Very soon after the short period in which the attention of the institutions and national public opinion had been captured by the trials of the Notarbartolo case, the mafia became part of the normality of the Sicilian situation once more, and any investigative activity was very low-key. The reasons for this ‘normalisation’ can be attributed principally to the deep roots that the Sicilian cosche had grown within the political structures of the island, and thanks also to the increased suffrage that the left-wing parties had erroneously considered the best antidote to the mafia (Pezzino 1995, p.161). Links between the mafia and members of the island’s politics were not isolated, especially since the cosche even infiltrated those movements which fought for a fair distribution of public land, such as the Sicilian Fasci. An eloquent example is the case of Vito Cascio Ferro, an important mafioso of the day, who was director of the Fascio in Bisacquino, while other gabelloti, directly involved with the mafia, promoted the movement at Contessa Entellina (Block 1986, pp.121–26). A clear attempt to anaesthetise the problem of the mafia and its dangers emerges from the island’s police reports. In fact, the institutions, almost forgetful of the results obtained by previous investigations, reconfirmed the old refrain, that the mafia was not a criminal organisation.

In the meantime, relations were strengthened between Sicilian mafiosi and criminals who had emigrated to the United States some decades before. The Italo-American policeman, Joe Petrosino, paid the price of this collaboration in 1909. He arrived in Palermo to check the criminal records of American criminals associated with ‘la mano nera’ (‘the Black Hand’) and the Sicilian brotherhood, but was assassinated, now alleged on the orders of the future head mafioso, Don Vito Cascio Ferro. The repeated failures on the judicial front not only marked this period, but
also, the so-called Giolittian era (a period which began in 1900 with the hopes and expectations of the Notarbartolo trial and ended in 1915 with the Verro trial). The use of the cosche as electoral machinery increased and consequently led to a rise in the political protection afforded to the mafiosi, as is revealed in a report by the inspector general on the state of law and order in Sicily in 1906:

As much as I have tried, I have not been able to discover any acts which can make us suppose that it is organised by sector, with strict rules in order to become an associate. I believe that to earn the title of mafioso it is enough to have demonstrated, when necessary, one's readiness to help in any way towards the committing of crime. As is foreseeable, this leads to reciprocal assistance so a vast network of these individuals is created, which spreads across the whole island. However, in order to increase the prestige of this association and to add moral weight to the material set-up, the masses are led to believe that civil people, occupying state positions contribute to these criminal goings-on.

However, the state of the local parties and the use they make of notorious mafiosi during the administrative and political elections, create friendships and debts of gratitude which force respectable people, against their will, to give favourable testimonies in front of the judicial authorities or to recommend certain people to politicians, who do not really deserve any consideration. If we add to this the fear of possible harm, it is clear that the behaviour of these people is not really caused by the mafia, but by not knowing how to get out of the situation. (Report of the inspector general of law and order on the conditions of public safety in Sicily 1995, p.163)

The Verro case ended social policies that had been adopted in Sicily during the Giolittian era leading them to a bitter, tragic defeat. The Sonnino law approved in 1906 had permitted the strengthening of the movement for collective rents and the movement for the management of rented or acquired land by agricultural cooperatives, promoted by the Socialists and the Catholic Democrats. The mafia, with its precise political collocation, conceived and carried out the Verro assassination. During the Giolittian era, it had already carried out other 'excellent crimes, perhaps less clamorous, in 1905, 1906 and 1911 against the Socialists Luciano Nicoletti and Andrea Orlando of Corleone, and others from Santo Stefano Quisquina' (Renda 1997, p.187). Giolitti