

King of waste again in handcuffs

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Despite initially receiving a 6-year prison sentence (which was subsequently reduced to 5 years, on appeal), and being investigated in 2008, by the Anti-Mafia Investigation Office in Milan, for money laundering, the king of waste, Salvatore Accarino, is still involved in the illegal disposal of waste. This has been confirmed by a new investigation, which has led to 10 arrests and 41 suspects in the illegal trafficking of waste; the centre of the trafficking was in Fagnano Olona, in Via Colombo, in a company (“La Valle”, photo on the left), which officially served as a vehicle depot, but which, in fact, processed dangerous waste illegally, turning it into normal waste. The investigation, which was carried out by the Public Prosecutor of Busto Arsizio, Sabrina Ditaranto (photo), in collaboration with the Ecology Squad of the Carabinieri in Milan, began following an arson attack against Mario Accarino, the brother of Salvatore, but failed to produce any results concerning the attack. This episode led to a new investigation, which involved the rest of the Accarino family, including the brothers Mario and Francesco. The investigation also looked into the front men who ran Accarino’s companies, helpful bank officials, and the staff of other waste treatment companies.

THE INVESTIGATION – By means of tailing, video recordings and wiretapping, the Public Prosecutor’s Office in Busto Arsizio shed light on the methods used in the illegal trafficking of dangerous waste. According to the accusation, it was Salvatore Accarino who pulled the strings, as he hid behind a number of companies (“Medio Ambiente 2000”, and Schenone) run by friends and relatives, which were only authorised to transport waste; in fact, trucks would always make a stop at the “La Valle” depot,

where the material (often earth that was full of hydrocarbons and heavy metals) was sorted and covered with building waste, or other, non dangerous waste. The load, which was reclassified for the transportation of waste that is innocuous for the environment, was then taken to dumps or to other disposal companies. By operating this system, the companies controlled by Accarino were paid a certain sum by the source companies to transport dangerous waste, and they would then pay the destination company a sum, that was certainly smaller after reclassification of the material, to dispose of the waste; according to the Public Prosecutor's office, the difference between the sum received and the sum paid for the disposal represented illegal earnings. The other, associated crimes were falsification of documents, and the laundering of money, which was invested in repurchasing property that had previously been seized for sale in the bankruptcy auctions of the company Lombarda SpA, in Olgiate Olona. Moreover, with the help of obliging bank officials, Accarino moved money from accounts in the names of front men (he had 21 accounts, all of which have been blocked), simply by telephoning bank managers directly and ordering operations that were not permitted, in exchange for presents or favours. Six bank officials are involved in the investigation.

THE RECLAMATION – The case described by the Public Prosecutor, Sabrina Ditaranto, for the reclamation of the paper factory “La Fornaci” in Fagnano Olona is typical. Accarino and his men managed to return to the scene of the crime. Years ago, the company “Lombarda SpA” (which went bankrupt after the investigation in 2003) was given the job of “dumping”, on the land of the paper factory; this was done, but the company also put several tones of other, special waste into the ground and covered up. Years later, one of the companies linked to Accarino managed to secure the job of transporting material that had been dug under years before, in agreement with two disposal companies based in Legnano and Novara. Basically, one company would dig up the earth and load it onto Accarino's trucks, which took it all to “La Valle”, “knocked off” the load and, at the first light of dawn, transported the reclassified material to the premises of the two disposal companies. In addition to making money from the transported loads, both Accarino and the companies involved made money from fake journeys that existed only on paper, in order to increase costs. In a fortnight, the Public Prosecutor's Office estimated the illegal earnings to be €240,000.

THE ARRESTS – The arrests were made during the night between Monday and Tuesday, with the involvement of 200 officers of the Environmental Protection Group of Treviso, and with the support of Carabinieri from Varese, Monza, Milan and of the helicopter squad from Orio al Serio. Orders for preventive custody were issued by the investigating magistrate, Nicoletta Guerrero, for Salvatore, Mario and Francesco Accarino, and Myriam Battistello; Sabrina Battistello, Gabriella Bragagnolo, Tommaso De Bellis, Roberto Doria, and Antonio, Fabrizio, Marta and Filippo Vicino are being held in prison or kept under house arrest.

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