

VareseNews

Usury with the gang's money, "zu Pippu"'s band arrested.

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They had transformed **an entrepreneur from Angera, first into a victim of usury, then into a victim of extortion and threats, and, in the end, into a contact with other struggling entrepreneurs.** The man, owner of a big company which is present in all Northern Italy, was going through a period of financial difficulty, and in order to pay his employees' salary, after acknowledging that he would not obtain anything from banks, he turned to **Sebastiano Patti, a 54-year-old man born in Alcamo** and living in Cassano Magnago, who basically handed him over to the Valle's family 'ndrangheta clan, who gave him the sum of €150,000, at an interest tax of 10-15% per month. **After a year and a half, the entrepreneur from Angera had to shell out something like €1.5 million under the continuous and constant death threats** and, on top of that, he **was forced to draw other entrepreneurs in the trap of usury.** Then, one day, some clan members **took him inside some woods and ordered him to dig his grave with his own hands** because they were going to kill him. Only at that point, after almost two years, he brought himself to denounce all that was happening to him.

The man who made him enter the vortex of usury and extortion was arrested yesterday morning, Tuesday, from **Arona's Carabinieri** who also arrested all the other members of the band who looked for entrepreneurs to fleece, and some members of which are **Giuseppe Drago**, a 63-year-old man born in Catania and living in Busto Arsizio, **nicknamed "zu Pippu"**, already known by the "procure", especially by that of Varese, which had arrested him in September 2010, and that of Busto Arsizio, which had arrested him in 2002 after he had been let out of prison because of a missing photocopy in the ruling; Pippo Drago's daughter's boyfriend, **Emanuele Federico** from Gela, already in prison for the same crimes; **Antonino Fazio**, a 69-year-old man born in Messina and living in Gozzano (Novara). The four were basically full-time loan-sharks and, in order to increase their financial resources, had signed alliances with clans of all Italian organized crime, from the Sicilian mafia to the 'ndrangheta, the camorra and the Sacra Corona Unita. The data have been given by the Arona's Carabinieri's commander **Francesco Palazzo**, by Novara's operative division's lieutenant colonel **Maurilio Liore** and from marshal **Carmelo Munao**, commander of Arona's radio car operative division.

A good deal of the cases of usury reconstructed in this investigation **involve indeed about 50 entrepreneurs from Novara** and the **meeting place of the band was found in Borgo Ticino, inside car dealership Muraca**, also the site of another operation named "Borgo pulito" (clean borgo) which had already succeeded in **arresting 18 people** linked to the same loan-shark circle. Here, all kinds of criminals would meet to organize the usuries with the relative threats and punishments.

Part of the investigation, however, is a matter of Busto Arsizio's Procura, in particular of Assistant Prosecutor **Raffaella Zappatini** who, already when she was in Varese, had dealt with Giuseppe Drago and his organization. "He is a man who enjoys great respect among criminals – the magistrate reminded – I am personally grateful to Arona's carabinieri because

they have arrested him again after he had been let out of prison in Varese because his term had expired." The general impression, however, is that the investigation, already started in 2009, is not over yet, and might spread out to crime circles that allowed loan-sharks to always have heaps of money to lend, in cash.

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