forty other American *mafiosi* back to Italy—where they used their American experience to help modernize organized crime.[7]

The Allied occupation undeniably gave new oxygen to the mafia. Anxious to exclude both Communists and Fascists from power, the occupying Anglo-American army—whether knowingly or un-

knowingly—installed several prominent *mafiosi* as mayors of their towns. (An Italian-American *mafioso*, Vito Genovese, managed to become interpreter for the American governor of Sicily, Colonel Charles Poletti, during the six months of military occupation.)[8] Criminal elements succeeded in infiltrating the Allied administration, often with the help of Italian-American soldiers. They managed to smuggle supplies from military warehouses and ran a flourishing black market in such scarce commodities as food, tobacco, shoes and clothing. While this black market trade may have involved the corruption of low- and middle-level officials, there is nothing to suggest that it was part of a strategy conceived in Washington. The Pentagon and the Roosevelt administration, in fact, registered their alarm about the situation in Sicily. As in the period after the Italian battle of unification, the aftermath of World War II was a time of chaotic freedom and economic expansion which the mafia exploited ably.

Determined to avoid the persecution it had suffered under fascism, the mafia made a concerted effort to assure itself political protection in the new postwar order. At first, many *mafiosi* backed the new movement of Sicilian separatism, helping to organize its small guerrilla army. But when the cause of separatism faded and other parties, such as the Christian Democratic Party, emerged, mafia bosses shifted their allegiances. With the Italian Left seemingly on the brink of power, the new parties accepted mafia support as a bulwark against communism.

Between 1945 and 1955, forty-three Socialists or Communists were murdered in Sicily, often at election time. On April 20, 1947, the united Left (Communists and Socialists) won an impressive 30 percent of the vote in Sicily against the 21 percent of the Christian Democratic Party. Ten days later, when Communist farmers of Portella della Ginestra gathered to celebrate May Day and their electoral victory, the criminal band of Salvatore Giuliano opened fire on the crowd, killing eleven people.[9]

The killings took place in the new chill of the Cold War. That year, the United States announced the Truman Doctrine, stating its commitment to fight Communist expansion throughout the world. Indeed, on the day of the massacre of Portella della Ginestra, Secretary of State George Marshall sent a telegram to the U.S. ambassador in Rome, expressing alarm over the rise of the Communists (especially in Sicily) and the need to adopt new measures to reinforce anti-Communist, pro-American elements. Until that time, the Communists (along with all other anti-fascist parties) had participated as equal partners in the government with the Christian Democrats—an arrangement of which (as Marshall's telegram makes clear) the United States strongly disapproved. As a result of this pressure, the Christian Democrats kicked the Communists out of the government. With the fate of democratic Europe at stake, and Stalin swallowing up entire nations whole, the excesses of local thugs in rural Sicily seemed a minor problem.[10]

The decision to enlist the mafia's help in Sicily was a quite conscious one, as one of the founders of the Sicilian Christian Democratic Party, Giuseppe Alessi, acknowledged openly many years later. While personally opposing this local pact with the devil, Alessi was outvoted by others who viewed it as a practical necessity. " 'The Communists use similar kinds of violence against us, preventing us from carrying out public rallies. We need the protection of strong men to stop the violence of the Communists,' " Alessi quoted one of his colleagues as saying. "I was in the minority and the 'group' entered en masse and took over the party." (Despite his dissent, Alessi shared a rather rosy view of the "honored society" prevalent at that time: "It was another kind of mafia, not the kind of violent organized crime we see today," he said.)[11]

"The DC decided to accept the mafia's support to reinforce itself in the struggle against communism," said historian Francesco Renda. "If one doesn't understand this, it's impossible to understand everything that happens afterwards. The people who made this choice were not criminals, nor were they joining with low-level criminals. They were allying themselves with a force that had historically played this role in Sicily. All this was justified in the name of the Cold War. The mafia was ennobled by being given the role of the military arm of a major political force, something it had never had in the past. Naturally, the mafia then drew on the power of the government and became not only a political and social force but an economic force and that's when the real adventure began."[12]

The perpetrators of the Portella della Ginestra massacre, Salvatore Giuliano and his criminal band, roamed freely around the Sicilian countryside for seven years, giving newspaper interviews,

meeting with politicians and even the chief prosecutor of Palermo. "The only people unable to find Giuliano were the police," declared a court sentence issued several years later. In 1950, when his presence had become a national embarrassment, the mafia helped wipe out Giuliano's band, presenting the bandit's corpse to police. "Bandits, police and mafia are one and the same, like Father, Son and Holy Ghost," said Gaspare Pisciotta, Giuliano's cousin, whose betrayal was key in the outlaw's final capture and death. Shortly after his trial in 1954, Pisciotta was himself mysteriously poisoned in Palermo's Ucciardone prison when someone put strychnine in his coffee.[13]

The mafia's valuable role as intermediary in capturing Giuliano and other bandits was openly praised by Italian judges of the period. In 1955, Giuseppe Guido Lo Schiavo, a member of Italy's highest court, wrote an outright defense of the mafia: "People say the mafia does not respect the police and the judiciary: it's untrue. The mafia has always respected the judiciary and Justice, has bowed before its sentences and has not interfered with the magistrate's work. In the persecution of bandits and outlaws . . . it has actually joined together with the police."[14]

Well-known mafia bosses with lengthy criminal records were all accorded places of honor in the Christian Democratic Party. And it was not uncommon for prominent politicians to appear as honored guests at the christenings, weddings and funerals of major mafia figures. In Sicily, being known as a friend of a *mafioso* was not a sign of shame but of power.

Mafia bosses could move blocks of votes and the politicians turned to them at election time, as is clear from a letter written in 1951 by a Sicilian member of parliament, Giovanni Palazzolo, of the Liberal Party, to the mafia boss of Partinico.

Dearest Don Ciccio,

The last time we saw one another at the Hotel delle Palme (in Palermo) you told me quite correctly that we needed a bright young member of the Regional Parliament from Partinico who was a friend and would be accessible to our friends. My friend Totò Motisi has all these requisites and I have decided to help him with all my strength. If you help me in Partinico we will make him a member of parliament.[15]

The letter's recipient was Francesco Coppola, known as Frankie "Three Fingers" Coppola in the United States, where he had served a long prison sentence until he was freed and deported to Italy along with Lucky Luciano after the war.

In the 1950s, after land reform helped break up the last great feudal estates (a process that the mafia worked to its own benefit), agriculture in Sicily diminished in importance and hundreds of thousands of unemployed peasants emptied the countryside for the growing cities. Many headed for Palermo, the new capital of the Sicilian region. In order to undercut the separatist movement, the government in Rome had granted Sicily special autonomy, including the right to have its own parliament and regional government in Palermo. While failing to fulfill the promise of greater self-determination and dignity for the Sicilian population, the new arrangement provided an extra layer of bureaucracy, thousands of jobs to be distributed to political cronies, and control over millions of dollars in government funds with seemingly limitless possibilities for corruption and patronage. So much so that many Sicilians referred to their regional representatives simply as *i novanta ladroni,* "the ninety thieves," there being ninety seats in the local parliament.[16]

With the flow of both people and money toward the new regional capital, the city experienced a massive building boom known as "the Sack of Palermo." Real estate developers ran wild, pushing the center of the city out along Viale della Libertà toward the new airport at Punta Raisi. With hastily drafted zoning variances or in wanton violation of the law, builders tore down countless Art Deco palaces and asphalted many of the city's finest parks, transforming one of the most beautiful cities in Europe into a thick, unsightly forest of cement condominia.

Developers with close mafia ties were not afraid to use strong-arm tactics to intimidate owners into selling or to clear the way for their projects. One of the most important buildings of the great Sicilian architect Ernesto Basile was razed to the ground in the middle of the night, hours before it would have come under protection of the historic preservation laws. In the period from 1959 to 1964, when Salvatore Lima and Vito Ciancimino were, respectively, mayor and commissioner for public works, an incredible 2,500 of the 4,000 building licenses issued in the city of

Palermo went to three individuals whom the Italian parliament's anti-mafia commission has described as "retired persons, of modest means, none with any experience in the building trade, and who, evidently, simply lent their names to the real builders."[17]

The expansion of the new city was accompanied by the gradual abandonment and decay of the old. Already damaged by bombs during World War II, the center of Palermo was gradually reduced to a wretched slum, through a deliberate policy of neglect. There was little money to be made in the old center because of zoning restrictions: throwing up cheap high-rise apartments was much more lucrative than patiently restoring seventeenth- and eighteenth-century structures. Many areas were left for months or years without gas, electricity or hot water, forcing residents to move out into the new housing projects. Even neighborhoods that had not been bombed during the war began to look as if they had been. Palermo gained the distinction of not only having a Department of Housing, but a department of *edilizia pericolante* or "collapsing housing"—a disgrace that continues to this day.

The residents of the city center dropped from 125,481 to 38,960 between 1951 and 1981—a period in which the population of Palermo as a whole nearly doubled.[18] Many of the great monuments of Palermo—the onion-domed Arab mosques-turned-Christian churches, the Norman palaces, the Renaissance fountains and baroque churches—stand next to empty, rubble-strewn lots or abandoned buildings with broken windows. Those who remained behind were generally the city's poorest and most wretched, prepared to put up with Third World conditions not unlike those of the bidonvilles of Cairo or Rio de Janeiro.

The story of mafia power in Palermo can be told in terms of real estate—block by block and building by building—a legacy that is reflected both in the cheap construction and infernal congestion of the "new" city and the total degradation of the old. The changes it wrought were so fundamental that almost no one was immune. The Falcone and Borsellino families were no exception.

Born respectively in 1939 and 1940, Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino grew up during this period of transformation only a few blocks apart in an old, dilapidated neighborhood of

Palermo near the seaport known as La Kalsa. For centuries the area had been one of the most elegant in the city. In the eighteenth century, the poet Goethe admired the striking axial views created by Palermo's criss-crossing avenues, along which the city's aristocracy rode in carriages for the daily *passeggio* in order to see and be seen.[19] The Falcones lived on Via Castrofilippo, in a house once inhabited by a city mayor, Falcone's great-uncle. Paolo Borsellino and his family lived nearby on Via della Vetriera, next to the family pharmacy. As boys, Falcone and Borsellino played soccer together in Piazza Magione. The neighborhood had come down a bit since Goethe's time, but it had retained some of its elegance, and remained a healthy mix of professionals and day laborers, aristocrats and fishermen, businessmen and beggars.[20]

The Borsellinos' house on Via della Vetriera was declared unsafe and the family was forced to move out in 1956. The family pharmacy (run at the time by Paolo's mother and now by his sister, Rita, and her husband) remained, while the neighborhood crumbled around it. Homeless squatters occupied their old building and, forced to live without light or heat, partially destroyed it in a fire. During the sack of Palermo, the Falcones' own house was earmarked for demolition to make way for a road. Falcone and the rest of his family haunted the offices of various city officials, carrying photographs of the palace's frescoed ceilings in hopes of convincing them of the building's historic and artistic value. The building was destroyed in 1959, although the road it was supposed to make room for was never built—a testament to the blind and irrational urban planning of the period. Both families had little choice but to join the exodus to the anonymous dormitory community on what had been the outskirts of town.

It is probably not an accident that the two prosecutors who wound up together on the front line against the mafia came from Palermo's small but solid professional middle class. Falcone's father was a chemist, Borsellino's a pharmacist. The middle class—in Sicily as in the rest of Italy—was perhaps also the part of Sicilian society that had been the most receptive to the values of patriotism and nationalism promoted by the new Italian state and emphasized even more energetically during fascism. "Our family was very religious and very attentive to the idea of civic duty," said Maria Falcone. "We grew up in the cult of the Fatherland.

Mamma's brother died at age eighteen in the First World War, falsifying his birth certificate so he could volunteer for the army at age seventeen. My father's brother died at age twenty-four, as a career air force official. Hearing about these relatives as children developed in us, and in Giovanni, a love of country above all. 'They served the Nation!' my father would say with reverence."

The family went to church every Sunday and, for a time, Giovanni served as an altar boy. Giovanni's mother showed few outward signs of affection but communicated a very Sicilian idea of manhood: "She would often repeat to him that boys never cry, because she wanted him to grow up to be a strong man," Maria said. Giovanni's father was more affectionate but remained the stern patriarch typical of the fathers of that period. "He taught us to work and to do our duty," Falcone once said. "He was a man of strong moral principle, serious, honest, extremely attached to the family. . . . He slapped me only once during my childhood. It was during wartime when I broke a bottle of oil. Someone who didn't live through those times wouldn't understand. A bottle of olive oil at that time was a treasure. My family was not rich, we lived on a modest state salary." In this somewhat austere, frugal household, Falcone's father was proud of the fact that he had never treated himself to a coffee at a café.[21]

Falcone's parents were not politically active. "They had a rather uncritical view of fascism, they were loyal, law-abiding citizens," said Maria Falcone. As a boy he had been infatuated with a phrase of the Italian patriot Giuseppe Mazzini, "Life is a mission and duty is its highest law." In fact, Falcone considered a career in the military, spending one year at the Italian naval academy, before returning to the University of Palermo to study law.

At the university, Falcone drifted away from his family's Catholicism and became interested in communism. "Our studies—particularly with Giovanni and me—brought us to a decidedly critical attitude toward fascism, as with any form of absolutism," said Maria Falcone. The Italian Communist Party, while not breaking with the Soviet Union, had long distinguished itself as the most independent and democratic Communist Party in the West. Falcone never became a party member.

Paolo Borsellino grew up with the same "cult of the Fatherland." He, too, had two uncles who had served in the army. Although they had not been killed, both had been taken prisoner in Africa during the Second World War. Both had worked for years in the Italian colonies in Africa during fascism and had moved back to Palermo after the war. Because his father had died when Paolo Borsellino was only twenty-two, his uncles assumed a more important role in his life. One of them, Francesco (Zio Ciccio), lived with the Borsellinos for many years. "When these uncles talked about their experiences in Africa he fell under the spell of these stories," says his sister, Rita. In fact, to the end of his life, Paolo Borsellino's study in Palermo was full of African masks and artifacts brought back from Somalia by his uncle. "Paolo had this great thirst for learning; completely on his own initiative he went to city hall to trace the origins of our family," says his mother, Maria Pia Lepanto Borsellino. He also made a very elaborate and carefully designed family tree of Italy's royal family, the Savoy. This would not have been unusual twenty years earlier, but by the time Paolo Borsellino was growing up, Italy had abolished the monarchy and the Savoy were living in exile, compromised by the fascist regime. But he was named Paolo Emanuele Borsellino, after King Vittorio Emanuele, and was born in 1940, when the Savoy family still held the Italian throne. "He was passionately interested in history, he wanted to know about fascism, he joked about being a supporter of the Bourbons [the Spanish monarchy that ruled Sicily and southern Italy before Italian unification]," his sister, Rita, said.

When Borsellino was at the University of Palermo, he joined a neo-fascist student group. While this fact became the source of some scandal in later years, fascism in the Sicilian context had a specific meaning: for better or worse, the fascist regime was the only Italian government that had made a serious effort to wipe out the mafia. In a land where the rule of law has generally been feeble or nonexistent, Borsellino dreamed of a State with a capital "S." In fact, mafia witnesses have testified repeatedly that the two parties they were strictly forbidden to support were the Fascists and the Communists. So that while starting at opposite ends of the political spectrum, Falcone and Borsellino were attracted by the two political forces that seemed the most uncompromising toward what was worst in Sicilian life.

Growing up, both Borsellino and Falcone had direct experience of the mafia. Borsellino often recalled envying a schoolmate of his

At the time, a general Pax Mafiosa reigned in the city. There had been virtually no major mafia killings in recent years, which led some people (in good faith as well as bad) to declare that the mafia no longer existed. There had been no major mafia prosecutions in several years. The mafia war of the early 1960s had led to the parliament's anti-mafia commission and to a series of massive mafia trials mounted by the Palermo magistrate Cesare Terranova. While Terranova had correctly identified all the major bosses of the Sicilian mafia, the cases all ended in disastrous failure. The culture of *omertà* (silence) and the intimidation of witnesses and judges were so great that the government's cases rarely held up in court.

Many preeminent scholars at the time insisted that the mafia, if it existed, was not an organization but an anthropological phenomenon, a set of values and attitudes common in Sicily.[24] The stories of initiation rites, highly structured mafia "families," with *capi* (bosses) and *consiglieri* (counselors)—were nothing more than the fantasy of Hollywood and the sensationalist press, they said. More attentive observers noted that the relative calm indicated something quite different, a harmony among the city's mafia clans that meant that they were going happily about their business with little or no opposition.

In fact, all the men whom the anti-mafia commission had denounced as the pillars of the mafia system in Palermo were still in place. Vito Ciancimino—the former barber of Corleone—continued to pull the strings at Palermo city hall. All of the important municipal contracts continued to be steered to Count Arturo Cassina, accused of subcontracting out much of the work to mafia firms. The island's taxes were collected by the private monopoly of the Salvo family, long suspected by police of being *mafiosi* themselves. Salvatore Lima, the mayor who presided over the Sack of Palermo, was now a member of parliament, and his political mentor, Giulio Andreotti, was prime minister, thus placing Lima at the center of power in Rome.

Despite the apparent calm, a small number of police officials and prosecutors knew that all was not what it seemed. Deputy police chief Boris Giuliano had begun to notice suitcases full of drugs and money moving back and forth between Palermo and New York. Rather than disappearing, mafia business was booming as

never before. Moreover, a series of mysterious kidnappings, murders and disappearances taking place in the Sicilian countryside indicated indecipherable rumblings within the obscure world of Cosa Nostra.

Meanwhile, the rest of the country was preoccupied with what seemed like much more pressing and more important problems—the right to divorce and abortion, terrorism, the rise of the Italian Communist Party, Italy's place in the international struggle between East and West. From the mid-1970s forward the headlines of the daily papers were dominated by terrorist bombings, kneecappings and killings. The Italian Communist Party had gained 34.5 percent of the national vote, just a point less than the ruling Christian Democratic Party and the two had begun to share government power in an arrangement known as "the historic compromise." In March 1978, the Red Brigades kidnapped former prime minister Aldo Moro, one of the architects of the new alliance between Christian Democrats and Communists.[25]

Throughout that spring, the nation was so caught up with the Moro kidnapping that it barely noticed when the mafia peace was briefly interrupted on the morning of May 30, and a group of killers murdered Giuseppe Di Cristina, the boss of Riesi, a town in eastern Sicily. Although the crime was committed in broad daylight on a crowded Palermo street, there were no witnesses. There were, however, a few intriguing clues. In Di Cristina's pocket, police found a $6,000 check from Salvatore Inzerillo, the mafia boss in whose territory Di Cristina had been killed, and the private telephone numbers of Nino and Ignazio Salvo, the fabulously wealthy Christian Democrat businessmen who had the concession to operate Sicily's private tax collection system.[26]

Although his case was ignored, Di Cristina had left investigators a gold mine of valuable information. Only a few days before his death, Di Cristina held a secret meeting with police in a deserted farmhouse in order to tell them of his imminent assassination, identify his potential killers and alert police to the scourge that was about to afflict both the mafia and Sicily during the coming years. Di Cristina provided police with a rare view inside the closed world of Cosa Nostra at its highest levels. He described a widening split between the traditional, "moderate" mafia and the crude and violent interlopers from the town of Corleone and their

allies. The Corleonese mafia—under the leadership of Luciano Leggio in the 1960s—had distinguished itself for its homicidal ferocity. Leggio—an ignorant former field guard—had grown into a charismatic mafia leader by showing his ruthless determination to eliminate anyone who stood in his way, often with his own hands and the long knife he carried with him. After Leggio's arrest in 1974, his place was taken by two of his lieutenants, who gave nothing away, in ruthlessness, to their boss. "Salvatore Riina and Bernardo Provenzano, nicknamed 'the beasts' because of their ferocity, are the most dangerous men that Luciano Leggio has at his disposal," Di Cristina told police. "They are personally responsible for at least forty murders each. . . ." Most dangerous of all, he added, was Salvatore Riina, "because [he is] more intelligent" than Provenzano. While the "traditional" mafia, represented by Palermo bosses such as Stefano Bontate, Gaetano Badalamenti, Salvatore Inzerillo and Di Cristina himself—favored a conciliatory attitude toward public officials, the Corleonesi preferred confrontation and violent intimidation. Against the wishes of the mafia's governing body, the Commission, the Corleonesi had murdered retired police colonel Giuseppe Russo, a tenacious investigator. They had carried out a series of kidnappings in Sicily—a practice the rest of the mafia frowned on.[27]

At the end of this secret confession, Di Cristina acknowledged that his life was in imminent danger: "In the next week, I'm expecting a bulletproof car some friends are sending me. It costs about 30 million lire [nearly $40,000 at the time]. You know, Captain, I have many venial sins to my credit and a few mortal ones, as well."

None of Di Cristina's warnings were heeded. Just as he had predicted, the investigation into his own murder concentrated on the better-known members of the "traditional" mafia. Police issued an arrest warrant for Di Cristina's friend and ally, Salvatore Inzerillo, on whose territory Di Cristina had been killed—falling into the trap Salvatore Riina had prepared.

The military offensive of the Corleonesi that Di Cristina predicted came, tragically, to pass. On July 21, 1979, mafia killers gunned down Boris Giuliano, the vigilant police officer who had shown too much interest in the suitcases traveling between Palermo and New York. In September, the Corleonesi made good

on their threat to kill Cesare Terranova, the member of the parliament's anti-mafia commission who had returned to take over the investigative office of the Palermo Palace of Justice. And just four months later, on January 6, 1980, they murdered Piersanti Mattarella, the president of the Region of Sicily, the most important Christian Democrat politician on the island, because he had tried to clean up the lucrative market of government contracts, heavily polluted by mafia interests. The season of excellent cadavers had begun. The emerging new mafia was sending a clear message that anyone who dared stand up to Cosa Nostra—even the president of the Region—would meet with instant death.[28]

During this period, Falcone was given the opportunity to move from the bankruptcy court to join his friend Borsellino at the investigative office, the Ufficio Istruzione of Palermo. (At that time, there were two distinct prosecutors' offices within the Italian judicial system: the Procura della Repubblica initiated criminal proceedings against a defendant, then passed the case on to the Ufficio Istruzione to be investigated and prepared for trial. The Procura della Repubblica would then review the evidence and present the case in court.) The investigative office was run by a tough Communist prosecutor, Rocco Chinnici, who was determined to pursue the strong anti-mafia stand promised by his predecessor, Cesare Terranova, who had been murdered before he could even take office.

On the night of May 5, 1980, three mafia killers shot and killed police captain Emanuele Basile, who had taken up the drug investigations of Boris Giuliano. The following day, Palermo police ordered the arrest of some fifty-five members of three different mafia families in Palermo, the Inzerillo, the Spatola and the Di Maggio, accused of running a massive international heroin ring together with the Gambino crime family in New York. The arrests constituted one of the biggest anti-mafia operations in more than a decade. The case quickly became mired in controversy. The two assistant prosecutors to whom the case had been assigned in the Procura della Repubblica of Palermo refused to validate the arrest warrants against the Palermo clans. The head of the office, Gaetano Costa, while acknowledging that the evidence against some of the defendants was preliminary, insisted it was important for the office to show it was not afraid to keep important *mafiosi* in

jail. The two young prosecutors, who had evidently told the defendants' lawyers that their clients would soon be out on bail, were reluctant to break their word. Costa and his assistants argued heatedly, while a crowd of journalists and defense lawyers waited expectantly in the hallway outside. In the end, Costa was forced to take the bold and unusual step of signing the arrest warrants by himself. When the meeting broke up, one of the assistant prosecutors apparently said to the mafia lawyers waiting outside, "He signed them, not us," leaving Costa in an exposed, vulnerable position.[29]

Immediately afterward, the Spatola-Inzerillo heroin case—with its already long trail of blood—was transferred to the investigative office, where it reached the desk of Giovanni Falcone—his first big mafia prosecution in Palermo.

TWO

Within a few days of being assigned the Spatola drug case, Falcone received an unannounced visit from the defendants' lawyers, who, in Palermo, are often the friendly, smiling faces with which the mafia presents its most deadly threats: "We're so glad you have been assigned this case," they said. "We have always admired your sense of balance and fairness . . ."[1]

The lawyers would have reason, initially, to be pleased with Falcone. After examining the skeletal initial evidence, he decided to release eighteen of the twenty-eight men who were under arrest. Despite his reputation as a tough prosecutor, throughout his career, Falcone was a firm civil libertarian, refusing to hold or arrest people when he felt the evidence was insufficient.[2]

But the mafia's relief was short-lived. Falcone began a quiet revolution in the prosecution of mafia cases. He took his experience in bankruptcy court and applied it to the financial world of the mafia. He went back to the check found two years earlier on the body of Giuseppe Di Cristina and set about reconstructing a whole network of economic relationships. Along with the check in Di Cristina's pocket were two currency exchange records from the Banco di Napoli for a total of 20 million lire each (about $24,000 at the time). He impounded every currency exchange record of every bank in Sicily from 1975 forward and, by himself, started