
Coronavirus. Raffaele Cantone: “I am proud of Italy and of Italians. We are seeing their best qualities emerge”

Raffaele Cantone, Italian magistrate, essayist and academic, was at the helm of the National Anti-Corruption Authority (ANAC) until last October. He is living through this time of forced closure due to the Coronavirus with apprehension, but also with hope. He served as Deputy Prosecutor in Naples, where, until 1999, financial crime was his main area of activity, he then joined the anti-mafia Directorate in Naples, until 2007. He was in charge of the investigation on the Casalesi Camorra clan, which led to the sentencing to life imprisonment of many crime bosses. Having returned to what he always considered "... my hometown", he too is now working from home, in constant communication with the Abstracts and Rolls Office of the Supreme Court of Cassation tasked with selecting the maxims, that is, the few short sentences encapsulating the principle of law laid down in Supreme Court rulings. During this period he works with his collaborators via web-based applications. SIR asked him to comment and share his view on the current situation. **Dr. Cantone, as a citizen and a Southerner, how are you coping with this situation?** At this stage of my working life, I have the privilege of working from home. Through IT tools, the Abstracts and Rolls Office of the Cassation Court allows me to do almost everything in real time. Interaction with colleagues and the office continues with regular online meetings. *However, like most Italian citizens I feel as if I were living some sort of nightmare from which I hope to wake up as soon as possible, even though I rationally know that it's not a nightmare but real life.* As a Neapolitan and a citizens of southern Italy, I am especially concerned about the consequences that my home region risks facing. **The virus is plaguing our health care system which, despite the blows and owing to measures taken, is holding its own. But soon we will have to deal with the repercussions on the economy. I believe that this situation has blown a cork and is bringing under the spotlight a critical issue that had been simmering below the surface for years, which at this stage risks reaching a dramatic peak. As if an axe were hovering over the South in particular, marked by precarious jobs, and undeclared work?** It can be said that a certain world, to which large numbers of ordinary people ultimately belong, has always been characterized by undeclared work. *These are ordinary people that have no connection whatsoever with organized crime, well acquainted with what in our region is called "the art of making ends meet".* Their condition is due to the fact that they have no steady employment, at best part-time, despite the fact that they actually work full-time. This is particularly true in the catering and tourism sectors, but also in small businesses, all areas characterised by a considerable amount of undeclared work. To this reality must be added that of cottage industries with local production of shoes, belts, clothing, for example, perhaps located in dilapidated or run-down facilities where workers often lack the minimal safety conditions. Often they supply major fashion firms in the north or abroad. *Until now, these situations were objectively tolerated for reasons we all know.* First of all, because they probably represent a social buffer. Second, because these activities, without the so-called "black labour system", would have lacked the opportunity to have a minimal manufacturing capacity. Third, because, altogether, these realities are to be considered as veritable industrial districts, small, but extremely important within the local economic fabric. By ensuring a minimum degree of competitiveness, they represent a viable alternative to foreign companies, much larger and better known, which manufacture the same branded or designer goods. In any event, these are illegal situations, that cannot be justified under any circumstance, least of all by me, but at this stage and in the light of what could happen, they risk being the most severely affected. **In this context, there is a concrete risk that organised crime might supplant the State...** Yes, there is. In fact, other activities coexist alongside the previous ones. First of all, those I define as "para-criminal activity", borderline or contiguous to criminal activity, ranging from sellers of counterfeit CDs to unauthorized parking attendants. There is also another reality, also present throughout the territory, which does business and thrives on crime. *By way of example, it's what I call the "mafia*

welfare", present above all in highly populated districts, where poverty, lack of services and of work has a heavy impact. In those environments, organized crime often takes direct care of destitute households: it leaves them only the crumbs, but in this way it creates a vast area of consensus. I hope it will have no opportunity and no chance of expanding further, of finding new resources and, above all, that it will not end up overwhelming and engulfing the other two. That would be a catastrophe. **What measures should be taken to prevent this scenario?**

I believe it is necessary to intervene with temporary and exceptional subsidies,

as the government has now planned, obviously without institutionalizing these procedures. Moreover, these areas of the Country fall outside the scope of citizenship income, which I believe was a fair measure, but it was not always interpreted correctly as it ended up favouring the less deserving. However, it is necessary to act with caution. *Let us not forget that Southern Italy is characterised by widespread cronyism, with age-old, historical roots.* This system ranges from buying votes with cash and other gifts, to the famous 50 thousand lire notes divided in half before the vote, with the other half given after the vote to renowned "Mr. 100 thousand votes" capable of securing jobs in the public sector or in related areas of activity. *Putting in place relief measures in favour of families and businesses, crucial to weakening the foothold of organised crime, will be a difficult and complicated process.* We must ensure that financial measures for economic recovery and job protection benefit those who most need them, shunning cronyist interference. I therefore hope that whichever instrument is put in place by national and local administrations will not also become an instrument for cronyism. **Here, a decisive role is played by administrators...** Of course, they are on the front line. They have a very challenging task ahead of them. *They are those who bear the heaviest burden, the most arduous and cumbersome responsibility, the most delicate one, I would define it as a responsibility of proximity.* The administrators at the moment are the terminals of all the requests from the population, as are the churches, the parishes, local Caritas and associations. More and more people are knocking on their doors, and not only because they need a piece of bread or a meal to share with the family. **Would you agree that at this stage some people are fanning the flames of discontent?** I think this chiefly involves a concern for the near future. Far from being a prophet of doom, I am sure this will happen sooner or later. Surely, whatever happens, we will witness widespread impoverishment involving family businesses and private citizens. *And at the right moment someone will come along, ready to fan the flames of discontent and dissatisfaction. So what we have to do is to remove the weapons from those that will make this attempt.* There will be a generalised discontent that will further reveal who is protected and who is not. **You have served as President of the National Anti-Corruption Authority for many years: no later than a few days ago, celebrating Mass in the Domus Sanctae Marthae, the Pope returned on the theme of corruption. "The corrupt person has no shame, that person does not ask for forgiveness, destroys, exploits people and puts himself in God's place." What is your opinion?** The Pontiff has reiterated this concept on other occasions: in his understanding corruption is an anthropological fact. The Pope's idea of corruption is not one of "secular" corruption, so to speak. It is rather an expression of human nature, on the part of a person who at a certain point decides to challenge the righteous path. *Francis also said that "sinners can be forgiven, the corrupt cannot".* This statement is in line with what he said a few days ago because it reaffirms that the corrupt person usually does not feel the need to change his life, to be forgiven. That of the Pope is a notion of corruption that extends far beyond what we, lay jurists, refer to, even if it obviously includes it in an absolute way. **What is your opinion of Italy and the Italian people who, by all accounts, have shown to be a great people and a united, supportive nation, capable of bringing out the best of themselves, to the point of setting an example for others?** *I am proud of Italy and of Italian people who have been making huge sacrifices.* They have strictly adhered to the rules, apart from a few sly exceptions, representing a tiny minority. The province of Naples in which I live is a complex reality, but I can

assure you that the rate of compliance with national and local regulations has been very high. Moreover, I must say that all too often, we are blaming ourselves more than we should. We are excessively self-critical both as a people and as a country. Italy has proven to be at the forefront in many areas, to be able to do outstanding things. For example, in my field of activity quality anti-mafia initiatives have been put in place, also thanks to the contribution of people of extraordinary value, at times even to the point of sacrificing their own lives. In essence, I believe this has brought out the best qualities of Italian people, that are far from anarchist.

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