



The Rothschilds of the Mafia on Aruba

1997

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The MPs of the Staten van Aruba – the Aruban Parliament – must have been bewildered when one of their own ministers smeared the good name of their island. Former minister Elio Nicolaas grins when he is reminded of his speech in 1989. (1) Finally someone had thrown a rock in the silent and complacent waters of the Caribbean tax-haven Aruba – a semi-independent part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. "I had to react," he says. "My own colleague, the Minister of Finance, denied money was laundered on the island." Nicolaas knew better. Prior to his political career he had been a police officer and had actually set up the anti-narcotics squad.

His denunciation incited strong objections in Parliament. Opposition-leader – and former Prime Minister – Henny Eman demanded his resignation. Nicolaas retorted by suggesting that Eman's election campaign was financed with drug money. Nicolaas thinks today nothing has really changed: "The island is still infested with 'narco-complacientes', people who benefit from the drug trade." Indeed, Eman is once more Prime Minister of Aruba. "Well, did you come to write stories about our pirates island?" he asks sarcastically when we walk to his office. (2) Eman has had enough of the 'mad stories' about the Caribbean island as a 'Mafia Nest'. They are not substantiated and damaging for Aruba's good name, foreign trade and the tourist-industry, he thinks.

"Aruba's geographical position is a blessing and a curse at the same time," says Eman, alluding to the pleasant climate which attracts thousands of tourists each year, and the unpleasant closeness of the Colombian and Venezuelan northern shores which makes it vulnerable for drug-traffickers. According to Eman, Aruba is burdened with the problem of other nations: "The drug trade is not Aruba's primary responsibility. The market is in Europe and the United States. It is not our fault they cannot control their borders; that Aruba is used as a transit point."

The US Government is not as dismissive as Mr Eman. Within three years Aruba rose from a 'medium risk' to a 'high risk' country in the State Department's annual International Narcotics Control Strategy Report. The island is used as a base for bulk transshipment of cocaine to the US and Europe, through its Free Trade Zone. Off-shore corporate banking facilities, the casino/resort complexes, high volume tourism, and a stable currency all make Aruba attractive to money laundering organizations. Eman considers these reports as too negative and suggests that Aruba is in good company since "the US and Holland rank number one on the list as well."

The US is concerned about credible reports that some members of the Aruban government met regularly with individuals associated with drug trafficking and money laundering syndicates. In spite of, or perhaps because of, the denials by Aruba officials, the US remains convinced that entrenched money laundering organizations direct large cash deposits into land development and other construction projects on the island. (3) The Netherlands is equally worried. "I think we are going to loose it on Aruba," Arthur Docters van Leeuwen, the Dutch Attorney General, said about the counter-narcotics efforts on the island. Aruba is in the hands of some powerful families and Holland can't do anything about it, due to constitutional restraints. (4)

The reasons for Docters' pessimism were revealed when a confidential report on the Aruban Security Service – the Veiligheidsdienst Aruba (VDA) – leaked in the Dutch press. In October 1994 its director Martien Ras had sounded the alarm-bell. He had written to Docters, then chief of the Dutch security service, that democratically elected officials promoted the interests of private business-men to such an extent that Aruba's democratic institutions were in danger. (5)

Both the Dutch security service and the American CIA had assisted Ras with his investigations. Ras wrote to Docters because Eman – freshly re-elected as Prime Minister – demanded to see the VDA-files about Aruban entrepreneurs who Ras suspected of money laundering and linked to drug traffickers. The Dutch rapidly removed the files, but Ras had to quit his job. Since then he Ras has lived in hiding somewhere in Holland. His interim successor, a Dutch intelligence officer, confirmed his conclusions.

In December 1996 President Clinton put Aruba on the list of Major Illicit Drug-transit Countries. (6) Aruba is now eligible for de-certification by the US Government. At the yearly certification scrutiny March 1997, however, Aruba was not decertified.

The First Independent State under Mafia Control

Aruba's reputation as a 'Mafia island' became public in March 1993 when it was described by the Italian daily *Corriere della Sera* as "the first state to be bought by the bosses Cosa Nostra." (7) The Sicilian Mafia clan of the families Cuntrera and Caruana allegedly had taken over the island. Between 1988 and 1992 they acquired 60 per cent of Aruba through investments in hotels, casino's and the election-campaign of a Prime Minister. Aruba looked set to be the first independent state under Mafia control.

At the time Aruba was set for independence from the Kingdom of the Netherlands in 1996. Ten years before it had acquired a status aparte – a semi-autonomous status – within the realm. The Dutch consented to the Aruban wish for self-determination, but established a 10-year time period. Due to the reluctance of many Arubans, and anxiety with the Dutch government about the infiltration of organized crime on the island, independence never materialized. The US, France, the United Kingdom and Venezuela pressed the Dutch government to abandon its moves towards Aruban self-government, and the Netherlands complied. (8) Consequently, although the island is now handling its own internal affairs, foreign relations and defense remain a Dutch responsibility.

Prime Minister Eman doesn't like to be reminded of the name Cuntrera – primarily because of his signature on the licence of Paolo and Giuseppe Cuntrera for their nightclub *Visage* in 1987. It keeps hurting him, even though he tries to dismiss it as "a very superseded story." According to Eman, at the time these people were honourable citizens in several countries, among others in Venezuela. In Aruba, their criminal activities were not known. Moreover, "when we learned who they really were, we expelled them."

The issue also became highly politicized. The two main political parties – the Arubaanse Volkspartij (AVP, Aruban Peoples Party) led by Eman and the *Movimiento Electoral di Pueblo* (MEP, People's Electoral Movement) led by Nelson Oduber – accused each other of permitting the Cuntrera's to infest Aruba and both claim to have kicked them off the island. In reality, the Cuntrera's had left – temporarily – on their own in 1988.

In April 1988, *Business Week* published a story about the involvement of the family in a case of heroin smuggling from Thailand to Montreal, and their money laundering schemes in Canada. (9) The article and copies of the licence for the Cuntrera's signed by Eman, were distributed anonymously on the island, and caused a fierce political battle.

Eman still claims that the MEP-government which preceded his first government, already allowed the Cuntreras to establish the nightclub and that legally he couldn't do anything about it. But Eman's own Minister of Economic Affairs, Leonard Berlinski, in writing had refused a licence for Paolo and Giuseppe Cuntrera. Berlinski's officials advised him not to issue the permit because it was not in the public interest of Aruba, warning him: "don't burn your fingers." Ironically, shortly after the licence was denied, Berlinski had to resign because of allegations of corruption. He was arrested but acquitted on appeal. In the meantime a new request for a licence was applied for – by notary Maria Albertina Eman, a sister of the Prime Minister. Eman, then Minister of Economic Affairs ad interim, approved the application in spite of repeated negative recommendations. (10) Berlinski contends that observers of these events can draw their own conclusions.

Eman's claim that the Cuntrera's were honourable citizens in several countries is not convincing. This was certainly not true in Italy, Canada and the United States. In 1983 an international arrest warrant for Paolo Cuntrera was issued by the Italian police, and in June 1985 Gerlando Caruana was caught smuggling heroin to Montreal. Assuming this escaped the attention of the Aruban authorities, closer at home in Venezuela, the Cuntrera's were exposed as mafiosi in 1984 – three years prior to permission for the Cuntrera nightclub.

Their names, accompanied by photographs, made the headlines in the Venezuelan press. In addition, Aruban authorities knew – or at least should have known – of the involvement of the Cuntreras in cocaine traffic on the island. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) had followed Sabbatino Nicolucci, a suspected courier for Montreal Mafia boss Vito Rizzuto, to the island. When

Canadian police-officers – accompanied by the Aruban chief of police – asked to look at Nicolucci's phone calls at the Holiday Inn it appeared he was not registered: the room was reserved and paid for by Pasquale Cuntrera. (11) Despite this incriminating evidence, which probably inspired the negative advice of Aruban officials, Prime Minister Eman gave the Cuntrera's permission to open a nightclub.

The Bankers of Cosa Nostra

The 'Rothschilds of the Mafia' or 'the bankers of Cosa Nostra' were the names given to the Cuntrera-Caruana Mafia-clan the Italian press. (12) A prosecuting judge was more precise, describing the clan as "a close wicker-work of blood-relations composed of family-nucleuses in different countries all over the world, joined with an equal wicker-work of economical and industrial connections, intended to improve their networks for international traffic in narcotics and money-laundering." (13)

The Cuntrera-Caruana clan specialized in laundering hundreds of millions of drug dollars. This may well have been why it had come to Aruba. The island is one of the many Caribbean tax-havens famous for their relaxed off-shore regulations popular at the shady side of the money business. In the 1980s the booming tourist-industry offered additional possibilities to re-invest drug profits. (14) It was entirely appropriate therefore when an Italian newspaper suggested that the sun never sets on the Cuntrera-Caruana narco-empire. The occasion for this was the arrest of three Cuntrera brothers (Pasquale, Paolo and Gaspare Cuntrera) at Rome's international airport in September 1992. (15) They had arrived from Caracas. The night before they had been secretly put on a plane to Rome, after the Venezuelan government had decided to expel them.

The Italian government had requested the Cuntrera brothers' extradition several times since a first arrest-warrant in 1983, but the clan seemed to have safeguarded its stay in Caracas through political connections. For a long time the Venezuelan government seemed uninterested in pursuing the brothers. In 1992, however, the tide turned. In May the brutal killing of the popular anti-mafia judge, Giovanni Falcone, in Sicily produced a public outcry in Italy and the government stepped up its battle against the Mafia. At the same time, the apparent protection of the Cuntrera-brothers in Venezuela dwindled.

President Carlos Andres Perez barely survived a coup of discontented military in February and faced allegations of corruption. A tough law-and-order Minister for Home Affairs was nominated. Diplomatic pressure from the US (where Pasquale Cuntrera was indicted on charges of heroin-smuggling) and Italy resulted in the expulsion of the three Cuntrera-brothers.

The arrest of the Cuntrera-brothers reverberated through Aruban politics. Parliament carried a motion concluding that there existed secret ties between the Aruban Peoples Party and the Cuntrera-family. The former Premier, Henny Eman and his Minister of Justice Edgar Vos (both in the opposition at that time) were alleged to have given the clan "preferential treatment" and asked "to leave the political arena." A parliamentary inquiry was asked for to uncover "the benefits which (Eman and Vos) acquired on account of the preferential treatment." (16)

Eman and Vos, however, did not leave the arena and subsequently nobody has heard about a parliamentary inquiry. Eman became Prime Minister once more and 'Watty' Vos the Minister of Justice (just recently their cabinet fell). The Minister of Health in Eman's new cabinet is Mrs. Lilly Beke, family doctor of Paolo Cuntrera when he stayed at the island. Although Mrs. Beke claims to "treat people, not names," many wonder why she consulted Paolo Cuntrera in Caracas in a restaurant. (17)

A Transnational Criminal Holding

"The Cuntrera's and Caruana's were and probably still are leading international drug traffickers, and they control a significant part of the money laundering networks," noted prosecuting judge Gioacchino Natoli from Palermo. He led the prosecution during the two-year trial against several members of the clan. (18) In January 1996 Pasquale Cuntrera was sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment for "associazione mafioso" ('mafia conspiracy') and drug trafficking. (19) Gaspare and Paolo Cuntrera both received 13 years.

Natoli subsequently became one of the prosecutors in the case against Italy's former Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti, accused of collusion with the Mafia. Being in the front line in the fight against Cosa Nostra, means that Natoli is sealed off from society, escorted and guarded 24-hours a day. Natoli's office reflects his almost monastic isolation. Piles of files wait for further study and elaboration. Palermo's intense sunlight and eternal traffic-bustle are shut off. Broad shouldered plain-clothes policemen guard the corridors of this enclave in Palermo's Tribunal.

Behind Natoli hangs a frame with a photograph of two men jesting. The photo's gaiety is in sharp contrast with the tragic fate of the men – Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino. Both were killed while fighting the Mafia. Their photo is a reminder of the danger and necessity of Natoli's everyday job. He worked with both men. As an assistant to Falcone he helped to prepare the indictment against Cuntrera-Caruana, back in 1989.

Falcone, however, did not live to see the result of that indictment. His car was bombed near the Sicilian town of Capaci in May 1992 – a few days after he had initiated a new extradition procedure against the Cuntrera-brothers. Falcone, his wife and three escorting policemen were killed in the blast. Cosa Nostra eliminated its principal opponent, who was not only responsible for the conviction of hundreds of its leaders at the Maxi Trial in 1987, but was also the impending national Anti-Mafia Prosecutor.

According to Natoli, "the clan is best described as an international holding ... a holding which secures certain services for the Sicilian Cosa Nostra as a whole: drug-trafficking routes and channels for money-laundering." The families Cuntrera and Caruana are the nucleus of the clan. They are relatives; they inter-married like medieval feudal lords to strengthen their criminal alliance. Consequently, the clan is very compact with great cohesion. Natoli describes it as "a very tight knit family group of men-of-honor, not only joined by Mafia bonds, but also by ties of blood." The strength of this group – apart from the numbers and solid relationships – is that it moved to the nerve-centres of drug trafficking in North and South America.

Within Cosa Nostra few know who they are, but all know what they are. "Everybody knew that Cuntrera-Caruana were the undisputed controllers of the Canadian and Venezuelan market," says Gaspare Mutolo, a pentito (repentant) who himself was heavily involved in the drug trade, but became a state witness in 1992. (20) "In Cosa Nostra it was generally known that they were involved in drug trafficking at a very high level," says Mutolo. Indeed, the names Cuntrera and Caruana were – and probably still are – a guarantee of a good deal.

Moreover, the clan has scarcely been touched by the Sicilian Cosa Nostra's internal power-struggles, like the one which brought Totò Riina and his Corleonesi to power in the 1980s. One reason is that the Cuntrera-Caruana clan had moved abroad. Another is that it positioned itself at an equal distance to the different factions in the Sicilian Mafia. As Natoli explains: "Their interest is the drug trade, an activity which runs right across different interests and actions. That is why they have to keep a central position and be independent from whatever 'political' wing that rules Cosa Nostra."

Others are Allied with Them

"The difference between the Cuntrera-Caruana clan and other Mafia families is that they have a key-position in the drug trade and money laundering for Cosa Nostra," says Alessandro Pansa, head of the Economic Crime Section of the Servizio centrale operativo (Sco) of the Italian National Police. (21) Pansa is one of Italy's leading experts in international criminal investigations and money laundering. Fifteen years ago, as one of the members of a newly formed crack team of investigators who became the confidants of judge Falcone, Pansa pioneered the use of computers to track the drug proceeds. In his view, the clan is the international transport service and the launderette of Cosa Nostra. It brings together the producers and distributors of narcotics. "Almost all the money of the Sicilian Mafia in North-America to purchase heroin and the resulting proceeds went through their hands." The Cunteras and Caruanas are necessary and irreplaceable for every other Mafia family. Their services are indispensable. Consequently, "the others are allied with them." (22)

It was Pansa who discovered the clan, almost by accident. One in hundreds of tapped phone conversations alerted him. In 1982 he was investigating the Italian end of a heroin smuggling network to the United States, later known as the Pizza Connection. The Italian police was following the movements of Giuseppe Bono, the middleman between the American buyers of the Gambino and Bonanno Family and the Sicilian clans who organized the heroin traffic to the US, and had tapped his telephone. Most of the time Bono did not say much, but suddenly he became very talkative to an elderly Sicilian woman. Bono respectfully expressed his condolences with the demise of her husband. Pansa wondered why Bono, an arrogant high-ranking boss within Cosa Nostra, "became suddenly so submissive ... that woke us up."

It turned out that Bono was calling a number registered to Pasquale Cuntrera in Ostia Lido, a sea-side resort near Rome. The deceased was Liborio Cuntrera, the eldest Cuntrera-brother, who had died in London, where he had settled in 1976. Pansa started to investigate this little known cluster of Mafia men from the distant, ignored south of Sicily. In the event it took him ten years before he finally arrested the Cuntrera brothers at Rome's Fiumicino airport when they were expelled from Venezuela in 1992. "They really look like Godfathers from the movie-screen, with their painted hair, gold watches and white shoes," Pansa says. But he acknowledges that, in spite of their appearance they are not be underestimated as "they are very good entrepreneurs."

Murderers, Cattle Thieves and Arsonists

The family moved outside Sicily some 30 years ago. The days when Pasquale Cuntrera and his brother-in-law Leonardo Caruana were indicted for murder and such old style rural Mafia crimes as cattle-thieving and arson are long gone. (23) Now they head a transnational criminal enterprise involved in the brokerage of all kinds of narcotics and laundering the proceeds.

Both the Cuntreras and the Caruanas were born in Siculiana, a small village on the south coast of Sicily in the province Agrigento. Already in the 1930's, during the Fascist repression of the Mafia, Giuseppe Caruana, the eldest of the Caruana-brothers, was denounced as a mafioso. He was rebuked as an "ozioso" ('a lazy bones') suspected of living from "the proceeds of criminal activity."

Siculiana had been ruled by mafiosi for years, concluded the Agrigento Court in 1966. Giuseppe and Leonardo Caruana and Pasquale Cuntrera exploited every economic activity in the village and its surrounding communities. They had created a atmosphere of omertà with violence and intimidation making sure that no one dared to denounce them. The Court thought it best to expel them from the village.

The banishment was the result of stepped-up repression from the Italian authorities after a car-bomb killed seven policemen in the Palermo suburb, Ciaculli, in 1963. The bomb was intended to kill Palermo Mafia boss Salvatore 'Cicchiteddu' Greco, target of a rival Mafia-faction during yet another internal power-struggle. The killing of the policemen, however, provoked a wave of public indignation – similar to the later one when Falcone and Borsellino were murdered – that forced the Italian government to act against Cosa Nostra.

The government resorted to a measure of the Fascist period: soggiorno obbligato (an internal banishment). To disconnect the mafiosi from their strongholds in Sicily, a forced deportation from their power bases was imposed. Hundreds of mafiosi were banned to locations elsewhere in Italy, mostly in the North. Many choose to leave the country instead. Pasquale Cuntrera and Leonardo Caruana moved to Montreal in Canada, while Giuseppe Caruana preferred Rio de Janeiro, where the now 86-year old family boss still resides in good health.

Unwillingly, the Italian government with its measure of internal banishment caused the spread of Cosa Nostra not only to the North of the country – its financial and business center – as an Italian Parliamentary Antimafia Commission would conclude ten years later, but also to the rest of the world. Many of the banned mafiosi emerged as the hard core of the heroin business in North America in the 1970s and 1980s.

Five Decades in the Narcotics Business

When and how the Cuntrera-Caruana clan became involved in drug trafficking is unknown. According to the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) the family was part of heroin-smuggling networks to the US the 1940s onwards. Their names appeared at investigations in such famous cases as the French Connection in the 1970s and the Pizza Connection in the 1980s. (24)

A good guess would be that they were introduced by the notorious Sicilian-American gangster and associate of Lucky Luciano, Nicola Gentile. 'Zu Cola' had also been born in Siculiana, but moved to the US at the turn of the century. In 1937 he was caught red-handed trafficking in narcotics, but – on the order of his American bosses – had jumped bail and returned to Sicily. (25)

In Sicily Gentile rose to a position as 'capo'. After the invasion in 1943, He helped the military set up its civil administration (AMGOT) in the Agrigento province and became involved in intelligence and the Sicilian separatist movement. Later he became an important canvasser for politicians from the Christian-democratic Party, who quarrelled for his support. (26)

When Lucky Luciano was extradited to Italy in 1946 he once again teamed up with Gentile in organizing drug routes to the US. Gentile had very good connections with well-known drug traffickers on Sicily, which he may have organized himself. His son was married to the daughter of Pietro Davì, one of the leading figures in the illegal tobacco and drug trade in Palermo in the 1950s. (27)

Several intertwining Sicilian networks were running heroin to the US. They had the same source – suppliers from the Corsican underworld in Marseilles with their high quality laboratories – and the same destination: the North American consumer market. After the War the US expelled dozens of Italo-American Mafiosi besides Luciano. These so-called 'undesirables' became the inter-oceanic link, and stimulated the metamorphosis of the Sicilian Mafia from a backward rural power-system into a modern protection and smuggling industry.

One of the protagonists was Giovanni Mira, a Palermo based drug trafficker, but born in Siculiana. Mira knew Gentile, and he was spotted by the police with Carmelo Caruana in Milan, where they probably met their Corsican heroin supplier. Both were linked to the so-called Caneba-network, which smuggled heroin to the US through Canada from 1951 until 1960 when the police disrupted this route. Mira was sending suitcases with tens of kilos of heroin to a certain Settimo Accardo in Canada. Another plot, according to Interpol, was to hide heroin in cans of anchovies. In 1960, Mira together with other high-rollers in the trade – Pietro Davì, Rosario Mancino (one of Luciano's lieutenants in Palermo) and Angelo La Barbera (a nephew of Davì) – traveled to Mexico and Canada to explore new drug routes. (28)

The Cuntrera-Caruana clan in all probability was involved in the trafficking networks. Some family-members had moved to Montreal in the 1950s. Canadian immigration records show Pasquale and Liborio Cuntrera arrived in 1951 and acquired Canadian nationality in 1957. (29) They moved up and down setting up base at both sides of the Atlantic.

Antonio Calderone – a mafioso from Catania who turned state-witness – recounts having first heard of the Cuntreras and Caruanas in 1968: "Giovanni Mira, an old uomo d'onore from Siculiana who was serving his soggiorno obbligato near Catania, told me they were drug traffickers and that they were very rich."(30) According to the Cuntreras own story they made their fortune in Canada. They worked hard, starting as snow-ploughers and barbers, saving enough money to start their first shop and pizzeria.

From the French to the Pizza Connection

The repression caused by the Ciaculli Massacre disarranged the Sicilian drug trade to the United States. Mafiosi were banned, arrested and incarcerated. Control over the trade fell to the hands of a few fugitives: Pietro Davì, Salvatore Greco 'l'ingegnere', Salvatore Greco 'Cicchiteddu', Tommaso Buscetta and Gaetano Badalamenti. (31) All of them acquainted with Cuntrera and Caruana.

Supergrass Tommaso Buscetta met the clan in the winter of 1969 in Montreal. Buscetta defected

from Cosa Nostra in 1984. He was the first high-ranking mafioso to turn state-witness, and enabled Falcone to indict the entire summit of Cosa Nostra. Buscetta stayed at Pasquale Cuntrera's home recovering from a venereal disease. The Cuntreras were introduced to him as uomini d'onore (men-of-honor). When Buscetta met them they were already very rich. He soon discovered the source of their affluence. At the Palermo Trial against Cuntrera and Caruana in 1995, Buscetta declared that Pasquale Cuntrera had told him they were dealing in heroin, and that their supplier was Pippo Bono – at that time unknown to the police – who arranged things in Italy. Buscetta says their involvement started after the Ciaculli Massacre, when the heroin routes had been disrupted. (32)

Buscetta denies having worked with the clan in the heroin business. The only thing he smuggled with them was another white pulverized stuff: powdered milk. In fact Buscetta denies having ever been implicated in the drug trade despite all the evidence to the contrary. At the time he met the Cuntreras, Buscetta was known to every law enforcement agency as one of the most notorious worldwide drug traffickers. (33)

One of Buscetta's partners, Pino Catania, ratted on him in much the same way Buscetta himself would do 10 years later. Catania turned state witness when he was arrested in the US in 1973 on heroin charges. He confessed to having been implicated in a heroin smuggling ring that transported 330 kilograms to the US and Canada in 3 years. His partners were Buscetta and a certain Carlo Zippo. (34)

Police investigations had already identified the Zippo-Buscetta network in 1969, later rebaptized as the French Connection. (35) They had also stumbled on a network involving some of the Cuntreras and Caruanas. The networks worked with the same people. A BNDD report summarizing the Zippo-Buscetta network identified Liborio Cuntrera, Giovanni Caruana and phone-calls from Cuntrera's partner Nick Rizzuto to Catania's company in Mexico and Zippo's firm Brasitalia Import-Export Company in New York. (36)

Buscetta had met Rizzuto at Cuntrera's house and both were partners smuggling 'powdered milk'. Buscetta's son Benedetto – who was dragged into the network and arrested – confessed he overheard his father talking to a certain 'Monoco': "Are you interested in 30 pairs of shoes for 14 dollars a pair?" Buscetta had asked, in the typical code-language used for heroin deals. (37)

Benedetto didn't know 'Monoco's' real name, but it could well have been yet another associate of the Cuntrera-Caruana clan, Santo Caldarella. Caldarella was nick-named 'u Monacu' or 'Monoco' ('the monk') because in his younger days he had begged on the streets of Siculiana. During the Cuntrera-Caruana trial Buscetta recalled that he had met Caldarella during his stay at Pasquale Cuntrera's place.

There are more indications of the close relationship between Buscetta and Pasquale Cuntrera, the clan member Buscetta was most intimate with. When Buscetta travelled to Italy in the summer of 1970, he did so on a false passport provided by Pasquale Cuntrera. (38) The Zippo-Buscetta French Connection network was related to an illegal-alien racket. Sicilians were smuggled into Canada and the US and most of them also brought in narcotics.

When the organization of Zippo and Buscetta was dismantled in 1972, the Cuntrera-Caruana network was not. Just like other partners in the network – Giuseppe Bono in Italy and the Eagle Cheese Company of the Casamento brothers – they would all turn up ten years later in de Pizza Connection. In both cases pizza parlours were important distribution centres.

The French Connection was a prelude to the Pizza Connection. In both cases the trade was organized by Sicilian men of honor, and not American made-members. Heroin wholesaling in the US was firmly in the hands of a Sicilian network, which supplied American Cosa Nostra Families at the distribution level. The Sicilians had the licence of the American bosses who 'franchised' the import to them. (39) The Cuntrera-Caruana-Bono combination supplied the market in the 1970s and kept on supplying in 1980s.

Protecting the Heroin Racket

The Cuntrera-Caruana clan automatically grew while other narcotics networks were dismantled. The clan started to diversify and spread their organization, evolving into a transnational crime corporation. One of the reasons that the Cuntrera-Caruana clan remained unnoticed for such a long time (and when they were noted were disregarded) is that although, structurally they were at the center of things, geographically they were at the outskirts: they did not come from Palermo, and they did not move to New York.

As law enforcement works primarily on a national basis, the clan was always dismissed as some kind of 'outside intruder' in local crime. International law enforcement cooperation is a highly complicated and tiresome matter. Given limited resources, transnational criminal organisations were inevitably made secondary to the local situation – at least for a long time. Only more recently have international inquiries been given priority.

Another reason for the elusiveness of the clan is that it operated as what criminologists call an 'enterprise syndicate', as opposed to a 'power syndicate'. The clan mainly focused on making money through the narcotics business, and left the criminal power politics to others. The members worked very secretly, not imposing themselves with overt acts of violence. Ultimately, though their increasing prominence made them an inevitable target of law enforcement. (40)

When the clan had to move to Canada half-way through the 1960s they found shelter with the Montreal Cotroni Family, a sub-division of the New York Bonanno Family. The logic of Mafia hierarchy required the clan to be subordinate to the Cotroni bosses. These bosses soon discovered they had lost control over their supposed Sicilian underlings who had set up their own narcotics racket. When Cotroni boss Paolo Violi tried to re-establish his leadership, he was eliminated. (41)

The implication is that although the distinction between 'enterprise' and 'power' syndicates may be useful as an analytical tool for the inner workings of crime organizations and their outside relations, where control of a criminal enterprise is concerned it is less significant. Running a profitable narcotics network means economic strength, and that means power. When other criminal power brokers try to control the enterprise – without comparable resources – they may find themselves at the losing end of the battle. Violi found this out in 1978. Perhaps he lacked the right connections and ruthlessness. Whatever the case, Montreal became a stronghold of the clan. The present-day Montreal Mafia-boss, Vito Rizzuto, is closely connected to the Cuntrera-Caruana organisation. His father, Nick Rizzuto, is the godfather of one of Pasquale Cuntrera's daughters.

Violi's nominal overlord in New York, Bonanno Family boss Carmine Galante, received the same fate in July 1979, when he tried to muscle in at the heroin racket in New York, after his release from prison. His killing was connected with the Sicilian monopoly in the heroin racket. After the liquidation of Galante, FBI files showed that a certain Gerlando Sciascia became head of the Bonanno Family. (42) Sciascia was born in Cattolica Eraclea, just like Nick Rizzuto and others of Cuntrera-Caruana Montreal branch of the clan. (43) Sciascia had close relations with Giuseppe Bono and Sal Catalano, key figure in the Pizza Connection. According to RCMP intelligence officer Yvon Thibault, Sciascia, in Bonanno's name, acted as the liaison between the Sicilians of New York and those in Montreal. (44) With Montreal mobster Joe Lo Presti (also born in Cattolica Eraclea), Sciascia supplied the New York Gambino Family with heroin from the Cuntrera-Caruana clan. (45)

It remains unclear whether there is a connection between the Violi and Galante murder. The exact role of the Cuntrera-Caruana clan in the overall control of the heroin supply line to New York is also unclear. There is evidence though that the clan had considerable clout in the matter.

The Missing Link: Venezuela

Around 1982 there was no denying that the Cuntrera-Caruana families were key players in the narcotics business. Police on both sides of the ocean met them in investigations. Italian Criminalpol and the Venezuelan police listened to their telephones, ignorant of their common interest. The FBI spotted their partner Giuseppe Bono in New York chatting with Pizza Connection protagonists Joe Ganci and Sal Catalano, while the Italians thought Bono controlled things in Milan.

DEA agents trailed their old acquaintance of the French Connection days, Nick Rizzuto, in Milan, telephoning Bono and sending containers to Canada. Pasquale Cuntrera was intermittently in Caracas and Rome (where he owned an apartment at the sea-side resort Ostia). Alfonso Caruana was spotted in Lugano, Switzerland, handling the money with Sicilian boss Antonio Salamone – a relative of the Grecos everybody presumed dead – coming in from Brazil.

Wiretaps gave a glimpse of Paolo Cuntrera's son-in-law Nino Mongiovi moving around in Honduras and Miami. He had obtained a monopoly for "two containers a month with a distributor in Florida." (46) They were all connected to Michele Zaza and his crew of skilled smugglers from the Camorra organization in Naples. According to the FBI this network smuggled 3 metric tons of heroin a year to the US. (47)

Only when the Americans and Italians pooled their findings did they grasp what was going on. In 1983 the Italian police summarized their investigations in the Bono+159 report. The report identified Cuntrera and Caruana as the pivot of the well organized network moving heroin up to the US and the money down. It was the first time the clan was thoroughly examined. In fact, the police had uncovered part of the supply line for the Pizza Connection. But, while the US Pizza Connection trial resulted in the conviction of a significant segment of the network the authorities didn't find the real link between North-America and Sicily. (48) That missing link was to be found in Venezuela, where the Cuntrera-Caruana clan had set up their headquarters at the start of the 1970s, buying hotels and founding a string of businesses in Caracas and Valencia.

The most intriguing of the dozens Cuntrera-Caruana enterprises was a cattle-breeding company on an extended ranch in the state of Barinas, close to the Colombian border. It had its own private airstrip. A special task-force of the Venezuelan intelligence-service DISIP looked at this farm called Ganaderia Rio Zapa, established in 1971. (49) The shareholders of the firm represented the creme-de-la-creme of Mafia heroin-movers in those days:

- * Salvatore 'Cicchiteddu' Greco, the former head of the overall Commission of the Sicilian Cosa Nostra, and one of the pioneers in the international heroin trade (50);

- * Nick Rizzuto, a lieutenant in the Montreal-based Cotroni Family, but highly independent and in fact subordinate to the Sicilian Mafia (i.e. Cuntrera-Caruana);

- * Antonio Napoli, a high-ranking made member of the New York Gambino Family and 'the biggest mover of junk to the United States' (51);

- * John Gambino, a relative of Carlo Gambino and boss of the Sicilian faction of the New York Gambino Family (52);

- * Brothers Angelo and Francesco Mongiovi, figure-heads of the Cuntreras in Caracas and Italy's financial centre Milan. According to a DEA report, Angelo's son Nino Mongiovi married Paolo Cuntrera's daughter and was the 'super manager for drugs of all kinds passing through Miami'. (53)

The DEA spotted them investigating the Napoli brothers of the Gambino Family in New York. Antonio Napoli had moved to Venezuela and was a partner in a Cuntrera business. At the time DEA headquarters figured the trail irrelevant; nevertheless, special agent Tom Tripodi was sent to Caracas. DEA-analyst Mona Ewell told reporter Claire Sterling that Tripodi "came back with the whole thing." (54)

"We saw the Cuntreras and the Caruanas. The security around their homes was incredible... They had control in Venezuela like you wouldn't believe... We saw their businesses, all fronts for paper-shuffling. What these people handled was the money. Their names had been coming up for years on the money. Historically, they worked the money. They did it for cocaine as well as heroin ... It was a tremendous operation, and it was going on a long, long time... In my opinion, that's still the key. They're the people with the money; they've been in the business of narcotics the longest."

The implication, as Italian investigator Alessandro Pansa has noted is that "Venezuela has its own Cosa Nostra family as if it is Sicilian territory ... Until this day, the structure and hierarchy of the Mafia has been entirely reproduced in Venezuela ... The clan has direct links with the ruling Commission of the Sicilian Mafia, and are acknowledged by the American Cosa Nostra." Pansa claims that they are

the funnel for the Gambino Family. Indeed, according to Tommaso Buscetta, it was the all-powerful New York Mafia boss Carlo Gambino himself who sponsored the acknowledgement of the Cuntrera-Caruana Family. (55)

Global Operations

The Montreal-New York and Caracas-Miami connections proved to be the gateway for narcotics to the world's biggest consumer-market. From its Venezuelan base the Cuntrera-Caruana clan supplied whatever drug was in demand – heroin, cocaine and cannabis. As their importance grew, however, the clan finally started to get to the attention of law enforcement agencies around the world.

Arrest warrants began to pile up. The 1983 Bono+159 report resulted in the first ones for the Cuntrera brothers and Alfonso Caruana, among others. Buscetta's revelations in 1984 resulted in a new one for Pasquale Cuntrera, followed by yet another set in 1985. Italian Mafia-prosecutor Giovanni Falcone again indicted the clan in 1989, when two influential clan-members were arrested in Germany.

At the time the family's estimated worth was US\$ 500 million. It was estimated by those investigating the clan's activities that it had shipped at least 700 kilo's of heroin and 70 metric tons of hashish with a total value of 700 million US dollars. Already then the Italian press warned Prime Minister Henny Eman of Aruba to remember the name Cuntrera and Caruana. If not, he might find himself a prisoner of Cosa Nostra instead of independent of the Netherlands. (56)

The investigation only looked at the years 1978-85, and the figures proved to be conservative. Subsequent evidence revealed that the investigators had missed a lot of what was going on. In 1992 pentito Gaspare Mutolo, Cosa Nostra's contact with Thai traffickers, disclosed massive heroin transports at the start of the 1980s. In 1981, Mutolo organized a 400 kilo shipment to the US. The Cuntrera-Caruana clan received half of the load, while John Gambino's crew took care of the other 200 kilos. When the money of the first deal came back, Mutolo immediately started to arrange another similar transport. (57)

The shipments were financed by consortium of Sicilian Mafia clans. They had organized a pool to provide the money to buy the merchandise from Thai suppliers. The system in the heroin-business was that every Mafia family could invest in a shipment if it had the money. Each step in the different stages between buying and selling the commodity was payed along the way. The Cuntreras and Caruanas were the trusted buyers who supplied the market in North America.

Mutolo was arrested in 1982 before he could finish the second shipment. But, he assured the judge during the Cuntrera Trial, the shipment arrived. His Thai supplier Koh Bak Kin was arrested when yet another shipment of 233 kilos was intercepted in the Suez Canal in May 1983. A few months later, Alfonso Caruana was in Bangkok with relative Giuseppe Cuffaro to set up a new supply line. (58)

This time the clan was caught red-handed when British Customs & Excise and the Canadian RCMP seized a shipment of 58 kilos of heroin in Montreal in June 1985. Principal suspects were co-mafioso Francesco Di Carlo of the Altofonte clan, who was arrested in the UK, and Gerlando Caruana in Montreal. The subsequent inquiry disclosed that there had been more shipments. Besides heroin, loads of hashish were smuggled in as well. (59)

Alfonso Caruana and his brother Pasquale had settled in Woking in 1982, a Sicilian enclave in the 'stockbroker belt' near London. They worked closely with Francesco Di Carlo, who had created a complete smuggling infrastructure in England: he owned a hotel, travel agencies and import-export companies. Both Caruanas managed to leave England before they could be arrested.

Giuseppe Cuffaro was the travelling salesman of the clan. The records of his American Express Card show the international scale of dealings. Between 1980 and 1985 Cuffaro travelled up and down Montreal, Zürich, Caracas, Miami, Aruba, Lugano, Rome, Nassau (Bahamas), New York, Hollywood (Florida), New Delhi, Atlanta, London, Rio de Janeiro, Antigua, Palermo, Singapore, Bangkok and Geneva. In Thailand he married a Thai girl, opened bank accounts and negotiated with their Thai supplier Bang Khampay.

The seizure in 1985 apparently disrupted the flood for a while. Mutolo recalls that he was approached by Giuseppe Bono's associate Gaetano Fidanzi during the Maxi Trial against the Sicilian Cosa Nostra in Palermo in 1986. Fidanzi asked if he could find some more Thai heroin. If so, Fidanzi said, "we'll send it to Canada, to Cuntrera and Caruana, everything you want, either a 100 or 200 kilos, every amount you can send them in Canada, because they control everything over there." (60)

In June 1988, 30 kilos of heroin were seized in a shipment of jade rocks from Thailand in a factory near Windsor at the US-Canadian border. The factory was owned by Cuffaro's brother-in-law, John Laudicina. Consignments from the same shipping-agent in Thailand had previously been seized earlier in Chicago, New York and in the Netherlands, but no one knew who had organized them. In the factory more hollowed out jade rocks indicated it wasn't the first load.

Meanwhile Giuseppe Cuffaro and Pasquale Caruana were in Germany organizing another network on the European continent to replace the route through England that had been dismantled. The German Bundeskriminalamt (BKA) was only just in time to stop them. In November 1988, the German police arrested Pasquale Caruana and Giuseppe Cuffaro near the Swiss border.

BKA investigations revealed an extensive network. Caruana and Cuffaro were supported by relatives and some of the many fellow-villagers who had emigrated to Germany in the 1960s and 1970s. Cuffaro had travelled for months through Germany, Luxembourg and Belgium in rented cars: 33,000 kilometres in 145 days, an average of 227 a day. He spent his days in the plush spa and casino-resort Baden Baden and Germany's financial center, Frankfurt. In addition, he flew up and down from Frankfurt to Bangkok several times, and to Montreal and Caracas. When the BKA finished the investigation it concluded "there are indications that Caruana and Cuffaro were planning to settle in Germany to lead drug trafficking from South-East Asia and to put into circulation the resulting profits through investments in legal businesses." (61) Cuffaro and Pasquale Caruana were extradited to Italy and convicted in 1991.

Dirty Money Really Smells

"It didn't smell right," a bank-clerk told prosecutor Gioacchino Natoli when he heard her in Montreal during a rogatory investigation, following the arrest of Caruana and Cuffaro. Natoli still recalls the event with surprise. (62) The dirty money the clan laundered through several Canadian banks really stank. "It smelled musty." The cash was all in small bills of two, five or ten dollars, the typical denomination of drug transactions on the street.

The bulk of the evidence used by Falcone to indict the Cuntrera-Caruana clan in 1989 was gathered by one single policeman from Montreal. Sergeant Marc Bourque of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police was appointed to investigate the financial aspects after the seizure of 58 kilo of heroin in 1985.

One of the persons under arrest was Gerlando Caruana. When Bourque wanted to look into Caruana's bank accounts, an employee said he would not find much there, but he should look at the accounts of Gerlando's brother, Alfonso Caruana. (63) What Bourque found there would keep him busy for the next five years. He code-named his investigation Operation Pilgrim – and a pilgrimage it proved to be. Bourque wandered through the international financial world; he heard 300 witnesses in nine countries, his dossier amounted to 3,600 pages. Bourque laid bare the money laundering system of the clan in Montreal – although whether he found all the money, nobody knows.

In one bank alone Bourque traced nearly 16 million US dollars laundered through accounts of Alfonso Caruana. Every week a couple of Sicilians entered the branch of the City & District Bank in the Montreal suburb Dollard-des-Ormeaux carrying hockey-bags filled with half a million in cash. The tellers spent a half day counting the small bills. The clan brought in its dirty dollars and walked out with clean bank drafts. Thirty-six million US dollars ended up in Swiss bank-accounts which were used to pay the Sicilian heroin suppliers. (64) The dollars the clan transported to Canada were enough to supply the Montreal money-exchange market with its weekly requisite of US cash. Bourque could trace some US\$ 50 million laundered by the clan through four Canadian banks from 1978 until 1984.

When Bourque presented his case to the Justice Department he was told that it would be discarded: it was deemed too expensive and too intricate. His pioneering investigation never reached a Canadian court. The Department had neither the time nor the money to prosecute the case. The mere summoning of the witnesses alone would cost four or five million dollars.

"Money doesn't just fall of the trees," says Bourque. "There is no legitimate business in Montreal which generates half a million every week, except the drug business." He is disgusted with the collaboration of Canadian banks. They earned some 4 to 5 percent on the transactions. The banks must have been aware of the shady backgrounds. After a while they all discreetly showed the Italians the door. But the clan always found a new financial institution to continue their affairs, carefully planning its steps. The bank branches it selected had Italian-born directors, no doubt more sensitive to the ways and means of the Mafia. Aldo Tucci, the director of the City & District branch, was completely integrated in the clan's system. He set up front store companies and neglected his work for the bank. Eventually Tucci was fired.

The Italian judicature very much appreciated the results of Sergeant Bourque's investigation, piecing it together with evidence they gathered during the Italian inquiry of the Pizza Connection. Bourque's evidence was subsequently used in the trials against Cuntrera-Caruana family members.

Bookkeeping is a Dangerous Business

The Italian community abroad is vulnerable to infiltration by its criminal countrymen. That doesn't mean that every Sicilian is a mafioso. Far from it. The most arduous mafia-fighters, like Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino, are often Sicilian. Evertheless, mafiosi use the Italian communities to hide in, especially when they are from the same village or region on Sicily.

On a visit to Siculiana – the village on the south coast of Sicily where the Cuntreras and Caruanas were born – an elderly villager who spent most of his working life in Germany told me the story of how he was approached by a Cuntrera to 'lend' him his son. The man who had known the family when they still lived in Siculiana, did not think it was a good idea. Why, he would not tell. Nevertheless, it was clear what we were talking about.

Siculiana once counted 12,000 inhabitants; now there are only 5,000 left. During the 1950s and 1960s the village emptied, the men moved to Belgium, Germany, England, Canada, Venezuela, Brazil. Most were merely trying to make a living; others went for more sinister reasons. Some, like Alfonso Gagliano, representative in the Canadian Federal Parliament for Montreal's 'Little Italy' Saint Leonard, rose to prominent positions.

The accountant Gagliano is a loyal supporter of Canada's Prime-Minister Jean Chrétien. Gagliano organized the Liberal Party's fund raising for the 1993 election-campaign. He was a candidate for a position in the new government of Mr Chrétien. The RCMP is asked to screen every probable future minister, and Mr Gagliano didn't quite pass the test. (65) The Montreal daily La Presse revealed why: Gagliano's accountancy firm kept the books of Agostino Cuntrera, a nephew of Pasquale Cuntrera and implicated in the murder of Paolo Violi, boss of the local Cotroni-family, in 1978. The murder was a sign that the Sicilian clan had taken over control in Montreal. Agostino Cuntrera was never convicted; he struck a deal with the Canadian Justice Department.

Asked about his relationship with Agostino Cuntrera, Gagliano said: "Mr Cuntrera is an acquaintance. We both come from Siculiana. I met him during an engagement in a church. He came to me in the 1970's when he wanted me as his bookkeeper for his restaurant." Gagliano et Cie kept Agostino Cuntrera as a client after his complicity in the Violi-murder was revealed. Agostino Cuntrera and Gagliano saw each other occasionally during marriages and activities of the Association de Siculiana, a cultural association founded by Mr Gagliano, who was its first president. Some years after Mr Gagliano's chairmanship, Agostino Cuntrera became president of the association.

Nor was Agostino Cuntrera the only client of Gagliano. Another was Dima Messina, the financial aid of Montreal Mafia-boss Vito Rizzuto. An RCMP investigation showed that Messina laundered 22

million Canadian dollars for Rizzuto in 1986-88. Rizzuto's Ferrari Testarossa (a 250,000 dollar Italian sports car) was registered under Messina's name.

During the controlled delivery of 58 kilos of heroin to Montreal in 1985 – the RCMP and British Customs were aware of the traffic and closely watched the transactions – one of the traffickers, Filippo Vaccarello, and an unidentified person, were observed entering the office of Mr Gagliano before the heroin arrived. After leaving the office Vaccarello proceeded with a tour of notorious bars well-known as selling points for heroin.

Bookkeeping proves to be a sensitive business for a politician. When the matter was discussed in Parliament after La Presse disclosed the facts, Premier Chrétien declared: "This Parliament would be much better off if we had more Gagliano's." (66)

Face to Face with Don Pasquale

"We never talked about heroin." DEA Special Agent John Costanzo is recalling his meeting with Pasquale Cuntrera. (67) After the Pizza Connection case the DEA understood the importance of the clan. While analyst Ewell had encountered much opposition at DEA headquarters in 1982, the powerful anti-narcotics agency finally targeted the clan some five years later.

"We talked world politics, economics, but never even mentioned the word heroin," says Costanzo. After 18 months of undercover work, codenamed Operation Wiseguy, Costanzo sat face-to-face with the "capo famiglia" in Caracas – an easy-going, well-dressed, low key gentleman. "He looked like my grandfather," says Costanzo. "He painted his hair pitch black, they all paint their hair – but it was very clear who and what he was, when he entered a room."

Don Pasquale did not know Costanzo's real profession. He thought he was dealing with Don Vincenzo, boss of a New York crime family. "At a certain point in the conversation he would say: 'If I can help you, where can I find you'. And then 'maybe I can do you a favour, or you can do me a favour'. Next was 'if I can get you packages where do you want them'. That was all, that meant there was a deal." The negotiations were smooth. It was very uncomplicated, just like the phone call in which they finally settled a heroin delivery. According to Costanzo, "There was no problem. In five minutes we struck a five million dollar deal, and most of the time we spent figuring out when we would do it."

Costanzo could lure Pasquale into a deal, but he couldn't catch him. Pasquale sent his right-hand man Ignazio Fiannaca to New York to settle the deal. Fiannaca and his accomplices were arrested in April 1990 with the 20 kilos of heroin Costanzo had offered Pasquale Cuntrera. Pasquale himself was high and dry in Caracas, not impressed with the indictment. Operation Wiseguy had got the DEA very close to Pasquale Cuntrera, but not close enough. He wouldn't think of leaving Venezuela.

The pressure was mounting though. In Venezuela, people protested against the presence of the Cuntreras. Representative Vladimir Gessen – head of the Venezuelan Anti-Narcotics Commission – pressed for the expulsion of the Cuntrera brothers, because of the indictments in Italy and the US. As Gessen has noted: "The government pretended they did not commit crimes in Venezuela. The only thing they did was sit behind a phone, giving instructions for their drug deals and channelling their payments. But phoning is not a crime." (68) They did launder money in Venezuela however. "My predecessor, Carlos Tablante, calculated in 1984 that their hotels generated more profits than the amount of rooms could justify. Every room had to be rented every seven minutes to make that kind of money." Money laundering was not a crime in Venezuela at the time.

In September 1992 the Cuntrera's were expelled. "A failed coup d'état shocked the country and there was widespread unrest. The government was anxious to show firmness in matters of security," says Gessen. In a surprise action the brothers were apprehended, held incommunicado and were almost secretly smuggled out of the country, as if it concerned one of their own drug transports. It was imperative they could not contact people on the outside who could have used their political connections to stop the expulsion.

Responsible for the operation was the chief of the Organized Crime Division of the Policia Tecnica Judicial (PTJ), Guillermo Jiménez. It was his finest hour, but a few months later he was forced in early retirement. Now he spends his time at a private office downtown Caracas. "We searched their houses and offices. We managed to seize lots of documents, that is what made the operation successful," says Jiménez. (69) These documents included details of off-shore companies on Aruba, commercial transactions with companies based in Russia, Nigeria and Senegal, bank drafts and deposits. According to Jiménez, the documents offered considerable scope for continued investigation. "On Aruba for instance. But that didn't happen ... They have problems over there. Their intelligence service is penetrated by political groups and the Cuntrera's have some first-rate relations on the island."

One of the Venezuelan banks the clan worked with, the Banco de la Construcción, has an off-shore subsidiary on Aruba: the Intercon Financial Bank, through which a lot of money was channelled.

A Smugglers' Paradise

The Intercon Financial Bank on Aruba is represented by the law-firm Croes & Wever. One of the partners is former Minister of Justice Hendrik Croes. The firm's trust-company Arulex was implicated in setting up the bank. "Yes, we are involved with that bank," says Croes. "We still handle all their legal affairs, but we don't know anything of their financial accounts." (70)

Hendrik Croes – a brother of the island's legendary leader, the late Betico Croes who guided Aruba to its semi-independent status in the Dutch realm – is one of the leading political figures on the island. He led several election campaigns for the MEP, now in the opposition. The Croes Family has been accused of ties with Cuntrera-Caruana. The Sicilian mafiosi payed for a trip of another brother, Rudy Croes (who succeeded Hendrik as Minister of Justice in a previous MEP government) as party secretary to a meeting of the Socialist International in Turkey. This has not been denied.

Paolo Cuntrera visited the island regularly despite his expulsion in 1988. The government opposed his legal actions for re-admittance. But Hendrik Croes has to admit the procedures were not stainless. A blundering government lawyer, an official who signed a residence permit "by mistake," meant that de facto Paolo Cuntrera was able to circulate freely on the island.

According to Canadian police reports, in 1978, Pasquale Cuntrera owned the Holiday Inn Casino – although the registers indicated otherwise. "At the start of 1980s the Cuntrera's were often at the Holiday Inn casino," says a croupier. "In 1989 they were there again, although they were ostensibly thrown off the island."

DEA agent David Lorino, the case-officer in Operation Wiseguy, claims that "when the Cuntrera's moved to Venezuela they carried some 15 to 30 million dollars with them, which were invested in hotels in Caracas, but also on Curaçao and Aruba." 71 The DEA had used the Miami-based Italian-born Venezuelan business man Raffaele Bellizzi to contact Pasquale Cuntrera. Before 1983 Bellizzi owned a shipping-company, but that year it went bankrupt because of the debt-crises in Venezuela. "He told us that his ships transported narcotics and money from Caracas to Aruba and Europe," says Lorino. As mentioned before Canadian investigations show that the clan used Aruba as a trampoline for cocaine to North America. (72)

According to Lorino, "the names Cuntrera and Caruana were well known on the island." Now nobody on Aruba wants to know that these gentle and well mannered Sicilians ever existed. "Oh, but a lot of people knew them then," says Bianca de Mey, who set up the company Investeringen Tweehonderd en Tien, which was the holding for a nightclub and pizzeria for the Cuntreras. The company now has nothing to do with them any more, she adds.

The Cuntrera's must have felt at home on Aruba. The island has been a smugglers' paradise, since colonial times, when it was used to evade the Spanish trade monopoly. Whatever disagreements Arubans may have – and they have a lot – this is something they readily admit. Even Prime Minister Eman acknowledges "it is an island of smugglers ... For years Aruba was the most important coffee exporter, while there is no coffee-plant to be found on the island." Aruba is also the biggest exporter

of Philip Morris cigarettes and every imaginable kind of whisky. On Aruba it is all imported and exported according to the rules. What they do at the other side on the South American mainland is not the problem of the islanders. Legal trade or contraband, the difference is thin. "A lot of families became very rich with this trade," says Eman. "This went on for decades and it is an eh... accepted fact."

Cigarettes, liquor, perfume, refrigerators and other electrical appliances, everything is brought to the Colombian and Venezuelan northern shores, only a few hours away by ship. The contraband sometimes includes guns, although this is something very few will admit. "One day a refrigerator fell when we were loading. The guns tumbled on the pier," a former longshoreman remembers. "Every family who is rich now, was in contraband." All commerce is in cash. Special 'runners' receive the cash in Colombia and bring the money to Aruba. "Once, a 'runner' of one family was robbed by another family. They only took the payment for a shipment of cigarettes; he could keep the rest. That means: do not mess with my business," the longshoreman explains.

Most of the merchandise went to Maicao, a semi-legal staple-town in Colombia at the border with Venezuela on the La Guajira peninsula. Its national representative is senator Samuel Santander Lopesierra Gutierrez, better known as the Marlboro Man. Like his father before him, Santa the Marlboro Man made his fortune smuggling cigarettes and liquor. (73) Maicao is moving exclusively on the rhythm of contraband. But is not only receiving goods, it also exports the local branded products such as coffee and other Colombian specialties. La Guajira was the place of the bonanza marimbero – the marijuana boom – in the 1970s when the US discovered the pleasure of Santa Marta Gold. Cocaine replaced marijuana when the Colombian government under US pressure sprayed the fields with pesticides – and the US market began to produce its own home grown grass. The Colombian and Venezuelan contrabandistas used the tested contacts with its Aruban business relations. The island is like a Western enclave in Latin-America. Its excellent banking facilities, and Free Trade Zone provide an easy access to the European and American market and financial institutions.

"Aruban traders built an extensive infrastructure in the Caribbean," one of their former employees explains – a network of warehouses, shipping-company's, bank-accounts on Aruba, in the Panamanian freezone Colón, in Miami. "In 1983 the bolivar – the Venezuelan currency – collapsed on account of the debt-crisis, and the bills could not be payed to the Arubans any more." Then it really started. The smuggling economy needed re-structuring. The whole infrastructure was turned around: now it was used for cocaine trafficking and money laundering.

The US Attorneys Office in Miami gathered an insight in this pattern when, in December 1993, it indicted – among others – Aruban business-men Randy Habibe and Jossy Arends in its case against the La Costa Cartel. This 'enterprise' is accused to have smuggled some 80 tons of cocaine and 250,000 pounds of marijuana to the United States, and laundering some 800 million US dollars from 1980 onwards. (74)

The Arubans managed the logistics. They brought in the precursor chemicals necessary for the production of cocaine out the coca leaves; they bought the planes and ships to transport the merchandise; and last but not least, they laundered the proceeds through the accounts of their import-export firms in the Aruban Free Zone, skimming a percentage for their services.

Habibe is not the only one. The 1994 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report stated that "other Aruban families with connections to banks in Venezuela and to cocaine cartels in Colombia are strongly suspected of involvement in drug trafficking and money laundering."

Aruban Connections

NOTE: Five members of the Aruban Mansur Family, viz. Mr. Elias F. Mansur, Mrs. Damia M. de Cuba-Mansur, Mr. Luis E. Mansur, Mr. Miguel J. Mansur and Mrs. Sarah E. Arends-Mansur, have raised objections against general references in the following chapter to the Mansurs or the Mansur family. In their opinion these references may be understood as including them

The author is of the opinion that such references to a large family will not be misunderstood as including each and every member of the family. However, in case this opinion should prove incorrect,

the author points out that he regrets such misunderstanding and that he did not intend said references to implicate all members of the family.

The Cuntrera-Caruana clan had links with another Aruban bank: the Interbank. The bank granted a credit to the Cuntrera company "Investeringen Tweehonderd en Tien" for 1.8 million Aruban guilders (approximately one million dollars). Why the Cuntreras who own several investment companies in Venezuela needed the loan is unknown.

One could speculate, however, this was a 'loan-back' operation to launder money. An amount of money is deposited cash at a bank and the bank lends the money back: now there is a clean and legitimate source of earnings. But there is no proof, no one ever looked really into the relations of the bank with the Sicilian mafiosi. The letter of credit was issued before the mafia connections of the clan became officially known on the island. This did not stop the bank from keeping the Cuntreras as clients. During Operation Wiseguy the undercover DEA agents were asked to wire money for a shipment of hashish on the account of Alfonso Cuntrera at the Interbank.

The Interbank is owned by the Mansur Family. If anybody owns 60 per cent of the island, it is this powerful family. The Mansurs made their fortune as cigarette manufacturers and in the import-export business. With a licence of Philip Morris, they are the major suppliers of Marlboros in the Caribbean basin. The Mansurs sponsor the best baseball team – Aruba's national sport – the Marlboro Red Tigers as well as the AVP party of Prime Minister Henry Eman. They own the biggest hotel and time-sharing complex, La Cabana, with its inevitable casino. And they have a couple of import-export businesses in the Free Trade Zone.

Jossy Mansur is the owner and chief editor of the biggest newspaper on the island, *Diario*. "When I read an article in *Diario*, I know what will be the next action of the government," says Hendrik Croes, adding that the Mansurs create a climate of fear and intimidation on Aruba. Their newspapers force others off the market. Furthermore, "their annual income is bigger than the yearly budget of the government. And you may guess how they make that kind of money."

Jossy Mansur is not impressed claiming that accusing people of drug trafficking and money laundering "has become a political tool to discredit them." (75) Jossy Mansur acts as the family's mouthpiece, Ruben and the elder Alex are the patriarchs, and Elias 'Don' Mansur is the family's whizz-kid. Elias graduated at Notre Dame University, and was Minister of Economic Affairs in Eman's first cabinet. As representative for the Free Trade Zone entrepreneurs in a mixed Dutch-Aruban commission he has to recommend measures to tighten regulations in the FTZ to prevent money laundering and contraband, together with Dutch government officials. (76)

More and more the name Mansur turns up in money laundering cases. Alex and Eric Mansur were indicted in Puerto Rico in August 1994. (77) President Clinton specifically mentioned the Mansur's when he put Aruba on the list of Major Illicit Drug-transit Countries in December 1996. Although no member of the family was actually indicted in the La Costa case, the name Mansur is frequently found in the files which were seized at Habibe's home on Aruba.

In Venezuela the Mansurs are implicated in money laundering with Santa Lopesierra, the Marlboro Man. Every month Santa 're-invests' 20 million dollar "with the help of a well-known entrepreneur called Mansur." (78) Lopesierra is accused to have financed his election with the proceeds of drug trafficking and a car-theft ring. He is also reputed to be the man behind the Puerto Rico indictment. The activities of Mansur and Lopesierra, however, go well beyond this. They are accused of illegally funding the presidential campaign of Colombian president Ernesto Samper in 1994. Not only did Samper allegedly receive 6 million dollars from the Cali Cartel – an accusation he vehemently denies

and ascribes to political machinations – it is said he also pocketed US\$ 500,000 in cash offered by "a group from Philip Morris and Interbank." (79)

The "Philip Morris people" are Alex and Eric Mansur and a member of the Lopesierra Family (Santa Lopesierra belongs to the Samper faction in the Liberal Party). Samper tried to ease out of meeting the group, the story goes. He suggested that one of his campaign officials should pick up the cash and bring them to the office later for coffee. "No one gives that kind of money just for coffee. That's worth at least a breakfast," the campaign official replied.

The Mansur Family seems to have all the right connections in its corner of the Caribbean. Some Mansur's still have Venezuelan nationality, and they have interests in Maracaibo and Caracas, as well as in Punto Fijo and Coro, where the originally Lebanese Mansur Family had settled before moving to Aruba. Punto Fijo is situated on the Paraguaná peninsula in the North at the Golfo de Venezuela, which separates it from La Guajira. A ferry connects Punto Fijo to Aruba. Some 20 years ago, in 1974, a few Sicilians set up a fishing company in Punto Fijo called *Mediterranea Pesca*. Among the shareholders: Leonardo and Giuseppe Caruana and Giuseppe Cuffaro. The company owned a sea-going vessel and Italian police suspected that "in view of the background of the owners it is probably a cover for drug trafficking." (80)

Maybe the Mansurs and the Cuntrera-Caruana clan first met each other in this remote part of the world. Nobody knows. (81) But they certainly have met on Aruba, according to several insiders and law enforcement officers. Venezuelan police-officer Guillermo Jiménez states: "I know they are connected. I have sent files about bank transactions between the Mansur's and the Cuntrera's to Aruba. But documents about the Mansur's are kept secret over there."

DEA-officer David Lorino is equally convinced and has connected the Cuntreras with Ruben Mansur. In his judgement, "Ruben Mansur is a major-league dope-peddler." The DEA has the toll-records of the Cuntrera phones in Caracas. "They phoned Mansur's trading company and his place. They certainly talked to each other." What they said, Lorino doesn't know, since it is not permitted to tap phones in Venezuela.

The Fly-wheel of the Drug Trade

The Cuntrera-Caruana clan has had some serious set-backs with the arrest and conviction of some of their most prominent bosses in 1996. Does this mean the clan is out of business? Prosecutor Natoli is under no illusions that the conviction of the Cuntrera brothers will mean the end of the clan's criminal activities and contends that the brothers are able to continue to organize drug transports from jail. Cuntrera and Caruana are not the kind of traffickers who smuggle the merchandise themselves, he explains: "They give the orders, they pull the strings." The highest levels of the drug trade use steady channels: solid systems of transport and tested money-laundering routes, Natoli adds. Several leading members of the clan – such as the Cuntrera sons, all called Giuseppe – remain outside prison and dozens of lower ranking foot-soldiers are still available. (82)

Natoli's fear that the clan continues to play a major role in the drug trade even though the principal leaders are in prison, proved to be correct. During the trial in Palermo, one of the defendants, the fugitive Alfonso Caruana, turned out to be the central organizer of a network that smuggled eleven metric tons of cocaine to Italy from 1991-94. The ring was dismantled in March 1995 in Northern Italy.

Caruana brought together the cocaine producers of the Colombian Cartels with the Italian distributors, six 'ndrangheta families the Calabrian variant of the Mafia. Once again the Cuntrera-

Caruana family was "the fly-wheel of the drug trade and the indispensable link between suppliers and distributors." (83)

The investigation – code-named Operazione Cartagine – started when the police seized 5497 kilo's of cocaine (a European record) in March 1994 in Turin. The operation "neutralized the most important supply-line of narcotics to Europe," investigators claimed (or hoped). A year later the Turin Prosecutors Office presented the indictment. (84)

The Palermo Tribunal, reviewing earlier drug connections of the clan, was impressed. The sentence concluded that the network was "a further indication of the high criminal capability" of Caruana who had "escaped every judicial initiative during the last decades and succeeded in reaching the top of the international drug trade, adjusting his criminal contacts and showing such skill that he is to be considered as one of the most important exponents in this sector." (85)

The 52-year old Alfonso Caruana is the living example of the international ramifications, elusiveness and continuity of the family's activities. Although a fugitive, he remains one of the top level Family bosses. The fact he is married to Giuseppina Caruana, the daughter of Family patriarch Giuseppe Caruana (brother of Alfonso's father Carmelo Caruana) the eldest of the foregoing generation, is an indication to be taken seriously in the archaic conventions which rule the internal dynamics of the clan. (86)

In 1968 he arrived in Canada with 100 dollar in his pocket pretending to be an electrician. Ten years later he was stopped at the international airport of Zürich in Switzerland with 600,000 dollar in a suitcase. He was released after paying a fee. At the beginning of the 1980s Alfonso established himself near Lugano in a luxurious villa, supervising the laundering of dollar-deposits at Canadian banks channelled through Swiss accounts. Two years later he moved to the stockbrokers belt near London. From his UKP 450,000 mansion, driving around in his BMW 732i or Mercedes 500 SEL, he supervised a heroin pipeline from Thailand, through England, to Canada. He went to Thailand to set up the route. When the pipeline was dismantled in England, he managed to escape arrest, moving to a Montreal suburb where he opened a pizzeria. Alfonso prepared the pizzas while his wife tended the pay-desk.

At the time Alfonso Caruana was already high on the most-wanted list because, according a high-placed Italian police official, "he was the one who knew most about Mafia finances." (87) When the Canadian tax-man moved in (alerted by the police who were unable to indict him) he left for Caracas, ignoring the 827,962 Canadian dollars the tax collector had seized. Law enforcement lost his traces. He is still at large, despite his conviction to 20 years' imprisonment by the Palermo Court.

Although he is subject to an international arrest warrant, Italian police in 1996 did not have his snapshot and did not know if he was still alive. According to some he is moving around in Venezuela or Colombia; according to others he is in Aruba or Curaçao. Possibly he is in Brazil, recently rediscovered as a Mafia hide-out by law enforcement agencies. His father-in-law (and uncle) Giuseppe owns several apartments in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paolo, and the multi-ton cocaine transports to Italy left from Brazilian docks. Or is it Cuba? Canadian police reports that elements of Vito Rizzuto's Montreal offshoot of the Cuntrera-Caruana Mafia clan are active in procuring assets in Havana. (88)

In fact, some phoning around established tha Caruana lives in Woodbridge (Ontario) with his nephew Giuseppe Cuntrera, washing and moving cars at a second-hand car-dealer earning 500 Canadian dollars a week. At least that was what he declared in Court in February 1997 when Revenue Canada challenged Caruana's bankruptcy. The Canadian taxman wanted 28,5 milion Canadian dollars in

unpaid taxes, interest and fines when Caruana was declared bankrupt in March 1995. At the time he returned 250 dollars in income.

The arrears of taxes was the result of the RCMP's investigation into the money laundering activities of Alfonso Caruana after the 1985 heroin seizure. The RCMP had detected 21,6 million moved through Caruana's bank account in 1981, and taxed Caruana accordingly. Revenue Canada couldn't prove Caruana possessed more than he pretended. The Court sentenced Caruana to pay 90.000 dollar in the next three years to buy off the bankruptcy. (89)

Diversity and elusiveness

"I wish this was true," Alfonso Caruana answered when the judge showed him a article claiming the Cuntrera-Caruana clan possessed 60 per cent of Aruba. Most observers agree the clan never owned that much of the island. Certainly, the records of the Chamber of Commerce fail to confirm such an allegation. On the other hand company-ownership or real estate property could well be hidden through the construction of Aruban off-shore limited liability companies offering strong secrecy provisions. With a chain of such companies on different Caribbean islands, it is almost impossible to track anything. In the Caribbean, the most insignificant island-states tend to compete with each other, offering the most unwarranted, unverifiable legal constructions of companies, trusts and off-shore banking regulations.

Aruba's Attorney General at the time, the Dutchman Jan Zwinkels, expressed his surprise over the allegations about the the Mafia's influence on the island. "It is all very vague. My impression is that people repeat the same unfounded story over and over again. I never spoke to a Italian judge. There never has been request for mutual legal assistance." (90) In contrast, the Italians say that when they arrested the Cuntreras in 1992 they had enough evidence to convict them. "We had indications that they were interested in investments on Aruba. Other countries should take over here, we have informed them," says Italian police-investigatior Pansa. That did not happen.

Most likely the Corriere della Sera took a short turn when it alleged the clan had taken over the island. The only 'clan' capable to own a considerable part of Aruba is the Mansur Family. Most observers do agree on that supposition. Nothing moves on Aruba without the consent of the Mansur's: "If you want to do business on the island, you have to deal with them." Probably the Cuntrera-Caruana clan took advantage of the vast opportunities which Aruba had to offer, linked themselves with local entrepreneurs who were in the same kind of business, and left when they became too exposed. But they certainly did not leave at the first setback, when their activities were disclosed in Business Week in 1988.

Paolo Cuntrera fought the Court decision to refuse his re-admittance on the island for nearly two years. That seems to indicate that there were considerable interests at stake or that he had enough faith in the political power of persuasion of his partners. When the three Cuntrera brothers were arrested in 1992, however, it all seemed to have come to an abrupt end.

After all, Aruba is not the clan's main focus. It was nice as long as it lasted. Maybe there still are interests through front-store companies or personal and business ties. But there are other places with the same opportunities – the Venezuelan Isla Margarita for instance, a freeport with a booming tourist-industry and a score of illegal casino's. Cuntrera-Caruana relative Salvatore Vella has been living there for years.

Diversity and elusiveness seems to be the clan's trade-mark. Thirty years at the center of the transnational drug trade have given the members the prestige and entrepreneurial expertise to link

with any other network in the business. Their case tickles the imagination to the point of mythology.
(91)

The Cuntrera-Caruana clan is a curious mix of Sicilian old fashioned patriarchal clannishness (which protects them from infiltration) and modern global enterprise in illegal commodities. They are very skillful in forging the right transnational alliances and has triple-jumped easily enough through fragmented international law enforcement cooperation. At the same time, no national law enforcement structure has been able to disrupt their operations. Indeed, the history of the Cuntrera-Caruana clan provides a compelling case for international investigative coordination. In this connection, the Italian police can now procure a photo of Alfonso Caruana at a Canadian news agency that was taken during his Court appearance in February 1997.

This article could not have been written without the financial support of the Fonds Bijzondere Journalistieke Projecten in Amsterdam.

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- (3) International Narcotics Control Strategy Report 1996, March 1997.
- (4) Reinoud Roscam Abbing, 'Verstuivende kartels', Elsevier, 9 March 1996.
- (5) Tom-Jan Meeus, 'Democratie Aruba verkeert in gevaar', NRC Handelsblad, 11 March 1997.
- (6) Letter from the President to the chairmen and ranking members of the House Committees on Appropriations and International Relations and the Senate Committee on Appropriations and Foreign Relations, 2 December 1996.
- (7) M. Antonietta Calabrò, 'Nei Caraibi il primo Stato comprato dai boss di Cosa Nostra', Corriere della Sera, 4 March 1993. See also: Claire Sterling, "Thieves World, The Threat of the New Global Network of Organized Crime", New York: Simon & Schuster 1994, p.21; and Jeffrey Robinson, "The Laundrymen, Inside the World's Third Largest Business", Simon & Schuster: London 1995, p.108.
- (8) 'Criminelen risico voor vrij Aruba', Het Parool (Amsterdam), 2 March 1993.
- (9) 'The Sicilian Mafia: Still Going Strong', Business Week, 18 April 1988, p.16.
- (10) The documentation about the licence, internal correspondance of officials and records from of the Chamber of Commerce were given to me by the people who distributed it anonymously.
- (11) "Rapporto investigativo Project Pilgrim", 18 May 1988, p.33. Nicolucci was sentenced to 14 years for drug trafficking in 1985.
- (12) Giuseppe D'Avanzo, 'I Rothschild della Mafia', La Repubblica, 17-18 December 1989, p.17.
- (13) Sentenza contro Caruana Pasquale e Cuffaro Giuseppe, nr 656\91, Palermo, 31 May 1991, pp.98-99.
- (14) For Aruba as a money laundering centre, see: Tom Blickman, 'Cosa Nostra ai Caraibi. Aruba-Torino: La famiglia è ancora viva', Narcomafie (Turin), April 1996; and Danny Illegems & Raf Sauviller, "Bloedsporen. Een reis naar de mafia", Atlas: Amsterdam/Antwerpen 1995, p.243 a.f.
- (15) Attilio Bolzoni, 'Sul loro narco-impero non tramontava il sole', La Repubblica, 13/14 September 1992, p.4.
- (16) Motion of the Staten van Aruba, 14 October 1992.

(17) 'Beke vs Croes. Como dokter no por nenga paciente, abogado si por nenga cliente', Bon Dia Aruba, 16 December 1992. See also the TV news item on Tg1 (Rai Uno) of Bruno Mobrisci, 'La mafia nei Caraibi', 12 March 1993.

(18) I interviewed Pubblico Ministero Gioacchino Natoli in May 1996.

(19) Sentenza contro Beddia Lucio+12, nr 48/96, Palermo, 18 January 1996.

(20) Beddia+12, pp.111-112.

(21) Interview with Alessandro Pansa, September 1993.

(22) 'Mafia: presi fratelli Cuntrera', ANSA, 12 September 1992.

(23) Pasquale Cuntrera and Leonardo Caruana were indicted for a double murder, the theft of four cows and arson by the Giudice Istruttore of Trapani in August 1952, both were acquitted in December 1953 per non aver commesso il fatto (not having committed the fact), an almost ritual verdict where Mafia crimes were concerned in the 1950's and 60's. See: Report of the Questura di Agrigento, 19 October 1966 to impose an soggiorno obbligato to Pasquale Cuntrera and the verdict of the Tribunale di Agrigento, 11 November 1966; and Report of the Questura di Agrigento on Leonardo Caruana, 6 June 1978.

For information about the clan in Siculiana and their first criminal activities, see also: "Rapporto giudiziario di denuncia a carico di Bono Giuseppe +159", Rome 7 February 1983, pp.254-258.

The Cuntrera's and Caruana's were campieri (armed guards) of the local baron Agnello, who owned nearly all of the village and its surroundings.

(24) According to DEA supervisor Tom Raffanello. See: Richard Cole, 'DEA Says Its Probe Helped Land Mafia Heroin Family in Jail', Associated Press, 19 September 1992.

DEA intelligence analyst Tony Attanasio is also quoted in the article: "They are the premier Mafia family, Pasquale Cuntrera is one of the top six in the mafia." He may even sit on the Mafia's twelve-member Commission, according to investigators, says the article. Italian investigators are more cautious. When I asked them, no one dared to speculate about their exact position in Cosa Nostra. They emphasize the transnational aspect of the clan. When I talked to Mr Attanasio in July 1996 he said Pasquale Cuntrera ranked top three qua experience and prestige. He also stressed the real importance of the clan was its international dimension.

The exact 'ranking' of Pasquale Cuntrera is not that important. Judge Natoli stressed that the management of the clan at the top is consensual rather than authoritarian. This 'Board of Directors' rules strictly top-down. This article is not ment to discuss whether the Mafia is a strict hierarchical pyramidal structure – where 'rankings' do matter – or a losely connected federation of independent families, cemented together through a common mentality – to mention the two extremes – but the case of Cuntrera-Caruana shows that they manage to operate quite independently. The question is whether they can be considered to be representative for the functioning of Mafia families in Cosa Nostra.

(25) Gentile, an old-time Mustache Pete, had been helpful to rising Mafia youngsters like Luciano who took over in the 1930's. He travelled the country as a troubleshooter and negotiator and became part of the New York Mafia Family led by Vincent Mangano and Joe Biondo, which later became known as the Gambino Family. See voor Nicola Gentile's life story: Nick Gentile, "Vito di capomafia", Editori Riuniti: Rome 1963; and Hank Messick, "Lansky", Robert Hale & Company: London 1973, p.49. According to Messick a resentful Gentile confessed to the FBI. In fact his memoirs were for sale in every bookshop. The confession was shown to Joe Valachi who vouched for its accuracy and said Gentile 'wrote just the way it is'.

The memoirs of Gentile were written down by Italian journalist Felice Chilanti. This forgotten book already describes the internal organization of the Mafia, or l'onorata società (the Honoured Society) as Gentile calls it, more than 20 years before Tommaso Buscetta emerged as the first pentito who broke with omertà and told Cosa Nostra's inside story. Gentile was already more explicit than Buscetta in his first confessions. Gentile undiffidently talked about his links with politicians for whom he acted as a canvasser. (See also: Felice Chilanti, "La mafia su Roma", Milan 1971, p.60) Buscetta only started talking about the links between the Mafia and politics eight years after his first confessions, after Judge Giovanni Falcone was murdered.

Gentile's fellow mafiosi didn't appreciate his candor and sentenced him to death, but the clan who had to kill him declined to do so. At the end of his days, Gentile was a pitiful figure who only survived through the pasta which his neighbours gave him. (See: Pino Arlacchi, "Gli uomini del disonore. La mafia siciliana nella vita del grande pentito Antonio Calderone", Mondadori: Milan 1992, p.158)

As to his contacts with the American bosses, Gentile claims it was he who educated Biondo as a mafioso in the 1920's (Gentile, p.63). Joe Biondo (aka Joe Banty) was 'sotto-capo' off the Gambino Familie from 1957 until 1970, when Carlo Gambino led the family. (See: John H. Davis, "Mafia Dynasty, The Rise and Fall of the Gambino Crime Family", HarperCollins: New York 1993, p.101.)

Mangano and Biondo had Gentile linked up with Charles La Gaipa (aka Big Nose Charley 'because he was sniffin' the stuff he was selling', see: Martin A. Gosch & Richard Hammer, "The last testament of Lucky Luciano", Macmillan: London 1975, p.59.), a long time dope peddler and Gentile's son in law.

(26) Gentile, p.172; Chilanti, p.60-62.

(27) Gentile and Luciano met New York gangster Joe Biondo in 1949, when the latter stayed in Italy for a few months. Biondo supervised the Gambino Family's heroin traffic. (Davis, p.101.) Luciano claims he introduced Biondo to Egidio Calascibetta of the Italian pharmaceutical company Saci in Milan, who legally produced heroin, but illegally sold it to its Mafia clients. When the scheme became known, the US pressed the Italian government to tighten its regulations. It was estimated that some 800 kilograms of heroin were shipped to the US this way. (Gosch & Hammer, pp.359-361.)

In 1958 an undercover agent of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics met Gentile. The police had intercepted a courier with a letter from Gentile to a certain 'cuniglieddu', in which Gentile complained about not receiving his money, which would be handed to him by Nino Gatto. The Narcotics Bureau decided to set up a trap by pretending that Gatto (who Gentile didn't know personally) wanted to meet him. Gentile told the undercover that 'cuniglieddu' was Joe Biondo, and of his friendship with Luciano and relations with drug traffickers. (See: Commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta sul fenomeno della mafia in Sicilia, "Relazione conclusiva", VI Legislatura, Doc. XXIII n.2, Camera dei deputati: Roma 1976, p.345; and Michele Pantaleone, "Mafia e droga", Giulio Einaudi Editore: Torino 1966, pp.74-75.)

See for Davi's curriculum vitae: Commissione Antimafia, Relazione Conclusiva, p.333-34. Already in 1950 Pietro Davi (aka Jimmy l'americano) and Gentile were implicated in a shipment of 300 kilograms of cocaine out of Germany. (Commissione Antimafia, Relazione Conclusiva, p.461.)

(28) Some of the intertwining networks were identified. The Squadra di Salemi for instance, a network which got its name from the town Salemi in the province Trapani where most of the traffickers came from. Or the Caneba network, named after its principal protagonists: the brothers Ugo and Salvatore Caneba. Information about these networks and Giovanni Mira is in: Comando generale della Guardia di Finanza, "Rapporto relativo agli episodi di contrabbando di tabacchi e di stupefacenti, interessanti direttamente o indirettamente la Sicilia, nel periodo dal 1955 al 1963". (In: Documentazione allegate alla relazione conclusiva della Commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta sul fenomeno della mafia in Sicilia, VIII Legislatura, Doc. XXIII n.1/VIII, Camera dei deputati: Roma 1980); and Nucleo Centrale Polizia Tributaria della Guardia di Finanza, "Rapporto Penale di Denuncia a carico di Caneba Salvatore ed altri 42", 6 June 1961. (In: Documentazione allegate alla relazione conclusiva della Commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta sul fenomeno della mafia in Sicilia, VIII Legislatura, Doc. XXIII n.1/XV, Camera dei deputati: Roma 1982.)

Mira and Caruana were spotted in 1958, their supplier was Antoine Cordoliani. Settimo 'Big Sam' Accardo was the subject of numerous investigations in the US between 1930 and 1956, among others on narcotics charges. He emigrated to Sicily in 1955, jumping a \$75.000 bail; in 1960 he was in Toronto. (See: Rapporto Guardia di Finanza, p.220\245; Caneba+42, p.128; Jean-Pierre Charbonneau, "La filière canadienne", Les éditions de l'homme: Montreal\Brussels 1975, p.142.)

Accardo was in contact with the Montreal Cotroni Family, under which guise the Cuntrera-Caruana clan worked at the time. Accardo was also linked to yet another Sicilian-born trafficker Giuseppe Indelicato, who was arrested in February 1956 with three pounds of heroin in New York. (See: Bono+159, p.201). The anchovy plot consisted of the smuggling of eight kilo's of heroin a month, according to Interpol. Accardo was the consignee. (See: Rapporto Guardia di Finanza, p.293; Pantaleone, pp.79-80.) See also note 54.

(29) Rapporto Pilgrim, p.5.

(30) Sentenza contro Caruana Pasquale e Cuffaro Giuseppe, p.115. See also: Orazio Barrese, "Mafia, politica, pentiti. Atti della Commissione Parlamentare d'Inchiesta sulla Mafia", Rubbettino Editore: Messina 1993, p.190.

(31) "Relazione del 24 maggio 1971 del Dottor Giorgio Staffieri, dirigente la sezione narcotici del comitato provinciale stupefacenti di Roma, su mafia, contrabbando di tabbachi e traffico di stupefacenti nella provincia di Roma". (In: Documentazione allegata, Doc. XXIII n.1/VIII, pp.1007ff)

(32) Sentenza contro Beddia+12, p.256.

(33) Buscetta claims other people used his name when dealing in heroin as a guarantee that nobody would swindle. See: Pino Arlacchi, "Addio Cosa Nostra. La vita di Tommaso Buscetta", Rizzoli: Milan 1994, pp.22-27; and Tim Shawcross & Martin Young, "Mafia Wars, The Confessions of Tommaso Buscetta", Glasgow: William Collins Sons 1987, pp.109-111.

Buscetta tends to give a more favorable impression of himself. Although a venereal disease is not very flattering, the real reason why Buscetta stayed with the Cuntrera's probably was that he had to hide himself for a while. Just before he moved in with the Cuntrera's in December 1969, Buscetta was stopped at the US-Canadian border at Champlain with four false passports and a collection of blue movies. He was travelling on one of the false passports, but managed to escape from the inspection office and slipped back to Canada. At the time control at the border was intensified because of an illegal-alien racket. The papers that were seized from Buscetta revealed an extensive involvement with narcotic traffickers which figured in other investigations. See: Charbonneau, pp.89\331; and Shawcross & Young, pp.89-90.

(34) Pino Catania's confession is in Charbonneau, pp.500-506.

(35) The network was called the French Connection because at that time the Oscar-winning movie with that title was just released. The movie itself deals with a 44 kilo drugbust in 1962, in the car of French TV-personality Jacques Angelvin.

(36) BNDD report 30 October 1970 in: Claire Sterling, "Octopus, How the Long Reach of the Sicilian Mafia Controls the Global Narcotics Trade", New York: Simon & Schuster 1990, p.353 note 4; Bono+159, p.200-205 describing a Narcotics Bureau report of March 1971, which also mentions Pasquale and Paolo Cuntrera; Charbonneau, p.333. Mrs Sterling's book was the first open source to identify the transnational importance of the Cuntrera-Caruana clan in the heroin trade. (37) Shawcross & Young, p.95.

(38) Sentenza contro Beddia+12, p.89. The purpose of Buscetta's visit was to re-install the Commissione, the ruling body of the Sicilian Cosa Nostra which had desintegrated after the Ciaculli Massacre. But many observers assumed that a reorganization of the heroin trade was also part of the meeting. Some of the participants escaped arrest when their car was stopped for speeding near Milan. In the car were Buscetta (alias Adalberto Barbieri), Salvatore 'Cicchiteddu' Greco (alias Renato Caruso Martinez), Gaetano Badalamenti, Gerlando Alberti en Giuseppe Calderone.

The police waved them on, after paying the fee, not grasping who these people really were. Only later on they discovered that they had missed the opportunity to arrest half of Cosa Nostra's top level. Before and after Buscetta was spotted with other top traffickers in Zürich (Switzerland), a.o. Pietro Davì. See: Commissione Antimafia, Relazione conclusiva, pp.492-493; "Sentenza contro Albanese Giuseppe + 74", nr 1422\74, Palermo 29 July 1974, pp.39ff (In: Documentazione allegato, Doc. XXIII n.1/VIII, pp.1760ff); Sterling (1990), p.112; Shawcross & Young, p.88.

(39) See: Sterling (1990), p.247-248; and Ralph Blumenthal, "Last Days of the Sicilians. The FBI assault on the Pizza Connection", Times Books: New York 1988, p.7 and 41-43.

(40) See for the application of the concept of 'power' and 'enterprise' syndicate on the Sicilian Mafia: Salvatore Lupo: "Storia della mafia, dalle origini ai giorni nostri", Donzella editore: Rome 1993, pp.193ff. He uses the distinction although he points to their 'reciprocal functionality' to illustrate the internal battles of the Sicilian Cosa Nostra, the one in 1963 and the one which started in 1981 and brought Totò Riina and his Corleonesi to power.

(41) Cotroni Family-boss Paul Violi was killed in January 1978. Years before, in 1972, Violi already complained about the independant modus operandi of his Sicilian 'underlings', Nick Rizzuto in

particular. 'He is going from one side to the other, here and there, and he says nothing to nobody, he is doing business and nobody knows anything,' Violi said about Rizzuto. Violi asked for more 'soldiers' from his Bonanno bosses, clearly preparing for war, and Violi's boss at the time, Vincent Cotroni remarked: 'After all, I am 'capo decina', I have the right to expel him.'

This episode is very well documented as the RCMP conducted an investigation into organized crime in Montreal at the time and was able to place a bug in Violi's Reggio Bar, in Saint Leonard in Montreal's Little Italy. See: Commission du police du Quebec, "Enquête sur le crime organisé", Montreal 1976, pp.79-80 and 100-101.

Some of the bugged conversations were later used in the Palermo Maxi Trial against the Sicilian Mafia by judge Falcone: it corroborated the evidence of Buscetta on the structure of Cosa Nostra and its relations with their North-American counterparts. In one of the conversations Cuntrera-Caruana Family member Giuseppe Cuffaro is explaining the new set-up of Cosa Nostra in Agrigento.

The taped conversations give also insight in the troublesome relations between Violi and his Sicilian 'underlings'. There is a lot of talk about the impediment of Sicilian mafiosi to work on the American continent without permission of the local Mafia Family (i.c. Cotroni). See: Lucio Galluzzo a.o., "Rapporto sulla mafia degli anni '80. Gli atti dell'ufficio istruzione del Tribunale di Palermo", SF Flaccovio editore: Palermo 1986, pp.91-99; and Giuseppe Arnone, "Mafia. Il processo di Agrigento", Edizioni La Zisa: Monreale 1988, pp.50-54.

(42) Carmine Galante was an important boss of the Bonanno Family. He masterminded the Family's expansion into Montreal in the 1950's, introducing the Cotroni's into the Bonanno Family. Galante was one of the American bosses who brought in Sicilian mafiosi to do the dirty work in the US for the American families. See: Charbonneau, pp.90-92; Shawcross & Young, pp.74-75; and Sterling (1990), p.246.

It has been suggested that the Sicilian 'zips' actually killed Galante on behalf of other American family heads, in particular Gambino boss Paul Castellano and Bonanno boss Phil Rastelli. Galante controlled the 'heroin franchise' and had ambitions to head the New York Mafia Commission. It was in the interest of both the Sicilians who he had solicited himself as the American bosses to get Galante out of the way. See: Shawcross & Young, pp. 268-269; Sterling (1990), pp.246-248; Davis, pp.172-175

(43) See: Bono+159, p.72. Cattolica Eraclea lies a dozen miles north of Siculiana. Many affiliated mafiosi of the Cuntrera-Caruana clan were born there: Nick Rizzuto and his son Vito, the Mongiovi's and Gerlando Sciascia. For a while Cattolica Eraclea was also the home town of Nick Gentile (see: Michele Pantaleone, "Mafia e politica", Einaudi editore: Turin 1962, p.214.) One of the Mongiovi's is married with a Gentile. The triangle Siculiana, Cattolica Eraclea and Montallegro is considered one mafia territory (see: Renato Candida, "Questa mafia", Salvatore Sciascia editore: Caltanissetta/Roma 1964 3rd revised edition, p.149; Candida was a major in the Carabinieri.)

According to several sources the Cuntrera-Caruana family was most prominent in the area and in the 1970's Leonardo Caruana was 'capo mandamento' for this region, a sort of representative of regional Mafia-families in the overall provincial Commission. Nick Rizzuto seemed to have some problems with this nomination, one can deduce from the Reggio Bar tapes. (See: Arnone, p.52, and Galluzzo, p.92.) The Rizzuto-Manno clan is a Mafia cosca of its own, but seems to be subordinate to the Cuntrera-Caruana. There is some kinship (see Family Tree), and Nick Rizzuto is the godfather of one of Pasquale Cuntrera's daughter.

(44) See: André Cédilot & Marcel Laroche, 'Les Siciliens (Rizzuto) controlent les Calabrais (Cotroni). Le milieu montréalais suit la tendance mondiale vers l'hégémonie des Siciliens sur les mafias italiennes', La Presse (Montreal) 24 April 1993.

(45) See: Peter Edwards & Antonio Nicaso, "Deadly Silence, Canadian Mafia Murders", MacMillan Canada: Toronto 1993, p. 162; and Jerry Capeci, 'Why the Mob Loves Canada', The Financial Post Magazine, February 1992.

(46) Bono+159, p.251.

(47) According to confidential informants. See: Bono+159, p.220.

(48) See a two part story in The Gazette of Montreal by William Marsden: 'Mafia hid millions in Montreal banks', 7 April 1988; and 'The Montreal connection: Dog's nose led to a Mafia drug ring',

April 8 1988. Marsden quotes an officer of the Italian Criminalpol who said about the Pizza Connection: 'they didn't find the real boss and the real links between the Sicilian and American Mafia'. Cuntrera-Caruana was that link.

(49) "Relaciones del Crimen Organizado norteamericano, canadiense e italiano con residentes en Venezuela", February 1983. See also: Sterling (1990), p.136; and Sentenza contro Beddia+12, p.124.

(50) Historian Salvatore Lupo suggests that the Greco's, after the internal clash in 1963, maybe thought the Sicilian 'power syndicate' uncontrollable, and probably preferred to put their capacity, relations and money into organizing a 'enterprise syndicate'. Lupo also remarks that this is exactly the time Cuntrera-Caruana moved to Venezuela were 'Cicchiteddu' Greco had established himself after the Ciaculli Massacre. See: Lupo, p.205.

(51) Sterling (1990), p.131. Napoli moved to Venezuela to escape the French Connection investigation. He also helped Buscetta to establish himself in New York halfway the 1960's. They were partners in several pizzeria's.

(52) Sterling (1990), p.107. This faction is known as the Cherry Hill Gambino's. They were the pivot of Sicilian Mafia operations in the US, according to Sterling. Nearly all exiles who dominated the heroin consortium in the 1970's and 80's were clustered around them.

(53) Sterling (1990), p 135.

(54) 54. Sterling (1990), p.238-239; and Tripodi's memoirs, Tom Tripodi & Joseph P. DeSario, "Crusade. Undercover Against the Mafia & KGB", Brassey's: McLean (Virginia) 1993. Curiously enough Tripodi was on the same trail 20 years before, when he worked undercover for the Federal Bureau of Narcotics. Disguised as a contract killer, he had to track Settimo Accardo in Toronto, who had jumped bail. Accardo's family in New Jersey was well taken care off, investigations showed: their money arrived through a intricate network of banks in Sicily and Venezuela! Tripodi's operation had to be aborted to protect a far more important investigation. (See: Tripodi, p.50-55).

The 'more important investigation' centered on pizzeria owner Benedetto Zizzo, part of the 'Squadra di Salemi' heroin network. Benedetto's brother Salvatore Zizzo, Mafia boss of Salemi, was in contact with Giovanni Mira and Leonardo Caruana. (See: 'Ucciso fuori dal suo regno', L'Ora (Palermo), 3 September 1981).

With the benefit of hindsight, you can say Tripodi's operation was part of the 'more important investigation'. Or you could say that Tripodi was on and off on the same investigation for more then 20 years. See note 28.

(55) Sentenza Beddia+12, p.59-61.

(56) 'Scoperti i conti d'oro della mafia-holding', Il Sole 24 Ore, 16 December 1989; and Rapporto Pilgrim, p.1.

(57) Sentenza contro Beddia+12, p.277-293.

(58) Sentenza contro Beddia+12, p.145; Rapporto Pilgrim, p.27. Giuseppe Cuffaro is a long time member of the Cuntrera-Caruana clan. His sister Maria was married to Giovanni Caruana. Cuffaro was born in Montallegro, a village a few miles to the west of Siculiana.

(59) The 58 kilo seizure and its money trail are reconstructed in Sentenzo Caruana+Cuffaro, and Sentenza Beddia+12, as well as the two part story in "The Gazette" of Montreal by William Marsden.

(60) Sentenza Beddia+12, p.249-250.

(61) According to a confidential BKA Report. For the operations of the Cuntrera-Caruana clan in Europe, see: Fabrizio Calvi, "L'Europe des parrains", Ed. Grasset & Fasquelle: Paris 1993; and Jürgen Roth & Marc Frey, "Die Verbrecher Holding", Piper Verlag: Munich 1992.

(62) Interview with Mr Natoli; and Yves Boisvert, 'Blanchissage d'argent: un juge italien enquête sur la filière montréalaise', La Presse, 6 December 1990.

(63) I interviewed Sergeant Marc Bourque in April 1994. See also: Mario Possamai, "Money on the Run", Toronto: Penguin Books 1993, p 88-93.

- (64) To Leonardo Greco of Bagheria for instance, who ran a heroin-lab in his ironwork factory. The raw morphine paste came from Turkish trafficker Avni Yassar Mussulullu, the heroin was destined for the Catalano-Ganci Pizza Connection.
- (65) See the investigation of André Cedilot and André Noel: 'Le député de St-Léonard entretient des relations avec un caïd de la mafia', La Presse (Montréal) 26 April 1994; and 'Le député de St-Leonard admet avoir commis une 'erreur de jugement'', La Presse, 27 April 1994.
- (66) Tu Nhanh Ha, 'Keeping books for reputed mob figure was mistake: MP', The Gazette (Montreal), 27 April 1994, A3.
- (67) Interview with John Costanzo, November 1996.
- (68) I interviewed Mr Gessen in June 1995.
- (69) Interview with Guillermo Jiménez, June 1995. See also: Rafael Rivero, 'El Waterloo del clan Cuntrera', Exceso (Caracas), August 1993, p.51-56.
- (70) Interview with Hendrik Croes, June 1995. See also: 'AVP bewijst connecties tussen Croes en Cuntrera', Amigoe (Curaçao), 24 March 1993.
- (71) Sentenza Beddia+12, p.300.
- (72) Not only Aruba but the Venezuelan tourist-island Isla Margarita as well. According to a Canadian summary of the Mafia in that country, Alfonso Caruana, Pasquale Cuntrera and Cuntrera-Caruana clan-member Salvatore Vella (his brother Domenico is married to Vincenza Caruana and his sister Francesca with Carmelo Caruana, the father of Alfonso Caruana) met each other at a hotel on the island in August 1987 to set up a cocaine smuggling route from Isla Margarita to Montreal, using the many tourist charters to fly their couriers up and down. The same kind of operation was used on Aruba.
- (73) See: Ken Dermota, 'Under a waning smugglers moon', Business Week, 30 September 1991; and 'El hombre Marlboro', Semana (Colombia), 22 March 1994.
- (74) United States of America v. Randolph D. Habibe, for the District of South Florida, Case nr. 93-0572, 6 December 1993; see also: 'Randy Habibe acusa di ta homber grandi di La Costa Cartel di Aruba', Bon Dia Aruba, 10 December 1993.
- I interviewed Assistant US Attorney David E. Troyer, who prosecuted the case, in November 1996. The cocaine suppliers were notorious traffickers Pablo Escobar and José Gonzalo Rodríguez Gacha of the Medellín Cartel, and the marimbero José Rafael 'El Mono' Abello Silva. Abello practically controlled the Bahamian island Exuma. At a certain moment two to three planes a night each with some 500 kilo's of cocaine passed through Exuma, according to Troyer. See: Tom Blickman, 'Wasserij Aruba', De Groene Amsterdammer, 22 January 1997.
- (75) I interviewed Jossy Mansur in June 1995.
- (76) See: 'Comision pa Zona Liber i Casinonan a keda instala', Resumen, 9\16 March 1996.
- (77) United States of America v. Juan Manuel Jinete Vargas et al., for the District of Puerto Rico, by US Attorney Guillermo Gil, Case nr. 94-230, 10 August 1994.
- (78) According to a report of the Venezuelan intelligence agency, the DISIP. See: Javier Ignacio Mayorca, 'Santa' Lopesierra encabeza brazo político del Cartel Maicao', El Nacional (Caracas), 5 June 1995.
- (79) Juan O. Tamayo & Gerardo Reyes, 'Intrigue in Colombia: Who has the \$500,000?', The Miami Herald, 21 February 1996.
- (80) Arnone, p.206.
- (81) In 1987, 'a confidential informer' told the Venezuelan newspaper El Mundo that the Government should start an investigation into the activities of Mansur in Punto Fijo. They would 'find much interesting affairs'. ('El Gobierno debe abrir un investigación sobre actividades de Mansur en Punto Fijo', El Mundo, 24 December 1987.) Mansur and El Mundo were engaged in a press-war since the Miami correspondent of El Mundo, Antonio Llano Montes, accused Jossy Mansur to head a gang smuggling cigarettes, liquor and televisions to Coro, and was implicated in the murder of Betico Croes, former Prime Minister of Aruba ('Desde Miami', El Mundo, 10 November 1987.) See also:

Brigido Marquino, 'Inunda a Venezuela y el Caribe Contrabando del Magnate Mansur', El Mundo, 21 December, 1987.

(82) Police-officer Jiménez told me there are some 40 members of the clan in Venezuela alone, when the three Cuntrera's were expelled.

(83) 'Coca, colombiani & 'ndrangheta', La Repubblica, 23 March 1995. p.21; Gian Carlo Caselli, 'Droga e criminalità organizzata', Narcomafie, April 1995. Caselli is Attorney General in Mafia capital Palermo. He describes the clan as 'pluricontinental', and underlines that Operazione Cartagine shows the clan still plays a essential rol in the drug trade.

According to DEA analyst Attanasio the clan smuggles 70% of the cocaine bound for Europe, he told me in July 1996. The Colombian Cartels have a lot of respect for the Sicilian Mafia, he added. The Cuntrera-Caruana clan worked with the Neapolitan La Torre Camorra clan, Attanasio said. They ran a cocaine supply-line through Scotland. Antonio La Torre runs a restaurant in Aberdeen, but before that he was based in Amsterdam. The Family boss, Augusto La Torre, was arrested in June 1996 at Amsterdams Schiphol Airport. (See also: Tom Behan, "The Camorra", Routledge: London/New York 1996, pp.129-130; Enquête Opsporingsmethoden, Deelonderzoek IV, "Georganiseerde criminaliteit in Nederland: een analyse van de situatie in Amsterdam", Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal 24072 nr 20, Sdu: The Hague 1996, p.81; and Joost de Haas, 'Lid van maffia op Schiphol gearresteerd', De Telegraaf, 13 June 1996.

(84) According to the investigating judge for Operazione Cartagine, who I interviewed in December 1995, the consignee expected to receive 3,500 kilograms. The surplus 2,000 kg's were not accounted for, which could mean this was a stock for either the Colombians or the Cuntrera-Caruana clan. The shipment was from three different Cali Cartel members, judging from the marks on the packages: sterling (£), drachme and scorpion, the last one the mark Henry Loaiza Ceballos 'El Alacrán' (the scorpion) who gave himself up to the police in June 1995.

(85) Sentenza contro Beddia+12, p 252.

(86) The present day top level of the clan probably is formed by the 'second generation' of both families. The three sons of Carmelo Caruana: Alfonso Caruana, Pasquale Caruana (who is serving a long jail sentence in Italy), and the eldest brother Gerlando Caruana (who was sentenced to 20 years in 1986 in Canada, as a reult of the 58 kilo shipment, and was released in 1993 due to the parole regulations in Canada).

An indication of their prominence over elder generation Caruana's was obtained when conversation between Gerlando and his uncle Giovanni Caruana (a brother of Alfonso's father) was tapped. The elder Giovanni was very respectfull towards his younger nephew Gerlando, a sign of the latters superior position in the clan. (See: Rapporto Pilgrim, p.32) Another indication is that Gerlando also married a daughter of the clans patriarch Giuseppe Caruana, just like is his brother Alfonso.

The second generation Cuntrera's is younger than the Caruana brothers (Gerlando, Alfonso and Pasquale were born in 1943, 1946 and 1948). Most prominent are Giuseppe and Alfonso Cuntrera (sons of Pasquale Cuntrera, respectively born in 1956 and 1959); Liborio Cuntrera's son Giuseppe (born in 1960); Paolo Cuntrera's son Giuseppe (born in 1962) and his son-in-law Nino Mongiovì (born in 1957), who is living in Venezuela.

Another prominent figure is Salvatore Vella (born in 1942), who's sisters Francesca and Giuseppa respectively married Carmelo Caruana (father of Gerlando, Alfonso and Pasquale Caruana) and Pasquale Cuntrera. The Vella family acts as a kind of 'glue' between the Caruana and Cuntrera families.

The Montreal Rizzuto branch is led by Vito Rizzuto (born in 1946), son of the ailing Nick Rizzuto. His brother-in-law Paolo Renda (married with Vito's sister) is the son of Domenica Manno, sister of Antonio Manno, father-in-law of Nick Rizzuto, and the undisputed former 'capo-mafia' of Cattolica Eraclea. Paolo Renda was one of the suspects in the Violi murder, together with Domencio Manno (Antonio Manno's son and brother-in-law of Nick Rizzuto), Agostino Cuntrera and Giovanni Dimora, brother-in-law of Liborio Cuntrera and Agostino Cuntrera.

The sons of former 'capo-mandamento' Leonardo Caruana, Gerlando (born in 1951) and Gaspare (born in 1954) are probably less prominent. Their father was the odd one out in the clan, according to Buscetta, challenging his elder brother Giuseppe Caruana and Pasquale Cuntrera. Leonardo is the

only one who got killed during the Sicilian Mafia War in 1981, the night of his son Gaspare's marriage. They are the only ones who still live in Siculiana. Family patriarch Giuseppe Caruana has one son left (his eldest Gerlando died in 1953), Pasquale Caruana (born in 1951), a physician living in Brasil. His position is unclear.

(87) The Gazette, 7 April 1988. Information about Alfonso Caruana is of several sources and interviews.

(88) Tony Attanasio, 'LCN Trying to Return to Cuba With Help of Sicilian Mafia', Organized Crime Digest, 16 August 1995.

(89) André Cédilot, 'Le fisc tente de coincer le mafioso Caruana', La Presse, 9 January 1997; André Cédilot, 'Le faillite de Caruana contestée en cour', La Presse, 13 February 1997; André Cédilot, 'Le mafieux Alfonso Caruana se tire d'une faillite de 28,5 millions pour... 90.000\$', La Presse, 28 February 1997.

(90) I interviewed Attorney General Jan Zwinkels in June 1995. Although Zwinkels himself is Dutch, he was appointed by the Aruban government. Aruba has its own independent juridical system and apparatus, but often Dutch trained juridical personal head the office of the Public Prosecutor. Zwinkels had to leave office in January 1997 after a two year long battle with the Aruban government about law enforcement on the island. Mr Zwinkels prosecuted a little too diligent some business-men affiliated with Premier Eman's party, among others the Mansur Family.

(91) See for instance: Patrick L. Clawson & Rensselaer W. Lee III, "The Andean Cocaine Industry", MacMillan: London 1996, p.74-75. The book shows a diagram of the Cuntrera-Caruana 'business empire'. In fact three fourths of the company's in the diagram are not owned by the clan at all. Most of them did turn up in one case or another while dealing with the clan, but to automatically allot them to the clan's 'empire' is incorrect.