

ITALIAN AND ITALIAN AMERICAN STUDIES

THE OFFICE OF STRATEGIC SERVICES AND ITALIAN AMERICANS

The Untold History

SALVATORE J. LAGUMINA



Italian and Italian American Studies

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The Office of Strategic Services and Italian Americans

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Introduction

“What did you do during the war?” a frequently heard query in the heady post-World War II years invariably elicited proud martial associations while citing battlefield participation and/or military service. The issue was particularly relevant for Italian Americans, mostly of the first and second generation who were either born in Italy or whose parents were from the country that during the war became the face of the enemy. In this worrisome and apprehensive atmosphere a number of solemn questions arose. Were they loyal to America or to Italy? Would they welcome assignments to fight in Italy? Would they take up arms against Italian relatives? Why are they speaking Italian? (In point of fact against a worrisome atmosphere many Italian-speaking parents refused to speak Italian to their children in their homes.) Why did they listen to Italian-language radio broadcasts? Why do they continue to display the Italian flag? Why do they insist on Italian feast celebrations? Why are they reading Italian-language newspapers? Why should they want to study Italian? Could they be trusted? Did they support the war effort? Did they show their patriotism by volunteering for the armed services? Are they buying war bonds? Are they donating blood?

Although it is impossible to obtain verifiable figures, it seems that for a staggering number of Italian Americans, apparently much larger than their proportion of the population, the answer to the question was to declare proudly and unabashedly the branch of service—Army, Navy, Marines,

Coast Guard, Merchant Marine, Womens Army Corps (WACS), Women Accepted for For Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES), and so on—in which they served. A limited but growing literature in the form of autobiographies, biographies, family and local recollections, and oral histories have recounted the partaking and sacrifices of many ranging from the little known to the more celebrated figures such as Congressional Medal of Honor recipient John Basilone and air ace Don Gentile. Scarcer, however, is knowledge about their role in clandestine activity and espionage. The purpose of this volume is to review the unique involvement and the extraordinary deeds of handpicked Italian Americans who served in covert operations of the Office of Strategic Service (OSS) and who have received only partial and occasionally contentious and misleading attention.

This tome strives to illuminate the contributions made by a selected cohort of Italian Americans in that great and heroic struggle against terrible totalitarian forces which threatened this nation and the world during World War II. It offers for posterity a record of remarkable and astonishing successes, but also of the perils encountered, the sufferings endured, and the martyrdom of the nameless who were recorded in histories of the conflict, in salient published biographies and autobiographies, and in the numerous unpublished oral and written testimonies that continue to unfold the secret history of unheralded brave, vigorous, and once youthful participants.

This is written not only because the events in which OSS Italian Americans were engaged were true, but also because I feel it a duty to bring to light the mundane and heroic sacrifices they endured for freedom's sake. The hazardous adventures and exploits of behind-the-enemy-lines operatives may seem to stretch credulity and a reluctance to believe their decision to place their lives in jeopardy, but it is the undeniable historical record. This work is needed because the "greatest generation" is passing away and a new generation is arising who do not know what the preservation of liberty cost in blood and suffering.

I was young when the events revealed in this work were occurring but as a student of American history I came to learn of the secret war not only from the printed word, but also from the spoken words, the oral authentication, and the private writings of key participants. While teaching at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut, in the 1970s I had the honor and privilege to meet Frank Tarallo, a humble, self-effacing OSS veteran who was my student and who acquainted me with the subject via his firsthand account of the perilous work undertaken by young

men and women volunteers to be part of a new American organization that dealt in stealth, secrecy, and surreptitiousness. The very knowledge of their encounters in often terribly dangerous places—their very magnitude—overpowers me. I have tried to render their struggle worthy to hand down to future generations and trust they will earn the reader's esteem and respect.

While this work rests on a chronological framework for the discussions, projects, and analyses of OSS activities undertaken by Italian Americans, that framework may be punctured at various points to explain a prior historical setting that may be anticipated later.

It is fascinating and indubitably interesting to raise questions that a review of the research reveals, some of which will be offered here. Who was the 21-year-old OSS high school dropout whose pioneering and innovative ideas evoked such interest that many generals and other high-ranking military officials sought him out to confer with him? Who was designated by President Roosevelt to be the OSS linkage between the USA and Great Britain's intelligence service? Who was credited for introducing the James Bond concept? Who was the Italian immigrant who became a star Notre Dame University football player and worked for the OSS to infiltrate enemy lines? Who was the most decorated soldier of World War? Who was the OSS operative who married the beautiful and resourceful 18-year-old partisan woman Walkiria Terradura, whose harassing activities became the bane of German enemy troops? Who was the Italian American from San Francisco whose expertise in Japanese found him on vital OSS missions in the Pacific Theater of war? Who was the journalist/printer who oversaw the printing of tens of thousands of propaganda literature? Who was the OSS officer who played a prominent role in saving much of Italy's works of art? Who was the 24-year-old OSS agent entrusted with the sober responsibility of arranging for the surrender of the Italian dictator and other high Italian military officials? The answers to these intriguing questions and much other information that unfolds demonstrates the remarkable role Italian Americans played in America's intelligence service during a critical period in history.

Intelligence Agency in Embryo

The genesis of the OSS harkens to that period between the outbreak of World War II (September 1, 1939) and America's entry in the war on December 7, 1941, when it became evident to President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his key advisors that conflict was imminent. What had passed for American intelligence operations until the outbreak of hostilities were random efforts that relied on the imperfect operations of rival, incongruent, and sometimes competing government Departments of State, Treasury, Army, and Navy, as well as information obtained from British intelligence sources. In operation since early in the twentieth century, by the beginning of World War II Great Britain's MI5 controlled English national security secret intelligence activities thereby becoming the chief British Security Service initiative responsible for protecting the UK. Its intelligence-gathering skills had become both legendary and the envy of other nations including the USA. If it was to assume a major and decisive role given the exigencies of modern warfare, Americans would have to develop a vastly more cohesive and interrelated intelligence initiative. From the outset of war Great Britain sedulously cultivated all forms of American aid including secret intelligence. To that end, the British opened the innocuous-sounding British Security Coordination (BSC) headquarters in New York City, which, although originally manned by amateurs, was strengthened by professional agents like the celebrated William Stephenson, the master spy code-named "Intrepid" whose exploits inspired

Hollywood to make the James Bond genre. As Stephenson put it, “I had been twenty years in the professional secret-intelligence service when in 1940 London sent me to British Security Coordination headquarters in New York to help maintain that secrecy. BSC had been manned by amateurs, and it was thought my special experience was required there.”¹ In utmost secrecy he then proceeded to draw up a blueprint for an American intelligence operation with detailed tables of organization and specified relationships between various internal offices. By the spring of 1940 it was clear that President Roosevelt was determined that the USA would assist Great Britain and that there should be a firm understanding of cooperation between the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the British Secret Service.² Churchill went out of his way to cultivate OSS chief William Donovan and Ernest Cuneo, the president’s special liaison officer, who was in fact an OSS agent.³

Accordingly, it was deemed imperative that the USA create its own information-gathering agency that would undertake covert activities to obtain vital military knowledge about the nation’s enemies. Ever the nimble leader Roosevelt excelled in selecting outstanding personnel to carry out his vision or parenthetically be cast aside if one became a political liability. In July 1941 the president appointed William J. Donovan Coordinator of Information (COI) that in 1942 would transition into the OSS, the super spy organization. The son of a poor Irish Catholic family from Buffalo, New York, who worked his way through law school, Donovan achieved exceptional fame in World War I as he bravely led a battalion of the famed 42nd Division composed primarily of Irish Americans and known as the “fighting Irish” or the “fighting 69th.” For his service he was awarded a Congressional Medal of Honor and in the process acquired the “Wild Bill” appellation. (The 1940 Hollywood film *The Fighting 69th* is based on the exploits of New York City’s 69th Infantry Regiment, headed by battalion commander William Donovan and portrayed by actor George Brent.) In addition to his military fame, Donovan’s immense success as a Wall Street lawyer, his extensive worldwide travels and familiarity with European leaders, and his friendship with President Roosevelt rendered him an outstanding choice to oversee espionage and sabotage operations in Europe and parts of Asia. (Although Roosevelt and Donovan were not very intimate friends and in fact were in opposing political parties—Republican Donovan ran for New York State governor in 1932—they were acquainted with each other. They simultaneously attended Columbia Law School.) It was said that while at

Columbia Roosevelt admired Donovan because of his football prowess. “At a time in American social history when Ivy League football heroes were stars of their generation, Donovan not only was excellent as a runner and in crew but clawed his way into college lore as a quarterback with the Columbia lions. Men who succeeded at Columbia’s Baker Field became idolized, and the idolatry often lasted for life—as in the case WJD.”⁴ That said, from the outset rivalry and contention plagued Donovan and the COI from jealous traditional intelligence departments which brazenly resisted any moves that might duplicate the work of their agencies thereby diminishing their own importance. This produced “turf wars” that found, for example, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover becoming an implacable and bitter foe whose enmity was demonstrated in assigning FBI agents to spy on Donovan throughout the war years. General George V. Strong, of an imperious and cerebral nature, epitomized how intense the opposition of branches of the armed forces could be. As head of G-2, the Army’s intelligence arm whose unswerving allegiance was to the professional Army establishment, he had nothing but utter disdain for the OSS which he considered “a band of civilian amateurs that had to be broken up or it would take over his agency.” He began to refer to the OSS director as “Wildman Donovan.”⁵

Intelligence arms of the armed forces were hampered by a long and potentially deleterious tradition that precluded meaningful cooperation between the services. Albeit a degree of collaboration was finally established between the Army’s Military Intelligence Division (MID) and the Navy’s Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI), it was not until 1945 that they created an effective joint intelligence committee. “Although MID was willing to work with its Navy counterpart, it regarded cooperation with other players in the intelligence arena with distaste. Both military services distrusted the civilians especially those in Donovan’s organization.” The rivalry, furthermore, did not abate after COI was phased out in favor of the OSS which now saw a rapid increase in its budget and in the number of agents under its control as well as a heavy augmentation of military personnel (detachments). Notwithstanding that Donovan himself ultimately received promotion to a general’s rank, the MID never allowed OSS analysts access to high-grade Communications Intelligence (COMINT).⁶ The opposition succeeded in confining the scope of OSS by specifically excluding its activity in domestic affairs as well as the entire western hemisphere. Although rivalry persisted on a departmental level, it was attenuated on the battlefield as noted by historian John Patrick

Finnegan. "Army commanders in Europe found the OSS a useful organization. In fact, the Army personnel provided the bulk of OSS strength."⁷

Donovan was not to be deterred; he met the challenge of staffing his new OSS agency by tapping into people he knew best: prestigious bankers, lawyers, industrialists, conservative academics, and their contacts. He thus produced an OSS personnel roster top-heavy with representation from Ivy League and the "Seven Sisters" colleges. With at least 42 members of its Class of 1943 engaged in the OSS, Yale University is a conspicuous example; appropriately it remained for a Yale historian to provide an absorbing account of the espionage-attraction phenomenon: faculty members who adjusted their research to assist in military intelligence; the connection of faculty, students, and close familial relationships that led to a large recruitment of Yale graduates into the OSS.⁸

The Yale/OSS connection was plain throughout operations in Italy in the person of Donald Downes who had a varied intelligence career and who was named to direct OSS personnel assigned to the Fifth Army. Lacking experience in Italy, Downes relied heavily on Vincent Scamporino and also collaborated with Irving Goff in a plan to enlist Italian prisoners of war to infiltrate behind enemy lines in order to obtain information. But Downes had problems of fitting in and clashed with other OSS colleagues leading to his departure from the spy organization in order to write spy novels, some of which became films.⁹ Far from dilettantism, the extraordinary attraction of academicians is ascribed to the natural outcome of the university setting where there exists "a wide-ranging curiosity, a somewhat child-like desire to collect experiences and to see places, to know because knowing in itself is fun: that is, a number of people ideally suited for the rather unconventional life of an intelligence service, and in particular, of the Office of Strategic Services in World War II."¹⁰

The inevitable consequence of elitism reflected in this privileged and affluent background in the ranks of the spy organization was to incur harsh censure as critics labeled the ensemble with such choice disparaging terms as "dilettante diplomats" and "amateur detectives"; however, it was far from a complete, fair, or accurate portrait especially when it came to recruitment designed to penetrate Italy. Under Donovan's guidance the OSS leadership sought out not only highly intelligent and motivated enlistees with a college background but also other non-college resourceful individuals who possessed innate linguistic and cultural understanding about the customs and traditions of lands targeted for invasion and who were also eager to participate. Donovan recognized that one of the

blessings of the US melting pot configuration was that it was home to a citizenry that virtually no other country possessed—a reservoir of people who traveled extensively and spoke many languages, natural advantages to personnel designated to operate effectively in Italy and an asset that gave the USA a distinct advantage over Great Britain in this regard. To implement the native language fluency concept the OSS created a Foreign Nationalities Branch (FNB) that focused its attention on foreign nationals and ethnic groups within the USA.¹¹

The OSS accordingly was made up of a specially designated group of people including famous college football players like Notre Dame's heralded Joe Savoldi, baseball great Moe Berg, leading Hollywood directors and actors John Ford, Sterling Hayden, and Douglas Fairbanks Jr., future New York Yankees president Michael Burke, John Ringling North, owner of the Barnum and Bailey Circus, Quentin Roosevelt, grandson of former President Theodore Roosevelt, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., noted historian, and Julia Child, destined to become a leading chef, author, and television personality. The spy organization also enlisted a group of mature European anti-fascists and young men and women of various national strains including a significant number with Italian and Sicilian background, in the conviction that their heritage enabled them to be inconspicuous in critical operations designed to defeat Italy and thus inflict a severe blow to the Axis powers. Many were civilians in their 50s who were too old for the draft and normally would not be regarded as physically competent to endure the bodily rigors expected in combat. It is estimated that throughout the course of the war the OSS consisted of 20,000 to 30,000 people some of whom were brought into field operations, while most served in unspectacular but necessary background support positions collecting and analyzing potentially pertinent data such as ethnic newspapers, journals, newsletters, casualty lists of enemy nations, maps and photographs of military bases, and traffic flow in major harbors. Unpretentious, toned-down research and analysis rather than spying behind enemy lines accounted for the bulk of OSS personnel. Most agents were of the so-called Chairborne Division collecting, sifting, and summarizing intelligence.¹²

The story of a number of Italian and Italian Americans who were recruited, trained, and deployed in this secretive and often dangerous activity is what follows. The OSS was divided into a number of branches, each of which was responsible for a specific function while in particular situations personnel from one branch assisted other branches. These branches, including Secret Intelligence (SI), Special Operations (SO),

Research and Analysis (R&A), Morale Operations (MO), and Operation Groups (OG), were subdivisions in which Italian Americans played important and in some instances indispensable roles. In MO Italian American agents, for instance, were essential contributors that encompassed the MO unit operating in Rome where they effectively employed psychological means to attack enemy political unity by an imaginative recreation and issuance of false dispatches designed to deceive the enemy. They were particularly adept in the use of “Black propaganda” which purported to emanate from a bona fide source, but in reality originated from other than a true one that served to fool the enemy repeatedly. This misinformation activity was a covert operation without any responsibility to disclose its sources; it stood ready and willing to play all kinds of nasty tricks to deceive the enemy—the kinds of artifices that generally were considered illegitimate and immoral for a reasonable government.

As factors in SI (Secret Intelligence) which was considered the primary intelligence source, OSS agents worked in neutral and enemy-occupied territory seeking out important information via infiltration to ascertain levels of enemy strengths and vulnerabilities which they shared with other Allied intelligence agencies. Their SO branch directed agents operating behind enemy lines to establish contact with and cultivate the support of underground guerilla forces supplying them with communications, money, and provisions, while dozens of OG semi-military units operating under code names were trained to work with local resistance forces to launch swift raids and carry out other guerrilla operations in conjunction with Allied theater commander directives designed to harass and disrupt enemy lines.¹³

Additionally, the OSS created special units that focused on specific objectives. For instance, there was a Special Assistants Division (SAD) that gave its attention to producing drugs for OSS operatives including the suicide tablet, while the Camouflage Division (CD) developed disguised, seemingly ordinary objects that masked hidden explosives. A special OSS unit which dealt with the important matter of saving European art treasures had representatives on the Committee for the Protection of European Cultural Material and played a vital role in saving priceless Italian works of art. The FNB was another OSS unit concentrated on gathering intelligence from foreign-language material circulating in the country. This organizational activity was in response to the realization that the nation housed 18 million people of foreign birth and that millions of them, including 600,000

of Italian ancestry, were not American citizens but enemy aliens—a situation that constituted a potential for either danger or good. Properly developed it could be a major positive source of information. To collect, study, and scrutinize foreign-language ethnic newspapers, pamphlets, and newsletters could be a valuable source of information—it would be the work of 50 OSS operatives, mainly academicians, who focused on large urban centers which housed large concentrations of ethnic groups. The multiple activities of the OSS indicated an intelligence agency that was disposed to tap into virtually any fathomable source of information. Informed observers concluded, “Without a doubt, the fact that the OSS had integrated the country’s scholarly intelligentsia into its operations contributed to its modernity of an office that made the slogan ‘Knowledge is power’ one of its leading axioms.”¹⁴

The warren of unadorned offices in an unspectacular Washington, DC, building that housed the intelligence agency belied the important work of OSS personnel. Far from screaming headlines, unequipped with lethal weapons and outside of the limelight, OSS employees labored at gathering vital intelligence.

Inside, the ancient corridors creaked and the tiny boxlike offices, crammed with filing cabinets and crackling typewriters and paper-littered desks, might have resembled a small town law firm on a busy afternoon. The occupants were as unromantic in their surroundings; elderly analysts, economists in shirt sleeves, research experts perspiring over columns of statistics...

A far cry from the headlines, the clash and thunder of battle. Yet these obscure buildings were a battlefield: the strangest and perhaps the most crucial battlefield of World War II.¹⁵

To carry out its objectives the OSS recruited regional experts to apply their knowledge and creative skills as factors in recalling additional resources and knowledge as needed. High value was placed on the ability of OSS members to leverage a multitude of personal and professional networks to achieve operational success. Such connections with business leaders, social elites, university academics, and other professionals enabled OSS administrators to recruit the appropriate personnel for the accumulation of intelligence. The OSS also expected agents assigned to overseas duty to influence networks within their areas of operation to work against the Nazi occupying forces and fascist enemy in Italy.

NOTES

1. William Stephenson, *Man Called Intrepid: The Incredible WWII Narrative of The Hero Whose Spy Network and Secret Diplomacy Changed the Course of History*, Lyons Press, 2009, xvii.
2. Stephenson, *Intrepid*, 79–80.
3. Stephenson, *Intrepid*, 166, 167.
4. Anthony Cave Brown, *The Last American Hero: Wild Bill Donovan*, Times Books, New York, 1982, 21.
5. Douglas Waller, *The Spymaster Who Created the OSS and Modern American Espionage*, Free Press, New York, 2012, 117.
6. John Patrick Finnegan, *Military Intelligence*, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, n.d., 63.
7. Finnegan, *Military Intelligence*, 92.
8. Robin W. Winks, *Cloak & Gown: Scholars in the Secret War, 1939–1961*, Yale University Press, 1996, 14. Winks recounts the OSS attraction to Yale as a place where they believed in a kind of elitism expressed in individualization, in belief of the virtue of doing one’s work well, in the value of the work being done—precisely characteristics sought by OSS.
9. Max Corvo, *The OSS in Italy, 1942–1945*, Praeger, New York, Westport, 1990, 99.
10. Robin Winks elaborates on the checkered but fascinating career of Downes. Winks, *Cloak & Gown: Scholars in the Secret War, 1939–1961*, 162–230.
11. *Foreign Nationalities Branch Files, 1942–1945*, U.S. Office of Strategic Services.
12. Jeremy Crampton, “Arthur Robinson and the Creation of America’s First Spy Agency,” *Georgia State University Magazine*, cites the OSS Map Division as an example wherein dozens of anonymous OSS employees working quietly behind closed doors in Washington, DC, helped win the war simply by making sense of the data and putting it on maps that were easier to understand. They produced specialty or thematic maps that were used at Allied Conferences between Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin.
13. John Whiteclay Chambers II, *OSS Training in the National Parks and Service Abroad in World War II*, National Parks, Washington, DC, 2008, 36. The current SOF (Special Operations Forces) community has similar requirements wherein future SOF warriors are expected to

- have the same level of expertise as the OSS warrior. See also Richard Cutler, *Counterspy*, Brassey's, 1970, for information on double agents.
14. Christof Mauch, *The Shadow War Against Hitler: The Covert Operations of America's Wartime Secret Intelligence Service*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2003, 18. See also 14, 15, for information on various OSS activities.
 15. Corey Ford and Alastair MacBain, *Cloak and Dagger*, Random House, New York, 1946, 4–5.

Recruitment and Training Strategies

Once the OSS settled upon an OG intelligence-gathering plan about the relevant Italian military and political situation, this knowledge was applied to specific operational tasks. For incursions into Italy it would be instructive to cite a few examples of OSS personnel recruited from the ranks of business leaders, social elites, university academics, and other professionals.

In this enterprise the Donovan concepts of enlisting those of Italian ancestry, especially those of more recent immigration, were now to be extensively employed. As Albert Materazzi, who played a major part in Italian OG operations explained, “General Donovan had a brilliant idea that out of the rich ethnic makeup of this country that he could find a couple of hundred soldiers, officers already trained who would be willing to jump behind the lines in the country of their origin to assist the Resistance movement—in the words of Churchill ‘that when the time came it would set Europe ablaze.’” Prospective recruits were tested immediately with regard to their composure under stress during the interview process when they were confronted with offensive questions like “Did you ever have sex with your sister?” This was a deliberate attempt to separate those who responded angrily from those who controlled their anger thereby providing an indication of an individual’s self-control in traumatic situations.

Because they might be called to serve in sabotage teams or guerilla units behind enemy lines, those already in military services became a prime source of potential OSS operatives. Regardless of whether or not they had

basic training previously in other branches of the armed services, once they became OSS members, recruits were given special commando training courses which were based on skills developed by the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) that were calculated to test endurance and physical stamina in addition to the use of explosives. Emulation of British commando preparation and techniques was, in effect, an acknowledgment of that country's leadership when it came to training singular elite military forces. Indeed, the creation of the OSS concept was to a considerable extent traceable to its British counterpart.

Those who were to be trained for behind-the-enemy-lines assignments learned a variety of skills for effective infiltration, the two most important being studying how to parachute and how to inflate rubber boats. It was Donovan's belief that strength of character was the first prerequisite for those chosen for precarious subversive work. Since they had to lead double lives as instruments of deceit Donovan thought that the best recruits were those who had never previously lived a double life. Contrary to much public opinion he felt it would be easier to train an honest person to engage in devious activities than to try to teach honesty to those of untrustworthy background.

Supplementing the enlistment of civilians with requisite backgrounds, OSS recruiters simultaneously methodically sought out candidates already in the armed forces who were fluent in or seemed to be conversant in Italian—preferably those who learned the language in an Italian home rather than solely a school product. Mario Forte, for example, was in Army infantry training in Fort Jackson, North Carolina, when one day “they pulled us out of the company and said whoever name I call, and I noticed that all the names they called were Italian.” Joseph Genco's experience, although similar, indicated a questionable presumption on the part of the Army. “They didn't say you had to know a language. They just saw your name and assumed you could speak Italian.”¹ Vincent LaGatta was already a paratrooper when he was approached by OSS recruiters who informed him that if he joined the OSS it would be a dangerous assignment. “I'm in the paratroopers. What could be more dangerous,” he retorted, only to be told, “This is more dangerous.” Tom Rossi remembered his astonishment when he was called to be interviewed by OSS officers: “I went to the Q (Que) building for an appointment and there was a really scary thing, they had all these generals and colonels all over the place and they had one guy in the room and all these guys about six or seven people and they started asking me questions.”² Reference to the Q building is fascinating especially

because it appears as an Ian Fleming fictional character that developed ingenious espionage instruments in James Bond movies. Fleming was in fact part of British SOE during the war which featured a technical branch that developed various gadgets that real-life espionage agents used. The OSS Q building was patterned after the British model that invented weaponry for agents to use in behind-the-lines missions.³ OSS recruiters were also interested in dialect speakers as Frank Monteleone recalled,

The way they recruited me. I was in the regular school in the Navy and one day...a fellow named Commander Green from the OSS gave a brief talk and asked if anybody spoke Italian and I said this might be a good way to get to Italy and sure enough they recruited me down in Washington and a fellow named Hollingshead, Roger Hollingshead, interviewed me in Italian. You know I spoke only dialect and a limited amount of words that I knew from my family. So Green who recruited me asked Hollingshead "how is he going to be able to do it?" He said "he speaks a beautiful American Sicilian." Green says "perfect just what we're looking for."⁴

Code Names. The surreptitious nature of OSS activity required the utmost secrecy including persistent efforts to shroud in a veil of concealment the very names of missions undertaken. Operation group forays were dubbed with anodyne titles like *Tacoma*, *Peedee*, and *Chicago I* that betrayed virtually nothing about their true objectives. Camouflage procedures extended to recruits as well. Thus novice personnel were strictly admonished to conceal their true identity by turning in all personal belongings that might cause them to be recognized and then given fictitious code names in order to keep their identity secret. The secrecy requirement expanded even to pointed instructions not to call fellow agents by their authentic appellations but rather to use code names, an instruction that was somewhat difficult to follow in instances of celebrity personnel. In general they used "common American first names such as 'Harry,' 'Ed,' 'Jack,' 'Sam,' 'Bill,' and 'Pete,' but occasionally the names were closer to their ethnic background such as 'Maurice,' 'Leif,' 'Ivan,' 'Spiro,' 'Gino,' or 'Bruno.'" Sometimes the code name was the real first name accompanied by letters and numbers.⁵ Among such code names were the following examples: "109" for OSS Director William Donovan, "774" for Emilio Daddario, "Marat" for Max Corvo, "Vic" for Joe Savoldi, and "Coniglio" for Neapolitan resistance leader Clemente Menicanti, "John Hamilton" for actor Sterling Hayden, and "Artifice" for James J. Angleton. The severe directive regarding the use of code names was stringently impressed on those being trained for

infiltration behind enemy lines because the precariousness of their positions placed in danger not only individuals who were captured but also their colleagues since the captured agent might subsequently be forced by torture to divulge such information. Trainees were likewise discouraged from making intimate friendships with other OSS trainees while those deemed too loquacious for the secret organization were weeded out.

“We would sit at a round table at night...and one given day, I would see a face was missing. It wasn’t there anymore,” said Sergeant Stephen J. Castro (“Steve A3”), a former football player from Rutgers College, who trained at Area A. “So, you’d ask, ‘what happened to ‘George A2?’” He [the instructor] would say, “Well, he got caught divulging who he was or what he was doing.”⁶

The cloak of security to which OSS agents solemnly subscribed and pledged to uphold extracted an extraordinary sense of permanency that had a life-lasting impact. The admonition to secrecy, for example, meant they could not reveal their wartime roles to their family and even to their spouses; it was a solemn obligation underscored by the awareness that even their employment files were to be sealed. It remained evident, moreover, in the fact that decades after the war’s end and long after the OSS was disbanded and its records declassified, one could find aging OSSers continuing to abide by their pledge to confidentiality. One recent example occurred in 2014 in the admission by John Cardinali of Monterey, California, who was honored belatedly by an Italian American organization after revealing his clandestine past more than 60 years earlier.

Civitelli. Philadelphia native Caesar Civitelli, who was one of the first Italian Americans to become part of the OSS, became so deeply enmeshed in many Italian OG operations that he was assigned the important task of writing official OSS mission reports replete with mission goals, names of specific personnel involved, and outcome evaluations. Twenty years old when he joined the U.S. Army in February 1943, he was stationed in Cape Cod, Massachusetts, as a crew member on the commanding officer’s yacht where he and another soldier committed a serious and potentially costly mistake by taking out the officer’s yacht for an unauthorized joyriding sail. Apprehended, there were two punishment options for the serious lapse in judgment: face court-martial or be transferred to Camp MacKall in North Carolina to learn how to parachute—Civitelli took the latter course and continued training in Fort Benning, Georgia.⁷ While in parachute training

he was ordered to appear before a screening board that not only tested his Italian-language fluency but also thoroughly interrogated him about his background and loyalty.

In September 1943, I was in paratroop school at Fort Benning, Georgia, and then at Camp Mackall near Fort Bragg, North Carolina for airborne and gliders. A guy from the OSS came and interviewed me. I was 20 years old. He asked me did I speak Italian. I did. He asked me if I was sent to Italy and had relatives there and they were working with the Nazis would I shoot them. I didn't know if I had any relatives in Italy. So I said, 'Of course.' He said, 'You'll hear from us.'⁸

Rigid secrecy was the OSS byword when it came to training its recruits in the sites which offered the utmost privacy in and around Washington, DC, such as the Catocin Mountain in Maryland, currently the site of Camp David, and the iconic Congressional Club in Bethesda, Maryland, the only club incorporated by an act of Congress. Opened to great fanfare in the gaudy 1920s, it offered the opportunity for congressmen to mingle with prestigious businessmen and influential professionals on its premier golf course; it was a private club that encompassed over 400 sprawling acres and which in its heyday numbered presidents, cabinet members, and wealthy power brokers as members, but which unfortunately had fallen on financial hard times generated by the Great Depression. Given the club's bleak financial picture by the outbreak of World War II, it was compelled to seek out a lessee, a development which fortuitously dovetailed with the growing needs of the OSS as it hastily sought to lease its facilities.⁹ Upon learning the Congressional Country Club was the place where he was to report to be introduced to OSS training, Civitelli was elated. "I was from a West Philadelphia Italian neighborhood. To me, this was going uptown. We could only call it Area F," said Civitelli, citing wartime secrecy that forbade the location's true identity; "If anybody asked us where we were training, we would say 'Area F.' Everything was very secretive back then."¹⁰ Taken to the site the troops were unloaded onto a large, lackluster, and bland tent city. "It was six of us to a tent with a potbelly stove in the middle," said Civitelli, describing the night in 1943. "We had been sworn to complete secrecy. They told us to go to sleep, so we went to sleep."¹¹ The code of secrecy would extend into the field of activity where agents carried nothing that might give away their identity in the event of their capture.

When Civitelli and the other soldiers emerged from their tents in the morning, they glimpsed the main building beside the campsite, espying a palatial lavishly decorated Mediterranean-style clubhouse overlooking an appealing rolling terrain that was the club's prized golf course. But it was not the dream site they imagined. Five or six man groups were assigned quarters in pyramidal tents strewn across pristine tennis courts that contained potbelly stoves which were rarely used because their days and night were spent outdoors training to become spies and commandos who could drop behind enemy lines and take out opposing forces. "It was guerilla warfare, unconventional warfare. Blowing up rail lines and so forth. We had to get through their obstacle course one night. They had booby traps all over the course. So we did it. When you made it to the end you were at Glen Echo Park. It was mostly crawling on your belly. We came out of the tent and thought, 'Hey, country club living,'" Civitelli said. "But we were wrong; it was no country club life. Every day we were interviewed by shrinks. The No. 1 question they asked was, 'Who don't you like among your group?' We had all agreed on one guy, who happened to be German."¹² Intense psychological screening always included interrogation of Civitelli and other Italian Americans over the sensitive issue of whether or not they would be prepared to shoot someone in their own family if the individual favored the Nazis. Following the preparation Civitelli, who subsequently compiled in a 30-year military career including duty in Vietnam, reported for training duty with an Italian OG then preparing for assignment in North Africa, France, and Italy. The SO trainees in his group were young, brash, and eager paratroopers proudly sporting freshly earned parachute wings on their shirts who keenly looked forward to their new position. "They were all very active type people who were willing to do things rather than to sit back and wait. They quickly took charge when they were given a mission. They all wanted to be there and to succeed."¹³ Of course not everyone recruited by the OSS met desired idealistic moral and ethical standards. Given the nature of the work that might well involve surreptitious entries, deceptive disguises, steaming open letters, and so on, the OSS sometimes employed people of dubious repute. "Many so-called teachers were actually safecrackers and other questionable types, but they really knew their business. Some of them had jail terms behind them before OSS picked them up, while others were clearly undemocratic and Communist."¹⁴ Thus despite his denunciation of Communism, General Donovan, like fiercely anti-Communist Winston Churchill, in the face of grave peril was willing to accept Communist

operatives or their collaborators as working agents if they could be helpful in defeating the Axis powers. Remaining active in the affairs of former OSS operatives, Civitelli was elected a member of the OSS Society Board of Directors in 2010 in a ceremony held ironically in the Congressional Country Club where he first underwent training.

Materazzi. Born in 1915 in the small candy manufacturing town of Hershey, Pennsylvania, of Italian parents who emigrated from Tuscany, Albert R. Materazzi was another outstanding example of the ideal OSS candidate—one whose talents included not only fluency with the Italian language but also an exceptional scientific educational background having received his undergraduate degree in chemistry from Fordham University in 1936 and an advanced degree in chemistry from the University of Rome in 1938. He volunteered for the service with the outbreak of war and was assigned to the Fifteenth Army headquarters. Materazzi was then inducted into the OSS but as with all OSS agents he was sworn to secrecy and prohibited from disclosing his new affiliation or describing or identifying the location of the training camp, even to his parents. When his bewildered but unsuspecting mother became alarmed over the intense follow-up military investigation that followed his entry into the armed forces, she shared her worries with Albert who strove mightily, if not always truthfully, to allay her fears. “I remember a frantic call from my mother asking what had I done, the FBI was in Hershey asking all sorts of questions. I was able to calm her down by saying I was being considered for a government job and such investigations was routine.”¹⁵ A degree of confusion surrounded Materazzi’s transition from the regular Army to the espionage agency as he and several second lieutenants “were ordered to the Adjutant General’s office in Washington and he found out he had joined the OSS.”¹⁶ Materazzi reported for OSS duty at its Catoctin Mountain, Maryland, facility where he underwent training typical for future behind-the-enemy-lines spies such as conducting realistic if mock espionage or sabotage missions at nearby bridges and dams including incapacitating the US conduit route across the Rappahannock River.

At night, we clambered out and placed charges strategically—dummy charges, of course...Another exercise was when we were to sabotage a dam on the Rappahannock River. That one required descending into the gorge and climbing up the other side and—ah—taking care of any guards that might be there and sabotage it. The only one that was there was the poor night watchman. We scared him half to death. Nobody had told him.¹⁷

The Catoctin Mountain site was also a training ground for U. S. Marines who had constructed an impregnable position on the grounds facetiously called “Shangri-La,” as a formidable training challenge for OSS agents. Materazzi’s description indicated the difficulty it presented. “We sought to infiltrate Shangri-La. I don’t know whether it was a prank, boredom or just testing ourselves, or whether we just wanted to know whether we could find a weak spot where we could get over the fence. We never succeeded.”¹⁸

Tall and thin, and known as “the brain,” Materazzi exuded rare leadership. He immediately proffered the impression of a man of action, which indeed was his persona as he directed more than a half dozen behind-the-enemy lines operations simultaneously.¹⁹ The highly intelligent Materazzi was entrusted with the crucial responsibility of planning numerous dangerous but vital OG missions designed to undermine and disrupt German battle plans as well as to extend aid to and encourage Italian resistance efforts. Fully aware of the dilemma facing Italian American agents in Italy he undoubtedly voiced the thinking of many ethnic colleagues when he ruminated about what his military decision might do to those of his ancestry. “I kept thinking to myself I might be shooting against my cousins. But then I made a conscious decision, on the other hand I might be liberating them too.”²⁰ With the conclusion of the war Materazzi returned to civilian life where he served as vice president of a printing and lithography company and subsequently as director of research and quality control at the U.S. Government Printing Office.

Levantino. In some instances units from other military branches were trained by OSS detachments for specific OSS missions while continuing to retain their identity as members of the Army, Navy, Marines, or other services. This was the experience of Italian American Brooklyn-born Barney Levantino who entered the Army and underwent a battery of tests before being selected to attend the foreign-language department at Yale University where, notwithstanding his expressed interest in studying Chinese, he was, nevertheless, directed to study Italian. One of five trainees selected from an original group of 50, he studied Italian language, customs, and traditions in preparation for an OSS mission to be parachuted behind enemy lines in northern Italy to gather intelligence when the mission was scuttled because of the collapse of enemy resistance in that region.²¹

Scariano. Another Italian American recruited by OSS was Anthony Scariano, born in a predominantly Sicilian section of an Italian enclave in Chicago, Illinois, where Sicilian was the language spoken in his home and in the neighborhood streets.

Everybody on the block was Italian, even beyond Ogden Avenue. There were Italian grocery stores. And there were Italian doctors and Italian lawyers and so was the neighborhood around the Como Inn, around Grand Halsted and Milwaukee. I went to the Schiller School when I lived on Rees Street although we had no Italian teachers. And I wouldn't be a bit surprised that I probably spoke—I can't remember now but I probably spoke more Italian than English when I started school. We had no bilingual programs in those days.²²

Coming from a poor family whose father died when he was ten years old, Anthony went to local public schools and worked his way through college earning a degree from George Washington University in Washington, DC, while serving on the staff of Senator Scott Lucas and also while working part-time as a Capitol policeman. He began teaching Italian and with the outbreak of war he tried unsuccessfully to join various armed service branches including the air force, and naval intelligence, claiming he was rejected because he was not a fourth-generation American.

“No,” they said, “we’re taking only fourth-generation Americans.” Can you imagine that? As if, you know, what would I classify as, technically? First-generation, born here you know. Second-generation of my family here. I always considered myself just as loyal as anybody else. “No, you’ve got to be a fourth-generation American.” I went back and told that to Lucas you know. Hands were tied, you know. I said, “To hell with them. Let them draft me,” you know. The last place in the world I wanted to go was in the army and that’s where I wound up, and finally wound up doing OSS [Office of Strategic Services] work.²³

3.1 PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTING

Individuals chosen for infiltration behind enemy lines were required not only to undergo demanding physical training but also to learn special techniques necessary to survive within the enemy's turf. Candidates learned about demolitions, map reading, compass work, rapid firing, silent killing, field craft, rope-work tumbling, and living off the land in remote places with strange names. They had to learn how to climb hand over hand up precipitous cliffs, swing off high ledges on ropes tied to nearby trees, shoot at moving targets, toss live grenades, shoot tracer bullets, resist enemy in an empty house, and avoid ambush on a lonely road. Ribs were broken and limbs fractured during this type of training. This manner

of training also meant, among other things, abandoning concepts of fair play and sportsmanship; they learned instead to fight gutter style, dirty tricks and all: a knee in the groin, knifing the opponent's Adam's apple, jabbing his eyes. It meant learning to move with drawn revolver amidst a maze of corridors, how to blow a safe, how to remove a fuse from a time bomb, how to make a microfilm of vital documents, how to counterfeit enemy money or ration stamps, and how to use shortwave radios.

Psychological testing was an indispensable sine qua non during the training phase. OSS Italian American psychologist William J. Morgan (Anthony Mitrano), who became instrumental in creating psychological tests, described in great detail what the OSS sought to learn from psychological exams: to ascertain that candidates possessed requisite emotional and intellectual aptitudes for the work. They endeavored to achieve this via a battery of test models: a verbal intelligence examination, a non-verbal intelligence test, mechanical aptitude and proficiency exams, tests of temperament and personality such as Rorschach and Thematic Apperception, and Buddy tests.²⁴ In an effort to determine who possessed intrinsic leadership potential OSS psychiatrists and psychologists devised psychological tests designed to show which OSS candidates within a group were recalcitrant as opposed to those who demonstrated natural leadership inclination. This was accomplished by presenting agents with problems likely to be found in the field in which the promising true leader was required to think out his plan carefully and explain it clearly so that all could follow.²⁵

One of the tasks of OSS psychologists was to discover which agents undergoing training would be suitable for infiltration assignments—specifically they sought an individual loyal not only to his country but also a person of adaptability and integrity.

Just as an infantry soldier shoots the enemy soldier so should the spy have no hesitation if, in the line of duty, he has to do away with someone who is a threat to him and his country. In other words, although he is a man of integrity, he must be able to lie, cheat and murder. A man whose private scruples will not allow him to behave like a criminal, even in his country's interests, is not cut out for a spy.²⁶

NOTES

1. Nancy Schiesari, "*Behind the Lines*," documentary.
2. Nancy Schiesari, "*Behind the Lines*" documentary.

3. Chambers II, *OSS Training in the National Parks and Service Abroad in World War II*, iv.
4. Nancy Schiesari, “*Behind the Lines*” documentary.
5. Chambers II, *OSS Training in the National Parks and Service Abroad in World War II*, 31, 242.
6. Chambers II, *OSS Training in the National Parks and Service Abroad in World War II*, 244. Stephen J. Capestro, interviewed by G. Kurt Piehler, 17 August 1994, oral history transcript, 20, in files of *Rutgers Archives of World War II*, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey.
7. “For Caesar Civitelli, Congressional Country Club means military training, not golf,” *Tampa Bay Times*, June 14, 2011.
8. Caesar J. Civitelli, telephone interview, 18 April 2008, 235, in Chambers II, *OSS Training in the National Parks and Service Abroad in World War II*.
9. See Jeff Silverman, “Spies in the Clubhouse,” 79–82, *The OSS Society*, for more on the topic.
10. “For Caesar Civitelli, Congressional Country Club means military training, not golf,” *Tampa Bay Times*, June 14, 2011.
11. Bill Pennington, “When Rounds Were Ammo,” *New York Times*, July 12, 2011.
12. “For Caesar Civitelli, Congressional Country Club means military training, not golf,” *Tampa Bay Times*, June 14, 2011.
13. Major General John K. Singlaub (USA-Ret.), transcript of interview by Maochun Yu and Christof Mauch, 31 October 1996, p. 9, *OSS Oral History Transcripts*, CIA Records (RG 263), Box 4, National Archives II, College Park, Md., hereafter, National Archives II, p. 236.
14. Elizabeth P. McIntosh, *Sisterhood of Spies: The Women of the OSS*, Dell Publishing, New York, 1999, 17.
15. Albert Materazzi, Bethesda, Md., *OSS Society Digest*, Number 992, 31 March 2005, ossociety@yahoo.com, accessed 31 March 2005.
16. Dorothy Ringlesbach, *OSS: Stories That Can Now Be Told*, AuthorHouse, 2005, 21.
17. Chambers II, *OSS Training*, 72.
18. Chambers II, *OSS Training*, 108, 131.
19. See Patrick K. O’Donnell, *The Brenner Assignment, The Untold Story of the Most Daring Spy Mission of World War II*, Da Capo Press, 2009, Chapter 8.

20. Nancy Schiesari, “*Behind the Lines*,” documentary.
21. *Interview* Barney Levantino, January 13, 2015.
22. *Anthony Scariano Memoir*, Vol. 1, SCA73, Archives and Special Collection, University of Illinois at Springfield, 8–9.
23. Dominic Candeloro, *Italians in Chicago*, Arcadia Publishing, Chicago, 2001, 58.
24. William J. Morgan, *The OSS and I*, W.W. Norton and Co. Inc., New York, 1957, 99–100.
25. Morgan, *The OSS and I*, 77–84.
26. William J. Morgan, *Spies and Saboteurs*, Victor Gollance LTD., London, 1954, 66.

Corvo and the Connecticut Connection

Middletown, Connecticut, an unpretentious residential town of less than 50,000 inhabitants, would seem to be a highly implausible locus to serve as a springboard for important wartime spying activity, yet that actually was what it became because of a unique confluence of several factors, most weighty of which was that it was home to a sizeable population of Italian Americans, the majority of Sicilian heritage from the eastern part of the Mediterranean island. Melilli, Sicily, was the village where many Middletowners had been born or where their parents came from and where lived numerous close relatives. A traditional Mezzogiorno (southern Italy) village suffering from underdeveloped industrialization and limited job prospects in the late nineteenth century, these conditions prompted many Melillisi to emigrate in search of work first to northern Italy and later by the 1880s there began a trek to Middletown in search for opportunities in the railroad and textile industries. Many newcomer Italians became laborers; others worked as skilled craftsmen and middle-class merchants who found jobs in their respective fields while large numbers gained employment in Middletown's machine parts, hardware, and textile industries. Earning a living working in the factories of the Russell Manufacturing Company, the Arawana Mills, and various quarries was the experience for more than a few Italian immigrants. By 1910 a perceptible number owned small businesses and had begun to acquire real estate, especially rental property.¹

Thus evolved an idiosyncratic “Little Italy,” an ethnic enclave revealing a distinctive code of beliefs, customs, and values—a legacy from their Sicilian descendants that they substantially embraced and a lifestyle discernible decades later even as they became assimilated into American society. It is estimated that the Melillisi comprise perhaps 80 % of Middletown’s Sicilian immigrants who are linked to one another by an intricate web of family connections which stretches back to time immemorial. The Italian community is held together not only by family ties, but also by religious and social organizations, most especially those connected to their Melilli patron saint, Saint Sebastian. By 1902 there were in Middletown enough families to form a “St. Sebastian’s Band” and to celebrate the traditional feast as it had been done in Melilli. In 1931 they had collected enough donations in the form of construction materials, labor of masons, plasterers, and stone carvers to construct St. Sebastian’s Catholic Church on Middletown’s main street. Saint Sebastian’s Church, Middletown’s largest house of worship, is an exact replica of Melilli’s Sicilian Renaissance mother church of the same name. The Middletown–Melilli St. Sebastian bond continues to characterize Middletowners well into the twenty-first century. That it remains a significant cultural symbol is reflected further in the annual journey of parishioners from Middletown’s St. Sebastian Church to Melilli to partake of the St. Sebastian Feast celebration in Sicily.²

This sense of identity the Sicilians shared, moreover, with immigrants from the nearby town of Augusta, Sicily, the birthplace of journalist Cesare Corvo whose anti-fascist fulminations antagonized Italy’s Fascist government and which led to his immigration to the USA in 1923. Upon receiving American citizenship Cesare brought the rest of his family to Middletown where in 1932 he began to publish *Il Bollettino*, an Italian-language weekly newspaper that featured polemical political and ideological pieces about Sicily, Sicilians, and Italian Americans while maintaining contact with like-minded Italian exiles. This was the singular background that was deeply absorbed by his son Biagio Max (Massimo) Corvo who, while assisting his father in the publishing business, not only followed his father’s footsteps politically but also made his own indelible mark in the sphere of clandestine intelligence. By 1947 Max had assumed the position of publisher/editor of the newspaper which became bilingual in Italian and English. He also published additional Italian weeklies in Hartford, New Haven, and Waterbury. That Corvo pondered deeply upon the impact of the war upon Sicily is reflected in his private writings in which he not only

described Sicilian characteristics but also forecast the need to liberate Sicily as a prerequisite for the liberation of Italy. He wrote about Sicilians as a

people of many moods changing rapidly from the affable to the sanguine [sanguine] without the least warning...Complete control of the Mediterranean is one of the ways to the eventual shortening of the war. Sicily is key. Any contemplated invasion of Sicily must of necessity have its prelude in North Africa. The initial battles must be fought in the sandy waste which is the Libyan desert. Once this territory is under Allied control it is to be used as a springboard for Sicilian invasion.³

America's entrance into war following the attack on Pearl Harbor saw young Max joining the Army and undergoing training at Fort Lee, Virginia, where, finding his assignment to mountains of paperwork, filling out order forms and checking records unrewarding, he took it upon himself to assume a self-appointed role as a creator of an ambitious plan to bring about the demise of the Mussolini government. At his own expense Max purchased architectural paraphernalia—pencils, drawing paper, glue, paste, and so on—necessary to craft a topographical relief map of Sicily that when completed would indicate ports, rivers, cities, provinces, peculiar terrain features, railroad centers, docks, valleys, mountains, ocean tides, viaducts, bridges, culverts, contours, and tunnels. Working on the project on his own time Max pestered his sergeant to allow him to bring his plan to the attention of higher officers succeeding finally in drawing the interest of his instructor, officer Angier Biddle Duke, scion of a wealthy aristocratic American family, future chief of White House Protocol and ambassador, who hobnobbed with the likes of the elegant diplomat David K. Bruce who in 1942 was appointed head of OSS/Europe and who also served as ambassador to France after the war. That fortuitous meeting unlocked the door to superior OSS officials including Colonel Earl Brennan and General Donovan who were so impressed with what young Corvo had accomplished that they promoted him to a lieutenantcy.

Colonel Earl Brennan was Corvo's leading advocate for promotion to an officer citing his exceptional contributions even while a young army private. Letter from Brennan to Major Oliver, February 13, 1943, "Private First Class Max Corvo has been and is an indispensable member of my section. Through his numerous contacts in various parts of the country, he has recruited agents for our activities abroad. Moreover he has brought

together the only body of material on psychological warfare that is available to our section. This has been turned over by General Macgruder to the Psychological Warfare Committee. Private First Class Corvo has also developed plans for operations in enemy territory for the Italian section, S.I. He has done a great deal of map work and has executed several missions of a very confidential nature (character). For reasons of national security it is not advisable to describe his work in greater detail.”⁴

As intrigued as he was with Corvo’s presentation which was almost too good to be true, Brennan’s initial reaction also engendered suspicion. “What this young man had exhibited and explained with very considerable professionalism was too good...I could not but feel that here is some sort of a ‘plant’ from Berlin itself.”⁵ The wariness did not long endure, however, and soon Brennan fully embraced Corvo and became one of his biggest promoters. That the Corvo map was exceptional was underscored by the realization that the graphic representation he created apparently was the only updated extant cartographic depiction of Sicily in the government’s possession at that time.

Corvo quickly understood that there was no program for the locations included in military operations. He therefore set up a special course focused on the history and geography of Sicily, a description of the Fascist administrative structure, the police, OVRA counterintelligence, and the Italian press. From books and documents in various libraries including the rich collection of the Library of Congress, Corvo and his team were able to find the valuable information they needed. There were 18th century British Admiralty maps full of important details about the Sicilian coastline. There were maps of caves and local sea depth, plus geological studies about the erosion of the coast around the whole island.⁶

Indeed, before Corvo consented to proceed with the map project, his superior Earl Brennan made pertinent inquiries about the existence of a relief map of Sicily with the Pentagon, the Navy, the State Department, and the Staff College at Fort McNair and found that none existed. The reality was that while in due course the OSS R&A (Research and Analysis) cartographic office employed 150 map makers in the USA plus hundreds more in England and other countries that fashioned an impressive collection of over 12,000 detailed and informative maps designed to support military and political objectives, such was not the case regarding Sicily in the early phases.⁷ The distinctiveness of the Corvo map was validated

further by the realization that top Pentagon brass attempted to expropriate the map by having it transferred away from the OSS in favor of the Pentagon; whereupon failing in this maneuver high Army officers settled for spending sundry hours studying Corvo's map in OSS facilities prior to Operation Husky (Allied invasion of Sicily). Clearly and remarkably, Corvo's map became the principal cartographic reference for the invasion of Sicily. Corvo's exceptional knowledge about Sicily is underscored by the fact that his map demonstrated genuine awareness of the land while simultaneous OSS personnel elsewhere were so woefully unknowledgeable about Italy that American forces training at Ft. Benning, Georgia, prepared as if they were entering a jungle terrain.⁸

However, Corvo's interest was not merely to produce a map of Sicily's physical features but ultimately to convince authorities that Sicily must be the logical focal point of the continental invasion—a view in perfect accord with Winston Churchill who saw Italy as the Achilles' heel of the Axis and Sicily as its weakest point. "Corvo was probably the first American to share the same thoughts as Winston Churchill in the summer of 1942."⁹ Corvo saw the conquest of island as a necessary prerequisite to winning the war and, further, that the invasion had to come from North Africa. "But the conquest of Sicily had to include an understanding of the mentality of the Sicilian people."¹⁰ There had to be an appreciation for Sicilian history, an understanding that its people had experienced centuries of oppression from numerous invaders, and the realization of the futility of taking up arms in behalf of foreign rulers. In a word the Allies had to realize that Sicilians would welcome the opportunity to overthrow Fascism.

The undisputable fundamental point was that Corvo had formulated an excellent and credible plan for subversive warfare against the enemy in Sicily, one which his Army camp superiors had the good judgment to pass forward—in and of itself an astonishing development given the reality that Max was then only a 22-year-old private without college credentials—yet soon he would be commanding the activities of older professional officers who were graduates of prestigious universities. Upon Corvo's transfer to the newly formed OSS he continued to develop his plan to marshal together anti-Fascist and other Italian American elements who could provide portentous data that was extremely useful in carrying out subversive activities behind enemy lines in preparation for the Allied invasion of Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica, and the Italian mainland. Earl Brennan, head of the Italian Section of OSS's SI (Secret Intelligence) branch and Corvo's immediate superior, fully embraced and supported

Max's ideas, a fortunate development since Brennan possessed a rich political background as a former Republican New Hampshire state legislator and State Department veteran at ease with the Italian language and one who possessed numerous contacts with influential Italian as well as Italian American leaders. During his time as a diplomat in Italy Brennan had befriended powerful leaders of the Italian Masonic Order which had incurred the displeasure of Mussolini because it numbered many prominent Italians with enormous political sway. Deeming the freemasonry system inimical to the interest of the government in power the Fascist government proceeded to outlaw the Italian Masonic Order.¹¹ Mussolini's attack against Masons was ironical in that Masons were conspicuous supporters of the Fascists during the early phases of Mussolini's ascent to power. Indeed, "the original Fascist program was somewhat analogous to that of Italian Freemasonry. After he attained power, however, Mussolini no longer needed the Masons."¹²

Under Donovan's guidance the OSS leadership sought out not only highly intelligent and motivated enlistees with college background, but also other resourceful non-college individuals—basically young men who possessed innate intelligence and natural initiative to emerge as leaders during the war. Fortunately, this was what Brennan saw in Max, an individual far more mature than his age, one who recognized that gathering intelligence was not a foolhardy daredevil adventure but rather serious business. Espionage, wrote Corvo,

has never been a profession, as many practitioners of this activity in the post-World War II era have attempted to make us believe, nor has it been a craft as Allen Dulles attempted to pun with the word in his book, *The Craft of Intelligence*. It is and has been a most tedious pursuit of knowledge in all spheres of endeavor which must be carried on relentlessly and with singular purpose (not to mention luck) if it is to succeed.¹³

Brennan could not help but marvel at Corvo's orderly mind and sensibleness under pressure. Corvo betrayed none of the novice's typical air of indecision; rather, his demeanor made a profound impression on several senior military figures who were deeply impressed about his seemingly intuitive knowledge of military affairs as it applied to Italy.

With Brennan's blessings Corvo executed an aggressive campaign to recruit viable candidates who then received training in OSS schools in Maryland and Virginia. Corvo gave much consideration to the types of individuals he preferred.

There is no question that in the war period the government relied quite heavily on Italo American groups in order to pick up a body of expertise derived from personal background that was not available to other Allied nations. We sought out first a few in Connecticut and then New York which had been the capitol of the anti-fascist movement in the world and the United States...Many of the leaders of the anti-fascist movement were in New York, Luigi Sturzo who lived in Brooklyn was the founder of the Popular Party, the forerunner of the Christian Democratic Party...in recruiting for the Italian section of the OSS we wanted no conflict of interest between those elements that had been born here and those who had received hospitality in these shores and knew what Fascism really stood for...But we primarily recruited from segments of the populace who were better-educated, those particularly in politics, or from the younger element who spoke Italian well, who had some knowledge of the land.¹⁴

An illuminating measure of Corvo's remarkable career was the fact that it captured the attention of master military writer W.E.B. Griffin whose novels are known for historical accuracy and who tells his stories with crackling realism and rich characters. Griffin refers to Max Corvo as one of his main characters in *The Double Agents: A Men at War Novel*.¹⁵ To carry out his recruitment plan Corvo was granted the special privilege of traveling anywhere in the USA in order to meet with and enlist veteran and influential anti-Fascists, an assignment that reflected the deep confidence placed in him by his superiors, which, however, sometimes resulted in perplexing and perilous situations. For example, in September 1942, upon returning to his hotel room during his first trip to New York City, he was surprised by government agents with revolvers in hand waiting for him as he flipped on the room lights, and who then interrogated him at length and detained him as they attempted to ascertain the purpose of his inquiries. The fact that he could not reveal his mission complicated the situation.¹⁶ Max Corvo's commitment to the super spy organization would extend beyond intelligence gathering—in 1945 he married Cleveland-born Mary Donovan (no relation to General Donovan) who also worked for the OSS. Following her enlistment into the Army she was transferred to the OSS where she achieved the rank of lieutenant and where she met and married Max in 1945. After the war she and Max lived in Rome, Italy, where they established a consulting business before returning to Connecticut where she assisted her husband in publishing the Middletown *Bulletin* while raising a family of three children.¹⁷

Focus Sicily. After the Allies drove the Axis forces from North Africa a conference of Allied leaders was held in January 1943 in Casablanca where, under extensive prodding from Great Britain, an agreement was reached to strike a fatal blow against Italy beginning with the invasion of Sicily, then heavily fortified with Italian and German troops. With Sicily now the epicenter of attention Corvo sought to become a central factor in deploying OSS personnel to infiltrate Sicily in order to obtain useful military information. To implement his plan Corvo assembled a number of Middletown Italian Americans for the OSS including Frank Tarallo, Louis Fiorilla, Emilio Daddario, and Vincent Scamporino, all of whom possessed perfect backgrounds for the work ahead. Louis Fiorilla had attended a seminary in Sicily until 1937 when he transferred to Wesleyan University where he excelled scholastically and from which he graduated. Vincent Scamporino, while working his way through the University of New Hampshire, spent summers studying Italian with Max's father Cesare Corvo. Proficient in Italian and a Middletown lawyer in his mid 30s he became Brennan's trusted confidant and was at the center of many OSS transactions. Interestingly, the State Department initially rejected the OSS effort to grant Scamporino a passport because their files indicated he had been labeled a Communist. Using his connections Brennan successfully convinced government officials that as a lawyer Scamporino merely represented suspected individuals.¹⁸ Born in Massachusetts, Emilio Q. "Mim" Daddario, future Mayor of Middletown, member of Congress, and Democratic candidate for governor of Connecticut, had enrolled at Wesleyan University where he achieved an astounding record not only scholastically but also in athletics specifically football and baseball. Daddario received his law degree from the law school of the University of Connecticut in 1942 and practiced law with Scamporino in Middletown, before Corvo recruited him for the OSS. Born of immigrant parents from Melilli, Sicily, Frank J. Tarallo became a star football player for Middletown High School that earned him a scholarship at the University of Alabama. An admirer of the Corvo family's staunch anti-Fascism and a personal friend of Max, Tarallo spent considerable time in the offices of *Il Bollettino* where he perused readily available literature about Sicily and Italian American political activities.

Additionally, Corvo recruited a number of Italian exiles in America, especially in New York City, perhaps the nation's leading anti-fascist center where lived many with useful contacts within Italy that could serve the intelligence-gathering community. One example was Vincenzo

Vacirca, a prominent Sicilian exile (*fuoristici*), former Socialist member of the Italian parliament and his father's close friend who was then living in New York. There Vacirca became co-editor of *Il Nuovo Mondo*, an Italian-language anti-Fascist paper which published many of his trenchant position papers that were indeed valuable psychological warfare appeals to the Italian American community.¹⁹ Although Mussolini had revoked his Italian citizenship and confiscated his property, and despite his illness with skin cancer, Vacirca fully cooperated with Corvo by composing the first appeals for psychological warfare aimed at Sicilians. His commitment was total.²⁰ Among others in the New York Italian American community whom Corvo contacted to obtain support in the effort to overthrow Mussolini's government was the energetic Girolamo Valenti, muckraking editor of an Italian-language Socialist weekly whose sleuthing instincts kept congressmen aware of fascist activities. Another key figure enlisted by Corvo was Luigi Antonini, the elegant and mannerly labor leader who wore a large flamboyant black butterfly tie to express his opposition to oppression, and who influenced tens of thousands of Italian American workers in the needle trades.²¹

From Brooklyn, New York, Corvo enlisted the OSS Sicilian-born (1905) Victor Anfuso, who had immigrated with his family in 1914 and who settled in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. He was educated in New York City's public schools, received a law degree from Brooklyn Law School, and became active in many Italian American community affairs including the Italian Board of Guardians, a privately funded non-profit Social Services Agency offering assistance in English and Italian.²² Anfuso joined the OSS in 1943 working in the Mediterranean Theater of operations which earned him a Certificate of Merit. In 1950 Anfuso was elected to Congress from a Brooklyn Italian American enclave, continuing to advocate in behalf of Italy in the dangerous cold war atmosphere arguing, "She is the fortress we need to combat Communist infiltration in Africa and the Mediterranean area."²³

In Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, Corvo also met with stalwart anti-Fascist Sicilian Catholic priest Fr. Luigi Sturzo who had assisted his father's departure from Sicily and his further settlement in Middletown. A noted cleric and a politician then living in Brooklyn, Fr. Sturzo was one of Mussolini's most hated adversaries. An unswerving champion of liberty and democracy, he spent 22 years in exile during which time he wrote dozens of articles, essays, and treatises denouncing Fascism. He was the subject of spying by Fascist police and suffered criticism by Catholic Church leaders,

but he continued to display astounding courage, humility, and determination, speaking in behalf of liberty and justice. Upon his return to Italy in 1946, 22 years after his exile and no longer in good health, he was honored as a co-founder of Italy's Christian democracy and the Italian People's Party, and made senator for life in the Italian parliament.²⁴

In the course of recruiting anti-Fascist Italian Americans Corvo met with labor leader Giuseppe Lupis, editor of an anti-Fascist monthly, and eminent and influential historian Gaetano Salvemini. Corvo enlisted Socialist Chicagoan Egidio Clemente, a foremost labor activist editor who subsequently became editor of the persuasive journal *La Parola del Popolo*, a publication that reached the conscience of social democrats in Europe as well as in America.²⁵ In Chicago Corvo contacted Sicilian-born noted anti-Fascist Giuseppe Borgese, the highly regarded academician at the University of Chicago who exercised wide influence with a number of people including former New York governor Charles Poletti who also came to hold a major administrative position in liberated Italy. Although there were many anti-fascists within Italian Americana it bears remembering that it was not until after the USA entered the war that rank and file Italian Americans heeded their warnings.

In any event, the "Little Italy's" of the big cities proved susceptible to much of Mussolini's theatrical propaganda as can be seen by an examination of the Italo-American press...It must be repeated, though, that such people were much less influential with Italo-Americans than they were with academic and certain other groups in the New World.²⁶

The reality was that there was some support for Fascism within the Italian community, a backing that rested on a combination of nationalistic and philosophic assertions. Agostino De Biasi, one of the most articulate apologists of Fascism in America, expressed it as follows:

The ancient dream of us immigrants, it is the dream that made us suffer, humiliation, discouragement, in *diminutio captis* [loss of status] planned by a foreigner not better educated than us, but always treating us unjustly and arrogantly...

Fascism in America, whether it is organized in squads or professed as a national creed, promises solidarity to the rulers of the Fatherland's destiny. It asks corresponding solidarity. Fascism means justice and fidelity, union and harmony.²⁷

NOTES

1. See James V. Annino, *Arrivederci Melilli, hello Middletown: A concise history of the first families from Melilli, Sicily, to settle in Middletown, Connecticut, U.S.A.*, 1980.
2. Shawn R. Beals, "Sicilian Transplants Help Give Middletown Its Unique Identity," *Hartford Courant*, August 09, 2014, observed that while many Connecticut towns have a distinct European heritage, it is rare to find one so thoroughly transplanted from a single location.
3. See "Sicily: Her Role in The Mediterranean Conflict A Paper on the Sicilian People and Their Island," *Corvo Papers*, Trinity College Archives.
4. *Corvo Papers*, Trinity College Archives, Folder: Earl Brennan.
5. Earl Brennan, "O.S.S. and the Italian Contribution," *La Parola del Popolo*, Anno 68, Vol. XXVI, Settembre-Ottobre, 1976, 257–266, 260.
6. Ezio Costanzo, *The Mafia and the Allies*, Enigma Books, 2007, 86–87.
7. See J. Crampton, "Arthur Robinson and the Creation of America's First Spy Agency," *Georgia State University*.
8. Earl Brennan, "OSS and the Italian Contribution," *La Parola del Popolo*, Anno 68, Vol. XXVI Settembre-Ottobre, 1976, 257–272, 270. Emilio T. Caruso, "I Gruppi Operativi Italo-Americano Dell," *Office of Strategic Service*, 36–43.
9. Costanzo, *The Mafia and the Allies*, 78.
10. *Gli Americani e la Guerra Librazione in Italia*, 37. Costanzo, *The Mafia and the Allies*, 78.
11. Fabio Fernando Rizi, *Benedetto Croce and Italian Fascism*, University of Toronto Press, 2003, 85–87; Glen Yeadon, *The Nazi Hydra*, 237.
12. Charles Delzell, *Mussolini's Enemies: The Anti-Fascist Resistance*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1961, 34.
13. Max Corvo, "War-time controversy over Vatican-OSS relations renewed by 'declassification'" *Executive Intelligence Review*, February 5, 1985, Volume 12, Number 5, 56–59.
14. Author *interview* of Max Corvo, July 23, 1975.
15. W.E.B. Griffin, *The Double Agents: A Men at War Novel*, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2007.

16. "The Trip to New York," Report, *Corvo Papers*, Folder: Early Days, Trinity College Archives. Corvo, *The OSS in Italy*, 24.
17. Hartford *Courant*, November 27, 2004. McIntosh, Elizabeth P., *Sisterhood of Spies: The Women of the OSS*, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, Maryland, 1998, 92, 125.
18. Brennan, *O.S.S. Contributions*, 263.
19. Corvo, *The OSS in Italy*, 18.
20. Costanza, *The Mafia and the Allies*, 81.
21. John Patrick Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism: The View From America*, 137–138.
22. *Brooklyn Eagle*, May 14, 1940.
23. *Greenpoint Weekly Star*, January 27, 1956.
24. *Brooklyn Eagle*, September 13, 1946, 3. Corvo, 19–20.
25. Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, 139.
26. Delzell, *Mussolini's Enemies*, 199–200.
27. Agostino De Biasi, "Fascism in America," *Italoamericana*, edited by Francesco Durante and Robert Viscusi, Fordham University Press, New York, 2014, 715–722.

Agents Extraordinaire

Myrtle Quinn. Although males comprised the overwhelming majority of OSS personnel especially in the Italian section, there were exceptions. One was Mirtella (Myrtle) Vacirca Quinn, born in Massachusetts in 1916, and the daughter of unshakable anti-Fascist Vincenzo Vacirca, who graduated from Brooklyn College and became a labor organizer. She then married Robert Jennings Quinn who was regrettably killed in action during the early phases of World War II. Seeking to do her part, Myrtle left her job as a union organizer and went to work in a defense plant that produced airplanes, becoming the first woman inspector of motors—a position that brought a degree of esteem—but it was not enough; she sought to do more for her country and volunteered for the Women’s Army Corp before making the momentous transition to the OSS in 1943. A diminutive woman, Myrtle withstood routinely strenuous combat troop training including the stimulating action inherent in drills, ceremonies, marching miles with a back pack, and climbing rope ladders, in addition to learning about judo and chemical warfare. Given her father’s deep OSS involvement and the talents with which she was gifted, namely, a keen sharp mind, multilingual skills, knowledge of various European countries, and organizing experience, she was naturally sought after as an interpreter and analyst. In 1944 she was assigned to Italy, a position she regarded as very special: “War was being fought in my father’s country, and I wanted to participate in it directly.”

In addition to collecting intelligence as an OSS analyst, Myrtle performed a significant amount of “fieldwork,” such as setting up Italian “shadow” corporations to facilitate funding for Partisan activities, obtaining safe houses for field agents, and mingling with Italian socialites. All of these duties significantly helped the OSS operational groups, including the 13-man unit that worked with the Partisans who ultimately captured Mussolini and his mistress near the Swiss border on April 27, 1945.

Wearing only size 4½ boots, the petite woman who operated in a predominantly male environment became one of about 4500 women OSS agents and staffers. Sergeant Vacirca was a member of a tiny, elite, and legendary force that included Julia Child, Elizabeth McIntosh, and many other well-known along with anonymous women who voluntarily left “their work, their lives, and their loves to make a difference when the world was at war.”¹ Even though the OSS collaborated with Italian Partisans to bring about the defeat of Mussolini’s government throughout the second half of the war, there remained concern over the influence of Partisan Communists, namely, that they must be thwarted in attempts to manipulate the situation to their advantage.² Myrtle, together with Max Corvo and others, were intent on using their positions to shrink Communist influence. Therefore when she learned that a US plan to renege on benefits promised to partisans by the War Department was about to be exploited by Communist elements, she says, “I started pestering Washington with a series of cablegrams. I told them that this was going to play right into the hands of communist propaganda.”³ Her action led to a program to bypass bureaucratic obstacles wherein Myrtle was given a stash of cash and a bodyguard to locate Italian widows and orphans in the countryside and obtain releases for payments to compensate partisan families for their losses. “I had a duffel bag between my legs and a machine gun in my lap. It was no easy task.” She remained in Italy for a time following the war, and, after earning a doctorate at the University of Palermo, returned with her two children to the USA and worked for the Italian consulate in New York City, before a long career with the New York City Department of Social Services. In 2009, at age 94, Myrtle Vacirca Quinn reflected on her OSS career. For years the fact that she and other OSS women endured the same training and preparation as men, and as women were even more vulnerable had never been acknowledged; belatedly but finally the serious omission was rectified in 2010 when at age 95 she was awarded the Congressional Certificate for World War II.

Julia Cuniberti. Julia Cuniberti, born in Washington, DC, in 1923, was the daughter of an Italian immigrant and lawyer from a well-to-do Tuscan family who owned La Palazzina, a lovely villa in Italy. While the family lived in Europe for several years during the 1930s she attended elementary school in Paris, and the Lycee Chateaubriand in Rome. She also frequently visited the family home, La Palazzina Villa, outside of Bologna and came to know the estate intimately in all its detail: the huge fireplaces and copper pots, its murals, and the music room. She thus acquired important knowledge and familiarity about Italian customs, language, and geography. At one point in 1939, she and her father narrowly escaped from France just before its frontier borders were closed. Her studies and graduation from the Madeira School in McLean, Virginia, and Vassar College in New York rendered her fluent in Italian, French, and German while simultaneously becoming part of the Washington, DC, social scene which included Jean Wallace Douglas, a debutante friend and daughter of the nation's vice president. Unbeknown to Julia, Jean, already a member of the OSS, was the person who made the first overtures to Julia about joining the secret organization to aid the country.

The outbreak of war found the Italian members of the extended Cuniberti family moving into La Palazzina Villa hoping that its isolated remote hilltop location would provide a haven from the fighting and the bombing. Unfortunately, intensified hostilities in late 1944 and early 1945 in central and northern Italy between anti-fascist Italian partisans and Nazi occupation and Fascist forces brought the conflict closer to the Cuniberti home in the town of Pavullo nel Frignano until at one point the Nazis had taken control of the Cuniberti Villa and converted it into a headquarters and observation point. Back in Washington 21-year-old Julia had become intrigued with notion of offering her services in behalf of the war effort—she would join the OSS where she was assigned to registry in Special Intelligence (SI) which routed cables for the Italian desk.

I had been kind of sniffing around for a war job when I was recruited by Jean Wallace Douglas, the daughter of the vice president. I did not know it then, but Jean was already with the OSS. She called me and said that with my languages, I really needed to be down here. I asked her what she meant by down here but she wouldn't say. She arranged for me to have an interview with the OSS. They still did not say what the job was but they told me I was in.⁴

In the course of her OSS work which was to set up files, transfer them to SI, then quickly forget what she had just read, Julia learned that the Cuniberti Villa had become the target of Allied bombing raids and Partisan attacks. “You can imagine my reaction. I couldn’t notify my uncle and aunts and cousins. I could only pray!”⁵ Dutifully she revealed this information to her superiors, but could not contact her family because it would involve an obvious breach in security. She continued her prayers in their behalf while the family survived. During her OSS career Julia Cuniberti served in assignments in Washington, DC, England, Germany, and Switzerland. Her postwar activities included working as an illustrator, teacher, and freelance graphic designer until she passed away in Washington, DC, at age 90.

Stephen Rossetti. Stephen Rossetti, an Italian American from Charlestown, Massachusetts, who lived one of the most incomparable OSS careers, graduated from Boston English High School and the Bentley School of Accounting before he joined the Army in 1941. Beginning as a private, he rose to the rank of sergeant, and, after attending Officer Training School, became an officer. Seeking hazardous duty he volunteered for the OSS, underwent rigorous training in clandestine operations specializing in behind-the-lines infiltration commencing with the Allied landing at Salerno—the first invasion of Italy’s mainland on September 3, 1943. Ever the impetuous soldier, Rossetti was frustrated at first when his outfit’s forward action was circumscribed by a front line stalemate that led to his assignment to a transportation job, a seemingly minor function which others might have regarded a welcome respite from perilous duty, but which he vociferously disdained by offering crude suggestions as to what a superior officer could do with the order. For his impolitic offense he was rewarded with confinement to quarters for six weeks until one morning when the enemy laid down a heavy barrage of artillery and smoke shells upon his holding area, he was ordered to pack all his gear and report to a certain OSS villa in Naples early that evening to fight against the fascists who had fired on them. Little did he realize that he would be assigned to the very locality where his father was born.

We returned their fire, our first shots of the war against the enemy—and they quickly dispersed. Our immediate objective was Avellino, which by a strange coincidence was the birthplace of my father. Here we spotted our first German troops, and because we were dressed in American uniforms, our agents thought they had better strike off for Naples on their own.

Accordingly we dispatched them about eighteen miles from Naples, and started back through the fields for the American lines. Our trip to Avellino had taken us only a day and a half; but on the way back, we ran into some serious trouble that was to keep us travelling four days and nights.⁶

Like other young, energetic, and impatient men of the OSS, Rossetti was tired of the seemingly endless time spent just waiting around; he was eager to be involved in real action. He was overjoyed when he realized he was assigned to join other OSS men who were dressed for combat and wearing side arms. Finally he was going on a mission. Assigned to a villa supervised by Joe Savoldi of Notre Dame Football fame, Rossetti was impressed with the treatment he and other OSS men received including cocktails followed by an elaborate dinner. Soon afterward Rossetti's wish for action came to pass. "Someone started shooting. The enemy returned our fire, but our automatic weapons were too much for them."⁷

After escaping from the fire of German soldiers Rossetti and his small OSS contingent finally penetrated the jittery American outposts only to encounter another kind of problem from friendly forces—it was a difficulty other behind-enemy-line agents faced when they met American troops who were unacquainted with the OSS and naturally mistrustful.

At first they were very suspicious of us, having never heard of OSS, but finally we were identified at the Corps level. This was the first American ground infiltration of agents in the Italian campaign. Our men made their way successfully into Naples where they set up radios and for several weeks sent through much valuable information to the advancing Allied forces.

It was the first time behind enemy lines for all of us, and we were naturally a little jumpy...Our immediate objective was Avellino, which by a strange coincidence was the birthplace of my father. Here we spotted our first German troops.⁸

Joe Savoldi. Surely one of the most colorful OSS operatives was celebrity Giuseppe Savoldi (Jumping Joe Savoldi), star football player at University of Notre Dame and world champion of professional wrestling. The renowned athlete, born in 1908, grew up in Castano Primo near Milan, Italy, where he spent the next 12 years before joining his parents in Three Oaks, Michigan, entering school there as an over-age and over-sized third grader speaking broken English.⁹ He was blessed with a large muscular body and was extremely strong—a development which he attributed to an impoverished childhood in Italy when at age 11 during World War

I he was forced to tote ammunition crates for the army to supplement the family's slim budget.¹⁰ He graduated from high school as a leading athlete and was awarded a football scholarship to Notre Dame University in South Bend, Indiana. Still, he was having such difficulty with the English language that in the huddle his exasperated teammate Quarterback Frank Carideo, also of Italian heritage, resorted to using Italian to explain the signals to him. As related in a whimsical article by a Notre Dame fan:

Truth be told, Jumping Joe's grid prowess was fueled by more than headlines that season of '29. Carideo was observed on several plays hissing something in his buddy's ear before handing him the ball. Time after time the one Italian was seen hissing in the other's ear as the Irish roared to the national championship.

It was only when the season was over that Jumping Joe felt at liberty to reveal the ominous message. Carideo threatened to cut his heart out unless he made a gain every time he handed him the ball, Joe grinned.

I couldn't take a chance with little Frank Carideo. He's a pretty hot-headed guy—there's no telling what a crazy little Italian would do when he's mad. "I know, I'm Italian too."¹¹

Although legendary coach Knute Rockne considered Savoldi an elegant athlete, Joe's awkward gait was simply a way of feinting defenders. He gained immediate notice by running a 100-yard kickoff return for a touchdown in his inaugural game by jumping over goal line defenders and thereby earned the epithet "Galloping Joe." Savoldi instantly became a source of pride within the Italian American community as demonstrated in an Italian American periodical which cited him as an example of the growing number of Italian Americans playing football—presumably a sure sign of ethnic group acceptance and assimilation.¹² Notwithstanding this auspicious pigskin inauguration supplemented by additional stellar performances that led Notre Dame to national championships in 1929 and 1930, he also attracted unwelcome notoriety and was dropped from the school when it was learned that he had secretly married, in violation of the school's no marriage policy for athletes. Not daunted, Savoldi signed a contract to play professional football in the backfield for the Chicago Bears, alongside immortal legends Red Grange and Bronko Nagurski. But after a few games during which he excelled, he left that sport for the wrestling ring being promised more money in a single wrestling match than he would make during the entire football season. Perfecting his flying kicks Savoldi became world wrestling champion in 1933. He continued

his wrestling career throughout the 1930 decade, touring various countries throughout the world including Italy before World War II where he was reputed to have earned handsome amounts for his exhibitions, but which were reportedly confiscated by Mussolini. Savoldi also became a wrestling promoter—his name was so intimately linked with wrestling that others coopted it; immigrant Mario Louis Fornini, who became a professional wrestler, for instance, adopted the name “Angelo Savoldi” and even though unrelated to Joe billed himself as the brother of Joe Savoldi.

Shortly before the war Joe Savoldi began a business venture promoting a popular soft drink named “Dropkick” which was advertised as the “drink for all Americans” and a beverage that was supposed to be served on Notre Dame’s campus and its football stadium back in 1942. The outbreak of war and government sugar rationing crippled production and the drink vanished apparently with his entire investment. (In 2003 an online item appeared that told about plans by Savoldi’s grandson to resurrect the drink concept.)

It was no surprise that Donovan saw in Savoldi an ideal recruit for the Italian operation, namely, a big, strong natural athlete born in Italy, so at home with the Italian language and customs that he could easily blend in within the populace to conduct clandestine activities. He possessed, in addition, knowledge of multiple Italian dialects and French. Recruited in 1942 and sent to OSS training in Maryland’s Catocin Mountain Park, the 34-year-old, known only by his code name “Vic,” utilized unusual wrestling techniques that stunned his OSS instructor when he leaped at him feet first, caught him around the legs, toppling him and pinning him down to the ground. Asked about the technique Savoldi said, “That’s my specialty in the ring. It’s called the flying scissors.”¹³ A tongue-in-cheek observation of his OSS association harkened to his wrestling days when while on tour in Italy “taking on all comers and sending Rome’s best grapplers flying through the ropes with his famous drop-kick only to have Mussolini’s Fascists confiscate his purse when the tour was over, Jumping Joe, properly aggrieved, viewed the OSS mission as a crusade to make Italy safe for honest wrestlers.”¹⁴ Savoldi’s OSS position was uncommon in that he was a civilian attached to military forces. Joe did not talk a great deal about his wartime experience, a ringing illustration of how seriously he took the OSS oath of secrecy. While on infiltration assignment he was kept busy helping to break up an Italian black market ring and assisting in the capture of hijackers, notwithstanding the peril in having his cover being blown by a chance meeting with a Chicago *Tribune*

war correspondent in Italy.¹⁵ That Savoldi exercised restraint in divulging much information about his OSS activities is such an understatement that it prompted a sports reporter to depict him as “one of the war’s mystery men.” Attributing the attraction of the OSS to Savoldi’s triple threat endowments—his languages, intelligence, and brawn—a reporter’s January 1945 interview of Savoldi upon his return after 18 months of OSS assignments provides ample evidence of the constraint exercised.

“I was not permitted to say much about my duties overseas. You see I am still subject to recall if they need me again.” Asked about his Army service, he responded “I wasn’t in the army. Let’s say I wasn’t in anything. Let’s just say I was working for the government on special assignment. Yes I am permitted to tell what areas I visited. They were North Africa, Sicily, Italy—including Salerno, and France—including Normandy. Yes I was under fire several times. No I wasn’t wounded. This scar on my cheek and these cauliflower ears came before the war.”¹⁶

Savoldi’s reticence to speak about his OSS work extended even to sharing his activity with his wife Lois. While he went to work for the OSS she remained in their home and communicated with him via letters that were dispatched in a diplomatic pouch. She received occasional messages saying “Our friend is all right,” but otherwise was told nothing about his whereabouts and activities when he dropped out of sight and went overseas. She had to rely on the writings of his OSS colleagues that became available years later to learn more about the actual exploits that produced Joe’s disturbing nightmares in the postwar period. Given his eagerness to sign autographs for American soldiers Savoldi’s restraint about OSS matters is somewhat incongruous since it contradicted the admonition for agents to be inconspicuous. Regardless of the policy he continued to sign autographs even while he carried out his OSS assignments.

Even before the end of fighting the American high command was well aware of how important it was to develop a list of Italian scientists and engineers whose knowledge and expertise could be brought into the fray on the Allied side. Much like the later and better-known U.S. Army success in obtaining the services of leading German scientists Wehrner von Braun and hundreds of his colleagues, the Allied command in Italy focused on getting Italian scientists, technicians, and engineers to work for the USA. The prevailing view among Allied leaders was that Italian naval accomplishments merited military focus. Knowledge of Italy’s naval strength so impressed British Prime Minister Winston Churchill who, in

his excessive eagerness, foresaw that after Italy's acceptance of the armistice terms there would be 100 Italian warships ready to do important work for the Allies and that accordingly nothing must be done to cause Italy to scuttle its fleet. Recognizing that Italy's military value as a co-belligerent primarily rested on its naval ships, docks, and port facilities, General Eisenhower stated the point succinctly on November 15, 1943. "The Italian naval strength is the only military factor of importance to us at this time."¹⁷

Against this background Allied leaders planned an operation to obtain the cooperation of prominent Italian naval figures. The OSS was given the task of locating and safeguarding a number of these individuals, entrusting a specific assignment to Savoldi who was teamed him up with another OSS legend Michael Burke, all-American football player from Cornell University in the "McGregor Mission," an enterprise designed to convince Italian admirals to surrender their fleet. According to Burke the idea was attributed to Palomino Geri, a wealthy New York Italian American silk merchant who had informed Donovan that another prominent Italian American, journalist Marcello Giroi, could be persuaded to influence his brother, Italian Admiral Massimo Giroi, to abandon the fascist government.¹⁸

The elaborate MacGregor Mission that called for the team to be led by OSS Chief of Special Projects John Shaheen and Marcello Giroi, along with key OSS agents Savoldi and Burke, was approved by President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox in a plan historian Patrick K. O'Donnell called "wildly ambitious." Unaware that the Italian Navy had already set sail for Malta where it would soon surrender to the British, the Shaheen assignment projected landing in Salerno for the purpose of locating and convincing Italian naval leaders to surrender—the order subsequently was modified to that of intelligence gathering.

Burke portrayed Savoldi as a giant of a man "built like a gorilla and moved as lightly as a leopard. His wrestler's face had been mashed against the ring canvas a thousand times. He was enthusiastic; I thought he would be perfect. He would terrify Giroi and maybe the entire Italian fleet."¹⁹ Savoldi's assignment was to serve as the bodyguard for Italian Admiral Giroi, a Supreme Commander of the Italian fleet, who would then be spirited to the USA. The MacGregor team procured a high-speed patrol-torpedo (PT) boat to transport the unit to the island of Capri where they were informed about new and potentially harmful German inventions: a radio-guided bomb as well as the deadly new magnetic-activated torpedo.

Notwithstanding the importance of the intelligence gained, historian Patrick K. O'Donnell maintained that "The operation was a bit of a farce since nobody bothered to inform the McGregor team that the Italian navy had already agreed to surrender to the British at Malta."²⁰

Savoldi's special assignment as bodyguard for Marcello Giroi was to personally infiltrate him behind enemy lines to meet with his brother Admiral Massimo Giroi in order to effect the Italian Navy's capitulation. Savoldi took the obligation most seriously—perhaps too seriously—shadowing Marcello "day and night, tiptoeing behind him ponderously from room to room, sleeping in the adjoining bed and wakening him several times a night to ask if were still there. Wherever Marcello Giroi went he was followed by Joe, who was followed in turn by a group of adoring enlisted men pleading with him to show them his wrestling holds. After a week, Giroi began to long for the comparative peace of the villa in Algiers."²¹ Determined to get Marcello behind German lines Savoldi brooked no obstacle. When at one point on a crowded road an Arab gate-tender held up the jeep carrying Savoldi and Marcello Giroi, "Joe vaulted out of the jeep in a single bound, grabbed the gate-tender, hoisted him overhead in a flying mare that had brought wrestling audiences to their feet from Maine to Frisco, and the Arab disappeared in a swirl of robes and skirts and pointed slippers. Joe lifted the gate with one hand and motioned the jeep through. They caught the plane just as it was taxing down the strip."²² There can be little question that Savoldi took his OSS assignment seriously right up to his final separation from Marcello Giroi. "Jumping Joe was on hand to say good-bye, and he wrung Giroi's hand with emotion. In a husky voice he reminded Mr. Giroi that if he ever needed a bodyguard again, he knew what to do. Giroi, strengthening his crushed fingers, assured them that he did."²³

The involvement of Savoldi and other OSS agents in the task of obtaining vital information about the enemy's latest research in naval weaponry was considered extremely important because the American Navy had been plagued with defective torpedoes that failed to explode in combat. Accordingly, the Navy was quite anxious to study Italy's detonator developed by Carlo Calossi, Italy's leading radio and radar scientist, who worked under Admiral Eugenio Minisini of the Italian Navy engineering department.²⁴ The establishment of contact with Admiral Minisini, a naval engineer and authority on torpedoes who was credited with inventing important naval ordnance and who, with a selected group of Italian engineers and technicians, came to the Naval Base in Newport, Rhode

Island, to help Americans develop technology applicable for improving American torpedo usage, underscored the value of the mission. It was a definite triumph for the OSS.²⁵

The exceedingly critical military value of this kind of activity unfortunately has received little acknowledgment because of the prevailing distrust of Italians and a persistent depreciation of their marine expertise. This disdainful attitude rendered it awkward for the USA to admit that perhaps it was the farthest behind when it came to the type of stealth naval actions that the Italians had pioneered and developed and that in 1942, by comparison, Americans simply did not have the special operation units. "The Americans were reluctant to admit that they had anything to learn from Italians and their adroit foot-dragging on a project approved by the secretary of the navy and the president was in the best bureaucratic tradition."²⁶ This condescending mentality could and did result in flouting the reality that the Italian Navy had developed valuable naval military advances. Its accomplishments in this regard were of long standing and had become evident during World War I when Italy became the first nation to successfully deploy a torpedo boat in warfare as a two-man crew destroyed an Austrian-Hungarian vessel in October 1918. The Italian Navy, moreover, continued to perfect the practice of sneak attack crafts during World War II employing a number of techniques such as the simple single swimmer dressed in a tight-fitting rubber suit to protect against the cold. The water warrior was armed with swimming fins and a single oxygen bottle breathing device that gave the swimmer one half hour of time to swim under a vessel and plant an explosive. Another technique revolved around a one- or two-man torpedo boat with extensive ranges. The result was that despite overall Allied naval supremacy, Italian sneak craft delivered enormous damage in the Mediterranean Sea, with the sinking of two British battleships and a tanker in the harbor of Alexandria on December 19, 1941, being the most dramatic example. On that date Italian Commander Junio Valerio Borghese, scion of a prominent Roman noble family and commander of the submarine *Scire*, transported six sailors (frogmen) equipped with the latest devices and trained to maneuver torpedoes into the Egyptian harbor. Entering the harbor undetected, they planted huge limpet mines capable of blasting a hole in a merchant ship or crippling a capital ship—actually there were four 40-pound explosives armed with four-hour-delay time fuses under the keels of the *Valiant*, the HMS *Queen Elizabeth*, and a Norwegian ship that were soon detonated knocking those vessels out of commission for several months. It was a

major triumph for the Axis powers that destroyed 80,000 tons of Allied shipping that was sunk in Alexandria's harbor. Adding to Allied concern was the knowledge that the German Navy, emulating the Italians, subsequently sank a number of ships at Gibraltar. Inflicting such severe damage in traditional sea battles would be considered a colossal accomplishment; that it was conducted by a handful of men made it all the more impressive—it represented a dramatic change of fortunes against the Allies.²⁷

Known as the “Black Prince,” the controversial Borghese conducted other operations up to the time of the Italian surrender in September 1943 that resulted in an estimated total destruction of almost 200,000 tons of Allied shipping. An ardent Fascist and a fierce anti-Communist, Borghese worked with the Germans after Mussolini's downfall, as part of the *Decima Flottaglia Mas* or *X-Mas* unit that was active in the Mediterranean Sea where it invented new techniques of commando assault warfare. While this background elevated the esteem in which the Italian Navy was held it also meant that Borghese had become a Communist Partisan target.²⁸ Among the Italian Navy's masterpieces of engineering was the construction of superior PT boats that were shorter than American built PT craft (55 feet compared to 77 feet) that made for greater maneuverability and speed, albeit a bumpier ride.²⁹ It sometimes has taken decades to acknowledge the level of valuable scientific knowledge gleaned by the OSS. Thus an October 2014 newspaper account about ongoing and accelerating research on hypersonic flights in a state-of-the-art Long Island, New York plant, attributes the beginning of this research to Italian scientist Antonio Ferri who was spirited out of Italy by the OSS during the war.³⁰

Savoldi returned to the wrestling circuit following the war but arthritis soon ended his career in the ring and he faded into relative obscurity working primarily as a manager and promoter. He discovered, trained, and helped launch the professional wrestling career of Houston (“Bobo Brazil”) Harris, the first successful African American professional wrestler who was credited with integrating the sport. Savoldi refereed a few wrestling matches, made some guest appearances on TV programs, briefly had his own sports radio show, and worked in the insurance business. In 1962, at age 54, he returned to college, earned his teaching credentials, and became a high school science teacher in Henderson, Kentucky, where he continued until his death in 1974, at the age of 65. A plaque at Henderson High School honors his memory.³¹

Stephen J. Capestro. Born in Brooklyn, New York, as a young boy Stephen J. Capestro moved with his family to New Jersey where he attended

school and where he excelled as a four-sport athlete at Toms River High School. He attended Franklin and Marshall University on a football scholarship and continued his education at Rutgers University where he excelled in football. Upon graduation Stephen entered the Army, became part of the OSS, and was assigned to a SO training camp in Algeria, where under the tutelage of Jack Hemingway, son of the famous author, he underwent intensive parachute training and practiced field exercises day and night in preparation for any eventuality. As an example, Capestro and other trainees in full uniforms were dropped off in the Algerian countryside with only a compass and a hand-drawn map to find their way back to headquarters amid indigenous people, Berbers and Arabs, who, sensing the Americans were aiding the French regain their land as a colony, often proved hostile. Capestro found night exercises in that atmosphere full of danger.

The difference is, for example, taking training overseas behind enemy lines, or lines that aren't friendly lines [such as Arab North Africa] and doing training in the United States...There's a hell of a difference. If you're on a highway in Virginia, and you hitch-hike home, there's no problem. In North Africa, I didn't know. If the people came out, they could have been enemies. They could have robbed me personally or attacked me out of hate for the Americans. Because on many nights on training sessions in North Africa, I saw them, their looks, and their snarling dogs. I could tell they were saying nasty, nasty things. On training missions if they found you alone, what would happen? They might have hijacked your wallet or worse. It concerned me. I just didn't know.³²

Ernest L Cuneo. Few OSS men could match the incredible multifaceted career of Ernest Cuneo: lawyer, presidential advisor, newspaperman, author, professional football player, and intelligence liaison factor. Ernest was a member of the illustrious Cuneo family of Genoa, Italy, which immigrated to the USA in the nineteenth century. While one branch of the family went to San Francisco and became associated with the Bank of America and another branch went to Chicago where it became hugely successful in the printing business, Ernest's branch of family went to New York where his father owned a scrap metal plant and a ship repair/marine hardware business. Because Ernie's parents arrived in the USA as infants, English, not Italian, became the main language spoken at the Carlstadt, New Jersey, home where Ernest was born in 1908. Thus despite the family's ethnic roots, "I spoke no Italian and seldom heard any at home."³³ A brilliant student Ernest was able to acquire knowledge at high speed and recall it

instantly years later. At an unimposing height of 5'9" and a hefty 195 lbs., he possessed and displayed superior athletic abilities at East Rutherford High School, Columbia University, and Penn State University playing varsity football in both colleges—becoming an All-American member at Columbia; he also played two years of professional football. At Columbia he came under the influence of three liberal professors: Adolf J. Berle, Jr., William O. Douglas, and Drew Pearson who instilled in him lasting liberal principles that became part of his public persona. Simultaneously he worked for the New York *Daily News* where he developed his unique writing style that enabled him to become a highly successful columnist. Upon obtaining a law degree from St. John's University he became law secretary to New York Congressman Fiorello H. LaGuardia, demonstrating adeptness at briefing LaGuardia about ongoing investigations of judicial malpractice and fraudulent bankruptcies.

Cuneo's Italian roots stemmed from unphlegmatic Genoa, while LaGuardia's ancestry was from the more expansive and artistic region of Foggia. While the two did not engage in chauvinistic boasting about their Italian background, it was infuriating to both to hear cheap Italian politicians brag about Italy's culture in broken English to polyglot audiences. Even though not preoccupied with the subject, they were fully aware of their ethnic heritage and very sensitive to events that could cast the ethnic group in a negative light. They expressed concern when an Italian name was attached to the perpetrator of a horrendous crime such as the news that the Lindbergh baby had been kidnapped. It drew a fierce LaGuardia comment that was echoed by Cuneo.

"I hope that bastard kidnaper doesn't turn out to be Italian." So did I. The Italian immigration had occurred only three decades before, and its publicized effects upon the country were mostly lamentable, centering around tabloid headlines about the Capones, Fiaschettis, Costellos, and similar scum of gangland. These lice were as typical of the Italian immigrant as John Dillinger was typical of the American Midwesterner. People knew John Dillinger wasn't representative, but they tended to think of Capone as a prototype of the Italian-American.³⁴

A degree of anti-Italianism already apparent, now intensified, undoubtedly in response to the March 1, 1932, kidnapping of famed aviator Charles Lindbergh's oldest son, which was one of the most publicized stories of the century attracting widespread attention and multiple offers of help including, interestingly, one from then Colonel William Donovan,

future chief of the OSS. There were rumors also of aid in recovering the child from known Italian American mobsters. The tragic incident inspired mystery writer Agatha Christie to identify a fictional character with the Italian name of Cassetti, as the kidnapper in her famous book *Murder on the Orient Express* that was published in England in 1934. This was prior to the arrest, conviction, and execution of a German immigrant as the perpetrator. In his LaGuardia biography, Cuneo relates the role played by LaGuardia during World War I when he secretly represented the USA in obtaining needed materials for its ally, Italy. Cuneo was impressed with LaGuardia's promise never to reveal his contact; it was the same code sworn to by OSSers and prompted Cuneo to recall his own clandestine wartime experience. "I was very impressed at the time, but having been a cloak and dagger bucko myself in the last war, the situation doesn't seem so spectacular now."³⁵ Cuneo's close association with LaGuardia left such a deep imprint that in 1955 he felt impelled to write *Life With Fiorello*, a popular biographical memoir that substantially was the basis of the Tony Award-winning Broadway musical *Fiorello*.

As his career matured Cuneo grew both in influence and in physical size (ballooning to about 300 lbs.) inspiring not merely descriptive caricature, but also appreciation for his gifts. Acknowledged as extraordinarily erudite and popular, Cuneo made deep impressions on many, including wealthy Ivor Bryce, who became an intimate Cuneo friend in the latter part of World War II.

He is the repository of innumerable secrets; is on intimate terms with the denizens of the corridors of power; and his advice, as can easily be imagined, is widely sought by the famous. So is his company. It is not surprising that this eminence grise of Washington and New York became a most useful as well as a most dear friend to Sir William Stephenson. Ernie was of great help to us in the war and when I met him and became a friend of his I considered myself lucky indeed. He is a wonderful companion, to whom I am indebted for countless happy and laughter-filled hours, and the enormous bulk of wisdom I have not learnt from him is due entirely to my limited ability to learn enough of that which he has the unlimited ability to teach.³⁶

To journalist Neal Gabler, Ernest was "the affable, erudite associate counsel of the Democratic National Committee [with] small, dancing eyes and a huge swath of a smile." Cuneo was a man of Falstaffian proportions both physically and temperamentally. He was a Renaissance man at home with Greek, Latin, history, science, and English literature. "A florid speaker

with a booming voice given to orotund expression, he could and did quote Shakespeare at the drop of a hat. But he was hardly a dry pedant... His girth testified to the good life, and his spirit was large, generous and infectious." Walter Winchell affectionately called him "Fatso."³⁷

Cuneo's successful literary career included authoring several books, writing nationally syndicated newspaper columns, serving as editor-at-large of the *Saturday Evening Post*, and serving as president of the North American Newspaper Alliance. In the course of a long career Cuneo created a law practice in Washington, DC, served as associate counsel for the Democratic National Committee, a post that led to the development of meaningful ties to President Franklin D. Roosevelt. He was part of a nationwide group of lawyers who sought to advance the Roosevelt agenda. The group, centered in New York City, met informally in the Hotel Lafayette. Significantly, even though Cuneo was by far the junior of the group, he was its most valued member primarily because he was the only one of the group with wide knowledge of how to use the media.³⁸ In addition, as a young unmarried man he was free of concern about money and he could operate full-time. He made a huge impact on President Roosevelt in 1938 when he suggested that the president use the popular press to go over heads of the political professionals to address the nation's masses. Cuneo cleverly enlisted the assistance of gossip columnist Walter Winchell, with whom he had a special relationship, and whose daily newspaper column had a circulation of 27 million that translated to a readership approaching 50 million daily. Also important was the reality that Winchell's weekly radio broadcast on Sunday night reached 89 out of every 100 adults in the country. Cuneo was reputed to have written columns attributed to Winchell that explored national and international aspects of the President's policies.³⁹

This was the fertile background that led to the establishment of a close and unique relationship to one of the reigning powerful and influential columnists and radio reporters of the day: Walter Winchell. Intimating that Cuneo more than merely provided occasional information to selected columnists, a perceptive Winchell observer stated:

Cuneo has undoubtedly offered the largest single contribution to his book of political knowledge and overheated opinion.

It is characteristic of the Winchell story that Cuneo's name never appears in his column and past published accounts of the Winchell saga have regularly overlooked his role...

If this seems like dubious reward for big services Cuneo has rendered. It might be weighed against the fact that Walter Winchell is a well-paying client. Possibly there have been more important vicarious satisfactions for Cuneo in being known in political circles in Washington and New York as “the man who can line up Winchell” in support of a given crusade.

There is no evidence that Cuneo has ever rebelled over the lack of public notice for his efforts. He is fond of telling friends that he loves anonymity.⁴⁰

The long and beguiling Cuneo/Winchell relationship was an association of two brilliant but headstrong individuals. Winchell, better-known, was constantly in the public eye via his newspaper columns and radio broadcasts that swayed millions of people, while Cuneo, less familiar to the public, played a vital role not only as a source of significant information for Winchell, but also one who actually examined Winchell’s texts before broadcasts and made substantial changes in them—some claim he ghostwrote many Winchell columns.

Clearly, Cuneo possessed a rich and resonant background together with a Roosevelt “insider status” in the “Draft Roosevelt” third-term drive. Such credentials obviously rendered him a prime OSS recruit target at the outbreak of World War II.⁴¹ In elucidating Cuneo’s background novelist and air ace Roald Dahl cited his massive appearance as an “affable Falstaffian attorney...every bit as colorful and engaging a character as his former boss.”⁴² With President Roosevelt’s blessings Donovan appointed Cuneo liaison officer between the OSS and its counterpart, the British Security Coordination (BSC). Cuneo worked so seamlessly with BSC that he was given his own code name—“Crusader”—and referred to as a British-born subject. According to one account upon arrival in England he had a middle-of-the-night meeting with Prime Minister Winston Churchill, who, upon learning that Cuneo was a direct descendant of a mariner who accompanied Columbus in the historic 1492 voyage, insisted they commemorate the fact with a drink.⁴³ Cuneo established a close relationship with Stephenson that typified the budding Anglo-American bond. A wealthy man, Stephenson financed British secret intelligence operations in the USA using the cover of innocuous-sounding appellation for the British Passport Control Office located in Rockefeller Center, New York City, for the purpose of maneuvering the USA into war. Among other techniques developed by Intrepid were false documents designed to show how threatening Germany was to American security, including an allegation that Hitler had secret plans to invade South America. Another false

document supposedly placed in Hitler's hands supposedly was a secret Roosevelt plan to carry out a preemptive strike against Germany without a declaration of war. This was said to have played a role in Hitler's decision to declare war against America on December 11, 1941.

Roosevelt had full knowledge of and was in agreement with this but the U.S. Congress knew nothing of this deceitful action. The primary purpose of the organization was to help Roosevelt and Churchill bring America into the war through false propaganda, the creation of false documents, and whatever other means were necessary...Roosevelt stayed in constant contact with Intrepid primarily through an American lawyer by the name of Ernest Cuneo, whose code name was Crusader.⁴⁴

In any event Cuneo was authorized to leak select British intelligence information about Nazi sympathizers and subversives to friendly journalists including Walter Winchell, Drew Pearson, Walter Lippman, and Dorothy Thompson, Edward R. Murrow, and other furtive editors and publishers who supported American intervention in the war. On one occasion Cuneo used his extremely influential OSS position which made him privy to highly confidential matters to help Pearson, then in disfavor with the White House. This enabled Pearson to broadcast the previously suppressed story about Gen. Patton's slapping of a sick American soldier in a Sicilian hospital that consequently threatened to curb the career of America's most popular field general. "Public outrage leads the American Congress to call for Patton's immediate dismissal, even in the face of his battlefield triumphs."⁴⁵

Cuneo's intelligence activity in England led to a particularly warm relationship between the Italian American OSS official and Ian Fleming, British journalist and navy intelligence officer best known for his sensational James Bond spy novels, many of which became highly popular films. They began a close association characterized by vacationing together and sharing many ideas. Their relationship was more than mere friendship—Fleming readily acknowledged that Cuneo deserved credit for the plot of his famous James Bond novel *Thunderball*, stating in his dedication, "To Ernest Cuneo, Muse." For a time Cuneo was teamed up with wealthy Ivar Bryce and Ian Fleming to form the North American Newspaper Alliance. Bryce also became a film producer whose firm Xanadu Films agreed to make the first James Bond film genre, *Thunderball*, for which Cuneo wrote the first draft and which Fleming highly praised.⁴⁶ On one excursion

to Saratoga Springs, New York, Cuneo and Fleming blundered into what was very much a disreputable establishment, filled with gambling habitués—purportedly the genesis of the famous mud-bath incident in the James Bond movie, *Diamonds are Forever*. Fleming manifested his indebtedness by naming a taxi cab driver character in the book *Ernie Cuneo*.

A realist about intelligence matters Cuneo accepted the fact that British intelligence operations went beyond the legal and the ethical, namely, that given the desperate wartime circumstances English espionage agents logically tapped telephones, tampered with mail, disrupted public gatherings, perpetrated forgeries, and probably committed murders in the USA. In the spirit of cooperation Cuneo also passed along a number of secrets to the English intelligence service counterpart, an action that aroused passionate diatribes by critics, one of whom declared, “Cuneo consciously betrayed his country in favor of British objectives.”⁴⁷

Following the war Cuneo married Canadian Margaret Watson, one of Stephenson’s loyal secretaries who had worked as a British counter spy while Ernest returned to practicing law while also writing a syndicated news column, and serving as military analyst for the North American Newspaper Alliance. Eventually he became president of the firm. At the time of his death on March 4, 1988, he was survived by two children. Convinced that he merited wider recognition for services to his country his associates thereupon petitioned in vain for Congress to award him a Presidential Medal of Freedom posthumously.

Frank Monteleone. The fascinating saga of burly and loquacious Brooklyn-born OSS agent Frank Monteleone has come to light in recent years via a documentary (Nancy Schiesari, *Behind The Lines*) and Patrick K. O’Donnell’s 2014 book *First Seals, The Untold Story of the Forging of America’s Most Elite Unit*. These works depict a “down to earth” Sicilian American who became a member of the agency’s elite Maritime Unit (MU) force that was established to carry out commando-style infiltration missions via sea craft. Monteleone conducted dangerous missions some of which entailed night landing on beaches using inflated craft powered by silent electric motors. He and his Italian colleagues fashioned another term for the teardrop-shaped vessel, namely, “tartuga,” Italian for turtle.⁴⁸ Worried about the Italian Navy’s advanced status in underwater operations that had earned it a vaunted reputation in underwater combat highlighted by its pre-Pearl Harbor success against the British Navy during the Battle of the Mediterranean, American intelligence officials were determined to prepare America’s own underwater attack force. The decision

reflected the reality that Italy's *Decima Flottiglia MAS* project had successfully trained frogmen to affix explosives on vessels supposedly safe and docked in harbor which, as has been seen, resulted in dreadful damage including the sinking of some 20 Allied merchant ships and several war ships. Donovan was determined that the OSS must develop its own version of swimmer-commandos.⁴⁹

MU recruits were trained in Washington, DC, area facilities such as the socially prominent and prestigious Congressional Country Club, one of the few clubs in the Washington area with an indoor swimming pool. Accordingly, Montelone underwent a thorough preparation for infiltration that included demolition and hand-to-hand combat and training to become a radio operator. Along with his understanding of Italian his position as a radio operator rendered him essential to the unit as he stated: "The radio operator was the key to the mission." As historian Patrick K. O'Donnell declared, "If you could not send and receive information on missions behind the lines, you were dead." His unit was deployed to the Mediterranean Theater detached to the British Eighth Army.

John Cardinali. Born of Sicilian immigrant parents in Pittsburg, California, in 1921, John Cardinali was one of 12 children whose family then moved to Monterey, California, where it earned a livelihood as part of the hard-working but struggling Italian commercial fishing community. As a youngster attending local schools John also fished out of the harbor of Monterey just like his father. Since his parents had never formally obtained American citizenship the family was severely impacted by America's 1941 entry into war when the Cardinalis, along with many Italian immigrant families along California's west coast, could no longer earn their livelihood by fishing. As "enemy aliens" they could not engage in maritime activity—they were prohibited from fishing or even from visiting the San Francisco waterfront. John's brother's boat was confiscated and the family was forced to move inland where all the Cardinali American-born children were issued special ID cards by the government and subjected to constant surveillance by the FBI and local authorities.⁵⁰ Cardinali maintained that the government kept a suspicious eye on him even after he joined the OSS. "I was kind of mad when they sent my mother and father away," he recalled. "Hell, I was in the service. My brother was in the service. And we were still highly monitored by the FBI and OSS. I was really teed off."⁵¹ Married less than a year to Josephine, he was drafted into the Army in 1942 where he underwent a battery of tests that indicated a strong disposition toward communications, especially radio. He had become so

proficient in communications that ultimately he could send messages containing more than 20 words per minute. While in training at Fort Butler, North Carolina, he came across and responded to a poster that would change his life. "There was a big sign there," Cardinali recalled, which read "Wanted: Men for the Office of Strategic Services. Hazardous duty. Second language desired. Radio operators especially needed." His radio expertise and Italian fluency made a favorable impression on OSS officers who quickly notified him to pack his gear for a trip to Washington, DC. While waiting in an ante room to be interviewed by an OSS officer he fortuitously made a thorough study of various items in the room so that when an officer asked what he had observed about the room, Cardinali said, "I described everything, the bent shade, the paperclip, and he said 'you observe pretty good. Even I didn't notice the paperclip.'"⁵² This was Cardinali's introduction to the OSS, a step that was followed by the agency's vigorous training program which taught candidates how to parachute, sabotage bridges and rail tracks, and encrypt and decrypt coded messages.

He and other recruits were taught the seemingly minor but critically important details about how to eat in a restaurant European style in which the diner keeps the fork in the left hand in contradistinction the American style in which the fork is shifted between the left and rights hands. Cardinali told of one agent who was caught behind enemy lines because he used his knife and fork as American children are taught, switching the fork from left to right before taking a bite.

Given his mastery of the Morse code Cardinali was preparing for assignment to parachute into Italy, only to learn the mission had been canceled after word came that the Germans had captured a dozen Italian American paratroopers and executed them as spies. Instead, the Army sent Cardinali to Holland after his team received a message that underground resistance forces in the Netherlands needed supplies. From there he sneaked into Belgium, France, and Germany to teach spies and resistance fighters how to transmit intelligence by Morse code over the radio. The drop which was made in one of the country's signature windmills occurred in March 1945 at the time when the Allies were getting ready for a big push across the Rhine amidst rumors of formidable German resistance.

The enemy, it was feared, was prepared to put their crack troops armed with an abundance of stores of ammunition into an impregnable fortress in the Alps where they could hold out for years. The G-2 of the Seventh Army asked the OSS to discover what was being put into this redoubt. Given the inordinate amount of time to accomplish this by regular overland routes,

the OSS decided to send agents by means of hazardous blind jumps, 30 of them altogether. Miraculously, they suffered no casualties.⁵³ Cardinali then joined the Allied troops who were preparing to march into Germany, a move made more difficult because, with exception of the Remagen span, all bridges crossing the Rhine River had been destroyed. The capture of the bridge was imperative. However, before the Allied troops crossed the Remagen Bridge they needed information about what to expect on the eastern side of the bridge. This important task was given to Cardinali and a female agent known as “Katja” who rode a German-made bicycle dressed as a German worker replete with woolen stockings, German undergarments, carrying German-style bread and sausage, along with a blanket, a half-full bottle of water, and a small portable radio. Using a small inflatable boat, Cardinali and Katja crossed the river 45 minutes later, hid the boat under cover, and erased drag marks with tree branches. After spending a cold night outdoors Cardinali ordered Katja to join in and blend with German workers on their way to a work site to obtain information about German troop strength on the eastern side of the bridge. Katja even began a romantic relationship with a Nazi captain to acquire the information flow which she sent by Morse code to Cardinali using a secret signal. In this manner she obtained invaluable information regarding the last surviving bridge spanning the Rhine River. The objective was to capture it intact and thus open the way to Germany’s interior. Katja’s information revealed that there were tanks and two to three companies of Nazi soldiers waiting for them. Armed with this important knowledge the informed American Army speedily organized and sent troops across the Remagen Bridge to battle the Germans in an encounter that continued over ten days as both sides employed new weapons and tactics.

When the German plan to destroy the span with thousands of pounds of explosives wired at critical points in the structure failed to ignite, the enemy resorted to using air bombardments and even a squad of naval demolition swimmers wearing Italian underwater breathing apparatus to set off the explosives. However, the alerted Americans were prepared and frustrated all German efforts to detonate the explosives as they took over the bridge intact. With the capture of the bridge the Allies rapidly transported five divisions of combat troops across the Rhine into the Germany industrial heartland, thereby hastening the defeat of Nazi Germany.

With the conclusion of fighting, Cardinali, then a staff sergeant, served in the General Counsel’s office in Washington, DC, where he supervised documents relating to the forthcoming Nuremberg war crimes trials. Upon

coming home from war he operated a commercial fishing boat in Alaska for 20 years, became a painting contractor, built much of the Sunny slope area of Hollister with his partners and friends, and was one of the founders of San Benito Bank. Cardinali's military career was unknown until 2008. "For nearly 60 years, John never told anyone of his service," said his cousin Gasper Cardinali. John was then nominated for Outstanding Italian Citizen of Monterey County, an honor that was bestowed upon him at a banquet held at the Monterey Marriott Hotel.⁵⁴

Alphonse Peter Thiele. Typically small in the number of men involved, OSS detachments proved to be very capable. A case in point was the unit headed by Captain Alphonse Peter Thiele who was born in Constantinople of a German father and an Italian mother and who had come to America, became a naturalized citizen, and worked as a welder in New Jersey before enlisting in the Army in 1940.⁵⁵ Short in stature but exceptionally brave and fluent in Italian and German, Thiele was recruited by the OSS and assigned to the Mediterranean Theater where his assignment was to cooperate with Italian partisans as they undertook sabotage activities against German forces in Italy—he eventually married Walkiria Terradura, described as a beautiful and resourceful partisan whose harassing activities became the bane of enemy troops. At the very young age of 18, Walkiria, who was born in Gubbio (Perugia) and brought up in a strongly anti-Fascist household, commanded a team of men, "Settebello," in the Fifth Brigade Garibaldi "Pesaro" that was involved in acts of sabotage and incursions against Nazi forces occupying the territory. For a woman to command men in a strongly macho society was in itself not only extraordinary, but it also served to encourage more Italian women to join the ranks. They thereby convinced skeptical Italian partisan males that women were equal to the tasks that the difficult moment required. Legend has it that at one point Germans had eight different warrants on her head and that expert German mountain troops trekked the mountains for days on end with Walkiria's photo in hand. She and other women of the Resistance took their turn at doing the same dangerous duties as did the men. "My life on the run was a continuous struggle to survive, an unequal struggle in which I was held up, like everyone else, a great will to win. I fought against the Germans and against the fascists and am proud of what my choice [was] because I know that I too contributed to defeat those dictatorships which then choked the world."⁵⁶ For her deeds Walkiria was awarded Italy's highest military medals. In the decades following the end of the war Walkiria has been the subject of documentaries that explored

the experience of wartime women who fought in Partisan units in the Italian resistance—an experience that revolutionized the traditional role of women.⁵⁷ While carrying out her partisan responsibilities Walkiria met Thiele and aided him in locating German positions. They married after the war and lived for a time in the USA before returning to Italy.

In the summer of 1944 Major Thiele was assigned to a task which took place in Italy and which involved a mission coordinated by the British Eighth Army. It proved to be so very dangerous and exciting that it came to the attention of a war journalist who published an account of the episode in a popular magazine. Thiele, who at the time served as commanding officer of a five-man OSS detachment to the British Army, led a ground mission to confirm air photographs of presumed German defenses and troop concentrations along the Gothic Line.

What lay ahead was the engagement of hundreds of recently recruited native Italian OSS agents in bloody encounters upon the battle-scarred Italian soil. Included in the group recruited by Thiele was the “Fabulous Five,” one of the most colorful OSS operators whose sheer nerve and resourcefulness became a big nuisance to German forces. Among the incredible exploits of the “Fabulous Five” was the assassination of a German general, a narrow escape from a German execution squad, and, notwithstanding strict Gestapo vigilance, the takeover of a Fascist municipal police force. The frustrated Germans were determined to exterminate them, but the quintet repeatedly cheated death at the hands of Nazi firing squads. Highly intelligent, they received intensive OSS training that rendered them proficient with a variety of weapons, while they were also provided with a solid background in military intelligence. They ranged in age from 17 to 22, and represented widely divergent backgrounds that complemented each other. In accord with OSS policy they were known only by code names: former students “Rolando” and “Red” worked in tandem with former fascist prisoner “Buffalo Bill,” “Potato” from a wealthy family, and communist-inspired “Stalin.” Whatever their background, they were intensely loyal working under American supervision and became principal factors in Thiele’s undercover intelligence force serving the Eighth Army.⁵⁸

Thiele’s agents were sent on highly perilous short-range missions through the lines to secure intelligence immediately behind the front—the kinds of assignments that frequently were far more hazardous than deep infiltrations behind enemy lines. They required precise execution by team members who were taken to the most forward British outposts late at night—even the cover of darkness did not spare them from enemy artillery

and machine-gun fire. The five Italian OSS operatives on Operation PIA were assigned to pinpoint gun positions and obtain troop identifications and supply routes. Thiele was very solicitous of the five young Italians as he watched them plummet from the darkened plane toward the blacked-out Italian countryside—two of his Italian agents had been killed on previous assignments. When on one occasion an attempted PT boat landing of the Fabulous Five was aborted, Thiele and his men were escorted by Sergeant Michelini and Private Devivi of the OSS Eighth Army detachment to a successful landing. In sum, Thiele headed an OSS unit which operated along the coast of the Adriatic Sea that made numerous infiltration incursions behind enemy lines in order to obtain valuable information regarding German positions as potential bombing targets and rescuing downed Allied pilots. Proceeding by PT boat through heavily mined waters or parachuting from airplanes he made 25 such landings for which he was awarded the Legion of Merit.⁵⁹

Alfonso Felici. The saga of Alfonso Felici, the most decorated World War II soldier, is that of a lengthy and incredible military career during which he fought on many fronts for various countries, at one point he also became a member of the OSS. Born in 1923 in Villa Santo Stefano, Italy, Alfonso possessed dual Italian and US citizenship because his father had become an American citizen after years of living and working in Cohoes, New York. Felici began his Italian military activity in 1940 at age 17 whereupon he fought heroically on several battlefronts, was wounded, and received numerous awards. When Italy surrendered to the Allies and became a co-belligerent power in 1943, he fought courageously against German forces and came to the attention of the OSS which valued his extensive knowledge of foreign languages and his substantial familiarity with the Italian countryside. He was brought to the USA, and he took OSS training at Fort Dix, New Jersey, which ironically was also the site which held Italian war prisoners who had been captured but with whom he could not interact. Despite years of military experience Felici found OSS training difficult but useful.

They asked us if we had been enrolled in the Fascist party and if we had fought against the Americans in Tunisia. To my interrogation I said that I had always had a certain sympathy for the US since, both my grandfather and my father, had worked for years in America. Also my father had become an American citizen and wanted us to emigrate with him in Cohoes, in upstate New York, but after a few years he was dead and he had not done

anything. Among the hilarity of interrogators uttered some dirty word in English that I had learned from my relatives...

The training was hard: we worked on plastic explosives, the use of detonators to blow up bridges, tunnels, dams, railway junctions, trains and minefields. I knew something about explosives in Russia because I had done the spoiler in the Alpi. We did a crash course in English and in a short time we managed to understand it well. Practiced skydiving and the use of weapons at high level.⁶⁰

Felici participated in the Third Army campaigns in Cassino and Voltorno infiltrating behind enemy lines into territory ironically only about 50 miles from his hometown to acquire significant intelligence about the most important hill positions defended by the Germans and to conduct sabotage acts against the enemy—he even captured German prisoners in their own trenches and subsequently grilled them for vital information. Interestingly, he fought alongside Audie Murphy, the most decorated American soldier of World War II, who was cited for heroism on the Anzio beachhead. In the course of this fighting Felici was involved in an operation that led to the killing of 13 Germans and the capture of 18 others, an engagement during which he once again was hospitalized because of war wounds, a feat that won the admiration of American officers—General Mark Clark personally administered the Silver Medal. In his memoir Felici described his involvement in OSS furtive work and the techniques deployed to avoid capture by German Schutzstaffel squads (SS), (Nazi Party elite corps devoted to Adolf Hitler).

We had to fight on all types of terrain: valleys, forests, mountains, swamps and mud. We had to dress as monks, priests, from German shepherds to implement our attacks of sabotage, because it was the best way to avoid the SS that caught young and able-bodied men to use them in the work of fortification, or in workshops. In the villages we saw only little kids and old.⁶¹

Felici's memoir described how his OSS unit helped free prisoners of war held by the Germans, specifically a British general and seven American officers who were kept in a concentration camp in Arezzo, an ancient city east of Florence. They accomplished this challenging mission by first stealing a truck and then fashioning a false bottom large enough to carry out eight men. On the appointed morning of the escape the eight men appeared in yellowish clothing that was typical for workers. Speaking perfect German one of the agents, posing as a maintenance worker, produced an impeccable-looking but forged document that authorized him to head

for a field with the workers. With the consent of the deceived German officers the group moved into the field and hid themselves in the false truck bottom. Twenty minutes later the OSS agent drove the truck out of the field making certain to shout “Heil Hitler” to the German guard. Some hours later the freed prisoners were placed in the hands of a local priest to await other OSS agents who then brought them back across the Allied lines.⁶²

During an interlude Felici was able to visit his mother and family bearing items obtained from his U.S. Army unit that “was kind enough to give me the meat, bread and jars of all good things that led to my mother [being] very happy to have a reserve food for a few weeks.”⁶³ The Felici saga was such a remarkable story, that of a former Italian soldier now fighting in the American Army who had won numerous awards, that it captured the attention of Ernie Pyle, the most famous wartime reporter who was inspired to write an extensive biography about him that was published in *Stars and Stripes*, the official U.S. Army newspaper. Ernie Pyle, using the nickname “Happy,” which was an American literal translation of Felici’s last name, cited the action of young Alfonso as a worthy model, that of a kid who thanks to his dual Italian and American citizenship was able to fight as an Allied soldier to free Italy from Nazism and Fascism. Felici’s exploits not only served as an inspiration to other Italian American young boys but it also attracted the attention of Hollywood director Frank Capra who hired him as an assistant.

After his stint with the OSS was over Felici continued his army career as his unit was assigned to fight against the Japanese in the Pacific Theater of operations. In an engagement with the enemy he was captured, became a Japanese prisoner, and was brutally treated until he was liberated by American troops. He was shipped to California where because of confusion over his citizenship, he had some difficulty, however, he did find work that enabled him to send money to his mother in Italy. He also met a number of famous people including General Eisenhower and Sicilian-born New York City Mayor Vincent Impellitteri.

One day I had a surprise, the deputy mayor of New York, Vincent R. Impellitteri (Italian American) invited me to City Hall...and gave me a dinner in my honor at the famous restaurant “Mamma Leone.” The vice mayor had read my story in the newspaper Italian-American “Il Progresso Italo-Americano,” the Generoso Pope [newspaper]. It was a good party and inter-vened [included] many people of Italian origin in the State of New York.⁶⁴

Felici returned to Italy not only bearing no ill will but proud of his OSS association and resides in Rome where he continues to greet visitors to the Anzio/Nettuno cemetery.⁶⁵

There were many fantastic behind-the-line instances in which Italian Americans attached to the OSS played significant roles—the capture of 1100 German soldiers in Chioggo being one of the most memorable. On that occasion the OSS operation was led by Marine Lieutenant George M. Hearn accompanied by Corporal Peter Rago of Staten Island and six members of a marine regiment from the Italian Royal Navy, along with 40 Italian guerilla fighters. Successfully sealing off the German avenue of escape and capturing dozens of Germans, Hearn and Rago led a small party of Marines and guerillas in search of much larger German forces. Fortuitously they came across an Italian fisherman, who was quizzed by Rago who served as interpreter since he spoke Italian. When Rago learned about rumors that the Germans were about to abandon the area, he sent the fisherman back to the German officers with a message that in view of the powerful American Army approaching they would be wise to discuss surrender. Fifteen minutes later three German soldiers hoisted a white flag and approached Hearn and Rago who carried out a major bluff saying they were the vanguard of a large force that had been sent to accept the surrender of Chioggia. In point of fact Hearn commanded only three or four dozen men. Although the Germans eyed them suspiciously they asked Hearn to accompany them as they conferred with their commander. The worried Hearn continued the bluff shouting an order for the American troops to hold their fire until he returned. As he accompanied the Germans into Chioggo his personal fears intensified because what he witnessed were hundreds of heavily armed German troops, and buildings shored up with barbed wire and sand bags in preparations for a major siege. Hearn and Rago were escorted to the main hotel, met with German commander and using graphic descriptions about the devastation that lay ahead, convinced him they were the advanced guard which would call off the planned air attack if he surrendered.⁶⁶ Hearn received high military honors as did Rago who was cited for his invaluable aid in Italy working with partisans and awarded the Bronze Star “for heroic achievement... valuable services in helping successfully to complete the mission of liberating the territory around Porto Levante.”⁶⁷

This study concentrates primarily on the history of Italian American members of the OSS whose value frequently revolved around their ethnicity, knowledge of Italian geography, language, and mores. However,

it should be noted that some Americans of Italian descent had important careers in the OSS which did not revolve around their ethnicity as illustrated in the following examples.

Magistretti. Born in San Francisco, California, which also was home to many Japanese residents, William L. Magistretti showed an early inclination to study the Japanese language. His passion for the Japanese language was so strong that he went to Japan where he attended a Japanese middle public school for boys, dressed in a Japanese school uniform, complied with all school regulations and graduated with extremely high grades. Understandably his continued study of Japanese at university level brought him to the attention of intelligence officers even before the December 7, 1941, attack on Pearl Harbor. His unique and valued background attracted military intelligence officials in the Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) who employed him as a civilian unofficial undercover agent. His assignment was to engage in felonious actions such as breaking into Japanese firms; however, it was understood that he was on his own so that if he was captured the Navy would disown any knowledge about him. As part of the OSS in 1943 he was tasked with picking locks of Japanese cultural centers, organizations, and businesses in the San Francisco area, an operation that yielded an important flow of information about the extent of knowledge gleaned by Japanese surveillance of West Coast naval facilities and Army bases. In one case, Magistretti and another undercover operator, utilizing the excuse of “customs inspection,” obtained important photographs from the imperial Japanese Naval mobilization code books. Even though the Japanese switched codes after the incident the information obtained was useful for comparison purposes.⁶⁸ This rich but unusual background made a deep impression on those who were to work with him. “I was working on an MO [Morale Operations] project with a very talented Italian American Bill Magistretti, a lieutenant in the OSS who had gone to school in Japan.”⁶⁹

In one of his more fascinating OSS projects Magistretti focused on trying to get behind the intractable hard shell of the Japanese warrior code that found them resolutely refusing to surrender despite enduring under the most horrible and hopeless conditions as war prisoners. The OSS sent him to India where a number of Japanese soldiers were being held prisoners while other Japanese troops were trying to stave off certain annihilation unless they laid down their arms. To prevent an imminent slaughter Magistretti tried to forge and distribute a Japanese order exhorting front line Japanese soldiers who were surrounded, wounded, without food,

and suffering to surrender. Realizing the futility of the attempt unless the order was written by a Japanese officer, the concept was instantly rejected. However, Magistretti befriended a prisoner, a very bright member of the Japanese general staff, and persuaded him that laying down arms in a hopeless situation was not disgraceful. The Japanese officer proceeded to write and sign a call to surrender.

In the postwar period Magistretti worked for years for the United Nations and accepted assignments to various countries accompanied by his wife, Catherine. He held the Chair of Distinguished Service at his alma mater until his death in 1989. The Catherine and William L. Magistretti Distinguished Professor in Near Eastern Studies at the University of California, Berkeley is named after them.

Morgan. Although his name does not betray his Italian heritage, William J. Morgan, born Anthony Mitrano, became one of the most curious OSS agents. Growing up poor in Rochester, New York, Willie Mitrano, who began earning money delivering newspapers, hoped to lay claim to the city's best newspaper delivery route that included Rochester's famed George Eastman, the industrialist and inventor. Mitrano was so determined that he was prepared to forego sleep to achieve his goal. After completing public elementary school and high school in Rochester, the intelligent and hard-working young man went to the University of Rochester where he became student body president and where, according to an account, he changed his name to avoid anti-Italian prejudice. Citing Mitrano's favorable review of a pro-eugenics book in *Survey Magazine*, one critic insists that the name-changing decision probably was due to Mitrano's concern over being regarded an apologist for an incipient eugenics movement then being promoted by prominent eugenicists who advocated sterilization.⁷⁰ Morgan went to graduate school at Yale University where he worked his way through school to acquire a doctorate in psychology by laboring 8–12 hours a day lugging large blocks of ice up tenement stairs.⁷¹

With the outbreak of war he employed questionable stratagems to join the OSS (by suppressing his "unfit for overseas duty" classification since he was blind in one eye). Once in the agency he was stationed in Perberley, England, a site which specialized in psychological testing and training of spies—he was the only American on the staff. But he wanted more than a desk job; he wanted to be on the ground where he could combine his psychological knowledge of spying techniques with his mastery of French. Despite his ancestry and unlike most OSSers of Italian background he seemed to show no interest in using his expertise in Italy.

He parachuted into occupied France to organize guerrilla attacks against the Germans and fought the Japanese in China. William Morgan's wartime adventures are described in his 1957 autobiography *The OSS and I*. After the war Morgan and his wife, whom he had met while in Great Britain, settled in Virginia where they began a private practice testing and counseling school children. He also served as a psychological strategy specialist with the White House under Harry S. Truman and Dwight Eisenhower. Morgan subsequently teamed up with other psychiatrists to perfect methods to discern leadership qualities among candidates selected for clandestine operations steadfastly maintaining that candidates were more likely to reveal their true character when they had more choice in solving a problem.⁷²

Morgan made sensational newspaper headlines many years later over a family issue involving his daughter Elizabeth who was imprisoned for failure to produce her daughter for extended visitations with her ex-husband whom she accused of sexual abuse. Drawing on his intelligence training, Morgan took his wife and granddaughter over a circuitous underground escape route to a refuge in New Zealand. He died at age 85 in 1996 and was survived by his wife, daughter, and two sons.⁷³

Raymond Rocca. Raymond Rocca was another Italian American OSS agent whose intriguing career encompassed both World War II and extended well into the Cold War. Born in California in 1917 he attended the University of California at Berkeley where his studies concentrated on Fascist Italy. He received a doctorate in 1942 and then became employed in the Analytic Section of the Foreign Broadcast Service where he learned the techniques of content analysis as an Italian broadcast analyst. This was the rich background he brought with him when he joined the OSS Special Counterintelligence component in 1944. It was during his early days in the OSS that he met and served under James Angleton, who was just beginning his legendary career as a super spy and who was appointed commander of Special Counter Intelligence (SCI) Unit Z, which handled Ultra intelligence in 1944. Angleton soon came to appreciate Rocca's talents of keeping track of and analyzing fragmentary reports emanating from German, Italian, and Vatican sources, naming him his executive officer, cementing a relationship that would last for decades. Angleton acknowledged that when he encountered difficulty in deciphering a KGB defector's message, he conferred with Rocca, "The Rock," who had "pieced it [message] together with monk-like devotion," in a masterful piece of research on Soviet deception practices called "The Trust." Rocca,

who was also known for cultivating exotic flowers, continued to play a valuable intelligence role in the postwar period that led to the defection of a high KGB official.

NOTES

1. *Liberazione*, 88.
2. For corroboration see: Ronald L. Fillippelli, “Luigi Antonini, the Italian American Labor Council, and Cold-War Politics in Italy 1943–1949,” *Labor History*, January 1, 1992, Vol. 33, Issue 1, 102–125. “Antonini’s attitude mirrored American policy. The OSS and the State Dept., while officially supporting the cooperation of all the anti-fascist groups, were solidifying their contacts with anti-communist forces in Italy at all levels by late 1944.” 107.
3. *Liberazione*, 91.
4. Agostino von Hassell, Sigrid MacRae, *Alliance of Enemies: The Untold Story of the Secret American and German Collaboration to End World War II*, Macmillan, New York, 2013, 117.
5. *Washington Post*, May 12, 2014.
6. Richard M. Kelly, “Secret Agents,” *Blue Book*, Vol. 88, No. 2, December 1948, 33.
7. Kelly, “Secret Agents,” *Blue Book*, 32–42, 34.
8. Kelly, “Secret Agents,” *Blue Book*, 32–42.
9. John McHugh, “The Reflections from the Dome,” *Berrien County Record*, September 1992, found in *Irish Legends*, 2005.
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11. McHugh, “The Reflections from the Dome.”
12. *Atlantica*, *The Italian American Review*, November 1930.
13. Chambers II, *OSS Training*, Chapter 7, 262.
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15. McHugh, “The Reflections from the Dome.”
16. Jack Cuddy, “Joe Savoldi Back Home From Secret Mission,” *The Milwaukee Journal*, January 16, 1945, 4.
17. Charles T. O’Reilly, *Forgotten Battles: Italy’s War of Liberation, 1943–1945*, Lexington Books, Boston, 2001, 123.
18. Michael Burke, *Outrageous Good Fortune*, Little, Brown and Company, Boston, Toronto, 1984, 93.

19. Burke, *Outrageous Good Fortune*, 94.
20. P.K. O'Donnell, *Operatives, Spies, and Saboteurs: The Unknown Story of the Men and Women of World War II's OSS*, Free Press, New York, 2004, 55.
21. Ford, *Donovan of the OSS*, 153.
22. Ford, *Donovan of the OSS*, 160–161.
23. Ford, *Donovan of the OSS*, 175.
24. O'Reilly, *Forgotten Battles: Italy's War of Liberation*, 126, 303. Glen Yeadon, *The Nazi Hydra in America: Suppressed History of a Century: Wall Street and the Rise of the Fourth Reich*, Progressive Press, 2012, 235.
25. Chambers II, *OSS in Action*, 303.
26. O'Reilly, *Forgotten Battles: Italy's War of Liberation*, 126–127. Patrick K. O'Donnell states that realizing it was substantially behind in this kind of military activity, that it did not have special operations units, the USA to the OSS to help solve that problem.
27. Midget Submarines German and Italian Sneak Craft 1945 OSS-US Navy, *you tube*. The attack on the British fleet was considered strategically the most important and successful operation of the war for the Italian Navy. William H. Mcraven, *Spec Ops: Case Studies in Special Operations Warfare: Theory and Practice*, Random House Publishing, New York, 1996, 100.
28. For information on controversial Prince Junio Valerio Scipione Borghese, a member of Roman nobility who served as an Italian submarine commander under Mussolini, directed Decima Flottiglia Mas that pioneered new naval techniques including the use of human torpedoes see: J. Valerio Borghese, *Sea Devils, Italian Naval Commandos in World War II*, Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1995. See also Jack Greene and Alessandro Massignani, *The Black Prince And The Sea Devils: The Story Of Valerio Borghese And The Elite Units Of The Decima Mas*, Da Capo Press, 2004.
29. Peter S. Karlow, *Targeted by the CIA: An Intelligence Professional Speaks Out on the Scandal*, Turner Publishing Company, Paducah, 2001, 65.
30. Antonio Ferri, whose research in the field of aerodynamics was very important in hypersonic and [supersonic flight](#), narrowly escaped capture from the collapsing Fascist regime. He and his brother formed a band of partisans that coordinated attacks on German and Italian fascist forces in the Valle del Fiastrone [Fiastra Valley]. With the

liberation of Rome he made contact with OSS agent [Moe Berg](#) and began to work with him translating key documents that provided information about the achievements of German science during the war. In 1944, Ferri was brought to the leading American research center in his field, the [National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics](#) in [Langley, Virginia](#), where he continued as a major figure in his field. Among Ferri's other achievements was his important contribution in dealing with internal shocks that limit the viability of scramjets—he introduced the concept of thermal impression in which heat addition is substituted for formation of normal shocks.

Ferri had endowed Chairs at Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute and New York University where he conducted significant experiments. He worked for U.S. Air Force Office of Scientific Research until 1956 when he founded the General Applied Science Laboratory. Ferri died in 1975 on [Long Island, New York](#). Ferri's colleague Major Luigi Crocco, a pioneer in theoretical aerodynamics, rocketry, and jet propulsion, followed a similar path. Crocco worked for a time at the Princeton University Department of Aeronautical Engineering conducting research on combustion instability and liquid propellant rocket engines that were fundamental for the ICBM. (Michelangelo De Maria, Lucia Orlando, *Italy in Space: In Search of a Strategy, 1957–1975*, Editions Beauchesne, Paris, 2008, 41.) See also “Island Firm's Hypersonic Boom,” LI Business, F2–F3, *Newsday*, October 12, 2014. Nicholas Davidoff, *The Catcher Was a Spy: The Mysterious Life of Moe Berg*, Vintage, New York, 1995, 185–186. T.A. Heppheimer, *Facing the Heat Barrier*, National Aeronautics and Space Administration NASA History Division Office of External Relations, Washington, DC, September 2007, NASA SP-2007-4232, 198, 201–202. See also O'Reilly, *Forgotten Battles: Italy's War of Liberation*, 125, and P.K. O'Donnell, *Operatives, Spies and Saboteurs*, 55.

31. Chambers II, *OSS Training*, 539.
32. Stephen J. Capestro, Oral history interview with G. Kurt Piehler, 17 August 1994, 29, typescript in the office of the Rutgers Oral History Archives of World War II, New Brunswick, N.J. After Capestro's back was broken in a military vehicle accident in North Africa in which the driver was killed he was returned to the USA for treatment.
33. Ernest Cuneo, *Life With Fiorello*, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1955, 82–83.
34. Cuneo, *Life With Fiorello*, 82–83.

35. Cuneo, *Life With Fiorello*, 82, 121.
36. M. Cordell Hart, *A Patriot: Ernest L. Cuneo*, online.
37. Neal Gabler, *Winchell, Gossip, Power and the Culture of Celebrity*, Vintage Books, New York, 1997, 285.
38. Cordell Hart, *A Patriot*, on-line.
39. Hart, *A Patriot: Ernest L. Cuneo*, online.
40. "Winchell's Big Brain," *The Afro American*, March 22, 1952.
41. That Cuneo really exercised enormous influence on national events is a hypothesis not accepted by all historians. A reviewer of the book *Those Radio Commentators*, for instance, reproofs the author Irving E. Fang, saying he "is on far weaker ground, however, when he appears to accept as true the testimony of Ernest Cuneo, a man whom he describes as 'an attorney with New Deal connections' and later a member of Winchell's staff, to the effect that Winchell played a decisive role in electing Franklin Roosevelt to a third term in 1940." Cuneo's story is that, at his urging, Winchell began broadcasting support for Roosevelt's third term in 1938...Winchell's support undoubtedly was very helpful to Roosevelt, but not a single New Deal scholar credits either Winchell or Cuneo with a major role in the 1940 election. See Irving Fang, *Those Radio Commentators!* Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1977, ix, 264, 341, More information from Richard J. Garfunkel, website, "The Harder They Fall: The Decline and Crash of Walter Winchell and Don Imus," April 12, 2007. See Richard J. Garfunkel, website, "The Harder They Fall: The Decline and Crash of Walter Winchell and Don Imus," April 12, 2007. See also Cuneo, *Life With Fiorello*, 82.
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46. Andrew Lycett, *Ian Fleming*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1995, 431.
47. *EIR* Volume 25, Number 44, November 6, 1998 New light on Transatlantic assassins: Lucianne Goldberg and Murder, Inc. by Anton Chaitkin Lucianne Goldberg.

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59. *New York Sun*, September 24, 1945, 3.
60. *History of Alfonso Felici*, online, Allowance must be made for the poor English translation of Felici's memoir. *History*, Felici.
61. Felici, *History*.
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69. Layton, *And I was There*, 109.

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73. *New York Times*, March 5, 1996. Yvonne Shinhoster Lamb, "Antonia Morgan; Fled U.S. With Granddaughter," *Washington Post*, April 21, 2006.

Operation Husky

The Connecticut OSS contingent eagerly accepted the challenge to create an infiltration strategy designed to gather intelligence about Sicily-based German and Italian forces that would be advantageous in conducting “Operation Husky,” the code name for history’s largest amphibious incursion prior to the Normandy D. Day invasion. Theoretically, the role of the OSS was not to engage in direct combat but rather to penetrate behind enemy lines to accumulate information regarding strongly held and fortified enemy military positions, and to enlist native Sicilians to work with the OSS in gathering information. As Frank Tarallo so suitably described it:

We were not combat personnel...we were strictly intelligence agents...gather intelligence...slip away...no contact with the enemy...no contact duties whatsoever...we were the Secret Intelligence arm of the Italian SI “OSS” desk. Our personnel were highly skilled, highly professional, they all were in the armed services...army, navy, air force, marines, coast guard...and from civilian life whose skills served us well...these American civilians wore military uniforms with the collar insignia who were recruited by us but not enlisted, but subject to military law and discipline.¹

With General Donovan’s support Corvo proceeded to recruit Sicilian Americans, refugees from Sicily and Sicilian soldiers who had surrendered to the Allied forces in North Africa. One of the first rewards of this initiative bore fruition two weeks before the Sicilian invasion in the form of

“Black Propaganda” radio broadcasts beamed from Tunis, Africa, or leaflets dropped from planes into Sicily that contained a mix of genuine facts and phony news along with a pressing message urging Sicilians to rise up against the Germans and Italians who had sold out to the Nazis.²

But Corvo had an even greater ambition in mind—the creation of a Sicilian military legion composed primarily of Sicilian soldiers formerly in the Italian Army to spearhead the invasion. To Corvo Sicily was the key to the conquest of Italy—the largest island in the Mediterranean, which represented the doorway to the stronghold of the Axis powers and a base for future operations against “Fortress Europe.” This view might be dismissed as myopic and non-objective because of an understandable attachment to the place of his birth; however, it was an opinion shared by many knowledgeable leaders. It was, for example, also a major preoccupation for anti-Fascist Italians like philosopher Benedetto Croce and high-profile exiles in the USA like Count Sforza and others who saw the conquest of Sicily as an indispensable priority to defeating fascism; the singular ideal place to turn the tide in Western Europe because Sicilians, more so than residents of any other Italian region, detested German influence and control. To that end Sforza was in the process of assembling a “Friends of Italy” operation in the USA. According to recent research there is evidence that attempts to separate Sicilians’ loyalty from the fascist government had been under way for some time before the USA officially entered the war. An examination of secret documents of that period indicates that British and American intelligence units had been striving to “initiate ill will between the Germans on the one hand and the populace and the armed forces and settlements on the other to provoke the fall of the fascist government.”³

Independent and courageous Sicilians, moreover, had a special bond with Americans since so many of them had immigrated to the USA, had lived, worked or visited there, and had numerous relatives who lived there. Indeed, an often-heard comment that was repeatedly echoed declared that it was the dream of every Sicilian to emigrate to America. “Sforza, in particular, was crucial in convincing US policy-makers that Italians were at heart a democratic peace-loving people and that terms ‘Fascist’ and ‘Italian’ were not synonymous.”⁴

Sforza was not alone in the process of assembling a “Friends of Italy” operation in the USA. In June 1942 a long and detailed report reached the desk of Earl Brennan, head of OSS Intelligence Branch, Italian Section, in Washington titled “The Battle for Sicily,” from Vanni Buscemi Montana

born in Mazara del Vallo, Sicily, but then living in New York. As the head of the Socialist Party in exile and vice president of a Sicilian mutual aid society he had met with Italian exiles in Paris to discuss the decisive role that Sicilians in America could play in assisting and encouraging a revolt against fascism in Italy. It was strongly suggested that the OSS consider these ideas. The report cited the existence of hundreds of Sicilian mutual aid societies in Philadelphia, Chicago, Boston, and other principal metropolitan cities and that they were loyal Americans. It also highlighted the esteem in which prominent Americans of Sicilian descent like Frank Capra and Joe DiMaggio were held.

At the end of 1940, British intelligence had concluded that Sicily was the basic pawn in the Mediterranean chessboard causing leading Britons to draw up strategic plan “Operation Influx” forecast for the following spring. Although the plan did not then take place it was revived after the attack on Pearl Harbor and emphasized even further once the OSS became involved. However, distrusting the senior role assumed by Great Britain to bring about Italy’s defeat, and unenthusiastic about US Naval Intelligence resources regarding the conquest of Sicily, Corvo also sought more independence for American OSS operations. As military historian Timothy Newark elucidated:

What is notable about this process is that Corvo and his Italian section were intent on creating their own body of information on Sicily separate from that used by British intelligence—and separate from that gathered by U.S. Naval intelligence. They were also keen on diminishing the British influence in post-war Italy. Corvo feared that a British initiative to create a government-in-exile headed by Count Sforza in Tripoli would be detrimental to U.S. interests in the region and worked hard to scupper the project.⁵

The preference for men with a natural background in the Sicilian language and culture was understandable and to a large extent followed in OSS missions; however, the notion of creating a Sicilian legion to lead the invasion was rejected early in the process as was Corvo’s plan for a late June Sicilian infiltration unit to precede the invasion—scrapped because its deployment so close to the actual July 9 Mediterranean D Day might have served to alert Axis defense units of an imminent offensive. Much to his dismay Corvo played a limited role in the invasion of Sicily; however, it was a different story when it came to developments to further the defeat of Mussolini’s Italian forces on the Italian mainland where he played a vital, almost indispensable part which will be related later in this account.

Luciano's role. The OSS role in planning Sicily's invasion remains somewhat murky. Some sources maintain OSS actions were tangential while others highlight OSS collaboration with convicted criminal Charles "Lucky" Luciano (born in Sicily as Salvatore Lucania) to extract aid from Sicilian Mafia elements in order to insure a successful invasion, and still others are in complete disagreement with the latter thesis. After weighing the opposing views that have been advanced prominent military historian Carlo D'Este offers a thoughtful and sobering observation. "The truth is that the evidence that does exist is far too circumstantial and virtually impossible to corroborate." D'Este further observed that as Donovan himself had been a crusading prosecutor, he definitely would not countenance working with the notorious criminal Mafia group. "Thus, despite the fact that the OSS in the past had recruited some rather unsavory characters, including safecrackers and counterfeiters, to help fill their many needs, when it came to godfathers, the answer was a firm no."⁶

It is important to note that OSS administrator Earl Brennan selected Max Corvo as chief of Sicilian and Italian OSS operations. Corvo readily admitted that he was approached about the subject of enlisting Luciano's assistance but instantly and vehemently rejected it perceiving that since Mussolini's crackdown of the criminal organization in the 1920s had practically wiped it out, there was little to gain from the association. Furthermore, he thought it a contemptible move that would result in future embarrassment. Frank Tarallo was just as passionate in rejecting the notion of Luciano's help:

As far as Mr. Luciano, Mr. Lanza, Mr. Lansky, Mr. Espy and Mr. Polakoff are concerned, it is the first time I ever heard of their names linked with any, any kind of intelligence on Sicily, Italy, Sardinia, Pantellaria...I can honestly and truthfully say that our wartime efforts, that is the wartime efforts of the OSS, Secret Intelligence, Italian desk, (which was our outfit), had no ties, links, association or any connection with the so-called mafia type individuals.⁷

The best available evidence is that the ONI, not the OSS, co-opted Luciano's help.⁸ Lieutenant Junior Grade Paul A. Alfieri and Anthony Marzullo were among ONI personnel who played a key role on the Navy's behalf in contacting Luciano. Alfieri was awarded the Legion of Merit for his service especially as an Intelligence officer during the amphibious invasion of Sicily in 1943.⁹

There was, additionally, confusion within and without the OSS as to the role that the intelligence organization should play in Italy. "The OSS program to penetrate Italy was wracked by controversy from the start. Two groups formed, frequently in competition and sometimes not even in contact with each other." One group headed by Scamporino and Corvo sought to concentrate on collecting political and personality data and work with pre-war anti-Fascists and exiles who might return to Italy, while the other group did not. "They were not prepared for the assignment thrown at them to give immediate support to military tactical operations. The fact was, however, that the OSS had to earn its place in the Theater by providing significant tactical support for military operations before it could obtain support for its more strategic programs."¹⁰

Pantaleoni. With OSS Sicilian stratagems bogged down a frustrated Donovan chose a new chief for the Sicily operation: Lt. Col. Guido Pantaleoni, whose appointment was in contradistinction to the OSS preference for unmarried men since Pantaleoni was in fact married. Guido Pantaleoni was the son of wealthy Italian immigrants in St. Louis, a graduate of Harvard Law School, and a widower with three children, who in the mid-1930s had married Helenka Adamowska, scion of a prominent Polish family with whom he had two more children. Helenka's close friendship with General Donovan's wife undoubtedly led to Pantaleoni's determination in 1943 to eschew his exempt status and take leave from his prestigious New York law firm to become part of the OSS. Commissioned a lieutenant colonel, Pantaleoni enlisted fellow Italian Americans and undertook the assignment to administer control over a large swath of OSS Italian and southern French operations. In the process of carrying out his mission the committed and conscientious Pantaleoni, together with Ohioan Sam Buta who once ran for Congress, and Tony Ribarich, a former waiter, infiltrated behind enemy lines near Palermo, Sicily, attempting to ascertain accurate information about the strength of the German military position on behalf of General George S. Patton. According to one historian he "unwisely decided to lead an SO mission in person. Because Pantaleoni possessed extensive knowledge of OSS operations at the highest levels, he could compromise the security of the OSS if captured. Tragically it was Pantaleoni's first and last mission."¹¹

As it happened he was taken prisoner but remarkably sought to convince his German captor, a sergeant, that since Germany's cause was doomed he should think of surrendering. Apparently, he was beginning to make an impression but was unfortunately killed in an accident. What

renders this story so extraordinary is that years after the war the former German sergeant sought out Panteleoni's family to relate his last days. He located Guido's widow, Helenka, in New York and explained to her that even though he only knew Guido for two days and was his enemy, he regarded him as one of the most outstanding people he had ever met in his life. He also delivered a handwritten note from Guido which requested that the German sergeant be afforded the same courtesy and consideration that had been extended to him.¹²

The focus of OSS training to foster deception and dissimulation was immediately evident in Sicily in the person of Chicago's Michael Chinigo (code name: Sorel), one of the most intriguing if controversial agents to land in Sicily in the wake of the invading Allied troops. Born in 1908, in Cosenza, Italy, and of Albanian/Italian extraction, he attended Yale University, studied pre-med, served in New York City's Bellevue Hospital, and became a journalist for the International News Service. With the outbreak of war Chinigo was recruited into the OSS. He accompanied the Seventh U.S. Army forces that had just landed in Sicily and was walking along the beach when he heard a phone ringing in a nearby house, answered it, and heard the Italian officer on the other end ask if the Americans had landed. Chinigo responded in perfect Italian that there had been no landing and that everything was calm—an assessment that was accepted as credible even though it was a ruse, that forestalled a decision to send Italian troops to repel invading forces.¹³ Although a civilian, Chinigo performed admirably “advancing under enemy fire to interrogate Italian prisoners. The plucky reporter also pulled wounded American soldiers under fire to medics during the action.” For his deed he became one of the few civilians to win a Silver Star.¹⁴ To aver that controversy surrounded Chinigo's reputation is an understatement. “Around the name of Michael Chinigo there hangs a heavy miasma of bad taste, double dealing, petty crime—a feeling that not everything was quite as it seemed to be or should have been.”¹⁵ He and his wealthy and equally controversial wife, Marajen, were reputed to be connected with Chicago mob boss Jimmy Roselli. Although Chinigo returned to Rome as a Hearst correspondent to write about Mafia figures, he was rumored to continue serving as an intelligence agent working under James Angleton. Years later in a mysterious and unresolved act of violence, he was fatally shot in Rome. This did not prevent the government from bestowing an honor on him posthumously, a presidential award for gallantry in action while serving as an accredited correspondent assigned to the 3d Infantry Division, in Sicily

on July 10, 1943. He was cited for disregarding his personal safety under heavy enemy fire, interrogating prisoners, and assisting the wounded. He also convinced Palermo's Chief of Police and Italian troops that the American forces had taken the city, and entered Messina prior to its occupation returning with two truckloads of Italian prisoners.¹⁶

Following the Allied conquest of Sicily, Germany was now forced to extract additional divisions from other fronts and deploy them in Italy which was exactly what Gen. Mark Clark said was the main purpose of the invasion of Italy—one that resulted in subtracting those German forces from the Russian front. Thus while the invasion of Italian mainland would seem to be the inevitable next Allied step, it, nevertheless, found German military leaders uncertain as to where it would actually take place especially after the Allies strengthened its deception practices. These included launching feints that seemed to indicate the mainland invasion might occur at the town of Crotona at the heel of Italy while simultaneously continuing their pressure against Sardinia and Corsica. Deceptive steps to facilitate objectives in this area involved some surprising figures including, among others, Hollywood actor turned Navy officer Douglas Fairbanks Jr. who worked with the OSS. Clad in his perfectly tailored resplendent non-regulation uniform he helped develop deceptive diversion schemes designed to mislead Germans about the location of the Sicilian invasion, by focusing on western Sicily and thus influencing German military leaders to concentrate their forces there instead of the eastern part of the island where Allied forces really planned their attack.¹⁷ Hitler was said to be completely fooled. “As a result, in June several large consignments of good troops and material were sent from Adriatic ports and France to the Peloponnesus, a Panzer division was sent to Sardinia, coastal batteries were installed on the Greek coast, and German minesweepers off the southern coast of Sicily were diverted to Greece, together with most of the motor torpedo boats then in Sicilian waters.”¹⁸

NOTES

1. Frank Tarallo, letter to author, Oct. 11, 1977.
2. Waller, *Wild Bill Donovan*, 173.
3. See Giuseppe Casarrubea and Mario J. Cereghino, *Operazione Husky*, Castelveccchi, 2013, “Creare una fattura tra la Germania e una parte e la popolazione e forza armata e la colonie dall’attra provocando così la caduta del governo fascista” (Author’s translation).

4. Robert Ventresca, *From Fascism to Democracy: Culture and Politics in the Italian Election of 1948*, University of Toronto Press, 2004, 36. The exiles attempted to foster sympathy for the Italian cause by referring to popular American icons Joe DiMaggio and Frank Sinatra, both of whom were of Sicilian heritage. They stressed the existence of a putative bond between Sicily and the USA, reflected in the political rumors offering that Sicily be annexed to the USA and the 1950 election of Sicilian-born Vincent Impellitteri as New York City mayor.
5. Timothy Newark, *The Mafia at War: Allied Collusion with the Mob*, Greenhill Books, London, 2007, 14.
6. Carlo D'Este, *Bitter Victory, The Battle for Sicily, 1943*, E.P. Dutton, New York, 1998, 628.
7. Letter from Tarallo to author, October 11, 1977. On this subject see also: James J. Martin, "How Mussolini Crushed the Mafia in Italy, and How the United States Revived It." *The Journal of Historical Review*, Volume 15, Number 3, May/June 1995. In reviewing the literature on the subject Martin concludes that accounts of assistance furnished by the Mafia in assaulting Sicily is "confusing and contradictory." No one has put forth any convincing facts aside from persisting "vague and mock-mysterious abstruseness." The succession of books on the Mafia's role in this regard tell us little since "each writer cannibalizes his predecessors and the same story appears. Over and over again embellished sometimes with fictional overtones."
8. See: C. D'Este, *Bitter Victory The Battle for Sicily*, 627–629. Ezio Costanzo, *The Mafia and the Allies: Sicily 1943 and the Return of the Mafia*, 85, who concludes that the decision not to use the Mafia criminal organization came after the Treasury Department suggested that the OSS use it. The Americans may have used well-known Mafia experts to facilitate the conquest of Sicily and its governance but certainly did not need them to win any battles or prepare for military operations." Xii.
9. Alexander Cockburn, Jeffrey St. Clair, *Whiteout: The CIA, Drugs, and the Press*, Verso, London, 1998, 127–134.
10. See Karlow, *Targeted by the CIA*, 55.
11. Sheila Graham, "Feminine "Agents" Did Good Work Says Shaheen," *Coshocton News*, March 3, 1946, 6. O'Donnell, *Operatives, Spies, and Saboteurs: The Unknown Story of the Men and Women of World War II's OSS*, 51.

12. User talk Radeksz: Pantaleoni, Online: One of Guido's descendants is actress Tea Leoni, a granddaughter.
13. Bayard Stockton, *Flawed Patriot: The Rise and Fall of CIA Legend Bill Harvey*, 2006, 278–279.
14. Douglas Fairbanks Jr., *A Hell of a War*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1993, 118.
15. Stockton, *Flawed Patriot*, 278.
16. *Military Times*, *Hall of Valor*.
17. For more on this see John B. Dwyer, *Seaborne Deception*, Praeger Publishers, New York, 1992, 6–10, 27–33, 36. Among deceptive practices was the use of a cadaver floating in the water just off the coast of Spain on April 30, 1943, dressed in a British officer's uniform with written military orders describing a planned British invasion of Greece that resulted in a German decision to divert forces from Sicily to other locations in the Mediterranean Sea. This ploy proved a successful fraud that significantly facilitated the invasion of Sicily.
18. Samuel Elliot Morison, *Sicily-Salerno-Anzio: January 1943–June 1944 (History of United States Naval Operations in World War II)*, v. 9, Castle Books, Edison, New Jersey, 1954, 46.

Conquering the Islands: Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica, Lipari, Ventotene

Before any attempt was made to invade the Italian mainland it was determined that the first OG should be implemented to wrest Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica, and other islands from Axis control. The OSS accordingly launched challenging missions that succeeded in freeing hundreds of political prisoners who previously had been incarcerated on western Mediterranean Sea islands.

Tarallo in Sicily. Although the OSS was not at the forefront of the conquest of Sicily, its personnel did attempt to facilitate the successful Allied drive via the infiltration technique. The story of Frank J. Tarallo is a case in point. Already an Army officer with years of training at the outset of the war, Frank Tarallo readily succumbed to Max Corvo's blandishments to become part of the OSS. As he explained, "I joined Max in the beginning of 1943. Prior to that time I was an Infantry Instructor for the amphibious training command at Camp Carabelle, on the gulf in Florida."¹ Inducted into the OSS in 1943, Tarallo was in the first OSS OG sent to Algiers in North Africa where he was trained by British intelligence officials to descend into Sicily and be put in charge of a nine-man crew of OSS operatives that was being primed for a Sicilian assignment.² There were, however, some interlocking problems delaying the mission attributable to the innovation of the OSS as a novel procedure, which did not speedily or seamlessly mesh with extant military operations. Some American officers were unaware of its existence, did not know where the OSS fit in,

or resented the presence of the freewheeling intelligence group rumored to have access to large sums of money to expend without accountability. The OSS North Africa contingent did not have long to wait for action—Operation Husky was launched on early morning of broiling hot July 10, 1943, as the OSS group embarked from Bizerte on July 13 on a Landing Craft Infantry (LCI) boat that landed on the Sicilian coast between Gela and Licata where, after the beaches were secured, they established an OSS headquarters. The land surface they encountered was little different in climate and vegetation from the North Africa terrain where they had trained. With enemy resistance hardening, US G-2 (Army Intelligence) requested that Tarallo's group infiltrate further to ascertain badly needed information about locations of enemy gasoline stocks, ammunition supplies, strategic targets for air force bombings, and probable routes the enemy might take in the event of retreat. Once the Allies completed their sweep of enemy forces in Sicily on August 17, Tarallo, functioning as liaison between G-2 and OSS now headquartered in Palermo, conducted behind-the-lines intelligence operations in Sicily to acquire information from relatives and friendly Sicilians about German concentrations. In the course of intelligence gathering, Tarallo hoped to enlist his own uncles and cousins who, although welcoming, were not well-enough informed or able to provide significant data, nor did he locate among his relatives individuals suitable for deeper involvement with OSS activities. Corvo, on the other hand, was more successful in obtaining the cooperation of his relatives and others whom he directed to move along the road to Caltagirone with mules carrying bales of wheat. En route they were instructed to take mental notes of military positions they witnessed behind German lines and report back to him. Corvo was able to report to Colonel Eddy that the mission was successful.³

For more than a few OSS men the Sicilian operation was a welcome opportunity for connecting with family clan members that were highly surprising and emotional occasions that saw Americans join with grandparents, uncles, aunts, and relatives they had never previously met but had heard about all their lives. The results were uncannily surprising if unnerving. For example, during a brief lull in Sicilian military activity, Tarallo, after receiving permission for his first visit to his parents' family in Melilli, loaded his jeep with "goodies" (coffee, sugar, cigarettes, and other items) and proceeded along a dirt road toward his destination. "I realized that we must have presented quite a sight, dirty, with two weeks growth of beard and worn-out clothes, As I approached the plaza I saw this little old man

sitting there and was about to ask him directions when all of a sudden he jumped up and exclaimed ‘figlio mio, figlio mio.’ It was my grandfather holding my high school picture in his lap.”⁴

Sardinia. The jumping off place for the penetration of Sardinia was in the North Africa region under the military jurisdiction of U.S. Marine Colonel William Eddy, highly regarded for his knowledge of Arabic culture. Eddy together with OSS leaders Earl Brennan and Max Corvo were under pressure to perform and thus anxious to showcase their value by supporting an SI mission to Sardinia. As we have seen the focus on Sardinia was in large part a ruse, a deliberate attempt to mislead the enemy into thinking that Sardinia rather than Sicily was the ultimate objective of the Allies first major thrust against Axis-controlled territory in mainland Europe.⁵ Great care was exercised to enlist the appropriate personnel for a five-man unit headed by Sardinian-born Chicago salesman Anthony Camboni, the son of a Sardinian poet and militant anti-fascist Socialist leader. Married, and father of two children, the 43-year-old Camboni discussed the matter with Girolamo Valenti and Prof. Borgese and agreed to become leader of the SI *Bathtub* mission accompanied by John DeMontis, Joseph Puleo, Vincent Pavia, and Lt. Charles Taquay. The chosen five were directed to undergo training by FBI and British counter-espionage experts in the use of firearms, photography, use of disguises, and basic navigation. “They were indoctrinated in Italian table manners which are different from American, were required to act as the Italians do so that they might be inconspicuous in Italy.”⁶ Continuous practice landings along isolated coast lands of North Africa engendered confidence that was further fortified by the knowledge that unit leader Camboni spoke a perfect Sardinian dialect and that he and DeMontis were armed with the names of numerous reliable and potentially helpful people in Sardinia—it portended a perfect fit for the mission. Following months of laborious planning by Corvo and Brennan and preparation under the guidance of Marine Captain Sebastian Passinisi who had attended Radio and Cryptographic school, in June 1943 the OSS undertook its first enterprise to infiltrate the island in which large numbers of German and Italian troops were stationed.

On July 26, 1943, the *Bathtub* mission was launched as three PT boats set out at midnight to land at Monte Mannu, Sardinia under the cover of a moonless dark night. Plowing through the calm seas the mission included the five-man infiltration unit, and OSS administrators Corvo and Brennan. After a couple of hours they approached the Sardinian coast whereupon

the five men transferred to small rubber boats to paddle ashore, which was an even rougher ride. The plan was for them to land at Mount Mannu, contact natives, and report back. At midnight, July 1, thinking they had arrived at the designated spot, they took their equipment off the PT boats, got into rubber boats, and paddled to shore only to realize they had landed at the wrong location and soon encountered Italian soldiers whom they greeted with shouts of “Hello Italians.” The soldiers were cordial but dubious causing Camboni to explain that they had just arrived from Tunisia and were lost. The OSS unit declined the Italian soldiers’ offer of food and moved on after hiding the equipment. They were soon confronted by soldiers from another Italian outpost who, even more suspicious, ordered them to raise hands and disarmed them even while an Italian soldier rebuked them. “You speak better Italian and Sardinian than I do and you can tell that crippled President of yours we are ready for the American Army.” What had started out so promising seemed to be deteriorating badly as Camboni and his group were now prisoners giving their captors their rank and serial numbers. Things were not as gloomy, however.

After gaining the confidence of the guards the men began a psychosocial campaign by telling them of a futility in fighting a war that was not popular with the Italian people. They repeatedly told them the Americans had no hard feelings towards the Italian people and that about ten million Italians were living in America and were proud to be there in a free democratic country.⁷

Rendering the incarceration condition more tolerable was the news that on July 25, the Mussolini government had fallen and that in a few days they would be freed. They would soon see other Americans coming on the *Bathtub II* mission; however, the Camboni unit enjoyed the distinction of making the first contact in Sardinia between the Allies and enemy troops. Thus it was after the July 1943 invasion of Sicily that Sardinia became the focus of attention. The assignment given to OSS *Bathtub II* was to capture Sardinia from which German and Italian bases had successfully blocked Allied efforts to supply Malta. On the night of September 13–14, 1943, a courageous four-man OSS OG crew undertook the assignment. The unit was led by Lt. Col. Serge Obolensky (code name “Sky”), a tall, colorful aristocratic Russian prince and officer during the Russian Revolution, who married into the socially prominent and wealthy Astor family, had become

a US citizen and would eventually become chairman of the board of the Hilton Hotel chain. Deemed too old to join the regular Army, he enlisted in the New York National Guard before importuning Gen. Donovan to join the OSS. Obolensky then took paratrooper training completing his first five jumps in 1943 at age 53, and was then placed in charge of the group. Second in command was First Lieutenant Michael Formichelli from New York City, an original member of the Italian American OG, who served as interpreter; plus two communications specialists, Second Lieutenant James Russell, SO, an instructor, and Sergeant William Sherwood. As the official OSS report described it:

Neither Formichelli nor Russell had ever jumped before, but both volunteered. Since, the OSS had no contacts on the island, this would be the most dangerous of infiltrations, a “blind jump,” leaving them entirely on their own in enemy territory. On the night of 13–14 September 1943, the four men parachuted into the Sardinian countryside through an escape hole in the belly of a black-painted bomber.⁸

While Russell and Sherwood were left to guard the radio equipment, Obolensky and Formichelli, having learned that German troops still controlled Cagliari, the island’s capital, bypassed it heading instead for a nearby railroad station. There, dressed in their Army uniforms and totting submachine guns, they astonished waiting passengers and local police officers with a stunning display of boldness demanding to see the officer in charge declaring they had an important message from the King of Italy and Prime Minister Marshal Pietro Badoglio. They were led to the headquarters of General Basso, head of Sardinian Italian military forces, successfully convincing him to stop fighting against the Allies and follow instead the lead of the King of Italy who had just signed an armistice with the Allies on September 3.⁹ Remarkably, 36 hours after leaving Algiers, the OSS team was able to radio headquarters that the Sardinian mission had been essentially accomplished: “Except for the Germans retreating in the far north, Sardinia was ours.” A few days later, Brigadier General Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., arrived with a token occupation force and formally accepted the surrender of the 270,000 Italian troops on Sardinia.

Corsica. Although Corsica, which lay north of Sardinia in the Mediterranean Sea, belonged to France, it had a long history of ties with the Italian peninsula. With Italy’s capitulation to the Allies, the 12,000 German troops who occupied the Mediterranean island of Corsica

became the focus of OSS attention. The French-administered territory that housed a significant Italian-speaking minority started an uprising, under the direction of the Maqui (French resistance forces) in a determination to harass the German 90th Panzer Division. The Maqui petition for OSS assistance, to which Gen. Donovan responded promptly, led to the deployment of OG *Fourth Group*, a mission consisting of 31 officers and enlisted men—almost entirely Italian Americans. Heading *Fourth Group* was Captain James Piteri with three First Lieutenants: Victor Gianinno, Thomas Gordon, and Vincent Russo—the latter would be executed later in 1944 upon the failure of the ill-fated Ginny II mission. The capable and popular Captain Piteri made such an impression that he was cast as an extra in the 1947 movie “13 Rue Madeleine,” a spy film about training espionage agents to infiltrate Nazi-occupied Europe starring James Cagney, Annabella, and Richard Conte. In Corsica OSS personnel were split into several groups: some taught the Guoms (French Moroccan auxiliary troops) the use of bazookas and other demolitions, while Lt. Russo and others combatted in the field alongside French forces that drove the Germans out of Corsica on October 4, 1943.

Among the 31 men in the *Fourth Group* was Frank Zabatta whose story is a moving account of a young Italian American whose association with the OSS and the spirit of patriotism inspired him his entire life. The son of Italian immigrants—father from Naples and mother from Calabria—Frank was born in New Rochelle, New York, in 1922. His birth certificate lists him as Francisco Zabatto, misspelling both his last name and his first name which in Italian should be Francesco. His father, a cobbler, moved the family to Malverne, Long Island, where three generations later it continues to make its home. After attending St. Raymond Parochial School, Frank, who was fluent in Italian, worked for a time until he joined the Army in 1942 and soon became part of the OSS where he learned to work with various military types of explosives. After a bout with dysentery he went from Algiers to Corsica with his contingent known as “Donovan’s Devils,” which, despite a period of heavy rain, engaged in a fierce shoot-out with German troops that caused the death of Sgt. Rocco T. Grasso, Sgt. Sam Maselli, and Lt. Gordon. As Zabatta recalled it; “We slept in the most adverse conditions—frequent rain—we went to Bastia to help chase the Germans, again lots of rain up and over the mountains under fire from 88s. I almost lost my testicles—no medics available, off to the island of Capria. Thru [Through] this whole period we operated with only one medic and mostly with

none.”¹⁰ During the war Zabatta married Rose who worked as a riveter at Grumman Aircraft. Because of the covert nature of his work, his wife did not receive much mail from him, “I did receive letters, but they were censored and signed by someone else. I really didn’t know exactly where he was.”¹¹ Following the war Zabatta returned to Malverne, where he and his wife raised a family of four children, and where he became an entrepreneur, while actively promoting patriotism in local schools and community events. He never forgot his OSS experience, attending many reunions and confessing that he constantly cried for his comrades who had been killed, especially those on the Ginny II mission. The deaths of Grasso, Maselli, and Gordon deeply impressed a French officer who described their action as the bravest thing he had ever seen. All posthumously received medals for bravery from the American and French governments.¹²

Another Italian American OSS man assigned to Corsica was Anthony Scariano, who had gotten married, was drafted and sent to North Africa where he taught the Italian language to troops about to be sent to Italy. He found the assignment too insipid and was itching for more action. “I was a young Italian American looking for adventure. Wild Bill Donovan was looking for adventurous types. He wanted people who could speak Italian, who were young, energetic, and progressive. I was already overseas, destined to be military governor of Reggio Emilia, just north of the Adriatic. That seemed a little too tame for me.”¹³ Craving for action he was introduced to the OSS by a superior officer. “Here are your orders. I don’t know where you are going or what you’ll be doing but an outfit known as the OSS, they want you in Corsica. Are you ready?”¹⁴ Undoubtedly, he was ready. “We were conducting what was known as dirty tricks. Blowing up tunnels, convoys, barracks, all behind the fascist line as, German and Italian...Our object was to create havoc behind the enemy lines.”¹⁵ Scariano set up operation headquarters on the coast of Corsica that prepared troops for the upcoming invasion of the Italian mainland. A predilection toward politics from his youth that was stirred by the Roosevelt campaign for president in 1932 would be a further connection to OSS head General Donovan whom Scariano was stunned to see personally come to the Corsica site even before the island was secured. He was further surprised that the noted general discussed politics with him perceiving how extraordinary it was since Donovan was a Republican while he was a Democrat. In time Scariano became an OSS Intelligence officer and assistant operations officer assigned to help administer penal colonies of

several hundred men on two small islands in the Tuscan Archipelago. After the war Scariano became a member of the Illinois state legislature, federal prosecutor, and a jurist.

In leaving a detailed account of his duties Scariano provided posterity with the particulars of OSS and Italian collaboration concerning the administration of conquered Italian islands. The OSS requisitioned ships on a paid basis from private civilian owners who were pressed into service operating the vessels. Italian fishing boat owners were more likely to cooperate once the Badoglio government succeeded Mussolini in Italy.

The islands were of course Italian. We requisitioned the fishing boat from a Capraian fishing team. They were two people who owned it as partners. And we requisitioned that from them on a paid basis...And we employed help on the islands to administer relief to the civilian population and keep them out of the hair of the military that was my principal duty.¹⁶

7.1 TARALLO MISSIONS: SICILY, LIPARI, AND VENTOTENE

Lipari. On the morning of August 18, 1943, Captain Frank Tarallo led an SI mission to Lipari Island, the largest of the Aeolian archipelago chain of islands, to wrest it from Axis control, capture valuable military documents, and free prisoners. Accompanied by Lt. North and Privates Fiorillo, Treglia, Durante, Clemente, Ballato, Bonmarito, and Tumiolo, the group filed into three PT boats and, accompanied by a destroyer, reached the island's outer zone. Their intention to launch a surprise landing was foiled by the Axis powers, who began to deploy shore defenses including howitzer shore batteries and machine-gun emplacements on commanding ridges overlooking the harbor. Without hesitation the OSS unit proceeded to reach land where Tarallo and two others jumped off the PT boats and confronted the Axis naval officer in charge of the island, convincing him to surrender. This bold action undoubtedly saved the mission and upon subsequent interrogation, the surrendering officer confessed that had there been hesitation on the part of Tarallo's party the shore defense batteries would have opened fire. Consequently the bloodless Lipari mission was exceedingly successful not only in capturing the island and taking 45 prisoners thought worthy of interrogating, but also in collecting valuable

Italian naval code books and freeing many prisoners. The liberated island was then turned over to the U.S. Army to administer.¹⁷

Ventotene. Corvo then instructed Tarallo to lead a mission to free from German control island redoubts that could significantly advance the Allied cause leading to Tarallo's most rewarding experience in the Ventotene Island Group. Located in the [Tyrrhenian Sea](#) off the west coast of [Italy](#), Ventotene housed a fascist jail that held many political prisoners including Sandro Pertini, future President of Italy and some of Italy's outstanding military minds. Tarallo's task was to overcome the large German force guarding the prison, liberate the prisoners, and salvage important military secrets. With little more than a corporal's guard, at noon on September 8, 1943, Tarallo and his team, including Carl Bonmarito, Benny Treglia, and Lt. J.G. North, son of the famous circus family as second in command, boarded the destroyer USS *Knight* that sailed toward Ventotene, notwithstanding a thick haze that seriously hampered visibility. Added to this was the virtual impossibility of distinguishing the shore line because of the island's volcanic ash composition terrain, which caused the dory on which they riding to hit the rocky shore. Confronted with this exigency Tarallo and another man jumped out to reconnoiter the area in an effort to locate the entrance to the harbor. Simultaneously loud explosions emanated from the activity of nearby German troops who were destroying various items including a supply boat along the wharf in an effort to prevent them from falling into Allied hands. Although the Tarallo detachment quickly captured 25 German soldiers, dozens more fled to the northern part of island where lay a heavily fortified garrison surrounded by booby traps—a setting that proffered a looming dangerous possibility of a bloody battle between the small American contingent and a superior number of Germans.

Far outnumbered but refusing to be denied, Tarallo moved ahead, accompanied by a German-speaking Italian whom he had just released from the island's prison, plus two SI OSS men fully armed with submachine guns. Understandably nervous and uncertain as to what to expect, they resorted to ingenious deception and proceeded toward the German encampment under the cover of a white flag. Climbing up a path strewn with abandoned but fully loaded German machine guns and cases of ammunition, visible along the narrow path that constituted glaring evidence that the Germans could put up a stiff fight, the audacious Captain Tarallo asked to confer with the German officer in charge. He ingeniously convinced the German officer that he was in the vanguard of 500 troops supported by a formidable navy presence offshore—essentially only the

destroyer USS *Knight* accompanied by some PT boats that continually sailed round the island thereby giving the appearance of multiple craft. Accompanied by the handsome and dashing Hollywood actor Douglas Fairbanks Jr., Tarallo prepared a surrender document to present to enemy commanding officers. In recording the incident Fairbanks attested to Tarallo's role writing that he

spoke to them in Italian, promising God knows what and threatening dire alternatives if they didn't comply. The poor Ventotenesi were obviously mystified. Tarallo spoke a slightly American-accented, North Italian dialect accented, and our shaking local captives spoke only the southern Neapolitan dialect. But both could read, and the rest of us remained as solemn as we could while they obediently scribbled their names to the "surrender."¹⁸

Resplendent in his full uniform and adorned with ceremonial sword, the Italian official in charge of Ventotene signed the surrender agreement. Meanwhile, concluding that discretion was the better part of valor, the German officer, believing they could be blasted to smithereens, agreed to submit to Tarallo's 45 men, notwithstanding the fact he commanded 89 heavily armed German troops. The next day Tarallo and his men went to the nearby island of San Stefano where they freed an additional 400 political prisoners and restored civil rights to thousands of civilians who had been driven from their homes and forced to survive under awful conditions. For his extraordinary bravery and leadership in the face of superior forces, his superior officers recommended Tarallo for the Navy Cross. This remarkable OSS operation became a better-known incident after the publication of John Steinbeck's lively but dubious and untrustworthy 1963 article "A Ragged Crew" in *True Magazine*. Simply put, in writing about this thrilling performance, Steinbeck completely ignored the part Tarallo played—a role documented and confirmed by responsible authorities. Douglas Fairbanks Jr., for instance, who was part of the Ventotene operation, does not mention Steinbeck while proffering due credit to Tarallo.¹⁹

NOTES

1. Letter to the author, October 11, 1977. *OSS Records*, Washington, DC, Personal Report, Transfer of Major Frank J. Tarallo to OSS at request of OSS Director.

2. George C. Chalou, *The Secret War: The Office of Strategic Services in World War II*, National Archives and Records, Washington, DC, 2002, 185.
3. Costanza, *The Mafia and the Allies*, 93. Although according to Earl Brennan a six-man OSS infiltration team including Tarallo had infiltrated Sicily before the invasion of the island, the reference most likely referred to the OSS agents that arrived in Sicily three days later who then began their infiltration missions. "When he had learned from me that we had six agents in Sicily in advance of the invasion all of Sicilian connections and all both highly qualified and productive," he exclaimed: "Only six in all of Sicily!" (Brennan, "OSS and the Italian Contribution," 263).
4. Tarallo autobiography.
5. See Richard Overy, *Why the Allies Won* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), 13, for information about Operation Mincemeat. See also Brennan, "OSS and the Italian Contribution," 262.
6. Ringlesbach, *OSS Stories that can now be told*, 14–15.
7. Ringlesbach, *OSS Stories that can now be told*, 18.
8. Chambers II, *OSS Training in the National Parks*, 300.
9. Chambers II, *OSS Training in the National Parks*, 300. Office of Strategic Services Operational Groups, *Bathtub II*, online. See also O'Donnell, *Operatives, Spies and Saboteurs*, 56.
10. Frank Zapatta *Papers* in possession of Joanne Zabatta Scully, Malverne, New York.
11. Malverne *Herald*, June 6–10, 2004.
12. Chambers II, *OSS Training in the National Parks*, 301.
13. "Anthony Scariano," *The Good War*, edit. Studs Terkel, The New Press, New York, 1984, 487–490.
14. Candeloro, *Italians in Chicago*, 60.
15. Scariano, *The Good War*, Terkel, 488.
16. *Anthony Scariano Oral History*, University of Illinois, Springfield, 61.
17. G.C. Chalou, *The Secret War*, 187. See also Tarallo, *Lipari Island Mission, Report*, August 18, 1943.
18. Fairbanks Jr., *A Hell of a War*, 196.
19. See: LaGumina, "From a Ragged Crew to a Ragged Truth: How John Steinbeck Missed the Mark on a World War II Story," *Italian Americana*, Summer 2004, 117–131. See also *The Per Niente Club*

Newsletter, Editor, Joe Di Leo, agosto due mila sei, Volume II, Issue VIII, August 2006, which commented: “The exciting drama of their liberation attracted the attention of famed writer John Steinbeck who, in writing about the episode, sadly omitted the critical role that Tarallo and the other Italian Americans played.”

It is astounding to observe how inaccuracies and vital omissions characterize the retelling of this episode. Brian Kannard, *Steinbeck: Citizen Spy*, Grave Distractions Publications, 2013, for instance, spends several pages (113–129) discussing Steinbeck’s presence and questionable role at Ventotene, while also mentioning the participation of Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. and Lt. North, however, Tarallo’s name is conspicuous by its absence. Kannard remarks further that Fairbanks does not mention Steinbeck at all in his recollection of the Ventotene operation, 128. On the contrary Fairbanks gives Tarallo due credit. Fairbanks Jr., *A Hell of a War*, 196.

From Salerno to Anzio

With the subjugation of Sicily and other major islands, and not without dissenting opinions, it was decided that the penetration of the Italian mainland should be the next target. It was the logical sequence to the conquest of North Africa and Sicily and a prelude to the Normandy invasion in 1944. Salerno, with its 20-mile stretch of beach, excellent sea approaches minus dangerous shoals, and acceptable underwater gradients permitting ships to come close to land located 168 miles from Rome, was selected as the landing site in the hope of surprising the defending forces.¹ The September 3, 1943, invasion day opened with a deceptively promising dawn that offered a marvelously bright day, a lovely climate, and a calm sea, but the enemy was not to be surprised and what lay ahead would be some of the bloodiest fighting of the entire war. The direct Allied goal in this offensive was to remove Italy from the war and thereby significantly weaken Axis influence in the region—a task easier said than done. Thus the combined Allied military forces under British General Harold Alexander and American General Mark Clark were destined to slug it out arduously side by side and shoulder to shoulder as they fought tenacious Axis forces headed by General Albert Kesselring, one of Germany's most skilled, decorated, and popular commanders. As the American Fifth Army and the British Eighth Army began their agonizingly slow ascent in the Italian peninsula from September 1943 through May 1945, they asked for and were aided by various branches of the OSS. This was in itself a

noteworthy departure from prior practices wherein both in North Africa and in Italy the Army generally discounted the role of commando-type units or specially trained detachments. Although under the general supervision of the Army's G-3 Division, commando-type deployment increasingly was left to the OSS and its British counterpart, the SOE. The Americans tended to be dominant in North Africa, while the British enjoyed greater influence in the eastern Mediterranean.

Skepticism initially characterized the attitude of Army staff officers who did not expect positive results from OSS personnel, but the same officials soon came to acknowledge the intelligence agency's value. Having established contact with Allied sympathizers in North Africa, OSS agents even organized warrior tribesmen of the region into a guerrilla force.

Although the OSS detachment at Salerno proved its mettle by providing critical tactical intelligence to Darby's Rangers during their defense of the Sorrentino peninsula, Allied field commanders frequently misunderstood their operations. On the other hand, General Mark Clark not only was appreciative of the OSS operation, but he also provided its agents with vehicles and rations.²

After transferring its bases to the Italian mainland in the late summer of 1944, the OSS played a larger role in promoting Partisan activity which had previously been hampered by lack of airlift and the political situation. According to one Army report the 75 OSS teams that were equipping and training Resistance bands in preparation for the final Allied effort by the spring of 1945 culminated in immense amount of help from Partisans that accounted for thousands of enemy deaths and the wounding of tens of thousands of enemy soldiers. Much of the credit for gathering intelligence necessary for the successful military operation was properly credited to Ultra deciphering that took place at Bletchley Park in England. However,

little credit has been given to the vast amount of detailed intelligence collected and rapidly transmitted by individual Partisan spies in Italy. Strategically, Ultra may have saved the day, but tactically its information was far slower in getting to where it was needed in the field than agent signals. During the crucial battles of Anzio in January and February 1944, for example, Ultra signals warning of Hitler's plans and of Field Marshal Albert Kesselring's attacks would arrive regularly at Allied headquarters in Caserta as many as three days after the attacks had already taken place. On the other hand, extremely accurate information gathered by the Partisans, often directly from Kesselring's own headquarters, was sent via a secret OSS

radio in Rome, on the air as many as five times a day, to be received simultaneously in Caserta and on the beachhead in time to repel these attacks.³

Partisan activity was especially helpful in preventing the destruction of port facilities and other infrastructure in the Genoa, Milan, Venice, and Modena regions in northern Italy. This was largely attributable to supplies parachuted to them by SOE (British) and OSS as well as to the ability of Italian Resistance forces that coordinated efforts via secret radios with General Clark's Fifteenth Army Group headquarters.

The dozens of OG units deployed to aid the US and British armies in Italy via infiltration and that carried out sabotage missions were specially selected and trained. They were primarily "Italian-speaking OSS agents from various operational branches, SI [Secret Intelligence], SO [Special Operations], OG [Operational Groups], X.2 [Counter Intelligence Division], MU, [Maritime Unit] even R&A [Research and Analysis] served as interpreters, helped recruit Italians for supporting functions, and penetrated German lines and report on enemy units and deployment."⁴ For a successful incursion of Salerno it was essential that all possible information about German positions inland be obtained—the kind of activity in which the OSS excelled. As Corvo explained,

We were on the lookout to question many of the refugees and deserters who were trickling back to Sicily from the mainland. One of them, an officer, who had been in that zone only a few days earlier and was familiar with the defenses was found on August 29 through one of our contacts. We were able to transmit to Algiers, for action by the Fifth Army, the accurate disposition of some of the units that were located at various strongpoints along the coastline from Capua to Salerno. All indications were that a landing at Salerno was expected and that, since the fall of Mussolini, the Germans had started to move increasing number of troops into Italy.⁵

In pursuit of its mission to gather information the OSS infiltrated Italian and American agents up to 50 miles behind German lines in southern Italy where eventually they were successful in providing target information that expedited raids carried out by Allied artillery and airplane bombers.

Known by the code name "Operation Avalanche," the Salerno assault ran into such stiff German resistance that at one point the Allies contemplated evacuation. One historian, in placing the blame for the near disaster on both British and American commanders declared, "The truth was that the mess at Salerno was of Alexander and Clark's own making."⁶ The

Allies, furthermore, were beset by harsh friction, mistakes, and miscalculations “taking the Allied force from the benighted, braying optimism of invasion eve to the brink of obliteration five days later.”⁷ For success to be achieved a massive invading force was necessary and in time was achieved, however, only after sustaining frightful casualties in harsh fighting. As a historian proclaimed, “Yet Salerno for the Allies was a blood chit, to be redeemed in the future.”⁸

The difficulty of the battle notwithstanding, Salerno demonstrated the value of Italian-speaking OSS agents from various branches who served as interpreters and who recruited Italians for support functions that helped penetrate German lines. As such they acted as eyes and ears for Clark’s Fifth Army as it advanced into Naples where it faced deadly obstacles prepared by the Germans. “A team of OSS infiltrators warned that retreating Germans had mined at least fifty buildings and Italian bodies lay in the streets ‘heavily scented with sweet heliotrope odor of unburied dead,’ an OSS officer wrote.”⁹

Anzio. The Battle of Anzio, code-named Operation Shingle, has been cited by many military analysts as one of the war’s most faulty concepts—some go so far to call it the war’s greatest blunder. The battle commenced in January 1944 after a flotilla of American, British, Dutch, and Greek ships landed American and British forces on the Italian coast three and a half miles north of Salerno. The ambitious plan placed the VI Corps of the Allied Fifth Army 70 miles behind the German Gustav Line defenses in central Italy, with the objective of cutting German lines of communication and thus forcing German defenses on the Gustav Line to retreat and thereby bring the Allies a step closer to the liberation of Rome. Unluckily, they encountered unexpectedly powerful and protracted German resistance that became a four-month ordeal of ferocious fighting in foul weather that caused painful casualties. The Battle of Anzio engendered fierce fighting not only on land but also on the high seas forcing American ships to pull back in the face of heavy if inaccurate shelling from land. The following excerpts from the log of a participant sailor on the light cruiser USS *Brooklyn* provides an indication of ferocity of the battle.

JAN 3 “4, Underway at 0555 for Anzio. Allied troops are meeting stiff opposition and we are needed for support as the British cruiser HMS Spartan and the HMS Humming Bird were sunk early this morning by enemy aircraft. Arrived at Anzio at 1000. Proceeded to Peter Beach where enemy shore batteries were firing at our shipping...

FEB 9 “44 Underway at 0600 and headed for Anzio. Arrived at Anzio at 0800 and contacted our SFC party. Fired on targets and results were very satisfactory. Enemy artillery fired back at us and some were very close. We fired 580 rounds... ambulances and litter bearers were seen going to the area we had just bombarded. Underway for Palermo at 1600.¹⁰

Acknowledging the heavy cost of battle, renowned historian Samuel Eliot Morison, nevertheless, maintained that the Allies did not fight in vain because their sacrifice did in fact draw off a significant amount of German troops that previously had been effective in stalling the Salerno drive—General Kesselring was now forced to throw in so many forces to try to stop the Anzio beachhead that it had the result of helping to turn the balance in the Allies favor in the drive to Rome.¹¹ The fundamental weakness of Operation Shingle, it is maintained, is that it required the deployment of maximum, not partial use of Army personnel.¹²

At Salerno the OSS detachment that was present was able to bring radio equipment that allowed them to contact agents who by this time had successfully established themselves in Rome, and provided tactical intelligence at a critical time. The intelligence gathered identified the German units already at the beachhead and those moving through Rome to take part in the anticipated German offensive. One of the Italian American OSS agents present during this crucial engagement was the intrepid Stephen Rossetti, whose exploits at Salerno we have previously discussed. Rossetti subsequently made a stupendous number of 85 infiltrations behind German lines, the most important and dangerous of which was a 129-day stretch during the historic and costly Battle of Anzio, which we have seen was launched in an attempt to draw German troops off the daunting Gustav Line—a string of military fortifications that ran across Italy from the Tyrrhenian Sea to the Adriatic coast. The center of the Gustav Line which crossed the main route north to Rome was anchored around the mountains near historic Monte Cassino. The Allies hoped that their offensive would degrade enemy forces and thereby render less hazardous the road to Rome. American General John P. Lucas successfully led the combined American and British invasion forces to secure a beach between Anzio and Nettuno; however, German resistance responded rapidly and forcefully bringing a halt to the drive of the invading forces which led to a four-month stalemate marked by heavy casualties on both sides. Rossetti and other OSS personnel were brought into the fray by a PT boat assigned to infiltrate behind enemy lines where they would endure the hardships of the battlefield in the midst of a bitterly cold winter.

Aware that they were in an area in which there lived a large number of fascists, Rossetti's detachment rejected the idea of seeking shelter in any of the houses and spent two bitterly cold nights in the open fields. Frustrated by fitful cat naps, they took off for Rome in the middle of the night. In the pitch blackness they moved too close to a few truckloads of German troops who shouted to them in the darkness. Rossetti gave the order for his men not to respond but to spread out and fire upon them when they came close. In this manner they continued toward Rome.¹³

Although they dodged German troops in the fields the most dangerous part of the Rossetti mission lay ahead; it was to cut across German lines in order to reach American positions—a task they accomplished by crawling very slowly on their bellies. Three hours and one mile later they had reached an American foxhole and dove in only to be confronted by a suspicious American sergeant who, having never heard about the OSS, kept them under guard. The sergeant, whose company had been unable to make advances for more than 24 hours, found Rossetti's account so incredulous that he detained him for a time until an officer from the Sixth Corps headquarters confirmed knowledge of Rossetti as an OSS agent. Rossetti thereupon resumed his infiltration operation by planting three OSS agents in Rome, a step that proved to be a hugely beneficial source of intelligence regarding the strategic location of and condition of specific German military units. When Rossetti analyzed a particular message that revealed Hitler's order for a total elimination of the Allied beachhead no matter the cost, he quickly rushed to inform General John Lucas, who was in the dining room about to eat lunch with his staff. Lucas abruptly left his meal to order an all-out bombardment of German airfields in the area that successfully hampered German ability to use air power. Rossetti and his OSS men also volunteered to assume front line duty to stem the ongoing German tide. This episode further tellingly demonstrated the value of behind-the-lines radio intelligence by clandestine Italian-speaking operators while simultaneously illustrating the value of linking arms with Italian resistance forces.¹⁴

From the beginning General Donovan sought out for the OSS individuals who were above all imaginative and creative. It was a desirable quality that was evident when it came to essential communications that had to be transmitted in the heat of battle. It also required extraordinary resourcefulness to insure that intelligence messages were shared by its units in Italy but did not fall into wrong hands or if it did that the information would be completely incomprehensible. Much like the successful bilingual use of

the obscure Navajo language as a means of secret communication in the Pacific Theater, during World War II when Native Americans transmitted coded wartime messages that were bewildering to the enemy, bilingual OSS agents used the Sicilian language for the same purpose. "Contact between the two striking forces and the reserve was to be maintained in our customary manner by the use of walkie-talkies. Conversation over these circuits was always carried on in a Sicilian dialect which we could safely assume to be unintelligible both to Germans and to Italians from the northern part of the country."¹⁵ It is important to bear in mind that Sicilian is not a dialect but a language of its own. Even though there is a great deal of similarity between Italian and Sicilian because of common roots, there are considerable differences between the two. They differ, for example, in parts of speech: nouns, articles, adjectives, pronouns, variances in the lexicon, the accent, the tone, and, in a minor way, in the sentence structure.

Communications of another unusual type were what linked William DeSalvo and Rossetti who were only two of many OSS operatives in the Po Valley offensive that commenced on April 8, 1945. It was to be part of the final spring offensive that followed the agonizing pattern of the past: slow and arduous advance over rugged terrain, poor weather, and a determined and skilled enemy. Although it would only be a matter of weeks before fighting ended in the Italian peninsula, there were some trying moments for OSS agents and Partisans in mountain areas near Bologna because of shortages in supplies and arms. As Rossetti put it, "Here we were stopped cold...I knew that we couldn't hope to crack the German defenses without additional supplies." There was an urgent need to get the word out—by pigeon—to be resupplied.

Carrier pigeons were in fact to play a very important role in Italy during the war to notify friendly forces about enemy troop concentrations, or to desist from bombing their own troops. In a particular instance on October 18, 1943, after the failure to send radio messages, a celebrated pigeon named GI Joe succeeded in delivering a message to cancel a scheduled heavy bombing mission on German-occupied Colvi Vecchia, Italy, which would result in bombing American troops. One source indicates that 150 officers and 3000 enlisted men were part of the pigeon service.¹⁶

Prior to departure for a mission Rossetti frequently checked the pigeon loft carefully on a daily basis. When he got word that the Germans in the immediate area were beginning to mobilize, Rossetti dispatched a carrier pigeon to the rear base urgently requesting sorely needed ammunition.

Knowing that pigeon tenders checked their lofts every hour, Rossetti became extremely alarmed when his request was not answered. He sent a second pigeon spelling out his dangerous position in stronger terms—this message caught the attention of Captain De Salvo of Long Island, New York. Appreciating Rossetti's plight, and without taking the time to clear things with a higher officer, De Salvo raced to the airfield where he commandeered a squadron of eight A-20s, ordered them to unload their bombs, and reload the planes with parachute packs of ammunition to deliver to Rossetti. About to be reprimanded by a superior officer for failing to obtain permission for the planes, the fast-talking DeSalvo convinced the officer of the urgency that required bypassing protocol. It was a decision highly appreciated by Rossetti. "I am still thanking God that he did."¹⁷

Even as Allied forces were moving in to conquer Rome the American Fifth and British Eighth armies pursued the stubbornly resisting Germans up the Italian peninsula. The Allies had great interest in capturing (Livorno) Leghorn, the major port on Italy's west coast and a giant Italian naval base; its capture would provide the Allies a fine harbor and sea supply. Well aware of its potential value to the Allies the retreating Germans were determined to impede them by means of extensive demolition to block the port. Rossetti and his detachment made up of Japanese Americans of the famed 442nd Regiment were assigned the task of breaking through German blockade efforts. With clear admiration for the Asian American contingent which would emerge as among the most decorated American soldiers, Rossetti declared: "Those tough little fellows were generally conceded by both the Americans and the Germans to be the best fighters in the Fifth Army." He then described their entrance into the port city.

After we crossed the bridge, we had but minor difficulty in sweeping into Leghorn itself. Once inside the city, however, we found the air full of flying bullets. The Partisans were attempting to settle scores with local Fascists and the few Germans who had not been able to escape with the main enemy forces. The years of Fascism and the long German occupation had kept the lid on these people for a long time.¹⁸

Armed with prior information about OSS connections in Leghorn, Rossetti sought to make contact with the father of an Italian who worked for OSS in Rome only to be told by Partisans that the man he sought was suspected of collaborating with the Germans. Confronted and offended

by the charge, the Italian in question, succumbing to a flair for the dramatic, ushered Rossetti to the back yard where he began to dig while Rossetti held a flashlight. The excavation unearthed an old cognac bottle which the man picked up and shattered against the garden wall and from which he extracted a map. Back inside the man's house on a table under a lantern light they unfolded the map which revealed a sketch of Leghorn harbor with the precise location of all the ships which the Germans had sunk to deny use of the port. It was further revealed that at the time of the Anzio landings these ships had been loaded with salt in Sardinia and sunk at Leghorn. The map also provided the location of a large number of German mines.

The next morning Rossetti took that document to his superior who immediately sent it by courier to the American naval unit attached to the Fifth Army. Following locations indicated by the map, a Navy unit confirmed that the information was indeed accurate and thus of the greatest value in quickly clearing the harbor for Allied traffic. In gratitude, Rossetti provided the man with a pass for Rome, where he was subsequently picked up by authorities and confessed to having been a former German agent. Apparently, his cooperation in turning over the German charts of Leghorn harbor was an attempt to ingratiate his way into Allied confidence and escape the retribution that awaited him. In any event the Navy appreciated the information he provided about the Leghorn harbor.¹⁹

After the Battle of Anzio ended Major Rossetti remained part of the Fifth Army OSS detachment that continued to render important service working with a small unit of Italian Partisans who remarkably captured 1200 Germans. For his extraordinary gallantry during the Italian campaign, Rossetti became one of most decorated soldiers of the war. Among the medals bestowed upon him were the Silver Star, Legion of Merit, Combat Bronze Star, British Distinguished Service Order (highest military order to citizens other than British), and the Italian Crown of Italy medal.

The protracted battle of Salerno dragged on for months as troops became bogged down in mud and snow thereby delaying the hoped for hasty occupation of Rome; it frustrated the historic eternal city's takeover that had long loomed large in the thinking of the Allies. Prime Minister Churchill coveted the capture of Rome as an extremely anticipated objective whose conquest would bring sizeable political and military benefits of desirable airfields and road systems and most of all it would be a major psychological event. The road to Rome, however, tragically would develop

into a grueling contest marked by formidable German defenses and a demanding geographic landscape riven with twisting rivers, lakes, mountains and hills. With frightening casualties, the path to Rome became one of the most destructive battles on the western front. It was estimated that the continuous combat for 602 days—longer than any field army battle of the war—resulted in over 312,000 Allied casualties, the majority of which were sustained by Fifth Army units. Brutality is an inevitable concomitant of warfare but the catastrophic consequences of Anzio seemed to dwarf virtually all the World War II battles in Western Europe. Men suffered and died from napalm, bullets, shell fragments, and an assortment of other violent battlefield devices.

This was the bleak environment that constituted the controversial and bloody Battle of Anzio in which tens of thousands men fought, many died, and many others were wounded in the cold, mud, and swamps of reclaimed lands 30 miles away from the capital. Commencing with the Anzio invasion in late January 1944 the OSS continued to work in close concert with the Fifth Army while establishing command posts throughout Italy in such centers as Rome, Brindisi, Palermo, Caserta, and Siena, which interacted with the Algiers OSS command post. This network facilitated the execution of vital clandestine activities as, for instance, those carried out by infiltration teams from the Brindisi command post that “gave us a pretty comprehensive picture of the German and fascist military situation, provided bombing targets and placed us in touch with the various guerilla formations and with the General command of the patriot forces in Milan.”²⁰

Carrying out dangerous military operations behind enemy lines was a feature of the Battle of Anzio. For example, previously mentioned Captain DeSalvo, who was part of a detachment that worked with Italian Partisans, was diligently engaged in searching nearby woods when unbeknownst to him an American soldier was also scouting the same area as a member of a unit headed by legendary Colonel William Darby. It nearly resulted in a friendly fire tragedy as DeSalvo and his men crawled around the beachhead trying to get as close to the Germans as possible without being detected. All of a sudden a man speaking perfect English stepped out of the darkness to confront them. It was a tense situation with all involved placing their nervous hands on the triggers of their guns until it was realized that it was an Italian Partisan who spoke English without accent. Dangerous incidents of this type were not uncommon in the no-man’s terrain between the Germans and the Allies.²¹

The matter of patches worn by OSS operatives is interesting since many assigned to work with Italian Partisans chose whatever patch design suited their fancy. Years after the war ended, the patch that Captain DeSalvo wore was found in a tailor shop in Italy where it and the other patches that identified Fifth Army OSS detachments were becoming desirable collectors' items that spurred the manufacture of fake duplicates. It was said that the patch worn by DeSalvo was the sole surviving example of that period and thus became a treasured keepsake of his son.²² The fighting endured by Fifth and Eighth Army troops from Salerno to Rome was among the most arduous of the war—it was a demanding experience for OSS personnel caught up in it as well.

We continued to push ahead with the beachhead forces as they joined up with the Fifth Army and raced for Rome. Our little group entered the Italian capital on the morning of June 6th. We were among the first Allied units actually to enter the city. Although there was still scattered firing from enemy troops, we were given a tremendous ovation after living like animals under constant shell fire for over four months. Seeing the comfort and beauty of Rome, we could hardly believe that a war was going on—certainly not war as we had lived it through that winter. One of the things that impressed us most was eating our first meal since January above ground, and without fear of being hit any moment by shrapnel. I reported to Fifth Army headquarters and was sent back to Naples for a badly needed rest. As far as I know, I was on Anzio longer than any other American—129 days; and I was also one of the very few who hadn't been given any relief during the whole period.²³

Rome. Prompting the invasion of Italy on the part of the Allies was the conviction that eliminating Italy from the war would compel Hitler to maintain a large concentration of German divisions there instead of deploying them in other vital military sectors. The fall of Rome was central to the goal, an irresistible attraction desired by Allied leaders. Insistent that Rome fall by the end of 1943, Churchill pressed Eisenhower and the Allied ground commander-in-chief in Italy, Field Marshal Sir Harold Alexander, to bring it about, not because of its incomparable military value, although airfields and vast road and rail network were desirable assets. More important was its political and psychological value—a prize beyond compare; its capitulation would indicate that Berlin, already being battered by non-stop Allied bombing, was next. But circumstances militated against the British Prime Minister's aspiration. In part it was due to the paradox inherent in the Italian campaign, namely, that it was both an

active front and a secondary front that was subordinate to the building up of forces in England for a planned cross-channel invasion. The consequent shortage of reserves resulted in a stalemate south of Rome delaying the advance on the Italian capital under the spring of 1944.²⁴ It took the strenuous efforts of several major drives to break through the formidable German Gustav Line of defenses with Allied troops finally entering Rome on June 5, 1944.

Following the liberation of Rome, the German Army was compelled to fall back to mountain defenses that straddled the Apennines, which came to be known as the formidable Gothic Line. It was imperative for Generals Alexander and Clark to obtain intelligence necessary to crack the German mountain stronghold; it was the kind of activity in which OSS operatives and Partisans excelled. Although this monograph focuses primarily on Italian Americans mention must be made of some OSS operatives like 23-year-old Peter Tompkins, not of Italian ancestry, who played a major role in wartime Rome. A former journalist for the New York *Herald Tribune* and CBS radio who had lived in Italy for years prior to the war, he spoke Italian fluently, Tompkins was personally designated to head the OSS Rome spy operations that were already performing vital undercover work. Using the clandestine Radio Vittorio he made contact with the Italian Underground and sent real-time tactical intelligence about German plans and deployments which proved more immediately useful than the other intelligence sources that took longer to decipher and deliver. The intelligence provided by Tompkins, his local watchers, and his Italian agents was praised for its effectiveness by James Jesus Angleton, head of the OSS's counter-espionage operation.

Tompkins has been cited by historians for supplying the vital intelligence that proved to be especially critical in saving the Anzio operation. His Rome radio operation provided "accurate and timely information. His work gave VI corps valuable insight into German movements throughout the beachheads most vulnerable days."²⁵ In carrying out his assignment Tompkins barely escaped capture; however, Maurizio Giglio, the key operator of Radio Vittorio, was not so fortunate—he was captured by the Gestapo and beaten to death.²⁶ Another OSS agent was the controversial but captivating James Jesus Angleton who was born in the USA but was brought up in Italy. He was part of an innovative X-2 (Counter Intelligence) unit operating in London when in late 1944 he was transferred to head up secret operations in Rome where he gained extraordinary repute for developing a system of interrogating Italian prisoners for

valuable military information that was quickly disseminated. He was also credited with cultivating meaningful relationships and liaisons with foreign intelligence service contacts that yielded worthwhile data.²⁷

Black propaganda. Although by the outbreak of World War II the use of propaganda as a way of influencing opinion fostered a negative connotation, all countries expended it to convey information primarily to influence and further an agenda, often by presenting facts selectively, if not falsely. Various branches of the US government including the OSS also utilized the system to advance their interests. The OSS was influenced by presumed effectiveness of Nazi propaganda and was inclined to duplicate it concluding that utilization of any and all means, even if morally deficient, was acceptable to obtain national goals. Since MO activities were covert, there was little concern over damaging America's reputation or moral standing. The MO OSS branch, which was specifically charged with development and promotion of psychological warfare against enemy forces, conducted the use of various kinds of propaganda but most particularly Black propaganda. Relying on its collective sense of imagination the MO branch moved aggressively to create and distribute "black" or undercover misinformation via propaganda campaigns against the Axis powers. Starting a little more than a month after the Allies entered Rome, OSS MO developed into a highly successful psychological fabrication program. At its peak MO numbered 400 OSS agents who devoted their time almost exclusively to crafting propaganda missions code-named "Sauerkraut" and "Cornflakes," which essentially were programs of massive misrepresentation and deception designed to demoralize and discourage Italian-based German forces and the German public by capitalizing on news events in Germany—specifically the July 21, 1944, attempted assassination of Adolph Hitler. "The attempted assassination of Hitler provided an unusual psychological moment to attack the morale of the German Army if appropriate propaganda could be circulated without delay."²⁸ Jumping at the opportunity OSS agents in Rome bent their energies to immediately produce printed material highlighting the attempts on Hitler's life by German officers and circulating the account by mixing facts with rumors.²⁹ Clayton D. Laurie asserts that the MO newspaper *Das Deutschland* was the most successful fictitious newspaper of its kind. After consultation with "trustworthy" German prisoners of war, OSS personnel printed seemingly authentic but false material about German military orders and official proclamations supposedly emanating from field posts. Designed to play on homesickness anxieties of German troops, they

produced forged letters on German stationary that were mailed with German stamps informing German soldiers that while they were sacrificing their lives on battlefronts, their wives, girlfriends, or sisters were unfaithful rather than remaining true to front line troops.

MO and other OSS branches developed semiautonomous psychological units consistent with the natural tendency toward secrecy and turf protection characteristic in intelligence operations. By 1945 these operations were functioning in several Italian towns: Bari, Caserta, Siena, Naples Brindisi, and Rome with the latter becoming especially proficient in producing significant philatelic Black propaganda. In 1944 and 1945 the Rome OSS propaganda activity was significantly improved by the development of an editorial and planning team. It was to Rome that MO agents Lieutenant Saul Steinberg *New Yorker* magazine cartoonist and Corporal Larry Bruzzese, former Detroit radio announcer and Italian-language specialist, were flown and where “inside the stiff and rococo Victorian villa were the other members of the Branch which had the assignment of undermining German morale in the Mediterranean Theater.” After much research to render their products as authentic-looking and convincing as possible, the unit determined which propaganda ideas, texts, and production methods were to be employed.³⁰ At one point Bruzzese was sent to the Naples public library where his research yielded valuable fruit in religious books and old Papal Encyclicals against war and war-makers, from which suitable quotations were extracted and inserted in their products because they fit the moral tone desired.

Bruzzese continued his activities well into April 1945 when he agreed to launch the “Ravioli” mission which was designed to infiltrate three Italian Partisans dressed in Fascist uniforms behind enemy lines. Their assignment was to disseminate propaganda material among Republican fascist troops in and around military installations, bivouac areas, supply depots, vehicles, and road houses while simultaneously gathering intelligence about enemy strength. Unfortunately, apprehensive team members failed to wait for their guides and returned to the American lines in full daylight whereupon they were fired upon by German troops. From that point on Partisans were sent in civilian clothes. Allied propaganda in the form of hundreds of thousands of leaflets was used also to frighten the enemy. The propaganda effort also targeted the slave labor force brought into Germany to produce military equipment, via hundreds of thousands of leaflets designed to scare away the Italian workers and other nationalities involved. The leaflets that were dropped on major German industrial

cities contained messages suggesting inhabitants were living in important zones of war industry that were surely subject to merciless bombardment.

Egidio Clemente. When it came to the nuts and bolts of actually printing MO material the OSS entrusted the task to 45-year-old master printer Egidio Clemente. A middle-aged man with a son was in the American Army, Clemente seemed an unlikely OSS operative, yet he saw action as part of Tarallo's SI mission that liberated Lipari Island. He was then transferred to the MO branch where he came to play a very valuable role. Born in 1899 of an Italian-speaking family in Trieste, then under the Austro-Hungarian rule, Egidio came to the USA as a teenager, and settled in Chicago where he became a printer and editor of the Socialist weekly *La Parola del Popolo*. Active in Socialist activities and married with a family, he was contacted by the OSS. "A few weeks later, I had a call from a fellow who is still living, in New York, Brennan, who was a vice consul in Italy for many years...I left in 1943. We had two months of training in Washington. My wife didn't know where I was."³¹ Egidio's brother, Marcel Clemente, a banker, also became an OSS operative. On July 8, 1944, Egidio went to Rome where he was provided with funds, and authorized to rent a print shop and hire Italian workers to publish propaganda material. The Rome OSS printing operation handled more than two million addresses and names gleaned from telephone books provided by OSS R&A from German cities like Berlin, Dresden, Vienna, Hamburg, and Stuttgart. A staff of typists was engaged to address the envelopes, producing more than 15,000 envelopes a week. To provide a plausible mixture of mail, another team hand-addressed envelopes, while still other personnel stuffed the envelopes and attached the stamps.³² The impressive accomplishment underwent scrutiny from high government officials including an onsite visit by influential Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz.

They came. I saluted them. I was in civilian clothes with a G I Jacket on. I showed them the printing shop, the presses, and the people working, and I showed them something else. There was a room double the size of the print shop with big table, and piled up all around was the material which we had printed—thousands of different pieces of propaganda against Nazis. Then I showed them the chart of all the jobs we had done—handbills, newspapers, and many other things, to propagandize against the Nazis...When they left everyone shook hand, and they said, Mr. Clemente congratulations.³³

Egidio Clemente, assisted by Sergeant Alfio D'Urso, supervised the printing of Operation Sauerkraut and Operation Cornflakes, the highly

successful propaganda undertakings that involved the careful selection of paper on which printing was done in order to emulate or closely approximate normal German material. The Sauerkraut printed material, furthermore, was prepared in two qualities—very good or very crude—depending on whether hand stamps were to be affixed to the documents. According to one source, among the hundreds of thousands German-language items produced were faked field post letters, leaflets, and “official’ proclamations” containing an assortment of false orders and rumors aimed at arousing homesickness. In this manner the OSS MO branch demonstrated that Americans could outdo and defeat the enemy with their own techniques and methods. It was further evidence that they could defeat the Nazis at their own game while significantly advancing the ends of democracy as opposed to totalitarianism. It also demonstrated that the secret subversive and negative OSS work was particularly successful in undermining enemy morale by creating the impression that a fifth column existed within the German forces.³⁴

Since these operations were in violation of the 1929 Geneva Convention and the U.S. Army Rules of Land Warfare, both of which applied to the OSS, they “exemplified perfectly the willingness of the OSS leadership to use whatever means were necessary to defeat the Nazis.”³⁵ According to Clayton D. Laurie who has studied the topic closely, OSS and Allied propaganda activities played a significant role in winning the war.

Although the cumulative efforts of conventional weapons provided the most obvious reason for the Allied victory, evidence does support the assertion that American psychological attacks also played a role in the final Axis defeat. Propaganda helped weaken Axis morale, convincing less dedicated enemy soldiers, civilians, and allies to quit the fight or lessen their support of the Nazi regime and its war effort. American psychological warfare placed doubts in the minds of many Germans about the justice of their cause and the Nazi philosophy.³⁶

Laurie goes so far as to identify Donovan as the most successful Allied propaganda leader.

William Donovan was perhaps the most successful American propaganda leader of the war, given his devotion, his organizational skills, and concepts...Through the careful selection of personnel, through strict operational secrecy that hid the OSS from public view and political controversy, and by rigid adherence to his original concepts, Donovan managed to wage

psychological warfare against the Nazis while maintaining the ideological foundations and organizational integrity of the OSS in a manner unequaled by his contemporaries.³⁷

Printing the misinformation material was an important step in the propaganda war; however, there remained the challenge of distribution of materials. One means of dissemination was entrusted to Partisans including women and children who were directed to hand phony newspapers to friendly German soldiers, or to leave them in cafes, restaurants, cinemas, street cars, trucks, automobiles, barracks, latrines, and other places frequented by German troops. A subsequent debriefing of OSS agents by Lt. Bruzzese showed that these methods were quite successful. As important as infiltration behind enemy lines was, however, it, nevertheless, was limited in the amount of material that could be distributed. The previously mentioned Operation Cornflakes originated by Hungarians used the extant German postal system to make the Germans unknowingly complicit in the dispersal process. The core of the idea was for the OSS to make replicas of German mailbags to which were affixed proper-looking official markings, stuff them with an assortment of propaganda such as fake letters with canceled stamps and actual addresses obtained from pre-war German telephone directories, and then drop the bags in the course of bombing runs, or unload them in the rubble of German mail trains that had been bombed. The expectation was that German soldiers who came upon the bags would assume they were from the destroyed mail cars and return them to legitimate postal authorities who would distribute them with the rest of 15 million pieces of daily mail. "The operation was deemed a stunning success, MO personnel claimed that Cornflakes weakened civilian and military morale, added more confusion to an already chaotic communication and transportation network, and convinced many Germans, through MO material on their doorsteps, of the existence of bold and brazen anti-Nazi groups within Germany."³⁸ Adding to the credulity of the assessment was the fact that many pieces of propaganda were found on German prisoners.

The usefulness of propaganda, indeed, had already been demonstrated with respect to Italian soldiers in Sicily thereby leaving little doubt of its value. Approximately 80 % of Italian prisoners questioned in Sicily had PWB (Psychological Warfare Branch) leaflets in their possession or had read them. When the Italian fleet surrendered in response to a radio appeal transmitted by PWB over international distress-signal frequency, British

Admiral Cunningham said: “Tell General McClure they’ve accomplished in one day with propaganda what I’ve been trying to do for three years with the Navy.”³⁹

NOTES

1. The ordeal at Salerno is covered in Martin Blumenthal, *Salerno to Cassino*, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2015, chapters 2 and 3.
2. David W. Hogan Jr., *U.S. Army Special Operations in World War II*. CMH Publication 70-42, Department of the Army, Washington, DC, 1992, 28–29.
3. Peter Tompkins, “The OSS and Italian Partisans in World War II,” *Intelligence and Operational Support for the Anti-Nazi Resistance*.
4. Chambers II, *OSS Training in the National Parks*, 302.
5. Corvo, *The OSS in Italy*, 98.
6. D’Este, *Fatal Decision, Anzio and the Battle for Rome*, HarperCollins, New York, 1988, 48.
7. Atkinson, *The Day of the Battle*, 212.
8. Heavy criticism of the Salerno comes from many historians. For example, Carlo D’Este, declares that the commanding Allied generals “knew full well that the Fifth Army plan was flawed but permitted avalanche to go ahead without making the slightest attempt to redress its ills.” D’Este, *Fatal Decision*, 48. Rick Atkinson, also assesses this as a valuable if costly learning experience for future planning of amphibious invasions like Normandy, 236.
9. Chambers II, *OSS Training in the National Parks*, 302. Atkinson, *The Day of the Battle*, 239–240.
10. *Peter Lantelme Log*, Massapequa, New York.
11. Morsion, *Sicily-Salerno-Anzio*, 33. Peter Tompkins reminds us that espionage and Italian Partisans were instrumental in avoiding disaster for the Allies and for turning the tide against the Germans at Anzio. “Allied commanders needed to know firsthand what the Germans were doing on the other side of the lines and how to coordinate Partisan activities to coincide with the expected German retreat and liberation of the first Axis capital. To handle this job, General Donovan, Roosevelt’s chief intelligence gatherer, cleared it with Gen. Mark Clark, commander of the US Fifth Army, for an American OSS

- officer to be smuggled into Rome just before the landings. When I volunteered, both generals agreed.” Peter Tompkins, “Are Human Spies Superfluous?” 129–139. Chalou, George C., *The Secret War: The Office of Strategic Services in World War II*, National Archives and Records, Washington, DC, 2002.
12. Divergence from the original invasion plan at Casablanca is discussed in Morison, *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II, Sicily-Salerno-Anzio: January 1943—June 1944*, 5 and 336.
 13. Richard Kelly, “Secret Agents at Anzio,” *Blue Book*, Vol. 88, No. 2, 32–42, 34–35.
 14. Kelly, “Secret Agents at Anzio,” *Blue Book*, 32–42. Boston-born Kelly was a graduate from Boston College and was commissioned a Navy commander until he entered OSS spending 22 months in Italy and was involved in 79 missions behind enemy lines.
 15. Kelly, “Secret Agents at Anzio,” *Blue Book*, 34–35.
 16. Joe Razes, *Pigeons of War*, online.
 17. Kelly, “Secret Warfare,” *Blue Book Magazine*, May 1949, Vol. 89, No. 1, 13–23, 20.
 18. Kelly, “Secret Warfare,” *Blue Book*, 13.
 19. Kelly, “Secret Warfare,” *Blue Book*, 13.
 20. Corvo, *The OSS in Italy*, 162.
 21. Herbert Avedon, Second Encounter, *OSS-101 ASSOCIATION INCORPORATED*, Summer 2000.
 22. Herbert Avedon, Second Encounter, *OSS-101 ASSOCIATION INCORPORATED*, Summer 2000.
 23. Kelly, “Secret Agents at Anzio,” *Blue Book*, 42.
 24. H. Stuart Hughes, *Contemporary Europe: a History*, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1961, 34.
 25. Lloyd Clark, *Anzio: Italy and the Battle for Rome, 1944*, Headline Publishing Group, London, 2006, 210. D’Este, *Anzio*, 304–308.
 26. O’Donnell, *Operatives*, 63.
 27. Corvo says Angleton took credit for certain deeds that were unwarranted. Corvo, *The OSS in Italy*, 263.
 28. Herbert Friedman and Franklin Prosser, *The United States PSYOP Organization in Europe During World War II*, online.
 29. Clayton D. Laurie, *The Propaganda Warriors: America’s Crusade Against Nazi Germany*, University Press of Kansas, 1996, opines that the MO newspaper *Das new Deutschland* was the most successful fictitious newspaper of its kind.

30. Friedman and Prosser, *The United States PSYOP Organization*.
31. Dominic Candeloro, *Italians in Chicago*, Arcadia Publishing, Chicago, 2001, 116–117.
32. Carlo D’Este, *World War II in the Mediterranean, 1942–1945*, Algonquin Books, 1990, 147–148.
33. Nimitz’s congratulations of an OSS operation should be regarded as especially significant in view of his reputed antipathy to the OSS. Candeloro, *Italians in Chicago*, Arcadia Publishing, Chicago, 2001, 120–121.
34. Laurie, *The Propaganda Warriors*, 234.
35. Laurie, *The Propaganda Warriors*, 201.
36. Laurie, *The Propaganda Warriors*, 233.
37. Laurie, *The Propaganda Warriors*, 238.
38. Laurie, *The Propaganda Warriors*, 202.
39. Friedman and Prosser, *The United States PSYOP Organization*.

Italian Mainland Operational Groups

To implement intelligence gathering in December 1942, the Joint Chiefs of Staff sanctioned the formation of OG within the OSS as the infiltration operational nuclei made up of specially trained military personnel who would be used in enemy-occupied territory. The search was on for desirable candidates from extant line outfits, officer candidate schools, and specialty schools. Priority was also given to ethnic affinity, that is, to those armed forces members preferably first or second generation whose cultural background could be utilized to effect espionage. In addition to working knowledge of Norwegian, French, Greek, German, or Italian, the recruits ideally were service members who had already volunteered for hazardous duty—approximately 10 % of those interviewed were accepted for specialized training at OSS facilities. Basic training revolved around parachute jumping, physical conditioning, map reading, night reconnaissance, small arms proficiency, demolition operations, and other tactics acquired from the experience of British commandos. OG units usually consisted of 2 officers and 13 enlisted men including a medical technician and a radio operator. An analysis of the OSS historical record of 29 operations indicated that out of a total of 337 OSS men involved some 219 were of Italian background based on name recognition. (Some individuals participated in more than one mission.) A summary of several missions from the beginning of 1944 to the war's end in 1945 provides a sense of what they entailed.

Ginny I, Ginny II. The fate of the ill-starred Ginny I and Ginny II missions remains one of the most shameful acts of war crimes in the annals of the war in Europe. Following the failure of bombing sorties along Italy's west coast that were intended to destroy Genoa/Livorno German tunnel lines of communication at La Spezia, it was decided to deploy an OG sabotage party trained in the art of creativeness and armed with explosive equipment to insert itself via rubber boats from the sea to complete the objective. One of the proudest boasts of behind-the-lines OSS agents was the ability at improvisation should circumstances require it because of unexpected developments. The Italian American OSS agents on the Ginny mission, like others who were assigned to infiltration work, certainly subscribed to the concept of practicing continuously to take advantage of whatever resources were available in the face of imminent peril. They were determined to blend in, to be inconspicuous and commonplace in the enemy-controlled environment while those who had been on previous OG missions successfully concealed themselves in the field. They would now be tested in this new operation—an endeavor in which they were regrettably not successful as the circumstances militated against them. Ginny II mission members were assigned to destroy the key railroad tunnel that Germans had used effectively to transport large amounts of arms and equipment. If the OSS could demolish the critical passageway, the road to Rome would be substantially advanced.

Designed to replace OG Ginny I, the aborted first plan to raze the Stazione de Framura La Spezia tunnel, planners for OG Ginny II were convinced that a beefed up amount of dynamite (650 lbs.) would do the job, provided the heavy load could be landed within 300 yards from the objective where 13 men would carry the dynamite, one with the wires and detonators, and another armed with a Thompson machine gun to provide firepower. After carefully studying information from veteran Italian engineers in the railroad maintenance section and photographic reconnaissance, OSS planners deemed it exceedingly feasible. The plan called for the 15 men to depart on March 22, 1944, on PT boats on the night of March 22, 1944, and transfer into rubber boats and as they approached land, then paddle a short distance to landfall on March 23. The rubber boats in question that were supplied by the Navy were bright yellow vessels that were deliberately cast in the bright hue because of their normal use in ocean rescue—the brilliant pigmentation rendered them more visible. For the purposes of OSS infiltration, however, these vivid rubber boat colors not only were easier to spot but also made them much more

difficult to conceal on the ground and most likely played a role in unearthing the mission.¹

Lieutenant Materazzi planned the operation that was headed by First Lt. Vincent J. Russo and First Lieutenant Paul J. Traficante, plus 13 other Italian Americans, many of whom had participated in prior commando forays. Russo and Traficante, for instance, were members of OG Ginny I. OG Ginny II ran into trouble almost from the outset including skirmishes with German torpedo boats while experiencing the sense of being enveloped in complete blackness because of the dark, moonless night that rendered landmarks indistinguishable. The veritable wall of murkiness caused them to land at a considerable distance of perhaps two or three miles away from the tunnel—far more than the 300 yards planned. In an effort to carry out its assignment the landing party dragged demolition-laden dinghies under trees for cover and proceeded to hide during the day hoping to be picked up by two PT boats. The latter became an unsuccessful endeavor as the Germans sank one of the boats and scared off the other. As Anthony Scariano recalled,

One of our earliest operations was known as the Ginny mission. We landed thirteen men and two officers off the coast of Genoa. Our object was to blow up a tunnel the air force couldn't get to. We put the men on rubber rafts and they rode in to the shore. We were to land the men, get them to do their mission, and pick them up. We had walkie-talkies. Just then, we picked up on radars some German Fighters and E-boats, landing craft like our Pts. We had to get the heck out of there or we would have been just annihilated. We scattered out.²

Realizing the insurmountable problem of trying to transport heavy ammunition over a long distance without exposure, the Ginny II team continued to radio for a pickup from the PT boats while taking refuge in a barn. Sadly the messages were not received.

On March 24 an Italian in a fishing vessel spotted and reported Ginny II's poorly hidden rubber boats to authorities that led Fascist and German soldiers to capture and take the OSS crew to German headquarters. There the captives were tricked into revealing their mission goals. When the mission members failed to return their worried OSS comrades went to the day room to listen to radio broadcasts about the war. As usual the voice of Axis Sally, the English-speaking propagandist, came through the air waves spewing her customary tales designed to demoralize American troops.

This time, however, “she started rattling off the names of these guys, their next of kin, addresses, everything. We thought they were captured. We did not find out what happened until the next year.”³ The OSS infiltration members wore military uniforms, which under the Geneva Convention meant they were required to provide only their names, ranks, and serial numbers; however, German captors viewed them as “commandos,” a category deserving of death in the lexicon of Hitler’s enemies. In an effort to respect the Geneva Convention one German officer who refused to carry out the execution order was reproved, reassigned, and replaced by another officer who ordered the immediate execution of the 15 OSS men. The discovery of their bodies was reported by a search party member.

A G.I who had been in the search party told us the final chapter of the story back in Washington. He was working at a switchboard at O.S.S. headquarters when we saw him: the heels of his combat boots still gray with Italian mud, were hooked on the lower rung of an operator’s stool, and his big hand moved back and forth across the switchboard as he talked. “They’d all been dumped together in a slit trench after they were shot. They were still in uniform, only the shoes had been stolen off their feet. When we turned them over, the bones of their wrists were still tied with rope.” His hand trembled a little as he plugged in the telephone cord. “We untied their wrists before we buried them.”⁴

Historian Rick Atkinson also provided a riveting description of the massacre.

On the early morning of March 22, an OSS team of fifteen uniformed American soldiers—mostly Italian speakers from greater New York—paddled ashore northwest of La Spezia in three rubber boats with orders to blow up a tunnel on the main rail line from Genoa which Eaker’s planes could not reach...At sunrise on March 26, the men were marched to a glade near the village of Ameglia, hands lashed with wire behind their backs. On command, a firing squad cut them down, a German officer delivered the coup de grace by a pistol shot.⁵

Following the investigation of the execution US military personnel were led to site of the dastardly deed where on May 23, 1945, laborers dug up the 15 bodies—their hands were still bound behind their backs, some were decomposed and all were without boots. With the conclusion of the war German General Dostler, who had approved the execution

order, was accused, convicted, and executed for war crimes thereby setting a precedent for the principle used in the Nuremberg trials of German generals. In the Piazza del Liberta, Ameglia, Italy, there stands a memorial in honor of the 15 OSS Americans who paid with their lives: Vincent Russo, Salvatore Di Sclafani, John J. Leone, Angelo Sirico, Joseph Noia, Paul J. Traficante, Livio Visceli, Dominick Mauro, Thomas M. Savino, Joseph Libardi, Rosario Squatrito, Joseph M. Farrell, Liberty J. Tremonte, Santoro Calcara, and Alfred L. De Flumeri.⁶

Memorialization of the Ginny II tragedy is ongoing into the twenty-first century among the families of the victims. In the small town of Natick, Massachusetts, part of Greater Boston, stands a memorial square dedicated to Alfred De Flumeri, son of Italian immigrants who grew up across the street from the square. De Flumeri attended local schools and completed three years of high school before going to work as a laborer and bulldozer operator. He was married to Ida Lodi, and had four children before entering the service in November 1942 where he became part of an operational group of the OSS designated as Company A, 2671st Special Reconnaissance Battalion, that embarked on the ill-fated Ginny II mission. Although Alfred's widow Ida had been informed of her husband's death following the Ginny II disaster she did not know the details until she received a letter from OSS Colonel Russell B. Livermore in August 1945. It appears that the letter's contents remained private until 2012 when a reference librarian at the Morse Institute Library uncovered it and was stunned by the minute details covered by the OSS officer who most likely was trying to bring solace to families of the victims in explaining the tragedy that resulted in the death of her 33-year-old husband. "It may be some consolation to you to know the facts concerning Alfred which until now we either did not know or could not disclose."⁷

Taking a different approach Joseph Squatrito, nephew of victim Rosario Squatrito, was inspired to research and write a book on the subject—*Code Name Ginny: A Hero's Story* that provides additional insight into the mindset and the motivation of conventional young Italian American OSS participants. We are given a portrait of Rosario Squatrito, born into a large immigrant family of 12 children in South Beach, a small tight-knit Italian proletarian enclave in Staten Island, New York. Absorbed in the common but sometimes frenzied activities of an energetic life revolving around, family, friends, and sports and excelling in baseball, Rosario, known as "Saddo" or "Sonny," surprised his family in 1943 by leaving his job as a tool and die-maker to join the OSS. Squatrito's knowledge

about the OSS was minimal—namely, that it was a newly formed unit of “commandos” that would play a major role in ending the war. He took intensive basic training at the Congressional Country Club before being sent overseas.⁸ Known to his OSS peers as “Rosy,” even before the ill-starred Ginny II mission he was eager to demonstrate his abilities having volunteered for a few operations. This included being a member of the nine-man OG Neptune, one of the most successful OSS missions led by Lt. Rocco Benedetto that destroyed a bridge which seriously hampered an enemy communications complex. The mission departed from the OSS base at Bastia, Corsica, on PT boats on the night of January 2, 1944, and transferred to rubber boats close to the shore which it reached 50 minutes later; then the mission made its way through a trench, a deep stretch of woods, and a barbed wire fence until it came upon the single span masonry bridge. Team members placed 250 pounds of composition C plastic explosives set to a timer, returned to the rubber boats, and signaled for a PT boat pickup. Forty minutes later they spotted a flash from the target area. Subsequent air reconnaissance confirmed that there were no vehicle movements on the bridge.⁹

The formal government notification of Rosario’s death on June 10, 1945, hit the family very hard since at the time another son Joseph had also been reported missing. The parents were never the same again—until her death in 1965 Rosario’s mother continued to maintain that her son was still alive somewhere in Italy. In time one of Rosario’s sisters was able to visit his grave in the American Cemetery in Florence, Italy, while other family members were present at the 2001 Staten Island dedication of a monument bearing his name among those who paid the supreme sacrifice for their country.

Walla Walla. OG Walla Walla mission that set forth on August 12, 1944, was the first of these exercises to work with partisans in enemy-held territory in Italy. With the exception of two men including unit leader Captain Wheeler, all team members were Italian Americans. Expecting a small number of partisans they were pleasantly surprised to learn that 6000 partisans participated in driving out Nazi and Fascist forces and superceded them in control of the Monte Aiona mountain area. They were now prepared to further harass German lines of communication. By focusing on providing aerial supplies, equipment, and ongoing training to various partisan groups, OSS efforts proved so effective that on December 12, the Germans were forced to bring in reinforcements which included armor and artillery to mount a major counterattack. Recognizing that it

was beyond their ability to contend with the powerful enemy, the partisans were forced to bury their arms and leave the field of battle temporarily while the OSS operatives returned to their headquarters. During the nearly five-month Walla Walla mission it had delivered over 100 tons of supplies including ammunition and other equipment, supervised training, and kept OSS headquarters informed daily regarding enemy dispositions and movements. It also identified possible bombing targets and opened up a channel of escape for downed airmen, prisoners of war, and others. Recent research indicates that OSS missions like Walla Walla demonstrated desirable compatibility between OSS Italian Americans and Italians partisans.

The Americans used the Italian services without reservations, and not only at the beginning of the Resistance. Though still not investigated much, the clandestine network thus set up by the intelligence services reached an unimaginable dimension, both in terms of the extent and complexity of the network as well as of people involved.¹⁰

Cayuga. The Cayuga OG enterprise that began on December 2, 1944, was undertaken in response to a request by the Allied Fifteenth Army Group to accelerate Italian partisan (Italian resistance) activity against Nazi forces. It was so highly regarded that it served as a model operation for behind-enemy-lines enterprises which the OSS visually recorded for training and educational purposes. Graphic reproduction provided instructive lessons for future participants, and also remains for posterity as a vibrant example of the meticulous preparation and accounting undertaken by actual mission personnel. This included confirmation of weather conditions, map orientation, suitable clothing to wear, briefing updates, checking and rechecking of supplies, reviewing of instructions, and infiltration steps that preceded parachute jumps.

Michael Formichelli, because of the vital role he played in Sardinia's capitulation, also became a principal participant in OG Cayuga. Promoted to a captaincy, Formichelli was directed to establish liaison with the partisans in order to advise and train them and to coordinate offensive actions against the German occupying forces. Heading a seven-man group consisting of Sergeants Frank J. Alessi, Oscar F. DiSilvestro, Frank A. Savio, Mario J. Procacinni, Reno J. De Stefani, and Joseph Scalia, Formichelli worked to prevent friction within and between diverse and frequently bickering partisan bands while attempting to integrate them into a

cohesive single brigade command. Delayed by poor weather conditions the operation was launched finally on December 27, 1944, when Formichelli and Alessi parachuted into the mountains in the Liguria area. Formichelli broke an ankle and sustained minor bruises from bumping into scattered trees and hard snow. In addition, their radio was broken. Notwithstanding these adversities, Formichelli and his team of Italian Americans were constantly on the move usually seeking shelter in churches, barns, shepherd's huts, and private homes, and traveling only at night on foot, horseback, and mules as they evaded or beat off several German patrols.

After reconnaissance of the area to identify ambush sites and other targets, the Cayuga group managed air drops, distributed their supplies, and gave partisans instructions on the use and care of the weapons and the tactics of guerilla and sabotage operations. It also simultaneously maintained communications between Section Headquarters and various partisan units. Between the December 27 landings and its departure May 10, 1945, the Cayuga mission saw frequent combat. On December 31, 1944, for example, Savio and Scalia joined with a partisan brigade that ambushed and inflicted heavy casualties on enemy Alpine troops, while on January 8, Formichelli, De Silvestro, Procacinni, and Stefani participated in another ambush. Cayuga group members directed partisan brigades over many hours of fighting that succeeded in liberating the towns of Ostia and Boro Val di Taro.

It is incontrovertible that the five-month Cayuga mission did its share of weakening local German garrisons and establishing roadblocks to effectively hinder the German retreat in the Parma region. The Formichelli-led mission succeeded in making contact with the unified Resistance command in the area, which directed 13 partisan brigades consisting of 4000 troops that rose up against the Nazi occupiers. Formichelli subsequently reported that the partisans in his zone had been engaged in 182 actions, conducted 38 acts of sabotage, and devastated 13 railroad and highway bridges. They destroyed 2 trains loaded with arms and ammunitions, 3 locomotives, 41 trucks, and captured 57 trucks and numerous weapons and stocks of ammunition. They had attacked 43 enemy command posts and eliminated 26 of them, killed 612 enemy soldiers, wounded 750, and taken 1520 prisoners. What rendered this all the more extraordinary was that it was accomplished despite the fact that the unit's radio was broken and that Formichelli injured his ankle. In sum, the Cayuga mission helped immensely to liberate the province of Parma. Its assignment completed, after a victory parade at the insistence of the joyful Italian populace, and

after arrangements made for partisan weapons to be turned over to the Fifth Army, the Cayuga unit returned to its base.¹¹

Santee. Beginning on March 4, 1945, and for the following month OG Santee unfolded in the Valtellina region of Lombardy in northern Italy which shared a border with Switzerland. It was a 14-man OSS infiltration unit composed almost entirely of Italian Americans headed by Captain Victor J. Giannino in command and First Lieutenant Michael A. DeMarco. Sadly, one of their members, Sergeant Bennie A. Bellone, was killed in the April 13, B 24, crash that also killed T/5 Anthony Rocco and T/5 Anthony Fantauzzo of another mission. The Santee goal was to harass German garrisons, disrupt enemy communications, gather and transmit intelligence, establish liaison, supply arms, and train partisan units in the lower Valtellina region. They shared flights with personnel of OG Spokane and Sewanee, who were on similar missions, to link up with local partisans, provide them with American equipment, train them, and reconnoiter the area extending to the Swiss border. Ironically, both sides acknowledged that although the end of the war was in sight yet for those soldiers, partisans, and civilians in the combat region, the days ahead meant ongoing death, deprivation and destruction.¹²

In pursuit of their goal OSS agents in a B 24 sought parachute drops of 12,000 feet in often unfavorable terrain during the bitterly cold and miserable winter. Six agents, including Captain Giannino, radio operator Tec/4 Joseph Seliquni, and T/5 Mario J. Forte, arrived within the first week of March and were joined by the others over the next month along with supplies and equipment. They engaged in the many skirmishes between partisans and enemy fascists, Nazis and French collaborators, and inflicted heavy damage to the enemy at minimum cost. Stunned by the heavy casualties caused by the OSS/Italian partisan collaboration, the Germans burned a town (Sernio) to the ground in retaliation and punishment for supporting partisan attacks and placed Giannino and Sergeant Ciarmicola on a wanted list with a price of thousands of lire on their heads. Lieutenant De Marco recalled the ferocity of combat in the April 26 battle of Tirano. "There was fierce fighting in the streets, and from house to house. At the end of the day, more than 1200 German, fascists and French Maliciene troops surrendered. On April 29, 350 Germans surrendered to OGs and partisan forces at San Giacomo." Within a few days the entire Valtellina region was liberated and OGs arranged for food drops while also collaborating with partisans to establish local civilian governments and prison camps. OG Santee, Sewanee, and Spokane had

successfully carried out their missions and returned to their Siena home base on May 22, 1945.¹³

Choctaw. OG Choctaw was a 16-man mission almost entirely Italian American, including the leader Captain Rocco J. Benedetto, that was assigned to harass German army withdrawal efforts in the Parma area. Heeding Formichelli's suggestion it undertook steps to severely hinder enemy retreat attempts as the war was drawing to a conclusion. Accordingly on April 2, 1945, Captain Benedetto and his men were on board two C-47s ready to deliver cargo and men at the designated drop point that saw the men land safely; however, most of the equipment was badly damaged due to faulty parachute openings. Formichelli and OSS personnel skillfully coordinated efforts among 1000 partisans made up of various factions that effectively hampered German retreat attempts by blowing up a vital bridge, ambushing a truck convoy, hitting a mule train, and by other acts of sabotage. They also successfully repelled counterattacks and enemy efforts to demolish public utilities. On April 24, Captain Gerald Sabatino of OG Choctaw made contact with Allied elements of the 34th Division and joined them in the pursuit of the fleeing enemy before they returned to their base.¹⁴

The 2013 movie *The Monuments Men* focused attention on the remarkable efforts to rescue millions of cultural objects that the Nazis coveted from the countries they conquered. It is a topic that has great meaning in Italy because of its historic patrimony over thousands of priceless works of art from the world's most renowned artists. Following the lead of President Roosevelt who had endorsed the American Commission for the Protection and Salvage of Artistic and Historic Monuments in War Areas, General Eisenhower issued a directive during the Allied invasion of Italy that addressed the protection of "cultural monuments," by which he meant not only historical buildings and churches but also art, sculpture and other forms of fine art. This action by the USA was historically noteworthy marking the first time that cultural protection of art, books, and historic buildings became a war aim.¹⁵ Priority must go to military necessity, Eisenhower maintained, but as much as possible, there must be respect for Italy—a country rich in monuments that illustrated the growth of the civilization that formed a dominating part of the world's cultural inheritance. Monument protection became a subject of interest to the US government including the OSS which joined with leaders of learned societies, philanthropic foundations, research libraries, museums, and professional associations to anticipate the impact of war on cultural resources.¹⁶

Alessandro Cagiati is the only OSS figure among the 16 men cited by Richard M. Edsel in his important monograph "Saving Italy" that reviewed the subject of rescuing art treasures. Cagiati had a fascinating pedigree: Roman-born, educated at Ampleforth College and Oxford University, England, immigrant to the USA in 1934 where he was employed by Standard Oil of New Jersey; he also became an investment counselor in Boston, Massachusetts. In 1942 he joined the OSS as a private, eventually became a major and was assigned to Italy in 1943. He had the respect of SI leader Corvo who, nevertheless, faulted him. "But he was not aggressive, and so for the duration of the Italian campaign, he was satisfied to play a background role, counseling whoever was in charge of the Fifth army detachment."¹⁷ That critique notwithstanding, the five-foot-nine agent with brown hair, blue eyes, and fair complexion possessed a desirable background for the challenge of saving Italy's treasures: his father was a prefect of the Pontifical Library at the Vatican. Furthermore, the highly educated Alessandro had genuine military experience including a position with General Mark Clark's Fifth Army which landed at Salerno and also was the first to enter Naples. Cagiati had special permission to travel throughout Allied-controlled territory where he recruited new OSS operatives to work behind enemy lines.¹⁸ Most importantly, Alessandro engaged in a high-level meeting with Fr. Anelli and Archbishop Montini who, once assured that partisans with whom he worked were Anti-communist Christian Democrats, welcomed partisan support. Cagiati's recruitment effort brought into play some of the individuals whose role in saving Italy's treasures was vital, specifically Pietro Ferraro. As the intermediary between the heavily armed partisans and the German forces, Ferraro was successful in convincing the enemy to desist from its intended decision to destroy the city and also extracted information about maps that identified the location of enemy-planted mines throughout various harbors and tunnels which the retreating enemy forces had planned to detonate. Edsel states Ferraro's contribution plainly stating he "played a significant role in sparing the fragile city of Venice from last minute destruction by the German forces. Ferraro, whose mission code name was 'Margot,' now scrambled to find a way to Alto Adige." Cagiati and Ferraro had learned that some of the greatest Renaissance art works by masters like Caravaggio, Rubens, and Titian that had been confiscated by the Germans were stored in an old jail in a castle in the Tyrolean communities of Campo Tures and San Leonardo in Alto Adige.¹⁹

NOTES

1. Joseph Squatrito, *Code Names Ginny: A Hero's Story*, Forever Free Publications, 2002, 140–141.
2. Terkel, *The Good War*, 488.
3. Thomas Rossi, Nancy Shiesari, OSS documentary.
4. Corey Ford and Alastair MacBain, “Cloak and Dagger,” *Collier's*, October 6, 1945, 12.
5. Atkinson, *The Day of the Battle*, 499.
6. See also Don Smart, “OSS Operation Ginny Met With a Tragic End,” *World War II History*, September 2005. Joseph Squatrito, nephew of Rosario Squatrito, one of the victims who was murdered, has written *Code Name Ginny, A Hero's Story*, which interprets the execution of the German general who ordered the killing of the 15 Italian Americans, as the forerunner of the Nuremberg Trials that held German officers accountable for atrocities. As such it was “the avenging sword of justice for the atrocities committed on six million Jews in Europe.”
7. Bill Porter, *The Boston Globe*, Metro Section, 2, “Librarian uncovers Natick veteran's true story Letter found describing execution of WWII sergeant.” May 12, 2012.
8. Squatrito, *Code Name Ginny*, 35–47.
9. Squatrito, *Code Name Ginny*, 116–117.
10. Claudia Nasini, “The OSS in the Italian Resistance: A Post Cold War Interpretation,” *Eurostudium*, 3w, luglio-settembre 2012, 53.
11. Summary compiled by Art Frizzell from End of Mission reports from the National Archives submitted by Captain Michael Formichelli at the conclusion of the mission. Office of Strategic Services, Operational Groups, Cayuga online. Chambers II, 311.
12. Michael A. DeMarco, “The Santee Mission in Northern Italy and the Liberation of Valtellina.” Office of Strategic Services, n.d.
13. *Office of Strategic Services Operational Groups*. Italian Operation Group: Santee.
14. *Office of Strategic Services Operational Groups*. Italian Operation Group: Choctaw.
15. For more on this subject see Kathy Lee Peiss, “Cultural Policy in a Time of War: The American Response to Endangered Books in World War II,” *Library Trends*, 55, no. 3 (2007), 370–386.
16. Paul J. Sachs and George L. Stout of the Fogg Museum of Art, David Finley, director of the National Gallery, among others became strong

proponents of a plan to safeguard cultural sites in war areas which achieved results in 1943 with the creation of the American Commission for the Protection and Salvage of Artistic and Historic Monuments in War Areas. See *Gli Americani e la Guerra Librazione in Italia*, Digitized, University of Michigan, 238–243. Sachs and Stout worked with the leadership of the Metropolitan Museum and the National Gallery of Art to push for a federal commitment to protect cultural resources while Finley used his political connections in the War Department, the Office of Strategic Services, and most crucially with Supreme Court Chief Justice Harlan Stone to approach President Franklin Roosevelt with a plan to safeguard cultural sites in war areas.

17. Corvo, *The OSS in Italy*, 132.
18. Robert M. Edsel, *Saving Italy*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 2013, 208–209.
19. Edsel, *Saving Italy*, 285, 286–290.

OSS and Partisans

Italy's nascent Resistance movement which accelerated its activities after the nation became a supporter of the Allied cause against their enemies was definitely palpable in areas north of Rome, and was likewise evident in the stream of tens of thousands who joined Partisan resistance groups that had surfaced and fought guerilla-type warfare. When the Allies first landed in southern Italy, they had not expected to find a large-scale partisan movement and indeed the only partisan activity that occurred in 1943, other than in Naples, was sporadic and ineffectual. However, Resistance activities increased during the winter of 1943–1944 to such a degree that the Allies began supplying some partisan groups, albeit in a limited fashion. It was during the siege of Rome in the spring and summer of 1944 that the Allies took greater cognizance of the value of partisan activity and began to amplify the rate and quantity of support extended to them. Although at first the Allies limited the amount of equipment sent to partisans, the Supreme Allied Commander in the Mediterranean came to acknowledge the valuable role of partisans, by expanding aid to them in the form of thousands of tons of supplies delivered to them behind the German lines, mostly by air drop. In addition, the OSS sent money in the form of lire and gold for necessary expenses. It was essential to be very circumspect in supplying Italian partisans or the results could be disastrous. In the matter of clothes, for example, the OSS went to great lengths not to endanger them with incorrect apparel.

Because it was necessary for partisans to remain undistinguishable from the general population, special operations purchased Italian-made clothing from sources behind the Allied lines and sent it to partisans. On the other hand, when bands like the San Marco or Garibaldi Battalions had reached sufficient strength to come out “into the open,” OSS supplied them with United States uniforms dyed a non-Army color.¹

The political issue of whether to send or withhold supplies to Communist-controlled Italian partisans arose when it became known that some of these units hoarded weapons, arms, and munitions for future use rather than expending them in current military operations. Countering that concern, however, was the fact that these Communist-oriented partisan brigades had been very effective and made good use of arms; furthermore, it was relatively inexpensive to supply partisans. A secret analysis indicated that the actual cost savings was substantial. Whereas the estimated cost for a regular soldier to inflict a casualty cost was roughly \$3500–\$10,000 (for ammunition only), the same result could be achieved at a cost of \$600–\$1000 (ammunition and air drop delivery) for a partisan volunteer. A secret study that did not become public until many years later argued that the rationale for utilization of partisans would be of small consequence unless the possibility existed that this type of situation would again occur. It was clearly an indication that military thinkers were looking at the experience in Italy as a valuable lesson for future wars—the assumption that there will exist behind the enemy lines people who will be against the occupying regime. In such instances it would behoove the USA to aid guerilla Resistance forces because this would have a disruptive effect upon the governing authorities and, if severe enough, upon the enemy military situation.²

Among the many challenges inherent in the matter of delivering supplies to partisans none was as serious as the problem of transporting supplies from the Allied side across the front lines to partisans behind enemy lines. Although in some instances traditional ground transportation means were put into service (cars, trucks) and in very hilly and rocky terrain even mules were used, it became apparent that air transportation was most feasible. Once air drop preferences were established, there were, nevertheless, complications that had to be addressed, namely, that even though the Allies had broken German air superiority by September 1943, the Germans could still launch occasional attacks well into 1944. There was also the problem of inability to deliver supplies in desired quantities, as

well as the annoying dependency on the Army Air Force airplanes as the only available transport system. The Army Air Force, not the OSS, had final control over plane assignments. Other problems included the amount and types of weapons selected, packaging of ammunition, faulty radios, dearth of parachutes, and the large number of damaged parachutes. In packing supplies for partisans the OSS could not overlook any detail, however minor, as, for example, language instruction regarding new weapons. On occasion when some weapons were air dropped without instructions in the Italian language, it resulted in much costly delay, let alone chagrin and feelings of annoyance. Because of the political differences within the partisan movement another not infrequent complaint was that some OSS missions received a disproportionate number of supply drops compared to others.

A complicating factor here was that some OSS/SI (Secret Intelligence) missions also engaged in the business of procuring supplies for partisan formations. There were indeed three separate branches of the OSS involved in the support of military resistance; SO, SA and OG (Operational; Groups—roughly the American counterpart of the Special Air Services (SAS) There is some evidence that relations between them was governed by rivalry as for the need for coordination.³

Packing problems were also bound up in the question of standardization of weapons for partisans. The OSS was heavily involved not only in supplying weapons, arms, equipment, and others provisions to be air dropped to partisans but also with the distinctive problems of packaging the wares. The OSS dealt with this by employing detachments made up of army personnel and enlisted men to run bulk stores and depots and organizing specially trained packing teams. Notwithstanding the manifold problems encountered in supplying Italian partisans, the OSS, the Army, and other military units not only overcame many obstacles but in fact compiled an enviable record in that regard that aided the war effort. An official government study summarizes it as follows:

FACTS During the Allies' military campaign in Italy, which extended from their landings in early September 1943 to the German surrender on 2 May 1945, a partisan resistance movement against Germans grew up. At first this movement received little help from the Allies, but in the summer of 1944 the Supreme occupiers of Italy Allied Commander in the Mediterranean acknowledged that Italian partisans had been a substantial aid in the Allied

drive. Following this, Allied aid to partisans was increased. In all, approximately 6000 gross long tons of supplies were delivered to Italian partisans behind the German lines, mostly by air drop.⁴

The Allied struggle against Nazi Germany and its Italian Fascist allies that transpired between Italy's capitulation in September 1943 and the conclusion of the war two years later witnessed the confluence of traditional military might with captivating behind-the-lines activity. It was an endeavor, furthermore, in which the OSS in general and Italian-speaking personnel in particular played prominent roles. Notwithstanding the fall of the Mussolini government, the heavy presence of German troops that rendered the Italian populace virtual prisoners within their own country, while also forcing the new government of Prime Minister Pietro Badoglio to tread carefully, nevertheless, led to clandestine communications with the Allies. Known by the eponymous umbrella term "Resistance Movement" the Italian anti-Nazi and anti-Fascist underground movement emerged covertly in southern Italian cities from among religious and political factions ready to engage primarily in limited activities that had a largely psychological value such as distributing anti-fascist propaganda. Allied success in capturing major Italian islands and much of southern Italy emboldened them to act in furtherance of Resistance movements in northern Italy, a region that the Germans were resolved to hold. Partisan strength, made up of an assortment of groups that ranged across the political spectrum, interacted with the OSS and the SOE, its English counterpart. Donovan encouraged OSS agents to make contact with prominent Italians to stimulate action against Nazi occupiers. He was especially partial to gain the support of individuals like Benedetto Croce, the leading Italian intellectual of the period and one of Europe's best-known public figures, and his son-in-law Raimondo Craveri, one of the founders of "Giustizia e Libertà," the democratic radical party with a large following among the anti-Fascist cultural and professional elite; Craveri also organized the Organization for Italian Resistance (ORI) which worked with the Italian Committee for National Liberation (CLN) and the OSS. A critic of British policy that opposed his plan for organizing an Italian military unit to fight against Germany and the Italian Fascist puppet government, Craveri found in Corvo a supportive ear "un compagno perfetto," one with whom there developed a mutual trust. The two were of a similar mind regarding the value of interacting with partisans in northern Italy.⁵

The vital task of enlisting, organizing, and coordinating Italian partisans was an undertaking left largely to Italian-speaking OSS men—mostly Italian Americans who objectively sought to evaluate the principal motives and reliability of the myriad Italians who claimed to be part of the Resistance. Which groups should the OSS sanction, support, and finance? Which groups had real strength that could make a difference in the battlefield? Which groups could be trusted? It was a challenging and complex assignment which intensified in the midst of war when OSS representatives came across swarms of Italians who, in the traffic of war, came forward to work with the OSS. Evaluations had to be made as to their knowledge about the regions from which they claimed to be, their potential value to the Allies, and their reliability. Compounding the issue was the intermixing of politics and partisans that found some groups preoccupied with the establishment of political power in the postwar period. Wishing to avoid being dragged into political infighting, Donovan was willing to accept the help of all groups so long as they had sizeable fighting forces that could make a difference in defeating the enemy.⁶

When it came to dealing with differing political elements within the Resistance movement Corvo was pragmatic. While aware of and concerned about Communist influence among partisans, he, nevertheless, was not hampered by ideology and focused on developing working relationships between the OSS and the Servizio Informazione Militare (SIM), the Italian Intelligence Service. With the support of Donovan and other OSS administrators this cooperation yielded positive results as reflected in a number of instances. One example involved enlisting the assistance of Colonel Pompeo Agrifoglio, not a Fascist Party member but a respected professional Italian soldier, who had been head of the Italian military intelligence until Italy's surrender. With the approval of Donovan, Agrifoglio was released from a "prisoner of war" camp in the USA and returned to Italy where he collaborated with the OSS. "The contacts with Agrifoglio and other members of the Italian government led to a high degree of collaboration and paved the way for future OSS operations in northern Italy."⁷ The Sicilian background of Corvo and Scamporino helped to cultivate a strong bond with Sicilian-born Agrifoglio, who worked effectively to restore SIM, Italy's military intelligence branch. The Agrifoglio/Italian Section OSS relationship "was open and friendly and involved mutual trust. This is not to say that SIM's cooperation with the British was not loyal. It was simply an arms-length relationship."⁸

The collaboration between the OSS and Italian resistance movement is well illustrated in the career of Piero Boni, an Italian national trained and deployed by the OSS after Italy became a co-belligerent ally. A member of the Socialist party, in 1944 the 24-year-old Roman lawyer who had served as a lieutenant in the Italian Army joined the Resistance movement in Rome where he met Peter Tompkins of the OSS. Together with a number of partisans from opposite ranges of the political scale, he was selected by the American intelligence service for special training to conduct missions in Northern Italy that consisted of three weeks at an OSS school near Naples, where Italian American instructors replicated their Virginia and Maryland training camps OSS curriculum. “They gave us American cigarettes and my first chewing gum,” Boni recalled. They were taught techniques of observation and reporting, transmission and reception using five-letter groups in code, and the effectiveness of various demolitions, particularly plastic explosives. They also practiced with American and British pistols, submachine guns, hand grenades, and bazookas. “I particularly liked the bazooka,” Boni said. “That was a new weapon, and it was good.”⁹

Once the Italian capital was liberated he had no hesitation about undergoing training by American OSS to be parachuted on the other side of enemy lines and, not only to bring back information in the fight against the Germans, but also and above all, to play a direct part in the partisan struggle, which saw him involved in major acts of warfare—including the liberation of Parma—for which he was awarded the silver medal for bravery.

It is striking to see the simplicity with which at a glance of so many years Piero emphatically illustrates the actions performed in that period of Italian history almost as if the protagonists’ own lives were not at stake. That is what he was like, eschewing rhetoric while attaching importance to the objectives to achieve and the paths to take to achieve them, and not the price to pay.¹⁰

In the postwar period Boni would emerge as the second highest ranking official in the Italian General Confederation of Labor, the largest confederation of labor unions in Italy.

Manfredo Ducceschi (aka Pippo) was another exceptional Italian partisan who worked closely with Italian American OSS agents in successfully waging the fight against Italian Fascists and German occupying forces. The Italian front was seen by the Allies to be of secondary importance to the offensives through France, an observation that was underlined by the withdrawal during the summer of 1944 of seven divisions from the

Fifth Army to take part in the landings in southern France. The consequence was that the combined US and British Army strength had fallen from 249,000 to 153,000 against the German forces that not only held their positions with great tenacity, but also overran some Allied positions. The reality was that the conflict in Italy became the “forgotten war” during one of the worst winters in Italy’s history in that it concluded in a stalemate. The remaining Allied troops were inexperienced and spread thin—it was obvious the partisans could be a great asset. The OSS Detachment Fifth Army consisted of 25 officers and enlisted men from the Italian OG who were responsible for furnishing tactical intelligence and nurturing the partisan effort. It was against this background that the Resistance movement plagued German defenders with increased Italian partisan activity behind the front lines. Led by Pippo, his partisan brigades proved their value by striking the flanks of German troops attempting an offensive breakthrough, and thereby holding off the German hordes on the impregnable Gothic Line.

The relationship formed between Pippo and the OSS agents Stephen Rossetti and Gerald Sabatino was nothing less than a solid and lasting relationship based on mutual trust. These Italian American OSS agents had earned the respect of Italians for their humanity that was demonstrated in strenuous efforts to avoid unnecessary bombing and to alleviate the suffering of the people in the hard 1944–1945 winter. Although receiving little attention in the USA the warm relationship between Italian partisans and American OSS personnel continues to be remembered in Italy. On July 31, 2005, a ceremony dedicating a monument to this relationship was held at Piana Novello, Italy. That this was unique is underscored by the fact that nowhere else in Italy has the role of Italian American OSS assistance been so indelibly recognized.¹¹

Gothic Line. After Rome’s liberation, General Kesselring, commander of the German forces, retreated to his mountain defenses, namely, a barrier straddling the Apennines from Carrara on the Tyrrhenian Sea to Rimini on the Adriatic Sea, known as the Gothic Line. The Germans’ last line of defense in northern Italy was heavily fortified with deadly weapons and obstacles. In this tense and fast-moving situation, intelligence became a priority for Field Marshal Sir Harold Alexander, who was intent on launching an attack against these defenses. General Mark Clark whose Fifth Army would have the job of cracking Kesselring’s mountain strongholds exhorted partisans operating further north to increase their activities, which happily produced positive results. Effectively this meant that

Clark was counting on the ties that had developed between the OSS and partisans. Ennio Tassinari, for instance, was an Italian who, working for the OSS, had developed important contacts with partisans in the ancient city of Lucca in Tuscany that led to the acquisition of vital German military plans to establish a strong German line of defense in the western half of the Gothic Line.

He [Tassinari] personally smuggled a copy of the plans in the soles of his shoes to the OSS in Siena, and from there the plans were rushed to General Clark's G-2. The plans showed that the weakest spot in Kesselring's defenses was at Il Giogo Pass, at the juncture of his Tenth and Fourteenth Armies. Clark therefore shifted the main attack of his II Corps eastward to the area indicated by the partisan intelligence. If Clark were to break through to the foot of the mountains, he would be in position to trap and destroy Kesselring's forces by cutting the flatland Route 9 from Bologna to Milan. On 17 September, II Corps broke through the Gothic Line, causing the whole German line to fall back.¹²

In possession of such valuable plans that indicated where the last major German line of defense was most vulnerable, General Alexander, commanding Allied forces in Italy, could now exploit the advantages. Supplied with arms and munitions parachuted to them by the OSS, hundreds of partisans joined with American troops to advance up narrow mountain trails through intermittent rain and fog to attack Monte Battaglia, the last remaining obstacle along the Gothic Line. The fundamental reality concerning intelligence about the Gothic Line acquired by the OSS is that it was considered the best information of its kind. The OSS team that was responsible for bringing this about, furthermore, "was the first to employ a newly developed box camera in the field, paving the way for the use of numerous similar devices in the decades to come. Much of the intelligence the Eighth Army Detachment missions obtained definitely helped the Allies to track troop movements and identify supply lines and other targets for attack."¹³

The year 1944 saw a marked increase of cooperation between the OSS and partisans in Northern Italy. This teamwork was called into play in April 1944 when it was learned that as part of its withdrawal plan, the Germans had mined both walls of the Simplon Railway tunnel at the Italian end, and had assigned a crew to detonate the explosives at a given signal. At a length over 12 miles and for years the longest railway tunnel

in the world, it was a tremendous feat of engineering and a critical railroad passageway between Switzerland and Italy. It served, therefore, as a vital economic lifeline between the two countries and its destruction would cause immense hardship. When efforts made to bribe the local German military leader proved unsuccessful, a call for assistance was sent to the OSS at Caserta that brought about collaboration with the 83d Garibaldi Brigade of Partisans, who decided on a risky plan to remove the mines.

On a moonless night, a trained group of seventy-five mountaineers crept along the rim of an overhanging ledge, their hob-nailed shoes removed so that no sound might alert the garrison below. As dawn was breaking over the snow-covered peaks of the Alps, they lowered themselves by rope one by one down the face of the cliff and crept from boulder to boulder toward the tunnel entrance. A German sentry uttered a single command to halt; a hand was clapped over his mouth, a knife buried in his back, and his body toppled into a ditch.¹⁴

Enveloped by the darkness the unit continued to penetrate the black tunnel, groped for the wires, cut them and then carefully, carried the dynamite out of the tunnel, and detonated it.

These are but a few examples that demonstrate the contribution of Italian anti-Fascist partisans to the campaign in Italy in World War II—it is estimated that these actions kept as many as seven German divisions out of the line. Additionally, partisans obtained the surrender of two full German divisions which led directly to the collapse of the German forces in and around Genoa, Turin, and Milan. Throughout northern Italy, partisan brigades in the mountains and clandestine action groups in the cities liberated every major city before the arrival of Allied combat units.

10.1 OSS PARTISANS FACE DANGER

Spying behind enemy lines is a serious business; one must be adept at deception, he or she must trust strangers on the recommendation of others and place his or her safety in the hands of individuals or acquaintances who might in fact be in the employ of the enemy. Behind-the-lines clandestine activity meant living with the constant fear of being uncovered by enemy forces or suffering betrayal by supposedly trusted comrades. This was the life of danger that confronted Italian American OSS SI agents, as it did for all OSS operatives during the war. It was the experience that

Frank Monteleone saw up close while he served as part of OSS Fifth Army Detachment that landed at Salerno—it became his first true encounter with an Italian double agent.

They caught another guy playing the double agent game [one of our men] started to interrogate him. Headquarters told him to work on this guy, find out what he could. It seems that the guy had given us information and as a result we sent about eight infantrymen out on a patrol and they got wiped out. We nailed the guy. In fact we caught him in Naples and brought him back. [One of the men] tied him to a platform on a bed and beat the shit out of him. He physically abused him. The guy sort of cracked but it was too late. The information he gave us was bad but he didn't give us any new information about who we could work with. He was an Italian agent working for the Germans but we thought he was working for us. At the time I didn't think it mattered, they just wanted revenge. They killed him. I'm always a little squeamish talking about it.¹⁵

This also was the unfortunate fate of Maurizio Giglio (Cervo) whose commitment and steadfastness won the admiration of OSS professionals who infiltrated Rome, while Fascist and Nazi forces still controlled the city. A double agent, he stealthily walked the entire distance from Naples to the eternal city through fighting lines bringing with him the secret OSS radio code Vittorio, which was to be the source of vital information broadcast to the Allies. Ostensibly he served as a lieutenant for the Roman police force, while he secretly aided the OSS via Radio Vittorio that provided a valuable intelligence link between Peter Tomkins, the crucial OSS operative in Rome and the Fifth Army.¹⁶ Giglio was captured and monstrously tortured by fascist police in their attempt to force him to reveal the identity of the OSS's secret operative in Rome.¹⁷ Unable to get him to betray his contact, Italian Fascist police turned Giglio over to the Nazi occupiers who placed him with 335 Italian civilians and military personnel whom they executed in the notorious Ardeatine massacre on March 24, 1944—the event became the symbol of harsh Nazi reprisals against Italians during the period of occupation. The Ardeatine massacre was only one of a number of horrendous German reprisals in retaliation to partisan sabotage actions. Adopting the formula of ten Italian civilians to be executed for every German soldier killed, enemy troops indiscriminately chose innocent civilian victims without regard to age or sex for death.¹⁸ Giglio knew that his refusal to divulge secret OSS operatives would result in his death. His silence and self-abnegation in the face of excruciating torture saved

them. “By foregoing rescue, Corvo had in fact surrendered his own life to save his father from any hint of suspicion.”¹⁹

In the Lazio region of Italy there were approximately 40 partisan formations working against Fascist Italian and German forces which willingly underwent danger to work alongside the OSS. They included Giorgio Ciula, commander of an autonomous group who cooperated with OSS agent Angelo Pitoni in ambushing a German troop column. “Ciula had also supplied the OSS with a map with the locations of arms and explosive depots in the entire region. These targets were bombed and destroyed by Allied airplanes.”²⁰ Preceding Tompkins in Rome was Arrido Paladini (Eugenio), another Italian, whose mission it was to make contact with partisan groups to assist local anti-Fascist operations. Following Giglio’s arrest, Paladini operated the key Radio Vittorio for Tompkins eluding arrest together with his wife Elvira, until he was captured and tortured for refusing to inform on OSS agents. Paladini managed to survive, was freed, and after a brief convalescence reported to the OSS for duty, thereby earning a medal for his extraordinary service from General Donovan.²¹ Assisting Tompkins was Italian Mino Menicanti (Coniglio) who supposedly was in charge of the OSS operation in Rome, but in reality was acting as an agent for SIM, the Italian Intelligence that used OSS money to prop up right-wing political activity.²²

Interaction between Italians and partisans. Corvo supervised other activities including establishing authentic connection with Italian administrators of SIM, to foster liaison with northern Italian partisan forces. This rendered the espionage operation more efficient by reducing or eliminating duplication. Gaining the cooperation of Italian anti-fascist individuals to conduct behind-the-lines operations was no minor accomplishment, considering the multiplicity of groups involved, each of which had its own political agenda. The reward, however, was important—indeed, for German troops it was partisan forces activity rather than Allied troops that became the bane of their existence.

Seeking strategic rather than tactical intelligence, Max Corvo, as chief of Italian SI activities, inserted OSS agents and recruited Italian agents in central and northern Italy that yielded very important information for the Allied Military command. This was the result of Corvo’s unswerving focus on preparing for a long military campaign by producing strategic intelligence that would foster greater Allied control over Italy, while also working with various Italian guerrilla outfits. However, before he could proceed, it was necessary to fix certain operational problems in order to

achieve proficiency. Effective communications, for example, was a constant bedevilment until Corvo coordinated the use of experienced former Italian Army telegraphers with OSS activities.²³ Another of his preparatory steps was to establish an OSS site as a parachute training school for agents who would undertake behind-the-enemy-lines espionage missions.

Other OSS activities took the form of OG consisting of nearly 150 officers and men, primarily second-generation Italian Americans who were primed for combat. Important as the aforesaid was, questions, nevertheless, arose about the very role of the SI, causing General Donovan to reevaluate its status in the overall Italian intelligence operation. The extent and degree of involvement in Italian politics was a large part of the problem. Although Corvo was cognizant of Donovan's admonition to steer clear of involvement with indigenous politics, he reasoned that "the very nature of our business made this principle almost impossible to honor."²⁴ Thus it was that notwithstanding the loyalty and significance of Corvo's service in coordinating these activities, in 1944 he and other key OSS players were eased out. The SI's many achievements had gained wide recognition, not the least from General Donovan himself, who had great respect for Corvo, Scamporino, and their colleagues. But the SI had alienated many people in high places, one of whom was the influential Allen Dulles, who headed the OSS office in Berne, Switzerland. Dulles also ran some operations in northern Italy where SI was also conducting missions that led to serious jurisdictional disputes with Corvo and Scamporino. In retaliation, Dulles registered negative comments about SI to General Donovan. There was also the reality that revolved around an ethnic bias—simply put, for Corvo and many of his associates it was their Sicilian background that engendered animosity:

It earned a reputation at AFHQ and OSS Caserta as an unruly group of Italian Americans. Dubbed the Mafiosi, they were seen as running SI Italy as their own fiefdom. A spurious kind of logic was at play in this perception. Many Italians in north and central Italy looked down on Sicilians as an inferior, hot blooded breed. Corvo and Scamporino were both of Sicilian descent, as were many of their recruits. Therefore by this logic, all SI personnel were tarred with the brush of inferiority.²⁵

The alienation of a number of influential people including the head of OSS presaged a decision to close down the SI branch. Donovan himself was said to remark to Corvo, "You Italians have politics in your

blood...You and Scamp were getting mixed up in Italian politics.” One OSS participant explained that Corvo elicited antipathy partially because he failed to instill the teamwork spirit and more particularly because he tended to exaggerate his role. “However, the more likely reason for SI’s untimely termination and Corvo’s abrupt exit was resentment and jealousy among peers.”²⁶ A reading of relevant documents suggests that powerful anti-Italian stereotypes persisted among Allied military and occupation officers who had a low opinion about them and distrusted them as recent former enemies. This attitude undoubtedly extended to Italian American OSSers who had established ties to Italian nationals.

Interaction with partisans, while extremely dangerous, often resulted in developing contacts with lifetime consequences. This was the fate of Ohioan Lawrence J. De Maria who was fluent in Italian and who volunteered for the OSS in 1943. After rigorous training he became part of the OSS’s Italian Operation Group that infiltrated behind enemy lines in Italy where he remained for nine months. At age 96 he provided a vivid description of his encounter with partisans after parachuting into Italy that effectively illustrated the point.

Thus when they hit the ground and were kept busy gathering their equipment, they became alarmed by some men who came running toward them. The OSS unit was about to fire upon these newcomers when they heard the men speaking a dialect which indicated they were local Italians who called out “Americani” to them and offered to help them in carrying the equipment. Many years later on the occasion of the marriage of De Maria’s daughter to a young man from Campobasso, the former OSS agent and his family went to the Italian town. At the reception one of the Italians walked over to De Maria, called him by name, and pointed his finger into his face, saying “you son o bitch you almost shoot me!” He was one of the men who had helped De Maria and his men in the 1943 incident.²⁷

Holohan murder. The mysterious disappearance and slaying of Major William V. Holohan in December 1944 that became an unwelcome cause célèbre exposed a dark side of OSS operations in northern Italy—a blemish that plagued participants for years to come. The genesis of the case reverts to a decision by OSS leadership to further reinforce partisans in northern Italy in order to keep pressure on Nazi armies occupying the area. To that end two segments of the OSS agreed to merge efforts: one headed by Captain Max Corvo, head of SI for Italy who had devised the Mangosteen mission to act as official liaison with

the command of partisan forces in northern Italy, and the other an OG Chrysler mission that was scheduled to jump into the same area.²⁸ OSS leadership, anxious to reduce duplication and confusion, settled on the Chrysler mission name to be sent out in September 1944. The choice of the tall and graying Captain William V. Holohan as its executive officer elicited concern from Corvo: “I interposed that Holohan, who was still a captain, did not speak a word of Italian and knew neither the terrain nor the situation.”²⁹ It was a judgment shared by historian Charles Delzell, who lambasted the entire undertaking as a “wretched operation whose melodrama produced many a sensational headlines after the war.”³⁰ The demurrer notwithstanding, Holohan was given the command and after a briefing from Corvo went on to his assignment in September armed with \$16,000 in gold and Swiss francs to fund partisan activities. He parachuted with specially trained OSS men Lieutenants Victor Giannino and Aldo Icardi, Sergeant Carl LoDolce, and three Italian partisans to a designated location behind enemy-occupied territory. Although Italian partisans were of varying political stripes, most were militant Communists headed by Cino Moscatelli who sought to organize Resistance movements. On December 6, 1944, the Holohan detachment came under fire from unknown elements and what ensued was utter confusion as unit members scattered in different directions. Holohan was soon reported missing—reportedly the victim of a German ambush—but the unit continued its liaison mission with the support of partisans as it maneuvered the delivery of dozens of arms drops sufficient to equip tens of thousands of men. Six years later came the shocking news that Holohan’s body was found with two bullets in the head, his body zipped into a military sack and dropped into Lake Como, near Trieste. The public was also informed that he had been murdered by his colleague Aldo Icardi. Both local and national media jumped at the opportunity to publish the gruesome news. “OSS Will Fight Trial,” blasted the Brooklyn *Eagle*, in big bold front page print.³¹

Not to be outdone, *Life*, the persuasive national journal, covered the slaying replete with photographs while registering its opinion about the sensational news.

The secret files of America’s wartime spy service, the OSS, bulge with the documented courage of Americans who fought World War II within the enemy’s own lines. There are records of successful sabotage, of lonely drops by parachute of 100-1 gambles which paid off—and many which didn’t.

Most of these stories are still top secret—some will always be. But last week a bitter 6½ years after it happened, the Defense Department lifted from secrecy another sort of OSS story. It was a fantastic cloak and dagger mystery, the murder of a daring U.S. major by his own American aides behind German lines in Italy during the last winter of the war.³²

However, the story was not going to be put on the back burner. Joseph Holohan, the deceased major's brother and a lawyer, convinced a subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee to hold a hearing on the crime which subpoenaed Icardi to testify. Icardi, who lived in Pittsburgh and was raising a family that would reach five children, while also completing studies for a law degree at the University of Pittsburgh, pleaded his innocence passionately denying commission of any crime. But it was of no avail—he was indicted for committing perjury; simultaneously, he and Sgt. LoDolce were tried in absentia in an Italian court and found guilty of Holohan's murder. Desperate, despondent, and in serious trouble, the small, bald-headed, bespeckled Icardi, who appeared to be more a bookkeeper rather than a dashing spy, sought the help of Edward Bennett Williams nationally known for representing high-profile clients. When the eminent and powerful Washington, DC, lawyer agreed to represent Icardi about whom he wrote, "stood convicted in the court of public opinion and sentenced to infamy," Icardi was under tremendous pressure—the intense notoriety militated against his efforts to obtain a license to practice law and support his growing family which consisted of two children and another baby on the way. Added to these woes was the huge insult at the hands of his Pittsburgh neighbors who called him a "dago murderer."³³ Cleverly demonstrating that the accusatory subcommittee had been intent on setting up a perjury trap, rather than investigating with the purpose of formulating law, Williams got a perjury acquittal for Icardi. Williams and his associate Robert Mehue personally went to Italy where they met with Cino Moscatelli, the former Communist partisan chief, who was now in the Italian government and elicited an admission from him that Italian Communist elements killed the fiercely anti-Communist Holohan because he was unwilling to provide them with funds. Armed with this information, the brilliant attorney was able to argue that Holohan's murderers were Italian partisan Communists, not Icardi or LoDolce. Ironically, because of a quirk in the law, a civilian court could not prosecute a person for a crime committed abroad while in military service; nor could a military court pursue a person who was now a civilian.³⁴ The comments of a

District Court to the contents of sub-committee hearings are instructive in that they note that despite warnings that he would be in peril if he testified, Icardi, nevertheless, freely answered questions.³⁵ It was noted that individuals frequently judged guilty of an offense by a congressional committee were in fact caught up in an improper practice that could not be condoned because it denies to the accused the constitutional safeguards of judicial trial. Accordingly, the motion for judgment of acquittal was granted.³⁶

Elucidating further on the case, two lawyers wrote in a law journal in support of the conclusion that Icardi did not kill Holohan.

Icardi freely answered the questions put to him during the hearing and continued to adhere to his former statements concerning the disappearance of Major Holohan. Icardi was the only witness questioned at this hearing. Thereafter, on May 19, 1953, the subcommittee heard the final witness. Colonel Ralph W. Pierce, former Chief, Criminal Branch, Provost Marshal's Office, testified he had conducted a polygraph or "lie-detector" test of Icardi in 1947 and had concluded that Icardi did not kill Holohan, and probably did not know who did, although he could not give a conclusive opinion on the basis of the tests made.³⁷

For his own part Icardi wrote a personal account of his service steadfastly continuing to maintain his innocence.³⁸ He received support from former OSS colleagues Max Corvo and Emilio Daddario and from fellow Pittsburgher Ruggero J. Aldisert, who became a highly regarded Circuit Court Judge.³⁹ Aldisert was so inspired by the Icardi case that he wrote a novel in which the main protagonist is an OSS secret operative searching for hidden booty obtained in wartime.

News of Holohan's murder understandably was followed with great interest by OSS members including Anthony Scariano who developed such a keen curiosity that he personally reviewed and kept a file on the appropriate Italian legal documents. Not content to rely on secondary sources Scariano traveled to Italy to study the original files and expressed so deep an interest in the case that he hoped to write a book on the matter. There is no evidence that he did so; however, in his oral memoirs he did express his opinion that no crime had ever been established and that evidence unearthed revealed contradictory accounts as to the identity of the perpetrators. Scariano's memoirs leave a fascinating account not only of the tragedy but also of the ethnic prejudice he experienced.⁴⁰ Scariano

dismisses the speculation that attributes the crime to perpetrators who sought money earmarked for the OG Chrysler mission.

Some people think that this so-called Chrysler Mission, the murdered major, was due to money. I don't think so because our boys could have had all of the money they wanted in any denomination in any currency, gold, louis d'ors, Swiss francs, American dollars, English pounds, you name them, we had it and they operated. They had to account but you know, not under CPA [Certified Public Accountant] rigors. We were pretty much on our own. We were in business for ourselves. These boys were two hundred, three hundred miles beyond our own lines, sometimes five hundred miles beyond our lines.⁴¹

Aldo Icardi's autobiography, *American Master Spy*, created so much interest that an abridged version of the book was published and serialized in newspaper accounts titled "I Did Not Murder Major Holohan." Icardi's account confirms that he had serious reservations about the naming of Major Holohan as head of the mission. "He had no knowledge of Italian, no experience in OSS, had not even had parachute training, but he did have two things a mission needed: Rank and personal connections with top members of the OSS Club." (This was a reference to OSS administrator Major William Suhling and General William Donovan.) While he reiterated his innocence, Icardi also indulged in what might be called sour grapes, but which, nevertheless, provided insight into his thinking about prevailing anti-Italian prejudices of OSS personnel. Icardi's sentiments probably were shared by others. He had nothing but deep contempt for OSS Ivy Leaguers for their open deprecation of Italian Americans manifested in undisguised haughtiness, arrogance, and an air of superiority, as they casually flunked Italian American OSS candidates because they did not speak English well enough, even including those who could have been very helpful gathering intelligence in Italy. He inveighed against their insulting epithet for Italian Americans who "were invariably called 'Bennies,' 'Wop' would have been funnier and more kind." "Bennie was short for Benito [Mussolini]—a constant ugly reminder that we were second-class soldiers, permanently on approval by the graduates of... Harvard, Princeton, or Heidelberg."⁴² We need to be reminded that during the early phases of the war, Italian immigrants in America encountered harsh treatment from Americans stimulated by wartime propaganda that depicted the enemy, which included Italy, in the most demeaning manner.

It was richly paradoxical that such disgraceful and humiliating discrimination was visited upon Italian Americans, even while their sons and daughters were faithfully serving, fighting, and dying on behalf of the USA. The situation improved during the course of the war; however, a nasty residue of bigotry always seemed to remain.

The Holohan murder had negative consequences not only for Icardi but also for Corvo whose status as head of Italian SI activities undoubtedly was weakened further as a result of the killing of the middle-aged New York bachelor lawyer. Corvo was, after all, nominally in charge of assigning Icardi and other members of the Chrysler/Mongosteen infiltration team composed of specially trained agents. For a time following Holohan's disappearance, Corvo continued to assign Icardi to infiltration assignments. Since Resistance forces were chronically short of funds to carry out activities, and because of occasional bribes—Icardi claimed even Gestapo men could be bribed but only in gold. Holohan was given \$16,000 to expedite matters.⁴³

As already mentioned, this blot on the OSS surely was not helpful to Corvo's career. But more was involved in explaining the termination of the SI unit—specifically ethnic discrimination of a nature similar to that experienced by Icardi. Convinced that some military officials to whom he reported had an anti-Italian bias, Corvo referred to deteriorating relations with OSS administrator William Suhling, a Virginian gentleman farmer, as a case in point.

During this period my personal relations with Bill Suhling seemed to deteriorate further, with the respect and trust of the past vanishing. I attributed part of this change to Holohan's disappearance. Another factor may have been the influence of several southern staff members whom he brought into the organization and who made no secret of their dislike for Italo-Americans and people of other ethnic backgrounds.⁴⁴

In his biography of William Donovan, Anthony Cave Brown recounts the OSS chief's momentous decision to name Holohan as the head of the Chrysler mission to North Italy, primarily to arm, train, and maintain supplies to guerillas thereby enabling them to destroy Nazi and Fascist lines of communication, especially phones and telecommunication lines on which they were highly dependent.⁴⁵ Brown approvingly cites the Holohan choice by Captain William Suhling, who on July 1, 1944, became commanding officer for Italian OSS operations. Brown, however, engages in

excessive deductive reasoning regarding Icardi's role in the Holohan murder when he states that captured German records in the area referred to rumors that a senior American officer had been murdered. Furthermore, Brown implies that since these records likewise made no mention of a German attack at the place where Holohan was hiding, one must logically conclude that something sinister had occurred. Brown also revealingly avers that even while choosing Holohan as mission leader, Suhling had misgivings about the rest of team because all were Italian Americans, thus heightening Suhling's suspicions that "there were a number of queer and strange characters at the OSS, particularly in the Italian operations and although he {Holohan} got along with them all right, he did not particularly care for most of them and did not associate with them to any extent, apart from his contact in the line of duty."⁴⁶

Not to be overlooked is the reality that the decline of Corvo's influence could be ascribed in part to a lack of clarity regarding intelligence services. One historian attributed the problem to weak oversight by OSS Colonel Eddy that affected its existence, along with the growth of three different competing intelligence services. According to this account even though Donald Downes apprised Donovan of the situation during the Anzio landings, the delay in replacing Eddy with Colonel Edward Glavin to command the Italian Theater opened the door for more critics to deplore OSS shortcomings. Muddying the waters were the fulminations of the obdurate West Pointer and Commanding General in the European Theater, Jacob L. Devers, who demanded an accounting of OSS finances while stating he was appalled over "unvouchered funds," a statement that obviously inferred dishonesty. In addition, there was the ongoing undercurrent of suspicion toward the new, autonomous intelligence service from traditional military branches. In sum, conventional Army brass inured to traditional lines of authority was unsympathetic with the style and practices of the seemingly unregulated OSS and insisted that the OSS follow standard military procedure. In response Donovan proved just as adamant and refused to show the OSS books to anyone but authorized personnel. "The issue, again, was that to be effective, a secret service had to be secret in all respects to all except those within the government to whom it was responsible."⁴⁷

Also playing a part in Corvo's decline was the animosity between the Corvo-led OSS SI and other intelligence-gathering entities. This could be seen in the Vessel mission which was a Donovan OSS SI operation that received reports from a man who purported to be in possession of

information emanating from the Vatican that drew the attention of President Roosevelt and his policymakers. When it was revealed that the documents were fabrications by “Virgilio Scattolini, the prince of Vatican misinformers,” the OSS suffered additional humiliation.⁴⁸ The incident led to a dispute between Corvo, associate Vincent Scamporino, and James Angleton, chief of counterintelligence.⁴⁹

The death of Max Corvo at age of 74 on June 8, 1994, ended a truly remarkable career that was heralded by friends, admirers, and family at a solemn military funeral at St. Sebastian Cemetery. He was remembered as a “quiet hero,” a living legacy, a man of God, country, and family. Those who knew him would agree with the sentiments of writer Paul Goldstein. “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.”⁵⁰ Goldstein praised Corvo’s autobiographical account of the OSS as a work that corrected the historical record, an indispensable narrative to understand that agency.

If anyone claims to know the history of the United States intelligence community and its actual role in World War II and doesn’t read this book, then they should forever shut their mouth and hold their pen. Corvo fashions both a narrative history as well as a description of the political intrigues which took place to establish OSS’s presence in Italy.⁵¹

Thorny Partisan issues confronted the OSS until the final phases of the war particularly the disposition of Wehrmacht soldiers who were prepared to surrender but were concerned about a post-armistice partisan attack. This took on some urgency in Verona on May 4, 1945, amidst exuberant Italians celebrating victory and where a skirmish line of Italian partisans stood opposite truckloads of Germans awaiting transportation to POW camps. The angry partisans wanted the trucks for themselves and were ready to take military action. Representing the OSS at the site was Colonel Russell B. Livermore and his aide Albert Materazzi. “Materazzi was able to convince them that since the war was still going on up north they had to get the Germans out of the Alps to the POW (Prisoners of War) camps in the Po Valley.” Livermore and Materazzi were also able to defuse another potential flare-up by convincing German troops to evacuate an Italian farmhouse in the vicinity.⁵²

Rise of Daddario. The 24-year-old OSS agent Emilio Daddario was to play an important role in the final phases of the war as the tottering Italian Fascist government was gripped in such a rapid freefall that it spelled certain doom for its fallen leader and his associates. The Allies anxiously sought to capture Mussolini alive—a difficult task given the angry mood of outraged partisans in the region around Milan. Complicating the situation was the readiness of Nazi German forces to lay down their arms if their safety could be assured.

In this envenomed atmosphere it was essential that OSS liaison personnel be sensible and judicious, character traits that aptly described Daddario. Among the many individual OSS exploits that have been recorded and that have become part of OSS lore—real life achievements that deserve to be told—the Daddario role is one of them. He was the

24-year-old officer who had infiltrated into Milan to top all those other exploits by waging a brief but highly successful war of his own. During the last five days of the Italian campaign, this one-man task force, Captain Emilio Q. Daddario of Boston, Mass., maneuvered single-handed the surrender of S.S. headquarters at Villa Locatelli in Cernobbio; arranged with the German General in command at Como to confine his troops in barracks and yield three-quarters of his arms, in exchange for a guarantee of protection from the aroused and blood-crazed Partisans.⁵³

Thus as Corvo's star was dimming, Daddario's role was ascending. It was happening, furthermore, at a time when the OSS was mired in a great deal of perplexity stemming from jurisdictional disputes between SI, SO, and OG procedures on the one hand and Italian resistance activities on the other. The situation rendered it imperative to find the most suitable man to mediate the wrangle, whereupon OSS administrators recommended sending Corvo's ally and trusted mediator Emilio Daddario to Switzerland to work with Switzerland-based OSS Chief Allen Dulles. The OSS chief assigned Daddario the job of insuring that Mussolini be handed over to the Allies rather than to Communist partisan elements. A comparative youngster, Daddario had already accumulated an impressive record based on engagement in many important missions in northern Italy. He would now represent all OSS Italy branches working diligently and effectively to improve communications between Dulles' office and various OSS offices in Italy, while maintaining regular radio contact with American military forces that coordinated activities with Gen. Mark Clark's 15th Army Group.⁵⁴

Following its unconditional surrender on September 8, 1943, and with the exception of hardboiled Fascists, on October 13, 1942, Italy decided to join the Allies as a co-belligerent. This development steered most of Italy's armed forces to connect with partisan groups in pushing German troops back into northern Italy, where they were ensconced for a time behind the formidable Gothic Line. Taking advantage of rifts within the German military command in Italy, the Allied military leadership intended to induce German forces to surrender, provided that they could be persuaded there would not be monstrous reprisals. However, the multifaceted Italian resistance movement encompassing diverse groups ranging from Communist and Socialist to Christian and monarchist had a different mindset, especially the influential Communist segment which sought to capture and summarily execute without trials Mussolini and other Fascist leaders. This policy obviously served as a disincentive for remaining German forces to surrender. How to deal with disparate partisan elements intensely motivated by political and ideological considerations represented a serious challenge to the Allies whose focus was primarily on military priorities, in addition to forestalling Communist incursions. The sensitive issue was placed before the Brindisi OSS headquarters where Daddario was tasked with capturing the enemy leaders alive, a challenge he accepted without hesitation, notwithstanding the danger.

The selection of Emilio Mim Daddario for this important role was not a gamble—he had demonstrated proven leadership qualities that were tested at Wesleyan University where he starred in baseball and on the grid-iron field serving as captain of the college's football team. That Daddario was highly valued as a thoughtful and brave mediator was confirmed by his colleagues who attested to his fearlessness under pressure and danger. Thus Daddario was assigned the vitally important task of capturing the topmost Fascist leadership in order to prevent the partisans from executing them before they were brought to trial. On April 26, 1945, Daddario and a small armed unit left Switzerland and headed for Lake Como in an effort not only to round up the Fascist leaders, including Mussolini, but also to arrange a cessation of hostilities to prevent further bloodshed. Walking under a white flag, Daddario, accompanied by Italian partisan lieutenant Bonetti, headed toward the Villa Locatelli, where the chief German command anxiously awaited cease-fire negotiations. They entered into an agreement wherein German troops would surrender to the first Allied troops to arrive and that Italy's chief of staff, Marshal Rodolfo Graziani, and his close associates would be turned over as prisoners to Daddario.

This arrangement was rejected by armed partisan socialists who demanded that Daddario turn Graziani over to them for prompt execution. Not to be cowed by the threatening guerillas, Daddario placed himself in front of them unarmed and declared that they would have to eliminate him first—a brave but dangerous gesture that worked. Cursing the Americans for coddling Fascists, the frustrated partisans backed down.⁵⁵

That incident was hardly over when Daddario was faced with the problem of the pending surrender of a large and restless contingent of armed German soldiers who awaited events in a stadium. Validating the assessment of colleagues that he was one of the most ingenious and witty secret OSS agents, Daddario handled the matter adroitly by securing an agreement that German troops remain in place to await surrender to Allied troops. “Thus in several encounters, Daddario and his teammates succeeded in stabilizing an extremely explosive situation.”⁵⁶ Daddario’s demeanor impressed partisan leaders in Milan who were attempting to have the enemy surrender and cease fighting. They left a portrait of why they thought him so remarkable; it was significant that Daddario’s father had come from Abruzzi and that the immigrant’s son, Emilio, apparently would be the first American in uniform to enter Lombardy. Italians in this area had never previously seen these Allied uniforms and were so intrigued that they began to open their shutters and wave from the windows. Many of the local townspeople began to fill a small square to see the phenomenon firsthand. They were astonished to see in Daddario’s physiognomy what was depicted as the body of a classic Greek type, with short, black curly hair, athletic build that was enhanced by the American uniform, and a khaki foreign cap on his head. Daddario met with and thanked the foremost partisan leaders and while thanking them for their cooperation also begged them to cease all partisan action; he in turn would get the SS to sign a cease-fire.⁵⁷

While Daddario was effective in mediating the Gestapo surrender of its Milan command post, his mandate to capture Mussolini alive proved to be too difficult to carry out because OSS personnel were unable to prevent angry Communist partisans from executing the Italian dictator. According to one historical account, Daddario was hopeful after he met Walter Audisio, a leader of Communist partisans who “no doubt told Daddario he was going to bring the duce back to Milan because he persuaded him to give him a pass in case he was stopped by Allied troops.”⁵⁸ The events that followed were unclear but it is believed that Audisio played a central role in Mussolini’s execution. Controversy surrounds the role of the OSS and

Mussolini's demise with some critics implying that the Americans really did not intend to safeguard him.⁵⁹

Daddario was more effective in initiating the surrender of General Rodolfo Graziani, chief of staff of the Italian republic's armed forces and two other top Italian generals. Against a hazardous backdrop during which the OSS party was under fire from excited Italian Partisans, who tried to target with dynamite the car that escorted Marshal Graziani and which left an OSS lieutenant badly wounded, Daddario showed his mettle. In late April 1945 Daddario ordered his men to place the captured officers in a car and, accompanied by three jeeps, take them to the San Vittorio prison where he proceeded to obtain intelligence about the remaining Italian forces by placing them in separate cells. By removing the Italian officers from the certain partisan retribution it undoubtedly saved the men's lives. A grateful Graziani sent a letter to Daddario thanking him profusely for saving his life.

For his wartime service Daddario received the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star Medal, and the Italian Medaglia d'Argento. He subsequently served in the Korean War as a member of the Connecticut National Guard. He had a notable political career including election as mayor of Middletown at age 28, a judge on the Middletown Municipal Court, election to Congress, and Democratic candidate for governor of Connecticut.

NOTES

1. D.M. Condit, *Allied Supplies for Italian Partisans during World War II*, Operations Research Office, The Johns Hopkins University, Chevy Chase, Maryland, 35.
2. Condit, *Allied Supplies for Italian Partisans*, 3, 4.
3. Mark Seaman, editor. *Special Operations Executive: A New Instrument of War*, Routledge, 2006, 101.
4. Condit, *Allied Supplies for Italian Partisans*, 1.
5. Vittorio Gozzer, "OSS and ORI: The Raimondo Craveri and Max Corvo partnership," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 4:1, 1999, 32–36.
6. Scariano, *Anthony Scariano Oral History*, 64.
7. Corvo, *The OSS in Italy*, 118.
8. Corvo, *The OSS in Italy*, 124.
9. Chambers II, *OSS Training in the National Parks*, 309.

10. Enzo Bartocci, "Piero Boni: Between History and Recollection," (Rome, Carocci, 2010). *Economia & Lavoro*, Anno XLIV, 28–34.
11. Albert R. Materazzi, *Monument Dedicated to Pippo's Brigades*, online.
12. Peter Tompkins, "The OSS and Italian Partisans in World War II," *Central Intelligence Agency*, April 14, 2007.
13. P.K. O'Donnell, *Operatives*, 189.
14. C. Ford, *Cloak and Dagger*, 128–129.
15. P.K. O'Donnell, *First Seaks, The Untold Story of the Forging of America's Most Elite Unit*, Da Capo Press, 2014, 54–55.
16. G.C. Chalou, *The Secret War*, 131. Robert Katz, *The Battle for Rome*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 2003.
17. Patrick Gallo, *For Love and Country, The Italian Resistance*, UPA, 2003, 190.
18. The Ardeatine massacre occurred on March 24, 1944 without prior public notice in what was then a little-frequented rural suburb of Rome near the Via Ardeatina. A motley group of 335 Italian regular prisoners, captured partisans, and men from the Jewish community were rounded up randomly and were led by SS officers to the Ardeatine caves where in groups of five they were shot in the back of the head by SS executioners. The caves were then dynamited and sealed; the executioners tried to cover the entrance with garbage to cover the terrible stench of death. See Gallo, 213–214 for information on German reprisal policy.
19. Katz, *The Battle for Rome*, 278.
20. Gallo, *For Love and Country*, 248.
21. Gallo, *For Love and Country*, 249–250, 290.
22. Gallo, *For Love and Country*, 157, 174.
23. Corvo, *The OSS in Italy*, 142.
24. Corvo, *The OSS in Italy*, 149.
25. Erasmus H. Kloman, *Assignment Algiers: With the OSS in the Mediterranean Theater*, 64. A similar view is contained in Charles O'Reilly, *Forgotten Battles*, 254, who comments on the tendency of the OSSers of Sicilian descent to control the intelligence operation that resulted in jealousy and on occasion unsatisfactory results.
26. Kloman, *Assignment in Algiers*, 96.
27. Lawrence J. De Maria, Office of Strategic Services Italian Operational Group "A" "Donovan's Devils" On *War Era Story Project* 2012 www.aging.ohio.gov.
28. Corvo, *The OSS in Italy*, 191.

29. Corvo, *The OSS in Italy*, 191.
30. Delzell, *Mussolini's Enemies*, 433.
31. The Brooklyn *Eagle*, August 17, 1951.
32. "Murder in the OSS, Missing Major Provides Most Fantastic Cloak-and-Dagger Story of All," *Life*, August 27, 1951, 32.
33. Evan Thomas, *The Man To See*, Touchstone, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1991, 87.
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41. Scariano Memoirs, 66.
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43. See Aldo Icardi, *American Master Spy*, Stalwart Enterprises, Inc., 1954.
44. Corvo, *The OSS in Italy*, 236.
45. Brown, *The Last American Hero*, 720.
46. Brown, *The Last American Hero*, 721–722.
47. Brown, *The Last American Hero*, 504.
48. Francis Rooney, *The Global Vatican: An Inside Look at the Catholic Church, World Politics*, Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham, Maryland, 107.
49. For more on this see Max Corvo, "War-time controversy over Vatican-OSS relations renewed by 'declassification'" *Executive Intelligence Review*, Vol. 12, Number 5, February 5, 1985, 56–59. Corvo is highly critical of Arthur Cave Brown's coverage of the Vessel mission especially since it impugned Msgr. Gianbattista Montini, later to become Pope Paul VI, by asserting he provided the USA with critical military intelligence from Japan from confidential Vatican reports of

- the Papal nuncio to Japan that eventually facilitated the bombing missions over Japan. Much research proved the falsity of the assertion.
50. Paul Goldstein, "In Memoriam: Max Corvo, 1920–1994," *Executive Intelligence Review*, vol. 21, n.29 (22 July 1994), 65+.
 51. Paul Goldstein, "Patriot reveals secrets of World War II," *Executive Intelligence Review*, vol. 21, n.29 (22 July 1994), 64–65.
 52. Ringelsbach, 22.
 53. Corey Ford and Alastair Macbain, *Cloak & Dagger*, 146–147.
 54. E. Kloman, *Assignment Algiers*, 84.
 55. E. Kloman, *Assignment Algiers*, 89.
 56. E. Kloman, *Assignment Algiers*, 89.
 57. Vittorio Bonetti, "The Surrender of Graziani (*) And OSS. The First to Arrive in Milan," *Gli Americani e la Guerra Librazione in Italia*, Digitized, University of Michigan, 225.
 58. Ray Mosely, *Mussolini: the last 600 Days of Il Duce*, Taylor Trade Publishing, 283.
 59. Maurizio Barozzi, "Death of Mussolini: How it went," *Corriere d'Italia*, n.d., online.

Conclusion

In the introduction to his volume *American Intelligence in Wartime London, The Story of the OSS*, Nelson MacPherson makes a sagacious observation about the men and women engaged in gathering intelligence for capricious nations in an “anarchical society.”

The intelligence officers themselves, in their various incarnations, are the “desperate men” in this formulation, striving as they do to carry out their risky and/or problematic duties in the face of inertia or outright opposition on the part of rival enemies, and occasionally their own countrymen. It is unlikely that any intelligence service in history has ever completely escaped subjugation to such a restrictive bondage.¹

Although MacPherson’s focus revolved around the situation in London, his evaluation about the awkward and perplexing path the OSS had to follow was applicable elsewhere. As we have already seen, jealousy and rivalry from intelligence units in other military services and branches of government characterized OSS activity from the outset. In one sense Roosevelt encouraged competition of intelligence units in the belief that it was unwise to have reliance upon only a single division. But the question arises about the fundamental importance and value of the OSS to the prosecution of World War II. MacPherson raises the question of the intelligence service’s overall significance to the war effort maintaining it remains largely unresolved historiographically.²

Peter Tompkins, who was a principal OSS operative in Italy, is unambiguous in his assessment of the OSS for its immense contribution to winning the war against the Axis in Italy.

The contribution of Italian anti-Fascist partisans to the campaign in Italy in World War II has long been neglected. These patriots kept as many as seven German divisions out of the line. They also obtained the surrender of two full German divisions, which led directly to the collapse of the German forces in and around Genoa, Turin, and Milan.

These actions pinned down the German armies and led to their complete destruction. Throughout northern Italy, partisan brigades in the mountains and clandestine action groups in the cities liberated every major city before the arrival of combat units of Fifteenth Army Group, a mixture of American, British, French, and Commonwealth divisions, to which was added a smattering of Royalist Italians.³

Equally important in evaluating the OSS contribution is Tompkins' observations regarding the intelligence value derived from partisans in collaboration with OSS agents.

Intercepted German signals and the Ultra deciphering at Bletchley Park in England went far toward assuring final victory, but little credit has been given to the vast amount of detailed intelligence collected and rapidly transmitted by individual partisan spies in Italy. Strategically, Ultra may have saved the day, but tactically its information was far slower in getting to where it was needed in the field than agent signals.⁴

This study on the Italian American dimension of the OSS began with a basic question, namely, what and how did Italian Americans contribute to US/Allied victory in World War II. In addition to their actual and striking performance on the battlefronts as members of traditional armed forces, and their vital home front activities producing the necessary multidimensional sinews of war, it can be said that their contribution to winning the war via participation in the often necessary if somewhat illusory clandestine phase was immense. As OSS agents they participated in actions that produced more than their share of drama and intrigue; they were intrepid agents who dropped from the skies behind enemy lines, who paddled ashore on rubber dinghies, who entrusted their lives to strangers, and who were unknown to and even suspected by their own side. Small in number, OSS veterans, including Italian Americans, sought to recount their part in

hastening American victory by periodic gatherings that received press coverage. Perhaps the most momentous of these assemblies was the National Archives Conference held in 1991, 50 years after Donovan was appointed COI chief; it was a meeting that allowed former OSS participants, historians, and archivists to review the consequences of the OSS in the dispassionate light of history.⁵ At times their contribution seems lost or remains in the form of mementos in unlikely places such as Woodloch Pines, a family resort in Pennsylvania's Pocono Mountains, where hanging on wall is a photograph titled "Donovan's Devils" commemorating the 1970 New York City unit reunion of the 1671 Reconnaissance Battalion OSS Operation Group.⁶ At other times their contribution came in the form of patriotic community events during national holidays like Veterans Day where elderly veterans are all too often belatedly cited, honored, and held out as models of patriotism. Often public gratitude was delivered posthumously as in the case of Connecticut-born Staff Sergeant Egidio P. "Gene" Delaini who, after volunteering to become a paratrooper, was summoned to Washington, DC, where he was interviewed by the OSS, and became a member of the elite OSS or 2671st Special Reconnaissance Battalion. In July 2013 his widow of more than 60 years accepted the medal bestowed on him by the Florida National Guard.⁷ It took until August 2012 before citizens in Natick, Massachusetts, learned about the OSS background of the town's Alfred De Flumeri Bridge when a librarian chanced upon a verifying letter that identified Flumeri as an OSS operative who was killed in the line of duty. The honor accorded to 100-year-old Salvatore Gagliardo in the fall of 2014 by the Corona, Queens, New York, community is another fine example.

In 2009 an important symposium was held to assess the value of the OSS to modern resistance movements. Specifically it dealt with the issue of whether or not the World War II OSS model had relevance in the early twenty-first century. Not surprisingly, two distinct views were iterated: one maintained that circumstances surrounding OSS activities in World War II were so unique to that time that they are of little relevance for contemporary situations; the other view steadfastly contended that the OSS experience was indeed an extraordinary model, one that deserved to be studied. In development of the latter view model, proponents argued that with respect to current irregular warfare, the challenges were remarkably familiar and, accordingly, needing the kind of cleverness and ingenuity that the OSS employed in World War II. Among the practices that were developed in the 1940s that have applicability are

use of aircraft to include resupply; developing a cadre of pilots experienced in a specific region; communication among forces on the ground and with support organizations; integrating intelligence with operations; cultural awareness; building relationships and trust among indigenous peoples; understanding cultural complexity and mores; organizing, training, equipping, and advising credible security forces; deception operations; psychological operations; and training and employing available weapons systems.⁸

There seems to be a consensus among some historians of World War II who are dubious about and question the value of the Italian campaign, maintaining it was a costly peripheral diversion, a dead-end strategy that was only marginal to the importance of other decisive sectors. On the other hand there is an impressive and growing number of historians whose works illuminate the value of the Italian campaign in significantly wearing down the enemy, and thus constituting not only a vital phase of the war but also one that was a necessity. In *The Path to Victory*, Douglas Porch, for example, argues “that the Mediterranean was the European war’s pivotal theater, the critical link without which it would have been impossible for the Western Alliance to go from Dunkirk to Overlord.”⁹

Operating amidst an atmosphere of secrecy, manipulation, and subterfuge, controversy surrounding OSS activities during the war was inevitable; however, what is worth knowing is that at the war’s end General Mark Clark, commander of American forces in Italy, commended the OSS SO and OG for their part in the “outstanding success of partisan operations in the areas where these men operated.”¹⁰ Lt. Gen. Alexander M. Patch, who succeeded Clark as 7th Army Commander, praised the OSS units involved in passing vital information that greatly facilitated troop landings in France as “probably the fullest and most detailed work provided to G-2 Intelligence. I must say that I am proud to have been part of one of these units.”¹¹ Supreme Allied Commander General Eisenhower credited the SO of the American OSS and the British SOE with the very able manner in which the Resistance forces were organized, supplied, and directed. “In no previous war,” he added, “and in no other theater during this war, have Resistance forces been so closely harnessed to the main military effort...I consider that the disruption of enemy rail communications, the harassing of German road moves and the continual and increasing strain placed on the German war economy and internal security services throughout occupied Europe by the organized forces of Resistance, played a very considerable part in our complete and final victory.”¹² Even Army Chief of

Staff General George C. Marshall who had previously expressed misgivings about the OSS, nevertheless, was said to acknowledge that the OSS played a useful role in the Sicilian campaign.

Deception, whose primary goals were to gain surprise for offensive operations and to provide increased security for forces by masking military planning and objectives, has ever been a tool of countries at war. For example, keeping the Axis uncertain over whether or not Sardinia rather than Sicily was the objective of the first Allied landing in Europe was a deceptive ploy behind Operation Husky, the Allied invasion of Sicily during World War II. Italian American OSS operatives were a vital part of the exercises. It is also useful to remember that the invasion of Sicily, which was at the time the largest amphibious invasion in history, would serve as a valuable learning experience for the better-known D Day invasion of June 6, 1944. In her study on the topic of British deception during the war Whitney Talley Bendeck concludes: “Many factors contributed to the Allied victory, but the world of deception stands out for its many heroic efforts, undying determination, stories of grandeur and intrigue, and the undisputable contribution it made to the Allies’ success.”¹³

If we accept the premise that military campaigns build upon one another then parenthetically it must be said that the Italian campaign, in which OSS Italian Americans played a critical role, served as a priceless learning experience for American and Allied military leaders. To General Eisenhower the fighting in Italy served as a practical proving ground for field commanders who gained authentic battlefield experience that would pay dividends later. For Germany the occupation of these Italian territories swiftly became a drain and a burden since it had to provide manpower which constituted a further drain on valuable and limited resources. Germany would have to reallocate resources from the eastern and western fronts—actions that surely contributed to the Allies’ military advantage by D Day.

Despite seemingly of secondary importance to the outcome of the war, the Italian campaign forced German General Albert Kesselring into a defensive position in which he was compelled to employ 22 divisions including reserves, which not only absorbed enormous casualties, but also provided the Allies with critical experience in amphibious operations all of which proved invaluable during the invasion of France. Intensified partisan sabotage activities impeded German supply traffic so effectively that a frustrated General Kesselring instituted “Anti-Partisan Week” in a futile effort to deal with the OSS-trained Resistance fighters.¹⁴

It is essential to note the important role played by the OSS in laying the groundwork for friendly relations between the USA and Italy in the postwar period. As Erasmus Kloman, who held three OSS posts during the war, remarked,

The relationships with the Italian resistance that the large contingent of Italo-Americans established in Secret Intelligence, Special Operations and Operational Groups were a major influence in strengthening these bonds. In Italy's turbulent postwar political evolution, a number of politicians whom the OSS had befriended came to power, keeping the country from siding with the Communists in the Cold War...Clearly the Italian campaign has not received the credit it deserves as an essential element in the defeat of Nazi Germany.¹⁵

In discussing the OSS value in winning the war historian Nelson MacPherson maintains that while the issue is somewhat debatable, the edge goes to the OSS. "The question of overall OSS significance to the war effort also remains largely unresolved historiographically. The military gained by OSS more than balancing Nazi intelligence operations."¹⁶

The massive Italian immigration which produced millions of Italian Americans gave the USA a great advantage over its British counterpart for the OSS tapped into that resource by enlisting those with cultural affinity toward Italy. There was an additional advantage in obtaining collaboration with Italian nationals. Recent historical research indicates a growing sense of recognition regarding the substantial role played by OSS SI in hastening the defeat of Nazi-fascists in Italy. Historian Claudia Nasini adeptly adumbrates the view. "New evidence, from both the US and Italian intelligence archives, shows that numerous American agents, hundreds of Italian government soldiers and countless fully-fledged American spies of Italian nationality participated in the Liberation of Italy." She further explains the reason this record was not fully known until recently:

The Italian and US governments kept both OSS and SIM (Italian Military Intelligence) archives "classified" until a few years ago. Evidently, there were some "top secret" affairs to keep quiet, such as the OSS's habit, for instance, of enrolling Italians as fully-fledged U.S. military personnel. At the same time, the Italian government's compliance with—or more exactly, submission to—this American practice was not something to be proud of, from the Italian side.¹⁷

Simply put, it was deemed a source of embarrassment to acknowledge that Italian partisans—formerly Italian soldiers—signed contracts with, and were paid by the U.S. Army.

Nasini's study is also enlightening on the issue of whether the OSS deliberately was following a policy of shoring up Italian conservative elements for postwar positioning in Italian politics. Even more, Nasini makes a strong argument crediting Italian Americans for their democratizing influence upon Italians as these OSS members spread the word about egalitarian concepts that abound in an open and unrestricted society. In a word these Americans of Italian descent were apostles for a free society. She bolsters her conclusions with convincing citation of OSS documents which reject the notion that the OSS had a blatant conservative motivation. Conversely, one of the tasks entrusted to OSS Italian American agents in carrying out their missions was to demonstrate the enlightened and broad-minded spirit that animated them. This influence was particularly pronounced in those missions of long duration when agents came to live for months among the fighters of the new Italy.

Nasini refers to Captain Vannoncini, the "Peedee" mission commander, who, according to his final mission report, referred to the significance of young anti-Fascist partisans being exposed to democratic ideals while interfacing with OSS Italian Americans. The concern was with young partisans who might otherwise be susceptible to totalitarian concepts. Therefore the task for the postwar period was, on the one hand, to keep the partisans engaged in some big enterprise and, on the other hand, to teach them "how democracy works." Vannoncini maintained that OSS headquarters deliberately decided to send behind-the-lines American military personnel of recent US citizenship like Vannoncini himself to promote values and models of American democracy.¹⁸

When it comes to an appreciation of the truly remarkable role played by very young Italian Americans in the gathering of vital intelligence and as administrators, a similar attitude of historical neglect pervades. Welcome, if belated, recognition has begun to surface. Thus in May 2015, 70 years after the events and decades after his death, a Connecticut television special report featured the career of Max Corvo; it proudly cited him as a courageous Connecticut Italian American who had made a huge impact on local, state, and national history. Max was described as the most improbable of World War II heroes, one who played an instrumental role in what some historians call the first D Day invasion.

Corvo was a man of two worlds—Sicilian and Connecticut American. Coming to this country as a nine-year-old, with the outbreak of war and now 19 years old, he committed himself to freeing the land of his birth from the totalitarian Fascist government. He was convinced that Americans of Italian descent could be reintegrated as espionage agents and commandos in the field. Remarkably the 20-year-old five foot three inches tall Army private convinced the right people, and became an officer in the newly formed OSS. He developed a plan to augment the invasion of Sicily from North Africa by setting up an intelligence headquarters, and recruiting Sicilians from his family's hometown to gather vital intelligence. He was a loyal American who endeavored to bring American democratic ideals and principles to the land of his birth.¹⁹

The exploits of OSS personnel in the dangerous and ambiguous world of deceit, illusion, treachery, and loneliness, the espionage and counter-espionage work of infiltration behind enemy lines, and interacting with diverse political elements, animated by contradictory ideologies, have largely been overlooked and forgotten. It is estimated that more than a hundred SO, SI, and OG teams, including both Americans and Italian nationals, were infiltrated behind German lines into northern Italy between 1943 and 1945. The Italian nationals who were trained and deployed included individuals who subsequently played influential roles in Italian politics—a group that deserves to be remembered as a vital element in the wartime marshaling together of the indispensable and fundamental sinews of war.

Often overlooked by historians who deprecated Italian martial prowess, it needs to be stated that Italy's military value and the role that the OSS played in facilitating it deserves reconsideration. It is a sobering fact that following the armistice about 640,000 Italian soldiers fought against Germany or served the Allies in support roles in Italy while some 120,000 Italian prisoners of war voluntarily served the Allied military cause. It is important to note that about 40,000 Italian partisans organized, supplied, and directed by the OSS became significant factors in defeating the Axis powers. These figures stand in "stark contrast to the widespread and mistaken reporting found in most Anglo-American histories and contradict John Gooch who stated, 'the Italians cannot and will not fight.'"²⁰ John Gooch's study concludes that Italy's military forces were designed to win a short, not a long war—its generals acknowledged that beyond that "its industrial inferiority condemned it to defeat...Mussolini was certainly chiefly responsible for this state of affairs but so to a degree were most if not all of his generals and admirals."²¹

Among other things this study has traced the important contribution that Italian American OSSers made with regard to seeking out many of Italy's leading scientists and engineers, often endangering themselves in freeing them from prison and aiding their escape. The vital work of Italian naval scientists, for instance, that was extremely effective against Allied naval forces, would now be at the disposal of the Allies. Learning from such individuals proved invaluable not only during the war but also in the postwar period.

Although unintended, the 15 Italian American OSS agents who were tragically executed at Ameglio had important consequences in that the reprehensible deed was considered so odious that it helped to shine a glaring spotlight on the issue of war crimes. The 1945 execution of Nazi German General Dostler for killing of prisoners in violation of the Geneva Convention served as a backdrop for prosecution of inhumane atrocities in disregard of international law. It functioned as a precursor for the prosecution of prominent members of the political, military, and economic leadership of [Nazi Germany](#) at the Nuremberg War Crimes Trial. The Dostler case established a precedent for the principle that one may not be exonerated for atrocities committed on the grounds that he was following orders of a superior officer—this defense does not relieve officers from responsibility of carrying out illegal orders nor does it mitigate their liability to face punishment.

Italian American OSS operatives deserve to be remembered for the risks undertaken when they could be killed by members of their own side—American soldiers who in ignorance of the OSS's existence were ready to dispose of them. They deserve to be remembered above all for the hardships and sacrifices that were required—like the aforementioned 15 victims of the Ginny II mission and the bravery of OSSers Grasso, Maselli, and Gordon killed by mortar fire in Corsica while helping a French contingent escape a German attack. In sum, these and many other episodes undertaken by Italian Americans in the OSS significantly hastened the end of the war thereby validating their contribution to the American cause.

Our boys, most of us were somewhat liberal. We were Italian Americans who were recruited from the working-class areas of the big cities: New York, Chicago, Cleveland, Boston, all over. We weren't interned like the Japanese, but we felt as Italians, we had to prove ourselves. We weren't very political, but we'd sit around the fire in our villa and argue about the war. Would it mean a better America? Would it mean an end to injustice? We were just

learning about the Holocaust. We really believed in this war, unlike Vietnam and Korea. The boys really believed that a better world would come.²²

It is important also to mention the part played by OSS men like Alessandro Cagiati and others in saving Italian artifacts, paintings, sculptures, and buildings. These and many other works of art were guarded and rescued by OSS officers who braved death to save for posterity these great treasures of civilization that tell the stories of our cultural heritage.

The accomplishments of the Italian American OSS members in World War II demonstrate the lengths that they would go to in order to protect our fundamental rights. Only with the study of history can future generations fully understand and appreciate their sacrifices to preserve the precious freedoms we value and that we have today.

In summation, we now have the beginnings of the magnificent story, the previously untold story of the Italian Americans in the OSS that has been shrouded from the public. These were remarkable young people—mostly in their early twenties entrusted with grave missions normally the province of elder statesmen or mature diplomats—one is astounded by their youthfulness at the time they were charged with momentous responsibilities which were not only dangerous, but also rife with potential consequences that teemed with grave international repercussions. These were average, ordinary, and seemingly unremarkable Americans who came from families of recent vintage to this country; indeed, some were themselves immigrants from Italy with limited formal education, individuals who worked, furthermore, in mundane and routine jobs. Yet they successfully outwitted, outmaneuvered, and outsmarted veteran military espionage professionals as they paddled ashore at midnight onto small islands in the Mediterranean Sea to free Fascist political prisoners or parachuted into darkness in frigid climes of northern Italy to link up with partisans who were carrying on a bloody Resistance movement. They were a special breed of men and women who meritoriously validated the Italian American vital role in an important dimension of World War II, one that they earned and one that deserves to be shared.

NOTES

1. Nelson MacPherson, *American Intelligence In Wartime London, The Story of the OSS*, Frank Cass Publishers, London, 2003, 262.
2. MacPherson, *American Intelligence In Wartime London*, 3.

3. Peter Tompkins, "The OSS and Italian Partisans in World War II," *Studies in Intelligence*, Spring 1998.
4. Tompkins, "The OSS and Italian Partisans."
5. See G.C. Chalou, *The Secret War*. vi, vii, 4. 353, 359.
6. Frank Flood and James Walsh of Massapequa, New York brought this to attention of the author September 26, 2014.
7. Michael Isam, "Bronze Star, WWII, OSS, France, Italy WWII Veteran Receives Recognition after 68 Years," *The Patriot Reader*, Volume 2, Issue 7, Newsletter, July 2013, Jacksonville, Florida.
8. *Report of Proceedings Joint Special Operations University (JSOU) and Office of Strategic Services (OSS) Society Symposium Irregular Warfare and the OSS Model*, 2–4 November 2009, Tampa, Florida, 4.
9. Douglas Porch, *The Path to Victory*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004, 662.
10. Chambers II, *OSS Training in the National Parks*, 319. The OSS operational unit with the U.S. Fifth Army later received a Presidential Distinguished Unit Award. 116.
11. Helene Deschamps-Adams, "Behind Enemy Lines In France," 146, 140–164. G.C. Chalou, *The Secret War*.
12. Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower to the Director, OSS, UK base, 31 May 1945, reprinted in Office of Strategic Services, *War Report of the OSS*, vol. 2: The Overseas Targets (New York: Walker & Co., 1976), 222. A similar letter was sent to the Executive Director of SOE, British Maj. Gen. Colin Gubbins. 3. Chambers II, 287.
13. Whitney Talley Bendeck, *The Art of Deception: Dueling Intelligence Organizations in World War II*, Florida State University.
14. See James Holland, *Italy's Sorrow: A Year of War, 1944–1945*, St. Martin's Press, 2008, 144. In this connection it is instructive to read Publisher's Review of Holland's work that underscores the importance of the war in Italy. "Holland's balanced account of the savage fighting and wholesale destruction draws on the eyewitness testimony of Allied and German combatants, Italian partisans, and Fascist loyalists. He concludes—echoing historian Rick Atkinson's excellent recent account of the campaign, *The Day of Battle*—that despite its terrible cost, the fight in Italy played a decisive role in defeating Germany.
15. Kloran, *Assignment Algiers*, 104.
16. Nelson MacPherson, *American Intelligence In Wartime London, The Story of the OSS*, Frank Cass Publishers, London, 2003, 3, 263, 266.

17. C. Nasini, "The OSS in the Italian Resistance: A Post Cold War Interpretation," *Eurostudium*, luglio-settembre, 2012, 46–82, 46–47.
18. C. Nasini, "The OSS in the Italian Resistance," 79.
19. "How Middletown's Max Corvo changed the course of World War II," *Jim Watkins/News Anchor*, May 5, 2015, 4:42 pm. Updated: May 5, 2015, 5:58 pm.
20. O'Reilly, *Forgotten Battles: Italy's War of Liberation*, 89.
21. John Gooch, *Mussolini and the Generals: The Armed Forces and Fascist Foreign Policy, 1922–1949*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2007, 522.
22. Studs Terkel, Scariano, 490.

GLOSSARY

| | |
|--------|---|
| AMG | Allied Military Government |
| BSC | British Security Coordination |
| CD | Camouflage Division |
| CIS | Italian Naval Intelligence |
| CLN | Italian Committee for National Liberation |
| COI | Coordinator of Information |
| COMINT | Communications Intelligence |
| FBI | Federal Bureau of Investigation |
| FNB | Foreign Nationalities Branch |
| G-2 | Army Intelligence |
| HMS | Her Majesty's Ship |
| JCS | Joint Chiefs of Staff |
| LCI | Landing Craft Infantry |
| MID | Military Intelligence Division |
| MI5 | British Counterintelligence |
| MO | Morale Operations |
| MU | Maritime Units |
| OG | Operational Groups |
| ONI | Office of Naval Intelligence |
| ORI | Organization for Italian Resistance |
| OSS | Office of Strategic Services |
| OVRA | Italian Counterintelligence |

| | |
|-----|-----------------------------------|
| R&A | Research and Analysis Division |
| R&D | Research and Development Division |
| SAD | Special Assistants Division |
| SAS | Special Air Services |
| SI | Secret Intelligence Branch |
| SIA | Italian Air Force Intelligence |
| SIM | Servizio Informazione Militare |
| SO | Special Operations Branch |
| SOE | Special Operations Executive |
| X.2 | Counterintelligence Division |

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