

established close ties at the highest levels of the Vatican secretariat, where the nerve center of Vatican communications with its worldwide network was located.” The purpose of this network was the penetration of the Japanese Far East apparatus. Codenamed “Vessel,” the operation produced a “wealth of intelligence. . . . Vessel and other Rome intelligence sources provided information from all corners of the globe. Much of this information was quickly relayed to Brennan and Donovan, and from there it found its way to the White House.”

However, as Corvo states, “too many powerful influences within the OSS coalesced against us, and these influences were secretly militating for our immediate liquidation now that the war was over. . . . Our plans had been carried out sometimes with little or no support from field headquarters; sometimes over objections from superior headquarters; but always with the objective of advancing U.S. interests and OSS expertise in the intelligence struggle and the coordination of special operations.”

Thanks to Corvo and his team, finally some of the truth of what happened in Italy during World War II has come to light. Early in the book he reveals that the U.S.-based Italian mafia of Lucky Luciano and his Jewish gangster partner Meyer Lansky had little or practically nothing to do with aiding U.S. forces’ landing in Sicily, debunking a myth that Corvo’s enemies had used to smear him as a mafioso for lo these many years.

## In memoriam: Max Corvo, 1920-1994

by Paul Goldstein

On June 8, in the small town of Middlefield in the rolling hills of the Connecticut Valley, a solemn military funeral at St. Sebastian Cemetery proceeded with friends, admirers, and family mourning the loss of a wonderful man. The ceremony, conducted by a Sicilian Jesuit priest, Father Joseph Sibilano, praised the “quiet hero” as a man of God and country. He described an individual who devoted himself to a mission greater than himself and who gave to his country and family a living legacy. This “quiet hero” is Biagio Max Corvo. Known among all as Max, he gave himself to the cause of freedom he so cherished and fought for in his lifetime.

Max Corvo was born in Augusta, Sicily, on May 29, 1920, son of Cesare Corvo and Giuseppina Arena Corvo. When his father came under political attack by the Mussolini government, the nine-year-old Max was sent to the United

States. Max volunteered for the U.S. Army in 1941 and, stationed at Fort Lee, Virginia, drew up plans for operations behind enemy lines in the Mediterranean region during World War II.

His work impressed senior officers, and he was transferred to the Italian Secret Intelligence branch of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). By creating a plan for the development of partisan warfare in Italy and the Mediterranean, coupled with a special relationship to the Vatican and Italian political figures, Max helped change the course of history; by being in the right place at the right time, and having personal moral courage, Max accomplished a great deal.

The success of the Italian unit of Secret Intelligence caused Max to be mischaracterized, and in some cases slandered, by fellow OSS officers and historians who sought to minimize both Max’s role and that of the unit he served with. His detractors promoted the idea that two mafia figures, Meyer Lansky and “Lucky” Luciano, were responsible for helping the OSS and the Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) in securing the landing of Allied forces in Sicily and then Italy. Nothing could have been further from the truth.

Many Americans have never heard of Max Corvo. I wish that more had known him, because their lives would have been better for it. I was privileged to meet him 13 years ago, to get a personal glimpse of the kind of man he was: Prior to that, I had only known Max through the books written about the OSS and his unique role in the Italian campaign, which were filled with distortions and lies.

In 1989, he began setting the record straight in his groundbreaking autobiography, *The OSS in Italy: 1942-45* (see accompanying review). Max revealed some of the true history of the events surrounding his activity during World War II. Max ran operations against the British-dominated Mazzini Society in the United States. Ironically, later on, the British were forced to support Max’s operations because of the tremendous success his unit had throughout Italy. Max became, at the ripe age of 23, one of Gen. William Donovan’s special operators, whom he could fully trust to carry out his mission.

### Angleton, ‘Source Vessel,’ and Hiroshima

Max’s book never received the attention it deserved. Why?

Max blew open the myths about what happened in the Italian campaign and the subsequent defeat of Mussolini’s Fascist state. He subtly cut into the twin myths upon which the Central Intelligence Agency had built its reputation: its two top officials, Allen Dulles and James Jesus Angleton. Max sought the truth about their record in Europe during the war and in Italy itself. Not only had Dulles and Angleton mishandled matters in Italy, but what was written in most of the historical accounts about the secret operations of

World War II was wrong.

Perhaps the most famous situation was the Vessel Affair, in which the Vatican secretly negotiated with Japanese authorities for a complete and unconditional surrender. Max's unit was in liaison with several cardinals and priests who were involved in the negotiations. All of these reports wound up on the desks of President Franklin Roosevelt and key members of his cabinet and military. From every historical indication, FDR was willing to accept the terms, albeit with critical changes, of the Japanese surrender. However, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and the leadership of British intelligence—including the infamous Doublecross Committee (XX/C)—sought to prevent the Japanese surrender. What they needed desperately, was to discredit "Source Vessel."

The intelligence officer assigned to the task of checking out "Source Vessel," and who knew the truth about the nature of the apparatus, was OSS X-2 officer James Angleton. X-2, which stood for counterintelligence, was deployed under the joint sponsorship of U.S. and British intelligence through the XX/C. Angleton pronounced "Source Vessel" a fraud, and when the official histories were written, the Vessel Affair was proclaimed a hoax. The combined result of Angleton's report and the death of FDR was the decision to drop the atomic bomb on Japan. Max

and his unit were targeted by Angleton and others in order to prevent the truth from coming out.

### The Dulles myth

Fifty years later, almost to the day of his death, Max fought for the truth. Another historical irony is that Max had more to do with the surrender of Marshal Badoglio and the Italian Army than even most of the U.S. military leaders who received the surrender ever understood. Max's agents and operators also became directly involved in negotiating the surrender of German troops in northern Italy. Although the official histories magnified the role of Allen Dulles in securing the surrender of German troops, Dulles did little in this process. "Operation Sunrise," the secret negotiation between SS Gen. Karl Wolff and OSS Berne chief Dulles, was a public relations gambit designed to build up Dulles's prestige. In reality, it was Max and his unit who did all the work on the ground in ensuring that German and elite Nazi SS troops did not destroy northern Italy.

Did you read about it in the history books? I doubt it.

I understood more about Max in his death, than I did during his life, when I saw hundreds upon hundreds of ordinary citizens pay their final respects to Max Corvo. In his grandchildren, children, and wife stood a remarkable family. As he would have wanted it, his legacy will continue.

## Library of Congress honors German Resistance

To mark the 50th anniversary on July 20, 1994 of Col. Claus von Stauffenberg's unsuccessful attempt to assassinate Adolf Hitler, the Library of Congress is holding an exhibition dedicated to the theme "Against Hitler: German Resistance to National Socialism, 1933-1945" in the James Madison Building. The exhibit will be on view from July 13 to Sept. 2. A scholarly symposium on the German Resistance to National Socialism will be held on July 20.

The exhibit was prepared by Dr. Peter Steinbach, professor of history from the University of Berlin. It chronicles the fall of the Weimar Republic and the rise of Hitler and the Nazi regime.

Once in power, the Nazis arrested, tortured, imprisoned, and frequently executed their opponents. Dr. Steinbach notes that Nazi control of the judicial system led to judges and prosecutors determining sentences before trials. These ruthless tactics made mass resistance difficult, and resistance activities were usually confined to small groups and individuals.

The exhibit features more than 40 panels with photos and text, and explores resistance efforts among religious groups, military officers, Jews, communists, and socialists. Materials provided by the National Archives include documents about Nazi suspicions of German Army officers' concerns about prisoners, the translation of an interrogation of a guard on duty at Hitler's bunker on the day of the attempt on Hitler's life by von Stauffenberg, and a video of the trial of the conspirators.

In a speech prepared for the opening of the exhibit July 14, former mayor of Frankfurt Dr. Walter Wallmann recounted several stories "to illustrate the hard fact that the Germans who were united in their opposition to Hitler received absolutely no encouragement from abroad." Gen. Klaus Naumann, chief of staff of the Federal Armed Forces of Germany, stressed the meaning of July 20, 1944 for the German soldier of today. He described the Bundeswehr as "committed to the remembrance of the 20th of July 1944" as a "true component of its tradition." Naumann pointedly observed that those who resisted Nazism but then set up "a new dictatorship in one part of Germany immediately after the war," i.e., the communists, "will never be on an equal footing with the officers and civilians who died for a better Germany on July 20, 1944 and its aftermath."