

Move over, Tony Soprano—you've had it

Judith Harris (March 26, 2010)



"The era of the Corleonesi is definitely at an end." We are witnessing "the mutation of the Mafia strategy into one that is clearly based on finance." (Antonio Ingroia, Prosecutor)

ROME - Fuggeddabboud Tony Soprano and his Bada Boom style. With apologies to author [George De Stefano](#) [2], who is the brilliant analyst of the Soprano phenomenon, the homey, rough-hewn senior Soprano type is definitively passé in Sicily. The newer model Mafioso is more a Wall Street Gordon Gekko, with university degree and professional standing sufficient to make him welcome in the swankier parlors and on the more influential political platforms.

That is the message Italian investigators and commentators are drawing from the arrest in mid-March of a noted Sicilian architect, Giuseppe Liga, 60. A Mafia pentito named Isidoro Cracolici has described Liga—neatly cut short gray hair, glasses, jacket and tie—as the Sicilian Mafia's "financial



brain." Prosecutors call him the newest boss of bosses, symbolic of a recent trend. "The era of the Corleonesi is definitely at an end, and Liga's arrest confirms the mutation of the Mafia strategy into one that is clearly based on finance," according to Sicilian prosecutor Antonio Ingroia.

In addition to statements from those Mafiosi who are talking, Liga's arrest came as the result of many months of traditional sleuthing by Italian investigators: wire taps, hidden microphones, physically tracking him and documentary evidence.

By his own admission Liga, in addition to practicing his profession, was a leader of a Catholic worker movement, and involved in an action group of Catholics for dissent. At different times he reportedly supported and opposed the powerful Mafia associate Salvo Lima, linked to the Christian Democratic party of Sicily in the 1980s. As the Mafia's financial interests increased since the years of daily Mafia murders in Sicily, so, apparently, did its need for a new kind of man, investigators in Sicily theorize. Other recent arrests of men supposedly above suspicion have included others with university degrees and a certain social standing. "Cosa Nostra is ever less a world apart and ever more integrated into the social and economic texture of our country," Ingroia has said. "This was always true to some extent but the process has speeded up."

Even in the Sicily of the 1980s, when the Corleonesi won the battle for control of the drug racket that ranged from Hongkong to Manhattan and Rio, the social and economic distances were less distant than might appear, as I learned during an interview with one upper-class Palermo matron who admitted to me that she was surprised when her husband brought the not-yet pentito Tommaso Buscetta to their home one evening. Even a priest who was head of an association honoring Mafia victim Paolo Borsellino was arrested for money laundering. As his son Manfredo Borsellino has written, "The Palermo of the elegant salons is polluted and has been for a long time." Indeed, as another well-to-do society matron in Palermo confided to me, her friends had invited "a few Mafiosi" to their New Year's Eve party, to drink Champagne together, "for a lark."

(For the full text of the fascinating interview with Ingroia upon which this comment is based, see *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, March 23.)

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