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Sunday 23 December 1984, an express train packed full of people going home or to visit relatives for Christmas is travelling from Naples to Milan. At about 6.30 p.m. 'Rapido 904' pulls out of Santa Maria Novella Station in Florence heading for its next stop, Bologna [Thread] >> 1

The line between Florence & Bologna crosses the Appennini mountains with numerous tunnels, the longest being the 'Grande Galleria dell'Appennino', which is 18km long. The train passes through the station of Vernio, the last before the tunnel entrance, picking up speed >> 2

At this point the line has finished climbing and flattens out through the tunnel, allowing trains to reach a speed of 150 km/h. At about 7.05 p.m. the train enters the tunnel. It will not come out at the other end >> 3

What happened inside the tunnel is almost a case of history repeating itself. 10 years earlier, a bomb planted by neo-fascist terrorists on an express train had exploded just as it was coming out of the tunnel at the other end, in the station of San Benedetto Val di Sambro >> 4

On that occasion the perpetrators had miscalculated & set the timer badly. Nonetheless, 12 people died & 48 were injured. On 'Rapido 904' the consequences are more serious. The bomb explodes almost in the centre of the 18km tunnel & effect of the blast is thus intensified >> 5

15 people die immediately, 2 die later of their injuries and 267 are wounded. Apart from the more serious consequences, there is another important difference with the earlier event. That bomb had been planted by neo-fascist terrorists, this one by the mafia >> 6

In almost total darkness & biting cold, the crew of the train organise first aid to the injured & call for help on an emergency phone inside the tunnel as there is no radio reception. First rescuers attempt to enter the southern end of tunnel but are stopped by dense smoke >> 7

Consequently, it takes an hour and a half for help to reach the scene of the explosion. Injured passengers are placed in undamaged carriages, which are then towed out of the tunnel by another locomotive. The whole operation takes until 5 a.m. next morning >> 8

The victims of the attack are:
Giovanbattista Altobelli (51)
Anna Maria Brandi (26)
Angela Calvanese (33)
Anna De Simone (9)
Giovanni De Simone (4)
Nicola De Simone (40)
Susanna Cavalli (22)
Lucia Cerrato (66)
Pier Francesco Leoni (23)
Luisella Matarazzo (25)
Carmine Moccia (30)

Valeria Moratello (22)
Maria Luigia Morini (45)
Federica Taglialatela (12)
Abramo Vastarella (29)
Gioacchino Taglialatela (50) >> 10

What possible motive could the mafia have for planting a bomb on a train in northern Italy with the intention of killing or maiming as many random innocent people as possible? This is the question investigators have to answer after arresting Pippo Calò & Guido Cercola >> 11

The two suspects are arrested for a completely different offence, drug trafficking but, when searching their hideout, police find not only large quantities of drugs but also explosives that prove to have the same chemical composition as that used for the bomb on the train >> 12

Cercola is found to have had contacts with a German, Friedrich Schaudinn, who made detenators for the bomb. Links are also discovered between Calò & neo-fascist groups, the P2 masonic lodge & the Camorra. This leads to members of the Camorra also being put on trial >> 13

Investigators conclude that the motive for the bombing is to distract the attention & resources of Italian authorities from the fight against organised crime, which is proving very successful for the first time with numerous mafiosi deciding to collaborate with the state >> 14

Seven men are tried for the attack:
Pippo Calò (Cosa Nostra)
Guido Cercola (Cosa Nostra)
Franco Di Agostino (Cosa Nostra)
Alfonso Galeota (Camorra)
Giulio Pirozzi (Camorra)
Giuseppe Misso (Camorra)
Friedrich Schaudinn.
Italy's Byzantine judicial system leads to 5 trials >> 15

1. First Instance:
Calò - life
Cercola - life
Galeota - life
Pirozzi - life
Misso - life
Di Agostino - 28 years
Schaudinn - 25 years.

2. Appeal:
Calò - life
Cercola - life
Galeota - acquitted
Pirozzi - acquitted
Misso - acquitted
Di Agostino - 24 years
Schaudinn - 22 years >> 16

The case then comes before the Supreme Court of Cassation, in particular before the First Section, presided over by Corrado Carnevale, notorious for quashing mafia convictions on any technicality. He duly quashes all convictions & orders a retrial at the Court of Appeal >> 17

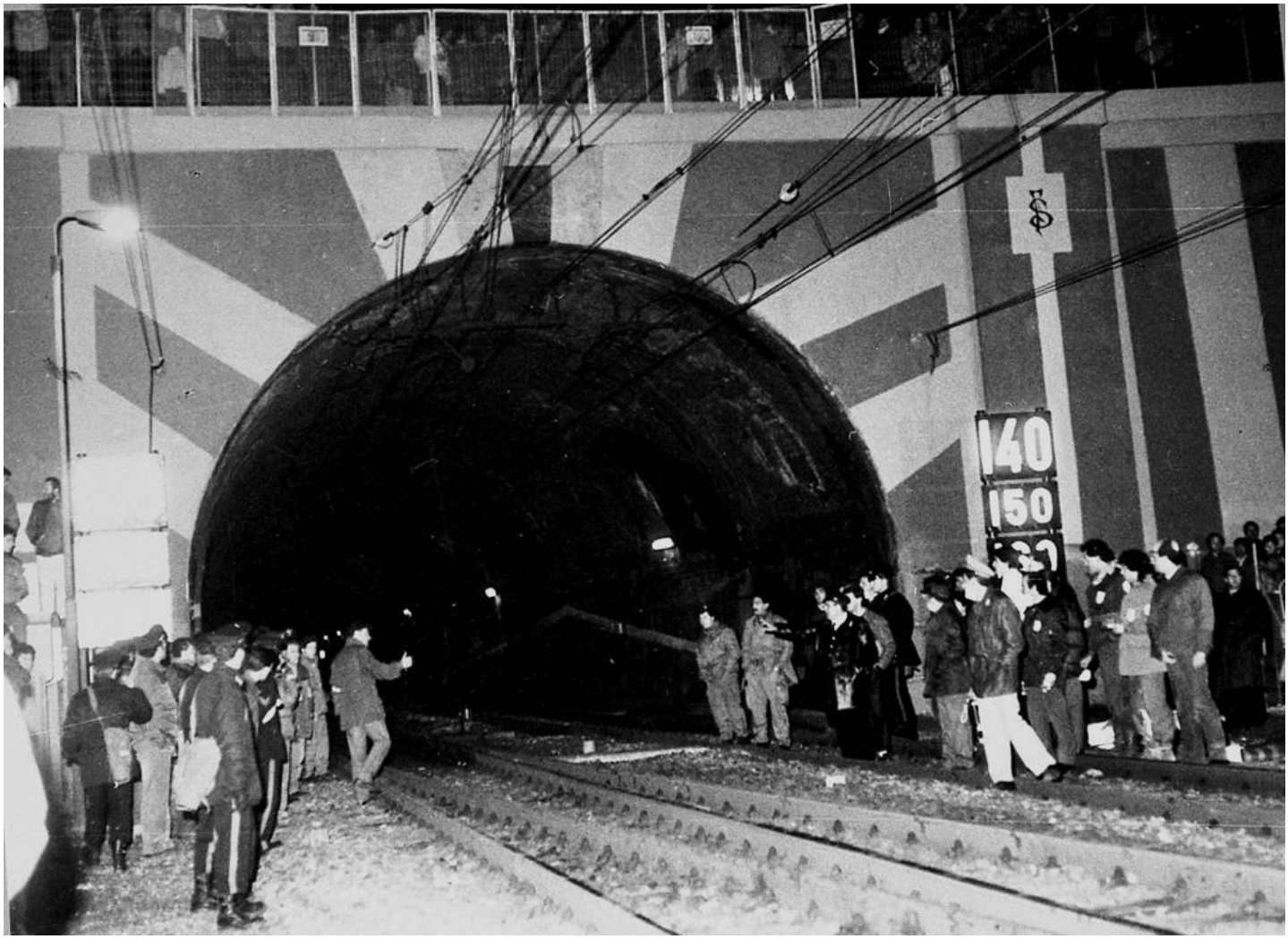
A new Appeal Court trial ends thus:
Calò - life
Cercola - life
Di Agostino - 24 years
Schaudinn - 22 years
Misso - 3 years
Galeota - 1 year 6 months
Pirozzi - 1 year 6 months
Effectively, the Camorra suspects are convicted of minor offences, such as possession of explosives >> 18

On the evening after the verdict at Florence Court of Appeal, Galeota & Pirozzi return to Naples (their sentences do not require them to be remanded in custody) with Pirozzi's wife and the wife of Misso (who remains in custody). On the outskirts of Naples they are ambushed >> 19

Their car is forced off the road and Galeota & Misso's wife, Assunta Sarno, are killed by the assailants' gunfire. Pirozzi & his wife are saved by the arrival of a motorway police patrol that causes the assailants to flee >> 20

The final verdict is handed down by the Supreme Court of Cassation on 24 November 1992 (almost 7 years from the start of proceedings), confirming the sentences of the second Court of Appeal >> 21

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