

Italian-American conversations on the mafia: Danilo Dolci visits Philadelphia's 1961 Festival of Italy

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In 1961 the peace activist and anti-mafia campaigner Danilo Dolci spoke at a protest event at the Italian centennial of unification celebrations hosted by the City of Philadelphia. The reactions to the talk he gave on development initiatives in Western Sicily provide some insight into the transnational discussion that was developing around the mafia, governance and leadership in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Dolci and his supporters made the suggestion that the problems encountered by the post-war governments in Italy, Sicily and Philadelphia were a result of leaderships which presented or made the appearance of change but did not fix the underlying problems. This article maps how the conversation developed, why the idea of the mafia as a 'thing', an operating criminal organisation with Sicilian origins, was such an important narrative, and what it meant for those trying to make a claim to leadership positions.

Keywords: Danilo Dolci; Italian-American; mafia; Sicily; Italian centennial; development

Introduction

In 1961 a hundred years of Italian Unification was celebrated world-wide through tens of thousands of commemorative gestures. The two largest, officially sponsored and most internationally recognised events were in two first capitals: *Italia '61* in Turin and the Festival of Italy in Philadelphia, twin cities for the year (Scott 1961). In both celebrations the theme was unity, which, defined as progress, resulted from a moment of rebirth or renaissance and involved some form of conciliation. 'Renaissance' was the term chosen to signal the new period and had a particular valence in 1961 Philadelphia (Hunter 1962, 63). In 1952 Democrats were elected in City Hall for the first time in 60 years after a sustained campaign by the newly elected mayor, Joseph S. Clark, and his friend, Richardson Dilworth, to unearth a number of sensational scandals in the long-labelled 'corrupt and contented' Republican administration (Steffens 1903). Clark promised that under his leadership Philadelphia would 'reclaim its birthright as an internationally-minded centre of commerce and culture' (Ferleger 1961a, 9; Clark & Clark 1982, 653–658). One of the civic amenities marked for rejuvenation was the Festival site, the Commercial Museum, which was founded in 1893 to exhibit raw materials as a way to encourage new avenues for foreign trade (Beers 1982, 460–468; Benson 1954). Trade took off but the museum did not and by the 1950s it was a 'dark, dusty, obsolete warehouse of 50-year-old materials' (Hunter 1962, 58). Under the new City Charter US\$10 million was allocated to bring 'the museum once more to the front rank of educational and cultural institutions in the city' and Harry Ferleger was appointed

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director, with Lawrence M.C. Smith as the chairman of the Board of Trade and Conventions (Smith and Ferleger 1958, 7). Ferleger and Smith were friends, members and supporters of the Democratic Party and labour unions and founder members of the Philadelphia chapter of Americans for Democratic Action (ADA). The museum reopened on 15 May 1956 ('Commercial Museum is Big Draw' 1961) with two linked exhibitions: 'Philadelphia Panorama' and 'Festival of Nations', a series of temporary exhibitions with nations with which Philadelphia had trade and cultural links (Press Release 1956). The Festival of Italy was to be the grand finale and its organisation was assigned to Ferleger and Count Edgardo Sogno del Vallino, the Italian consul-general in Philadelphia ("Festival of Italy" Seen by 250,000' 1961).

The Festival coincided with leadership crises in Philadelphia and Sicily which provoked questions about the new leadership in Philadelphia, Italy and Sicily, and the Italian and Sicilian character. In this article I shall focus on a talk given at the Festival's Sicilian exhibit by Danilo Dolci, then a 37-year-old peace activist, teacher and anti-mafia campaigner who lived in western Sicily. It was organised by a local Sicilian-American and lecturer in Italian at the University of Pennsylvania, Jerre Mangione, who disagreed with the Sicilian exhibit message – 'all is well in Sicily' (Mangione 1961a) – and wanted to incite a discussion on how discourses of development were framed, how Italians and Sicilians were discussed and stereotyped in Cold War America, and how these factors influenced the civic leadership and civil society roles they could assume. The talk given by Dolci was based on the findings of his new work, *Spreco (Waste)* (1960), in which he argued that waste was created by corruption and party politics, which blocked the formation of a functioning civil society. Dolci contradicted the message conveyed in the Festival and the Sicilian exhibit. He not only spoke openly about clientelism but he suggested that the Mafia was a thing, in operation, in control in Sicily, and in alliance or partnership with not just the Sicilian but also the national government. This threw into question the viability of the trade initiatives proposed in the Festival and raised questions about the tendencies or behaviours of Sicily or Italy in Philadelphia.

This article is a study of how and why these questions were raised and responded to in the context of the Festival: it came about through the direction of Christopher Duggan. Noticing Dolci's name in the research I brought back from the United States, he urged me to further investigate the significance of the debate Dolci raised and to look closely at the figure of Dolci. Duggan had met Dolci when he was in Sicily undertaking his doctoral research, which he notes in the preface to *Fascism and the Mafia* (1989). Duggan's work is a study of how the operation of the Mafia can be used to explain the backwardness of Sicily, of why problems persisted in the area following unification, of the political value of the conceptualisation of the Mafia as a 'way of life' and an 'attitude of mind'(xi). In Duggan's much cited and much debated work he defines the Mafia as 'an idea' and traces how and why the concept of the Mafia as a criminal organisation or Sicilian secret society was manufactured 'as an explanation for many confusing aspects of the Sicilian problem' and – ultimately – for the problems of unification (31). Duggan studies the power of the explanation 'the Mafia was to blame' (56) becoming 'received wisdom' (57) and his assertion that making the Mafia synonymous with Sicily and Sicilian disguises a more 'complex social, economic and political life' (91) is the same as that made by Dolci in his speech at the Festival. This article analyses how and why it came about and its ramifications for those living on both sides of the Atlantic in the early 1960s.

The Festival of Italy

The Festival took as its theme '100 years of Progress' and sought to 'bring into new focus the bonds of culture and commerce between our two nations' ('Festival of Italy' 1961). The Italy–US connection was key and on 11 July 1960 Ferleger left for Italy to secure sponsors: those that came

on board included Fiat, Olivetti, Motta, Esso Italiana, the Italian Institute for Foreign Trade, the Italian Government Printing Office, the Italian State Tourist Office, the Rotary Club in Ravenna, the Sicilian and Sardinian regional governments and Alitalia ('30 Firms Share in Festival of Italy' 1960; 'Italian Officials Hail Plan' 1960; 'Commercial Museum Staff' 1961). The Festival events comprised exhibitions, musical performances, balls, dinners, fashion parades, cooking demonstrations, wine tastings, concerts, puppet shows, operas, travel talks, motion pictures and lectures (Philadelphia Honorary Citizens Committee 1962). There were three exhibition themes: historical, industrial and cultural Italy ('Philadelphia Festival of Italy' 1961, 4). The historical exhibit, curated by the *Italia '61* historical exhibition committee in Turin, contained three sections: Ancient Civilisations; Renaissance; and Risorgimento, all of which pointed to the cultural richness of Italy and its legacy for democracy and contemporary civilisation. The cultural exhibit displayed 'Italian contributions to the artistic, political and commercial life of the US' (Ferleger 1961a, 13). The industrial exhibit had seven supporting displays presenting 'The resurgence of Italian leadership in design and manufacture of quality products which enrich the homes, businesses and lives of Americans' (Ferleger 1961a, 13). Italian industrialism was defined as the integration of the old – standards and style – and the new – industrial speed – and the presentation made a defence of the post-1948 Italian industrialisation policy that had been instituted using Marshall Funds and under the *Cassa per Opere Straordinarie di Pubblico Interesse nell'Italia Meridionale (Cassa)*.

The Sicilian exhibit in the industrial section placed particular focus on rebirth, displaying 'the glories of Sicily, past and present, its people, its products, its history' (Exhibition Brochure 1961) and how they were 'preserved and enhanced' due to 'regional economic development' which 'coupled with traditional arts and crafts have brought new prosperity' ('Sicily and Sardinia Featured' 1960). Accompanying the exhibit was an essay written by Ugo Morabito, a Torinese lawyer who was the commercial counsellor at the Italian embassy in Washington DC. He focused on the benefits brought about by Italy's 'economic miracle'. However, he said that growth in Italy had to take into account the benefits of national and international aid programmes, thus making the point that the region was not autonomous (Morabito 1961, 13). The exhibit focused on these programmes, making the argument that development was a balance of central government-funded large-scale industry (such as the operations of IRI and Eni) and artisanal enterprises that benefited from 'technical and economic assistance' – industrial canning, bottling, preserving – and that used 'new artistic styles which blend with and revitalise the old' ('Sardinian Crafts: Suggested Press Release' 1959; 'Sicily Exhibit Opens soon' 1961; Blackwood 1961).

Linked to the Sicilian exhibit was a trade initiative which brought together the Festival and the *Cassa*. Before Ferleger left for Italy in July 1960 he was approached by Andrew N. Farnese, a second-generation Italian-American who was regarded as the spokesperson for the Sicilian business community in Philadelphia (Blackwood 1961). Farnese was part of the influential Philadelphian legal and business elite and friends with some of the most important men in the city, notably Mayor Dilworth and the business magnate Albert M. Greenfield. Involved in national politics, Farnese had been active in the 1948 anti-communist campaigns and in 1960 became the head of the Italian-American Committee for Better Government. Farnese also endorsed candidates in local elections, which was of note as the Italian-American vote was of increasing importance ('Obituary: Andrew N. Farnese' 2003).

Farnese was heavily involved in the Festival organisation and he had a particular interest in the representation of Sicily and Sicilian development. He asked Ferleger to meet with his friends Mario Fasino and Ernesto Del Giudice (Svenson 1960). A committed Catholic and the director of *Voce Cattolica*, Fasino was a Democrazia Cristiana (DC) party politician who represented Palermo in the regional assembly. He was involved in the development of heavy industry and the

setting up of the regional tourist board, and in 1955 he was appointed as the Sicilian Regional Minister for Public Works and then later for Industry and Real Estate. In 1960 he picked up the Agriculture portfolio and directed the XI Commission for Agriculture and Forests, which advised on Marshall and *Cassa* expenditure. Del Giudice sat on the Commission in his capacity as the elected DC representative for Western Sicily in the national Chamber of Deputies and as head of viticulture at the Technical Agrarian Institute of Marsala. With Fasino and Del Giudice, Ferleger planned a trade initiative and in his trip report he proposed that the Festival include a feature on Sicilian wines: he asked for a temporary import licence for Sicilian wines to be stocked in the 640 state liquor stores throughout Pennsylvania (Svenson 1960).

The proposal went ahead, and included a visit by a Sicilian wine delegation from Marsala, led by Del Giudice. At the Sicilian exhibit's official reception guests were offered traditional Sicilian *aperitivi*: Capo Bianco, Moscato and Marsala all'Uovo. For the toasts they were given a first taste of Alcamo Spumante, which was promoted as 'Sicily's new venture into the field of sparkling wine' as it was made using the newest industrial techniques and marketed specifically for the trade ('Sicily Wine Delegation' 1961). Thus as visitors clinked their glasses, they symbolically toasted the re-establishment of the Commercial Museum as a trade centre, the success of the new City Charter, the successes of post-war Italian reconstruction industry and development plans and of the Sicilian and national leadership. The narrative told in the Sicilian exhibit was the one endorsed by the Italian government, the *Italia '61* Committee in Turin headed by Giuseppe Pella, the Festival organising committee and the Sicilian business community in Philadelphia. However, not everyone agreed with it, and it was for this reason that Mangione invited Dolci to speak.

Danilo Dolci

Danilo Dolci arrived in the Sicilian fishing village of Trappeto in February 1952, aged 28. Originally from Sesana in the north of Italy, Dolci remembered Trappeto from his childhood when his father had been posted there temporarily as a stationmaster. In 1943 Dolci had been arrested for anti-Fascist activity; in the immediate aftermath of the war he had worked with war orphans in Don Zeno Saltini's utopian community in Tuscany, Nomedelfia. Dolci then went on to study architecture and at the conclusion of his degree he returned to Trappeto (Bess 1993). He claimed that he was so disturbed by the misery that he witnessed on his arrival that he decided to hold an eight-day fast to force the municipal authorities to take direct action on child poverty and starvation and to make the regional government promise to build a pharmacy in the village, pave the streets and construct a sewerage system (Vitiello 1983).

Dolci remained in Trappeto and continued to work as a social activist – he repeated the hunger strike annually. He also married a local widow, became a father and established a communal space, Borgo di Dio, on the hill behind the village. Dolci's experiences in western Sicily led him to form the view that political corruption at a local, regional and national level and Mafia-related violence and crime were the chief causes of the problems in the area, and the reason for the continued existence of a society that he claimed remained feudal and governed by superstitious beliefs (Vitiello 1983, 13). He believed that what was needed to create change was a 'cultural and economic revolution that was non-violent and non-political and that developed through direct action at the grassroots level': he aimed to cause this by teaching self-help and a sense of community and individual responsibility (Vitiello 1983, 15).

Dolci set himself up in Sicily as a moral counterpoint to the local authorities and continued to hold hunger strikes and strikes-in-reverse, unauthorised public works. He also wrote and published on his campaigns and began to attract followers, among them Bertrand Russell and

Aldous Huxley, who described him in gushing tones as ‘a new Gandhi, a modern St Francis, equipped with much more than compassion and seraphic love’ (Huxley 1959). In February 1956 Dolci was arrested for defamation and imprisoned for two months (‘A Trial in Palermo’ 1956). The DC maintained that he was dangerous, as did the Catholic Church, who labelled him a ‘communist sympathiser’; the Sicilian Cardinal Ernesto Ruffini later called him one of the ‘plagues’ affecting Sicily (Bess 1993, 179; Mangione 1985, 55). In 1957 Dolci won the prestigious Viareggio Prize. He used the prize money to open the Centre for Study and Initiatives in Partinico, which attracted volunteer workers from Italy and overseas to teach new agricultural methods and community co-operation to local residents.

In November 1957 Dolci organised a Congress for Full Employment to generate further support for his projects and to establish a network of ‘full employment centres’ which would operate independently but in partnership with government initiatives, and run education programmes (‘Congresso’ 1957). The congress was quickly followed by another in April 1958, which was attended by René Dumont, Julian Huxley, Carlo Levi, Leonardo Sciascia and Elio Vittorini. Putting his plan into action, Dolci asked each of the international Friends of Danilo Dolci groups – in London, Paris, Geneva and Stockholm and, later, New York – to take on a centre and send volunteers who were trained community development and social workers to Sicily. Dolci built the first of these centres with the £20,000 he received when he won the 1958 Lenin Peace Prize (Doty 1965) and having done so he decided to ‘stand down’ (Bess 1993, 169) and apply himself to a problem: waging war on the water Mafia in western Sicily to provide a model of how development should happen. Dolci believed the Jato Dam irrigation scheme had the potential to revitalise the socio-political structures that supported the industry connected to it and ensure that ‘Sicily’s natural, agricultural and human resources are finally being used to meet authentic needs’ (Dolci in Mangione 1985, 14).

Dolci’s trip to the United States in 1961 was organised by the Orion Press, which had just published *Outlaws* (1960), the translation of *Inchiesta a Palermo* (1956), and the Friends of Dolci in the US. The Friends shared an interest in development, aid, colonialism, peace activism and humanitarian work, and included Aldous Huxley, Edward C. Banfield, Immanuel Wallerstein, Charles Page, Michele Cantarella, Warren Staebler, Reverend John Papandrew, Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy, Douglas Steere, William Robert Miller and Gelston McNeil. They secured sponsorship from, among others, the Harvard Divinity School; the Universities of Pennsylvania, Yale, Columbia, Princeton, Smith, Earlham, Haverford; the Fellowship Journal, the Community Church of New York, and the Overseas Friendship Center (‘Organising Committee for the American Visit of Danilo Dolci’ 1961). A notable member was the conservative and acclaimed American political scientist, Edward C. Banfield. In the early 1950s, Banfield and his family had lived for a year in Chiamonte, Basilicata, and in 1958 his book *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society* was published. Banfield concluded that civil society had not been established in Basilicata as the society he observed was ruled by the ethos of ‘amoral familism’, which prevented peasants working in any way that did not ‘maximise the material, short-run advantage of the nuclear family’ (Banfield 1958, 85). Banfield argued that to bring an end to the cycle of poverty in southern Italy, aid had to be coupled with an educational programme that would teach a self-help sensibility. While Banfield’s political views differed from Dolci’s and those of others on the committee, it is this understanding of the need for, and power of, education that united Dolci and his supporters.

Dolci linked the mode of behaviour Banfield described with the Mafia and violence in western Sicily, a connection he made clear in the talk he gave on 5 March 1961 at an unofficial afternoon reception at the Sicilian exhibit. In attendance were 75 ‘leading citizens, professors, writers, and some representatives from the Italian-American community’ (Mangione 1961a). His talk was

entitled 'Difficulties in the Development and Stimulation of New Initiatives in Western Sicily' (Sheeman 1961b; Mangione 1985, 8; 134). Dolci outlined what he viewed as 'three of the most serious aspects of the economic and social conditions in this region'. First, lack of education and training of 'intelligent men' who wanted to work but who were unskilled, which left available and usable resources squandered. Second, violence. Dolci showed a map identifying the locations of murders by 'paramilitary peasant squads, led by local *Mafiosi*.' He defined the Mafia as an organisation that used murder as a means for 're-establishing the local morality'. Third, government intervention that was 'unorganic' and 'non-collaborative' and did not respond to community needs. Instead it encouraged clientelism, which Dolci asserted had developed as a way of life and survival, and in reaction to a history of continuous invasion and domination. Clientelism thus created a situation in which 'the political, religious and legal authorities, together with the police AND [*sic*] the Mafia, are more or less connected to each other.' Furthermore, in the post-war period and in order to secure international development funds and aid to try to address what was judged to be the backwardness of the region, the government and its institutions were bound to implement a universal solution to a specific and local problem, as that would help them to prove the whole of Italy was of one particular character and identity – liberal and democratic. In his view the result of this approach was not long-term, real and infrastructural change but misspent resources and badly implemented schemes in areas where they served no need or application.

To make his point Dolci told the story of a fisherman who had returned to western Sicily after living in the US for 23 years. Despite long-term exposure to 'developed civilisation' the fisherman had refused worming treatment because he believed the old wives' tale that 'without [intestinal] worms we cannot live'. Dolci's argument was that the problem was not that the man held fast to ancient beliefs, but that he had not been educated: it had been wrongly assumed that simply living in the environment of the US would have changed his views. Dolci said that to stop intestinal worms killing children in western Sicily 'the distribution of 'chocolate-flavoured worm powder is not enough [...] water must be accessible [...] sewage [*sic*] systems built': but most of all there must be an active and targeted education campaign. Dolci argued that 'unorganic' leadership that ignored the grassroots and character traits that developed in response to these conditions, perpetuated the problem. Thus he concluded that financial, physical, material and human waste could only be minimised if those involved in leading investment and development had an intimate knowledge of the region and local folklore culture.

In order to understand what was needed in the South, those living there needed to be listened to, and education schemes run by and for those living there had to be implemented to allow their true character to emerge. He concluded by describing his four-stage approach to undertaking work in Sicily: 1) goodwill, a period of community integration; 2) documentation, gathering of information about the people and their lives and understanding the problems; 3) active resistance to the conditions and ways of life witnessed; 4) 'initiating systematic work which will lead towards development', which he was undertaking and seeking to fund (Dolci 1961). Dolci suggested that by making use of natural resources and teaching agricultural techniques, peasants and farmers on the island would first learn to live sustainably and become self-sufficient and later they would produce goods for export (Hutchens 1961). His argument was that by not following this approach, the national and Sicilian regional governments did not respond to local needs but instead to those of the Mafia and other patron-client relationships (Hutchens 1961).

Dolci's talk contradicted the approach to development presented in the Sicilian exhibit and he raised suspicions about how the funds for the loans Morabito referred to in his essay were dispersed. In doing so he brought to the fore the two aims of his trip. First, to find support for a 'scientific investigation of Mafia and violence' (Hofman 1960) and second to influence the

direction of the proposed initiative to send the just-formed US Peace Corps to set up and organise development projects in the Italian South. In contrast to Morabito, Dolci and his supporters were advising that aid should not go through governments but that the US should send a convoy of people who could be hosted by organisations such as Dolci's ('Italian Gandhi' 1961). Dolci was very open about these aims, as he told the US Peace Corps director: 'I come here ... to find qualified people to help us in our development work, which is to make self-sufficient the most miserable and bloodiest part of western Sicily' (Sheeman 1961a).

In his report for the Friends of Dolci in the US, executive Mangione described the general mood of the attendees at Dolci's talk 'to be most receptive and [they] asked intelligent questions afterwards'. One came from 'a certain Alex Gregorian, a Rumanian [*sic*] who published the *Italian-American Herald*' (Mangione 1961a). He asked Dolci to comment on the communist situation in Sicily and – providing no reassurance for Cold War warriors – Dolci replied that before the Second World War Sicily had been largely conservative but now one-third of the island voted for the Partito Comunista d'Italia (PCI). Gregorian sat with 'two or three hecklers in the audience' and Mangione noted 'they made statements, in Italian and English, attacking Danilo for his picture of western Sicily'. Although Mangione dismissed these interventions, saying '[t]heir effect was not important since it was quite obvious that the attack was a premeditated one,' they were taken up in the newspapers (Mangione 1961a).

An editorial for the *Italian-American Herald* described Dolci as a 'spiritually wormy character' (9 March 1961) and an article on his talk was subtitled "'Crusading" Dolci Seen as Red Dupe in Talks Here' (1961). Most notably, Farnese sent an 'Anti Dolci' letter to *Il Progresso Italo-Americano* (1961) which the *Herald* reprinted in English ('Letters to the Editor' 1961). Farnese began: 'Your presentation follows very closely the Communist Party line' and he questioned Dolci's intentions: 'You, a native of Trento, must try to understand that your defamatory method does not help Sicily anywhere [...] Because I know Sicily better than you I have an obligation' to correct. He also accused Dolci of wilfully ignoring the 'reassuring figures' in the national and regional budget and the results of programmes such as the *Cassa*. Farnese then bolstered his argument with statistics from the 'Italian Trade Topics' bulletin issued through the office of the commercial counsellor at the Italian Embassy in Washington. It showed a general rise in living standards by mapping consumption. Farnese also criticised Dolci's use of examples:

You very often generalise single episodes [...] Your attempt to convince others that your tales are the true examples of Sicilian life is obvious [...] your approach might be temporarily convenient for the group that you champion, but your approach is not at all advantageous for the Sicilians. ('Letters to the Editor' 1961)

Farnese agreed that Dolci's 'poor people' were real but his view was that the current progress indicated standards of living would keep increasing. Thus, Farnese argued, it was 'not necessary to adopt the well-known Communist methods' Dolci was using to gain support, and in doing so damaging the reputation of Sicily and the Sicilians and reinforcing a view that they were backward ('Letters to the Editor' 1961).

Mangione's response opened by accusing the Italian-American newspapers of 'dishonest journalism' and Farnese of deception in the way he reported progress in Sicily and discussed Dolci. Mangione challenged the figures and projections that Farnese relied on by pointing to the appendices in *Spreco* (1960). He also dismissed Farnese's accusation that Dolci did not look and behave as a missionary should, with the assertion that such stereotypes were precisely the ones that, when applied to Sicily, Farnese resisted. Finally, Mangione defended Victoria Bawtree, Dolci's translator, and stated that she had denounced neither the Catholic Church nor the Italian government. Bawtree was only trying to communicate the message that Dolci had consistently

repeated: 'We have remained outside politics ... we invite all parties, without exception, to study the problem concretely.' Thus she – and Dolci – spoke of a commitment to a politics of cooperation or consensus, not communism ('Letters to the Editor' 1961).

In a letter to his friend Gene, Mangione suggested the only reason those like Farnese were questioning Dolci's motives was because he contradicted the view of Sicilian development that had been chosen by those in power. Mangione's 'proof' was that the negative reaction to Dolci came from within the Italian-American community. In the wider world, Dolci's visit had been positively reported in Republican and Democratic newspapers and the funding he had received to come to the US was from prestigious sources (Mangione 1961b). Despite this, Mangione believed that it was important to defend Dolci's position because while 'intelligent and educated Italian-Americans' would discount the 'propaganda of such dishonest elements in the community [...] who will stoop to any dishonest means to defend the status quo in Italy', the problem as he saw it was that 'on the whole the Italian-American community in any large American city cannot be called an enlightened group [...] they are either politically ignorant or reactionary' and likely to swallow the line of 'frauds' like Farnese, 'hook, line and sinker'. In Mangione's view holding on to these beliefs resulted in 'waste' as it prevented societal development and progress through cooperation, and 'shady operators' remained undetected. He argued that for the Italian community to be united they did not all have to behave the same way and uncritically accept their leaders' views on what Italy and Italians should be (Mangione 1961a).

'Renaissance' or repetition?

The pleas made by Farnese and Mangione came as allegations of corruption, embezzlement and fraud were being lodged against the new Philadelphia leadership. The first signs of trouble were in 1959 when the radio broadcaster and print journalist, Donald Rose, blew the whistle on a radio DJ payola scandal, which was followed by the city controller Alexander Hemphill making public the Frankford Elevated Line refurbishment scandal ('The Need: A Grand Jury Probe' 1961; Rose 1961). These allegations raised questions about clientelism and what sort of 'renaissance' the 1952 Charter heralded for the city. Throwing the city administration into question did the same to the activities of the Commercial Museum. Many of those on the Festival of Italy organising committee and the new Commercial Museum board were also Democrats who belonged to the ADA, which brought together WASPs and leaders of ethnic and minority communities. These groups represented the 'new' leadership. In the post-war period Italian-Americans were active and respected participants in civic life and in the upper ranks of the Democrat and Republican parties as well as charitable and business organisations (Luconi 2001).

Questioning the nature of the Philadelphian 'renaissance' potentially connected clientelist and dishonest political practices to Italians and suggested they were the cause of the problems in the city council. It was an easy allegation to make, as by 1960 the perception that organised crime networks were synonymous with the Mafia had firmly taken hold. The Kefauver hearings in the US Senate a decade earlier had endorsed it, thereby shifting responsibility for the existence of organised crime and corruption linked to governing authorities squarely onto the shoulders of Italians (or indeed Sicilians), and had found evidence that governance in Philadelphia was manipulated by a 'political-police-gambler tie up' (US Senate 1951, 46; Duggan 1989, 3). The findings of Kefauver were echoed in works such as *Brotherhood of Evil: The Mafia* (1959). Written by *Reader's Digest* journalist Frederic Sondern in consultation with the head of the US Federal Bureau of Narcotics, it was an instant success, sitting on the *New York Times* bestseller list for 15 consecutive weeks. Sondern reinforced the Mafia-Sicilian-crime networks link and his

preface began: ‘There have been many secret societies devoted to evil-doing, but nothing like the strange combine of Sicilian families which forms this company of born lawbreakers’ (7). Sondern attributed ‘their peculiarly Sicilian mentalities, characters, personal habits and lives’ to a predilection for involvement in Mafia activity but he also cautioned: ‘the terms Mafia and Sicilian are not synonymous’ (8). Nevertheless, trade, Sicilian, corruption, violence and Mafia, were presented as inextricably linked, and potential blocks to the successful operation of government.

It was this subject that the British development scholar Margaret Carlyle addressed in *The Awakening of Southern Italy* (1962). She commented that Sicilians in government had long been suspected of being *mafiosi* who use ‘their membership to defeat the ends of justice’ (112) and that operations of the octopus-like Mafia (Duggan 1989, 38) were the cause of the island’s problems:

[This] leaves an impression that the controlling influence of the Mafia may now be exercised by landowners, prosperous business men and officials ... who use that influence to oppress small farmers and landless labourers. (Carlyle 1962, 112)

Carlyle ended her chapter with a comment on Dolci, whom she described as an ‘unpractical saint’ (Carlyle 1962, 113). But from what she had observed when doing her research in 1957–1958 she thought his approach was the only one bringing about change and development in western Sicily and operating outside clientelist networks, thus independent of the government, Church and Mafia. She also noted an important distinction between Mafia, mafia and brigands, which Carlo Levi had also made in *Words are Stones* (1958).

Levi argued that post-war policies had prevented development and land reform was needed to give peasants control and to bring an end to the violence and corruption in western Sicily. In Part Three of his book he defined the Mafia as a ruling organisation neither natural nor organic to Sicily but which had developed as a ruling body in response to the ‘foreign’ government: the Mafia ‘take the place of the absent government in a code of honour’ and rule. Accordingly a ‘fundamental pact of impunity between the Mafia and the government’ developed (157). Levi saw this arrangement as the cause of the hunger, illiteracy and unemployment he witnessed and he suggested that if those like Dolci could be in charge there would be hope for Sicily (171–172). On his way back to Palermo to return to Rome Levi discussed politics with his taxi driver, who told him: ‘Something social is needed, [...] because people can’t go on with the sort of poverty there is at present’ (211). Understanding that the DC would not fulfil this, the driver had considered voting for the neo-fascist Italian Social Movement (Movimento sociale italiano, MSI) or the Socialist Party. Levi thus questioned the efficacy of the programmes introduced by the post-war government and as he crossed back onto the mainland he concluded that Dolci and his work represented the best hope for Sicily: ‘Sicily was far away [from] Rome, Rome that is both too conscious and too ignorant, asleep in her limitless history and in the torpor of a hot summer day’ (212).

Levi’s warning foreshadowed the national, political and social crisis of late June and July of 1960 that was the Tambroni Affair. On 24 February 1960 Fernando Tambroni was appointed prime minister following a vote of no confidence in Antonio Segni’s government. A lawyer in his late 50s and a former member of the Fascist militia who joined the DC after 1945, Tambroni was a second-rank politician with flexible politics. To make up a government and reach an absolute majority Tambroni invited the MSI, which was led by former Fascists Giorgio Almirante, Arturo Michelini and Pino Romualdi, into an informal coalition. It was a contentious move (Silveri 2008, 500, 503, 527; Cortesi, 1960, 1; Mammarella 1966, 324–326). However, the majority of ministers supported it, as did the US government (Scoppola 1991, 363–364) and Pius XII (Bosworth 2011, 239). The Tambroni government characterised the alliance as a ‘non-political “business administration”’ (‘Senate Approves’ 1960) but despite measures taken (lower prices for domestic goods)

to win popular approval, there was still social unrest (Silveri 2008, 520). Tambroni's past also meant the government was accused of being pro-military, a charge reinforced when they ordered police intervention and sanctioned the use of force in response to strikes and demonstrations called by the PCI in May (Ginsborg 1992, 257). Tensions remained strained but were pushed to breaking point when, to thank the MSI for their support, Tambroni granted them permission to hold their annual congress in Genoa in the first week of July (Mammarella 1966, 326–327). Carlo Emanuele Basile, who as a prefect in Genoa during the Italian Social Republic had approved deportations and for which in 1945 he had been sentenced to twelve years' imprisonment (later reduced), was a named speaker at the Congress (Ginsborg 1992, 256).

In response a strike was held on 19 June, and on 28 June a massive demonstration was organised in Genoa to announce the intention to strike and protest on 30 June unless permission for the MSI was withdrawn (Behan 2009, 142). However, it was not, and so, at the command of the trade and labour unions, general strikes went ahead in Milan, Ferrara and Livorno, as did a protest march through the streets of Genoa. There were violent clashes across Italy between the parties involved: the MSI, anti-fascist protesters, workers, students and finally police. The prolonged presence of protesters on the streets and the industry strikes forced Tambroni to make two public announcements. First, and with the mayor of Genoa, he revoked the MSI conference permission. Second, he called in the police to control the strikes and protests and gave them permission to shoot in 'emergency situations'. Tambroni's actions inflamed rather than resolved the situation (Mammarella 1966, 328) and in the days that followed there was further unrest ('Riots End' 1960) which continued until the crisis was brought to an end on 19 July 1960 with the resignation of Tambroni and his government (Behan 2009, 143).

The Tambroni Affair represented a massive failure for the DC and how the story was told to the outside world was carefully controlled. The *New York Times* special correspondent, Arnaldo Cortesi, an anti-communist 'Fascist apologist' ('Mr Cortesi' 1945) asserted that Tambroni's 'fall' had been caused by the 'Communist-inspired and Communist-led riots' (Cortesi 1960). This was also the view taken up by Manlio Brosio, the Italian ambassador to the United States, and he cautioned against the formation of a new government through alliance with the left ('L'Amb Brosio' 1961; Silveri 2008, 17; 525). They also agreed that it was not Tambroni who had failed, but the system, a view reinforced by the president of Fiat S.p.A., Vittorio Valletta, who thought Tambroni an 'excellent administrator' who had 'accomplished a great deal' (Foreign Service Despatch 1960, 1). The new interim government appointed on 22 July 1960 was centre-left and led by the sometime Fascist economist and committed Catholic, Amintore Fanfani, with the help of Aldo Moro. The new executive was composed of only DC ministers and Tambroni was offered a ministry. Although he declined, it sent a clear message that the tumult had resulted from causes external to the DC style of leadership.

Sending such a message was important as the national DC government was not the only one in trouble and which appeared out of touch with voters' needs. In January 1960 a crisis had hit the Sicilian regional government when the coalition government that supported the regional president, Silvio Milazzo, fell apart following his attempt to pass a controversial budget. Milazzo held a special interest in agricultural development and as a DC politician had first stood for Catania in 1948. In 1958 he split from the DC and formed his own party, the Union of Christian Socialists (*Unione Siciliana Cristiano Sociale*, USCS), which angered the DC and the Catholic Church (Bayne 1961). His view was that it was time for Sicilian constitutional autonomy and control of the future of Sicily to be reclaimed from the national DC (Bayne 1959, 12). A debate continued about leadership in Sicily and whether the combination of autonomy and increased funding would simply further serve the interests of Sicilian elites and encourage clientelist practices. US government officials kept a close watch over how Marshall Plan money was spent.

In the late 1950s it was becoming increasingly clear that development policies were directing the Italian economy towards a 'sensational' boom and that the regions benefiting were mostly in the north. It was suggested that the reason regions like Sicily were not booming was because local DC leaders in Sicily had misused development funds and systematically plundered resources for their own ends (Chubb 1982, 28–34). Milazzo did not believe the problem was with Sicily and Sicilians but instead with a government who were working to serve their own interests. One particular accusation was that Eni was being used as a 'private fiefdom' by national DC minister Enrico Mattei and 'clientelistic practices were rife throughout the organisation [...] Public money was used habitually and without scruple to bribe clients and officials' (Ginsborg 1992, 164). Milazzo was joined by other renegade politicians from the DC and the Socialist Party in Sicily ('Sicilian Political Rebel' 1959). He was elected president of the region of Sicily on 30 October 1958 on a mandate protesting incomplete regional autonomy and frustration over the slowness of development in Sicily.

The new ruling coalition was composed of the PCI, the Socialist Party and right-wing dissidents – neo-fascists and ex-monarchists (Bayne 1961, 2). Defending the mix, Milazzo asserted: 'What may appear a democratic marriage in one area of Italy, may not appear so in another' (Bayne 1961, 3). Thus Milazzo made the argument that Sicilian specificity demanded autonomy, not only in leadership but also in development. Milazzo's term as president was tumultuous as he was continually contesting the DC national leadership ('Sicilian Regime' 1958; Casserly 1960). In February 1960 he resigned and he was replaced by his friend, Benedetto Majorana ('Red-backed Chief Resigns' 1960). The coalition supporting Majorana collapsed following a vote of no confidence in early 1961 ('Rightist Elected As Sicilian Chief' 1961) and it took 78 days for a new majority to form, which once again raised questions over autonomy and backwardness in Sicily ('La crisi siciliana' 1961). From the point of view of those like Milazzo and Majorana the problem was that there was no unity of vision between the regional assembly and the national government. They raised concerns about the DC style of rule and governing practices, which they implied were clientelist and Mafia related.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Dolci's understanding of politics and everyday life in Sicily challenged the DC as well as, through its emphasis on grassroots, the lingering vanguardist assumptions of the PCI. Pertinently he asserted the development projects being implemented by the national and Sicilian regional governments did not correspond to local needs but instead to those of the various patron–client relationships, which the trade relationships struck for the Festival potentially represented. The conversation that Dolci entered into regarding post-war governance and his way of uncoupling the connection between Sicilian and Mafia, was alarming as the new leaderships promised a 'renaissance' and an end to developmental problems. In doing so they implied that a dangerous criminal organisation such as the Mafia represented an 'impediment to national integration' (Duggan 1989, 145). However, the problems they encountered raised the question: had the new leadership made the appearance of change without actually making change? Or was there a problem – a character flaw of sorts?

To answer the first question Dolci suggested that there was continuity in pre-Fascist, Fascist and post-Fascist Italy because there had not been real and structural change. Dolci thus implied that the DC were, in some way, clientelist. In the context of the Festival – because the products and exhibits had been organised by DC politicians and were connected to them – this raised the suggestion that they were the fruit of clientelism, and that a transnational network was in operation. Moreover, Dolci

averred that DC policies did not solve the underlying problems of Italian modernity and unification, as post-war development measures merely served the narrow interests of those in power. Thus while the organisers tried to keep the problems of the new leaderships out of the Festival of Italy, Mangione's event with Dolci moved them into the spotlight and raised questions about Italians, their 'character' and their capacity to lead and self-govern.

Dolci put forward the view that traits developed as a result of particular conditions and societal relations, which could and would change with education and training. He asserted that there was an institutional problem: the government, the church and local authorities served only their own interests. Thus, he suggested that the stereotype of Sicilians being *mafiosi* had been purposely left uncontested or even endorsed by self-interested parties who did not want any attention drawn to their activities. Furthermore, Dolci's view that the problems of the Italian nation state were neither fascism nor mafia but deeper and structural not only contradicted and unsettled the official message told in the Festival of Italy but also had ramifications in Philadelphia: the problems at City Hall could not be blamed on newcomers – who, by implication, had Mafia links. Dolci argued that the way to create fundamental and structural change was to bypass the government and authorities and work from the grassroots to educate. Sicilians needed to be in charge of development work without the direct interference of the national government, hence his suggestion that the US Peace Corps funding should work through organisations like his. Influential development specialists such as Banfield agreed.

A study of Dolci's visit to the Festival provides some insight into the transnational discussion that was developing around development, governance and leadership. Dolci and his US supporters were united in their understanding that the problems encountered by the post-war government in Italy, Sicily and also in Philadelphia were a result of a leadership which presented or made the appearance of change but did not fix the underlying problems. The reaction to Dolci's talk at the Sicilian exhibit clarifies the stake that different groups had in the particular representation of Sicily, Sicilian politics, Italy and Italians being portrayed in the Festival of Italy. For those trying to encourage new trade agreements between the Sicilian regional government and the Philadelphia city council and businesses in the area, Dolci had to be discredited. For those invested in the idea of a consolidated Italian community in Philadelphia, his statements were also threatening as they went to the heart of a community debate over what it was to be an Italian-American: was it possible to suggest that Italians and Italian-Americans were not homogenous? This of course was Mangione's argument: the cause of the troubles in Philadelphia was not the presence of the 'new ethnics' but as in any society the presence of some individuals. With this approach it would be possible to decouple 'Italian' or 'Sicilian' and 'mafia' and to eliminate the phrase that was repeated *ad nauseum*: Italians are mafiosi.

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Italian summary

Nel 1961, Danilo Dolci, pacifista ed attivista contro la mafia, partecipò ad una protesta pacifica alla esposizione per commemorare il centenario dell'unità d'Italia ospitata dalla città di Filadelfia. Il suo discorso sulle iniziative di sviluppo in Sicilia occidentale è una finestra sulla discussione transnazionale della mafia, amministrazione e dirigenza politica nella seconda metà degli anni Cinquanta fino ai primi anni Sessanta. Dolci ed i suoi sostenitori vedono che i problemi dalla amministrazione dopo la seconda Guerra mondiale in Italia, Sicilia e Filadelfia, sono causati da una dirigenza politica che ha semplicemente fatto comparsa del cambiamento, ma non ha risolto i veri problemi sottostanti. Questo articolo spiega come è stata sviluppata la discussione. L'idea che la mafia è 'una cosa', ovvero un'organizzazione criminale operante con origini siciliane, è stata una narrazione importante, specialmente per chi voleva vincere una posizione di dirigenza politica.