

The Telegraph

Inbreeding wiped out Spanish Habsburgs, say researchers

Royal inbreeding extinguished the Spanish Habsburg dynasty which ended with the death of King Charles II in 1700, genetic evidence suggests.

6:55AM BST 15 Apr 2009

The Spanish branch of the Austrian royal family ruled from 1516 to 1700, and brought Spain to the pinnacle of its influence and power in Europe.

But when Charles II died childless from both his two marriages the dynasty perished too, to be replaced by the French Bourbons.

The king's inability to produce an heir has been blamed on physical and mental handicaps caused by generations of inbreeding.

However until now there has been no scientific evidence to support these claims.

The Spanish Habsburg kings were famous for marrying close relatives such as uncles, nieces or first cousins.

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MailOnline

Wills and Kate, kissing cousins! How the Royal lovebirds are related thanks to a Tudor tyrant so bloodthirsty he's been airbrushed from history

By [Christopher Wilson](#)

Last updated at 8:26 AM on 3rd August 2010



Blast from the past: Kate Middleton and Prince William

A dark and deliciously murky secret hovers over the continuing relationship between Prince William and his girlfriend Kate Middleton - a skeleton so large that even a vast royal closet would struggle to contain it.

For the Mail can reveal that William and Kate are distant cousins. Not only that, the common ancestor who links the two lovers is a murderous despot whose bloody deeds have been deliberately forgotten by history. Until now.

The man who links William and Kate as kith and kin is Sir Thomas Leighton, an Elizabethan soldier, diplomat and, for 40 years, the cut-throat Governor of Guernsey.

He is William's 12th generation great-grandparent, and Kate's 11th, making them 12th cousins, once removed.

A despot and a dictator, Leighton brooked no argument and made life hell for those he ruled.

'He disregarded civil liberties and kept the people down by main force,' reads a rare account of his life.

This hard-nosed figure was, however, a gentleman; which will come as a timely snub to those critics of Kate Middleton who dismiss her antecedents as being working-class and - extraordinary in this day and age - therefore deem her unsuitable as a future princess.

So Kate may be relieved to learn of her posh ancestor. On the other hand, she might not be too keen to boast over the dinner table about his bloody modus operandi.

So hated was Leighton, that on his death in 1610, the official report on his demise was defaced by angry Guernsey residents. And uniquely for such an important figure in the Elizabethan court - his wife was the Queen's cousin - no portrait of him survives. All were destroyed or lost.

So what makes this gruesome fellow, whose blood courses through the veins of our future king and queen, into such a figure of hatred? Why do historians prefer to ignore his existence?

The answer lies in his despotic, nepotistic rule of Guernsey - a small but crucial stronghold during the days when Spain was amassing its armada against Britain.

Leighton had been a hugely successful soldier, serving with distinction in France and Ireland, and lustily enjoying the quelling of a revolt in northern England in 1569.

Some said he enjoyed the sight and smell of blood just a little too much. An enthusiastic supporter of hanging, drawing and quartering, Leighton never shied away from the meting out of justice, and the bloodier the better.

To reward him, or perhaps just to get this gentleman thug out of her way, Queen Elizabeth gave him Guernsey to govern in 1570 - and so his reign of terror began.

From the moment he landed at St Peter Port on a blustery May day, he took a hearty dislike to the locals.

For a century or more, the Channel Islands had determinedly maintained international neutrality, but this inspired in the warlike Leighton a deep contempt: 'a people cowardly in their courage and somewhat too kind to the French,' he snorted.

And, in an early warning of what was to follow, he added menacingly: 'I will keep them Her Highness's subjects maugre [despite] the instinct of their hearts.'

With the threat of Spanish invasion just around the corner, and discovering that the island's defences were paper-thin, Leighton started out as he meant to go along - lavishly spending Guernsey's revenues on fortifications without reference to the locals.

Within a year, sensing a growing well of resentment to his profligacy, he used his contacts in London to secure a royal Warrant to endorse his actions.

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Monday, Jan. 28, 1952

Religion: The Knights of Malta

One of the anomalies of the modern world is the Roman Catholic military order of laity and "religious" known as the Knights of Malta. It specializes in modern medical relief in the manner of the Red Cross and operates a fleet of Italy-based ambulance planes; yet two of its three categories of membership are traditionally open only to the nobility. Moreover, the order is recognized as a sovereign state (with no territory, but with diplomatic representatives) by the Vatican and 13 countries.*

Last week five cardinals met in Rome, as a papal tribunal, to investigate the knights, and perhaps shear them of...

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MONDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2012

FOLLOW   

Who Are the Knights of Malta -- and What Do They Want?

They're a secretive religious order with a long and bloody history and unique status under international law, but that doesn't mean they run the world.

BY JOSHUA E. KEATING | JANUARY 19, 2011



In a speech in Doha on Monday, veteran *New Yorker* journalist Seymour Hersh **alleged** that the U.S. military's Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) had been infiltrated by Christian fanatics who see themselves as modern-day Crusaders and aim to "change mosques into cathedrals." In particular, he alleged that former JSOC head Gen. Stanley McChrystal -- later U.S. commander in Afghanistan -- and his successor, Vice Adm. William McRaven, as well as many other senior leaders of the command, are "are all members of, or at least supporters of, Knights of Malta." What was he talking about?

Not exactly clear. There's not much evidence to suggest that the Knights of Malta are the secretive cabal of anti-Muslim fundamentalists that Hersh described. (For the record, when contacted by **Foreign Policy**, McChrystal said that he is not a member.) But they are certainly an anomalous presence in international politics and have provoked their share of conspiracy theories over the years.

The Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Saint John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta is a Roman Catholic organization based in Rome with around 13,000 members worldwide. The group was **founded** in 1048 by Amalfian merchants in Jerusalem as a monastic order that ran a hospital to tend to Christian pilgrims in the Holy Land. At the

height of its power, the order was also tasked by Rome with the additional military function of defending Christians from the local Muslim population. The Knights of St. John were just one of a number of Christian military orders founded during this period -- including the fabled but now defunct Knights of Templar.

When the Sultan of Egypt retook Jerusalem in 1291, the Knights of St. John went into exile, settling in Rhodes 20 years later. In 1523 they were forced from Rhodes by the Sultan's forces and settled in Malta, which they ruled until they were dislodged by Napoleon's army in 1798. The order settled in Rome in the mid-19th century, where it remains to this day.

Despite its name, the Knights haven't had any military function since leaving Malta. Instead, the order has gone back to its charitable roots by **sponsoring medical missions** in more than 120 countries.

When the order was founded, knights were expected to take a vow of poverty, chastity, and obedience upon joining. Nowadays, obedience is enough. Membership is still by invitation only, but you no longer have to be a member of the nobility. In recent years, the organization has become **increasingly American** in membership. The leader of the order, referred to as the **prince and grand master**, is elected for life in a secret conclave and must be approved by the pope.

Despite having no fixed territory besides its headquarters building in Rome, the order is considered a sovereign entity under international law. It prints its own postage stamps and coins -- though these are mostly for novelty value -- and enjoys observer status at the United Nations, which **classifies it** as a nonstate entity like the Red Cross. The Knights **maintain diplomatic relations** with 104 countries. The order does not have official relations with the United States, though it has offices in New York, for the United Nations delegation, and Washington, for its representation at the Inter-American Development Bank.

Because of its secretive proceedings, unique political status, and association with the Crusades, the order has been a **popular target for conspiracy theorists**. Alleged members **have included** former CIA Directors William Casey and John McCone, Chrysler Chairman Lee Iacocca, and GOP fixture Pat Buchanan, though none have ever acknowledged membership. Various theories have tied the Knights to crimes including the **Kennedy assassination** and **spreading the AIDS virus** through its clinics in Africa.

In 2006, a newspaper article in the United Arab Emirates **claimed** that the Knights were directly influencing U.S. policy in Iraq and Afghanistan, reprising their role in the Crusades. Following the article, Islamist websites in Egypt urged followers to attack the order's embassy in Cairo, forcing the organization to issue a statement denying any military role.

To be fair, the Knights have been involved in their fair share of political intrigues. In 1988, the charge d'affaires at the order's embassy in Havana **confessed to being a double agent**, reporting to both the CIA and Cuban intelligence. According to journalist Jeremy Scahill's book **Blackwater**, Joseph Schmitz, a former executive at the company who also served as inspector general for the U.S. Department of Defense, boasted of his membership in the Knights in his official biography. The defense contractor now known as Xe's chief executive, Erik Prince, **reportedly espoused** Christian supremacist beliefs, and its contractors in Iraq used codes and insignia based on the order's medieval compatriots, the Knights of the Templar. However, there's no evidence to suggest the Knights of Malta had any direct influence over the company.

So while the group is, for the most part, a charitable organization with little resemblance to the sinister portrait painted by its detractors, an image-makeover might be in order as it finishes off its 10th century.


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High-ranking members of US military part of 'Knights of Malta,' 'Opus Dei,' reporter claims

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Veteran investigative reporter Seymour Hersh has broken some massive stories in his day, but uncovering secret societies within the highest echelons of America's military would probably be the biggest of his career.

Well, get ready for the media storm, because that's essentially what Hersh told an audience in Doha, Qatar recently, according to **a report published earlier this week** by *Foreign Policy*.

Speaking at a campus operated by Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service, Hersh said he was working on a new book that details "how eight or nine neoconservative, radicals if you will, overthrew the American government."

"It's not only that the neocons took it over but how easily they did it — how Congress disappeared, how the press became part of it, how the public

AdChoices

acquiesced," he continued, according to the published quotes.

Hersh also lamented President Obama's continuance of the Bush administration's worst abuses.

"Just when we needed an angry black man, we didn't get one," he reportedly said.

The *Foreign Policy* report added that in 2003, those "in the Cheney shop" were not concerned about the havoc the invasion of Iraq was destined to cause.

"[The] attitude was, 'What's this? What are they all worried about, the politicians and the press, they're all worried about some looting?'" Hersh was quoted as saying. "Don't they get it? We're gonna change mosques into cathedrals. And when we get all the oil, nobody's gonna give a damn.' That's the attitude. We're gonna change mosques into cathedrals. That's an attitude that pervades, I'm here to say, a large percentage of the Joint Special Operations Command [JSOC]."

He further claimed that Gen. Stanley McChrystal, Vice Admiral William McRaven and others in the JSOC were members of the "Knights of Malta" and "Opus Dei," two little known Catholic orders.

"They do see what they're doing — and this is not an atypical attitude among some military — it's a crusade, literally," Hersh reportedly continued. "They see themselves as the protectors of the Christians. They're protecting them from the Muslims [as in] the 13th century. And this is their function."

He added that members of these societies have developed a secret set of insignias that represent "the whole notion that this is a culture war" between religions.

It was President George W. Bush who first **invoked images of a holy war** in the Middle East, when he suggested soon after Sept. 11, 2001 that the US was on a "crusade" in the region.

The "**Knights of Malta**" were a Catholic order founded in 1085 as a group of monks who cared for the wounded. It evolved into a military order that safeguarded Christian pilgrims from Muslims during the nine "Crusades," where Europe's Christian states **laid siege to Muslims** for control of Jerusalem.

"Opus Dei," popularly depicted in the Hollywood film "**The DaVinci Code**," was founded in 1928 and officially accepted as part of the Catholic church in 1947. **The group's website claimed** their principle calling was to bring about a "Christian renewal" around the world.



Seven medals Andy? That's a princely sum: The Duke's gongs are revealed

By [Daily Mail Reporter](#)

UPDATED: 05:19 EST, 31 March 2011



© CAMERA PRESS

Not another one: Prince Andrew is awarded the highest possible honour for 'personal service' to the Queen

Prince Andrew is a man of many medals and today we can reveal the extent of Duke of York's collection of gongs.

It comes as the Prince was honoured yet again this week, this time for 'personal service' to the Queen, despite the continuing row over his close friendships with convicted paedophile and tyrannical foreign regimes.

His mother invested him with the insignia of a Knight Grand Cross of the Royal Victorian Order at a private ceremony at Buckingham Palace before the two took afternoon tea together.

It is a wonder where the Prince will keep his seventh medal which senior royal sources told the Daily Mail was offered as a 'thank you' at the time of Andrew's 51st birthday last month for the support he has given his mother for his work since 2001 as an unpaid UK trade ambassador.

It is certainly a special medal and will no doubt be cherished by the Duke. The RVO was founded by Queen Victoria in April 1896 as a way of rewarding personal service to the sovereign.

There are five ascending levels within the order and the Queen has loyally given her son the highest rank – that of Knight Grand Cross – which allows him to use the letters GCVO after his name.

But the Prince is not short of medals - he has collected a glittering array over the years. Here we detail his other six.



The Duke of Ruritania and his many medals

- 1** Maltese Cross signifies a Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian Order, presented by the Queen in 2003 to mark 50th anniversary of Coronation. Order has five ranks and this week he reached the highest — the Knight Grand Cross, whose badge will replace this one.
- 2** Blue sash represents the Order of the Garter. In 2006 Duke appointed by the Queen to be a Royal Knight Companion of the Most Noble Order of the Garter, the oldest British Order of Chivalry, founded by Edward III in 1348.
- 3** Medals on Andrew's chest are, from left: his South Atlantic Campaign Medal (Falklands War), the Queen's Silver Jubilee Medal, the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal (given to Royal Family and trusted members of her household), The Canadian Decoration (awarded in 2001) and the New Zealand Commemoration Medal (1990).
- 4** The Garter star, worn pinned to the left breast. Introduced in the 17th century by Charles I, it is a colourfully enamelled depiction of the heraldic shield of St George's Cross, encircled by the Garter, which is itself encircled by an eight-point silver badge. Since the Garter is the senior order of the UK, a member will wear its star above any others.
- 5** Underneath the Garter star is the star of a Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian Order. This is an eight-point Maltese cross in white enamel with gold edging and silver rays between each arm. In future, however, he will wear the slightly different star of a Knight Grand Cross.
- 6** Ornamental gold braids are aiguillettes, awarded after his appointment in 1984 as Personal Aide De Camp (ADC) to the Queen. It is a military rank of senior assistant.

Why the Queen will ALWAYS back Andrew

By GEOFFREY LEVY and RICHARD KAY

No one could doubt the intensity of the maternal love involved when the Queen this week invested Prince Andrew with her highest personal honour.

In a private ceremony at Buckingham Palace, she presented him with the gold-embroidered insignia of a Knight Grand Cross of the Royal Victorian Order, a mark of her gratitude for his service to the Crown.

This has been the most difficult of times for Prince Andrew, but it has probably been even worse for his mother.

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Peculiar 900-year-old Order of the Knights of Malta celebrates anniversary with Vatican mass

NP

 ASSOCIATED PRESS | 13/02/09 | Last Updated: 13/02/09 3:19 PM ET
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The Order of the Knights of Malta, on Feb. 9, 2013 at Andreas Solaro/AFP/Getty Images

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VATICAN CITY — The Knights of Malta, one of the most peculiar organizations in the world, marked its 900th birthday Saturday with a colourful procession through St. Peter's Square, a Mass in the basilica and an audience with Pope Benedict XVI, himself a member of the onetime chivalrous order drawn from Europe's nobility.

The Knights are at once a Roman Catholic religious order, an aid group that runs soup kitchens, hospitals and ambulance services around the globe, and a sovereign entity that prints its own passports and enjoys diplomatic relations with 104 countries — yet has no

country to call its own.

Some 4,000 people — volunteers in neon orange civil protection suits, children in red berets and members each draped in a black cloak with a white, eight-pointed Maltese Cross on the front — processed through St. Peter's Square and into the basilica for the Mass marking the 900th anniversary of the order's recognition by the Holy See.



Grand Master of Knights of the Order of Malta Matthew Festing reads his message for Pope Benedict XVI at the end of a mass celebrated to mark the 900th anniversary of the Order, on Feb. 9, 2013 at the Vatican.

Gregorio Borgia/The Associated Press

After the Mass, which was celebrated by the Vatican No. 2, Benedict came to the basilica for an audience during which he thanked the order for its service and urged it to continue providing health care for the world's neediest while staying true to its Christian ideals.

The order's work, he said, "is not mere philanthropy but an effective expression and a living testimony of evangelical love."

The order traces its history to an 11th century infirmary in Jerusalem set up by a monk to care for pilgrims visiting the Holy Land. During the Crusades, as the order's humanitarian efforts spread, it took on a military role to protect pilgrims and Christendom as a whole from Muslim attacks. In February 1113 Pope Paschal II recognized the order with a papal bull establishing its sovereign status by saying it was independent of both lay and other religious authorities.



Pope Benedict XVI greets Grand Master of Knights of the Order of Malta Matthew Festing at the end of a mass celebrated to mark the 900th anniversary of the Order, on Feb. 9, 2013 at the Vatican. Gregorio Borgia/The Associated Press

During its heyday, would-be members had to prove nobility through all eight great-grandparents. Such requirements are now largely relaxed except in some European countries. Still, the order's members are drawn from some of the world's wealthiest Catholics, who fund its health clinics, homeless shelters and old folks' homes in 120 countries and rally for special appeals when disasters strike.

Sixty of the 13,500 members are so-called "professed knights," who make vows of poverty, chastity and obedience and live like monks, albeit without being ordained priests.

The order's international legal status is entirely unique, a sovereign entity that prints its own stamps, coins, license plates and passports, yet has no territory over which it rules. Its forces once occupied Cyprus, Rhodes and Malta, but Napoleon expelled the order from Malta in 1798, depriving it of the final patch of land over which it ruled.

Los Angeles Times

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Financing Details Add Bizarre Twist to MGM Saga : Hollywood: Giancarlo Parretti's scramble to buy the studio last October included a possible CIA operative and several members of the secretive Knights of Malta.

April 24, 1991 | ALAN CITRON and MICHAEL CIEPLY | TIMES STAFF WRITERS

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Giancarlo Parretti's tenure as chief executive of MGM-Pathe Communications Co. may have ended with his forced resignation last week, but new details of his bizarre business dealings continue to surface even as the beleaguered movie studio struggles for survival.

The latest characters to emerge as players in the MGM story include a possible CIA operative, a mysterious Italian businessman accused of fleeing the country with \$500,000 that was set aside for the studio purchase, and several members of the secretive Knights of Malta.

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FROM THE ARCHIVES

Former MGM Owner Fights to Reclaim It

August 30, 1996

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The group came together as Parretti scrambled to secure the final \$210 million needed to complete the MGM purchase last October, according to Washington court records and parties to the discussions. Sources say Parretti acted out his own variation on "The Desperate Hours" as the deadline for closing the much-delayed \$1.4-billion deal bore down.

Those recruited for the emergency fund-raising effort included Italian businessman Nino L. Sanna, who has been linked to the disappearance of the \$500,000; Joe Kelso, a self-styled financier with reported ties to the CIA, and members of the Knights of Malta, O.S.J., a New York organization unrelated to the 11th-Century order of knights affiliated with the Vatican.

The financing plan was supposed to return big dividends to Parretti's partners. While it ultimately collapsed, the convoluted deal illustrates how far Parretti went to gain control of MGM. It also helps explain why the troubled studio slipped through his hands just six months later.

Sources say Parretti's dealings have become the focus of a Securities and Exchange Commission investigation. At least one individual close to Parretti has been asked to provide extensive information to the commission. And while there have been no accusations of wrongdoing, sources say Parretti's eleventh-hour loan discussions are part of the probe.

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CRIMINAL MINDS & METHODS

FRANK SINATRA AND THE MOB

BY **Anthony Bruno**

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"Now We Go See Frank"



The McGuire Sisters (AP)

One morning in June 1985, Frank Sinatra's breakfast must have been ruined by what he saw in the comics section of the morning newspaper. *Doonesbury* cartoonist Garry Trudeau had set his satirical sights on Sinatra after President Ronald Reagan awarded the singer the Medal of Freedom, the most prestigious civilian award in the country. At a gala ceremony on May 23 where actor Jimmy Stewart, marine explorer Jacques Cousteau and Mother Theresa were among the recipients, the president had praised Sinatra as "one of our most remarkable and

distinguished Americans." In a departure from Trudeau's usual format of four drawn panels, the last panel in the strip showed a photograph of a smiling Sinatra surrounded by a gang of mobsters and mob associates, his arms draped around two of them. It was a frequently reprinted photograph from 1976 that Sinatra must have wished had never taken because it was used for the rest of his life as proof positive that he was all mobbed up.

Among the goodfellas and friends in the picture with Sinatra were *capo di tutti capi* Carlo Gambino, head of the crime family that bore his name; Gambino's brother-in-law Paul Castellano, who would later succeed Gambino as head of the family only to be gunned down in a palace coup orchestrated by his successor, John Gotti; and West Coast boss Jimmy "the Weasel" Fratianno who would later turn state's witness against his Mafia pals. The photo was taken backstage at the Westchester Premier Theater in Tarrytown, New York, on April 11, 1976. According to Fratianno in his authorized biography *The Last Mafioso*, it was Gambino's idea to go backstage and pay a visit on the singer.

The wiseguys had been seated together at the same table at the dinner theater, "lingering over coffee" after the show when someone came up to Gambino and whispered in his ear. The old don raised his hand, and everyone was suddenly silent. "All right," he said, "Now we go see Frank."

Backstage, Sinatra "welcomed Gambino with a kiss and a hug." A photographer was present, and the men of honor gladly posed for a picture with the Chairman of the Board. Sinatra's star power dazzled even Gambino, one of the most cautious Mafia chieftains who had ever lived.

The mob had built the 3,500-seat theater with money from legitimate investors, and in its first year they had brought in \$5.3 million by booking top-shelf acts like Sinatra, Dean Martin, and Steve Lawrence and Edie Gorme. But it was a typical mob bust-out scam in which the mobsters defrauded their investors and sucked every penny they could out of the business until it was teetering on the brink of bankruptcy. But unlike other bust-out scams, the mob was unwilling to let the Westchester Premier Theater wither away. It had proved to be a good money maker. All it needed was a little infusion of working capital to keep it going, and for that the mob turned to Sinatra, booking him for two dates in 1976 and another in 1977 for which he was paid his going rate. Sinatra's enormous popularity guaranteed sold-out shows, which gave the wiseguys enough money to keep their cash cow alive a little while longer.



Maltese Cross

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The greed and chutzpah of a career criminal can never be underestimated. Sinatra had been good for the theater, but the way the wiseguys figured, he could be even better for them if he performed for free. It was Jimmy the Weasel who knew how to do it. Fratianno enticed Sinatra with the possibility of getting the singer inducted into the ultra-exclusive social order, the Knights of Malta. Fratianno even held out the carrot that he might be able to get Sinatra the Maltese Cross, an award for outstanding accomplishment, which had been awarded to only 700 people in the society's 1,000-year existence. Sinatra took the baithook, line and sinker. In a dubious private ceremony, a Hungarian named Ivan Markovics, who claimed to be a high-ranking Knight, donned red silk robes and presented Sinatra with a scroll, several medals, a ceremonial passport, and a red flag with the white Maltese Cross. Afterward Fratianno confided in Sinatra that the Knights were hurting financially, and it would be a wonderful gesture if a new Knight could find some open dates on his calendar to do a few benefit concerts for them. Sinatra agreed to donate his services without hesitation. Fratianno suggested that they use the Westchester Premier Theater because things had always gone so well for Sinatra there in the past.


When Sinatra agreed to perform for the Knights, Fratianno thanked him profusely and told him that if he ever needed anything, just say the word. According to *The Last Mafioso*, Sinatra did have something he wanted done. A former bodyguard named Andy "Banjo" Celentano was planning to write a tell-all about his experiences working for the singer. Sinatra wanted the man sufficiently roughed up so that he would change his mind about becoming an author. Fratianno promised to take care of the situation, but he later revealed in court testimony that his legbreakers were never able to locate Mr. Celentano to deliver the message.

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News Unholy mess: Vatican amidst mafia money-laundering scandal

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Published: 13 June, 2012, 18:45

Edited: 13 June, 2012, 18:45



The Vatican Bank is under media fire as reports emerge that Italian prosecutors suspect it of laundering Sicilian mafia bosses' riches.

The Vatican Bank is under media fire as reports emerge that Italian prosecutors suspect it of laundering Sicilian mafia bosses' riches.

The Institute for Works of Religion, commonly known as the Vatican Bank, has so far refused to disclose details of an account held by a priest in connection with a money laundering and fraud investigation.

Father Ninni Treppiedi was sacked from serving as a priest after a series of church funds transactions made by his parish came to anti-mafia prosecutors' attention this spring. The dealings, involving millions of euro, date back to 2007-2009.

Prosecutors suspect Treppiedi was involved in money-laundering operations linked to Matteo Messina Denaro, a Mafia Godfather on the run. The cleric's former post in Aclamo, near Trapani, is said to be the richest parish in the Mafia stronghold of Sicily.

Trapani prosecutor Marcello Viola made the request to disclose Treppiedi's account details over six weeks ago. But the Vatican, though confirming the request has been received, maintains the issue is not mafia-related.

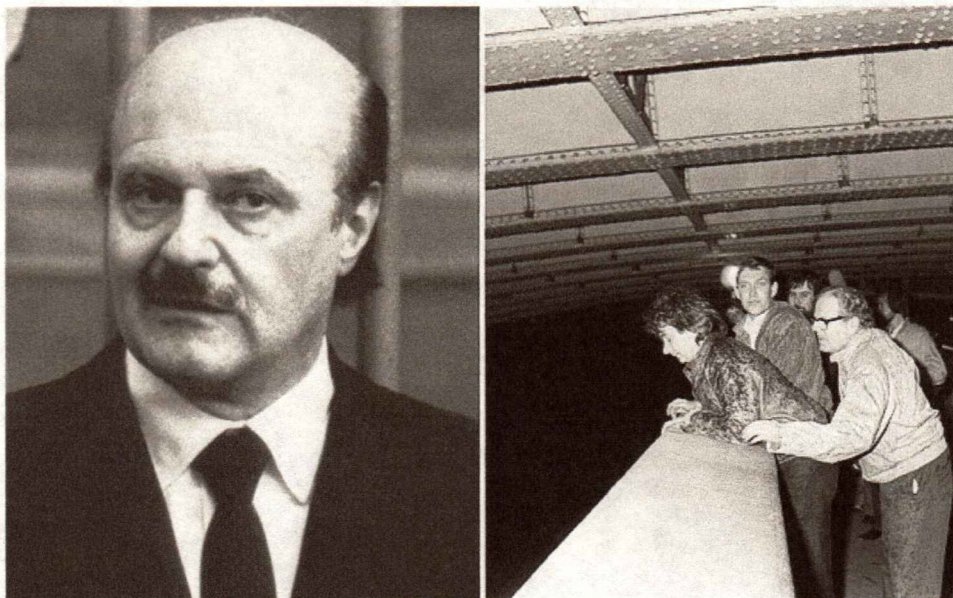
"The letter the Vatican received on May 9 did not speak of any money laundering or mafia issues. It contained concerns over shortages and fraud made by ecclesiastical authorities in the Diocese of Trapani," the Vatican spokesman told the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera* on Monday.

The first reports on the scandal emerged in the Italian media two weeks after the head of the Vatican Bank, Ettore Gotti Tedeschi, was ousted after receiving a unanimous vote of no-confidence from bank overseers.



Prosecutors investigate Vatican Bank mafia link

Anti Mafia prosecutors have asked the secretive Vatican Bank to disclose details of an account held by a priest in connection with a money laundering and fraud investigation, it emerged on Sunday.



Jurors, right, on the inquest of Italian banker Roberto Calvi, left, whose corpse was found hanging from Blackfriars Bridge Photo: EPA/PA

By Nick Pisa in Rome

10:25PM BST 10 Jun 2012

The official request was made more than a month ago but so far the Vatican Bank, known as the Institute for Religious Works, has refused to disclose any records of the account held by father Ninni Treppiedi – who is currently suspended from serving as a priest.

Investigators want to know more about vast sums of money that are said to have passed through his account to establish if they were money laundering operations by on the run Mafia Godfather, Matteo Messina Denaro.

The reports emerged in the Italian media and came just two weeks after the head of the Vatican Bank, Ettore Gotti Tedeschi, was sacked amid claims of power struggles and corruption within the Holy See which have been linked to the leaking of sensitive documents belonging to Pope Benedict XVI.

More in line with a Dan Brown thriller, it is not the first time that the Vatican Bank has been embroiled in claims of Mafia money laundering. Thirty years ago this month financier Roberto Calvi was found hanging under London's Blackfriars Bridge with cash and bricks stuffed into his pockets.

Initially City of London police recorded the death as suicide but Italian authorities believe it was murder after it emerged Calvi, known as God's Banker because of his links to the Vatican Bank, had been trying to launder millions of pounds of mob money via its accounts and through his own Banco Ambrosiano which had collapsed spectacularly.

Ex-head of Vatican bank 'planned to give dossier to Pope'

(<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/vaticancityandholyysee/9319414/Ex-head-of-Vatican-bank-planned-to-give-dossier-to-Pope.html>)

Ex-head of Vatican bank has archive on senior Italian and Church figures

(<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/vaticancityandholyysee/9316219/Ex-head-of-Vatican-bank-has-archive-on-senior-Italian-and-Church-figures.html>)

Red Cross and the Vatican 'helped thousands of Nazis escape'

A new book has revealed how the Red Cross and the Vatican helped thousands of Nazis including men like Adolf Eichmann and Josef Mengele to escape justice after the war.



The Vatican has always refused to comment on its wartime activities and has kept its archive closed to the public Photo: REUTERS

By Matthew Day, Warsaw

10:43PM BST 26 May 2011

In his book "Nazis On The Run: How Hitler's Henchmen Fled Europe" Gerald Steinacher, a research fellow from Harvard University, sheds light on just how thousands of Nazis managed to evade detection and start a new life.

Steinacher based much of his book on unpublished documents held by the Red Cross that revealed a system struggling to cope with the millions of displaced people in post-war Europe, and one that could be exploited by fleeing Nazis.

The historian estimates that some 8,000 SS men managed to escape to Britain and Canada alone using documents issued to them by the Red Cross by mistake.

But most fleeing war criminals either headed to Franco's Spain or South America.

While the Red Cross provided inadvertent help, the Vatican, the book claims, may have provided more

theguardian

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Red Cross and Vatican helped thousands of Nazis to escape

Research shows how travel documents ended up in hands of the likes of Adolf Eichmann, Josef Mengele and Klaus Barbie in the postwar chaos

Dalya Alberge

The Guardian, Wednesday 25 May 2011 10.31 EDT



SS officers at Auschwitz in 1944. From left: Richard Baer, who became the commandant of Auschwitz in May 1944, Josef Mengele, commandant of Birkenau Josef Kramer, hidden, and the former commandant of Auschwitz Rudolf Höss, foreground; the man on the right is unidentified. Photograph: AP

The Red Cross and the Vatican both helped thousands of Nazi war criminals and collaborators to escape after the second world war, according to a book that pulls together evidence from unpublished documents.

The Red Cross has previously acknowledged that its efforts to help refugees were used by Nazis because administrators were overwhelmed, but the research suggests the numbers were much higher than thought.