Fighting the Mafia with Culture

Natasha Lardera (November 18, 2014)

Lights from the Dark. Mafia and Antimafia: pictures for an inventory, is an itinerant exhibition strongly desired by the Fondazione Italiana per la Legalità e lo Sviluppo "Generale CC Ignazio Milillo" (Italian Foundation for Legality and Development "General of the Carabinieri Army Ignazio Milillo"), composed by pictures referring to key and dramatic mafia-related events and to unforgettable victories of the State against the mafia, that is on view at the Italian Cultural Institute.

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“I was born in a police station. I have always lived in the barracks and I served in the Carabinieri [5] Corps up to the rank of General. In 1963 I was 10 years old and lived in Palermo. My father, the Lieutenant Colonel, used to command the external group of the Carabinieri in Palermo...” The person speaking is General Giuseppe Fausto Milillo, the son of Gen. Ignazio Milillo, an important figure in the fight against the mafia, who is at the head of the Italian Foundation for Legality and Development "General of the Carabinieri Army Ignazio Milillo.

Can you please explain the title of this photographic testimony.

“Luci dal Buio. Mafia e Antimafia” (Lights from the Dark. Mafia and Antimafia: pictures for an inventory) is the title that we picked because, we want, right from the start, simply by leafing through the catalogue or by looking at the pictures, to convey the message that there is always a ray of sunshine, space for hope and for new beginnings, and that Good always wins against Evil. Right from the start people must understand that with the implementation of a Cultura della Legalità (Culture of Legality), key point of all operative activities of the Foundation, the mafia and any other criminal organizations will have a hard time in coming together and in operating in that social, economic and political context.

Would you point out a couple of pictures that are particularly significant.

The Fondazione Italiana per la Legalità e lo Sviluppo is named after the “Generale dei Carabinieri Ignazio Milillo” who

- In 1949, while he was a lieutenant in Palermo, was hurt during the famous and tragic attack known as the “Strage di Bellolampo” by the bandit Salvatore Giuliano;

- On May 14, 1964, after lengthy investigations with the Polizia Giudiziaria, arrested the mafia boss Luciano Liggio [6], aka the Primula Rossa di Corleone, after sixteen years as a fugitive. Luciano Liggio was the undisputed Mafia boss at the time and his arrest was the first historical action that the State took against the Mafia. For that reason we are particularly proud of showing a picture portraying his arrest. Liggio is in his bed at the moment of his capture. The man in uniform is the Gen. Ignazio Milillo, at the time Colonel in command of the Gruppo Esterno Carabinieri of Palermo.

The other two pictures that are particularly meaningful are that of the arrest, by the Polizia di Stato, of Bernardo Provenzano, and the portrait of Joe Petrosino [7], the first, well known victim of the criminal organization. If we were to give a common meaning to these three images, we could say that no homicide, or any other criminal action, wanted by the mafia remains unpunished. Even the most powerful criminals, assassins and mafia bosses see their power disintegrate and they are either killed or arrested.

Your foundation has several purposes - the disclosure, retention and promotion of the fight against the Mafia; training the new generations in the rediscovery of historical memories; and the promotion of activities aimed at preserving and enhancing the civilization and culture of Sicily's legal philosophy - this exhibition seems to satisfy them all, is that so?

The Foundation's goals are well known and this photographic testimony represents them all.

The importance of this collection of photographs is due to the fact that historical memories must be revisited with a social purpose. Nobody should forget what happened in the past as that helps the present's sense of freedom and respect for humanity.

I want to use the words of Italian Ambassador in the US, Claudio Bisogniero, who, in the letter he sent me, has shown appreciation for the tireless work of the Foundation. “The fight against the mafia is not simply colliding with organized crime, there is more.

We can win only by teaching legality and instill it in the hearts and minds of the younger generation. We win only by keeping alive the memory of all the sorrow and pain inflicted by the mafia cancer and of all the country's victories against it...so we don't only bring the mafia into the shadows but we

bring our anti-mafia successes into the light.” We help the light shine stronger as we are there teaching all future generations the importance of legality.

What's the importance of bringing this exhibition to the US?

Bringing this photographic testimony to New York is extremely important because it's an opportunity to further denounce the operational-criminal link and the infiltration by the mafia that both Italy and the United States have experienced since forever. The Foundation is always busy in spreading a Culture of Legality and that's why we use the show, which is almost at the end of its tour, to communicate our Credo even overseas, in that Italian-American axis, that has always been afflicted by the Mafia. Let's not forget that among the pictures exposed there is the aforementioned one of Joe Petrosino, and that of the mafia boss Tommaso Buscetta, also known as the boss of two worlds, because he was at the head of the mafia connection in both Italy and the USA.

What should the American people know about Ge. Milillo?

The American people are wonderful as they have been able to grow with great respect for Freedom and Democracy, fighting against terrorism and organized crime. They have live through great sacrifices with great respect for culture and memory... that's why they can comprehend and cherish the work and the high feelings of loyalty to the state that motivated Gen. Ignazio Milillo. A man like so many in his simplicity and humility. A military man among many, who, proud and influential, lived his Credo and his life with the utmost respect for human beings, society and the Law, and who fought against every form of criminal activity and the mafia.

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