

Italy's Heroes

by Gary Fouse



Having spent five years in Milan, Italy during my DEA career (1982-1987), I follow the events in that country and try to keep up with the language. Armed with my Firestick, I can enjoy TV shows and movies from around the world. Naturally, I enjoy the Italian crime shows. Along with Scandinavia, Italy is producing the best TV detective series. This week, I watched a two-part movie on [Boris Giuliano](#) (Full name, Giorgio Boris Giuliano), who was assassinated by the Mafia in Palermo in 1979. The movie is entitled, [Trans-Atlantic Ties](#) or *Un Polizotto a Palermo*.

Giuliano's name was very familiar to me when I arrived in Italy three years later because he was one of the true heroes in Italy's fight against the Sicilian Mafia. I would like here to highlight not only Giuliano, but four other notable figures from that era in Italian law enforcement. The others are [Rocco Chinnici](#), [General Carlo Alberto Dalla Chiesa](#), and prosecuting magistrates [Giovanni Falcone](#) and [Paolo Borsalino](#). All were assassinated by the Mafia in Sicily between 1979 and 1992.

Giuliano left a comfortable position in Milan to return to his native Sicily in order to make a contribution in the fight against the Mafia. Back in Palermo, he became head of the National Police *Squadra Mobile* (Flying Squad), and aggressively went after the Mafia who were involved in heroin trafficking between Italy and America, the so-called Pizza Connection investigation, which also involved DEA and the FBI. Giuliano worked with both agencies and exchanged valuable information, which led to many high-level arrests and seizures of heroin. Unfortunately, as with the other three, Giuliano's courage and dedication were not matched by many of his superiors as well as many Italian politicians, most notably the Mafia-connected [Giulio Andreotti](#), (who incredibly was prime minister of Italy three times as well as its foreign minister, interior minister and defense minister). As a result, many high-level Mafia figures arrested by Giuliano were soon freed for one reason or another.

As you can read in the link, Giuliano was gunned down by the Mafia in July 1979 as he was having coffee in a coffee bar near the Questura.

Rocco Chinnici was a magistrate in Palermo who created the [Anti-Mafia Pool](#), which also consisted of other magistrates like Falcone and Borsalino to fight the Mafia. Unlike many at the time, he was not afraid to speak publicly about the Mafia. In 1983, he and two of his bodyguards were killed by a car bomb. Eventually, the Anti-Mafia Pool would bring forth the Maxi-Trial against the Mafia with almost 500 indictments (1986-1992). Most of these cases resulted in convictions.

Carlo Alberto Dalla Chiesa was a Carabinieri general when he was assigned to Palermo in May 1982. He had already achieved fame for his successes against the Italian terror group, *Brigati Rossi* (Red Brigades). He announced that he would attack the Mafia with the same vigor he had exhibited against the Red Brigades. In September that same year, he, his wife, and his police escort were ambushed and killed in their

car by men on motorcycles. The entire country reacted in outrage.

Giovanni Falcone was also a native Sicilian who became one of Italy's most famous prosecutors for his determined campaign to fight the Mafia. He was part of the Anti-Mafia Pool formed by Chinnici. His greatest success was the [Maxi-Trial](#) of Mafia figures which lasted from 1986-1992 and resulted in hundreds of convictions.

Falcone was eventually transferred to Rome in 1991, but on a regular visit to Sicily in 1992 was murdered by a bomb placed by the side of the road as his car drove by. Also killed were his wife and three police escorts.

Paolo Borsalino, also a Sicilian, was a long-time friend of Falcone and fellow prosecuting magistrate. Like Falcone, he was part of the Anti-Mafia Pool created by Chinnici. Like Falcone, he was tenacious, and like the others was hampered by lack of resources, official corruption, and a lack of will on the part of others to support him. Two months after Falcone's death, Borsalino and five police bodyguards were killed by a car bomb in Palermo.

An Italian movie about the period between the deaths of Falcone and Borsalino is,