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Salvatore Lupo. *History of the Mafia.* Translated by Antony Shugaar. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009. xvi + 328 pp. $32.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-231-13134-6.

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Italy's National Tragedy with the Mafia

Salvatore Lupo, a professor of contemporary history at the University of Palermo, painstakingly makes his way toward a definition of "the Mafia." It is, he says toward the end of this well-researched and, for the most part, compellingly argued book, "an organization that links criminals together in an age-old, well-consolidated structure, rendered more compact by the ritual of oath, capable of surviving, renewing itself, and growing ever stronger over the course of more than a century" (p. 266). The key element in his definition concerns the Mafia's capacity for renewal. Although some of the Mafia's constituent elements, such as a vigorous culture of banditry in Sicily, indeed are centuries old, Lupo dates the organization's effective origins from Italy's unification, calling the Mafia "a by-product of this process" (p. 48). Sicilian criminal elements moved into the vacuum created by the violent upheavals on the island. From its inception, the Mafia has adapted itself to changing conditions, first in Sicily, then on the mainland, and ultimately on the international scene.

What the North perceived in 1861 as unification, many in the South opposed as occupation and exploitation. Franco Molfese analyzes the mass peasant uprising known as the Brigandage in his authoritative *Storia del brigantaggio dopo l'Unità* (1964). For more than a dozen years, guerrilla warfare ravaged the South, aggravating the region's backwardness and creating an ideal environment for the proliferation of criminal activities. A group of scholars and intellectuals, collectively known as the *meridionalisti* (the "southernists") set out to explore the reasons for the region's mounting post-Risorgimento economic, social, and political woes. They especially worried about the South's losing battle with crime. Lupo avails himself very slightly of *meridionalista* literature, resting content with scattered pejorative remarks about one of these figures, Leopoldo Franchetti. He identifies Franchetti as a paradigmatic "anthropologist," whose writings had the effect of typecasting southerners, high and low, as a backward race of people with a proven lack of aptitude for modern civilized life. Lupo laments that Franchetti's *Condizioni politiche e amministrative della Sicilia* (1877) served as the point of departure for a vast and essentially misconceived literature about the South as an "infected society" in need of quarantine and cauterization at the hands of the sound and progressive North.

I found Lupo's anti-*meridionalista* comments to be unpersuasive, mainly because he does not engage his adversaries except in a disappointingly selective way. In fact, the *meridionalisti* deserve far more respect than he gives them. They made errors of judgment and often used language that does not meet current standards for political correctness, to be sure. Nevertheless, there were men among them who undertook heroic exertions to expose the terrible conditions of exploitation that Lupo himself shows to have been tragically real and enduring in the Italian South. The *meridionalisti* require supplementing today as historians, not the liquidation that Lupo proposes for them.

Liberals themselves for the most part, the *meridionalisti* documented the disconcerting irony of Italian liberalism: despite their ardently professed intentions to provide uplift for the South, the men of the Risorgimento revealed themselves to be powerless in reducing or even containing criminality there. Franchetti and his *meridionalisti* colleagues–Pasquale Villari, Giustino For-

tunato, and Pasquale Turiello among the most famous of the first generation–thought that the fault for this failure stemmed from the intrinsic defects of southern culture. Lupo's deeper explanation effectively supplements the *meridionalisti* without refuting, as he seems to think that he is doing, their thesis about the manifold defects of southern societies. He shows how the northern power structure turned to the emerging Mafia as a means of maintaining control of Sicily. There developed almost from the beginning of Italy's national history "the clientelistic relationship between pieces of the Mafia and pieces of the state" (p. 93). A complex set of relationships became established in these years among politics, finance, corruption, ordinary criminality, and Mafia criminality down to World War I and the onset of the Fascist era.

The Fascists ended the historic relationship between the Mafia and the state. As an aspiring totalitarianism, Benito Mussolini's regime could tolerate no rivals for power. His attempts to blunt the political pretensions of the Catholic Church and to reduce the monarchy to a subordinate status originated in the same mentality that induced him to appoint the ruthless Cesare Mori as the prefect of Palermo. Lupo tersely summarizes the Fascist record in Sicily: "Amidst terroristic excesses, the conviction of innocent defendants, and political persecution, the policeman Mori and his inquisitor [Luigi] Giampietro met and soundly beat the Mafia" (p. 187). His account of the Fascist triumph raises a disturbing question: Is the Mori strategy the only way to defeat the Mafia? Certainly, the post-Risorgimento Liberals had no answer for the problem of Mafia criminality. Toward the post-World War II Christian Democratic establishment and the so-called Second Republic of the post-Cold War period Lupo adopts an attitude of withering scorn for their feckless reliance on the Mafia politically in the time-tested manner of the Liberals.

Parliamentary Liberals, Christian Democrats, and their successors in the Italy of Romano Prodi and Silvio Berlusconi all have the same vulnerability in the face of pressure group politics at which the Mafia has shown itself to be a master. From its inferior position in the nineteenth century as the intermediary between the Sicilian underworld and Italian officialdom, the Mafia experienced a dramatic surge of power, wealth, and influence after 1943. Lupo cites this growth trend in refuting the thesis of Pino Arlacchi's influential book, *La Mafia imprenditrice* (1983), that with the disintegration of traditional society brought on by modernization, the Mafia experienced a profound crisis in the post-World War II era. Lupo argues that just the opposite took place in these years, as "the Mafia gave unmistakable and tragic signs of vigor" (p. 205). In the 1960s an internal war for control of the Mafia produced appalling carnage. With the police pinned down during the following decade by the assault of right-wing and left-wing terrorists, the Mafia experienced yet another boom period.

But the Mafia's brilliant success in adapting itself to consumer society accounted for more of the organization's phenomenal growth than did the distracting demands of the terrorism front. Contrary to the expectations of experts who claimed that modern conditions would be fatal for the provincial Mafia, "the 'developed' world ... proved to be a market that was perhaps more fruitful even than Sicily" (p. 230). The narcotics business gave the Mafia fabulous returns. The heroin trade alone accounted for as much as a billion dollars annually. Such profits intensified factional rivalries and produced a second Mafia war during the early 1980s. Hundreds of people died in the ensuing slaughter.

The Mafia responded to the state's belated attempt to stop the gangland slayings in Sicily by murdering nearly a score of policemen, military officers, judges, and politicians in rapid succession. The 1982 killing of Carlo Alberto Dalla Chiesa, the Carabiniere general who had led the successful fight against the Red Brigades after Aldo Moro's murder four years earlier, caused a national outrage. General Dalla Chiesa's murder also revealed the Mafia's complete lack of fear in directly confronting a state that for most of the organization's history it had been content to manipulate through corruption. The state did not back down from this confrontation. An anti-Mafia pool of investigating magistrates led by Antonino Caponnetto and including Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino secured confessions from Tommaso Buscetta and other repentant *mafiosi*.

The so-called maxi-trial of 1986, in which 707 indicted criminals stood trial, was a confrontation from which the Mafia could not back down. In 1992, they murdered two of their worst nemeses in the anti-Mafia pool, Falcone and Borsellino. That same year they also killed Salvo Lima and Ignazio Salvo, the Mafia's two key links to the Christian Democratic Party. To cope with the shattering repercussions of these assassinations, the government dispatched the army to Sicily.

The Lima and Salvo murders shed light on the intertwined destinies of the Mafia and the Christian Democrats. The two victims had belonged to Giulio Andreotti's entourage in Sicily. They had performed the

classic mediating functions between the Mafia and the state. The Mafia had liquidated them in order to express its displeasure over not having received protection to which it felt entitled for having supported the party. Lupo scathingly rebukes Andreotti, many times Italy's premier, for his "bad faith" and denounces the *andreottiani* as the most polluted political faction on the island. He thinks that Andreotti, in the manner of many Christian Democrats and Liberals before him, affected nonchalance about the Mafia, pretending to himself that he could use this criminal organization as a vote-getter without being besmirched by it. Lupo calls that pretense the grand illusion of Italian politics and the institutional cover for "the unprecedented danger that the Mafia has posed over the past thirty years of Italian history" (p. 274).

Writing in 1996 about the Mafia, Lupo expressed the hope in his book's final sentence "that this formidable historical continuity can soon be interrupted" (p. 275). On the most welcome occasion of this informative book's translation into English, it is to be regretted that he did not add a postscript for the 1996-2009 period. No one would be better prepared than Lupo to provide an authoritative update for Italy's national tragedy with the Mafia.

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