



by Sandro Mattioli, Andrea Palladino

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## The Garbage Mafia. The European Criminal Network

*Die Müllmafia. Das kriminelle Netzwerk in Europa*

### review

*The Garbage Mafia* is a ground-breaking piece of investigative journalism which strives to unravel the complexities of the criminal networks involved in the industrial waste trade. It is well known that the processing and safe storage of highly toxic industrial waste generated by the chemical, pharmaceutical, electronics, nuclear and other industries are serious issues. In general, the more high-grade the waste is, the more expensive it is to process and store. What is not so well known is the extent to which the waste trade offers opportunities for illegal and quasiillegal activity.

Mattioli and Palladino show how these networks extend into the heart of governments and their secret services, major companies, mafia clans and freemasonry, and are intricately connected with money laundering, arms trafficking and other illegal activities. The story begins in Calabria with the 'ecological bomb' in the valley of the Oliva River, near Amantea. It is believed that the cargo of a container ship, comprising thousands of cubic metres of industrial mud with very high levels of cobalt, nickel, mercury, lead, heavy metals and caesium 137, was intentionally dumped and buried here after it mysteriously washed up on the coast in 1990. Local silence on this, despite cancer clusters and raised mortality rates, together with irreversible damage to regional fishing and agriculture, remains deafening.

guarantee.

The story then moves to other cases in Italy, with the highly secretive investigation of the poison ships, and the sudden death by cardiac arrest of a key investigator when he appeared to be nearing the truth. From there we move to Mogadishu and the gunning-down of a journalist and cameraman in 1994 by a Somali commando unit after they were said to have seen toxic waste arrive in the port of Bosaso. This killing was apparently the subject of a subsequent cover-up by the Italian authorities and has not yet received satisfactory explanation. The story concludes with the Greenpeace campaign to persuade the EU to take action against environmentally damaging waste-processing and storage practices.

A serious piece of criminal investigation, this very important book also reads as a 'real-life' thriller. The content is shocking, the narrative is pacy and tense, and the structure is cleverly put together from a series of individual vignettes of unusual incidents and painstaking investigations.

## press quotes

*'A compact, compelling overview of an explosive topic, which will provide plenty of inflammatory material in the future, too.'* – *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*

*'A shocking appraisal of Mafia structures'* – *Münchener Merkur*

*'The authors sketch a dirty and extremely lucrative business, with Italy as the 'distribution centre'* – *Kurier*

## about the authors

**Sandro Mattioli** was born in Germany in 1975. He worked for the daily newspaper the *Stuttgarter Zeitung* before moving to Rome as a freelance journalist in 2008. On a scholarship from the Otto Brenner Foundation, he has been doing intensive research on the 'garbage mafia' since 2009. He now lives in Stuttgart.

**Andrea Palladino** was born in Milan, Italy, in 1965, and works as a freelance journalist for several newspapers, including *Il Messaggero*, *Il Mani-festo* and *L'Unità*. His work focuses on organised crime.

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