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Infamous Immigrants

Here's Proof All Newcomers Aren't Albert Einsteins

By James S. Robb

Those who would keep the doors of entry to the U.S. wide open into the indefinite future, allowing a million new immigrants in each year, often argue that the nation can't afford to limit immigration.

What, they ask, would we have done without the Yo Yo Mas and Albert Einsteins and I. M. Peis, and the thousand other illustrious immigrants? Indeed, patience is required to sit through the roll call of worthy and famous newcomers. Hardly discussed, however, is another roll, that of America's infamous immigrants — those persons who have come and used this nation and its people, taking advantage of our democratic form of government and easy-going ways.

Unpleasant as it is, we should take a few minutes to balance the debate and remind ourselves that more than one kind of newcomer is waiting at the gates.

Here's a sampling from our past and present of some infamous immigrants

Giuseppe Esposito — Father of the Mafia in America

Few classes of immigrants in all American history have acted the role of the parasite quite so thoroughly as has the Italian Mafia. Throughout the 20th century this group of vicious criminals has challenged our whole system of law enforcement to the near-breaking point.

At times "the mob" has been said to control whole cities, or at least exercise a sort of criminal and political hegemony over them. It has corrupted entire labor unions (remember Jimmy Hoffa's Teamsters?), pockets of industry (trucking and private trash collection in New York City until quite recently), and more than one police force (too numerous to mention). Until Congress and the FBI came upon the ingenious Racketeering and Criminal Organization Act (RICO), little could be done to stop them. New members of the Italian immigrant community, or fresh arrivals from Italy itself, would be recruited as quickly as individual criminals could be arrested (or were killed off by rivals).

Just as every epidemic has its "Alpha" case, so too the Mafia had its first chieftain in America. His name was Giuseppe Esposito, or at least that was the alias he used during his multiple-year crime spree in America.

Esposito rose to criminal infamy in his native Sicily, where he had been merely an ordinary thief and killer until he helped commit a notorious international crime in 1876. He and some fellow Mafiosi kidnapped a 22-year old English investment banker named John

Forester Rose while the young man was in Sicily inspecting his family's sulfur mines.

The kidnapers informed Rose's family they must pay £5,000 or face the dismemberment of Rose. Being principled people, the Roses refused to negotiate. Through the mail the horrified family received one ear, and then the other. Then Esposito and company began work on Rose's nose. Finally, Rose's young wife defied her in-laws and paid as much as she could raise. Her husband lived to tell about it.

Unfortunately for Esposito, and ultimately for America, the British government informed the Italian authorities that they must either arrest and punish the kidnapers or British troops would be landed to do it for them. This warning effectively invigorated Italian justice and most of the gang was rounded up after they mounted a furious and bloody last stand.

A corrupt official allowed some of the accused to escape, however, including Esposito. During the next year, Esposito went on a killing spree, personally murdering 11 wealthy landowners and two city officials. The Italian government began to search for him with greater zeal, and Esposito decided a relocation of his business was in order.

The man emigrated to America to start a new life: organizing the Mafia here. He began in New York's Little Italy neighborhood, where many of the more than 4 million Italians who migrated to America between 1880 and 1920 located. This and other Italian enclaves in big U.S. cities quickly began to model themselves after the culture of their native (mostly southern) Italy — including a tolerance for the deadly grip of the Mafia.

Blackmail was perhaps the biggest business. The term was invented by the Italians, and referred to the practice of sending extortionist letters to victims, usually fellow immigrants, demanding cash and threatening deadly results if they were refused. The letters were usually signed by a black silhouette of a hand, often wielding a knife. Since the threats were usually carried out, most people paid up. Many of the hold-outs were murdered, and few of their assassins were ever caught.

"The damage to America had been done, however. Once organized, the Mafia never drifted into freelance or disorganized crime again."

Esposito found these and other criminal activities already well established in New York, but not organized. He meant to remedy that. First, however, he moved on to New Orleans, home of another great Italian enclave. In the perverse logic understood perhaps only by the Sicilians themselves, this criminal parasite became a celebrity among his countrymen, even though they knew full well any of them might be his next victim.

He dressed expensively, dined at the best eateries, and sailed his private yacht with what he called the Mafia flag flying from the masthead. Effortlessly, it seemed, he soon had the city's Italian criminals working for him. Policemen and city officials were bought off. For a few years he reigned without challenge.

Then the Italian government stepped in. It seems Esposito's wife back in Sicily had learned her husband was openly keeping a mistress in New Orleans. Distressed with this news, she revenged herself by informing on his whereabouts to the government. The Italian consul in New Orleans asked the police to arrest and deport the man.

On July 5, 1881, Esposito was arrested by a fearless Irish-American officer, David Hennessey, and returned to Italy via New York, despite the efforts of numerous corrupt officials to block deportation. He spent the rest of his life in chains in an Italian prison.

The damage to America had been done, however. Once organized, the Mafia never drifted into freelance or disorganized crime again. Hennessey became a mob-busting chief of police in New Orleans and was later assassinated by the mob there. That in turn led to a mockery of a trial in which police officers, purchased by the Mafia, provided alibis for the killers.

Following the assassins' acquittal, however, enraged citizens of New Orleans hunted down the suspects and lynched them publicly, and engaged in extensive anti-Italian rioting.¹

Donovan Ellis: The Man With 26 Aliases

Donovan Ellis is registered as a citizen of Jamaica, but he has spent the bulk of his ignoble existence in the United States. He is not what one would call a big-time criminal, but he certainly qualifies as a steady and determined one.

In his 20-odd years in America, Ellis has been arrested at least 50 times for a variety of crimes including possession of firearms, possession of drugs, selling of drugs, armed robbery, shooting a gun in an occupied dwelling, battery of a policeman, illegal re-entry of the country, etc., etc.

In 1993 Ellis made a colorful witness at the U.S. Senate's Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations hearing on alien criminals. He reported that he had first come to the U.S. in 1965 on a student visa, later

returned home, only to re-enter America to start his life of crime.

The witness, amiable and apparently forthcoming with his questioners, explained how his adoption of one false name after another kept the INS off the scent nearly every one of the 50 times he was arrested. He was convicted of most of the charges, but again, his 26 aliases enabled him to successfully mix back into the population when he wasn't actually behind bars.

At the time of his testimony Ellis was serving a 17-year sentence for selling crack cocaine. He reported he had 42 persons working for him when he was arrested. He had been operating this "mini-Mafia" several years after his official deportation from this country, which happened in 1985.

Actually, the INS made plans to deport Ellis even earlier, in 1983, when he was serving time in a Connecticut jail, but the agency never showed up at the jail to pick him up. On another occasion Ellis was actually ordered deported, but never left the country. Most times, however, the INS never even questioned him, even though he often told his jailers he had been born in Canada.

After his 1985 deportation, the Jamaican returned in only two weeks. From the hearing:

Senator Roth: And how soon after you were deported to Jamaica did you return to the United States?

Mr. Ellis: Two weeks.

Senator Roth: Just 2 weeks?

Mr. Ellis: Two weeks, sir; yes, sir.

Senator Roth: How did you return to the U.S.?

Mr. Ellis: Well, all you need to travel to the United States is just three pieces of documents, which is social security, a picture I.D. and a voter registration. That is it.

Senator Roth: Were they false?

Mr. Ellis: Yes, sir, definitely.

Apparently, Canada has found it difficult keeping the man of 26 aliases out as well. Ottawa has deported him four times.²

Sirhan Sirhan: Dasher of a Million Hopes

Whether Bobby Kennedy, the charismatic younger brother of President John F. Kennedy, would have fulfilled the unbounded hopes millions of earnest Americans were beginning to place in him will never be known.

Late in the primary season of the 1968 presidential campaign, Kennedy was beginning to look like a come-from-behind winner, threatening to upset the front-running Hubert Humphrey. He had actually entered the race very late, only after President Lyndon Johnson pulled out and the democratic rank-and-file began showing obvious restiveness with his heir-successor, Vice President Humphrey. Kennedy ran on a platform of hope for the poor and an early end to the Vietnam War.

He had only to win the California Democratic primary on June 4, 1968 to give himself an excellent chance of

triumphing at the convention. He won the primary, but the rest of the scenario was not to be.

Just after midnight on June 5, following Bobby Kennedy's victory speech to campaign workers at Los Angeles' Ambassador Hotel, Sirhan Sirhan, a young Jordanian immigrant of ethnic Christian Arab stock, emptied his revolver into the New York Senator at point-blank range, mortally wounding him and striking two bystanders. Roosevelt Grier, the great African-American football player and volunteer for the Kennedy campaign, wrestled the young assailant to the ground. The next day the candidate was dead.

The nation went into profound shock. This assassination had come only two months after the murder of Martin Luther King, Jr., and four and one-half years after the assassination of President Kennedy. Many Americans trace the end of their idealism to the younger Kennedy's murder.

Sirhan was captured immediately at the scene of the crime. Found in his home the next day was a notebook explaining his motive. He had written that Kennedy must die before June 5, 1968, which was the first anniversary of the six-day war, in which Israel smashed the attacking armies of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. Kennedy was the target because of his outspoken support of the Jewish state in the U.S. Senate and in the campaign.

The Jordanian kept to his self-imposed deadline.

The Sirhan family had come to New York in 1957, just after the Suez war, when the young Sirhan Sirhan was 12. The parents did not get along, so Mrs. Sirhan and her five children moved on to California. The father later moved back to Jordan. Hearing about the assassination from reporters, the elder Sirhan said indignantly, "This news made me sick when I heard it. If my son has done this dirty thing, let them hang him."

Quickly convicted and sentenced to death, Sirhan was saved from the electric chair only by the Supreme Court's 1972 decision striking down the death penalty as it was then administered. He still resides in a California prison, regularly refused release by the parole board.³

Michael Flannery: Financier to the Irish Republican Army

Perhaps surpassed only by the PLO for terrorist activity, Ireland's notorious Irish Republican Army has been a constant source of terror in Ireland and England for more than 25 years. Restaurants, department stores, marketplaces, all have been the targets of IRA bombs. British soldiers have been killed by the hundreds, and numerous prominent civilians have been assassinated.

Chief among these was the murder of the elderly Lord Mountbatten, the much-loved English aristocrat who was vacationing in Ireland with his family. A 50-pound explosive device ripped apart the boat on which he and his family were fishing, shocking the world.

The goal of the IRA has been to bully Great Britain into renouncing its claims to the six northern counties of Ireland, even though the majority of the Ulster Irish support British rule.

For many years a major source of funding and arms for the IRA has been an organization called Irish Northern Aid, or Noraid for short. The founder and prime mover of Noraid was Michael Flannery, who immigrated to the U.S. in 1927. In his youth, Flannery fought as a guerrilla in the IRA struggle to gain Irish independence. When the Irish parliament cut a political deal with Britain agreeing to the partition of the island in exchange for the south's independence, Flannery and many other radicals felt betrayed.

"It quickly became obvious that Michael Flannery and his Noraid organization were gun runners as well as fundraisers."

He believed that Northern Ireland should be joined to the Republic of Ireland by force, no matter how long it took. His view was not shared by all. In fact, it was the Irish Republic that jailed him when he joined in the civil war which broke out as a protest against the partition. After spending two years in an Irish jail, Flannery headed for America.

After arriving in New York, Flannery went to work for the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, becoming an affluent businessman and a leader in the Irish-American community. But his political convictions never wavered. In 1969, when the IRA began its modern-day campaign of terror to force the uniting of Northern Ireland with the Republic, IRA operatives approached Flannery about the need for financial support.

He learned, however, that getting funds to the IRA was a tricky business. His initial contribution in the form of a \$5,000 check was returned by the Belfast bank uncashed. Flannery then founded Noraid as a front organization to channel funds more effectively. During the 1970s, Noraid became something of a *cause celebre*, with Irish-American politicians, union officials, and businessmen eagerly attending its fundraising dinners. Ninety-two regional chapters sprang up and more than 5,000 dues-paying members became involved. Public opinion in the U.S. seemed to be turning in the IRA's direction.

Then Noraid suffered a series of reverses. Four prominent Irish-American politicians — Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Senator Ted Kennedy, House Speaker Tip O'Neill, and New York Governor Hugh Carey — released a statement condemning activities which support the IRA. Then, in 1979, the murder of Mountbatten outraged Americans and support for Noraid diminished markedly.

Perhaps most importantly, the FBI began cooperating with Great Britain in stopping arms-running to the IRA

from America. Noraid soon became a primary focus of the investigation. It quickly became obvious that Michael Flannery and his Noraid organization were gun runners as well as fundraisers.

In 1981, Flannery was arrested as he left his home, accused of smuggling arms to the Irish Republican Army. Unfortunately, although Flannery and his fellow defendants admitted in court they were guilty of the offense, they claimed the CIA was behind it all. And since the CIA had indeed used one of the defendants as an informer concerning the IRA, the wild charge sounded plausible enough to result in acquittals.

Flannery managed to avoid prison and deportation, but his organization continued to decline in strength.⁴

Rosario Ames: Spendthrift Cheerleader to a Traitor

Rosario Ames was the intellectual daughter of a rising middle-class Colombian family, when she met and married CIA operative Aldrich Ames, while the American was stationed in her country.

If anything, Rosario could be described as a conservative. The Colombian magazine *Semana* said that for a child of the 1960s, Rosario was remarkably “immune to marijuana, the Beatles and rebellion.”⁵ She made it a point to avoid ideological political discussions. She lived quietly at home with her parents until she was nearly 30, and actually went through the university with her mother, the two sometimes sitting in the same classrooms.

But then she married the colorful Aldrich Ames, emigrated to America, and set up housekeeping on a rather lavish scale. The couple purchased a half-million dollar suburban home, drove a Jaguar, and spent freely on clothing and gifts. Not needing to work, Mrs. Ames pursued a Ph.D. degree in philosophy at Georgetown University.

It was Rosario’s expensive tastes rather than any political agenda that made her eager to cooperate with her husband’s sideline job — that of traitorous “mole” for the Soviet (and later Russian) KGB.

Apparently, she was ignorant of her husband’s crimes for the first few years of their marriage. It was the money that got her interested. *The Washington Post* described her as a “greedy co-conspirator who enthusiastically aided and abetted after discovering her husband’s secret by going through his wallet in 1991.” Once she discovered that helping the Soviets was bringing them literally millions of dollars she became actively involved in his espionage activities.

It has been documented that Aldrich Ames’ leaks to the KGB caused the deaths of at least 10 U.S. agents in the Soviet Union, and compromised countless others. His immigrant wife went along with the traitor without blinking, merely for the love of money.

Eventually, the CIA and FBI became suspicious, in part because of the Ames’ lavish lifestyle. They were

investigated, and finally arrested in early 1994. Pleading guilty, she received a short five-year prison sentence, a concession Aldrich Ames extracted from the government in exchange for his cooperation and guilty plea.

Vyacheslav Kirillovich Ivankov: Leader of the “Thieves-in-Law”

On June 8, 1995, Vyacheslav Ivankov, the highest-ranking Russian mobster in America, was arrested at his girlfriend’s New York City apartment. FBI agent James Kallstrom called the move “the most important arrest ever made” against the fast-growing Russian Mafia in the U.S.⁶

American authorities are scrambling to stop the Russian mob before it becomes as entrenched in this country as the Sicilian Mafia. The pattern the two criminal enterprises have followed in their rise to infamy is uncomfortably familiar. First, serious but loose-knit criminal activity springs up among the early immigrants. Then, with a massive, uncontrolled influx of immigrants come mob bosses from the old country, ready to whip America’s fledgling ethnic crime organizations into shape.

In this case, several hundred thousand Russian Jews and political dissidents were allowed to come to America in the 1970s, settling mostly in New York’s “Little Odessa.” The criminal element among them soon started working such scams as gas tax fraud. But when the Soviet Union collapsed, a new outpouring of immigrants arrived, this time bringing organized crime bosses with them.

Ivankov entered the country illegally in 1991 or 1992 to help organize the Russian mob here. He was a member of the so-called “thieves-in-law,” underworld bosses who never cooperated with Soviet authorities and who act as the administrative heads of the various Russian underworld “families.”

“He was the most senior [Russian] crime figure in the U.S.,” commented Stephen Handelman, author of *Comrade Citizen: Russia’s New Mafia*, “and basically he’s been trying to take over the existing networks of small-time Russian groups and consolidate them into a professional organization.”⁷

The viciousness of the crime Ivankov was arrested for demonstrates the threat this group of immigrant criminals represents. Ivankov and five other Russians were picked up for trying to extort \$3.5 million from two Russian immigrant investors, Alexander Volkov and Vladimir Voloshin. Ivankov and his cohorts threatened to kill Voloshin’s father back in Russia unless the investors paid the money. They didn’t pay, and the old man was subsequently beaten to death, his body left on a Moscow train station platform.

Next, the investors themselves were kidnapped and literally forced to sign an agreement saying they would pay the money. By this time, however, Russian and American authorities were investigating and in June, 1995 the FBI moved in.

Unfortunately, everyone involved realizes rooting out the Russian mob will take years, if it can be done at all. The

arrest of Ivankov was only “a shot across their bow,” said FBI Agent Kallstrom. Yet authorities hope the Russian “mafia” will get the message that at least they cannot buy their way out of trouble here, as they did back home.

Lord Cornbury: Cross-Dressing Colonial Governor of New York

Lest the impression be given that white Anglo-Saxon Protestants are exempt from a list of the infamous, the case of Edward Hyde, better known as Lord Cornbury, needs telling.

Cornbury was sent from England at the turn of the eighteenth century by his first cousin, the young Queen Anne, to govern the colony of New York. With his royal connections and his years of experience in the British Parliament, New Yorkers felt they were getting an excellent choice. It was not long before they were disillusioned.

"They [colonial New Yorkers] soon learned that Cornbury was a “thief, a bigot, a grafter, a drunk, and, strange as it was, a transvestite.”

According to historian Shelley Ross, they soon learned that Cornbury was really a “thief, a bigot, a grafter, a drunk, and, strange as it was, a transvestite.”⁸

Shortly after arriving, the new governor asked for a special allowance of two thousand pounds for his personal use. The taxpayers, surprisingly, agreed and a banquet was held to hand over the cash. The lord’s speech at that occasion consisted of a soliloquy on the sensual beauty of his wife’s ears. The mortified crowd was made to touch the lady’s auditory apparatus themselves, by way of proving the point. **T h e n**, when Cornbury opened the New York Assembly in 1702, he actually appeared in drag, complete with full, hooped gown, headpiece, fan, etc. To the unbelieving assemblymen, Cornbury defended himself by stating, “You are all very stupid people not to see the propriety of it all. In this place, and on this occasion, I represent a woman, and in all respects I ought to represent her as faithfully as I can.”

The habit persisted, with the governor appearing in women’s garb more and more often, and finally nearly fulltime. His wife, meanwhile, was losing her wardrobe to her husband in the bargain. He expropriated her clothes, so she appropriated the clothes of the fashionable New York ladies. She would visit, make her selections, and send servants to pick them up the following day.

As a greedy schemer, Lord Cornbury knew few peers. He would invite people to his parties, then charge admission at the door. Enormous land grants were made

to his friends in exchange for secret payoffs. One tract of land he dishonestly granted was larger than Connecticut! To build his new house, Cornbury made up a lie about the French preparing to attack the colony. He asked for money to build defenses, and the assembly gave him 1,500 pounds, which he stole.

For five years this unlikely and unscrupulous representative of the crown scandalized and abused the colony. Then his wife died, and Cornbury had the gall to appear at her funeral in drag. The citizens howled for his recall and the Queen could no longer protect him. He was removed from office and thrown into a New York debtor’s prison. Fortunately for him, his father, an earl, died, leaving him free to cancel his debts under the strange English law of that time. He returned to England and assumed his peerage.

Lord Cornbury’s reign, however, left such a distaste in the mouths of the colonists that when the U.S. Constitution was drafted some decades later, the impeachment provision was said to be inspired in part by his memory.

The Marielitos Boatlift: Cruel Cuban Export

Perhaps the most bizarre episode of America’s generally chaotic immigration history occurred in 1980 when 125,000 Cubans left their island *en masse* for the United States — all without visas, passports, or papers of any kind.

It began on April 1, 1980 when six Cubans crashed a bus through the Peruvian Embassy’s gates in Havana, seeking asylum. One of the Cuban guards posted outside the embassy was shot. Cuba protested. Nevertheless, Peru granted the six asylum. In retribution, Castro withdrew the guard from the embassy.

Almost immediately 10,000 Cubans, desperate to leave Castro’s regime, jammed onto the embassy grounds and an international incident was born. Castro, deeply embarrassed that so much disaffection existed among his people, tried to counter the negative impression by announcing that there was no reason for people to be afraid. Anyone who wanted to leave Cuba could, he said. The port of Mariel would be open to anyone wishing to emigrate.

In Florida, the Cuban émigré community lost no time in organizing a large boatlift to bring their erstwhile countrymen to the U.S. At first, many Americans viewed the Mariel boatlift with pride, seeing it as evidence of American virtue and confirmation of the bankruptcy of Castro’s model of communism. President Carter initially welcomed them with “open hearts and open arms.”

However, as the original 10,000 immigrants swelled to more than 125,000, complacency quickly turned to panic. How could a country, let alone a single state, absorb so many people so rapidly? In the White House, President Carter seemed helpless to influence events, leaving an impression of incompetence which *The Miami Herald* called a “political disaster.”⁹

Worse — far, far worse — was the devious trick

Castro pulled, using the Mariel boatlift as cover. He literally emptied his prisons of hardened criminals and his hospitals of mental patients, sending them with the Marielitos to disrupt the United States. Furthermore, he encouraged his homosexual population to depart, and between 20,000 and 30,000 of them were among the Marielitos, many bearing disease.¹⁰

"As the original 10,000 [Cuban] immigrants swelled to more than 125,000, complacency quickly turned to panic."

The INS quickly recognized something was amiss, and detained some few hundred of the Cuban criminals before they cleared customs. Many more, however, got through and went on to launch an epidemic of crime in the Miami area. A movie featuring Al Pacino, "Scarface," was made about a fictional Marielito criminal. The film was so violent it had to be rated "x."

By 1987, federal, state, and local jails were holding a total of 5,638 Mariel prisoners.¹¹ Many had committed extremely violent crimes. It took nearly a decade to badger Castro into taking a portion of these misfits back.

Partially because of the Mariel disaster, fully 25 percent of all federal prisoners in this country are foreign-born. This does not take into account the burden on the states. The seven leading immigrant-receiving states alone incarcerated about 21,400 *illegal* immigrant prisoners in 1994, at a cost of about \$474 million.¹²

Meyer Lansky: Kingpin of American Crime

Although Meyer Lansky immigrated to the U.S. as a boy from his native Poland, he was nonetheless an American-style capitalist through-and-through. In the public eye he tended to be overshadowed by figures from the Italian Mafia, yet Lansky was the brains behind the building of many of this century's most well-known criminal ventures.

The short (five feet, four inches), plain-looking figure as a teenager, partnered with his friend Benjamin (later Bugsy) Siegel in a life of petty crime on Manhattan's Lower East Side, when a financial windfall called Prohibition arrived. During the 1920s, Lansky and Siegel teamed up with Italian mobsters, especially the notorious Lucky Luciano, to smuggle illegal alcohol in from Canada. Prohibition showed the up-and-coming criminals like Lansky that cooperation was better than bloody warfare among organized criminals. And nobody was better at hammering together criminal cabals than Meyer Lansky.

By the time Prohibition was repealed in 1933, Lansky was rich, highly respected in the underworld, and barely 30 years-old! Always considered a statesman

of crime, Lansky was fit for the part. Unlike almost all other gangsters, he was a dedicated family man. When not running his illegal slot machines, underground casinos, unlicensed distilleries, and assorted other enterprises, Lansky preferred to stay home with his wife and children. He did not swagger, yell, or throw his weight around.

What distinguishes this man from all other gangsters, besides his more moderate temperament, is his work in turning one resort area after another into centers of casino gambling. Some of this activity was completely illegal, such as installing slot machines in New Orleans. Several other ventures appeared legal on the surface yet were secretly backed and corrupted by him. One way Lansky criminalized his gambling operations was by skimming; that is, hiding much of the revenue from the government to avoid taxes.

Eventually he founded major gambling centers in Hot Springs, Arkansas, the Gold Coast of Florida, Las Vegas (this venture spearheaded by Bugsy Siegel), the Bahamas, and the entire island of Cuba. Lansky personally cultivated the Cuban dictator, Fulgencio Batista, and was able, in effect, to write his own law by sharing his ill-gotten gains with the Cuban president.

On June 20, 1947, Lansky and other criminal investors in the Flamingo Casino in Las Vegas had Bugsy Siegel assassinated for allegedly skimming profits to defraud his fellow mob investors. The unlucky criminal was shot in the back of the head as he sat on his living room sofa. Lansky's reputation for non-violence did not prevent him from murdering his best friend from childhood when he felt double-crossed.¹³

In fact, Lansky proved to be something of the "teflon" criminal. Never caught for Siegel's murder, he also survived the Senate's hearings on organized crime in 1950 and 1951, the communist takeover in Cuba (though his casino properties were seized by Castro), and even a federal indictment over profit-skimming at the Flamingo (ill health prevented him from standing trial).

Nothing like Lucky Luciano's fate — a long prison term followed by deportation to Italy — ever befell him. However, toward the end of his life, the FBI began to see him as one of the kingpins of American crime. Agents thereafter dogged his every step, though they still failed to get him behind bars. Lansky became nervous, however, and in his attempt to shake them, he tried to gain Israeli citizenship. The Israelis rejected him.¹⁴

He left American organized crime more gentlemanly, coordinated, enterprising, and infinitely more enmeshed in the American economy than ever before. He died of natural causes in 1983, having never been prosecuted.

Arthur Rudolph: Nazi V-2 Builder Turned U.S. Rocket Scientist

During World War II, Germany's brilliant rocket scientists left no advantage unexploited in their race to build the crude missiles which killed so many thousands of Britons.

By far the worst thing the German rocket-builders did was to employ slave labor, mostly Jews, in their underground missile factory located in Dora, Germany. Some 60,000 slave workers, half of whom died, labored there from 1943 to 1945. The high rate of mortality should not be surprising in light of the fact that the SS guards forced the workers to complete 14-hour shifts, seven days a week.

Cruelty abounded, as in the case of every operation with SS involvement. Mass public hangings of recalcitrant prisoners were common, with a dozen strung up at a time by means of a construction crane.

One young German scientist witnessing these hangings was the production manager of the V-2 rocket program, Dr. Arthur Rudolph. This dedicated Nazi had been a member of the party since 1931, and he was a captain in the dreaded SS. Not only aware of the treatment given the slave laborers, Rudolph personally helped procure replacements for those who perished.

"Rudolph was included in 'Operation Paperclip' ... despite a security evaluation which called him a '100 percent Nazi, dangerous type, security threat ... suggest internment.'"

After the war, the American military establishment, in a caper that has generated enormous controversy, quickly enlisted as many of the German rocket experts as it could. In all, more than 1,500 German scientists were signed up to help establish this country's missile program. Rudolph was included in "Operation Paperclip," as the scheme was called, despite a security evaluation which called him a "100 percent Nazi, dangerous type, security threat....Suggest internment."¹⁵

Instead of internment, Rudolph was brought to America as an all-star immigrant and put to work. Here he thrived. In the 1960s, Rudolph was given an enormous responsibility: he became supervising engineer of NASA's Saturn V rocket program. This rocket launcher would eventually boost American astronauts out of earth's orbit on their way to the moon. In all his scientific work Dr. Rudolph was a great success. In 1969 he retired from NASA with medals and honors, and became a well-paid consultant.

Yet he was also a war criminal, just the type of person Americans had died struggling against in Europe and eventually his past caught up with him. An enterprising government prosecutor, Eli Rosenbaum, worked on his own time to piece together the facts concerning Rudolph. The Justice Department acted, drawing up a consent decree in which Rudolph was asked to give up his naturalized citizenship and leave the country voluntarily.

In November, 1983, Rudolph signed the agreement

and a few months later left for Germany, a former Nazi no longer sheltered by America's overly-generous immigration policy.

Charles Ponzi: Affable Inventor of "Pyramid" Schemes

Anyone who has followed the philanthropic disaster brought about in 1995 by the New Era Foundation, in which dozens or even hundreds of charitable organizations lost millions of dollars, has been reacquainted with the dread "Ponzi scheme." The originator and master of the concept was an enterprising, if unscrupulous, immigrant from Italy.

Unlike the back alley criminals associated with the Mariel boat lift, Charles Ponzi was the picture of the Italian gentleman when he stepped onto American soil early in the 20th century. Well-dressed, speaking a respectable English, and very ambitious, he immediately set out to make his fortune.

The problem was, his brilliant and original methods were invariably just one step this side of criminal, and occasionally they crossed the line. After passing a bad check and serving a brief jail term, and other assorted failures, Ponzi one day hit upon a simple scheme which would make him and his initial investors rich.

In a sudden burst of crooked inspiration, it occurred to Ponzi that the international system of postal reply coupons could be exploited to good advantage. Somewhat like today's pre-paid long distance calling cards, postal coupons were issued by the postal services of various countries to allow stamps to be paid for in one country and received and used in another. For example, a Spaniard could lay down 30 centavos in Spain for the coupon, which stated, "This coupon may be exchanged at any post-office of any country in the Universal Postal Union for a postage stamp of the value of 25 centimes, or its equivalent."

Ponzi had used these coupons before. But this day, it occurred to him that the math strongly favored the person exchanging the Spanish coupon for a U.S. stamp. That was because the Spanish currency had been devalued, but the American dollar remained strong. Further, the Spanish currency's devaluation had not yet been reflected in the official value of the coupons. In other words, Spaniards could actually buy a 30 centavo postal coupon for only about 23 1/2 centavos, but the coupon would still fetch a five cent stamp in the U.S. — the same as before. The result of the transaction would be a 10 percent profit.

Then Ponzi turned his attention to countries with even weaker currencies. He discovered that using the same scheme with Italian postal coupons yielded an astounding 230 percent profit! In fact, Ponzi had stumbled onto an early, grossly unethical, version of today's modern currency trading. It was cruel, of course, because one or both nations would lose a great deal of money when the funds proved inadequate.

"Using new investors' money to pay

off his older investors, Ponzi grew hopelessly overextended.... he went to prison for fraud, adding his name to our language as the label for 'the Ponzi scheme.'"

"My discovery didn't involve much scientific study," Ponzi later reflected. "In fact it did not involve either science or study. It was a good deal simpler than the Einstein theory of relativity. So simple, really, that it took me less than five minutes of figuring on a scratch pad to realize its possibilities."¹⁶

The "Boston swindler," as he was later to be called, immediately lined up investors to buy great quantities of foreign postal coupons and exchange them for U.S. stamps, to be sold for a tremendous profit. He became wealthy and influential, though greatly resented by the U.S. government.

The problem was it couldn't last. As more and more foolish investors wanted to share in the obviously unsavory scheme, Ponzi had to keep promising ever higher payoffs to keep the money flowing. At the same time, the actual opportunity in exploiting postal reply coupons was narrowing as officialdom caught on to the scheme.

Using new investors' money to pay off his older investors, Ponzi grew hopelessly overextended within a year. In 1920 his investment company collapsed and he went to prison for fraud, adding his name to our language as the label for the "Ponzi scheme."¹⁷

Colin Ferguson: Mad Executioner of the Long Island Railroad

This is the story of an immigrant whose suspicion of white racism literally drove him mad, and influenced him to go on one of the deadliest shooting sprees in New York City history.

A native of Kingston, Jamaica, Colin Ferguson had not done well in America since his immigration in 1982. In fact, in the years preceding his rampage he had lost his wife, his home, his job, and his place as a college student. In his mind, all of these maladies were brought about because he was black, and white Americans were determined to keep him down.

A fellow Jamaican immigrant, Patrick Denis, shared a house with Ferguson during the two years leading up to the shootings. He described Ferguson's wild outbursts against white oppression. Ferguson would hurl insults at Denis when Denis would disagree. The outbursts increased. "It was like he was losing his mind," Denis said. "It was impossible to reason with him."¹⁸

That's what the administrators of Adelphi University thought when they suspended him in 1991 after a series of shouting matches with teachers and

students. Ferguson was a religious fanatic who finally began to pray loudly in his room and shout to himself about "Uncle Tom negroes" who were cooperating in a racist conspiracy to keep people like him down.

There were law suits connected to a workers' compensation claim he had made, and Ferguson decided that system was rigged against blacks, too. He began to badger the staff of Brooklyn's workers' compensation board. When that didn't work, he began calling the state attorney general's office, sometimes several times a day, demanding action on his case. He also wanted to sue the New York transit police for brutality, and Adelphi University for suspending him.

One day, he walked into an outdoorsman store and purchased a Ruger P89 pistol with a 15-round clip. Then, on December 8, 1993, Ferguson boarded the LIRR's 5:33 p.m. commuter train bound for Hicksville, Long Island. During the trip, he stood up and started firing at whites and Asians at random.

Twenty-three persons were shot, five fatally, before the madman could be wrestled to the floor. The nation was horrified. Crazed to the end, Ferguson insisted on defending himself during his trial a year later, which made a sorry spectacle.

Today he sits in prison serving a life sentence.

Sheik Omar Abdel-Rahman: The Most Bloody-Minded Immigrant of Them All

If Omar Abdel-Rahman, a blind Islamic cleric from Sudan, had had his way in February 1993, he would have butchered 50,000 New Yorkers in a single day.

The sheik's fanatical followers planted the massive bomb that ignited underneath the World Trade Center in 1993, killing six persons and injuring thousands more. Horrible as that act of terrorism was, it was meant to be much more deadly. The sheik's organization had intended the car bomb, located in a parking garage situated directly underneath one of the two 110-story towers, to buckle the structure of the building, sending all of the approximately 50,000 office workers plunging to their deaths amidst a million tons of concrete, steel and glass. Fortunately, the tower proved tougher than the bombers had expected, and the damage was less than catastrophic.

Abdel-Rahman immigrated to the U.S. with the sole intent of launching a "holy war" against this country. His band of radical Muslims planned a terrorist campaign which included blowing up the Lincoln Tunnel, assassinating Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak (while he visited New York City), and blowing up the World Trade Center, among other uniquely bloody-minded acts. All this was meant as punishment for America's befriending Israel and opposing the radical fringes of fundamentalist Islam.

The most shocking thing about Sheik Abdel-Rahman's story is that he immigrated here with a valid visa, even though the U.S. government had him on a

“watch list” of suspected terrorists! Egyptian officials had long believed him involved in the assassination of Anwar Sadat, the Egyptian president who made peace with Israel. In 1987 the State Department declared him a possible terrorist. Yet in 1990 the fanatical cleric obtained a visa and moved to the U.S. A year later he was granted resident status at a time when another governmental agency was seeking to have his original visa revoked.

After the FBI moved in to arrest the sheik following the bombing, Congress blasted the INS for letting him in the country. “He entered the country through a string of errors and failures that suggest that Abbott and Costello may have been in charge of our visas,” stated Rep. Benjamin Gilman (R-NY).¹⁹

The INS complained about its antiquated computer system, which makes cross-checking for persons on the “watch list” difficult. The State Department admitted human error was involved as well. The question certainly comes to mind: If a fanatical cleric with a history of suspected terrorist activity can enter this country *legally*, what does it take to be turned away?

At this writing, the sheik and his followers have been declared guilty of the bombing conspiracy.

Summary

Of course, most immigrants aren't infamous at all. Most have simply come to America to work and raise a family. No one would argue that a broad brush be used to defame everyone born overseas. However, neither is every immigrant the next Toscanini. Quite a number are criminals and other problem-makers, eager to take advantage of our open society and its generous system of public benefits.

Because America was populated by a full gamut of people — pilgrims, adventurers, felons, paupers, refugees, exiles — and emerged as the world's leading example of economic success, technological skill and democratic polity, we have romanticized “being an immigrant” to a high degree. Those who favor maintaining high numbers of immigrants use this emotion to suppress any discussion of limitation. So it becomes, as we try to illustrate with the drawing on our cover, a matter of balance. Let's stop saying that if there were limits to immigration we would miss some great contributor to the arts or sciences or public well-being, unless we are equally willing to argue that we would avoid dealing with someone who would be a great detriment. ■

NOTES

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