



# CIVIL COURAGE PRIZE

## Introduction by the Honorable Cyrus R. Vance

Nicola Gratteri

2014

It is, truly, a great honor for me – as a lawyer, as a public servant, and as a prosecutor – to recognize the work of Italian magistrate and prosecutor Nicola Gratteri. In honoring the life of this remarkable man, the Train Foundation could not have found a more stirring example anywhere in the world of unbridled courage, or of dedication to the rule of law.

And to explain why that is so, I need to take you no further away than the docks of New York, and no further back in time than last February 11th. On that date, the FBI in New York announced the arrest of seven New Yorkers on charges of heroin trafficking and money laundering. New Yorkers have grown used to hearing about those kinds of arrests; what made these arrests unusual is that they were effected in coordination with the arrest of 17 people in Italy, all linked to a single Calabrian organized crime group called 'Ndrangheta.

Tonight, I want to tell you a little bit about 'Ndrangheta. It is believed to be the richest crime organization in Italy. Experts estimate that its annual revenues equal three percent of the entire Gross Domestic Product of Italy. The syndicate has extended its operation to run the cocaine industry in Europe, to acquire legitimate businesses, and to corrupt politicians. One journalist said that the group is “capable of penetrating anywhere, from Europe to the U.S., from Canada to Australia.” In the south of Italy, the group routinely exacts tribute from public works contracts, so that, as one expert put it, “the south is a land of unfinished works because finished works don’t pay.” And another journalist wrote that in its native Calabria, 'Ndrangheta “controls every breath anyone takes, every inch of road, every thought.”

While it is a secret organization, there is no secret to its tenacity. 'Ndrangheta is not a hierarchy, but a sprawling organization, at each point run as a complex of family relations. As a result, there have been precious few cooperating defendants, and there is no executive committee. And thus the group has proven notoriously resilient to attack by law enforcement. As one Italian prosecutor put it, “the 'Ndrangheta cannot be beheaded.”

Those who have tried have too often paid with their lives. One anti-mafia youth group chose as its name an Italian phrase which translates as, “Now Kill Us All.”

It is to confront this evil that our honoree, Nicola Gratteri, has dedicated his life. This prosecutor has spoken out boldly against organized crime, and has built painstaking cases that deliver telling blows against 'Ndrangheta. He has gone into the schools to teach children that there is another way, and gone into prisons to work for reform. And everywhere he goes, he preaches a simple message: in his words, "the Mafia can be defeated."

And he knows he has hurt the organization, because the syndicate has threatened his life. He has had to live under police protection for the past three decades. But make no mistake: in attacking 'Ndrangheta, prosecutor Gratteri is attacking something even more dangerous – the sense of fatalism and futility that allows organized crime to grow. Every morning that Nicola Gratteri shows up to work, he demonstrates to Calabria and to the world that just one man can make a difference.

Speaking at the site of an 'Ndrangheta execution in Calabria, Pope Francis recently called the organization the "adoration of evil and contempt for the common good." Today we honor the man who has made it his vocation to fight that evil, to restore that common good.

Mark Twain, in the aftermath of the Civil War, famously remarked that one of life's greatest mysteries was why physical courage was so common, yet moral courage so rare. Tonight we honor that rarest of virtues in the rarest of men: Nicola Gratteri.