

## **AN ITALIAN IN PANAMA**

*By Paolo Mondani*

*in collaboration with Norma Ferrara*

### **SIGFRIDO RANUCCI IN THE STUDIO**

After the Panama Papers and the Paradise Papers, we now have the Mondani Papers. Welcome to this exclusive show: a year ago, Paolo from Report headed to Panama, where he met a tax haven guru and lawyer Giovanni Caporaso, whose job is creating offshore companies, provided with encrypted telephone lines for his clients. And one of these individuals, a magician with a passion for hypnotism, succeeded in acquiring a list of 4,500 of Caporaso's clients from under his nose, most of whom are Italian. And so we discover that these paradises (to use the Italian term for "haven") aren't just the preserve of the virtuous.

### **PAOLO MONDANI OFF SCREEN**

A year ago, the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists published the documents of two hundred thousand anonymous companies that had been founded by Panamanian law firm Mossack Fonseca. Subsequently, it transpired that the names of 11 heads of state and thousands of tax evaders and money launderers were included in those documents, called the *Panama Papers*. Italian-Panamanian lawyer Giovanni Caporaso provided us with a description of his work and the principles that inspire him.

### **GIOVANNI CAPORASO – LAWYER AT CAPORASO AND PARTNERS**

Let's take a person who goes into an Italian bar, for example, and sees that you've bought a coffee and the bar in question hasn't provided a receipt. He decides to report this through an app that you can now download into your phone – in my eyes, that's not a behaviour to take as one's model for a citizen; that person is villain.

### **PAOLO MONDANI**

So this is how your sense of morals works - the moral code according to Caporaso.

### **GIOVANNI CAPORASO – LAWYER AT CAPORASO AND PARTNERS**

This is how my moral code works.

### **PAOLO MONDANI OFF SCREEN**

Marco Marzaduri is a young man from Catania who works as a hypnotist and lives in Malta. Last year, he met Caporaso over the internet, and became a client of his. He gave him forty thousand euros to invest in property, and he lost everything.

### **PAOLO MONDANI**

Who cashed that money?

### **MARCO MARZADURI - HYPNOTIST**

Caporaso.

### **PAOLO MONDANI**

How would you describe what Caporaso does, personally?

### **MARCO MARZADURI - HYPNOTIST**

So, essentially Caporaso does this way: when a client contacts him, the first thing he does is to offer to set up an anonymous company in Panama. So, if I'm Caporaso, I offer to open an account with Payopm, a sort of online bank without any form of

banking license or other licence that enables it to offer extended banking services, an institution that is neither a fiduciary nor a bank.

**PAOLO MONDANI**

So this account actually belongs to...

**MARCO MARZADURI - HYPNOTIST**

Caporaso.

**PAOLO MONDANI**

It is one of Caporaso's accounts, presented on the internet as if it were an online bank, but in reality it belongs to another series of banks.

**MARCO MARZADURI - HYPNOTIST**

Exactly.

**PAOLO MONDANI**

Which banks?

**MARCO MARZADURI - HYPNOTIST**

Cim Bank is a bank in Lugano, and is the main bank for OPM's shares, plus Paysera in Lithuania.

**PAOLO MONDANI**

And?

**MARCO MARZADURI - HYPNOTIST**

Siauliu Bankas in Latvia.

**PAOLO MONDANI**

So he handles them as he pleases.

**MARCO MARZADURI - HYPNOTIST**

Yes - he does whatever he wants.

**PAOLO MONDANI**

Why do clients trust him so blindly?

**MARCO MARZADURI - HYPNOTIST**

Well, because it's not exactly as if Berlusconi uses Caporaso's services. His clients are average Italian businessmen. Above all individuals who want to launder money earned through illicitly, of course. And Caporaso offers these people a solution that tickles their fancy. Why? He has also created the OPM Voip service, providing anonymous, encrypted telephone lines. So let's imagine, for example, that you want to commit a financial crime, OK? You are given an anonymous telephone line, after which you pay the money via OPM, and your name doesn't appear at any stage in connection with any of this. How do they catch you out?

**PAOLO MONDANI**

What is the system for transferring money out of the country? From Italy, for example. Without it being traced.

**GIOVANNI CAPORASO – LAWYER AT CAPORASO AND PARTNERS**

I'll give you an example: I could officially take up residence abroad, move there with all my money, leave the cash in that country and then move back to Italy. Thus, whether that person had paid all the taxes or less or has even paid no tax at all, is not my concern - that's his problem, not mine. I'm not a priest, or a policeman.

**PAOLO MONDANI**

But if a person wants to remain anonymous, completely anonymous, how can that be possible? There must be a way, isn't there ?

**GIOVANNI CAPORASO – LAWYER AT CAPORASO AND PARTNERS**

You want to set up an anonymous company in Panama? You put the shares in the name of a company in Liberia - an unregulated company, so those shares remain anonymous.

**PAOLO MONDANI**

Are there any other ways to do it?

**GIOVANNI CAPORASO – LAWYER AT CAPORASO AND PARTNERS**

Simply this: you make a request to set up a company to a lawyer in Dubai, who in turn, makes the same request to a lawyer in Lugano, who in turn, on instruction, makes the request to a lawyer in Belize, who in turn makes the request to a lawyer in New Zealand, who in turn, on instruction, makes the request to a lawyer in Liberia etc.. And then finally, the request ends up with me, OK? So I receive the request from a lawyer in Santo Domingo, in the Dominican Republic - "Mr. Caporaso, please set up a company for me etc., the beneficiary is this person." That's it. Accordingly, if the authorities call me tomorrow, I'll say: Look, I set up the company because this lawyer in the Dominican Republic asked me to do so, and he told me that the final beneficiary is this person. When they go and ask him, he points them in the direction of the next link in the chain, and they go through the whole process in reverse, and after ten years or so - maybe - they'll sort it out who the company belongs to.

**PAOLO MONDANI**

But what happens if at a certain point, having sent my money to Caporaso, I need to withdraw it again. If not, I'll soon find out that he...

**MARCO MARZADURI - HYPNOTIST**

Exactly. And he gives it back to you.

**PAOLO MONDANI**

And how can he make it?

**MARCO MARZADURI - HYPNOTIST**

Through bank cards which correspond to another account, usually MyChoice, in Gibraltar.

**PAOLO MONDANI**

Is MyChoice a company?

**MARCO MARZADURI - HYPNOTIST**

It's a bank. Either via Union Pay, in Hong Kong, or via anonymous bank cards, in dummy names, from banks in Panama, or banks anywhere...

**PAOLO MONDANI**

Why do these two banks, the Bank of Gibraltar and the bank of Hong Kong, offer anonymous credit cards?

**MARCO MARZADURI - HYPNOTIST**

So, Hong Kong makes Union Pay cards anonymous. In Gibraltar, he opens the card in a dummy name, the name of a Panamanian. So if you take the money, they don't know that it's you, it looks like you're Panamanian.

**PAOLO MONDANI**

How much does he charge for this service?

**MARCO MARZADURI - HYPNOTIST**

Caporaso has his own price list. For Payopm, he charges four hundred and eighty euros a year, plus six percent of the amount you'll receive.

**PAOLO MONDANI**

But has Caporaso ever confessed to having members of organised crime groups among his clients?

**MARCO MARZADURI - HYPNOTIST**

Sure. He reeled off a list, telling me that he had people from Caserta with links with killers, who have come here to Panama and obviously didn't do anything.

**PAOLO MONDANI OFF SCREEN**

Marzaduri reports everything to the Finance Police in Catania; he claims to have received threats, and provides us with the database containing a list of Caporaso's clients - 4500 people, most of whom are Italian.

**GIOVANNI CAPORASO – LAWYER AT CAPORASO AND PARTNERS**

It's an attempt of extortion, and a data theft/breach from one of the servers belonging to one of my companies.

**PAOLO MONDANI**

You talk about attempted extortion - does that mean that Marzaduri has asked you for money?

**GIOVANNI CAPORASO – LAWYER AT CAPORASO AND PARTNERS**

Mr. Marzaduri has tried to ask me for various sums of money in exchange for the database that he stole from our servers.

**PAOLO MONDANI**

Do you actually work with Cim Bank in Lugano, with Paysera in Lithuania, with Banca Lituana and with Siauliu Bankas, from Latvia?

**GIOVANNI CAPORASO – LAWYER AT CAPORASO AND PARTNERS**

I have opened accounts at those banks, as I have done at many other banks.

**PAOLO MONDANI**

Listen, is it true that you use debit cards or other cards provided by MyChoice in Gibraltar or Union Pay in Hong Kong?

**GIOVANNI CAPORASO – LAWYER AT CAPORASO AND PARTNERS**

Yes, yes, yes, I have lots of cards, I have lots of card providers and I use them interchangeably.

**PAOLO MONDANI**

I have seen a list of some of the people who are registered with Payopm, and several of them have criminal records, including for mafia-related crimes. How can we put it... Do you actually check out your clients?

**GIOVANNI CAPORASO – LAWYER AT CAPORASO AND PARTNERS**

I don't carry out any checks, I'm not a police officer or a magistrate or anything else - I'm a lawyer.

**PAOLO MONDANI OFF SCREEN**

We have called some of Giovanni Caporaso's clients.

**PAOLO MONDANI**

Can I ask why you signed up to use this service?

**TOMMASO TEMPERATO ON THE PHONE**

Well, it's no big deal. It was simply to open an account - I've had some current account issues here in Italy, it's a little difficult, with me being in the databases.

**PAOLO MONDANI**

I was wondering if you are related to Mario Temperato, who is currently in prison, and is thought to have close links to the Casalesi clan in Emilia Romagna...?

**TOMMASO TEMPERATO ON THE PHONE**

We are all one family, there's no other family with the same name...that is to say, we are related - cousins, brothers and so on. I'm not getting away from it.

**ELIO MATAACENA ON THE PHONE**

Big multinationals almost always use offshore accounts offshore companies. Why shouldn't individuals use them too, in order to save on their taxes? But you'll probably also find me in another database on another site that provides the same services, which might be in Switzerland rather than ... in Guadalupe.

**PAOLO MONDANI**

Are you related to the famous Amedeo Mataacena?

**ELIO MATAACENA ON THE PHONE**

Alas, alas, yes I am - he's my brother.

**PAOLO MONDANI**

Because I saw that you have a company with him - or rather, two companies.

**ELIO MATAACENA ON THE PHONE**

It happens, these things can happen with brothers. Yes.

**PAOLO MONDANI**

No, no, it's just that, let's put it like this - given that your brother is still on the run, we're interested in getting a sense of the kind of activity that you might be engaging in with Caporaso.

**ELIO MATACENA ON THE PHONE**

My brother and I haven't had a relationship for a long time, since before he got himself in trouble.

**STEFANO ZAVANAIU ON THE PHONE**

For example, I work with Bitcoin. The problem isn't how to prevent my Bitcoin from leading back to me. I'm just not a person who wants to have my name bandied around, as they say. I've been accused, I've been accused of being part of a criminal organisation under Article 416 of the Italian Penal Code...

**PAOLO MONDANI**

A criminal organisation or a mafia organisation?

**STEFANO ZAVANAIU ON THE PHONE**

The accusation that I was part of a mafia organisation has been dropped.

**PAOLO MONDANI**

So now, you're just accused of being part of a criminal organisation.

**STEFANO ZAVANAIU ON THE PHONE**

Exactly. And because of that, they've put me under special surveillance. Not everyone want to work with someone who is under special surveillance. And so to sum up, I also do this - I also sell Bitcoins.

**SIGFRIDO RANUCCI IN THE STUDIO**

So here, we have an example of an offshore businessman who's under special surveillance. Fantastic. What I'd like to know is how he's being monitored, if he's still free to do business with tax havens? After all, Article 53 of the Italian Constitution states that "Everyone is required to contribute to public expenditure, in line with their ability to pay". So why do we allow tax havens to exist?