

## The Liberation of Lonate from Fascism, and from 'Ndrangheta

**Pubblicato:** Lunedì 26 Aprile 2010

On 25 April, in Lonate Pozzolo, there will be two “liberations” commemorated, the first, from Nazi-Fascism, and the second, from the 'Ndrangheta Mafia. At least this was the meaning that the municipal council, led by the Mayor, Piergiulio Gelosa, wanted to give to the day, when it decided to call Igor Greganti and Fabio Abati, the authors of “Polo Nord”, the book that talks about the infiltration of the Mafia organisations in the north of Italy (photo: the presentation that took place in Busto Arsizio). This is the first, clearly anti-Mafia, public event to be promoted by the council.

In Lonate Pozzolo, the presentation of the book, which also contains a part dedicated to the sad story of this village, takes on a particular meaning, a little more than one year after the operation *Bad Boys* led to the arrest, by the Anti-Mafia Investigation Office in Milan, of 39 people connected with the Marina Cirò Mafia gang, headed by the Farao-Maricola families, which had created, near Malpensa Airport, a 'Ndrangheta zone, between the north of Milan and the south of Varese, which was controlled with extortion, loan sharking and robbery. For 25 of the 39 people arrested, the trial, which includes charges of Mafia-style criminal association, will begin on 8 June in the Law Court of Busto Arsizio.

In the streets of Lonate Pozzolo, there is an air of liberation. Even though no reports of extortion or loan-sharking were made to the police, the people feel liberated from the bold oppression they had suffered. “Maybe today, we feel this liberation more than the liberation from Nazi-Fascism. We went through a really terrible time. People started moving away to escape the harassment and abuse,” a few elderly from the village told us in front of a bar.

This is also the opinion of Pino De Luca, the village butcher, who, despite not being a victim of extortion, nevertheless felt the presence of the clan. “They never asked me for anything, in fact, they paid me the right price for whatever they bought. I know that they often went into other shops, took things and left without paying. When they came into my shop and there were other customers, there was an atmosphere of tension, looks were exchanged.”

There are some who do not agree with combining the two events. “I don’t see what the two things have to do with each other,” says Ambrogio Regalia. “Anti-Mafia Day is a great idea, but let’s do it another time. The 25 April is Liberation Day.” Since many of these people were put in jail, there have been no more arson attacks against shops, building yards or cars, and the silence at night is no longer broken by gunfire against shop shutters.

Whether they are for or against, many people will take part in the initiative promoted by

the Mayor, who wants to emphasise the spirit of the celebration. “We’re not trying to obscure the real meaning of the celebration,” explained Piergiulio Gelosa. “We just want to extend the spirit of this commemoration to celebrate of freedom in every sense.”

Igor Greganti and Fabio Abati immediately welcomed the idea of the initiative. “We don’t have many occasions to present our book, so this seemed to us to be a good opportunity. Incidentally, we know that nobody in Lonate reported the intimidation and extortion, even though a lot of people knew it was going on. We’re going to participate also to break this chain of fear that creates the conspiracy of silence.”

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