

The cop and the mob: Joe Petrosino against the Mafia in the United States and Italy during the Progressive Era

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ABSTRACT

This article reconstructs the clash between local police and Italian crime in New York during the Progressive Era. During the 1900s the Black Hand organized crime began to blackmail Italian businesses and, to counter this felony, the New York Police Department decided to establish Detective Joseph Petrosino's Italian Squad. The clash between Petrosino and the Black Hand lasted until 1909, when the officer was killed in Palermo. However, the death of the Italian American detective led to the conviction of the alleged contract murderers and, finally, to the end of the Black Hand in the early 1910s.

On the evening of 12 March 1909, the Italian-American trader Simone Valenti was killed in Palermo in front of several witnesses. However, behind this fake identity was the detective Giuseppe Petrosino of the New York Police Department (N.Y.P.D.), who had gone to Italy to search for dozens of Sicilian mobsters who had previously emigrated to the United States to escape the Italian justice system. Shortly after the murder, the U.S. consul in Palermo, William Bishop, sent the New York Police Commissioner Theodore Bingham the following telegram: 'Petrosino shot: instantly killed in heart of city this evening. Assassin unknown. Dies a martyr'.¹

On this subject, both Italian and U.S. historiography tried to find out the motives that led to his death. On one hand, Arrigo Petacco and Anna Maria Corradini wondered why the Italian-American detective had been killed by a transoceanic conspiracy between the Sicilian Mafia and New York Black Hand.² From their perspective, the criminal connection between New York and Palermo seemed to strengthen due to a steady influx of individuals with criminal records who annually, during the peak of the Italian migration wave, temporarily settled primarily between New Orleans and New York before returning to their homeland. They did all this to evade conviction sentences in both countries, living in continuous hiding, with support from the ethnic community of the Little Italies where they resided in the United States. According to Edward P. Hutchinson and Maddalena Marinari, a potential improvement of the anti-immigration laws and communication between the Italian and the U.S.

¹ 'Police Seek Plotters,' *New York Times* (hereafter *N.Y.T.*), 14 March 1909, p. 2.

² A. Petacco, *Joe Petrosino* (Novara, 1983); and A. M. Corradini, *L'omicidio di Joe Petrosino. Misteri e rivelazioni* (Acireale, 2013).

justice systems before the enactment of the 1907 Immigration Act would have been crucial to avoid the massive arrival of Italian criminals, so fatally increasing the power of the Black Hand.³

On the other hand, Salvatore Lupo identified Petrosino's murder as an event that could be framed in the broader scenario of the evolution of Italian organized crime since the mass migration between nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Lupo, more than any other Italian scholar, delved into the historical reasons behind the Sicilian Mafia's seamless infiltration of the modern, multiethnic backdrop of New York City.⁴ For John Dickie and Antonio Nicaso, the arrival in the U.S. of southern Italian immigrants with criminal records led to the rise of one united Black Hand, which combined the codes of honour of different underworlds that hitherto had been separated.⁵ The Italian-American reporter Amy A. Bernardy already wrote about these honour codes in 1913, and they clearly showed the fusion between the past of the Sicilian Mafia tradition and the present of the forced coexistence with the new host U.S. institutions.⁶

For this reason, Mike Dash, Humbert Nelli and David Critchley defined the Black Hand as the early stage of the future Italian-American Mafia, along with the making of the first anti-Mafia skilled unit in the N.Y.P.D.: the Italian Squad.⁷ On this latter point, it is important to emphasize that the structural change of the N.Y.P.D. in the early 1900s arose as a direct consequence of the judicial pursuit of the Sicilian Mafia, in a constant chase between the evolution of crime typologies and the enhancement of social security. According to James Richardson, although the N.Y.P.D. was established as early as 1845, making it the oldest police department in U.S. history after Boston's (1838), New York continued to be a not 'well-policed city'⁸ throughout the nineteenth century due to widespread corruption at all levels of the uniformed force. This system was certainly orchestrated by a type of local politics that was based on the spoils system by the Democratic Party and its urban political machine: Tammany Hall. According to Theodore J. Lowi and Terry Golway, thanks to the latter organization, local political power was maintained through patronage, which, on one hand, involved integrating a large portion of the immigrant population, particularly the Irish, into local public administration, including the N.Y.P.D. On the other hand, the judicial protection of the neighborhood gangs became essential for getting the political consensus through the control of electoral packages within their belonging ethnic community.⁹ In short, even during the years between the office of the staunch anti-Tammany and future U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt as police commissioner (1895–7) and the establishment of the Italian Squad, Tammany Hall remained a sort of *trait d'union* between the 'upper world' of bribed police officers and the underworld of Irish, Italian, and Jewish gangsters.

Finally, Paul Moses and Matthew Guariglia considered the decade-long struggle between the Italian Squad and the Black Hand as a tragic period of a wider cultural conflict between U.S. society and Italian ethnic minority, which in the early 1900s encountered serious difficulties while trying to integrate into the U.S. institutional system.¹⁰ In any case, there is no doubt that the historical figure of Petrosino best embodies the concept of cultural assimilation, which most Italian immigrants in New York were 'eager to embrace' so as to detach from the negative stereotypes of their 'innate and biological inferiority and natural criminality'.¹¹ Thomas Reppetto's dual perspectives on the N.Y.P.D. and the Italian-American Mafia illustrate the contrasting yet interconnected evolution of this phenomenon, representing two sides of the same coin: the transition from Italian immigrant to Italian-American citizen through

³ E. P. Hutchinson, *Legislative History of American Immigration Policy, 1798–1965* (Philadelphia, 1981); and M. Marinari, *Unwanted: Italian and Jewish Mobilization Against Restrictive Immigration Laws, 1882–1965* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2020).

⁴ S. Lupo, *Quando la mafia trovò l'America. Storia di un intreccio intercontinentale, 1888–2008* (Turin, 2008), pp. 11–40.

⁵ J. Dickie, *Onorate Società. L'ascesa della mafia, della camorra e della 'ndrangheta* (Rome, 2012), pp. 253–8; and A. Nicaso, 'Organized crime and Italian Americans', in *The Routledge History of Italian Americans*, ed. W. J. Connell and S. G. Pugliese (New York, 2017), pp. 479–92.

⁶ A. A. Bernardy, *Italia Randagia attraverso gli Stati Uniti* (Turin, 1913), pp. 195–9.

⁷ H. S. Nelli, *The Business of Crime: Italians and Syndicate Crime in the United States* (Chicago, 1976), pp. 69–100; D. Critchley, *The Origin of Organized Crime in America: the New York City Mafia, 1891–1931* (New York, 2009), pp. 36–71; and M. Dash, *The First Family: Terror, Extortion, Revenge, Murder, and the Birth of the American Mafia* (New York, 2009).

⁸ J. F. Richardson, *The New York Police: Colonial Times to 1901* (New York, 1970), p. 284.

⁹ T. J. Lowi, *At the Pleasure of the Mayor: Patronage and Power in New York City, 1898–1958* (London, 1964), pp. 79–85; T. Golway, *Machine Made: Tammany Hall and the Creation of Modern American Politics* (New York, 2015).

¹⁰ P. Moses, *An Unlikely Union: The Love-Hate Story of New York's Irish and Italians* (New York, 2015), pp. 113–54; P. Moses, *The Italian Squad: The True Story of the Immigrant Cops Who Fought the Rise of the Mafia* (New York, 2023); M. Guariglia, *Police & the Empire City: Race & the Origins of Modern Policing in New York* (Durham, N.C., 2023), pp. 107–34.

¹¹ Guariglia, *Police and the Empire City*, pp. 112, 132.

either law enforcement or criminal activity.¹² With the demise of the Italian Squad in 1922 and the rise of the Sicilian Mafia through international alcohol smuggling during Prohibition, the dual aspects of cultural assimilation for the average Italian immigrant within American mass consumer society came to fruition.

With this historiographical background, the article relies on partially consulted primary sources and offers a fresh interpretation of documents, including articles from the *Progresso Italo-Americano*, the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Daily Reports of Agents at the National Archives and Record Administration, and biographical records of Italian law enforcement at the Archivio Centrale dello Stato in Rome. Unlike previous studies, the article aims to look at the historical origins of the Black Hand criminal phenomenon in New York City, by reconstructing the times and spaces in which it was born (namely in Sicily in the late nineteenth century) and how it was able to later fit into U.S. civil society.

As far as the U.S. historical background is concerned, the article investigates social issues that occurred during the Progressive Era at the turn of the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. During the transitional period between the Gilded Age and the Prohibition Era, it is crucial to acknowledge the onset of the Second Industrial Revolution, exemplified by Taylorism and Fordism, which revolutionized manufacturing with the advent of the assembly line. Concurrently, this era saw the emergence of significant labour issues, including the rise and subsequent suppression of labour unions in Illinois (1905) and Colorado (1914), culminating in the formation of the Socialist Party of America in 1901. Under Theodore Roosevelt's presidency, a new era of investigative journalism led by muckrakers played a crucial role in exposing societal issues such as political corruption, child labour, and poor sanitary conditions among unskilled workers. These challenges were exacerbated by the influx of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, highlighting the complex dynamics of the time.

Therefore, reporters, such as Jacob Riis in New York, documented the miserable lives of Irish, Italian or Jewish immigrants inside the so-called urban slums, where a small percentage of individuals belonging to these three main ethnic communities decided to take an alternative way to social welfare using the means of 'crime as an American way of life'.¹³ It is no coincidence that Roosevelt was well aware of the problem of urban crime as a former New York Police Commissioner and considered Petrosino as a 'great detective, and an honest, unselfish, and heroic man, who united indefatigable patience and industry with reasoning powers of a high order'.¹⁴ There is no doubt that New York was the most involved town concerning this demographic revolution. In 1898, while the U.S. was preparing to conquer the last territorial outposts of the decaying Spanish colonial empire on the American continent, Cuba and Puerto Rico, the two municipalities of New York and Brooklyn merged, thus creating a metropolis that, in the early twentieth century, had nearly 3.5 million people, 37 per cent of whom were foreigners.¹⁵

Between 1880 and 1900, nearly one million Italians landed in New York harbour. During this twenty-year period, more than 200,000 made up the overcrowded urban ethnic community, accounting for one third of all Italians living in the U.S.¹⁶ Despite the prejudice of the white, 'anglo-saxon' and Protestant public opinion through the stereotype of the 'dirtiest population'¹⁷ in the world, there was no doubt that, in the populated East Harlem and Lower East Side slums, some individuals kept committing crimes thanks to the silence of their honest compatriots. Until then, anti-immigration laws only focused on Chinese immigration and anarchist terrorism through the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882) and the Anarchist Exclusion Act (1903) respectively. However, even when Congress enacted an early federal anti-crime law (Expatriation Act) in 1907, checks on immigrants from southern and eastern Europe were still ineffective.¹⁸ This underestimation of the problem could be explained by

¹² J. Lardner and T. Reppetto, *NYPD: a City and Its Police* (New York, 2000); T. Reppetto, *American Mafia: a History of Its Rise and Power* (New York, 2004).

¹³ D. Bell, 'Crime as an American Way of Life', *The Antioch Review*, xiii (1953), 131–54. On the investigative journalism about the problem of mass migration, see J. Riis, *How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York* (New York, 1890).

¹⁴ A. Train, *Court, Criminals and the Camorra* (New York, 1912), p. 103.

¹⁵ I. Rosenwaike, *Population History of New York City* (Syracuse, 1972), p. 63 (tab. 19).

¹⁶ S. L. Baily, *Immigrants in the Lands of the Promises: Italians in Buenos Aires and New York City, 1870 to 1914* (Ithaca, 1999), p. 58.

¹⁷ C. L. Brace, *The Dangerous Classes of New York, and Twenty Years Among Them* (New York, 1872), p. 194.

¹⁸ T. Hester, "'Protection, not punishment': legislative and judicial formation of U.S. deportation policy, 1882–1904", *Journal of American Ethnic History*, xxx (2010), 11–36.

the lack of a clear idea of the Mafia in U.S. criminal law, which mistakenly identified the felony of conspiracy as small-scale crime or terrorism.

For the first time, New York newspapers defined the Mafia in 1874 as a ‘Sicilian form and name corresponding to what in Naples was so long and ominously known as the Camorra’¹⁹ although serious crimes committed by Sicilian mobsters in the U.S. had already occurred between the 1850s and 1860s, such as the killing of a New York officer or the counterfeiting of U.S. dollars in New Orleans.²⁰ Other gangs opened counterfeiting plants still in the 1890s, just like Stella Frauto and Salvatore Clemente on the Upper East Side.²¹ While the Secret Service (founded in 1865 to prosecute counterfeiting under the supervision of the Treasury Department) was continuing its investigations to arrest counterfeiters, Petrosino already joined the N.Y.P.D. for 12 years and had been recently promoted to detective sergeant.²² He didn’t yet know that, a few years later, Clemente would have become one of his most important informants in fighting against New York Black Hand and its undisputed boss: Giuseppe ‘The Clutch Hand’ Morello.

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Morello was born in 1867 in Corleone (province of Palermo) and after committing a double murder, he decided to flee to the United States in 1893 before being sentenced *in absentia* to six years imprisonment for counterfeiting.²³ Initially, he worked as a farmhand on sugar cane and cotton plantations in Louisiana and Texas. However, in 1897 he decided to move permanently to East Harlem, where he very soon joined the gang of Salvatore Brancato, Angelo Lamanna, Salvatore Macchione (future informers) and Francesco Massi (aka Francesco Motisi), who were arrested the following year for dealing counterfeit coins between Connecticut, New Jersey and New York.²⁴ As early as 1899, secret agent William Hazen reported Morello in connection with other Boston counterfeiters who were, in turn, in business with the Frauto and Clemente gang.²⁵

In the early 1900s, Morello kept joining new counterfeiting groups, which were promptly disbanded by William Flynn, a former plumber who in 1901 replaced Hazen as chief agent of the New York Secret Service.²⁶ A further important criminal that Morello met during this period was Antonio Cecala from Greenpoint, Brooklyn, whom Flynn reported for his connection with a counterfeiting ‘Organization on the East Side as does an Italian friend of his named Joe [Morello]’²⁷ who had been arrested the previous year and immediately discharged for making counterfeit notes in a plant on Long Island.²⁸ It is very likely that after the arrests of Brancato, Lamanna and Macchione, a power vacuum was created in the Sicilian underworld, and that it was filled by Morello, Cecala and his other friends, including his future right-hand man Ignazio ‘The Wolf’ Lupo. Born in 1877 in Palermo, he arrived in New York in 1898 to escape a twenty-one-year sentence for homicide.²⁹ Lupo was first a food merchant on the Lower East Side, before coming to own a real estate fortune thanks to extortion against honest Italian retailers, while his involvement in counterfeiting occurred in 1902 through his proximity to a bar run by Morello and close to his grocery stores.³⁰ This was how, in the early 1900s, Morello’s counterfeiting

¹⁹ ‘The Sicilian mafia’, *N.Y.T.*, 24 Sept. 1874, p. 2.

²⁰ ‘A police officer murdered’, *N.Y.T.*, 22 July 1857, p. 1; and ‘A nest of counterfeiters broken up’, *New Orleans Daily True Delta*, 15 Aug. 1861, p. 3.

²¹ ‘Coin makers captured’, *N.Y.T.*, 17 Feb. 1895, p. 8.

²² ‘Detectives in new jobs’, *N.Y.T.*, 20 July 1895, p. 1.

²³ College Park, MD, National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter N.A.R.A.), General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, The Department of State to the Embassy of the United States in Italy, 4 Nov. 1909, fol. 1.

²⁴ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, RG 87, William P. Hazen, vol. 5, Daily logs, 3 Jan. 1898, fols. 1–10.

²⁵ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William P. Hazen, vol. 5, Daily logs, 17 March 1899, fol. 773; vol. 6, Daily logs, 28 Apr. 1899, fols. 219–227; 8 May 1899, fol. 285.

²⁶ Dash, *First Family*, p. 13.

²⁷ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William P. Hazen, vol. 4, Daily logs, 21 Sept. 1901, fol. 727.

²⁸ ‘Are these counterfeiters?’, *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (hereafter *B.D.E.*), 13 June 1900, p. 7.

²⁹ Rome, Archivio Centrale dello Stato (hereafter A.C.S.), Ministero di Grazia e Giustizia, Direzione Generale Affari Penali Grazie Casellario, Divisione Affari Penali, 1862–1925, Box 132, Folder 1181, Letter to Giovanni Giolitti, 3 Oct. 1908, fol. 1.

³⁰ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 9, Daily logs, 30 Apr. 1903, fol. 213.

and Lupo's blackmail merged into a single racket through the marriage between Lupo and a Morello stepsister.³¹

As far as criminal connections in New Orleans were concerned, the brothers Francesco and Salvatore Motisi ensured the alliance between Morello and the Di Cristina family, which had been running the citrus trade in that town since the mid-1880s.³² In 1898, Hazen mentioned Francesco (born 1866 in Palermo) as a 'shover of counterfeit notes'³³ in service of the Brancato, Lamanna and Macchione gang. In order to avoid being arrested by the Secret Service, Francesco Motisi moved to New Orleans, seeking protection in the Di Cristina family. It is no coincidence that in 1902, shortly before the outbreak of a Mafia feud in New Orleans, he (under the fake name of Francesco Genova) asked Lupo and Morello to protect a man named Francesco Paolo Marchese (aka Paolo Di Cristina) when the latter arrived in New York: 'In the house of Lupo there is a young man just come from Italy, by name Francesco Paolo Marchese, condemned by the tribunal of Palermo to thirty years in prison. This for your intelligence, he has been sent by persons in New Orleans to Lupo'.³⁴

Francesco Motisi's younger brother Salvatore was born in 1871 and at the age of twenty-six decided to immigrate to New York after being sentenced for robbery and outrage.³⁵ In 1899, the Secret Service arrested him for passing counterfeit coins and, once discharged for lack of evidence, he continued to counterfeit Canadian dollars from his plant in Portage La Prairie, Manitoba, Canada.³⁶ His move was shown by a 1902 letter that Salvatore addressed to Pietro Inzerillo, who was affiliated with the Morello gang and arrived in New York after being indicted for burglary in Palermo:³⁷ 'I beg of you warmly to tell me how soon the goods arrive, and to send me the sample all in good quality, if these have not arrived, be so kind as to send me one of a Five, in order to see if we can do business'.³⁸ Based on this early information, it becomes evident that by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, while a nationwide Sicilian Mafia had not yet fully formed, the Black Hand was already linked to affiliates residing in several U.S. cities such as New York and New Orleans, as well as internationally in countries like Italy and Canada.

The year 1902 also saw the first murder committed by the Morello gang, when the body of grocer Giuseppe Catania (aka Giuseppe Di Trapani) was found mutilated inside a bag in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn.³⁹ At first, Lupo was under suspicion of killing Catania as he was the last person to have seen the victim alive.⁴⁰ Later, the motive for murder was blamed on a small outstanding debt that the victim owed to a gangster, Vincenzo Troia. The latter was the so-called 'Uncle Vincent' who, in the late 1900s, was involved in running a counterfeiting plant in Highland, N.J. In order to escape a double murder conviction in Sicily, Troia lived in Tunis, Tokyo, Liverpool, New Orleans and, finally, New York, where in 1902 he got to know several characters belonging to a secret society 'bigger than the Masons'.⁴¹ However, informants said that Catania's death was due to revenge for breaking the code of honour and speaking 'too freely of the affairs of the society',⁴² namely the Mafia.

³¹ Dash, *First Family*, p. 101.

³² 'Commercio degli agrumi italiani sui mercati americani', *Bollettino di notizie commerciali* (Oct. 1885), p. 817.

³³ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William P. Hazen, vol. 6, Daily logs, 29 Apr. 1899, fol. 227.

³⁴ 'Barrel murder inquest', *N.Y.T.*, 8 May 1903, p. 7. In early 1903 the New Orleans press proved Francesco Genova's dual identity as, during one of his arrests, law enforcement officers found out that his passport was under the name of 'Francesco Mortesi [Motisi]'. See 'Luciano jury out', *New Orleans Times-Democrat*, 18 Feb. 1903, p. 13.

³⁵ A.C.S., Ministero dell'Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, Confini di Polizia e Confini Speciali per i Mafiosi (Sezione Seconda), Fascicoli Personali dei Confinati Comuni e Mafiosi, 1926–43, Box 100, Folder Confinato Mafioso Motisi Salvatore, Cartella biografica, 9 Jan. 1932, fol. 2.

³⁶ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William P. Hazen, vol. 6, Daily Logs, 30 Apr. 1899, fol. 233; 3 May 1899, fol. 251; 9 May 1899, fol. 293; William Flynn, vol. 9, Daily logs, 17 Apr. 1903, fol. 116.

³⁷ Palermo, Archivio di Stato (hereafter A.S.P.A.), Questura (1860–1944), Archivio Generale (1860–1944), Box 1584, Folder 352, Omicidio di Petrosino Giuseppe, 2 Apr. 1909, fol. 10.

³⁸ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 9, Daily logs, 17 Apr. 1903, fol. 135.

³⁹ 'Band of assassins murdered Catania', *B.D.E.*, 24 July 1902, p. 1; and N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 9, Daily logs, 14 Apr. 1903, fol. 93.

⁴⁰ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 9, Daily logs, 19 Apr. 1903, fol. 135.

⁴¹ West Branch, Iowa, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum (hereafter H.H.P.L.), Lawrence Richey Papers, Box 1, Folder 3, Comito's Confessions, Aug. 1910, fol. 51.

⁴² 'Eight Sicilians held for the barrel murder', *N.Y.T.*, 16 Apr. 1903, p. 1.

The idea of revenge persuaded Detective Sergeant Antonio Vachris, according to whom the motive for the Catania murder had actually originated in Sicily when the victim 'appeared as a witness against two of his countrymen in a murder case'.⁴³ Catania was a relative of Nicola Trapani who, in turn, was a defendant along with Rome Chamber of Deputies representative Raffaele Palizzolo and kidnapper and robber Giuseppe Fontana at the trial for the homicide of the director of the Banco di Sicilia Emanuele Notarbartolo in 1893. The latter, in fact, was killed for discovering dark financial transactions between Palizzolo and some Sicilian criminals.⁴⁴ After an early sentence of thirty years imprisonment in 1902, the Court of Cassation in Florence overturned the sentence by acquitting the three defendants in 1904, partly due to the indignation of representatives Antonio Marinuzzi, Pietro Bonanno and Giuseppe Di Stefano Napolitani who undermined the conviction as not 'conforme risultanze processuali [in accordance with the trial verdict]'.⁴⁵ In any case, Fontana was on the run since 1899, seeking protection from the nobility and Mafia in Palermo until he moved to New York in the early 1900s.⁴⁶

While the trial was taking place in Italy, Morello began working to set up a connection with the Mafia in Sicily. So, it was that, through the intermediation of Frauto and Clemente, he met the food importer Vito Cascio Ferro. Born in Sambuca Zabuta (province of Agrigento) in 1862, Cascio Ferro joined the Socialist Workers League in Bisacchino in 1893, and occupied some land owned by fallen noble families under the pretext of anarchist propaganda.⁴⁷ Although he was charged with various offences including attempted extortion, outrage, threatening a public official, bankruptcy and assault, Cascio Ferro was always able to avoid prison by living in Tunis as a political refugee and getting back to Italy only to keep 'la compagnia di mafiosi, pregiudicati e socialisti [the company of mafiosi, criminals and socialists]'.⁴⁸ Following the kidnapping of a baroness in 1899, Cascio Ferro was forced to flee to Marseilles and then to New York in 1901 where he was arrested, a year later, for running a counterfeiting plant in Hackensack, N.J., along with Frauto.⁴⁹ While the latter was sentenced for counterfeiting, Cascio Ferro was released due to his lack of criminal record in the U.S., so he decided to join the Morello gang.⁵⁰ At the same time, Morello also became involved in the fake real estate company named Ignatz Florio Co-Operative Association Among Corleonesi, which aimed at scamming Italian immigrants under the guise of planning the construction of four buildings in East Harlem.⁵¹ Therefore, investors were asked to pay the company advance payments in order to start building work, which was never carried out.⁵²

In early 1903, the Frauto and Clemente gang broke up for good with the arrest of Giuseppe Di Primo for passing counterfeit notes in Yonkers, N.Y., while Petrosino had already been an officer for twenty years.⁵³ He was born in Padula (province of Salerno) in 1860 and moved with his family to New York as a teenager, working as a shoeshine, sweeper and informant for N.Y.P.D. Inspector Alexander 'Clubber' Williams.⁵⁴ Williams was the first to realize that higher recruitment of Italian policemen could potentially limit the increase of crime in the Little Italies due to mass migration.⁵⁵ In 1883, he

⁴³ 'Revenge after 20 years, Catania's probable fate', *B.D.E.*, 30 July 1902, p. 18.

⁴⁴ 'Palermo police trying to solve Catania mystery', *B.D.E.*, 5 Oct. 1902, p. 5.

⁴⁵ A.C.S., Ministero dell'Interno, Direzione Generale di Pubblica Sicurezza, Direzione Affari Generali Riservati, Archivio Generale, Categorie Annuali, 1879–1903, Box 1, Folder 1, Telegram to Giovanni Giolitti, 4 Aug. 1902, fol. 1.

⁴⁶ A.C.S., Ministero dell'Interno, Direzione Generale di Pubblica Sicurezza, Direzione Affari Generali Riservati, Archivio Generale, Categorie Annuali, 1879–1903, Box 1, Folder 1, Letter to Luigi Pelloux, 8 Dec. 1899, fols. 1–2.

⁴⁷ A.S.P.A., Prefettura (1860–1935), Gabinetto (1860–1926), Box 137, Folder 15, Fascio dei lavoratori di Bisacchino, 20 Oct. 1893, fol. 2.

⁴⁸ A.C.S., Ministero dell'Interno, Direzione Generale di Pubblica Sicurezza, Direzione Affari Generali Riservati, Uffici Dipendenti dalla Sezione Prima, Casellario Politico Centrale, Fascicoli Personali, 1894–1945, Box 1141, Folder Cascio Ferro Vito, Scheda biografica, 14 May 1898, fol. 1.

⁴⁹ 'Women coiners captured in raid on gang and plant', *New York Evening World*, 22 May 1902, p. 3; and Omicidio di Petrosino Giuseppe, 2 Apr. 1909.

⁵⁰ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 6, Daily logs, 21 May 1902, fol. 766; 22 May 1902, 774.

⁵¹ Comito's confessions, Aug. 1910, fol. 59.

⁵² N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 9, Daily logs, 29 Apr. 1903, fols. 204, 206.

⁵³ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 9, Daily logs, 1 Apr. 1903, fol. 3; 20 Apr. 1903, fol. 142.

⁵⁴ Lardner and Reppetto, *NYPD*, p. 128.

⁵⁵ Moses, *Unlikely Union*, p. 119.

convinced Petrosino as a young Italian street sweeper to join the N.Y.P.D. Six years later, the local press first mentioned Petrosino in connection to the arrest of a teenage thief so that, after about a hundred such arrests, Police Commissioner Theodore Roosevelt promoted him to detective sergeant in 1895.⁵⁶ When Roosevelt was appointed as Police Commissioner, he aimed at solving the serious problems concerning bribery in the N.Y.P.D. through a significant reorganizational effort that especially affected the new Detective Bureau, made up of honest and efficient officers such as Petrosino.⁵⁷

The early cases entrusted to Petrosino dealt with frauds, assaults and even a few murders, such as the court case of Angelo Carbone, who in 1897 was sentenced to death for killing one of his fellow countrymen but, a few days before his execution, was discharged thanks to Petrosino's detective work, who arrested the real perpetrator of the crime in Baltimore.⁵⁸

After saving Carbone's life, Petrosino began his co-operation with Hazen and Flynn to prosecute counterfeiting, so much so the latter praised him for always being 'ready at any time to render service to this Division'.⁵⁹ In the early 1900s, for example, Petrosino forwarded useful information to Flynn about the disbanding of the Frauto and Clemente gang, as well as the discovery of a further counterfeiting gang located between Hell's Kitchen and New Rochelle, N.Y.⁶⁰ In the same year, the detective sergeant first dealt with an attempted blackmail case concerning a fake Black Hand called 'Holy House', which had been simply made up for the sake of unfair competition between traders.⁶¹ On this last point, it is no coincidence that, in those years, the Morello gang started to replace counterfeiting with extortion of Italian businesses, to the extent that in 1903 Flynn had already highlighted the widespread use of blackmail writing in some of New Jersey and New York Little Italies.⁶²

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The turning point in Petrosino's career occurred on 14 April 1903, when the body of a man was found inside a barrel on the Lower East Side.⁶³ Petrosino immediately realized that the strange discovery of the body was leading to a revenge by 'some secret society, probably the Italian Mafia'.⁶⁴ The criminal investigation took a turn when the secret agents told Flynn that they noticed unusual activity by the Morello gang during the days before the discovery of the body.⁶⁵ The Secret Service had already been spying on him for days, since, on 6 April he had been reported along with Cascio Ferro in front of Inzerillo's pastry and mobster Vito La Duca's butchery in the Lower East Side.⁶⁶ Two days later, Morello was seen in front of his bar along with Lupo, La Duca, Cascio Ferro and Inzerillo, while on 12 April Lupo was reported along with an unknown person (probably the victim), who was last seen in La Duca's butchery along with Morello, Domenico Pecoraro and Antonio Genova (aka Francesco Motisi).⁶⁷ This news was then forwarded to Petrosino who immediately proceeded to arrest twelve people:

- 1) Giuseppe Fanaro
- 2) Antonio Genova
- 3) Pietro Inzerillo

⁵⁶ 'A young, but accomplished crook', *New York Evening World*, 4 Sept. 1889, p. 4; and 'Detectives in new jobs', *N.Y.T.*, 20 July 1895, p. 1.

⁵⁷ G. Myers, *The History of Tammany Hall* (New York, 1917), p. 279; Richardson, *The New York Police*, pp. 249–51.

⁵⁸ 'Ciaramello's own story', *N.Y.T.*, 28 Jan. 1898, p. 13.

⁵⁹ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 5, Daily logs, 20 Feb. 1902, fol. 1045.

⁶⁰ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 6, Daily logs, 19 March 1902, fol. 160; 21 March 1902, fol. 181; 9 Apr. 1902, fol. 366.

⁶¹ "'Holy House' blackmailers', *New York Sun*, 26 Jan. 1902, p. 12.

⁶² 'Desperate gang held in murder mystery', *N.Y.T.*, 17 Apr. 1903, p. 3.

⁶³ 'Looks like murdered man', *B.D.E.*, 15 Apr. 1903, p. 2.

⁶⁴ 'Murdered man's body found in a barrel', *N.Y.T.*, 15 Apr. 1903, p. 2.

⁶⁵ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 9, Daily logs, 14 Apr. 1903, fols. 93–94; 15 Apr. 1903, fol. 101.

⁶⁶ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 9, Daily logs, 6 Apr. 1903, fols. 33–35.

⁶⁷ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 9, Daily logs, 9 Apr. 1903, fol. 57; 10 Apr. 1903, fols. 67–68; 11 Apr. 1903, fol. 75; 12 Apr. 1903, fol. 81.

- 4) Vito La Duca
- 5) Giuseppe Lalamia
- 6) Lorenzo Lobaido
- 7) Vito Lobaido
- 8) Ignazio Lupo
- 9) Giuseppe Morello
- 10) Domenico Pecoraro
- 11) Tommaso 'The Ox' Petto
- 12) Nicola Testa⁶⁸

La Duca arrived in New York in 1902 with Fanaro at the same time that Genova/Motisi arrived from New Orleans to escape the Mafia feud involving the Di Cristina family.⁶⁹ Nicola Testa was Catania's grandson and, like La Duca, worked in the butchery, while his family in Palermo kept close bonds of friendship with the Motisi family.⁷⁰ As for the Lobaido brothers, they arrived in New York in early 1903 as enforcers of the Morello gang just after the arrest of Di Primo.⁷¹ Those who avoided arrest were Cascio Ferro, who escaped to New Orleans and then returned to Sicily for good in 1904, and Fontana, whom the Secret Service identified in those days as a simple retailer at the Washington Market.⁷² As far as the persons of interest's biographical profile is concerned, it is important to note that, even in the early 1900s, the lives of the blackhanders did not consist solely of crime. Instead, they engaged in honest work at bars, bakeries, butcher shops, or grocery stores, possibly as a social cover to construct personal impunity.

Suspensions against the Morello gang about the 'barrel murder' increased when Petrosino raided its hangouts, since an identical barrel to the one used in the murder was found in Inzerillo's pastry, while long aprons stained with human blood were found in Lupo and Morello's bar.⁷³ Petrosino and Flynn were sure that Tommaso 'The Ox' Petto was the real executor of the homicide since, during a second arrest, he was found in possession of a pawn ticket for a watch that the victim's wife, Anna Di Primo, recognized as belonging to her husband.⁷⁴ Due to an identity mistake, however, Petto was mistaken for the mobster Giovanni Pecoraro (Domenico's brother), thus giving him the chance to become a fugitive.⁷⁵ Like the other Blackhanders, even the Pecoraro brothers had previous convictions in Sicily for embezzlement (1898) and homicide (1901), as well as being 'affiliati alla mafia, e fanno parte di una associazione tenebrosa [affiliated with the Mafia, and part of a dark association]'⁷⁶ and skilled in blackmail. Anna Di Primo was the sister of the counterfeiter Di Primo and when Petrosino went to Sing Sing Correctional Facility to talk to him, the inmate finally recognized his brother-in-law Benedetto Madonia from Buffalo as the victim.⁷⁷

The motives for his murder were different. During interviews, for instance, Giuseppe Fanaro revealed to Di Primo that his brother-in-law was killed because of a small debt Morello owed him and wasn't willing to pay back.⁷⁸ Actually, the real amount Morello owed Di Primo was about \$25,000 so that, after his arrest, Morello decided to share the proceeds of his counterfeiting racket with his

⁶⁸ 'Twelve suspects held in barrel murder case', *B.D.E.*, 16 Apr. 1903, p. 22.

⁶⁹ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 9, Daily logs, 24 Apr. 1903, fol. 176; 29 Apr. 1903, fol. 205.

⁷⁰ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 9, Daily logs, 1 May 1903, fol. 221; and A.S.P.A., Tribunale civile e penale (1819–1950), Processi penali, 1929, Box 3278, Transcript to the Procuratore del Re, 25 July 1927, fols. 178, 190.

⁷¹ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 9, Daily logs, 24 Apr. 1903, fol. 176.

⁷² N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 9, Daily logs, 28 Apr. 1903, fol. 199; and Omicidio di Petrosino Giuseppe, 2 Apr. 1909, fol. 2.

⁷³ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 9, Daily logs, 15 Apr. 1903, fol. 101; 17 Apr. 1903, fol. 118.

⁷⁴ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 9, Daily logs, 25 Apr. 1903, fol. 182.

⁷⁵ 'L'assassino di Benedetto Madonia', *Progresso Italo-Americano* (hereafter *P.I.A.*), 30 Apr. 1903, p. 1.

⁷⁶ Omicidio di Petrosino Giuseppe, 2 Apr. 1909.

⁷⁷ 'Il mistero del barile', *P.I.A.*, 21 Apr. 1903, p. 1.

⁷⁸ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 9, Daily logs, 30 Apr. 1903, fol. 213.

affiliates.⁷⁹ Madonia travelled to New York to convince Morello to return the money, but when the latter refused, the victim ‘threatened to expose the secrets of the Mafia band of counterfeiters and blackmailers’⁸⁰ to the police. Furthermore, Madonia demanded that Morello took action for a transfer of Di Primo to a prison in Buffalo.⁸¹ When Madonia didn’t receive a positive response from the gang, he decided to disavow Morello’s criminal authority, and blamed him for entrusting an inexperienced criminal like La Duca with the delicate management of counterfeit notes dealing in Pittsburgh.⁸²

Faced with murder charges, Morello pretended not to remember anything. Similarly, brothers Francesco and Salvatore Motisi were respectively charged with perjury and conspiracy but, despite this, they were released immediately, thus allowing them to temporarily return to Sicily.⁸³ It is important to note that, during those years, the N.Y.P.D. did not yet have a detective record system for criminal identification, such as the Bertillon system or fingerprinting. These methods were introduced to U.S. law enforcement in the early 1900s, around the time when the history of the Black Hand was coming to an end.⁸⁴ Efforts to find the contract murderers of Madonia proved useless because, shortly after their arrest, all the gangsters were discharged, so the Secret Service attempted a last desperate move by using the former counterfeiter and informer Brancato to gather some necessary evidence to incriminate the Morello gang. Brancato spoke to Inzerillo, who started to get angry with him, telling him that Madonia deserved to end the way he did and did not add anything else. Finally, Domenico Pecoraro told Brancato that he did not know who Madonia’s killers were and advised him not to talk too much about it for the risk of meeting a possible spy.⁸⁵

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As mentioned earlier, in 1903 the Morello gang abandoned counterfeiting and turned to extortion. The first of these episodes occurred against a fruit dealer in Bay Ridge and, in this case, Detective Vachris was able to easily arrest the blackhanders.⁸⁶ In addition to extortion, the Black Hand also engaged in kidnappings, the first of which took place in 1904 against contractor John Mannino, whose son was kidnapped in order to demand a ransom of \$50,000.⁸⁷ The investigators soon realized that the kidnapping had been organized by characters involved in the ‘barrel murder,’ as they discovered that La Duca convinced one of Mannino’s employees to hand over his son.⁸⁸ In the end, no ransom was paid and, ten days later, the child returned to his family in good health.⁸⁹ The escalation of the danger that the Black Hand was fostering in the Little Italies was based on the N.Y.P.D.’s general negligence concerning Italian matters, since the majority of the police high command was still of Irish descent and underestimated the Sicilian Mafia as a social phenomenon aimed at intimidating honest Italian immigrants, as the *New York Tribune* clearly expressed: ‘As the police have shown themselves more and more helpless, the criminal Italian element has become bolder, until the better class of Italians have become thoroughly alarmed.’⁹⁰ The concerns of the *New York Tribune* reporters aligned with those of New York Police Commissioner William McAdoo, who, in his book *Guarding a Great City*, highlighted the terrible conditions of the precarious social security in town: ‘waves of crime, oceans of crime, swept the community in their columns; gambling, prostitution, blackmail, and graft held like

⁷⁹ “‘Barrel murder’ plot and victim known’, *N.Y.T.*, 21 Apr. 1903, p. 1.

⁸⁰ “‘Barrel murder’ plot’.

⁸¹ ‘L’assassinio di Benedetto Madonia’, *P.I.A.*, 23 Apr. 1903, p. 1.

⁸² ‘L’assassinio di Benedetto Madonia’.

⁸³ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 9, Daily logs, 22 Apr. 1903, fol. 160; 27 Apr. 1903, fol. 193; 28 Apr. 1903, fols. 197–198; 1 May 1903, fol. 221; 3 May 1903, fol. 236; 8 May 1903, fol. 264.

⁸⁴ E. Graper, *American Police Administration* (New York, 1921), pp. 205, 217; Fosdick, *American Police System*, pp. 346–51; Guariglia, *Police and the Empire City*, pp. 179–84.

⁸⁵ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 9, Daily logs, 26 Apr. 1903, fol. 188; 2 May 1903, fol. 230.

⁸⁶ ‘Blackmail in jail’, *New York Daily Tribune*, 14 Sept. 1903, p. 12.

⁸⁷ ‘Child’s captors demand a ransom of 50,000’, *B.D.E.*, 11 Aug. 1904, p. 1.

⁸⁸ ‘Kidnapped boy may die’, *New York Sun*, 13 Aug. 1904, p. 1.

⁸⁹ ‘Kidnapped boy is strangely returned’, *N.Y.T.*, 19 Aug. 1904, p. 1.

⁹⁰ ‘Italian crime and police incompetence’, *New York Tribune*, 21 Aug. 1904, p. 1.

huge, defiant, sulphurous clouds over the city, obstructing the heavens and causing the innocent and honest men and women to shudder.⁹¹

In accordance with Petrosino, McAdoo realised that the N.Y.P.D. should have provided a special unit of detectives who were familiar with the criminal environment and illicit vices from southern Italy.⁹² Thus, in 1904, the Italian Squad was established with ‘the able, conscientious, intelligent, and modest man’⁹³ Petrosino as leader and other five agents only.⁹⁴ His dream would have been to transform ‘a recruit into an efficient policeman’⁹⁵ through the qualitative improvement of the training (through university courses in criminal law and physical exercise) and equipment (a club and revolver) of the entire N.Y.P.D. uniformed force, so as to create professional police officers to counter professional criminals. The detective sergeant, moreover, promoted co-operation between local and federal enforcement to counter the Italian mob, alongside with a legislative change that would have led to a greater control of mass immigration through the compiling of a ‘list of all suspects and bad characters and then let the federal government order them deported’⁹⁶ to their homeland. Following the rise of ethnic crime, there was a type of ‘ethnic policing’⁹⁷ by the N.Y.P.D. between the 1900s and 1910s, when the Police Department was almost entirely made up of Irish immigrants. In fact, in addition to the establishment of the Italian Squad in 1904, the German Squad was born in the same year, as well as the unprecedented recruitment of police officers belonging to the Chinese and the African-American ethnic communities in the persons of Warren Charles in 1904 and Samuel J. Battle in 1911, respectively.⁹⁸

Meanwhile Morello’s gang kept killing anyone who tried to oppose his criminal influence. By the end of 1903, the murder of a gangster had already taken place for competing with Morello in dealing counterfeit notes in New Brunswick, N.J., as well as being a dangerous witness to the Catania murder.⁹⁹ When Petrosino and Vachris asked Flynn for information about the murder, the secret agent replied that his death had been planned for some time, as several compromising letters were found in Lupo and Morello homes regarding the victim.¹⁰⁰ The year 1905 saw the homicide of a butcher, whose family was involved in the underworld as, just two years later, one of his brothers was responsible for the kidnapping and murder in New Orleans of the child Walter Lamanna as revenge against his uncle Angelo becoming a Secret Service informer.¹⁰¹ To save his own life, Angelo Lamanna fled to Little Rock, Arizona, at the end of 1906 – and as it was impossible for Morello to find Lamanna at this point, Morello retaliated by ordering the death of his grandson in Louisiana.¹⁰² Also participating in the murder of Walter Lamanna was Francesco Motisi, who came back to New Orleans from Sicily to escape a twenty-one-year sentence for a murder committed in his homeland.¹⁰³ Following the tragic kidnapping, Motisi returned to New York State in 1908, taking refuge in New Rochelle.¹⁰⁴

A few days after the murder, Di Primo avenged his brother-in-law Madonia by killing Petto in Browntown, PA, who had been betrayed by his former friends as they were convinced that ‘he had already revealed some of the secrets’¹⁰⁵ about the ‘barrel murder’. The feud between the Black Hand

⁹¹ W. McAdoo, *Guarding a Great City* (New York, 1906), p. 39.

⁹² ‘McAdoo aroused by police conditions’, *N.Y.T.*, 14 Sept. 1904, p. 1.

⁹³ McAdoo, *Guarding a Great City*, p. 154.

⁹⁴ Moses, *Unlikely Union*, 134.

⁹⁵ Graper, *American Police Administration*, p. 108.

⁹⁶ ‘New York is full of Italian brigands’, *N.Y.T.*, 15 Oct. 1905, p. 28.

⁹⁷ Guariglia, *Police and the Empire City*, p. 99.

⁹⁸ Guariglia, *Police and the Empire City*, pp. 102–6, 145–52.

⁹⁹ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 9, Daily logs, 17 July 1903, fol. 723; 18 July 1903, fol. 736; vol. 10, Daily logs, 14 Dec. 1903, fol. 837.

¹⁰⁰ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 11, Daily logs, 9 Jan. 1904, fol. 48.

¹⁰¹ ‘A Black Hand four kill Italian butcher’, *N.Y.T.*, 12 Oct. 1905, p. 1; and ‘Lamana boy killed by Black Hand’, *New Orleans Times-Democrat*, 24 June 1907, pp. 1, 4–5, 11.

¹⁰² N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 19, Daily logs, 3 Jan. 1907, fol. 222.

¹⁰³ A.C.S., Ministero dell’Interno, Direzione Generale di Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Polizia, Affari Generali di Polizia Giudiziaria, 1907–9, Box 104, Folder Genova Leonardo, Sull’omicidio di Giuseppe Silvio di Salvatore da Lucca Sicula, 17 May 1907, fol. 1.

¹⁰⁴ A.C.S., Ministero dell’Interno, Direzione Generale di Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Polizia, Affari Generali di Polizia Giudiziaria, 1907–9, Box 139, Folder Genova Angelo, Estradizione del latitante catturando Genova Angelo fu Giuseppe da Bivona, 8 Sept. 1908, fols. 1–2.

¹⁰⁵ ‘Italian murdered’, *Wilkes Barre Record*, 24 Oct. 1905, p. 2.

and Di Primo also affected Madonia's cousin, who in 1906 was shot dead in his saloon at the order of Fontana.¹⁰⁶ It is notable that at the scene of the crime Petrosino was able to find a bag with thief tools that were used by a gang led by Gioacchino Lima (Morello's brother-in-law) and Giuseppe Masseria.¹⁰⁷ The latter was also arrested for grand larceny and threat against one of his relatives shortly after the murder, and a few years later he even bought the bar where the victim had been murdered on the Lower East Side.¹⁰⁸ Lima, instead, was already charged in 1890 in Palermo with conspiracy, robbery, extortion and homicide, until he decided to emigrate to New York two years later and become a saloon keeper in East Harlem.¹⁰⁹ In the summer of 1906, a merchant was murdered in Yonkers by the brothers Ignazio and Domenico Milone (the main food suppliers of the Morello gang in East Harlem), who acted on the orders of Fontana, Morello and Lima over matters of business competition.¹¹⁰ Finally, about a year later, Ignazio Milone and Fontana were also responsible for the murder of a shoemaker as he was simply under suspicion by the Black Hand of being an informer for the N.Y.P.D.¹¹¹ Over the years, the Black Hand expanded its activities beyond counterfeiting and blackmail. As its membership grew and it spread further across the U.S., the range of its crimes increased to include virtually any kind of felony.

It was for this exact reason that the initial project of McAdoo's Italian Squad was perfected by the following Police Commissioner Bingham. By the end of 1906, the Italian Squad turned into a 'new secret service'¹¹² of about twenty detectives headed by the newly appointed Detective Lieutenant Petrosino and Detective Sergeant Vachris patrolling East Harlem, the Lower East Side and Brooklyn Heights.¹¹³ In addition, a few months later, the much-anticipated Expatriation Act was enacted, intended to tighten controls on all Italian immigrants who entered the United States since 1904. For Petrosino, it was important that Congress approved a law that would forbid foreigners without passports to land in the United States, also to reduce overcrowding in the Little Italies, where the Black Hand could count on a potential army of 10,000 affiliates and supporters in an ethnic community of almost 350,000 inhabitants.¹¹⁴

The year 1908 was the worst year for the Black Hand blackmails, as New York was the most targeted among all U.S. towns with forty-four bombings and 424 extortions. In addition, out of 285 total arrests made for blackmails and bombings, 214 led to discharges due to an 'almost universal refusal of the victims to enter complaints or to give the Police any sort of assistance'¹¹⁵ in reporting crimes. For this reason, Bingham desperately tried to demand \$25,000 to the Board of Aldermen to further enhance Petrosino's Italian Squad.¹¹⁶ Regardless of the escalation of the attacks, the Board of Aldermen rejected his proposal, demanding instead the police commissioner to decrease the investigation against the Italian underworld.¹¹⁷ Despite the obstruction of local politics, detectives and secret agents kept working expertly to oppose the Morello gang, which in the meantime was turning into a mob consisting of professional killers and extortionists – as in the case of Clemente, who at the end of the 1900s was involved along with Morello, Lupo and Inzerillo in the 'blowing-up of several barber shops'¹¹⁸ in the Lower East Side. So it was that in early 1908 Pasquale Pati's bank

¹⁰⁶ 'Murder in cold blood skillfully planned', *N.Y.T.*, 12 Dec. 1906, p. 2; and Omicidio di Petrosino Giuseppe, 2 Apr. 1909, fols. 7, 9–10.

¹⁰⁷ 'Murder in cold blood', p. 2.

¹⁰⁸ 'Italian accuses two nephews of blackmail', *Standard Union*, 1 Aug. 1907, p. 12; New York, John Jay College of Criminal Justice/CUNY, Lloyd Sealy Library, Criminal Trial Transcripts of New York County Collection, 1883–1927, *The People v. Pietro LaGatutta*, Giuseppe Masseria, Salvatore Rufino and Giuseppe Rufino, 15 May 1913, Trial 1714, reel 220, fol. 502.

¹⁰⁹ A.S.P.A., *Questura (1860–1944)*, Archivio Generale (1860–1944), Omicidio di Petrosino Giuseppe, 2 Apr. 1909, fol. 11.

¹¹⁰ 'Body identified as Andrea Feoria's, by brother-in-law – running down suspect', *Yonkers Herald*, 29 June 1906, p. 1; A.S.P.A., *Questura (1860–1944)*, Archivio Generale (1860–1944), Box 1584, Folder 352, Omicidio di Petrosino Giuseppe, 24 March 1909, fol. 8; Omicidio di Petrosino Giuseppe, 2 Apr. 1909, fols. 7, 9–10.

¹¹¹ 'Cleave used to murder', *B.D.E.*, 19 Jan. 1907, p. 16; A.S.P.A., *Questura (1860–1944)*, Archivio Generale (1860–1944), Omicidio di Petrosino Giuseppe, 2 Apr. 1909, fols. 7, 9–10.

¹¹² 'A Secret Service squad to hunt the Black Hand', *N.Y.T.*, 20 Dec. 1906, p. 16.

¹¹³ 'Blames immigration for the Black Hand', *N.Y.T.*, 6 Jan. 1908, p. 14.

¹¹⁴ 'Blames immigration,' p. 14; Rosenwaik, *Population History of New York City*, p. 95.

¹¹⁵ N.Y.P.D., *Annual Report (New York, 1908)*, p. 23.

¹¹⁶ 'Italians open war on the Black Hand', *N.Y.T.*, 7 Feb. 1908, p. 3.

¹¹⁷ 'Blames immigration,' p. 14. His statement was confirmed as early as 1903, when Inzerillo confidentially told Brancato that U.S. Representative Timothy 'Big Tim' Sullivan paid \$5,000 bail to release him during the investigation on Madonia murder. See N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 9, Daily logs, 25 Apr. 1903, fol. 188.

¹¹⁸ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 19, Daily logs, 2 March 1907, fol. 622.

was wrecked along with \$40,000 of savings, besides the fact that he had already been the victim of extortion and fraud nine years earlier by Morello, Lupo, Inzerillo and Pietro La Barbera, who taped two \$2 counterfeit notes to his bank window as a warning sign.¹¹⁹

The mobster La Barbera suffered a bomb attack that destroyed his brewery in the same year. Although he continued to say he had no enemies, La Barbera was known to the Secret Service since 1902 as a counterfeit money dealer for the Morello gang and as a friend of the former counterfeiter Macchione.¹²⁰ This last piece of information contained the real motive about the bombing against La Barbera's brewery because, two weeks later, the mutilated body of Macchione was found, guilty of co-operating with the police.¹²¹ Vachris immediately realised that the macabre homicide had been carried out by the same individuals involved in the murder of Emanuele Notarbartolo in 1893, so that Fanaro was arrested for being Macchione's killers at the behest of Fontana and Palizzolo, who were in turn worried that Macchione could have revealed the identities of Notarbartolo's murderers.¹²² Macchione, in fact, was indirectly involved in that homicide, as one of his relatives facilitated Fontana's escape to Tunis and New York in 1903, so that in that year he was able to get out of the counterfeiting racket.¹²³ In fact, it became known in underworld circles that Macchione 'has gone insane.'¹²⁴ meaning that Macchione began to reveal some of the secrets of the Black Hand and the Mafia in order to obtain a leniency during his imprisonment in Connecticut.¹²⁵

Macchione was aware that New York was dangerous, also because his family warned him to get back to Sicily as soon as possible to save his life.¹²⁶ However, he seemed to feel safe in Brooklyn, as a further affiliate and friend of his contradicted the previous message about the risk he would have run once he had returned to Italy.¹²⁷ The latter hypothesis turned out to be true, as at that time La Duca was killed in Palermo, after having lived in Maryland and West Virginia between 1906 and 1907 and having come back home to avoid a sentence for violation of internal revenue laws.¹²⁸ Therefore, the double murder of Macchione and La Duca should be seen as a transoceanic exchange of favours between the Palermo Mafia and the New York Black Hand for the elimination of possible police informants. A few months after the Macchione's death, Palizzolo was warmly welcomed by Manhattan's Italian ethnic community as a victim of Italian justice system, although Petrosino was convinced that Palizzolo had come to town to meet his friend Fontana and to turn 'the Mano Nera or Black Hand into an organization with a powerful chief at its head.'¹²⁹

Fraud was a further racket that some affiliates of the Morello gang ran, particularly from the end of 1908. In the same year, the wine dealer and Blackhander Antonio Passanante declared the fake bankruptcy of his winery on the Lower East Side and in Flatbush, Brooklyn, in order not to pay their wine suppliers a total debt of \$325,000.¹³⁰ As well as being a cigar smuggler in Richmond, Virginia, a blackmailer and even a murderer, Lupo was also a fraudster – his food suppliers had collected a credit of about \$200,000 over the years, and he had been accused of fraudulent bankruptcy of his private bank.¹³¹

¹¹⁹ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 5, Daily logs, 13 Jan. 1902, fols. 634–635; vol. 9, Daily logs, 1 July 1903, fols. 611, 615; and 'Dynamite shatters a bank near Pati's', *N.Y.T.*, 27 March 1908, p. 1.

¹²⁰ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 5, Daily logs, 13 Feb. 1902, fol. 972; vol. 6, Daily logs, 10 March 1902, fol. 81; 11 March 1902, fol. 87; 22 March 1902, fol. 198; 26 March 1902, fols. 233, 236–7.

¹²¹ 'Mafia victim's body was in two packages', *B.D.E.*, 20 Feb. 1908, p. 1.

¹²² 'Three held in murder case', *New York Sun*, 23 Feb. 1908, p. 2.

¹²³ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 9, Daily logs, 30 Apr. 1903, fol. 214.

¹²⁴ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 9, Daily logs, 29 June 1903, fol. 598.

¹²⁵ 'Mafia victim's father had sent him warning', *B.D.E.*, 22 Feb. 1908, p. 2.

¹²⁶ 'Mafia protects men who cut up body of victim', *New York Evening World*, 22 Feb. 1908, p. 2.

¹²⁷ 'Three men arrested in Brooklyn murder', *N.Y.T.*, 23 Feb. 1908, p. 4.

¹²⁸ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 16, Daily logs, 23 Feb. 1906, fol. 876; and 'Mafia protects men', p. 2.

¹²⁹ 'Italians here greet Palizzolo', *N.Y.T.*, 14 June 1908, p. 16.

¹³⁰ 'The bankruptcy court', *B.D.E.*, 6 Dec. 1908, p. 5; and 'Police hunt Italians who owe over \$70,000', *B.D.E.*, 10 Dec. 1908, p. 2.

¹³¹ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 14, Daily logs, 30 Jan. 1905, fols. 260–261; 'Italian dealers fail like Lupo', *N.Y.T.*, 6 Dec. 1908, p. 18; and Comito's confessions, Aug. 1910, fol. 70.

Although counterfeiting was by then abandoned by the Black Hand, there was a revival of this racket in late 1908 through the establishment of a counterfeiting plant in Highland and the recruitment of Calabrian printer Antonio Viola Comito, who was lured by a fake job in Philadelphia offered to him by Cecala.¹³² After meeting the gangsters Salvatore Cina (who had been sentenced for murder in Italy and fled to Tampa, Florida) and Nick Sylvester (sentenced for juvenile delinquency, burglary, robbery and carrying a concealed weapon), Comito soon realised that he should have printed fake Canadian and U.S. dollars to be dealt in Hoboken, N.J., Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Buffalo and Chicago under the eye of a gang also consisting of Morello, Lupo and 'Uncle Vincent' Troia.¹³³

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While Comito had been kidnapped by the Morello gang, in early 1909 Bingham was able to get funds from private citizens to set up a 'secret service branch'.¹³⁴ The purpose of this special unit was to cooperate with the Italian police in the extradition of all Italian criminals who fled to the United States to avoid criminal trials, house detentions or judicial investigations.¹³⁵ Detective Lieutenant Petrosino was appointed as the only undercover agent to go to Sicily to search for the criminal records of the most important New York blackhanders (the first on the list were Morello and Inzerillo), so as to find the necessary evidence to enforce the Expatriation Act and definitively disband the Black Hand in town.¹³⁶ Although it was a secret mission, Bingham made the serious mistake of reporting to the *New York Herald* both the dates and the stages of the journey that Petrosino should have followed before arriving in Palermo.¹³⁷ Due to this naïve move, the blackhanders were able to find out Petrosino's arrival date in Sicily in advance, and this was confirmed by Comito's testimony, after he had listened to a conversation between Troia, Lupo and Cina in February 1909:

'What news do you bring, Ignatius [Lupo]?'

'You know all that I know', he replied, 'except perhaps that Petrosino has gone to Italy.'

'Then he has gone to a good place', laughed Uncle Vincent, 'for he will be killed.'

'I only hope that the plan may be successful', said Cina.¹³⁸

On 17 February 1909, a mysterious telegram was sent from Partinico (province of Palermo) from the two blackhanders Carlo Costantino and Passanante to Morello: 'Io [Costantino] Lobaido [Passanante] lavoro Fontana [I Lobaido work Fontana]'.¹³⁹ These two were the previously mentioned brothers Lorenzo and Vito Lobaido (arrested for the Madonia murder). Lorenzo had moved to New York after a sentence for conspiracy (1900), where he ran a grocery store on the Upper East Side. He had kept out of trouble until Morello ordered him to return to Palermo with Passanante and meet Cascio Ferro, who in the meantime had become friendly with Baron Guglielmo Inglese and Rome Chamber representative Domenico De Michele Ferrantelli.¹⁴⁰

Under the fake name of Simone Valenti, Petrosino landed in Genoa on 20 February and the next day he travelled to Rome to talk with Prime Minister Giovanni Giolitti about his reasons for coming to Italy.¹⁴¹ Instead of Giolitti, Petrosino met his Head of Cabinet Camillo Peano and Police Chief Francesco Leonardi, as well as the U.S. ambassador Lloyd Griscom, who warned him about the

¹³² H.H.P.L., Lawrence Richey Papers, Box 1, Folder 2, Antonio Comito's statement in re the Morello-Lupo case, fols. 7–10.

¹³³ H.H.P.L., Lawrence Richey Papers, Box 1, Folder 2, Antonio Comito's statement, fols. 25, 31–32, 35, 38; and Comito's confessions, Aug. 1910, fols. 71, 75–77, 83, 85–87.

¹³⁴ 'Mr. Bingham's "Secret Service"', *New York Herald*, 20 Feb. 1909, p. 3.

¹³⁵ 'Mission that took Petrosino to Italy', *N.Y.T.*, 16 March 1909, p. 1.

¹³⁶ N.A.R.A., General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, Letter to Elihu Root, 17 Dec. 1908, fol. 1; and 'Bingham gets his fund', *New York Sun*, 20 Feb. 1909, p. 3.

¹³⁷ 'Bingham's Secret Service started', *New York Herald*, 20 Feb. 1909, p. 6.

¹³⁸ Comito's confessions, Aug. 1910, fols. 69–70.

¹³⁹ Omicidio di Petrosino Giuseppe, 24 March 1909, fol. 8. When deciphered, the message meant 'Passanante and I will kill Petrosino. Say it to Fontana.'

¹⁴⁰ A.C.S., Ministero dell'Interno, Direzione Generale di Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Affari Generali e Riservati, Uffici Dipendenti dalla Sezione Prima, Casellario Politico Centrale, Fascicoli Personali, 1894–1945, Box 1141, Cascio Ferro Vito fu Accursio. Socialista, 12 Dec. 1908, fol. 2; and Omicidio di Petrosino Giuseppe, 2 Apr. 1909, fol. 14.

¹⁴¹ Omicidio di Petrosino Giuseppe, 24 March 1909, fol. 2.

extreme danger he would have faced by going to Palermo alone.¹⁴² Right from the start, the detective emphasized in a letter addressed to his wife the perception that his mission was encountering big logistical difficulties: ‘Here the people are altogether different, and even the police sometimes are of no help if you ask questions.’¹⁴³ After a brief stay in Naples and Padula (his birthplace), Petrosino arrived in Palermo on 28 February under the second false identity of Guglielmo De Simone,¹⁴⁴ and here he wrote his last letter to his wife: ‘Son arrivato in Palermo mi trovo tutto confuso e... non mi piace niente affatto tutto l’Italia che poi quando io vengo ti spiego tutto [I arrived in Palermo I find myself all confused and ... I don’t like anything at all Italy which I explain you all when I come back].’¹⁴⁵

Strangely, Petrosino decided not to go immediately to Palermo’s superintendent Baldassarre Ceola, and limited himself to attend the places where he ate, stayed and kept his correspondence, except for his meeting with the U.S. consul Bishop, who strongly advised him to ask the superintendent for an escort of Italian agents for his safety.¹⁴⁶ It was not until 6 March that Petrosino spoke to Ceola, asking about the hidden location of at least seventy Sicilian mobsters who had been able to escape from New York.¹⁴⁷ This request was met with full co-operation by Ceola, who also offered an Italian officers’ unit. However, Petrosino refused due to his lack of trust in the Italian authorities – which probably began after his arrival in Rome.¹⁴⁸ On 12 March, Petrosino made his last trip to Caltanissetta to collect more criminal records of gangsters, returning to Palermo only at dinnertime, when he met with Costantino and Passanante to obtain important information on someone, maybe Palizzolo.¹⁴⁹ From the restaurant, Petrosino, Costantino and Passanante travelled to the nearby Marina Square, where the two killers fatally shot the unarmed detective.¹⁵⁰ This detail confirmed Petrosino’s blind trust in the two Sicilians, considering that the autopsy showed that he was totally unaware of the ambush as he was probably sure that they would have never betrayed him.¹⁵¹

From Rome, Giolitti ordered Ceola and the prefect of Palermo, Francesco De Seta, to immediately start criminal investigations,¹⁵² while from Palermo, Bishop claimed that the ambush was ‘undoubtedly the work of the Black Hand.’¹⁵³ In Albany, State senator ‘Big Tim’ Sullivan strove for introducing a bill which guaranteed a pension for the widow of the Italian-American detective who died in the performance of duty.¹⁵⁴ In Washington, former president Roosevelt and the head of the Secret Service, John Wilkie, stated that Petrosino’s work was of ‘great benefit to the Federal authorities on numerous occasions.’¹⁵⁵ From New York, finally, Bingham and first deputy commissioner Arthur Woods expressed their shock at Petrosino’s death and the complete failure of his secret mission against the Sicilian Mafia.¹⁵⁶

According to Ceola, Petrosino was betrayed by ‘persone di Fiducia [Costantino e Passanante] che lo stesso Funzionario si sarebbe procurate in America [trusted people who the same officer had gotten in America]’¹⁵⁷ and who then killed him. This hypothesis was confirmed by three anonymous letters that some Sicilian immigrants in New York sent to the superintendent. The first two letters said that the murder was planned by Morello, Lupo, Fontana, Lima, Inzerillo, Ignazio Milone, Giovanni Pecoraro and the brothers Nicola, Ciro and Vincenzo Terranova, along with the co-operation of Cascio Ferro in Sicily.¹⁵⁸ Moreover, Lupo also had a personal score to settle with Petrosino, who on one occasion

¹⁴² ‘Ambassador warned him’, *N.Y.T.*, 14 March 1909, p. 2.

¹⁴³ ‘Last letter from detective’, *N.Y.T.*, 14 March 1909, p. 2.

¹⁴⁴ Omicidio di Petrosino Giuseppe, 2 Apr. 1909, fol. 2.

¹⁴⁵ Washington, D.C., Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, NYWT&S Collection, Letter to Adelina Saudino, 28 Feb. 1909.

¹⁴⁶ A.S.P.A., Questura (1860–1944), Archivio Generale (1860–1944), Box 1584, Folder 352, Per l’uccisione di Petrosino Giuseppe, 16 March 1909, fol. 2.

¹⁴⁷ Omicidio di Petrosino Giuseppe, 24 March 1909, fol. 3.

¹⁴⁸ Per l’uccisione di Petrosino Giuseppe, 16 March 1909, fol. 2.

¹⁴⁹ ‘Petrosino left clue to slayers’, *N.Y.T.*, 15 March 1909, p. 2.

¹⁵⁰ Omicidio di Petrosino Giuseppe, 29 Apr. 1909, fol. 6.

¹⁵¹ ‘Italian police active’, *N.Y.T.*, 17 March 1909, p. 2.

¹⁵² ‘Italian authorities active’, *N.Y.T.*, 14 March 1909, p. 2.

¹⁵³ ‘Italian police get Petrosino’s papers’, *N.Y.T.*, 18 March 1909, p. 1.

¹⁵⁴ ‘Bill to pension the widow’, *N.Y.T.*, 16 March 1909, p. 2.

¹⁵⁵ ‘Aided the Secret Service’, *N.Y.T.*, 14 March 1909, p. 2.

¹⁵⁶ ‘Blames immigration laws’, *N.Y.T.*, 14 March 1909, p. 2.

¹⁵⁷ Omicidio di Petrosino Giuseppe, 24 March 1909, fol. 1.

¹⁵⁸ Omicidio di Petrosino Giuseppe, 2 Apr. 1909, fols. 4-5.

dared to slap him in the street and ‘heaped personal abuse on him’,¹⁵⁹ thus undermining his criminal reputation. The third anonymous letter, instead, added a further boss of the Mafia in Brooklyn and Tunis (a key stopover for the flow of illegal migration), to the list of plotters. He would have been the intermediary between Costantino and Passanante and the ‘alta mafia [high level Mafia]’¹⁶⁰ of Cascio Ferro, who was seen with the two killers in Marina Square a few days before the homicide.¹⁶¹

Alongside the Ceola’s reconstruction of the Petrosino murder, there were some dense and mutual accusations between the Secret Service, the N.Y.P.D. and the Italian *Polizia di Stato* concerning the failure to physically protect the Italian-American detective. Flynn, for instance, kept wondering why Woods didn’t think of sending Petrosino to Sicily with even a small group of detectives from the Italian Squad.¹⁶² Vachris, unlike Flynn, concluded that during his stay in Palermo, Petrosino was always ‘accompanied by local detectives’¹⁶³ who didn’t protect him enough from fake informers like Costantino and Passanante and ultimately left him to die. Assistant district attorney of Brooklyn Francis Carrao (Detective Carrao’s brother), instead, blamed the Italian government for complicity in the assassination in a frightening scenario of an alliance between organized crime and law enforcement, as Giolitti was supposed to have ordered De Seta to supervise Petrosino’s every move until his meeting with Ceola in Palermo.¹⁶⁴ The latter, moreover, was accused by Bingham of negligence for his steady lack of interest in involving the N.Y.P.D. in the investigation while, at the same time, the superintendent exclusively blamed Petrosino for his recklessness in refusing the escort he had offered him.¹⁶⁵ Petrosino’s deep distrust of the Italian police was explained when a record of him was found in his hotel room containing creepy statements ‘bearing against the faithfulness of Petrosino as a police officer,’¹⁶⁶ who evidently did not like someone in the Ministry of the Interior in Rome. Intentionally or not, the disputes between Bingham and Ceola only worsened the already fragile relations between the N.Y.P.D. and the *Polizia di Stato* in their search for Petrosino’s killer. According to his letters, Petrosino had never fully trusted Italian law enforcement since his arrival in Rome, even refusing the offer of a personal escort of Italian officers during his trips in Sicily.

While Ceola and Bingham continued to accuse each other, De Seta incredibly never pronounced himself on the murder, seemingly more concerned with resolving some economic and political issues in Palermo. At the end of March, in fact, the prefect went to Rome (on Giolitti’s request) to speak with the general director of the Bank of Italy about something that ‘molto interessa questa città [so affects this city, Palermo]’¹⁶⁷ and that dealt with the settlement of the catastrophic financial conditions of the noble businessmen Vincenzo and Ignazio Florio, that in turn were close to the Mafia and were candidates in the next Palermo municipal elections.¹⁶⁸

In his last report, Ceola concluded that the plot to assassinate Petrosino was planned in New York, so that he urged Bingham to find further evidence that could corroborate the serious clues that the superintendent already gathered in Palermo.¹⁶⁹ Therefore, the Italian police arrested Cascio Ferro and Costantino on charges of conspiracy with Morello, Fontana and Passanante.¹⁷⁰ Nevertheless, they were both immediately released from prison thanks to the intercession of a ‘personalità influente [influential person]’¹⁷¹ in Rome (maybe De Michele Ferrantelli or Palizzolo) who guaranteed their innocence, so the perpetrators of the homicide were never found.¹⁷²

¹⁵⁹ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 29, Daily logs, 15 Apr. 1910, fol. 729.

¹⁶⁰ Omicidio di Petrosino Giuseppe, 2 Apr. 1909, fols. 2, 15.

¹⁶¹ Omicidio di Petrosino Giuseppe, 16 May 1909, fol. 1.

¹⁶² W. J. Flynn, *The Barrel Mystery* (New York, 1919), p. 182.

¹⁶³ ‘Vachris would go to Sicily’, *N.Y.T.*, 14 March 1909, p. 2.

¹⁶⁴ ‘Italy is to blame’, *B.D.E.*, 14 March 1909, p. 6.

¹⁶⁵ Omicidio di Petrosino Giuseppe, 24 March 1909, fol. 2; Omicidio di Petrosino Giuseppe, 29 Apr. 1909, fol. 1.

¹⁶⁶ Department of Indictment at the Court of Appeal of Palermo, Circuit Court of the U.S. to the State of New York, 16 Apr. 1909, fol. 2.

¹⁶⁷ Rome, Archivio Storico della Banca d’Italia, Sottofondi di Sezioni Esterne, Fondo Sconti, Box 104, Folder 1, Letter to Bonaldo Stringher, 31 March 1909, fol. 1.

¹⁶⁸ O. Cancila, ‘Giolitti, la Banca d’Italia, la navigazione generale italiana e il salvataggio di Casa Florio’, *Mediterranea*, iv (2007), 299–330, at pp. 307, 313.

¹⁶⁹ Omicidio di Petrosino Giuseppe, 16 May 1909, fol. 4.

¹⁷⁰ Omicidio di Petrosino Giuseppe, 24 March 1909, fols. 4, 10.

¹⁷¹ Omicidio di Petrosino Giuseppe, 16 May 1909, fol. 5.

¹⁷² Omicidio di Petrosino Giuseppe, 2 Apr. 1909, fol. 20.

Petrosino's body come back to New York a month after his death. Some 2,000 immigrants from southern Italy greeted the detective's coffin in the harbour, but the next day the crowd at the mortuary grew tenfold to include New Yorkers of every ethnic minority.¹⁷³ On the day of the funeral, 200,000 people followed the funeral procession from St. Patrick Old Cathedral to Calvary Cemetery in Queens.¹⁷⁴

Along with the Secret Service, the Italian Squad kept searching for Petrosino's murderer by following the flow of counterfeit notes that from Highland reached Manhattan Little Italies for their distribution. The Black Hand didn't know it, but around the second half of 1909 already, the N.Y.P.D. detectives had found the Highland counterfeiting plant, and reported a meeting on the Lower East Side between Cecala and Inzerillo.¹⁷⁵ At the same time, the secret agents reported the presence of the two counterfeiters in East Harlem in front of the house of Cascio Ferro's brother-in-law and the grocery store of Domenico Milone, as well as a further move by Milone, Cecala and Morello to Brooklyn to meet Lupu.¹⁷⁶ After that, there were raids in suspicious places such as Morello's house where Detective Carrao charged him and his son Calogero for carrying concealed weapons, while in the house of another gangster more than a thousand counterfeit bills were found.¹⁷⁷ In New York, fifteen people were arrested, including boss Morello and his right hand man Lupu,¹⁷⁸ while in Highland the Secret Service's surveillance continued until it was discovered that in the counterfeiting plant 'there was a back room in which there were a lot of Sicilians'¹⁷⁹ including Cina and Cecala. This led to a further five arrests and the final dissolution of the Morello gang.¹⁸⁰

The trial for counterfeiting was set for January 1910 and saw Cina, Nicola Terranova, Cecala, Domenico Milone, Sylvester, Lupu and Morello as defendants.¹⁸¹ The latter two were also charged with ordering several murders, as well as of extortion and fraud for the fake bankruptcy of the Ignatz Florio Co-Operative Association for a total gain of \$160,000.¹⁸² On Morello, in particular, weighed the statements of the prosecution witness Comito concerning his involvement in the 'barrel murder,' according on what Cecala, in turn, confessed him.¹⁸³ Furthermore, Comito accused Cina and Sylvester of talking about the chance of throwing a bomb during Petrosino's funeral 'as there was a lot of detectives in the funeral cortege and many would fall.'¹⁸⁴

In proving the criminal offences made by the Defendants, the investigations of Detective Carrao were important in linking the Highland counterfeiting plant with the Black Hand's hangouts in East Harlem and the Lower East Side through the tailing of Sylvester and Cecala. At the same time, the role of Flynn was crucial because, according to Comito, he did an excellent job in co-ordinating the arrests by the Secret Service in Highland.¹⁸⁵ At the trial, Lupu openly manifested his innocence, also through the defense testimony of his brother John, while Morello preferred to keep silent, trying to procure a false alibi thanks to the perjury of his doctor, who witnessed his inability caused by rheumatism

¹⁷³ 'Signal honours paid to slain Petrosino', *N.Y.T.*, 10 Apr. 1909, p. 5; and 'Thousands pray at the Petrosino's bier', *N.Y.T.*, 11 Apr. 1909, p. 3.

¹⁷⁴ 'Petrosino buried with high honours', *N.Y.T.*, 13 Apr. 1909, p. 1.

¹⁷⁵ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 27, Daily logs, 20 Oct. 1909, fols. 852–853.

¹⁷⁶ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 27, Daily logs, 4 Oct. 1909, fol. 628; 18 Oct. 1909, fol. 783; 22 Oct. 1909, fol. 883; 24 Oct. 1909, fols. 903–904, 906; 28 Oct. 1909, fols. 968–969; vol. 28, Daily logs, 15 Nov. 1909, fol. 173; vol. 29, Daily logs, 27 Feb. 1910, fol. 266.

¹⁷⁷ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 28, Daily logs, 15 Nov. 1909, fols. 168–169; 18 Nov. 1909, fol. 224.

¹⁷⁸ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 28, Daily logs, 15 Nov. 1909, fols. 164–165; 16 Nov. 1909, fols. 184–185; 19 Nov. 1909, fol. 233.

¹⁷⁹ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 28, Daily logs, 1 Jan. 1910, fol. 762.

¹⁸⁰ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 28, Daily logs, 5 Jan. 1910, fols. 812–813; 16 Jan. 1910, fol. 990; 21 Jan. 1910, fol. 1071.

¹⁸¹ 'Truffa colossale?', *P.L.A.*, 11 Jan. 1910, p. 2.

¹⁸² Department of State, Letter to U.S. embassy in Italy, 4 Nov. 1909, fol. 1; and N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 28, Daily logs, 30 Dec. 1909, fol. 738; 30 Jan. 1910, fol. 1156; vol. 29, Daily logs, 27 Feb. 1910, fol. 264.

¹⁸³ Comito's confessions, Aug. 1910, fol. 59.

¹⁸⁴ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 28, Daily logs, 23 Jan. 1910, fol. 1086.

¹⁸⁵ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 28, Daily logs, 10 Jan. 1910, fol. 879; 21 Jan. 1910, fol. 1071; and Comito's confessions, Aug. 1910, fol. 108.

in his East Harlem home between 1908 and 1909.¹⁸⁶ Nevertheless, the judge imposed the following sentences: 30 years in prison for Lupo, 25 years for Morello and 15 years for Cina, Sylvester and Cecala.¹⁸⁷

Even after the trial verdict, the officers of the Italian Squad kept investigating on the murderers of Petrosino. A key clue, in fact, came from Comito himself, who revealed that he heard Lupo and Morello talking about a guy called ‘Michele, the Calabrian’,¹⁸⁸ who was involved in the Petrosino murder (it is not known with what task) and who was none other than ‘Salvatore the Calabrian’,¹⁸⁹ meaning Salvatore Motisi. When Carrao arrested him, Motisi expressed his total lack of involvement in Petrosino’s death, stating that he never moved from the United States, although his statement clashes with the fact that in the early 1930s his Italian criminal record listed his arrest for theft in 1907.¹⁹⁰ Finally, Motisi was able to convince the detectives about a case of mistaken identity between himself and his brother Francesco, who took part in the Petrosino murder despite having been in London for some time.¹⁹¹ Therefore, the two detectives were forced to release Motisi for lack of evidence, although it was clear that he too was involved in the detective’s death and that he returned to New York after a stay in London with his brother Francesco.¹⁹²

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In the years following the trial, the criminal power vacuum was easily filled by the Terranova brothers and Calogero Morello, who eliminated traitors and committed horse thefts, extortions and bombings in East Harlem.¹⁹³ However, the terror period of the Terranova gang went on for only a short time, because in the early 1910s already, ‘the era of the bomb was at its end’¹⁹⁴ in New York. Thus, between 1912 and 1922, Calogero Morello and his stepbrothers Vincenzo and Nicola Terranova were the victims of several feuds against new criminal groups.¹⁹⁵

In Sicily, most of the former Mafia bosses were imprisoned thanks to the anti-Mafia campaign by the prefect of Palermo Cesare Mori from the mid-1920s. Once ‘L’Americano’¹⁹⁶ Francesco Motisi returned to Italy for good in 1921, he was reported in Palermo as a robber and extortionist, until he was forced to flee to Marseilles in 1926 due to Mori’s anti-Mafia repression.¹⁹⁷ Salvatore Motisi continued to escape punishment and committed thefts, extortions, assaults, threats and homicides, and also became a wealthy landowner.¹⁹⁸ Everything changed in 1932, when the police confirmed him as a Mafioso and he was sent to confinement until at least 1940.¹⁹⁹ Finally, Cascio Ferro was arrested by Mori as early as 1925 under the criminal profile of ‘Socialista rivoluzionario [revolutionary

¹⁸⁶ Flynn, *Barrel Mystery*, pp. 189–92.

¹⁸⁷ ‘150 years in all for the Wolf Gang’, *N.Y.T.*, 20 Feb. 1910, pp. 1–2.

¹⁸⁸ Comito’s confessions, Aug. 1910, fol. 70.

¹⁸⁹ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 28, Daily logs, 23 Jan. 1910, fol. 1086; 24 Jan. 1910, fol. 1094.

¹⁹⁰ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 29, Daily logs, 21 March 1910, fol. 474; and A.C.S., Ministero dell’Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, Confini di Polizia e Confini Speciale per i Mafiosi (Sezione Seconda), Fascicoli Personali dei Confinati Comuni e Mafiosi, 1926–1943, Cartella biografica, 9 Jan. 1932, fol. 2.

¹⁹¹ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 29, Daily logs, 25 March 1910, fol. 510.

¹⁹² N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 29, Daily logs, 25 March 1910, fol. 510; 4 Apr. 1910, fol. 609.

¹⁹³ N.A.R.A., Records of the U.S. Secret Service, 1863–1999, Daily Reports of Agents, 1875–1937, William Flynn, vol. 29, Daily logs, 29 May 1910, fol. 1170.

¹⁹⁴ ‘Bomb terror over, police now think’, *N.Y.T.*, 13 Oct. 1913, p. 3.

¹⁹⁵ ‘Three gunmen fight until all are down’, *N.Y.T.*, 17 Apr. 1912, p. 24; ‘2 die in pistol fight on Brooklyn Street’, *N.Y.T.*, 8 Sept. 1916, p. 18; and ‘Gunmen kill cousin of “Lupo-the-Wolf”’, *N.Y.T.*, 9 May 1922, p. 3.

¹⁹⁶ A.S.P.A., Tribunale civile e penale (1819–1950), Processi penali, 1929, Box 3278, Transcript to the Procuratore del Re, 25 July 1927, fol. 177.

¹⁹⁷ A.C.S., Ministero dell’Interno, Direzione Generale di Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Polizia Politica, Fascicoli Personali, 1926–44, Box 876, Folder Motisi Francesco, Motisi Francesco, 21 Jan. 1929, fol. 1.

¹⁹⁸ A.C.S., Ministero dell’Interno, Direzione Generale di Pubblica Sicurezza, Confini di Polizia e Confini Speciale per i Mafiosi (Sezione Seconda), Fascicoli Personali dei Confinati Comuni e Mafiosi, 1926–43, Box 100, Folder Confinato mafioso Motisi Salvatore, MOTISI Salvatore fu Pietro – confinato comune, 15 June 1938, fol. 1.

¹⁹⁹ A.C.S., Ministero dell’Interno, Direzione Generale di Pubblica Sicurezza, Confini di Polizia e Confini Speciale per i Mafiosi (Sezione Seconda), Fascicoli Personali dei Confinati Comuni e Mafiosi, 1926–43, Box 100, Folder Confinato mafioso Motisi Salvatore, MOTISI Salvatore fu Pietro – confinato comune, 18 May 1940, fol. 1.

Socialist]²⁰⁰ and, from then on, he was held in various Italian penitentiaries, to then die of thirst and loneliness in 1943 after being forgotten by the prison keepers in Pozzuoli (province of Naples) during the Allied bombing.²⁰¹

As was to be expected, the last standing old Sicilian bosses came back to the criminal scenario just to meet certain death. The counterfeiter gang leader Cecala was released on parole in 1920, but eight years later some gangsters from the Masseria gang killed him on the Lower East Side.²⁰² Even Morello was released on parole in 1918, managing to become a *consigliere* of the boss Masseria.²⁰³ Nevertheless, his meaningful role in the new Sicilian Mafia in East Harlem lasted until the outbreak of the so-called Castellammarese war, as in 1930 he was one of the many victims of this feud.²⁰⁴ Finally, after being released on parole in 1920, Lupo kept a low profile throughout the 1920s, running gambling, alcohol smuggling and extortion in Brooklyn.²⁰⁵ However, his criminal authority didn't help him to avoid jail again in 1936 and then die penniless in Queens a few days after his release from prison in 1947.²⁰⁶ All the Lupo-Morello-Terranova family is now buried at Calvary Cemetery along with Petrosino's monumental grave, which was built in 1910 to commemorate the first anniversary of his death.²⁰⁷ In the end, fate decreed that good and bad would meet all together again in the inevitability of eternal rest, thus bringing to life the Sicilian motto 'If I live, I shall kill. If I die, I forgive you.'²⁰⁸

In conclusion, the aim of the article's contents is to highlight issues not yet addressed by previous historical studies through the examination of new archival sources. Above all, it is imperative to highlight the profound proximity, particularly geographically, between the victims and perpetrators in crimes like extortion, fraud, kidnappings, and murders. It is noteworthy how the latter could readily become informants for law enforcement, as seen in cases such as Lamanna, Brancato, or Macchione, even at the risk of their own lives. This is linked to the fact that the Blackhander was not a 'professional criminal'²⁰⁹ as during Prohibition, but rather divided his life into a legitimate side managing butcher shops, bakeries, saloons, and a darker side involving criminal activities. On this point, the use of periodical sources such as the *Progresso Italo-Americano*, the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, and the *New York Times* was crucial for understanding the news events and thereby reconstructing the familial relations and neighborhood connections that existed between honest Italian immigrants and the Blackhanders. Similarly, the Italian police's biographical records of criminals such as Cascio Ferro, Lupo, or the Motisi brothers, played a significant role in understanding their criminal profiles ahead of their arrival in New York.

Secondly, the article emphasizes a clear backwardness by the N.Y.P.D. in countering the Mafia phenomenon. Despite the presence of Sicilian criminal activity displaying its violence in New York since the mid nineteenth century,²¹⁰ the establishment of a specialized unit like the Italian Squad against the Black Hand occurred only several decades later, thanks to the investigative genius of Detective Petrosino. He recognized the necessity for local law enforcement to modernize by employing informants and undercover agents. Furthermore, the collaboration between local and federal law enforcement to dismantle Italian organized crime never developed until after Petrosino's assassination. In this regard, consulting Ceola's reports at the Archivio Centrale dello Stato of Palermo allowed me to understand the sense of helplessness on the part of the Italian police following Petrosino's death, as well as the lack of co-operation between the Italian police, N.Y.P.D., and the U.S. Secret Service, resulting in a disheartening uncertainty during the course of judicial investigations. During the time

²⁰⁰ A.C.S., Ministero dell'Interno, Direzione Generale di Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Affari Generali e Riservati, Uffici Dipendenti dalla Sezione Prima, Casellario Politico Centrale, Fascicoli Personali, 1894–1945, Box 1141, Cascio Ferro Vito fu Accursio – Socialista rivoluzionario, 9 Nov. 1925, fol. 1.

²⁰¹ Petacco, *Joe Petrosino*, p. 189.

²⁰² U.S. Attorney General, Annual Report (New York, 1925), p. 426; and 'Shotgun slayers kill man on street', *N.Y.T.*, 27 May 1928, p. 13.

²⁰³ US Attorney General, *Annual Report* (New York, 1918), p. 530.

²⁰⁴ 'Harlem racket gang murders two in raid', *N.Y.T.*, 16 Aug. 1930, pp. 1, 3.

²⁰⁵ U.S. Attorney General, Annual Report (New York, 1922), p. 400; and '19 decisions given within half hour', *N.Y.T.*, 1 March 1938, p. 12.

²⁰⁶ 'Prison shuts again on Wolf the Wolf', *N.Y.T.*, 16 July 1936, p. 1; and Dash, *First Family*, p. 308.

²⁰⁷ 'Il ricordo marmoreo a Petrosino', *P.L.A.*, 15 March 1910, p. 2.

²⁰⁸ 'Protection of the slayers of Petrosino', *N.Y.T.*, 28 March 1909, p. 44.

²⁰⁹ R. Moley, 'The criminal as culture', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, cxxv (1926), 78–84, at p. 80.

²¹⁰ On this point, see 'A police officer murdered', *N.Y.T.*, 22 Jul. 1857, p. 1.

when there was not yet a true national police like the future Federal Bureau of Investigation (the first investigative unit was only born in 1908 as the Bureau of Investigation), the N.Y.P.D. and Secret Service mistakenly chose to divide their investigative efforts respectively in pursuing extortion and counterfeiting crimes, without considering that these crimes were being committed by the same criminal group. The testimony of the informant Comito, preserved at the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, as well as the Daily Reports of secret agents Hazen and Flynn at the National Archives and Record Administration have provided me with the opportunity to understand the structure of the Black Hand in its complex heterogeneity as an organized crime association with mafia characteristics. Finally, the research work has also highlighted the disturbing illicit relationships between Black Hand bandits and local authorities, both in Sicily (as in the case of Palizzolo) and in New York (as in the cases of Sullivan and Tammany Hall in general), automatically ensuring greater criminal power within the Little Italies of East Harlem, the Lower East Side, and Brooklyn.²¹¹ As Eric Monkkonen noted, in the case of Tammany Hall, this illicit connection had already surfaced between 1894 and 1895 through the work of the New York State Lexow Commission. The commission succeeded in exposing 'systematic collections'²¹² of bribes involving members of the N.Y.P.D. and owners of gambling and disorderly houses to avoid raids or closures by law enforcement.²¹³ However, Roosevelt's reformist activities in the late 1890s were futile. As before the emergence of the Black Hand in New York, the same close ties between police and criminals resurfaced in the early 1910s, exemplified by the trial and death sentence of N.Y.P.D. Lieutenant Charles Becker for orchestrating the murder of gambler Herman Rosenthal.²¹⁴

In short, the story of Petrosino and the Black Hand represents the juxtaposition of a dual and parallel process of cultural assimilation inherent to the Italian ethnic minority in New York. It materialized in the establishment of the Italian Squad and the necessity for the N.Y.P.D. to recruit an increasing number of Italian officers for the obligatory fight against the Sicilian Mafia, which, between the 1920s and 1930s, began to transform into the Italian-American La Cosa Nostra through the affiliation and respective association of Neapolitan/Calabrian gangsters and Jewish/Irish ones. Alongside the evolution of the Black Hand, it has been crucial to trace the transformation of the N.Y.P.D. through the figure of Italian-American Detective Lieutenant Joseph Petrosino, who inevitably wrote an important chapter in the history of the New York Police Department through the establishment of the Italian Squad in 1904, up to his ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty.

²¹¹ See G. Kibbe Turner, 'Tammany's control of New York by professional criminals', McClure's Magazine, xxxiii (1909), 117–34; R. F. Welch, *King of the Bowery: Big Tim Sullivan, Tammany Hall, and New York City from the Gilded Age to the Progressive Era* (Albany, N.Y., 2010).

²¹² McAdoo, *Guarding a Great City*, p. 85.

²¹³ E. H. Monkkonen, *Murder in New York City* (Berkeley, 2001), pp. 17–18; R. Fosdick, *American Police System* (New York, 1921), p. 271.

²¹⁴ On this point, see, Board of Aldermen, *Report of the Special Committee to Investigate the Police Department* (New York, 1913).