


Vol. 6, No. 1, 1993

# THE Italic Way

The newsletter of the Italic Studies Institute



**Strangers Among Us:**  
The Mafia and its ilk

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Review: *A Bronx Tale*

The Legions of Rome: Italy's Finest

Dean Martin: A New Biography

Wm. Paca: An Italic Founding Father?

**Hollywood's Love Affair:**  
Italian-American cast of the  
1990 movie *GoodFellas*





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## Letters

Address all letters to: LETTERS, The Italic Way, PO Box 818, Floral Park, NY 11001

### Can't Wait!

I enjoy your magazine so much that I can't wait for my next issue.

**Anthony Paupini**  
Derby, CT

### London Review

I have just received your featured book, *Four Centuries of Italian American History* by Giovanni Schiavo.

I enjoyed it no end. It is incredible how little we know on this side of the Atlantic of what has been going on in the USA. I have made it compulsory reading for the whole of my family.

**Arturo Barone**  
London, England

### Mafia Cooking

I agree with your disappointment in the publishing of books glorifying the recipes and eating habits of the mafiosi (Media Madness, Vol.5, No. 4). The *New York Times* felt that this item was worthy of a review in their Living section. This type of publicity helps perpetuate the stereotypes that malign the Italian-American Community.

**Joseph L. Tromba, M.D.**  
Garden City, NY

### An Italian & The Holocaust

I read your article in *L'Italo Americano* about "The Italian Refugee" and "The Italians and the Holocaust" and was



**The cinema has told the public about Schindler and Wallenberg but when will Italy's heroic stories be told?**

very touched. This was the first time I heard about Jews in Croatia other than from my father.

My father, Antonio De Marchi, because of his fluency in the Slavic languages, worked for the diplomatic service in Croatia during World War II. He told me stories of how nightly my mother and father housed 10 to 20 Jewish fami-

lies who were hiding from the Nazis. Apparently because of his profession, he could stamp the passports of these Jewish families which enabled them to seek freedom.

For this humane act my father never took a penny. Eventually he himself was hunted by the Nazis.

I believe hundreds of Jewish families were saved because of my father's efforts.

**Nazira De Marchi**  
Los Angeles, CA

### Typical?

In response to your message in *Variety*, please let this serve as a request for information about your organization. I am an Italian-American who is

equally dumbfounded as to where all those "typical" Italian families live.

**Letitia A. Monaco**  
Jupiter, FL

### Spreading the Word

I am enclosing my Lodge's newsletter (Howard County Sons of Italy,

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# Letters

Howard County, MD), wherein we included an article about the Italic Studies Institute. Since I am an ardent admirer and booster of the Institute, I thought it appropriate to inform all of our members (approximately 140) of your objectives.

**Robert A. Perry**  
Ellicott City, MD

## Ellis Island Revision

In the last issue you mentioned that I had sent a letter of complaint to Catherine Reef, author of *Ellis Island*, a book for children. The letter was sent because she listed Lucky Luciano as the only Italian who came through Ellis Island.

Miss Reef has since written to me and indicated a willingness to "correct the oversight" in the next publication of her book. I have sent her a sampling of other names of Italians who came through Ellis Island, including filmmaker Frank Capra.

Keep up the good fight.

**Vincent S. Romano**  
Chairman,  
Commission for Social Justice,  
Sons of Italy,  
Bellmore, NY



**An Ellis Island book forgot filmmaker Frank Capra (*It's A Wonderful Life*) but remembered the *mafioso* Lucky Luciano.**

## Waiting for Oprah

I want to thank you very much for your interest in *The Oprah Winfrey Show* and for sending your program suggestion.

We will give your suggestion for a show on Italian-American bashing every consideration.

**Deba DiMaio**  
Executive Producer  
The Oprah Winfrey Show,  
Chicago,  
IL



## FUTURE ISSUES OF THE ITALIC WAY

- THE ITALIC FAMILY - Then and Now
  - ITALIANS - Architects to the World
- ROMAN CATHOLICISM - Bearer of Ancient Rites
  - CELTIC ITALY - The Irish Side
- ITALIAN DEBT - What Italy Owes Italian-Americans





# All'Italiana



**Signorina Alessandra Mussolini: Fascism - The next generation.**  
**Achille Occhetto: Leader of the former Communist Party and perhaps Italy's next Prime Minister**

## THUNDER OUT OF ITALY

"THE CENTER IS GONE." So blared the headlines of newspapers throughout Italy. As 1993 came to an end, the Christian Democrats and Socialists had suffered devastating defeats in regional elections. They no longer constituted the majority parties in the north and south. The corruption and scandals of the past year had thoroughly discredited these relics of the Cold War. In their place stood two unlikely victors: the MSI (Movimento Sociale Italiano, a.k.a. the neo-Fascist Party) and the PDS (Partito Democratico Sociale or the ex-Communists). In Rome, the neo-Fascist Gianfranco Fini nearly won the mayor's race. The pernicious Lombard

League (*Lega Lombarda*), which wants to decentralize Italy, managed to lose Genoa, Venice, and Trieste to ex-communists. "We did not win," whined the horse-faced leader of the League, Umberto Bossi.

Alessandra Mussolini of the MSI and granddaughter of the Duce lost to Antonio Bassolino's (PDS) for the mayoralty of Naples. Palermo voted en masse for the anti-Mafia *Rete* party and Leoluca Orlando. With 75.2% of the vote, he became the mayor of that beleaguered yet fabled Sicilian city. Foreign commentators were, as usual, caught off guard by these political developments. Their inane prattling about Italian instability brought down the lira on world currency markets. In truth, Italian voters have turned the corner. Although the dust has

yet to clear, there now exists a left and a right. The Christian Democrats helped usher in Italy's economic miracle but fell prey to democracy's political shennanigans and corruption. In the end, their subservience to the United States and fear of Soviet domination led to crazy quilt alliances and the world's scorn. Mario Segni, a former Christian Democrat, believes that



A typical airliner interior: design by Del Giudice

Italy's political reformation is not yet complete. The direct election of the prime minister is the next step. 1948 has ended. A new era is beginning.

## IN PASSING . . .

- Aviators around the world mourn the passing of **Frank J. Del Giudice**, who quietly revolutionized modern air travel by making subtle yet significant additions to passenger aircraft. Del Giudice designed such standard airplane fixtures as cabin lighting, overhead compartments and individual reading lamps. In 1946, this taciturn Italic pioneer spearheaded the team of Boeing designers that converted a B-29 bomber into the Stratocruiser passenger airplane. The next time you sit in the comfort of a 747 reading, dozing or contemplating, thank your lucky star for designer Frank Del Giudice and his aerial innovations.

- Film star Dominick Felix Amici, known to his fans as **Don Ameche**, died at the age of 85 in December. The handsome actor took the lead in some 40 feature films including *The Story of Alexander Graham Bell* and *Cocoon*.

- **Federico Fellini**, Italy's premier filmmaker, died last fall at the age of 73. Four of Fellini's films, *La Strada*, *The Nights of Cabiria*, *8-1/2*, and *Amacord*, won Oscars, as did the maestro himself this past March. Among the stars he



Dominick Felix Amici



# All'Italiana



helped to fame were Anthony Quinn and Marcello Mastroianni.

## CALABRIA'S LOST CITY

It has long been an article of faith among Italians that Italy's historic treasures run deep. And nowhere is this more evident than in Calabria—the region originally called *Italia*. Recently, Italian archaeologist Paolo Vissona began excavations below the olive



Generale Bruno Loi (r) gets kudos from his relief Gen. Carmine Fiore. Loi's clear thinking helped change UN & U.S. policy in Somalia.

groves of *Oppido Mamertina* in southern Calabria. What he uncovered was the ancient metropolis of Mamertion. This technologically advanced city was populated by the Tauriani, an indigenous Italic people who spoke Oscan, a language similar to Latin. The streets of Mamertion were paved and many homes had indoor plumbing and bathrooms with sophisticated drainage systems. Although the Romans severely punished most Oscan cities for their alliances with Hannibal during the Second Punic War (218-202 B.C.), Mamertion prospered. This prosperity spread throughout the region and Italy as well when all free male inhabitants of the peninsula became Roman citizens.

Spartacus and his slave army are

believed to have finally destroyed Mamertion.

## GENERAL CORAGGIO

If courage is defined as grace under fire, Italian general Bruno Loi is the very epitome of the term. Not only did he have to weather threats from Somali marauders during his humanitarian mission of mercy in Somalia, but the commander of Italy's contingent had to endure the calumnies and innuendo of American and U.N. leaders. While Loi called for calm negotiations, U.N. superiors Boutros Boutros-Ghali and General Howe were hellbent on cowboy confrontations. They ridiculed the general and disparaged Italians as lacking in team spirit. Events in Somalia have vindicated General Loi and Italian resolve. Italian President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro offered his nation's heartfelt thanks to Loi and his troops in a ceremony of special recognition. President Scalfaro lauded the contingent for "having rendered a service to the international community and to the dignity of our country."

## URBAN UPS

Two major American cities have elected Italian-American mayors. The voters of New York City gave the nod to Rudy Giuliani, a former U.S. Attorney, in his second try for city hall. More surprising is Tom Menino's victory in the traditionally Celtic stronghold of Boston.

Giuliani courted all of the Big Apple's mosaic with a theme of safe neighborhoods and better city management. He received only 5% of the African-American vote against his opponent, incumbent David Dinkins, and had to slough off the ever-more-popular Fascist smear during the campaign. He was no doubt spared the Mafia smear due to his crime-fighting

reputation. With a mayor, U.S. Senator, and governor all of Italian descent, New Yorkers may have achieved a record of sorts.

While Giuliani was not the first Italic mayor of New York (Fiorello LaGuardia achieved that honor) Menino is the first in Boston. In a city where the Irish outnumber Italians 2-to-1, his victory is all the more impressive because his opponent was an Irish-American. In fact, Menino broke a 63-year Gaelic winning streak. Monday morning quarterbacks suggest Menino's victory was due to his



New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani. Will he bring a Roman sense of order and tolerance?

working class identity and the fact that he was pre-tested as Acting Mayor since July.

## GALLO'S VICTORY

Dr. Robert Gallo has truly earned his title as co-discoverer of the HIV virus and surely is entitled to the sizeable royalties, which he shares with French research Dr. Luc Montagnier, from the test that now keeps our blood supply free of that AIDS-causing virus. After four years of defending his honor against his own countrymen over French accusations of laboratory fraud, Gallo has been vindicated with the decision by the Office of Research Integrity to withdraw all charges against the doctor. How much did this legal hounding set back the war on AIDS?

\*\*\*\*





# World Notes

[We present this section to inform our readers of events and trends that may be of interest with regard to ethnic opinions or cultural values.]

## ON THE CHEAP

As if to prove that money can't buy love, the Italian Republic has scored near the bottom of foreign nations who lobby the U.S. Government. Recent Justice Department figures reveal that the fifth largest economic power spent only \$2 million in 1992 to influence American opinion. In comparison, Ireland forked over nearly \$8 million and Japan \$60 million. These funds represent payments to American lobbyists who peddle influence around Washington, DC.

Consistent with Italy's failure to support her own immigrants over the past one hundred years, the mother country has mostly banked on nostalgia to gain favors in our Congress.

For a country that has raised political shennanigans to an art form, the Italians are incredibly naive about American politics.

## KING TUT'S TOXIN

In 1922, soon after archeologists entered the long lost tomb of Egyptian pharaoh Tutankhamen, now known affectionately as King Tut, death overtook at least 23 of them. The cause of these collective deaths has remained a mystery and a source of horror movie plots ever since.

But wait! Dr. Nicola Di Paolo, head of the kidney disease department at a Siena hospital, thinks he has found the natural cause of the "pharaoh's curse." Blame it on a fungus called *Aspergillus Ochraceus*, says the researcher and amateur archeologist. The fungus thrives in ancient tombs and documents. Dr. Di Paolo speculates that the discoverers of Tut's tomb breathed in significant amounts of the stale vault air and became infected. Long-term exposure to this fungus eventually degenerates the kidneys and liver.

Even the boy-king Tut knew enough to wear a mask in his own tomb.



What really killed King Tut's discoverer Howard Carter and most of his researchers?

## RIDE'EM COMRADE

Just as Americans are obsessed with the Mafia, Italians have a fascination for cowboys and Indians. Clint Eastwood reached stardom in "spaghetti westerns." Now, the Russian proletariat is being rounded up for a new generation of Italian tumbleweed.

Finding Russia relatively inexpensive, Italian director Enzo Castellari built an entire American western town for less than the cost of phoney building facades in Rome's Cinecittà. Extras work for as little as \$1.50 per day and Mongolians from Asiatic Russia double for American Indians, their distant cousins.

The Russians are learning quite a bit from this cinematic rodeo. But as one extra put it, "All films are basically the same. The Italians work a little faster and shout a little more."

## LOMBARD INVASION

Italy's band of teutonic wannabes, the Lombard League, has established its first base of operations in the United States. This Northern League (*Lega Nord*) has been riding the wave of disgust among Italian voters in northern Italy for the central government in Rome. Somewhat akin to Governor George Wallace's

States Rights Party of the 1960's, the Northern League wants to divide Italy into North, Central and South autonomous regions. They claim that the North's German-like work ethic has made Italy the fifth largest economy and the sole support of a parasitic South. Their party symbol has the look of a barbarian Longobard, the spiritual ancestor of their membership.

Although they are quick to blame organized crime for the South's economic problems they appear to forget that the current political degradation and crisis began in Italy's financial capital Milan, which is, you guessed it, in the region of *Lombardia*. In fact, most of the government and business officials arrested and caught with dirty hands happen to be, you guessed it, northerners. Go figure.



Will this be a symbol of the new Italy?

## LIMP LIPS

Keeping a stiff upper lip in England is getting to be a lost art. Economic decline, appalling crime, royal randiness, IRA terrorism, Scottish separatism, and a pathetic showing in world soccer competition has left many an Englishman in a unending funk. The good times are definitely on the wane.

Some fear that the gritty England that inspired Charles Dickens and Karl Marx is rearing its ugly head again.



# World Notes



Even the East Enders, of London's famous working class section, are yearning for the return of local gangsters to make the streets safe again. The Kray Supporters Club has gone so far as to organize a campaign to free mobsters Reg and Ron Kray. The Krays are serving some 30-year terms for murder. In their heyday of the 1960's, the Brothers Kray built a fortune from protection rackets and legitimate nightclubs. Says one of the Club's members, "Back in those days you could walk the streets. Old ladies didn't get mugged. They did a better job of keeping the streets safe than the Bills [police]."

## MEIN MONSTROSITY

A recent newspaper account reveals that German automotive manufacturers have been conducting mock accidents using the cadavers of children and adults. Amazingly, these ghastly tests have been standard operating procedure in German industry since the 1970s. Rather than observing dismemberment, laceration and combustion on synthetic mannequins, the Germans believe it is better and more *efficient* to witness the gruesome effects of shredded metal and flame on actual human flesh. Even the French have admitted sacrificing 450 corpses in this cause over the last 20 years. But perhaps more surprising, some U.S. universities have revealed similar procedures on behalf of Ford and General Motors. *Gott in himmel!*



Extras in the new spaghetti Westerns



The Carbone Family: maintaining the record.

## NASAL ANNIHILATION

A rather unusual ceremony took place last December outside of Seoul, Korea. The remains of 20,000 noses were laid to rest after a 400 year captivity in Japan. The noses were bizarre war trophies taken from the vanquished by invading Japanese samurai in 1597. This Japanese method of quantifying victory was probably more accurate than our own body count method. The nose knows!

## CUP FEVER

With the coming of the World Soccer Cup finals to the United States, promoters are hoping to infect Americans with soccer-mania. Only eleven nations worldwide have qualified for the finals. Of those, Germany became eligible by virtue of their position as defending champion four years ago, and the United States merely because it is the host country. But

the remaining nine earned their places. For the Italians who hold three past championships, America will be almost like home turf considering that 15 million Americans claim Italian ancestry. Nevertheless, there may be divided loyalties in the stands since the United States team may be fortunate enough to face-off the Italians. And mixed marriages may also suffer since Greece and Ireland also made the finals.

## BABY TIMES FIVE

The Italian-Americans of Long Island appear to have the upper hand in the fertility department with the arrival of the Carbone quintuplets in a Long Island hospital. Mom Denise and Dad Lou are overjoyed by the blessed event which is reportedly only the second occurrence of quints in Long Island history. The first occurrence happened six years ago when the Cangialosi quints were born. Delivery was by the "Roman" method, i.e., Caesarian section, average weight: 1 pound 10 ounces.

Mom and Dad Carbone credit a fertility drug for their new around-the-clock occupation. Their fellow quint-raisers, Angelo and Alice Cangialosi, predict sleepless nights and financial challenges ahead for the Carbones. Certainly, these are the times when extended families really count. \*\*\*\*



Three-time world champs in 1934, 1938, and 1982. Can Italy win the unprecedented 4th in 1994?





## Editorial

### THE DEVIL AT BAY

Italy's regional elections are over. And the political landscape resembles a *terra incognita*. America's favorite party, the Christian Democrats, garnered only 10% of the vote; the Socialists much less. The MSI and Democratic Party of the Left (formerly the Communists) loom large. Rome and Naples elected ex-communist mayors yet made the neo-fascist MSI Party the majority party. Still, there is cause for considerable optimism. The greatest threat to Italian unity and democracy, the loathsome *Lega Nord* (Northern League) was thwarted. Its base was limited to Genova, Venice and Trieste. The *Lega's* platform of "federalism" is nothing more than thinly-veiled separatism. As such, it poses the greatest threat to Italy's survival and democracy. For all their historical baggage, the MSI and Democratic Party of the Left are reform-minded parties committed to an indivisible, scandal-free and prosperous Italy. Italy is not Russia. There is no Zhirinovskiy on the horizon. Italians everywhere must remain vigilant, however. Anyone in cahoots with the *Lega Nord* (a.k.a. *Lega Lombarda*) is in league with the devil of Italian dismemberment. Recently, the *Lega* opened New York and Washington offices. In a colossal *faux pas*, the foul *leghisti* were welcomed by Italy's New York Consul General, Alberto Boniver. Such behavior shows little regard for the central and southern heritage of metropolitan area Italian-Americans. Would the Kennedy Administration have welcomed States Rights leader and bigot George Wallace to the White House?

-RAI

### A NATIONAL AGENDA

With the establishment of our Midwest Council in Chicago (see p.24) the Italic Studies Institute is increasingly a national organization. This is confirmed by the fact that we have some 350 non-Metro New York members. Plans to designate ISI regional committees in Sacramento, Washington, DC, and London, England are under discussion.

This national and even international growth may sound impressive but it must be backed by a will to see beyond New York. Yet, so much hinges on reaching milestones in membership. The sad fact is that we are far from an ideal *Italic Way* circulation (i.e., membership) of 50,000 or even 20,000 which would allow us a full-time executive staff and funds to expand our education programs (*Aurora*), and continue our video documentary series (*Project Italia*).

Italian-Americans are a tough audience and to recruit 50,000 members from among them is a Herculean task. Recently, the Governors and Plenary Council voted on a motion to assist the State University of New York in establishing a chair in Italian Studies at Purchase, NY. Beside the obvious desire to promote Italic Studies, the Governors feel that interaction with the State will translate into new members among SUNY alumni and new credentials for ISI among the academic community. Let us hope this bears fruit.

In the end, the ultimate question will be: is Italic Studies a movement or a charitable club? From the first hour it has always been a movement.

-JLM

### FRENCH RESISTANCE

The just completed trade talks between Europe and the United States have opened a wound in media relations. The French, it seems, tack on a surcharge to movie tickets that is used to subsidize their own movie industry. Hollywood sees the surcharge as an unfair advantage to French moviemakers. For their part, the French insist that left unchecked by the European film industry Hollywood would subvert French culture. Fortunately, the U.S. decided not to fight the issue.

Regardless of the disdain among many Americans for the French "attitude" we must at least acknowledge that our film industry has sunk to many new lows. As Italian-Americans we see first hand the wholesale trashing of our heritage for the sake of profit. Let's understand where the French are coming from.

-JLM

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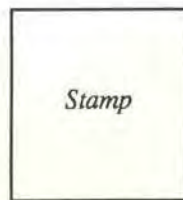


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# Forum of the People



## An Army of Schindlers from Italy

by Dorothy Rabinowitz

Oskar Schindler, flawed hero of Steven Spielberg's monumental film, *Schindler's List*, came to Poland a profiteer and ended up a rescuer of many hundreds of Jewish lives. His story's entry into the world, via Mr. Spielberg's justly celebrated film, calls to mind a number of other unlikely rescuers of whose exploits little has yet been heard, however much they are known to historians.

I have in mind, namely, Hitler's allies, the Italians, whose government ministries and army and highest political circles moved heaven and earth to see to it that not a single Jew was deported from Italy. They schemed, they plotted, they resorted to the wildest of strategies and delaying efforts — including the invention of the most wonderfully complicated "census-taking" known to man — to ensure that no Jews under their governance fell into German hands. Not for nothing does the history of these plots sometimes read like farce.

None of this can mitigate the facts of the unspeakable fate that ultimately befell some 8,000 Italian Jews when the Germans finally marched in — nor the harsh anti-Jewish legislation Mussolini introduced in 1938. Still, there is no doubt that, were it not for what the Germans so bitterly described, in their cables, as the peculiar "Italian attitude" of protection toward the Jews, far more than the 20% of the Italian Jewish population that was annihilated would have been shipped to their deaths.

Unlike countries like Bulgaria and, for a time at least, France — which resisted deporting their Jewish nationals but were prepared to deliver their foreign-born Jews — the Italians refused to deport Jews, period.

Their refusal (like that of Hitler's other temporary ally, the Finns) was based on a full awareness of what awaited any Jew deported for "resettlement." Berlin was naturally bitter over this intransigence. The telegrams from Bureau IV of the Reich Security Head Office — command post for the Final Solution — flew thick and fast with inquiries as to when Italy could be expected to begin handing its Jews over. The answer from the Italians was an unbending — if silent — "Never." And indeed, so long as Fascist Italy remained independent, and until its occupation by the Germans in 1943, the answer was the same.

Not only would the Italian government — reflecting the popular attitude of the citizenry at large — resist deportation, its army and consuls undertook extraordinary efforts to rescue Jews in their zones of occupation. As an Axis partner, Italy's forces occupied a large sector of Greece, part of Yugoslavia and eight sectors of southeastern France, including Nice.

The attitude of the occupying Italians with regard to Germany's extermination plans for the Jews was made immediately clear, to the great distress and confusion of the Germans and their French allies. For, as soon as the Vichy police in these areas busied themselves rounding up Jews for arrest and deportation, the Italian military and foreign ministry demanded — and obtained — a stop to the arrests and deportations.

In Annecy, the French police, who had rounded up a trainload of Jews for deportation, found themselves looking at the barrels of guns trained on them by soldiers of the Italian Fourth Army. Yielding to this forceful persuasion, the French released the Jews.

In Salonika as elsewhere, as historians Leon Poliakov and Jacques Sabille document, the Italians offered more than tolerant protection. In Greece, the Italian consuls and military — witness to the brutal deportations taking place before their eyes — busied themselves handing out phony certificates of "Italian nationality" to the hunted Jews. Italian officers spirited Jews away to safety on military trains and, as survivors have attested, they undertook, in every way possible, to cheer them on and assure them of their protection. In Poland, Italian troops gave aid and comfort to the hunted Jews.

In Nice, the Italian commandant stationed *carabinieri* outside the Jewish communal center and synagogue to make certain that Vichy police could not enter to make arrests. Elsewhere in southeastern France where the Vichyite police (on orders from the Germans) decreed that the Jews be made to wear the yellow star, the Italian generals countermanded the order. It was, they answered, "inconsistent with the dignity of the Italian army" that in areas of its control Jews should be made to wear "this stigmatizing badge."

The dignity of the army. Such a quaintly improbable ring the words have in the context of the unrivaled horrors being inflicted daily by the armies of the Reich and their accomplices. They were flawed heroes of a kind different from Schindler, these servants of Mussolini's Fascist state. It has been argued that there were elements of political concern in Rome's refusal to cooperate in the murder of the Jews — but no one can attribute anything but humanitarian revulsion at the Germans' policies in the activities of the Italians who strove so assiduously to save lives in the territories they occupied.

What there was in the character of the Italians that made their resistance to mass murder so implacable, so different from that of the Vichyite French, is a question we may ponder — and one for whose existence we can be grateful.

[Ms. Rabinowitz, a *Wall Street Journal* editorial writer and television critic, is currently preparing a book on this subject.]

(Reprinted from *The Wall Street Journal*, December 22, 1993)





## REVIEW

### A Bronx Cheer for A Bronx Tale

Roger Ebert, the rotund half of TV movie mavens "Siskel and Ebert," has said Robert DeNiro and Chazz Palminteri are both likely to get Academy Award nominations for *A Bronx Tale*, yet another film view of Italian America.

Why am I not celebrating? Well, for one thing, Ebert just may be correct.

*A Bronx Tale*, in which DeNiro plays a supporting role and debuts as a director, is okay on the technical and dramatic fronts. Too bad. If it were not it might soon be forgotten.

Like the films of Francis Ford Coppola and Martin Scorsese that deal with Italian American subjects, it reflects aspects of the Italian American lifestyle like a funhouse mirror.

Yes, the faces are authentically Italian American. Personal mannerisms ring true. The settings look real enough. But something is terribly out of whack.

And it's not because the 187th Street-Arthur Avenue section, the uniquely charming Little Italy of the Bronx where the film is supposedly set, was not used for the shooting. (It was actually shot in Queens. Why? Perhaps to hint at the lack of authenticity?)

The tenor of the stereotyping is set forth at the outset with a totally gratuitous

### The Italians are violent because, well, simply because they're Italian.

insult: A voice tells us about the "traditional" way Italian men make love and a lout is shown driving his car, yelling at a woman pedestrian, "Get in the f—— car."

So we are warned.

The story itself makes the point that bus driver Lorenzo (DiNiro) is a hard-working, honest, moderately intelligent father who wants the best for his son, Calogero (played first by Francis Ca-

pra, 9, and later by Lillo Brancato, 17). What's wrong with this? Hold on.

Calogero is the real focus of the film and he grows up wanting to be what? Did somebody say a gangster? An Italian American kid wanting to be a ganster in a Hollywood film? C'mon.

Calogero's hero is the neighborhood mafioso, Sonny (played by Chazz Palminteri, who wrote the allegedly autobiographical script and whose real name is Calogero.)

The film Calogero is called "C" because his Italian American pals, who cannot pronounce simple English words too well, certainly can't handle a four syllable Italian one.

Katherine Narducci, who plays C's mother, will surely get some sort of nomination, too. She gives a thoroughly convincing portrayal of a spineless, borderline moron — the very model of Italian American motherhood *a la* Hollywood. Fortunately, her role is miniscule.

The most admirable character is Lorenzo. But he is depicted not as the norm of Italian American life but the rarest of exceptions — one even his family regards as odd — an

honest man. Everybody else in *A Bronx Tale* is either a lacky of Sonny's, a buffoonish admirer of him, or a non-Italian.

The non-Italians, in another big surprise, are African Americans. In the major subplot, C falls in love with a black girl played by Taral Hicks (from TV's *All My Children*).

Is this to show that Italian American men are not bigoted? Are you kidding? It's to show that in this respect C is an ab-

beration. His Italian neighbors set the record straight. They're all mindless racists who think C is crazy for having anything to do with a black.

Although the blacks are just as violent as the Italians in the inevitable altercations, their violence is motivated by an understandable, almost admirable self-defense. The Italians are violent because, well, simply because they're Italian (read: lower class urban bigot, par excellence).

The story reaches no conclusion, it's simply a "slice of life" in Little Italy.



An Italic Ralph Kramden (DeNiro) confronts a Mob boss to save his son from a life of crime.

Sonny, although a murderer, is shown to have some admirable traits. C may or may not go straight. Save for oddball Lorenzo, Italian America is peopled much the way it always has been in Hollywood.

The pity, as far as this film goes, is that it might have been a nice little movie, one Italian Americans could even rejoice in, if it had avoided the predictable ethnic clichés.

The greater shame is that Italian America has again been badly maligned by its own worst enemy — Italian American filmmakers. — Bob Masullo

\*\*\*\*

(Bob Masullo was raised in the Bronx. He resides in Sacramento, California.)





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## Focus

# STRANGERS AMONG US: The Mafia and its ilk

by John Mancini

Somewhere in America today a Chinese-American named Au Yeung is desperately trying to sell his story as the FBI informant who spilled the beans on a major Chinese heroin operation with nearly 800 pounds of the narcotic seized. (Hollywood's famed *French Connection* was based upon a 220 pound bust.) Moreover, Mr. Yeung broke the code of silence on Chinatown's notorious *tong* (family association) gambling dens. For his services the United States Government awarded Mr. Yeung \$250,000. But what this con man/canary really wants is a Chinese Mario Puzo and Francis Ford Coppola to make Asian crime, and himself, famous. Mr. Yeung's name might as well be No Such Luck. Hollywood is solely obsessed with Italic criminals.



Cracking down on *mafiosi* is an old Italian tradition.

As *de facto* publicists for the Italic Mafia, many writers and filmmakers of Italian descent have effectively ceded their culture to the mob. Italian surnames, to many, now connote criminal connections. In fact, the words *mafia*, *family* and *godfather* have become a part of the universal criminal vocabulary. Hence, the new Russia is plagued by a "mafia" and the once proud religious title of godfather now evokes snickers around the English-speaking world. Here in America the public is treated to mafia cookbooks, and, the mafia "national anthem" (the theme from the *Godfather*) has become an Italian-American wedding favorite. Local criminals like John Gotti and mentally handicapped suspects like Vincent "The Chin" Gigante, who parades daily through his neighborhood in pajamas, have been transmogrified, thanks to sensational journalism, into real-life Lex Luthors. And, the Sicilian Mafia — the octopus that is reputed to control all crime on the planet earth, has done so without computers, fax machines, copiers or secretaries.

In short, over the span of twenty years, since the premiere of *Godfather I*, the Mafia has become the golden goose for a generation of twisted Italian-American media-crats. Their myth-making has not only enriched them but has propelled the Mafia into American folklore and permanently stained the image of an entire ethnic group.

What is the Mafia? What are its origins? Why does it persist? To answer these questions we need to address the

myths and perceptions as well as the realities of the Mafia.

### WHAT IS THE MAFIA?

Some Mafia "experts" tell us that there is a unified, centralized organization known as the *Mafia* or *La Cosa Nostra* (Our Thing) that is subdivided by territory (eg. Sicily, New York, etc.) and then by family (the Genovese, the Gambino, etc.). These components are loosely confederated but acknowledge a *capo di tutti capi* (boss of bosses) who lives somewhere in Sicily and who keeps all the regional organiza-

tions humming while he runs the Italian government and the Vatican on the side. This omnipotent Mafia decides what drugs are smuggled into Europe and America, and when a United States president needs to be bumped off. It is now reportedly in the process of obtaining nuclear weapons. One thing wrong with this picture is that it assumes that the other 5 billion earthlings are innocent bystanders. Another distortion is that it imbues the Italic people with superhuman powers. While it is nice to have only one devil to blame for all human ills, this incredible theory perpetuates old myths: the Mafia started many, many years ago in Sicily as a "good" organization and

### The general public takes some comfort in the myth that like opera and food, crime is an Italic specialty.

evolved into a criminal group; *Mafiosi* only kill each other and certainly not women and children; Italian neighborhoods are under special godfatherly protection; every Italian-American family has a "connection" for purposes of social justice.

The first problem with all these myths is that most people actually believe them. And why shouldn't they? Italian-American criminals are the most flamboyant and romantic. Al Capone (real) and Don Vito Corleone (unreal) have been deified by the media. They have been seared into the American psyche by unending repetition in television and movies. In contrast, the likes of Jesse James and John Dillinger have become cardboard figures, mere bit players in the annals of crime. Even the all-American Robber Barons of the 19th Century as well as the bootlegging dynasties of the 20th Century have been sanctified by laundered family wealth. The



# Focus



general public takes some comfort in the myth that like opera and food, crime is an Italic specialty.

## A LACK OF PRIDE

By promoting these myths, many Italian-Americans reveal a lack of pride. As a poor immigrant people subjected to the most menial occupations at the turn of the century, demeaned by earlier immigrants as wops, dagoes, and guineas, Italians struggled to achieve basic material security. Unfortunately, some shunned education in favor of extra income. And these peasants and sons and daughters of peasants were all but cut off from their rich cultural patrimony, and all but abandoned by the motherland. Many Americans of Italian descent have only the most superficial knowledge of the Italian heritage — a litany of names (Dante, Michelangelo, Da Vinci, et al) highlighting a painfully abbreviated past. What America taught the succeeding generations of Italian-Americans was that the only thing that works in Italy is the Mafia, and that Italians



**Alfonso Capone was of Neapolitan, not Sicilian, origin. His criminal organization was not the Mafia.**

were lucky they were allowed to immigrate here. This education went on to declare that the ancient Romans had English accents, Mussolini and Fascism were a joke, the Italian soldiers of World War II were lovers and cowards, and the post-war Italian government is a menagerie of clowns. Here in America, of course, there was Columbus and Joe DiMaggio, but their memories were seasonal. So, by default, the Mafia stole the mantle of Italic pride. Draped in the purple of Italian culture — *la famiglia, il ristorante, il bel canto, la lingua, la chiesa cattolica, l'onore*, were brought to the big screen by Frankie Coppola. Here, for the very first time was every man's desire: power, money, compliant women, and respect. To some Italian-Americans, the new and improved Mafia was a godsend. Only the punchdrunk *Rocky* came in a close second. At last, pride was restored — sort of.

Few acknowledge the ultimate cost of this grotesque pride. A recent study by Dr. Herbert Abelson of Princeton U. revealed that 74% of Italian-Americans actually believe that the



**The Mafia's worst nightmare, Cesare Mori, Fascist Prefect of Palermo, 1927**

Mafia pervades their ethnic community. Some 73% of non-Italians share this belief. There is substantial anecdotal evidence that the general public associates Italian surnames with either a propensity for crime or an outright affiliation to the Mafia. Such is the power of endless media repetition. The image is reinforced daily as local Mafia criminals make the headlines and become national celebrities to fulfill the movie legends. John Gotti, the Dapper Don, is a perfect example of a local hood with a national audience. Not for him the mere 15 minutes of fame.

## ORIGINS UNKNOWN

We probably know more about the origins of dinosaurs than of dons. Some apologetic Sicilians claim that the Mafia began in the 13th Century to defend the islanders against the rapacious French. Having defended home and hearth, not to mention the honor of Sicilian women, these "Men of Honor" turned greedy and began living off their own kind. Notwithstanding the apologists, the stuff of reality tells us that if *Mafiosi* are thieves and murderers today, their ancestors were probably the thieves and murderers of yesteryear.

One of the more ludicrous origin theories has the Mafia descended from Roman soldiers (since it appears so well organized). This absurd speculation is usually proffered by half-baked Italian-American historians who start Italian history at the fall of Rome. In truth, the Romans were the establishment. The precursors of the Mafia are more likely to be found as hired guns of foreign occupiers or in the anti-establishment types, such as:

**Roman Slaves:** There were at least two major slave revolts *a la* Spartacus in Sicily before the birth of Christ. Slaves were most likely non-Italic prisoners of war or criminals who worked on large commercial farms, in the sulfur mines or the salt basins. This theory has them fleeing to the hills and living like Robin Hood's Merry Men, minus the generosity, for the next two thousand years. Similar slave revolts in southern Italy, like that of Spartacus, may have spawned the *Camorra* of Naples and the *N'drangheta* of Calabria.

**Vandals & Goths:** During the last stages of the Roman Empire, a system was devised by the Italians to buy off the

(continued on p.15)



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## Mafia (from p. 13)

barbarians. It was an arrangement whereby one-third of the produce of Italian land was given to the Germanic mercenaries in return for protection and peace. For the Italians, this "protection money" staved off the inevitable for almost 100 years. The parasitic nature of the Vandals and Goths, however, bears a striking similarity to the traditional Mafia. One Roman author speaks of Gothic soldiers as tax collectors in Syracuse, Sicily. They had to be legally restrained from shaking down the Roman landowners. Another trait of the germanic tribesman was absolute loyalty, unto death, to his chieftain or boss.

**Pirates & Arab Raiders:** The Middle Ages witnessed another wave of ravaging foreigners that included Mediterranean pirates and Arab-types from North Africa. The quaint hilltop towns that dot southern Italy's landscape were actually defensive enclaves away from the coastal invasion routes. Just how many raiders decided to dwell among the native Italians cannot be known.

**Arabs & Berbers:** The word *Mafia* may be of Arabic derivation, *mu'afah* meaning "protection." Although Sicily is generally thought of as prospering under the Arab occupation of 250 years, no doubt some bad pomegranates slipped in. Historians like to think the Normans chased all the Arabs and Berbers out of the island. But who really knows? The holding of court by a "godfather" to hear the grievances of the populace may have been a tradition from Arab times. These sessions, or *majlis*, are still common among Middle Eastern sheiks.

The Italic people are no more disposed to crime than any other ethnic group. The daily newspapers are proof of that. However, it is perplexing why the Mafia has such deep roots. Surely, the usual factors — poverty, bad government, injustice, and ignorance — create and foster criminal activities. Southern Italy, as a goal of foreign invasion since the fall of Rome and the victim of nearly three centuries of Spanish occupation, fell prey to many alien predators. Every effort to eradicate organized crime has ultimately failed. It is as though the *mafioso* is the bad seed, the stranger among us.

### THE SICILIAN EXPERIENCE

Cesare Mori, the Fascist prefect of Palermo, considered the Mafia not one centralized organization but rather many gangs in loose associations. Mori effectively destroyed the "mafia" with massive round-ups and mass trials. By 1927 Mori had arrested over 11,000 suspected *mafiosi* and associates. Such a



**John Gottl: Does he deserve more than his 15 minutes of fame?**

radical measure even alarmed Mussolini who insisted that the detainees' families be cared for. Yet Fascist power did what no other government before or since has accomplished — the state was undisputed master of the island.

The Allied invasion of Sicily in 1943 undid all that Mori had accomplished. Under the direction of Charles Poletti, a former New York State Lt. Governor, the Allied occupation authorities "unknowingly" released *mafiosi* from the jails and appointed them to municipal leadership. The Allies reintroduced deported Italian criminals like Lucky Luciano to interface with their ilk. Sicily's problems today stem in large part from this de-Fascification.

The 1980's were boom years for the Mafia and drug money together with corrupt government officials and constitutionally-mandated Sicilian autonomy weakened the Italian state on the island. Murders soared. In the process of reasserting its control in the 1990's, a number of heroic prosecutors were gunned down or blown to bits by the threatened gangsters. Taking a page from Cesare Mori, the Italian state has expanded police powers and shipped in some 7,000 troops. Still, it is difficult for a democratic state to destroy the ancient infestation of the Mafia despite the fact that the vast majority of Sicilians depise the menace.



**Men of Honor? If mafiosi are thieves and murderers today, their ancestors were probably the thieves and murderers of yesteryear.**

### THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

Yes, there is a Mafia, or actually mafias, among Italic people. Like the Italian word *fascism*, *mafia* is now a generic term. But the truth is these gangs probably do not have the impact on crime in America as the movies would have us believe. They are involved in the drug trade (a recent French-connected bust uncovered 400 pounds of heroin and implicated four New York crime "families") but the public should not believe that they control all the trade or all facets of the trade. In fact the Asians dominate the heroin market as importers and wholesalers, the Latin Americans the cocaine market. Apparently, the forte of the Italic mobs is corrupting

(continued p.27)







# Perspectives

[Highlights of historical records that shed light on modern times]

## THE ROMAN LEGIONS

by Alfred Cardone

Perhaps Pliny described it best. "*Immensa Romanae pacis maiestas*" — the boundless majesty of the Roman peace. At its height, the Roman Empire extended from Scotland to the Sudan, from Portugal to the Euphrates, uniting an area of Europe, Asia and Africa that has never again been under a single rule. The known Western world was brought under one law culminating in two centuries of peace and prosperity which it had never before experienced and was to never enjoy again.

This great empire was conquered and defended for centuries by the most successful army in history. Most of its soldiers were strapping peasant farmers and shepherds from central and southern Italy. The Roman legionary had unmatched discipline, patience, tenacity, strength and courage which enabled him to endure interminable marches and terrible battles in foreign lands for years of service. Even when not engaged in combat or on the march, he was constantly active building camps, erecting fortifications, constructing or repairing roads and bridges or sowing the fields with grain. These citizen soldiers



were trained in the discipline of arms for the common good, and as volunteers enlisted to fulfill the needs of a particular war or campaign or even later as long-term professional soldiers, they brought with them a patriotic fervor and high level of training and organization which was to prove irresistible to any foe they encountered.

The story of the Roman legions spans many centuries. The army of the Republic had only a wartime organization. Officers and troops were enlisted and legions created for a specific military task when a state of war had been declared or was imminent. Given Rome's history of almost constant warfare, in practice this call to arms took place each year. Eligibility for military service began at the age of seventeen and ended

at the age of forty-six. The Roman citizen, however, could not be called up for more than twenty campaigns in the infantry or ten in the cavalry. Shortly before 100 B.C., the reforms of Gaius Marius gradually transformed the legions into a standing army of volunteer professional soldiers serving for a term of twenty-five years. These volunteers had to be Roman citizens, which in Rome's formative years meant Italic.

The Roman legion, with its 3,200 heavy infantry, 1,200 light infantry, 300 cavalry and various auxiliary troops, was a complete combat unit comparable to half a modern division. It was capable of acting independently or in cooperation with other legions. The reforms of Marius expanded it into a powerful body of 6,000 men, divided into ten cohorts, which were further divided into centuries, commanded by the legendary centurions, the backbone of the Roman army. The Roman centurions were the first body of fighting professional officers in history. They rose through the ranks by virtue of their talent and courage and were instrumental in passing along the code of discipline to the legionnaires in their charge. (cont'd p.17)

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Each legion also had engineering specialists capable of surveying a canal, planning roads and bridges, and above all building or demolishing walls and fortifications. As such, the weapons of the legions also included such artillery pieces as stone hurling *ballistae* and massive wooden catapults that shot large bolts or arrows. These were used in sieges and also for supporting fire on the battlefield.

The legion was trained to fight as a concentrated, solid mass employing a form of high intensity, offensive warfare never before seen. Nonetheless, it proved to be far more maneuverable than the unwieldy phalanx. Typically, the front ranks hurled a volley of javelins at the enemy from a distance of ten to twenty paces. Meanwhile, archers and slingers attacked from the wings with arrows and stones, and the cavalry charged with pikes and swords. The decisive action, however, was in the form of hand to hand combat with the famous Roman short sword.

While on the march, the Roman le-

gionary carried over sixty pounds of baggage which included a twenty day supply of grain, an axe, a scythe, a basket, a spade, a cooking pot and two or three stakes for the construction of a palisade. He was generally required to cover a distance of between ten and fifteen miles

### **These volunteers had to be Roman citizens, which in Rome's formative years meant Italic.**

a day, after which he was required to erect a fortified camp complete with tents, ramparts and gates deployed in a predetermined standard configuration.

To defend their vast empire, the Romans deployed an army which ranged in size from 25 to 30 legions, a force of approximately 150,000 to 180,000 men. At the time of Augustus, this was augmented by an almost equal number of auxiliary troops comprised of provincials, who were rewarded with the privi-

lege of Roman citizenship for themselves and their children after completion of their service. The deployment of the legions varied over time, but was generally concentrated along the frontiers of the Empire, especially along the Rhine and Danube to defend against the almost constant pressure from barbarian tribes. It is a testament to the effectiveness of the Roman army that it was able to successfully defend such a far-flung empire for centuries with such relatively limited forces.

Rome was successful against every conceivable enemy in more than five centuries of almost continuous warfare. As long as the army consisted of sturdy Italic shepherds and peasants trained in the discipline of arms and instilled with an unflinching patriotism, the Empire would remain secure. Such is Virgil's explanation of Roman rule over the world. "*Sit Romana potens Italia virtute propago*" — "Such be the power of Roman stock, allied to the valor of Italy."

\*\*\*\*





## REVIEW

### DINO: Living High In The Dirty Business of Dreams

By Nick Tosches, Doubleday, 572 pp

He rode with Duke Wayne, interpreted Lillian Hellman and beat back the Beatles. His mellifluous Italianate baritone captivated two generations of women even as his quick wit and easy masculinity won over their husbands. Gary Cooper, Humphrey Bogart and Henry Miller were avid fans. Elvis idolized him. For nearly a decade, he welcomed us into his world and soothed a nation wracked by a ruinous war in Vietnam. In truth, everybody loved Dean Martin sometime. And Italians owe him a debt of thanks.

Dino Paul Crocetti's trek from Steubenville, Ohio, crooner to international entertainer was a long and winding journey. He endured more than his fair share of hardships, rejections and out-

right prejudice along the way. But this son of an Italian immigrant from Abruzzi never forgot his heritage. And, unlike most Italo-American thespians, he never besmirched his brethren on the silver screen.

In a 1967 interview with Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci, he said "I love every bit of being Italian, and I don't think of the Mafia, I think of Christopher Columbus, and Michelangelo, and Marconi, and Toscanini, and Fermi, and all those great people who gave much to my country, America." Five years later, Martin had a blistering

retort for *The Godfather*. "I didn't like that film. What they did to the Italian people. There was no call for that. I know a lot of gangsters and they're not Italians. They're guys with briefcases—an Irishman, a Jewish guy and an All-American type."

Two decades later, despite Dino's protestations, *The Godfather* spawned a  
(Continued p. 28)



Dean on the set of *The Young Lions* with Brando and Clift. His portrayals of Italian-Americans were positive.

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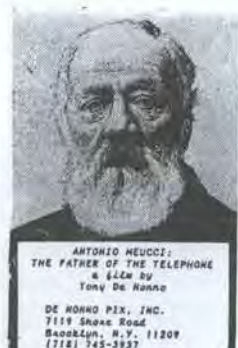


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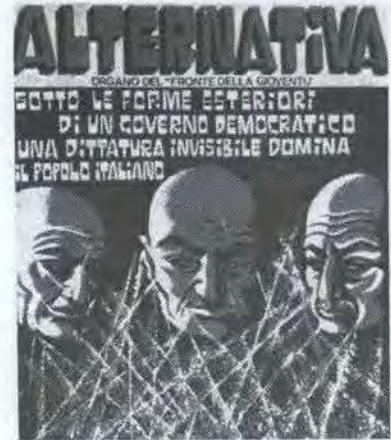


# Media Madness

[In which we present media material with commentary]

**ITEM:** An Italian television show broadcast to the USA last November concerned a proposed law that would allow overseas Italians to vote in Italian parliamentary elections. The fear was raised that New York area Italians would vote *mafiosi* into the Parliament.

**COMMENT:** The fear was put forth by the *Lega Nord* (Northern League) politicians. Their ultimate goal is to separate the north and south of Italy. With one of their top officials jailed for bribes they certainly need not fear the New York vote. Anyway, why must the Italic community in America be smeared from both sides of the Atlantic? The *Lega Nord* has opened an office in New York City to be among us. Is it really a good idea?



**ITEM:** A greeting card with an unflattering Italian theme.

**COMMENT:** A group of five men talking on a New York street has the caption, "I'm Gonna Make You An Offer You Can't Refuse!" Just to insure that the unsuspecting reader knows the connotation of the now-famous remark, the reverse of the card states: "One of these guys is not Italian. Can you tell which one?" The real questions should be: Why do people produce such cards and why does a card store sell them?

**ITEM:** An ad in the *New Republic Magazine* soliciting bisexual members states that this manly persuasion dates back to ancient Greece and Rome.

**COMMENT:** Certainly there is no doubt that many Greeks and some Romans pursued bisexual activities. However, this club with no name used the picture of Caesar Augustus as their inspiration. The founder of the Roman Empire and the creator of the Pax Romana (200 years of peace) was emperor for 41 years, married to the same woman the whole time, and despised by Roman libertines, including his own oversexed daughter, for legislating morality. This is not the man to inspire AC/DC devotees.

## Bisexual Men

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**ITEM:** *The New York Times* trashes Naples with the headline, "Naples Ready to Elect a Mayor, but Does It Matter?"

**COMMENT:** Any sane person reading the article by our favorite cafe correspondent Alan Cowell would consider Naples, if not Italy, ready for a UN Peacekeeping Force. "Can a bankrupt, mob-ridden city be governed?" asks the bewildered Cowell. Then, in one easy sentence he states, "Schools and hospitals don't work." Doesn't this man have editors watching over him? If *The NY Times* can speak in gross generalities then perhaps they ought to reread their own report comparing national education results (12/9/93): Italian 13- and 14-year-olds surpass U.S., U.K and Canadian children in math. And although they are just below average in reading they are no worse than the Dutch.





# Media Madness

**ITEM:** A Black clergyman sees "fascists" in candidate Rudy Giuliani's supporters during the New York City mayoral election

**COMMENT:** Maybe it is just a coincidence but this is the second time that an Italian-American candidate has been linked with the term "fascist". First it was Senator Alphonse D'Amato during his re-election campaign against state Attorney General Robert Abrams. It's getting to be like word association: Italian surname = fascist. We suppose it's an improvement over the other association. The one that begins with "m"



**ITEM:** *Tonight Show* host Jay Leno, in a routine about the justices of the Supreme Court on the night of August 19th, joked that Justice Antonin Scalia signs all his opinions in blood.

**COMMENT:** Leno, of course, has the now famous Ital-baiting license, after all he is part Italian. Such a license is available to any Italic person (full, half, quarter, etc.) who needs to get a laugh at any cost. Alan Brown Alda has the very same license that permitted him to produce *Betsy's Wedding*. And Leno, who had the darndest time trying to pronounce Scalia's name, was probably a little nervous while making the crack.

**ITEM:** A revival of the 1922 Broadway play *Abie's Irish Rose* is panned by *Newsday's* critic Aileen Jacobson for being a gross stereotyping of Jews and Irish.

**COMMENT:** The long-running off-Broadway hit *Tony & Tina's Wedding* has been the darling of all the critics even though it makes Italian-Americans the butt of one endless joke. So popular is the stereotypical show that there was even a float with Tony and Tina in Chicago's Columbus day parade last October. Aileen, get use to it. Maybe defamation is the sincerest form of flattery.



**ITEM:** The city of Chicago has an obsession with its former gangster image. The city's welcoming center greets tourists with a mannequin reproduction of the St. Valentine's Day Massacre. Elsewhere in town the Gilbert Theater is playing *Breaking Legs*, a comedy about a Mafia-produced stage show; Rosebud's Restaurant advertises that it "Feeds the Whole Mob", whatever that means; and there is a new eatery named *Goodfellas*. But the greatest display of the city's Mob pride is the opening of Al Capone's house as a museum.

**COMMENT:** Hey, as long as it doesn't affect the Italian image, who cares! Who is kidding whom? (We thank member Bill Dal Cerro of the Midwest Council for his research.)





# News of the Institute

## MIDWEST COUNCIL ESTABLISHED

The kickoff luncheon for our new Midwest Council was held on October 14th at the Swissotel in downtown Chicago. Twenty new council members were in attendance as the Institute banner was turned over to Advisor Don Fiore by ISI Development Chairman John Mancini. A follow-up meeting was held to hammer out organizational matters and pro tem officers were elected. Elections are scheduled for the month of February. The *pro tem* officials are: Vice President Allan Adducci, Treasurer Anthony Farace, Financial Secretary John Locallo, Deputy Secretary of Programs & Administration Donald Fiore.



Vice president *pro tem* Allan Adducci (center)

## GIFT & MEMBERSHIP CAMPAIGN

The winner of the \$1,000 incentive prize was Dominick Bianco of Staten Island, NY. The drawing was held at the November 18th Plenary Council luncheon. Thirty new members joined the Institute during the course of the campaign which is now officially closed. Gift points may be redeemed through the month of February, 1994.



Development Chairman John Mancini, left, passes ISI banner to Don Fiore.

## OCTOBER REJECTION

The various media, in its infinite wisdom, rejected the Institute's request this fall for a celebration of Italian-American themes. ISI suggested to a number of newspapers and television shows that coverage be given to the positive side of Italian-Americans as well as a televised confrontation between actors who play stereotypes and representatives of organizations which combat their effects. Only the *Oprah Show* indicated a remote interest. (see Letters)

## PERFECT PICNIC

The Third Annual New York Council Picnic was held at Prazl Hofbrau on Sept 18th. Social Chairman Pat Grecco counted in excess of 460 people on hand despite the drizzle. It was the best showing since the event was added to our social calendar.



## MEDIA OFFENSIVE BEGUN

A quarter-page ad was taken in the September 6th issue of *Variety*, Hollywood's newspaper, to demand a stop to the Mafia themes in movies and television. The ad was specifically directed to Italian-American filmmakers, actors, actresses, and producers. It appeared within the Venice Film Festival section.

The Midwest Council managed to get an article with photo published in the *Chicago Sun Times* on October 17th, written by Advisor Don Fiore. The article lambasted *NYPD Blues* and producer Steven Bochco for consistently degrading the Italian image.





## KIDS, KIDS

The Aurora Youth Program got off to an excellent start last October with an enrollment of twenty-three 5th & 6th graders at our Floral Park, LI, facility. The Saturday classes are open to all surrounding communities and ethnic groups. In fact, one-third of the students do not have Italian surnames. The first level of instruction is offered at no charge. The second level requires membership in the Institute or a \$25 registration fee. Aurora is an excellent way to reach the children and recruit their parents.



## UNIVERSITY DONATION

The Council of Governors has approved a recommendation for a grant of \$25,000 toward a chair in Italian Studies at Purchase College, State University of New York (SUNY). The Plenary Council will vote on the grant as part of the annual budget package. For additional information or to make a contribution call Lou Brevetti at (516) 488-7400.



## SEPTEMBER LUNCHEON

The New York Plenary Council held a luncheon at the 60 East Club (60 East 42nd St.) on September 16th, Noon. The program included U.S. Olympic skier Maria Guarnieri who is entered in the ballet skiing competition in the 1994 Winter Olympics. A donation was made from the picnic raffle proceeds to the U.S. Olympic Committee in support of our athletes.

## HOLIDAY LUNCHEON EXCEEDS FORECAST

It was planned and executed in less than a month but the First Annual Holiday Luncheon at Manhattan's 60 East Club exceeded all records with 180 people in attendance. The luncheon featured a guest chef from Classico Ristorante on Long Island, co-owned by Plenary Council member Pietro Riva, who prepared a superb five course meal. The special guest was actor Tony LoBianco, a long-time friend and member of the Institute. (Tony is off to Africa for a new film about WW II, in which he plays an Italian Army captain.) Social Chairman Pat Grecco and his committee can be credited with yet another success.

## 6th ANNUAL DINNER DANCE UNDERWAY

Like clockwork, the New York Plenary Council has begun planning the annual fundraiser at the Waldorf-Astoria. Events Coordinator Monica Polizzi reported that Joseph Donnolo of Advanced Contracting will chair the affair. The honoree will be Jack Conroy of the Manhattan real estate firm of Williamson Pickett Gross. The date is Saturday evening, May 21, 1994.





# PROFILES



## William Paca An Italic Founding Father?

It has been assumed by many Italian-American historians and organizations that William Paca (pronounced PAY-ka), a signer of the Declaration of Independence from Maryland, was of Italian lineage. This assumption was not merely based upon Paca's Italianate name but rather on published statements from the signer's descendants attesting to the fact. The Encyclopedia Britannica, that bastion of Anglo-Saxony, in its 1969 edition lists Paca as being of "English-Italian" ancestry. So who would question the pedigree of an Italic William Paca? Why, the Maryland Historical Society, that's who.

The Italic Studies Institute learned of this official denial of Paca's background when our newsletter representatives Robert and Michelle Vricella paid a visit to the Wm. Paca House Museum in Annapolis, MD, in early 1993. Robert and Michelle happened to ask the museum staff if there was any information on Paca's Italian background. After informing our researchers that they were misinformed, the staff provided information refuting the alleged Italian ancestry. It appears from the letters and book excerpts we received that the Maryland Historical Society is quite obsessed with keeping Paca a pure Anglo-Saxon. Of the 56 signers of the Declaration the overwhelming majority were WASPs. However, there were men of Irish, Scottish, Welsh, Swedish, and Dutch ancestry - although all northern European. Only Paca was a Latin. Some Marylanders over the years have found this disturbing.

So who is correct? The Historical Society claims to have done an admittedly incomplete genealogical search and found no evidence of *Italianita'*. Surprisingly, the Society has even instructed the Paca family to prove their own oral tradition! The name Paca, they claim, must be a variation of some good ole English name like Parker, Pace (which also happens to be a good ole Italian name), Packe, Peake, or Pake. Case closed. Our research thus far has uncovered a 1904 *Baltimore Sun* article quoting the Paca family tradition which states that the name is derived from, and is related to, Pecci (PEH-chee) the

surname of Pope Leo XIII. This would explain why the family pronounced their first syllable as PAY rather than PAH. The family tradition was restated in 1937 by great-great-great grandson William Paca in a letter to the *New York Times*.

Other tidbits lend credence to the family tradition. The signer named his own son Aquila, after his father. Aquila means eagle in Latin and Italian. It is also a family name from southern Italy as well as the name of the capital of Abruzzi. (The Maryland Historical Society rebuts that Aquila was commonly used as a first name by Roman-loving Englishmen.) Moreover, the 1938 Paca recalled crates of Italian trade goods left by his ancestor. But perhaps the signer, like Thomas Jefferson, was only an Italophile. And finally, Italic colonists who emigrated from England were not unheard of, the most famous being the Taliaferro clan in the 1600's. The Taliaferros were Virginia landowners who served in the Revolutionary War. Black educator Booker T. Washington was born with the name Booker Taliaferro. The name has many variations including Tolliver, which in most telephone books will refer you to the spelling Taliaferro.

So who is right? Is the Paca family tradition just a lot of wishful thinking? Did the Encyclopedia Britannica merely parrot the family oral history? Something strange is going on in the State of Maryland.

But Paca isn't the only mystery. Why did Lord Calvert, founder of Maryland Colony, have an Italian motto on his family coat of arms? To this day, Maryland is the only state in the union with an Italian motto — *Fatti Maschi, Parole Femmine* ("Deeds are Masculine, Words are Feminine").

\*\*\*\*

(Ed. We wish to thank Rocco Lombardo of the NY Public Library and Michelle and Robert Vricella for their research on this article.)

### Signers of the Declaration

Name	Birth-Death	National origin
John Hancock	1737-93	English
Button Gwinnett	c.1735-77	English
Lyman Hall	1725-90	English
George Walton	c.1740-1804	English
William Hooper	1742-90	English
Joseph Hewes	1730-79	English
John Penn	1741-88	English
Edward Rutledge	1749-1800	English
Thomas Heyward, Jr.	1746-1809	English
Thomas Lynch, Jr.	1749-79	Irish-Dutch-English
Arthur Middleton	1742-87	English
Samuel Chase	1741-1811	English
William Paca	1740-99	Italian-English
Thomas Stone	1743-87	English
Charles Carroll of Carrollton	1737-1832	Irish
George Wythe	1726-1806	English
Richard Henry Lee	1732-94	English
Thomas Jefferson	1743-1826	English
Benjamin Harrison	1726-91	English
Thomas Nelson, Jr.	1738-89	Scottish-English
Francis Lightfoot Lee	1734-97	English
Carter Braxton	1736-97	English
Robert Morris	1734-1806	English
Benjamin Rush	1745-1813	English
Benjamin Franklin	1706-90	English
John Morton	1724-77	Swedish-English
George Clymer	1739-1813	English
James Smith	c.1719-1806	Scottish-Irish
George Taylor	1716-81	Scottish-Irish
James Wilson	1742-98	Scottish
George Ross	1739-79	Scottish
Caesar Rodney	1728-84	English
George Read	1733-98	Irish-Welsh
Thomas McKean	1734-1817	Scottish-Irish
William Floyd	1734-1821	Welsh-English
Philip Livingston	1716-78	Dutch-Scottish
Francis Lewis	1713-1803	Welsh
Lewis Morris	1726-98	English-Dutch
Richard Stockton	1730-81	English
John Witherspoon	1723-94	Scottish
Francis Hopkinson	1737-91	English
John Hart	c.1711-79	English
Abraham Clark	1726-94	English
Josiah Bartlett	1729-95	English
William Whipple	1730-85	English
Matthew Thornton	1714-1803	Scottish-Irish
Samuel Adams	1722-1803	English
John Adams	1735-1826	English
Robert Treat Paine	1731-1814	English
Elbridge Gerry	1744-1814	English
Stephen Hopkins	1707-85	English
William Ellery	1727-1820	English
Roger Sherman	1721-93	English
Samuel Huntington	1731-96	English
William Williams	1731-1811	English
Oliver Wolcott	1726-97	English





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### **Mafia** (from p.15)

union pension funds (by the way, Jimmy Hoffa was not Italic), rigging bids in construction projects, gambling and other sin services. In truth, Mafia-watching does not prevent all crime. For example, crime families such as Charles Keating and his son, with numerous other non-Italic S & L executives, were busy ripping off America to the tune of \$200 billion while the Feds were taping John Gotti's every utterance. Long Island car dealer John MacNamara was fleecing General Motors of nearly \$1 billion while investigators were videotaping Vinny the Chin on his morning promenade in slippers and pj's. District attorneys were zeroing in on price-fixing in the New York City cement industry when Ivan Boesky, Michael Milken, and Dennis Levine were contributing to the crash of the stock market.

In short, the movies and press have not shed light on organized crime, only narrowed the beam.

### CONTROLLING THE IMAGINATION

It is considered bad form to question the existence of a centralized, all-powerful Mafia headquartered in Corleone or Palermo, Sicily. Governor Mario Cuomo of New York was once taken to task for questioning the definition of the word "Mafia". And yet fantastic reports from around the world would have us believe such things as: the Mafia ordered the assassination of President Kennedy; the Mafia has access to nuclear weapons to supply mad dictators; the Mafia is developing the criminal markets of eastern Europe and Russia (This adds immensely to their linguistic reputation alone!); the Mafia

causes forest fires; "Sicilians" operate on a "planetary scale" controlling the world's heroin and cocaine traffic.

We really ought to get hold of ourselves. The first step is to stop the bogeyman movies and books that flood the public's senses every day. Hollywood studios and publishers must be persuaded to find new interests, perhaps something closer to reality. The second step is to educate ignorant Italians and Italian-Americans. The fact is Italic crooks managed to rise to high positions in the criminal heap but they are not that good. Let's give others their due. Politicians and journalists in Italy, as well as the Italian-American community, have to stop bragging about the power of Italic criminals. It is becoming almost an operatic form seeing our bad seed as the "best of the worst." Although it may be nice to dream that a wise-guy could be called in to bash your noisy neighbor's head, few Italian-Americans have those connections. Yet, many do not see the harm in making other people think they have those connections. Likewise, folks must stop bragging about how safe Italian-American neighborhoods are. Find out what that neighborhood's auto theft rate is or how many homes have window bars and security alarms before bragging that the Mafia is protecting it.

Most of all, it is necessary to separate our lives and our cultural patrimony from the Mafia strangers in our midst. Although we cannot deny their blood relation there is reason to suspect that somewhere in the distant past some of their ancestors did not speak the same Latin that ours did.

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*The Italic Way*





## DINO (from p.18)

film industry comprised entirely of Italian criminal caricatures. Bobby DeNiro, Chazz Palminteri, Al Pacino, Paul Sorvino and Joe Pesci are but a handful of the Italo-American lunkheads who have debased their culture.

It is this lurid subculture that Nick Tosches attempts to graft onto his biography of Dean Martin. Instead of a celebratory recreation of the man's rise to fame, fortune and fable—warts and all—Tosches bores the reader with a fanciful, semi-slandering account of Dino's foibles. It might as well have been titled *Dino Dearest*. No one ever suggested that Dean be canonized. But then the same could be said of Bing Crosby, who encountered manymobsters in the speakeasies of Prohibition. Or Elvis Presley, whose descent into drugs, obesity and perversion gave new meaning to the word deviant.

The author sprinkles his prose with enough Italian words to impress those conversant in the language of Dante Alighieri. But he undercuts the majesty of it all by his constant references to "dago," "wop," "greaseball," and "guinea." Whenever an Italian name appears in the book, Nick Tosches quickly resorts to the aforementioned slurs. Is he merely recounting the feelings of some anti-Italian cretins, or is he giving vent to his own prejudices? One cannot be sure.

Another hackneyed device Tosches employs is the new journalism technique of omniscient telepathy. Thus,

we can read Dean's thoughts and learn how he loathed working with Rock Hudson on the set of *Showdown*. And we are treated to the hoariest of all Italian homilies, "*La vecchiaia e' carogna*." Old age is carrion. This shorthand schtick bespeaks a dearth of research. Indeed, Tosches left out some fascinating details about Dino's life that might have helped to understand the superstar's alleged *menefreghismo*, or uncaring nature.

Although Tosches expertly details Martin's thorny relationship with Jerry Lewis, the author ignores Dino's friendships with John Wayne, Bing Crosby, Jimmy Stewart and Orson Welles. Tosches spends too little time on Martin's rebirth as a dramatic actor following his split with the egomaniacal Lewis. And he fails to convey the sheer magnitude of Dino's cinematic achievements. Here is this tuxedo-territory crooner outacting Marlon Brando and Montgomery Clift in *The Young Lions*, dominating John Wayne in *Rio Bravo* and stealing *Some Came Running* out from under a flaccid Frank Sinatra. Dean Martin should have won an Academy Award for any one of those breakthrough films. Certainly, his directors—Howard Hawks, Henry Hathaway, Vincente Minelli and Billy Wilder—gave him the highest marks as an actor's actor. As did his peers. Tony Franciosa, his co-star in *Career*, told how the set erupted in spontaneous applause after

Dino had completed a particularly telling dramatic scene. Like Spencer Tracy, Dean was a no-nonsense-let's-get-it-done actor who always knew his and everyone else's lines. Unlike his ex-partner, Jerry Lewis, he did not whine and kvetch on the set.

Dino's penchant for female pulchritude is well documented in Tosches' book. His affairs of the heart and dalliances were numerous. Thankfully, the author also includes the accolades of Martin's female co-stars. Virtually all of them found Dean to be the consummate professional. Susan Clark referred to him as the quintessential "Italian gentleman."

For general readers and Dean Martin fans, this book is a disappointment. Tosches does a masterful job of conveying the pain and joy of Dean's early days in New York and his meteoric if mercurial team-up with Jerry Lewis. But he gives short shrift to Dino's film and TV career. He also fails to fully convey Martin's intense Italic pride. One of Dean's hit songs in the mid 1960s was *I Take A Lot of Pride In What I Am*. Dean Martin's last full-fledged film was *Mr. Ricco*. In it he played an Italian-American attorney whose defense of a militant black radical sparked a racially-charged murder mystery. That may have been the last time a major Italian-American star portrayed a positive and intelligent Italo-American on film. As Italian-Americans, we can take a lot of pride in Dean Martin. -R.A. Iaconis



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