



The Boys from New Jersey: How the Mob Beat the Feds

Robert Rudolph

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Of all the extraordinary stories to emerge about the war on organized crime, none is quite so bizarre as the U.S. government's 1988 prosecution of the notorious Lucchese crime family, the mob that claimed to "own" New Jersey. Federal authorities called it the most ambitious legal attack ever mounted against underworld figures--a sixty-five-page indictment capping a ten-year investigation that would take out an entire organization, from godfather to street soldier, in one knockout blow. The two-year proceeding became the longest Mafia trial in American history--but it took the jury less than two days to render its verdict: not guilty. On all counts. It was a devastating blow for the government. How did this happen? Robert Rudolph, the only reporter to cover the story from start to finish, answers that question in a book that turns courtroom drama into a rollicking theater of the absurd. At its center are defendants like Jackie "Fat Jack" DiNorscio, the career criminal representing himself, who began the trial by announcing, "I'm a comedian, not a gangster," and then proceeded to turn the legal system on its ear; mob boss Anthony Accetturo, a man of almost unlimited luck, who once avoided prosecution by claiming to have Alzheimer's disease, only to experience a miraculous "cure" when he slipped and fell in the shower after the case against him was dropped; and the philosophy-spouting underboss, Michael Taccetta, who brazenly debated his FBI nemesis on the morals of the underworld and how they applied to the teachings of Socrates and Machiavelli. And there are lawyers, like Vincent "Grady" O'Malley, who'd never lost a case until quarter-backing a government offensive that aimed too high and took too long; and Michael Critchley, who led a Mission Impossible-style defense team that succeeded in putting the government itself on trial. Here is the full story behind what should have been the government's shining hour, and how it turned into one of the most embarrassing.

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Cheryl Burnett:

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