

Italy's War on Crime by Marco Fanini

The murder of Judge Chinnici

The mafia took a risky step; they feel freer now that Craxi is the prime minister.

Palermo, 8 o'clock in the morning of Friday, July 29: the head of the judicial inquiry office of the court, Rocco Chinnici, leaves his house to go to work. Two autos of the carabinieri, Italy's military police, block the traffic in Via Pipitone and the judge starts to get into his armored car, when a nearby parked car filled with TNT explodes, killing the judge, two carabinieri, and the doorman of the building. "Palermo Like Beirut" headline the newspapers, and people ask why the mafia decided to free itself at all costs of Judge Rocco Chinnici.

"A particular pride of mine is a statement made by the Americans, according to which the judicial inquiry office in Palermo is a pilot center of the anti-mafia struggle, an example for the other magistracies," Chinnici had said in a recent interview. His efficient office has a dozen judges in it, such as Giovanni Falcone, who are extremely competent and determined. On the day of the atrocious murder of Chinnici, Falcone had been sent to Thailand to interrogate the controller of the dope traffic of Southeast Asia. The Palermo judges had discovered that the Sicilian mafia was being resupplied with drugs through the Riccobono family, which had long since given up refining the morphine base obtained in Sicily as too risky, and had completely entrusted this aspect to these Golden Triangle services. But beyond the traffickers, Chinnici and his men were beginning to hit the managers of the drug trade, and were about to aim at the upper level, that is the bankers, politicians and the noble families.

In the United States, according to one investigator, the news of the recent verdicts against the Spatola crime family and above all Gambino, a "boss of bosses," reportedly alarmed the Cosa Nostra mafiosi to the point that they decided to kill Chinnici and strangle the investigative activity of the judges. It was also reported to us that recently the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation has been cooperating less and less with Italian law-enforcement officials, and that from Italy the war which has broken out between the FBI and the Drug Enforcement Administration was regarded with puzzlement.

It is clear that international cooperation in the anti-drug fight is as important as the support of the government apparatus in one's own country: Chinnici had probably come to lack both. In a speech last July 2 to an assembly of judges in Milan, he had complained that the anti-mafia data bank, so often promised by the government, had never been granted, and the judge added bitterly: "Probably we will never have it."

In Italy judges enjoy particular power. They direct investigations and the activities of sectors of the police forces. Thus it has turned out that a small group of courageous judges, with a small group of police officers around them, decided to launch a no-holds-barred struggle against the mafia, against terrorism, and against the P-2 lodge circles.

These judges are admired, feared, and hated.

On July 24, the journalist of the London *Daily Telegraph* Stephen Vi-

zinczey went to Palermo to interview Judge Falcone.

written that judges of that stamp would not be stopped except by assassination—a strange article, as strange as the articles that the *Times* of London dedicated to the magistrate Mario Marchetti (who is committed to a probe of Sardinian separatism and its connections to Libya) and to the Roman magistrate Ferdinando Imposimato (responsible for successful investigations of the mafia). Given that the mafia only kills when it has to, viewing assassinations as dangerous for its business interests, certain articles which tend to profile the judges seem worrisome. We never noticed London distinguishing itself in the fight against drug trafficking.

The murder of Chinnici also represents a horrible warning to all the Italian judges: armored cars and escorts are useless if the mafia has decided to kill.

Now that the leader of the Italian Socialist Party, Bettino Craxi, has become the head of the Italian government, a very difficult period is opening for the judges. Craxi is the sworn enemy of the magistracy, has always proposed limiting their powers. He is also a friend of Henry Kissinger, who fled from Italy to avoid being questioned by the Rome judges.

Above all the judges need concrete collaboration by international law enforcement agencies, above all American ones. Second, they need real coordination between the various magistrates and investigators operating inside Italy: some kind of institutionalization of a group of magistrates and investigators that can work unimpeded. The problem won't be solved with a High Commissioner who coordinates everything, but with a staff moving in a unified and determined way.