

Lisa Sergio, Radio Commentator In Italy and New York, Dies at 84



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Published: June 26, 1989

Lisa Sergio, a pioneer radio news broadcaster in Mussolini's Italy who became a dedicated anti-Fascist and a news commentator for WQXR and other American radio stations, died of a heart attack Thursday at her home in Washington. She was 84 years old.

Miss Sergio, a slender, fiery contralto once known as "the Golden Voice of Rome," also translated the dictator's blustering speeches into English and French almost simultaneously on the air until her modifications of propaganda commentaries prompted her dismissal from Rome radio.

Faced with arrest and internment in 1937, she was smuggled aboard a trans-Atlantic liner by a family friend, Guglielmo Marconi, the radio developer. She settled in New York City, where she soon became a guest observer for NBC radio and the host for broadcasts including Metropolitan Opera performances and Berkshire music festivals.

She then became one of the few female news commentators with her own program, broadcasting seven times a week on WQXR from 1939 to 1946, when the station dropped single news commentaries in favor of forum talks. 'Mental Honesty'

"Lisa Sergio was a most attractive personality both on and off the air," said Elliott M. Sanger, a founder and longtime executive of the station. In his 1973 book about WQXR, "Rebel in Radio," he hailed her comments on foreign news and cultural events.

Miss Sergio was a fervent advocate of democracy, free speech and feminism. Analyzing her broadcasts, she said, "Mental honesty is essential because the microphone has a strange and impolite way of sending over the airwaves not only what the commentators say, but also what they think."

The commentator was born Elisa Sergio in Florence to Baron Agostino Sergio, a landowner, and the former Margaret FitzGerald of Baltimore.

With no professional background, she soon became the editor of Italian Mail, an English literary weekly in Florence, worked as a freelance writer and researched and wrote on archeology. After her broadcasting career in Rome and New York, she taught propaganda analysis at Columbia

University, lectured widely at American colleges and wrote several books, including "I Am My Beloved: the Life of Anita Garibaldi" (1965). She was also a board member or trustee of many philanthropic and cultural groups.

There are no immediate survivors.