

"Liberty, Restriction, and the Remaking of Italians and Eastern European Jews,
(1882-1965)"

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Introduction

On April 15, 1924, in his testimony to Congress in favor of immigration restriction, Senator Matthew Neely of West Virginia warned ominously:

It is our duty to defend not only against enemies in arms but against the millions of physically, mentally, and morally inferior men and women scattered over Europe, Asia, Africa, Mexico, and the islands of the sea, who, as prospective immigrants, are awaiting their opportunity to rush to our shores. [If they are successful] we shall have justified the following words of Isaiah: "Your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate."¹

In 1924, Senator Neely's arguments over restriction and exclusion had become familiar and part of popular knowledge. The debate was not really over whether the quota system would become law, but rather over the most 'scientific' criteria to adopt to exclude and restrict prospective immigrants. The adoption of the 1924 Immigration Act represented the climax of a long battle over the legitimacy of exclusion and restriction and the desirability of selecting specific people to enter the country. The country's first comprehensive immigration law drastically limited immigration from Europe, barred immigration from Asia, and strictly regulated immigration from Mexico.² The passage of the 1924 Immigration Act also concluded a period of immigrant mobilization begun in the 1880s with Chinese immigrants' opposition to exclusion and ended with Southern and Eastern Europeans' resistance against restriction.

This study explores how Italian and Jewish immigrants mobilized against U.S. immigration restriction policy and, in the process, altered their identity and their place in American society and politics.³ Like specialists in Asian and Mexican migration, I shift the

¹ Quoted in Cheryl Shanks, *Immigration and the Politics of American Sovereignty, 1890-1990* (Ann Harbor, MI: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 56.

² For a more detailed account of the 1924 debate on immigration and the law itself, see Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004); and Shanks, *Immigration and the Politics of American Sovereignty*.

³ Throughout this dissertation I use Italian Americans and American Jews to identify the two groups I study in order to avoid confusion with Jewish and Italian immigrants in general and to highlight the distinction between how they constructed their identity, rooting it in ethnicity and religion respectively.

focus from the restrictionists to the restricted to shed light on how these two groups responded to the defamatory campaign against them and to the laws that restricted immigration from their countries of origin.⁴ While we have learned a lot about how exclusion has affected Asian immigrants and Asian communities in the United States and how repatriation, workers programs, and illegality have shaped Mexican immigration to this country, we still know very little about how restriction changed the lives of Southern and Eastern Europeans. The assumption is that restriction barely affected Southern and Eastern European migrants because they were "white on arrival" and could benefit of the advantages that naturalization affords. Yet, although they were technically white, in practice they were ascribed "a whiteness of a different color."⁵ The entire campaign to limit new arrivals from Eastern and Southern Europe revolved around the construction of a different kind of whiteness that made undesirable.⁶

The campaign to restrict immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe began as early as 1882 in concomitance with the campaign to exclude Chinese and Japanese immigrants. The two movements coexisted and overlapped often, as their proponents used similar arguments to mark Italian, Jewish, Chinese, and Japanese immigrants as undesirable. All four groups were attacked on the basis of their race, ethnicity, class, religion, gender, sexuality, moral standing, health, and political affiliation, among other factors. Yet, while the argument for Chinese and Japanese exclusion quickly gained momentum and led to immediate legislative action, the

⁴ Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*; Erika Lee, *At America's Gates. Chinese Immigration During the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Lucy Salyer, *Laws Harsh as Tigers – Chinese Immigrants and the Shaping of Modern Immigration Law* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995); George Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Fancisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodriguez, *Decade of Betrayal* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press: 1995).

⁵ Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

⁶ For a more in-depth discussion of the changing meaning of whiteness for Italian and Jewish immigrants, see Karen Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004), Jennifer Guglielmo and Salvatore Salerno, *Are Italians White?* (New York: Routledge, 2003), and Thomas Guglielmo, *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color and Power in Chicago, 1890-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

campaign to exclude Southern and Eastern Europeans took longer, in part because the argument to restrict them was more difficult to build as it required justification to reject white immigrants. In the late 1890s, the debate surrounding the Lodge bill, the first to propose a literacy test to limit immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe, helped critics to identify their major tenets more clearly. For the first time nativists distinguished between "old" and "new" European immigrants and considered Southern and Eastern Europeans as a collective entity posing a serious threat to the survival of American society. Slavs, Italians, and Jews came increasingly to be associated with disorder, violent crime, and avarice respectively. The new form of nativism incorporated the older anti-Catholicism and anti-radicalism, borrowed from contemporary Darwinian and Spencerian theories, and embraced the country's new bombastic nationalism.

Attacks against the two groups came from everywhere: academia, public intellectuals, 'experts' on immigration, and the media. Starting from the late years of the 1890s, a flood of publications on the new immigrants' inferiority entered mainstream America. The most popular titles included Edward A. Ross's *The Old World in the New*, Frank J. Warne's *The Immigrant Invasion*, and Madison Grant's bestseller *The Passing Great Race*, the book that officially sanctioned scientific racism. Italians and Eastern European Jews' moral and intellectual deficiencies, Ross argued, would dilute Americans' superior Anglo-Saxon stock. He condemned Eastern European Jews for their inborn love of money but feared southern Italians for their volatility, instability, and unreliability. Letting more Italians into the country would be to consent to incorporate "great numbers of wavering, excitable, impulsive persons who cannot organize themselves," and it would in the end force Americans to accept "less efficiency, less democracy, or both." With more Jews, Ross wrote, the nation's moral values would be in danger since working-class Eastern European Jews were "moral cripples, their souls warped and

dwarfed by iron circumstance [...] Life amid a bigoted and hostile population has left them aloof and thick-skinned."⁷ Echoing Ross, Warne insisted that the new immigrants had "been reduced to the qualities similar to those of an inferior race that favor despotism and oligarchy rather than democracy."⁸ Reinforcing another common stereotype, Warne also contended that history had transformed southern Italians and Slavs, in particular, into individuals very similar to the already excluded Chinese immigrants. Finally, Grant warned that America was spiraling toward a "racial abyss." Inferior Europeans such as the Alpines, the Mediterranean, and the Jews were mongrelizing the American stock. Inevitably, he decried, the mixing of any of these inferior races with the American one would produce "a race reverting to the more ancient, generalized and lower type." Besides, he added, "the cross between any of the three European races and a Jew is always a Jew."⁹

These racial arguments soon spread into daily life and became part of day-to-day interactions and conversations. To debase them in popular imagery, Italians were repeatedly compared to Chinese immigrants and African Americans. Italians were often called "the Chinese of Europe" because the two groups "occupied an ambiguous, overlapping and intermediary position in the binary racial schema," neither black nor white but 'yellow,' 'olive,' or 'swarthy.'¹⁰ Woodrow Wilson, in his 1902 *History of the American People*, gave this view the status of academic validity. These immigrants, he explained, came from "the lowest class from the South of Italy." They had neither skill, nor energy, nor initiative, nor quick intelligence, and,

⁷ Edward A. Ross, *The Old World in the New: The Significance of Past and Present Immigration to the American People* (New York: The Century Co., 1914), 287, 119, and 154.

⁸ Frank Julian Warne, *The Immigrant Invasion* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1913), 267.

⁹ Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1919), 18.

¹⁰ Gabaccia, "The 'Yellow Peril' and the 'Chinese of Europe:' Global Perspectives on Race and Labor, 1815-1930," in Jan Lucassen and Leo Lucassen, *Migration, Migration History, History: Old Paradigms and New Perspectives* (Bern, NY: Peter Lang, 1999), 177-79.

ultimately, "the Chinese were more to be desired."¹¹ Moreover, as John Higham shows, all around the country, native-born and Northern European workers called themselves white to distinguish themselves from the Southern Europeans with whom they worked side by side.¹² The popular imagination also racialized Jews. Widespread opinion contended that Jews had visible physical characteristics that made them distinctively "look Jewish." As Barrett and Roediger explain, "While racist jokes mocked the black servant who thought her child, fathered by a Chinese man, would be a Jew, racist folklore held that Jews, inside-out, were 'niggers'."¹³

Italian and Jewish immigrants were restrictionists' primary targets, as they represented the two largest groups among the new immigrants. Yet, my choice to write a comparative history of these two specific groups' mobilization against restriction stemmed from other considerations as well. Italian and Jewish emigrants to the United States followed two distinct patterns of migration and had a different relationship with the countries from which they emigrated. Eastern European Jews left Europe as entire families to escape religious persecution and discrimination to settle permanently in the United States. Although some of them eventually returned to Europe, the majority never went back and had no desire or opportunity to maintain any ties with the countries from which they arrived aside from the Jewish communities there.¹⁴ Italian immigrants, on the other hand, were predominately men who traveled back and forth between Europe and the United States several times over their lifetime to escape economic stagnation and social subjugation. At least until the beginning of the twentieth century, they arrived in the United States in search of better job opportunities, hoping to set aside enough

¹¹ Quoted in Alexander DeConde, *Half Bitter, Half Sweet* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), 101.

¹² Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925*. 3rd ed. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 173.

¹³ James Barrett and David Roediger, "Inbetween Peoples: Race, Nationality and the New 'Immigrant' Working Class." *Journal of American Ethnic History* 16, no. 3 (Spring 1997), 9.

¹⁴ Jonathan D. Sarna, "The Myth of No Return: Jewish Return Migration to Eastern Europe, 1881-1914," *American Jewish History* 71, no. 2 (December 1981): 256-68.

money to return to their village as soon as possible, to settle their debts, or to start a new life. Unlike Jewish immigrants, Italian immigrants, even after they began to settle permanently and send for their families, retained strong ties with their ancestral home.

As I began to study how these two groups reacted to the first calls to limit immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe, I soon discovered that I was in reality dealing with three rather than two groups. Restriction, in fact, affected German Jews as much as Eastern European Jews in the United States. German Jews had arrived in the United States during an earlier wave of immigration from Europe in the middle of the nineteenth century. A significantly smaller and less conspicuous group, German Jews, in spite of sporadic episodes of anti-Semitism, had quickly created a wealthy and well-connected community that included prominent professionals, politicians, and financiers. As the campaign to restrict immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe began, German Jews considered the attacks and the stereotyping against Eastern European Jews as an affront to their own image and achievements as well. As the older and more successful community, many German Jews believed that it was their duty to defend and provide assistance to Eastern European Jews. To this end, they founded the American Jewish Committee (AJC) specifically to deal with immigration laws and other legal aspects of Jewish life in America. The AJC quickly became the principal voice and face of the mobilization against restriction in court, in Congress, and in the media.

Eastern European Jews often resented German Jews' intervention, as they perceived it as condescending and presumptuous. This often represented a source of tension and discord between the groups, but the fight against immigration restriction was one of the few issues on which they often joined forces, especially after both groups discovered what European Jews were experiencing under Hitler's regime. Eastern European Jews achieved more visibility within the

entire Jewish community, not only because they outnumbered German Jews but also because they began succeeding in their lives. Ironically, restriction was another factor that brought the two groups closer together. The arrest of immigration from Europe left both groups to deal with how to preserve their Old World culture, and Eastern European Jews, being more numerous, influenced how they began to envision their life and identity under restriction. Despite their internal disagreements, the presence of German Jews provided Eastern European Jews with the resources, connections, and knowledge of American society that Italian immigrants sorely lacked.

As the calls for restriction began, in fact, Italians were still transitory migrants. The almost complete absence of response to the attacks they suffered reflected the fragility of the Italian community in the United States at the turn of the nineteenth century. Their mobilization occurred at a slower pace because they first had to build the resources, acquire the knowledge of the system, and build the connections necessary to make their voices heard. Yet this was not the only reason why their path to mobilization against immigration restriction was different from American Jews'. Similar to the Eastern European Jewish case, Italian mobilization included another actor as well: the Italian government. Unlike German Jews, however, the Italian government often represented a hindrance to Italian Americans' efforts to oppose restrictive legislation or to attenuate the impact of the existing immigration laws. The evolving relationship between Italian Americans and the Italian government is part of this story as well.

The constant meddling and interference of Italian governmental officials in the United States in Italian American affairs profoundly shaped how Italian Americans responded to restriction. Regarding them as a mass of ignorant, poor, and civically uneducated people, the Italian government repeatedly intervened to protect its interest in keeping the Italian emigration

to the United States going. At least until the middle of the 1920s, Italian government officials condescendingly refused to collaborate with Italian Americans on pushing for more lenient immigration legislation. Their intervention often derailed Italian Americans' efforts to mobilize against restriction and only managed to convince restrictionists of the wisdom of their calls for restriction against Italian immigration. As the Italian American community gained influence in American society and began to carve a space for itself in the political sphere, the tables turned, and the Italian government increasingly came to depend on Italian Americans as its most powerful non-state actors in the United States to protect Italy's economic and international interests. Yet this would not be the case until the late 1940s when, facing a serious economic and unemployment crisis, the Italian government found itself dependent on Italian Americans' efforts to convince American lawmakers to provide financial assistance to Italy and to soften the country's draconian immigration policy to alleviate Italy's financial and overpopulation problems.

The presence of the Italian government had another effect on Italian Americans' response to immigration restriction. In addition to complicating Italian Americans' strategy to oppose the quota system, the Italian government also worked hard to keep alive the ties the community had with Italy. These efforts to cultivate spiritual ties to Italy within the Italian American community was part of a larger project to create what Mark Choate calls a Greater Italy, whose members still felt a connection with their ancestral home and were committed to protect Italy's interests.¹⁵ Especially after Mussolini's rise to power, the Italian government systematically worked to create a bond with Italian Americans by increasing the number of consulates in the country, organizing cultural events to foster a sense of *italianità*, arranging for Italian culture and language courses and trips to Italy, and honoring in ostentatious official ceremonies Italian Americans'

¹⁵ Mark Choate, *Emigrant Nation: The Making of Italy Abroad* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

contributions to the welfare of the mother country. The Italian government also allied itself with organizations that were influential in the community, anointing them as its spokesmen and representatives in the United States. These efforts, however, also contributed to delay Italian Americans' full integration into American society, as they were stuck between two communities to which they were equally committed.

If Italian Americans had to negotiate their presence in American society with the interference of the Italian government, American Jews were essentially stateless but with strong ties with the Jewish community around the world. Their statelessness pushed American Jews to mobilize to protect their interests, to found organizations for the advancement of their community, and to create the financial, political, and intellectual resources necessary to pursue their political goals and to assist Jewish immigrants from the very moment they arrived in the United States. The lack of a national government that could assist them in their fight against restriction and discrimination forced them to be self-reliant, so they took it upon themselves to found resettlement organizations with offices around the world to provide assistance to Jewish emigration, protect Jewish migrants from abuse, and establish a network of connections to help Jewish communities whenever a problem arose. Their statelessness also pushed them to try to maintain their ethno-religious culture and traditions as an integral element of their identity. These efforts, however, often clashed with the calls for assimilation and homogenization to which they were exposed in American society and forced them to find a middle ground that would allow them to participate without repudiating their identity.

As relevant as the choice to focus on two very unique immigrant groups was my decision to study their story over the *longue durée*. Following their experience from 1882, when Congress passed the first ineffective law to limit immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe,

to 1965, when Congress repealed the national origins quota system, which had effectively reduced Italian and Jewish immigration to a trickle, this study follows the evolution of their strategies to oppose immigration restriction and of their responses to the impact of the quota system on their communities at home and abroad. This approach allowed me to identify what they shared with other immigrant groups who had to deal with immigration laws that regulated their admission to the United States. Both groups initially looked at how Chinese and Japanese had mobilized against the immigration laws that targeted them. Similarly to Chinese and Japanese activists, Italian and Jewish anti-restrictionists initially went to court to challenge some of the provisions of the 1917 Immigration Act and the 1921 Immigration Act, and similarly to the two Asian groups, they soon realized that legal battles were an expensive and uncertain strategy. Like Chinese and Japanese immigrants, they soon realized that Congress was one of the main sites of struggle. However, unlike their predecessors, although they were “racially distinct from other whites” in every other context, they were “white by law” and thus could naturalize and vote.

The shift to the political sphere represented a major turning point for both groups, as they began to push legislators in their districts to listen to their concerns. This was not always easy to accomplish, and, more often than not, their pleas were ignored. Nonetheless, their efforts to emerge as a potent political force eventually gave them enough leverage to participate in the discussion for immigration reform in the early 1960s. Before achieving visibility in the political arena, both groups underwent a major transformation in the 1930s, when they had to learn to live under restriction and negotiate their place within American society. Both groups sought to define how they fit in a society that had officially rejected them as undesirable. Along the way, they developed two distinct approaches to their fight against restriction. In the 1930s, the

solidification of Jewish Liberalism and American Jews' embrace of New Deal's emphasis on social justice paved the way to the American Jewish community's commitment to immigration as a social justice issue in the 1950s and 1960s. The emphasis on immigration as a right for all had been present from the very beginning, but it emerged more forcefully after the American Jewish community's battle for legislation to assist refugees and displaced persons stranded in Europe at the end of World War Two. The shift also represented a conscious effort to avoid the repeated criticism that the immigration problem was a Jewish problem, as American Jews were often the most visible voice of dissent that put forth the loudest opposition. To this end, many prominent Jewish organizations consciously tried to deny this accusation by seeking alliances with non-Jewish anti-restrictionists.

As the 1930s wore on, Italians became very pragmatic in their mobilization against restriction. Aware of their precarious status within American society and, after 1929, faced with continuous disparaging attacks for their ties with Fascist Italy, Italian Americans focused their energy almost exclusively on Italian immigrants and Italian emigration. The obstacles they faced in their battle for amnesty for the large contingent of Italian illegal immigrants in the United States further convinced them that they needed to target their mobilization on Italian immigrants only. To this end, during the 1950s and 1960s they usually joined forces with other groups only when the collaboration could directly affect Italian immigrants, even when they finally had an organization, the American Committee on Italian Migration, that was as visible and influential as any of the older and more established Jewish advocacy organizations.

Among the most effective strategies the two groups adopted was the creation of organizations that focused specifically on immigration matters and had strong leadership, internal cohesion, well-funded programs, sophisticated lobbying techniques, and well-chosen

allies.¹⁶ Jewish and Italian organizations were at the forefront of the struggle against immigration restriction from the very beginning but did not have a prominent role in American foreign policy until the Truman Directive of December 1945. Conceived as an emergency action to assist Displaced Persons and refugees from war-torn Europe, the directive also assigned a prominent role to voluntary agencies in the administration of immigration policy, effectively turning them into powerful advocates for immigration reform. Congress later put its imprimatur on the Truman Directive when it passed the 1948 Displaced Persons Act and allowed ethnic and religious groups to sponsor applicants and assist them in their resettlement. These two laws effectively turned voluntary agencies (VOLAGS) into the major nongovernmental groups influencing American immigration policy.¹⁷ Italian and Jewish organizations were at the forefront of both the relocation and advocacy efforts. As the United States emerged as the leader of the new postwar world, these organizations became powerful players in the new geo-political order and, because of their participation in the administration of American immigration policy, they now received Cold War administrations' full attention. These organizations' transnational networks were now a powerful asset to the United States Cold War objectives. At a time when the country was still reluctant to reform its immigration policy, these Italian and Jewish organizations used their new role and Cold War logic to persuade legislators to undermine the quota system by weakening it one provision at a time.

The Cold War brought yet another crucial character into Italian Americans' mobilization against immigration restriction: the Catholic Church. Until the beginning of the Cold War, Italian Americans rarely joined forces with the American Catholic Church. During the mass

¹⁶ Judith S. Goldstein, *The Politics of Ethnic Pressure* quoted in Kevin MacDonald, *The Culture of Critique An Evolutionary Analysis of Jewish Involvement in Twentieth-Century Intellectual and Political Movements* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998), 248.

¹⁷ David M. Reimers, *Still the Golden Door: The Third World Comes to America*, 2nd Ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 12.

meetings that Italian immigrants organized to oppose the passage of restrictionist laws earlier in the century, Catholic Church high-ranking members would often send messages of support for their cause, but the collaboration between the two groups would usually end there. As Evelyn Savidge Sterne points out, "It took some time for the Catholic Church to assume the prominence in Italian neighborhoods that it enjoyed in other ethnic communities, for many immigrants arrived with a strained relationship to the church."¹⁸ Largely dominated by clergy members of Irish ancestry, the American Catholic Church initially had little to do with Italian immigrants and perceived them as a threat to its standing in American society.¹⁹ In the 1950s, however, the Catholic Church became Italian Americans' most powerful ally in its struggle against the quota system, especially after it pushed for the creation of the American Committee on Italian Migration under the auspices of the National Catholic Resettlement Council.

In addition to shedding light on how Italian Americans and American Jews' strategies and agenda evolved over their time, this study's emphasis on the long term also helped me uncover the reasons why neither group ever asked for the complete abolition of the immigration ceiling from American immigration policy. First introduced in the 1921 Emergency Immigration Act, the notion of a cap limiting the total number of admissible immigrants in a year still exists to this day. Mae Ngai argues that Euro-Americans purposefully refused to further a truly liberal immigration policy and ask for the repeal of any immigration ceiling in order to protect their standing in American society and preserve a system that centered on the importance of

¹⁸ Evelyn Savidge Sterne, *Ballots and Bibles. Ethnic Politics and the Catholic Church in Providence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), 52.

¹⁹ The *Catholic World* well exemplified the attitude that most members of the American Catholic hierarchy had towards the presence of these new Catholics in America. Southern Italians had no sense of respectability or spirit. Unlike an American or an Irishman who "will almost starve before asking charity and often really does starve," Italian immigrants shamefully accepted charity while returning little to the community. Yet, besides their poverty, their customs, and their habits, Italian immigrants were "the worst of all in religious equipment." Bernard J. Lynch, "The Italian in New York," *Catholic World* 47, issue 277 (April 1888).

citizenship.²⁰ Yet, a look at the long struggle Italian Americans and American Jews waged for the repeal of the national origins quota system reveals this not to be the case. Even before the passage of the first quota system in 1921, both groups had come to believe that quantitative restriction was inevitable. In response, they began to declare themselves in favor of immigration regulation in order to plea for the benefits of qualitative rather than quantitative immigration laws, as the former were decidedly less harsh. Ngai mistakes their realism for racism.

By the 1960s, the existence of an immigration ceiling could hardly be questioned, especially considering that most of the country still did not want the repeal of the quota system. In spite of the country's commitment to a quantitative immigration policy, both Italian Americans and American Jews nonetheless argued for a more liberal immigration policy for all immigrant groups and collaborated with non-European immigrant organizations in the final push for the 1965 Immigration Act. Moreover, throughout the 1950s and 1960s, both groups also sought to undermine the quota system to favor Italian and Jewish immigrants living outside Europe, especially as the movement for decolonization began. Finally, although both groups contributed to the eventual repeal of the quota system and of the Asiatic Barred Zone, the crafting of the legislation and its passage ultimately rested in the hands of Congress and the Johnson administration.

²⁰ Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, chapter 7.

Chapter One

From Unwanted to Restricted (1890-1921)

On March 11, 1910, the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization granted a hearing to those who opposed any further restriction of immigration. Commenting on the absurdity of proposing yet other restrictive bills, Louis Marshall, the face of Jewish mobilization against restriction since 1905, when he helped found the American Jewish Committee, to 1929, the year he died, bluntly said:

All this talk about immigrants is, to me, very amusing, when we consider that we are all immigrants—every one of us. Beyond that, there are very few who are in any way, in this community, descendants of the Pilgrims, or of the original settlers of the South, who arrived in the country prior to the Revolution. [...] You will find that the great bulk of our population is descended from people who have been on this continent not longer than one century. What is to be gained by all this talk about difficulty with immigrants, when we are all either immigrants ourselves or the sons and grandsons of immigrants?²¹

Marshall's words encapsulate the shock that many within the Jewish community felt when attacks on their undesirability and on immigration from Europe continued even after Congress had passed laws restricting the entry of contract laborers, convicts, lunatics, idiots, and those likely to become a public charge. The existing laws, they repeated ad nauseam, already weeded out the undesirables.

The persistence of the virulent attacks against them took many Southern and Eastern Europeans by surprise. Convinced that the attacks and the restrictive immigration bills were transitory, they initially struggled to voice their discontent. Until 1896, when Congress seriously considered passing a literacy test to administer to all arriving immigrants, few believed that the flow of Eastern and Southern Europeans could be stopped. The different impact of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the Immigration Act of 1882 in part justified their confidence. Although both laws marked a significant turning point in the legislation of immigration policy in

²¹ "In Defense of the Immigrant," *American Jewish Year Book* vol. 12 (1910-1911).

the United States and set the tone for the racialized treatment of immigrants in the country, the provisions of the two laws also epitomized the different treatment that the United States would reserve for Asian and Southern and Eastern European immigrants.²² Despite the limited number of Chinese immigrants in the country, the Chinese Exclusion Act was a drastic provision that excluded Chinese immigrants from the United States—except for diplomats, merchants, and students—and barred those already in the United States from naturalization. The Immigration Act of 1882, on the other hand, barred "convicts, lunatics, idiots, and those likely to become a public charge" but barely altered the flow of 'new' immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe. While the Chinese Exclusion Act led to an all-time low in 1887 of ten Chinese immigrants admitted to the United States in a single year, the Immigration Acts of 1882, 1885, and 1891 barely affected the five million immigrants who reached the United States under their aegis.²³ Despite their different outcome, these laws were a watershed in the country's immigration policy and symbolized new ideas of sovereignty and national identity.²⁴ It soon became apparent to Italians and Jews in the United States that they were hardly immune to the rhetoric of exclusion and restriction.

After years of timid efforts to oppose restrictive immigration legislation, Southern and Eastern Europeans realized that the issue would not simply disappear, so they needed to mobilize against immigration restriction proposals. Between 1882, when Congress passed the first ineffective law to regulate the immigration flow from Southern and Eastern Europe, and 1921, when the passage of the 1921 Emergency Immigration Act officially marked them as

²² For a more detailed account of the changes in the United States immigration policy before the 1880s, see Roger Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door: American Immigration Policy and Immigrants Since 1882* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004); Robert A. Divine, *American Immigration Policy, 1924-1952* (New York: Da Capo, 1972); Higham, *Strangers in the Land*; E. P. Hutchinson, *Legislative History of American Immigration Policy, 1798-1965* (Philadelphia, PA: Philadelphia University Press, 1981); and Daniel J. Tichenor, *Dividing Lines – The Politics of Immigration Control in America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).

²³ Lee, *At America's Gates*, 43-44; and Tichenor, *Dividing Lines*, 70.

²⁴ Lee, *At America's Gates*, 22.

undesirable, the Jewish and Italian communities tried to build strategies to oppose the calls for restriction, but they embarked upon two different paths. The conditions under which they lived at the turn of the nineteenth century shaped their mobilization strategies and identities in ways that would characterize their responses to restriction until 1965, when Congress repealed the national origins quota system.

For the Jewish community, the call for restriction represented a serious complication. The older and well established German Jewish community saw the attacks against the recently arrived Eastern European Jews as a reflection on their standing and their reputation as well; hence they felt compelled to intervene on their co-religionists' behalf. In addition to these selfish motives, German Jews also worried that unless they intervened, Eastern European Jews would have to fend for themselves against the same kind of violence and discrimination they had faced in Europe. Although not a perfect society, many of them felt that the United States was a safer haven for Jews. The imperative to help and defend Eastern European Jews compelled German Jews to organize and create organizations that could help them relocate and defend their rights on both sides of the Atlantic. As they considered their options, they realized that they should pressure the administration and politicians into action but also that they needed to take the lead in creating their own organizations that could help Eastern European Jews. Citing his own experience as a Russian refugee, Judge Leon Sanders told the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization in March, 1910, that "the Jews welcomed increased immigration; and though it imposed a burden upon them, they were willing to assume it and see to it that the Jewish immigrants did not become charges upon the charitable institutions."²⁵

To a certain extent, Italians in the United States had a response similar to German and Eastern European Jews. They too created an organization that could defend and facilitate the

²⁵ "In Defense of the Immigrant," *American Jewish Year Book* vol. 12 (1910-1911).

arrival of Italian immigrants, oppose immigration restriction proposals, and help Italians in the United States deal with their daily ordeals and discrimination. However, unlike Jewish immigrants, Italians created one major organization in charge of all these tasks rather than the discrete ones that Jews founded and did not benefit from the experience, the connections, and resources that the German Jewish community enjoyed. Part of the problem resided in the fact that Italian immigrants, unlike Jewish immigrants, were still birds of passage by the beginning of the twentieth century, or they returned to Italy permanently after years in the United States. This compelled them to create an infrastructure for their community and come up with strategies to mobilize against restriction at the same time. The ambivalent relationship Italian immigrants had with the representatives of the Italian government in the United States further complicated their response. Unlike Jews, who felt no connection to the countries from which they migrated and severed any relations with their representatives in the United States, Italians had strong ties with their ancestral home and a complex rapport with Italian authorities. The lack of an older community, like that of the German Jews for Eastern European Jews, in a way compelled Italian Americans to turn to the Italian government for help.

*Reacting to "The Necessity of Restricting Immigration to Our Shores" (1882 to 1917)*²⁶

Calls for restriction against Southern and Eastern European immigrants began in earnest in the mid-1880s when it became clear that the laws passed by Congress up to that point were ineffective. In 1885, Josiah Strong published *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis*, in which he warned against the seven perils facing the country, namely Catholicism, Mormonism, socialism, intemperance, wealth, urbanization, and immigration. Tapping into

²⁶ "Must Guard Our Gates: The Necessity of Restricting Immigration to Our Shores," *New York Times*, March 17, 1896.

unsophisticated versions of Darwinism, eugenics, and nativism, he presented recent European immigrants as the main source of crime, immorality, corruption, religious extremism, and political radicalism.²⁷ Amid industrial strife, economic crises, and the passing of the frontier adventure, his calls for immigration restriction resonated with many Americans concerned about the country's future and contributed to create a sense of national claustrophobia that regarded immigration restriction as a vehicle to foster social and cultural uniformity. The 1886 bombing of Haymarket Square in Chicago during a national strike of the Knights of Labor further fueled the Nativist frenzy. In the midst of national hysteria, the bombing was hastily attributed to a group of seven anarchists, six of whom were immigrants.²⁸ The frenzy that ensued from the bombing led to violent outbursts against immigrants and the creation, among other Nativist organizations, of the Immigration Restriction League (IRL). The IRL was an intellectual and professional organization whose policy activism set the tone, the goals, and the arguments for the anti-immigrant campaign and provided congressional immigration committees with the expertise, agenda, and support to limit immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe.²⁹

After the Republican victory in the 1894 midterm election, the IRL waged its first large-scale campaign to restrict immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe. The organization decided to support economist Edward Bemis's proposal that all immigrants must pass a literacy test to be admitted into the country. Bemis argued that the literacy test represented a powerful

²⁷ John Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 39.

²⁸ For a more detailed account of the role of the Haymarket Affair in the reemergence of nativism after the 1880s, see Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*; Divine, *American Immigration Policy*; Higham, *Strangers in the Land*; Hutchinson, *Legislative History of American Immigration Policy*; and Tichenor, *Dividing Lines*.

²⁹ Created and located in the Northeast, the IRL included in its ranks upper-class academics, businessmen, politicians, and professionals who believed themselves to be the last group of people left to defend the survival of Anglo-Saxon traditions and ideals in a country on the brink of an immigrant invasion. Unlike previous nativist organizations like the American Protective Association (APA), which spoke to the anxieties of foreign radicalism, anti-Semitism, and anti-Catholicism, the IRL organization became the national emblem of racialized nativism. Unlike their predecessors, IRL activists opted to lobby national policymakers directly and to provide their expertise to support restrictive legislation in the name of Progressive notions of direct democracy and scientific government. For more on the history of the IRL and the APA, see Higham, *Strangers in the Land*.

mechanism to weed out those immigrants who were naturally inferior and guarantee the admittance of immigrants from the traditional source countries. Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, the voice in Congress of the IRL, led the battle for the committee's literacy test bill on the Senate floor:

[O]ther races of totally different race origin, with whom the English-speaking people have never hitherto been assimilated or brought in contact, have suddenly begun to immigrate to the United States in large numbers—Russians, Hungarians, Poles, Bohemians, Italians, Greeks, and, even, Asiatics [...] It involves nothing less than the possibility of a great and perilous change in the fabric of our race.³⁰

In late 1896, Lodge's literacy test bill, which required immigrants be able to read 40 words in any language, passed with strong Republican backing, but outgoing president Grover Cleveland vetoed the bill in early 1897, following the Democratic Party's long-standing commitment to endorse European immigration and listen to immigrant voters.³¹ This defeat hardly deterred the IRL and its supporters, but it sent a powerful message to Southern and Eastern Europeans in the country and abroad. The temporary success of the bill, in fact, alarmed pro-immigration groups and convinced them to organize against any further action on the literacy test.

The 1896 Lodge Bill took Italian and Jewish immigrants by surprise, but their failure to react promptly taught them the value of numbers and organization. In 1897, while Italians in the country remained silent on the subject, the Socialist United Hebrew Trades organized a mass meeting at the Cooper Union in New York City to urge President Cleveland against signing the Lodge Bill. The protesters denounced the bill "as vicious, demagogic, and fatuous, and, while it appeared to be in the interest of the working people, [it] was really in the interest of capital."³² This mass meeting, however, hardly had any impact on the national debate on restriction. In

³⁰ "Must Guard Our Gates: The Necessity of Restricting Immigration to Our Shores," *New York Times*, March 17, 1896.

³¹ Tichenor, *Dividing Lines*, 83.

³² "Lodge Bill Denounced," *New York Times*, February 6, 1897.

1898, when Lodge proposed a new version of his 1896 literacy test bill, ethnic groups and pro-immigration groups, this time including Italian immigrants, quickly realized that isolated forms of protests were not effective and that they needed to rally together to have any impact on the debate. Once again New York City immigrant groups led the way. Early in 1898, W. Bourke Cockran, former representative of the state of New York, J.H. Senner, former United States Commissioner of Immigration for New York, and Oscar Straus, United States Minister to the Ottoman Empire and future Secretary of Commerce and Labor, met with prominent members of different ethnic organizations from across the country to create the Immigration Protective League (IPL) and protest the incumbent Lodge bill. Business groups, steamship companies, and northern and southern industrialists joined the IPL in its campaign in favor of unrestricted European immigration.³³

On March 8, 1898, the IPL teamed up with the New York Chamber of Commerce and various captains of industry in a mass meeting organized to oppose the Lodge bill.³⁴ The speakers presented objections to the passage of the bill that would soon become integral to the anti-restrictionist agenda. They criticized the literacy test as a superfluous addition to the existing laws regulating immigration to the United States and proposed to use it for naturalization not for admission. They also condemned the test because it would separate families and mislead American workers who believed that the competition from immigrant workers would cease, while skilled workers would undoubtedly pass the test. The speakers also emphasized the role of the ethnic vote in McKinley's recent victory and warned Republican leaders of the serious risk of losing any support among restricted immigrants.³⁵ More importantly, some of the speeches reflected a rising awareness that some form of restriction was

³³ "To Favor Immigration," *New York Times*, January 7, 1898.

³⁴ "The Lodge Bill Denounced," *The New York Times*, March 3, 1898.

³⁵ "The Lodge Bill Denounced," *The New York Times*, March 3, 1898.

most likely inevitable. Among them, Carl Schurtz, the German-born Republican who had contributed to purge the Know-Nothings from the party in 1860, sent a letter that read: "That this country should not be a dumping ground for the criminals and the cripples of the Old World, we all readily admit; but existing legislation had proved itself amply sufficient to prevent this."³⁶

Carl Schurz's criticism of the Lodge bill spurred criticisms of the bill among Republican leaders themselves. Later in the year, Representative McCall informed the IRL and its supporters that the chances of passing the literacy test were scarce. Many congressional leaders, he continued, worried that they would lose the support of their ethnic voters, especially after the triumph of the 1896 elections when McKinley had won by a margin of 202 to 1 in the twelve states with the country's largest foreign-born voters.³⁷ As opposition to restrictive legislation mounted, pro-immigration representatives proposed to delay any legislation on immigration until after a non-partisan immigration committee studied the impact of the new immigrants on labor, agriculture, and capital. As the country recovered from another economic depression, immersed itself in its imperialistic ventures, and regained confidence in its power of assimilation, the creation of the Industrial Commission on Immigration in June 1898 momentarily placated restrictionists.

The hiatus was short lived, and Southern and Eastern European immigrants found themselves at the center of new attacks against their presence in the country. The 1901 assassination of President McKinley at the hands of Leon Czolgosz, an American-born anarchist with a foreign-sounding name, brought immigration restriction back to the fore. In 1903, at the urging of President Theodore Roosevelt, Congress passed a new immigration act and expanded the already long list of undesirable to include epileptics, beggars, anarchists, and all those who

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ O. P. Austin, "Is the New Immigration Dangerous to the Country?" *North American Review* 178 (1904), 570.

believed in the forceful overthrow of the government. The mounting attacks that followed McKinley's assassination did not catch pro-immigration groups unprepared. After 1898, pro-immigrationists realized that restriction had become a concrete scenario in America and that they needed to be more proactive, organize themselves more effectively, and seek a wide base of support. Their mobilization against restriction also forced them to reconsider their presence in American society. Italians had to confront and also had to negotiate the challenge of organizing a community that was still searching for a common sense of identity and had to negotiate their relationship with Italy and Italian diplomats. Eastern European Jews, on the other hand, had to negotiate their alliance in their fight against restrictive legislation with the older and more affluent German Jewish community and grapple with how to maintain their ethno-religious identity.

Significantly, both groups came to the conclusion that they needed to create institutions that could safeguard their immigration rights and represent them at the national level in times of need. A year apart from one another, this shift from isolated protests to organized struggle produced two of the most important ethnic organizations that led the opposition against restriction until 1965. In 1905, Italians created the Order Sons of Italy in America (OSIA) "to reunite in one single family" all the Italians scattered throughout the United States and Canada.³⁸ Only a year later, a group of influential American Jews of German descent founded the American Jewish Committee (AJC). Marking the epicenter of the battle against immigration restriction for the rest of the century, both organizations were born in New York City and relied on well-connected professionals. Although OSIA and AJC emerged in response to similar

³⁸ The idea of a nationwide federation incorporating all Italian American organizations across the country dated back to 1868, when prominent Italian Americans from seven different cities met in Philadelphia to found the *Unione Italiana negli Stati Uniti*. Subsequently, Italian Americans created other national organizations, but most of them were either short-lived or very limited in their membership. See John Andreozzi, *Guide to the Records of the Order Sons of Italy in America* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 7.

problems, the two organizations developed a completely different understanding of their role. While the American Jewish Committee focused exclusively on the legal component of immigration to avoid any conflict or overlap with other Jewish organizations working on immigration, OSIA was conceived as an organization that needed to address all issues related to immigration.³⁹ Although American Jews subsequently fought over matters of competence and complained about the excessive fragmentation of their organizations, the initial compartmentalization ultimately helped their strategy and prevented any dispersal of energy, money, and efforts. OSIA, on the other hand, simultaneously opposed immigration legislation, sponsored publications that challenged stereotypes of Italian immigrants, organized classes to help its reluctant members naturalize and Americanize, worked to cement relationships between Italy and the United States, and contributed "to keeping alive the flame of the cult of the native land [...] without thereby falling short of the respect due to the country which has accorded us welcome."⁴⁰

As Italians began to organize their community to oppose restriction, they had to negotiate their strategies with the presence of Italian government officials in the country. Initially, the Italian government paid little attention to the masses of Southern Italians leaving the country. Convinced that emigration was the perfect safety valve to the country's economic problems and profiting from the emigrants' remittances, the Italian government hardly oversaw the robust emigration flow to the Americas and left Italian migrants virtually unprotected in their country of destination. The situation changed in 1901, when the Italian government instituted the *Commissariato Generale per l'Emigrazione*, an office that provided migrants with information on the job market, assistance with their trip to the country of destination, and legal counsel. In

³⁹ Sydney Liskofsky, "Field of Activity," February 2, 1959, American Jewish Committee Collection, YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

⁴⁰ Quoted in Andreozzi, *Guide to the Records of the Order Sons of Italy in America*, 8.

1906, after an investigation had revealed that the majority of workers injured on the job were Italian, the Commissariato ordered the creation of Investigation Bureaus for Italian Immigrants at the Italian consulates in New York City, Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, Denver, and San Francisco to offer legal advice to Italians in the United States.⁴¹ Yet, as early as 1912, overloaded investigation bureaus, lacking political and financial support from the Italian government, struggled to bring their clients' cases to court.

Despite the infrastructure it created in the United States, the Commissariato and the Italian government appeared more concerned with how the immigration restriction proposals would affect Italy's sovereignty and its jurisdiction over its immigrants than on the impact it would have on the immigrants.⁴² Moreover, aware of the hostility towards Italian immigrants and the limited leverage Italy had, Italian government representatives usually refused to collaborate with Italians and opted for negotiating privately with American authorities over legislative issues or specific immigration cases. As correspondence between Italian authorities in Italy and the United States reveals, their reluctance to join forces with Italians in the United States stemmed from their contempt of Italian immigrants' illiteracy. Gallina, head of the Commissariato at the time, wrote that, "if many of our emigrants will not be able to go to the United States, unless they overcome this serious lacuna in their education, it is their fault because they had plenty of opportunities to earn that education that they now need to enter the United States" at the new night and Sunday schools that the government had created in the years 1911 to 1913.⁴³ A letter that Gallina received from Serrati, the director of Italian immigration in the United States, went further and

⁴¹ Count Gallina to Pio Carbonelli, March 19, 1912, and Gino Speranza, "Per l'assistenza legale degli italiani negli Stati Uniti," Fondo Commissariato Generale per l'Emigrazione, Busta 17, foglio 59, Archivio Storico degli Affari Esteri, Rome.

⁴² Serrati to Cusani-Confalonieri, June 19, 1913, Fondo Commissariato Generale per l'Emigrazione, Busta 22, foglio 78, Archivio Storico degli Affari Esteri, Rome.

⁴³ Count Gallina, February 15, 1913, Fondo Commissariato Generale per l'Emigrazione, Busta 22, foglio 78, Archivio Storico degli Affari Esteri, Rome.

explained that while the Italian community's protest against restriction remained inconsequential, the Jews had finally decided to intervene and oppose the legislation, thus improving the chances for the president's veto. While praising the efforts of the Italian community in Philadelphia to organize a committee to voice their concern over the pending legislation, Serrati blamed the New York colony for the entire Italian community's inability to have any impact among the ranks of the pro-immigrationists. Italians living in New York, according to him, did not "enjoy a good reputation in the American press [...] because of the local Italian press."⁴⁴ The constant interference of Italian government representatives and their contempt for Italian anti-restrictionists caused confusion within the Italian community and annoyed American legislators who considered the letters they received from Italian consuls further evidence of the need for restrictive legislation.

If Italians had to deal with the interference of the Italian government, Eastern European Jews had to negotiate their space within the older and more prominent German Jewish community. The relationship between the two groups was problematic and complex from the beginning. The arrival of thousands of Jewish immigrants from Russia initially startled the already established German Jewish community in the United States. The older community was initially detached and aloof from the poor, illiterate, and culturally different Eastern European Jews. The newcomers, in turn, resented the patronization of the more affluent and acculturated Germans, challenged their assumption of leadership, and questioned the values according to which they sought to shape American Jewry.⁴⁵ Yet after these initial disagreements, German and Eastern European Jews in America began to dialogue and try to find common ground. A

⁴⁴ Serrati to Gallina, January 24, 1913, Fondo Commissariato Generale per l'Emigrazione, Busta 22, foglio 78, Archivio Storico degli Affari Esteri, Rome.

⁴⁵ Naomi Cohen, *Not Free to Desist: The American Jewish Committee, 1906-1966* (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1972), 6.

significant turning point came between 1903 and 1906, when approximately three hundred pogroms in Russia forced hundreds of thousands of Jews to leave Eastern Europe. News of the pogroms changed the American Jewish community significantly:

The Old World has for many years been setting the Jews of the New World difficult problems to solve. They must try to remedy in detail what the civilization of Europe perpetrates in the wholesale. Arduous as is the task, it has its compensations. There can be no doubt that the questions raised by the Russian immigration have placed the Jewish community of the United States in the vanguard of the best charitable and philanthropic endeavor of the day.⁴⁶

With the outbreak of the pogroms, the unofficial American Jewish leaders assumed the obligation of giving philanthropic aid to the victims as well as exerting pressure on the Russian Government to change its anti-Semitic policies. Frustration over the inability to convince Roosevelt to change his Russian policies through personal connections as well as the suspicion that more pogroms against Russian Jews would soon follow convinced the Jewish community in America to organize more effectively to act on its concerns.⁴⁷

It was the Russian pogroms that spurred the creation of the American Jewish Committee and the web of organizations and networks that later became fundamental to American Jewish mobilization against restriction once the quota system went into effect. For the first time, an immigrant group "in the United States [...] organized for the sole purpose of defending its rights and those of its brethren outside America."⁴⁸ After a long series of meetings and fierce opposition from B'nai B'rith and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the AJC came to life, and its members decided that its principal concerns were to protect the civil and religious rights of Jews, to watch closely the legislative and diplomatic developments concerning Jews living in the United States and abroad, and to provide the president, State Department, and

⁴⁶ Henrietta Szold, "The Year 5660," *American Jewish Year Book* vol. 2 (1900-1901).

⁴⁷ Judith Goldstein, "Ethnic politics: The American Jewish Committee as Lobbyist, 1915-1917," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 65 (1974), 37.

⁴⁸ Cohen, *Not Free to Desist*, 4.

Congress with information pertinent to these issues. The prevalence of German Jews in the newly born organization did not go unnoticed among Eastern European Jews. The organization openly manifested an elitist penchant that would characterize it at least until 1929, when its president, Louis Marshall, died. Embedded in their American education and stories of success, Marshall and his colleagues believed that Russian Jews deserved a chance at a better life, but they also believed that it was their responsibility to offer them one and act on their behalf.⁴⁹

Both OSIA and the AJC did not have to wait long before they had to mobilize to oppose new calls to limit immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe. In 1907, restrictionists waged a new campaign calling for a literacy test. In response, Congress created the Dillingham Commission and instructed it to investigate the immigration problem and suggest proposals for future legislation. Among its first initiatives, the AJC immediately wrote a letter to Senator William P. Dillingham, Chairman of the Immigration Commission, to express its interest in testifying on the conditions of Eastern European immigration and to offer to provide any information the commission might need on the subject. The committee articulated a particular interest in protecting Russian Jews from accusations leveled against them by people prejudiced against them:

It is a matter of common knowledge that in many European countries political parties are organized, whose platform contains a plank inculcating hatred of Jews as such. That prejudices so promulgated color the minds of many well-meaning persons in such environment is inevitable, and [that] these prejudices tend to be reflected in testimony that may be offered before you is highly probable. We deem it our duty to offer you our best services in avoiding this kind of error or indeed any kind of error which maybe impede the objects of your Commission.⁵⁰

Following a pattern that would soon become convention, the letter concluded that the AJC was aware of the "right and duty of every government to protect its people against the incursion of

⁴⁹ Besides Marshall, the self-appointed leaders who dominated the AJC for the first twenty years of its existence included Cyrus Adler, Jacob Schiff, Oscar Straus, and Cyrus Sulzberger.

⁵⁰ "Immigration, Legislation, Etc.," *American Jewish Year Book* vol. 10 (1908-1909).

criminals, paupers, lunatics, and other persons who would be public charges," but they urged the commission to do so "without violating our national traditions and the dictates of common humanity, or depriving our country of a natural and healthy means of increasing its population and prosperity."⁵¹ Many AJC members reiterated these arguments when they testified at the hearing that the Dillingham Commission held on March 11, 1910, but their appeals and testimonies were to no avail.⁵²

The forty-two volumes the Dillingham Commission issued in 1911 struck the final blow to any alternative to restrictive immigration policy. Adopting a Nativist and Anglo-American conception of American citizenship, the commission confirmed all the stereotypes that mainstream America had of the new immigrants and deemed them unfit for American citizenship and unassimilable. The report presented the new immigrants as intellectually inferior, politically subversive, and physically weak. The committee concluded that these traits, along with their lack of skills, their large presence in the asylums, their inability to appreciate American culture and traditions, made Southern and Eastern European immigrants unable to assimilate and Americanize. Politically, the commission's conclusions set the stage for immediate restrictive legislation and provided the foundation for the establishment of a quota system based on national origin.⁵³

Both Italians and Jews immediately mobilized to challenge the recommendations of the Dillingham Commission and limit its impact on the treatment of immigrants around the country. In 1911, in response to the spike in rejections of Italian immigrants for health reasons that followed the publication of the Dillingham Commission Report, OSIA placed one of its

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² "In Defense of the Immigrant," *American Jewish Year Book* 12 (1910-1911).

⁵³ Desmond King, *Making Americans: Immigration, Race, and the Origins of the Diverse Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), chapter 3.

representatives on Ellis Island to assist arriving immigrants.⁵⁴ In 1912, the New York Jewish community participated in a crowded mass meeting organized to condemn the literacy test. The meeting led the *New York Times* to write that the event was "one of the stormiest meetings that Cooper Union had ever seen, and the sentiment appeared to be all one way." The speakers included many prominent members of the Jewish community, namely Oscar Straus, Congressmen Sulzer and Godfogle, and Rabbi Stephen S. Wise. Labeling the new wave of nativism as a resurgence of Know-Nothingism, Straus declared that Senator Dillingham himself had openly admitted that the literacy test was a pretext and that restrictionists hoped "to exclude by this bill 36 per cent of the immigrants who are now free to enter. It is a sham, a fraud, and a pretext for accomplishing an end indirectly."⁵⁵ A letter from AJC member Jacob Schiff echoed the frustration that the anti-restrictionists felt about the discriminatory nature of the literacy test:

The immigrant who comes here to find actual work by which to support himself and his family, and who possesses good health and physical strength, is likely, even if he cannot read or write, to become a better citizen and greater asset to this country than he who is highly trained and educated and who, because of this, assumes that the world owes him a living, and who becomes a danger to society if that be not granted him in the manner he expects.⁵⁶

Jacob Schiff's claims about the willingness of the poor and the illiterate to integrate and become better citizens than more skilled immigrants resonated deeply among Eastern European Jews. The stress on the advantages of favoring the immigration of this particular type of immigrants was especially important for Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe because they, unlike Italians, did not have a home country to which they could return if they were rejected because they failed the literacy test.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ In 1914, the Order also decided to create the Garibaldi-Meucci Museum on Staten Island to promote a positive image of Italians in the United States and highlight their contributions to the development of American society.

⁵⁵ "Immigration Bill Stormily Attacked," *New York Times*, May 7, 1912.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Between 1880 and 1900, perhaps as many as 15 to 20 percent of Russian Jews who came to the United States returned to Europe. As the dispute over the possibility for American Jews to have passports to travel to Russia

In 1913, OSIA organized a mass meeting to voice its dissent and support free immigration. This was one of the rare instances in which Italians initiated a protest. They widely publicized the event in several immigrant newspapers and urged as many people and ethnic organizations as possible to participate. For a community that was still caught between permanent and temporary immigration, this protest represented an encouraging beginning of their political activism. Yet their criticisms of the literacy revealed some of the obstacles they faced in creating a strong presence in the debate:

This law, besides being an insult to the ever-praised American freedom, would seriously damage our home country's economic, industrial, and commercial relationship with the United States. The Order Sons of Italy in America—created for the tutelage of such interests—has resolved to organize a vibrant protest, with the most appropriate ways and means, in the name of its 145 lodges and of its 45 thousands affiliates.⁵⁸

The emphasis in the message of the impact that the administration of the test would have on the relationship between the two countries sheds light on the influence that the Italian government had on their agenda. The intrusive presence of the Italian government to protect its interests abroad effectively delayed the maturation of Italian Americans' political consciousness and complicated how, when, and why Italian Americans mobilized. This complex relationship delayed Italian Americans' full integration into American society and contributed to prolong the sense of foreignness that Americans had of Italian communities in America.

The outbreak of the World War One further complicated any possibility to limit the passage of restrictive immigration legislation. Anti-restrictionists pleaded with Congress to adopt a wait-and-see approach since the sharp decline in immigration during the war years made

shows, many Russian Jews wanted to go back to Russia, if only to visit their home towns. After 1906, the percentage of Russian Jews returning to Europe dropped to about 5 percent. The 1906 turn of events also lowered the rate of Russian Jews who were repeat crossers. For more details on Jewish return migration see Jonathan Sarna, "The Myth of No Return: Jewish Return Migration to Eastern Europe, 1881-1914," *American Jewish History* 71, no. 2 (December 1981): 256-68.

⁵⁸ "L'Ordine dei Figli d'Italia in America per la libera immigrazione," *Bollettino della Sera*, January 6, 1913, Fondo Commissariato Generale per l'Emigrazione, Busta 22, foglio 78, Archivio Storico degli Affari Esteri, Rome.

it difficult to predict what would happen at the end of the war. Congress, however, sided with the restrictionists and began new proceedings to pass an immigration law that stipulated a literacy test for admission. The war provided the perfect opportunity for restrictionists to argue for the passage of a literacy test to restrict immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe. They apocalyptically warned that the end of the war could only bring hordes of destitute, inferior, and radical refugees to the already unruly and unreliable immigrant communities in the United States. To support their accusations further, restrictionists pointed to the inability of Southern and Eastern Europeans in the United States to be loyal to the country that provided them a new home and cited immigrants' use of the vote to advance group interest over American interests. Despite that both groups participated in large numbers in the American war effort to prove that they were "good Americans," Italians and Jews in the United States found themselves on the defensive again.⁵⁹

Restrictionists cast their arguments for the two groups' disloyalty in completely different terms. While Jews were disloyal because of their statelessness, Italians were disloyal because of their persistently strong ties to their homeland and their constant efforts to cement and improve the relations between the two countries. Following these diametrically opposed reasons, restrictionists complained that the high rate of naturalization among Eastern European Jews was more a testimony to the greatness of America as a promised land than to their loyalty to their new country. In 1920, a consular agent in Rotterdam, Netherlands, reporting to the Department of State about pending emigration to the United States, lamented that most of the Polish Jews at the port were "largely without any political principles or convictions, [were] entirely without patriotism, and [were] usually evasive, dishonest, and incapable of appreciating any

⁵⁹ For a complete analysis of Jewish and Italian participation in World War I, see Christopher Sterba, *Good Americans: Italian and Jewish Immigrants during the First World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

responsibility towards any government."⁶⁰ A clear sign of Italian immigrants' disloyalty, instead, was the extremely low rates of naturalization among them and their isolation in ghettos.

"Taking into account the innumerable 'birds of passage' without family or future in this country" inveighed Edward Ross, professor of sociology at the University of Wisconsin, "it would be safe to say that half, perhaps two-thirds, of our Italian immigrants are *under* America, not *of* it."⁶¹ Clearly, what the new immigrants did or did not matter little in the eyes of restrictionists.

Italian and Jewish leaders' efforts to challenge these accusations often dispersed their energy to oppose the legislation itself. Repeatedly, during testimony in Congress, during public ceremonies celebrating Jewish achievements in America, and in open denunciations of discrimination, Jewish representatives reminded the public of the Jewish soldiers, most of them still not naturalized, who had served and died for the United States. In a response to an article that appeared in *Life Magazine* on Jews' lack of any national feelings, Marshall insisted that they "by deed and word [...] have loyally supported the Government in every measure undertaken for the national defense. Their love for America is the more intense because of what America has been to them. It opened to them the gates of hope and bestowed the sweets of Liberty."⁶² Similarly, during the congressional debates on the United States' entry into the war, New York Representative Fiorello La Guardia told his fellow Congressmen that he could "vouch for the Italian residents of this country" that they were "are eager, willing, and anxious to fight [...] under the American flag."⁶³ In the same debate, La Guardia also pointed out to his colleagues

⁶⁰ "Netherlands Report to the Department of State," quoted in Senate Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, "Emergency Immigration Legislation," Hearings on H.R. 14461, January 3, 1921, 66th Congress, 3rd Session (Washington, DC: GOP, 1921), 21.

⁶¹ Ross, *The Old World in the New*, 112.

⁶² Louis Marshall, "The Jewish Mind in these States—An Answer," no date, Louis Marshall Papers, Collection 359, series C, box 19, file 3, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College.

⁶³ La Guardia quoted in Thomas Kessner, *Fiorello H. La Guardia and the Making of Modern New York* (New York: McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, 1989), 44.

that Italian voters were no longer to be taken for granted on the floor of the House, denying insinuations that Italians in America were hiding to avoid the draft in Italy.

Italians and Jews' ability to vote also drew criticisms. One of the most vigorous attacks on immigrant politics came directly from a once leading member of the Italian community. In the early nineteen-tens, Gino Speranza switched from being a defender of immigrants to a supporter of Anglo-Saxonism. In his *Race and Nation*, Speranza ferociously attacked the power of the immigrant vote:

The essential danger in that race issue, lies in the fact that we have armed these heterogeneous non-American stocks with a political weapon which many of them are congenially unprepared to use, and by legislative fiat clothed legions of them with an "equality" which flies in the face of nature and of their history.⁶⁴

In his book, Speranza tied Eastern and Southern Europeans' inability to appreciate the American political process to their "abysmal ethnic, cultural and historic differences" and to racial characteristics that never died out and were transmitted from generation to generation practically unchanged. In addition to this, he concluded, "Consider that the easy and rapid means of international communication to-day powerfully tend to keep the alien under the influences of his original civilization; and the conclusion seems unavoidable that the possibility of even an approximation to real national absorption is practically nullified."⁶⁵ For him, the war represented the best example of the persistence and force of pre-natal, racial ideas and mental outlook.⁶⁶ Soon after the war ended, in fact, many anti-restrictionists denounced the "intrusion" of Jewish politicians as part of an international Jewish conspiracy to take over the world.

The attacks on their use of the vote was particularly distressing for Italian Americans, who had only recently entered the political sphere. Before the outbreak of the war, very few

⁶⁴ Gino Speranza, *Race or Nation. A Conflict of Divided Loyalties* (Indianapolis, IN: The Bobbs-Merrill Company Publishers, 1923), 30.

⁶⁵ Speranza, *Race or Nation*, 32-33.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 195.

Italian American politicians could be found in office, yet in 1917, New York Republicans had fifteen Italian candidates for the New York Assembly. Italian voters were so eager to have a voice in the political arena that they often voted for Italian candidates independently of their affiliation. "The differences of the political [parties]," wrote the *Bollettino della Sera* during the 1917 elections, "should not hinder Italian voters from voting for their countrymen [...] the need to make our reputation and to win greater prestige are more urgent than the differences of the parties."⁶⁷ Despite their efforts to seek election, Italian politicians still remained few and far between. Fiorello La Guardia's extraordinary ascent to power represented the exception rather than the norm.

The bitterness of the attacks against the Jewish vote created a rift within the Jewish community as well. Affluent Jewish leaders of German descent, including Louis Marshall, Oscar Straus, and Simon Wolf, repeatedly insisted in public that there was no such thing as a Jewish vote and cautioned the rest of the community that Jewish bloc-voting could have dangerous ramifications by stimulating anti-Jewish counter-voting. Always in favor of silent diplomacy rather than open attacks, they preferred to use the specter of the Jewish vote in private conversations or in private correspondence to bring pressure in favor of issues relevant to the Jewish community. In a remark to President Coolidge's secretary, Louis Marshall, aware of his influence within his community, observed: "I am not a politician, but you are possibly aware that a man's political influence is not to be measured by his blatancy or by his activity in seeking office."⁶⁸ Eastern European Jews, on the other hand, tended to be more outspoken and endorsed people like Israel Zangwill who, during a speech at Carnegie Hall, caustically remarked: "If

⁶⁷ *Bollettino della Sera*, October 28, 1923 quoted in Thomas M. Henderson, "Immigrant Politician: Salvatore Cotillo, Progressive Ethnic," *International Migration Review* 13, no 1 (Spring 1979), 86.

⁶⁸ Quoted in Morton Rosenstock, *Louis Marshall, Defender of Jewish Rights* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1965), 55.

there is no Jewish vote today [...] it is a disgrace, not a policy to be commended. If Jews will neither use their vote to protect themselves nor to express their ethical conceptions, then they do but cumber the ground."⁶⁹ While Marshall and his colleagues at the American Jewish Committee rejected Zangwill's remarks and warned that they could only fuel more anti-Semitism, other prominent Jewish leaders, including Stephen Wise, applauded his appeal.

Despite the differences in the criticisms about their loyalty, the two groups responded in exactly the same way. Both communities deemed ignorance of their cultures and lack of integration into the fabric of social and communal life as the source of their problems. Thus, starting in the late 1910s through the vehement and corrosive attacks against them in the 1920s, Italian and Jewish elites "interpreted" their culture, their traditions, and their origins to a wider American audience to explain how they reconciled their Jewishness and their *Italianità* with their loyalty to America. At the same time, many of these leaders recognized that government-sponsored Americanization programs were often characterized by a veiled racism, so they began to promote naturalization and Americanization programs sponsored by their own communities to press them to become the epitome of patriotic, virtuous, and exemplary Americans. Cotillo, La Guardia, Marshall, and Straus all publicly appealed to their communities to make a greater effort to reconcile their traditions with their life in the new world, but they also argued that it was Americans' unwillingness to know the new immigrants better and appreciate their role in American society that created prejudice and discrimination. "The cure for this astonishing ignorance and indifference toward the immigrant," wrote Congregationalist pastor and president of the United Societies of Christian Endeavor Francis E. Clark about Italians in the United States, "is simply larger information and better acquaintance." More in-depth knowledge and acquaintance with the new immigrants, he insisted, would refute many biases against them and

⁶⁹ Israel Zangwill quoted in Rosenstock, *Louis Marshall*, 56.

show that "he is a human being of like passions with ourselves."⁷⁰ In a similar vein, when the U.S. Senate Committee on Immigration and Naturalization asked Marshall to comment on the allegedly weak Americanization among Jewish immigrants, Marshall replied, "A man is not assimilated because he wears certain clothes or cuts his beard just the way the average man does, or even because he speaks the same language; assimilation is after all a matter of the heart and of the mind."⁷¹

The attacks on their loyalty and their voting complicated Italian and Jewish attempts to counteract the calls for immigration restriction. As the hearings for the literacy test bill began, American Jews decided to change their tactics and focus on containing the damage that the passage of the law could cause to future Jewish immigrants. Marshall decided to try "to gain Congressional acceptance of his proposed exemption clause to the literacy test, providing for the entry of illiterate immigrants who were fleeing religious persecution."⁷² Representative John Burnett of Alabama, Chairman of the House Immigration and Naturalization Committee, declared he was willing to negotiate with Marshall. He hoped that complying with Marshall's proposal would weaken the anti-restrictionists' protests and rally enough support from Congress to override President Wilson's expected veto on the bill. Burnett and the AJC leaders never formally reached an agreement, but in January 1916, the House Committee made a major concession to the Jewish lobbyists when it conceded that people seeking admission into the country because of religious persecution could be exempted from taking the literacy test. Marshall was hoping the exclusion would include people persecuted for political reasons as well, but Congress rejected the proposal because it feared an influx of Mexican revolutionaries. While

⁷⁰ Francis E. Clark, *Our Italian Fellow Citizens in Their Old Homes and Their New* (Boston, MA: Small, Maynard & Company, 1912. Reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1975), vi-vii.

⁷¹ Louis Marshall, "Hearings before the Committee on Immigration United States Senate," 1921, 104.

⁷² Goldstein, "Ethnic politics," 44.

Marshall appreciated Congress's concession, Schiff advocated that AJC should still oppose the Burnett bill and fight for a more liberal exclusion clause that would include political persecution as well. Yet they ultimately decided to stay away from the debates in Congress so as not to jeopardize the concession they had obtained.⁷³

The inclusion of the religious exemption clause in the Burnett bill made the debate even more contentious. Many of the restrictionists who testified in Congress and the press argued that Jewish lobbyists were gaining special favors and considered the inclusion of the religious persecution exemption further reason to restrict immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe. Worried that Burnett might take out the provision, Marshall wrote to him to point out that the clause would not benefit just Russian Jews but also Finns, Letts, and Armenians. After the House and the Senate passed the law, Marshall mobilized to muster support for President Wilson's veto. He asked Adolph Ochs to write an editorial in the *New York Times* endorsing the president's probable action; asked for the support of Cardinal Gibbons; secured the names of doubtful representatives to apply pressure on them; and, finally, sent a letter to all AJC members urging them to write to their congressmen. The House voted 287 to 106 to override President Wilson's veto on the bill, which in its final version still included the exemption for religious persecution. For the Jewish lobbyists, the clause represented a small victory within a larger defeat.⁷⁴

Only isolated voices represented the Italian community during the mobilization against the literacy test. Their two major spokespersons were Fiorello La Guardia and New York State Senator Salvatore Cotillo. Both politicians vehemently criticized the calls for a literacy test to restrict immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe. Their efforts came to a halt after the

⁷³ See Cohen, *Not Free to Desist*; Goldstein, "Ethnic politics;" and Gerald Sorin, *A Time for Building: The Third Migration, 1880-1920* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

⁷⁴ See Cohen, *Not Free to Desist*; Goldstein, "Ethnic politics;" and Sorin, *A Time for Building*.

Austro-Hungarian forces defeated the Italian army in the Battle of Caporetto in the fall of 1917. The widespread disaffection among Italians after Caporetto convinced the United States government that this could seriously harm the final outcome of the war. Italians in Italy, in fact, blamed the tragic defeat of Caporetto less on the weakness of Italian leadership than on the Allies. In their opinion, the United States had failed to provide Italy with the sorely needed supplies and obstinately opposed the creation of a war council. The disillusionment that followed Caporetto led many to consider the possibility of a separate peace or even of surrender. The Axis powers encouraged these frustrations by telling Italians that Italy was "the forgotten ally" of the Entente and that the United States supplied the bulk of its assistance and provisions to England and France.⁷⁵ To remedy this crisis of credibility the United States government recruited Cotillo and La Guardia to travel to Italy and convince Italians of the undivided support of the United States in their war effort.⁷⁶ Putting Italy's interests first, Cotillo and La Guardia's missions to Italy effectively concluded Italians' opposition to the literacy.

The end of World War One marked the end of any hope for success for anti-restrictionists. The fear of an imminent invasion from Southern and Eastern Europe and the obsession with the infiltration of radical ideologies in the United States unleashed a new and more aggressive restrictionist campaign. The post-war calls for restriction left little room for compromises:

A change has occurred since the armistice. Chauvinistic nationalism is rampant. The hatred of everything that is foreign has become an obsession. The labor conditions accentuate this extraordinary phenomenon, and it requires unusual courage for a member of Congress to withstand the pressure that is brought to bear upon him to bring about a cessation of immigration. This has led to a virtual stampede.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Sterba, *Good Americans*, chapter 6.

⁷⁶ Nat J. Ferber, *A New American: From the Life Story of Salvatore A. Cotillo, Supreme Court Justice, State of New York* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1938), 93; and Kessner, *Fiorello H. La Guardia*, 46.

⁷⁷ Quoted in Rosenstock, *Louis Marshall*, 232.

The passage of the Immigration Act of 1917 with its literacy test, which limited immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe, and its creation of the "Asiatic Barred Zone," which banned immigration from Eastern Asia and the Pacific Islands, galvanized restrictionist groups. Starting in 1918, restrictionists, taking advantage of the mood of the nation, strongly pushed for emergency legislation to halt immigration.⁷⁸

From the Literacy Test to the First Quota System

The Immigration Act of 1917 did not satisfy restrictionists. Although the literacy test effectively reduced the number of Italian and Polish immigrants that entered the United States, it barely curtailed the flow of Russian Jews, who tended to be more literate but also benefited more from the exemption clause for religiously persecuted migrants for which the American Jewish Committee had lobbied during the debate on the new immigration bill. Restrictionists also complained that, contrary to what they had anticipated, the test hardly discouraged immigrants from leaving their countries because of their illiteracy. As early as 1918, many restrictionists lamented the failure of the Immigration Act of 1917 to limit the arrivals of Southern and Eastern European immigrants. Many critics complained that it was "a big joke" because it was "qualitative and fixed no numerical limit to immigration."⁷⁹ Emboldened by their victory in 1917, as soon as the war ended, restrictionists declared that the state of emergency that followed the end of the war called for unprecedented measures:

It was evident that fully two millions would be willing and able to come each year for several years against which the literacy and other tests would afford only a frail barrier. Here was an emergency. There was little or no time for an intelligent or logical study of

⁷⁸ Quoted in Rosenstock, *Louis Marshall*, 215.

⁷⁹ Roy L. Garis, *Immigration Restriction: A Study of the Opposition to and Regulation of Immigration into the United States* (New York: The McMillan Company, 1927), 131.

the question. It would take several years to do that; but in the meantime drastic numerical or quantitative restrictions were necessary.⁸⁰

The unfounded fear that a disproportionate number of immigrants would soon arrive in the United States and the virulence of the attacks against Southern and Eastern European communities already in the country defeated any rational argument that anti-restrictionist groups presented. Italian and Jewish groups, along with their supporters, began to fear early on that further restriction was inevitable.

Although both sides published books supporting their position, spoke in public to champion their agenda, and defended their stance in newspapers columns, ultimately, the battle over the first quota system unfolded in the halls of Congress during congressional hearings. A comparison between the Italian and the Jewish participation at the hearings that the U.S. Senate Committee held on the quota system bill from January 3 to January 26, 1921, reveals a strikingly different degree of organization and cohesiveness between the two groups. Whereas Italians had only Louis J. Scaramelli, president of the Italian Chamber of Commerce in New York City, to defend their points of views and voice their concerns, the Jewish community had Louis Marshall representing the American Jewish Committee, Judge Leon Sanders for the Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Society of America, Max Pine representing the United Hebrew Trades-Union Immigration Bureau and the United Hebrew Trade, John Bernstein on behalf of the Hebrew Sheltering Aid Society, and Morris Rothenberg representing the American Jewish Congress. The substantial numerical difference of testimonies in Congress ultimately damaged both groups. If it perhaps revealed the political inexperience or lack of leadership on the part of the Italian front, it also confirmed to many restrictionists that the fight against restriction was essentially a

⁸⁰ Garis, *Immigration Restriction*, 142.

"Jewish cause" paid by "Hebrew money" "to control the immigration policy of the United States" as part of an international Jewish conspiracy.⁸¹

During the hearings, Italian and Jewish witnesses questioned the existence of an immigration emergency from Europe. As Louis Marshall pointed out in his testimony, by 1921 it was time to declare over the emergency connected to the war and to focus on "our old-fashioned way of thinking on constitutional questions and on questions of human rights and on questions of public policy."⁸² The most recent statistics, Marshall and his colleagues pointed out, showed that the number of immigrants leaving the country was higher than the number of immigrants entering the country, thus disproving the existence of an immigration emergency. Statistics in hand, Judge Leon Sanders told the committee that between January 1, 1920 and November 30, 1920, 439,653 immigrants arrived and 280,165 left the United States:⁸³

The present flow of immigration is by no means abnormal. It is but deferred or postponed immigration. The immigrants who are coming here now would have come during the last six years had traveling conditions between Europe and this country been normal.⁸⁴

Italian and Jewish witnesses told the senators on the committee that many of the recently arrived immigrants were simply people who had planned to leave Europe before the war, as many of them had pre-paid tickets or declared that their relatives already in the United States had sent for them before the war made their trip impossible. "The present immigration," Judge Sanders noted, was "a reunion of families, a rehabilitation of broken-up homes, and, hence, the greatest case of constructive relief work."⁸⁵ Moreover, he added, the large presence among the recent arrivals of women and children who arrived in the United States to join their fathers or husbands

⁸¹ Ross, *The Old World in the New*, 144.

⁸² Louis Marshall, "Hearings before the Committee on Immigration United States Senate," 1921, Louis Marshall Papers, Collection 359, series C, box 19, file 3, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College.

⁸³ Leon Sanders, U.S. Senate Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, "Emergency Immigration Legislation," Hearings on H.R. 14461, January 3, 1921.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

who were American citizens or had declared their intention to naturalize further challenged any claims of an imminent immigrant invasion.

The witnesses' emphasis on family reunification in the postwar wave of immigration was also meant to assuage American labor's fear of competition. As during previous debates on immigration restriction and exclusion, the American Federation of Labor once again contended that restriction was necessary because it was the only way to stop the new immigrants from displacing American workers. In response to the AFL's concerns, Italian and Jewish witnesses in Congress testified that immigrants arriving from Europe could not have any other reason but to join their relatives in the United States since the American economy was experiencing an impasse. "An oversupplied labor market here," Scaramelli noted, automatically stopped "further emigration. This has been illustrated in more than one occasion."⁸⁶ The AFL's outcry, Marshall, Scaramelli, Sanders and the others argued, only confirmed this was the case. Whenever there were periods of economic depression, Marshall observed, "there was more or less of an outcry against the immigrants."⁸⁷ Family reunification, not the attractiveness of the American economy, was behind the current immigration to the United States.

If numbers and statistics could not convince the Senate Committee that an immigration emergency did not exist, the witnesses hoped that history could. During their statements, they all pointed to the inconsistencies that a restrictive immigration policy would entail when considered in light of the United States' immigrant past and its tradition as a haven of the downtrodden. Observing that during the last presidential elections, both Wilson and Hughes had at least one immigrant parent, Marshall insisted that the same people who in 1921 cried that a flood of destructive aliens was about to descend upon the United States to ruin its well-being forgot "that

⁸⁶ Louis Scaramelli in U.S. Senate Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, "Emergency Immigration Legislation," Hearings on H.R. 14461, January 3, 1921.

⁸⁷ Louis Marshall, "Hearings before the Committee on Immigration United States Senate," 1921.

in the last century probably 75 per cent of the population of this country has descended from immigrants."⁸⁸ Moreover, Scaramelli observed, these critics intentionally chose to overlook the contributions that these immigrants had made to the growth of the United States:

Let us not lose sight of the fact that [...] the remarkable progress of the past few decades could not have been accomplished but for the vast army of toilers who came to this country looking for opportunity, and who, when given the chance, have made good.⁸⁹

The extensive literature on the contributions of the new immigrants that both communities and their supporters produced testifies to their willingness to oppose accusations of being a disruptive force in America with positive and constructive arguments rather than all-out attacks on their opponents.⁹⁰

In and out of Congress, the insistence on equating the old and new immigrants and on comparing their contributions to America represented a major point of conflict between restrictionists and anti-restrictionists. In fact, as soon as Marshall extolled the virtues of the new immigrants, the chairman rebuked him for it and asked how he could not see the obvious differences between Northern European immigrants and Eastern and Southern European immigrants. Taking his argument further, the chairman asked Marshall how he could not realize that the 'new' immigrants were not as readily assimilable as those of the earlier immigration coming from northern Europe, the Scandinavian countries, Germany, and Great Britain. Both Marshall and Scaramelli argued that if the new immigrants did not assimilate as the old ones, it was because their receiving country had failed them and not because they did not want to belong to their newly adopted homeland:

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Louis Scaramelli, U.S. Senate Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, "Emergency Immigration Legislation," Hearings on H.R. 14461, January 3, 1921.

⁹⁰ On Italian immigrants, see Clark, *Our Italian Fellow Citizens*; Antonio Mangano, *Sons of Italy: A Social and Religious Study of the Italians in America* (New York: Missionary Education Movement of the United States and Canada, 1917); Constantine M. Panunzio, *Immigration Crossroads* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1927); Constantine M. Panunzio, *The Soul of an Immigrant* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1921); and Antonio Stella, *Some Aspects of Italian Immigration to the United States* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1924).

The treatment of the newcomer has not been in the past always as happy as it might have been. Discontent, resentment, and even lack of American spirit has sometimes been allowed to breed in the newly arrived immigrant, not because he was so by nature but because he was driven by hard circumstances. A contented man always makes the best citizen, and this hold with equal truth to the newly arrived alien.⁹¹

Exploitation, deception, rejection, discrimination, and vituperation of their origin at the hands of Americans certainly did not help them feel as full-fledged members of American society. That these immigrants and naturalized aliens, Marshall and Scaramelli observed, were nonetheless willing to serve and give their lives for their newly adopted country only attested to their willingness to be active and contributing members of American society despite how poorly American society treated them.

When all other arguments in favor of an open door immigration policy failed, the witnesses observed that quantitative immigration restriction was unnecessary because the existing qualitative restrictions already sufficed to bar unwanted and unwelcome immigrants. None of the Italian and Jewish witnesses opposed any of these measures, and they all insisted that they already successfully reduced the number of unwelcome people to the country. "What we need today," stated Scaramelli, "is not prohibition of immigration, but proper regulation, selection, and distribution of the immigrants."⁹² If the country invested more money to build more inspection facilities and to hire more inspectors and physicians, the likelihood to admit more undesirables would practically amount to zero. Most of all, they pleaded for personnel knowledgeable of the workings of the immigration laws in place to avoid the many injustices that immigrants currently faced because of the immigration personnel's incompetence. "Have more men," suggested Marshall, "have enough inspectors; and what is more have the right kind of inspectors, men who have sufficient intelligence to pass upon the application of the laws [...],

⁹¹ Statement of Louis Scaramelli in U.S. Senate Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, "Emergency Immigration Legislation," Hearings on H.R. 14461, January 3, 1921, 82.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 81.

and not men who merely perform their duties perfunctorily."⁹³ Widening the issue to the international sphere, Scaramelli argued that the existing immigration laws could become even more effective and guarantee the arrival of only desirable immigrants if the United States began collaborating with the sending countries on immigration to stipulate bilateral agreements that regulated the labor flow between the two countries involved. These treaties, Scaramelli insisted, would foster good relations with sending countries, and most of all, they would guarantee the admission of only "the proper timber."⁹⁴

Amidst Italians and Jews' efforts to mobilize against restriction, a third, and not always welcome, ally emerged to advocate for their cause, the Italian government. Yet as they had already done in the past, Italian government representatives often gave precedence to Italy's national interests rather than to the protection of Italian immigrants rights and welfare abroad. In many cases, the Italian government's pressure to limit the impact of restriction on Italian emigration often harmed Italian Americans' mobilization and irritated many members of Congress, who reacted to Italy's insistence with a stronger desire to approve stricter immigration laws. Moreover, many of Italy's proposals to address the American immigration problem without penalizing the sending countries often reminded congressmen, especially Representative Albert Johnson, of the unsavory negotiations with Japan about Japanese immigration at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Starting in November 1920, Adolfo Vinci, royal counselor of emigration at the Italian Embassy in Washington D.C., and Giuseppe De Michelis, Commissioner of Emigration in Rome, began an intense and frantic exchange of letters to decide on the best course of action to

⁹³ Louis Marshall, "Hearings before the Committee on Immigration United States Senate," 1921, p. 114, Louis Marshall Papers, Collection 359, Series C, box 19, file 3, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College.

⁹⁴ Statement of Louis Scaramelli in U.S. Senate Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, "Emergency Immigration Legislation," Hearings on H.R. 14461, January 3, 1921, 83.

address the immigration restriction bills pending in the United States Congress. In November 1920, Vinci traveled to New York City to attend a conference on immigration with the express intent to meet Representative Albert Johnson from Washington.⁹⁵ Already from this first meeting, both Vinci and De Michelis realized that immigration restriction had become unavoidable. Certain that the Jewish community would protest any restrictive immigration bill, the two officials decided that they needed to negotiate privately the best possible deal for Italy's emigration, evidently convinced that their opinion would sway American politicians to be magnanimous towards Italian immigrants if they intervened:

I believe that our self-restrained conduct [...] would provide us with a privileged position whenever the time comes (and I do not think it will be long) to negotiate on the future criteria of acceptance of prospective immigrants from Italy. [...] I would not recommend raising too many objections—a very violent opposition will in any case occur, especially from the Jews who are supported by powerful Israelite financiers in the United States—not to raise the suspicion that our opposition derives from internal political necessities and from the desire to liberate ourselves of politically and socially dangerous elements.⁹⁶

From the first meeting with Johnson, Vinci began to negotiate for Italian emigration. He immediately suggested that, if Johnson's bill passed, Congress should allow for a period of adjustment to elapse between the ratification of the new policy and its implementation so that the sending countries had time to adapt to the new criteria and avoid a sudden and potentially damaging arrest of their emigration. The mere consideration of his proposal did not come without a price. Vinci, in fact, had to promise Johnson that the Italian government would not oppose any provision requiring the registration of all foreigners in the United States to discipline and follow "the movements of the foreign element in the country."⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Vinci to De Michelis, November 20, 1920, Fondo Commissariato Generale dell'Emigrazione, busta 55, foglio 351, Archivio Storico degli Affari Esteri, Rome, Italy.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Vinci to De Michelis, November 20, 1920, Fondo Commissariato Generale dell'Emigrazione, busta 55, foglio 351, Archivio Storico degli Affari Esteri. Despite the representative's seemingly conciliatory attitude during this first meeting with Vinci, Johnson scarcely took into consideration Vinci's proposals and promises. In his testimony in front of the Senate Committee on Immigration on January 3, 1921, Johnson openly displayed his contempt for

Vinci's confidence in his ability to persuade Johnson stemmed from his incapacity to grasp that Italians represented one of the primary targets of the proposed legislation. In his opinion, Johnson's commitment to restriction derived from "the necessity for the United States [...] to defend itself from an invasion of immigrants (especially of Israelites from Eastern Europe) considered dangerous propagandists of extremist ideas" and "to put to rest for a while the issue—so politically dangerous—with Japan [...], stopping all immigration [from Asia] without any discrimination of origin or race."⁹⁸ This conviction led him to believe that the American government could still exempt Italian immigrants from the national origins quota system. With cautious approval from Rome, Vinci proposed that the United States stipulate agreements with foreign sending countries to establish the qualifications and number of immigrants allowed to migrate in accordance with the United States' demand for laborers. The proposal also entailed that the United States selected prospective immigrants according to their skills and based on the industries' demand. The immigrants would arrive through labor contracts with specific industries and work according to union rights and standards to avoid any further conflict with American unions, especially the American Federation of Labor.⁹⁹ Vinci firmly believed that if industrialists selected how many and which immigrants to let into the country, they would undoubtedly choose Italians in overwhelming numbers.

Vinci's meddling in American immigration policy. To Senator Phelan's inquiry about whether or not it was true that the Italian government had an agent in the United States opposing the pending immigration bill, Johnson caustically replied, "in the United States there is such an agent, who is the counselor for the emigration at the Italian Embassy, and he begged me that this bill be not made effective for six months." In a follow-up comment on the Italian counselor, Johnson subsequently observed that Vinci's involvement undoubtedly testified to Italy's interests and advantages to have its nationals come to the United States. Senate Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, "Emergency Immigration Legislation," Hearings on H.R. 14461, January 3, 1921, 30.

⁹⁸ Vinci to De Michelis, November 20, 1920, Fondo Commissariato Generale dell'Emigrazione, busta 55, foglio 351, Archivio Storico degli Affari Esteri.

⁹⁹ Vinci to De Michelis, December 16, 1920, Fondo Commissariato Generale dell'Emigrazione, busta 55, foglio 351, Archivio Storico degli Affari Esteri.

Industrialists' endorsement of this plan, Vinci hoped, represented an extraordinary resource to convince the incoming new Republican Congress and president to adopt a more lenient immigration policy, since traditionally Republicans complied with the industrialists' agendas.¹⁰⁰ He contacted prominent industrialists and representatives of ship lines to test the ground for his proposal. The industrialists were enthusiastic about it and offered their support if the plan arrived in Congress. This initial success convinced Vinci and De Michelis to present their proposal to Rhode Island Senator and Chairman of the Senate Committee on Immigration LeBaron Colt and Commissioner of Immigration Anthony Caminetti. Both men appeared to consider seriously the idea of an agreement between the two countries to solve the immigration problem. Their cautious endorsement of Vinci's proposal convinced the Italian government to demonstrate with a concrete token of appreciation its commitment to finding an alternative to restriction and its willingness to negotiate an agreement. On December 17, 1920, Vinci informed Norman H. Davis, acting Secretary of State, that the Italian government had just "suspended the issuance of passports to subjects emigrating to the United States, and [would] refrain from issuing such passports until informed as to the classes of immigrants desired into this country."¹⁰¹ In a last attempt, Vinci told De Michelis to pressure future New York Immigration Commissioner Robert E. Tod to consider the idea of stipulating labor contracts or a guest worker program for Italian migrants wishing to work in the United States during his upcoming trip to Europe to assess the status of European emigration on behalf of Representative Johnson and his immigration committee.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Vinci to De Michelis, December 16, 1920; Vinci to De Michelis, January 28, 1921, Fondo Commissariato Generale dell'Emigrazione, busta 55, foglio 351, Archivio Storico degli Affari Esteri.

¹⁰¹ Vinci to Davis, December 17, 1920 in Senate Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, "Emergency Immigration Legislation," Hearings on H.R. 14461, January 3, 1921, 57.

¹⁰² Vinci to De Michelis, May 28, 1921, Fondo Commissariato Generale dell'Emigrazione, busta 55, foglio 351, Archivio Storico degli Affari Esteri. In this letter, Vinci suggests that the idea of talking to Tod about the possibility of instituting labor contracts came from Frances Kellor.

Senator Colt seriously considered Vinci's proposal as a viable alternative to the quota system. In fact, he decided to bring it up for discussion during Representative Johnson's testimony at the hearings for the pending immigration bill. He told Johnson that he had heard that the government of Italy was to ready to suspend the issuance of passports, thus "suspending emigration from Italy, with a view of entering into cooperation with the United States to the end that Italy might supply such immigrants, peoples of such classes, as this country might desire."¹⁰³ Johnson's reply not only shed light on the representative's real feelings about Vinci but also on the restrictionists' conviction that immigration was a domestic problem in which foreign governments should not meddle:

The rumor has run all over Italy, and other countries as well, that the United States would suspend all immigration by January 1, 1921. That rumor created great excitement throughout Italy, and some semiofficial statements by the Italian Government were made along the lines the chairman has mentioned. But in the meantime a representative of the Government of Italy is here, spending much time around steamship offices in New York, and he is begging that the time allowance of this bill, which is 60 days, be made six months, in order to permit Italy to send to this country those of its people already in line for passports. This would rather indicate that Italy could not shut the movement off quickly.¹⁰⁴

To support his statement and reiterate the importance of immigration restriction, Johnson provided the Senate committee members with American consular agents' reports on the applicants for passports to the United States. The reports stressed that Italian applicants were "inimical to the best interests of the United States" because they had standards of living and "characteristics" that rendered them unassimilable, belonged to the undesirable "peasant class," were illiterate, poverty-stricken because of the war, and had "socialistic ideas."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Senate Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, "Emergency Immigration Legislation," Hearings on H.R. 14461, January 3, 1921, 7-8.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁰⁵ Senate Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, "Emergency Immigration Legislation," Hearings on H.R. 14461, January 3, 1921, 10-11. The same reports classified Jewish migrants as illiterates, "physically deficient," living in squalor and filth, and "reduced to an unprecedented state of life during the period of the war as the result of

General Commissioner of Immigration Anthony Caminetti further corroborated Johnson's statements during his testimony to the Senate Committee on Immigration in January 1921. During his two-day interview, Caminetti applauded the sending countries' efforts to abide by U.S. immigration laws and to collaborate with U.S. immigration authorities to select prospective migrants to the United States carefully, but he also told the committee that these efforts could scarcely prevent the imminent flood of immigration to the United States.¹⁰⁶ To Colt's comments on Caminetti's lack of any hard evidence to support his conclusions on the trend of European immigration, Caminetti responded that migrants in Europe were only waiting for traveling conditions to improve and for naval traffic to the United States to resume at full speed. As a confirmation of this, he added that, during his recent trip to Europe, official and unofficial sources had informed him of the lucrative traffic of fake passports with fake visas to emigrate to the United States, of the large number of agencies proclaiming to assist immigrants to leave for the United States for money, and of the many non-profit Jewish agencies that were preparing to assist Eastern European Jews to settle in the United States.¹⁰⁷

Ultimately, no argument or defense persuaded Congress to reconsider its approach to immigration and look for a less drastic solution. If anything, the Italian government's machinations only exacerbated congressmen's commitment to immigration restriction. On May 19, 1921, Congress passed the Emergency Immigration Act of 1921, which limited the annual number of immigrants admissible from any country to 3 per cent of the number of persons from each country living in the United States according to 1910 census. Of the 357,802 total, the law

the oppression and the war," economically, politically, and socially undesirable, "mentally deficient," and unassimilable.

¹⁰⁶ W. B. Wilson to Caminetti, June 24, 1920 in Senate Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, "Emergency Immigration Legislation," Hearings on H.R. 14461, January 25, 1921, 569-570.

¹⁰⁷ Senate Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, "Emergency Immigration and Naturalization," Hearings on H.R. 14461, January 25, 1921, 574-578; and Senate Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, "Emergency Immigration Legislation," Hearings on H.R. 14461, January 26, 1921, 594-595.

allocated slightly over half the number to immigrants from Northern and Western Europe and the remainder to Southern and Eastern Europe. Although intended as temporary legislation, the law "proved in the long run the most important turning-point in American immigration history" because it imposed numerical limits on immigration for the first time.¹⁰⁸

Immigration at a Crossroads: Reacting to the 1921 Immigration Act

When Congress passed the 1921 Immigration Act, few anticipated the problems, inefficiencies, and injustices that the haste with which legislators had drafted the first national-origins quota system would cause to many immigrants. The new law unleashed "the race of races." Laden with immigrants, "steamers raced madly in order to reach the various United States ports" before the quotas were filled. Many immigrants with their visa in hand landed in the United States only to be rejected because the quota for that month had been already filled:

The height of absurdity was reached in the case of a group of immigrants who arrived on June 30, 1922, the last day of the fiscal year, a few hours before the new quotas for another fiscal year would be available. They were counted as having arrived in the old year after the quota was filled and required, in order to gain admission, to return to the old country and then come back again and make another application under the new quota.¹⁰⁹

From June 3 to June 30, 1921, the first twenty-seven days of operation of the 1921 Immigration Act, more than 10,000 aliens arrived at United States ports *in excess of the quotas*. By the end of 1921, the authorities deported 2,680 persons for the sole reason that they were in excess of quota. An executive order subsequently allowed 10,000 surplus immigrants to enter the country and during Christmas week of 1921, 1,000 more excess-quota immigrants were admitted as an act of "Christmas good will."

¹⁰⁸ Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 311.

¹⁰⁹ Panunzio, *Immigration Crossroads*, 101-02.

Less than a week after the passage of the law, anti-restrictionists were back in Congress to protest against the inadequacy of the emergency immigration act. On June 10, 1921, the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization scheduled a hearing to decide whether to authorize the admission of immigrants brought to the United States on vessels which had departed from foreign ports on or before June 8 and count them against future quotas or pass a resolution applying the 2 per cent plan to the June quota, as the new law prescribed. The confusion arose from the fact that many immigrants and the representatives of the countries from which they came were under the assumption that the 2 per cent quota was monthly and not yearly. When asked if the Department of Labor knew if the steamship companies realized that the new system was already in place when they sailed from Europe, Commissioner General of Immigration W. W. Husband testified that the cases of Italy and Poland, the countries that the new policy affected the most, illustrated well the source of the mishap. In the case of Poland, Husband told the committee, the large presence of excess quota immigrants originated from the shift of the country's borders after the settlement at the end of the war. Because the Department of Labor did not find out about the new boundaries of Poland until June 2, 1921, they could not issue the official annual quota for Poland until then. The new quota for Poland dropped from the expected 58,000 to 20,000 per year, thus penalizing all the migrants already on board steamship lines headed towards the United States. In spite of the problems this created, American immigration authorities were more lenient towards the Polish government because overall it "was not inclined to have [its] nationals come to the United States." The government, of course, made a notable exception, as E. J. Henning, Assistant Secretary of Labor, pointed out: "Poland proper does not issue passports; at least, they are not granted to Poles. They are the Jewish

residents who get passports, and it is more or less a race question, and Poland is trying to eliminate certain races from Poland."¹¹⁰

Commissioner Husband was not as understanding when he addressed the Italian case. Husband belied that, in Italy, the steamship lines, "must have known that the law was going to be enacted at a very early date [...] they had ample opportunity to keep within the Italian quota, but they apparently elected not to do so."¹¹¹ In Husband's and many of the committee members' minds, the callousness of the Italian steamship companies, in part, derived from the Italian government's slow regulation and control over the migration process from Italy. The frustration with the Italian government was such that one of the committee members, Representative John Raker from California, even proposed to enact stricter regulations specific to Italian immigration. More than anything else, Raker resented the Italian government for pushing the State Department to admit all the Italian immigrants arrived above the quota for the month June. "Do I understand," Raker asked Harry McBride, State Department Chief Visa Division, "that the Italian Government is dealing through the Secretary of State to this Government to admit these Italians and their nationals, to be entered and coming as they are when their own nationals, knowing the law, knowing that they can not be admitted, are bringing them over here?"¹¹² Although a few American officers praised the Italian government's recent efforts to regulate and supervise Italian

¹¹⁰ Senate Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, "Admission of Aliens in Excess of Percentage Quotas for June," Hearings, 105. Henning's statement contrasted with Marshall's optimism during his testimony in Congress about the American Jewish Committee's successful efforts to pressure the Polish government to eliminate its discriminatory policies against Polish Jews. Marshall went so far as to guarantee that Polish Jews would not have any reason to migrate to the United States anymore since their main reason for emigration, discrimination, had ended.

¹¹¹ Senate Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, "Admission of Aliens in Excess of Percentage Quotas for June," Hearings, June 10, 1921, 67th Congress, 1st Session (Washington, DC: GPO, 1921), 82.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 114.

emigration, most people in the government and in Congress openly condemned Italy's intrusion in what they considered American domestic affairs.¹¹³

In addition to highlighting congressmen and immigration authorities' position on sending countries, the hearing also represented the first moment of protest against the 1921 Immigration Act. Among those who testified in front of the committee were State Senator Andrew Casassa and ex Representative Vincent Brogna from Massachusetts who spoke on behalf of the 1,040 Italian and 125 Portuguese immigrants left on board of the *Canopic* in the port of Boston because American immigration authorities refused to admit them. In their testimony, they said that they had come to Washington, DC, to urge Congress to present a proposal for "an amendment of the present law restricting the admission of a certain number of Italian immigrants during the remainder of the present fiscal year ending June 30" on behalf of the attendees of a mass meeting held in Boston's North End the day before the hearing.¹¹⁴ Their presence at the hearing was part of a larger strategy conceived at the meeting that also entailed asking the presidents of Italian societies throughout New England to write to their representatives to urge them to intervene to amend the new immigration law.¹¹⁵

Brogna and Casassa's testimonies shed light on some of the problems that the new law created and on the arguments that anti-restrictionists began to use to fight restriction. Both men mentioned the haziness of the new law, the desire of the incoming immigrants to reunite with family members already in the United States, and the validity of the previous immigration laws

¹¹³ Interestingly, when Congress was considering a bill to regulate immigration at the source and have more officers abroad to check all prospective immigrants, nobody on the Senate or House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization considered this as a violation of other countries' national sovereignty as Italy, along with other European governments, argued. See, among others, "Contagious Diseases Among Immigrants," Hearing before the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, House, 67th, 3rd Session, February 9, 1921.

¹¹⁴ "Italians Want an Amendment to Law—Admission of 1,165 here on 'Canopic' Sought," *Boston Globe*, June 9, 1921, in Senate Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, "Admission of Aliens in Excess of Percentage Quotas for June," Hearings, 124.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 124.

to weed out undesirable immigrants. The Italian immigrants on the *Canopic* only longed to reunite with their families and contribute to America's economy. They could not be punished because they did not know the new immigration policy. Many of the Italian immigrants on board of the *Canopic*, Casassa explained to the committee, were desperate and discouraged because they could not understand why some of the passengers had been allowed to land and others had been left on the ship:

This is a drastic piece of legislation that has gone into effect as far as immigration is concerned, and [...] this is the practical operation of it. It is something new for this country. They have never tried it before, and necessarily when a drastic piece of legislation goes through there are emergencies arise [sic.], and I think one has arisen.¹¹⁶

Similarly, Vincent Brogna argued that lack of knowledge of the law on the part of the immigrants and the ongoing adjustment of American authorities to the new law were to blame for the immigrants' current predicament. When Representative Johnson asked Casassa if he believed that a similar situation would repeat itself in the future, Casassa, like many of those who had been asked the same question before, promptly replied: "I feel that this has been a sufficient lesson to the transportation companies, the Italian Government, and our own Government, so that they will be able to take care of any situation of that kind that might arise in the future."¹¹⁷ As it turned out, the Italian government had not learned the lesson.

Disappointed that Representative Johnson had not taken into any consideration his proposal to have some time elapse between the ratification and the enactment of the new immigration policy, Vinci began immediately to undermine the 1921 Immigration Act. As early as June 1921, he contacted several members of Congress and members of the Department of Labor to ask them to intercede in favor of the admission of the surplus immigrants. In his view,

¹¹⁶ Senate Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, "Admission of Aliens in Excess of Percentage Quotas for June," Hearings, 119.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 122.

the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization had decided to admit the surplus immigrants because of his intervention:

It was only thanks to my personal efforts that we could obtain the amendment that last June allowed the excess immigrants to be admitted. At that time, I exposed myself immensely to members of both the Senate and the House so that now, to be more effective, it is convenient that I be very cautious in my dealings with Congress.¹¹⁸

Yet the meddling did not stop. In July 1921, De Michelis asked Vinci if it were possible, in case Congress insisted on maintaining the quota system as the primary facet of the country's immigration policy, to plea for a more liberal reading of its criteria. De Michelis proposed to find out if the legislators were willing to consider basing the 3 per cent quotas "not on the Foreign Born (which would put us at 1.343.125) but on the Foreign white stock by country of origin (which would put us at 2.098.360)."¹¹⁹ In his reply, Vinci pointed out that it was virtually impossible to influence legislators on the criteria they should use to select immigrants. Only if the American economy improved again, Vinci wrote, could the Italian government easily defeat any opposition to immigration and push for the admission of a higher number of Italians in the United States. For now, the only option was to rely on private negotiations with the Secretary of State, the Department of Labor, and a few "influential friends" to curb the impact of the quota system on Italian migration.¹²⁰

In Vinci's opinion, besides the slump in the American economy, two other major obstacles prevented him from achieving any concrete results in mitigating the restrictions against

¹¹⁸ Vinci to De Michelis, September 24, 1921, Fondo Commissariato Generale dell'Emigrazione, busta 55, foglio 351, Archivio Storico degli Affari Esteri.

¹¹⁹ De Michelis to Vinci, July 18, 1921, Fondo Commissariato Generale dell'Emigrazione, busta 55, foglio 351, Archivio Storico degli Affari Esteri.

¹²⁰ Vinci to De Michelis, September 24, 1921, Fondo Commissariato Generale dell'Emigrazione, busta 55, foglio 351, Archivio Storico degli Affari Esteri. In a letter that Vinci wrote to De Michelis in October 1921, Vinci reiterated this idea of waiting for a more opportune moment to push for the admission of a higher number of Italians, saying that, given the state of American economy, the money that Italian emigrants would spend to go to America and support themselves until they found a good job would be money taken away from the Italian economy, if they then decided to return to Italy. Vinci to De Michelis, October 1, 1924.

Italian immigration: Representative Johnson and his allies' ever rising influence and Italian Americans' lack of support for any of Vinci's proposals. In September 1921, finally admitting that perhaps Italian immigrants were indeed one of the primary targets of the new American restrictive policy, Vinci conceded that his idea of proposing country by country agreements to regulate migration would most likely fail:

Unfortunately, some people—as Johnson himself said, notwithstanding his previous favorable declarations on the matter—don't like such agreements [...] because they remind them of the never too criticized agreement with Japan (the famous Gentlemen's Agreement), which is a synonym with 'international joke' to Representatives of the Western United States.¹²¹

Representative Johnson and his allies, Vinci asserted, created such an environment of suspicion, uneasiness, and opposition, that any attempt to propose an alternative or a variation of the existing law met with profound hostility. In an environment that asked for restriction at all cost, any effort to ask for more liberal amendments "would be like to ask for the moon." It would be counterproductive, Vinci insisted, to ask for anything when the counterpart is willing to concede nothing.¹²²

Representative Johnson's refusal to concede anything soon created a problem for the Italian government's credibility among Italians in the United States. In October 1921, in the middle of his negotiations with Secretary of State Hughes to convince him to support bilateral treaties on immigration, Vinci wrote De Michelis about the profound discontent among Italians in the United States about the Italian government's inability to stop the passage of the quota system or at least to secure a bigger quota for Italy. Genuinely afraid that Italians on both sides of the Atlantic would soon rebel if the Italian government and the Commissariato failed to

¹²¹ Vinci to De Michelis, September 24, 1921, Fondo Commissariato Generale dell'Emigrazione, busta 55, foglio 351, Archivio Storico degli Affari Esteri.

¹²² Vinci to De Michelis, November 23, 1921, Fondo Commissariato Generale dell'Emigrazione, busta 55, foglio 351, Archivio Storico degli Affari Esteri.

maintain their promises to promote unrestricted emigration to the United States, Vinci suggested to promise less and be more realistic and truthful about the status of American immigration. After the ratification of the 1921 Immigration Act, these promises were dangerous and damaging. It was better to prepare "the masses" for the worst, "present the American labor market as economically unable to absorb any immigration," so that they would appreciate any victory, however small, that the Italian government would subsequently achieve.¹²³ Vinci's relationship with the Italian American community further deteriorated after the New York Italian Chamber of Commerce refused to collaborate in the creation of offices across the country that could assist Italian immigrants to relocate to agricultural areas rather than industrial centers. They told him that they needed more data before making a final decision and that, in any case, they would rather have Vinci found the organization. "As your Excellency can see," Vinci complained to De Michelis, "to involve 'the active elements of our Colonies' entails a fight against an incredible inertia, not only of works but of thought. If one tries to take one of our citizens abroad away from his daily activities [...], he will lack any intelligence, any sense of initiative."¹²⁴

The lot of excess quota immigrants became an immediate concern among American Jews as well. Many of the problems these immigrants faced stemmed from the refusal of the House Committee, in its provision admitting all immigrants in transit in the month of June 1921, to amend the law to clarify what would happen to future excess quota immigrants and to clarify whose competence it was to decide their lot. Judicial decisions often further complicated the Department of Labor's decisions. In November 1923, Federal Judge Knox, evaluating the case

¹²³ Vinci to De Michelis, October 1, 1921, Fondo Commissariato Generale dell'Emigrazione, busta 55, foglio 351, Archivio Storico degli Affari Esteri.

¹²⁴ Vinci to De Michelis, November 23, 1921, Fondo Commissariato Generale dell'Emigrazione, busta 55, foglio 351, Archivio Storico degli Affari Esteri.

of a group of excess immigrants, ruled that the Secretary of Labor did not have the power to charge the excess immigrants of previous months against the quota of a subsequent month.¹²⁵ Knox's ruling questioned the status of a group of Russian Jewish immigrants that, in the same month, had been ordered deported because the immigration inspectors thought that the quota for the month of November had already been filled. Of this group, only twelve ultimately entered the country because they received writs of habeas corpus thanks to the intervention of a group of Jewish organizations that offered to pay for two New York Jewish lawyers to aid the Russian Jews in the group that had just arrived. The ruling judge supervising the revision of these deportation cases, in turn, deemed that his decision also affected eight hundred and seventy-six other immigrants detained on Ellis Island at the time.¹²⁶ What happened to the immigrants in excess of the quotas in November 1923 was typical and reflected how immigrants arriving were often at the mercy of the immigration inspectors, unpredictable court decisions, or volatile spurs of humanitarianism.

The Union of American Hebrew Congregations was one of the most active Jewish organizations involved in the resolution of the November excess quota problem. Its activities during 1923 alone reflected both the problems that the new legislation created and the extent of the involvement of many immigrant organizations. After the November 1923 excess quota immigrants, the Union turned its attention immediately to the predicament of the excess quota immigrants temporarily admitted into the country on parole or under bond between July and November of the same year. In November 1923, of the 2,400 excess immigrants on parole, 1,597 were Russian Jews. The Chairman of the Civil Rights Committee of the Union and Rev. Abram Simon of Washington, D.C., decided to intervene and obtained an interview with W.W.

¹²⁵ *Annual Report of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations* (Cincinnati, OH: May & Kreidler, 1924), 9472.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

Husband, Commissioner General of Immigration, to discuss the future of this particular group of people. The meeting yielded the results desired. After a compassionate plea in favor of the excess quota immigrants, the Commissioner General suggested that these immigrants and their representatives take no action whatsoever because he was convinced that the Department of Labor would do nothing to disturb or impair their life in the United States. The Department would not intervene because "the circumstances surrounding the entry of these unfortunate persons was of a tragic nature, and their deportation would impose upon them hardships of greater severity than it would care to inflict."¹²⁷ The discrete intervention of strong and powerful interest groups on behalf of specific cases often yielded positive results for incoming immigrants with entry problems. Yet, as both Jewish and Italian activists knew, these successes hardly ever produced concrete legislative provisions that would guarantee that any of these problems would never resurface again. The situation would not change until the end of World War Two.

Also in 1923, the Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Society presented the American Jewish Committee with a report on a thousand Russian immigrants who had been directed to be deported because they were in excess of the 1923 Russian quota. The Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Society pleaded for the intervention of the Committee on behalf of these immigrants. The Committee's executive committee immediately authorized Marshall to secure a stay of the order pending relief through apposite legislation. Accordingly, Marshall

waited upon President Coolidge, presented to him the facts, and urged him to suspend the exclusion of these unfortunate men, women and children, so that it might be possible to secure the admission by Congressional action of those who had arrived under these extraordinary circumstances, when they had every reason to believe that the Russian quota had not been exhausted, and that they had the right to enter, having done everything humanely possible to conform with the law.¹²⁸

¹²⁷ *Annual Report of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations* (1924), 9472.

¹²⁸ "To the Members of the American Jewish Committee," *American Jewish Yearbook* 27 (1925-1926).

The President conceded the stay but gave instructions to review every single case and not to deport those for whom deportation would clearly represent a hardship or a danger to their lives. As a result of this executive action, four hundred were admitted conditionally. As the rest of the immigrants were about to be deported, the defense discovered in the course of habeas corpus proceedings in the United States District Court for the Southern District of Newport that approximately 1,000 aliens who could not be technically classified as immigrants had erroneously been charged against the 1923 Russian quota. Marshall promptly notified the president and the Secretary of Labor of the mistake, and all one thousand immigrants were legally admitted into the country.¹²⁹ Marshall's actions anticipated one of the key strategies to which both the Italian and Jewish communities would turn to limit the impact of the national origins quotas, namely to appeal directly to the president or congressmen and propose the introduction of personal immigration bills to solve the problem at hand. Although, they did not know it at the time, this would later become was one of the main causes behind the end of the quota system.

Jewish organizations also protested that the law unduly punished some individuals more than others. They argued that women and children trying to reunite with their families and Jewish immigrants appealing to their refugee status for admission were often the hardest hit by the new immigration laws. Because of anomalies and inconsistencies, neither the 1917 nor the 1921 Immigration act elucidated when family members could reunite with their relatives already in the United States. If the law was ill-conceived, American authorities' prejudices against the new immigrants contributed even more to the surge of deportation cases that followed the ratification of the 1921 Immigration Act. Commenting on the many cases involving alleged mental and other incurable ailments and the consequent distressful separation of families, the

¹²⁹ "To the Members of the American Jewish Committee," *American Jewish Yearbook* 27 (1925-1926).

authors of the *Annual Report of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations* told its readers that "criticism has been directed at doubtful medical determinations excluding alleged feeble-minded children, where eminent medical authorities have controverted [sic.] the adverse Governmental medical certifications."¹³⁰ Similarly, Jewish refugees from Eastern Europe who failed the literacy test often struggled to meet the requirements of the refugee status because of the American authorities' lingering suspicions that they wanted to abuse the system by pretending to be refugees.¹³¹

Both Italian and Jewish immigrants soon learned of the possibilities of appealing the immigration authorities' decisions and decided to take their cases to court. The previous decisions on similar cases for Chinese and Japanese immigrants again set important precedents that allowed Eastern and Southern Europeans to take advantage of the legal system to challenge restriction. Although many of the cases were ultimately successful, the economic and emotional strain, the humiliations that the petitioners often experienced, and the lengthy proceedings severely limited the effectiveness of such a strategy. *Goldman v. Tod* and *Patton v. Tod*, in particular, showcased some of the key weaknesses of the 1921 Immigration Act, as they highlighted the primary victims of an ill-conceived policy and shed light on the inadequacy of the Immigration Service to implement the new law. At the same time, these two cases also showed the behind-the-scenes mobilization of Jewish organizations, politicians, and common citizens for a positive resolution of these two cases.

Goldman v. Tod focused on what exactly constituted mental defect and on when it represented sufficient ground to exclude immigrants. In 1921, when Samuel Goldman, a young Polish boy, arrived in the United States with his mother, brothers, and sisters to join his father in

¹³⁰ *Annual Report of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations* (1925), 9688.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

Syracuse, New York, the medical authorities in Ellis Island found him "a feeble-minded undesirable alien" and threatened him with deportation. The local Jewish community immediately intervened and secured a lawyer to take the case to court. Despite attorney Ralph Shulman's successful demonstration that Samuel's seeming feeble-mindedness was due to malnutrition, the court still ruled that he should be deported.¹³² After the harsh sentence, the Jewish community in Syracuse again mobilized and wrote Louis Marshall to ask for his assistance in the case as legal advisor for the appeal:

Congressman Magee has done all in his power to prevent the injustice but has been unable to do so. We are seeing Judge Hiscock and Paul Andrews to see if they could not reach the Governor. Letters are being written to Senators Calder and Wadsworth, and as last resort we are appealing to you. Unless some powerful influence can be set into motion the boy will be returned to Europe.¹³³

Louis Marshall agreed to collaborate with Ralph Shulman and, considering that the evidence on the boy's progress had yielded little result, suggested to change strategy and argue that the boy was admissible as the son of an American citizen. Samuel Goldman's father had even included the boy's name on his certificate of naturalization.¹³⁴ The appeal allowed the boy to continue to remain in the United States and guaranteed that the Goldman case be tried simultaneously with the *Fink v. Tod* case and the *Patton v. Tod* case, both addressing similar questions, thus gaining nationwide attention to the plight of immigrant children hastily rejected as undesirable.¹³⁵

Despite the involvement of Louis Marshall, the attention of the media, the intervention of many prominent public figures, and the change of defense, the case dragged on until 1925. By 1924, Marshall and Shulman decided to appeal directly to the Secretary of Labor. In June 1924,

¹³² Report of Dr. Hersey G. Locke, no date, Louis Marshall Papers, box 17, file 3, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College.

¹³³ Aaron Levy to Louis Marshall, April 22, 1922, Louis Marshall Papers, box 17, file 3, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College.

¹³⁴ Ralph Shulman to Louis Marshall, May 22, 1923, Louis Marshall Papers, box 17, file 3, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College.

¹³⁵ Marshall to Shulman, April 22, 1924, Louis Marshall Papers, box 17, file 3, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College.

Shulman and Marshall asked Congressman Magee to pressure the Department of Labor for a resolution to the case and to endorse Senator Roach's bill to facilitate the entry of children arriving in the United States to join their parents to find a permanent solution to pending cases similar to Samuel Goldman's.¹³⁶ Magee acted immediately and after his negotiation with the Department of Labor about the Goldman case, the department signaled that it would issue a special order consenting to Goldman's admission provided the court proceedings be discontinued. Shulman and Marshall immediately began proceedings to dismiss the case, but the department's decision about Goldman was prematurely leaked to the press. As a result, the Assistant Secretary of Labor curtly declared that the case was still open and stayed the same. Eventually, the Department of Labor did issue a special order on behalf of Samuel Goldman, but only when the publicity died down and the issue appeared as a matter of daily administration.¹³⁷

Simultaneously with *Goldman v. Tod*, Marshall also agreed to serve as counsel for *Patton v. Tod*. In a letter to A.S. Gilbert, Patton's attorney, Marshall highlighted the importance of both cases in respect to immigration and naturalization laws, especially as Congress debated how to modify the 1921 Immigration Act.¹³⁸ Both cases, in fact, raised questions about derivative citizenship. Pola Patton arrived in the United States from Lithuania on July 6, 1914, at the age of nine. Two weeks after her arrival, a board of special inquiry certified that, "the girl was mentally deficient and must be excluded." The Department of Labor issued an order for her deportation, but the application for a writ of habeas corpus and more appeals delayed the resolution of the case until the United States' entry into World War One put a halt to her deportation. She was

¹³⁶ Marshall to Shulman, June 26, 1924, and Shulman to Marshall, June 30, 1924, Louis Marshall Papers, box 17, file 13, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College.

¹³⁷ Marshall to Shulman, September 4, 1924, Louis Marshall Papers, box 17, file 3, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College.

¹³⁸ Marshall to A.S. Gilbert, January 18, 1924, Louis Marshall Papers, box 17, file 5, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College.

released on bond to her family. At the end of the war, in August 1919, the Department of Labor issued a new warrant for her arrest, but this only began a new round of appeals and of evaluation of the girl's mental health. All examinations again declared Pola Patton feeble-minded. In April 1921, the Department of Labor issued a new order of deportation, which the defense curtailed with the application of a new writ of habeas corpus. The case ultimately ended up in the United States Circuit Court, where Judge Julius M. Mayer ruled that the girl be returned to Lithuania after ten years in the United States.¹³⁹

Judge Mayer's decision had two deleterious consequences for immigrants who appealed their deportation and further complicated any efforts of immigrant organizations that provided assistance in these cases. His decision to rule that the Department of Labor did not have the authority to release the girl on bond revealed the confusion over which departments and officials within the government had the authority to decide over issues pertaining to entry to the United States, deportations, and appeals of minor immigrants declared feeble-minded. This conclusion also revealed the unreliability of the legal system as a way to oppose unjust restrictions and violations of civil rights, as other judges, in decisions over the same point, did agree that the Department of Labor had the authority to decide over appeals and deportations. More importantly, Judge Mayer's ruling also revealed the precarious status in which naturalized citizens found themselves. As in Goldman's case, Pola Patton's father was an American citizen who had listed his children's names on his documents of naturalization. Many cases involving minors entering the country to join their naturalized parents rested their deportation appeals on the argument that the parent's citizenship transferred to them as well. Although the law itself was vague on the subject, Meyer ruled that, "a foreign-born minor child dwelling in the United States at the time of the naturalization of the parent automatically becomes an American citizen.

¹³⁹ "Can't Free on Bail an Imbecile Alien," *New York Times*, May 12, 1924.

A foreign born child not in the United States when the parent is naturalized becomes a citizen only from such time as, while still a minor, it begins to reside permanently in the United States."¹⁴⁰ Because in his opinion the Department of Labor had no authority to admit Pola Patton on bond, the judge concluded that her ten-year permanence in the United States was illegal, which disqualified her from the benefits of her father's citizenship. This ruling represented a major setback for many similar cases, and in part, explains why Marshall opted to resort to Congressman Magee to resolve Goldman's case privately rather than in court.

Testimonies in Congress and legal battles represented only two of the strategies that Italians and Jews in America adopted to fight restriction. Assisted immigration and illegal immigration represented two more grass-roots strategies to circumvent restriction after the 1921 Immigration Act went into effect. By 1921, Eastern European Jews could rely on a powerful and well-organized web of American Jewish organizations that could assist them to migrate to the United States and relocate once in the country. The most prominent organization was the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), an organization founded in 1890 and incorporated in 1911 in New York City through the merger of the Hebrew Sheltering House and the Hebrew Aid Immigrant Society "to facilitate the lawful entry of Jewish immigrants at the various ports in the United States."¹⁴¹ Italian immigrants lacked any corresponding organization engaged in such immigrant assistance. The first Italian American organization of this sort would not emerge until 1952. In the meantime, many Italian immigrants who arrived outside the quotas or risked deportation opted for illegal immigration into the United States through Canada, Mexico, and Cuba.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ "HIAS Bylaws," HIAS Records Collection, Collection Finding Aid, Center for Jewish History, New York.

HIAS also represented one of the most active Jewish organizations committed to assisting immigration. With branches in Paris, Warsaw, Lemberg, and Danzig, HIAS provided financial and legal aid, transportation arrangements, educational and vocational programs, location of missing relatives, and lobbying the United States and other governments on behalf of individual cases. Aware of the criticisms that Eastern European Jewish immigrants received in the United States, HIAS ensured, similarly to the Italian government regarding Italian immigrants, that only immigrants who would be accepted at the American ports of entry left Europe and promoted immigrant relocation to agricultural areas rather than urban industrial centers. Following a strategy that both Italian and Jewish organizations had adopted as the attacks against Southern and Eastern Europeans began, HIAS also committed to foster "American ideals among the newcomers and to instill in them [...] a true patriotism and love for their adopted country" but also "to make better known to the people of the United States the many advantages of desirable immigration, and to promote these objects by means of meetings, lectures and publications."¹⁴² As the hostility towards Eastern Europeans mounted, HIAS also began programs to relocate these immigrants in other receiving countries, including Argentina and Palestine. In 1921, these efforts were still at a developmental stage and were not always successful, but they gained strength as restriction became law in the United States.

When assisted immigration was not an option, migrants turned to illegal immigration to get to the United States. The 1923 report of the Commissioner General of Immigration highlighted that attempts to gain admission into the United States illegally increased somewhat in proportion to the number and character of the restrictions. "Undoubtedly," the commissioner wrote, "the literacy test requirement which became effective in May 1917, and the per centum limit immigration act of May, 1921,—the so-called quota law,—have greatly increased the

¹⁴² "HIAS Bylaws," HIAS Records Collection, Collection Finding Aid, Center for Jewish History, New York.

number of such attempts to enter the country illegally."¹⁴³ These two laws, the commissioner observed, were at the origin of "a recent growing tendency among inadmissible European aliens to attempt to enter the country surreptitiously."¹⁴⁴ The resort to illegal immigration often revealed the immigrants' frustration with the new immigration policy, as "even many admissible aliens [entered] the country illegally in disregard of the quota limitations."¹⁴⁵ A report to the New York State Joint Committee on the Exploitation of Immigrants provided further details on the illegal traffic of European immigrants into the United States:

Such aliens enter the country in considerable numbers from Canada, Mexico and Cuba. New York's long northern boundary line adjoining Canada justifies that she gets more than her share of the aliens who enter the United States illegally from that country. Another source of additions to New York's share of aliens arises from its being a port of such magnitude. It is known that large numbers of deserting alien seamen leave their ships permanently in ports of the United States to take advantage of superior wage conditions existing here.¹⁴⁶

By June 30, 1923, desertions reported for all ports of the United States reached a total of 23,194, of which 14,734 were at the port of New York alone. To date, little evidence exists documenting European illegal immigration before 1923. Congress itself did not recommend harsher laws pertaining to seamen until it evaluated the bills proposing revisions to the 1921 Immigration Act.¹⁴⁷

Aspiring Italian migrants could not benefit from the assistance of an organization with the budget, the connections, and the network of HIAS. Circumstantial evidence suggests that Italians represented a considerable number of those who entered the country as seamen and then

¹⁴³ John Ripley, "Preliminary Report of a Statistical Study of New York State's Share of Immigrant Aliens, of the Growth of Adult Illiteracy and of the Increase in the Number of Aliens in the State," in New York State Joint Legislative Committee, *Report of the Joint Legislative Committee on the Exploitation of Immigrants*, 108-109.

¹⁴⁴ Report of Commissioner General of Immigration, 1923 in New York State Joint Legislative Committee, *Report of the Joint Legislative Committee on the Exploitation of Immigrants*, 107.

¹⁴⁵ New York State Joint Legislative Committee, *Report of the Joint Legislative Committee on the Exploitation of Immigrants*, 107.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ "Report to Accompany S. 4092," House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, "Restriction of Immigration" Hearings, December 26, 1924, 68th Congress, 1st Session (Washington, DC: GPO, 1924), 19.

deserted to overcome the restrictions of American immigration policy. As the oldest cases of the Italian Welfare League show, the peak of Italian illegal immigration began right after the passage of the 1924 Immigration Act and continued well into the war years.¹⁴⁸ The Italian Welfare League, a non-profit organization composed of social workers who assisted Italian immigrants upon their arrival and with legal problems, helped numerous Italian migrants in the forties, fifties, and sixties to adjust their illegal status and naturalize. Its cases all date from 1924 onwards. Partial evidence of an earlier beginning of Italian illegal immigration emerges from the records of the Commissariato Generale dell'Emigrazione.

Already in 1923, De Michelis received reports from Italian immigration authorities stationed along the Italian border warning him of attempts of Italians to emigrate illegally to circumvent the quota system or arrive in the United States before the new law passed. On December 1923, the Emigration Inspector in Ventimiglia, Liguria, on the border with France, wrote De Michelis about the intensification during the last year of illegal Italian emigration to the United States through France. To alleviate inspections at the border and reduce illegal emigration, the inspector suggested having immigration agents check passengers at train stations before departure in coordination with authorities at intermediate unmonitored stops before crossing the French border. The Commissariato's active involvement in negotiations and stratagems to delay, stop, or circumscribe the enforcement of restriction on Italian emigration, along with a change of government, perhaps distracted De Michelis and his coworkers from pursuing the issue further. The Commissariato began to investigate systematically illegal Italian emigration only in 1927.

Conclusion

¹⁴⁸ Italian Welfare League Collection, Center for Migration Studies.

Congress's adoption of the first quota system in 1921 concluded an era of qualitative immigration and ushered in an era of quantitative immigration. Because Congress hastily put together and ratified the new immigration law, the shortcomings of the first quota system created unexpected consequences for prospective migrants and for immigrants and immigrant advocacy groups in the United States. Anti-restrictionists hoped that the many outstanding failures of the 1921 Immigration Act would suffice to persuade restrictionists and their supporters in Congress to envision a different immigration policy.

The congestion of immigrants at Ellis Island, the arbitrary rejections, and the hardships that many immigrants had to endure caused an outcry among Americans and immigrant communities alike. Even the framers of the law ultimately conceded that the law had been ill conceived. The realization of the law's inefficiencies, though, only convinced legislators to draft a more effective and 'scientific' national-origins quota system. Although they realized that any new bill would meet obstruction and opposition from many fronts, an important precedent had been set. The years preceding and following the ratification of the 1921 Immigration Act had clearly shown restrictionists that anti-restrictionists would oppose them with any means and until the end of the draconian immigration policy. For Italian and Jewish immigrants those years represented a rehearsal for the battle against the 1924 Immigration Act. The results of their battle differed enormously, however. Although both groups realized that the help of politicians and the vote could seriously undermine the restrictionist position, they achieved very different results. Italians could count on very few politicians and leaders ready to voice their concerns and their opposition to restriction. Their presence in politics was still rare, and the overbearing presence of Italian government representatives like Royal Commissioner of Emigration Vinci often harmed rather than boosted their cause. At the more grassroots level, Italian immigrants

still did not turn to the legal system for justice or form organizations that could assist more Italians come to the United States. Eastern European Jews, on the other hand, benefited greatly from the politically well-connected older German community, criticisms and frictions over its elitism notwithstanding. The well-established German Jews defended them in Congress, gave them a voice in court, and contributed financially to the organizations dealing with assisted immigration. At the same time, though, the prominence and popularity of these famous fellow Jews attracted even more negative attention to Eastern and Southern European immigration and provoked further calls for restriction because many Americans came to identify the fight against restriction as a Jewish cause.

Chapter Two

"The doors of America are worse than shut when they are half-way open:" The Fight against the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act (1924-1929)¹⁴⁹

When Congress passed the 1921 Immigration Act, legislators repeatedly emphasized that the new law was highly experimental. Indeed, many presented it as a temporary measure to give the country 'a breathing spell' and to allow Congress enough time to conceive a 'scientific' method to control immigration.¹⁵⁰ Despite the many legal shortcomings and international embarrassments that emerged after the 1921 Immigration Act went into effect, the idea of excluding immigrants by the quota method steadily grew in favor:

The United States of America, a nation great in all things, is ours today. To whom will it belong tomorrow? The United States is our land. If it was not the land of our fathers, at least it may be, and it should be, the land of our children. We intend to maintain it so. The day of unalloyed welcome to all peoples, the day of indiscriminate acceptance of all races, has definitely ended.¹⁵¹

Unless immigrants were of Northern European origin, they needed to be restricted or excluded. For many, the quota system was the best tool for immigration control available. It was this atmosphere that progressively convinced Italian Americans and American Jews that quotas would be the hallmark of American immigration policy.

Congress was under such pressure to pass restrictive immigration legislation that it only reluctantly conceded public hearings on the Johnson-Reed immigration bill. After holding preliminary hearings in late December 1923, both Italian and Jewish agencies succeeded in having an extension of the hearings through the month of January to protest against its blatant discriminatory nature. Subsequently, most of these same agencies and institutions contacted

¹⁴⁹ "Rabbi Wise Calls Restricting Jews by Immigration Laws, Nation's 'Unpardonable Sin,'" no newspaper title, March 5, 1926, Stephen Wise Papers, Manuscript Collection 49, box 5, file 3: Newspaper Clippings (1902-1953), American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College.

¹⁵⁰ A. Warner Parker, "The Quota Provisions of the Immigration act of 1924," *The American Journal of International Law* 18, no. 4 (Oct. 1924), 737.

¹⁵¹ Albert Johnson in Garis, *Immigration Restriction*, vii-viii.

several members of Congress personally to impress upon them the injustice of immigration laws based on a census, contending that the basic immigration law of 1917 was sufficiently selective in nature to keep out all undesirable immigrants. While the immigration bill was under consideration by a Committee of both houses, these agencies and institutions also tried to secure amendments and to have provisions inserted to mitigate to some extent the rigor of the bill, especially to secure exemption from the quota, or give priority to those prospective immigrants who had received visas under the old act and who had been unable to sail because of the exhaustion of the quotas from their respective countries.

After Congress passed the bill, these organizations tried to arrange for a public hearing before the president to convince him to veto the bill. The president did not agree to the hearing but accepted to read a memorandum of their arguments in its place. The memorandum did little to change President Coolidge's mind, but for the first time, the petition signaled a shift in Italian Americans and American Jews' concerns about the implications of restriction. The ostensibly permanent nature of the new Immigration Act, unlike previous claims of emergency legislation, sent a clear message to Southern and Eastern Europeans already living in the United States. In addition to concerns about foreign policy and about those left behind, the petitioners for the first time consciously reflected on the consequences of restriction on the immigrant communities already in the United States.

After its passage in Congress, the fight against the Johnson-Reed Act continued on several different fronts, in Congress, in court, in the newspapers, and in public appearances. Both groups continued to oppose the 1924 Immigration Act through 1929, the year in which the act went into effect. Until then, the Italian and Jewish communities in the United States assisted migrants stranded on either side of the Atlantic trying to reach the United States or caught in

between legislations. In the midst of its mobilization against the Johnson bill first and the Johnson act later, the Italian community underwent a major change that affected both its fight against restriction and reinforced many of the prejudices that Americans had of Italians as unwelcome citizens. The rise of Mussolini to power severely divided the community and put a halt to any collaboration with other immigrant groups for a long time. The outbreak of the Great Depression officially put an end to the second phase of Italian and Jewish mobilization against restriction in the United States and left both groups to reckon with the impact of restriction on their life in the United States.

The Battle up to 1924

When the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization announced that it would hold hearings from December 26 to December 31, 1923, on the Johnson bill, anti-restrictionists flooded Chairman Albert Johnson's office with letters of protest. They asked for an extension of the hearings in January and denounced the injustice of holding very short hearings over the holidays.¹⁵² Cairoli Gigliotti of Chicago, publisher of *Il Nuovo Venuto*; Andrew Dorko, president of the First Catholic Slovak Union; Representative Samuel Dickstein of New York; William Edlin, representing a committee of foreign language newspapers; Louis Marshall of the American Jewish Committee (AJC); and Representative Emanuel Celler of Brooklyn, all wrote to Representative Johnson asking him to prolong the hearings after January 1 to allow a greater number of constituents "to voice their sentiments on the important changes proposed."¹⁵³

Eventually, the committee reluctantly conceded more hearings in January, but its discontent was palpable. On the very first day of the January hearings, voicing the feelings of all the committee

¹⁵² Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, United States Congress, House, "Restriction of Immigration," Hearings, Part 1, 68th Congress, 1st Session (Washington, DC: GPO, 1924): 1-3.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

members, Representative Raker commented that all these letters were just a subterfuge to delay further the passage of new immigration legislation.¹⁵⁴

Many of the anti-restrictionists who testified in Congress focused their criticisms of the pending legislation on the stereotypes it upheld and on the broader consequences of restriction. On the one hand, they stressed the racial and religious nature of the discrimination against the new immigrants and emphasized the contributions that all these immigrants had made, especially during the Great War. On the other hand, they pointed out the political, economic, and diplomatic repercussions that a restrictive immigration policy would have at both the domestic and international levels. The main arguments were always the same from group to group, but some of the testimonies shed a light on the intricate web of the implications that restriction had on their community. The Italian case was particularly revealing. Among those who testified in the presence of the House Immigration Committee was Salvatore Cotillo, Grand Master of the Order Sons of Italy of the State of New York.¹⁵⁵ Cotillo's testimony in Congress summed up the main points of the anti-restrictionist agenda by the early 1920s, but it also reflected how the relationship that Italian immigrants in the United States had with Italy affected their response to restriction.

Cotillo's testimony revealed an important difference between Italian and Jewish mobilization against immigration restriction. While Jewish migrants moved to the United States as families, tended to settle permanently in the country, and immediately began to build social, economic, and political networks to integrate into American society, Italian immigrants continued to travel back and forth between the two countries, maintained strong contacts with

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ The Grand Council of the Order subsequently sent a copy of Cotillo's testimony to the President of the United States, the members of his Cabinet, and all congressmen. Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, United States Congress, House, "Restriction of Immigration," Hearings.

their families left behind, and continuously had to deal with the presence of representatives of the Italian government in the United States. The Italian government, especially after Mussolini's ascent to power, constantly interjected itself in their life in America and worked to foster a sense of pride among its expatriates to persuade them that they were Italians abroad representing and defending Italy's interests in their host country. At the height of 100 per cent Americanism, Italian Americans' open stance on defending Italy created several problems for their acceptance by the American mainstream.

In his testimony, Cotillo used many of the arguments that anti-restrictionists had used since the beginning of the restrictionist attacks against Southern and Eastern Europeans and discussed two more recent reasons to object to restriction. Like many critics before him, Cotillo criticized the press for its incendiary rhetoric of racial fear, religious hatred, and nativism to rally support for restriction and to marginalize Italian and Jewish communities. He emphasized the new immigrants' numerous contributions to the development of the American economy and to Americans' prosperity. Finally, he reminded his audience that recent studies clearly showed that crime rates were lower among the new immigrants than among native whites.¹⁵⁶

At the same time, Cotillo also emphasized the new immigrants' participation in the Great War and denounced the bill's regulation on family reunification. Despite the vicious propaganda that had turned Southern and Eastern Europeans into scapegoats for every ill that touched the city, the state, and the nation, Cotillo believed that it was "unfair, unjust and inequitable to discriminate against the immigration of certain countries, which have fought with us and shed their blood with us and helped to build what is known now as the Great American Nation."¹⁵⁷ Immigrant soldiers had offered their most precious possession, their lives, to the United States'

¹⁵⁶ Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, United States Congress, House, "Restriction of Immigration," Hearings.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

cause, even though many of them had not yet naturalized. Within the Italian community alone, Cotillo pointed out, over 30,000 Italian-speaking soldiers had enlisted in the American Army during the war. Although Italian immigrants represented only 4 per cent of the American population, they accounted for 10 per cent of the American military forces and suffered 12 per cent of U.S. casualties. The deaths and sacrifices of so many un-naturalized soldiers within the ranks of the U.S. Army demonstrated the artificiality of terms like 'straight Americanism,' Cotillo observed. Nonetheless, the new bill severely punished Italian migrants, as the quota for Italy would go from 42,057 under the existing law based on the 3 per cent from the 1910 census to 4,112 in the proposed law, representing the 2 per cent based on the 1890 census.¹⁵⁸

In his testimony, Cotillo also criticized the harshness of the new policy's provisions on family reunion, identifying an issue that would become central to immigration reformers' campaign until 1965 and that still plays a critical role today. As the 1921 Immigration Act had demonstrated, the convoluted protocol that immigrants sending for family members had to follow often caused family separation, expensive trials, and hardship on family members forced to live apart. The Johnson bill further complicated family reunion. The application process, Cotillo noted, essentially assumed that each applicant represented a potential criminal given the type of information that they had to provide and the legal hoops they had to go through before their relative could begin their application process on the other side of the Atlantic.¹⁵⁹

Yet Cotillo also proposed a specifically Italian reason to object to the passage of the Johnson bill. Shifting the focus of his testimony to Italy, Cotillo emphasized the impact that the

¹⁵⁸ Other countries were similarly penalized: for Greece, for example, the quota would go from 3,294 to 247; for Hungary, the quota would change from 5,638 to 624; and for Poland, the quota would switch from 21,076 to 5,356. Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, United States Congress, House, "Restriction of Immigration," Hearings.

¹⁵⁹ Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, United States Congress, House, "Restriction of Immigration," Hearings.

law would have on Italy and praised the Italian government for implementing an exacting selection process of prospective migrants. He emphasized that Italy's attitude towards emigration was not to send criminals to the United States, like restrictionists sustained, but rather to allow only the very best and the most fit to come to American shores, thus preceding Americans in that policy of selective emigration advertised by the restrictionists.¹⁶⁰ Secretary of Labor Davis, Commissioner of Immigration Curran, former Commissioner of Immigration Tod, and Congressman Cable all confirmed the fitness of the immigrants that Italy had been sending over the previous few years. Moreover, Cotillo added, restriction on Italian immigration would also have negative consequences for American exporters to Italy. Thanks in part to the emigrants' remittances, Italy could, in fact, afford to purchase the wheat, oil, copper, iron, and other materials she needed from the United States, since the high protective tariffs prevented Italy from obtaining all these materials in exchange for its products. Severely restrictive immigration legislation, warned Cotillo, would, within a few years, greatly reduce remittances to Italy and strike a severe economic blow to a country endeavoring to do its share in the reconstruction of Europe and in the restoration of peace and order. "This deadly blow," Cotillo concluded, returning to the opening theme of his testimony, "will be dealt to her by her former ally towards which she has acted always in a friendly and loyal manner."¹⁶¹

While Cotillo and other prominent speakers testified before the Immigration and Naturalization Committees, the battle against restriction continued outside of Congress as well. In January 1924, Max J. Kohler published five articles on "Aspects of the Pending Immigration Legislation" in *The New York Times* and dissected many of the pro-immigration groups' criticisms of the Johnson Immigration bill in an effort to educate Americans on immigration

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

issues. Kohler's expertise in migration matters dated back thirty years. He had been Assistant U.S. District Attorney in New York City for four years, a legal representative of immigrant aid societies to assist immigrants in court, and an ardent defender of immigrants' rights in Congress. He was also an active member of the Board of Delegates on Civil Rights of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and sat on the Executive Committee of the American Jewish Committee. In the same vein of Cotillo's testimony, Kohler's criticisms focused on three specific issues: blatant racial and religious discrimination underlying the national-origins quotas system, violation of personal liberties, and obstruction to international treaties stipulating the mobility of other countries' citizens. Unlike Cotillo, however, Kohler refrained from focusing exclusively on the constituency he represented and spoke on behalf of all European immigrants. This strategy reflected the Jewish community's concern to avoid the perception of the immigration problem as a Jewish problem, an issue that had existed since the community's first mobilization against restriction and that would periodically resurface until the repeal of the quota system.¹⁶²

Reflecting the ideas and the sentiments of many anti-restrictionists, Kohler's first article centered on the racial and religious discriminatory nature of the new national-origins quota system. The use of the 1890 census, instead of the 1910 or 1920 ones, to calculate the quotas of each country, he wrote, indicated the House Committee's clear intention to target Eastern and Southern European immigrants with their reform, since it predated the peak of their arrivals. The adoption of the 1890 census as a frame of reference, in fact, enormously decreased the number of persons admissible from the countries from which most immigrants had arrived in the previous thirty years and penalized wives and minor children who were waiting to reunite with their family members in the United States. At the same time, Kohler wrote, the pending Johnson bill explicitly discriminated on the basis of religion, as most of the restricted immigrants were

¹⁶² Kohler, "Aspects of Pending Immigration Legislation", *New York Times*, January 5, 7, 9, 14, and 25, 1924.

Catholic or Jewish.¹⁶³ The Union of American Hebrew Congregations, to which Kohler belonged, took his criticisms a step further and, in its 1925 annual report, connected the law's religious bias towards all non-Protestant aliens in the United States to the proposed alien registration as an effort on the part of the government to keep track of unwelcome religious affiliations and intimidate prospective immigrants.¹⁶⁴

Like Cotillo, the section of the bill that Kohler considered the most outrageous was the proposal to introduce "Quota Relative Immigrants" in addition to the regular immigrant quotas. The proposal discounted all anti-restrictionists' previous efforts to facilitate family reunions. The House Committee on Immigration was in fact evaluating the idea to include two different sets of quotas in the new version of the bill: one based on the 2 per cent of the 1890 census for immigrants "selected in view of their economic value" and a separate quota specifically for incoming wives and unmarried minor children of residents of the United States planning to become citizens. Limitations on family reunions had already created problems during the 1921 Immigration Act tenure, when many Eastern European immigrants went to court to challenge the provisions pertaining to family reunions. The uproar that the cases had generated along with formal diplomatic protests from sending countries including, among others, Italy, Spain, and Greece had convinced the House Committee to take out of the final version of the 1921 Immigration Act the quota restrictions on wives and unmarried children of resident aliens who had lived in the United States for two years and were declarants for American naturalization for

¹⁶³ Kohler, "Aspects of Pending Immigration Legislation—An Analysis of the Johnson Bill Sponsored by the Chairman of the House Committee on Immigration," *New York Times*, January 5, 1924.

¹⁶⁴ *Annual Report of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations* (1925).

at least one year. The new Johnson bill, however, put such regulations for wives and children back into the quotas again.¹⁶⁵

In his articles, Kohler also objected to the proposed regulations that violated migrants' personal liberties in the name of controlling immigration. In addition to the already prescribed medical exams and literacy test, the Johnson bill proposed to fingerprint all immigrants upon their arrival in the United States and to request the submission of a military record, if any. The idea of fingerprints, Kohler argued, was an insult and a poorly disguised attempt to draw a connection between immigrants and criminals. Rather than fostering love for their newly adopted country, he continued, fingerprinting would only blight their spirits and "instill indignation in them upon landing."¹⁶⁶ Fingerprinting created a wave of uproar within Eastern and Southern European communities alike, and its repeal from the final version of the law was one of anti-restrictionists' few victories in the battle over immigration in 1924.¹⁶⁷ Immigrants already residing in the country did not fare much better. The new version of the bill, in fact, requested all residents who wanted to send for their families to provide a copy of their income tax return along with their applications. As Kohler noted, "scarcely any of the male married immigrants residing here [...] have succeeded, when they are ready to send for wives and children, in reaching the stage of enjoying the substantial annual income which requires an income tax return."¹⁶⁸ Finally, the bill provided for no statute of limitation for the deportation of residents found to have entered the country illegally.

¹⁶⁵ Kohler, "Aspects of Pending Immigration Legislation—An Analysis of the Johnson Bill Sponsored by the Chairman of the House Committee on Immigration," *New York Times*, January 5, 1924.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ Opposition to fingerprinting would last until 2004, when Congress ratified a law requiring everybody except for American citizens entering the country, not just immigrants, to be fingerprinted at their ports of arrival.

¹⁶⁸ Kohler, "Aspects of Pending Immigration Legislation—An Analysis of the Johnson Bill Sponsored by the Chairman of the House Committee on Immigration," *New York Times*, January 5, 1924.

The pending bill did not affect just the migrants, Kohler argued, but it had important international ramifications on the relationship that the United States had with sending countries. The introduction of "un-reviewable czars" granting visas and American medical inspectors examining prospective immigrants abroad ran counter to the notion of the United States as a safe haven and could be construed as a violation of national sovereignty.¹⁶⁹ Sending countries resented that the United States simply refused to sign bilateral treaties to regulate immigration. As Kohler explained, "universal inborn prejudices against all foreigners made such treaties indispensable for their protection."¹⁷⁰ This attitude towards European sending countries contrasted with the provision in the bill that provided that immigrants who had resided continuously for seven years in Mexico, Canada, Cuba, or any other Central or South American country and their wives and children could "enter as they [pleased], regardless of any quota, and despite greater opportunity to smuggle in excess quota immigrants over long borders."¹⁷¹ Yet, Kohler reflected, what European countries faced was less harsh than the creation of an "Asiatic Barred Zone." The barring from citizenship of all Asians seriously endangered the United States' relationship with China and Japan, and with Britain, France, and Turkey because of their colonial possessions in Asia. The Chinese boycott against the immigration exclusion enforced by the United States had already demonstrated the diplomatic and commercial damage that a discriminatory immigration policy could cause.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ Kohler, "Aspects of Pending Immigration Legislation—Treaty Provisions Regarded Aliens Disregarded—How the Law, in Practice, Has Been Defeated by Vagueness of its Provisions," *New York Times*, January 7, 1924; and Kohler, "Aspects of Pending Immigration Legislation—The "Gentlemen's Agreement" with Japan, and the Treaty—Authorized Inspections of Immigrants Abroad," *New York Times*, January 9, 1924.

¹⁷⁰ Kohler, "Aspects of Pending Immigration Legislation—Treaty Provisions Regarded Aliens Disregarded—How the Law, in Practice, Has Been Defeated by Vagueness of its Provisions," *New York Times*, January 7, 1924.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² Kohler, "Aspects of Pending Immigration Legislation—The "Gentlemen's Agreement" with Japan, and the Treaty—Authorized Inspections of Immigrants Abroad," *New York Times*, January 9, 1924.

The authority the bill vested in medical inspectors and consular officers created outrage both at home and abroad. The Italian government, in particular, vehemently opposed such a provision and requested that the issue be regulated through a treaty stipulating and regulating the inspectors' examinations on its territory. As Italian emigration consular Vinci wrote to De Michelis, director of the Commissariato Generale dell'Emigrazione, the request to let foreign medical inspectors on their territory only proved that the United States thought of Italy as a country of straccioni (good-for-nothings), damaging Italy's moral and political standing in the international sphere.¹⁷³ The Italian government understood that it could not fight this battle alone, and so it sought to gain the support of other European countries that would suffer the same predicament. Unfortunately, as Italian representatives often complained, the only countries willing to support Italy's requests were usually "weaker or less powerful countries" like Poland, Rumania, and other Eastern European countries, rather than more powerful countries like France and Britain.

The bill's provision granting American consuls the final say on visas without any possibility for the immigrant to appeal the decision also preoccupied anti-restrictionists. This practice, Kohler argued, would concentrate too much arbitrary power in the hands of few and often prejudiced and ignorant individuals.¹⁷⁴ Even an enthusiastic supporter of the new immigration system like immigration lawyer Warner A. Parker found it troublesome that the final decision concerning visas rested solely in the consuls' hands:

If the consul concludes that an applicant is an 'undesirable,' he may, without any chance of his reasons being reviewed by anyone else, simply decline to issue the visa; and no matter how insufficient or technical his reasons may be, the alien has no redress. This is

¹⁷³ Vinci to De Michelis, December 22, 1921, Fondo Commissariato Generale dell'Emigrazione, busta 55, foglio 351, Archivio Storico degli Affari Esteri, Rome, Italy.

¹⁷⁴ Kohler, "Aspects of Pending Immigration Legislation—The "Gentlemen's Agreement" with Japan, and the Treaty—Authorized Inspections of Immigrants Abroad," *New York Times*, January 9, 1924.

the first time in the history of immigration legislation that subordinate officials have been allowed finally to determine the question of admissibility.¹⁷⁵

Both Kohler and Parker pointed out that the widespread corruption among consular officials that emerged from previous investigations lent further weight to their claims about the dangers posed by the consuls' new discretionary powers and the impossibility to appeal their decisions. As Parker noted in his article, the records of the Department of Labor included numerous cases in which, had it not been for the right of appeal, most serious injustice would have been perpetrated, and the reports of the federal courts contained many cases in which, even *with* the appeal to superior administrative officers, unfairness and arbitrariness had still prevailed.¹⁷⁶

Kohler's article series on the pending bill did little to dispel people's misconceptions about Southern and Eastern Europeans and did little to build support for a liberal immigration policy. The two responses to his articles that the *New York Times* published reflected the widespread support for restriction and the persistence of stereotypes against Southern and Eastern Europeans. New York University Professor Pratt Fairchild wrote an article questioning Kohler's sources and data to defend the contribution of the new immigrants to the United States and their rates of assimilation and naturalization.¹⁷⁷ In a letter to the editor, Walter W. Hoffman wrote that Kohler's articles were interesting but, alas, misleading because the author forgot "that it is the undeniable right of any nation to select its immigration, to discriminate between those judged desirable and those judged undesirable."¹⁷⁸ In his defense of America's right to exclude, restrict, and select, Hoffman pointed out that it was not the issue of the new immigrants'

¹⁷⁵ Warner A. Parker, "The Quota Provisions of the Immigration Act of 1924," *The American Journal of International Law* 18, no. 4 (October 1924), 742.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 742.

¹⁷⁷ Throughout the 1920s, the *American Jewish Year Book* continued to publish studies on mental health institutions, prisons, and shelters to present a more nuanced image of the composition of the populations at these institutions and to question the assumption that immigrants represented the majority among those residing at these places.

¹⁷⁸ Walter H. Hoffman, "Need to Select Immigrants," *New York Times*, January 27, 1924.

inferiority that was at stake but rather that they were racially different: "the difference in racial type renders them undesirable entirely irrespective of the question of their inferiority."¹⁷⁹

Readers like Pratt and Hoffman responded more positively to articles in favor of immigration restriction, especially if the author was one of the sponsors of the bill. Like Kohler, Senator Reed published on April 27, 1924, in the *New York Times Sunday* to discuss the genesis and the purpose of the pending immigration bill and to reiterate the reasons for his refusal to alter the bill.¹⁸⁰ For years, wrote Reed, Americans had indulged in the illusion that the new immigrants could be fused by the melting pot into a distinctive American type, but the recent tide from Southern and Eastern Europe had proven that America, if it wanted to survive, could not afford to be the refuge of the oppressed of all nations anymore. The new immigrants threatened the survival of the American racial type. During the last forty years, Congress, he admitted, had passed some laws to limit the consequences of this invasion and guarantee that only immigrants complying with certain physical and moral standards be permitted to enter the country, but these tests had managed to exclude only cases of blatant unfitness, such as those with contagious diseases, the insane, and the notorious criminal. It soon became clear, wrote Reed, that these immigrants could not assimilate nor understand the value of American institutions since they came from countries where popular government was a myth:

With the wisdom of such a policy of exclusion there can be no real disagreement. It implies no reflection upon the merit of the excluded peoples. It is merely a recognition of their fundamental dissimilarity from ourselves. Many other nations have adopted similar policies. At the present time the Asiatics are excluded from Australia, New Zealand and most of the British colonies in South Africa. At the present time Japan itself excludes Chinese, Koreans and Malays for the very proper reason that their people are essentially dissimilar from her own. Some of the South American countries by Constitution or by legislative enactment have had similar exclusion policies in effect for many years. The

¹⁷⁹ Hoffman, "Need to Select Immigrants."

¹⁸⁰ David A. Reed, "America of the Melting Pot Comes to End," *New York Times Sunday*, April 27, 1924, John Di Silvestro Papers, box 3, folder 5, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

constitution of the Argentine Republic, adopted in 1853, contains such an exclusion clause for all except European immigrants.¹⁸¹

Perhaps more significant than his efforts to frame immigration restriction in an international context, Reed's reference to the exclusion of Asians across the world to justify his bill highlighted the correlation between the exclusion of Asian immigrants and the restriction of Southern and Eastern Europeans that existed for many restrictionists.

While Cotillo testified in Congress and Kohler wrote articles for the *New York Times*, the Order Sons of Italy leadership wrote a letter directly to Representative Albert Johnson to protest against the pending immigration restriction bill. In addition to the letter to Representative Johnson, OSIA leaders also decided to send telegrams to congressmen representing districts with a heavy Italian American presence to invite them to propose amendments to the Johnson immigration bill to avoid any discrimination against Italy and make sure that all countries be treated the same.¹⁸² Although it reiterated many of the criticisms and concerns that Italian and Jewish anti-restrictionists had discussed before, the letter from OSIA also testified to a slow shift of focus within the Southern and Eastern European communities. For the first time, both groups began to reflect on the consequences that restriction might have on them and on their life in the United States if the Johnson bill became law. That this concern emerged first within the Italian American community perhaps reveals a growing awareness of the fragility of their presence in America.

Focusing exclusively on the Italian case, the letter from OSIA criticized the new immigration bill because it singled out Italian immigrants for discrimination and dismissed the Italian government's efforts to comply with American immigration requirements. The law,

¹⁸¹ David A. Reed, "America of the Melting Pot Comes to End," *New York Times Sunday*, April 27, 1924, John Di Silvestro Papers, box 3, folder 5, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

¹⁸² Nathan Strong to Di Silvestro, February 8, 1924, John Di Silvestro Papers, box 3, folder 5, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

explained the letter, virtually eliminated immigration from certain European countries rather than just regulating or further restricting the immigration flow to the United States. The authors adduced four reasons that made the proposed bill unacceptable to the Italian American community: it was unfair, unjust and un-American; it was detrimental to the economic progress and prosperity of the United States; it confirmed illogical fears of race deterioration; and it contradicted America's attitude during the recent world war.¹⁸³ The bill established a hierarchy among European immigrants and formally classified Eastern and Southern Europeans as inferior to Northern European immigrants. This connection, in turn, threatened their rights and cast them as in-betweens within American social hierarchy.

From an international perspective, the letter from OSIA observed, the bill under examination in Congress discriminated against eight European friendly nations and unjustly favored France, Germany, Norway, Great Britain, and Denmark. Of the discriminated nations, OSIA felt that the bill marked Italy for special humiliation. If Congress approved the Johnson bill, with its blatant discrimination against Italian immigrants and the increase of the quota of a former enemy nation, it would ungratefully dismiss Italy's sacrifices to the cause of the Allies during the war.¹⁸⁴ As loyal and observant American citizens, the letter continued, OSIA members observed that they had always upheld the sovereign right of the United States to regulate, limit, and even abolish immigration when the best interest of the country required it. In the past, the United States had always exercised that right in a fair and just manner, without ever favoring one portion of its citizens to the detriment of another. "Our policy with the European nations," the letter pointed out, "has heretofore recorded no instance of favoring one nation or

¹⁸³ OSIA to Albert Johnson, no date, John Di Silvestro Papers, box 3, folder 5, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

people to the detriment of another."¹⁸⁵ In their opinion, the bill's division of people from Europe into two classes did not just affect prospective immigrants but inevitably altered the relationship among different groups within the United States as well. "The near exclusion of a once welcome class of immigrants," the letter read, "must necessarily precipitate and excite a racial feeling among the various elements of our citizens, which will ultimately form itself into racial blocs."¹⁸⁶ The ratification of this bill would nourish a false pride of racial superiority of one class of American citizens over another and encourage Americans descended from the favored races to view other Americans as an inferior and undesirable part of the American population. The new law, they argued, risked to weaken the feelings of patriotism of the millions of American citizens belonging to the restricted groups and to undermine the country's cohesiveness.

The Italian government expressed early on its appreciation for OSIA's campaign and initiatives against the Johnson bill. On February 26, 1924, Gelasio Caetani, the Italian ambassador to the United States, wrote Di Silvestro to thank him for the Order's extraordinary activity to defend Italy's dignity, so profoundly offended by the Johnson bill. The ambassador's letter reiterated one of the most recurrent themes within the Italian American community. It stated that because they were of Italian origin, Italian immigrants made excellent American citizens, and as such they should keep alive their spiritual ties to Italy while being loyal to their newly adopted country:

I can reassure you that your Motherland is conscious of everything and sees with profound satisfaction that her sons are proud of their origin, without which they would not be worthy of being citizens of the Great Republic of which they are an integral and loyal component.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ Caetani to Di Silvestro, February 26, 1924, John Di Silvestro Papers, box 3, folder 5, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

As Mark Choate demonstrates in his article, the Italian government carefully balanced its encouragement to its emigrants to naturalize with its efforts to build a community of Italians abroad who always had the interest of their motherland at heart.¹⁸⁸

If OSIA and Italian Americans had barely participated in the opposition against the 1921 Immigration Act, their involvement in the debate about the 1924 Immigration Act reflected the transformation that both had undergone within a few years. Two factors contributed to the change. Despite doubts about the Italian American community's political effectiveness, the Italian government understood that it needed to collaborate with Italian Americans to build a strong opposition to immigration restriction proposals. In 1922, right after Mussolini became prime minister, the Italian government designated OSIA as its official representative of Italians in the United States. It was then that OSIA began to sponsor student exchanges and annual pilgrimages to Italy where OSIA leaders could meet with the Pope, the king of Italy, and government leaders. At the same time, the Italian American community assumed new contours when, at the beginning of the twentieth century, more and more Italian immigrants decided to settle in the United States permanently. This shift pushed them to build the financial, political, and intellectual resources to become active members of American society and to pursue their political aims. By 1924, the first evidence of their transformation began to appear.

OSIA's emergence as a primary speaker against immigration restriction in the 1924 debate was a clear sign of the new status of the Italian American community in the United States. OSIA Supreme Venerable John Di Silvestro, who served seven consecutive terms from 1917 to 1935, reflected the ambition and the aspirations of the entire community. For him, as for many of the *prominenti* in the community, the key was to reconcile their connections to Italy with

¹⁸⁸ Mark I. Choate, "Sending States' Transnational Interventions in Politics, Culture, and Economics: The Historical Example of Italy," *International Migration Review* 14, no. 3 (Fall 2007).

Americanization. Di Silvestro arrived from Italy in 1903 at the age of twenty-four to join a brother and a sister, graduated from the University of Pennsylvania Law School in 1918, and passed the Bar exam in the same year. In 1906, he founded and was editor in chief for three years of *La Voce del Popolo*, a daily newspaper "devoted principally to work of Americanization and of a remedial nature, among Italian emigrants."¹⁸⁹ In 1911, Di Silvestro organized the first convention of Americans of Italian origin. The convention was held in Philadelphia and brought together seven hundred delegates from all over the United States to discuss "the Americanization of Italian emigrants, and the fulfillment of their civic and patriotic duties."¹⁹⁰ The nationwide push to restrict Southern and Eastern Europeans further convinced Di Silvestro to pursue his Americanization campaign after he became Supreme Venerable of OSIA, a position that gave him extraordinary influence over the large membership of the organization.¹⁹¹

Ultimately, no Americanization efforts, no newspaper articles, no testimonies in Congress, no letter campaigns to congressmen, no intervention from sending governments, or public denunciations of the unfairness of the pending Johnson bill succeeded in convincing Congress to vote against it. With only six dissenting votes in the Senate and a handful of opponents in the House, Congress passed the 1924 Immigration Act to go into effect on July 1, 1927 (the starting date was later postponed to July 1, 1929). The new law limited the number of immigrants who could be admitted from any country to 2 per cent of the number of people from

¹⁸⁹ "Curriculum Vitae of John M. Di Silvestro," box 1, folder 2, John M. Di Silvestro Papers, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ In 1923, he pushed for the adoption of a new oath for OSIA members to take despite the opposition of some members during the national convention held in Providence, Rhode Island, in the same year. The oath, which sought to incarnate the organization's commitment to the Americanization of its members, ultimately passed. In an effort to counteract accusations of disloyalty against Italians, the oath accentuated the members' allegiance to the United States, while their attachment to Italy was presented as stemming from cultural ties more than anything else: "1. I believe in the Government of the United States and I promise to obey and defend its constitution and its laws; 2. I believe in the fundamental conception of patriotism, and I do not profess any doctrine whose purpose is to subvert the present social order; 3. I believe in an ideal affection towards the land of my forefathers, conscious of the fact that the spiritual contribution of Italian Civilization is the best that I can offer for the everlasting progress of this my country of adoption." "Curriculum Vitae of John M. Di Silvestro."

that country who were living in the United States according to the Census of 1890, nullified the Gentlemen's Agreement by establishing that "no alien ineligible for citizenship" could be admitted as an immigrant, and narrowed the Western Hemisphere exemption by removing most black Caribbeans from the quota-free category. The law also mandated that no alien could enter the United States without an unexpired immigration visa issued by an American consular officer abroad, created a system of preferences for family reunion, and prescribed fines for transportation companies that helped inadmissible aliens arrive to the United States.¹⁹²

At this point, the last chance for Italian and Jewish groups to stop the bill from becoming law was to convince President Coolidge to veto it. The American Jewish Committee immediately tried to arrange for a public hearing before President Coolidge. While the President did not grant the hearing, he conceded to read a memorandum discussing the organization's objections to the law. In one of the last collaborative efforts for a long time to come, prominent Jewish and Italian representatives prepared a memorandum to express their concerns and objections to the Johnson bill. The signatories included Louis Marshall (American Jewish Committee), Stephen Wise (American Jewish Congress), Joshua Kantrowitz (Independent Order of B'nai B'rith), Salvatore Cotillo and John Freschi (OSIA).¹⁹³ The memorandum summarized many of the arguments that the two groups had used throughout the anti-immigration restriction campaign and, for one last time, focused on both the domestic and international consequences of ratifying the Johnson-Reed bill.

The memorandum sustained that the ratification of the bill reflected more the atmosphere of racial hostility that permeated Congress and the country at large than a genuine concern to approve a law to regulate the immigration flow to the United States. The racist bias underlying

¹⁹² Daniels, *Guarding The Golden Door*, 50-58.

¹⁹³ "To the Members of the American Jewish Committee," *American Jewish Year Book* 27 (1925-1926).

the new immigration policy distracted congressmen from considering the impact that such a law would have at the international level. Reiterating once again an argument already presented before, the petitioners argued that the termination of the Gentlemen's Agreement represented a serious threat to the relationship between the United States and Japan:

This bill [...] inflicts a deep insult upon the national and racial consciousness of a highly civilized and progressive country. Such a wound will never cease to rankle. It will give rise to hostility which, even when not apparent on the surface, will prove most serious. It cannot fail to be reflected upon our commerce, and in days of stress will be likely to occasion unspeakable concern. And what will be the net result upon immigration by the elimination and to play on the lingering fear of a rising Japanese imperial power in the country.¹⁹⁴

If the signatories found the law's exclusion of Japanese immigrants dangerous, they could hardly accept that, for the first time in the history of American legislation, the United States would discriminate among European immigrants based on their country of origin. "To add insult to injury," the memorandum read, "the effort has been made to justify this [...] legislation [against Southern and Eastern Europeans] by charging that those who are sought to be excluded are inferior types and not assimilable."¹⁹⁵

For the petitioners, the division between desirable and undesirable Europeans reflected deeper and more problematic prejudices that would negatively affect the lives of Southern and Eastern Europeans in the United States if the president signed the bill into law. They believed that the Johnson-Reed bill not only differentiated among countries of origin but also discriminated on the basis of "racial stocks and religious beliefs." The disruptions that the 1917 and 1921 Immigration Acts had created would pale in comparison to the impact of the new bill on the life of their communities. They had no doubts about the impact the new law would have on their communities:

¹⁹⁴ "To the Members of the American Jewish Committee," *American Jewish Year Book* 27 (1925-1926).

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

What we regard as the danger lurking in this legislation, is that it stimulates racial, national and religious hatreds and jealousies, that it encourages one part of our population to arrogate itself a sense of superiority, and to classify another as one of inferiority. At a time when the welfare of the human race as an entirety depends upon the creation of a brotherly spirit, the restoration of peace, harmony and unity, and the termination of past animosities endangered by the insanity and the brutality of war, it should be our purpose, as a nation which has demonstrated that those of diverse racial, national and religious origins can live together and prosper as a united people, to serve as the world's conciliator. Instead of that this bill, if it becomes a law, is destined to become the very Apple of Discord.¹⁹⁶

Legislators forgot, the petitioners pointed out, that the new immigrants, like the old ones, had been the target of discrimination when they first arrived to the United States. Like Irish and German immigrants in the nineteenth century, Southern and Eastern European immigrants were industrious, law-abiding, and loyal to the spirit of American institutions. Like the European immigrants who had preceded them, their contributions to the country's industrial, commercial, and social growth deserved praise not scorn. If the goal was to regulate immigration into the country, they maintained, then the 1917 Immigration Act was already sufficiently selective.

The last point of the memorandum concerned family reunion, an issue that would become central to the battle for immigration reform until 1965. The Johnson-Reed bill, for the first time, strictly regulated family reunion. The signatories criticized Congress for breaking its promise not to separate families and for approving a bill that assigned quotas to family members as well. The reduced quotas and the citizenship requirement necessary as a pre-condition to send for one's family made it virtually impossible for wives and children under twenty-one years old to reunite with their naturalized husbands and fathers in the United States.¹⁹⁷ The authors of the memorandum considered these family provisions as further evidence that Congress clearly meant to discriminate against Southern and Eastern Europeans. The law, in fact, also stipulated that

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

wives and unmarried children under eighteen years old of U.S. citizens who were natives of Western Hemisphere countries fell under non-quota status:

Can it be seriously contended that Mexicans, Cubans, Haitians, Santo-Domingoans, or Central and South Americans, are more desirable or more assimilable than Italians, Poles, Russians, Austrians, Belgians, Hungarians, Romanians, Greeks, Dutch, Czechoslovakians or Yugoslavians?¹⁹⁸

The irritation underlying this statement reflected the frustration that both Italian and Jewish organizations had with the exemption of Western Hemisphere immigrants from the quota system despite widespread belief of their inferiority and discrimination against them in the communities in which they settled. Yet legislators' different treatment of immigrants from the Western Hemisphere also spoke to the role that the different constituencies had in the immigration restriction debate. The exemption, in fact, was partly the result of the insistence of many Southern and Southwestern legislators that the states they represented needed cheap Mexican agricultural labor.

None of the arguments the joint memorandum made persuaded President Coolidge to veto the bill. On May 26, 1924, the president signed the bill into law. Yet, on that very same day, the anti-restrictionist front achieved one small victory. In *Commissioner of Immigration v. Gottlieb*, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of Rabbi Gottlieb and allowed him to reunite with his wife and infant son. The Supreme Court decision convinced Congress to add a provision in the final version of the bill that prescribed that, unlike other immigrants, ministers of religion and university professors could bring their families to the United States outside the quota limitations.¹⁹⁹ The case involved the wife and an infant son of Solomon Gottlieb, a rabbi of a

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ The provision continued a tradition of the U.S. Congress of using class, in addition to race and nationality, to differentiate among immigrants. The most notable precedent to the ministers and university professors provision of the 1924 Immigration Act was the exemption of diplomats, merchants, ministers, and students from the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Acts.

synagogue in New York City who, on December 1, 1921, had arrived from Palestine to join the rabbi. After a hearing before the board of special inquiry at Ellis Island, the immigration authorities ordered them deported on the ground that the quota for their country had already been filled for the year. Louis Marshall personally advised the defense lawyer of the case, and the American Jewish Committee along with other Jewish organizations supporting the case widely publicized the case in the newspapers and called on Congress to consider adding a provision in the pending bill to avoid such hardships in the future.²⁰⁰ The next year, the American Jewish Year Book reported that the Gottlieb decision had helped thirteen thousand similar cases.²⁰¹

This small victory was little consolation in the face of the terrible defeat American Jews and Italian Americans suffered after years of mobilization against immigration restriction. Yet both groups continued to oppose the 1924 Immigration Act until the law was expected to go into effect on July 1, 1929. Like the 1921 Immigration Act, the 1924 Act created more problems than it solved, especially when it came to immigrants who found themselves in between the two sets of legislation. The years between the ratification of the law and the beginning of its implementation represented a crucial transitional period in which both groups began to experience the impact of restriction and to search for loopholes and grey areas to get around the law's harshest provisions.

*"The Most Drastic Immigration Statute ever Passed:" The Battle Continues, 1924-1929*²⁰²

The first consequence of the passage of the law was the barrage of attacks that both groups faced for their opposition to the Johnson-Reed bill. Article after article continued to

²⁰⁰ "Domestic Activities: Immigration and Naturalization," *American Jewish Year Book* 28 (1926-1927) and Marshall to Davis, October 11, 1924, Louis Marshall Papers, box 16, file 6, American Jewish Collection, Cincinnati.

²⁰¹ "To the Members of the American Jewish Committee," *American Jewish Year Book* 27 (1925-1926).

²⁰² Warner, "The Quota Provisions of the Immigration Act of 1924," 737.

question Italian Americans and American Jews' loyalty to the United States, highlighted their inability to assimilate, and criticized their efforts to use their vote as a weapon to influence legislators to oppose immigration restriction. Indicative of the general mood after the fight over the Johnson bill was the exchange between Professor Roy L. Garis and Louis Marshall of the AJC. In August 1924, Garis wrote an article titled "How the New Immigration Law Works" for *Scribner's Magazine*, in which he firmly criticized the anti-restrictionist front. In his letter of response, Marshall focused on three major criticisms of the article. Garis argued that the opponents of the pending immigration bill knew so little about the problem at stake that they had testified in Congress that, "the plan was one in favor of blondes and against brunettes." Marshall retorted that Garis obviously failed to understand that anti-restrictionist groups were merely questioning the principle underlying the bill which posited Southern and Eastern Europeans as inferior when compared to the mythical Nordics. Garis also wrote that, during the congressional debate, those who opposed the legislation had "suddenly [become] enthusiastic advocates of absolute restriction for five or ten years." Marshall responded that the groups who testified in Congress were simply fighting for "true Americanism against the bogus and pinchback Americanism of the Ku Klux Klan."²⁰³ Finally, Garis noted that it certainly was no coincidence that the congressmen who had voted against the bill came from states with a high number of constituents of Eastern and Southern European descent.²⁰⁴ Marshall forcefully rejected the implication that anti-restrictionist groups had used their voting power to pressure their congressmen to vote against the bill and instead argued that they had voted against the bill

²⁰³ Marshall to Roy L. Garis, September 3, 1924, in "To the Members of the American Jewish Committee," *American Jewish Year Book* 27 (1925-1926).

²⁰⁴ 24 of the Representatives who voted against the bill were from New York State, 9 from New Jersey, 8 from Massachusetts, 6 from Pennsylvania, 6 from Illinois, 5 from Connecticut, 3 from Rhode Island, and 3 from Michigan. Marshall to Roy L. Garis, *American Jewish Year Book* 27 (1925-1926).

simply because they lived in states whose citizens were better acquainted with the value of the immigrant than those living in states where there were practically no immigrants.²⁰⁵

The type of accusations that Garis leveled in his article made both Jewish and Italian lobbying groups aware of the hostility towards their presence in American society. As Garis's article attested, for many, the immigrants' use of the political process to assert their rights and voice their concerns only further justified the need for restriction. Yet if critics stigmatized Southern and Eastern European immigrants for their political participation, their attacks on these groups' loyalty were even more intense, if from different viewpoints. A Princeton professor's remarks at the annual meeting of the American Society of International Law in 1925 on the opposition to the admission of more Eastern European Jews into the United States reflected the prevalent and stereotypical view of their loyalty:

I venture to suggest that a great deal of the animosity, the hostility, the prejudice, the unfairness toward the Jew has been due to the unfortunate fact that the Jew has preserved the idea that he wants to keep his racial integrity; that he desires and preserves his race intact; that he is unwilling to be assimilated fully in the community in which he lives. That I think is the real basis for most of the race prejudice that exists on this subject, and for that reason I feel that there is more need than ever for affirming the first obligation of a citizen and that the first obligation, it seems to me, is that of undivided allegiance.²⁰⁶

The Jewish response to this attack on their loyalty came during a public ceremony for the laying of the corner stone of a Jewish Community Center in Washington, D.C., organized with the express intention to convince skeptical Americans of Jewish loyalty to the United States. Like many times before, it was Louis Marshall who addressed the Princeton professor's remarks.

Among the strongest advocates for Americanization and most vocal critics of Zionism, Marshall nonetheless refused to exhort his fellow Jews to relinquish their connections with world Jewry. Those who attended the ceremony hoped that the Jewish Community Center could

²⁰⁵ Marshall to Roy L. Garis, *American Jewish Year Book* 27 (1925-1926).

²⁰⁶ Louis Marshall, "Address at the Laying of the Corner-stone of the Jewish Community Centre of Washington," May 3, 1925, Louis Marshall Papers, series C, box 19, file 3, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College.

represent a reminder to the rest of the nation that the American Jews did not harbor any dual allegiance but simply a strong connection with other Jews around the world. Using a language strikingly similar to Italian Americans' justifications for their spiritual ties to Italy, Marshall explained that American Jews' ties had nothing to do with issues of allegiance:

That we love Palestine, the home of our fathers, and are ready to help other sons of our ancient faith to seek there the opportunities for betterment which under our present immigration laws they are denied here, and to create there a cultural centre, is the same response to the feeling of brotherhood that the Sons and Daughters of the Revolution feel toward those who live in Anglo-Saxon lands, which our Irish fellow-citizens have evinced for those who belong to the same religious community. That is not double allegiance in the political sense of the term. It is merely evidence of the fact that, however men at times may differ, the call of humanity in the end, resounds above the clash of arms and the artificial hatreds and jealousies which are, too often alas, stimulated by cowardly propagandists and by narrow-minded bigots.²⁰⁷

Marshall's answer to the professor's accusations also reflected the two sides to American Jews' relationship with other Jews around the world that would remain at the heart of their mobilization against restriction for decades to come. On the one hand, Marshall attested to the American Jews' belief that their commitment to retain their ties to the World Jewry constituted an essential aspect of their identity. On the other hand, his words revealed American Jews' awareness that, despite the passage of a restrictive immigration system, they were still better off than many of the Jews living in other countries and that, as such, it was their responsibility to assist them in their relocation. As they continued to oppose the quota system at home, many American Jews in the United States also began to look for other viable countries to which their countrymen could migrate, often intervening financially, diplomatically, and politically to help them move to other countries.

Accusations of dual loyalty plagued the Italian American community as well. Like Jewish critics, Italian spokespersons opposed the expectations of full loyalty to the United States

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

underlying the new policy. On April 4, 1925, author Tino published an article for the anarchist newspaper *L'Adunata dei Refrattari* in which he connected the deportation delirium that followed the Red Scare, the new immigration bill, and the American insistence to punish immigrants for their reluctance to become 100 percent Americans. For him, the new legislation represented a manifestation of the nation's phobia of immigrants and an attempt to get rid of whoever was not willing to conform:

[They want] a more elastic law that seconds the careful choices of the immigration bill, kicking out of here those who do not yield to the distillation of one hundred per cent Americanism. And this is the Alien bill in its new form and in its more drastic sanctions, even more effective because the experiment perpetrated in Massachusetts on Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti indicates new ways to get rid of the reprobates, the insufferables, and the dreadful irregulars, because they cannot be disciplined.²⁰⁸

The connection between the 1920 mass deportations to the Sacco and Vanzetti trial, through the ratification of the new immigration law, reflected a clear awareness of the dangerous consequences of the association between foreigner and subversive.

Despite the harsh criticisms and the attacks that followed the ratification of the law, neither group was willing to concede, however. Both of them began to rethink their strategies of mobilization against restriction and to get ready for the impact the law would have on their communities once it went into effect. Immediately after Congress approved the Johnson bill, the American Union of Hebrew Congregations came up with an agenda that strove both to provide for aspiring immigrants and to limit the discrimination and attacks that the ratification of the quota system would unleash as it justified people's beliefs that the restricted groups were indeed members of an inferior stock. To help aspiring Jewish emigrants to the United States, the Union suggested to monitor the administration of the law to identify its main problems; to provide assistance on questions of immigration, passports, and miscarriage of justice; and to ensure that

²⁰⁸ Tino, "Vana Comprensione!" *L'Adunata dei Refrattari*, April 4, 1925.

the enactment of the new system would operate with equality upon all religious faiths. The suggestions that the Union proposed to attenuate the impact of restriction on American Jews shed light on what they believed the consequences on their life in the United States would be once the immigration authorities began to enforce the new system. The Union proposed to provide means for the relief of Jews from political oppression; to take action seeking to eliminate unjust discrimination against their civic and political rights; to promote the separation of Church and State; to educate the public about the Jewish experience in cases of misunderstanding of the Jewish culture; and to provide assistance with civil and military authorities.²⁰⁹ The American Union of Hebrew Congregations' proposals not only reflected American Jews' awareness of the consequences of restriction but also their emerging conception of immigration as a social justice and civil rights issue.

Yet both Italian Americans and American Jews had little time to pause before they had to turn to their attention to the problems the 1924 Immigration Act posed. As with the 1921 Immigration Act, Congress failed to address the fate of immigrants already traveling to the United States when it ratified the 1924 Immigration Act:

In discussing the new immigration law, the fact should not be overlooked that its enactment has in some quarters led to untold hardships and special reference is made to those refugees stranded at various ports in Europe, Cuba, Mexico and Canada, who had obtained passports in the land of their domicile which passports had been vised [sic.] by the United States Consular representatives, and while enroute [sic.] to America, the present law became effective, thereby preventing the refugees referred to from continuing their journey to the United States.²¹⁰

As with the 1921 Immigration Act, anti-restrictionists groups lobbied for provisions to relieve people caught in between legislations and to accelerate family reunion. One of the most active congressmen to fight for both issues was Polish-born Representative Nathan D. Perlman from

²⁰⁹ *Annual Report of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations* (1925), 9691.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 9686.

New York City's fourteenth congressional district. Between 1924 and 1929, Perlman regularly introduced proposals to relieve immigrants stranded abroad and favor family reunification to no avail. On December 1, 1924, Perlman introduced a joint resolution to allow into the country all admissible immigrants with passports with visas released prior to July 1, 1924 as non-quota immigrants. Later that year, he introduced in the House of Representatives his first bill to amend the Immigration Act of 1924 to facilitate family reunion. In 1926, Perlman joined a group of Jewish representatives and senators to sponsor an amendment for the admissions of relatives, soldiers, and immigrants stranded in foreign ports because of the new immigration law. Finally, in 1928, Perlman endorsed Senator Wadsworth's proposal to help immigrants lawfully admitted into the country reunite with their wives and minor children still abroad. Introduced as an amendment to another bill already adopted by the House and likely to pass the Senate, the measure ultimately succumbed to the filibuster of the closing days of the session.²¹¹

The objections to the passage of Perlman's proposals reflected the continued hostility towards Southern and Eastern Europeans. Many critics of these bills argued that immigrants were responsible for familiarizing themselves with the new quota system and that they should have known that they would find it difficult to have their relatives join them. Commissioner General of Immigration Harry Hull reiterated the same view, when he maintained that much of the fault for the ongoing separation of the families fell upon the immigrants themselves. According to Hull, immigrants were aware of the law, and yet they left "their wives and children to come here on the gamble that they [would] be able to slip in in the next monthly quota."²¹² As the executive committee of the AJC argued, although that reasoning might be acceptably applied

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 9686. Starting in 1926, even Marshall regularly appeared before the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization of the House of Representatives to defend bills proposing to facilitate family reunions for immigrants arrived in the United States before June 1924 but no avail. See "Domestic Matters: Immigration," *American Jewish Yearbook* 31 (1929-1930).

²¹² Harry Hull quoted in "Domestic Matters: Immigration," *American Jewish Year Book* 30 (1928-1929).

to immigrants admitted after the passage of the 1924 Immigration Act, it was unreasonable to use the same logic with immigrants who had arrived in the country under the previous quota system, a policy expressly introduced as a temporary measure rather than the prelude to the 1924 national origins quota system.²¹³

In the meantime, the Emergency Committee for Jewish Refugees decided not to wait for congressional action and mobilized to help the stranded emigrants. The Emergency Committee for Jewish Refugees had been recently organized and, overcoming ideological and religious differences, included representatives of a number of national Jewish organizations from around the country. The AJC and its president Louis Marshall once again played a key role in the activities of the newly formed committee. Marshall was in fact the chairman of the Emergency Committee for Jewish Refugees and the committee member with the strongest political connections. After studying the problem, the committee came up with three possible solutions to help the stranded migrants: the repatriation of refugees able to return to their countries of origin without incurring persecution, the distribution of those who wished to proceed to other destinations where they could be lawfully admitted, and the assistance of those who were permitted to remain in the countries of temporary sojourn. The Jewish community in Canada secured permission for the admission of 5,000 refugees after the Emergency Committee guaranteed that it would financially contribute to the sustenance of these refugees until they could become self-sufficient. The Emergency Committee also promised social, religious, and financial assistance to emigrants in Cuba and in Mexico.²¹⁴

The most acute problem that the Emergency Committee faced, however, concerned the thousands of Jewish refugees stranded at ports of embarkation in Europe who were unable to

²¹³ "Domestic Matters: Immigration," *American Jewish Year Book* 30 (1928-1929).

²¹⁴ "Domestic Activities: Immigration and Naturalization," *American Jewish Year Book* 28 (1926-1927).

return to their country of origin or to proceed forward. During the summer of 1927, representatives of the Emergency Committee, the Jewish Colonization Association, the Jewish World Relief Conference, and the Emigdirekt, representing the Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Society, met in Paris and reached an agreement by which the three organizations would jointly assist these refugees to move to countries in which they might be able to settle permanently in compliance with the immigration laws of the receiving countries. The agreement also stipulated that the organizations needed to collect 425,000 dollars to carry on their relief work, with the Emergency Committee's share of the total amount being 80 percent.²¹⁵ By the summer of 1928, the Emergency Committee had taken care of all the emigrants to the United States stranded in European ports. The Committee assisted these migrants either to stay in the country of their temporary sojourn, to move to Canada, to settle in Palestine, or to return to their country of origin.²¹⁶

As after the passage of the 1921 Immigration Act, the group that faced more problems than others was the immigrants who arrived to the United States in between legislations. Many immigrants who had obtained visas, bought tickets, or arranged for their families to join them were left waiting in the ports of arrival to understand which of the new or old provisions applied to their situation. As with the 1921 Act, many immigrants resorted to the legal system to solve many of the inconsistencies of the new act. Believing that this would guarantee more chances of success, the American Jewish community focused its attention on cases that revolved around two major issues: the admission of ministers of religion's families and the admission of American residents' under-age children with mental defects. The most important case for ministers of religion remained *Commissioner of Immigration v. Gottlieb*, while *Fink v. Tod* and *Duner v.*

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

²¹⁶ "Domestic Matters: Immigration," *American Jewish Year Book* 29 (1927-1928).

Curran inconsistently dealt with children under age with mental defects trying to join their fathers in the United States, continuing the debate first addressed in *Goldman v. Tod*.²¹⁷

Marshall and the American Jewish Committee had considered the Supreme Court ruling in *Commissioner of Immigration v. Gottlieb* and its impact on the revision of the 1924 Immigration Act a victory, but their elation was short lived. In response to the Supreme Court decision, the Department of Labor Solicitor, in fact, decided that the ministers and professors provision applied only to ministers and professors admitted after July 1, 1924, thus leaving those who had entered the country before then with no options. Exemplary of what happened to immigrants caught in between the two Immigration Acts was Rabbi Schevelovitz's case. Advised by Marshall to wait for the Supreme Court to decide on the Gottlieb case, Schevelovitz began the procedure to send for his family after the Court approved Gottlieb's request and after Congress approved the provision concerning ministers' families. As required by the 1924 Immigration Act, the steamship company from which Schevelovitz purchased the tickets for his family laid the matter before the Department of Labor and had to inform the rabbi that the non-quota status of wives and children of ministers applied only to ministers admitted to the United States after July 1, 1924. Because Rabbi Schevelovitz had arrived in the United States in 1923 to administer a Jewish congregation at Long Branch, New Jersey, the steamship company informed him that his options were either to return to Riga, Poland, and then travel back to the United States with his family, or to leave the country, return to the United States by himself first, and then send for his family as immigrants outside the quota.²¹⁸

²¹⁷ See chapter 1 for a detailed analysis of the *Goldman v. Tod* case.

²¹⁸ "Domestic Activities: Immigration and Naturalization," *American Jewish Year Book* 28 (1926-1927).

Marshall personally wrote a letter to Secretary of Labor James J. Davis to protest the Solicitor's decision. The decision, Marshall argued, completely ran counter Congress's recent provision on ministers and professors in the 1924 Immigration Act:

Can it be said for a moment that the Congress which sought to deal humanely with ministers of religion and professors of colleges, academies, seminaries or universities, at the same time intended to subject them to the enormous expenditure of money, waste of time and mental and physical suffering incident to an unnecessary journey across the ocean and back as a condition to the admission of a family intended to be exempted from the quota provision of the Act?²¹⁹

Ultimately, after considerable opposition on the part of the various officials in the Department of Labor and protracted correspondence, Rabbi Schevelovitz's family was admitted. The Gottlieb and Schevelovitz cases ultimately helped many other families who faced the same situation and who were stranded in Ellis Island waiting for the authorities to decide on their cases, but the positive resolution of these cases rested often on long and unpredictable legal battles.²²⁰

If the Gottlieb and Schevelovitz cases ended well after over two years of legal battles, *Duner v. Curran* and *Fink v. Tod* demonstrated the arbitrariness and unreliability of the legal system. Rabbi Duner arrived in the United States in 1923 and sent for his family to join him from Poland in 1924. When the family arrived, immigration authorities ordered the youngest of his five children, the four-year old Channa, deported because the authorities deemed her mentally defective. Rabbi Duner then arranged for an adult to accompany the child back to Europe. The rest of the family was admitted as non-quota immigrants under the 1924 Immigration Act, but a Board of Special Inquiry subsequently excluded all of Rabbi Duner's family as likely to become public charges after it found that the other son, Michel, had a heart problem that prevented him from earning a living. The Board excluded the wife as the

²¹⁹ Marshall to Davis, October 11, 1924, Louis Marshall Papers, series B, box 16, file 6, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College.

²²⁰"Domestic Activities: Immigration and Naturalization," *American Jewish Year Book* 28 (1926-1927)1.

accompanying adult responsible for taking him back to Europe and the remaining children because they would inevitably become public charges without two parents taking care of them. Marshall assisted the lawyer in charge of the case, Morris Jablow, and helped him draft an appeal to the Secretary of Labor to reopen the case. To defend Duner's case and the right for his family to be admitted, Jablow and Marshall referred to previous cases that had deliberated on the legitimacy of some of the provisions of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, pointing to the fact that exceptions for ministers and professors applied to Chinese emigrants but not to European emigrants.²²¹

After the Secretary of Labor ordered the case reopened, Marshall began a month-long correspondence with Representative Perlman to intervene on behalf of Rabbi Duner. Marshall asked Perlman either to intercede with Secretary Davis to persuade him to admit the boy in the exercise of his discretion or, in case this were to no avail, to institute personally a second habeas corpus proceeding, hoping that this might be regarded as a tacit invitation to the Circuit of Appeals to resort to that remedy. This practice of inviting congressmen to present personal bills to delay deportation until courts settled the cases favorably would soon become one of the most used loopholes and, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, would convince Congress to consider reform because of the backlog that the inordinate amount of personal bills created. Perlman personally appeared in front of the Board of Review of the Labor Department to plea for Michel's admission. Despite Marshall's cooperation with Rabbi Duner's lawyer and the personal intervention of Representative Perlman in the case, the Court of Appeals ultimately ruled to

²²¹ Duner v. Curran, 1924-1926, Louis Marshall Papers, series B, box 16, file 6, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College.

admit the rabbi's wife and all the children expect for Michel, who was ordered deported back to Europe.²²²

The *Fink v. Tod* ruling revealed yet another layer of the complications immigrants faced when trying to reunite with their families immediately after July 1, 1924. When Pauline Fink arrived in the United States with her mother to join her father already living in the United States, a board of physicians excluded her on the alleged ground that she was feeble-minded. Marshall once again assisted the lawyer in charge of the case, Max Kohler, and asked Representative Perlman to intervene on behalf of Pauline Fink as well. After requesting a series of medical examinations to evaluate Pauline's mental capacities, all of which agreed with the first board's decision, a Board summoned by the Surgeon General of the United States concluded that the girl was not feeble-minded but rather deaf-mute, a fact that the teachers at the schools that Pauline was attending since her arrival in the United States had immediately discovered. Nevertheless, the original board of physicians overruled the decision of the higher body and insisted upon her deportation. After both the District Court and the Court of Appeals rejected Fink's petition to be admitted, Kohler and Marshall took the case to the Supreme Court of the United States. During the debate before the Supreme Court, the Solicitor General arose in court and, recognizing the grave injustice perpetrated at Pauline Fink's expense, admitted the errors in the proceedings of the lower courts and moved that a writ of habeas corpus be allowed. The Supreme Court then went on to rule that Pauline be regularly admitted. The American Jewish Committee could claim another victory, but its members realized that legal battles were expensive and unpredictable and offered no guarantee of positive resolution. Their plan, which would soon become a pivotal

²²² *Ibid.*

strategy in their mobilization against restriction, was that undermining the law one provision at a time would ultimately lead to the entire system's demise.²²³

The AJC quickly discovered that the rigid interpretation of the new law extended to naturalization practices as well. Beginning in 1925, the Committee began to receive complaints that the courts were denying naturalization to immigrants legally eligible to become citizens whose wives and minor children were not yet in America. In a large majority of the cases, the requirements of the new immigration law had prevented these immigrants from reuniting sooner with their families. Even when these naturalization applicants showed that their intention was to send for their families as soon as they became citizens so that their wives and children could fall outside the quotas, the courts nevertheless continued to deny them naturalization. The reason behind this peculiar persistence on the part of the courts in denying naturalization to this specific type of immigrants long remained unknown.²²⁴

The mystery, however, was cleared up in a court proceeding in May of 1925. During the naturalization case of an immigrant named Abdullah, representatives of the Department of Labor produced a memorandum dated January 31, 1925, from their department urging its agents to oppose the granting of citizenship to any applicant whose wives and minor children were still in Europe. The explanation for this recommendation revealed the extent to which the bias against new immigrants pervaded the Department of Labor and the lengths to which its representatives would go to obstruct immigration. According to the 1926 American Jewish Committee report, the authorities believed that there was a possibility

That among the members of the new citizen's family, who would have the right to come to America, there might be one or more who would otherwise be inadmissible for some cause; that to debar such a person from entering would lead to the separation of families;

²²³ *Fink V. Tod*, 1924, Louis Marshall Papers, series B, box 17, file 2, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, and "Domestic Activities: Immigration and Naturalization," *American Jewish Year Book* 28 (1926-1927).

²²⁴ "Domestic Activities: Immigration and Naturalization," *American Jewish Year Book* 28 (1926-1927).

that this separation would, in turn, arouse public indignation under pressure of which the immigration authorities would feel constrained to admit the person in question, thus evading the law. Therefore, it was urged that rather than force the immigration officials to violate the law it was necessary to prevent this contingency from arising by the simple expedient of opposing the naturalization of all aliens whose families are still abroad.²²⁵

Familiar with some of the tactics that anti-restrictionists would use to fight against immigration restriction provisions, the immigration authorities were trying to counteract these strategies by preventing any controversy from arising in the first place. These circulars also instructed the officials to report every case in which a judge overruled the objection to the admission of these petitioners for naturalization and to keep track of the judges who complied with the views of the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization.²²⁶ Immigration authorities' obstruction of immigration would only increase after 1929 after the beginning of the Depression and the emergence of the Jewish refugee problems.

Outraged by these memoranda, the executive committee of the American Jewish Committee took immediate action and went straight to the top. On June 8, 1925, Marshall wrote a letter of complaint directly to President Coolidge to inform him of the "extra-statutory requirements" that the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization had added to the provisions defining the conditions upon which immigrant applicants could naturalize contained in the last immigration law. Denouncing the Assistant Secretary of Labor's memoranda as unmitigated lawlessness and an act of tyranny, Marshall called the president's attention to the fact that the efforts of the Department of Labor to deprive the wife and children of a resident entitled to

²²⁵ "Domestic Activities: Immigration and Naturalization," *American Jewish Year Book* 28 (1926-1927). Some of the judges presiding over naturalization cases often agreed with the Department of Labor's recommendations with regard to applicants whose families still resided in Europe. In its 1928 report, the executive committee of the American Jewish Committee quoted from a judge who, during his ruling, complained that he had presided over many cases where the applicants openly admitted that they were seeking to naturalize for no other reason than to bring to the United States family members who were unable to meet the requirements of the current immigration law. See "Twenty-First Annual Report of the American Jewish Committee, 1927," *American Jewish Year Book* 29 (1927-1928).

²²⁶ "Domestic Activities: Immigration and Naturalization," *American Jewish Year Book* 28 (1926-1927).

citizenship of the right to come to the United States by stripping the husband and father of his right to naturalize clearly ran counter to Coolidge's most recent appeals to humane policies. The president referred the letter to the Department of Labor and let Acting Secretary W. W. Husband handle the matter.²²⁷

The correspondence between Husband, Robe Carl White, the new Acting Secretary, and Marshall lasted until July 3, 1925, when Marshall wrote a letter to White to which the Acting Secretary never responded. In this exchange, the Department of Labor denied any intention to abuse its power to encourage the courts to disregard the law and refuse naturalization to immigrants whose families still lived in Europe or to require naturalization officers to provide the names of the judges who complied with the department's directions and of those who instead criticized them.²²⁸ In a letter to Marshall on June 23, 1925, Husband explained that the courts' penchant to decline American citizenship to applicants whose families lived abroad was in fact an old practice and that the department's instructions with regards to keeping track of judges' decisions was only for statistical purposes. To avoid any misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the law, Husband continued, the department issued another memorandum to instruct naturalization field officers to alert the courts whenever such a case arose so that judges could consider whether an alien whose family resided abroad could be said to be a permanent resident of the United States before making their decisions.²²⁹

Once Robe Carl White became Acting Secretary, the correspondence with the Department of Labor became increasingly tense, especially after Marshall's letter to Husband on June 26, 1925. Annoyed by the department's persistence in denying the true intentions behind

²²⁷ "Domestic Activities: Immigration and Naturalization," *American Jewish Year Book* 28 (1926-1927).

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

²²⁹ Husband to Marshall, June 23, 1925, in "Domestic Activities: Immigration and Naturalization," *American Jewish Year Book* 28 (1926-1927).

the memoranda circulated among naturalization officials, Marshall explicitly stated the bias underlying the department's guidelines:

It seems to me exceedingly strange that on the one hand immigrants who have resided here for the required period and have not applied for citizenship, are frequently denounced in certain quarters as having no interest in the welfare of the country and as being undesirable, and that on the other hand immigrants who likewise have been here for the required period and signify their desire to cast their lot with the country by seeking to become citizens, are sought to be deprived of the right by a chop-logic which declares that though they are here in body they are nevertheless absent because their families are in a foreign land.²³⁰

After this letter, White still refused to address Marshall's criticisms directly and to send him the full text of the memoranda as Marshall had repeatedly requested. In his last letter to Marshall on June 30, 1925, White vaguely reassured him that the department issued those instructions regarding the naturalization of immigrants whose families were abroad only to guarantee a fair presentation of the cases in court and that the department would investigate any abuse that the field service officers might have committed under a misrepresentation of the department's directions.²³¹ Despite White's reassurances, naturalization problems continued into the 1930s.

The Department of Labor's efforts to derail naturalization applications from immigrants with families still living in Europe were not the only obstacle to Jewish immigrants' naturalization. Another important question pertaining to naturalization emerged in the 1925 case of *United States v. Cartozian*, which addressed the status of Armenian immigrants and their right to naturalize. The court had to establish whether Armenians were white and thus entitled to become American citizens. In the case *In re Halladjian* the court had ruled that Armenians were eligible to naturalize. Yet in view of the decisions of the Supreme Court in *Ozawa v. United States*, denying citizenship to Japanese, and of *United States v. Thind*, denying citizenship to East

²³⁰ Marshall to Husband, June 26, 1925, "Domestic Activities: Immigration and Naturalization," *American Jewish Year Book* 28 (1926-1927).

²³¹ White to Marshall, June 30, 1925, "Domestic Activities: Immigration and Naturalization," *American Jewish Year Book* 28 (1926-1927).

Indians, the Department of Labor sought to reopen the subject of naturalization in connection with Armenians, suggesting that if the latter were declared ineligible for citizenship then the question of naturalization should be investigated in connection with Asian Jews as well.²³² Once again the AJC intervened in the person of Marshall who provided counsel for Cartozian with data proving that it was "the overwhelming opinion of anthropologists and other authorities that Armenians in Asia Minor are white persons within the common usage of the term."²³³ Judge Wolverton, the presiding judge in the Cartozian case, ruled that Armenians were free white persons within the meaning of the United States Revised Statutes, section 2169 and, as such, eligible for naturalization. After Judge Wolverton's decision, both the Department of Justice and the Department of Labor decided to acquiesce to the conclusion reached in the Cartozian case.²³⁴

As the American Jewish community took its objections to court and tested its effectiveness, the Italian American community underwent a significant change that weakened and in part derailed some of its efforts to speak out against restriction. In 1925, following a disagreement over the organization's support for the Italian Fascist government, Salvatore Cotillo, with the support of social worker Edward Corsi, city Judge Francis X. Mancuso, and Fiorello La Guardia, withdrew their New York chapter from OSIA and renamed it the Sons of Italy Grand Lodge. The existence of two Sons of Italy organizations in New York dispersed energy and attention from the mobilization against restriction and deeply divided the Italian community along political lines. More importantly, the bitter controversy that followed and the intensity of the feelings over the split, even as the division over Fascism began to wane, damaged

²³² "Domestic Activities: Immigration and Naturalization," *American Jewish Year Book* 28 (1926-1927).

²³³ *Ibid.*

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

Cotillo's credibility as a political representative of the group.²³⁵ Until then, Cotillo had been the most outspoken critic of immigration restriction in public, in Congress, and in the newspapers. Cotillo had also been the most prominent Italian American to believe in the collaboration with other potentially restricted groups and had often collaborated with leading Jewish organizations to voice the two communities' frustration and criticisms of the country's move towards immigration restriction. As Cotillo's prominence languished, Supreme Venerable Di Silvestro and OSIA's reputation continued to gain strength and began to represent the official voice of Italian Americans.

In addition to the internal split within the Italian community, disagreements between Fascists and anti-Fascists in America generated a new wave of criticisms against Italian immigrants. For some critics, the arguments between the two factions only upheld the stereotypes about violent and irritable Italians, and for many, the disruption that their disagreements caused further confirmed the need for immigration restriction. In 1925, Supreme Venerable John Di Silvestro received an anonymous note along with an article discussing the quarrels between Fascists and Anti-Fascists:

The American people are tired of the trouble that the Italians are making in [New York City]; every time any one comes, that they don't like, the Italians disgrace themselves, and also the American people; we pay the bills for the police to keep in order a lot of cattle that are not fit to live in a decent country. All out crime is committed by Italians; there were 12 Black Hand murders in one week here in this city a short time ago. It would be appreciated if the Italians would All go back.²³⁶

The article included along with the note complained that recently arrived European immigrants refused to naturalize took advantage of their host country and continued to fight out the quarrels of their homeland in the United States. This time, the article complained, it was the Italians

²³⁵ Thomas M. Henderson, "Immigrant Politician: Salvatore Cotillo, Progressive Ethnic," *International Migration Review* 13, no. 1 (Spring 1979): 100.

²³⁶ Anonymous note to Di Silvestro, 1925, John Di Silvestro Papers, box 2, folder 2, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

fighting over Fascism. "If any Italian in the United States thinks that things are going badly in Italy," concluded the article, "his duty is to go back there and rearrange them. He cannot help his country by mobbing Fascists on steamship decks and in hotels here."²³⁷

The advent of Fascism gave many Italian Americans the illusion of a home country of which to be proud and whose achievements could positively reflect on their status within American society. Di Silvestro's collaboration with the Fascist government reflected a wider consensus within the Italian American community, especially among a substantial number of the 3,000 OSIA members spread across the United States and Canada:

While the delegates of the Order Sons of Italy in America assembled in Supreme Convention at Montreal, Canada are about to begin their labors, they send you, magnificent animator of the virtue of the race within and without the confines of Italy, their devoted greetings. Proud of the common origin, we re-assert our loyalty to America where we have built our new home and where we work intensely for her greatness, proud of the fact that we are in accord with the policy of your Excellency with reference to our spiritual ties to our motherland. We here turn our thoughts with intense love to our native land which gives us the divine privilege of proclaiming ourselves, progeny of Rome.²³⁸

In addition to highlighting the influence that the Fascist government had on Italian Americans, this excerpt from a letter that Di Silvestro wrote to Mussolini also showcased Italian American efforts to reconcile the pressure to Americanize while conforming with Italy's pressure to maintain their ties with their homeland alive. As with Jewish immigrants fighting to maintain their old world culture in the new world while remaining connected to World Jewry, this tension between Americanization and the permanence of the ties with Italy further complicated Italians' place in American society and intensified mainstream America's animosity towards them.

When it came to opposing the 1924 Immigration Act, Italian Americans increasingly opted to focus on mobilizing exclusively for Italian immigrants rather than all immigrants. After

²³⁷ "They should go home for fighting," no newspaper title, 1925, John Di Silvestro Papers, box 2, folder 2, Italian American Collection, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

²³⁸ Di Silvestro to Mussolini, July 19, 1929, John Di Silvestro Papers, box 1, folder 13, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

1924, this approach increasingly affected their decisions about with whom to collaborate and which causes to further. In 1927, as Congress debated the postponement of the 1924 Immigration Act, Di Silvestro received a letter from Catholic foreign policy consultant Constantine E. McGuire proposing to collaborate to campaign against the 1924 Immigration Act.²³⁹ McGuire asked Di Silvestro to distribute among all OSIA members copies of a recent speech given by Senator Shipstead of Minnesota challenging the national origins quota system and proposing its repeal. McGuire believed that if anti-restrictionists united to voice their opposition to the act as Congress was debating its enforcement, they might have a chance "to get rid once and for all of this proposal of the exclusionist fanatics, which is the first step in bringing about the adoption of a rational policy in the United States."²⁴⁰ The letter concluded by praising the value of collaboration with an important, well connected, and numerically significant organization like OSIA in such an enterprise. More importantly, McGuire provided a valuable explanation for his personal involvement in the campaign against the national origins system:

The extent of my earnestness in this fight will be gauged perhaps if I tell you confidentially that I was forced last month to decline the conferment of the knighthood of the Crown of Italy—graciously offered in connection with the appearance of my recent volume, "Italy's International Economic Position,"—because of the embarrassing position in which it might seem to put my activity against the Immigration Act of 1924 ever since its enactment.²⁴¹

McGuire's confidential confession to Di Silvestro, a great supporter of Mussolini, certainly contributed to convince him to accept McGuire's offer of collaboration without hesitation.

Although Shipstead's plea was to no avail, McGuire's request for help from Di Silvestro and

²³⁹ In 1926, McGuire published a book on Italy's economic position in world economy titled *Italy's International Economic Position* (New York: McMillan, 1926).

²⁴⁰ McGuire to Di Silvestro, April 4, 1927, John Di Silvestro Papers, box 3, folder 5, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

OSIA pointed to an increasing Italian American influence on American politicians and politics.²⁴²

Although Italian Americans saw these collaborations as important for their role in American society, their most immediate concern was to alleviate the impact of the new law on Italians in the United States and abroad. They found the 1924 Immigration Act's harsh provisions about expulsion particularly troublesome. Under the new law, in fact, immigrants could be deported no matter how long they had lived in the United States. Both Italian Americans and American Jews felt that this provision only further criminalized immigrants and established a hierarchy between naturalized citizens and native born Americans:

under our laws, one who commits any crime but murder, cannot be indicted for the same after a lapse of three years. Yet should it be discovered that an immigrant—no matter how long he has been in this country—had when a child before his arrival here committed a minor offense for which he may or may not have been punished abroad, he would, if such law passed, be subject to punishment.²⁴³

Italian Americans particularly worried about the consequences that the abolition of any statute of limitation had on the many Italians who had entered the country illegally. After 1924, the main Italian American newspapers were inundated with letters from Italian immigrants inquiring about the legitimacy of their status and about how to proceed if the law deemed them illegal.

The preoccupation with the impact of the 1924 Immigration Act brought to light the issue of undocumented immigration in the Italian community in the United States. Similarly to what had happened earlier in the decade, the debate and the passage of new restrictive immigration

²⁴² Senator Shipstead's speech criticizing the national-origins system focused mainly on the lack of sufficient reliable data to devise the quotas. After a lengthy and detailed explanation of the laborious efforts of the appointed committee to devise appropriate calculations for the quotas, the uncertainties on the chosen methodology that the same committee and the president's advisers had cautiously exposed, Senator Shipstead asked for the immediate repeal of the national-origins quota system and encouraged a more serious consideration of a coherent immigration policy. "Speech of Senator Shipstead, of Minnesota, delivered before the Von Steuben Society of America at Mecca Temple, New York City," February 19, 1927, John Di Silvestro Papers, box 3, folder 5, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

²⁴³ "Domestic Activities: Immigration and Naturalization," *American Jewish Year Book* 28 (1926-1927).

legislation led to a spike in illegal immigration from Italy. Well into the late 1930's, most Italian language newspapers in the United States abounded with stories about Italians arriving in the United States illegally. Right after the ratification of the Immigration Act of 1924, *L'Adunata dei Refrattari* reported that Filippo and Battista Giordano, owners of the Fascist *Il Bollettino della Sera*, had just been arrested because they had tried to help six Italian immigrants to enter the country illegally. While he rejoiced that the newspaper owners had been arrested, the author also denounced the iniquity of the new law because it forced hardworking people to resort to illegal means to enter the United States "to turn their misery into a dream of the past." The two brothers had actively opposed and criticized immigration restriction through the columns of their newspaper, but their arrest revealed another aspect of their involvement in immigration matters. The article concluded that, among other charges, the two brothers had been arrested because they had tried to profit from desperate Italians who wanted to migrate to the United States. The six immigrants that they had tried to help, in fact, had paid them three thousand dollars to be assisted in the passage.²⁴⁴

The Giordano brothers were not the only ones who tried to profit from the enactment of restrictive immigration policy in the United States. On the other side of the Atlantic, Italian emigration authorities regularly saw similar cases as they tried to control the emigration flow to comply with American immigration policies. As early as 1926, the Commissariato Generale dell'Emigrazione in Italy began to receive letters and documentation denouncing the traffic of illegal emigrants to North America from emigration officers from across Italy and civilians alike. Ciccio Sciulli wrote the Commissariato to denounce Giacinto Pollice as a promoter of illegal emigration to the United States in the small rural towns surrounding L'Aquila, in the Abruzzo

²⁴⁴ "Italia, i tuoi figli leggitmi ti onorano," *L'Adunata dei Refrattari*, October 25, 1924, Newspaper Collection, IHRC, University of Minnesota, University of Minnesota.

region. Taking advantage of the desperation and credulity of peasants desiring to migrate to North America, Pollice promised to arrange for them a permit to migrate to the United States through a cousin who was a close friend of the American consul. "Clients" had to pay a deposit of five to ten thousand liras and twenty-two thousand liras total for the permit.²⁴⁵ Another letter that the Commissariato received from a delegate from the province of Vicenza informed it about rumors that many prospective migrants took advantage of the pilgrimages to Lourdes organized by the Comitato Nazionale Pro Palestina e Lourdes in Milan to migrate to North America illegally. The author also added that it appeared that his predecessor Francesco Curti, previously convicted for illegal emigration activities, was involved in the swindle.²⁴⁶ The Commissariato immediately began investigating both matters but could never find any evidence supporting either of the claims. Both investigations were ultimately inconclusive, and in the case of Pollice and Sciulli, the emigration inspector was unable to locate the culprit and ultimately discovered that both the accused and writer's names were false.²⁴⁷

From two lists that the Commissariato compiled on the ongoing investigations on illegal migration, it emerges that a flourishing illegal migration traffic involving people on both sides of the Atlantic prospered at least until Mussolini closed the Commissariato at the end of 1927. After 1927, it becomes particularly difficult to trace the evolution of illegal emigration out of Italy. However, in 1926 and 1927 alone, the Commissariato investigated, among others, a traffic of illegal emigrants to the United States from Tunis, Tunisia, through Panama; a widespread commerce in false petitions for family reunifications; the discovery by a private investigator in

²⁴⁵ In 1927, the exchange rate was 19 liras per one U.S. dollar, bringing the sum that Pollice requested to purchase a permit to migrate to North America to approximately 1,158 U.S. dollars.

²⁴⁶ Vicenza Provincial Delegate to Commissariato, February 2, 1927, Fondo Commissariato Generale dell'Emigrazione, busta 732, Archivio Storico degli Affari Esteri, Rome, Italy.

²⁴⁷ Ciccio Sciulli to Commissariato, December 24, 1926, Fondo Commissariato Generale dell'Emigrazione, busta 731, Archivio Storico degli Affari Esteri, Rome, Italy.

Baltimore of an organization that forged passports and reentry permits for the United States; the existence in Palermo and Naples of individuals who forged passports by substituting pictures; the illicit use of American passports for emigration purposes; the bribery for ten thousand liras at a time of two employees at the sub-prefecture in Castrovillari in Calabria to facilitate the release of documents to help women in the area leave for the United States; and the bribery of employees at the Alcamo town hall in Sicily to foster illegal emigration.²⁴⁸

Little of these investigations remains except for the Commissariato's yearlong investigation of a case of illicit emigration traffic through Bordeaux, France, involving Italians living both in Italy and France. In April 1926, the French police in Bordeaux arrested six Italian migrants from Casalvieri, Lazio, trying to sail to Canada illegally. French police investigated the role in the traffic of illegal migrants of Giuseppe Tiberio, an Italian residing in Tarn, France, who was accused of being a co-conspirator because he had provided the six emigrants with the work contracts necessary to be admitted to France. French police also investigated Pietro Mequio, who was charged with supplying forged passports and visas to enter Canada for 500 to 600 francs. The investigation that ended in May 1927 found the six migrants and Pietro Mequio guilty but dismissed the charges against Giuseppe Tiberio. The six Italian migrants knew that that what they were doing was illegal because they arrived in France in two separate groups and then reconvened in Paris to purchase the forged documents to leave for Canada. Thanks to Tiberio's work contracts for Morel and Schiavi, a construction company that built roads and railroads, the six migrants had legally obtained their passports from the Italian authorities to work in France. The two groups crossed the border at Ventimiglia near the French border, an under-supervised crossing point that had previously been under investigation because it was

²⁴⁸ Fondo Commissariato Generale dell'Emigrazione, busta 734 and 735, Archivio Storico degli Affari Esteri, Rome, Italy.

suspected to be an easy site for smugglers to help illegal migrants cross the border. Pietro Mequio, a professional smuggler, had been earning between eight thousand to ten thousand francs per migrant to help them immigrate to the United States illegally from Canada. He sold the six migrants forged visas from the Italian and Canadian authorities. Giuseppe Tiberio, on the other hand, had provided the work contracts necessary for the migrants to be admitted to France out of a genuine belief that he was helping six Italians to find work in France.²⁴⁹

Mequio was not the only one that the Commissariato charged and found guilty of abetting illegal migration to North America. In June 1926, Donegani, provincial delegate for Cosenza, Calabria, informed the Commissariato that the border authorities stationed at Como San Giovanni, along the Swiss border in Lombardy, had arrested Giovanbattista Busacca, Rosario Amendola, and Giovanni Dierna, three migrants from his province, who during customs had provided vague answers about their whereabouts and the purpose of their trip. The border authorities had subsequently transmitted the three men's passports to the police headquarters in Cosenza, Calabria, and discovered that the passports were fakes and that the three migrants had lied about their domicile. They were not from Cosenza but rather from two different towns in the province of Siracusa, Sicily. The police ordered the arrest of the three men and the search of their houses. As investigations continued, the investigators discovered that Emanuele Farace, who had already previously been accused and arrested for fraud involving illegal emigration, might be involved in the illegal emigration fraud. Although they never succeeded in proving Farace's involvement in their current investigation, emigration authorities found Farace guilty on other charges pressed against him. Two women from the province Castrovillari, Calabria, had in

²⁴⁹ Poletti to Pompei, April 28, 1926, and Consigliere generale dell'emigrazione to segretario generale dell'emigrazione, May 5, 1927, Fondo Commissariato Generale dell'Emigrazione, busta 734, Archivio Storico degli Affari Esteri, Rome, Italy.

fact pressed charges against him for asking ten thousand liras to expedite their emigration practices.²⁵⁰

The efforts to assist Italian illegal immigrants soon absorbed the Italian American community's full attention. Its battle to lobby for congressional provisions to amnesty Italian illegal immigrants who had long lived in the United States would last well into the late 1930s. When, on March 2, 1929, Congress ratified the Regulation of Illegal Residence in the United States Act to authorize the adjustment of status for illegal immigrants "not ineligible for citizenship" who had entered the country prior to June 3, 1921, Di Silvestro immediately wrote a personal letter to Harry Hull, Commissioner General of Immigration, to ask for a copy of the act and to obtain forms for Italian illegals who desired to adjust their status.²⁵¹ At the same time, Representative La Guardia encouraged the publication of an article to be distributed to the Italian American press detailing the procedure and the requirements of the law. Applicants had to demonstrate that their date of entry was before June 3, 1921, that they had lived continuously in the United States since their arrival, that they were persons of good moral character, and that they were not subject to deportation. In the article, La Guardia also explained that during the scheduled interview with immigration authorities, applicants needed two witnesses of good standing that could account for their arrival before June 3, 1921, provide a list of names of people that could testify to their good moral character, and two pictures. If, after the interview, the applicants were found subject to deportation, immigration authorities would arrange for their

²⁵⁰ Donegani to Commissariato, June 26, 1926, Fondo Commissariato Generale dell'Emigrazione, busta 735, Archivio Storico degli Affari Esteri, Rome, Italy.

²⁵¹ Di Silvestro to Commissioner General of Immigration, 1929, and Public No. 962, 70th Congress [H.R. 349], An Act to supplement the naturalization laws, John Di Silvestro Papers, box 3, folder 5, Italian American Collection, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

immediate deportation. More importantly, if the applicants were caught lying, immigration authorities would immediately charge them with fraud and cancel their applications.²⁵²

In addition to fighting to help illegal immigrants regularize their status, Italian Americans also mobilized to oppose any provision that required the registration of aliens. The issue resurfaced when, in December 1926, Congress again considered legislation proposing the alien registration. Like Jewish activist groups, Italian Americans opposed the universal registration of aliens as a practice that was humiliating to the self-respect of immigrants and damaging to their interests. The 1926 OSIA convention in Washington unanimously agreed to oppose "any measures concerning the mandatory registration of foreigners living in the United States as measures in opposition to the spirit of the fundamental American principles underlying the American Government."²⁵³ OSIA's activity against the registration of aliens attracted many supporters among members of Congress. On March 20, 1926, Senator J.W. Wadsworth from the U.S. Senate Committee on Military Affairs wrote to Umberto Billi, Supreme Recording Secretary OSIA Grand Lodge of the State of New York, to express his support for the organization's opposition to the registration of aliens. In his letter, the Senator explained that the Vice President of the United States had referred to him several communications from OSIA regarding the bill requiring the registration of aliens. In his opinion, the enforcement of such legislation would create extraordinary difficulties, and "it would tend to bring about a condition of affairs in this country closely resembling the European espionage system with all its attendant evils."²⁵⁴ He proposed that if aliens entered the United States in violation of the country's

²⁵² "Per la regolarizzazione dei residenti illegalmente negli Stati Uniti," no newspaper title, no date, John Di Silvestro Papers, box 3, folder 5, Italian American Collection, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

²⁵³ "Atti e deliberazioni della Suprema Loggia," January-February 1926, John Di Silvestro Papers, box 1, folder 11, Italian American Collection, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

²⁵⁴ J.W. Wadsworth to Umberto Billi, March 20, 1926, John Di Silvestro Papers, box 2, folder 4, Italian American Collection, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

immigration laws, a simpler and more American solution to solve the problem and to prevent the smuggling of illegal immigrants was for Congress to improve and strengthen the administration of the law and not to criminalize the immigrants themselves.²⁵⁵

American Jews also mobilized against the bill. Along with many of the organizations opposing voluntary or mandatory registration of aliens, many prominent Jewish organizations participated in a luncheon conference to discuss registration bills and deportation bills before Congress at the Hotel Astor in New York City on January 9, 1926. The attendees included, among others, the Hebrew Shelter Immigrant Society; the Conference on Immigration Policy; the Department of City, Immigration and Industrial Work of National Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States; the National Board of the Young Women's Christian Association; the League for American Citizenship; the American Civil Liberties Union; and the Council of Jewish Women. Max Kohler delivered the keynote address at the conference, where he reiterated many of the points and criticisms he had raised in the columns of the *New York Times* in his series on the Johnson bill in January 1924. The conference received a strong endorsement from the American Federation of Labor, which, along with the other manifestations of opposition against the measure and the support of a few prominent Congressmen, persuaded Congress not to pursue the matter any further, at least for the time being. Italian Americans and American Jews' participation in the opposition to the various registration bills represent one of the last successful attempts to undermine restriction before the 1924 Immigration Act went into effect.²⁵⁶

Their enthusiasm for their success, in fact, was short lived. If Congress decided to refrain from legislating on the matter, the Department of Labor took it upon itself to find an alternative

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁶ "Domestic Matters: Immigration," *American Jewish Year Book* 31 (1929-1930).

to alien registration. In 1928, the Commissioner General of Immigration, with the approval of Acting Secretary of Labor Husband, issued General Order 106 to go into effect July 1, 1928, demanding the issuance of identification cards for newly arriving immigrants who intended to become residents.²⁵⁷ Despite Secretary of Labor Davis's efforts to reassure critics of General Order 106 that the system of the identification cards could actually benefit incoming immigrants, both Jewish and Italian representatives pointed to two provisions of the order that threatened not just incoming immigrants but also naturalized citizens. The order provided that immigrants should present their identification cards whenever an immigration officer requested it, and that the cards should be confiscated in case of arrest. The non-presentation of the card would automatically be considered as a tacit admission of illegal entry into the country. Furthermore, in public interviews, the Commissioner General of Immigration admitted that the registration cards for incoming aliens was only the first step of a larger plan to issue similar identification cards to all resident aliens trying to establish their residence in the United States. Responding to a letter of complaint from Congressman La Guardia, Davis himself stated that there was considerable demand that certificates of residence also be issued to immigrants already residing in the country, but that it had not yet been possible to determine whether the issuance of such documents was feasible.²⁵⁸

La Guardia and critics of the order argued that the provision was a usurpation of legislative authority, a registration of aliens in disguise, and a discriminatory measure promoting suspicions and prejudice against Southern and Eastern European immigrants. In its 1929 report to its members, the executive committee of the American Jewish Committee went as far as to

²⁵⁷ Kohler quoted in "Domestic Matters: Immigration," *American Jewish Year Book* 31 (1929-1930).

²⁵⁸ "Domestic Matters: Immigration," *American Jewish Year Book* 31 (1929-1930).

point out that some of the conditions of the Order were harsher than those established for Chinese immigrants:

The clause in the Order quoted as to the confiscation of the card in case of arrest, is extraordinary in its oppressiveness and illegality, even if measured by the standards of our "Chinese Registration" procedure. In cases of arrest in deportation proceedings in which the burden of proof rests upon the immigrant, the chief value of the "Identification Card" would come into play. To despoil the alien of the card at that critical moment would be unspeakably arbitrary. Even under the Chinese Exclusion Law procedure, such despoiling of the aliens of such a document was strongly recommended by our courts as illegal and tyrannical.²⁵⁹

For Eastern and Southern Europeans, starting at the end of the nineteenth century to 1929, the battle against immigration restriction began, continued, and ended with a comparison of their condition with that of Asian immigrants. They often found any connection with Chinese immigrants, in particular, disparaging and sought to fight against the notion that in many Americans' minds Chinese, Eastern, and Southern European immigrants were ostensibly the same.

Conclusion

The passage of the 1924 Immigration Act sent shockwaves through the Italian and Jewish communities. During a fundraiser for the emigration of Jews to Palestine, Zionist Rabbi Stephen Wise echoed the palpable disappointment in the community:

If in 1898 I had said that in 25 years America's doors would be shut to the Jews it would have been unthinkable that this country should so fail to live up to her traditions of freedom and opportunity. The doors of America are closed to the Jews and open part way to the Nordics and non-Jews.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁹ "Domestic Matters: Immigration," *American Jewish Year Book* 31 (1929-1930).

²⁶⁰ "Rabbi Wise Calls Restricting Jews by Immigration Laws, Nation's 'Unpardonable Sin,'" no newspaper title, March 5, 1926, Stephen Wise Papers, Manuscript Collection 49, box 5, file 3: Newspaper Clippings (1902-1953), American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College.

Despite their defeat after decades of mobilization, both Italian Americans and American Jews decided to prolong their battle and continue to oppose the act until it was set to go into effect on July 1, 1929. After President Coolidge signed the Johnson-Reed bill into law in May 1924, the two groups focused on providing assistance to migrants who found themselves in between legislation and on limiting the impact that the new legislation would have on those already in the United States.

The years from 1924 to 1929, in a sense, were a rehearsal for the battles to come in subsequent decades. As they grappled with the humiliating imprimatur that the law put on their status in American society, American Jews and Italian Americans began to consider how to live in a society that regarded them as undesirable. Yet, despite the new obstacles to their migration and the discrimination they faced, they still managed to win a few of the battles they waged, namely the exemption of families of ministers and professors from the quotas and amnesty for illegal immigrants who entered the country before June 3, 1921. In the process, both groups learned the advantages and the dangers of using the political process to advance their agenda, questioned any accusations of dual loyalty because of their efforts to help Italians and Jews abroad, and readjusted to assist aspiring emigrants once the quota system became law. Their experiences in these years foreshadowed the ebb and flow nature of their anti-restriction battles.

Nonetheless, American Jews and Italian Americans would not grasp the full extent of the impact of immigration restriction on their communities until the outbreak of the Great Depression. The simultaneous reduction of immigration from Europe, the rise of fascism, and the discrimination they experienced as the Depression raged on dramatically changed their perception of their role in American society and in the anti-restriction battle. The two groups

would move in two different directions and focus exclusively on their communities without seeking to collaborate.

Chapter Three

"Assimilated but Undigested:" Becoming American under Restriction (1929-1945)²⁶¹

The 1930s represented a critical turning point for the Italian and Jewish communities in the United States. More than anything that happened in the 1930s, restriction forced the two groups to contemplate on their role in American society and reflect on how to carry on their battle against immigration restriction now that the quota system was law. Interestingly, as Italian Americans searched for strategies, many of them turned to the American Jewish community for guidance:

Many Italians have held up the Jews to their countrymen as an example of the successful adjustment of a minority group in America, with admonition that their fellow Italians follow the same methods the Jews have used [...] It is also true, no doubt, that Jewish immigrants had some things working for them which Italians did not—a greater history of urban dwelling, for example, and some perhaps higher financial and educational level to start with.²⁶²

Ironically, as Italian Americans looked at the Jewish community for inspiration, American Jews in the 1930s worried that their newly achieved visibility, especially with the numerous nominations under the Roosevelt administrations, might hurt them, attract unnecessary attention, and spark a new wave of anti-Semitism.²⁶³

Looking back on the 1930s, many Italian Americans and Jewish Americans in the 1950s perceived that the decade had changed their communities permanently. Three years apart from

²⁶¹ Baker and Masserman, *The Jews Come to America* quoted in David Brody, *American Jewry, the Refugees, and Immigration Restriction, 1932-1942*, Typescript, 1954, Dorot Jewish Division, New York Public Library. Brody later published his essay, under the same title, in Abraham J. Karp, ed., *The Jewish Experience in America: Selected Studies from the Publication of the American Jewish Historical Society* (Waltham, MA: American Jewish Historical Society, 1969).

²⁶² Lawrence Frank Pisani, *The Italian in America: A Social Study and History* (New York: Exposition Press, 1957), 190.

²⁶³ In 1938, following accusations that the New Deal was a "Jew Deal," a group of prominent Jews, including Secretary of Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Jr. and *New York Times* publisher, Arthur Hays Sulzberger, urged President Roosevelt not to appoint Felix Frankfurter to the Supreme Court. They believed that with Louis Brandeis already serving as a Justice, appointing a second Jew on the court would only foment the hatred of anti-Semites at home and abroad. For a more detailed discussion of Jewish attempts to minimize their political achievements during the 1930s, see Beth S. Wenger, *New York Jews and the Great Depression: Uncertain Promise* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996).

each other, writer Lawrence Pisani and historian David Brody grappled with the legacy of the 1930s for Italian Americans and American Jews, respectively. Pisani explored Italian Americans' affair with Mussolini and Fascism, while Brody explored Jewish Americans' reluctance to intervene sooner on behalf of Jews persecuted in Europe under Nazism. For Brody, economic distress, anti-Semitism, and popular opposition provided unsatisfactory explanations of American Jews' acceptance of the quota system during the 1930s. More frustratingly, "the question," Brody noted, "was not peculiarly Jewish; no immigrant groups of recent origin showed a real desire to change the immigration laws."²⁶⁴ Investigating similar issues for different communities, Pisani and Brody arrived at the same conclusion: during the 1930s, Italian Americans and Jewish Americans were too busy assimilating and Americanizing to fight immigration restriction.

On the one hand, Pisani and Brody were right. During the 1930s, both Italian Americans and Jewish Americans believed that integration and Americanization were positive processes that the two communities needed to speed along. No other element convinced Italian Americans and Jewish Americans of the need to Americanize more than the implicit assumption behind the passage of the quota system: Southern and Eastern Europeans were undesirables. Commenting on the implications of the 1924 Immigration Act, author and prominent Zionist Maurice Samuel observed that Eastern European Jews were not only excluded but "told in the most unmistakable language of the immigration laws, that [they were] an 'inferior' people."²⁶⁵ Similarly, in an article published in all Italian American newspapers, New York City judge Francis X. Giaccone decried that the worst immigration laws were those that declared that some groups were

²⁶⁴ Brody, *American Jewry, the Refugees, and Immigration Restriction*, 26.

²⁶⁵ Maurice Samuel in Kevin MacDonald, *The Culture of Critique*, 246.

inferior.²⁶⁶ Moreover, in times of severe hardships for everybody, Italian Americans and Americans Jews saw the government used the likely to become public charge (LPC) clause to deny welfare support or entry into the country.

On the other hand, Brody and Pisani did not give their communities enough credit. If neither group actively sought to have the quota system repealed until the outbreak of the Second World War, both of them continued to look for loopholes to circumvent the system. They fought in court and in Congress on behalf of immigrants in the United States whose status remained uncertain, lobbied politicians to endorse and pass bills that would "humanize" the country's immigration policy, and assisted prospective immigrants in Europe to come to the United States or to relocate somewhere else. Moreover, older members of both communities also complained of an American-born generation speaking only English and forgetting their old world heritage. Italian and Eastern European Jewish immigrant generations thus also found themselves striving for a delicate balance between maintaining a Jewish and Italian core while becoming part of American society. In a time of fervid nativism, both groups hotly debated how to pursue this balance, and for both the discussion assumed transnational and international contours, as American Jews had to confront European Jewry's predicament and Italian Americans had to grapple with a fascist Italian government's renewed efforts to keep their ties to Italy alive.

In a sense, American Jews and Italian Americans' insistence that they could assimilate and were assimilating represented a battle against the intellectual foundations of restriction. Both groups considered naturalization as only the first step and realized that political participation was the key to their acceptance in American society. Their political activism in the 1930s would shape how they approached migration mobilization in the 1950s and 1960s. In the

²⁶⁶ "Parla il magistrato Francis X. Giaccone," no newspaper title, no date, Francis Giaccone Papers, box 5, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

1930s, the solidification of Jewish liberalism and American Jews' embrace of the New Deal's emphasis on social justice paved the way for the American Jewish community's later commitment to immigration as a social justice issue for all. As they struggled to persuade the Roosevelt Administration to help European Jews, many American Jews struggled to dissipate the preconceived notion that the immigration problem was a Jewish problem and found inter-group collaboration to represent a possible solution to the impasse.

Integration and participation in politics was more complicated for Italian Americans. Although the quota system and the Depression reduced immigration from Italy to a trickle, Italian Americans continued to travel back and forth between the United States and Italy, and the Fascist Italian government continued to nurture the relationship with the Italian community in the United States. Both of these issues affected their integration into American society and complicated their effectiveness in the political sphere. Their 1930s battle for the legalization of the status of illegal Italian immigrants, however, taught them to be more pragmatic about immigration issues and to lobby for Italian migrants first and foremost. Finally, although the widespread negative attitudes against immigrants of the 1930s persuaded American Jews and Italian Americans that the use of quotas would always remain the foundation of American immigration policy, the Roosevelt Administration and Democrats' favorable view of family reunion convinced them that this represented an issue that provided immigration reformers and restrictionists with some common ground.

The outbreak of World War II presented both groups with yet other problems that shaped how they would later handle immigration issues. After cautious efforts to influence the Roosevelt Administration to intervene during the 1930s, American Jews forcefully asked the Administration and Congress for the repeal of the quotas to rescue European refugees once the

war began. Their campaign for a refugee policy paved the way for the fight against restriction that developed during the 1950s and 1960s. For the first time, the Truman Directive of December 1945 assigned a prominent role to voluntary agencies in the administration of immigration policy, effectively turning them into powerful advocates for immigration reform. Ethnic and religious groups and voluntary agencies (VOLAGS) responsible for the resettlement of refugees would later become the major nongovernmental groups influencing American immigration policy.²⁶⁷ Lacking a crisis of similar proportions to the Jewish refugee problem, Italian Americans did not exhibit the same sense of urgency about the need for immigration reform that the American Jewish community did. Nonetheless their strong relationship with Italy and the slow pace of their integration forced Italian Americans to wrestle with wartime attacks on their loyalty to the United States, the government's violations of some of their civil rights, and opposition to their efforts to help free Italy from Fascist rule.

"Strangers in the Land that Harbored them:"²⁶⁸ Depression, Identity, and Politics

When the 1924 Immigration Act went into effect in 1929, Italian Americans and American Jews needed few reminders of the impact of the quota system on their communities or of the consequences they faced if they mobilized for its repeal. In 1935, Commissioner General of Immigration David McCormack, considered by many restrictionists "too soft" on immigration, warned advocates of a more liberal immigration policy to consider the country's national interests before asking for any changes to the existing immigration policy: "One of the best ways to promote latent racial, and religious antagonisms is to advocate increased

²⁶⁷ Reimers, *Still the Golden Door*, 12.

²⁶⁸ Gaetano Salvemini, *Italian Fascist Activities in the United States* (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 1977), reprint, Philip Cannistraro, ed., LI.

immigration, particularly during a period of depression and unemployment."²⁶⁹ The rampant anti-immigrant sentiment in the country led to the proposal of six bills to decrease or stop the immigration flow entirely during the spring of 1934 alone. As Washington Senator Louis B. Schwellenbach observed, "to condemn aliens [...] is perhaps the best vote-getting argument in present day politics."²⁷⁰

Calls for restriction, in fact, continued despite the consistently decreasing numbers of arrivals from Europe and the increasing number of departures to return to Europe. After the beginning of the Depression, the number of immigrants admitted each year was significantly below the 153,714 total annual quota that President Hoover had fixed with his Proclamation of March 22, 1929. Starting in 1931 and ending in 1938, the annual immigrant arrivals were: 54,118; 12,983; 8,220; 12,483; 17,207; 18,675; 27,762; 42,494. Moreover, from July 1, 1932 to June 30, 1938, 246,449 European immigrants left to go back to their country of origin.²⁷¹ Official statements showing that immigration restriction succeeded in limiting the flow of immigrants into the country did little to assuage public opinion. In August 1933, Harold Fields, executive director of the National League for American Citizenship, published an article in *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, later reprinted in the *New York Times*, to announce that for the second year in a row more foreign-born persons were leaving than entering the country. Thanks to the immigration laws in place, Fields observed, the United States no longer had an immigration problem. Emigration and not immigration was becoming a problem. Moreover, he added, the reduction of immigration sped up the assimilation of the foreign born. Immigrants moved out of

²⁶⁹ "Change Opposed in Alien Quotas," *New York Times*, March 4, 1935. For critics of McCormack's stance on immigration as well as of Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins, see William B. Griffith, "Alien Problem," *New York Times*, August 2, 1936, and Breitman and Kraut, *American Refugee Policy and European Jewry, 1933-1945* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), chapter 1.

²⁷⁰ As quoted in Brody, *American Jewry, the Refugees, and Immigration Restriction*, 31.

²⁷¹ Sidney Liskofsky, "Immigration Policy of the United States," American Jewish Committee Collection, RG 247, Series General 10, Box 128, folder "Immigration 1940-1945", YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

the slums, participated in Americanization programs, and naturalized in high numbers. Lastly, the new immigrants arriving from Europe were mostly skilled workers and women and children reuniting with their family members in the country.²⁷²

With immigration from Europe reduced to a trickle, a severe economic crisis, and a climate hostile to immigrants, American Jews and Italian Americans changed their agenda and chose to focus on integration into American society and to limit their work on immigration to practical assistance to immigrants. First and foremost, immigration restriction proved that isolation within their community and exclusive reliance on their community organizations could do little to improve their lot in America, especially as the Depression threatened the survival of the institutions in their communities.²⁷³ Both groups hoped that success in Americanizing might lead to more accomplishments in changing the immigration laws as well. They also agreed that the political arena offered the most powerful way to achieve both goals. Yet their political participation suffered from stereotypes against 'immigrant' politicians whom many Americans considered a threat to the American political system because they sought to benefit only their communities and brought old world interests into American politics. Political reporter Raymond Clapper echoed these feelings in a 1938 article published in the *New York World Telegram* and other newspapers on the presence of immigrant politicians in American politics. After arguing that "racial groups" in the United States shook down political parties for the inclusion of at least one candidate from their group in both state and local tickets, Clapper added, "Thereafter if they don't get one of their racial brothers on the ticket they take it as an insult to the old country."²⁷⁴

²⁷² "Immigration Seen in New Phase," *New York Times*, August 6, 1933. As Daniels writes, however, despite four consecutive years—1932-1935—in which the number of recorded emigrants did exceed the number of immigrants, the balance for the decade remained positive. The average annual immigration for the 1930s was 6,900. Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*, 59.

²⁷³ See Elizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

²⁷⁴ Raymond Clapper quoted in "Hyphen in Politics," *The Vigo Review*, November 1938.

To these accusations, Italian Americans and American Jews retorted that if politicians gave equal opportunities to everybody, "irrespective of their racial strains or religious beliefs," the main argument for the creation of hyphenated groups would cease to exist.²⁷⁵

For both groups, the first step in acquiring more political visibility rested in naturalization. The years immediately following the implementation of the 1924 Immigration Act saw a flood of applications for naturalization across the country. The American Jewish Committee calculated that from July 1, 1932 to June 30, 1938, 241,962 immigrants became permanent residents.²⁷⁶ By 1935, the New York City naturalization bureau complained that it had 18,000 pending applications.²⁷⁷ Nevertheless, the impact of naturalization was different for the two groups. Despite their disagreements, naturalized Eastern European Jews joined a fairly well integrated community of Jews of German descent that facilitated their transition into American society and provided the financial, social, and political structure from which they could benefit and upon which they could build. Italian Americans, on the other hand, had only recently begun to naturalize and were still trying to build a community in the United States that could help them integrate into American society and maintain connections with Italy.

As the 1930s went on, the debate about the ethnic vote took on new connotations for Jewish Americans. They found themselves dealing with a problem that Italian Americans did not have to face, not even at the peak of the attacks against them for their support for Mussolini or during the 1942 internment. By the end of the 1930s, anti-Jewish sentiment reached a critical point in the United States, further fomenting fear of the Jewish vote. Father Coughlin's radio speeches became increasingly virulent, and Nazi and nativist groups openly held demonstrations,

²⁷⁵ "Hyphen in Politics," *The Vigo Review*, November 1938.

²⁷⁶ Sidney Liskofsky, "Immigration Policy of the United States," American Jewish Committee Collection, RG 247, series general 10, box 128, folder "Immigration 1940-1945", YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

²⁷⁷ "Change Opposed in Alien Quotas," *New York Times*, March 4, 1935.

broadcast "Buy Christian" slogans, and distributed anti-Jewish leaflets. These accusations had their intended effect. Many Americans considered the Depression the result of a moral and spiritual crisis precipitated by a conspiracy of unchristian subversives, especially Jews, and discriminated against them in the workforce and with the establishment of Jewish quotas in universities.²⁷⁸ By May 1939, the press and radio routinely talked about "the Jewish problem" and speculated that Jews were pushing the United States to enter the war. The *America First Bulletin* spoke of "numerous groups which fight for America's entry into the war—foreign and racial groups which have special and just grievances against Hitler."²⁷⁹ The hysteria around a renewed Jewish conspiracy led many American Jews to fear that the very presence of large numbers of recent Jewish immigrants in the United States would be a constant source of anti-Jewish feeling.²⁸⁰

The rise of anti-Semitism in the 1930s influenced American Jews in more subtle ways. Along with anti-Semitism, waves of nativism, pressure to conform, and charges that Jews in America were more loyal to their tribe than to their country often made American Jews fearful of overrepresentation and more cautious in their pleas. The concern over Anti-Semitism and visibility profoundly divided the American Jewish community when American Jews began mobilizing for the admission of Jewish refugees to the United States between 1933 and 1939. They disagreed over what the most effective strategy to help Jewish refugees could be. Some, like the American Joint Distribution Committee, preferred to focus on social programs, raising money and sponsoring direct assistance to refugees. Others, namely the American Jewish Committee and the American Jewish Congress, dedicated themselves to lobbying political leaders and marshaling public opinion's support to the refugee cause. Still others, like B'nai

²⁷⁸ Breitman and Kraut, *American Refugee Policy and European Jewry*, 87-88.

²⁷⁹ Brody, *American Jewry, the Refugees, and Immigration Restriction*, 21.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 25-26.

B'rith and the Jewish War Veterans, were fraternal organizations uninterested in politics that decided to intervene only when the refugee crisis galvanized their leaderships.²⁸¹ Similar to the impasse that the fight between Fascists and anti-Fascists created within the Italian American community, American Jews' inability to stay united prompted each group to blame the others for failure, de facto weakening their political influence and confirming other Americans' impressions that they—like Italian Americans—were a gaggle of squabbling factions.

Internal divisions and political obstruction notwithstanding, the American Jewish community accomplished remarkable achievements during the 1930s. Although American Jews in the Great Depression faced unprecedented financial hardships, barriers to economic and educational progress, and a sudden increase in anti-Semitism, many believed that, as a community, they were still progressing thanks to their wholehearted support of the Roosevelt Administration.²⁸² The political visibility that the Roosevelt era brought them and the New Deal's emphasis on social justice resonated with Jews of both German and Eastern European descent and cemented a liberal tradition within the community at large. As sociologist Steven Cohen has suggested, "Jewish Liberalism—as much as modern Orthodoxy, Zionism, assimilationism, and so forth—should be seen as a reflection (if not, sometimes, a strategy) of the entry and integration of Jews into modern society."²⁸³ As Jews of German and Eastern European descent came together to build a common identity, many American Jews realized that, despite the small numbers of their community, their position in American society was improving

²⁸¹ For a more detailed analysis of each group's stance and initiatives, see Breitman and Kraut, *American Refugee Policy and American Jewry*.

²⁸² See the five volumes of oral interviews in *"Not the Work of a Day" Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith Oral Memoirs*, Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith Collection, MS 365, boxes 1 and 2, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College.

²⁸³ Steven M. Cohen, *American Modernity and Jewish Identity* (New York: Tavistock Publications, 1983), 136.

faster than that of some of the other new immigrants, especially Italians. In his oral interview, Seymour Graubard effectively captures the impact of politics on the two communities:

In my work in the La Guardia Administration which I enjoyed for six years, I learned a great deal about the City of New York and about the factions that worked against each other in the city. I learned how the politicians, above all, made alliances for their own selfish advantage. But they made peace particularly among the dominant Irish and the upcoming Jews. The poor Italians had to wait awhile before they came into the front rank of citizens in the City of New York.²⁸⁴

The younger Jewish generation was particularly committed to political participation. In a collection of essays titled *How to Combat Anti-Semitism in America*, a generation of younger Jews urged the rejection of the "sha-sha philosophy of Jewish polemics, which sought to turn away wrath with gentle words, to obscure the Jew from public gaze" and asked the American Jewish community to assume leadership in liberal movements.²⁸⁵

Italian Americans also hotly debated the future of their community after restriction. Like American Jews, they realized that participation in the political process was fundamental to their success in the United States. Pisani cogently captured the essence of the debate: "It became increasingly clear that to remedy some of the evils they were suffering would require not only self-help but changes in the law. To secure these, political participation could hardly be avoided."²⁸⁶ Like American Jews, Italian Americans realized that naturalization was central to their integration efforts. A few Italian Americans explicitly linked naturalization and restriction. In an article published in the Italian American press, New York City judge Francis Giaccone urged Italians in the United States to naturalize and to create a unified Italian American voting bloc specifically as a strategy to oppose the recently passed draconian immigration policy. Emphasizing that "vile is the people that accepts this law without reacting and combating,"

²⁸⁴ Seymour Graubard, "Not the Work of a Day," Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith Collection, MS 365, box 1, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College.

²⁸⁵ Cited in Brody, *American Jewry, the Refugees, and Immigration Restriction*, 23.

²⁸⁶ Pisani, *The Italian in America*, 138.

Giaccone called for unity among all Italian American organizations to fight American immigration policy and proclaimed that, as contributing and productive members of American society, Italian Americans had a duty to oppose restriction and to ask for equality for all peoples:

We want and must become good and honest American citizens, participating in the national life and customs. In the North American continent there are over five million Italians; in the city of New York alone more than a million and three hundred thousand Italians exist, representing a formidable force and power. The leaders, the POLITICAL BOSSES, have to acknowledge this power.²⁸⁷

For Pisani and Giaccone, Italian Americans like Cotillo, Marcantonio, and La Guardia became politicians because they believed that politics was the best means to correct "the social evils" that the Italian American community suffered and that non-participation in the political process risked marginalizing Italian Americans further.

Echoing Giaccone's arguments, *The Vigo Review* published an article titled "Hyphenated Americans—An Open Letter to an Anglo-Saxon Friend" to justify the adoption of the hyphen among Italian immigrants. The hyphen, the article read, was "their only protection against being submerged in the maelstrom of American life, without however receiving any of the benefits to which they would be entitled if they actually had equality of opportunity."²⁸⁸ It was America's disdain of their looks and last names, he continued, that convinced many young Americans of Italian extraction that, in the eyes of other Americans, they were Italian Americans and could never be just Americans. The difficulty of finding and getting better jobs convinced many that this was certainly the case. Even more than in their search for better jobs, Italians suffered in their efforts to enter politics:

In politics, of course, the Italians haven't got even a Chinaman's chance, unless they can muster the 'Italian vote.' If you think that it is not so, study the matter for yourself. Of course there are exceptions, but very rare exceptions. Take, for instance, any Italian

²⁸⁷ "Parla il magistrato Francis X. Giaccone," no newspaper title, no date, Francis Giaccone Papers, box 5, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

²⁸⁸ "Hyphenated Americans—An Open Letter to an Anglo-Saxon Friend," *The Vigo Review*, November 1938.

community in which the 'Italian vote' is of no importance. How many Italians do you find holding public offices? And even in those communities in which there are many Italians, but not organized, what has happened to public officials of Italian extraction? Look at Newark, or at Cleveland, or Buffalo, or Cincinnati, or St. Louis, or Baltimore. Do you not suppose that there are in those communities Italian-Americans who could have been trained for the higher offices available?²⁸⁹

The presence of hyphenated Americans would disappear, commented the author, when all young men and women would receive equal opportunities not just in name but in fact and when Americans of "old stock" would abandon any pretensions of superiority and refer to the children of the 'new' immigrants as Americans, and not as Italians, or Germans, or Poles. For that to happen, Italian Americans, concluded the author, needed to organize and achieve more visibility in politics.

Nonetheless, by the end of the decade, Italian Americans had achieved much less political prominence than their Jewish counterparts. Despite repeated efforts to rally them around either of the major parties, Italian American voters never became a united front the way American Jews did when they became part of the New Deal coalition. Tied to Tammany Hall, Generoso Pope created a powerful chain of political clubs known as the Italian Federation of Democratic Clubs, which, by 1933, counted 150,000 voters. Yet most of the members went on to vote for Fiorello H. La Guardia, running for the Fusion ticket. When La Guardia endorsed Franklin Delano Roosevelt for president in 1933, many Italian American voters voted to reelect Roosevelt, but when both La Guardia and Roosevelt failed to appreciate Italian American voters' loyalty with more appointments and benefits, many Italian Americans manifested their disappointment in the next round of elections, when both La Guardia and Roosevelt saw their votes among Italian Americans in New York City decline.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

Unlike those of American Jews, Italian Americans' efforts to integrate into American society and to enter the American political arena suffered severe disruptions after the rise of Fascism in Italy. In addition to stark divisions between Fascists and anti-Fascists, the continuous interference of the Fascist Italian government posed numerous obstacles to their integration and favored a clientelistic attitude toward immigration matters that ultimately accomplished very little.²⁹⁰ In an environment that heaped discrimination and disparagement, Fascism fulfilled a much-needed psychological function for them. Fascism promised Italian Americans a respect they had hardly ever enjoyed before:

The respect for Italy which the Mussolini regime temporarily won was reflected in an increasing prestige given to the Italian immigrant here. It was as if, once Italy was accepted in the international community as a first-rate power, her immigrants abroad could at last be treated as first-class citizens. Mussolini's popularity in America had given a new dignity to the status of being Italian.²⁹¹

Examining the sources of Italian Americans' fascination with Fascism, anti-Fascist organizer Gaetano Salvemini concluded that many first generation Italian Americans' ties to their homeland slowed down the assimilation process enough to make them vulnerable to Fascism. Their strong ties to Italy were not the only reason. Salvemini soon realized that under the pressures of American society and the stresses of assimilation Italian Americans often felt a pervasive sense of inferiority as well as a bitter resentment towards the United States, making them an easy target for Fascist propaganda.²⁹²

Yet Italian Americans' support for Mussolini and Fascist Italy was also the product of a carefully orchestrated propaganda campaign. Recognizing that Italians abroad represented potential troops, remittances, and public relations agents, especially in the United States,

²⁹⁰ On the relationship between Fascists and anti-Fascists in the United States see Philip V. Cannistraro, *Blackshirts in Little Italy—Italian Americans and Fascism, 1921-1929* (West Lafayette, IN: Bordighera Press, 1999).

²⁹¹ Pisani, *The Italian in America*, 199.

²⁹² Salvemini, *Italian Fascist Activities in the United States*, XIX.

Mussolini's government increased the number of Italian consulates in the major destinations of Italian emigration, subsidized the Italian language press, sponsored after-school language programs, organized cultural events to celebrate *italianità*, and constantly reminded immigrants that they remained Italians to the seventh generation.²⁹³ In their efforts to retain Italian Americans' loyalty, Mussolini and his government effectively tapped into Italian Americans' frustration with the passage of restrictive immigration laws to cement their ties with their ancestral home. As Pisani later argued:

The recently-passed immigration-restriction law, with its implication that Italian immigrants were less desirable than others, was an especially vulnerable point. Fascist propagandists who proclaimed the superiority of Italian people found a more eager reception for their ideas from those whose spirits were mortified by the immigration act.²⁹⁴

After initial strategic blunders, the fascist Italian government also understood that, unlike its policy towards Italian migrants in other countries, it needed to encourage Italians in the United States to naturalize and take advantage of the power of their vote.²⁹⁵ The new campaign ultimately yielded the results desired. Many Italian Americans enrolled in language classes; became members of organizations like the Italian Touring Club, the Order of the Sons of Italy (OSIA), and the Italian war veterans' association, *Associazione Ex Combattenti e Reduci*; and enrolled their children in the youth clubs like *Gruppo Giovanile*.²⁹⁶ The membership of OSIA, in particular, rose dramatically after the Italian government's endorsement, and the organization

²⁹³ Gloria Ricci Lothrop, "Unwelcome in Freedom's Land: The Impact of World War II on Italian Aliens in Southern California," in Lawrence DiStasi, ed., *Una Storia Segreta: The Secret History of Italian American Evacuation and Internment during World War II* (Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books, 2001), 163-165.

²⁹⁴ Pisani, *The Italian in America*, 199.

²⁹⁵ In his *L'Avvenire degli Italo-Americani*, Mario Osini Ratto, Italian consul in Baltimore and in Philadelphia, discussed the need for a shift in the Fascist government's attitudes towards Italian Americans after criticisms of the violence that followed the creation of American Fascist societies, riots between Fascists and anti-Fascists, and, most of all, accusations of promoting disloyalty towards the United States within the Italian American community with its invitations to forgo naturalization. Osini Ratto, Mario. *L'avvenire degli italo-americani* (Milan, Italy: Fratelli Treves Editori, 1933).

²⁹⁶ "Draft of speech held in Norfolk," 1931, John Di Silvestro Papers, box 1, folder 14, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

collaborated with the Italian government to help it maintain its influence over Italian Americans. In his closing speech at the 1931 OSIA national convention, Di Silvestro reminded his audience of the indefatigable work of the Order and Giacomo Di Martino, the Italian Ambassador in Washington, D.C., to build a strong relationship between Italy and the United States. The ambassador, said Di Silvestro, was especially fond of the Order and followed its developments closely, constantly inciting its members to be devout American citizens mindful of their origin.²⁹⁷

The turning point of the popularity of Fascism in the United States came with Italy's invasion of Ethiopia. As Fox points out, up until the outbreak of the Italo-Ethiopian War, Republican and Democratic administrations alike shared four assumptions about Mussolini and Italy: "he was bringing economic and social progress to his people; he was a dictator, but popular; he might serve as a moderating influence on Hitler; and therefore he was good for Italy and the United States."²⁹⁸ The Second Italo-Ethiopian War represented both the apex of Italian Americans' support for Fascism and the beginning of its decline. At first, many Italian Americans enthusiastically supported the war and the country's expansionist ambitions as yet another proof of Italy's greatness and of its status as a great power with an empire. Yet, the United States' ultimate condemnation of Italy's aggression against Ethiopia quickly convinced many prominent Italian Americans that their support for Fascism and Fascist Italy could actually damage their efforts to rise politically and socially.

The debate that raged within the OSIA leadership when discussing its strategy towards the Ethiopian War reflected concerns similar to those over which the Jewish community

²⁹⁷ "Draft of speech held in Norfolk," 1931, John Di Silvestro Papers, Box 1, folder 14, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

²⁹⁸ Stephen Fox, *The Unknown Internment: An Oral History of the Relocation of Italian Americans during World War II* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1990), 36.

struggled as well. During the 1937 annual OSIA convention, Supreme Venerable Stefano Miele proudly remembered the organization's protest against the passing of a law that would put Italy at a clear disadvantage in the war. The decision to issue a public statement calling for the Roosevelt Administration to remain neutral, in fact, aroused many concerns among many Italian Americans who feared that such exposure might in the long run hurt Italian Americans' integration into American society. These critics proposed instead to identify prominent and influential American allies belonging to other groups to fight this cause with them.²⁹⁹ Miele explained that in the cause at stake the Order could not wait upon other groups to intervene and defend Italian Americans' position on the United States' stance on the Ethiopian war. According to Miele, for Italian Americans to avoid intervening in the debate and let other groups speak on their behalf would have been to admit their political weakness and admit an inferiority complex with respect to other groups.³⁰⁰ In part, Italian Americans' reluctance to collaborate with prominent Americans insulated them further and dampened their chances to represent their voice in the immigration reform debate at least until 1952, when a group of Italian Americans agreed to collaborate with the Irish Catholic hierarchy to mobilize for reform.

In addition to their old world ties, many Italian Americans realized that the negative images of Italian American voters also stemmed from the stereotypes that mainstream America had of them. To dispel some of these images, throughout the 1930s, many Italian Americans mobilized to redeem the Italian reputation among American newspapers. They created committees that specifically targeted attacks against Italian immigrants in the press or provided help to Italian American victims of discrimination. Starting in 1931, Generoso Pope, through his two newspapers, *Il Progresso Italo Americano* and *Il Bollettino della Sera*, waged a decade-long

²⁹⁹ "Messaggio del Venerabile Supremo, anno 1937," 1937, John Di Silvestro Papers, box 1, folder 19, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

campaign to "have English-language newspapers cease the practice of identifying an Italian criminal suspect by his nationality, while not doing the same in case of other such groups."³⁰¹ The initiative quickly gained the support of many Italian American organizations across the country, especially OSIA's. The 1931 article in *Il Bollettino della Sera* that announced Pope's initiative explained that the campaign was "an act of justice for Italians residing here—citizens and non-citizens alike—but also [was] a patriotic campaign of pure Americanization, aimed at banning the prejudices and the discriminations that create lines of demarcation among the elements that constitute the great American family."³⁰²

In addition to naturalization, involvement in politics, and disputing the stereotypes plaguing them, Italian Americans and Jewish Americans reflected on how to maintain a distinctively Italian and Jewish cultural identity as their communities transitioned into a society with fewer and fewer arrivals from Europe. Within the Italian community, OSIA appointed itself as the only Italian American organization that could take on such an ambitious campaign because of its numerical and political strength, the endorsement of local, state, and national politicians and businessmen, and the official endorsement of the Italian government. Throughout the 1930s, under the aegis of Supreme Venerables John Di Silvestro and Stefano Miele, OSIA shifted its focus to the Italianization of young Americans of Italian descent, insisting that "for the preservation of the spirit of our race, the admission of one of our children into one of our lodges will have a value infinitely superior to the admission of an immigrant."³⁰³ Both Di Silvestro and Miele presented the campaign as indispensable for the survival of an Italian American identity in the United States. "Left alone, without our propulsive force," Miele observed, young Italian

³⁰¹ Pisani, *The Italian in America*, 185.

³⁰² "L'Ordine dei Figli d'Italia per il Buon Nome Italiano," *Il Bollettino della Sera*, May 7, 1931.

³⁰³ "Draft of speech held in Norfolk," 1931, John Di Silvestro Papers, box 1, folder 14, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

Americans "would find themselves, given the current competitions among different races, without the powerful engine that has pushed young Americans of other nationalities."³⁰⁴ For Di Silvestro, the new agenda inaugurated the fourth and most important phase since the creation of the organization, as it meant the survival of the entire Italian American community.³⁰⁵

After recruitment, the second step was to instill in the new recruits the pride of their race through the knowledge of Italian culture, history, language, and customs. Learning Italian represented the most important aspect of this plan. The power of the language in preserving the culture, explained Di Silvestro, was undoubtedly at the root of the extraordinary success of "the children of Israel" in the United States because "the history of all times and peoples teaches us that the races whose linguistic patrimony disappeared made them in turn disappear as ethnic entities, while those who managed to impose their language survived and ultimately prevailed."³⁰⁶ Similarly to Di Silvestro, Miele considered knowledge of the Italian language the most visible vestige of Italian heritage and a constant reminder that advancing in life for an Italian American meant the advancement of the entire community. Yet Miele also recommended that older Italian Americans use English in order to reach out to young Italian Americans who only spoke English.³⁰⁷

As they struggled to decide how to position themselves within American society, many American Jews worried about the changes that restriction imposed on their cultural heritage too.

³⁰⁴ "Messaggio del Venerabile Supremo, anno 1937," 1937, John Di Silvestro Papers, box 1, folder 19, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

³⁰⁵ The first period, he recalled, was the organizational phase that brought together all Italian immigrants beyond their *campanilismo* and fought against racial prejudices. The second phase witnessed the organization's efforts to educate its members to the participation of American life in all its aspects. The third phase focused on publicizing the Order's agenda and translation of *italianità* to America. "Messaggio del Venerabile Supremo, anno 1937," 1937, John Di Stefano Papers, box 1, folder 19, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

³⁰⁶ "Draft of speech held in Norfolk," 1931, John Di Silvestro Papers, box 1, folder 14, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

³⁰⁷ "Messaggio del Venerabile Supremo, anno 1937," John Di Silvestro Papers, box 1, folder 19, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

As American-born, young Jewish intellectuals looked for a new cultural identity, the immigrant generation worried that their Yiddish heritage would be forever lost. Writing of the dim future in the Yiddish press, Abraham Cahan, editor of the Yiddish-language *Jewish Daily Forward*, concluded, "The children are becoming Americanized, and it is only natural; they live in this country and it treats them as its own children."³⁰⁸ If the older generation worried that the old European traditions would be lost, the new generation of American Jews rejected the idea of collaborating with non-Jewish leaders and believed that their elders' approach was the product of an old world mentality that failed to understand the differences of the American environment. Typical of the attitude of many younger Jews was Alexander F. Miller's memories of his activism within the ranks of the Anti-Defamation League:

One thing I did learn in Chicago was that the 'sha-sha' policy was still quite prevalent among many of the older ADL leaders. They felt that Jews were a powerless minority and therefore would be better off if maintained a low profile. They believed Jews should attempt to fight anti-Semitism and conquer discrimination with the help of important Christians rather than speaking up for themselves. It was the 'shtadlonem' theory that long had pervaded many Jewish communities in Europe.³⁰⁹

The more prudent approach of the older Jewish community of German descent would eventually prevail. Jewish leaders continued to pursue interfaith collaboration with prominent Protestant Americans at least throughout the 1950s and especially in conjunction with its efforts to push Congress to pass refugee legislation after World War II.

Throughout the 1930s, American Jewry's relationship with European Jewry shaped their identity as well. Until 1938, many American Jews believed European Jews were the cultural and intellectual leaders of world Jewry, especially when it came to Zionism. Philip Klutznick

³⁰⁸ As cited in Brody, *American Jewry, the Refugees, and Immigration Restriction*, 28. On the emergence of a new generation of Jewish intellectuals during the 1930s, see Wenger, *New York Jews and the Great Depression: Uncertain Promise* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996).

³⁰⁹ Alexander F. Miller, *Not the Work of a Day* 5, no. 14, Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith Collection, MS 365, Box 2, YIVO, Center for Jewish History. For more on the rise of young Jewish intellectuals in America, see Wenger, *New York Jews and the Depression*.

cogently explained that the sentiment, in part, derived from the perception that American Jews were still a youthful and growing community with reasonable financial resources but lacking the cultural tradition and the political prominence necessary to represent or lead world Jewry:

One must think back in those days of a Jewish world in which the greatest political and cultural influence was not in America, it was in Europe. Europe represented the leadership of the Zionist movement, not America [...] American Jewry was relatively weak in terms of political strength. It was not the Jewry of the 1950s, '60s, '70s, '80s and it was secondary in terms of influence in the international Jewish community in those days.³¹⁰

This deference to European Jewry often caused misunderstandings and delays when American Jews began to strategize on how to help Jews get out of Europe. Oftentimes, European Jewish leaders advised against taking action or suggested waiting, trusting that the enlightened outlook of modern Germany and civil rights guarantees enshrined in the Weimar constitution sufficed to defend them against the threat of National Socialism.³¹¹

Ironically, American Jews' efforts to provide a refuge for European Jews and to bolster their identity at home functioned as a springboard for the growing popularity of Zionism in America in the 1930s. A new, specifically American brand of Zionism slowly began to emerge during the 1930s, providing yet another prominent cultural focus for the community at large. As American Jews struggled to rescue European Jews from the Nazis, Zionism became a unifier of the different Jewish factions and provided a clear goal, even to those who had previously resisted it or feared that it might only attract criticisms from mainstream America as evidence of their reluctance to integrate. As Philip Klutznick remembered in his oral interview, "The notion that there would be a Jewish state [...] was not really believed with the depth that we began to

³¹⁰ Klutznick, "*Not the Work of a Day*," 3, no. 5, Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith Collection, MS 365, box 1, YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

³¹¹ See Breitman and Kraut, *American Refugee Policy and European Jewry*, especially chapter 4.

believe it until the horrible things that happened in Europe."³¹² Zionism continued to garner support during the war as well, but it would surge to prominence only in the 1950s.

Although influenced by domestic and international events and despite numerous disagreements, American Jews ultimately created in response to restriction an identity that they decided and shaped for themselves. From this point of view, statelessness served American Jews well. The absence of any powerful external interference gave them more agency in negotiating their role in American society. It allowed the Jewish community to overcome their differences and unite around a common agenda when, during the war, they had to assist European Jews, lobby for changes in the existing immigration laws, and later promote the creation of a Jewish homeland. This independence from an ancestral home forced them to create and operate through transnational and exclusively Jewish organizations to aid European refugees, but it also provided them with an incentive to invest resources, time, and energy in politics to protect their interests and voice their concerns.

Italian Americans, on the other hand, found themselves in between two worlds that pulled them in two different directions. They were caught between the pressure to integrate in American society when the new arrivals from Europe dwindled and the demands of the Italian Fascist government to retain their loyalty. Mussolini's campaign to cultivate their ties with Italy and Italian Americans' continued travels between the two countries further complicated their efforts to create a niche for themselves in American society. Furthermore, Italian Americans, unlike Eastern European Jews, did not benefit from the presence of an older and established community that could ease their transition to American society. This was particularly evident in

³¹² Klutznick, *Not the Work of a Day* 3, no. 4, Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith Collection, MS 365, box 1, YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

the political sphere, where Italian Americans struggled to assert their presence more than Eastern European Jews did.

Yet as Italian Americans and American Jews sought to create a prominent role for themselves within American society in response to restriction, they also worried about how to help all those whom the law condemned to stay behind. Life under restriction, the rise of Fascism in Europe, the Depression, and the persistence of anti-immigrant sentiments throughout the 1930s and World War II limited and, oftentimes, hindered their mobilization in favor of a more favorable immigration policy.

"Almost as Inaccessible as Tibet:"³¹³ Mobilizing under Restriction

Italian Americans and American Jews soon realized that the new restrictive immigration policies affected them as much as they affected those who found themselves barred from this nation's shores. Similar to what happened to Mexicans in the 1930s, the two groups became the target of local, state, and federal officials' efforts to bar newcomers from entering the country and exclude those already in the United States from welfare benefits.³¹⁴ The impact of the new restrictions became obvious in 1930, when President Hoover and the Department of State instructed American consulates in Europe to use the likely to become public charge (LPC) clause to bar immigrants from Europe.³¹⁵ The decision was an extension of a 1928 order first applied to prospective immigrants from Mexico. The impact of the decision was immediate. The case of Italian immigrant Sirianni provides one example of the clause's impact. With his application for American citizenship well under way and a steady income from his factory job, Sirianni decided

³¹³ Thomas J. Hamilton, "Few Refugees to Be Admitted by U.S.," *New York Times*, December 30, 1945.

³¹⁴ For more on the forced repatriation of Mexicans in the United States, see. Balderrama and Rodriguez, *Decade of Betrayal*.

³¹⁵ Divine, *American Immigration Policy*, 44-45.

to send for his wife and their children living in the province of Catania, Italy. Yet, in both June and October 1931 his wife, Maria Giuseppa, received letters from the American Vice Consul in Naples asking her to provide further information about her husband's financial status to guarantee that she and her children would not become a public charge once in the United States. Even after proving the soundness of Sirianni's finances and the intervention of Italian Officer of Emigration Torquato Giannini, the consul still denied the visa. Similarly, in 1931, Maria Mazzone requested non-immigrant visas for her husband and their child, confident that her American citizenship would hasten the process. Both OSIA Gran Venerabile Di Silvestro and Representative Clyde Kelly from Pittsburgh intervened on her behalf, but the American Consul in Naples again denied Mazzone the non-quota immigrant visas because there was not enough evidence that the entire family would not become a public charge once they reunited in the United States.³¹⁶

The new approach yielded successful results immediately. A year after issuing his order, Hoover reported to Congress that his administrative restrictions had reduced the monthly average of admissible European immigrants from 24,000 to 7,000.³¹⁷ The success of the measure convinced the Roosevelt Administration to continue Hoover's administrative restrictions. Even before the Depression, the two major parties' platforms on immigration were hardly distinguishable, although the Democratic Party did favor more lenient provisions for family reunification. The major difference between the Hoover and the Roosevelt Administrations with regard to immigration was the decline in deportation and repatriation rates. Deportations, which

³¹⁶ "Sirianni" and "Mazzone," John Di Silvestro Papers, box 9, folder 17, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

³¹⁷ Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*, 60-61.

had soared from 2,672 in 1920 to 19,865 in 1933, dropped to less than 9,000 the following year and remained at about that level for the rest of the decade.³¹⁸

As the Depression deepened, the impact of the new use of the LPC clause affected immigrants in the United States as well. The courts and the immigration authorities, in fact, began to use it to exclude resident aliens from welfare relief, public assistance, and housing relief. Although federal relief regulations considered resident aliens eligible for relief, many states tightened their residency requirements in the administration of their public assistance programs. Most states had no citizenship requirements for this type of relief, yet all of them required a specific length of residence in the state and used the public charge clauses 3 and 19 of the 1917 Immigration Act to bar resident aliens from public assistance and, in extreme cases, to deport them. Section 3 declared that aliens who were inadmissible because they could potentially become public charges and who had nonetheless entered the country could be deported if taken into custody within five years of their entry. Section 19 established that any alien could be deported at any time if, within the first five years of entry, he or she became a public charge.³¹⁹ At the state level, authorities often interpreted the acceptance of any type of relief by a resident alien with less than five years of residence as grounds for deportation as a public charge. At the federal level, the Department of Labor and many courts used the LPC clause to contend that any misdemeanor committed within five years of landing made the immigrant retroactively inadmissible as likely to become a public charge, regardless of his or her actual status at the time of entry.³²⁰ The *Ex parte Costarelli* case fully demonstrated the bias against Southern and Eastern European immigrants when they went to court to redress the charge of deportation against them. "The ever-alert Immigration Service," wrote Maryland lawyer Leo

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 66.

³¹⁹ Leo Alpert, "The Alien and the Public Charge Clauses," *The Yale Law Journal* 49, no. 1 (Nov. 1939), 19.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

Alpert, "arrested the man for deportation on the ground that, although admissible in 1920 when he had entered the United States, he had later committed the crime of bigamy for which he might be jailed, and therefore at the time of entry in 1920 he was likely to become a public charge."³²¹

American Jewish leaders repeatedly complained of the exaggerated enforcement of the LPC clause and the skyrocketing number of refused visas.³²² In response to these criticisms, the House Committee on Immigration held a hearing on a proposed amendment allowing review of consular refusals of visas. Immigration expert Max J. Kohler testified on behalf of three of the most prominent American Jewish organizations, B'nai B'rith, the American Jewish Committee, and the American Jewish Congress. The testimony is significant more for the arguments it used to encourage reform than for what it accomplished. Kohler's appeal for the mitigation of the application of the LPC clause, in fact, revealed the emergence of three key points that would substantiate future battles for immigration reform. His testimony showed that, by the 1930s, restricted groups believed that quotas were here to stay and would always represent the foundation of American immigration policy. To this end, immigration advocates usually felt compelled to clarify that they were not trying to revert to an open door policy but rather just trying to improve the existing one. Thus, at the outset of his testimony, Kohler pointedly avowed that he did not challenge the executive order of 1930 but welcomed it as "a salutary thing."

Within this framework, immigration reformers realized that the system had to be undermined one provision at a time and that the only approach that could guarantee any results was to focus on family reunion. After expressing his approval of the 1930 LPC clause order, Kohler quickly added that his "plea [was] on behalf of non-laborers and some exceptional

³²¹ *Ibid.*, 36-37.

³²² For more on State Department officials' obstructions, see Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*, 74-76, and Breitman and Kraut, *American Refugee Policy and European Jewry*, especially chapter 4.

persons." Finally, Kohler's testimony also highlighted a third element of the immigration reform battle that specifically characterized American Jews' view of reform: the need to frame their battles on behalf of all immigrants and not just Jewish immigrants. To this end, Kohler concluded his testimony saying that he opposed special legislation for the benefit of a single group.³²³

No Italian American witness attended the hearing. Appeals to American authorities in the United States would have done little to help Italian Americans, a group whose members, unlike American Jews, continued to travel back and forth between Italy and the United States, even after many of them naturalized. As they experienced problems with admission into the country or family reunion, many Italian Americans preferred to resort to the prominent members in their community with connections to Italian and American government officials in Italy. As early as 1931, many of them wrote OSIA Gran Venerable John Di Silvestro asking him to help them with their cases through his contacts with key members with members of the Foreign Affairs Ministry in Italy. A sample of the cases on which Di Silvestro decided to intervene illustrate well the legal quandary in which many Italians found themselves because of their transnational ties. In a memorandum prepared for the director of the Direzione Generale degli Italiani all'Estero Piero Parini, Di Silvestro described the case of Fortunato Menga, a naturalized American citizen from Mansfield, Massachusetts, who, upon his return to the United States from studying at a conservatory in Naples, discovered that the Italian government had summoned him for the draft, apparently still considering him an Italian citizen.³²⁴ In a letter to Morris N. Hughes, American Vice Consul in Naples, Di Silvestro pleaded for the cases of a deserter who wanted to return to Italy one final time to see his mother on her deathbed and of a man who had

³²³ Brody, *American Jewry, the Refugees, and Immigration Restriction*, 3.

³²⁴ Promemoria, no date, John Di Silvestro Papers, box 10, folder 1, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

returned to the United States after marrying his niece in Italy and wanted to send for her.³²⁵ If the volume of the correspondence between the three men testified to OSIA's power within the Italian American community across the United States, the special treatment also had unpleasant consequences. Di Silvestro, in fact, helped mostly OSIA members with their applications, and the entire system was based on clientelism, thus rendering the process personalistic and arbitrary. To this end, most of the people asking for Di Silvestro's help provided a letter of recommendation from high-ranking local OSIA officers to ensure that he would consider their pleas.

Yet, Di Silvestro's intercessions taught Italian Americans an important lesson. Like Americans Jews, Italian Americans learned that family reunion was the only expedient that could succeed. Italian authorities were aware of this as well and pushed Di Silvestro to seek assistance only for family reunion cases. In a letter to Di Silvestro in June 1931, director of the Direzione Generale degli Italiani all'Estero Parini admitted that, because of the harshness of American immigration laws, only the emigration of wives and minor children of legally admitted Italian residents in the United States willing to travel to Italy to collect their families was possible.³²⁶ In these cases, Di Silvestro often managed to have his contacts at the Italian Foreign Ministry speed up the release of passports for applicants or authorize an emigration inspector to include the recommended individuals in the Italian annual quota.³²⁷ Di Silvestro was also able to get officials at the various emigration offices across Italy to verify the status of an application or expedite it. From some of the letters that Di Silvestro received, it appears that he encouraged the

³²⁵ Di Silvestro to Hughes, October 16, 1931, and De Martino to Di Silvestro, July 18, 1931, John Di Silvestro Papers, box 9, folder 17, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

³²⁶ Parini to Di Silvestro, June 24, 1931, John Di Silvestro Papers, box 9, folder 17, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

³²⁷ Parini to Di Silvestro, December 15, 1933, and Parini to Di Silvestri, March 30, 1934, John Di Silvestro Papers, box 10, folder 1, IHRC, University of Minnesota. For another example of the importance of letters of introduction see also Di Silvestro to Armando Salati, December 1, 1930; and Gioacchino Catone to Di Silvestro, September 3, 1930, John Di Silvestro Papers, box 9, folder 17, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

applicants to take advantage of the yearly OSIA-organized pilgrimages to Italy to bring back their relatives. In August 1929, for example, Di Silvestro asked Berardelli, a representative at the Royal Italian Embassy in Washington, D.C., to help Teresa De Angelus bring back her twenty-four year old daughter on her way back from a OSIA pilgrimage to Italy. Berardelli wrote back to say that he had already instructed the Emigration Inspector in Naples to begin the application process for De Angelus's daughter, so that the documentation would be ready by the time De Angelus arrived in Italy on her pilgrimage.³²⁸

The courts and the immigration authorities were only two of several governmental entities that complicated Italian and Jewish immigrants' lives in a restricted and economically depressed America. Despite decreasing immigration rates, both the House and the Senate Immigration and Naturalization Committees continued to consider and to hold hearings on bills that either further curtailed immigration or targeted unanticipated loopholes that migrants were using to enter the country. After 1929, stopping illegal immigration became a top priority for Congress. In particular, they targeted immigrants entering the country under the guise of being seamen. "We feel," Frank Morrison, the Secretary of the American Federation of Labor, testified in Congress, "that any avenue through which Chinamen and any other undesirables can be bootlegged into this country should be stopped."³²⁹ As the Alien Seaman Act—the only law specifically targeting the illegal seamen traffic—neared its expiration in 1931, the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization held hearings to consider its extension under

³²⁸ Di Silvestro to Berardelli, August 15, 1929, and Berardelli to Di Silvestro, August 20, 1929, John Di Silvestro Papers, box 3, folder 7, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

³²⁹ U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, "Deportation of Alien Seamen," Hearings on S. 202, 71st Congress, 3rd Session (Washington, DC: GPO, 1931), 43.

pressure from the American Federation of Labor, the American Seamen's Union, General Commissioners of Immigration, and public opinion.³³⁰

Critics of illegal immigration primarily invoked reform in the name of the competition to American workers, but their criticisms also reflected Nativist fears. The American Seamen Union complained that the lucrative traffic of illegal immigrants to the United States created competition for American seamen during a time of economic depression and brought large profits only to foreign ship owners. The American Federation of Labor endorsed the renewal of the bill as a necessary measure to protect American labor from competition from smuggled immigrants. Critics denounced that in 1931, illegal immigrants coming from China paid up to \$1,100 and European immigrants paid from \$200 to \$400 for a passage to the United States, often via Cuba, Mexico, or Canada.³³¹ Furthermore, they complained, Europe was not only sending a substantial number of illegal immigrants, but it was also becoming a pivotal hub of illegal immigration traffic:

They are manufacturing fraudulent papers in Europe, so that you can buy them in every port in Europe from Greece all around the Mediterranean to Hamburg, to my knowledge. I know of a consul's office in Berlin where I was told they had an entire building, occupying it for no other purpose than to make fraudulent papers of all descriptions. The men who made those papers were usually Russian Jews, but they were making them, although they had succeeded in breaking it up.³³²

Despite being less significant in numbers, many perceived illegal immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe as dangerous to the future of the country as the illegal entry of immigrants

³³⁰ After the passage of the Alien Seaman Act in 1926, in compliance with the 1924 Immigration Act, the alien seaman still retained the right to take shore leave and to remain in the United States for sixty days before reshipping on a foreign ship, but he could no longer seek to remain in the United States by merely presenting himself for examination before an immigration officer. Even though he might have been admissible under the immigration laws, the fact that the new law required an immigrant to be in possession of an unexpired immigration visa that only an American consul in a foreign country could grant made it impossible for a seaman to seek a lawful permanent entry.

³³¹ U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, "Deportation of Alien Seamen," Hearings on S. 202, 71st Congress, 3rd Session (Washington, DC: GPO, 1931), 3.

³³² *Ibid.*, 27.

from Asia. Critics of illegal immigration often singled out Italy as the main source of illegal emigration from Europe. "With reference to the Europeans, the greatest violations up to the present have been on vessels coming from the Mediterranean," Furuseth testified in Congress, "the Italian longshoremen in New York could tell much about it if they, as they say, 'were tired of life.'"³³³

Officials found it difficult to obtain an accurate estimate of the number of illegal immigrants entering as seamen. The official annual reports of the Commissioner General of Immigration showed that the Public Health Service and immigration officials examined approximately 1,000,000 alien seamen per fiscal year. Of this total, the annual average number of deserters for the years from 1911 to 1921 was a little over 8,500. As Congress debated the 1924 Immigration Act, the number of deserters skyrocketed. It increased to 23,194 in 1923 and to 34,679 in 1924. In 1925, it went down to 19,710, but it hovered above 10,000 until 1929: the number was 18,456 in 1926; 23,447, in 1927; 12,357, in 1928; and 11,314, in 1929. Although there were no official records available from which to determine the number of seamen who left on board of other ships, the Immigration Bureau also indicated that about two-thirds of such deserters returned to being seamen shortly after leaving their ships. Based on this estimate, an annual average of approximately 6,000 or 7,000 alien seamen deserters remained unlawfully in the United States during each of the eight years that followed the ratification of the 1921 Immigration Act.³³⁴

The illegal entry of immigrants from Europe became a critical issue for many in both the Jewish and Italian community, if for different reasons. While Italian Americans hoped primarily

³³³ "Smuggling Immigrants and Narcotics through the Unguarded Side Door—Statement Prepared by Furuseth," December 1, 1925, U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, "Deportation of Alien Seamen," Hearings on S. 202, 71st Congress, 3rd Session (Washington, DC: GPO, 1931), 29.

³³⁴ U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, "Deportation of Alien Seamen" (Hearings on S. 202, 71st Congress, 3rd Session (Washington, DC: GPO 1931), 87, 90.

to help illegal Italian immigrants already in the country to adjust their status, American Jews wished to help European Jews escaping Nazi-dominated countries. On March 16, 1937, *Il Corriere d'America* reported that, after two years of campaigning, Generoso Pope had finally obtained a hearing at the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization for the Dies bill. The bill sought to counteract the provision in the 1924 Immigration Act that placed no statute of limitation for illegal immigration, regardless of how long the immigrant resided in the United States.³³⁵ It proposed to grant the Department of Labor more discretionary power to decide over deportation cases and prescribed that this discretionary power be applied only to illegal immigrants of good character who either had resided in the country for more than ten years or had a close relative lawfully admitted into the country or who was a citizen of the United States. The bill also stipulated that its provisions lasted only for four years, enough time to resolve the problem of the illegal immigrants already present in the country.

Many Italian and Jewish organizations supported the bill. Tapping into the only argument that could persuade Congress to consider reform, they argued that ratification of the Dies bill was necessary to avoid the disruption of families and the risk that many families would then become public charges.³³⁶ The Italian community was particularly enthusiastic about the hearings, as their battle for the legalization of the status of illegal Italian immigrants represented yet another strategy in their decision to integrate into American society and use the political process to do so:

Many family heads wrote to Pope encouraging him to continue his sacred campaign [...] There are many families today in the United States who live under the constant fear that

³³⁵ The chances to become a legal resident did not improve if the illegal immigrant accepted to be deported and subsequently tried to enter the country again. Although immigrants could apply for a reentry permit to the Secretary of Labor right after their deportation, they could not return to the United States for a year, and, even then, they could do so only if their case was considered favorably. "I limiti dei casi di deportazione" and "La riammissione di uno straniero deportato," *Il Commerciantе Italiano*, February 15, 1936.

³³⁶ "The Dies Bill," *New York Times*, August 9, 1937.

their breadwinners could be deported any day. They don't have any fault but to have entered the country out of desire to improve their conditions, to take advantage of the great opportunities that this great nation has to offer. [...] It is thus only humane and right that their status be legalized with a law from Congress.³³⁷

Pope's campaign received support from prominent Italian members of the community as well.

The same issue of *Il Corriere d'America* that published the excerpt above also reported about a letter that immigration lawyer and former member of the Immigrant Aid Society Gaspare Cusumano had written to Pope to praise his campaign and volunteer his services.

Cusumano's letter to Pope addressed many of the criticisms that Americans had of Italian immigrants in the United States and expressed the hope that many Italian Americans had in the Roosevelt Administration. Following the 1930s strategy to encourage integration, Cusumano invited newspaper readers to work to discard the images of disloyalty, isolation, and ignorance of American customs that mainstream society had of them. In his letter, Cusumano reiterated that these illegal immigrant men had committed no crime and that their deportation would only cause severe hardship for their families and for society. Their only fault, he continued, was their desire to improve their lives, have an American life and American families. Moreover, all of them yearned to become American citizens, had adjusted to life in America, and could not see themselves living in Italy anymore.³³⁸ In spite of the enthusiasm and the success of Pope's campaign, Cusumano also understood that passing the bill still remained a difficult battle. The long-standing hostility against Southern and Eastern European immigrants proved very resilient, and, at times, the passage of a law to regulate the illegal status of many immigrants seemed a Sisyphean task. However, Cusumano noted, perhaps the current Administration could be the only one under which such a law could pass:

³³⁷ "La Comunità Accoglie con Entusiasmo la Campagna del Gr. Uff. Pope per Umanizzare le Leggi d'Immigrazione," *Corriere d'America*, March 16, 1937.

³³⁸ "La Comunità," *Corriere d'America*, March 16, 1937.

I am convinced that, given the President's liberal politics and Miss Perkins' humanitarian spirit, the probability of success in this session is higher than in the past. However, there are still many prejudices and misunderstandings about the foreigner in this Country. Your most committed personal interest is thus necessary to obtain laws that maintain intact the families and the households of these future Americans.³³⁹

Despite Cusumano's confidence in the Roosevelt Administration, the Dies bill never became law.

Yet public campaigns and testimonies in Congress were only part of the plan to solve the problem within the Italian American community.

The letters that many Italian Americans wrote to their local Italian newspapers revealed yet other facets of illegality, namely confusion about the many provisions in the law and the widespread fraud committed against immigrants. The *Corriere della Sera*, *Corriere d'America*, *Il Commerciantе Italiano*, and *La Donna Italiana* all established permanent weekly columns to answer questions about immigration matters. Most of the letters sent to the *Corriere della Sera* and the *Corriere d'America* asked questions pertaining to citizenship issues in general, but many of them specifically inquired about what happened to illegal immigrants who wanted to become citizens or who feared to adjust their status because of a past crime. Some of the letters also revealed some common misconceptions about legality. Sixty-five year old Maddalena thought that her thirty-two year residence in the United States sufficed to make her a citizen and now asked where and how she could apply for her social security. Similarly, Ingrassia believed that when evaluating his application for citizenship, the judge would grant him citizenship because of his long-term residence in the country. Lastly, a World War One veteran asked if his registration with the immigration authorities would automatically adjust his status from illegal to legal immigrant.³⁴⁰ Many of the letters also revealed that some individuals took advantage of the desperation and credulity of aspiring Italian immigrants or of Italian immigrants who resided in

³³⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁰ "Consigli e Informazioni," *Corriere d'America*, October 13, 1940.

the United States and sought to adjust their status. Commenting on a reader's hope for Pope's campaign to succeed, a journalist of the *Corriere della Sera* urged him not to "let the usual swindlers who promise that they can obtain your citizenship card for you convince you. You might find yourself in serious trouble."³⁴¹

The monthly New York-based *La Donna Italiana*, the only Italian women's newspaper published in the United States, and *Il Commerciante Italiano* revealed yet other concerns that its readers had when it came to immigration. Similar to letters sent to other newspapers, the queries that troubled Italian women also pertained to the adjustment of status for illegal immigrants, the procedure to apply for citizenship, and the rules on derivative citizenship. Aware of their different status in the eyes of the law, many women wrote letters to inquire about which laws specifically applied to their cases. They wondered if they lost their citizenship if they divorced, if their husbands enjoyed similar citizenship benefits to those of women marrying American citizens, and if their citizenship would help their fiancé immigrate to the United States and become a citizen more easily and more quickly.³⁴² Yet, as caretakers of the family finances, they also seemed to have more practical concerns in mind. On May 1938, in a letter to *La Donna Italiana*, Marta M. from Union City, NJ, wondered about the fee to apply for the final certificate to obtain citizenship. Significantly, the reply stressed that the amount of the fee—ten dollars—was still prohibitive and often prevented many aspiring citizens from applying for citizenship, but the response reassured that help might be on the way:

Congressman Emanuel Celler has presented a bill H.R. 9907 to bring the fee down to \$2.00. This bill, if made law, would facilitate the process of naturalization of millions of

³⁴¹ "Viva Pope," *Corriere d'America*, March 16, 1937.

³⁴² "La cittadinanza di un marito di una donna Americana," "Il divorzio non ha effetto sulla cittadinanza," "I diritti di immigrazione del marito di una donna cittadina," *Il Corriere Commerciale*, February 15, 1936.

non citizens, desirous to become such but unable to pay the current fee. All the Italo-American organizations and individuals should write letters of support for this bill.³⁴³

More significant perhaps than the prohibitive costs of the naturalization process, the response to Marta's question revealed the beginnings of a renewed collaboration with Jewish politicians and organizations similarly interested in immigration matters.

Amnesty for illegal immigrants already in the country became a crucial issue for American Jews as well, especially after many European Jews tried to escape persecution following Hitler's ascent to power. In March 1936, 2,000 people attending the celebrations for the fifty-first anniversary of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society urged Congress to humanize some parts of the country's immigration policy by passing the Kerr-Coolidge Bill. To reinforce their pleas, Abraham Herman, president of the society, reported that the promulgation of the Nuremberg laws and the rising anti-Semitism in Poland and Rumania had led thousands more Jews to register with the agency for help. To that point, HIAS, in collaboration with the Jewish Colonization Association, had assisted 13,428 German Jews to relocate to South America, China, Palestine, Spain, France, and the United States. The society, already with thirty-one agencies operating across the world, was looking for new countries where Jews could relocate.³⁴⁴

Many critics of the country's immigration policy considered its deportation directives excessive because they warranted deportation even for minor technical violations. Many supporters of the Kerr-Coolidge bill observed that the pending deportations would separate families, punish prospective productive and law-abiding citizens, and protect professional criminals from deportation. Both the House and Senate Committees on Immigration and Naturalization recommended the adoption of the bill.³⁴⁵ Reflecting the sentiments of many

³⁴³ "Domande e Risposte—Marta M., Union City, NJ," *La Donna Italiana*, May 1938.

³⁴⁴ "Humanized Laws for Aliens Urged," *New York Times*, March 2, 1936.

³⁴⁵ "Stay Deportations," *New York Times*, June 20, 1936.

supporters of the bill, New York Senator Royal S. Copeland adduced that the exceptional circumstances in Europe granted the pardon of these cases to avoid sending illegal aliens back to a destiny of certain persecution.³⁴⁶ On the other side, voicing the sentiments of many restrictionists, William B. Griffith, chairman executive of the Immigration Restriction League, criticized the Kerr-Coolidge bill as giving too much discretionary power to the already munificent Secretary of Labor Perkins and Commissioner of Immigration McCormack to decide on deportation cases and as adding more criminals, dependents, and unemployed at a time when the country was undergoing a serious economic crisis and had over eleven million unemployed.³⁴⁷ The Kerr-Coolidge bill never became law.

The mobilization on behalf of the Kerr-Coolidge bill represented only one of the many attempts by the American Jewish community to help European Jews leave Europe. From the moment Roosevelt took office in 1933, American Jews sought to persuade the president and his administration to intervene on behalf of European Jews and change the existing immigration laws to facilitate their immigration to the United States. From 1933 to 1936, the two different Jewish groups—the "accommodationists" and the "protesters"—worked both together and separately to focus the government's attention on the fate of European Jews, while a handful of prominent Jews tried to use their personal access to the president to elicit direct action from him. As early as 1933, the three leading Jewish organizations, B'nai B'rith, the American Jewish Congress, and the American Jewish Committee, met to discuss a common strategy and, as result, formed a Joint Conference Committee to meet regularly to discuss the status of the German Jews and strategize the American Jewish response. Yet only three weeks after the creation of the committee, without consulting the other two organizations, the American Jewish Congress

³⁴⁶ "Deporting Aliens Called Inhuman," *New York Times*, April 23, 1936.

³⁴⁷ "Alien Problem," *New York Times*, August 2, 1936.

decided to endorse mass meetings and demonstrations across the country. The alliance declined further when the American Jewish Congress supported a one-day boycott of German goods, despite the objections raised by American and European Jews alike.³⁴⁸

Complicating the chances for American Jews to promote any concrete changes in the country's immigration policy was Franklin D. Roosevelt's decision to deal with the Nazi persecution of Jews through a series of executive and administrative orders. Although Roosevelt spoke out against Nazi persecutions, for years he chose to do little or nothing to change American immigration policy. Revealing his reluctance to take serious action, in 1936, Roosevelt refused to appoint Rabbi Stephen S. Wise as one of the members of the American delegation to a League of Nations conference on refugees and sent a minor functionary instead. Similarly, when his handpicked successor as New York governor, Hebert H. Lehman, wrote him in 1935 and in 1936 to inform him of the problems that German Jews were having in getting their visas, Roosevelt had the State Department write replies on his behalf. The letters vaguely reassured the governor that consular officials abroad were carrying out their duties "in a considerate and humane manner."³⁴⁹

The administration began to take more action on the refugee question only after the *Anschluss*, the German annexation of Austria in March 1938. That year, Roosevelt created an Advisory Committee on Political Refugees, ordered an extension of the visitors' visas granted to German Jewish visitors to enable them to remain in the United States as long as possible, and instructed Secretary of State Hull to enjoin immigration officials to interpret liberally the sections of the 1924 Immigration Act requiring specific documentation for their visa applications, especially if the applicants were in personal danger. The bitter criticisms that

³⁴⁸ For a more detailed account of the actions of American Jews to help European Jews, see Breitman and Kraut, *American Refugee Policy and European Jewry*, chapter 4.

³⁴⁹ Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*, 73.

Roosevelt's initiatives received from the public made it difficult for American Jews to plead for more action. In November 1938, for the second time in two weeks, Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis met with President Roosevelt for forty minutes to plead with him to intervene on behalf of European Jews. Brandeis's appeals came along with requests for intervention from the Women's International League of Peace and Freedom and the United Palestine Appeal, but they were ultimately to no avail, as Roosevelt continued to receive warnings against acting on behalf of European Jews.³⁵⁰ On the same day Brandeis met with Roosevelt for the second time, Senator William E. Borah of Idaho proclaimed that any proposal to revise the existing immigration policy to allow more German refugees into the country would arouse tremendous opposition in Congress. Echoing Borah's comments, Chairman Martin Dies of the House Committee investigating Un-American Activities challenged the right of the President to extend the six-month visitors' visa permits under which between 12,000 and 15,000 refugees had already been admitted.³⁵¹

American Jews rejoiced in 1938 when Roosevelt also asked Secretary of State Hull to organize an international conference to facilitate the emigration of political refugees out of Austria and Germany, under the condition that no country receive a greater number of immigrants than prescribed by its existing laws. The only major accomplishment of the conference held in Evian, France, in July 1938, was the creation of an Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees with headquarters in London. Jewish organizations applauded the creation of the committee, as they knew that, given its magnitude, no private agency could deal with the refugee problem adequately. Yet they also asked the American government to expand the powers of the new committee to coordinate emigration plans for displaced and stateless

³⁵⁰ "Pleas for Aid Rise," *New York Times*, November 20, 1938.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*

Jews.³⁵² Just before the outbreak of the war, the committee reached a secret agreement stipulating the orderly emigration of 400,000 Jews over a period of five years, but the beginning of hostilities invalidated it. By 1945, the enthusiasm for the committee waned and many Jewish organizations realized that

while eager to serve and highly successful in preparatory work, [the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees] is still lacking both the means and the authority needed to achieve the task itself. General resistance to emigration schemes prevails on the part of governments, often in the hope that the delay may further reduce the number of the displaced persons who wish to emigrate.³⁵³

Their fears about resistance within the government was justified. Many State Department officials, in fact, repeatedly obstructed refugees' applications for asylum in the United States.

Emblematic of the State Department's attitude toward assisting European refugees was Assistant Secretary of State Breckenridge Long's obstructionism. Typical of his attitude towards European refugees was his false claim to a congressional committee on November 26, 1943, that, in the ten years since the rise of Hitler to power, the United States had admitted about 580,000 refugees under the quota, "not counting American generosity with visitors' and transit visas." Many Jewish organizations as well as scholars of immigration and state officials criticized Long's estimate as based on the number of visas issued rather than persons actually admitted into the country.³⁵⁴ Attorney General Francis Biddle, in an address before the 1944 Convention of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, stated that the United States had admitted an average of fewer than 28,000 immigrants a year during the same time period. Former Commissioner of Immigration and Naturalization Earl Harrison equally objected to Long's labeling of all

³⁵² "The Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees," 31 October, 1945, American Jewish Committee Collection, RG 247, series general 10, box 128, folder "Immigration, 1940-1945," YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁴ Daniels argues that one of the ways Long inflated the number was to include in the count the Japanese Americans in various government concentration camps as if they were refugees. Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*, 88-89.

immigrants as refugees. Under Long's definition, Harrison observed, "Our entire nation can be said to consist of refugees and their descendants."³⁵⁵

Despite all their efforts to humanize existing immigration policy, Italian Americans and Jewish Americans accomplished little in terms of immigration reform in the 1930s. Both groups, as A. Abbot Rosen reminisced in his interview for the *Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith Oral Memoirs*, were still "an immediate post-immigrant community" trying to adjust to life in America under restriction during a time of economic hardships and amidst hostility and resentment towards them.³⁵⁶ Though both groups achieved political prominence through the New Deal coalition, neither achieved enough political clout to influence Congress or the President to change the country's immigration policy. They still faced fierce opposition from a broadly based, bipartisan coalition of hostile and suspicious voters, including Southern Democrats and Western and Midwestern Republicans. The outbreak of World War II, by contrast, dramatically changed their opportunities to have an impact on American immigration laws. In addition to the new role that the war assigned the United States and the beginnings of a new civil rights movement, changes to the immigration policy enacted during the war provided stepping stones for future changes and paved the way for more effective lobbying in the 1950s and 1960s.

*World War II: "The Refugee Invasion of America through Immigration"*³⁵⁷

³⁵⁵ Liskofsky, "Immigration Policy of the United States," 4 December 1945, American Jewish Committee Collection, RG 347, series general 10, box 128, folder "Immigration 1940-1945," YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

³⁵⁶ "Not the Work of a Day" 6, 176-177, Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith Collection, MS 365, box 2, YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

³⁵⁷ "The Refugee Invasion of America through Immigration," March 27, 1945, American Jewish Committee Collection, RG 347, series general 10, box 132, folder "DPs Hate Literature," YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

The outbreak of the war in Europe brought little change to American immigration policy until the fall of France in June 1940, when nativists and others began to fear that Nazi agents disguised as immigrants or refugees were infiltrating the country as fifth columnists.³⁵⁸ In response to these pressures, Congress passed the Alien Registration Act of 1940 and transferred the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) from under the aegis of the Department of Labor to the Department of Justice, de facto transforming its functions from protective to prosecutorial.³⁵⁹ The Alien Registration Act provided criminal penalties for various subversive activities, expanded the grounds for deportation, and required all aliens to register and report any change of address or employment.³⁶⁰ Within months after passing the Smith Act, Congress ratified the Selective Service Act, requiring all men between twenty-two and thirty-five years of age to go through a year of military training. The following year, the President authorized the FBI to wiretap suspects of subversive activities, especially aliens, declared a state of national emergency, and closed the Italian and German consulates and repatriated their diplomatic staff.

Many Italian and Jewish organizations had long opposed the registration of aliens, and, after Congress passed the Alien Registration Act, they immediately mobilized along with other ethnic organizations to ensure that its enforcement did not discriminate against its targets.³⁶¹

³⁵⁸ Despite the United States' declaration of neutrality after Britain and France declared war on Germany on September 1939, Roosevelt privately asked the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to compile a list of "potentially dangerous" persons to detain in case of America's entry into the war. This became the Custodial Detention List. For more details, see Rose D. Scherini, "When Italian Americans were 'Enemy Aliens'," in DiStasi, ed., *Una Storia Segreta*, 10-31.

³⁵⁹ Ironically, as Fox points out, the vitriolic divisiveness between Fascists and anti-Fascists that permeated Italian American communities across the country contributed to the government's restrictive and paranoid reaction when unfounded fears of fifth columnists emerged: "The anti-Fascist and anti-Nazis were so successful in branding a majority of Italian and German Americans as disloyal that the government did not feel it could sit idly by as the war clouds gathered." Fox, *The Unknown Internment*, 36.

³⁶⁰ Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*, chapter 4.

³⁶¹ Most of the agencies were nationally accredited Jewish, Catholic, or social welfare organizations. More specifically, they included the American Association of Social Workers, American Committee for Christian Refugees, American Friends Service Committee, American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Congress, B'nai B'rith, Committee for Catholic Refugees from Germany, Common Council for American Unity (formerly Foreign Language Information Service), Community Chests and Councils Inc., Council of Jewish Federations, Family

Encouraged by calls for cooperation from the government, many of these organizations met to discuss how to address potential problems and had conferences with representatives from the Division of Alien Registration and other officials in the Department of Justice. The meetings convinced them that they could provide an extremely important service to the Government, to immigrants, and to the public in general by assisting immigrants to prepare for registration. To this end, they jointly issued a memorandum outlining the law, the solutions to possible problems that could arise, and how to avoid cases of exploitation. Difficulties with the process derived either from uncertainty of status, illegal entry, technical infractions of laws and regulations, and past participation in activities now deemed questionable or from language difficulties, lack of information, and fears as to the purposes and consequences of registration. The organizations also worried that the law would be used "to impose a stigma on the law-abiding alien population" and organized to prevent the use of registration "as an excuse for discharging or black-listing aliens, or extorting money, or otherwise imposing upon them." To prevent this from happening, the memorandum encouraged the organization of programs of public education about the implications of the law for immigrants and Americans alike.³⁶² The collaboration and help that these organizations provided during the registration process set an important precedent that would later influence the government's decision to seek their help again when it had to deal with refugee resettlement.

Welfare Association of America, Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Society, International Migration Service, Jewish Labor Committee, National Board of Y.W.C.A., National Catholic Welfare Conference, National Council of Jewish Women, National Council on Naturalization and Citizenship, National Federation of Settlements, National Institute of Immigrant Welfare, National Jewish Welfare Board, National Refugee Service, National Social Work Council, and National Travelers' Aid Association. The memorandum encouraged the collaboration with other agencies in the community. "Memorandum on Cooperation of Social Agencies in Connection with Registration of Aliens," 20 August, 1940, American Jewish Collection, RG 347, series general 10, box 128, folder "Aliens, Deportation," YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

³⁶² "Memorandum on Cooperation of Social Agencies in Connection with Registration of Aliens," 20 August, 1940, American Jewish Collection, RG 347, series general 10, box 128, folder "Aliens, Deportation," YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

At the same time, the outbreak of the war made immigration policy part of President Roosevelt's wartime foreign relations strategy. This enabled him to enact a series of small initiatives to help refugees without obtaining Congress's approval. He asked his Advisory Committee on Refugees to put together a list of eminent refugees and then instructed the State Department to issue temporary visas in their names. In late 1940, the Roosevelt Administration authorized consuls outside of Germany to issue visas to refugees who had managed to reach places like Portugal, French Africa, and China, and to charge them to the German quota established in the 1924 Immigration Act. Then, in January 1941, an agreement with Canada allowed refugees with temporary visas in the United States to cross the border, apply for a quota number in Canada, and reenter the United States as regular immigrants. Finally, the Roosevelt Administration took the lead in providing for refugees in North Africa and Europe first under the Office of Foreign Relief and Rehabilitation at the State Department and later under the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA).³⁶³

The provisions the government took following the fall of France to Nazi Germany set in motion two distinct paths for Italian Americans and American Jews regarding mobilization against immigration restriction during World War II. The Smith Act along with the other security orders set up mechanisms that eventually led to Italian resident aliens becoming enemy aliens for most of 1942. The new regulations tested the entire community for loyalty and silenced its voice against immigration restriction at least until Italy switched sides and became an ally. Italian Americans did not get involved in the relocation of refugees and displaced persons until after the war was over. American Jews, on the other hand, while appreciative of the Roosevelt Administration's initiatives, challenged the negative propaganda surrounding the refugees and pressed for drastic changes in the country's immigration policy. As they fought for

³⁶³ Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*, 84-85.

refugee legislation, they obtained changes in the overall immigration law that would later be crucial to the fight to repeal the quota system in 1965.

The war and the persecution of European Jews precipitated a debate among American Jews over immigration restriction. For many American Jews, finding a viable solution for European refugees and displaced persons coincided with the abolition of the quota system. Yet, as it had been the case throughout the campaign against the quotas, Jewish organizations helping European refugees and advocating a liberal immigration policy initially worried about exposing themselves too much; they did not want to turn the refugee problem into an exclusively Jewish question. The rampant anti-Semitism of the 1930s had declined but not disappeared. Sporadic episodes of intolerance and anti-Semitism re-emerged throughout the war and encouraged many Jewish organizations to act behind the scenes.³⁶⁴ Moreover, the fear of fifth columnists threatening the survival of American democracy rekindled the flurry of proposals advocating further immigration restriction, the most radical of which was the Gossett Bill, asking to cut the immigration quotas in half.³⁶⁵

When discussing possible solutions for the refugee problem, all Jewish organizations recognized the need to push the countries that could absorb individual immigrants to open their doors at the end of the war. Yet Jewish groups and potential receiving countries hotly debated the terms and conditions for admitting potential Jewish refugees. A 1940 American Jewish

³⁶⁴ In March 1945, a member of the American Jewish Committee wrote a memo on the history of the publication of an anti-Semitic pamphlet titled "The Refugee Invasion of America through Immigration." The pamphlet, first published in 1940, was reprinted in 1943 and distributed along with another pamphlet titled "B'nai B'rith's Jewish Conspiracy." Behind the writing, the printing, and the distribution of the two pamphlets were Earl Southard, secretary of the Citizens USA Committee in Chicago, Illinois; Homer Mertz, who introduced a resolution at an American First Party's convention calling for the sterilization of Jews; and Ainsley Horney, member of the German American Bund in Milbourne, Illinois, and owner of real estate property exposing a sign "No Jews Allowed." "The Refugee Invasion of American Through Immigration," March 27, 1945, American Jewish Committee Collection, RG 347, Series General 10, box 132, folder "DPs Hate Literature," YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

³⁶⁵ "Memorandum on Immigration," no date, American Jewish Committee Collection, RG 347, series general 10, box 128, folder "Immigration, 1940-1945," YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

Committee memo outlined a proposal for Jewish organizations to prepare both the aspiring Jewish emigrants and the receiving countries for each other. The American Jewish Committee committed to create a bureau that, in collaboration with other Jewish and non-Jewish institutions, would survey and train the aspiring immigrants in agricultural, manual, and industrial labor. The Committee would also work to assure positive public opinion in potential receiving countries to support legislation in favor of Jewish immigrants and to welcome the new immigrants as a valuable asset.³⁶⁶ Despite the 1940 memo's optimism, its authors were also aware of the massive numbers of Jews who desired to leave Europe and the reluctance of most Western countries to welcome new immigrants. Thus, they also encouraged the committee to find alternative destinations, including Africa, Asia, or Alaska, that could accommodate entire groups of Jewish immigrants, not just individuals. In 1944, representatives of the American Jewish Committee conducted extensive trips to Latin American countries to convince them to receive European Jews, but the two sides disagreed on the details of the communities in which the migrants would live once they arrived. In 1945, an American Jewish Committee Latin American specialist, accompanied by a non-Jewish South American, visited the embassies of eight South American countries in Washington to encourage them to open their doors to European Jews, but most of the negotiations proved fruitless.³⁶⁷

These discouraging results convinced a growing number of American Jews that the creation of an autonomous Jewish state represented the best solution for the Jewish refugee problem. As the situation in Europe worsened and American governmental intervention languished, even the more reluctant American Jews, such as those affiliated with the American

³⁶⁶ "Problems of Jewish Emigration and Immigration," 2 August 1940, American Jewish Committee Collection, RG 347, series general 10, box 128, folder "Immigration, 1940-1945," YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

³⁶⁷ "Memorandum on Immigration," no date, American Jewish Committee Collection, RG 347, series general 10, box 128, folder "Immigration, 1940-1945," YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

Jewish Committee, began to endorse the creation of a Jewish homeland.³⁶⁸ As the idea gained momentum, however, many American Jews realized that they also had to continue to lobby the American government until it relented, as even the creation of a Jewish state might fail to resolve the European refugee problem:

Even with early favorable solution of the Palestinian impasse, homes in countries other than Palestine will have to be found for a far larger number of European Jews than was anticipated. Appeals to nations of the world have fallen on deaf ears, and it is now clear that unless the United States sets an example, no change in their attitude can be expected.³⁶⁹

This awareness convinced many Jewish organizations to act on both fronts. To this end, on January 16, 1944, Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau presented Roosevelt a report indicting American policy in general in regard to European refugees and singling out the State Department for keeping immigration well below the established quotas in the name of national security and for failing to rescue Jews. The report convinced Roosevelt to undertake additional steps on behalf of Jewish and other refugees. He issued an executive order creating the War Refugee Board, and, in June 1944, he ordered that approximately 1,000 refugees be brought from Italy to the United States.³⁷⁰

As they exerted pressure on the White House, many Jewish organizations, in collaboration with non-Jewish representatives, began a campaign to create support for humanitarian refugee legislation among Americans at large. For many of the individuals involved, dissipating rumors about "the refugee influx" represented a primary objective. Many considered their efforts to rally support for refugee legislation a patriotic duty and a contribution to an American victory in the war:

³⁶⁸ "Problems of Jewish Emigration and Immigration," 2 August 1940, American Jewish Committee Collection, RG 347, series general 10, box 128, folder "Immigration, 1940-1945," YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

³⁶⁹ "Memorandum on Immigration," no date, American Jewish Committee Collection, RG 347, series general 10, box 128, folder "Immigration, 1940-1945," YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

³⁷⁰ Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*, 86.

As we approach the closing phase of the war, the work of the [Non-Sectarian Anti-Nazi] League is more urgent than ever before. Between now and the time peace treaties are ratified, good Americans must fight and win the great political battle which will decide who has actually won the war. The League's function in exposing enemy propaganda, anti-Semites, "Nationalists" and neo-Isolationists is therefore immediately urgent in a sense never paralleled before in the history of our organization.³⁷¹

The campaign to gain support was nevertheless arduous and lost momentum, as the closing of the war profiled new enemies on the horizon. In an attempt to persuade the newly constituted Truman Administration into immediate action, prominent Jews organized a meeting with the Secretary and Under Secretary of State in the fall of the 1945. The American Jewish Committee urged the full use of the quotas up to the maximum of 150,000, the reopening of American consulates in Germany and Austria, and the preference for displaced persons and refugees at all European consulates.³⁷² This time, the pressure worked.

On December 22, 1945, President Truman issued an immigration directive reserving half of the quotas of European countries for displaced persons (DPs). Truman issued his order amidst strong criticisms. Many Americans, in fact, shared isolationist Hamilton Fish's sentiments: "If I were in Congress today, I would sponsor a bill to deport all aliens, immediately after the war, if they had been admitted to this country within the last ten years."³⁷³ The president hoped that his provision would bring about 40,000 DPs a year to the United States. Trying to reassure activist Americans, Truman insisted that the provision conform strictly to the quotas imposed by the 1924 Immigration Act, yet his directive allowed for the kind of quota swapping that the act explicitly forbade. Despite the broad scope of the directive, only about 5,000 Jewish and non-Jewish DPs arrived in the United States in the first nine months of 1946. United Nations Relief

³⁷¹ Non-Sectarian Anti-Nazi League to Sabath, April 1, 1945, Adolph Sabath Papers, MS 43, box 5, folder 9, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College.

³⁷² "Memorandum on Immigration," no date, American Jewish Committee Collection, RG 347, series general 10, Box 128, folder "Immigration, 1940-1945," YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

³⁷³ Non-Sectarian Anti-Nazi League to Sabath, April 1, 1945, Adolph Sabath Papers, MS 43, box 5, folder 9, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College.

and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) director Fiorello La Guardia's pleas that Congress amend the law to allow greater flexibility in its application remained unheard.³⁷⁴ "The United States," journalist Thomas Hamilton wrote, "once the haven of refuge for the oppressed peoples of Europe, has been almost as inaccessible as Tibet."³⁷⁵ October 1946, an American Jewish Committee analysis of the directive reflected a similar disappointment. The author of the analysis believed that inflexibility of the legislation, insufficient financing, understaffing, thorough screenings, and lack of transportation accounted only in part for the limitations of Truman's directive. "There is no doubt," the document read, "that the State Department did not use all the necessary dispatch and maybe even not all the good will for the carrying out of the President's directive."³⁷⁶ It was a meager consolation that during the first months of the directive the number of Jewish refugees was higher than non-Jewish refugees, as American Jews knew that this was only because non-Jewish welfare agencies lagged behind the Jewish ones in the work of assisting immigrants.

More importantly, the United States' inaction on its requests to solve the refugee and displaced person problem intensified the other countries' reluctance to open their doors. In an American Jewish Committee memorandum, its authors explicitly said that America's immigration policy could hardly dissuade the other countries from their indifference to the war refugee problem and admitted that "in our attempts to preach to other nations, we have been handicapped by our own practice."³⁷⁷ If the United States kept its restrictive immigration policy, other countries would never change their attitudes. The time had come to ask again for the

³⁷⁴ "Memorandum on Immigration," no date, American Jewish Committee Collection, RG 347, series general 10, box 128, folder "Immigration, 1940-194," YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

³⁷⁵ Thomas J. Hamilton, "Few Refugees to Be Admitted by U.S.," *New York Times*, December 30, 1945.

³⁷⁶ "Analysis of Implementation of President Truman's Immigration Directive of December 22, 1945," 25 October 1945, American Jewish Committee Collection, RG 347, series general 10, box 128, folder "Immigration 1940-1945," YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

³⁷⁷ "Memorandum on Immigration," no date, American Jewish Committee Collection, RG 347, series general 10, box 128, folder "Immigration, 1940-1945," YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

passage of more liberal immigration laws. However, the memorandum warned, the battle would be difficult to win, and it encouraged the Committee to seek non-Jewish allies, to work with non-sectarian organizations, and to mobilize public opinion on behalf of a measure that, "in addition to offering a haven here for Jewish refugees, seems indispensable if a haven is to be found for them in other lands."³⁷⁸ This was exactly the strategy that the American Jewish Committee was to follow to push for refugee and DP legislation immediately after the war.

Despite its disappointing results, Truman's directive introduced a major change that would shape the country's immigration and refugee policies for the rest of the century. Rather than requiring affidavits of support filed by financially stable individuals, the directive allowed blanket assurances for large number of persons issued by competent agencies to assist the government in refugee resettlement.³⁷⁹ Until then, as Seymour Graubard remembered, many affluent American Jews had signed affidavits in the hope of helping Jewish applicants in Europe: "During those years, like so many of my friends, I signed affidavits of support for would-be immigrants. It did not matter whether or not I knew the people for whom I signed."³⁸⁰ By including private groups in the administration of immigration policy, the Truman Directive inaugurated a sea change in the role that interest groups would have in the drafting and enactment of the country's immigration policy. This change provided these organizations, including Italian and Jewish ones, with special access to the government and legitimized their advocacy for immigration reform.

As American Jews struggled to help European Jews, the Italian American community wrestled with attacks on its loyalty to the United States. As Mussolini and Fascism lost favor in

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁹ Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*, 103-104.

³⁸⁰ Seymour Graubard, "Not the Work of a Day," Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith Collection, MS 365, box 1, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College.

America, Italian Americans quickly realized that any connection with either of them could profoundly hurt their chances to be accepted as legitimate members of American society. On more than one occasion, Italian Americans found themselves compelled to justify their actions and their support for the war effort against "the disgraceful and unwarranted insinuations that are being made daily by malicious newspaper writers, by the subversive groups and by the real 'fifth columnists' of the country."³⁸¹ In the face of mounting American criticisms of Italy's war, Italian Americans began to distance themselves from Mussolini and his government and to challenge any charges of disloyalty based on their earlier political dalliances with *Il Duce*. "Americans of Italian origin," claimed G.S. in his open letter to an Anglo-Saxon friend published in *The Vigo Review*, "are not interested in Fascism, Nazism, or Communism. The only 'ism' they believe in is Americanism. Italy to them is only a cultural expression, and they should not be blamed if they take some interest in Italian literature or Italian painting or Italian music."³⁸² Not all Italian Americans went this far in denying any real connection to Italy. Others, especially as the war began, took it upon themselves to prove to Americans that Italians living in Italy, like those living in the United States, disapproved of Mussolini and Fascism and they argued that an American victory in the war represented a victory for the Italian people as well. Many also resented the lingering discrimination against them because of their ancestry. In an article about the refusal of two U.S. Navy officers to hire an Italian applicant because of his ethnic origin, the journalist lamented that Anglo immigrants were still favored and their loyalty and patriotism never questioned: "Speaking the same language as the American people, they are no sooner admitted into this country that they soon call themselves Americans. Though newly arrived, to

³⁸¹ "Criscuolo to Pope," *Corriere d'America*, December 1, 1940.

³⁸² "Hyphenated Americans—An Open Letter to an Anglo-Saxon Friend," no date, *The Vigo Review*.

them, even a descendant of the third generation of an immigrant from a non-English speaking country of Europe is a foreigner."³⁸³

Distancing themselves from any association with Fascist Italy and condemning Fascism as undemocratic, many Italian Americans set in motion a campaign to rehabilitate Italy's name in America. In New York City, on November 25, 1941, a group of Italian Americans decided to found the bi-weekly newspaper *L'Azione* to dissipate "the legend created abroad by Fascism, and accepted for mental inertia or out of interest, that the Italian people is Fascist."³⁸⁴ The day of the attack on Pearl Harbor, a group of prominent Italians from the Mazzini Society sent a telegram to President Roosevelt expressing their support for a free America *and* a free Italy:

On the day when Japan, vanguard of the Axis, treacherously attacks the United States, the Italians and Italo-Americans of the Mazzini Society reaffirm their absolute loyalty to the principles of justice and liberty for which free America and free Italy stand and offer their unlimited services to the American nation for the cause of the democracies against all tyrants and aggressors.³⁸⁵

Similarly, the United Italian-American League telegraphed President Roosevelt urging the defeat of all enemy forces.³⁸⁶ The *Comitato d'Azione degli Ex-Combattenti d'Italia* announced, in an article in *L'Azione*, that the war was total and urged Italians living in the United States to fight to free Italy and Europe and Italians living in Italy to resist and oppose Fascism. Together both groups, along with people from all over the world, had to fight against Fascism, Nazism, and Japan.³⁸⁷ Italian-language newspapers, as well as many Italian groups across the country, rushed to declare their unstinting support of the American government.³⁸⁸ Far from voicing protests against the detention of Italians, many of these newspapers justified and accepted the need for vigilance and detention of suspect individuals in times of war.

³⁸³ "Our Grand Venerable exposes plot to discriminate," *Sons of Italy Magazine*, August 1941.

³⁸⁴ "Il telegramma degli Italiani liberi a Roosevelt," *L'Azione*, December 15, 1941.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁶ Pisani, *The Italian in America*, 206-207.

³⁸⁷ "Il telegramma degli Italiani liberi a Roosevelt," *L'Azione*, December 15, 1941.

³⁸⁸ Pisani, *The Italian in America*, 206-207.

Despite their efforts to defend their loyalty to the United States and the fact that Italian Americans were disproportionately represented among enlisted personnel in the war, attacks against resident Italians began immediately after America's entry into the war in December 1941.³⁸⁹ Within the first few weeks following the attack on Pearl Harbor, the government issued a series of proclamations that declared noncitizen Italians, Japanese, and Germans to be alien enemies and established regulations governing their conduct.³⁹⁰ All enemy aliens had to register and receive certificates of identification to carry with them at all times. The new regulations required 600,000 Italian residents to carry identity cards at all times, limited their freedom of movement, and forced 10,000 Italians residing in California alone to relocate. Local police conducted searches in many homes to sequester guns, shortwave radios, and cameras; arrested about 1,500 Italians for curfew, travel, and contraband violations; and sent 250 Italians to internment camps for up to two years.³⁹¹

Bewilderment, frustration, and concern followed the issuance of the orders among Italian Americans.³⁹² Many feared that the provisions against enemy aliens would lead to mass internment and/or deportation. The initial relocation of many Italians on the West Coast and the news about what the Japanese and Japanese Americans were undergoing caused a surge in the number of naturalizations within Italian American communities across the country.³⁹³ The low

³⁸⁹ Gloria Ricci Lothrop, "Unwelcome in Freedom's Land," in DiStasi, ed., *Una Storia Segreta*, 166.

³⁹⁰ For more on the internment of Italian Americans, see DiStasi, *Una Storia Segreta*; Fox, *The Unknown Internment*; Franca Iacovetta, Roberto Perin, and Angelo Principe, eds., *Enemies Within: Italian and Other Internees in Canada and Abroad* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000); and George E. Pozzetta, "Alien Enemies or Loyal Americans? The Internment of Italian Americans," in Kay Saunders and Roger Daniels, eds. *Alien Justice: Wartime Internment in Australia and North America* (Queensland, Australia: University of Queensland Press, 2000): 80-92.

³⁹¹ Rose D. Scherini, "When Italian Americans were 'Enemy Aliens'," in DiStasi, ed., *Una Storia Segreta*, 10.

³⁹² As Fox points out, relocation in particular had a dramatic impact on Italians on the West Coast: it "broke up families, interrupted education, forced breadwinners to find new employment and new homes (in many cases families had to maintain two residences), resulted in individual internment for petty violations, lowered the aliens' self-esteem, and in general heightened their anxiety about what more lay in store for them since they knew what was happening to the Japanese." Fox, *The Unknown Internment*, XIII.

³⁹³ For more on the spike in naturalization applications, see Fox, *The Unknown Internment*.

naturalization rate among Italian Americans raised particular suspicion. For many Americans, naturalization represented the most tangible evidence of immigrants' loyalty and allegiance to their new country. That Italians living in the United States for over forty years often preferred to maintain their Italian citizenship convinced officials in both the War and State Departments that these immigrants were under the ideological spell of Fascism. Many of these officials also believed that the maintenance of dual citizenship, as many Italians did, constituted another blatant proof of their disloyalty. Although the officials used the dual citizenship argument primarily to intern many Japanese Americans, Italy and Germany had long insisted on adherence to dual citizenship even more aggressively than Japan. Italian law strictly enforced the principle by descent, according to which, no matter where a child lived, he or she remained an Italian citizen if either parent was Italian. Even their Italian passport reminded them that space and time placed no limit to their allegiance to their homeland.³⁹⁴

Italians' experiences with the internment program were inconsistent and unpredictable. Unlike their Japanese and German counterparts, of the approximately 4,000 Italians who faced arrest and/or detention under the internment program, most of them ultimately only answered a few questions and received a release or parole, spending very little time in custody.³⁹⁵ Most of the Italians whom the authorities took in for questioning or interned were individuals who had joined pro-Fascist organizations before the outbreak of the war or who had been vocal about their support for and admiration of Mussolini. They usually fell in one of the following three categories: members of the Federation of Italian War Veterans; editors/writers for Italian-

³⁹⁴ The final page of instructions issued with passports during 1926 and 1927 read: "The immigrant should never abandon his feeling of the value of being an Italian [...] keep alive, at all times, the use of your mother tongue and the practice of your own institutions; bring up your children in a love for your Fatherland and teach them language, history and geography of Italy. And even if you assume the nationality of the country in which you have settled, never deny and never forget the sublime moral inheritance of your ancestors and transmit to your descendants the sacred flame of the love of the distant Fatherland. Thus will you ever remain a true son of that world-extensive and strong Italy. Long Live Italy, Forever." As quoted in Fox, *The Unknown Internment*, 7-8.

³⁹⁵ Pozzetta, "Alien Enemies or Loyal Americans," 85.

language newspapers and announcers on Italian-language radio; and instructors in Italian-language schools sponsored by the local Italian consulate.³⁹⁶ Yet many prominent Italian Americans who had had close ties with Mussolini and his regime remained untouched, thanks to the political influence they had achieved, especially within the Democratic Party and labor unions. Moreover, stereotypes about the soft "Italian character" and the popularity of a handful of Italian Americans, including Fiorello La Guardia, Don Ameche, and Joe DiMaggio, helped consolidate a less threatening image of Italian Americans. According to a survey conducted in April 1942, forty-six percent of Americans considered the Germans the most dangerous element in the nation, thirty-five percent chose the Japanese, and two percent selected Italians. Finally, Italy's repeated defeats during the first months of the war persuaded many Americans that it could hardly represent a threat to the United States.³⁹⁷

The very different outcomes of the decisions to intern Italians and Japanese ultimately reflect the different impact that the 1924 Immigration Act had on the two groups and the different role that racism and discrimination played for the groups. As Fox points out, "It was the racially motivated step of halting Asian immigration in 1924 and its numerical implications across the country, not the attack on Pearl Harbor and its bitter emotional legacy, that determined what happened to the Japanese in 1942, and why Italians and Germans did not experience the same fate."³⁹⁸ Because of the 1924 Act, the fewer and disenfranchised Japanese on the mainland were more vulnerable to relocation than the vastly larger, more scattered, politically organized, economically prominent, and more "assimilable" Italian and German communities.³⁹⁹

Significantly, similar to Italian and German communities on the mainland, the Japanese

³⁹⁶ Scherini, "When Italian Americans were 'Enemy Aliens'," 12.

³⁹⁷ Pozzetta, "Alien Enemies or Loyal Americans," 86-87.

³⁹⁸ Fox, *The Unknown Internment*, 185.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 183-185.

community in Hawaii was spared from internment and relocation, mostly because of its size and its role in the Hawaiian economy.⁴⁰⁰ Finally, as Daniels explains, although the language of the proclamations treated the different enemy nationalities identically, in practice, the government, from the White House down, had a hierarchical notion about the seriousness of the threat that each group posed. In a private conversation with Attorney General Francis Biddle, President Roosevelt himself admitted that he worried more about the Germans than the Italians, who were "a lot of opera singers."⁴⁰¹

With an eye to the impending November congressional elections, on Columbus Day 1942, Attorney General Biddle announced the decision to lift the blanket designation of unnaturalized Italians as enemy aliens.⁴⁰² As historical accounts have documented, in addition to the notion that Italian aliens were less dangerous than others, two reasons influenced the administration's decision: the congressional elections scheduled for November 1942 and plans to invade Italy the following spring. President Roosevelt and his political advisors most likely still remembered the aftermath of FDR's June 1940 speech condemning Mussolini's declaration of war on France. Following his speech, many Italian American voters in New York, San Francisco, Philadelphia, and other American cities had supported Wendell Willkie's candidacy.

⁴⁰⁰ For more on the different internment stories of the Japanese communities in Hawaii and in the mainland United States, see Roger Daniels, *Concentration Camps USA: Japanese Americans and World War II* (New York: Rinehart and Winston, 1972).

⁴⁰¹ Francis Biddle, *In Brief Authority* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1962), 207.

⁴⁰² Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*, 87-88. Many prominent Italian American leaders claimed the success behind Biddle's announcement to advance their clout within their community. Among those who had repeatedly urged the government to adopt this policy were AFL labor leader Luigi Antonini, CIO leader August Bellanca, Congressman Vito Marcantonio, Judge Eugene Alessandrini, State Representative Anthony Di Silvestro, and Generoso Pope, as well as various Mazzini Society and Order Sons of Italy spokesmen. Pozzetta in Saunders and Daniels, *Alien Justice*, 89-92.

Moreover, the large presence of Italian American soldiers in the armed forces warranted the need for their crucial support in the Italian campaign.⁴⁰³

As preparations for the campaign in Italy began, the American government, much as it did during World War I, sought the help of prominent Italian American organizations and individuals to promote its agenda in Italy. The shift began when governors and other prominent authorities in states with large Italian American constituencies lauded in public the Italian American support and valor in the war.⁴⁰⁴ On January 4, 1943, the government appointed the newly instated New York governor Charles Poletti as special assistant to Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson. For his experience in state politics and his Italian ancestry, the army selected Poletti as the U.S. Army civil affairs officer in postwar Italy, where he rose to the rank of colonel. The government also sent labor organizer Luigi Antonini to address the northern industrial workers.

Despite the high numbers of enlistments in the U.S. army, the collaboration with the U.S. government in the Italian campaign, and the pledges of support for the war effort, Italian Americans never advocated nor lobbied for changes to the existing immigration laws. They concentrated their efforts on securing support for American intervention in Italy, on convincing Americans that Italians had pledged to Fascism under duress and as such needed help to restore a democratic Italy, and on collecting money and supplies to provide relief after Mussolini's regime fell. In the meantime, however, they rose more prominently in the political sphere and acquired the connections, the language, and the mobilization strategies they would later adopt to advocate for immigration reform in the 1950s and 1960s.

Conclusion

⁴⁰³ See essays in DiStasi, ed., *Una Storia Segreta*; Iacovetta et al., *Enemies Within*; and Fox, *The Unknown Internment*.

⁴⁰⁴ For some examples, see Pisani, *The Italian in America*, 208.

As World War Two came to an end, American Jews and Italian Americans realized that a new era was about to begin in the history of their communities. Living in a restricted and depression-stricken America, American Jews and Italian Americans during the 1930s became for the first time a predominantly native-born rather than an immigrant population. As they wrestled with this new reality, both communities worked to negotiate their presence in the United States, carve out a niche for themselves in American society, and attenuate the harshest provisions of the 1924 Immigration Act on both sides of the Atlantic. The Depression and pervasive nativism limited the effectiveness of their efforts to integrate into American society and their immigration battles of the 1930s, but these experiences taught them valuable lessons to use in the 1950s and 1960s. Their support and participation in the New Deal coalition reinforced the belief that the political arena represented the most appropriate setting to advocate for reform. Their challenges to the LPC clause, the rules on illegal immigration and family reunion, and the existing refugee policy showed the importance of undermining restriction from the margins of legislation, the importance of advocating for reform in the name of family reunion, the usefulness of educational campaigns, and the need for interfaith collaboration to lay the groundwork for a widespread support for reform.

As American Jews and Italian Americans prepared for a post-war world, they hardly realized how the war had set in motion changes that would profoundly shape their fight against restriction until 1965. In addition to the Truman Directive giving power to private organizations to handle resettlement and intervene in the immigration reform debate, modifications to immigration laws unrelated to European immigrants opened the immigration door a little and provided immigration reform advocates with critical arguments for their campaign later on.⁴⁰⁵ Congress's decision to repeal the Chinese Exclusion Acts in 1943, make Chinese immigrants

⁴⁰⁵ See Reimers, *Still the Golden Door*, chapter 1.

eligible for naturalization, and assign China an annual quota of 105 to reward China for its wartime support transformed immigration policy from a domestic to a foreign policy issue.⁴⁰⁶ Furthermore, the lobby that fought for the repeal of the exclusion acts effectively argued that ending exclusion represented a Christian and democratic philosophy, providing the foundation for a post-World War II rhetoric to contrast with the Communist hysteria of the 1950s. Finally, the atrocities perpetrated in European concentration camps and the movement to end Western colonialism challenged American society to re-evaluate, if slowly, the pervasive racism and discrimination in its society as the United States emerged as the leader of the free world.

⁴⁰⁶ The repeal of the exclusion acts against Chinese prompted Congress to pass the India bill in 1946. Shortly thereafter, the Senate added, and the House accepted, an amendment that also allotted a quota of 100 per year to Filipinos. Like China, both India and the Philippines had been on the American side during the war, making Congress and the public at large more sympathetic to their case. See Reimers, *Still the Golden Door*, chapter 1.

Chapter Four

"International Migration and One World:" Reframing the Debate on Immigration Reform in a New Era, 1945-1952⁴⁰⁷

Soon after the end of World War Two, Alexander F. Miller Write, director of the Anti-Defamation League regional office in Miami, FL, organized a committee to talk to a hotel owner in the South Florida area who had placed on the hotel roof a sign, which read, "The Gulf Hotel: every room with a view without a Jew." Miller recalled:

Our attempted communication, to say the least, was unsuccessful. 'My Host' was unimpressed. He was also a war veteran, and [he said] he had fought for the democratic right to keep away from "Jews and niggers and wops and the whole damn bunch who were trying to run the country into the ground by preaching newfangled notions like equality." He had a right to let the whole world know how he felt. As for the "Four Freedoms," he suggested a place where we might place that historic document.⁴⁰⁸

The end of World War II marked the beginning of a new era both for the United States and for immigration reform advocates. As the United States emerged as the leader of the free world, immigration policy assumed a new role and became central to the country's foreign policy interests. As displaced persons and refugees wandered around Europe at the end of World War II, immigration and refugee legislation intertwined and brought new issues to the fore, challenging legislators and immigration reformers to define the boundaries and the distinctions between the two.

From the end of the war to 1965, refugee and immigration debates often overlapped and opened new opportunities for immigration reformers to undermine the quota system. American

⁴⁰⁷ The title is taken from a report that the National Committee on Post-War Immigration Policy circulated among agencies and organizations working in the immigration field right after its creation. "International Migration and One World," HIAS Collection, RG 245.4, series 1, folder IV-40a, YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

⁴⁰⁸ Alexander F. Miller, *"Not the Work of a Day:" Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith Oral Memoirs* 5, no. 19, Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith Collection, MS 365, box 2, YIVO, Center for Jewish History. Until well into the late 1950s, the American Jewish Committee's annual publication *American Jewish Yearbook* included two separate section on anti-Semitic activities and on discrimination across the country, detailing politicians, organizations, publications, institutions, and public figures endorsing, practicing, or condoning anti-Semitism and discrimination.

Jews and Italian Americans played a key role in this shift in discourse, by recasting the debate to fit the country's Cold War agenda. They emphasized the connection between immigration and American foreign policy, and Italian Americans framed immigration reform in the language of Christianity and humanitarianism, while Jews used that of social justice. In a political climate in which the public was resistant to change to the immigration policy and suspicious of new arrivals, both groups understood that the best strategy to push for reform was first to weaken the existing immigration legislation by undermining some of its core provisions through ad hoc reforms and measures and later to advocate for an overhaul of the entire system at a more opportune moment.

The battle over the Displaced Persons Acts and the McCarran-Walter Act marked a transition to new approaches to immigration reform for both groups. American Jews were the most visible and engaged proponents of refugee legislation. Despite their claims to the contrary, they remained the prime motor behind the passage of the Displaced Persons Act. The battle for refugee legislation had two major consequences for the American Jewish Community. It allowed them to carry on their long-standing commitment to provide succor to Jews in need around the world, and, at the same time, it transformed the premise underlying their mobilization for a liberal immigration policy. Their work to promote refugee legislation, amidst efforts to resist the label of the refugee issue as a Jewish problem, reinforced their belief that immigration policy reform was a social justice issue that affected all groups and transformed it into a pivotal tenet of their agenda. While they had made a similar argument during the 1920s, they now embraced it as their central mission, especially as the creation of the State of Israel and the Refugee Acts resettled the decimated European Jewry and Cold War geopolitics made it hard to help Jews behind the Iron Curtain. Despite the mixed results, their efforts to promote interfaith

cooperation during the refugee legislation campaign convinced many American Jews that an interfaith strategy represented the only way to work for universal immigration reform.

Italian Americans experienced a transformation of their own. Italian Americans hardly participated in the mobilization for refugee legislation because they focused on other aspects of the aftermath of the Second World War, such as Italy's high unemployment rate and overpopulation problem. As American Jews worked on refugee legislation, Italian Americans lobbied Congress to ratify a treaty with Italy that would allow their ancestral home to keep its African colonies as a way to solve its unemployment and overpopulation problem. Despite the negative outcomes of their efforts, the experience taught them a few valuable lessons. They learned that Italy's position in the Mediterranean, their own collaboration with the Catholic Church, and their professed anti-Communism all lent them the ears of Congress and the administration. Moreover, unlike American Jews, they chose to focus pragmatically on mobilizing for provisions, bills, and amendments that specifically benefited Italian migration and Italy's interests. Finally, Italian Americans' connections with Catholic resettlement agencies engaged in the debate on immigration reform opened the way for future interfaith collaboration.

More than ever before, American Jews and Italian Americans' fight for immigration reform overlapped with their efforts to be fully accepted in mainstream America and acquire more visibility in American society. Both groups realized that religiosity and anti-Communism represented the most prominent symbols of belonging and credibility in 1950s America. They reframed their immigration reform agenda to reflect both. If anti-Communism also represented an obstacle to passing legislation, one of the appeals of the domestic "red scare" was its ability to offer "every American, however precarious his ancestry, the chance of being taken for a good

American simply by demonstrating a gut hatred for Commies."⁴⁰⁹ At the same time, both groups saw their church and synagogue membership rise, even if attendance at worship services remained small. As sociologist Will Herberg noted at the time, "To find a place in American society increasingly [meant] to place oneself in one or another of these religious communities."⁴¹⁰ Italian Americans and American Jews collaborated only sporadically between 1945 and 1952, but the early years of the Cold War and the shared desire to portray themselves as staunch anti-communists began to create a common ground for Italian Americans and Jewish Americans, encouraging them to focus on the discriminatory nature of the quotas themselves.

If anti-Communism and religion provided a reliable entry into mainstream America, the visibility that American Jews and Italian Americans achieved in the sphere of immigration reform was also the product of the solidification of a state-private network. Following a strategy begun during the war, the U.S. government continued to cement its connections with citizen groups, private sponsors, and voluntary agencies involved in immigrant resettlement. As early as 1948, a subcommittee of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs officially acknowledged that voluntary agencies should be considered "an essential counterpart of foreign assistance programs."⁴¹¹ International relief, particularly the relocation of migrants, refugees, and displaced persons, became the most important area of cooperation between church and state. Collaboration with the government brought agencies like ACIM, through its affiliation with the National Catholic Welfare Conference, and HIAS not just government subsidies for their relocation activities but also visibility to their immigration reform agenda.

⁴⁰⁹ Richard G. Powers, *Not Without Honor: The History of American Anti-Communism* (New York: Free Press, 1995), 426.

⁴¹⁰ Will Herberg, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology*, 2nd Ed. (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1960), 56-57.

⁴¹¹ As quoted in Axel R. Schäfer, "Religious Non-Profit Organisations, the Cold War, the State and Resurgent Evangelicalism, 1945-1990," in Helen Laville and Hugh Wilford, eds., *The U.S. Government, Citizen Groups and the Cold War: The State-Private Network* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006): 181.

Yet if anti-Communism could function as a badge of honor and sign of belonging, the atmosphere of the early years of the Cold War also severely limited any serious attempt to advocate for changes to the country's immigration policy. This was particularly true of the years from 1948 to 1952 and accounts in part for the difficulties of passing any refugee legislation. Albeit to a smaller degree, supporters of DP legislation and proponents of a liberal immigration policy often faced pressures similar to those that civil rights activists experienced during the same period. McCarthyism framed and circumscribed both groups' battles and left very little space for criticism of the status quo. It constrained their agenda, limited their strategies, and narrowed the boundaries of acceptable civil rights and immigration rights discourse at home and abroad. As Mary Dudziak shows in her *Cold War Civil Rights*, McCarthyism transformed critics of American society into potential subversives and forced civil rights groups to repeat time and again that their goal was to fill out the contours of American democracy, not to challenge or undermine it.⁴¹²

*The 'Delayed Pilgrims': American Jews and the DP Acts (1948 and 1950)*⁴¹³

When the war came to an end in May 1945, from seven to eleven million displaced persons (DPs) were scattered across Europe. By the fall of 1945, after a large majority had been repatriated, estimates counted fewer than two million non-repatriable DPs in Western Europe. Yet the United States and the West in general had little inclination to help them. They were either stateless victims of the Holocaust or expatriates of newly communist countries. Late in the

⁴¹² Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 11-12.

⁴¹³ In the fall of 1947, William Bernard, member of the Citizens Committee on Displaced Persons, began to refer to the displaced persons as 'delayed pilgrims' to evoke a more positive image of the refugees and attract more support for special legislation on their behalf. Leonard Dinnerstein, *America and the Survivors of the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 152.

winter of 1945, the U.S. Congress specified that the United States would admit, settle, or resettle refugees and displaced persons only after congressional approval and without any alteration to the existing immigration policy.⁴¹⁴ A 1945 Gallup Poll captured Americans' attitude towards the DP problem. The poll asked Americans whether more, fewer, or the same number of European immigrants should be admitted into the country than before the war. Five percent of the respondents answered more, 32 percent answered the same, 37 answered fewer, 14 percent answered none at all, and 12 percent had no opinion.⁴¹⁵

Concerned by the negligent treatment of European DPs, American Jews immediately mobilized to attract the American government's attention to the DP problem. They first contacted Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau. Almost at the end of his appointment, Morgenthau tried unsuccessfully to persuade Truman to create an ad hoc cabinet committee to deal with the DP problem. Morgenthau later approached Acting Secretary of State Joseph C. Grew to suggest that his department send Earl G. Harrison, former Commissioner of Immigration and current Dean of the University of Pennsylvania Law School, to tour the displaced persons camps in Europe to report on the conditions and the treatment of the DPs. Harrison's report was a bombshell. It scathingly denounced the precarious living conditions in the camps and the isolation of the displaced persons.⁴¹⁶

Despite the improvements enacted in the camps after Harrison's report, many American Jews remained disappointed that the predicament of Jewish displaced persons continued to represent a low priority for the military, the American government, and the American people. In response to this inaction, the American Jewish Committee took preliminary steps to carry out a

⁴¹⁴ Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*, 98.

⁴¹⁵ As cited in Dinnerstein, *America and the Survivors of the Holocaust*, 114.

⁴¹⁶ "Memorandum to the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry from the Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Society," 1946?, HIAS Collection, RG 245.4, series 1, folder IV-41a, YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

campaign to admit Jewish DPs. Under condition of anonymity, its department of public information and education put together and mailed potential refugee legislation supporters a brochure sketching the DP problem and proposing ideas to change the existing American immigration policy to provide for the admission of refugees. This initiative had immediate results. In September 1946, the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, the Catholic weekly *Commonweal*, *Life* magazine, and a few New York state politicians all endorsed the idea of bringing more refugees. These public endorsements pushed President Truman to make a new public commitment, resulting in a December, 1945, directive to admit refugees outside the quotas.⁴¹⁷

This early initiative demonstrated the American Jewish Committee's commitment to frame the DP problem and immigration reform in broader terms. As early as 1945, the American Jewish Committee had decided that any action to promote change in the country's immigration legislation must not be perceived as an exclusively Jewish initiative. The whole problem of immigration, the committee believed, was a question of American democracy in its relation to other nations and of honesty in dealing with them. As such, the American Jewish Committee decided to "emphasize the democratic integrity of our laws rather than the exceptional need of the Jews for immigration into the United States."⁴¹⁸ They also believed that Americans owed it to themselves "to establish a sound, sane immigration system responsive to their social and economic needs" and owed it to the world "to take the lead in fomenting international peace and good will and sharing equally in international responsibility."⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁷ Dinnerstein, *America and the Survivors of the Holocaust*, 119-121.

⁴¹⁸ "Suggestions on AJC Policy with Regard to Immigration," 5 December, 1945, American Jewish Committee Collection, RG 247, series general 10, box 128, folder "Immigration 1940-1945," YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

⁴¹⁹ "Why Changes in the Immigration Laws Should be Opposed at this Time," 12 December 1945, American Jewish Committee Collection, RG 247, series gen. 10, box 128, folder "Immigration 1940-1945," YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

In early October 1946, Truman, disappointed by the meager results of his December directive, told reporters that he planned to ask Congress to enact legislation to admit Jewish refugees outside the existing quotas.⁴²⁰ The directive's insufficient ability to alleviate the situation could hardly be played down. "It is significant to note," reported the American Jewish Committee, "that since the war's end, Palestine and Great Britain have accepted more displaced persons than has the United States, and Belgium almost as many. During the period under review, Great Britain, Belgium, France, and Canada exceeded the United States in the number of displaced persons admitted."⁴²¹ Yet, Truman's proposal overnight turned the DP problem into an issue of public concern and revealed the hostility that the majority of Americans felt towards Truman's suggestion. A poll conducted later in October 1946 further underscored Americans' hostility to the president's idea. Asked whether they favored "allowing more Jewish and other European refugees to come to the United States to live than are allowed under the law," only 16 percent of the respondents said yes, while the remaining 72 percent said no and 16 percent said they had no opinion on the matter.⁴²² Manifestations of hostility of this kind undoubtedly convinced American Jews involved in pushing for DP legislation of the importance of creating a coalition that involved non-Jews as well.

Truman's proposal drew strong criticisms and attacks not only from traditional nativist groups and from people opposed to any change to the existing immigration policy, but also from

⁴²⁰ Ten months after Truman's directive, only 2,400 Jews had benefited from the order. As mentioned in the previous chapter, uncooperative bureaucrats and the small quotas for the Eastern European countries from which most of the Jewish and non-Jewish DPs arrived limited the number of admissible refugees. It is difficult to quantify how many of the DPs were Jewish. The United States Army calculated that there were approximately 207,000 Jewish DPs in the camps in Austria, Germany, and Italy at the end of 1945. Yet, the number began to rise after a revival of Anti-Semitism in Poland escalated to a July 1946 pogrom that killed some forty Jews. The United Nations estimated that in the western-controlled territory there were 1,171,000 DPs at the end of 1946 and 963,000 in November 1947. Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*, 102; Dinnerstein, *America and the Survivors of the Holocaust*, 117-119. See also "President Truman's Directive," *American Jewish Yearbook* 48 (1946-1947); and "Refugee Aid," *American Jewish Year Book* 49 (1947-1948).

⁴²¹ "Arrival of Displaced Persons," *American Jewish Year Book* 50 (1947-1948).

⁴²² As cited in Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*, 104.

Orthodox and Zionist Jews concerned with the impact of American refugee policy on the prospects of creating a Jewish homeland. Until Truman's announcement, American Zionists and non-Zionists unanimously approved the proposal to relocate 100,000 Jewish DPs to Palestine. While the non-Zionists viewed it as another initiative to assist the survivors of the war, Zionists considered it a crucial step towards the creation of a Jewish state.⁴²³ As early as February 1945, the American Jewish Committee had tried to create a united front on the matter by holding an informal conference to formulate "a unified Jewish post-war program" with the Agudas Israel, the American Jewish Conference, the American Jewish Congress, and the Jewish Labor Committee.⁴²⁴ Truman's new suggestion divided the two groups, and the united front crumbled.

The two groups' different position on Palestine influenced their stance on Truman's 1946 proposal. To many Zionists, Truman's proposition signaled that the president had abandoned any hope of helping Jewish DPs move to the Holy Land. This fear was not completely unfounded. As the Joint Distribution Committee's publication *JDC Review* reported, as of June 30, 1947, only ten percent of the refugees the organization had helped desired to go to Palestine. Fifty percent of the remaining ninety percent desired to relocate to the United States, and Latin America was a distant second-preferred destination with twenty-two percent.⁴²⁵ Under the leadership of Rabbis Abba Hillel Silver and Stephen S. Wise, the Zionists intensified their efforts to bring about a Jewish commonwealth. Affiliated with the American Jewish Committee and the American Council for Judaism, the non-Zionists started lobbying to bring more Jewish displaced persons and refugees to the United States. The two organizations worked behind the scenes to

⁴²³ Dinnerstein, *America and the Survivors of the Holocaust*, 117. In his report, Harrison related that many Jewish DPs desired to move to Palestine, and he proposed to help them resettle there. Yet, Britain's reluctance to accept any more Jewish refugees into its Palestine mandate made this solution difficult to accomplish.

⁴²⁴ "The San Francisco Conference," *American Jewish Year Book* 47 (1945-1946), 302.

⁴²⁵ *JDC Review*, September 12, 1947, HIAS Collection, RG 245.4.10, folder X A-8, YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

establish the nondenominational Citizens Committee on Displaced Persons (CCDP) with the primary objective of raising awareness on the DP problem and making public and congressional opinion more receptive to refugee legislation through a campaign of public education and persuasion.⁴²⁶

The American Jewish Committee, like many other Jewish agencies, initially hoped that Congress would understand on its own the need for change in immigration laws and act upon it. Yet, as late as April 1947, Congress had failed to act on the DP problem, and numerous congressmen had sponsored bills to restrict immigration. Many of the bills called for a temporary suspension of immigration or for a drastic reduction of the existing quotas.⁴²⁷ It was then that the American Jewish Committee decided to take the lead. Determined to keep its involvement in the DP cause as quiet as possible, the AJC set in motion its efficient and well-oiled machine and its affluent members to create a nondenominational organization, to seek endorsements for its agenda from prominent non-Jewish public figures, and to identify respected Protestants to call for legislation on behalf of displaced persons.⁴²⁸ In light of this view, AJC members carefully avoided the involvement of any minorities of European origin in the initial stages of the creation of the CCDP and decided that, if they wanted to succeed in bringing 100,000 Jews to the United States, their campaign had to focus exclusively on those people uprooted by the war in Central and Eastern Europe. Because no other well-organized and well-financed organization seriously joined the AJC campaign to raise awareness about the DP plight, "the American public learned only about the 850,000 or so DPs in or near the German, Austrian, and Italian assembly centers, and received almost no education about the other several million

⁴²⁶ "The Call of the Hour: Presidential Address of Joseph M. Proskauer," *American Jewish Yearbook*, vol. 47 (1945-1946), 687; see also Dinnerstein, *America and the Survivors of the Holocaust*, 117.

⁴²⁷ "Legislative Activities," *American Jewish Year Book* 49 (1947-1948), 219-220.

⁴²⁸ "The Stratton Bill," *American Jewish Year Book* 49 (1947-1948), 220.

for whom the Jewish leaders felt no sense of responsibility."⁴²⁹ Americans learned little about the expulsion of about 12 million *Volksdeutsche* in the summer of 1945 and almost nothing about the Africans and Asians still roaming around the globe because they had been forced from their homes before, during, and after the war.

After securing Earl Harrison as chairman, the AJC carefully organized the first strategy session of the CCDP at the Waldorf Astoria hotel in New York City on December 20, 1946. AJC staff members prepared and mailed invitations to notable Americans, emphasizing the non-sectarian nature of the organization. The most urgent priority was to secure the endorsement of Protestant and Catholic leaders because, as an interim report on the American Jewish Committee immigration campaign read, "any effective program in this area required the active support of all sections of the population, particularly of the Catholic and Protestant lay and church groups, inasmuch as three quarters of the DPs are *not* Jews."⁴³⁰ The thirty-two prominent Americans who agreed to attend the first CCDP meeting included, among others, former Supreme Court Justice Owen Roberts; Charles P. Taft and Samuel McCrea Cavert, president and executive director of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America; Major General William J. Donovan, former head of the Office of Strategic Services; Catholic Bishop McIntyre; and a few Jewish leaders from business, labor, politics, philanthropy, and religious organizations.⁴³¹ Shortly after the meeting, Eleanor Roosevelt, Fiorello LaGuardia, William Green, former Secretary of State Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., and Charles P. Taft all lent their names as vice-

⁴²⁹ Dinnerstein, *America and the Survivors of the Holocaust*, 124.

⁴³⁰ As cited in Haim Genizi, "Interfaith Cooperation in America on Behalf of the DP Acts, 1948-1950," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 8, no. 1 (1994), 76. As Genizi documents in his article, the American Jewish Committee arranged for meetings with prominent Catholic and Protestant leaders to solicit their endorsement. AJC's Irving Engel personally met with Fredrick O. Nolde of the Federal Council of Churches; Bishop Francis McIntyre; Howard J. Carroll, general secretary of the National Catholic Welfare Council; and Edward Swannstrom, director of the War Relief Services. Genizi, "Interfaith Cooperation in America," 76.

⁴³¹ "The Stratton Bill," *American Jewish Year Book* 49 (1947-1948), 220. For a more detailed account of the American Jewish Committee's involvement in the entire campaign to admit DPs, see Dinnerstein, *America and the Survivors of the Holocaust*, chapter 9.

chairmen to the CCDP letterhead. The most authoritative endorsement from within the Italian community for DP legislation came from Charles Poletti, who was referred to as the "governor" of Italy by many Italians during his two-year stay in Italy as U.S. Army civil affairs officer. In his letter to Harrison, Poletti unconditionally approved the passage of a DP Act. "My military service in Italy in the Allied military government during the war and after," he wrote, "gave me first hand knowledge of the miserable conditions of the displaced people in Italy. And, obviously, I know that the same situation exists in Germany and Austria. In my opinion, allowing part of these refugees to come to the United States would be useful to our nation and to world peace."⁴³²

The meeting accomplished very little in terms of developing a strategy, but from the AJC standpoint it was a success. The event brought the DP issue to the fore, it appeared as an initiative that noted Americans, and not Jewish interests, had promoted, and, more importantly, it immediately attracted the endorsements of other prominent Americans.⁴³³ Only then, did the CCDP pursue the endorsements from a wide variety of ethnic organizations to add to the list of supporters for the proposed immigration legislation concerning displaced persons. Yet, despite the numerous endorsements that the CCDP received from its inception, very few non-Jews made or asked their organizations to make substantial donations to the committee. Over 90 percent of the money that sponsored the committee's activities came from individual Jews, Jewish groups, and their friends.⁴³⁴ The mobilization for the passage of the first Displaced Persons Act remained a Jewish concern.

⁴³² "Poletti appoggia un bill a favore dei rifugiati," *Il Progresso Italo Americano*, 9 May 1947.

⁴³³ As a CCDP Washington attorney reported earlier in the campaign, "the general sentiment in Congress at the present...[is] still too hostile, particularly because of the feeling that too many Jews would come into the country if immigration regulations were relaxed." As quoted in Dinnerstein, *America and the Survivors of the Holocaust*, 137.

⁴³⁴ Dinnerstein, *America and the Survivors of the Holocaust*, 125-126. Significantly, two prominent members of the AJC were at the heart of the entire committee's activities: Irving Engel was in charge of the operation and Lessing Rosenwald and his family financed it throughout most of its existence.

Italian Americans' response to the movement for DP and refugee legislation epitomized the reaction of many other non-Jewish ethnic groups with an interest in the issue. Despite the fact that Italy hosted a substantial number of refugees, Italian Americans participated only marginally in the debate over the legislation to provide succor to refugees and displaced persons. When it came to the displaced persons legislation battle, the Italian American press mostly reported what the CCDP was doing, covered Jewish agencies' pleas to help Jewish displaced persons to emigrate to Israel, or contended that Britain should relieve Italy from some of her refugees. Italian Americans, like Greek Americans and other groups, mostly endorsed American Jews' efforts through larger Catholic organizations involved in refugee resettlement like the National Catholic Welfare Conference expressed as the CCDP.

Similarly to the Citizens Committee to Repeal Chinese Exclusion, the Citizens Committee on Displaced Persons chose to lobby specifically for the group it was representing rather than try to push for changes to the country's overall immigration policy. Also similarly to the Citizens Committee to Repeal Chinese Exclusion, the CCDP focused its efforts on alerting the wider public and members of Congress to the problem and building momentum in favor of legislation. CCDP representatives participated in national and local conventions, prepared and mailed thousands of flyers to newspapers, wrote radio scripts, solicited articles on the topic, provided speakers and movies to local events, met with key leaders, identified congressmen who could help them pass DP legislation, sent out mailings, promoted letter-writing campaigns, and organized local groups to support the cause. Hoping to rally broader support for its campaign for refugee legislation, the CCDP propaganda campaign emphasized from the very beginning that 80 percent of the approximately 850,000 DPs in Europe were Christian. The campaign also stressed that most of the people displaced by the war had already returned to their home country, and that

the few still in the camps could no longer go back either because they feared persecution or because the loss of their families and their former lives discouraged them from doing so.⁴³⁵

These efforts continued throughout 1947 and 1948, as getting Congress to intervene with special legislation proved a Sisyphean task.

In addition to educating the public about the DP problem, the Committee also worked to find a Congressman who could present legislation in Congress. Early on, they came to the conclusion that they needed to win the support of a member of the majority Republican party from the Midwest to give legislation any chance to pass. After several congressmen refused to sponsor a bill, preferring to wait for solid and widespread support for the legislation to emerge, the CCDP settled on Republican William G. Stratton, Representative from Illinois, to introduce a bill that the CCDP had drafted.⁴³⁶ The Stratton bill called for the admission of 100,000 displaced persons for four consecutive years above and beyond the quotas. It required aspiring immigrants still to meet all the requirements of American immigration law to be admitted and privileged close relatives of American citizens and allied war veterans. The *American Jewish Year Book* reported, "Individuals and organizations favoring the admission of a fair share of displaced persons to the United States have rallied behind this proposal."⁴³⁷ Yet, despite a straightforward bill, the widespread support outside of Congress, and the encouragement of Truman's Special Assistant on Minority Affairs, David K. Niles, very few members of the eightieth Congress paid attention. Few congressmen considered immigration legislation a priority.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*, 127-130.

⁴³⁶ As Dinnerstein details in his book, the committee first contacted Republican Senators Homer Ferguson and Arthur H. Vandenberg of Michigan, and then Robert Taft of Ohio, but all of them refused because they were afraid of the consequences for their political careers if they sponsored such a bill. They subsequently focused on the House of Representatives and tried to secure the sponsorship of a House Judiciary Committee member. When everything else failed, they decided to settle on Stratton, despite their reservations on the extent of support that the Representative from Illinois would be able to rally around his bill. Dinnerstein, *America and the Survivors of the Holocaust*, 131-132.

⁴³⁷ "The Stratton Bill," *American Jewish Year Book* 49 (1947-1948).

When the hearings on the Stratton bill began, the American Jewish Committee and the CCDDP worried about presenting a nuanced image of the DP problem to discard the common belief that it represented an exclusively Jewish issue. To this end, they carefully handpicked their witnesses and chose many prominent Americans and only two Jews, Rabbi Philip S. Bernstein, a former adviser on Jewish Affairs to the army in Europe, and Herbert H. Lehman, former United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) director. Moreover, they believed that the endorsement of the Truman administration would send a strong signal to Congress to pass legislation. To convey its support for a solution to the DP problem, the administration sent Assistant Secretary of Labor Philip Hannah, Assistant Secretary of State John H. Hilldring, Commissioner of Immigration and Naturalization Ugo Carusi, and three Cabinet members—Secretary of State George C. Marshall, Secretary of War Robert P. Patterson, and Attorney-General Tom Clark—requested to testify. The most successful speaker was Lieutenant Colonel Jerry M. Sage, respected by many legislators in Congress for his service as second in command to Colonel Stanley Mickelson, Chief of the Civil Affairs Division of the European Command. Recalled from Europe expressly to offer an evaluation of the status of the DPs in Europe from a military perspective, Sage persuasively argued on behalf of the bill.⁴³⁸ The hearings proved to be an instructive experience for the American Jewish Committee as they justified its inclination to cast the DP problem in broader terms and demonstrated the lingering hostility towards Jewish immigration.

Critics of the bill presented familiar anti-immigration arguments to oppose its passage. They contended that the United States had already done more than the other Allies to help the DPs, expressed concern that the entering DPs might include subversives or be particularly susceptible to socialist and communist ideals, and argued that refugees represented a potential

⁴³⁸ Dinnerstein, *America and the Survivors of the Holocaust*, 143-44.

threat to the jobs and standards of living of the American workforce. As in previous debates, some of these witnesses also reflected the fear that the arrival of new destitute immigrants endangered the survival of the American institutions and the country itself. Many of these witnesses were spokesmen for conservative groups like Charles E. Babcock of the Junior Order, United American Mechanics; John B. Trevor of the American Coalition of Patriotic Societies; and Merwyn K. Hart of the National Economic Council. As testimonies progressed, Representative Ed Gossett from Texas, a member of the Immigration Subcommittee of the House Judiciary Committee, became the most vocal critic of the bill. Echoing many of its critics, Gossett reiterated that many of the DPs were subversives, and he also pointed out that many of them were Jewish and that the DP issue was receiving so much attention only because of the involvement of prominent Jewish groups in the matter.⁴³⁹ A few critics of the DP measures also pointed out that those in favor of helping European displaced persons and refugees were inconsistent in their concerns as they did little to help uprooted peoples in Palestine, India, China, and elsewhere. An even smaller number of critics worried that legislation to help European refugees and displaced persons could establish a dangerous precedent to admit non-Europeans as well.⁴⁴⁰ Despite the urgency to help Jewish displaced persons and refugees that many American Jews felt, the arguments against passing DP legislation because of a fear of a Jewish invasion confirmed the need to frame refugee and immigration reform as an issue concerning all immigrant groups.

The success that the CCDP's educational campaign about the number of Christians included among the European displaced persons confirmed the validity of this decision. During the summer of 1947, despite the reluctance of Congress to act swiftly on passing legislation, in

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*, 145-146.

⁴⁴⁰ Reimers, *Still the Golden Door*, 22.

fact, the Stratton bill and its Senate companion, the Ferguson bill, won endorsements from many state and local government officials, from prominent national and local organizations, and from newspapers and magazines.⁴⁴¹ More importantly, all the major bodies of Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish faiths in the United States publicly voiced their support for the bill. The support of Catholic and Protestant institutions in turn attracted the backing of grass-roots Catholics and Protestants across the country. This shift contained yet another valuable lesson for American Jews' future efforts to reform immigration, one that they would soon adopt against the McCarran-Walter Act. The majority of Catholics and Protestants began to favor a refugee bill not only when they learned that many refugees were Christian, but also when they read in publications like the Jesuit weekly *America* and the Protestant weekly *Christian Century* that many of the European displaced persons were Christian victims of communism. As Genizi explains, because communism embodied "Christianity's archenemy, the churches reluctantly and gradually called upon America to open its gates to those people who refused to return to their countries of origin, now dominated by Communists."⁴⁴² Finally, the emerging interfaith support for refugee legislation was also the product of earlier collaborations to dispel fears that an incessant flow of refugees would invade the United States. In 1944, for example, the National Refugee Service along with four other national refugee-service organizations—the American

⁴⁴¹ At the government level, the endorsements included the governors of Illinois, Maine, New York, Arizona, and Wyoming, and the Mayors of New Orleans, Minneapolis, and Baltimore, as well as Stamford, Connecticut; Schenectady, New York; and Passaic and Atlantic City, New Jersey. Ninety-four national organizations supported the bill, including, among others, the General Federation of Women's Clubs, the American Library Association, and the Chamber of Commerce, the AFL, the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), the Catholic War Veterans, the Home Missions Council of North America, the Methodist Federation for Social Action, the international board of the YMCA, the American Association of University Women, the American Association of Social Workers, the American Lithuanian Council, the National Peace Conference, the Order of the Sons of Italy, the Marine Corps League, the National Council of Negro Women, the Girl Scouts, the Seventh-Day Baptists, the Syrian Antiochian Orthodox Church, the Unity of Bohemian Ladies, and the Western Slavonic Association. Among the newspapers that wrote about the bill and called for legislation to solve the DP problem were the *Washington Star*, the *Minneapolis Tribune*, the *Washington Post*, the *Baltimore Sun*, the *Chicago Sun*, the *Denver Post*, and the *New York Times*. Periodicals like *Life*, *Reader's Digest*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Survey Graphic*, and the *Yale Review* echoed the call. Dinnerstein, *America and the Survivors of the Holocaust*, 145-149.

⁴⁴² Genizi, "Interfaith Cooperation in America," 78.

Committee for Refugees, the American Friends Service, the Catholic Committee for Refugees, and the United States Committee for the Care of European Children—commissioned a study on the adjustment of refugees and their effect on American society.⁴⁴³

As the new congressional session began, congressmen knew that this time their constituents expected them to pass some form of legislation regulating the DP issue, but they still obstructed it. In public, many congressmen justified their reluctance by expressing concern for the competition to American workers and the congestion to the major metropolises the refugees would bring. In private, however, they admitted that they worried that the majority of the DPs would be Jewish and resented that the Stratton bill had no provision to prevent a wave of Jewish migrants from entering the country.⁴⁴⁴ Despite the CCDP's efforts to dissipate these fears, the majority of congressmen soon began to endorse an alternative more restrictive bill and to propose provisions to the bill that would limit the number of Jews admitted to the United States, including a proposal reserving fifty percent of the visas for agricultural workers and another one setting a December 22, 1945 cutoff date for eligibility, de facto excluding the 100,000 Jews who had left Russia in the spring of 1946 or who had fled the Polish pogroms that summer.⁴⁴⁵ As Congress debated the bill, a frustrated American Jewish Committee observed, "Every anti-Semitic device was employed, not only by the anti-Semitic press and orators, but in Congress itself."⁴⁴⁶ In its final version, the Displaced Persons Act of 1948 maintained the December 22, 1945 cutoff date; favored farm laborers; included the clause mortgaging the refugee visas against the quotas of the countries from which they arrived; and limited eligibility to refugees in the DP

⁴⁴³ "Study of Recent Immigration," *American Jewish Year Book* 48 (1946-1947), 226-227.

⁴⁴⁴ Dinnerstein, *America and the Survivors of the Holocaust*, 145-146; 163-164.

⁴⁴⁵ "Legislative Activity," *American Jewish Year Book* 50 (1947-1948), 232-236.

⁴⁴⁶ "Displaced Persons," *American Jewish Year Book* 50 (1948-1949), 216.

camps in the American, British, and French zones of Germany, Austria, and Italy.⁴⁴⁷ The law was a far cry from what the American Jewish Committee had anticipated, but they ultimately chose to support the bill because they believed that, despite its anti-Semitic bias, the law still provided some help.

Inevitably, the passage of the 1948 Displaced Persons Act unleashed a virulent debate within the American Jewish community. Members of the American Jewish Committee viewed the passage of the law as a sound defeat, leaving them to wonder whether relying on non-Jewish representatives and spending exorbitant amounts of money for the propaganda campaign represented an effective strategy. "This compromise measure," lamented the American Jewish Committee, "was a shock and a disappointment to all who had hoped that this country would assume world leadership in the solution of the DP problem."⁴⁴⁸ Anticipating a pattern that would characterize most of the 1950s and 1960s fight for immigration reform, most American Jews came to the conclusion that some legislation was better than no legislation at all and realized that, given the hostile environment towards immigration in general, proposing amendments to the act would be easier than starting over and trying to have another version passed. Many also understood that protesting against its passage after arguing for months that the majority of the DPs were Christian could strain Jewish-Christian relations and would be politically risky.⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁷ Dinnerstein, *America and the Survivors of the Holocaust*, 173-175. The law also included categories that reflected emerging Cold War concerns. It reserved quotas for persons of German ethnic origin born in Czechoslovakia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Rumania, Russia, or Yugoslavia, Greek displaced persons, European refugees in China, Polish veterans, Italian refugees from the Venezia Giulia, and post-1948 refugees from Czechoslovakia.

⁴⁴⁸ "Legislative Activity," *American Jewish Year Book* 50 (1948-1949), 235.

⁴⁴⁹ Genizi, "Interfaith Cooperation in America," 79-80 and Dinnerstein, *America and the Survivors of the Holocaust*, 179. The American Jewish Committee also received strong criticisms for what some perceived as its failure to push for a more effective piece of legislation. The Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith complained that in its 105 years of existence, no other law had violated the American principles of fair play and equality like the 1948 DP Act. The most scathing critique came from American Zionist Abraham Duker, who had worked for the Nuremberg Trials Commission. Reflecting the views of Zionist and Eastern European Jews belonging to the American Jewish Congress, the Jewish Labor Committee, and the Jewish War Veterans, Duker contended that Jewish refugees were doing well enough under the Truman Directive and that the two organizations' efforts had only helped pass

As individuals and organizations debated the merits of the DP Act, others within the American Jewish community longed for immediate action. In a long established tradition of self-help that became crucial to refugee and immigrant resettlement after World War II, the three leading Jewish agencies in the immigration and refugee aid field—the National Refugee Service, the Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), and the National Council of Jewish Women—immediately activated to help administer the law.⁴⁵⁰ HIAS once again emerged as the leader, and at least half of all Jewish displaced persons in the United States arrived through its operations. "In 1947, when the Displaced Persons Program was still in its embryonic stage," remembered New York Industrial Commissioner Edward Corsi, and "many new and inexperienced agencies came into being [,] it was HIAS that set the pattern of experience for these agencies and aided in the success of their work."⁴⁵¹ To speed up the relocation of European Jewish displaced persons and refugees, HIAS opened new offices across Europe to provide shelter and assistance to refugees and collaborated with the International Refugee Organization (IRO) and with the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) until its program ended on June 30, 1947. In 1947, the U.S. State Department authorized HIAS to issue as many as 2,000 corporate affidavits in Shanghai and 4,500 corporate affidavits for displaced persons in Germany and Austria. Finally, from June 1, 1946 to April 30, 1947 alone the HIAS Washington bureau argued 3,812 immigration cases before the Justice and

legislation to allow into the country people who had previously collaborated with the Nazis. The AJC and CCDP retorted that Duker's accusations uselessly exacerbated Jewish-Christian relations and charged that perhaps a more satisfactory act could have been passed if Zionists had invested in the cause as much enthusiasm as they had for a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Dinnerstein, *America and the Survivors of the Holocaust*, 176-179; Genizi, "Interfaith Cooperation in America," 80-82.

⁴⁵⁰ "Immigration and Refugee Aid," *American Jewish Year Book* 47 (1945-1946), 316.

⁴⁵¹ "Address by Industrial Commissioner Edward Corsi to the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society," October 26, 1952, HIAS Collection, RG 245.8, series 10, folder 289, YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

State Departments and gave expert counsel to 8,805 mail queries.⁴⁵² In the United States, HIAS cooperated with local welfare agencies and assisted the families of prospective immigrants with the immigration process.⁴⁵³ By 1950, HIAS remained the only agency to offer temporary shelter for newly arrived Jewish DPs in the New York area.⁴⁵⁴

During its relocation efforts in the United States, HIAS also sought to promote a positive image of the arriving Jewish refugees and to assuage fears of their negative impact on American society. In an effort to counteract accusations that Jewish refugees crowded big cities and remained isolated and distant from American life and traditions, HIAS repeatedly stressed that while many of the new arrivals landed and often remained in New York City for a while, a substantial number of them soon relocated to other cities in the United States, where local HIAS offices helped with housing and employment. Moreover, the HIAS executive director explained, "the desire to become American citizens and integrated into the life of their new land runs high in these immigrants, and a large percentage of them avail themselves without delay of the opportunity to file their applications for citizenship."⁴⁵⁵ In the first six months of 1950 alone, the report indicated, 2,589 persons applied for U.S. citizenship through the HIAS office, and many of the newly arrived refugees immediately enrolled in school to learn English and to familiarize themselves with life in America.⁴⁵⁶

Outside the United States, HIAS collaborated with its bureaus in East Asia, Africa, and in Central and South America to find alternative destinations. It repeatedly sent special

⁴⁵² No title, *HIAS News Release*, December 12, 1949, HIAS Collection, RG 245.8, series 10, folder 286, YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

⁴⁵³ No title, *HIAS News Release*, November 14, 1947, HIAS Collection, RG 245.4.10, series 1, folder X A-8, YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

⁴⁵⁴ No title, *HIAS News Release*, July 24, 1950, HIAS Collection, RG 245.4.10, series 1, folder X A-11, YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁶ "Address by Industrial Commissioner Edward Corsi to the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society," October 26, 1952, HIAS Collection, RG 245.8, series 10, folder 289, YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

representatives to Canada, Australia, and Latin and South America to meet in person with local governmental officials in an effort to obtain concessions for displaced persons and refugees seeking to enter their countries.⁴⁵⁷ With its well-established system and its long-standing connections across the globe, HIAS was instrumental in aiding in the resettlement of some 150,000 people in 330 U.S. communities, as well as Canada, Australia, and Latin and South America.⁴⁵⁸ In addition, HIAS, in cooperation with the Jewish Agency for Palestine, paid for inland transportation, assistance, lodging, and supplies until refugees boarded a ship directed to Palestine. In the first eight months of 1947 alone, this program helped 3,784 bona fide Palestinian certificate holders.⁴⁵⁹

Finding a Cold War Voice

Italian Americans took notice of the many shortcomings of the 1948 DP Act as well, and, like American Jews, believed in the need for a more lenient post-war immigration policy. Italian Americans criticized the act for making it more difficult for Catholics and Jews to gain admission and for disproportionately favoring refugees in the Balkan region. "The final version of the act," denounced *Il Progresso Italo Americano*, "is characterized by an intolerance that runs against and is inconsistent with the American sense of justice."⁴⁶⁰ Yet, as Italian Americans came out of the war more confident of their position in American society, they chose to focus

⁴⁵⁷ "HIAS Envoy to Appeal before Nine South American Governments in Behalf of Immigrants," *HIAS News Release*, no date, HIAS Collection, RG 245.8, series 10, folder 287, YIVO, Center for Jewish History; "Canada Showed Way to World in Absorbing DPs Reports HIAS Official on Return to U.S. after 3 Years in British Zone," *HIAS News Release*, no date, HIAS Collection, RG 245.8, series 10, folder 286.

⁴⁵⁸ "Report Covering Period from June 1 1946 to April 30, 1947," no date, HIAS Collection, RG 245.4.10, series 1, folder X A-8, YIVO, Center for Jewish History; *HIAS News Release*, December 8, 1949, HIAS Collection, RG. 245.8, series 10, folder 286, YIVO, Center for Jewish History; no title, November 14, 1947, HIAS Collection, RG 245.4.10, series 1, folder X A-8, YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

⁴⁵⁹ No title, *HIAS News Release*, December 12, 1949, HIAS Collection, RG 245.8, series 10, folder 286, YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

⁴⁶⁰ "Una legge che deve essere modificata," *Il Progresso Italo Americano*, February 3, 1949.

exclusively on Italian migration and became the most prominent non-state actors that Italy had in its efforts to solve the country's post-war overpopulation and unemployment problems. The war had left Italy with a fairly damaged industrial capacity, a lowered standard of living, an unemployment rate above ten percent, and a serious overpopulation problem. Italian Americans believed that the only solution to Italy's problems was for the United States to press for the stipulation of a peace treaty with Italy that would allow it to retain its African colonies to solve its overpopulation problem and create remittances, to use its limited resources to boost its economy rather than to pay war retributions, and to receive financial assistance for its reconstruction efforts.⁴⁶¹ At the same time, they realized that they too had to dispel a stigma of poverty and ignorance that mainstream America had of Italian immigrants. In a way, in their efforts to defend and explain Italian immigrants to Americans, post-war Italian Americans found themselves in the same position in which American Jews of German origin had found themselves when Americans began to attack Eastern European Jews at the end of the nineteenth century. Like them, Italian Americans felt compelled to defend the newcomers also to protect their own image and to assert their position in American society.

Unlike American Jews of German origin, though, Italian Americans also had to negotiate their strategies with the Italian government. The Italian government strongly supported Italian American efforts, especially after the demand for bi-lateral agreements to regulate an Italian emigration flow to Northern and Western European countries in need of manpower for their

⁴⁶¹ "Il problema dei rifugiati in Italia," *Il Progresso Italo Americano*, April 1, 1947; "I senatori Aiken e Green ispirandosi alla lettera di Pope insistono per un sereno esame del Trattato Italiano," *Il Progresso Italo Americano*, April 2, 1947; "Per l'America e l'Italia: Domande rivolte a tutti i cittadini," *Il Progresso Italo Americano*, April 27, 1947; "Le attrattive dell'America del Sud per l'opera di colonizzazione degli emigranti italiani sono tra le più vive," *Il Progresso Italo Americano*, May 13, 1947; "Rendere più rapida la emigrazione dei lavoratori italiani verso l'Argentina," *Il Progresso Italo Americano*, June 26, 1947; "La Fine della UNRRA all'Italia," *Il Progresso Italo Americano*, 30 June 1947; "L'emigrazione italiana per l'Argentina è stata temporaneamente sospesa," *Il Progresso Italo Americano*, 9 August 1947; "L'immigrazione è problema di tutti," *Il Progresso Italo Americano*, May 10, 1949; and "Gli operai e l'immigrazione," *Il Progresso Italo Americano*, May 22, 1949.

post-war reconstruction languished by the end of the 1940s.⁴⁶² Aware of Americans' preoccupation with communist infiltration in Western Europe and of the evolution of American immigration policy into an international issue, the Italian government encouraged Italian Americans to use these arguments when making a case for more American support to Italy. To this end, the Italian-American press regularly covered speeches given by Italian Communist leaders extolling Russia, denounced the Italian Communist Party's efforts to seek Italian workers' affiliation, or decried the attacks that the Italian Communist Party perpetrated against the Catholic Church.⁴⁶³ As late as 1949, *Il Progresso Italo Americano* published thirteen editorials in a row to discuss "the perverse activities that the communists and their [...] socialist allies have been perpetrating at the expense of the Italian nation and the Italian people."⁴⁶⁴

Thus, while Congress held hearings for the DP bill in 1947, New York-based politician Generoso Pope wrote a letter to all congressmen to enjoin them not to ratify the peace treaty with Italy. The treaty, Pope contended in his letter, was unfair because it forced Italy to relinquish Trieste and its colonies in Africa, required Italy to pay considerable reparations, and failed to acknowledge adequately the need to include provisions in the treaty that would help Italy solve its overpopulation problem. According to Pope, the treaty, in its existing version, would endanger the growth of democracy in Italy, tip the balance towards the Italian Communist Party, effectively leave the Italian workforce in the hands of Russian propaganda, and endanger the spread of democracy in the West and world peace. At the same time, Pope's *Il Progresso Italo Americano* organized a letter writing campaign under the motto "No Ratification without

⁴⁶² For more on the system of the bilateral agreements that the Italian government sought to institute to solve its overpopulation and unemployment problems, see Maccari-Clayton, "Communists of the Stomach."

⁴⁶³ "Washington respinge le accuse di Togliatti, darà altri aiuti all'Italia," *Il Progresso Italo Americano*, September 16, 1947; "La frode comunista al popolo italiano," *Il Progresso Italo Americano*, September 18, 1947; "L'ondata di furore rosso in Italia," *Il Progresso Italo Americano*, November 13, 1947; "Chi vuol distruggere la chiesa sarà distrutto," *Il Progresso Italo Americano*, February 14, 1949; "Nessun compromesso con l'anti-Cristo," February 22, 1949.

⁴⁶⁴ "Fuori lo straniero," *Il Progresso Italo Americano*, February 7, 1949.

Revision." For over a month, the newspaper invited its readers to fill in, sign, and mail the letter provided in the daily edition to their senators and to encourage their friends without any distinction of race, color, or religious creed, as long as they were convinced of the necessity to protect American interests in the Mediterranean, to do the same in the name of America's national security, lasting world peace, and justice to the new, democratic Italy.⁴⁶⁵

Other prominent Italian American politicians voiced their concerns as well. The Italian American mayor of New York City, Vincent R. Impellitteri, intervened in the debate, giving a public speech in which he defined the treaty as unfair with respect to Italy's contribution to the war effort and expressed his concern that it could damage the country's growth towards democracy, as "the seed of democracy cannot germinate in a disgruntled country."⁴⁶⁶ He pointed to the ongoing civil war in Greece and the political problems in Turkey to remind congressmen of the consequences of a disgruntled country. During his testimony to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations in the spring of 1947, labor organizer Luigi Antonini urged the committee members to send the unfair treaty back to the State Department and instruct it to reopen negotiations with the other superpowers, arguing that the treaty stymied economic recovery in Italy and endangered the balance of power in the world:

Is it worth spending all hundreds of millions of dollars in Turkey and Greece if then Italy, strategically more important, is left, because of the current peace treaty, under the prospect of an aggressive Asiatic invasion? I am convinced that Truman's political theory needs to be applied to the democratic Italy as well, at least in the same way that it is applied to Turkey. I am convinced that it is against the most important of American interest to leave the Italian people, tied to us by ideals, by many traditions, and by blood, to the mercy of Tito.⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁶⁵ "Scrivete ai vostri Senatori! Esortate tutti i vostri amici a fare altrettanto perchè il Trattato con l'Italia non sia ratificato," *Il Progresso Italo-Americano*, April 6, 1947.

⁴⁶⁶ "L'On. Impellitteri afferma che il Trattato Italiano è in contrasto con la nostra attuale politica estera," *Il Progresso Italo-Americano*, April 29, 1948.

⁴⁶⁷ "Antonini, Berle ed altri parlano contro la ratifica del trattato con l'Italia al Comitato Esteri del Senato," *Il Progresso Italo Americano*, May 1, 1947.

Impellitteri and Antonini's emphasis on the ties that connected Italy and the United States and on the need to secure a democratic Italy would soon become central themes in Italian Americans' agenda for immigration reform along with an emphasis on Italy's overpopulation and unemployment problems.

Luckily for Italian Americans, their campaign for the Italian treaty coincided with the 1948 elections in Italy. The Truman administration had long worried about the strength of the Communist Party in Italy. As early as 1946, Walter Dowling, Italian desk officer at the State Department, reported to his superiors that the political gridlock and the worsening of economic conditions were favoring the Italian Communist Party. To slow the party's ascendance to power, he urged the administration to use a combination of economic aid, moral support, and flattery, and to present itself as "so damned pro-Italian that even the dumbest wop would sense the drift."⁴⁶⁸ After the 1948 Italian elections ended with a victory for the Christian Democrats, Father Edmund A. Walsh's words on the significance of the victory reflected a widespread feeling among American politicians: "If Italy had fallen into the lap of Moscow, [...] not one but three or four victims of the creeping imperialism of Marxian Communism would surely have been involved, and communism would have advanced that much nearer to the English Channel and the Atlantic World."⁴⁶⁹ Thanks to the 1948 Italian elections and Cold War geopolitical interests, Italian Americans saw their political influence rise substantially.

Consequently, the "No Ratification Without Revision" campaign received extensive attention in and out of Congress. Republican and Democratic congressmen from across the country responded favorably to the myriads of letters pertaining to the Italian treaty that they had

⁴⁶⁸ As quoted in Robert Ventresca, *From Fascism to Democracy: Culture and Politics in the Italian Election of 1948* (Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 64.

⁴⁶⁹ Patrick McNamara, *A Catholic Cold War: Edmund A. Walsh, S. J., and the Politics of American Anticommunism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 137.

received from their constituents. Some of them explicitly labeled the treaty as too harsh, declared themselves as against the treaty, and observed that Italy's help to the Allies during the last phases of the war deserved consideration before passing the treaty. All thanked Pope for bringing the matter to their attention, praised the articles published in *Il Progresso* about the shortcomings of the treaty, and promised to take the objections the Italian American community raised into careful considerations before voting on the treaty. The American Federation of Labor also condemned the treaty as unjust and as disastrous to the development of Italy into a healthy democracy that could take her rightful place in the community of free and prosperous nations.⁴⁷⁰

The numerous endorsements notwithstanding, Pope's letter campaign yielded no results in 1947. In 1949, he launched a new letter writing campaign that more explicitly connected the restitution of the former Italian colonies in Africa to Italy with the possibility of solving Italy's overpopulation problem. "The colonial problem," Pope wrote, "needs to be addressed from the perspective of the current world tension and in view of peoples' needs and aspirations."⁴⁷¹ Furthermore, a 1949 form letter that of *Il Progresso Italo Americano* invited readers to send to their representative or senator further emphasized that "by urging the United Nations to give Italy trusteeship over these colonies, we will also be making possible the emigration of tens of thousands of Italy's population to lands that can well absorb them."⁴⁷² As in 1947, the new letter campaign received positive endorsements from Italian American organizations, workers' unions, congressmen and local politicians, especially in areas with heavy concentrations of Italian American voters. A group of Italian American organizations met to organize a committee that

⁴⁷⁰ "A Last Minute Appeal," *Il Progresso Italo-Americano*, June 5, 1947.

⁴⁷¹ "Senatori e congressmen per la restituzione dei territori all'amministrazione italiana," *Il Progresso Italo Americano*, February 6, 1949.

⁴⁷² "Lettera aperta a Mr. Dulles, Delegato Americano alle N.U.," *Il Progresso Italo Americano*, April 17, 1949.

met with President Truman to plead for the restitution of Italy's former African colonies, and Representative John J. Rooney (D-NY) presented a motion in the House asking for the complete realization of Italy's aspirations to its pre-war colonies.⁴⁷³

Pope's campaign represented only one of the strategies that Italian Americans adopted to deal with Italy's overpopulation problem. Instead of mobilizing politically, many Italian Americans sought to take advantage of the family reunion clauses in the existing legislation to assist friends and relatives immigrate to the United States. Throughout the late 1940s and early 1950s, "La cassetta dell'immigrato," *Il Progresso Italo Americano's* weekly column to answer readers' questions about immigration matters, published letters that revealed other, quieter ways of getting around restriction. Some adopted nephews and nieces, married aspiring migrants, sent for one family member in the hope of bringing other relatives left behind, or vouched for tourist visas for applicants who anticipated remaining in the United States and hoped to adjust their status once in the country. Others tried to naturalize as quickly as possible after settling in the United States so that they could send for other family members, asked their employers to offer a job to their friends arriving from Italy, or entered the country illegally with the plan of regularizing their status soon after their arrival to bring the rest of their families over afterwards. These strategies did not always yield the desired results, and much confusion remained, especially about the status of newly arrived migrants. As in the previous decades, many did not

⁴⁷³ "Risoluzione di Schupler per l'intervento Americano a favore dell'Italia," *Il Progresso Italo Americano*, February 13, 1949; "Il Congressman Rooney mantiene la promessa fatta a Generoso Pope," *Il Progresso Italo Americano*, February 16, 1949; "I Presidenti di 426 Associazioni al Pres. Truman per le Colonie Italiane," *Il Progresso Italo Americano*, April 3, 1949; "40,000 affiliati all'Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America si uniscono alla campagna del Progresso per le colonie," *Il Progresso Italo Americano*, April 14, 1949; "Lettera aperta a Mr. Dulles, Delegato Americano alle N.U.," *Il Progresso Italo Americano*, April 17, 1949; "Generoso Pope ribatte la risposta di Dulles alla sua Lettera Aperta sulle Colonie Italiane," *Il Progresso Italo Americano*, May 1, 1949; "Le nostre comunità si mobilitano senza perder tempo per questa causa," *Il Progresso Italo Americano*, May 1, 1949; "L'Ambasciatore Dunn riceve milioni di messaggi diretti a Truman per le colonie," *Il Progresso Italo Americano*, May 3, 1949; "Altre valanghe di adesioni a Generoso Pope danno nuovo impulso alla nostra campagna," *Il Progresso Italo Americano*, May 8, 1949.

know how to apply for naturalization, send for their loved ones, or legalize their illegal status. Others believed that their permanence in the country sufficed to become residents, or mistakenly relied on people who promised them help with the transatlantic trip, the search for a job, or the bureaucracy in exchange for exorbitant amounts of money. Still others worried that they would never be able to go back to Italy if they became American citizens or believed that voting in Italian elections would not affect their status in the United States.⁴⁷⁴

Yet, more important than the results and the visibility Italian Americans achieved through their actions to solve Italy's overpopulation and unemployment problems, the battle for Italy's former colonies represented an important steppingstone for the entire community. After the bitter divisions and attacks of the 1930s, Pope's campaign provided a cohesive theme around which the entire community could rally. An article published in *Il Progresso Italo Americano* on May 1, 1949, reflected the newly found cohesion as it described the support that Pope's campaigns were receiving within the Italian American community:

Judging from the endorsements that Generoso Pope is receiving for his campaign for the former Italian colonies, we can proudly say that our communities have found the old enthusiasm of all the battles fought in the name of justice for the rights of Italy, our Great Mother from afar that remains alive in our hearts, an Italy poor but always great, always so rich because it has something that's worth everything: the love of her sons wherever they are. They are the most genuine ambassadors because the Italians of America, except for a few renegades, unite their forces, let their shout be heard in unison, represent a formidable embassy that no diplomacy can provide.⁴⁷⁵

After over a decade of timid political ascendance and divisive internal disputes, Italian Americans had found confidence in expressing their political voice. Ironically, the strong ties

⁴⁷⁴ For a sample of the cases, see "La Cassetta Postale dell'Immigrato," *Il Progresso Italo Americano*, May, 22 1949; "La Cassetta Postale dell'Immigrato," *Il Progresso Italo Americano*, June 5, 1949; "La Cassetta Postale dell'Immigrato," *Il Progresso Italo Americano*, June 12, 1949; "La Cassetta Postale dell'Immigrato," *Il Progresso Italo Americano*, June 19, 1949; "La Cassetta Postale dell'Immigrato," *Il Progresso Italo Americano*, June 26, 1949; "La Cassetta Postale dell'Immigrato," *Il Progresso Italo Americano*, July 3, 1949; "La Cassetta Postale dell'Immigrato," *Il Progresso Italo Americano*, July 17, 1949; "Altri emigranti italiani truffati da un lestofante senza coscienza si fa il nome di un avvocato di Buenos Aires," *Il Progresso Italo Americano*, June 27, 1949.

⁴⁷⁵ "Le nostre comunità si mobilitano senza perder tempo per questa causa," *Il Progresso Italo Americano*, May 1, 1949.

with Italy the author professed in his article were in a way the product of the campaign to italianize Italians abroad that the Fascist regime had conducted after it took power. Yet, this time the relationship with the Italian government was on a more equal footing, as the Italian government recognized that Italian Americans were evolving into an influential constituency in the United States.

The mobilization for a just treaty for Italy also helped Italian Americans find new rhetoric to justify their mobilization. After a hiatus that spanned from 1924 to 1945, Italian Americans, like American Jews, once again cast their concerns in transnational terms. This time, though, the recent Cold War developments helped their voices to be heard. In an editorial on the great responsibilities that the United States had in the promotion of world reconstruction and the preservation of peace, the writer reminded readers that little could be accomplished until the stain of discrimination and racism disappeared in the United States first:

Even with the best democratic foreign policy, the United States will never have the support of the peoples of other countries in the reconstruction of the world and of the peace until we'll seriously decide to eradicate every vestige and to eliminate every practice of racial hatred, religious prejudice, and national origin discrimination among us [...] Our schools, our churches, our workers unions, our cultural institutes, the media and the radio need to be mobilized for an incessant campaign against this terrible stain on the good name of our nation—against this serious, but not insurmountable, obstacle to the realization of America's destiny.⁴⁷⁶

The theme resurfaced frequently in the columns of *Il Progresso Italo Americano*. Again and again, the articles observed that there was no worse or more dangerous folly for the United States' standing around the world than that to refuse someone a job only because the applicant was born in Italy or in Poland, because he was Catholic or Jewish, or because his skin was of a different color.⁴⁷⁷ Thus, as American Jews fought for Jewish displaced persons and Italian Americans sought to help Italian migrants, both groups adopted a similar rationale to justify their

⁴⁷⁶ "Togliamo la macchia dall'America," *Il Progresso Italo Americano*, June 25, 1947.

⁴⁷⁷ "Seguiti dall'attenzione del mondo," *Il Progresso Italo Americano*, July 31, 1949.

actions and found in the exigencies of the Cold War a common ground that would later bring them together in the struggle for the repeal of the quota system.

A New DP Act (1950)

As American Jews quarreled over the merits of the 1948 Displaced Persons Act and Italian Americans advocated for Italy's right to a more favorable treaty, the administration began to administer the 1948 DP Act. Despite the divisions and the criticisms that the 1948 DP Act unleashed, detractors and supporters of the law alike were in for a surprise. When it came to the administration of the new act, the creation of the United States Displaced Persons Commission and the provisions that allowed private or public agencies approved by the Commission to act as immigrant sponsors turned out to be more relevant than all the restrictions contained in the law. Truman appointed a Protestant, a Catholic, and a Jew to head the Commission, all of them sympathetic to the refugee cause and with expertise in immigration matters: the Protestant Chair, Ugo Carusi, was a former U.S. commissioner of immigration; Catholic Edward M. O'Connor had spent fifteen years as a welfare worker and had directed the War Relief Services for the National Catholic Welfare Conference; and Jewish Harry H. Rosenfield had served as a former delegate to UNESCO and as an official of the Federal Security Administration. As Dinnerstein observes, the three commissioners were so imaginative in their interpretation of the act's provisions, "that many legislators would later wonder how the bill that they had voted for contained so many loopholes."⁴⁷⁸ At the same time, the success of the implementation of the DP

⁴⁷⁸ Dinnerstein, *America and the Survivors of the Holocaust*, 182. As a result of the Displaced Persons Committee's more flexible processing procedures, the agency later became embroiled in a controversy with Senator McCarran's immigration subcommittee. For a complete treatment of the resettlement that followed the ratification of the 1948 DP Act, see chapter 8 of Dinnerstein's book.

Act also depended upon the role that voluntary agencies played in the resettlement of the refugees.

In fact, the provisions in the act regulating the role of voluntary agencies allowed a higher number of refugees to resettle in the United States and transformed the voluntary agencies into powerful advocates for immigration reform. Putting the congressional imprimatur on the groundwork that the Truman Directive had laid, the 1948 DP Act officially allowed ethnic and religious groups to sponsor applicants and assist them in their resettlement. The federal government consolidated its relationship with these voluntary agencies by generously funding their activities to relocate the refugees. Through the Displaced Persons Committee, it dispensed more than \$1.5 million dollars to various voluntary agencies to finance their activities.⁴⁷⁹ These agencies were so efficient and organized that they were responsible for almost ninety percent of the sponsorships filed with the DP Commission during its existence. The DP Commission eventually accredited nineteen different voluntary agencies, but four of them did most of the work. The National Catholic Welfare Council, the Church World Service, the National Lutheran Council, and the United Service for New Americans together helped to resettle more than two-thirds of the total number of refugees who arrived in the United States.⁴⁸⁰ The American government fully realized the importance of these agencies. "The private agencies," New York Industrial Commissioner Edward Corsi acknowledged, "deserve full credit for the success of our

⁴⁷⁹ Nine of the nineteen agencies accredited by the DP Commission received funding. Almost two-thirds of the total went to the National Catholic Welfare Council. Under the conditions of the Cold War, state and religious non-profit organizations became increasingly intertwined and dependent on one another for support and success. The provisions of the 1948 DP Act represented only one way in which a Cold War administration sought to create these ties. As Schäfer contends, "Seeking to shore up national defense, ensure national security, generate economic growth and create social stability, Cold War policy-makers developed close ties with religious charities in such diverse areas as healthcare, higher education, welfare services and foreign aid." Schäfer, "Religious Non-Profit Organisations, the Cold War, the State and Resurgent Evangelicalism, 1945-1990," 175.

⁴⁸⁰ More specifically, the National Catholic Welfare Council sponsored 151,694; the Church World Service resettled 51,010; the National Lutheran Council was responsible for 42,000; and the United Service for New Americans helped 38,524. As quoted in Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*, 107.

DP program and I have this occasion to express the State's full appreciation of the great job they did and are still doing for these new immigrants."⁴⁸¹

As the Displaced Persons Commission and the voluntary agencies worked to bring as many DPs as possible to the United States, many critics of the discriminatory provisions in the act mobilized to amend it. Truman's victory and an overwhelmingly Democratic Congress after the November 1948 elections gave many hope for the successful passage of a revised bill. Many of the new congressmen were more sympathetic to the refugee cause and considered a revision of the DP Act a high priority for the 81st Congress. Once again, American Jews were the most vocal about the need for reform. HIAS repeatedly issued press releases to lament the inadequacy of the existing law and the slow pace of the resettlement.⁴⁸² New York Governor Thomas E. Dewey and New York Representative Emanuel Celler both publicly called for more liberal DP legislation in the presence of delegates from 2,500 labor, religious, and fraternal Jewish organizations and from communities from all around the globe who attended the sixty-fifth annual meeting of HIAS in New York City.⁴⁸³ The chair of the Displaced Persons Commission himself, Ugo Carusi, intervened in the debate to call for changes in the DP Act. Between July 1, 1948, and June 30, 1949, more than one hundred bills dealing with technical matters in the refugee and immigration and naturalization legislation were introduced in Congress. Yet only two of the proposed bills became law. In 1950, Congress modified the War Brides Act to admit all spouses and minor children of service members eligible for admission to the United States

⁴⁸¹ "Address by Industrial Commissioner Edward Corsi to the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society," October 26, 1952, HIAS Collection, RG 245.8, series 10, folder 289, YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

⁴⁸² "HIAS reports 5,000 Jews will Remain in Germany's British Zone for Several Years," *HIAS News Release*, August 5, 1949, HIAS Collection, RG 245.8, series 10, folder 286, YIVO, Center for Jewish History; "Special to JTA," *HIAS News Release*, no date, HIAS Collection, RG 245.8, series 10, folder 286, YIVO, Center for Jewish History; "HIAS Delegates to Geneva Conference to Condemn Practice of Governments in Breaking Up Families by Admitting only Employables," *HIAS News Release*, no date, HIAS Collection, RG 245.8, series 10, folder 286, YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

⁴⁸³ "Governor Dewey, Congressman Celler Call for Liberal DP Legislation at 65th HIAS Annual Meeting," *HIAS News Release*, no date, HIAS Collection, RG 245.8, series 10, folder 287, YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

outside the quota system and ratified H.R. 2663, which provided for the permanent admission, regardless of existing immigration laws, of 100 aliens a year if their entry was "in the interest of national security or essential to the furtherance of the national intelligence mission."⁴⁸⁴ Neither law tackled the DP issue, but, to many American Jews, the two acts signaled Congress's willingness to modify the existing immigration laws.

As during the passage of the first DP Act, Italian Americans' role in the debate was limited. They remained bystanders in the fight for refugee and displaced persons legislation and did little more than endorse the American Jewish efforts for more humane legislation. Similar to how it had covered the case of the 1948 DP Act, the Italian American press once again followed with interest and reported regularly on the American Jewish Committee's campaign to change the existing legislation. On May 10, 1949, *Il Progresso Italo Americano* praised the committee's efforts and criticized the State Department's recent suspicion of all visa applicants irrespective of their origin and connection to American citizens and to organizations in the United States that sponsored these applicants.⁴⁸⁵ The most prominent Italian American to take a public stance on the issue was Edward Corsi. Significantly, however, he criticized the 1948 DP Act in front of a Jewish but not an Italian audience. In a speech during a donors luncheon of the Women's Division of HIAS, Corsi urged that the current DP legislation be amended to allow a larger number of Europe's DPs into the country and that "restrictions which make it impossible for many of the war sufferers to enter the United States be eliminated."⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸⁴ As quoted in "Immigration and Naturalization," *American Jewish Year Book* 51 (1950), 127.

⁴⁸⁵ "L'immigrazione è problema di tutti," *Il Progresso Italo Americano*, May 10, 1939.

⁴⁸⁶ No title, *HIAS News Release*, April 4, 1949, HIAS Collection, RG 245.8, series 10, folder 286, YIVO, Center for Jewish History. "Immigration and Naturalization," *American Jewish Year Book* 51 (1950), 129-130. In addition to New York harbor, the other two major ports of arrival for displaced persons and refugees were in Boston and New Orleans. In 1948-1949, the leading states in the reception of DPs were, in order, New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, New Jersey, Michigan, Ohio, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maryland, Louisiana, California, and Mississippi. "Immigration and Naturalization," *American Jewish Year Book* 51 (1950), 129-130.

All the hopes and enthusiasm for imminent change waned as Nevada's senior Senator Pat McCarran ascended to the chairmanship of the Judiciary Committee.⁴⁸⁷ Senator McCarran strongly believed that the act, if anything, should become more restrictive. Others once again worried that too many Jews were entering the country and that they all were settling in major metropolises. It did not help that by March 1949 New York State already led the rest of the country in the resettlement of displaced persons. HIAS tried to counter these concerns with news releases explaining that the initial higher number of Jewish refugees arrived in the United States would not continue. One of the organization's news releases distributed to all major newspapers quoted New York State Industrial Commissioner Edward Corsi as saying that the high percentage of Jews among the recently arrived displaced persons was because Jewish agencies "were better organized at the beginning of the program and naturally they processed their cases with greater speed." Yet, he added, "this ratio was bound to drop quickly as the program gets under way and the other agencies hit a normal stride."⁴⁸⁸

Despite their determination, McCarran and other critics of the legislation faced an uphill battle when they sought to restrict rather than to liberalize the DP Act. They ultimately remained a small minority. In and out of Congress, clear signs emerged that many were in favor of amending the bill. Many congressmen received letters supporting changes to the bill, and newspapers across the country endorsed a liberalization of the DP Act as well. The CCDP began a new campaign, and this time it successfully received the endorsement of many of the members of the Displaced Persons Committee, of several ethnic organizations that wanted special consideration in the amended version, and of religious groups that spoke in favor of a more

⁴⁸⁷ Dinnerstein, *America and the Survivors of the Holocaust*, 217.

⁴⁸⁸ No title, *HIAS News Release*, April 4, 1949, HIAS Collection, RG 245.8, series 10, folder 286, YIVO, Center for Jewish History; "Address by Industrial Commissioner Edward Corsi to the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society," October 26, 1952, HIAS Collection, RG 245.8, series 10, folder 289, YIVO, Center for Jewish History; "Resettlement of DPs," *American Jewish Yearbook* 52 (1951), 145.

liberal and effective DP law and against discrimination on grounds of race, religion, or national origin. In total, 140 national institutions, including the major welfare, civic, and labor organizations, publicly supported changes to the law.⁴⁸⁹ "Prominent among these groups," the American Jewish Committee reported, "were the national labor organizations, the CIO and AFL, which unequivocally endorsed the effort to secure adequate and non-discriminatory legislation," a fact of considerable significance since organized labor was traditionally against a liberal immigration policy.⁴⁹⁰ No major Italian American groups adhered.

Discussion over the amendment to the 1948 DP Act divided the American Jewish community yet again. Disagreements again arose on whether or not more legislation was opportune. Similar to their previous battles against discriminatory legislation, the more assimilated American Jews of German descent of the American Jewish Committee and the American Jewish Congress wanted to have the law amended and to work to guarantee that even more Jewish DPs arrived in the United States. They continued to believe that both goals would be accomplished only through the collaboration with prominent non-Jewish personalities and organizations, thus furthering Jewish relationships with Christians in America. By contrast, secular Zionists, Orthodox Jews, and the Yiddish press advocated that no more Jews should be brought to the United States. The establishment of Israel in 1948 only reinforced this conviction. They believed that the new state represented the best and safest haven for Jewish refugees. Although not voiced publicly, many Zionists worried that fewer European Jews would opt to move to Israel if offered the opportunity to settle in the United States.⁴⁹¹ The Zionists and the

⁴⁸⁹ "Public Opinion," *American Jewish Year Book* 51 (1950), 130-131.

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 131.

⁴⁹¹ Dinnerstein, *America and the Survivors of the Holocaust*, 222-223. As Dinnerstein points out, it is important to keep in mind that because many of the Orthodox and Yiddish speaking American Jews were also Zionists, it is often hard to identify the differences between the two groups' position on this issue.

Yiddish press's concerns received little attention from the wider public and press, though, and the views of the American Jewish Committee and of the American Jewish Congress prevailed.

American Catholics represented a more united front. Catholics of different backgrounds, including Polish, Czech, and Lithuanian, wanted the amended bill to reflect the religious composition of the refugees more accurately and demanded proportional representation along with religious affiliation. Italian Americans generally endorsed the Catholic Church's stance on the issue but did not actively participate in the debate or publically plead for the law to allow a greater number of Catholic DPs to relocate to the United States. The Catholic hierarchy, and in particular Monsignor Swanstrom, who was in charge of the relocation of refugees for the War Relief Service of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, supported the suggestion, especially because very few Catholics had made it to the United States until then, despite being the most numerous group among the DPs.⁴⁹² As Dinnerstein details, American Catholics' plea for proportional representation in the revised act attracted the attention of a few congressmen, as "both groups feared that without this provision a disproportionate number of Jews might continue to swell the totals."⁴⁹³ The National Catholic Welfare Council adopted a resolution maintaining that if the quota were raised to 400,000 without adequate proportions for the religious groups, the law would then be discriminatory.

The resolution set in motion a month-long crisis between the Jewish and Catholic representatives on the CCDP. The proposal raised serious concerns among American Jews, who worried that it might provide further motivation to Senator McCarran and his supporters to obstruct the passage of the amended act. Along with other members of the CCDP, they objected that such a provision would distinguish among suffering human beings on the basis of race,

⁴⁹² "Public Opinion," *American Jewish Year Book* 51 (1950), 131.

⁴⁹³ Dinnerstein, *America and the Survivors of the Holocaust*, 224.

religion, and nationality. After a series of meetings, the two parties finally reached an agreement: in exchange for the withdrawal of the “group and elements provision,” the Jewish representatives agreed to accept a carefully worded provision allowing more *Volksdeutsche* to enter the country.⁴⁹⁴

Diametrically opposed to McCarran and his Senate committee's resistance to modify the act, Representative Celler from Brooklyn, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, quickly became the staunchest advocate for a new DP act. He sponsored a bill that the House Judiciary Committee put forth for consideration, which stipulated the admission of an additional 179,000 DPs (over and above the original 205,000 in the 1948 Act) and of 56,623 persons of German ethnic origin, and incorporated special provisions for 18,000 members of the Polish Army then residing in Great Britain, 4,000 refugees in Shanghai, 5,000 nonquota orphans, and 15,000 recent political refugees. More importantly, the bill set a new cutoff date of January 1, 1949, to provide equal opportunities to migrate to the United States to refugees from Nazism as well as from communism. In June 1949, the House of Representatives passed the bill after only three hours of debate, overcoming the opposition of those representatives who insisted on keeping the cutoff date of the original bill. Any hope for a similar expeditious passage of a Senate bill faded as Senator McCarran announced that his committee would not report on the Ferguson-Kilgore bill, the Senate version of the Celler bill, within the year nor schedule hearings anytime soon.⁴⁹⁵

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 224; Genizi, "Interfaith Cooperation in America," 85-87. Jewish representatives on the CCDP protested that Catholic and Lutheran representatives' request to include in the new act a provision for the doubling of the quota allotted to the *Volksdeutsche* might mean the potential admission of Nazis or Nazi collaborators. The call for the admission of more *Volksdeutsche* met with considerable public hostility, but when Jewish organizations repeatedly refused to include a provision for members of the Baltic Legion—Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians who had served in the Baltic-Waffen units during the war —, the Lutheran Resettlement Service vehemently protested against their exclusion and put pressure on the Department of State to change the existing rule. Under heavy pressure from several Christian denominations arguing that these Baltic soldiers had fought against the Russians and not against the Allies, the Department of State capitulated. Genizi, "Interfaith Cooperation in America," 83-85.

⁴⁹⁵ "The Senate," *American Jewish Year Book* 51 (1950), 133.

McCarran's obstructionist tactics successfully delayed the passage of an amended DP bill. In January 1950, McCarran proposed a restrictive immigration bill to counteract the more liberal Ferguson-Kilgore bill. Once the bills came up for discussion on the Senate floor in March 1950, McCarran's argument that the Ferguson-Kilgore bill would "tear down our immigration barriers to the end that this country will be flooded with aliens" and his appeal to fears of communism at home helped him rally enough opposition to the bill to stall the voting until the beginning of April.⁴⁹⁶ On June 1, 1950, after lengthy debates, the conferees reached an agreement that both houses of Congress could endorse. The new act allowed entry for a total of 415, 744 DPs eligible for admission, retained the quota mortgaging, extended the life of the Displaced Persons Committee to June 30, 1951 (the next Congress extended it to August 31, 1952), provided a cutoff date of January 1, 1949, and assigned equal authority to consuls, the Immigration and Naturalization Service officials, and the Displaced Persons Committee to rule on the eligibility and admissibility of individuals who applied for entry to the United States. President Truman signed the bill into law, hailing it as a measure that corrected the discrimination inherent in the previous act.⁴⁹⁷

The euphoria for the success of the campaign for the new DP Act turned out to be short-lived and ephemeral. As Leonard Dinnerstein observes, though McCarran lost the legislative battle on the DP issue, he won the administrative fight.⁴⁹⁸ His tour of the Displaced Persons Committee offices in Europe the previous fall, his repeated accusations of malpractice and

⁴⁹⁶ As quoted in Dinnerstein, *American and the Survivors of the Holocaust*, 231. In their concerns over communism, the Senators merely reflected the wider population's anxieties, which arose between 1947 and 1950, about foreigners seeking to enter the country to undermine American institutions, reinforced by the trials of Alger Hiss, the "loss" of China, and the detonation of the atomic bomb by the Soviet Union in 1949.

⁴⁹⁷ "Amended DP Act of 1950," *American Jewish Year Book* 52 (1951), 143-144.

⁴⁹⁸ Dinnerstein, *American and the Survivors of the Holocaust*, 250. The law also included provisions that reflected emerging Cold War concerns. It barred people who had previously participated in or been a member of a movement hostile to the United States or to American democracy and had provisions for persons of German ethnic origin born in Czechoslovakia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Rumania, Russia, or Yugoslavia, European refugees in China, Greek displaced persons, Polish veterans in exile, and post-1948 refugees from Czechoslovakia.

incompetence, and the general tone of hostility towards the United States Displaced Persons Commission during the hearings took a toll on the commission officers once the new DP Act went into effect. Charles Jordan, European director of the Joint Distribution Committee, later wrote that the members of the Displaced Persons Commission took the criticism very seriously. As a result, the agency enacted stricter screening procedures that led to backlogs, snags in its operations, and a slowdown in the processing of applicants.

Many organizations involved in refugee and displaced persons resettlement repeatedly sought to bring the problems in administering the new DP Act to the public and Congress's attention. Some called for the expedition of the processing of displaced persons but to no avail.⁴⁹⁹ As voluntary agencies and immigration reform supporters continued to criticize the inefficiency of the immigration system and the bureaucratic obstructionism of the implementation of the DP acts, a new strategy emerged. In an address before delegates of the Workmen's Circle, HIAS executive director, Isaac L. Asofsky, told the audience that HIAS and other pro-immigration advocates saw an imminent need for "a greater measure of flexibility in the administration of quota limitations" and invited the organization to mobilize to call for the pooling and utilization of unused immigration quota numbers. In 1950, the climate of hostility towards immigrants and the fear of subversives and communists led Asofsky to clarify in his statement that he had no intention of advocating for the revision of the immigration quota system of the United States.⁵⁰⁰ Yet the first timid calls for the allocation of unused quotas would grow stronger as pro-immigration groups sought to reignite the immigration reform debate after 1952. The request to allocate unused quotas would become increasingly important as they worked to

⁴⁹⁹ No title, *HIAS News Release*, 1950?, HIAS Collection, RG 245.8, series 10, folder 287, YIVO, Center for Jewish History; "Problem of 75,000 Refugee Jews Discussed at HIAS Council," *HIAS News Release*, no date, HIAS Collection, RG 245.8, series 10, folder 288, YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

⁵⁰⁰ No title, *HIAS News Release*, May 31, 1950, HIAS Collection, RG 245.8, series 10, folder 287, YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

undermine the validity of the entire quota system by pushing Congress to ratify one exception to the system at a time.

Chances for the admission of more DPs dwindled even further when McCarran successfully convinced Congress to pass his internal security proposal less than three months after the outbreak of the Korean War. McCarran's Internal Security Bill required Communists already in the country to register with the Attorney General's office; stipulated the creation of concentration camps to detain subversives, spies, and saboteurs in times of emergency; and introduced what critics called the principle of "permanent guilt," namely that no alien who had previously belonged to a totalitarian or Communist organization could receive a visa to the United States. Despite Attorney General McGrath's criticisms of the bill as a sign of domestic hysteria and President Truman's veto, both houses overrode the veto, passing the bill by more than the required two-thirds majority.⁵⁰¹

The 1950 Internal Security Act had disastrous consequences on refugee resettlement. The DP Commission estimated that the Internal Security Act and the clause in the DP Act that prohibited the issuance of a visa to any person who had participated in or had been a member of a movement hostile to the United States or to the American form of government barred more than 100,000 refugees from entering the United States.⁵⁰² More importantly, in light of the Jewish community's efforts for refugee legislation, of the 410,000 refugees who entered the United States thanks to the special refugee legislation passed between 1945 and 1950—including the 1950 act's deadline extension—only about one in six admitted was a Holocaust survivor. American Jews' mobilization for DP legislation demonstrated the persistence of prejudice against them, despite and because of their political, social, and economic strides. Moreover, because of

⁵⁰¹ "Internal Security Act of 1950," *American Jewish Year Book* 53 (1952), 128-129.

⁵⁰² Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*, 106.

their prominence in the DP legislation efforts, American Jews continued to be perceived as the principal motor behind the movement for immigration reform until 1965. However, this experience also convinced them of the validity to seek a broader consensus with Catholic and Protestant advocates to secure reform and to continue to frame immigration reform in terms of social justice.

*"We are really in the business of closing the door:"*⁵⁰³ *The McCarran-Walter Act (1952)*

The 1950 Internal Security Act was only the first step that McCarran took to control immigration in response to the passage of the two DP Acts. Incensed over the passage of the 1950 DP Act, McCarran wrote to his daughter: "I met the enemy and he took me on the DP bill. It's tough to beat a million or more dollars and it's something worthwhile to give the rotten gang a good fight anyway, and they know they have been to a fight for its [sic.] not over yet."⁵⁰⁴ With a not so subtle reference to the persisting accusations that Jewish funds and organizations accounted for the success of the passage of the two DP acts, McCarran vowed to carry on his fight against higher immigration rates. On April 20, 1950, he proposed his first omnibus bill to overhaul American immigration policy. Influenced by McCarthyism, the bill retained the quota system based on the 1920 census but also added new, harsher criteria for deportation and exclusion, narrowed the grounds for court review and administrative appeal, and severely curtailed the naturalization process.⁵⁰⁵ Congress did not act upon his first proposal, so, with minor modifications, McCarran reintroduced his bill in the 82nd Congress on January 29, 1951. On February 5, 1951, Representative Walter, chairman of the House Immigration Subcommittee,

⁵⁰³ "Address by Industrial Commissioner Edward Corsi to the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society," October 26, 1952, HIAS Collection, RG 245.8, series 10, folder 289, YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

⁵⁰⁴ Dinnerstein, *America and the Survivors of the Holocaust*, 248.

⁵⁰⁵ Jethro K. Lieberman, *Are Americans Extinct?* (New York: Walker and Company, 1968), 112.

introduced a similar, but slightly more lenient bill. On February 22, 1951, Representative Emanuel Celler, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, introduced a more liberal third omnibus bill, which also provided for the reallocation of unused quotas.⁵⁰⁶

Most of the fight against the future McCarran-Walter Act played out in the halls of Congress during the joint hearings on the three bills from March 6 to April 9, 1951. Both American Jews and Italian Americans participated in the debate over the pending bills, but their testimonies at the hearings crystallized the different approach that the two groups chose to pursue in their criticisms of the McCarran and Walter bills. Following a strategy that they began to develop after World War II during their campaign for a fair treaty for Italy, Italian American groups who testified at the hearings focused on provisions and amendments that specifically concerned Italian migration rather than on the bills in their entirety. The reallocation of unused quotas represented Italian Americans' major concern as it had the potential to alleviate Italian oversubscribed quotas. Among the Italian American groups who testified in Congress were the Columbia Civic Group Club of New Jersey, the National Unico Clubs of America, and the Order of the Sons of Italy. All of these Italian American fraternal and welfare groups testified to endorse the Celler bill specifically because its provision for a system of utilizing unused quotas allowed for the largest number of Italian immigrants to be admitted.⁵⁰⁷

American Jews also continued the multi-pronged strategy that had emerged most forcefully after World War II. They promoted and joined non-sectarian coalitions that opposed the McCarran and Walter bills, criticized the bills in their entirety, and argued for the benefits of reform for all immigrant groups. Jewish organizations joined two umbrella organizations and subscribed to their testimonies against the bills in Congress. A representative from the Joint

⁵⁰⁶ "General Immigration Legislation," *American Jewish Year Book* 53 (1952), 127-128.

⁵⁰⁷ "Testimony on Quota Provisions," *American Jewish Year Book* 53 (1952), 133.

Conference on Alien Legislation presented a fifty-point written statement on behalf of twelve organizations opposed to the McCarran and Walter bills. Significantly, the twelve organizations belonging to the Conference included some of the major agencies that had been active in the refugee resettlement and refugee legislation.⁵⁰⁸ No Italian American organization belonged to the Joint Conference on Alien Legislation. The four Jewish organizations that belonged to the conference—the American Jewish Committee, the Hebrew Sheltering Immigrant Aid Society, the National Council of Jewish Women, and the United Service for New Americans—also subscribed to the testimony of Judge Simon H. Rifkind, who testified on behalf of a large number of Jewish organizations affiliated with the National Community Relations Advisory Council (NCRAC).⁵⁰⁹

Both organizations objected to the restrictive character underlying the two bills. They pointed out that the total annual quota of about 154,000 established in the Immigration Act of 1924 had to a large extent remained unused due to the rigidity of the quota system. They proposed to amend the law to provide that all unused quotas in any fiscal year be made available the following year to all immigrants, regardless of their country of origin, who qualified in certain specific categories, including close relatives, victims of totalitarianism, persons with skills needed in the United States, or special hardship cases. They recommended that, regardless of the system of preferences on which the Congress would ultimately settle, any new legislation should allow the full use of unused portions of the preference categories. Many of the Jewish

⁵⁰⁸ The twelve organizations were the American Jewish Committee, the American Federation of International Institutes, the American Friends Service Committee, the Common Council for American Unity, the Council for Social Action of the Congregational Christian Churches, the Hebrew Sheltering Immigrant Aid Society, the International Rescue Committee, the International Social Service, the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, the National Council of Jewish Women, the National Lutheran Council, and the United Service for New Americans. "Congressional Hearings," *American Jewish Year Book* 53 (1952), 132-133.

⁵⁰⁹ NCRAC included, among others, prominent Jewish national organizations like the American Jewish Congress, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, and the Jewish Labor Committee. "Congressional Hearings," *American Jewish Year Book* 53 (1952), 133.

organizations also found objectionable the preference given in McCarran's bill to aliens with special skills or education "on the ground that immigrants should be viewed as persons and not as economic commodities, and that many of the most significant contributions to American society had been made by immigrants who when they arrived in the United States could not claim special skills or education."⁵¹⁰ The Joint Conference and the National Community Relations Advisory Council cautioned against shifting the American naturalization system from one encouraging aliens to become citizens to a procedure intended to place obstacles in the way of the immigrants who desired to naturalize. Finally, they urged that a reasonable statute of limitations should be retained and applied, at least in cases that did not involve the security of the United States or serious criminal or moral offenses.⁵¹¹ However, despite these groups' opposition to the McCarran bill, the Senate ultimately opted to pursue it over the Celler bill.

Other groups raised concerns similar to those that Italian Americans and American Jews addressed in their testimonies. The National Community Relations Advisory Council; agencies working in immigrant and refugee resettlement; professional organizations like the Association of Immigration and Nationality Lawyers, the International Social Service, the American Psychological Association, and the Committee to Improve United States Immigration law; unions like the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) and the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union (ILGWU); civil rights organizations like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Americans for Democratic Action, and the Liberal Party of New York; and other national and local organizations from across the country in favor of an enlightened immigration policy all testified against the McCarran and Walter omnibus bills.⁵¹² They all concurred that the bills "did not accord with the humanitarian and liberal traditions of

⁵¹⁰ "Testimony on Quota Provisions," *American Jewish Year Book* 53 (1952), 133-134.

⁵¹¹ *Ibid.*, 134.

⁵¹² "Other Groups," *American Jewish Year Book* 54 (1953), 86.

the United States or with its obligations as leader of the free world" but their appeals remained unheard as they failed to coalesce into a strong opposition group that could effectively influence the final version of the bill.⁵¹³ Yet, despite their vocal opposition, the front against the McCarran and Walter bills struggled to gain momentum and a coalition similar to the one that had emerged during the mobilization for DP legislation and that had successfully overcome internal ideological divisions never materialized.

The American Jewish Committee lucidly identified at least four reasons that justified McCarran's ultimate triumph. First, Senator McCarran held a strategic position as chairman of the Judiciary Committee to influence immigration and naturalization legislation. Second, "the effective working relationship between the Southern Democrats and conservative Republicans" during the Senate debate on the McCarran bill effectively stifled the liberal immigration forces from raising a candid debate over the crucial issues of McCarran's omnibus bill in Congress.⁵¹⁴ Third, the breadth and complexity of the three hundred-page bill added to McCarran and his allies' victory. The Senator presented the public with a bill addressing such a wide host of issues involving difficult questions of immigration policy and vexing issues of civil liberties that many pro-immigration advocates felt confused about who to support and reluctant to take any position. Finally, McCarran continuously played "on the fears of other elements in the United States," arguing that the pooling of unused quotas would change the ethnic composition of the country and that the elimination of the 'one-half ancestry' concept would result in flooding the country with Asian immigrants.⁵¹⁵

The complexity of the law convinced many groups traditionally in favor of immigration reform to pursue the same strategy for which Italian Americans opted and focus exclusively on

⁵¹³ "Congressional Hearings," *American Jewish Year Book* 53 (1952), 132.

⁵¹⁴ "Congressional History," *American Jewish Year Book* 54 (1953), 83.

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 83-84.

issues that pertained to their group. "A minor, but not unimportant factor in the McCarran victory," wrote the AJC, "was the role of the Japanese American Citizen's League, and in particular, of its energetic legislative representative."⁵¹⁶ According to the committee, Minnesota Republican Representative Walter Judd's campaign for the repeal of 'oriental exclusion' also contributed to McCarran's victory. As early as 1947, Judd, a former missionary who wanted to repeal all aspects of immigration exclusion against Asian immigrants, had been lobbying for an 'Asia-Pacific Triangle,' assigning a quota of one hundred to each nation east of Iran without a quota. His proposal quickly gained widespread support and passed the House in early 1949.⁵¹⁷ When the McCarran bill included the Asia-Pacific Triangle, Judd immediately endorsed the bill and began a campaign in support of the McCarran bill, highlighting its progressive racial features and, in general, buttressing his case by using McCarran's same arguments. "In its campaign," wrote the AJC, "the Japanese group went so far as to join with twenty-three traditionally anti-alien 'patriotic' and veterans' organizations in a public statement endorsing the bill."⁵¹⁸ In the course of the House debate over the bill, Representative Walter himself quoted at length statements from Judd to justify passage of the bill. The State Department's endorsement of the bill, specifically because it believed that its racial provisions would enhance American prestige in Asia, further validated the McCarran camp.⁵¹⁹

In addition to the Japanese American Citizen's League and the State Department's endorsements, McCarran also relied on the support of the AFL and of a few influential Catholic organizations. As early as April 1951, a representative of the AFL expressed the organization's

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 84.

⁵¹⁷ As Daniels explains, Judd's quotas were racial as well as national: a Chinese citizen of Great Britain who entered as a quota immigrant would still be charged to the tiny and oversubscribed Chinese quota and not to the large and undersubscribed British quota. Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*, 116.

⁵¹⁸ "Congressional History," *American Jewish Year Book* 54 (1953), 84.

⁵¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 84-85.

approval of the major provisions in the McCarran bill. During the Senate debate, McCarran also included in the *Congressional Record* a letter, dated May 19, 1952, from the National Catholic Welfare Conference and the National Council of Catholic Women, stating that they favored the McCarran bill as amended rather than the more liberal Humphrey-Lehman bill. He also incorporated into the record a letter, dated May 17, 1952, from the National Catholic Rural Life Conference disavowing its support for the Humphrey-Lehman bill and officially endorsing the McCarran bill as amended. While most local Catholic organizations opposed the bill, the only national Catholic organization that openly criticized and refused to support the bill was the National Conference of Catholic Charities. The organization's general secretary, Msgr. John O'Grady, denounced the bill as opposed to American tradition and publicly called for its defeat.⁵²⁰

The fragmentation of the front against immigration restriction also reflected the impact of heightened fears of communist influence in America. In a climate of suspicion and hostility, immigration reformers' proposals and objections struggled to attract attention. Senator Lehman, one of the few politicians to endorse a more liberal immigration policy, repeatedly complained of the inability of immigration advocates to have their opinions heard and to generate a debate over the issues in the bill that they found problematic:

To me it has been a source of disillusionment that although this bill, one of the most important within my memory, [...] was debated for a long time, for several weeks, [and] its opponents have not even had the courtesy of reply from the authors of the bill to objections made and questions asked by us.⁵²¹

Adducing fears of an invasion of spies and subversives, supporters of the McCarran and Walter bills proposed to restrict immigration even further or to stop immigration altogether for a period

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁵²¹ *Ibid.*, 83.

of time to protect the United States against a Communist threat.⁵²² Playing on this fear and confident of the large support his bill enjoyed in and out of Congress, McCarran insisted that any objection to his law was Communist-inspired and argued that the non-Communists opposed to the bill were either "soft on Communism" or duped. To the critics who insisted that his bill was discriminatory because it retained the national origins system and the racially discriminatory provisions of the Asia-Pacific Triangle, he retorted, "The rock of truth is that the Act does not contain one iota of racial or religious discrimination."⁵²³ McCarran's accusations of communism to his critics at the height of McCarthyism seriously hampered the emergence of a strong and united front against his bill, especially after the difficult and rocky experience with lobbying for and passing two DP Acts.

McCarran's accusations also limited the allies that the anti-restriction coalition found in Congress. Among the few voices to object to the passage of the McCarran bill was Representative Adolph Sabath, Democratic Representative from Illinois, born in Slovakia of Jewish parents. As a representative who had served in the House for forty-five years, with much of that time spent as a ranking member of the former Committee on Immigration, and who had assisted in the drafting of the Immigration Act of 1924, he stated that he believed the McCarran bill "to be one of the most unfair, discriminatory, and un-American measures dealing with this vital subject ever to come before Congress." To those who argued that the new law was necessary to avoid admitting immigrants who would endanger American free government, he responded that, "the record shows, beyond any doubt, that the immigrants who came to our shores following World War I and after World War II have become loyal, patriotic, law-abiding citizens and have contributed materially to the development and strength of our economy." If

⁵²² "Immigration and Naturalization," *American Jewish Year Book* 54 (1953), 77.

⁵²³ Quoted in Roger Daniels and Otis L. Graham, *Debating American Immigration, 1882—Present* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefields, 2001), 37.

Congress and the President ratify the pending legislation, he concluded, "the United States will itself become an iron-curtain country."⁵²⁴ Despite Sabath's appeal to proceed with caution, the debate over the bill lasted only three days, and the House amended and passed the bill 206 to 68 on April 25.⁵²⁵

Immigration advocates' last resort was President Truman's veto. Although applauding the Act for banning exclusion based on race, Truman rejected the act as a piece of legislation that perpetuated long standing injustices against other countries, stifled America's efforts to unite the East and the West in a common fight for freedom, and further exacerbated the country's immigration procedures:

Today, we have entered into an alliance, the North Atlantic Treaty with Italy, Greece, and Turkey against one of the most terrible threats mankind has ever faced. We are asking them to join with us in protecting the peace of the world. We are helping them to build their defenses, and train their men, in the common cause. But, through this law, we say to their people: you are less worthy to come to this country than Englishmen or Irishmen.⁵²⁶

Truman's plea was to no avail. At the end of June 1952, Congress overrode the president's veto by a vote of 278 to 113 in the House and 57 to 26 in the Senate, answering McCarran's plea to do it "in God's name, in the name of the American people, in the name of America's future."⁵²⁷ The speedy passage of the McCarran-Walter Act left many of its opponents stunned. While many anticipated the passage of the law, few expected for it to happen as swiftly as it did.

Yet, in an interesting development, many of the Catholic organizations that had originally favored the passage of the bill rejected it almost immediately after Congress ratified the bill. In its July 5, 1952 issue, the Catholic weekly magazine *America* supported President Truman's veto

⁵²⁴ "Proposed Revision of Our Immigration Laws," April 25, 1952, Adolph Joachim Sabath Papers, Manuscript Collection MS 43, box 5, file 6: 1952, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College.

⁵²⁵ Lieberman, *Are Americans Extinct?*, 109.

⁵²⁶ *Ibid.*, 112-113.

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*, 113-114.

in its editorial. On August 2, the Catholic Association for International Peace sharply criticized the newly passed immigration law for using a "white supremacy" principle and for assigning severely prohibitive quotas to immigrants from Eastern Europe and recommended a survey of Asian immigration needs and the encouragement of necessary population shifts. More importantly, all the major Catholic organizations realized their blunder and appeared "prepared to conduct a vigorous campaign for a major liberalization of the country's immigration policy."⁵²⁸ The major Catholic organizations also subscribed to the National Community Relation Advisory Council's public statement of disapproval of the passage of the bill on behalf of the Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant organizations it represented. On July 25, after Congress overrode the President's veto, NCRAC and other ethnic organizations, this time including an Italian American organization, spoke out to express their dissent and successfully pleaded to the Platform Committee of the Democratic National Convention to adopt as part of its foreign policy plank the liberalization of the immigration laws of the United States.⁵²⁹

American Catholics were not the only ones who played a role that differed from what they had done on the DP legislation battle. Despite remaining prominent advocates for immigration reform, no Jewish organization rose to orchestrate a campaign against the McCarran bill similar to the one that the American Jewish Committee had sponsored for the CCDP. The American Jewish Committee suggested the most likely explanation for the difference in Jewish Americans' attitudes towards the refugee and immigration policy:

For unlike the situation during the previous twenty-five years when the economic—and later, the very physical—survival of the Jews of Europe depended on holding open the doors of America, the European reservoirs of potential Jewish emigration had now been

⁵²⁸ "Other Groups," *American Jewish Year Book* 54 (1953), 86-87.

⁵²⁹ "Position of Jewish Organizations," *American Jewish Year Book* 54 (1953), 86; "Recommendations on Immigration Written into Democratic Platform," *ACIM Dispatch*, August 1952.

depleted through extermination and emigration. The Jewish concern [about the McCarran bill] therefore transcended any specific Jewish interest.⁵³⁰

The American Jewish Committee's admission *de facto* sanctioned the American Jewish community's consolidation of a new approach to immigration reform, one that rested on the conviction that they needed to seek reform for all groups. From 1952 onwards, the American Jewish community's motivation in intervening in the immigration debate articulated their commitment to help restore the American tradition of welcoming immigrants, to extend the principle of non-discrimination based on race and religion, to protect the rights of naturalized citizens and resident aliens, and to preserve a fair judicial process. These principles, American Jews contended, were vital to a healthy and democratic American society and to America's role in building a stable world order.⁵³¹

Yet the debate over the McCarran bill also revealed an important development for the Italian American community. Following their campaign for a just treaty with Italy to solve its overpopulation and unemployment problems, Italian Americans intervened in the debate surrounding the McCarran bill with a clear strategy, focusing exclusively on the aspects of the bill that directly affected Italian emigration, and openly criticized restriction. They were emerging, if timidly, as important members of the interfaith coalition that the American Jewish community had long believed to be necessary to achieve reform. This might, in part, explain why, in its analysis of the activities of other ethnic groups interested in immigration reform during the debate, the American Jewish Committee praised the Italians, Czechs, Poles, Lithuanians, Armenians, and Chinese for speaking out against the bill but regretted that "this sentiment did not make itself felt soon enough to have the desired effect."⁵³² Moreover, the

⁵³⁰ "Position of Jewish Organizations," *American Jewish Year Book* 54 (1953), 85.

⁵³¹ *Ibid.*, 85-86.

⁵³² "Other Groups," *American Jewish Year Book* 54 (1953), 86.

postwar Catholic influence over the Italian American community yielded an important result during the debate over the McCarran bill, one that would critically affect its mobilization for immigration reform from 1952 to 1965. In October 1951, New York Judge Juvenal P. Marchisio flew to Chicago for a meeting of the National Catholic Resettlement Council as a leader in the postwar relief efforts for Italy. During the meeting, Cardinal Stritch from Chicago and Msgr. Edward E. Swanstrom, Executive Director of Catholic Relief Services, approached Marchisio to convince him to take the leadership in forming an immigration committee for Italian Americans. The National Catholic Resettlement Council, explained Stritch, included immigration committees representing practically every nationality group in the United States except for Italian Americans. At a time when Italy faced a serious overpopulation problem as well as the danger of the Italian Communist Party's influence over its population, he pointed out, Italian Americans needed an organization that would specifically deal with the problems of immigration from Italy.⁵³³

Cardinal Stritch's efforts to prompt the creation of a committee on Italian migration coincided with a renewed interest in immigration among high-ranking Church officials both in Italy and the United States. Although the Catholic Church had been actively involved in helping refugees from Europe come to the United States since the 1930s, it was not until 1951 that the Holy See explicitly committed to aiding immigrants around the world and sponsored the establishment of the International Catholic Migration Commission, at the direct request of Pope Pius XII. According to Monsignor G.B. Montini, Vatican Under-Secretary of State and the future Pope Paul VI, the primary reason for the creation of the new commission was "the stimulation of a greater Catholic interest and participation in the grave problem of emigration

⁵³³ "ACIM Mourns Death of Founder," *ACIM Dispatch*, June 1958.

and the resettlement of surplus population."⁵³⁴ The Vatican's preoccupation with finding a solution to solve problems of overpopulation stemmed from a concern that countries afflicted with these problems could easily fall prey to Russian influence and turn Communist. The Vatican believed that Italy in particular was, in the words of Montini, "the weak link in the European chain" and the primary target of the Soviet Union as "its principal field for undermining Western Europe."⁵³⁵ In 1952, the Catholic hierarchy worried particularly about the several hundred thousand repatriates from Africa and the displaced from Venezia-Giulia still unabsorbed into the Italian economy.⁵³⁶

Marchisio immediately seized on Stritch and Swanstrom's suggestion and set out to work on creating an Italian organization focused on immigration and affiliated with the National Catholic Resettlement Council. In February 1952, the American Committee on Italian Migration (ACIM) was founded with headquarters in New York City. The National Catholic Resettlement Council financially supported the committee during its first year of existence and continued to sponsor and contribute to its initiatives throughout the organization's entire campaign for the reform of American immigration policy.⁵³⁷ The Council warmly praised the addition of ACIM to its ranks, fully understanding the scope of its agenda:

The American Committee on Italian migration comes into being at a period of crisis for Italy—a crisis perhaps not too widely known or at least not sufficiently appreciated. One of the principal concerns of the new Committee will be to make Italy's problems better known and understood, not only as they relate to the peace and equilibrium of the world. It cannot be said too often that "enlightened self-interest" itself should motivate the

⁵³⁴ "J.B. Montini to Norris," March 3, 1954, *ICMC News*, April 1954, ACIM Collection, series D, box D4, file "ACIM Dispatch – May 1954," Center for Migration Studies.

⁵³⁵ Monsignor Giovanni Battista Montini quoted in Anthony Rhodes, *The Vatican in the Age of the Cold War, 1945-1980* (Norwich, UK: Michael Russell LTD, 1992), 142.

⁵³⁶ Rev. W.J. Gibbons, "Migration from Europe," *ACIM Dispatch*, April 1952.

⁵³⁷ Marchisio to Fred Scafidi, January 15, 1953, ACIM Collection, series A, box A1, file "Fred Scafidi," Center for Migration Studies.

United States and the countries of the free Western world to increase and hasten their efforts to help Italy find the means to a solution of her gigantic problems.⁵³⁸

From the beginning, the committee attracted endorsements from prominent Italian Americans, from Italians and Italian government authorities, American politicians, and members of the Catholic hierarchy in Italy and the United States. ACIM leadership immediately contacted prominent Italian Americans across the country to encourage them to open chapters open to both lay and clerical members, men and women.⁵³⁹ Its leadership clearly reflected the committee's blend of lay and religious members: Judge Juvenal Marchisio became its national chairman; Father Caesar Donanzan, assistant pastor of St. Mary of Mount Carmel Church of Utica, New York, and founder of the ACIM Utica chapter and also of the Women's Division of the chapter, worked as its executive national secretary; Yolanda Coda was the committee's administrative assistant; and Princess Margaret Draper Boncompagni, daughter of former ambassador to Italy General William Franklin Draper, was the national chairman of the Women's Auxiliary of ACIM.

Among its first initiatives, ACIM joined a sizeable number of groups, including the American Jewish Committee, interested in immigration reform to solicit Truman to steer Congress towards a different path in immigration. On September 4, 1952, Truman issued Executive Order No. 10392, which established a Commission on Immigration and Naturalization whose goal was to study and report on the country's existing immigration, deportation,

⁵³⁸ "Guest Editorial," *ACIM Dispatch*, April 1952.

⁵³⁹ "Memorandum re American Committee on Italian Migration," no date, ACIM Collection, series A, box A14, file "AFL," Center for Migration Studies. The Catholic hierarchy contributed to the recruitment effort as well. In a letter to his priests, Reverend Joseph Burke observed: "it would please me greatly if you would call the attention of your parishioners to the importance of this Christian program [the Refugee Relief Act program] and instruct them in the methods of providing assurances for housing and employment for the prospective immigrants [...] It is our sincere hope that this work may flourish and bring forth fruits worthy of the great Italian heritage, of which our country has been the beneficiary for many years." "Memorandum re American Committee on Italian Migration," no date, ACIM Collection, series A, box A14, file "AFL," Center for Migration Studies.

naturalization, and nationality laws by January 1, 1953.⁵⁴⁰ During the Commission's deliberations, the AJC did all it could to keep the issue of immigration reform alive. It offered testimony, distributed material discussing the problem of the existing policy, and provided data on immigration to other organizations and individuals interested in reform. Liberated from the constraints of political negotiations, the Commission endorsed the repeal of the national origins quota system altogether. Most of all, AJC leaders cautioned legislators not to view aspiring immigrants as economic commodities and to consider the human issues involved as they decided on the parameters to select desirable immigrants.⁵⁴¹ The Commission on Immigration and Naturalization's report, titled *Whom Shall We Welcome?*, incorporated many of the concerns of the American Jewish Committee and of the American Committee on Italian Migration as well as of other groups, individuals, and organizations involved in immigration. It called for the repeal of the national origins system, welcomed an increase in immigration, and suggested more flexibility to admit more refugees and migrants with skills needed in the United States. Walter and McCarran, however, categorically refused to hold hearings on its findings and criticized the report vehemently. Francis Walter complained that the report was politically inspired and that he had read it with disgust. McCarran called it a "rehash of the line that was parroted in Congress

⁵⁴⁰ The President appointed Philip B. Perlman, former Solicitor General of the United States, as chairman of the commission. Other members included Earl G. Harrison, former U.S. Commissioner of Immigration and Naturalization; Msgr. John O'Grady, secretary of the National Conference of Catholic Charities; the Rev. Thaddeus F. Gullixson, President of the Lutheran Theological Seminar, St. Paul, and chairman of the Minnesota Displaced Persons Commission; Clarence R. Pickett, honorary secretary of the American Friends Service Committee; Adrian S. Fisher, legal adviser to the States Department; and Thomas C. Finucane, chairman of the Board of Immigration Appeals, Department of Justice. Yet, despite the illustrious members that composed it, the embattled history of the establishment of the committee itself undermined the impact of its report from the beginning. On June 26, the day after Congress overrode Truman's veto on the McCarran-Walter Act, Senator Lehman and eleven other senators introduced a resolution proposing the establishment of a commission to carry out a wide range and in-depth study of American immigration and naturalization policies. Yet the Senate Judiciary Committee diverted Lehman's resolution, arguing that the subcommittee that it had established on June 21 to investigate the refugee and overpopulation problems already covered what the resolution proposed. Moreover, opponents to Lehman's proposal observed that the McCarran-Walter Act itself provided for the establishment of a joint congressional committee to conduct an ongoing review of the country's immigration policies. "Humphrey-Lehman Resolution," *Jewish American Year Book* 54 (1953), 88-89.

⁵⁴¹ Cohen, *Not Free to Desist*, 371.

by the radical, left wing clique in Congress" when the legislators debated the McCarran-Walter Act.⁵⁴²

Outside of Congress, reactions to the report's recommendations were less than enthusiastic as well. Emblematic of the comments that the committee's findings prompted was an editorial published in *The Saturday Evening Post*. According to the author, the quota system represented "pretty well the views of the average American on how new arrivals should be distributed among the various emigrating nations." Reflecting growing anxieties of the political clout of some of the ethnic groups that would benefit from a more lenient immigration policy, the editorial contended that any change in the policy would mean that "the racial group with the best public-relations setup and the highest squeeze on politicians would win all the arguments." Finally observing that there was "no universal demand for upsetting the present proportion of ethnic groups in our population," it concluded that, "much as we wish to do so for humanitarian reasons, we cannot destroy our immigration standards to take care of people who are a surplus elsewhere."⁵⁴³ The animosity towards the report confirmed Italian Americans and American Jews' suspicion that the crystallization of Cold War interests and fears determined Americans' reaction to immigration policy. This represented yet another lesson that the immediate post-war years had for both groups.

The contrast in tone was striking particularly with the relative success of the mobilization for refugee legislation. "In view of this experience with the DP program, how can we explain the McCarran Walter Law?" asked New York Industrial Commissioner Edward Corsi. His conclusions captured the spirit of Cold War fears about immigrants that underlay the passage of the law:

⁵⁴² Reimers, *Still the Golden Door*, 61.

⁵⁴³ "Before Attacking Immigration Law, Why Not Read it?," *Saturday Evening Post*, February 21, 1953.

Why? Because those who write our immigration laws are afraid of the immigrant. Congress itself is afraid of the immigrant. Labor is afraid of the immigrants. The Legion and the Daughters of the American Revolution are afraid of the immigrant. Our whole thinking on the subject of immigration is motivated by fear, fear of the immigrant as a security risk, fear of the immigrant as a competitor for our job, fear of the immigrant as a man and as a human being. And to protect ourselves against our own fear, we have adopted an immigration policy which keeps out one hundred good people for fear that one bad may come in.⁵⁴⁴

HIAS echoed Corsi's remarks in a brief submitted to Congress in November 1952 asking for sweeping revision of U.S. immigration policy and the creation by the new Congress of a new and independent government agency for the administration of the new law. In its present form, the report read, the McCarran-Walter Act demonstrated that it was "conceived in unjustified fear and distrust for the foreign-born and represents an undemocratic approach to the immigration and naturalization problems."⁵⁴⁵

Conclusion

Italian Americans and American Jews' last attempt to derail the McCarran-Walter Act failed to succeed, and the frustration was palpable. Writing just before Congress overrode President Truman's veto to pass the McCarran-Walter Act, Oscar Handlin concluded that, no matter the outcome, the bill represented "a resounding defeat for all those who have toiled to bring into conformity with present needs and ideals the complex code by which we regulate the admission of immigrants."⁵⁴⁶ Yet immigration reform advocates' mobilization for changes to the country's immigration and refugee policy from the end of World War II through 1952 revealed the emergence of a common ground for an anti-quota system coalition. "On the whole,"

⁵⁴⁴ "Address by Industrial Commissioner Edward Corsi to the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society," October 26, 1952, HIAS Collection, RG 245.8, series 10, folder 289, YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

⁵⁴⁵ "Immigration Agency Registers Initial Appeal to New Congress," *HIAS News Release*, November 6, 1952, HIAS Collection, RG 245.8, series 10, folder 289, YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

⁵⁴⁶ Oscar Handlin, "The Immigration Fight Has Only Begun: Lessons of the McCarran-Walter Setback," *Commentary*, July 1952.

commented the American Jewish Committee reflecting the mobilization against the McCarran-Walter Act, "the national debate over the McCarran bill revealed substantial active or potential support for basic revision of the United States immigration system."⁵⁴⁷ American Jews and Italian Americans began to find their common ground around their conviction that refugee and overpopulation resettlement were equally pressing issues, their belief that immigration and foreign policy intersected, their understanding of the impact of Cold War concerns on their communities and their agendas, and their perception that Americans' fear of new immigrants from Europe reflected their continuing ambiguous status in American society.

The years from 1945 to 1952 were crucial transitional years for both Italian Americans and American Jews in their fight against immigration restriction. When Italian emigration to the United States resumed after World War II, Italian Americans, in a way, became what American Jews of German descent had been for Eastern European Jews at the end of the nineteenth century. Similar to the American Jews of German origin earlier in the century, starting in the late 1940s, Italian Americans felt responsible for the newcomers, and, like German Jews, were aware that Americans' perception of the new immigrants would reflect on them. Therefore, at least until 1960, they chose to mobilize mostly for Italian immigrants, to educate the American public about the new immigrants, and to endorse legislation that specifically benefitted Italian immigration to the United States. The leader in the American Jewish immigration restriction battle, the American Jewish Committee, on the other hand, decided to abandon its exclusive focus on Jewish migration and sought to pursue a broader agenda. In short, its motivations for mobilization for immigration reform changed. Until 1952, AJC's primary motive behind its immigration policy had been to provide refuge to Eastern European Jews in the United States. After 1952, with most of the Jewish Displaced Persons resettled, the

⁵⁴⁷ "Other Groups," *American Jewish Year Book* 54 (1953), 86.

major European reservoirs of Jewish immigration wiped out by the Holocaust, the majority of Jews behind the Iron Curtain not free to emigrate, and Israel's doors open to Jewish immigration, the Committee reframed its stance on immigration reform and committed to reform in the name of democratic principles and the cause of international amity.

Chapter Five

"A Thing of Shreds and Patches:" Challenging Immigration Reform from Within (1952-1960)⁵⁴⁸

Remembering his work for the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith in his 1987 oral interview for a history of the organization, Nathan C. Belth considered the late 1940s and the 1950s as pivotal years in the history of the Jewish community in the United States:

In the 1940s and 1950s, we were in the mainstream and we held on—increasingly secure, increasingly self-confident [...] Jews had truly merged into the majority; we were in thought, aspirations, commitment and status part of the majority. We had lost our minority image because something positive had happened over the years, not because we had been displaced. And what was equally important, the recognized American majority looked upon us no longer as a minority, subject to special treatment, good and bad, but as a part of themselves.⁵⁴⁹

Two other leaders of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, David A. Rose and Maxwell Greenberg, shared Belth's conviction and concurred with Belth that white ethnic minorities made enormous strides after World War II.⁵⁵⁰ Yet, even a cursory look at American Jews and Italian Americans' fight against restriction during the 1950s shows that Rose, Greenberg, and Belth's memories of the era were romanticized. In fact, both groups continued to grapple with persisting stereotypes against them that at times stifled their efforts for immigration reform and integration. The political climate of the 1950s complicated both their role within American society and their mobilization against immigration restriction.

Italian Americans and American Jews' mobilization for more lenient immigration and refugee policies reflected the tension within the national debate on immigration and highlighted

⁵⁴⁸ From Council for Nationalities Services, "Immigration," *National Newsletter*, June 1960, HIAS Collection, RG 245.8, Series 6, folder 77, YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

⁵⁴⁹ Nathan C. Belth, *"Not the Work of a Day:" Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith Oral Memoirs 5* (1987), Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith Collection, MS 365, box 2, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College.

⁵⁵⁰ Maxwell Greenberg, *"Not the Work of a Day" 1* (1987), and David A. Rose, *"Not the Work of a Day" 3* (1987), Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith Collection, MS 365, box 1, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College. Maxwell believed that white minorities had benefited more than African Americans from the war effort, the opportunities that the Armed Forces offered veterans, and the Civil Rights Movement and the passage of fair employment legislation.

the fragility of their newly-achieved status in American society. Throughout the 1950s, the country divided between those who supported immigration reform in the name of America's foreign policy interests, and those who opposed it because of concerns over national security. Italian Americans and American Jews stood in the former group, but they soon realized the limitations of what they could accomplish and understood the vulnerability of their status in American society. As both groups soon discovered, in fact, unless their causes for reform intersected with America's Cold War interests and values, their calls would go unheard. In light of this development, American Jews and Italian Americans re-crafted their message and their agenda on immigration reform to reflect the existing political climate. For both groups, a display of anti-Communism became necessary to pursue their goals and helped them find common ground. At the same time, as both groups emerged as political forces, restrictionists attacked them for safeguarding their interests and endangering the survival of the United States with their calls for more immigration, leaving them to deal with some of the accusations they had faced since the 1890s.

This complex backdrop forced Italian Americans and Jewish Americans to develop a multi-pronged approach to reform. First, Italian and Jewish organizations decided to set aside their pleas for comprehensive reform for the moment and instead to pursue immigration reform through a series of minor laws, amendments, and executive orders. They hoped that this strategy would mitigate the punitive provisions of the existing legislation and demonstrate the untenable nature of the overall immigration policy.⁵⁵¹ Second, Italian and Jewish organizations consciously maintained the public's attention on the shortcomings and the discriminatory nature of the McCarran-Walter Act and of the post-war refugee legislation. They hoped that this

⁵⁵¹ Their "patchwork" efforts were so effective that, by the beginning of the 1960s, two-thirds of the new immigrants were nonquota, half of whom were from outside the Western Hemisphere.

groundwork would pay dividends when Congress finally acknowledged the need to overhaul American immigration policy. Third, they worked to build alliances with politicians and governmental officials in and out of Congress to lobby for reform. Finally, as Italian and Jewish organizations mobilized to promote reform on their own, they also began to create a coalition with other groups interested in immigration reform to present a united front. Although their efforts achieved only limited success in the 1950s, this collaboration laid the foundation for broader inter-ethnic cooperation in the 1960s.

Beyond these common traits, however, American Jews and Italian Americans continued to frame their mobilization against immigration restriction in different terms, as they had done during the struggle for refugee legislation and the opposition to the McCarran-Walter Act. American Jews persisted in positioning themselves as promoters of social justice within a global framework. Significantly, for the American Jewish Committee (AJC) immigration became an aspect of its larger civil rights agenda. Along with immigration and refugee issues, AJC worked for

those rights and privileges [...] guaranteed by law to each individual, regardless of his membership in any ethnic group: the right to work, to education, to housing, to the use of public accommodations, of health and welfare services and facilities, and the right to live in peace and dignity without discrimination, segregation, or distinction based on race, religion, color, ancestry, national origin, or place of birth.⁵⁵²

Moreover, the organization intervened in issues related to subversion, censorship, church and state relations, security and loyalty programs, and anti-Jewish agitation as well as in efforts to cement American-Israeli relations and secure American support for Israel. Continuing efforts to build a coalition that they had begun during the battle for refugee legislation, American Jews worked to create a coalition with other groups to promote their civil rights agenda. Sensitive to the post-war religious revival and the role of Catholic and Protestant voluntary resettlement

⁵⁵² "Civil Rights," *American Jewish Year Book* 57 (1956), 142.

agencies, they actively sought to build alliances with both lay and religious groups and to appeal to their shared anti-Communism to find common ground.⁵⁵³ Because of their overarching commitment to issues of social justice, American Jews' lobbying efforts subsided somewhat after 1952, even though they continued to follow and support efforts to reform immigration legislation.

Whereas Jewish organizations cited social justice and civil rights in their arguments for immigration and refugee reform, Italian Americans framed their efforts as Christian and anti-Communist.⁵⁵⁴ Their staunch anti-Communism offered them an entry into American society and liberated them from the stigma against their ties with Italy. Within the framework of American Cold War policy, their relationship with Italy became an asset. Moreover, continuing a trend started at the end of World War II, they pragmatically focused on advancing reform specifically for Italian migrants. When they settled on family reunion as the centerpiece of their reform agenda, they presented it as a Christian goal that would solve Italy's problems with overpopulation and unemployment and shield Italians from the lure of Communism. Throughout the 1950s, the American Committee on Italian Migration (ACIM) emerged as the most important Italian American organization working for the resettlement of immigrants and refugees and lobbying for reform. ACIM gladly collaborated with other organizations whenever they focused on immigration proposals that would benefit Italian migrants, but it was initially more reluctant to espouse a broader immigration reform agenda. ACIM's close collaboration with Catholic

⁵⁵³ At the same time, American Jews' redirected some of their lobbying efforts to ensure continuous American support for Israel. As they worked toward this goal, American Jews also debated among themselves the advantages and disadvantages of considering themselves American while supporting the State of Israel. Many agreed with Maxwell Greenberg that the newly achieved status in American society made this possible: "it took from 48 to 67 for the mainstream of Jews of this country to come to understand that we could support Israel without being disloyal to the United States; to understand that Israel could be an important ally of the United States in the Middle East; to understand that the United States was potentially threatened by Soviet incursion into the Middle East." Maxwell Greenberg, *"Not the Work of a Day" Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith Oral Memoirs 1* (1987), Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith Collection, MS 365, box 1, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College.

⁵⁵⁴ "A Christian Immigration Policy," *ACIM Dispatch*, March 1954.

organizations and clergy profoundly shaped its immigration reform rhetoric. The Catholic Church's staunch opposition to 'Godless Communism' shielded Italian Americans from any potential suspicions of disloyal and un-American activities and supported their efforts to present their calls for reform as driven by a commitment to the civic and societal advancement of American society and to the improvement of the country's standing in the world.⁵⁵⁵

*"The Immigration Fight Has Only Begun:" Mobilization at the Height of McCarthyism*⁵⁵⁶

McCarran's victory in 1952 was short-lived, as pro-immigration groups immediately began to mobilize to discredit and undermine the act. In the months immediately after the ratification of the McCarran-Walter Act, many prominent lay as well as Catholic, Jewish, and Protestant organizations took a public stand against the existing immigration policy. The National Conference of Catholic Charities, the American Committee on Italian Migration, the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, the Jewish Labor Committee, the Jewish War Veterans, Jewish community councils, HIAS, and the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A all publicly criticized the act. Among the publications that voiced criticisms against the act were the Catholic periodicals *America* and *Commonweal*, the *New York Journal American*, *Collier's*, the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, the *New York Herald Tribune*, the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and the *CIO News*. *ACIM Dispatch*, the newsletter of the American Committee on

⁵⁵⁵ In his Encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* of 1937, Pius XI clearly stated the Vatican's opposition to giving any help to atheist countries. For more details on the Vatican's position, see Rhodes, *Vatican in the Age of the Cold War*, ch.1.

⁵⁵⁶ Oscar Handlin, "The Immigration Fight Has Only Begun: Lessons of the McCarran-Walter Setback," *Commentary*, July 1952.

Italian Migration, published critiques and reactions to the law from a wide spectrum of commentators for five months in a row.⁵⁵⁷

Yet, as pro-immigration groups voiced their criticisms and honed their agendas, supporters of the McCarran-Walter Act put an equal amount of energy in their efforts to defend the Act and extol its advantages. The newspapers in the Hearst and McCormick chains led the effort to discredit critics of the act. The virulent attacks often singled out American Jews. Supporters of the McCarran-Walter Act repeatedly maintained that "attempts to liberalize the act were part of a Marxist-Jewish plot to flood the country with aliens determined to abolish the American form of government."⁵⁵⁸ Tapping into old xenophobic stereotypes, some contended that American Jews had lobbied for the repeal or revision of the quota system because they wished to secure the admission of millions of their co-religionists to dominate the United States. "The fact that Christian church groups, both Catholic and Protestant were also opposed to the new immigration law," the American Jewish Committee noted in its annual report, "was made light of, if not completely ignored."⁵⁵⁹

The charged environment surrounding the battle of opinions over the McCarran-Walter Act convinced many lay and religious pro-immigration organizations to narrow the scope of their agenda for the moment and to focus on the immediate enactment of an emergency refugee

⁵⁵⁷ *ACIM Dispatch* published comments against the McCarran-Walter Act by, among others, President Eisenhower; the National Lutheran Council; the National Council of Catholic Women; the National Board of the Young Women's Christian Association; the Minnesota Council of Churches; the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.; Frank Goldman, president of B'nai B'rith; the Hebrew Sheltering and Immigration Aid Society; Secretary of Labor Maurice J. Tobin; Department of Agriculture statistician Louis H. Bean; Senator Estes Kefauver, Democrat of Tennessee; Council of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences; the New York County Lawyers Association; Clare Boothe Luce, American Ambassador to Italy; Governor Theodore R. McKeldin of Maryland; Senator Hubert Humphrey from Minnesota; and the National Federation of American Shipping. See "The McCarran Law: Views and Comments," *ACIM Dispatch*, January 1953; "The McCarran Law—Views and Comments," *ACIM Dispatch*, February 1953; "McCarran act Denounced by President's Commission—Revision in Full Asked as Resentment against Law Swells," *ACIM Dispatch*, February 1953; "The McCarran Law—Views and Comments," *ACIM Dispatch*, March 1953; "The McCarran Law—Views and Comments," *ACIM Dispatch*, April 1953; and "The McCarran Law—Views and Comments," *ACIM Dispatch*, May 1953.

⁵⁵⁸ "Public Opinion," *American Jewish Year Book* 55 (1954), 65.

⁵⁵⁹ "Appeals to Xenophobia," *American Jewish Year Book* 55 (1954), 73-74.

program on the heels of the expiration of the 1950 DP Act. Believing that Congress would respond more favorably to an appeal for a temporary emergency program rather than to a call for an overhaul of the country's immigration policy, these organizations sought out and endorsed bills that tackled the renewal or the passage of a refugee act. The spring of 1953 saw a flurry of refugee bills. Interestingly, however, the mobilization for the 1953 Refugee Act saw a reversal of the roles of the groups interested in immigration matters: unlike the battle for the 1948 and 1950 DP Acts, Italian Americans were more prominent while Jewish Americans played a secondary role. In light of its pragmatic commitment to Italian migration, ACIM and its Italian American supporters turned their attention to the refugee legislation because the new proposals also sought to address their main concern with Italian migration, Italy's overpopulation problem. In a way, the change also reflected the Citizens' Committee on Displaced Persons and the American Jewish Committee's earlier successful campaign to convince Americans that the displaced persons that the DP Acts sought to help included a large number of Christians and people fleeing the Communist bloc. The shift reflected the AJC's commitment to immigration reform in general but also American Jews' new focus on cementing the United States' relationship with Israel.

The American Committee on Italian Migration and the Catholic hierarchy endorsed Representative Emanuel Celler's Refugee Relief bill, which proposed the admission of 328,000 European refugees on a nonquota basis within the following three years. Both groups immediately mobilized in favor of the bill. In February 1953, Congressman Celler met with Msgr. Edward E. Swanstrom, executive director of War Relief services and director of the National Catholic Resettlement Council, Aloysius J. Wycislo, assistant executive director of War Relief Services, James J. Norris, European director of War Relief Services, and Judge Juvenal

Marchisio, national chairman of the American Committee on Italian Migration, to muster support for his bill. During the meeting, Celler told his guests that the religious persecution unleashed in Eastern Europe gave undeniable urgency to the passage of his bill. Echoing Celler's concern for victims of Communism, Judge Marchisio added that he worried about the possibility of the Italian Communist Party emerging victorious in the coming national elections in Italy in May. In his view, Celler's Refugee Relief Bill, which warranted the admission of 100,000 immigrants from Italy and Trieste, represented the only measure that could "give to the people of Italy a ray of hope that would insure a democratic victory."⁵⁶⁰ Yet, despite the support of the Italian American community and the Catholic hierarchy, Congress refused to endorse Celler's bill, as the majority of congressmen feared that it provided for the entry of too many refugees.

This setback notwithstanding, ACIM continued to look for opportunities to push for a new refugee law. Congress began to consider the possibility of passing a new refugee law only in April 1953, when President Dwight D. Eisenhower requested the admission of 240,000 refugees outside the quotas within the following two years. ACIM immediately mobilized to arrange for a meeting with Eisenhower to express its support for his refugee proposal. Through the intercession of Monsignor Swanstrom, the American Committee on Italian Migration convinced New York Senator Irving M. Ives to organize a meeting with the president to discuss emergency legislation addressing refugee and overpopulation problems.⁵⁶¹ Ives arranged a meeting with Eisenhower at the White House with three leading officials of the American Committee on Italian Migration: national chairman Judge Juvenal Marchisio, national secretary Ross J. Di Lorenzo, and public relations director Joseph Jordan. President Eisenhower told his

⁵⁶⁰ "Celler, Swanstrom, Marchisio discuss Emergency Immigration Legislation—Say Italian Elections and Increased Religious Persecution Make New Law Imperative," *ACIM Dispatch*, March 1953.

⁵⁶¹ "Memorandum re American Committee on Italian Migration," no date, ACIM Collection, series A, box A14, file "AFL," Center for Migration Studies.

guests that he was "most sympathetic" towards some form of emergency relief for overpopulated countries in Europe. He said that he believed that the most immediate possibility of migration legislation lay in the reallocation of the unused quotas to admit a substantial number of Europeans for the years 1950, 1951, and 1952 and in a Joint Resolution in Congress that gave him emergency power to reallocate unused quotas. During the meeting, the attendees also discussed the politically and economically disastrous consequences in the free nations of Western Europe that could result from a policy of apathy or neglect on the part of the United States.⁵⁶²

ACIM's meeting with Eisenhower reflected the rise in political and social prominence of the Italian American community, but it also highlighted ACIM's different approach to mobilization for a liberal immigration policy. Unlike Italian American organizations seeking immigration reform that had preceded it, ACIM pragmatically decided to take on one single issue related to Italian migration at a time and to pursue it until it accomplished its objective.⁵⁶³ ACIM's other peculiarity was its alliance with the Catholic Church, whose rising influence and clear-cut anti-Communism provided the organization with the rhetoric, the connections, and the influence it needed to succeed. The 'law of Christianity,' the 'voice of enlightened conscience,' and the 'instinct of decent humanity' represented the key phrases guiding ACIM's mobilization rhetoric. ACIM could rely on the Catholic hierarchy for organizational and financial support in its campaigns, fundraising activities, and educational programs, and each diocese appointed a priest consultant to assist the local ACIM chapter in its activities; to publicize ACIM's agenda,

⁵⁶² "Eisenhower discusses Migration with ACIM leaders—Conference Arranged at White House by Senator Ives," *ACIM Dispatch*, April 1953. Most prospective Italian migrants were refugees from Italy's former colonies, namely Ethiopia, Libya, Eritrea, and Italian Somaliland. In addition to the approximately 200,000 Italian refugees from Africa, there were also approximately 115,000 displaced persons from Venezia Giulia and Dalmatia, about 125,000 refugees who had returned to Italy from the European countries to which they had migrated before the outbreak of the war, and about 5,000 refugees from the Dodecanese Islands who had been displaced after the islands were assigned to Greece by the 1947 Peace Treaty with Italy.

⁵⁶³ "ACIM's First Goal Achieved," *ACIM Dispatch*, July-August 1953.

campaigns, and fundraising activities in their parishes; and to inform their superiors of the success of ACIM's initiatives.⁵⁶⁴ The most involved member of the American Catholic Church in ACIM was by far Monsignor Edward E. Swanstrom.⁵⁶⁵ He had important connections with key religious and political figures, shaped the formulation of the organization's agenda, suggested valid potential members, and collaborated with ACIM leaders on important initiatives against restriction. He also secured the support of a prominent base of Italian American Catholics in the United States. Finally, similarly to some of the major American Jewish organizations, ACIM adopted English as its language of communication. Unlike many of the Italian American publications, *ACIM Dispatch*, the organization's magazine, was completely in English. This choice helped the organization to secure a wider support base among second- and third-generation Italian Americans and, more importantly, to widen their audience to include people outside the Italian American community.

At the same time, cognizant of the old anti-Catholic and papist arguments, ACIM was careful to reassure the broader public that its activism was hardly an intrusion into United States foreign policy. Bishop Cushing, an ACIM supporter, explained:

We are not interested in becoming involved in Old World politics, but it is entirely proper and praiseworthy, I repeat, that we should seek to do something great and good for Italy

⁵⁶⁴ In a letter to his priests, Reverend Joseph Burke observed: "it would please me greatly if you would call the attention of your parishioners to the importance of this Christian program [the Refugee Relief Act program] and instruct them in the methods of providing assurances for housing and employment for the prospective immigrants...It is our sincere hope that this work may flourish and bring forth fruits worthy of the great Italian heritage, of which our country has been the beneficiary for many years." "Memorandum re American Committee on Italian Migration," no date, ACIM Collection, series A, box A14, file "AFL," Center for Migration Studies.

⁵⁶⁵ Swanstrom was born in New York City in 1903. In 1928 he was ordained to the priesthood, after which he pursued his studies at the New York School of Social Work. Before joining the relief agency he was Associate Director of Catholic Charities in Brooklyn. In 1943 he became Assistant executive Director of War Relief Services and in 1947 was made Executive Director of the overseas relief needs of the afflicted populations of Europe and Asia. Pope John Paul II eventually elevated him to the rank of Auxiliary Bishop to Cardinal Spellman because of his work with the refugees. Other members of the Church hierarchy who were involved included Cardinal Samuel Stritch of Chicago, Reverend Richard Cushing of Boston, Reverend Edward F. Hoban of Cleveland, Reverend John F. O'Hara of Philadelphia, and Cardinal Francis Spellman of New York.

in helping her solve the basic problem [overpopulation] which plagues her progress toward the solution of most of her other problems.⁵⁶⁶

Christian ideology legitimized ACIM's work and agenda and shielded its activities from any suspicions of disloyalty and communist conspiracy. The equation of good Christian behavior with America's interests reframed Italian Americans' mobilization and cast it into a more benevolent and acceptable light for the American government and people.

The successful outreach that ACIM achieved within just a year of its existence attested to the soundness of its strategy.⁵⁶⁷ In 1953, thanks to the extensive financial and technical support from the National Catholic Resettlement Council, the organization could already boast eighty-five chapters spread across the United States; 40,000 subscriptions to the *ACIM Dispatch*; 125,000 people in key areas around the country who received ACIM's brochure outlining the main objectives of the organization; an educational campaign that reached 158,370,000 people through publicity in major newspapers and 47,250,000 people through appearances on radio and television; and finally, 57,270 miles traveled by ACIM leaders, covering 100 cities throughout the country to give important addresses and conferences to sensitize people to the subject of immigration. The swift initial success also guaranteed that other organizations and individuals endorsed ACIM. Among its supporters, ACIM could, by then, count many national and local labor organizations, women's groups, and prominent Italian American politicians and professionals.

⁵⁶⁶ "Cushing Lauds Migration Work at ACIM Annual Dinner," *ACIM Dispatch*, Dec. 1953 – Jan. 1954.

⁵⁶⁷ The only other major Italian American organization was the Order of the Sons of Italy in America (OSIA), founded in Philadelphia in 1905. OSIA opposed immigration restriction from the beginning and assisted immigrants who had problems with their status, especially right after the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act was ratified. Its initiatives and efforts, however, were based more on personal relationships and its leaders never formally tried to organize coherently the various chapters into a compact front to oppose restriction. When ACIM was created, OSIA was suspicious of its intentions at first and not willing to cooperate. It was only after ACIM's successful campaign in support of the 1953 Refugee Relief Act that OSIA began to collaborate with ACIM and participate more actively in its activities.

In May 1953, ACIM, confident of the support and the network it had created, began to rally support for Senator Watkins's bill. Modeled on Eisenhower's suggestions in his inaugural address, the bill allowed for the entry into the United States of 240,000 refugees and nationals from overpopulated countries, 75,000 of whom would be Italians, outside the quotas. Major religious organizations immediately endorsed the bill and mobilized for its passage. ACIM organized a letter-writing campaign, using the May issue of *ACIM Dispatch* to invite its members to write to their congressmen to advocate for the necessity of emergency legislation to admit more people outside the quotas and to write to President Eisenhower to express their appreciation for his interest in this legislation.⁵⁶⁸ Responding to ACIM's call, Italian Americans sent more than 100,000 messages to urge emergency legislation for refugees and for people from overpopulated countries to the members of the Senate Subcommittee on Immigration and to President Eisenhower.⁵⁶⁹ Meanwhile, representatives of thirty-two ethnic organizations, including ACIM, "interested in aiding refugees from Communist-controlled countries and in relieving overcrowded conditions in free Europe" met in New York City to pledge their support for the Watkins Bill. The New York City meeting exemplified the central role that the Catholic hierarchy played in the mobilization in favor of the Watkins Bill as most of the organizations that attended the meeting were affiliated with a Catholic agency; Edward O'Connor, former director of the War Relief Services for the National Catholic Welfare Conference, presented an analysis of the bill to the delegates; and, highlighting a shift in Italian Americans' fight against restriction, Monsignor Edward E. Swanstrom presented ACIM's resolution urging the passage of the bill.

⁵⁶⁸ "Urgent to Our Readers!," *ACIM Dispatch*, May 1953.

⁵⁶⁹ "Washington Flooded by Letters and Wires from ACIM Chapters," *ACIM Dispatch*, June 1953.

Swanstrom acted in his capacity as executive director of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, of which ACIM was a member agency.⁵⁷⁰

When the congressional hearings on the Watkins Bill began at the beginning of June, religious and ethnic agencies lined up to press for the passage of the bill. On June 5, 1953, even before the hearings got under way, the major Jewish organizations sent a joint written statement to the House Judiciary Committee to encourage legislators to consider the long-range aspect of the immigration problem, emphasizing that the elimination of the national origins quota system was essential for the United States to meet emergency situations. On June 8, 1953, major Catholic and Protestant organizations testified before the House Judiciary Committee in favor of the Watkins Bill, despite differences among them on some aspects of the legislation.⁵⁷¹ Judge Juvenal Marchisio, ACIM's national chairman, was among the witnesses at the Senate Subcommittee on Immigration and Naturalization's hearings. "Stressing that the hour is late in the crucial Italian elections scheduled for June 7th and 8th," Marchisio urged the passage of the bill and "declared that the psychological impact on the Italians would be tremendous in strengthening the forces of Italian democracy."⁵⁷² During his testimony, Marchisio significantly invoked America's self-interest and the need for admitting Europeans who could fill jobs in American industries that were experiencing a shortage of workers.

Despite the widespread support that the Watkins bill received from immigration reformers, its passage also showed the lingering hostility and stereotypes towards immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe. To Italian Americans' surprise, when the bill came up for debate in the Senate, Senator McCarran violently objected to the inclusion of Italian nationals in the provisions of the bill. In response to his objections, ACIM invited the organization's chapters

⁵⁷⁰ "Watkins Bill Backed by 32 Nationality Groups," *ACIM Dispatch*, June 1953.

⁵⁷¹ "Refugee Relief Act of 1953," *American Jewish Year Book* 55 (1954), 67-68.

⁵⁷² "Judge Marchisio Testifies at Senate Hearings on Watkins Bill," *ACIM Dispatch*, June 1953.

across the nation to voice their dissent and write to Senator McCarran. In addition to the letters of protest that each chapter sent, ACIM national chairman Marchisio sent a telegram to McCarran as well:

The American Committee on Italian Migration representing the sentiments of more than six million Americans of Italian origin and right-thinking Americans not animated by racial or religious bias resents the intolerance manifested in your insistence to exclude Italian nationals from the provisions of the Refugee Bill. Your stand on this matter violates every basic principle of tolerance and freedom from prejudice which has made the United States the leader of the free world and is a slap in the face to all Americans of Italian origin who have contributed so much to the welfare and progress of the United States and whose record of devotion, sacrifice and service in the armed forces bespeaks true Americanism.⁵⁷³

ACIM's protest succeeded, at least in part. The final bill included visas for Italians as well, but the number of admissible Italians shrank from the original 75,000 to 60,000. Of the 60,000 visas the law reserved for Italian migrants, 45,000 were for refugees of Italian origin from former Italian colonies, Venezia Giulia, and Trieste, and the remaining 15,000 were for Italian nationals.⁵⁷⁴

Despite the reduction in the number of visas reserved for Italians, many Italian Americans considered the passage of the 1953 Refugee Relief Act a testament to the success of their involvement in the campaign in favor of the bill. ACIM was particularly elated by the victory, as it accomplished the first goal that the committee had established when it was founded, namely to seek emergency legislation to admit Italians from overcrowded Italy into the United States, over and above the quota. The passage of the act also reflected the importance of the organization's partnership with the Catholic Church and Italian Americans' ascendant political influence. ACIM immediately acknowledged that the passage of the Bill "was the culmination of numerous efforts of the National Catholic Resettlement Council [...] as far back as the pre-

⁵⁷³ "ACIM Protests McCarran Opposition to Italian Nationals," *ACIM Dispatch*, July-August 1953.

⁵⁷⁴ Lieberman, *Are Americans Extinct?*, 68-69.

Presidential election days when Judge Juvenal Marchisio, ACIM National Chairman, spoke to the Honorable Winthrop Aldrich, who subsequently discussed the matter with General Eisenhower and got a sympathetic reaction for consideration after the election."⁵⁷⁵ Moreover, in August 1953, ACIM leaders met with President Eisenhower during his visit to New York City to thank him in person for "the effective role he played in the securing of emergency migration legislation" and told him that the executive board "had unanimously voted to name him Outstanding Humanitarian of 1953."⁵⁷⁶ Finally, the mobilization that ACIM mustered for the passage of the law offered its leadership two important lessons to keep in mind, namely that Congress continued to be more inclined to consider refugee rather than immigration legislation and that some of the stereotypes that mainstream American had of them still persisted.

Working to Overcome Imperfect Legislation: The 1953 Refugee Relief Act

The elation over the passage of the 1953 Refugee Relief Act was short lived. Both Italian and Jewish resettlement agencies soon realized the many shortcomings of the law. Disregarding the problems that emerged from the 1948 Displaced Persons Act, the new law in fact retained the same tight screening requirements, including the prerequisite that applicants could not receive a visa unless they provided complete information about themselves for at least two years prior to submitting their visa application, the provision requiring refugees to include assurances of

⁵⁷⁵ "ACIM's First Goal Achieved—New Emergency Legislation Permits Entry of 60,000 Italians, Among Others," *ACIM Dispatch*, July-August 1953.

⁵⁷⁶ "ACIM Leaders Meet with Eisenhower in New York," *ACIM Dispatch*, July-August 1953. Significantly, President Eisenhower sent the newly appointed Assistant Secretary of Labor, Rocco Carmine Siciliano, to receive the award in his name at the annual \$100-a-plate dinner. Eisenhower was only one of the many politicians who received an ACIM award or was invited to their annual dinners and galas. For both Italian and Jewish organizations, these annual events became a symbol of the political influence that both groups achieved during the fifties. Similarly to ACIM, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, for example, began to host the Dinner with Presidents. Starting with Truman, the organization invited the sitting President of the United States to its annual anniversary dinner. "Siciliano to Accept Award to Eisenhower to ACIM Dinner-Assistant Secretary of Labor is First Italo-American and Youngest Appointed by President," *ACIM Dispatch*, November 1953; Benjamin R. Epstein in *Not the Work of a Day* *Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith Oral Memoirs* 1 (1987), Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith Collection, MS 365, box 1, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College.

employment and housing, and the requirement of certification from the United States Employment Service.⁵⁷⁷ Moreover, the number of visa applications from Italians, Dutch, and Greeks with relatives in the United States far outnumbered Italian, Dutch, and Greek refugees seeking a visa. As early as February 1954, ACIM also complained that the high hopes that the passage of the act had generated were fading fast "because of constant delays, needless administration pitfalls and many complex 'safeguards' in the name of 'security.'"⁵⁷⁸ The frustration with bureaucratic ineffectiveness escalated when a State Department spokesman, commenting on its decision not to request a supplemental budget to finance the additional screening requirements of the 1953 Act, said that "in any event screening requirements to prevent subversives from taking advantage of the refugee operation [were] time-consuming and would have prevented issuance of more than a relatively few visas in the immediate future."⁵⁷⁹

ACIM's response focused on the need for job and housing assurances, following a strategy on which many Jewish agencies had relied since the end of the nineteenth century. ACIM launched a countrywide campaign to raise awareness of the issue among Americans, while appealing to Italian Americans to secure assurances for Italian immigrants who qualified under the 1953 Refugee Relief Act.⁵⁸⁰ Reverend William Kelly's appeal fully captured the dual goals of ACIM's campaign:

The average American finds it hard and sometimes impossible to understand overseas population pressure problems because there is, thanks to God, no counterpart of these

⁵⁷⁷ "Editorial: Cut the Red Tape," *ACIM Dispatch*, May 1954.

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid.* See also "Machinery of Refugee Act Stalled by Red-Tape," *ACIM Dispatch*, February 1954; "Machinery of Refugee Program Still Stalled—Only a Trickle of Immigrants Admitted Since Law was Passed," *ACIM Dispatch*, March 1954; "Editorial: Cut the Red Tape," *ACIM Dispatch*, May 1954.

⁵⁷⁹ "Machinery of Refugee Act Stalled by Red-Tape," *ACIM Dispatch*, February 1954.

⁵⁸⁰ Horatio Tocco, "Requirements for Sponsorship of New Italian Immigrants," *ACIM Dispatch*, December 1953-January 1954; "ACIM Launches Nationwide Campaign to Obtain Job and Housing Assurances—More than 80 Chapters Alerted to Obtain 45 Thousand as Soon as Possible," *ACIM Dispatch*, April 1954.

problems in America's experience. Living space is a tragically important consideration of many economically poor nations such as Italy.⁵⁸¹

The campaign to secure assurances once again benefited from the full support of Monsignor Swanstrom, who, as chairman of the National Catholic Resettlement Council, reassured ACIM that it would have the full cooperation of the agencies he headed. In addition to ACIM, in fact, the National Catholic Resettlement Council included agencies from "35 other racial, nationality, and religious groups." Thanks to Swanstrom's promise, ACIM's 80 chapters could now count on 1,500 parishes in every state of the union to obtain 45,000 job and housing assurances for Italian immigrants under the 1953 Refugee Relief Act.⁵⁸² Throughout the entire life of the 1953 Refugee Relief Act, ACIM leadership visited Italian American communities across the country to find potential sponsors. Moreover, starting in March 1955, *ACIM Dispatch* published extracts of emigration dossiers with photos of individuals and families who had filed petitions to come to the United States and needed sponsors who could help them to meet the provisions of the Refugee Relief Act of 1953.⁵⁸³

The Jewish community responded to the crisis that emerged from administering the various refugee acts with a merger of the three major Jewish resettlement agencies. In 1954, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), the seventy-year old migration agency, merged with the United Service for New Americans and the Joint Distribution Committee offices abroad in order to provide for a flexible, expert, national and Jewish international migration service, a unified agency representing the entire Jewish community which [could] speak with a

⁵⁸¹ William F. Kelly, "Assurances Vital for Success of Refugee Act," *ACIM Dispatch*, March 1954.

⁵⁸² "ACIM Launches Nationwide Campaign to Obtain Job and Housing Assurances—More than 80 Chapters Alerted to Obtain 45 Thousand as Soon as Possible," *ACIM Dispatch*, April 1954.

⁵⁸³ "You Can Sponsor one of these Cases," *ACIM Dispatch*, March 1955; "You can Sponsor One of these Cases," *ACIM Dispatch*, May 1955; "You Can Sponsor One of these Cases," *ACIM Dispatch*, April 1955; "The Urgent Need for Assurances," *ACIM Dispatch*, June 1955; "Visit to Major Cities Nets Assurances—Fr. Donanzan on Tour 5 Weeks to Stimulate Sponsorship," *ACIM Dispatch*, June 1955; "You Can Sponsor One of These Cases," *ACIM Dispatch*, June 1955; "Procedure for Sponsoring Italian Refugees," *ACIM Dispatch*, June 1955; "ACIM Obtains Assurances for More than 1,000 Visas," *ACIM Dispatch*, September 1955; "Over 30,000 Visas Issued to Italians Under Refugee Act," *ACIM Dispatch*, October 1955.

more powerful voice than can separate individual agencies, no matter how they cooperate with each other.⁵⁸⁴

The merger created the United HIAS Service, which had offices and committees in more than forty countries around the world, eliminated any overlap with other agencies, and capitalized on the expertise and connections of the three previously distinct agencies. The new agency emerged from the fear that it was "a time of great and dangerous urgency in many parts of the world for Jews" who looked to Jews in the United States "for aid in distress."⁵⁸⁵ It was also the product of the American Jewish community's awareness that migration represented a much more technical and complicated process than ever before and that to be successful it required "careful selection and planning with the family and the community of destination, as well as the constant representations to the governments involved."⁵⁸⁶ Yet, more than anything else, the merger represented a major accomplishment within American Jewish community in matters of immigration. With its broad scope, the United HIAS Service quickly prided itself on being "the only Jewish international migration agency with the Jews of every community in the United States solidly behind it and believing in it."⁵⁸⁷

The United HIAS Service worked to relocate Jewish refugees both in the United States and in other countries around the world, while continuing to advocate for changes to the law. Outside the United States, the relocation process to countries like China, Europe, Australia, Israel, Latin America, and South America encountered delays almost at every level and was often as convoluted and expensive as resettlement to the United States.⁵⁸⁸ In the United States,

⁵⁸⁴ Ben Touster, "The 'New Look' for Jewish Immigration Services in the New Year," no date, HIAS Collection, RG 245.8, Series 4, folder 12a, YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

⁵⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸⁶ "Report of Sessions of United HIAS Service," March 1955, HIAS Collection, RG 245.8, series 4, folder 15, YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

⁵⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸⁸ Ben Touster, "The 'New Look' for Jewish Immigration Services in the New Year," no date, HIAS Collection, RG 245.8, series 4, folder 12a, YIVO, Center for Jewish History; "European Operations," May 24, 1955, HIAS

the United HIAS Service, like ACIM, worked to secure work and housing assurances that qualified under the 1953 Refugee Relief Act and provided technical guidance to local communities for their integration, rehabilitation, and naturalization efforts once the refugees arrived. More importantly, its leadership considered United HIAS Service as "a significant instrument in implementing citizen action [...] a necessary and useful part of our political and cultural life, national, as well as local."⁵⁸⁹ Like ACIM, United HIAS Service repeatedly criticized the 1953 Refugee Relief Act and the McCarran-Walter Act and received the endorsements from many of the same politicians that praised ACIM for its work, from President Eisenhower to Senator Irving M. Ives, as well as from Senator Herbert H. Lehman, New York City mayor Robert F. Wagner, and Commissioner of Immigration Joseph M. Swing. Reflecting a stance similar to other organizations interested in immigration reform, United HIAS Service connected immigration reform to the need to foster family reunion, provide asylum to refugees, to strengthen American foreign policy, and to guarantee civil liberties to all people.⁵⁹⁰

In August 1954, after protests and criticisms of the shortcoming of the 1953 Refugee Relief Act, Congress decided to amend it. The amendment authorized the State Department to issue visas eliminating the division contained in the 1953 version of the law between refugees and those with relatives in the United States. The revision came with a caveat, however. At McCarran's insistence, the new law required that both refugees and migrants with relatives in the United States applying for a visa needed to show evidence of a job and housing to be granted a visa.⁵⁹¹

Collection, RG 245.8, series 4, folder 13, YIVO, Center for Jewish History; and "United States Operations," May 24, 1955, HIAS Collection, RG 245.8, series 4, folder 13, YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

⁵⁸⁹ "Report of Sessions of United HIAS Service," March 1955, HIAS Collection, RG 245.8, series 4, folder 15, YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

⁵⁹⁰ Ann Petluck, "Draft of Statement on Immigration," April 28, 1958, HIAS Collection, RG 245.8, series 4, folder 16.

⁵⁹¹ Lieberman, *Are Americans Extinct?*, 115.

The amendment did little to placate criticisms of the act, as it created rather than eliminated new challenges.⁵⁹² ACIM, HIAS, and other groups working on refugee resettlement, in fact, warned that the rise in the number of visas available for immigrants with relatives in the United States that the amendment opened up meant "a reduction [...] for the refugees, escapees and other classifications of aliens whom the law was intended to help."⁵⁹³ Confirming its somber predictions, in September 1955, ACIM reported that of the 20,000 Italians already admitted to the United States only approximately 600 were refugees, the remaining balance being relatives of American citizens. "It is the wish and the hope of both the United States and Italian governments," read an article in *ACIM Dispatch*, "that of the total 60,000, a minimum of 10,000 be refugees. ACIM is working towards this goal."⁵⁹⁴ Government representatives' efforts to extol the advantages of the act for Italian migrants did little to assuage ACIM's criticisms. After reminding *ACIM Dispatch* readers that visas accorded to Italians represented nearly 60 per cent of the worldwide total of Refugee Program visas issued, Pierce J. Gerety, Deputy Administrator for the Refugee Relief Program, added:

Knowing well the deep concern of President Eisenhower and of Ambassador Luce for the success of this emergency legislation, the significant part it plays in American foreign policy, and the humanitarian values it has for meeting refugee problems and over-population distress, I and my staff shall continue our efforts toward the fullest possible attainment of all objectives of the Act.⁵⁹⁵

Gerety's article boasted another important achievement of his bureau's administration of the program. By October 14, 1955, 32,500 of the 60,000 visas allocated to Italy by the Refugee Act had been issued. Yet, the news was far from promising for Italian Americans. The number meant that, with the program expiring on December 31, 1956, fewer than half of the visas

⁵⁹² "Refugee Relief Act," *American Jewish Year Book* 57 (1956).

⁵⁹³ "Refugee Act Amended to Admit More Relatives—Fewer Refugees Will Enter As a Result," *ACIM Dispatch*, October 1954.

⁵⁹⁴ "Italian Quota in Refugee Program More than One-Third Completed," *ACIM Dispatch*, September 1955.

⁵⁹⁵ Pierce J. Gerety, "Success of Refugee Relief Program in Italy Assured," *ACIM Dispatch*, November 1955.

available for Italians remained to fill. By February 1956, Gerety, in his second article for *ACIM Dispatch*, announced that the number of applications for visas from Italians eligible under the 1953 Refugee Act already exceeded the allotted 60,000 quotas.⁵⁹⁶

The debate about the red tape in the administration of the 1953 Refugee Relief Act attracted further public attention when Scott McLeod, head of the Bureau of Security and Consular Affairs and Administrator of the Refugee Relief Program, fired Edward J. Corsi, his Special Assistant for Refugee and Migration Problems. McLeod argued that Corsi's dismissal was necessary because of his public comments criticizing the administration of the law and because of his suspicion that Representative Walter's charges that Corsi had past communist affiliations were true. Walter had asked for Corsi's dismissal as a Department of State consultant because "he had shown contempt of Congress, addiction to falsehood, and scorn of the law."⁵⁹⁷ Corsi denied the charges and retorted that "the security gang" around Secretary of State John Foster Dulles was administering the Refugee Relief Act unsympathetically.⁵⁹⁸ In truth, Corsi and McLeod disliked each other even before they began working together. In discussing his appointment as Special Assistant for Refugee and Migration Problems with Maxwell Rabb, one of the president's assistants who offered Corsi his job, Corsi told him that "in the part of the country I came from McLeod's name was used to frighten babies," because of his bad reputation among people familiar with immigration problems.⁵⁹⁹

Following the uproar that resulted from Corsi's firing, Senator William Langer, chairman of the Subcommittee on Refugees and Escapees of the Senate Judiciary Committee, announced public hearings from April 15 to 23, 1955, on Corsi's charges and on the administration of the act

⁵⁹⁶ "Applications for Italian Visas in Refugee Act Now Exceed 60,000 Quota—Expected Increase in Quota Permits the Filing of New Cases," *ACIM Dispatch*, February 1956.

⁵⁹⁷ "Rep. Walter Terms Corsi Unfit for Job," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 16, 1955.

⁵⁹⁸ Edward Corsi, "My Ninety Days in Washington," *The Reporter* 12, no. 9 (May 1955).

⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

in general. Neither the hearings nor the public protests reversed the decision to terminate Corsi's position or removed the administration of the refugee program from the jurisdiction of Scott McLeod.⁶⁰⁰ After his dismissal, Corsi took advantage of the uproar generated by his firing and went on a tour across the country to speak on the impact of international tensions on the movement of people and to advocate fundamental changes in the approach toward basic immigration laws as well as toward the admission of refugees. During his tour, he spoke at a rally against the McCarran-Walter Act at Carnegie Hall in New York City in June 1955 and broadcasted his criticism of the McCarran-Walter Act at the New York City radio station WOV.⁶⁰¹

The Corsi affaire, as many referred to it at the time, created a considerable stir within the Italian American community. Luigi Criscuolo, the conservative and former Fascist sympathizer editor of *The Rubicon*, charged that the Corsi affaire revealed that "Italians are made to be the instrument of a plot to flood this country with Communists, who were the real reason why the McCarran-Walter Act had to be so drastic as to even penalize the decent Italians who wanted to come here." According to Criscuolo, the episode also revealed that "the insinuations made to the effect that Corsi had been adopted by Jewish interests in this country was not mere guesswork."⁶⁰² It was most likely because of this episode, and the negative publicity associated with it in a climate of rampant anti-Communist phobia, that ACIM refrained from participating in the Carnegie Hall protest, where Corsi was one of the keynote speakers, against the McCarran-Walter Act.

⁶⁰⁰ "Refugee Relief Act," *American Jewish Year Book* 57 (1956), 178.

⁶⁰¹ American Immigration Conference, *News* 1, no. 4 (August 1955) and Luigi Criscuolo, "Post Mortems by Edward Corsi," *The Rubicon* 14, no. 11 (July 1955).

⁶⁰² Luigi Criscuolo, "Post Mortems by Edward Corsi," *The Rubicon* 14, no. 11 (July 1955).

The Corsi affaire succeeded at least in grabbing President Eisenhower's attention. A few weeks after the scandal, Eisenhower acted on Corsi's allegations and urged Congress to intervene legislatively to change the administration of the act and to redistribute the unused quotas. The president's proposals echoed those for which resettlement agencies had long advocated, including the transfer of unused quotas from some categories to others; the elimination of the requirement of a complete two-year history of each visa applicant; and the recognition of the job and housing assurances given by voluntary agencies. Many of the Italian Americans and Jewish Americans' political allies mobilized after the president's call to action but to no avail. Senator Watkins and Senator Ives immediately incorporated the president's proposals into a bill and rallied the support of fifteen other Republican senators. Senator Langer held hearings on June 8, 1955, on this and other proposals that suggested possible amendments to the Refugee Relief Act. However, despite the president's recommendations and the widespread public expression of dissatisfaction with the existing law, none of the proposed amendments ever reached the House or the Senate floors for debate.⁶⁰³

If Italian Americans and American Jews faced an uphill battle to amend refugee legislation, they had to reckon with even more challenges when they focused on immigration reform, as Eisenhower's efforts to push for reform after his re-election demonstrated. During his campaign for his second term as president, Eisenhower launched a new attack on the quota system and called for the use of the 1950 census, the increase of the yearly quota to 220,000, the redistribution of the unused quotas, and the release of the quotas of countries mortgaged by the Displaced Persons Acts.⁶⁰⁴ Once again, two politicians who shared American Jews and Italian Americans' calls for immigration reform tried to act on the president's call for changes in the

⁶⁰³ "Refugee Relief Act," *American Jewish Year Book* 57 (1956), 178-179.

⁶⁰⁴ Lieberman, *Are Americans Extinct?*, 116-117, and "Edward Corsi Appointed Special Assistant for Refugee and Migration Problems," *ACIM Dispatch*, February 1955.

existing immigration policy. Senators Lyndon B. Johnson of Texas and Everett McKinley Dirksen of Illinois suggested to attaching to another pending immigration bill a compromise amendment to redistribute unused quotas. Despite widespread support in the Senate, Dirksen and Johnson's proposal raised immediate opposition from Senator James Eastland of Mississippi, who had replaced McCarran as chairman of the subcommittee on immigration. The Senate passed the Johnson-Dirksen compromise amendment despite Eastland's criticisms, and, for the first time in twenty-two years, many immigration reform advocates felt that "a serious dent in the substantive basis of national origins had been made in the Senate."⁶⁰⁵ Yet, despite New York Republican Kenneth B. Keating's attempt to secure House approval on the last day of the second session of the 84th Congress, it was too late for the House to act upon it.⁶⁰⁶ The battle remained far from its end, but ACIM showed its appreciation for Senator Dirksen's efforts to help Italian migration with an ACIM award at a dinner with more than a thousand guests organized by the Chicago chapter.⁶⁰⁷

More important than the congressional battles over immigration reform, the debate surrounding Johnson and Dirksen's proposal exemplified old and new obstacles and stereotypes that Italian Americans and American Jews had to endure as they sought immigration reform. In his discussion of the amendment, Senator Eastland denounced the fact that the use of the unused quotas would

change the cultural pattern of our immigration system from northern and western Europeans to southern and eastern Europeans [...] Ours is a constitutional republic, built upon concepts stemming from cultures which reflect themselves in the historic composition of our population. If we transfer the pattern of our immigration to countries and peoples who have historically maintained a totalitarian concept of government, it will

⁶⁰⁵ Lieberman, *Are Americans Extinct?*, 117.

⁶⁰⁶ "Bills to Carry Out Eisenhower's Proposals on Immigration Introduced," *ACIM Dispatch*, March 1956, and "Immigration," *American Jewish Year Book* 58 (1957), 140-141.

⁶⁰⁷ "Senators Dirksen and Douglas to be Honored for Help to Italian Migration," *ACIM Dispatch*, January 1958, and "Senators Dirksen and Douglas Receive ACIM Award at Chicago Dinner," *ACIM Dispatch*, February 1958.

only be a matter of time until our Republic will veer from its traditions of freedom and democracy.⁶⁰⁸

In addition to raising the old specter of the danger that immigrants posed to the survival of American institutions, critics of immigration reform also continued to use the fear of communism to rally resistance against any change to the country's immigration policy. Robert C. Alexander, former Assistant Administrator for the Refugee Relief Program, provided solid ammunition to the opponents of immigration reform in Congress. In a 1956 article for *Law and Contemporary Problems*, he argued that the recent discovery that a member of the American Communist Party had been actively involved in the National Committee to Repeal the McCarran Act demonstrated the dangers that immigration reform posed to the American way of life. "This does not mean, of course," he continued, "that all those who criticize the McCarran-Walter Act are Communists, or even Communist sympathizers, but it should cause patriotic Americans who have no political ax to grind to ponder before joining any movement to attack the law."⁶⁰⁹

Alexander was not alone in his efforts to charge critics of the existing immigration policy with Communist affiliations. As late as 1960, Representative Walter himself repeatedly insisted that Communists had successfully infiltrated a large number of churches across the country and persuaded them to endorse immigration reform.⁶¹⁰

In addition to lingering fears of an imminent immigrant and Communist invasion, the American Jewish Committee suspected that the absence of a public debate similar to the one on refugee legislation complicated any campaign for immigration reform. To their surprise, the McCarran-Walter Act continued to attract little public concern, despite Eisenhower's repeated warnings against its shortcomings. At its 1955 annual meeting, the American Jewish Committee

⁶⁰⁸ Quoted in Lieberman, *Are Americans Extinct?*, 117.

⁶⁰⁹ Alexander, Robert C., "In Defense of the McCarran-Walter Act," *Law and Contemporary Problems* 21, no. 2 (Spring 1956): 386.

⁶¹⁰ Lieberman, *Are Americans Extinct?*, 107.

adopted a resolution that commended the President's recommendation during his State of the Union message on January 6, 1955, that Congress rectify the discriminatory features of the McCarran-Walter Act and the cumbersome, unworkable provisions of the Refugee Relief Act. Similar to ACIM with its political allies, the AJC praised "those members of Congress of each political party who, during the last session, joined in sponsoring bills to improve these laws."⁶¹¹ Yet, a year after Eisenhower's call to action, the AJC realized that the lack of public concern over the need to revise the basic United States immigration laws failed to rally enough Congressional support for sweeping reform. Ultimately, "only a few private bills, a bill for the relief of shepherders and certain other legislation of a very limited and specialized nature, were seriously considered by Congress," lamented the American Jewish Committee.⁶¹²

ACIM was equally worried about the lack of public interest in immigration reform. In response to this problem, the organization intensified its efforts to keep Italy's overpopulation problem alive in the public's mind as a way to prepare Americans and Congress to consider Italy as a primary beneficiary when the country would be ready to tackle immigration policy reform. It also used Americans' fear of Communism to continue to reframe the immigration reform debate in terms of American foreign policy interests. Starting in October 1953, *ACIM Dispatch* regularly published articles that focused on Italy's overpopulation problem and warned of the danger that it posed to the survival of democracy in the country and the entire West. ACIM recruited powerful allies to discuss these issues in its monthly publication. Following a strategy that American Jews had adopted during the fight for refugee legislation, the authors of the opinion pieces included prominent political and religious personalities from outside the Italian American community, namely Clare Boothe Luce, American ambassador to Italy; Massachusetts

⁶¹¹ "American Immigration Conference," *News* 1, no. 2 (March 1955).

⁶¹² "Immigration and Nationality (McCarran-Walter) Act," *American Jewish Year Book* 57 (1956).

Senator John F. Kennedy; Monsignor John O'Grady; and Manlio Brosio, Italian Ambassador to the United States. This educational program, ACIM believed, represented the best strategy to "bring about a state of mind in this country where we will be able to have decent immigration laws that will permit the citizens of any country to come in—not be discriminated against—but to be received in true charity and justice."⁶¹³ The ACIM headquarters also called upon its chapters across the country to organize educational and informational programs in collaboration with local and fraternal organizations in industry, labor, and religious groups. In its effort to educate Americans, ACIM also relied on the assiduous presence of a collaborating priest within the circumscription of every ACIM chapter around the country. The pulpit often proved to be the most effective instrument to inform churchgoers and ask for their assistance.⁶¹⁴

ACIM's strongest ally in its educational campaign were members of the Catholic Church who wholeheartedly espoused ACIM's commitment to raise awareness about Italy's overpopulation problem among Americans and helped the organization popularize its agenda. Archbishop Richard J. Cushing of Boston repeatedly admonished that too many Americans ignored how essential Italy was and needed to remain to the interests of the West. Reiterating ACIM's position on that matter, Cushing explained:

There are even more practical considerations of a contemporary kind behind the contention that whatever strengthens Italy here and now strengthens Western Civilization—and whatever dooms Italy contributes proportionately to the destruction of

⁶¹³ "Monsignor Swanstrom's Address," May 17, 1959, ACIM, series C, box C1, file "Symposium Proceedings," Center for Migration Studies.

⁶¹⁴ "Mrs. Luce Says Overpopulation is Basic Problem for Italy," *ACIM Dispatch*, October 1953; Caesar Donanzan, "The Critical Problem of Overpopulation In Italy," *ACIM Dispatch*, October 1953; Caesar Donanzan, "The Critical Problem of Overpopulation in Italy," *ACIM Dispatch*, November 1953; Caesar Donanzan, "The Critical Problem of Overpopulation in Italy," *ACIM Dispatch in Italy*, December 1953-January 1954; Msgr. John O'Grady, "A Christian Immigration Policy," *ACIM Dispatch*, March 1954; William F. Kelly, "Assurances Vital for Success of Refugee Act," *ACIM Dispatch*, March 1954; "Facts and Data on Overpopulation in Italy," *ACIM Dispatch*, February 1955; "Facts and Data on Overpopulation in Italy," *ACIM Dispatch*, March 1955; "Facts and Data on Overpopulation in Italy," *ACIM Dispatch*, April 1955; "Facts and Data on Overpopulation in Italy," *ACIM Dispatch*, May 1955; "Address by H. E. Manlio Brosio," *ACIM Dispatch*, Dec. 55—Jan. 56; John F. Kennedy, "Nine Months of Experience with the "Reunion of Families" Legislation," *ACIM Dispatch*, June 1958.

the Western World [...] The Mediterranean is still the sea highway between the East and the West. It is still the basin where mingle whatever forces for good or evil travel either Eastward or Westward, and the shores of Italy are still, as in centuries past, washed with the worries of the West and the East.⁶¹⁵

The solution to the fragile conditions of some countries in Western Europe after the war was regarded as an international responsibility, but ACIM leaders argued that only if the United States, "the recognized leader of the Free World," intervened to help the economies of these nations would its allies join to solve this problem. According to Father Donozan, it was this centrality of the United States in international affairs that made it regrettable that

immigration sanctions applied to Italy [in] 1924 are still in effect today—5,645 Italians per year only can migrate to this country. This, indeed, harms the good will engendered by our foreign policy. If Italians and others are left without hope of immigration, their oppressive conditions cannot be borne for long without the outbreak of violence of incalculable proportions.⁶¹⁶

ACIM's use of the anti-Communist rhetoric in its educational campaign in part exorcised some of the stereotypes that Americans had of Italian Americans, as it offered the dual advantage of proving their loyalty to the United States and of legitimating their ties with Italy. For similar reasons, American Jews recast their mobilization for immigration reform in social justice terms to dispel fears of immigration as a Jewish conspiracy but also to present themselves as fully American. The two groups' different relationship with their countries of origin and specific stereotypes affected their mobilization against immigration restriction, forcing them to frame their agenda in different terms.

In addition to publicizing Italy's overpopulation plight, ACIM leadership decided to circumvent American restrictive immigration laws by finding alternative destinations for aspiring

⁶¹⁵ "Text of Speech by Archbishop Richard J. Cushing of Boston," *ACIM Dispatch*, Dec. 1953-Jan. 1954.

⁶¹⁶ "Father Donozan's Address," May 17, 1959.

Italian migrants.⁶¹⁷ The organization cooperated with the Catholic Relief Services to sponsor and direct the resettlement and integration of Italians in Venezuela, Brazil, Uruguay, and Argentina. In 1958, Father Donanzan visited these four countries, under the auspices of the Catholic Relief Services and ACIM, and "met with scores of government officials, church officials, Italian officials, to get [...] as accurate a picture as possible on the social, moral, material, religious conditions affecting the Italians who have migrated since 1946 as well as those who have migrated before the war."⁶¹⁸ After Donanzan returned from his trip, ACIM agreed to collaborate with the Catholic Relief Services (CRS), the Intergovernmental Committee on European Migration (ICEM), the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), and the Scalabrini Fathers to be part of a pilot project "for the social assistance" of Italian postwar migrants in South America.⁶¹⁹

In the first months of 1953, Marchisio and Donanzan, with the help of Monsignor Swanstrom and his network, also began negotiations with General Rafael Trujillo to coordinate the resettlement of a group of Italian migrants in the Dominican Republic. In the spring of 1953, Marchisio; Baron Carlo De Ferrariis Salzano, Italian Consul General in New York; and Ross Di Lorenzo, National Secretary of ACIM, met with Trujillo and his aide during one of the general's visits to New York City to attend a meeting at the United Nations. The organization of the meeting entailed the involvement of American and Italian government officials and American

⁶¹⁷ The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), among other organizations, had long been involved in efforts to secure possibilities for emigrants to migrate to countries other than the United States. Like HIAS, ACIM leaders focused most of their efforts on South American and Latin American countries, established offices in the sending countries, and created contacts in the receiving countries. Unlike ACIM, however, HIAS operated and collaborated almost exclusively with lay organizations, while ACIM organized its network around strong ties with well-established Catholic organizations.

⁶¹⁸ "Donanzan's Address," May 18, 1959, ACIM Collection, series C, box C1, file "Symposium proceedings," Center for Migration Studies.

⁶¹⁹ "ACIM Pilot Project Set for South America—Assistance for Italian Immigrants there Asked of Father Donanzan during Recent Visit," *ACIM Dispatch*, April 1959.

and Italian Catholic clergy members.⁶²⁰ At the end of the meeting, Trujillo declared that the Dominican Republic stood ready to welcome to its shores 100,000 Italians and to give each family a land grant to settle in the republic. "The doors of the Republic," said Trujillo, "are wide open to God-fearing, anti-communistic Italians who wish to settle in [the Dominican Republic] for a life of stability and security."⁶²¹ Once again, ACIM's avowed anti-Communism and its ties with the Catholic was an important asset.

White, God-fearing, and anti-Communist Italians incarnated Trujillo's favorite migrants. Since his first years of government, in fact, General Trujillo, as part of his Dominicanización program, had reinforced the country's relationship with the Catholic Church and expanded the construction of church-supported schools, especially along the border with Haiti.⁶²² Trujillo's Dominicanización program also entailed the reinforcement of the country's white, Spanish heritage and the obliteration of its mulatto ancestry.⁶²³ This was not Trujillo's first attempt to recruit European immigrants to whiten his country. Before trying to recruit Italians in the 1950s, Trujillo had announced at the 1938 Evian conference that his country was willing to accept up to one hundred thousand refugees from Central Europe. His initiative received the blessing of the Roosevelt administration and the strategic support of the Joint Distribution Committee, a Jewish agency that worked to carry on an agricultural colonization program for Jewish refugees in countries other than the United States as a way to circumvent the restrictive American

⁶²⁰ Among to people who interceded with Trujillo to organize the meeting were Reverend Francesco Lardone, Apostolic Nuncio; Reverend Riccardo Pittini, archbishop of Ciudad Trujillo; United States ambassador to the Dominican Republic Phelps Phelps; Antonio Cottafavi, Italian Ambassador to the Dominican Republic; and Arturo Calventi, Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs in Italy

⁶²¹ "Dominican Republic Will Welcome 100,000 Italians Says Trujillo," *ACIM Dispatch*, April 1953.

⁶²² The Mision Fronteriza entailed the construction of churches, seminaries, and school and the promotion of education of the youth in rural areas and along the borders.

⁶²³ Color permeated Dominican society. The *guardia blanca*, the presidential guard, had almost exclusively white officers and its primary task was to accompany Trujillo during his trips abroad and to honor foreign dignitaries during their visits to the National Palace. See Valentina Peguero, *The Militarization of Culture in the Dominican Republic, from the Captains General to General Trujillo* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2004): chapter 7.

immigration policy. Ultimately, only 757 Jewish refugees stranded in countries of transit along Germany's borders during the panic emigration reached the Dominican Republic, but, as in the Italian case, this initiative was part of "a despot's racist efforts to remake his own society."⁶²⁴

After the meeting in New York City, Marchisio organized a trip to the Dominican Republic to verify the desirability and fitness of the environment for Italians and iron out the details of resettlement with the secretary of Foreign Affairs and the President of the Republic. Traveling with him were Ross Di Lorenzo, Monsignor Ligutti, chairman of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference and representative of the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) of Rome.⁶²⁵ During its stay in the Dominican Republic, the delegation and the government representatives also agreed on "the type of immigrants needed by the Republic whose visas would be given priority," namely seamen, fishermen, marble cutters and setters, upholsterers, mechanics, and farmers.⁶²⁶ At the end of the trip, Marchisio applauded the deal and Monsignor Ligutti declared that he would ask the ICMC to pay for the cost of transporting the migrants from Italy. The negotiations with Trujillo came to a halt, however, when the general kept postponing the beginning of the program.

ACIM's involvement in the refugee legislation in the United States and its negotiations with the Dominican Republic confirmed its rise to leadership with regard to immigration matters among Italian Americans, Italians, American and Italian authorities, and the Italian and American Catholic hierarchy. Other Italian American organizations often had to succumb to its

⁶²⁴ Allen Wells, *Tropical Zion: Federal Trujillo, FDR, and the Jews of Sosúa* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2009), xix. It is ironic, perhaps, that, while Italian and Jewish migrants were not white enough for the United States, they were sufficiently white to be part of Trujillo's plan to "whiten the Dominican race." According to Wells, the Roosevelt administration's support for Trujillo's program deflected the attention away from America's restrictive immigration policy. In this respect he adds, "the administration's immigration policies and its overriding preoccupation with fighting fascism worked to strengthen relations with Latin American dictators like Anastasio Somoza (Nicaragua) and Fulgencio Batista (Cuba) for decades to come." Wells, *Tropical Zion*, xxvi.

⁶²⁵ "Msgr. Ligutti to Fly to Dominican Republic with ACIM Officials," *ACIM Dispatch*, May 1953.

⁶²⁶ "Dominican Republic Mission Most Successful, Say ACIM Leaders," *ACIM Dispatch*, June 1953.

influence. In a gesture that acknowledged ACIM's rising leadership, the American Resettlement Council for Italian Refugees (ARCIR) relented and decided to join forces with ACIM and its campaign. Led by Fortune Pope and supported by the Order Sons of Italy, ARCIR was an impromptu organization created specifically to help Italian migrants with relatives in the United States and refugees take advantage of the 1953 Refugee Relief Act. In June 1954, after months of bickering about which organization was truly in charge of the operation, the two organizations agreed to divide their tasks to be more efficient: ARCIR was in charge of obtaining Assurances for employment and housing, while ACIM provided for the reception and resettlement of the Italian refugees.⁶²⁷ A year later, ACIM sealed an agreement with the Comitato Italiano Pro Profughi Stati Uniti (CIPSU), the official Italian refugee agency, to coordinate their efforts to help Italian migrants with relatives in the United States and refugees who qualified under the Refugee Relief Act.⁶²⁸

The recognition that ACIM received from Italian and Italian American agencies effectively paved the way for the Italian government's endorsement of ACIM as the most prominent Italian American organization dealing with immigration issues. After allowing its representatives in the United States to participate in and support ACIM's campaigns and activities, the Italian government's official approval arrived first with a letter in February 1955 from Prime Minister Mario Scelba congratulating ACIM on its third anniversary and then with an official visit of the prime minister to ACIM headquarters during his trip to the United States in the spring of 1955.⁶²⁹ At the luncheon organized in his honor, Scelba thanked President

⁶²⁷ "ACIM and ARCIR Join Forces on Refugee Act Program," *ACIM Dispatch*, June 1954. Another major Italian American organization that endorsed ACIM was UNICO. "New UNICO President Pledges Support to ACIM," *ACIM Dispatch*, November 1953.

⁶²⁸ "ACIM Recognized and Registered by State Department—Agreement with CIPSU, Official Italian Refugee Agency, Also Made," *ACIM Dispatch*, September 1955.

⁶²⁹ "Eisenhower, Scelba Salute ACIM on 3rd Anniversary," *ACIM Dispatch*, February 1955 and "Scelba to be Guest of ACIM Leaders," *ACIM Dispatch*, April 1955.

Eisenhower and ACIM for their efforts for the Refugee Relief Act and praised their work as a crucial material, moral, and humanitarian contribution to the relationship between the two nations. He added that he was delighted to attend the luncheon to thank ACIM, "this deserving organization that, motivated by a truly Christian spirit, has done so much to ameliorate the immigration laws of the United States."⁶³⁰ A year later, in April 1956, during a visit to the United States, the Italian president himself, Giovanni Gronchi, recognized ACIM's work as vital to alleviate Italy's overpopulation problem and as invaluable to cement the ties between Italy and the United States.⁶³¹

A little over two years later, ACIM's rise as the leader in immigration advocacy in the United States for the Italian government was complete. In June 1958, Marchisio traveled to Italy for a ten-day tour of key Italian cities as a guest of the Italian Government. The purpose of the trip was to bring to the attention of the people of Italy the work and accomplishments of the American Committee on Italian Migration through public speeches, meetings with top-level Italian leaders, and radio, television, and press interviews. The Italian government also saw Marchisio's tour as an occasion to foster a closer understanding between the people of the United States and of Italy. More importantly for both the Italian and the American governments, the tour "projected the good intentions and the good will of the United States towards the aspiration of the Italian people and removed many misconceptions and distortions in their minds planted there by the enemies of America."⁶³² American Jews similarly engaged in a close relationship with the government of Israel, but the two never directly discussed the resettlement of Jewish

⁶³⁰ "Scelba says ACIM Work is Motivated by 'Truly Christian Spirit'," *ACIM Dispatch*, May 1955. The guest list of the luncheon well reflected the rise in prestige among American and Italian political and religious authorities. In addition to ACIM members and Prime Minister Scelba, the guests comprised Cardinal Spellman; Reverend James Griffiths, Auxiliary Bishop of New York; Monsignor Swanstrom, executive Director of War Relief Services; Manlio Brosio, Italian Ambassador of Italy; and Baron Carlo De Ferrariis Salzano, Italian consul in New York.

⁶³¹ "Gronchi Lauds Eisenhower and ACIM," *ACIM Dispatch*, April 1956.

⁶³² "Marchisio Guest of Italian Government," *ACIM Dispatch*, June 1958.

migrants to Israel as Jewish settlement agencies had long been engaged in resettlement.

American Jews rather represented "honest brokers," as Truman called them, between Israel and American society, negotiated American Jewish emotional ties with Israel, sponsored the country financially, and monitored Israeli policies towards American foreign policy so as not to jeopardize the Jewish position in the United States.⁶³³

As it received recognition for its work from both American and Italian authorities and from Italian Americans, ACIM began to mobilize again for a short extension of the Refugee Relief Act beyond the December 31, 1956 deadline and for the transfer of unused quotas in the act for Germany and Austria to Italy, Greece, the Far East, and Great Britain. Senator William Langer's pending bill fulfilled both of their goals and, if passed, guaranteed 20,000 additional visas for Italians. When the bill came up for consideration by the committees on immigration in Congress in June 1956, ACIM urged its 107 chapters across the country to show their support for the bill by writing, wiring, and contacting in any way possible the members of the House and Senate Sub-Committees on Immigration to urge them to vote the bill out of the committees before Congress closed for recess in July.⁶³⁴ The Senate swiftly passed the Langer bill only to see it killed in the House by Representative Walter.

1957: A Change in the Tide?

Despite the disappointment over the failure of the Langer bill, Italian, Jewish, and other organizations began to notice signs in the 1956 election platforms that the climate might soon become more favorable for immigration reform. Both the Republican and the Democratic parties, in fact, included planks in their platforms that favored the liberalization of America's

⁶³³ Cohen, *Not Free to Desist*, chapter 12.

⁶³⁴ "Immediate Action Urged on Lange and Walter Bills," *ACIM Dispatch*, June 1956.

immigration laws, and Eisenhower once more committed to immigration reform.⁶³⁵ The shift coincided with the expiration in December 1956 of the 1953 Refugee Relief Act. Encouraged by the tepid optimism about immigration reform generated by the election platforms and by Eisenhower's renewed commitment, ACIM set its sights on eight ambitious goals for its 1957 legislative program, which it believed could "serve the American national interest and could win approval by Congress." The goals included, among others, the admission of third-preference cases (including approximately 15,000 Italian spouses and minor children of Italians, legally residing in the United States); the admission of 24,835 Italian relatives and refugees whose assurances were in the "pipeline" under the Refugee Relief Act of 1953; the admission of 5,000 orphans with an increased age limit of 14 years old; the admission of 250,000 immigrants in the United States per year instead of the present 168,000; the pooling of unused quota numbers to be made available to aliens having specific skills or relatives in the United States; and the increase in quotas to be based on the 1950 and not on the 1920 census.⁶³⁶

ACIM was not alone in its conviction that the time might be ripe for limited immigration reform. In March 1957, Republican Representative Kenneth B. Keating from New York expressed a similar optimism in an article he wrote for *ACIM Dispatch*. The combination of a number of factors, he argued, made chances for passage of immigration legislation more probable in 1957 than they had been for a long time. In the first place, Congress showed an inclination to evaluate immigration legislation earlier than usual, following President Eisenhower's renewed calls for reform shortly after the start of the new session. Another factor raising hopes for passage of immigration legislation, he believed, was Americans' realization of the growing impact that the inequities of the existing policy produced. Finally, he believed that

⁶³⁵ "Both Parties Include Immigration Plank—Senate-passed Bill Killed by Walter in House; New Hope Voiced for Next Session of Congress," *ACIM Dispatch*, September 1956.

⁶³⁶ "ACIM sets Legislative Goals for 1957," *ACIM Dispatch*, February 1957.

Congress and Americans were beginning to appreciate "the fruiting of the long years of hard effort by fine organizations such as ACIM in dramatizing the needs and desires of those who have already come to this country and become worthy citizens. Your increasing labor for more liberal immigration laws has had its effect on the American people and on Congress." In the long run, he concluded, the contributions to the greatness of the United States by Americans of foreign descent was the best argument of all for allowing freer immigration.⁶³⁷

Despite the encouraging environment, ACIM leaders remained pragmatic about their goals and decided to pressure Congress to pass legislation to tackle only two of them, the "pipeline" cases and the family reunion cases. According to data provided by the Department of State, Italy had 24,841 pipeline cases; Greece had 11,290; the Netherlands had 377; and Germany had 568. In March 1957, ACIM sent a statement to the members of Congress and to the *New York Times* calling for quick action on the pipeline and family reunion cases as the restrictive policy played into the hands of "red propagandists." Senator Jacob K. Javits of New York had the statement included in the Appendix of the Congressional Record and several of the members of the Committee on the Judiciary in both the Senate and in the House sent messages of solidarity favoring the recommendations made in the statement.⁶³⁸ Thanks to the public support for their agenda from Maxwell M. Rabb, Secretary of the Cabinet at the White House, Marchisio and his colleagues personally met with Senator Keating, Senator John F. Kennedy, and Senator James Eastland, Chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Immigration, to discuss ACIM's recommendations to provide for family reunion and pipeline cases to be included in Keating and Kennedy's pending immigration bills. They did not succeed in getting an audience with

⁶³⁷ Kenneth B. Keating, "Prospects for Immigration Legislation in the 85th Congress," *ACIM Dispatch*, March 1957.

⁶³⁸ "Statement Issued by ACIM Gets Favorable Congressional Reaction—Calls for Quick Action on Separated Families and 'Pipeline' Cases," *ACIM Dispatch*, April 1957.

Representative Walter, but they still decided to endorse his bill as well because it included some of ACIM's suggestions for reform.⁶³⁹

The American Jewish Committee as well as other Jewish organizations acted on the favorable climate for reform as well. On February 1, 1957, five national Jewish organizations issued a joint statement praising President Eisenhower's proposals for reform but also asking for action to relieve the plight of the Egyptian refugees. On April 3, 1957, the American Immigration Conference issued a public statement supported by thirty-nine of its Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant member organizations that urged Congress to act on the president's proposals. The statement also praised the plan for admitting escapees and refugees fleeing from Communist countries but asked that the plan be expanded to include victims of religious or political persecution in non-Communist countries as well.⁶⁴⁰ Like Italian Americans, American Jews concurred that the pending Kennedy bill represented the last serious attempt at reforming American immigration policy in the 1950s. The bill tackled family reunion, settlement of the refugees who remained unsettled, and the regularization of paroled immigrants' status.

All the major Jewish agencies also participated in the debate on the Kennedy bill. On July 1, HIAS issued another statement praising Kennedy's bill. Other testimonies calling for immigration reform during the hearings confirmed another significant aspect of immigration

⁶³⁹ "ACIM 'Reunion of Families' Attained—New Bill Permits Entry of Some 30,000 Italian Spouses, Children, Plus 4,000 Orphans," *ACIM Dispatch*, October 1957. See also "Keating, Kennedy, Walter Introduce Bills Containing ACIM Objectives—All Three Sponsor Measures which Include Reunion of Families; 'pipeline' Cases provision also Written in Except by Walter," *ACIM Dispatch*, May-June 1957. ACIM later honored Kennedy for his help on Italian immigration.

⁶⁴⁰ "Public Reaction," *American Jewish Year Book* 59 (1958), 104. It is important to note that American Jews' ability to argue for the admittance of people persecuted for religious reasons waned after the beginning of the Cold War. Ironically, they were more successful in helping Jews persecuted for their religion in Russia and in other Eastern European countries to be admitted to the United States at the turn of the nineteenth century, at the height of nativism and eugenics in the United States. After World War II, geopolitical considerations overtook religious persecution in terms of importance for refugee status. The example of the American reaction to the refugees of the Hungarian Revolution and of the Suez crisis sheds light on some of the reasons behind their failure. While the United States promptly sidestepped its immigration restriction policy to welcome Hungarian refugees because they were from a Communist country, the American government accepted very few Egyptian refugees citing its immigration policy as justification.

reform advocacy that emerged after World War II: the prominence of voluntary agencies with religious affiliation in the debate over immigration. The Standing Conference of Voluntary Agencies Working for Refugees, the Church World Service, the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., and the National Lutheran Council all testified in support of immigration reform. In August 1957, the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the Jewish Labor Committee, the Jewish War Veterans of the United States of America, the Rabbinical Council of America, the Synagogue Council of America, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, HIAS, the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations, and the United Synagogue of America submitted a joint testimony in favor of immigration reform at the Senate Immigration Sub-Committee hearings on the Kennedy bill. The testimony cogently reflected the degree of unity behind immigration reform reached within the American Jewish community after World War II among organizations that were often at odds with one another on a host of other issues.⁶⁴¹

Yet, Kennedy's campaign for his bill revealed to American Jews and Italian Americans that the openness that many immigration advocates perceived at the time was only superficial. The majority of Congressmen remained reluctant to pass sweeping immigration legislation, no matter how hard Kennedy tried to assuage their fears:

The number of aliens which this bill would admit is relatively small—less than 90,000 over a two-year period—but the advantage to the United States and the people affected are tremendous. More importantly, however, this bill has great moral significance, having as its basic purpose the preservation of families and the extension of assistance to the homeless [...] This bill is no panacea nor is it a final answer to the immigration problem.⁶⁴²

⁶⁴¹ "Public Reaction," *American Jewish Year Book* 59 (1958), 104.

⁶⁴² As quoted in Lieberman, *Are Americans Extinct?*, 118-119.

After an informal poll among congressmen, Kennedy realized that very few would support his bill.⁶⁴³ Many of them favored the much narrower immigration bill that Representative Walter had reported to the House Judiciary Committee. Kennedy then decided to introduce a new bill, similar to Walter's, in the Senate. Its limitations notwithstanding, Italian Americans and American Jews decided to support the new version of the bill "on the ground that it would help in the reuniting of families, would aid in solving some of the existing refugee situations, and would in other respects mitigate some of the harsh and inflexible features of the basic immigration law."⁶⁴⁴ Once again, immigration reform advocates concluded that some legislation was better than no legislative action at all and hoped that pushing for changes in the existing legislation would prove more feasible than mobilizing for new legislation. Both chambers of Congress swiftly approved the new bill, and, in its final version, the act erased the mortgaged quotas accumulated since the DP Act of 1948; released previously authorized but unused refugee visas to more than 60,000 persons fleeing persecution; and granted nonquota status until 1959 to orphans who were being adopted by U.S. citizens.⁶⁴⁵

The passage of the 1957 Immigration Act generated different responses within the Italian American and the Jewish American communities. Many of the Jewish organizations that had testified in favor of immigration reform issued public statements expressing disappointment over the failure of Congress to enact more sweeping changes to the country's immigration law than those contained in the law just passed.⁶⁴⁶ For ACIM, in accordance with its pragmatic focus on any legislation that favored Italian migrants, it was so important that the law accorded Italy

⁶⁴³ Senators that endorsed Kennedy's bill included Arthur V. Watkins (Rep., UT), Hubert H. Humphrey (Dem., MN), Everett M. Dirksen (Rep., IL), John O. Pastore (Dem., RI), Frank J. Lausche (Dem., OH), Joseph F. Clark (Dem., PA), Richard Neuberger (Dem., OR), and Henry M. Jackson (Dem., WA). "Legislation," *American Jewish Year Book* 59 (1958), 101.

⁶⁴⁴ "S. 2792," *American Jewish Year Book* 59 (1958), 101.

⁶⁴⁵ "Provisions," *American Jewish Year Book* 59 (1958), 102.

⁶⁴⁶ "Public Reaction," *American Jewish Year Book* 59 (1958), 104.

nearly 34,000 visas of the 62,556 total visas that it was willing to disregard its shortcomings. Moreover, ACIM could hardly contain its satisfaction for its role in the passage of the law. "This is the result of the initiative, the effort, and the unity put into the campaign by the members and friends which constitute the 107 ACIM chapters throughout the United States," read the article in the *ACIM Dispatch* that reported the passage of the law.⁶⁴⁷

ACIM's enthusiasm for the passage of the law soon waned. As had already happened with the passage of the displaced persons and refugee acts, frustration inevitably followed the initial jubilation for the passage of another favorable immigration law. As early as January 1958, ACIM complained of the failure of Congress to allocate funds to hire additional staff for the administration of the 1957 Immigration Act. The lack of funds seemed to jeopardize the family reunion visas more than the other provisions in the law. "So far," lamented ACIM, "only some 4,000 visas have been issued for Italy and this snail paced rate of issuance defeats the purpose of the law which is immediate reunion."⁶⁴⁸ Spurred by the inaction of Congress to speed family reunion visas along, ACIM decided to launch a campaign to obtain legislation to admit thousands of sons and daughters and brothers and sisters of naturalized Italians. The McCarran-Walter Act classified this group under the fourth preference, which granted it only a limited number of visas. As the thousands of letters and telephone calls that ACIM national headquarters received daily proved, this issue remained central to many Italian Americans.⁶⁴⁹

Once again, ACIM decided to pursue the passage of legislation targeting a specific aspect of the quota system. ACIM realized that family reunion represented a more palatable and

⁶⁴⁷ "ACIM 'Reunion of Families' Attained—New Bill Permits Entry of Some 30,000 Italian Spouses, Children, Plus 4,000 Orphans," *ACIM Dispatch*, October 1957.

⁶⁴⁸ "Congress Urged to Support Program to Speed Issuance of 'reunion' Visas—Money for Larger Staffs Needed by American Consulates; Only 4,000 Issued in Italy thus Far," *ACIM Dispatch*, January 1958.

⁶⁴⁹ "ACIM Launches Drive for Reunion of 'Fourth Preference' Cases—Affects Immediate Entry of Sons and Daughters, Brothers and Sisters," *ACIM Dispatch*, February 1958.

achievable goal than other revisions to the law. In an effort to gauge congressional willingness to pass legislation addressing the reunion of American citizens with their sons, daughters, brothers, and sisters still residing in Italy, ACIM leaders traveled to Washington, DC, to meet with several key senators and representatives. Many of the congressmen with whom ACIM met expressed sympathy towards its cause but regretted that congressional action would remain difficult to achieve until the economy improved.⁶⁵⁰ However, the lobbying campaign ultimately yielded favorable results for Italian immigrants. In the spring of 1958, ACIM proudly reported to its supporters that its "campaign to get quick action from Congress to appropriate the necessary funds for the implementation of Public Law 85-316 which, among other provisions, [provided] for the reunion of families, [...] achieved success."⁶⁵¹ Congress allocated the funds necessary to hire additional personnel to sort through the heavy caseload of fourth preference applications under the 1957 Immigration Act. Evidently, ACIM's emphasis on the importance of family reunion to protect the sacred institution and to alleviate Italy's overpopulation problem and prevent its fall to Communism touched on sensitive issues for American legislators.

Once again, however, the passage of legislation failed to turn into concrete action. Even after Congress allocated funds to speed up the administration of the 1957 Immigration Act, the obstacles to and the delay in receiving a visa remained. Nine months after the passage of the act, Senator John F. Kennedy wrote an article for *ACIM Dispatch* to review the act's accomplishments and reassure readers that he would pursue further action. Kennedy lamented that from September 1957 to May 1958, only 20,967 immigrants were admitted under the law to reunite with family members already in the United States. Yet, attesting to the attention that Italy's overpopulation and emigration problems received from the American government, of

⁶⁵⁰ "Congressional Sentiment Favors ACIM 'Fourth Preference' Goal," *ACIM Dispatch*, March-April 1958.

⁶⁵¹ "Congress Funds Quicken Issuance of 'Reunion Visas'—10,491 Issued in Italy out of World Total of 17,509," *ACIM Dispatch*, May 1958.

those admitted in that period, 13,213, or 63%, came from Italy. Highlighting a problem that had persisted since the 1930s, Kennedy went on to observe that "although the action taken for the admittance of parents, spouses and children of Americans has been disappointing, the program for the granting of visas to orphans, escapees and refugees has been even worse; the administration of that part of the Act may almost be termed scandalous."⁶⁵² Statistically, only 8% of the visas issued until then had gone to orphans, refugees, and expellees. Reflecting what ACIM and other Catholic and Jewish organizations had long argued, Kennedy admitted that the problem with administering the provisions of the law that dealt with refugees, expellees, and orphans stemmed from the failure of those who administered the act to learn from the experience of the Displaced Persons laws and the Refugee Relief acts. Finally, Kennedy acknowledged the importance of voluntary organizations in the administration of the immigration and refugee laws and praised them for the improvements that Congress enacted:

Such improvements as have been made in administrative practices are due to a large extent to the efforts of such organizations as ACIM. These voluntary organizations are of immeasurable assistance in the Herculean task of helping the immigrant through the transition between life in the old country and life in the United States. In addition, they maintain constant watch over the public administration of the program.⁶⁵³

Reflecting on the necessity to remedy the shortcomings of the administration of the 1957 Immigration Act, Kennedy concluded his article saying that it was morally and psychologically necessary to speed up the enactment of the law to avoid the disruption of families and to make the law's humanitarian purposes more than a mere gesture.

While ACIM figured prominently among immigration advocates' efforts to reform American immigration laws, American Jews did not focus exclusively on the pending immigration bills in 1956 and 1957. Although American Jews closely followed and supported

⁶⁵² John F. Kennedy, "Nine Months of Experience with the 'Reunion of Families' Legislation," *ACIM Dispatch*, June 1958.

⁶⁵³ *Ibid.*

the developments in immigration legislation after the ratification of the McCarran-Walter Act, their lobbying efforts subsided somewhat after 1952 as they turned their attention abroad to the Israeli-American relationship and at home to civil rights issues, civil liberties, inter-faith collaboration, and personal attacks that questioned their loyalty and accused them of Communist affiliations. Until the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and the Suez Crisis of 1957, the American Jewish Committee, in particular, mostly focused on keeping alive the immigration policy problems within the public eye through resolutions, statements, and publications. The committee continued to press for liberal planks on immigration in election years, tried to convince politicians to keep their campaign promises through its contacts in Congress, and collaborated with other organizations interested in immigration reform whenever a chance for reform arose. Yet these activities had become only part of the overall agenda of the Committee and the community at large.⁶⁵⁴

After the Hungarian Revolution and the Suez Crisis, however, American Jewish efforts to lobby for refugee legislation resumed at full speed. The difference in the results they achieved for Hungarian and Egyptian refugees was striking and sheds light on the rationale behind what type of immigration bills Congress and the administration deemed suitable for consideration and passage. While the Hungarian Revolution provoked "a widespread sentiment in the United States and other countries of the free world in favor of relaxing immigration restrictions," the Suez crisis revealed that "the failure of the United States to contribute in any significant degree to the resettlement of the Egyptian refugees was due to the minimal immigration quota for Egypt

⁶⁵⁴ Cohen, *Not Free to Desist*, chapter 13.

and to the inflexible character of the basic immigration law."⁶⁵⁵ Cold War interests clearly determined for which refugees the United States could sidestep its restrictive immigration laws.

For the Hungarian Jewish refugees, all that American Jews had to do was to activate their efficient and well-oiled voluntary agency machine to assist them to come to the United States. From November 1956 to June 1957, when most of the Hungarian refugees arrived in the United States, HIAS assisted 3,926 Hungarian Jewish escapees to be admitted into the country. Reflecting yet another emerging characteristic of American immigration policy during the fifties, many of the parolees who managed to enter the United States fell into the two categories that would shape American immigration policy after 1965: those refugees who entered because of family reunion and those who possessed skills that were lacking in the United States or needed for national interest.⁶⁵⁶ Significantly, beginning in June 1957, thanks to the provision for parolees in the McCarran-Walter Act and the provision for escapees from Communist countries in Europe in the 1953 Refugee Relief Act, the United States opened its doors to more Hungarian refugees than any other country in the Americas.

American Jews' efforts to help Jewish refugees from Egypt, on the other hand, took a completely different turn. Confident after the experience with Hungarian refugees that the United States was more willing to admit refugees than immigrants, American Jews mobilized to persuade the American government to welcome more Egyptian refugees. During the early months of 1957, several Jewish and non-Jewish agencies beseeched the President, the Department of State, and the Department of Justice to admit more refugees from Egypt. They made at least three significant attempts. On February 26, 1957, a delegation including the major Jewish national organizations met with Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Lampton Berry to

⁶⁵⁵ "Immigration," *American Jewish Year Book* 59 (1958), 98, and "Emigration from Egypt," *American Jewish Year Book* 59 (1958), 100.

⁶⁵⁶ "Immigration," *American Jewish Year Book* 59 (1958), 98-99.

urge action. On March 22, Senators Case, Ives, and Javits, all long time supporters of immigration reform, wrote an open letter to the attorney general to ask him to extend the parole procedure to Egyptian refugees. On May 29, another Jewish delegation met with officials at the Department of State to discuss the admission of Egyptian refugees. Despite their efforts, "repeated pleas by Jewish and other civic and religious organization for admission of a fair share of the Egyptian refugees under the parole provision of the immigration law, on the same basis as the Hungarian refugees, went unheeded."⁶⁵⁷ Time and again, the Department of State insisted that the extension of the parole provision to groups other than Hungarians depended upon congressional action and that the administration would not act without first receiving guidance from Congress.

ACIM's participation in the attempts to help Egyptian refugees showcases the different approaches that the two groups had. Rather than plead for all Egyptian refugees, ACIM focused exclusively on Egyptian refugees of Italian origin and limited its intervention to a public expression of dissent. In the pages of *ACIM Dispatch*, ACIM leadership complained that the Italian exodus out of Egypt to Italy further clotted an already overpopulated country and called for legislation to assist and resettle these families "with no means of earning a living in the countries where they [were] stranded without the opportunity to emigrate elsewhere."⁶⁵⁸ Unlike its Jewish counterparts, ACIM leaders, however, did not take direct action to lobby for legislation for Egyptian refugees. It did nothing more than endorse the testimony of Monsignor Wycislo, Resettlement Division Director of the Catholic Welfare Conference, before the Senate

⁶⁵⁷ "Emigration from Egypt," *American Jewish Year Book* 59 (1958), 100.

⁶⁵⁸ "Plight of Italian Refugees in Tunisia and Egypt Serious," *ACIM Dispatch*, April 1959.

Sub-Committee on Refugees, as the Monsignor asked for the admission of at least 15,000 of the Italians displaced from Egypt.⁶⁵⁹

Their failure to convince Congress to pass legislation on behalf of Egyptian refugees notwithstanding, American Jewish voluntary agencies nonetheless mobilized to relocate these refugees to other countries that offered them asylum. As a consequence of the crisis, by June 30, 1957, some 20,000 Jewish refugees from Egypt, or about 40 per cent of the Jewish population in Egypt, fled to Europe. By the end of March 1957, the United Service HIAS and the Joint Distribution Committee, in collaboration with the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration and other smaller Jewish voluntary agencies, resettled over 7,500 Jewish refugees from Egypt to Israel. By the end of June of the same year, United HIAS Service assisted 1,446 Egyptian Jews to relocate to Latin America, 48 to Canada, 65 to Australia, and 69 to various other countries. From January through June 1957, however, HIAS managed to assist only 24 Egyptian Jews to be admitted to the United States.⁶⁶⁰ Many of the refugees had clearly hoped to resettle in the United States:

Many Egyptian Jews who would have preferred to immigrate to the United States resigned themselves to the unlikelihood of obtaining admission to this country and accepted opportunities available to them to settle in Israel and elsewhere. Others, however, remained in countries of first asylum in the hope of the eventual liberalization of United States immigration policy.⁶⁶¹

United HIAS Service collaborated closely with the refugees' American relatives and worked hard to obtain visitor, student, and preference case visas within the limitations of the quota law. The results were nonetheless disappointing. In her annual review, executive director Ann S. Petluck

⁶⁵⁹ "Plight of Italian Refugees in Tunisia and Egypt Serious," *ACIM Dispatch*, April 1959.

⁶⁶⁰ "Emigration from Egypt," *American Jewish Year Book* 59 (1958).

⁶⁶¹ *Ibid.*

complained that, "although there were over a thousand persons in whose cases we were participating, the actual arrivals in the United States were infinitesimal."⁶⁶²

The different experience that American Jews had in helping Jewish refugees from Hungary and Egypt reflected both a shift in their agenda, as they focused more on refugees than immigrants, and the limitations of lobbying for immigration reform and refugee legislation if the proposal fell outside of Cold War geopolitical interests. Yet, the experience with the resettlement of Hungarian and Egyptian refugees had one positive result. It proved that the premise behind the creation of the United HIAS Service was successful, as the organization had shown that "it could take on an emergency and at the same time continue its work in planned migration."⁶⁶³ This experience also helped the organization realize that unless Congress corrected the shortcomings of the existing legislation, 1958 would be "a tragic year for those still unsettled refugees who wished to immigrate to the United States."⁶⁶⁴ As a consequence of this conclusion, the organization decided to intensify its efforts to collaborate with other Jewish organizations invested in immigration reform as well as with larger umbrella organizations, including the American Immigration Conference and the American Council of Voluntary Agencies, and with members of Congress who showed interest in immigration reform.

As American Jews lobbied for Egyptian refugees, ACIM continued its campaign for the reunion of families under the 1957 Immigration Act. Following ACIM's campaign in Congress for funding the administration of the law and Kennedy's report on the status of the visas issued in the first nine months of the law, ACIM headquarters in New York City received hundreds of letters pleading for the resolution of the fourth preference problem and for help to speed along

⁶⁶² Ann Petluck, "Annual Report: January through December 1957—United States Operations," December 19, 1957, HIAS Collection, RG 245. 8, series 6, folder 41, YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

⁶⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

the reunion of families.⁶⁶⁵ ACIM leadership decided to take the problem directly to the president of the United States. In October 1958, thanks to the help of New York Senator Keating, ACIM arranged for a brief meeting between Eisenhower and Father Donozan to discuss current immigration problems during the president's visit to New York City. Referring to the common decency of the American people imbued with the "tradition that this country is the sanctuary of the oppressed," Eisenhower said he favored a solution to the fourth preference visa problems and expressed the hope that Congress would soon take action to expedite family reunions.⁶⁶⁶

Although Eisenhower's appeal fell on deaf ears, ACIM continued to lobby for legislation facilitating family reunion. In its campaign, ACIM argued that it was "unfair to permit U.S. citizens to file petitions for their brothers, sisters, sons or daughters, granting them approval and then letting them pile up in a huge backlog at American consulates abroad without the hope of any visas being issued."⁶⁶⁷ In early 1959, Senator Keating introduced a bill proposing to grant non-quota status to immigrants who were brothers, sisters, sons, or daughters of United States citizens, thus attempting to remedy the delays derived from the fourth preference quota section of the McCarran-Walter Act. Significantly, the introduction of the bill followed a meeting in Washington, DC, between Keating and a delegation of ACIM leaders headed by Marchisio. Besides meeting with Senator Keating, Judge Marchisio also visited the offices of Senator Kennedy; Joseph M. Swing, Commissioner of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service; Senator James Eastland, Chairman of the Senate Sub-Committee on Immigration and

⁶⁶⁵ "ACIM Flooded with Requests to Help Resolve 4th Preference Problem—Letters Pouring in Reflect Pathetic Plight of Broken Families," *ACIM Dispatch*, October 1958; and "Appeals for Help on 4th Preference Cases Increase Daily—Letters Pouring in from all Sections of U.S. Reflect Frustrated Hopes," *ACIM Dispatch*, November 1958.

⁶⁶⁶ "Eisenhower Favors Solution of 'Fourth Preference' Problem," *ACIM Dispatch*, November 1958.

⁶⁶⁷ "Fourth Preference 'Clean-Up' Bill Introduced by Keating—ACIM Leaders in Washington for Ceremony; Kennedy Readying All-inclusive Bill," *ACIM Dispatch*, February 1959.

Naturalization; and other leaders to rally support for the resolution of the fourth preference problem.⁶⁶⁸

To ACIM's satisfaction, Senator Keating's bill unleashed a new debate on immigration reform and became the first of other immigration bills introduced in Congress that year. In March 1959, Kennedy presented a seven-point proposal for an all-inclusive immigration bill that suggested to replace the national origins system of quotas based on the 1920 census "with a formula based upon the blood relationship between citizens and resident aliens already here and those who seek admittance," to raise the annual quota to 250,000, and to admit 150,000 relatives of U.S. citizens or resident aliens through the third degree of consanguinity.⁶⁶⁹ Kennedy's proposal not only contained many of the goals of ACIM's campaign on family reunion, but he also shared many of the arguments for immigration reform that ACIM and other immigration reform advocates had long adopted:

In these days when we Americans desperately need a clear idea of our national goals and a real conception of what our society represents, it is especially important that we re-examine our immigration policies. Our basic legislation was developed under the illusion that we were a nation of separate nationalities and that our greatness required a continuation of a policy under which each nationality was compartmentalized. Such a law divides us rather than unifies us. It is discriminatory against friendly nations. It is too inflexible to meet demonstrable needs. Perhaps most important, it is based upon an unnatural fear that we cannot assimilate people with different customs and different habits.⁶⁷⁰

Despite the enthusiasm among immigration reformers for the Keating and Kennedy bills, Congress ultimately decided to evaluate only a third, less overarching immigration bill, which Representative Walter introduced. The final version of the bill would admit nearly 57,000 immigrants from Western Europe, with 35,000 of the visas set aside for Italian migrants and the

⁶⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶⁹ "Kennedy Announces 7-point Program for Immigration Bill—Says Proposals Were Discussed with Congressman Walter," *ACIM Dispatch*, March 1959; and "Kennedy Bill Would Admit 150,000 Relatives Annually—Measure to Be Introduced soon Would also Raise Annual Quota to 250,000," *ACIM Dispatch*, April 1959.

⁶⁷⁰ "Kennedy Announces 7-point Program for Immigration Bill—Says Proposals Were Discussed with Congressman Walter," *ACIM Dispatch*, March 1959.

remaining 22,000 distributed among other countries. For Italians, the groups that benefited from the new legislation were the second, third, and fourth preference applicants registered at American Consulates prior to December 31, 1953 (for a total of 33,000), and spouses and minor children of those admitted under the Refugee Relief Act of 1953 (for a total of 1,709). Walter's bill (H.R. 5896) went through Congress rather quickly, and in September 1959 Eisenhower signed it into law.⁶⁷¹

ACIM considered the passage of the bill, despite its limitations, a successful ending to its eighteen-month long campaign. Although the bill dealt exclusively with family reunion issues, it introduced a few important changes that further eroded the foundation of the McCarran-Walter Act. The law moved American citizens' unmarried sons and daughters over twenty-one years of age from the fourth to the second preference, thus making it easier for these applicants to receive a visa; resident aliens' unmarried sons and daughters over twenty-one years of age fell under the third preference quota, whereas before they had no preference status; and spouses and minor children who accompanied either brothers and sisters or adult married sons and daughters of U.S. citizens fell in the fourth preference and could migrate with them if these were eligible for fourth preference visas under the annual quota of the McCarran-Walter Act. Moreover, ACIM could now count on another ally in Congress, Senator John O. Pastore of Rhode Island, who had Representative Walter's ear and esteem. Pastore spearheaded the passage of the Walter bill in the Senate and received high praises from Walter for his "wisdom and workmanship" during the evaluation of the bill in Congress.⁶⁷² Finally in 1959, for the first time since its founding, ACIM

⁶⁷¹ "Walter Introduces Immigration Bill to Reunite Family Units—Says he Agrees in Principle with Senator Kennedy's 7-point Proposal," *ACIM Dispatch*, March 1959; and "Eisenhower Signs Bill to Reunite Families—Over 30,000 Italian Relatives among 57,000 from Europe to Benefit," *ACIM Dispatch*, September 1959.

⁶⁷² "Eisenhower Signs Bill to Reunite Families—Over 30,000 Italian Relatives among 57,000 from Europe to Benefit," *ACIM Dispatch*, September 1959.

leaders succeeded in meeting Representative Walter in person to discuss immigration problems.⁶⁷³

That legislators increasingly focused on family reunion over labor in matters of immigration became increasingly clear when, only a few months after passing Walter's bill, Congress passed another bill sponsored by Walter that dealt with other family reunion provisions in the McCarran-Walter Act. As the *ACIM Dispatch* noted, this law, as the ones that preceded it, did not solve all the problems that the McCarran-Walter Act created, but it was certainly part of the smaller significant changes that ACIM hoped would eventually lead to an overhaul of the country's immigration policy.⁶⁷⁴ The new Walter bill (H.R. 9385) amended the section of the Immigration and Nationality Act that allotted 50% of the annual quota of each country to immigrants whose services the Attorney General determined necessary for the economy, cultural interests, or welfare of the United States because of the immigrant's high education, technical training, specialized experience, or exceptional ability. The bill also gave non-quota status to the spouses and children of these immigrants, and the fifth section of the bill provided for the admission of fiancés and fiancées of American citizens as visitors for a three-month period to allow them to get married. Until then, marriage was essential before entry was permitted.⁶⁷⁵ In a way, the passage of this new Walter bill confirmed that tackling one issue at a time to undermine the overall immigration system was a successful strategy, especially in an environment that still viewed immigrants as a threat.

Amidst the successes, failures, and setbacks that American Jews and Italian Americans faced in their mobilization for immigration and refugee legislation, the 1950s also saw the first

⁶⁷³ "Walter Introduces Immigration Bill to Reunite Family Units—Says he Agrees in Principle with Senator Kennedy's 7-point Proposal," *ACIM Dispatch*, March 1959.

⁶⁷⁴ "New Walter Bill Passed by House," *ACIM Dispatch*, January 1960.

⁶⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

serious, albeit weak, attempt of different ethnic groups to collaborate to lobby for immigration reform. On October 1, 1954, the American Jewish Committee, the National Catholic Welfare Conference, the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., CIO, Common Council for American Unity, and the American Friends Service Committee organized under the American Immigration Conference. ACIM soon joined them but remained a secondary player in the organization's activities. The organization intended to provide a common medium for the exchange of information and experience, to promote effective cooperation and joint action among member agencies, to orchestrate an educational campaign on the need for immigration reform, and to represent American organizations in international conferences on migration and population movements.⁶⁷⁶

As an organization, the American Immigration Conference repeatedly tried to present a unified view on immigration reform. It testified at and submitted briefings to congressional hearings on refugee legislation and immigration bills; collaborated with other umbrella agencies dealing with immigration, including the Committee on Migration and Refugee Problems of the American Council of Voluntary Agencies and the National Council on Naturalization and Citizenship; and participated in conferences of non-governmental organizations interested in migration.⁶⁷⁷ It also wrote to Congressmen whenever they evaluated a new immigration bill to endorse reform and highlight the discriminatory nature of the existing policy.

Despite its ambitious and far-reaching agenda, the American Immigration Conference struggled to convince its member agencies to find and pursue a unifying course of action to advocate for immigration reform. During a meeting discussing "the plan of attack upon the National Origins Quota of the Immigration and Nationality Act," Donanzan reported to

⁶⁷⁶ "American Immigration Conference," *American Jewish Year Book* 57 (1956), 179-180.

⁶⁷⁷ "American Immigration Conference," *News* 1, no. 2 (March 1955) and American Immigration Conference, *News* 1, no. 4 (August 1955).

Marchisio that the organization seemed rattled by much division on how to proceed: "Many seemed to feel that the organizations represented should act individually on this subject while others felt that it should be done in concerted action through the medium of the American Immigration Conference."⁶⁷⁸ The attitude ACIM had towards the American Immigration Conference is instructive of the obstacles facing collaboration among groups interested in migration matters as well as of the organization's pragmatic approach to lobbying for reform. ACIM regularly received AIC's correspondence and newsletter and attended its meetings, debating action to lobby for amendments to the McCarran-Walter Act. Yet, more often than not, ACIM steered away from initiatives organized by the conference.

One of Father Donanzan's reports to Marchisio about a meeting of the American Immigration Conference he attended sheds light on ACIM's wariness about its affiliation with AIC. Donanzan wrote that he found it problematic that the representatives at the meeting were mainly from Jewish organizations leaning from the center to the extreme left. "I seemed to be the only representative of a Catholic group," Donanzan reported, "and there was only one other who represented a Protestant denomination."⁶⁷⁹ In line with this position, Donanzan suggested that they not participate in the AIC-organized rally at Carnegie Hall in New York City in June 1955 to protest against the McCarran-Walter Act. By the end of the 1950s, however, even Marchisio and Donanzan had to recognize that collaboration with other ethnic groups interested in immigration reform was critical to the overhaul of American immigration policy. Once again, the Catholic Church pushed and shaped ACIM's approach in this regard. In an address to the delegates of ACIM from all over the country at the 1959 national ACIM symposium, Monsignor Swanstrom suggested that it was necessary to work with other groups because "we must not kid

⁶⁷⁸ Memorandum, Donanzan to Marchisio, May 20, 1955, ACIM Collection, series E, box 27, folder "American Immigration Conference," Center for Migration Studies.

⁶⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

ourselves at all. There are not too many people around the country who think as we do who would tomorrow permit a change in our basic immigration laws, or our national origins quota system."⁶⁸⁰

Conclusion

The 1957 Immigration Act represented the climax of immigration reform in the 1950s. For three years after the passage of the 1957 Immigration Act, Congress enacted only minor changes to the country's immigration policy. Through their endorsement of and mobilization for executive action and ad hoc congressional laws, Italian Americans and Jewish Americans contributed to erode the system of immigration restriction created in the 1920s and renewed by the 1952 McCarran-Walter Act. The widespread hostility against immigration reform notwithstanding, Italian Americans and American Jews succeeded in taking advantage of their newly acquired position within American society to keep the public's attention on immigrant and refugee issues, to push Congress to pass palliative legislation to remedy the shortcomings of the quota system and the refugee legislation, and to begin to build a broader coalition against immigration restriction. Moreover, both groups, taking advantage of their connections and their financial means, tried to circumvent the problems of the McCarran-Walter Act and post-war refugee acts by working to find alternative destinations for Italian and Jewish migrants and refugees outside the United States.

At the same time, both groups developed a post-World War II, Cold War rhetoric on which to base their mobilization for reform. Although they continued to emphasize the contributions that immigrants made to the United States, they also began to adopt a language of

⁶⁸⁰ "Transcription of Symposium Proceedings," May 1959, ACIM Collection, series C, box C1, folder "Symposium Proceedings," Center for Migration Studies.

humanitarianism, social justice, and Christian empathy, to stress the repercussions of exogenous elements on the country's immigration policy, and to frame the need for a more humane immigration policy in international terms. Finally, they chose to focus on family reunion as a primary objective for immigration reform to assuage critics' fears of a new immigrant threat. The groundwork Italian Americans and American Jews laid and the rhetoric they developed in the 1950s would serve them well in the 1960s. With John F. Kennedy's campaign pledge to abolish the quota system, the 1960 presidential elections marked the beginning of the last phase of the battle for the repeal of the national origins quota system.

Chapter Six

Reform at Last: A Diverse Coalition at Work

The 1960s began with tremendous hope followed by profound frustration for Italian Americans and Jewish Americans involved in the struggle against immigration restriction. The election of John Fitzgerald Kennedy, a grandson of immigrants and the first successful Catholic candidate, to the presidency of the United States created the fleeting illusion that the elimination of the quota system and the overhaul of American immigration policy was imminent. Yet, when many supporters of immigration reform realized that the majority of Congress still opposed the idea of revisiting the McCarran-Walter Act and its isolationist provisions, they found themselves wondering about what strategy to adopt next. Sidney Liskofsky, chair of the Immigration Committee for the American Jewish Committee, clearly remembered the disillusionment many felt until the Kennedy Administration decided finally to commit to immigration reform:

Until 1963, reformers had not dared hope to obtain more than an improvement of the existing system, such as reallocating unused quotas; changing the census base year for computing quotas from 1920 to 1960 (to reflect more recent immigration trends), or establishing continental quotas.⁶⁸¹

Similarly, Father Caesar Donanzan, executive secretary of the American Committee on Italian Migration (ACIM), admitted in a 1962 letter to Joseph De Serto, ACIM officer in Chicago, that although ACIM hoped for an overarching reform of the immigration system, "We must, however, be practical and either settle for the most of what we can get or nothing at all."⁶⁸² Liskofsky and Donanzan's words reflected the frustration that many of the groups who had mobilized against immigration restriction felt after their decades of effort had amounted to little

⁶⁸¹ Liskofsky, "Immigration Act of October 3, 1965—Factors in Passage of Act," *American Jewish Year Book* 67 (1966).

⁶⁸² Donanzan to De Serto, June 25, 1962, Organizations Collection, ACIM Chicago Papers, box 2, file 12, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

change. As the 1960s began, the national-origins quota system had been in place for almost forty years.

After the disappointment with the Immigration Act of 1957, the anti-restriction movement faced a serious crisis of confidence. The major source of frustration stemmed from the disconnect between the political prominence achieved by many of the nationality groups that supported reform and their inability to accomplish their goal. Moreover, since the voluntary agencies to which many immigration reform advocates belonged were simultaneously responsible for the resettlement and integration of the arriving refugees and immigrants, the backlog and the congestion that discriminatory and poorly conceived policies created made their task all the more difficult. The same government that depended on voluntary agencies to administer its immigration and refugee laws did little to facilitate these organizations' job. A speaker at the 1962 Annual Seminar on Integration of Immigrants identified some of the unintended consequences that this system generated:

The United States is unique in its dependence on private individuals and voluntary organizations to carry out the initial stages of resettlement and integration. In general, according to the fragmentary studies on refugee resettlement, the sponsor has assumed his responsibilities fairly successfully. In general, however, sponsors are unprepared and untrained to handle the newcomer's psychological adjustment problems.⁶⁸³

As Italian Americans and Jewish Americans decided to continue putting pressure on the politicians who represented them in Congress, they also realized that joining forces with other groups to fight for a common cause remained their best strategy. Many of the Italian and Jewish organizations, in fact, became part of larger umbrella advocacy organizations that incorporated multiple organizations interested in immigration reform.

⁶⁸³ Richard Ferree Smith, "The Third Annual Seminar on Integration of Immigrants," January 12, 1962, HIAS Collection, RG 245.8, series 6, folder 108, YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

As the 1960s wore on, this collaboration assumed new contours. While all ethnic organizations continued to focus on issues specifically related to the groups they represented, their affiliation with umbrella organizations pushed them to expand their agenda outside the boundaries of the interests of their ethnic group and to advocate for other groups as well in an effort to showcase the need for wide-reaching reform. Contrary to what Mae Ngai has argued in *Impossible Subjects*, Euro-American immigration advocates began to argue for the right to come to the United States for Mexican and Asian immigrants as well as Arab, Chinese, Cuban, and North African refugees.⁶⁸⁴ The change stemmed not only from the realization of the potential that such an agenda had for all restricted groups but also from the collaboration among the groups, from the influence of the civil rights discourse on immigration activists, and from a new, post-World War II approach to immigration.⁶⁸⁵ In the case of American Jews, embracing a larger immigration reform agenda flowed from a long-time commitment to social justice for all. For Italian Americans, on the other hand, it was the Catholic Church's Cold War campaign for a humane and Christian immigration policy for all migrants that slowly broadened their agenda.

At the same time, the shift toward the consolidation of an alliance among all agencies interested in reform revealed different motivations for Italian and Jewish organizations to join. The organizations that joined belonged to two different categories: national voluntary agencies defined by religious affiliation, and organizations founded by each ethnic or nationality group. In this context, Jewish organizations like United HIAS Service, American Jewish Committee, and Anti-Defamation League, regarded themselves as nationwide voluntary agencies like the National Catholic Welfare Conference, National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, Lutheran Immigration Service, and National Community Relations Advisory Council. ACIM,

⁶⁸⁴ Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, especially chapter 7.

⁶⁸⁵ American Immigration and Citizenship Conference, *News*, October 10, 1962, HIAS Collection, RG 245.8, series 6, folder 106, YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

on the other hand, fell into the second category and, like many other ethnic organizations, was affiliated with one of the nationwide voluntary agencies to carry on both its advocacy and resettlement work. ACIM was in fact a member organization of the Catholic Relief Services. Yet, the strength and number of Italian American voters helped ACIM succeed in rising above similar organizations. Despite the circumscribed focus of its agenda, in fact, ACIM successfully campaigned for many of its goals, attracted politicians' attention to its policy objectives, and mobilized other ethnic organizations interested in similar issues. The different character of the Jewish and Italian organizations ultimately determined their separate courses after the battle against immigration restriction was over. While all of the Jewish organizations continue to exist today, ACIM closed its doors in 1967 as it had completed its mission to fight for changes in the law and to assist the beneficiaries of the new legislation to move to the United States.

Ultimately the passage of the Hart-Celler Act was the product of two interdependent events. Without the commitment of the Kennedy and the Johnson Administrations to push for immigration reform, the task would have been more difficult, even with the solid Democratic majority that the Johnson Administration enjoyed. At the same time, the ability of immigration reform advocates to join forces and keep the issue of immigration reform alive helped shift public opinion, persuading many Americans of the unjustness of the quota system and the need for reform. The vocal support of a grassroots base in turn influenced how many of the congressmen voted on the Hart-Celler bill.

"Snared in the Sargasso, or When, Oh Captain, Do We Sail?"⁶⁸⁶

⁶⁸⁶ Writing about the flurry of immigration bills introduced in Congress, the author of an article in the newsletter of the American Council for Nationalities Service commented: "Old-time sailors had an interesting legend that in the broad expanses of the Atlantic a certain area existed which they called the Sargasso Sea and which was so full of grasping seaweed and clutching mermaids that ships became ensnared, managing to escape only by Herculean

The 1960 presidential election reignited the struggle against immigration restriction. Organizations interested in immigration reform attended the hearings of the Democratic and Republican Platform Committees to encourage both parties to include an immigration plank in their platforms. On June 21, 1960, New York attorney Edward J. Ennis testified before the Democratic Platform Committee on behalf of seventeen lay and religious organizations interested in immigration, including the major Italian and Jewish organizations, to recommend that the party acknowledge in its immigration plank the need for serious reform. He pleaded for the increase in the annual number of admissible immigrants based on the 1960 census, a reasonable statute of limitation on deportations, the elimination of any distinctions between native born and naturalized citizens, the improvement of administrative procedures, and assistance to refugees escaping from Communist countries. Most of all, Ennis insisted that the platform favor the elimination of basing quotas "on the accident of national origin:"

The elimination of national origin of an immigrant as the determining factor of his practical opportunity to immigrate to the United States must continue to be the primary goal of a revised immigration policy at the present crucial time in which the United States must move forward in many ways to discharge its responsibility as a leader of the democratic forces of the world. Increasing closer ties with all the democratic people of the world imperatively demands elimination of national origin as the basis of immigration.⁶⁸⁷

effort. Is that where we are right now with immigration legislation of any significance?" American Council for Nationalities Service, "Immigration Legislation," *National Newsletter*, April 1961, HIAS Collection, RG 245.8, series 6, folder 77, YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

⁶⁸⁷ "Statement of Edward J. Ennis before the Democratic Platform Committee at its Hearings in New York City on June 21, 1960," HIAS Collection, RG 245.8, f. 70, YIVO, Center for Jewish History. Ennis spoke on behalf of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, American Civil Liberties Union, American Committee on Italian Migration, American Council for Émigrés in the Professions, American Council For Nationalities Service, American Friends Service Committee, American Jewish Congress, Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, International Social Service—American Branch, Italian Welfare League, National Board YWCA, National Conference of Catholic Charities, National Council Protestant Episcopal Church, Self-Help of Émigrés from Central Europe, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, United Automobile Workers of America, and the United Steelworkers of America.

The Democratic Party listened. For the first time, the party platform explicitly attacked the national origins system as a "policy of deliberate discrimination."⁶⁸⁸ During his presidential campaign, John F. Kennedy pledged to end the quota system if elected. The Republican candidates, on the other hand, opted to advocate simply for the replacement of the 1920 census with the 1960 census, but they remained convinced that the overall rationale behind the system must stay in place.⁶⁸⁹

Kennedy's victory reinvigorated immigration reformers' commitment to mobilize for an overhaul of the McCarran-Walter Act.⁶⁹⁰ For many, Kennedy's election showed that "a member of a so-called minority group" could attain the presidency of the United States and usher in a new era "of equality of all men under the Constitution," including under the immigration laws.⁶⁹¹

Many of these organizations realized that his victory offered an extraordinary but brief window of opportunity to resume the battle against restriction in full force:

If the issue of reform is tied up properly with foreign policy, and if real, not token, pressure is exerted by the new administration and its leadership in both Houses upon the Immigration Subcommittees of Congress, then basic revision can come. There must be popular support manifested, of course. And the agencies and organizations interested in immigration must stand together, fighting for principle and not settling for quarter loaves.⁶⁹²

⁶⁸⁸ Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*, 129.

⁶⁸⁹ Lieberman, *Are Americans Extinct?*, 122.

⁶⁹⁰ Kennedy himself contributed to fuel immigration reformers' expectations. In December 1960, for example, he published a brief message in *ACIM Dispatch* to state his support for the reunion of families, an update of the existing quotas, the pooling of unused quotas, and a flexible formula for the admission of refugees, but he also promised more: "I also feel that we should look beyond these proposals to the abolition of the national origins quota system and its replacement with a more equitable method of regulating the inflow of immigrants." Six months later, in June 1961, President Kennedy sent a message to the ACIM second symposium, held in Rome, Italy, that urged the revision of American immigration policy. "From President-Elect Kennedy," *ACIM Dispatch*, December 1960; and "Kennedy Urges Revision of Immigration Laws in Message Read to Symposium Delegates," *ACIM Dispatch*, June 1961.

⁶⁹¹ American Council for Nationalities Service, "Factor in Ethnic Equality: A Catholic President of the U.S.," *National Newsletter*, December 1960, HIAS Collection, RG 245.8, series 6, folder 77, YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

⁶⁹² American Council for Nationalities Service, "Immigration Legislation," *National Newsletter*, December 1960, HIAS Collection, RG 245.8, series 6, folder 77, YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

During the first two years of Kennedy's term, however, his administration showed little interest in embarking upon an overhaul of American immigration legislation, and the president made only moderate proposals to Congress. However, in the first two years of his administration, responding to Cold War imperatives, Kennedy oversaw the passage of legislation for refugees from the Western Hemisphere, the first without an expiration date to acknowledge that the refugee problem would be continuous, and signed a law that authorized automatic minimum quotas of one hundred for newly independent nations and assigned a similar quota to each country within the Asia-Pacific Triangle. For organizations and activists who had long waited for the right moment and had struggled to create an environment more open to reform, Kennedy's modest proposals hardly matched their expectations.

As the hope for immediate immigration reform after Kennedy's election waned, many immigration reform groups struggled to find new momentum. The disappointment was palpable:

The administration now in office in Washington is, we know, sympathetic to immigration reform and asylum for refugees. The President himself, when a Senator, introduced various bills toward these ends. But the administration so far in its course is behaving not like an ardent swain but more like a selective suitor, looking elsewhere than in immigration's direction and casting its nods and becks and wreathed smiles toward a host of other issues.⁶⁹³

Yet these groups found themselves gridlocked as to how to continue their battle. Many of them agreed that the only solution to break the impasse in which immigration reform languished was for "agencies, organizations and church groups truly concerned to join together and exercise pressure both ways, on the people and on the politicians."⁶⁹⁴ Many others also realized that the plethora of umbrella organizations created divisions and redundancies that limited reformists' impact. By 1959, at least four major umbrella organizations were advocating for immigration

⁶⁹³ American Council for Nationalities Service, "Wallflower at the Legislative Ball," *National Newsletter*, February 1962, HIAS Collection, RG 245.8, series 6, folder 77, YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

⁶⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

reform: the American Immigration Conference, the National Council on Immigration and Citizenship, the American Council for Nationalities Service, and the American Council for Voluntary Agencies. Many smaller organizations and agencies often belonged to at least two if not more of the larger organizations. This meant that the initiatives, objectives, and competences of these umbrella organizations often coincided, creating an overlap that was detrimental to the success of their efforts.⁶⁹⁵

The solution to this dispersal of energy and resources and to the frustration that it generated arrived in 1960. That year, the National Council on Naturalization and Citizenship and the American Immigration Conference merged to create the American Immigration and Citizenship Conference (AICC) with headquarters in New York City.⁶⁹⁶ AICC had about one hundred affiliated and cooperating agencies for which it functioned as a clearinghouse and coordinator of information, research, and educational activity. Its member agencies included several influential Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish welfare and community-relations agencies (such as the National Catholic Welfare Conference, National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, Lutheran Immigration Service, United HIAS Service, American Jewish Committee, Anti-Defamation League, and National Community Relations Advisory Council); labor unions (including the United Steel Workers of America and the Industrial Union Department of the AFL-CIO); and an array of nationality group organizations (such as the American Committee on Italian Migration, American Hellenic Educational Program Association, and the Japanese

⁶⁹⁵ "Notes of Discussion of a Special Meeting of the Representatives of the American Immigration Council of Voluntary Agencies for Foreign Service," March 30, 1960, HIAS Collection, RG 245.8, series 6, folder 70, YIVO, Center for Jewish History. During this meeting, representatives of both organizations complained of the problems that the overlap of initiatives and representations created for the immigration reform cause and suggested the division of competences among the two to strengthen the effectiveness of their objectives.

⁶⁹⁶ Sonia D. Blumenthal, "The Private Organizations in the Naturalization and Citizenship Process," *International Migration Review* 5, no. 4 (Winter 1971), 451.

American Citizens League).⁶⁹⁷ From its inception until 1965, the AICC focused on the removal of the two most discriminatory aspects of the McCarran-Walter Act, namely the national-origins quota system and the Asia Pacific Triangle.

As they struggled with the significance of Kennedy's election for their cause and tried to regroup, Italian Americans and American Jews also continued to fight to obtain legislation for refugees and family reunion. In early 1960, ACIM expressed concern at the unintended repercussions that the inclusion of unmarried sons and daughter over twenty-one in the 1959 PL 86-363 law had on family reunion for spouses and minor children of resident aliens in the third preference. Even though they had previously lacked any preference status, the majority of unmarried sons and daughters over twenty-one often had earlier registration dates than spouses and minor children of resident aliens, thus penalizing the intended primary beneficiaries of the third preference visas. "Because of this factor, plus the increased number of persons eligible," observed ACIM officials, "the limited number of yearly visas issued to the third preference applicants has become totally inadequate."⁶⁹⁸ Moreover, as with previous ad hoc legislation, the pace of the implementation of the new provisions remained slow. A year after Congress had passed the law, only 12,267 persons of the 57,000 expected to benefit from it had arrived.⁶⁹⁹

ACIM contacted congressional leaders to alert them to the problem:

Reaffirming their stand that we, as a country, have a moral responsibility to reunite families who are separated only by an inadequacy in our laws, ACIM officials appealed for legislation that would permit the entry of these spouses and minor children as nonquota immigrants.⁷⁰⁰

⁶⁹⁷ Liskofsky, "Immigration Act of October 3, 1965—Factors in Passage of Act," *American Jewish Year Book* 67 (1966).

⁶⁹⁸ "Third Preference Quota Dilemma—Spouses and Minor Children of the Third Preference Face Long Wait," *ACIM Dispatch*, September 1960.

⁶⁹⁹ "Reunion of Families to Be Stepped Up," *ACIM Dispatch*, November 1960.

⁷⁰⁰ "Third Preference Quota Dilemma—Spouses and Minor Children of the Third Preference Face Long Wait," *ACIM Dispatch*, September 1960.

Congressmen once again expressed sympathy with their cause but took no action because of the imminent presidential elections. The only consolation for immigration reform advocates was the assurance in November 1960 from Under Secretary of State Loy W. Henderson and United States Visa Office authorities that the issuance of visas would soon increase.⁷⁰¹

Family reunion remained a central concern among ACIM's leadership throughout 1961 as well. Despite the promises from the Under Secretary of State and the United States Visa Office authorities, seventeen months after the passage of PL 86-363, ACIM noted, only 9,684 out of the anticipated 30,000 Italian immigrants had reunited with their families in the United States.⁷⁰² In May 1961, the *Visa Office Bulletin* reported that there were 171,210 pending family reunification applications, most of which were from Italy (138,378), with Greece a distant second (6,999).⁷⁰³ Congress ultimately heard ACIM's and other immigration reformers' complaints, but action on the issue took another year after the Under Secretary's assurances. Between January and May 1961, eleven congressmen introduced legislation proposing to reform the country's immigration laws with an emphasis on family reunion and skills needed in the United States.⁷⁰⁴ All the bills proposed permanent revisions to the existing immigration legislation. ACIM remained optimistic that Congress might at least pass stopgap legislation facilitating family reunion:

There is good reason to believe that ACIM's pleas for emergency action—in the absence of permanent provisions—will be answered, and legislation will be enacted momentarily to alleviate, at least, the most serious hardship cases.⁷⁰⁵

⁷⁰¹ "Reunion of Families to Be Stepped Up," *ACIM Dispatch*, November 1960.

⁷⁰² "20,000 Relatives still to Be Re-United Under Public Law 363," *ACIM Dispatch*, March-April 1961.

⁷⁰³ Portugal was third (3,888), "Chinese Persons," not China, fourth (2,327), Yugoslavia fifth (2,135), Hungary sixth (1,706), and Philippines seventh (1,636), with people from other countries having 5,897 registered applications. "Registered Demands for Visas," *ACIM Dispatch*, September 1961.

⁷⁰⁴ "Congressman Walter Sponsors New Immigration Legislation—H.R. 6300 Includes 'Quota Reserve' Section for Reunion of Families," *ACIM Dispatch*, May 1961.

⁷⁰⁵ "Stopgap Legislation Sought by ACIM to Reunite Families—No Action this Session on Bill to Reallocate Unused Quotas," *ACIM Dispatch*, September 1961.

ACIM's confidence derived from the large number of pending family reunification applications and from past experience—ad hoc legislation had been Congress's response to previous immigration or refugee crises for almost two decades by then.⁷⁰⁶

As ACIM suspected, the stopgap solution arrived soon after. In July 1961, Senators Pastore, Dirksen, Keating, and Javits introduced a bill providing for the continuation of the program to adopt alien orphan children. When the House began to debate the bill, Representative Walter decided to add a provision that all second and third preference cases whose petitions had been filed prior to July 1, 1961 should be admitted on a non-quota basis. To ACIM's initial satisfaction, Congress approved the bill into law with Walter's provision.⁷⁰⁷ The new law, signed by President Kennedy on September 6, 1961, was, in the words of Senator Dirksen, "a step forward." Legislators estimated that 10,000 Italians would benefit from PL 87-316, namely parents and adult unmarried sons and daughters of U.S. citizens (second preference) and spouses and unmarried adult and minor children of lawful residents of the United States (third preference).⁷⁰⁸

At the same time, the frustration over the difficulty of convincing Congress to pass legislation that could provide a permanent solution to the problems deriving from the existing immigration policy convinced ACIM leaders to continue to pursue destinations other than the

⁷⁰⁶ Donanzan reported to ACIM officers across the country that ACIM leaders had repeatedly met with legislators to bring to their attention the need for a comprehensive solution to the family reunification problem, but action seemed difficult because of "the unemployment prevailing in some parts of the country together with the tense international situation. Hence, ACIM leaders opted to urge "that at least some interim legislation be enacted before the adjournment of the present Session of Congress." Donanzan to ACIM Officers, July 27, 1961, Organizations Collections, ACIM Chicago Papers, box 2, folder 11, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

⁷⁰⁷ "A Step Forward—10,000 Italians to Enter under Non-quota Status," *ACIM Dispatch*, October-November 1961.

⁷⁰⁸ ACIM initially endorsed Representative Walter's bill but, after more careful analysis, opposed it as it prescribed that only a minimum of unused visas would be re-issued with the result that the bill would be of little value to countries like Italy, which had a tremendous backlog of visa applications. After the passage of the bill, Donanzan immediately wrote ACIM officers across the country to write to their Congressmen to express their dissatisfaction with the recently passed act and to criticize the apathy shown by Congress to pass adequate legislation to reunite families. Donanzan to ACIM Officers, July 27, 1961, Organizations Collections, ACIM Chicago Collection, box 2, folder 11, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

United States for future Italian migrants. While lobbying for PL 87-316, ACIM leadership, with the full support of the Italian government, also conferred with Peruvian government officials "in connection with the Peruvian-Italian colonization project which would provide for large scale financing of irrigation projects in various desert areas of the Pacific coast and the settlement of these reclaimed lands of Peruvians as well as immigrants from Italy."⁷⁰⁹ Although such efforts could help some Italian migrants and lessen the flow of immigrants competing for U.S. visas, they did little to reduce the backlog of family reunification applications. Thus, in spite of its efforts to find alternative destinations, ACIM continued to focus its energies on the United States and again mobilized its base to fight for adequate family reunification legislation.

While ACIM identified alternative destinations for future immigrants, immigrants already in the United States turned to private immigration bills to circumvent the severity of the quota system. Many immigrants took advantage of the private immigration bills to delay immigration authorities' action in their pending cases. If a congressman agreed to submit a bill, the immigrant would be safe for at least a year and could temporarily avoid deportation as the Immigration and Naturalization Service would usually not act on the case while the bill was pending in Congress. In 1961-1962 alone, 2,677 private immigration bills came up for discussion.⁷¹⁰ Although the majority of the private immigration bills concerned the adjustment of status of family members, the immigrants who benefited the most from the delay that the bills guaranteed were those threatened with deportation because the quotas for their countries had been filled for the year. The delay could be indefinite, as private bills to allow immigrants to remain in the country could be reintroduced in each new session of Congress until a quota slot opened up.⁷¹¹ The cases behind the proposal of these bills were often ludicrous. In his *A Nation of Immigrants*, Kennedy

⁷⁰⁹ "Judge Marchisio Outlines Italian Migration Plan to Peruvian Government," *ACIM Dispatch*, May 1961.

⁷¹⁰ Lieberman, *Are Americans Extinct?*, 124-125.

⁷¹¹ *Ibid.*, 126. On the cumbersome inefficacy of private bills, see also Kennedy, *A Nation of Immigrants*, 78-79.

discussed the absurdity of one such case: an Italian immigrant living in Massachusetts with his small children could not bring his wife to the United States because she had been convicted on two counts involving moral turpitude. Her crimes? In 1913 and 1919 she had stolen bundles of sticks to build a fire.⁷¹²

As private immigration bills required great time and resources and only marginally helped the immigration flow, family reunification thus remained the most pressing issue for immigration reform groups. As the number of backlogged applications mushroomed to 170,000—140,000 of which were from Italian applicants—ACIM resumed its struggle for the streamlining of the family reunification process and the reallocation of unused quotas:

An intolerable situation which confronts low quota countries such as Italy and focuses the spotlight on the inadequacy and unfairness of America's immigration policies is the present misfortune facing closer relatives of U.S. citizens who seek to join their loved ones here.⁷¹³

Aware that a permanent solution to the problem still remained a chimera, ACIM allied with the Catholic Relief Services (CRS) to push for legislation for the reallocation of unused quotas to resolve the family reunification applications backlog. ACIM and CRS joined forces when they realized that Congress would not pass Senator Hart's bill, which proposed an extensive revision of the quota system; that the Kennedy administration had decided to postpone to 1963 its request for broad changes to American immigration policy; and that they could not count on other large and influential religious and other interested groups to support their objective.⁷¹⁴ Bishop

Swanstrom and Juvenal Marchisio, ACIM's national chairman, wrote a letter addressed to all the

⁷¹² Kennedy, *A Nation of Immigrants*, 79.

⁷¹³ "Reunification of Families Now—Vital Issue, Active chapter Support of Plea is Urgent," *ACIM Dispatch*, May 1962.

⁷¹⁴ Donanzan to De Serto, June 25, 1962, Organizations Collection, ACIM Chicago Papers, box 2, file 12, IHRC, University of Minnesota. Senator Hart's bill proposed to set up a two-part formula based on population ratios and the pattern of immigration over the previous fifteen years. Despite the support of twenty-five other Senators representing seventeen states, Congress refused to take the bill into consideration. "Senator Hart Bill—25 Senators from 17 States Co-Sponsors," *ACIM Dispatch*, May 1962; and "Congress Passes Immigration Bill—Thousands of Americans Disappointed by Inadequacy of New Bill," *ACIM Dispatch*, October 1962.

members of the Senate and House Judiciary Committee describing the plight of the 170,000 close relatives waiting to reunite with their family members in the United States and proposing that their admission be made possible by the reallocation of unused quotas. The letter also proposed as an alternative solution the extension of PL 86-363—the law passed in 1959 that prescribed the entry of relatives with applications submitted by December 31, 1953, as nonquota immigrants—to include applications filed by December 31, 1955, and to continue the program after its expiration in March 1962. ACIM mobilized its base and asked its 120 chapters to contact their local, state, and national legislators to urge them to support such legislation.⁷¹⁵

As in the past, congressmen responded to ACIM's pleas with the introduction of scores of bills aimed in varying degrees at revising the limitations of America's immigration laws. ACIM rejoiced at the number of bills submitted and took pride in its role in pushing congressmen to act on one of its major goals:

The majority of the bills contained as the major premise the provision that long separated families should be re-united—that mother, sons and daughters, sisters and brothers should be rejoined as a family unit. The bills were an acknowledgement by Congress of support for the repeated appeals made by ACIM since its founding in 1952 to eliminate the hardships inflicted on low quotas countries such as Italy.⁷¹⁶

ACIM leaders were also aware, however, that many of the bills introduced were simply "political smoke screens" meant mainly for the benefit of congressmen running for reelection in the coming months. Confirming their skepticism, Representative Walter replied to Swanstrom and Marchisio's letter and let it be known to his colleagues, as well, that the passage of any immigration legislation was unlikely given the uncertain economic and political climate.⁷¹⁷

⁷¹⁵ "Reunification of Families Now—Vital Issue, Active chapter Support of Plea is Urgent," *ACIM Dispatch*, May 1962; Donanzan to De Serto, June 25, 1962, Organizations Collection, ACIM Chicago Papers, box 2, file 12, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

⁷¹⁶ "Congress Passes Immigration Bill—Thousands of Americans Disappointed by Inadequacy of New Bill," *ACIM Dispatch*, October 1962.

⁷¹⁷ Donanzan to De Serto, June 25, 1962, Organizations Collection, ACIM Chicago Papers, box 2, file 12, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

ACIM and the Catholic Relief Services knew that unless Representative Walter supported any pending immigration legislation, nothing could be accomplished. Donanzan himself admitted as much, when he wrote to Joseph De Serto, the coordinator of the ACIM chapter in Chicago:

I need not to tell you that Congressman Walter is the absolute, unchallenged boss of legislation on immigration and that, as Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Immigration, he has control of life and death over immigration bills.⁷¹⁸

After receiving Representative Walter's negative response, Marchisio and Donanzan decided to appeal to Edward Kennedy to ask him to discuss the proposal that Marchisio and Swanstrom had outlined in their letter to Walter with President Kennedy and Attorney General Kennedy. Following up on his promise, Kennedy met with his brothers and, at the end of May, 1962, with Congressman Walter to suggest the possibility of proposing legislation to help Chinese refugees in Hong Kong and to address the family reunification problem. Because Walter had already publicly declared that no new legislation would be introduced and passed in 1962, Kennedy agreed to work on the renewal of PL 86-363 to help fourth preference applicants who had filed in 1954 instead.⁷¹⁹ ACIM leaders would have preferred a definite solution rather than a "piecemeal legislative approach," but they realized that this was all for which they could hope.⁷²⁰

Representative Francis Walter's bill and Senator John O. Pastore's companion bill in the Senate soon became the only chance to have any legislation passed. The bill called for the non-quota admission of fourth-preference applicants—sons, daughters, brothers and sisters of U.S. citizens—with spouses and children whose applications had been filed by consular officials prior

⁷¹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷¹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷²⁰ "Senator Hart Bill—25 Senators from 17 States Co-Sponsors," *ACIM Dispatch*, May 1962; and "Congress Passes Immigration Bill—Thousands of Americans Disappointed by Inadequacy of New Bill," *ACIM Dispatch*, October 1962.

to December 31, 1954, and approved by the Attorney General by January 1, 1962.⁷²¹ Despite ACIM and the Catholic Relief Services' incessant and urgent recommendations, Congress seriously began to consider this legislation only in late October. The final version, which became PL 87-885, provided a cutoff date of December 31, 1954, and limited eligibility to applicants approved between January and March 1954. Legislators estimated that approximately 15,000 immigrants would benefit from the bill, the majority being Italians, Greeks, and Portuguese, but the legislation left many of those who had worked for its passage frustrated, particularly with its narrow eligibility requirements. "The result," ACIM leadership commented, "was far from laudable. It was tragic."⁷²² More importantly, ACIM leaders felt that its experience with PL 87-885 had three important lessons that everybody involved with the organization needed to remember in future endeavors:

- 1) The opposition to liberalize the U.S. immigration policies even for the benefit of close relatives of U.S. citizens is obstinate and reflects the attitude of the majority of U.S. Congressmen, who, in turn, reflect the attitude of their constituents.
- 2) There is no easy formula to break the grip that the opposition holds on immigration matters.
- 3) A complete revision of our immigration laws remains our ultimate goal and should be attempted whenever there exists a favorable climate for it. In the meantime we must settle for piecemeal legislation.⁷²³

Ultimately, ACIM agreed with the *New York Times* that Congress began working on the legislation only "to permit its members to go home for some political fence-mending before the elections."⁷²⁴

⁷²¹ "Senate and House Bills Support ACIM Fourth Preference Appeal," *ACIM Dispatch*, June 1962.

⁷²² Donanzan to ACIM Officers, Chapter Chairmen, and Priest Consultants, October 17, 1962, Organizations Collection, ACIM Chicago Papers, box 2, file 12, IHRC, University of Minnesota. In his letter, Donanzan also complained that those who opposed the legislation crippled the final version of the law through private meetings with the Senate immigration committee members.

⁷²³ Donanzan to ACIM Officers, Chapter Chairmen, and Priest Consultants, October 17, 1962, Organizations Collection, ACIM Chicago Papers, box 2, file 12, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

⁷²⁴ As quoted in Donanzan to ACIM Officers, Chapter Chairmen, and Priest Consultants, October 17, 1962, Organizations Collection, ACIM Chicago Papers, box 2, file 12, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

In the case of the Jewish community, other issues absorbed their attention as the discussion over immigration reform reemerged with the new decade. The beginning of the 1960s saw American Jews engaged in debates on desegregation, church and state relations, civil rights, and discrimination. Their involvement in these issues often attracted attacks against them and episodes of Anti-Semitism from people who opposed the recent developments in civil rights and church and state relations.⁷²⁵ Periodicals, pamphlets, flyers, and leaflets circulated alternatively accusing American Jews of being part of the Jewish-Communist-Zionist conspiracy to subvert the country and enslave the world; of scheming to mongrelize the South through their domination of government and the press; of controlling the UN; of conspiring to wage war through Zionism; and of exploiting welfare laws and programs, including mental health and water fluoridation, for conspiratorial ends.⁷²⁶

Yet what concerned American Jews most at the time was the reaction to their support for the State of Israel. Accusations and attacks against them came from two distinct fronts: Arab propagandists and Americans who exploited the tensions in the Middle East to discredit American Jews. The pro-Arab propaganda, as the American Jewish Committee labeled it, used literature, lectures, and Arab students at American institutions to discredit American Jews' involvement with Israel. The main sources of Arab propaganda in the United States were the Arab League's Arab Information Center, the embassies and UN delegations of Arab League countries, the Organization of Arab Students, and the Palestine Arab Refugee Office.⁷²⁷ In his analysis of the attacks against Jews from these groups, George Killman noted that they often

⁷²⁵ In its annual reports from the late 1950s to the early 1960s, the American Jewish Committee periodically reported in its "Anti-Jewish Agitation" section of verbal and physical attacks against American Jews and synagogues from Nazi sympathizers and members of the American Nazi Party, National States Rights Party, Ku Klux Klan, John Birch Society, and White Citizens Council.

⁷²⁶ George Killman, "Anti-Jewish Agitation," *American Jewish Year Book* 62 (1961).

⁷²⁷ George Killman, "Pro-Arab Propaganda," *American Jewish Year Book* 63 (1962).

conflated Zionist and Jew and centered on one main argument, American Jews' disloyalty to the United States:

Anti-Jewish activists maintained a volume of pro-Arab propaganda comparable to that of the preceding period, equating Communism with Zionism and in that context leveling conspiracy charges against American Jews and Jewish groups. Fund-raising appeals for Israel were characterized as sinister; dual-loyalty charges were frequent, as were depictions of alleged Jewish cruelty toward the Arabs.⁷²⁸

The intensity of the attacks on American Jews during this period, coupled with the impasse in Congress over immigration legislation, persuaded American Jews to handle immigration restriction by continuing to rely on their own organizations, while trying to create a broader alliance with other groups to frame immigration reform as part of people's rights to mobility. Thus, while they continued to support Jewish resettlement agencies like United HIAS Service to care for Jewish migrants and refugees in the United States and around the world, they also became a driving force behind the efforts of umbrella organizations to create a united front against restriction.

At the same time, American Jews continued to carry on local refugee programs. These programs took over the resettlement of Jewish immigrants once United HIAS Service brought Jewish refugees to American shores. Generally administered and financed by local Jewish family agencies, these programs provided economic aid and counseling to newly arrived Jews. The bulk of Jewish refugees continued to arrive from Europe, but substantial numbers also arrived from Egypt, Cuba, and the Middle East. This change in the refugees' countries of origin later motivated American Jews to plead for immigration and refugee rights for non-European immigrants as well. Despite United HIAS Service's efforts to encourage resettlement in other

⁷²⁸ George Kellman, "Pro-Arab Propaganda," *American Jewish Year Book* 61 (1960). See also George Kellman, "Pro-Arab Propaganda," *American Jewish Year Book* 62 (1961); George Kellman, "Pro-Arab Propaganda," *American Jewish Year Book* 63 (1962); George Kellman, "Arab and Pro-Arab Propaganda," *American Jewish Year Book* 64 (1963). The coverage of the 'pro-Arab propaganda' ended with the 1963 report, but the annual reports continued to include a section titled "United States, Israel, and the Middle East."

communities in the United States where the prospects for adjustment might be better, well over half of the arriving refugees settled in New York City. Jewish agencies in New York City thus bore the largest share of refugee costs. The financial mobilization of the American Jewish community to support the New York Association for New Americans (NYANA), the major agency for refugee assistance in the city, was substantial. Because its financing was considered a national responsibility, NYANA was a direct beneficiary of the United Jewish Appeal, whose funds came from welfare funds and contributions from smaller Jewish agencies from across the country. The need for funding ebbed and flowed as refugee crises soared or quieted down. In 1957, as the Hungarian refugee crisis raged, NYANA received grants from the United Jewish Appeal for \$1,291,000. The grants progressively declined in the following years, and NYANA received \$870,000 in 1958, \$690,000 in 1959, \$603,000 in 1960, and then went up again in 1961, as a consequence of the 1959 Cuban Revolution, when the United Jewish Appeal gave NYANA \$817,000.⁷²⁹ After a new upturn in 1962, NYANA's activities diminished again.⁷³⁰

Italian Americans continued to be concerned with the relocation of refugees as well. In 1960, the first World Refugee Year declared by the United Nations, *ACIM Dispatch* repeatedly published articles discussing the plight of refugees around the world and opinion pieces on the issue, often detailing the Catholic Church's position and its emphasis on migration as a natural

⁷²⁹ S.P. Goldberg, "New York Association for New Americans," *American Jewish Year Book* 62 (1961); S.P. Goldberg, "New York Association for New Americans," *American Jewish Year Book* 62 (1961); and S. P. Goldberg, "Migration Services," *American Jewish Year Book* 64 (1963).

⁷³⁰ For more on Jewish refugee programs and on the activities of the New York Association for New Americans in these years, see S.P. Goldberg, "New York Association for New Americans," *American Jewish Year Book* 62 (1961); S.P. Goldberg, "New York Association for New Americans," *American Jewish Year Book* 63 (1962); S. P. Goldberg, "Refugee Programs," *American Jewish Year Book* 63 (1962); S. P. Goldberg, "Migration Services," *American Jewish Year Book* 64 (1963); S. P. Goldberg, "Refugee Programs," *American Jewish Year Book* 64 (1963); S. P. Goldberg, "Refugee Programs," *American Jewish Year Book* 65 (1964); S. P. Goldberg, "Migration Services," *American Jewish Year Book* 66 (1965); and S.P. "Refugees," *American Jewish Year Book* 66 (1965).

right.⁷³¹ Moreover, the newsletters periodically published articles that described programs through which readers could help Italian refugees, including paying ten dollars a month to a refugee family, making a contribution to provide refugees with a care packet upon arrival, contributing a sum towards a resettlement grant fund, or donating a sewing machine, the single most requested item by Italian refugee families.⁷³² Also in connection with the World Refugee Year, in February, 1960, ACIM was one of the twenty-five leading national Catholic organizations and nationality groups that met in New York City to discuss the expansion of their efforts to assist refugees and to urge the U.S. government to implement the programs to which it had committed under the auspices of the World Refugee Year. For the first time, these organizations explicitly expressed their concern and their interest in helping non-Western refugees as well. "In addition to being concerned with the needs of the refugees in the countries of Western Europe," wrote Monsignor Swanstrom in his letter to Representative Walter and President Eisenhower to inform them of the outcomes of the meeting, "we are especially concerned with the plight and the sufferings of refugees in Asia and the Far Eastern countries."⁷³³ The emergence of these concerns for non-European refugees among Italian Americans not only speaks to the influence that the Catholic Church's ecumenical vision of migration had on them and parallels American Jews' similar claims but also counteracts Mae Ngai's contention that Euro-Americans mobilized only for white European migrants.⁷³⁴

⁷³¹ "Bishops Stress Natural Right to Migrate—Statement on 'World Refugee Year and Migration' Issued by NCWC Administrative Board," *ACIM Dispatch*, January 1960; "Aid for World Refugees Urged—Catholic Relief Services Conference Outlines Programs and Projects," *ACIM Dispatch*, February 1960. This trend continued after the World Refugee Year. See "Migration: Natural, Inalienable Right," *ACIM Dispatch*, May 1962; "Magna Carta for Migrants—First English Publication of Church's 'Exul Familia'," *ACIM Dispatch*, July-August 1962

⁷³² "World Refugee Year Projects—How You Can Help," *ACIM Dispatch*, February 1960.

⁷³³ Swanstrom to Walter, February 5, 1960, Organizations Collection, ACIM Chicago Papers, box 1, folder 11, IHRC, University of Minnesota. Swanstrom to Eisenhower, February 5, 1960, Organizations Collection, ACIM Chicago Papers, box 1, folder 11, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

⁷³⁴ Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, chapter 7.

One important factor behind ACIM's participation in the activities of the first World Refugee Year was its concern with the predicament of Italian refugees from Tunisia. Similar to American Jews who took an interest in non-European migrants when they helped to resettle Jewish refugees from Egypt, Cuba, and the Middle East, Italian Americans' interest in non-European refugees stemmed from their experience helping Italians in the region. Their efforts to help Italian refugees from Tunisia broadened ACIM leaders' agenda. From then on, they fought for legislation on behalf of Italian refugees outside of Europe and began to make a case for non-European refugees as well. The shift was in part due to the influence of the Catholic relief agencies with which ACIM collaborated and the Catholic Church's new mission with regard to immigration worldwide. ACIM's broadening of its agenda was also the unexpected product of Italian decolonization. Italian Americans' interest in Italian refugees from Tunisia was yet another example of their ethno-nationalism and of the special relationship they continued to maintain with Italy.

In fact, the Italian government was particularly eager to get ACIM involved in the relocation process of Italian refugees from Tunisia. The Comitato Italiano per l'Anno del Rifugiato (Italian Committee for World Refugee Year) invited ACIM national chairman Marchisio to visit refugee camps in Italy and Tunisia in his capacity as one of the directors of the U.S. Committee for Refugees. The purpose of his three-week trip was to survey "the situation of Italians expropriated and dispossessed by virtue of the policy of nationalization now being carried on by the Tunisian government."⁷³⁵ Upon his return, Marchisio published an extensive report in the *ACIM Dispatch* on the dire conditions of Italian refugees in the camps. The report

⁷³⁵ "Marchisio Surveying Plight of Tunisian Refugees—Invited to visit Camps in Italy and it Tunisia," *ACIM Dispatch*, February 1960.

had the dual purpose of informing the newsletter readers of the plight of these refugees and of encouraging them to participate in any of the refugee programs that ACIM sponsored:

Despite the fact that this is 'World Refugee Year,' the American public—even as the Italian—is completely unaware of the tragic situation of 51,702 Italian nationals in Tunisia. More than two-thirds of this number (39,528) are second and third generation born Tunisians with, however, technical Italian citizenship.⁷³⁶

The legal definition of their citizenship status represented the crux of what complicated their refugee status, as they fell under the classification neither of refugee nor of expellee as defined by the existing programs of assistance administered by the United Nations or by immigration legislation in potential receiving countries. Neither could they remain in Italy, Marchisio explained, because of its overburdened economy and high rate of unemployment.⁷³⁷ For many of these refugees, ACIM represented their last chance, as the several letters that Italians in Tunisia sent ACIM headquarters in New York City attested.⁷³⁸

In addition to informing the Italian American community, Marchisio and his collaborators sent a copy of his report to members in both houses of Congress. In a letter accompanying his report, Marchisio asked congressmen to include Italians from Tunisia in the bill that Representative Francis Walter had proposed to allow a certain number of refugees to enter the United States with parolee status. The law would represent the United States' contribution to world initiatives organized in connection with the World Refugee Year. During the earlier House hearings for the bill, both the American Council of Voluntary Agencies for Foreign Service and the United States Committee for Refugees also requested that the bill's language be altered to include Italian nationals in Tunisia among its beneficiaries, but the House

⁷³⁶ "Judge Marchisio Reports—Expropriated Italians in Tunisia Facing Starvation, Moral Degradation," *ACIM Dispatch*, March-April 1960.

⁷³⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷³⁸ "Letter from Tunisia—Points Up Plight of Expropriated Italians Forced to Leave Country; 15,000 Back in Italy in Refugee Camps," *ACIM Dispatch*, January 1960.

rejected these recommendations before passing the bill. Marchisio explained his and his organization's disappointment in the bill, especially in view of the additional quotas that Congress had granted to other white migrants in non-Western countries in a similar situation to Italians in Tunisia:

These recommendations were not accepted even though there is the precedent that Dutch nationals from Indonesia—in exactly the same position as Italian nationals now find themselves in Tunisia—were the beneficiaries of a law which permitted the entry into this country of some of their number.⁷³⁹

Marchisio's letter concluded with a plea to help resettle at least 5,000 Italian nationals from Tunisia. This move, he wrote, would confirm the United States' humanitarian interest in people forced to leave their country because of their nationality, help the overcrowded conditions in Italian refugee camps, and set the precedent for other 'countries of haven.'⁷⁴⁰

Marchisio's report attracted many congressmen's attention. Several congressmen introduced bills to tackle the plight of Italian refugees from Tunisia. Yet, as *ACIM Dispatch* noted in its June issue, action on these bills was not forthcoming. Frustrated with the legislative inaction, ACIM leaders along with other groups interested in refugee legislation again contacted congressmen and urged them to act before the close of the July session and before the end of the World Refugee Year on June 30, 1960. They argued that inaction before that date left U.S. commitments with regard to its international program for the World Refugee Year unfulfilled.⁷⁴¹ Their pleas had a strong supporter in President Eisenhower, who twice in the spring of 1960 asked Congress to pass refugee legislation to admit 10,000 refugees a year before the end of the World Refugee Year and to consider the liberalization of American immigration laws in general

⁷³⁹ "Congress Stirred by Marchisio Report on Tunisia Refugee," *ACIM Dispatch*, May 1960.

⁷⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴¹ "Action on Refugee from Tunisia Urged by ACIM—Legislation to Relieve Plight Imperative before Close of World Refugee Year," *ACIM Dispatch*, June 1960.

during the same spring session.⁷⁴² Eisenhower's pleas notwithstanding, immigration reform advocates recognized that "only the proposal for refugees [had] any chance of favorable consideration and enactment by Congress before adjournment."⁷⁴³

The Fair Share Refugee Act of July 14, 1960, was Congress's response, but the act left many immigration reform advocates disappointed with the limitations of the act, as it facilitated the entry only of Europeans who fled from Iron Curtain nations. The act also placed a ceiling on the number of admissions in relation to the resettlement activities of other nations and established that the number of parolees should represent twenty-five per cent of the total number of refugees resettled elsewhere.⁷⁴⁴ Many congressmen and organizations engaged in refugee relief work expressed frustration:

At best, it is a token bill passed in order to permit some refugees to enter in observance of World Refugee Year. But the plight of the vast number of refugees in parts of the world other than Europe has been completely ignored.⁷⁴⁵

ACIM was particularly disappointed that the act excluded Italian refugees from Tunisia and "the other countless refugees who wait upon the good will of America to open its doors to them" and immediately encouraged "enlightened Americans" to contact their congressmen to encourage them to remedy the Fair Share Act's shortcomings.⁷⁴⁶

By 1962, despite the frustration they generated, the several ad hoc laws that immigration advocacy groups and resettlement agencies had pushed Congress to pass had laid the

⁷⁴² "Eisenhower Asks Major Immigration Changes—Also Calls for Entry of 10,000 Refugees Annually," *ACIM Dispatch*, March-April 1960; and "Eisenhower Asks Congress to Act on Refugees—Other Leaders Stress Need for Immediate Action," *ACIM Dispatch*, May 1960.

⁷⁴³ "Eisenhower Asks Major Immigration Changes—Also Calls for Entry of 10,000 Refugees Annually," *ACIM Dispatch*, March-April 1960.

⁷⁴⁴ Linda W. Gordon, "The Origins and Initial Resettlement Patterns of Refugees in the United States," in David W. Haines, ed., *Refugees in America in the 1990s: A Reference Handbook* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), 339.

⁷⁴⁵ "Refugee Immigration Bill Passed—Tunisian Refugees and Many Others not Included Under the New Law," *ACIM Dispatch*, September 1960.

⁷⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

groundwork to change American immigration policy.⁷⁴⁷ As scholar Jethro Lieberman puts it, "Between 1952 and 1962 the national origins provisions had been so diluted that it was difficult to see what remained of them other than the honorific name."⁷⁴⁸ As statistics show, between 1953 and 1964, fully 3,197,857 immigrants entered the country, but only 1,140,479 of them came in under the national origins system. The remaining immigrants were either nonquota immigrants accounted for in the McCarran-Walter Act (1,681,285) or those who entered the country because of the ad hoc legislation that Congress passed in that period (376,093). The case of Italian immigrants is particularly illuminating. Despite an annual quota of 5,666, 185,491 Italian immigrants arrived in the United States between 1951 and 1960. Similarly, during the same decade, China sent 9,567 Chinese against an annual quota of 105; 46,250 Japanese arrived against Japan's annual quota of 185; and 47,608 Greeks were admitted against Greece's annual quota of 308.⁷⁴⁹ More importantly, in conjunction with the end of the Cuban missile crisis and the shift of the administration's focus on civil rights reform domestically, the Kennedy administration finally showed signs that it was ready to turn its attention to immigration reform.

*"Winds of Change or Lulling Breeze?" The Final Push for an Imperfect Reform*⁷⁵⁰

The year 1963 began with new hope for immigration reform. At the beginning of the year, the Department of Labor issued a positive report on the occupational distribution of the

⁷⁴⁷ In addition to the legislation discussed in this chapter so far, Congress also passed a few other immigration laws. In 1961, Congress made the nonquota orphan provision permanent and replaced the Asia-Pacific triangle ceiling of 2,000 with a 100 quota minimum for each country. In 1962, with the Cuban crisis, Congress intervened in the country's refugee policy again with the Migration and Refugee Assistance Act. The same year, in response to the wave of Chinese refugees fleeing to Hong Kong from the mainland, President Kennedy paroled some 19,000 Chinese. In addition to these changes, Kennedy asked Abba Schwartz, administrator of the Bureau of Security and Consular Affairs, to prepare a new formula for the admission of immigrants. Reimers, *Still the Golden Door*, 63-64.

⁷⁴⁸ Lieberman, *Are Americans Extinct?*, 120.

⁷⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵⁰ "Winds of Change or Lulling Breeze?," *ACIM Dispatch*, June 1964. In the final version of the Hart-Celler Act, legislators substituted the term 'selective system' for 'quota system,' the term 'immigrant' for 'quota immigrant,' and the term 'special immigrant' for 'non-quota immigrant.' Sydney Liskofsky, "Provisions of Act of October 3, 1965 (PL 89-236)," *American Jewish Year Book* 67 (1966).

3,500,000 immigrants who had arrived in the United States between 1947 and 1961. According to Secretary of Labor W. Willard Wirtz, the report demonstrated the significant role that immigrant workers played in the American labor force, mostly because they had been trained before their arrival for occupations that were in great demand in the United States. "There can be no doubt," concluded Wirtz, "that by providing a haven for the oppressed, the nation has reaped great profits."⁷⁵¹ Once again the blurred lines between refugees and immigrants helped immigration reformers advance their agenda, as the report dispelled images of unproductive and unassimilable refugees. At the same time, however, the report's portrayal of the immigrants' prominence in the labor force provided labor unions with evidence to negotiate a stricter admission policy for immigrant workers once legislators began to consider an overhaul of the country's immigration policy later in the year.

Another positive sign came in February 1963, when thirty-four Senators from twenty-three different states cosponsored Senator Hart's immigration bill. Hart's bill was the same bill the Senate had refused to consider the year before. The bill proposed the revision of the national origins quota system following a two-part formula based on the population ratios and the pattern of actual immigration to the United States during the previous fifteen years. Groups that had seen their immigration rise despite the quota system, including Italian Americans and American Jews, fully endorsed Hart's bill, but more importantly these groups understood the symbolic significance that the reintroduction of the bill carried. Hart merely reflected their sentiments when he commented on the need for Congress to consider his bill seriously:

⁷⁵¹ "Immigrants Help America Reap Great Profits States U.S. Labor Secretary," *ACIM Dispatch*, December 1962-January 1963.

The continued [...] support for this legislation evidences, I believe, a growing public awareness of the need for immigration reform, and a fast evolving consensus to the kind of reform that is needed.⁷⁵²

In the same month, President Kennedy took a public stance in favor of immigration reform for the first time since his election, and during a press conference convened shortly after the beginning of the 88th Congress, he urged congressmen to consider the reallocation of unused quotas to low quota countries in order to accelerate family reunification among recent immigrants.⁷⁵³

The most serious call for repeal of the McCarran-Walter Act came during President Kennedy's message to Congress on July 23, 1963. In his speech, Kennedy called for the immediate elimination of the Asia-Pacific Triangle, the continuation of the non-quota status of the Western Hemisphere, and the discontinuation of the quota system over a five-year period. Kennedy's proposal suggested allotting unused quotas to oversubscribed countries during the transitional period and admitting immigrants who would satisfy all the necessary requirements on a first come first served basis once the quota system disappeared. The available visas would be divided between immigrants with skills needed in the United States and people trying to reunite with close family members already in the country. To assuage criticisms from Americans worried about a substantial increase in immigration, Kennedy proposed a global cap, excluding the Western Hemisphere, of 165,000 instead of the 158,000 of the McCarran-Walter Act with each country allowed no more than ten percent of the total.⁷⁵⁴

Two other elements contributed to shift the debate on immigration and toward a candid conversation about the need for immigration reform. The first pertained to the changes on the

⁷⁵² "35 Senators from 23 States Cosponsor Immigration Bill—S. 747 Calls for Revision of National Origins System," *ACIM Dispatch*, February 1963.

⁷⁵³ "Pres. Kennedy Speaks on Redistribution of Unused Quotas," *ACIM Dispatch*, February 1963.

⁷⁵⁴ Reimers, *Still the Golden Door*, 63-64.

congressional committees that dealt with immigration. Representative Michael A. Feighan of Ohio replaced Representative Francis Walter as chairman of the House Subcommittee on Immigration, and, despite his sharing many of his predecessor's ideas on matters of immigration, the predisposition in favor of immigration reform of the other representatives on the committee made it more difficult for him to resist too fervently the passage of new legislation. The second factor was that many legislators who had once been reluctant to stand up to support immigration reform changed their minds under the pressure caused by the congestion that private immigration bills created for the congressional schedule.

Kennedy's proposals and the new atmosphere of the immigration reform debate reenergized Italian Americans and American Jews. Both groups hoped that the president's bill would substantially increase the number of visas available to immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe, help more families reunite, allow more Jews and Italians with skills in demand in the United States to immigrate, and finally consider Jews from Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco as refugees.⁷⁵⁵ Both groups shared the cautious optimism that many of the organizations committed to immigration reform expressed about the outcome of the Kennedy administration's call for reform. As Ann S. Petluck and James P. Rice of HIAS wrote:

It is evident that the President's recommendations give new impetus and new hope to the proposals for revising our immigration legislation. While it is true that [...] it might not be possible to obtain early passage of this bill, there is nevertheless reason to believe that passage in the not-too-distant future will be possible. This will require widespread support from communities throughout the United States.⁷⁵⁶

As a token of appreciation for the administration's efforts to generate momentum for reform, ACIM and the most prominent Jewish organizations all sent letters and telegrams to the White

⁷⁵⁵ Ann S. Petluck and James P. Rice to Cooperating Agencies, July 25, 1963, HIAS Collection, RG 245.8, series 6, folder 90, YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

⁷⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

House endorsing Kennedy's immigration proposal.⁷⁵⁷ Along with seventy-two other ethnic, labor, and civic organizations, they also signed a letter to President Kennedy, which was initiated by the American Immigration and Citizenship Conference. The letter strongly endorsed the steps Kennedy had "have taken [...] in calling for the elimination of the National Origins Quota System."⁷⁵⁸

Yet, despite President Kennedy's call for reform, many congressmen's predisposition to reform the country's immigration policy, and the overall weariness with the private immigration bills, Congress turned its attention to other pressing matters in the coming months, namely civil rights, tax reform, and the beginnings of the war against poverty. Kennedy's assassination in November brought any plan to overhaul immigration laws to a halt until January 13, 1964, when President Johnson urged Congress to pass President Kennedy's July immigration reform proposals. To immigration reformers' satisfaction, the appeal spurred thirty-seven senators and sixty-four representatives to sponsor the administration's bill by June 1, "dramatizing the tide of Congressional sentiment for change in our immigration laws."⁷⁵⁹

Despite Johnson's pleas to act swiftly, the House subcommittee did not begin to hold its hearings, the first in twelve years, until June.⁷⁶⁰ A feud between subcommittee Chairman

⁷⁵⁷ Murray I. Gurfein and James P. Rice to John F. Kennedy, July 29, 1963, HIAS Collection, RG 245.8, series 6, folder 90, YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

⁷⁵⁸ Among the undersigned groups were the American Civil Liberties Union, American Committee on Italian Migration, American Fund for Czechoslovak Refugees, American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Congress, Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, Church World Services, AFL-CIO, UAW, Iuliu Maniu American Romanian Relief Society, Italian Welfare League, Japanese American Citizens League, Jewish Labor Committee, Lutheran Immigration Service, National Catholic Welfare Conference, National Council of Jewish Women, Polish American Immigration and Relief Committee, Tolstoy Foundation, Ukrainian Workingmen's Association, United Friends of Needy and Displaced People of Yugoslavia, United HIAS Service, and United Steelworkers of America. American Immigration and Citizenship Conference to John F. Kennedy, September 1963, HIAS Collection, RG 245.8, Series 6, folder 79, YIVO, Center for Jewish History. See also American Immigration and Citizenship Conference to Member of Congress, October 25, 1962, HIAS Collection, RG 245.8, series 6, folder 107, YIVO, Center for Jewish History.

⁷⁵⁹ "Rep. Lindsay Introduces Reform Bill," *ACIM Dispatch*, June 1964.

⁷⁶⁰ "Congressman Feighan Announces Start of Immigration Hearings—Congressman Celler First Witness," *ACIM Dispatch*, June 1964.

Feighan and Chairman Celler of the parent Judiciary Committee over who had the power to influence immigration policy changes caused the delay. In an effort to postpone the hearings, Feighan launched a series of accusations to discredit immigration reformers' efforts to advance their agenda.⁷⁶¹ Congressional squabbles notwithstanding, many immigration reformers hoped that the hearings represented a serious step towards reform. Many shared ACIM's cautious optimism:

The universal support and overwhelming bipartisan affirmation of the principles embodied in H.R. 7700 can no longer be ignored. The majority's democratic right to vote for or against immigration reform can no longer be denied. For the sake of millions of Americans, their close relatives and others living in countries allied with us, ACIM hopes that the hearings do not represent another lulling breeze.⁷⁶²

In the meantime, the Supreme Court provided another positive sign when it ruled in *Schneider v. Rusk* that a Federal Statute that deprived naturalized Americans of their citizenship if they returned to their land of birth for three years was unconstitutional. The ruling further galvanized the immigration reform base, and according to the *ACIM Dispatch*, the decision demonstrated "the legal and moral fallacy of 'anti-foreigner' sentiment which, in its more militant forms, created our discriminatory immigration laws."⁷⁶³

Taking advantage of the positive momentum, many of the groups committed to immigration reform immediately mobilized their grassroots base to influence the outcome of the hearings and the vote. ACIM urged its readers and supporters to write their congressmen immediately to let them know how "you feel about this all important legislation for the benefit of

⁷⁶¹ Feighan claimed that Russian spies had infiltrated the CIA; that INS inspectors and administrators had accepted bribes to fix cases; and even that British actor Richard Burton should be denied a visa because his alleged misconduct with American actress Elizabeth Taylor made him ineligible to enter the country. Lieberman, *Are Americans Extinct?*, 127.

⁷⁶² "Winds of Change or Lulling Breeze?," *ACIM Dispatch*, June 1964.

⁷⁶³ *Ibid.*

our own United States which has a lot to gain from such immigration."⁷⁶⁴ Donanzan and Marchisio also suggested to ACIM officers across the country that they organize a rally "to demonstrate to Congressmen from your area the desire and determination of people to see the Kennedy program enacted into law." "An assembly of people," Donanzan explained in a letter to all ACIM officers, "will inspire them [congressmen] to translate sentiments privately expressed into positive action in the halls of Congress."⁷⁶⁵ Many of the ACIM chapters located in areas whose representatives were either on the House or Senate immigration committees immediately organized rallies and sent a copy of their resolution in favor of the pending legislation to members of both houses of Congress and to President Johnson. Many congressmen replied to the letter sent by the Chicago chapter of ACIM after its rally by blaming the delay in passing legislation on the Democratic majority of the Judiciary Committees. "In other words," wrote De Serto, "they intimate that they are not against the Bill, but that they don't have the power to get it out of Committee. [...] The Republicans are making hay out of the delaying tactics of the Democrats who are supposed to favor legislation."⁷⁶⁶

ACIM's activism had an impact on other ethnic groups involved in the debate on immigration reform as well. The spring issue of the bi-monthly Greek American newspaper *The Chicago Pnyx* published ACIM leaders' appeal to its members along with an *ACIM Dispatch*

⁷⁶⁴ "The Time is Now," *ACIM Dispatch*, June 1964. In a letter to ACIM officer De Serto, Donanzan wrote that letters from ACIM chapters from across the country were flooding the White House, conveying "to the President, we hope, that there is a ground swell of sentiment in favor of the Bill throughout the nation." Donanzan to De Serto, May 13, 1964, Organizations Collection, ACIM Chicago Papers, box 2, file 15, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

⁷⁶⁵ Donanzan to ACIM Officers, February 17, 1964, Organizations Collection, ACIM Chicago Papers, box 2, file 15, IHRC, University of Minnesota. The letter came with a detailed outline on how to organize and conduct the rally to ensure success and attract local congressmen's attention. Among other things, the outline suggested to hold the rally over Congress's Easter recess, have an admission fee of a dollar to cover the expenses, to invite the local congressman who was most interested in the issue to address the rally, and to invite local entertainers to perform for free to make the rally more attractive and to secure a larger attendance.

⁷⁶⁶ De Serto to Donanzan, May 7, 1964, Organizations Collection, ACIM Chicago Papers, box 2, file 15, IHRC, University of Minnesota. See also Donanzan to De Serto, May 13, 1964, Organizations Collection, ACIM Chicago Papers, box 2, file 15, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

article analyzing the different proposals introduced to reform American immigration policy. *The Chicago Pnyx* editors enjoined its readers to follow ACIM leaders' advice:

This sound advice advocated by the editors of the *ACIM Dispatch* should also be followed by all citizens of Hellenic extraction. Let us join hands with this progressive American group to bring about a complete revision of the present unjust and iniquitous immigration legislation. Like the editors of ACIM we cannot too strongly advise you to sit down right NOW and write your congressman.⁷⁶⁷

Perhaps more flattering than the commitment of another group to mobilize for Johnson's immigration proposal was the Greek Americans' acknowledgement of ACIM's preeminence in the struggle against restriction. Anticipation for the hearings continued to build as Italian Americans, Greek Americans, and American Jews voiced their hope that they would lead to reform.

The list of witnesses in favor of reform at the House Hearings included advocates from ethnic groups, voluntary agencies, and the Johnson administration. Secretary of State Dean Rusk, during a testimony critics termed "an event of importance," urged the House to change the existing immigration laws as their use of quotas based on race and place of birth was "indefensible from a foreign policy point of view."⁷⁶⁸ Marchisio, once again following ACIM's pragmatic strategy of tackling one issue at time, presented a brief to the House Subcommittee on Immigration and Nationality that labeled the waste of unused quota numbers under the quota system a cruel cynicism and described the thousands of Italian families separated by immigration barriers as "unwanted children of misfortune."⁷⁶⁹ Similarly, Robert F. Kennedy and Secretary of Labor W. Willard Wirtz asked the House committee to revise the existing legislation to admit

⁷⁶⁷ "Greek Newspaper Reprints 'ACIM Dispatch' Articles," *ACIM Dispatch*, June 1964.

⁷⁶⁸ "Dean Rusk Assails Immigration Quotas," *ACIM Dispatch*, July-August 1964.

⁷⁶⁹ "Judge Marchisio Testifies before House Subcommittee," *ACIM Dispatch*, July-August 1964.

more immigrants. Wirtz once again reiterated his belief that immigrants help the American labor force.⁷⁷⁰

President Johnson's pleas for action and grassroots mobilization, along with the criticisms against the McCarran-Walter Act during the House hearings, succeeded in keeping Congress's attention only until the 1964 presidential elections. Even as the hearings took place, immigration leaders were already shifting their focus to the two parties' immigration planks. After the Republican Party issued its immigration plank on July 15, 1964, vaguely promising immigration reform, thirty-five immigration agencies, including the major Italian and Jewish organizations, issued a statement against it to Republican presidential candidates, key party officials, and the press. The agencies proclaimed the Republican plank "innocuous to the point of being meaningless," as it avoided confronting the basic problems of the existing immigration policy. "We are appalled," read the statement, "at the failure of the 1964 convention at least to reaffirm the Republican Party pledge in the 1960 platform."⁷⁷¹ The Democratic plank, on the other hand, received sweeping praise, as Johnson declared that the need for immigration reform was immediate and that he had immigration legislation ready for the next Congress.⁷⁷² The media further contributed to raise consensus around the Kennedy-Johnson proposals. The *Wall Street Journal* attacked the "cumbersome and inflexible" national origins system and defined the administration proposals as "eminently reasonable," as they sought to eliminate hardships on separated families. Signaling a significant shift in Americans' attitude towards the issue, in a statement that would have been unthinkable only a year earlier, the editors stated, "We are

⁷⁷⁰ "R. F. Kennedy Urges New Immigration Quotas—Asks Congress to Erase 'Cruel' Discriminations," *ACIM Dispatch*, July-August 1964, and "Wirtz Says Immigration Helps U.S. Labor Force—Increased Number of Migrants under H.R. 7700 Termed Insignificant," *ACIM Dispatch*, July-August 1964.

⁷⁷¹ "Immigration Leaders Criticize Plank in Republican Platform," *ACIM Dispatch*, July-August 1964.

⁷⁷² "Immigration Legislation Ready for Next Congress—President Johnson Says Need for Reform Bill Immediate," *ACIM Dispatch*, November-December 1964.

convinced that most Americans believe it's wrong to discriminate against someone simply because he was born in the wrong place."⁷⁷³

As election day approached, Johnson met with some of the ethnic groups most involved in the campaign for immigration reform. At a White House meeting with a group of prominent Italian Americans concerning the issuance of a postage stamp commemorating New York City's Verrazano Narrows Bridge, President Johnson decried the discrimination underlying the American immigration system and declared, to the attendees' elation, that "the strength of our nation has been built from many groups from many lands. No group has contributed more—few have contributed so much—as the sons and daughters of Italy."⁷⁷⁴

Plans for immigration reform remained dormant until January 4, 1965, when Johnson returned to Washington with the greatest popular electoral margin in American history. The election gave the Johnson administration a powerful mandate, but perhaps more importantly, it also sent many new Democratic congressmen to Washington, giving Johnson a two to one majority in both houses of Congress and a more sympathetic audience for immigration reform. Reflecting a significant shift, the new Congress included 107 congressmen who were Roman Catholics, effectively making them the leading group among the various denominations for the first time in Congress's history.⁷⁷⁵ ACIM supporters were elated, as they felt that the 1964 presidential elections demonstrated for the first time that the immigration issue was more than a campaign promise revived every four years. Johnson's 1964 victory was reason to hope, many believed, that immigration reform was near:

⁷⁷³ "The Wall Street Journal Blasts 'National Origins'—Urges 'Rational Basis' in Law," *ACIM Dispatch*, November-December 1964.

⁷⁷⁴ "Johnson Praises Italo-Americans—Decries Discrimination in Present U.S. Policy," *ACIM Dispatch*, November-December 1964.

⁷⁷⁵ Reimers, *Still the Golden Door*, 81.

Toward the adjournment of the last Congress, the picture was indeed gloomy. As of the present time, the outlook is probably brighter than it has ever been, due to the fact, that it now appears that we have finally won over many friends who now realize that the present immigration law of the land is one which is not compatible with the image of the United States as we would like the rest of the world to see it.⁷⁷⁶

In his inaugural address on January 4, 1965, President Johnson again called for an immigration policy based "on the work a man can do not on where he was born or how he spells his name."

On January 13, he sent his Special Message to Congress on Immigration, which specifically called for the repeal of the national origins quota system and presented them with a list of proposals very similar to those that President Kennedy had drafted in 1963, including his proposal to introduce a preferential system over a five-year period.⁷⁷⁷ In his message Johnson, like Kennedy, rejected the idea that men and women from some countries could become more desirable citizens than those from others and emphasized the damage that the quota system did to American foreign policy and to the country's image as a bastion of democracy.

Johnson's inaugural address and his message to Congress also attempted to create room for negotiation with potential detractors of his proposals. Aware that critics of immigration reform would counteract efforts for reform with the claim that the abolition of the quota system would inevitably lead to an immigrant invasion, from this very first message, Johnson and his administration insisted that the new immigrants would not threaten American workers' jobs or depress their wages and argued that the new law would mainly bring a higher number of highly skilled, professional migrants.⁷⁷⁸ Moreover, from very early on, President Johnson made it clear that he would endorse a bill repealing the quota system in any form and that the Executive would back any bill containing that provision. As many contemporaries agreed, Johnson's concession

⁷⁷⁶ De Serto to ACIM Chicago Chapter Supporters, November 18, 1964, Organizations Collection, ACIM Chicago Papers, Box 2, file 16, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

⁷⁷⁷ "LBJ's Immigration Proposals—Message to Congress Seeks Change over 5 Years to a Preferential Law," *ACIM Dispatch*, January-February 1965.

⁷⁷⁸ Lieberman, *Are Americans Extinct?*, 128-129.

set the stage for the watering down of his original proposals and gave an advantage to restrictionists favoring stringent regulations of the immigration flow to the United States in the new bill.⁷⁷⁹

The reaction to the president's call for priority consideration was immediate. The press widely publicized Johnson's speeches, and the *New York Times* considered the president's message to Congress necessary to "revive an issue that should trouble the American conscience." Reflecting an important change in American society's perception of the presence of Italian Americans in the United States, the *New York Times* editorial, after observing that the people of Dante and Michelangelo were limited to a quota of 5,666, wondered, "Is there not something terribly arrogant—and also absurd—in this self-righteous national posture?"⁷⁸⁰ Yet, immigration reformers were aware that mobilization was crucial for legislation to pass. In a letter to all ACIM officers across the country sent less than ten days after President Johnson's message to Congress, Donanzan urged action:

Administration sources assure us that a determined effort will be made to achieve passage of this legislation. However, it was made quite clear at a meeting of Voluntary Agencies in Washington that much depends on the 'grass roots' support which the measure will receive across the nation.⁷⁸¹

In his letter, Donanzan provided detailed directions about how to mobilize for the administration's immigration proposal. He told them to ask local newspapers, including newsletters of fraternal societies, political clubs, and religious organizations, to take a stand on the new immigration proposals and to feature informative articles on the legislation as well as personal stories. He encouraged them to organize rallies, conferences, social gatherings, or fund-

⁷⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 132.

⁷⁸⁰ "Reaction to the Proposals—Nation's Press Echoes President's Call for New Law," *ACIM Dispatch*, January-February 1965.

⁷⁸¹ Donanzan to ACIM Officers, January 21, 1965, Organizations Collection, ACIM Chicago Papers, box 2, file 17, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

raising events to show support for the president's immigration reform agenda and told them that, if the events were large enough, the Department of State had indicated that it would arrange for speakers, including from the Cabinet if the event was likely to draw over a thousand people. Finally, he recommended that they enlist the aid of other civic, religious, political, and social organizations in their efforts to popularize the president's immigration agenda and rally support for reform. "Employ every feasible method and use every opportunity to keep the issue alive," Donozan concluded, "we must not permit the matter to sink into oblivion as has happened in the past."⁷⁸²

Many of the ACIM chapters immediately put Donozan's advice into practice. ACIM chapters in Los Angeles and Chicago organized one-day conferences to provide information about the need for a new immigration law and about the recently introduced Hart and Celler bills. The Los Angeles chapter mobilized even before receiving Donozan's letter and joined forces with ten other local ethnic and religious organizations for a one-day conference on January 18, 1965, in Los Angeles, the first such meeting organized after Johnson's inaugural address. The eleven conference organizers welcomed 325 people, hosted panels on the impact of the pending bills on different immigrant groups, and distributed an action sheet urging all the participants to write letters and send telegrams to members of Congress.⁷⁸³ The conference brought together an eclectic coalition of ethnic organizations, religious organizations, labor unions, and professionals dealing with immigration issues. The attendees passed a resolution

⁷⁸² *Ibid.*

⁷⁸³ The organizers of the conference were: the American Committee on Italian Migration; the American Friends Service Committee, Pacific Southwest Region; the Council of Churches in Southern California, Public Affairs Commission; the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles, Division of World Relief; the Friends Committee on Legislation of Southern California; the International Institute of Los Angeles; the International Rescue Committee of Los Angeles; the Japanese American Citizens League, Pacific Southwest District Council; the Jewish Federation Council, Council of Greater Los Angeles; the Southern California Baptist Convention, Christian Community Concerns; and the Community Relations Conference with 62 member community organizations. "Report on Los Angeles Conference on Immigration," January 18, 1965, Organizations Collection, ACIM Chicago Papers, box 2, file 17, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

expressing "concern and distress with the present American legislation in the area of immigration," applauding President Johnson's message to Congress, and declaring support for the members of Congress determined to revise the existing immigration laws.⁷⁸⁴ Conference participants expressed four major concerns in their deliberations. Each concern reflected the different constituencies of the local coalition for immigration reform, but the attendees felt that they were all interrelated. Participants' primary concern was the entry of immigrants from the Western Hemisphere:

Although natives of the Western Hemisphere are considered non-quota immigrants as a matter of law, as a matter of practice the documentary requirements [...] in effect create what amounts to a quota system. As to the enactment of the proposed immigration law modifying the national origins quota system, close attention should be paid to the promulgation of regulations for the enforcement and administration of the new law.⁷⁸⁵

Participants also worried about the rigid discriminatory provisions of the Asia-Pacific Triangle and the heavy backlog of visa applications both inside and outside the Triangle. During his remarks at the conference, Frank F. Chuman, an attorney and past president of the Japanese American Citizens League, observed that some of the applications would not be evaluated before the year 2000, and some evaluations would run into perpetuity: "Italy, for example, has an annual quota of 5,666 and has a waiting list of 263,878. India has a quota of 100—a backlog of over 15,000."⁷⁸⁶

The ACIM chapter in Chicago participated in the organization of a Midwest conference on immigration with seventeen other local organizations. As in Los Angeles, the coalition behind the conference reflected the composition of the local immigrant community. In the Chicago case, Jewish organizations by far outnumbered all other organizations. In addition to

⁷⁸⁴ "Report on Los Angeles Conference on Immigration," January 18, 1965, Organizations Collection, ACIM Chicago Papers, box 2, file 17, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

⁷⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

ACIM and eight local chapters of Jewish organizations, including the American Jewish Committee, the Anti-Defamation League, and the Jewish Labor Committee, other organizations that participated in the planning of the conference were the Chinese American Civic Council, the Japanese American Service Committee, the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association (AHEPA), and religious organizations.⁷⁸⁷ The planning committee for the Chicago conference seemed particularly concerned with attracting national attention to the issue and making sure its roundtables would differ from the ones held at its previous conference in 1957. The impulse for the 1965 conference came from nationality groups interested in immigration reform, but it expanded to include religious organizations as a strategy to build a wider and more powerful support base. Both Secretary of State Wirtz and Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs Abba Schwartz agreed to speak at the event.⁷⁸⁸

At the same time, Congress resumed its debate on immigration legislation. Three major developments offered a positive signal that reform was under way. Long-time immigration supporters in the Senate and the House, such as Philip A. Hart, Jacob K. Javits, and Emanuel Celler, introduced bills. Forced to act, Representative Michael A. Feighan, chairman of the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration and Nationality, and Senator James O. Eastland, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee and its Subcommittee on Immigration and

⁷⁸⁷ The planning committee included: the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association, the American Committee on Italian Migration, the American Friends Service Committee, the American Jewish Committee, the Anti-Defamation League, the Bishop's Resettlement Committee, the Catholic Interracial Council, the Chicago Board of Rabbis, the Chicago Federation of Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Chinese American Civic Council, the Chicago Federation of Greater Chicago, the Immigrants Service League, the Japanese American Service Committee, the Jewish Community Centers, the Jewish Family and Community Centers, the Jewish Federation, the Jewish Labor Committee, and the United Synagogue of America. "Planning Committee for a Midwest Conference on Immigration," February 25, 1965, Organizations Collection, ACIM Papers, box 2, folder 17, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

⁷⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

Naturalization, announced that hearings would commence at the beginning of February.⁷⁸⁹ More importantly, Senator Eastland decided not to attend the hearings, and Senator Edward M. Kennedy, a long-time advocate for reform, acted as unofficial chairman. This latest development represented a particularly auspicious omen for immigration reform advocates.⁷⁹⁰

Italian Americans, Jewish Americans, and other supporters of President Johnson's call to action on immigration welcomed Congress's immediate response and the positive reception in the press. "ACIM leaders and other sponsors of President Johnson's proposals," reported *ACIM Dispatch*, "expressed guarded optimism about making a breakthrough in the obstacle-ridden field of immigration."⁷⁹¹ ACIM leaders' reservations originated from their familiarity with the fate of previous bills that proposed similar sweeping changes, including the bill submitted by President Kennedy. To many observers, however, the large Democratic majorities in Congress were an advantage, and the timing of the president's January message on immigration to Congress, issued between the education and foreign aid messages, indicated that the administration was committed to immigration reform. Following the resumption of activities in Congress, ACIM, reflecting a strategy that other organizations adopted as well, invited its readers and its sponsors to act immediately to show their support for the president's proposals following three easy steps:

1. Encourage your friends, members of your clubs and other organizations to send letters and wires to the President supporting his message on immigration.
2. Do the same with your Senators and Congressmen—tell them why you support the President's proposals.
3. Ask your local newspaper to comment editorially on the proposals; give the editor your reasons for supporting H.R. 2580 and S.500.⁷⁹²

Supporters of the bill, including American Jews and Italian Americans, also began to work on their arguments to support reform. They built their defense on three assertions. They asserted

⁷⁸⁹ "New Bills and Hearings Announced in Congress," *ACIM Dispatch*, January-February 1965; "In Washington: Leaders Support Action on Bills," *ACIM Dispatch*, January-February 1965.

⁷⁹⁰ "Kennedy Pledges 'Origins' Battle—Addresses Albany Chapter," *ACIM Dispatch*, January-February 1965.

⁷⁹¹ "Outlook for the Proposals—ACIM Leaders 'Guardedly Optimistic' about Future," *ACIM Dispatch*, January-February 1965.

⁷⁹² "Here's How You Can Help Immigration Reform," *ACIM Dispatch*, January-February 1965.

that the abolition of the quota system would improve foreign relations; they rejected the charge that the new bill would again bring to America uneducated and unskilled migrants who would take away jobs from American workers and depress American wages; and they maintained that the national origins quota system was discriminatory.

Once the hearings began, immigration reform advocates found a powerful ally in the administration. Johnson dispatched many of the key representatives working on immigration matters in his administration to testify in Congress to counter objections against an overhaul of the country's immigration reform. Each of Johnson's lieutenants tackled a different criticism that the pending bill faced and used arguments that the American Jewish Committee, ACIM, United HIAS Service, and similar organizations had repeated for years.

The most prominent witness to testify on the impact of the quota system on American foreign policy was Secretary of State Dean Rusk. In his testimony, Rusk pointed to the problems that the system created with the restricted countries who were American allies:

We continue to be judged abroad by a basic provision of law which suggests that prospective immigrants are selected on the basis of their national origins. [...] I have been approached on a number of occasions by foreign ministers who expressed their belief that this principle discriminates against their countries where, although frequently ignored or overlooked or paid little attention in this country, it proves to be a point of high sensitivity among the other countries who are directly concerned. They were not complaining about numbers but about the principle which they considered discriminatory.⁷⁹³

Rusk's explanation and the testimony of Assistant Attorney General Norbert A. Schlei—one of the principal drafters of the administration bill—convinced many that the new legislation was not very radical after all. The absence of any opposition to the inclusion of a numerical cap on

⁷⁹³ As quoted in Lieberman, *Are Americans Extinct?*, 133.

immigration also convinced many Congressmen that the president's proposal had the potential to counter criticisms of the American immigration policy without enacting sweeping changes.⁷⁹⁴

Similarly, Secretary of Labor W. Willard Wirtz testified to address the argument that the quota system offered a safety net to American labor.⁷⁹⁵ Shifting the focus to family reunion, Wirtz reassured those who worried about American jobs that most of the immigrants who had entered the country between 1959 and 1962 were women, children, and other relatives who had come to reunite with their family members and who, more importantly, would not join the workforce:

Under S 500 [...] it is estimated that nearly 60 percent of increased admissions due to full use of the 165,800 quota will likewise be non-workers. This means that an additional yearly number of about 23,900 quota immigrants would be expected to enter the labor force. In a total force that is estimated to reach 86 million by 1970, the yearly addition of 23,900 would have no appreciable impact. Qualitatively, the increased immigration of persons of high education, specialized experience, exceptional ability or capable of filling labor shortages could be beneficial.⁷⁹⁶

Both Wirtz and Rusk's testimonies received the full endorsement of immigration reform advocates, but one more witness proved to be a powerful advocate for their cause, New York Senator Robert F. Kennedy. Kennedy was not the only congressman to take the stand to endorse the bill under consideration, but his testimony clearly reflected some of the major concerns that immigration reform advocates had had for years.

In his testimony, Robert Kennedy focused on the perverse rationale that underlay the quota system and the Asia Pacific Triangle. He criticized the absurdity of an immigration system that allowed some American citizens to bring over an unskilled worker from Northern Europe

⁷⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 136-137.

⁷⁹⁵ The decision of the American Federation of Labor in 1946 to reverse its long-held position and welcome skilled immigrants to the United States in times of labor shortage had already undermined the criticisms that the abolition of the quota system would lead to more competition for jobs, lower wages, and an overall depression of the country's economy.

⁷⁹⁶ Quoted in Lieberman, *Are Americans Extinct?*, 139.

fairly quickly but forced skilled immigrants from other parts of the world and relatives of American citizens to wait years before they could arrive in the United States:

Last year I noted a maid or an unskilled laborer from a northern European country can enter this country within a matter of weeks, while scientists or doctors or other highly skilled persons from less favored countries wait for months and years. [...] And others are waiting as well—American citizens, waiting for their parents and brothers and children. An American citizen whose mother is Greek must wait more than five years before she can get a visa. An American citizen whose brother, or sister, or married son or daughter is Italian or Australian, Spanish or Portuguese, Japanese or Korean, Indian or Filipino, cannot expect a visa for them until Congress passes a special bill.⁷⁹⁷

Echoing Kennedy's arguments, other witnesses testified that some immigrants from Japan and Turkey faced waiting periods of up to 322 years in 1965 only because of their country of origin. Still others pointed to the absurd predicament that some immigrants faced because of the idiosyncrasies of the system in place.⁷⁹⁸

Building on the groundwork that these testimonies created for negotiations, voluntary agencies and nationality group organizations that, both together and on their own, favored immigration reform continued to call for reform and keep the issue alive among the wider population. The American Immigration Citizenship Conference repeatedly proclaimed its support for the president's proposal, while its member organizations sent witnesses to testify for the bill and lobbied congressmen. In their public appearances and statements, they incessantly echoed the administration's arguments about discrimination and the need to abandon the Asia-Pacific Triangle and the national origins system.⁷⁹⁹ Finally, in Washington, DC, the National Committee for Immigration Reform came to life in early 1965 as an ad hoc pro-immigration lobbying group to rally support for the administration's proposals. This organization consisted of individuals rather than organizations and included among its members former Presidents Truman

⁷⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 142.

⁷⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 142-143.

⁷⁹⁹ Reimers, *Still the Golden Door*, 66-68.

and Eisenhower.⁸⁰⁰ Based on the idea that prominent American leaders should take a stance and voice their opinion on the ongoing immigration debate, the organization eventually grew to include 400 leaders in American public life who signed a petition to reform American immigration policy. During the House debates over the 1965 Immigration Bill, Representative Peter W. Rodino placed in the *Congressional Record* a copy of an advertisement that the National Committee for Immigration Reform published in the *Washington Post* titled "Leading Americans Speak Out for Immigration Reform Now" to support his case for reform.⁸⁰¹

More importantly, testimonies in the Senate and the demonstrations of public support for the bill persuaded Senator Sam J. Ervin from North Carolina, the staunchest defender of the quota system sitting on the Senate Committee, to change his mind about the bill. When the bill reached the Senate floor, he became a key player in the compromise bill that eventually became law.⁸⁰² During the Senate hearings, however, Senator Ervin invoked many of the arguments that restrictionists used to counter the repeal of the quota system and of the Asia-Pacific Triangle. Ervin adduced that the national origins system provided an equitable means to administer immigration as it selected immigrants depending upon the contributions that their predecessors had made to the United States. Ervin argued that the abolition of the quota system would still discriminate against some groups:

The reason I say this bill is discriminatory against those people is because it puts them on exactly the same plane as the people of Ethiopia are put, where the people of Ethiopia have the same right to come to the United States under this bill as the people from England, the people of France, the people of Germany, the people of Holland, and I don't think—with all due respect to Ethiopia—I don't know of any contributions that Ethiopia has made to the making of America.⁸⁰³

⁸⁰⁰ Liskofsky, "Immigration Act of October 3, 1965," *American Jewish Year Book* 67 (1966).

⁸⁰¹ Liskofsky, "In the House of Representatives," *American Jewish Year Book* 67 (1966).

⁸⁰² Lieberman, *Are Americans Extinct?*, 133-143.

⁸⁰³ *Ibid.*, 149.

Ervin believed that only if the new law set a numerical cap on the unregulated immigration from the Western Hemisphere, could he bring himself to endorse it.⁸⁰⁴

Senator Ervin's racist opposition to reform unleashed harsher criticisms of the Hart-Celler bill during the Senate hearings than during the House ones. The most vocal restrictionist groups that testified against repeal of the quota system included the American Legion, the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Jersey Coalition, the National Economic Council, Inc., the Atlanta Federation of Republican Women, the American Coalition of Patriotic Societies, the League of Christian Women, the Baltimore Anti-Communist League in affiliation with the Catholic Anti-Communist Committee of Baltimore, and the American Coalition of Patriotic Societies. Similar to groups in favor of immigration reform, groups who opposed immigration reform founded umbrella organizations to voice their opposition and send a unified message. The two most prominent anti-immigration umbrella organizations were the American Committee on Immigration Policies founded in 1964 and the Liberty Lobby, established in 1965.⁸⁰⁵

Most of the criticisms that restrictionist groups presented during the Senate hearings echoed the objections that restrictions had long employed against an open door immigration policy. Many of the witnesses criticized immigrants' ingratitude in sending their money back home rather than spending it in the United States and objected that American immigration policy was not as outrageous as the Berlin Wall, the genocide in Tibet, or the prisons in Castro's Cuba. Reflecting Cold War preoccupations, others warned of communist infiltration as evidenced by the widespread support for the law among many communist organizations around the country. Still others argued that the use of the census to calculate the national quotas guaranteed objectivity and warned that, without the quota system, "hordes of Red Chinese, Indians,

⁸⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 154-156.

⁸⁰⁵ Liskofsky, "In the House of Representatives," *American Jewish Year Book* 67 (1966).

Congolese cannibals" would destroy the nation's identity. Echoing the dissatisfaction with the recent civil rights legislation, a few lamented that the administration bill only forced integration with the excuse of serving humanity and robbed white citizens of their rights. A vocal minority still contended that the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon majority in the United States justified immigration restriction.⁸⁰⁶ This last contention struck a nerve within the Italian American community. Reflecting the sentiments of many immigration reformers, an ACIM Chicago officer wrote to Senator Dirksen in protest: "I am ready to give the Anglo-Saxon Protestant their due credit, but I believe [...] the many thousands of others who were not of Anglo-Saxon Protestant heritage all contributed to the greatness of my country. We fought a terrible war and costly war to disprove the "master race" theory. Let's keep it out of our boundaries."⁸⁰⁷

The atmosphere during the House hearings was decidedly different from the Senate. The committee began with a decisive advantage in favor of the Hart-Celler bill, but more importantly, the committee had chairman Feighan, who now sought to gain back the support he had lost during the past elections at home because of his failure to act on the national origins system the previous year. A chastened Feighan decided to negotiate with the administration to change the country's immigration policy. Feighan and the administration agreed on the abolition of the Asia-Pacific Triangle and the national origins quota system, but they disagreed on how to distribute the allotted yearly visas. The administration's proposal gave first preference to immigrants with desirable skills and education and second preference to immigrants with family members in the United States. Feighan reversed these preferences and ultimately won. The final proposal reserved only two preferences for those with skills, education, and occupations needed

⁸⁰⁶ Lieberman, *Are Americans Extinct?*, 156-158.

⁸⁰⁷ Annunzio to Pierini, April 27, 1965, and De Serto to Dirksen, April 28, 1965, Organizations Collection, ACIM Chicago Papers, box 3, folder 19, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

in the United States but contained four categories for those with relatives in the country. Refugees, with 6% of the total visas, had seventh and last preference.

Ultimately, multiple conditions intersected to make possible the repeal of the national origins quota system. In the eyes of many immigration reform advocates the major boost to change was President Johnson's strong endorsement of Kennedy's proposals. Furthermore, pressure from his constituents, pleas from Congressman Celler, and the House leaders' decision to enlarge the membership of the subcommittee on immigration to secure a pro-reform majority all contributed to convince Representative Michael A. Feighan to change his position on immigration reform. Feighan's change of attitude in turn softened the resistance of some the traditionally anti-immigration organizations in the country. However, few could question the importance of long-standing pro-immigration groups in the passage of the vote:

The 1965 Act was, in fact, the product of a forty-year-long educational effort by religious, nationality, and other citizens' organizations, and of several independent and converging developments.⁸⁰⁸

Starting at the end of the nineteenth century, Italian Americans and American Jews had consciously courted the party that appeared more inclined to carry out immigration reform. The 1964 two-to-one Democratic majority in both houses of Congress reflected the party's acknowledgment of their political status and of their influence within American politics. Italian Americans and American Jews had also carefully pursued an educational campaign to dispel the negative stereotypes that American mainstream had of them. Within this framework, they contributed to the positive changes in the attitudes of the American people in the early 1960s on issues of race, ethnic origin, and civil rights. Finally, they had worked successfully to secure

⁸⁰⁸ Liskofsky, "Immigration Act of October 3, 1965—Factors in Passage of Act," *American Jewish Year Book* 67 (1966).

support from organized labor, which in earlier decades had been vehemently opposed to immigration.⁸⁰⁹

For many of the groups who had worked for decades for the repeal of the quota system, the passage of the Hart-Celler Act represented a counterintuitive climax. Despite their satisfaction with their victory, they understood the limitations of their accomplishments immediately after Congress passed the new law. They also openly recognized what they had had to give up to see the quota system repealed. The law's emphasis on family reunion represented a victory for ethnic groups, especially with the inclusion of parents along with spouses and children under 21 in the category of immediate relatives admitted outside the ceiling. Yet, the reversal of priorities of family reunion and labor migrants supported by Feighan marked a clear triumph for organized labor, as the first preference received half of the allotted visas, and the rest were divided among the remaining three preferences. Moreover, Congress amended the bill to accept another recommendation proposed by the AFL-CIO that further assuaged labor's fears of competition from immigrant workers. The law required the Secretary of Labor to certify on an individual case basis that the aspiring immigrant would have a job that no available qualified American could take. This provision was not easy to accept for many of the groups committed to immigration reform, but, as the American Jewish Committee admitted, they understood that they had few alternatives:

Though pro-immigration groups were concerned from the outset about the restrictive impact of the new procedure, they did not protest vigorously, preferring to avoid endangering thereby the achievement of their overriding goal: repeal of the national origins system.⁸¹⁰

⁸⁰⁹ *Ibid.* Labor began to endorse immigration reform after the end of World War II. Yet, its support for the Hart-Celler Act was facilitated by the labor clauses and the limit on immigration from the Western Hemisphere that Feighan incorporated in the final bill.

⁸¹⁰ *Ibid.*

As awareness of the significance of the labor clearance procedure sank in following the passage of the act, many reform advocates grew concerned and voiced publicly the fear that the new and administratively cumbersome procedure might paralyze the flow of skilled and unskilled workers. They vowed to secure legislation that modified the new procedure on the grounds that it had been introduced without adequate consideration of its consequences.⁸¹¹

Pro-immigration groups also realized that, in spite of tangible gains, the law had other limitations. Pro-immigration groups, who had long supported a broader definition of the grounds to suspend deportation, achieved a victory with the amendment that expanded the criteria of eligibility for suspension of deportation from danger of "physical persecution" to danger of "persecution on ground of race, religion or political opinion." Similarly, these groups applauded the law's new provision that allowed a waiver of the grounds of ineligibility based on mental retardation or previous evidence of insanity for immigrants who were immediate relatives of United States citizens or resident aliens. Previously, such persons had been excludable. At the same time, the same groups realized that the absence of a provision to impose a statute of limitations on deportation and the failure of the new law to institute a visa-review board represented a defeat. They also opposed the provision in the act that declared individuals from the Western Hemisphere ineligible for the procedure to adjust their status from non-immigrant to immigrant without leaving the country.⁸¹² Along with the administration, Senators Edward M. Kennedy, Philip A. Hart, and Jacob K. Javits, many of the pro-immigration groups also argued that the provision that placed a ceiling on immigration from the Western Hemisphere endangered

⁸¹¹ *Ibid.*

⁸¹² Before the passage of the Hart-Celler Act, only people born in Canada, Mexico, and the islands adjacent to the United States had been ineligible for such adjustment of status.

the Good Neighbor Policy.⁸¹³ Finally, the law's revised system of preferences placed refugees last, after family relationship and skills, defeating many of the pro-immigration groups' efforts to secure more comprehensive legislation for refugees. Moreover, reflecting the administration and Congress's exclusive concern with Cold War priorities, the law applied only to refugees from any Communist or Communist-dominated area or from any country in the Middle East.⁸¹⁴

Conclusion

On October 3, 1965, seated under the Statue of Liberty in the presence of a large group of high government officials and citizens from all walks of life, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Hart-Celler bill into law. Addressing a nationwide television audience, he stated that the new law repaired "a cruel and enduring wrong in the conduct of the American nation." From that day forward, "those wishing to emigrate to America shall be admitted on the basis of their skills and their close relationship to those already here."⁸¹⁵ In the same address, reflecting the emerging concerns of many immigration reform advocates, Johnson informed the people of Cuba that those who desired to seek refuge in the United States would find it. He announced that he had asked the appropriate departments "to make the necessary arrangements to permit those in Cuba who seek freedom to make an orderly entry into the United States," and he appealed to all the American voluntary agencies for the "continuation and expansion of their magnificent work" to aid in this program.⁸¹⁶

⁸¹³ Liskofsky, "In the House of Representatives," *American Jewish Year Book* 67 (1966); Liskofsky, "In the Senate," *American Jewish Year Book* 67 (1966); and Liskofsky, "Provisions of Act of October 3, 1965," *American Jewish Year Book* 67 (1966).

⁸¹⁴ Liskofsky, "Provisions of Act of October 3, 1965 (PL 89-236)," *American Jewish Year Book* 67 (1966).

⁸¹⁵ As quoted in Liskofsky, "United States Immigration Policy," *American Jewish Year Book* 67 (1966).

⁸¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Johnson's words poignantly reflected the changes for which Italian Americans and American Jews had pushed over the previous forty years. For them, the elimination of the quota system depended upon winning acceptance for an immigration policy that privileged family reunion and migrants with skills needed in the United States. At the same time, both groups continued to voice the need to integrate refugees into the country's immigration policy in order to dispense with ad hoc legislation. The American government and Congress would have hardly heard their concerns if the voluntary agencies they had founded had not played such an integral role in the resettlement of refugees after World War II. By 1965, the United States could not do without these agencies to administer its immigration laws because of the large volume of immigrants and refugees trying to enter the country every year. Another significant factor that helped Italian Americans and American Jews, along with the other ethnic groups interested in immigration reform, to succeed was American foreign policy interests. Cold War geopolitical exigencies favored their agenda in spite of the persistent hostility towards immigration reform.

Italian Americans and American Jews also ascribed another, more personal meaning to the passage of the law for their groups. Commenting on the momentous implications of the abolition of the national origins quota system for their groups, Sydney Liskofsky wrote for the *American Jewish Year Book* that the Hart-Celler Act

introduced a major reversal of a policy which had been in force since 1924, and which had antecedents in even earlier national policies and attitudes. This policy, which was rooted in concepts of racial and ethnic superiority and assimilability, in suspicion of alien 'radicalism' and foreign labor competition, had survived decades of reform efforts. These efforts, which did not avail the victims of Nazism during the 1930s and early 1940s, produced limited results after World War II in the form of temporary refugee legislation and minor revisions of the fundamental law. However, the basic policy remained intact until October 3, 1965.⁸¹⁷

⁸¹⁷ Liskofsky, "United States Immigration Policy," *American Jewish Year Book* 67 (1966).

Liskofsky's reference to the indifference towards Jewish refugees in the 1930s and during the war reflected yet another important change that the two groups had undergone since their fight against restriction had begun at the end of the nineteenth century. By 1965, the two groups felt secure enough with their presence in American society that they felt comfortable criticizing it openly for its shortcomings without worrying about possible repercussions.

Upon his return from Johnson's signing of the bill on Liberty Island, Father Donanzan, ACIM's executive secretary, wrote a letter to all ACIM officers expressing the emotions of witnessing the culmination of ACIM's "thirteen-year-old crusade." His words remarkably resembled Liskofsky's:

My emotion was augmented by the feeling that I was, in that moment, the symbol of ACIM to which tens of thousands of Italians throughout the world, particularly in Italy, looked to in prayerful confidence and expectation that its humanitarian and Christian program be crowned with victory—the victory of justice over the archaic and unjust immigration formula of the past 41 years, the victory of genuine democratic process over the totalitarian rule prevailing elsewhere, the victory of rightful, even though belated, recognition of the contribution of all who made America great, the victory of charity over the egotism that permeated the now abolished 'national origins system.'⁸¹⁸

For both American Jews and Italian Americans, the passage of the Hart-Celler Act sealed the end of an era that had marked them as undesirables. It finally sanctioned their acceptance as full members of American society, and recognized their contributions and their achievements.

⁸¹⁸ "A Message from Father Donanzan," October 3, 1965, ACIM Chicago Papers, box 3, folder 23, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

Conclusion: "Are Americans Extinct?"⁸¹⁹

A year after the ratification of the Hart-Celler Act, Sidney Liskofsky, a member of the American Jewish Committee, admitted that long-time immigration reform advocates viewed the passage of the law with pride. Both American Jews and Italian Americans considered the new law as the crowning achievement of their forty years of lobbying efforts to overhaul the quota system. Liskofsky also observed, however, that their work was far from over:

Pro-immigration groups were generally satisfied with the new law, especially its thoroughgoing elimination of the national-origins and racist concepts. But they were greatly concerned about the hardships that would ensue. [...] Its operation was to be closely watched by the pro-immigration groups [...] and efforts would doubtless be made in the future to correct its remaining weaknesses.⁸²⁰

Although the passage of the Hart-Celler Act was hailed as a victory for toleration at the time, Liskofsky, as many migration scholars have observed in recent years, was right to be concerned. While a remarkable achievement, the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 was hardly the apotheosis of postwar liberalism and cultural pluralism. After decades of discrimination, the law finally abolished the Asia-Pacific Triangle, phased out the national origins quota system, and gave priority to family reunion over work visas. Nonetheless, the law also created new forms of restriction. Although these provisions secured the passage of the bill, the law's system of global and evenly distributed quotas (20,000 per country), tight controls for immigrant workers, and ceiling on immigration from the Western Hemisphere paved the way for illegal immigration to become the central problem of American immigration policy in the late twentieth century.⁸²¹

⁸¹⁹ Lieberman, *Are Americans Extinct?*

⁸²⁰ Liskofsky, "Provisions of Act of October 3, 1965 (PL 89-236)," *American Jewish Year Book* 67 (1966).

⁸²¹ Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 227; and Reimers, *Still the Golden Door*, 83-84. Ironically, the act's emphasis on family reunification "adversely affected" aspiring Northern European immigrants. As Dowling Almedia explains, "The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act reordered the priority of entry to favor family reunification, which required aliens to have immediate family in the United States to sponsor them. This change in the law, coupled with the return migration of Irish through the 1970s, made emigration to America difficult for the Irish because they did not have the close relations they needed to gain legal access to America. As a result, most of the Irish who emigrated through the 1980s entered the United States as tourists, overstayed their visas, and lived and worked as

The final compromise bill reflected more the Johnson administration's desire to pass a sweeping immigration bill than the limits of what pro-immigration groups could accomplish. Both Italian Americans and American Jews envisioned a more liberal immigration law than the one that ultimately passed, one that favored family reunion as much as labor migration and that eliminated any form of discrimination against immigrants upon their arrival. Mae Ngai argues that this agenda was hardly progressive and that Euro-Americans refused to further a truly liberal immigration policy to protect their standing in American society and preserve a system that centered on the importance of citizenship.⁸²² Yet, as the last chapter has shown, both Italian and Jewish activists proposed an immigration reform agenda that, in line with the growing awareness of the civil rights movement, proposed a more equitable immigration policy for all immigrant groups and not just for Southern and Eastern Europeans. The absence of any objection to the retention of quotas attested more to their awareness that the United States would never have an open door immigration policy again. Immersed in a climate of rampant nativism and Americanism, their early attempts to call for the repeal of the quotas had attracted criticism and created additional obstacles to their efforts against restriction. As this dissertation has demonstrated, as early as 1890, anti-restrictionists had to declare themselves in favor of immigration regulation if they wanted to make their voices heard and limit the impact of the existing laws.

They were not alone in this conviction. Earlier in the century, Chinese and Japanese activists had reached similar conclusions. After waging legal and diplomatic battles, both groups realized that Congress opposed any changes to the existing laws and preferred to focus on creating a transnational network that could help aspiring Chinese and Japanese immigrants reach

undocumented aliens." Linda Dowling Almedia, *Irish Immigrants in New York City, 1945-1995* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001), 6.

⁸²² Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, chapter 7.

the United States.⁸²³ By 1965, when Congress and the country seriously considered immigration reform, nobody ever proposed the repeal of an immigration ceiling.

Moreover, despite their accomplishments and their advancements in American society, Italian Americans and American Jews saw themselves as still fighting to fit in. Nancy Foner has argued that the restrictive legislation of the 1920s reduced the fears of a deluge of "racial inferiors" and "facilitated assimilation by depriving Italians and Jews of constant, large-scale reinforcements."⁸²⁴ Yet, as I have shown, the isolation that the Italian and Jewish communities experienced during the 1930s changed after World War II, when both communities lobbied to bring refugees, displaced persons, and more family members to the United States. These new arrivals changed the dynamics and the configuration of both communities yet again and also attracted new criticisms against them. The passage of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act only increased the new and continuous influx of arrivals, pushing both groups to examine their role in relation to the new arrivals.⁸²⁵ While the more recent immigrants brought a welcomed infusion of new blood, Italian Americans and American Jews worried that the newcomers' presence would attract new criticisms and reflect negatively on the communities as a whole. Although hostility towards Southern and Eastern Europeans was not nearly as virulent as it was earlier in the century, Italian Americans and American Jews made it a point of taking care of the new immigrants. By then, thanks to decades of experience in the relocation and assistance of newly arrived immigrants, their organizations were much more efficient and effective, and the

⁸²³ For more on Chinese and Japanese mobilization against exclusion, see Lee, *At America's Gates* and Frank F. Chuman, *The Bamboo People: The Law and Japanese-Americans* (Del Mar, CA: Publisher's Inc., 1976).

⁸²⁴ Nancy Foner, *From Ellis Island to JFK* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 225.

⁸²⁵ The post-WWII Italian immigration to the United States was part of the second largest wave of Italian mass migration. Between 1951 and 1971, over three million Southern Italians left, 400,000 of whom went to the United States. Despite the size of this wave and the impact it had on existing Italian communities in the receiving countries, the phenomenon has so far received little attention among scholars. In an effort to begin to fill out this gap, Laura E. Ruberto and Joseph Sciorra are currently putting together an edited volume on the history and culture of post-WWII Italians to the United States to fill the gap in the existing literature.

transition was less traumatic than what German Jews had experienced at the turn of the nineteenth century, for example.

Their concerns were not completely unfounded. The obstacles that both groups faced in pushing for legislation for refugees, displaced persons, and family members reflected the reluctance of Americans to welcome more Southern and Eastern Europeans. As late as 1968, in fact, many Americans agreed with Walter Kerr when he complained that "the immigrants—above all the Jewish immigrants—seem more American than [the WASP] does. They are the faces and voices and inflections of thought that seem most familiar to us, literally second nature."⁸²⁶ He identified a clear moment and a group for the demise of the true American, the WASP:

"Where did he go?" We remember him: pale, poised, neatly dressed, briskly sure of himself. And we see him as an outsider, an outlander, a reasonably noble breed in the act of vanishing. [...] He has stopped being representative, and we didn't notice it until this minute. Not so emphatically, anyway. What has happened since World War II is that the American sensibility has become part Jewish, perhaps as much Jewish as it is anything else [...] The literate American mind has come in some measure to think Jewishly. It has been taught to, and it was ready to. After the entertainers and novelists came the Jewish critics, politicians, theologians. Critics and politicians and theologians are by profession molders; they form ways of seeing.⁸²⁷

Kerr's remarks clearly echoed the backlash against the Civil Rights Movement and Kennedy and Johnson's liberal agendas, yet they nonetheless preoccupied Americans of Southern and Eastern European descent. Also in 1968, Jethro K. Lieberman published his *Are Americans Extinct?* in part to counter some of the persisting stereotypes against these groups.⁸²⁸ Ultimately, I contend, their integration was not complete until the primary origin of immigrants leaving for the United States tilted from Southern and Eastern Europe to Asia and the Western Hemisphere.

⁸²⁶ Walter Kerr, "Skin Deep is not Good Enough," *New York Times*, April 14, 1968.

⁸²⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸²⁸ Lieberman, *Are Americans Extinct?*

In 1968, few predicted that the recently passed law would generate a new large immigration flow and shift the origins of immigrants from Europe to the third world. In the first five years after the passage of the 1965 Immigration Act, Southern and Eastern European immigrants found it easier to come to the United States. As the law and the legislators had intended, the proportion of Europeans shifted from a majority from Northern and Western Europe to Southern and Eastern Europe. While Italy, Greece, Portugal, and others sent more people to the United States, Northern and Western European countries sent fewer. After 1965, twenty thousand Italians immigrated every year for a decade, and Greeks and Portuguese also arrived in considerable numbers. The only country that did not benefit from the new law was Poland. Before 1965, Poland was the only country in the Eastern block to allow any emigration, and many Poles chose to settle in the United States. After 1965, Polish authorities stopped the trend, as they did not want well-educated and skilled citizens to go to the United States, while the unskilled lacked the skills and the family connections to obtain a visa. Once immigrants from Italy, Greece, and Portugal exhausted their family reunion options, the immigration pressure from Southern and Eastern Europe began to ease. European migrants in search of work found it easier to relocate to other European countries that experienced labor shortages following their economic recovery. Many took advantage of guest workers programs that countries like Germany, Switzerland, and Belgium instituted to attract an unskilled labor force.⁸²⁹

American Jews and Italian Americans survived the addition of new Italians and Jews to their communities and criticisms like Kerr's because of what they had accomplished in the meantime. By 1965, along with other groups that mobilized against immigration restriction and the exclusion they faced, American Jews and Italian Americans contributed to create a blueprint for ethnic politics that contemporary ethnic groups still use today. Along with Chinese,

⁸²⁹ Reimers, *Still the Golden Door*, 89-90.

Japanese, and Mexican activists, Italian and Jewish reformers created a space and a voice for immigrant communities, set important legal precedents for future battles, and used mobilization strategies that later inspired other immigrant groups. Moreover, together they re-framed the role that immigration policy played in the country's domestic and foreign policy. Finally, they set an example of how older immigrants could assist, help relocate, and interact with newer immigrants.

At the same time, Italian Americans and American Jews' history of mobilization against immigration restriction provided two different trajectories in the politics of ethnic pressure for future immigrant communities. While Eastern European Jews joined a well-established and well-connected German Jewish community, Italians were newcomers with no connections and a complicated relationship with their homeland. Moreover, while the great majority of Eastern European Jews arrived in the United States to settle permanently and maintained ties only with the Jewish communities in the countries from which they emigrated, Italians were birds of passage well into the beginning of the twentieth century and continued to travel regularly back and forth even after the ratification of the national-origins quotas.

Their different transnational status profoundly shaped their mobilization against restriction. From very early on, their statelessness pushed American Jews to mobilize to protect their interests, to found organizations to further the advancement of their community, and to command a high level of financial, political, and intellectual resources in pursuing their political aims and assisting Jews abroad. The need for self-reliance helped German and Eastern European Jews in America bridge their cultural and religious differences to come together to fight for immigration reform. Their unique status and their commitment to social justice and civil rights afforded Jewish organizations a vastly disproportionate effect on U.S. immigration policy. With

all its shortcomings, the American Jewish Committee rapidly became a model in struggles for immigration reform for its "strong leadership [particularly Louis Marshall], internal cohesion, well-funded programs, sophisticated lobbying techniques, well-chosen non-Jewish allies, and good timing."⁸³⁰ Yet American Jews also perceived their statelessness as a source of vulnerability that motivated them to seek and collaborate with allies outside their communities and push for the decline of a homogenous Protestant culture in the United States. This insecurity and their commitment to civil rights, in part, explain why all the major Jewish organizations that were involved in the battle against immigration in the first half of the twentieth century still exist today.

Italian Americans' transnational ties yielded different results. The fate of ACIM after the ratification of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act represents a perfect example of the difference of approach to immigration restriction between Italian Americans and American Jews. Similarly to the American Jewish Committee, ACIM had built the resources, contacts, prestige, and organizational efforts that had turned it into a powerful voice in the immigration reform debate in its thirteen years of activity. Proud of their accomplishments, Donanzan and Marchisio began to discuss ACIM's future in a post-quotas era and felt confident about the role the organization could have:

You will be interested in knowing that last year when the crowning of ACIM's campaign with the abolition of the National Origins System was favorably and authoritatively forecast for 1965, officials of our Government, of the Vatican and of the Italian Government were unanimous in urging that ACIM, the only Italo-American organization operating in the U.S.A. under Catholic auspices, be not disbanded but preserved and, possibly, expanded by adding to its program other projects.⁸³¹

⁸³⁰ Goldstein, *The Politics of Ethnic Pressure* quoted in Kevin MacDonald, *The Culture of Critique*, 248.

⁸³¹ Donanzan to Members of ACIM Board of Directors, September 29, 1965, ACIM Chicago Papers, box 3, file 22, IHRC, University of Minnesota.

In October 1964, with the blessings of "well-informed Americans," they traveled to Italy to discuss the organization's future. During their trip, they met with officials of the Secretariat of State and Pope Paul VI at the Vatican and held talks with officials of the Italian Foreign Ministry and the Foreign Affairs minister himself, Giuseppe Saragat.

Upon his return, Donanzan wrote to the members of the ACIM Board of Directors to discuss possible options. In his letter, Donanzan detailed the alternatives that American, Italian, and Church authorities had considered as viable options. They decided the organization should continue to provide information and assistance to Americans petitioning for the admission of their family members, to help Italian immigrants "in their assimilation in their new land of adoption," and to maintain its role as advocate for Italian Americans in immigration affairs with governmental agencies and members of Congress "lest the fruits of the victory be virtually nullified by bureaucrats and other factors." At the same time, ACIM's scope could expand and take on cultural and welfare programs for Italian American communities and international programs to help hard-pressed Italian communities in South American countries "in the spirit of the Alliance for Progress launched by the late President Kennedy and endorsed by President Johnson."⁸³² Yet ACIM interrupted most of its activities in 1968, after shepherding a myriad of Italian immigrants through the three-year phasing out of the quota system, assisting Italian American applicants sending for their families, and helping with their relocation to the United States.⁸³³

The meteoric history of ACIM reflects the pragmatic approach that Italian Americans had towards immigration restriction. As they built their communities in the United States and entered the anti-restrictionist movement, they consciously chose to focus on immigration issues

⁸³² *Ibid.*

⁸³³ The reduction in activities also seems related to the transfer of Donanzan to a new dioceses and Marchisio's retirement from the public sphere after a hospitalization.

that directly related to Italian migrants and Italian Americans. Along the way, they created a immigration reform rhetoric that specifically tackled Italian American issues, learned to use the political process to attract both the Italian and American governments' attention, and worked to dismantle stereotypes against them. Unlike American Jews, they pursued the collaboration with other groups only when it suited their goals. It was this understanding that led them to accept the partnership of the Catholic Church that led to the creation of ACIM. From this point of view, it was only natural that ACIM became less involved when it accomplished its main goals.

Italian Americans' decision to be pragmatic in their mobilization strategies stemmed from an understanding of their position in American. Significantly, as they grappled with the impact of the 1924 Immigration Act on their communities and the Italian immigrants barred from entering the country, they turned to the American Jewish community for inspiration.⁸³⁴ If the greater history of urban dwelling and initial higher financial and educational levels might in part explain the different strategies, Italian Americans' decision also stemmed from the different relationship they had with their ancestral home. Italian Americans continued to travel between the United States and Italy, even after they settled permanently in the United States. Moreover, especially after the rise of Mussolini to power, the Italian government carefully cultivated a strong relationship with Italians abroad to protect its international and economic interests. This close relationship focused Italian Americans' interest in furthering Italy and Italians' interests, especially because they perceived that their success inevitably reflected on their standing in

⁸³⁴ Pisani, *The Italian in America*, 190. It is interesting to note that these comparisons continue to this day among some Italian Americans. When, in April 2009, Brown University announced that, at the request of student groups, it would rename the institution's Columbus Day Holiday as "Fall Weekend.," a small group of Italian Americans protested. In an email to the H-net List on Italian American History and Culture, a subscriber wrote: "Only one thing would stop Brown University from doing this - a major loss in donations. Unfortunately, Italian Americans do not have that clout. We are not Jews. And this comment should not be seen as anti-Semitic; it is simply a statement of fact. Jews have been far more successful in America than Italian Americans, and it shows in their greater power." H-ITAM email received on April 15, 2009.

American society. The relationship tightened after World War II, after Italian Americans became the most powerful non-state actors Italy had in the United States.⁸³⁵

Ultimately, both strategies proved successful, and they both provided a model for mobilization that intersected with the battles of other immigrant groups. As they learned from Chinese and Japanese immigrants' opposition against exclusion, they created new venues through which immigrants could voice their concerns and have an impact on the laws that affected them. Along the way, they learned to negotiate their role in American politics and society, created an agenda that was responsive to American domestic and international concerns, and reframed their presence in the their transnational community. Finally, as they struggled to find the best strategy to push for change, they learned the value of collective action.⁸³⁶

⁸³⁵ For more on the Italian government's efforts to build connections with Italians abroad, see Mark Choate, *Emigrant Nation*.

⁸³⁶ Charles Tilly and Louise Tilly, eds., *Class Conflict and Collective Action* (Beverly Hills and London: Sage Publications, 1981), 233.

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YIVO, Center for Jewish History, New York

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Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) Records

Newspapers and Periodicals

American Jewish Year Book
ACIM Newsletter
L'Azione
Commentary
Corriere d'America
Commerciante Italiano
Donna Italiana
Progresso Italo-Americano
New York Herald Tribune
New York Times
Sons of Italy Magazine
The Vigo Review

Government Serial Publications

Congressional Record
Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service
U.S. Department of Labor, *Annual Report of the Commissioner General of Immigration*
U.S. Department of Labor, *Annual Report of the Immigration and Naturalization Service*

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