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ACTION EUR-01

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FOR EUR/WE

EUR/PA

E.O. 12356: N/A
TAGS: OPRC, IT
SUBJECT: OP-ED PIECE FOR CLEARANCE

1. THE FOLLOWING IS AN OP-ED PIECE THAT AMBASSADOR SECCHIA WOULD LIKE TO SUBMIT TO U.S. PUBLICATIONS. HE WOULD APPRECIATE IF CLEARANCE COULD BE GIVEN BY MONDAY JUNE 22, 1992.

BEGIN TEXT

2. JUDGE GIOVANNI FALCONE WAS A FRIEND. HE WAS A BRAVE MAN, A DECENT INDIVIDUAL WHO TOOK ON THE EXTRAORDINARY JOB OF PROSECUTING THE MAFIA ON ITS HOME TURF - IN SICILY. HE WAS THE CLOSEST THING ITALY HAD TO A LIVING SYMBOL OF RESISTANCE TO
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ORGANIZED CRIME.

3. BUT, GIANNI FALCONE DIED ON MAY 23. TWO DAYS AFTER I LAST SAW HIM AT DINNER AT MY HOME. HE, HIS WIFE, AND THREE SICILIAN SPECIAL ANTI-TERRORIST AGENTS ASSIGNED TO BE WITH HIM AT ALL TIMES WERE BRUTALLY ASSASSINATED; KILLED BY THE MAFIA BY A VERY LARGE AND POWERFUL BOMB AS HE TRAVELED ON THE AUTOSTRADA NEAR PALERMO. THIS WAS NOT THE ACT OF ONE INDIVIDUAL: IT TOOK A SMALL ARMY OF PEOPLE TO

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ORCHESTRATE SUCH AN ATTACK, AND POSSIBLY AN INFORMER TO TIP THE ASSASSINS TO HIS TRAVEL SCHEDULE.

4. JUDGE FALCONE SPEARHEADED THE EFFORTS OF SICILY'S RENOWNED ANTI-MAFIA POOL OF MAGISTRATES THROUGHOUT MOST OF THE 80'S. HE BUILT EXTENSIVE AND COMPLEX LEGAL CASES AGAINST NOTORIOUS MAFIA FIGURES, AND CULMINATED HIS EFFORTS IN "MAXI TRIALS" OF HUNDREDS OF MAFIOSI AT A TIME. HIS INVESTIGATIVE ABILITIES, INDEFATIGABLE WORK HABITS, HIS SINCERITY, HONESTY, AND BRAVERY WERE AN INSPIRATION, NOT ONLY TO HIS COLLEAGUES, BUT ALSO TO THOSE MEMBERS OF THE MAFIA WHO WERE READY TO "TALK". THESE QUALITIES ENABLED JUDGE FALCONE TO PENETRATE THE MAFIA "CODE OF SILENCE", THUS EXPOSING A SOPHISTICATED, COMPLEX, AND VICIOUS ORGANIZATION. JUDGE FALCONE WAS TRULY A "MAN OF HONOR."

5. GIANNI FALCONE WAS ALSO A TRUE FRIEND OF THE UNITED STATES. HE WORKED CLOSELY WITH U.S. OFFICIALS AGAINST THOSE OPERATING THE NOTORIOUS "PIZZA CONNECTION," WHICH DISTRIBUTED HEROIN THROUGHOUT THE

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EAST COAST OF THE U.S. HIS EFFORTS, COOPERATION, AND INVALUABLE EXPERIENCE IN THIS DIFFICULT ARENA WERE INSTRUMENTAL IN THE CONVICTION OF 21 OUT OF 22 DEFENDANTS ON CHARGES OF TRAFFICING, RACKETEERING, AND MONEY LAUNDERING. THE TRIAL, WHICH TOOK PLACE IN NEW YORK CITY, WAS INTERNATIONAL IN SCOPE, WITH DEFENDANTS FROM BOTH ITALY AND SWITZERLAND. IT WAS A TRIAL THAT WAS WON DESPITE THE BRUTAL MURDER OF ONE WITNESS AND THE SERIOUS INJURY OF ANOTHER.

6. THE RECENT CONVICTION OF U.S. MAFIA LEADER JOHN GOTTI WAS A RESULT OF THE TYPE OF COOPERATIVE EFFORT WHICH JUDGE FALCONE ENDORSED. HE WAS AN ADMIRER AND RESPECTED JURIST WHO WAS HELD IN HIGH ESTEEM BY THE U.S. LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMUNITY, AND HIS ASSISTANCE WILL BE SORELY MISSED.

7. JUDGE FALCONE'S DEATH WAS FRONT-PAGE NEWS THROUGHOUT EUROPE. HIS FUNERAL, TELEVISED NATIONALLY, SAW HIM MOURNED BY AN ARRAY OF GOVERNMENT LEADERS. I ATTENDED THE FALCONE FUNERAL IN PALERMO. I FELT THE EMOTIONAL DISTRESS OF THOUSANDS OF MOURNERS AS THEY CROWDED INTO THE BASILICA WHILE MORE THAN 10,000

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LINED THE STREETS OUTSIDE TO PAY THEIR LAST RESPECTS TO THE SICILIAN JUDGE WHO HAD COME TO SYMBOLIZE THEIR HOPE OF ESCAPING THE MAFIA.

8. THE FUNERAL'S MOST MOVING MOMENT WAS THE TEARFUL PUBLIC PLEA BY THE WIDOW OF ONE OF FALCONE'S SLAIN BODYGUARDS. SHE FORGAVE THE MEN WHO KILLED HER HUSBAND, BUT PLEADED WITH THEM TO CHANGE THEIR WAYS.

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9. HOWEVER, IT WAS EVIDENT THAT SICILIANS, WHO HAVE SUFFERED FOR GENERATIONS UNDER THE YOKE OF THE MAFIA, HAVE HAD ENOUGH OF MERCY; IT APPEARS THAT THEY WANT JUSTICE. ANTI-MAFIA FEELING WAS AT AN ALL TIME HIGH AT THE FUNERAL. THERE WERE CRIES FOR JUSTICE AND FOR LIBERATION FROM A SYSTEM THAT ENSLAVES THE SICILIAN

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PEOPLE AND DEMANDS THAT THEY SELL THEIR SOULS JUST TO REGAIN BASIC RIGHTS THAT HAVE BEEN STOLEN FROM THEM. IT IS A SYSTEM THAT FUNNELS TAXES FROM WORKING PEOPLE TO START CONSTRUCTION OF BUILDINGS THAT ARE NEVER COMPLETED. IT IS A SYSTEM THAT CONTROLS THE WATER SUPPLY OF THE PEOPLE OF SOUTHERN ITALY AND SICILY, AND DICTATES TO FARMERS WHAT CAN AN CANNOT BE PRODUCED. IT IS A SYSTEM THAT MURDEED A FRIEND.

10. THIS TYRANNY CANNOT LAST. TE MAFIA MUST BE DESTROYED. AS THE ITALIAN GOVENMENT WAS ABLE TO DEFEAT THE RED BRIGADE TERRORSTS OF THE 1970"S;

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ITALY WILL DEFEAT THE MAFIA. IT WAS THE ASSASSINATION OF PRIME MINISTER ALDOMORO, "A TERRORIST SHOT HEARD ROUND THE WORLD," WHICH GALVANIZED THE POPULATION IN ITS FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM. THEY SUCCEEDED, AND WE CAN ONLY HOPE THAT THE ASSASSINATION OF JUDGE FALCONE WILL HAVE THE SAME AFFECT ON THE FIGHT AGAINST THE MAFIA.

11. GIANNI FALCONE'S MISSION WAS TO ENGAGE THE MAFIA AND DEFEAT IT. THEREFORE, WE MUST PICK UP WHERE HE LEFT OFF AND CONTINUE THE BATTLE. WHEN I SAY "WE", I MEAN BOTH ITALIANS AND AMERICANS; FOR THE MAFIA IS AN EVIL THAT EXISTS BOTH IN SICILY AND THE UNITED STATES. THIS FIGHT WILL BE BASED NOT ONLY ON POWER, BUT ON A CHANGE IN ATTITUDES. ALL OF THE WORLD'S COMMUNITIES ARE THREATENED. HOLLYWOOD MUST STOP PORTRAYING THE MAFIA AS AN HONORABLE, ROMANTIC, AND SOMEHOW QUAIN T FRATERNITY. IT IS NOT. IT IS AN ORGANIZATION OF CRUDE, EVIL, AND DANGEROUS INDIVIDUALS. AN ORGANIZATION THAT KILLED MY FRIEND. I SINCERELY HOPE THAT THE ASSASSINATION OF JUDGE GIOVANNI FALCONE PROVES TO BE A " TERRORIST EXPLOSION HEARD ROUND THE WORLD," AND THAT THE LOSS OF THIS WONDERFUL MAN WILL NOT BE FOR NAUGHT. END TEXT.
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