

the Italians

WHEN the Chinese, confident that they were the only civilized people, were confronted by Italian Jesuits in the seventeenth century, and discovered that another people could write, and were even more competent than themselves at clock-building and calendar-making, they decided they would have to add to the number of known civilized nations. They consequently added the Italians, the first Western civilized people with whom they had contact, and the Jews, who had written the book that the Jesuits were trying to propagate.

Thus, to Chinese writers of the early modern period, the Chinese, Jews, and Italians were linked by a peculiar accident as the three civilized nations. Historical accident has again linked them more recently, for in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries these three peoples—so different in size, character, and history—became the great migrating nations. In each case, the migrants were im-

THE ITALIANS

poverished, had commercial skill that marked them off in many places where they settled, and showed a surprising strength of family, which served both to advance and to limit them.

Italian immigrants, from Genoa, Venice, and other cities, had settled in a number of countries in the early nineteenth century. In New York there were musicians, opera singers, and impresarios (including Mozart's librettist, Lorenzo da Ponte), political émigrés (including, for a while, Garibaldi), humbler sellers of cheap statuary, street musicians with monkeys, and some workers.¹ However, mass migration from Italy did not begin until the 1870's. Then it became modern history's greatest and most sustained movement of population from a single country.

This migration was a proletarian one, made up of peasants and landless laborers, large numbers of craftsmen and building workers, and much smaller numbers of professional people. It began as Italian workmen from the North made a seasonal migration to France, Switzerland, and Germany to get jobs. Italian workers preceded and followed the French and British flags into North Africa, making Tunis, for example, more Italian than French. Just as they labored on the railroads and tunnels of Central Europe, so they worked on the (first) Assuan Dam, the Suez Canal, Tunisian and Algerian railways, and the ports of Algiers and Tunis. They came as stonecutters, masons, and unskilled laborers, but they remained to become merchants, professional people, and—where opportunity offered, as in Tunis—farmers.

These migrations throughout Europe and the Mediterranean basin were soon eclipsed by migrations overseas. By 1885 more Italians were going across the Atlantic than to the nearer countries. Between 1860 and 1900 Italian immigration transformed the economy of Argentina, where many settlers of Spanish descent had disdained manual labor. A great stream of Italian laborers and farmers put the broad plains under plow, laid a railroad network, and built the city of Buenos Aires, largely along Italian lines. Almost half the immigrants to Argentina between 1857 and 1926 were Italians. The role of Italians

in Brazil was also great, though in that enormous country they formed a much smaller proportion of the population. More than a third of all the immigrants to Brazil between 1884 and 1941 were Italians, and they were the single most numerous immigrant group.²

In the nineteenth century, Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay underwent serious crises attendant on rapid development, and the flow of Italian immigrants was deflected, ever more heavily, to the United States. There, the pioneers' task was already done. Only in one state, California, did Italian immigration coincide with early growth, and there Italians played an important role in the creation of vineyards and production of wine (just as they did in Argentina), in fishing, and in growing and marketing produce.

In New York and the other industrial and commercial cities of the Northeast, where the great mass of the Italian immigrants settled, the story was different. The energy and hard work that achieved wealth and social position for Italians in Argentina could in the United States achieve only a moderately comfortable workingman's existence. The challenge of an underdeveloped country, which made traders and merchants of Italian emigrants in North Africa and South America and attracted professional people from Italy, was not to be found. The Italians arrived in New York with only a small complement of trained and even literate people.

Another significant change accompanied the shift of Italian migration from Argentina and Brazil to the United States. After 1900 emigration from Southern Italy and Sicily increased, and became almost as numerous as that from the Northern and Central parts of the country. And whereas emigrants from Northern and Central Italy continued for the most part to go to countries where their relatives had become established, to Latin America, the new streams of immigrants from the South headed for the United States.

Thus, the great mass of the Italians of New York are of South Italian origin, different in culture and outlook from the first Italians who came to the city. The distinction between North and South Italian that is embedded in the early official immigration statistics of the

THE ITALIANS

United States is not an expression of American prejudices and stereotypes alone. Indeed, Italian government statistics had long made the same distinction. "Wherever Italians might go," wrote Dr. Leonard Covello, the most subtle and perceptive writer on the Italo-Americans, "they were already divided into two groups."³ The statistics reflected the disdain of the Northern and Central Italians and the Southern gentry for the South Italian and Sicilian peasant. South Italians were considered inferior, hardly civilized.

They were in fact illiterate, having been totally neglected by incredibly reactionary monarchical regimes. Their horizon was limited to their own village; all outside of it were seen as foreigners. Indeed, the South Italian even called all those outside of his own family "*forestieri*"—"strangers."⁴ The South Italian had survived regimes that were as destructive as natural disasters; and he accepted natural disasters—earthquakes, floods, droughts—as part of the common course of events. Perhaps this helps explain his extraordinary suspiciousness of everyone and everything outside his family of blood relatives.

In any case, the South has been seen as the problem area of Italy for a hundred years, and like some such areas in other places, it has produced a great and fascinating literature that has made its problems familiar to intellectual Americans.

Of 2,300,000 Italian immigrants to the United States between 1899 and 1910, 1,900,000 were South Italians.⁵ Of these, less than half of 1 per cent were in the professions, only 15 per cent were in skilled occupations, and 77 per cent were farm workers or laborers—that is, without any skill of value in an urban, industrial setting. By contrast, three times as many North Italians were professionals, and 66 per cent were laborers. North Italians had on the average twice as much money as South Italians when they came in, and slightly more than the average immigrant. More than half of the South Italian immigrants over fourteen were illiterate, but only 12 per cent of the North Italians.⁶ This difference was reduced when, after the First World War, adult immigrants were required to show literacy.

Coming from the land, unskilled and illiterate, the South Italians at first worked as common laborers on railroad and other construction projects throughout the Northeast. They replaced the Irish, who also had arrived unskilled and illiterate, but in contrast to the Irish, the Italian men generally came alone, and in many cases with no intention of staying. The Italian migration had one of the smallest proportions of women and children, one of the highest proportions of returning immigrants.⁷

In 1880, according to the census, there were only 44,000 Italians in the country, 12,000 of them in New York. New York was the largest settlement from the beginning, and as the number of Italians in the country grew, New York continued to hold about one-quarter of them. In the first great decade of migration, the 1880's, 268,000 Italians came, but so many returned that only 183,000 were numbered in 1890. This pattern was repeated for the next two decades. In the nineties, 604,000 Italians entered the country, but only 484,000 were enumerated in 1900. In the first decade of the nineteenth century, 2,104,000 came, but only 1,343,000 persons of Italian birth were enumerated in 1910. The pattern then began to change. Between 1910 and 1920, 1,110,000 immigrants arrived, and in 1920 there were 1,610,000 persons of Italian birth in the country. By the 1920's the immigration was a permanent one. Men came with their families, or hoped to bring them soon, and returned to Italy only for visits or in their old age. The immigration continued at flood tide until cut off by the quota act of 1924, and 455,000 entered during the twenties. In 1930 there were 1,790,000 persons of Italian birth in this country, the largest number ever shown in a census. As many Italian immigrants as the stringent laws allow still enter this country. During the 1950's between 15,000 and 20,000 Italians entered each year,⁸ of whom probably a third settled in the New York metropolitan region.

In New York in 1890 there were 75,000 Italian-born persons and 40,000 of Italian parentage, together less than 5 per cent of the city's population. By 1900 the total had increased to 220,000, still only 6 per cent of the population. In the next decade it increased to 11

THE ITALIANS

per cent of the population, and in 1920 to 14 per cent. In 1917, 30 per cent of the children in the public schools of the city were of Italian parentage. Considering the high birth rate of the Italian population in the 1910's and 1920's, the Italian population of the city—that is, those born in Italy, their children and grandchildren—must by 1930 have been at least a sixth of the city.⁹ They make up perhaps the same proportion today, and thus rank second in size only to the Jews among ethnic groups in the city.¹⁰

THE COMMUNITY

WHEN A WELL-KNOWN SOCIOLOGIST STUDIED AN ITALIAN SECTION of Boston just a few years ago, he titled his study *The Urban Villagers*.¹¹ The two keys to understanding the role of Italians in America are the Italian neighborhood and the Italian family. Italians adapted to American society, took on new occupations, became politically significant, but still today, three generations after the founding of the first big Italian settlements in New York, the traditional bounds of neighborhood and family determine in large measure the accomplishments of American Italians.

From the beginning, the village-mindedness of the Southern Italians was striking to American observers. When the immigrants settled in the blocks of New York or in the small industrial communities around the city, they tended to congregate with others from the same province or even village.¹² Illiteracy seriously hampered the development of these diverse settlements into a single ethnic group, for differences in dialect, which in turn engendered mutual suspicion, tended to endure in the absence of widespread written communication. The Italian press was hampered not only by the illiteracy of its clientele but also by the existence of a great gap between the ordinary spoken language and the official language of the press. This contrasted, for example, with the Jewish situation. After Ab Cahan created the *Daily Forward*, literary and difficult Yiddish all but disappeared from the daily Yiddish press. In any case the dialectical differences within Yiddish were minor compared with those in Italian, and the Jews attached less importance to them than did the Italians, for whom they had great symbolic and emotional meaning.

The first Italian neighborhoods proved remarkably stable. Areas that were Italian in 1920 remain so, somewhat attenuated, today. East Harlem, which sent La Guardia to Congress in the twenties and Marcantonio in the 1940's, sent Santangelo in the late fifties and early sixties. However, this East Harlem community is now closely ringed by mostly Negro and Puerto Rican housing projects, and the district that elected Santangelo did not exist in 1962. The North Bronx Italian sections developed (as did similar areas in Queens) when Italians went to the end of the subway lines and beyond, seeking cheap land on which to build houses and raise vegetables and goats. These sections are still heavily Italian, and help elect Representative Paul Fino from the Bronx. Staten Island, which also was attractive to Italians forty years ago because it offered a semirural life, remains heavily Italian. It was the first borough to have an Italian borough president. Even the Italian section of Greenwich Village remains solidly established despite a dozen waves of artists and Bohemians. Indeed, there is no more striking evidence of the strength of Italian communities than the tenements of the South Village, which, regardless of the bizarre Bohemian activities in the basements and storefronts, are still largely Italian. While the Jewish map of New York City in 1920 bears almost no relation to that in 1961, the Italian districts, though weakened in some cases and strengthened in others, are still in large measure where they were.¹³

Nor are these old Italian neighborhoods only shells of their former selves, inhabited exclusively by the older people. Many of the married sons and daughters have stayed close to their parents. Even the trek to the suburbs, when it does occur among Italians, is very often a trek of families of two generations, rather than simply of the young. And it is striking how the old neighborhoods have been artfully adapted to a higher standard of living rather than simply deserted, as they would have been by other groups, in more American style.¹⁴ Tenements that once housed eight families now house half as many. The old houses are rebuilt on the inside (there is always a great amount of skilled building and crafts labor in an Italian community), new furniture is brought into the old apart-

THE ITALIANS

ments, new cars line the streets, and even the restaurants reflect quality and affluence, for they serve not only friends and relatives who come back to the neighborhood but also those who never moved away, and who now have an income far greater than the cost and quality of their housing would suggest.

Pleasant Avenue (now Paladino Avenue) in old Italian East Harlem and Prince and Thompson Streets in downtown Manhattan are very different from what they once were. They are less crowded and more comfortable, but they still reflect the surprising endurance of the Italian neighborhood in the city. The conservative village is in part recreated in an urban environment. When Salvatore Cotillo, the first Italian elected to the State Assembly from East Harlem, left to take his seat in Albany, he had never before, since arriving in New York as a boy, ventured beyond the borders of the city! ¹⁵

Because the desire for the new and the fashionable in housing is so restrained among Italians by attachment to the old neighborhood, even old neighborhoods that are quite unfashionable (because they are adjacent to docks, railroad yards, and factories) remain fully occupied, resisting the social consequences if not the outer appearance of blight. For example, there is such a community just across the East River from the United Nations, north of the Long Island Railroad yards. The industrial side of the Hudson River is also heavily Italian. Thus Italians occupy inlying areas that have been by-passed in the push to develop distant suburbs; in the shadows of the skyscrapers they enjoy quiet and convenient neighborhoods.

Powerful as the Italian village culture was, however, it could not, when transferred to the United States, sustain the absolute power of the father and the unquestioning humility of the children. Instead, the children, finding a serious gap between themselves and their parents, tended to create groups of their own, with something of their own values, code, and morality. Thus, to the structure of the Italian-American neighborhood was added a group known variously as the "boys," the "fellows," the "club," the "gang." In it boys gathered around the corner store, outside of the crowded tenements, and horsed around, talked, and

whistled at girls. This phenomenon was not confined among immigrant groups to Italians, but it seems to have been especially characteristic of them. W. F. Whyte's vivid description in *Street Corner Society* of the life of these corner boys is drawn from an Italian slum.¹⁶ A possible explanation is that in Italian culture there is a strong emphasis on male exhibitionism, strength, and sexual potency. The exhibition needs a proper audience, which might be found among the circle of family and relatives who gather daily or at least on Sunday, and among the street corner boys who gather nightly. The boys would withdraw from this society at marriage, almost embarrassed to be deserting the gang even for so compelling a reason. (A very few deserted the boys to train for careers.) But a little while after marriage they would be back among their old friends. Then the nightly gatherings might be moved to an apartment, where the women could talk separately in another room.¹⁷ In older age, the group might organize a club. Every Italian neighborhood is marked by storefronts behind which men chat, play cards, and drink coffee, free from intrusion by strangers.

"Free from strangers" is again the motif. Even today in Italian neighborhoods strangers are conspicuous. A non-Italian newcomer encounters a tight net of friendship and blood relation that binds the community and excludes outsiders until they are found to be "all right." And yet Italian neighborhoods supplied the best settings for bohemia. Oddities that did not affect the group could easily be ignored. Italians of the immigrant and second generations, who still dominate most of the old neighborhoods, do not subscribe to an abstract morality. Concern for odd or immoral behavior is limited to one's own family; the rest of the world, as long as it poses no threat, may be ignored. Emphasis on outer appearances—the "middle-class look"—develops relatively slowly among Italian Americans, probably not until the third generation. What is important is not the appearance of streets and houses, but the inner quality, where relatives and friends are welcome, and a good table is set. Thus it has been possible for Italians to look tolerantly on the oddballs, and to go about their business without being bothered. But perhaps this characteristic of

THE ITALIANS

the Italian neighborhood accounts less for its attractiveness to bohemians than the supply of cheap housing and small, low-priced restaurants that serve wine!

The tight little Italian neighborhood can accommodate a special group that really doesn't participate in its life, just as an Italian village can live comfortably with tourists; but it rigidly resists invasions of new immigrant groups, who have their own form of community existence. In New York, of course, these new groups are Puerto Rican and Negro. When they move into Italian neighborhoods there is, at the least, a good deal of resentful talk. The boys' gangs respond in tough fashion. And the Italian community—whether of renters or homeowners—moves away slowly, if at all. This has been the case in East Harlem, in Bushwick in Brooklyn, and elsewhere.¹⁸

The little circles of kinfolk and townfolk, gathered in a neighborhood, were the base of the American Italian community. In the early days, when Italians were the laborers and building workers of New York, they worked in groups under a leader from the same village, or someone known to one of the group. These were *padroni*, who supplied squads of laborers, took the pay, and divided it among the workers—a necessary function when employers and workers could not speak each other's language. In 1897 it was estimated that two-thirds of the Italian labor in New York was controlled by the *padroni*.¹⁹ At that time Italians formed roughly three-quarters of building labor in the city (the Irish had made up the same proportion only ten years before). By 1900 they formed almost the entire force building the New York subways.

The *padroni* often exploited the workers. Their contracts with employers gave them far too much of the workers' return, they lied in describing jobs, and the workers had no redress. In any case, the workers—illiterate, fearful of government, and docile before men of prominence—did not dream of bringing the *padroni* to justice. Aware of the evil, the Italian government tried to set up independent agencies that would arrange jobs for Italian workmen; it got little support from the *prominenti* (leaders) in New York's Italian community, who themselves very often had been *padroni*. Thus, among the immigrants, money

that might have improved the miserable standard of living or financed workers' institutions as in other ethnic groups instead went to a small number of wealthy dignitaries, either *padroni* or "bankers"—the shopkeepers and travel agents who kept and transmitted money for the immigrants. The illiterate workers preferred to use these kinfolk for saving money or sending it to Italy. Once more they were exploited, until state laws were passed to control these immigrant banks and bankers.

Italian government representatives and socialist and anarchist groups tried in various ways to ameliorate the lot of the Italian workers but were helpless against the *padroni* and the bankers. In the village community there was neither a tradition of self-help nor an expectation of improvement. The Italian immigrants did not assume that their children were as good as anybody else's. Thus, the most proletarian of immigrant groups played little role in the labor movement.²⁰ Furthermore, the Italian building-trades workers were sometimes excluded from unions, which the Irish dominated.²¹ Many Italian common laborers were organized in the Hod Carriers, the first union to have an Italian president, but this union became *padronismo* on a larger scale and was a scandal to the labor movement. Dominic D'Allessandro, who had worked in a bank before becoming a labor organizer, skillfully maneuvered himself into the presidency of the Hod Carriers in 1909 and thereafter ran the union as a private fief. There was no convention from 1911 to 1941.²² Whatever material advantages this union brought to Italian workers, it did little to develop in them any sense of independence and competence.

The Italian workers hesitated to strike against kinfolk who were *padroni* or employers, or to organize against Italians who became union leaders. The difference in station intimidated them, and in any case, many at first looked forward to returning to Italy and did not want to lose wages in a strike or risk trouble in a union fight in order to improve a long-run position. Furthermore, having come from the land, they had no knowledge of trade-unionism or radical movements. Italian girls scabbed in the great strike of the waistmakers in 1909–1910. It took careful work by the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union,

THE ITALIANS

with the aid of such men as Salvatore Ninfo and Fiorello La Guardia, to develop powerful Italian locals within that union after 1910.²³

To the business union-minded Irish leaders of the building trades, the Italians were cheap labor undercutting the market; to the socialist-minded Jewish leaders of the garment trades, they were deficient in class consciousness. Their own leaders were often the spiritual brethren of the narrow-minded and selfish *galantuomi* of the South Italian small town, and they lorded it over the workingman in New York as the gentry lorded it over the peasant in Southern Italy. There were many outstanding leaders of Italian labor and many outstanding Italian radicals—for example, Ettor and Giovanitti, who led the Lawrence strike for the IWW in 1912, and Carlo Tresca, who was for many years a leading radical editor. Salvatore Ninfo, August Belanca, Luigi Antonini, and others organized and led powerful locals in the Jewish-dominated garment-trades unions. But the influence of radical and labor leaders in the Italian community was small. It was impossible to establish a socialist Italian daily. The leading newspaper of the Italian community was (and remains) *Il Progresso Italo-Americano*, which was founded by Carlo Borsatti, a former *padrone*. He was succeeded as editor by a wealthy businessman, Generoso Pope. This newspaper and the Italian press in general were opposed to unions in the years when Italian workers might have been creating powerful ones.²⁴ This was in marked contrast to the Yiddish press, of which the most important paper was the Socialist *Forward*.

The family- and community-based Italian settlements were incapable of creating group-wide institutions such as the Jewish community built. Indeed, while the Jews were founding the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, the Educational Alliance, and other institutions to help immigrants off to a good start, the leaders of the Italian community were sabotaging efforts of the Italian government and a few farsighted Italian individuals to set up similar institutions. At a time when money was desperately needed for the Italian Home, a social agency launched by the consul to aid the immigrants, Borsatti's *Il Progresso* was raising large sums from the immigrants and their mutual aid socie-

ties for a monument to Columbus.²⁵ This was the kind of communal enterprise the Italian *prominenti* favored; statues to Columbus, Mazzini, Verrazzano, Garibaldi, and Verdi went up in rapid succession, all gifts of American Italians to the city of New York. (Again by contrast, the larger, more prosperous, and better organized Jewish community has still not built a statue to any of its famous men in the city.)

This pattern has characterized the Italian community of New York to the present day. It can make great efforts for a noble gesture, but it has been incapable of creating institutions that work steadily for common ends. Thus, in the twenties, the Italians of New York raised the grand Casa Italiana at 117th Street and Broadway. Wealthy Italians of the city, and particularly those who had made fortunes in erecting fine buildings—the Paterno brothers and Anthony Campagna—gave generously. But it has not become a significant cultural center for the New York Italian community. And while this campaign was going on, the Italian lawyer and sociologist John H. Mariano could write, after pointing to the enormous neglected educational, health, and social needs of Italian youths: “Altogether in New York City there are thirty-seven welfare agencies catering exclusively to Jewish-speaking children, eleven catering exclusively to Irish children, four to German children, three to Greek, one to Spanish. There is in existence an Italian Child Welfare Committee, an organization affiliated with the Catholic Big Brothers.”²⁶ Robert F. Foerster, the great scholar who chronicled the Italians’ emigration, also mused about their individualism: “Musical as few people have been, the Italians have never developed much interest in choir singing.” And the love of grandeur:

. . . the municipal expenditures in Italy are, to an unusual extent, munificent rather than provident and every town wants a statue to some *valoroso concittadino*. . . . Much of the life of Italians in their foreign settlements is organized about this trait. Many a mutual aid society has come into existence largely because of the chance offered for pomp and paraphernalia, and has been held together by its picnics, excursions, and parades. Through the narrow streets of such a colony a funeral procession may take its way, an endless succession of carriages smothered in flowers,

THE ITALIANS

followed by an endless line of men marching single file, plumed, decorated in uniform, carrying gorgeous banners—is it for the deceased or the living? ²⁷

Mutual aid societies did flourish, as in other immigrant communities. Workingmen and small shopkeepers showed a capacity to cooperate in the days before relief and social insurance, in confronting the accidents of an industrial society. But once again, the social strength of the neighborhood could not be developed on a larger scale. There were no less than 2,000 Italian mutual benefit societies in New York City in 1910.²⁸ While large numbers of these were banded together in the National Order of the Sons of Italy, it never developed beyond the city and state level to become a strong national organization. It had nothing like the strength of B'nai B'rith or the great Croatian and Slovenian benefit societies. Indeed, in 1961 when Italians everywhere were agitated by the representation of Italian criminals in the television program "The Untouchables," they had in effect to create a protest organization. They had none of the size and resources of the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, the Anti-Defamation League, or the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

FAMILY INFLUENCES

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO DIVIDE THE COMMUNITY, NEIGHBORHOOD, and peer-group from the family in their impact on immigrant and second-generation Italian Americans. The set of qualities that seems to distinguish Italian Americans includes individuality, temperament, and ambition, all of which, however, are restricted by the culture and outlook of the family and neighborhood. This produces a tension, the most satisfying resolution of which is some form of worldly success that is admired by one's family and the friends of one's childhood. Perhaps the ideal is the entertainer—to give him a name, Frank Sinatra—who is an international celebrity, but still the big-hearted, generous, unchanged boy from the block. That form of individuality and ambition which is identified with Protestant and Anglo-Saxon culture, and for which the criteria of success are abstract and im-

personal, is rare among American Italians. A good deal of this Italian-American orientation can be explained by looking at the family.

Edward C. Banfield has named the characteristic outlook of a small southern Italian village "amoral familism."²⁹ According to this outlook, one owes nothing to anyone outside one's family, and effort should advance only the family. The picture of such a life has been shown also in Verga's *The House by the Medlar Tree*, in Carlo Levi's *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, and in many novels of Italian-American life, such as Michael DeCapite's moving *Maria*. But the fullest and most vivid description of how this outlook has been carried to America is in Leonard Covello's *The Social Background of the Italo-American School Child*. "It is impossible," Covello writes, "to imagine the *contadino* [peasant] in South Italy contributing to the Red Cross."³⁰ He gives vivid examples of the universal acceptance of the notion that morality is limited to family members. Perhaps the most striking is the case of the old woman who saw a village boy stealing fruit from a tree. She ignored this. But after she saw him do it a second time she severely reprimanded the boy. Why? Because the first time he was stealing from someone who was not part of his family, a "stranger," and this was all right.³¹

The content of this moral code remained basically the same among Italian immigrants to America. One should not trust strangers, and may advance one's interest at the cost of strangers. Also, one does not interfere with strangers' business. One therefore tolerates the breaking of law by others (leaving aside the fact that it might be dangerous to do otherwise). "You be a gentleman, I'll be a gentleman," is the way this outlook is expressed in America today.³² Obviously it has a good deal in common with contemporary American morality. But whereas for America in general this self-serving and anticomunal ethic breaks with something in the American past, for the Italian American it is continuous with the past. For him it is rather the old American universalistic and abstract morality that is alien. The Italian peasant village and the contemporary American metropolis thus converge to some extent in a common ethical outlook.

THE ITALIANS

But there remains the difference that the contemporary American ethic values *self*-advancement, whereas the Italian variant still values *family* advancement. Thus, even in the case of Italian gangsters or racketeers, there is a surprising degree of family stability and concern with children, brothers, sisters, and other relatives. For example, the important group of Italians with illegal business connections who were discovered accidentally in a conclave at Apalachin, New York, were on the whole good family men; in fact, the Apalachin conference itself resembled nothing so much as a great family picnic. Indeed, it is impossible to understand Italians in crime without the setting of the family and neighborhood. Perhaps this accounts in part for the Italian-American superiority in organized crime. The "natural" succession in the management of criminal enterprise from the Italians to the newest slum-dwellers, the Negroes and Puerto Ricans, has not taken place in the city, and one reason may be that the Italian family and neighborhood provide connections of a closeness and dependability that the other groups cannot match.*

Of course, Italians have the advantage of better political connections, but that is not a satisfactory explanation by itself. In early 1960 a *New York Post* reporter, Ted Poston, investigated Adam Clayton Powell's charge that the New York police favored Italian and Jewish policy bankers in Harlem over Negro ones. He found indeed that Italians were driving Negroes out of business, but one reason was the Negroes' own style. As one player told him, the Negro policy banker gets a flashy car and flashy woman, and this annoys the customers, particularly when he has to scratch around in his pockets to pay off on a hit. The Italian banker has a conservative car and family life, a situation reassuring to the customers.³³

* We should point out something that perhaps hardly needs to be pointed out: that when we talk of the relationship between Italians and crime we speak of only a minute fraction of American Italians. It seems quite true that many or most of the people engaged in organized crime (that is, crime organized as a business) are first- and second-generation Italians; but even if their numbers run into the thousands, this is still an insignificant part of some 6,000,000 Americans of Italian origin.

Obviously the relationship between Italians and crime cannot be explained simply on the ground that Italo-Americans have maintained the strong family of the Italian village. Other explanations include the characteristic Southern Italian peasant's attitude to government officials (they are "thieves," and in Southern Italy they were); the complementary attitude to laws (which help the "thieves" in their work); and the fact that while social mobility among Italians was slow, the desire for material goods and sensual satisfactions was strongly felt and uninhibited by a Puritanical religion. There is too the fact that one common American channel to success—education—was narrowed for American Italians by the peculiar constitution and outlook of the family and neighborhood.

It is hard to determine how much the structure of the family helps us understand crime, education, and social mobility among American Italians. That the family is "strong" is clear. Divorce, separation, and desertion are relatively rare. Family life is considered the norm for everyone; bachelors and spinsters are few, much fewer than among the Irish. The Italian family resembles in some ways the Jewish one, in its strength, its heightened and uninhibited emotional quality, and even in some of its inner alliances. Thus, there is a strong tie between mother and son. But while the Jewish father is often ignored by this mother-son alliance, the Italian father is feared, for great emphasis is placed on male strength, and violent behavior is not unusual.

Both the Jewish and the Italian mother overfeed and overprotect the children. This is perhaps one reason why the rate of alcoholism is low among both groups, but probably more important is the fact that in both cultures wine is drunk early in family settings. Both mothers want to keep their children close. But the Jewish son, despite his dependence and neurosis, finds it easier to leave home than the Italian son. This is perhaps because accomplishment for the Italian son is felt by the parents to be meaningless unless it directly gratifies the family—for example, by maintaining the closeness of the family or advancing the family's interests through jobs and marriage. The

THE ITALIANS

Jewish parents can be gratified symbolically by the accomplishment of a son who may be removed from or even indifferent to them. To draw a distinction from cultural anthropology, the Italian family seems to be more interested in a child's being than his becoming, and the latter is sacrificed to the former.³⁴

But the social explanations for the differences are as convincing as the psychological. The Jewish child never has to face the conflict between departure from the family and individual achievement as clearly as the Italian child does, for the Jewish child is part of a whole group that is changing simultaneously its occupations, way of life, and dwelling places. Mobility for Italians has to be individual mobility, because the group moves slowly and is conservative in its outlook and habits; Jewish mobility is a mass phenomenon. Conceivably the Italian family nurtures a confident and self-reliant personality by its warmth and dependability and by early gratification of the child's desires (but studies show that there is a good deal of inconsistency in this gratification, which may not be so comforting to the child). But the society of his childhood is ready to punish him if he does seek to leave upon growing up and it is painful to leave in any case because so few do. An Italian-American novel published in 1961 (*A Cup of the Sun*, by Octavia Waldo) describes the problem of a young Italian American of great sensitivity who wants to become an artist or writer. She is as isolated in her community as she would be in a small Midwest town. She must go *away* to school, and she knows she will never have anything to come back to. Her development separates her decisively from the friends with whom she grew up.

There are distinctive solutions to this problem of expressing individualism while staying with the group. One can become a local lawyer, staying in the neighborhood and active in politics, or a local doctor, or a local businessman. Or one may become that special variant of a local businessman, a racketeer, who is a celebrity yet a resident of the old neighborhood block, where connections to the police, the local political powers, and the customers are available. But to enter a larger society—Wall Street, Madison Avenue, Washington—has been a challenging and diffi-

cult task, and it is only in the past ten or fifteen years that any sizable numbers of Italians have deserted the hearth and neighborhood to try. Even now, the proportion is not large.

But perhaps the chief factor in restricting the movement of second-generation Italian Americans has been their attitude to schooling. The South Italian immigrants came from villages in which schools were only for the children of the *galantuomi*, and the peasant's child (should his parents have the strange idea of sending him) was unwelcome. Education was for a cultural style of life and professions the peasant could never aspire to. Nor was there an ideology of change; intellectual curiosity and originality were ridiculed or suppressed. "Do not make your child better than you are," runs a South Italian proverb.

Nor, despite a strong desire for material improvement, did the Italian family see a role for education in America.³⁵ One improved one's circumstances by hard work, perhaps by a lucky strike, but not by spending time in a school, taught by women, who didn't even beat the children. Parents felt that the children should contribute to the family budget as soon as possible, and that was years before the time fixed by the state for the end of their education. Truancy and drop-outs were a constant problem, and were often abetted by the parents, who wanted the children to help out in the shop or store. And aside from these parental attitudes, the general isolation of the Italians as a result of their slow assimilation meant that the children, when forced out of the close, familiar family and into school, were ill at ease. They had not been raised for new adventures. Under this (from an American viewpoint) topsy-turvy system of values, it was the "bad" son who wanted to go to school instead of to work, the "bad" daughter who wanted to remain in school instead of helping her mother. Such behavior made the "bad" ones strangers to their families. For the children of the South Italian peasants in New York to get college educations in the 1920's and 1930's was a heroic struggle. (The situation was different among North Italians and South Italians not of peasant background. From these groups, most college-trained professionals were drawn until recently.)³⁶

THE ITALIANS

To New York's public school administrators of twenty and thirty years ago the great burden was the "Italian problem," just as today it is the Negro and Puerto Rican problem. The two periods have some things in common, such as the language difficulty of Italian and Puerto Rican children, and the disdain, even contempt, of many teachers and administrators for the children. But there are also striking differences. The problems of present-day Negro and Puerto Rican children often stem from the weakness of the family, in which a single overburdened and resentful parent is unable to maintain an ordered home life for the child. By contrast, the problems of the Italian children stemmed from a too strong, too rigorously ordered family, which did not value education.

Leonard Covello, one of the great educators of New York City, has described the whole educational history of the New York Italian in his autobiography, *The Heart is the Teacher*. He came to an overcrowded tenement in East Harlem from a Southern Italian town. He attended elementary school and left high school when all his friends did. The influence of a neighbor's daughter, and later of settlement house workers and Protestant missionaries, sustained him in returning to high school and going through Columbia University on scholarships. When his father heard that he was involved in sports in school, he told him to go to work—why should he go to school to be a strong man? (Many Negro parents today are also suspicious of anything other than the three R's, but Covello's parents weren't enthusiastic about those, either.)

Covello became a foreign-language teacher in DeWitt Clinton High School. Italian was not then one of the foreign languages taught, and Covello felt (aside from the significance of Italian as a major language) that teaching it might do much to enhance the self-image of the Italian boys (the problem was largely with the boys, interestingly enough, just as it is today with Negro boys). Covello, one of the first teachers of Italian background in the city high schools, and Salvatore Cotillo, the first elected Assemblyman—who were both from East Harlem—fought for this change and got the Board of Education to admit Italian to the high school curriculum in 1922.

Covello later became principal of the new Benjamin Franklin High School in East Harlem. He continually studied the educational problems of Italian children, gave a course to teachers at the School of Education of New York University on the background of Italo-American children, and worked on his own major study of this problem. In the later forties, Covello saw the Italian problem in the schools give way to the Negro and Puerto Rican problems, just as Italian laborers and other workers in the least skilled jobs were being replaced by these new groups. He then became the adviser on education problems to the New York office of the Migration Division of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and has since energetically devoted his enormous talents and experience to that problem.

For two long generations, for immigrants and second generation alike, the burden of Southern Italian culture prevented Italo-Americans from making effective use of the public school system in New York. The effects of this heritage, while they are no longer particularly visible in the elementary and high schools, may be seen in the city colleges. Eleven per cent of the graduates of Hunter College in 1960 were of Italian name, and 6 per cent of the graduates of City College. These proportions are less than one would expect on the basis of the city population of Italian origin. The difference in Italian enrollment between Hunter and City College reflects the role of Catholicism in the process of Italian adaptation to American norms of high education. There are more Italian girls in Hunter because of the sequence of Catholic presidents there and because, in accordance with the Catholic preferred practice, Hunter is not coeducational. Priests and other religious advisers therefore suggest Hunter for girls. City College and Brooklyn College, with their radical traditions, are less favored. Around Queens College there has for many years centered a struggle in which Catholic elements have attempted to increase their influence on the administration, for Catholics feel that Queens, which began as a very liberal institution in a borough of homeowners—many of them Italian, German, and Irish Catholic—should reflect the attitudes of its community somewhat more strongly.

THE ITALIANS

With respect to the Italian graduates of City College, another interesting point is that the majority of boys take degrees as engineers. The background of South Italians does not incline them toward the more intellectual and speculative college curricula; education is seen, when its importance is finally understood, almost exclusively as a means of preparing for a profession—teaching for the girls, engineering or the free professions for the boys. American Catholicism too encourages such practical pursuits, and in the third generation, the influence of Catholicism among Italian Americans has become formidable. From a collection of village cults with a distinct and marked character that made Italian immigrants very different from Irish or German Catholics, the religion of Italian Americans has slowly become incorporated into the large and efficient structure of American Catholicism. Thus, the proportion of Italian Americans enrolled in parochial schools steadily increases; the student body of Fordham University, for example, has become half Italian. This new appeal of the Catholic universities is another factor reducing the Italian proportion in the free city colleges.

RELIGION

THE ITALIAN NEIGHBORHOOD AND THE ITALIAN FAMILY, IN THE first decades of heavy Italian migration, offered strong barriers to the organizational and intellectual influence of Catholicism. There was much discussion, from the 1880's on, of the "Italian problem" in the Church: the fact that there were few priests, that many of these were of poor quality, that few Italians observed the sacraments, and that many departed from the Church.³⁷ In the first two decades of this century Protestant groups conducted mission churches in an energetic effort to convert Italians. Norman Thomas, the Socialist leader, was the pastor of one such church in East Harlem before World War I, and at that time there were almost 300 Italian Protestant missionaries engaged in full-time work among the American Italians.³⁸ Fiorello H. La Guardia was himself Protestant, as were such other important Italian political figures as Ferdinand Pecora and Charles Poletti. All this reflected the weakness of Ca-

tholicism among Italian Americans up until about the 1940's.

This situation is now changing. As Italians emerged from the grip of neighborhood and family which had maintained the peculiar cast of South Italian culture, they did not enter directly into an unmodulated and abstract Americanism. By the 1950's the American temper, as reflected in the age of suburbia and Eisenhower, emphasized the fact that every man must have a religion, and the Catholic was indeed one of the best and most American. Thus, the Italian migrant to the suburbs, who had perhaps never taken the village-type church of the dense ethnic neighborhood seriously (though his wife and perhaps his children had), found in the new, ethnically mixed Roman Catholic church of the suburbs an important expression of his new status as a middle-class American, just as his Jewish neighbor who had ignored the Orthodox church in the old neighborhood could not ignore the Conservative synagogue or Reform temple of the suburbs.

In particular, the rising Italian middle class, which adopts American Roman Catholicism as a symbol of its new status, also adopts the parochial school. The public schools, headed by Dr. Covello's Benjamin Franklin High School, dominated the educational life of East Harlem; this is not the case in the heavily Italian areas of New Jersey and Long Island. There the parochial school, whatever the heavy sacrifices necessary to maintain it, is strongly favored, while the American Italian population, as part now of a general American Catholic group, maintains pressure on the public schools to reflect the cultural orientations of American Catholicism. (Thus, for example, when an issue developed in 1961 in a Long Island suburb over corporal punishment in the public schools, it was, one might see in the papers, those with the Jewish names who opposed such punishment, and those with Italian names who favored it.)

This new suburban Catholicism is stronger than the Catholicism of the old neighborhood. It also operates as a special variant of the melting pot for the American-Italian group. In the old neighborhoods there was antagonism between Irish and Italian Catholics. It began over jobs

THE ITALIANS

in construction and influence in the Irish-run unions. It was maintained by cultural differences between the celibate, hard-drinking Irish, and the more sensual, wine-drinking Italians. It was expressed in Italian resentment over the Irish monopoly of municipal politics and jobs and also in Italian antagonism to an Irish-run church. The care of Italian souls was largely—almost always on the upper levels, but also often in the parishes—in Irish hands. Italians responded with indifference to religious observances in the case of most of the men, or, in the case of the most upwardly mobile, with a change of allegiance to Protestantism.

However, as mobility of Italians has become a large-scale phenomenon since World War II, the Catholic Church has assimilated this rising group into the new American Catholicism. The Irish and Italians, who often contended with each other in the city, may work together and with other groups in the Church in the suburbs, and their separate ethnic identities are gradually being muted in the common identity of American Catholicism. Protestantism was a symbol of rising social status among Italians thirty and forty years ago. Today, a more significant symbol of rising social status is marriage with a girl of Irish descent, who has gone to a good Catholic school, and who seems to young Italians to represent the older American society as much as Protestantism did a generation ago. The social pages of the *New York Times* often report such marriages.

Not that all is as yet peace between Italians and Irish in the Catholic Church. The hierarchy of the Church remains overwhelmingly Irish. In the New York Archdiocese, of thirteen auxiliary bishops, only one, Joseph M. Pernicone, is of Italian origin. Even he, the lone Italian bishop in the American Church, was not appointed until 1954. In Brooklyn, where there are very likely more Catholics of Italian than Irish origin, there are no Italian bishops.

The number of Italian priests, too, remains small. Today, as Italians are finally becoming integrated into American Catholicism, with respect to their degree of observance, their support of parochial schooling, and their replacement of the cultural outlook of neighborhood and family by that of the Irish-American church, their integration lags in one respect—they do not provide large

numbers of priests. Perhaps this will change, but it seems likely that one reason for the small weight of Italians in the Catholic Church—aside from the influence of the superlative organizational and bureaucratic skills of the Irish—is the fact that so few of them enter the Church and are available for further advancement. Here the old weight of South Italian culture makes itself felt. A man is supposed to be a man, and celibacy has always been something of a problem for the South Italian culture, which tends to see sexual needs as imperative and almost incapable of suppression or moderation. Celibacy is apparently no great problem for the American Irish. Very many of them—as do the Irish in Ireland—marry late, or not at all. (Of second-generation Irish men in the New York metropolitan area, aged 14 to 24, 8 per cent are married; of second-generation Italian men in the same age group, 14 per cent are married. Of those aged 25 to 44, 72 per cent of the Irish men and 80 per cent of the Italian men are married. Of those over 45, 17 per cent of the second-generation Irish men are still unmarried, against 10 per cent of the Italian men.) If one is to be celibate anyway, then an important consideration in contemplating a career in the Church need not affect one's decision. Among Italian Americans the South Italian assumption that sex is important and hardly controllable has under the circumstances of American life become transformed into the very similar point of view of American mass culture, and this too leaves little room for celibacy.

Despite the relative paucity of priests of Italian origin, Catholicism is now firmly rooted among the Italian Americans, and its impact will be reflected more effectively, we believe, in their moral and social attitudes in the future. In time, the American hierarchy may take on more of an Italian cast than it has today.

OCCUPATIONS

THE SLOW CHANGE THAT HAS CHARACTERIZED ITALIAN AMERICANS in the location of their neighborhood and the character of the family-based culture may also be seen when we consider their occupational history. The first-generation men were principally workers. Three-quarters of them were to be found, in 1950, in the categories of skilled, semiskilled,

THE ITALIANS

and unskilled workers. Two-thirds of the second-generation men were still workers. Among the women, the first generation was highly concentrated among factory operatives. In the second generation, two-fifths were employed as clerical and salesworkers, but the largest single category among the native-born Italian-American women was still factory workers, principally in the garment industry. The gap between first and second generation among Italians, in the occupations pursued, and in the income earned, was smaller than that for the other major European immigrant groups. (See Tables 6, 7, and 8, comparing the occupational distributions of first- and second-generation immigrants in the New York metropolitan area from Italy, the U. S. S. R., and Ireland.)

Indeed, in the sphere of economy, as in that of residence and family, differences between first and second generation among Italians are likely to be less important than the differences between second and third generation. In all these fields these differences are only beginning to emerge now, in the period since the Second World War. As late as the thirties and the forties most Italian professionals came from either the small North Italian group or the small part of the South Italian immigrant group that was of non-peasant background. Today, the grandchildren of the immigrants are moving into the professions and the higher white-collar fields. The mass media and advertising in particular have a good deal of glamour, and names of Italian origin are evident in these fields.

The pattern whereby, among Jews, the children of storekeepers and small businessmen went to college and became professionals, is being repeated, on a smaller scale and a generation later, among Italian Americans. Despite their peasant background, their lack of commercial experience, their educational limitations, the first generation of Italian immigrants showed a strong inclination for business enterprise, and established many thousands of stores, restaurants, wholesale food concerns, produce-handling firms, small contracting businesses, trucking and moving concerns (moving in New York is almost an Italian-American monopoly), clothes manufacturing factories, and the like. The business spirit was much stronger among Italian immigrants than, for example, among Irish immi-

grants. This network of small businesses has been expanded and maintained by the second generation, but since it is small business, often founded by parents with little education and social status, it does not very often attract the better-educated sons, just as in the case of Jewish small business. But Jewish small business was on a much greater scale than Italian small business, and many more Jewish enterprises have grown so that the father's socially lowering enterprise (such as dealing in junk) has become socially more respectable (such as dealing in scrap), as well as financially more rewarding.

The great bureaucracies of government and business have also been attractive to the second and third generation of Italian Americans. But whereas the great corporations could potentially draw from large numbers of college-trained Jews who have up to now found entrance into the executive hierarchy difficult (this has become a great matter of concern to Jewish defense agencies), as yet relatively few Italian Americans seek these jobs. It is hard to know whether there is discrimination against Italian Americans in the corporations, and in the country clubs and city clubs that are linked with their higher echelons. There are no Italian defense agencies and other community organizations to draw attention to such matters, even to the extent of formulating some general community opinion as to what the facts are. Perhaps Italian Americans, since there are relatively few of them, are treated more as individuals when they seek these higher jobs. There is evidence in studies of prejudice that in the thirties and forties Italian Americans came near the bottom of the list of American preferences. But today one-quarter of the population of New York City is Puerto Rican and Negro, and these raise on their shoulders, as they take over the dirty work, those who had the dirty work before them.

This great change in the bottom economic group of the city in the last twenty years has unquestionably raised the status of Italians and reduced the prejudice they may expect. The image of Italian Americans has also undoubtedly been affected by the more favorable image of Italy and things Italian since the end of the war. (In the past, Italians attempting to improve their social position

THE ITALIANS

would indicate they were linked to some noble or old family in Italy, rather than identify themselves with the generally low-status Italian-American group. Today, the entire group must benefit from the admiration and warm feeling felt by Americans for the culture and style of living of present-day Italy.)

But just what will happen when Italians join Jews in large numbers in attempting to enter the desirable places in American business life and society is hard to predict. Perhaps by that time the American corporation will see itself, as its propaganda so often pictures it, as a truly public institution, bound to the same criteria of selection that today affect the government service—freedom from bias, and the requirement at the same time to represent and reflect all parts of the American population.

POLITICS

IN 1950, AS UNPLEASANT SCANDALS WERE ABOUT TO BREAK, Mayor William O'Dwyer, Democrat, resigned shortly after being elected to his second term as mayor of New York, and sought refuge in Mexico as our Ambassador. A remarkable race for the mayoralty then developed. Vincent Impellitteri, president of the City Council, wished to succeed O'Dwyer, but Democratic leaders decided to give the party's nomination to Judge Ferdinand Pecora, who had had a far more distinguished record. Impellitteri, who had the support of a large part of the machine, then decided to run as an independent. Both men had been born in Sicily, but while Impellitteri was a good son of the Church, Pecora had in his youth become active in a Protestant Episcopal church in his neighborhood. The third major candidate, Edward Corsi, had also been born in Italy, but he represented an earlier stage of New York Italian life. He came from Central Italy, not the South. His father had been a member of the Italian Chamber of Deputies. He had become part of that able group of Italian Americans in East Harlem who had made up a sort of Italian-American intelligentsia. He had in the twenties edited *The New American*, one of the few efforts to create a serious Italian-American publication in English. He had been a settlement house director in East Harlem and an active Republican, and had

risen to the post of Commissioner of Immigration under Hoover.

Yet a fourth major Italian-born figure played an important role in this campaign—Frank Costello, long reputed to be one of the country's major entrepreneurs and organizers of gambling and other illegal activities. Costello was not running for office. But were it not for the fact that Mayor O'Dwyer could never explain satisfactorily why he had attended a meeting with some Tammany leaders in Costello's apartment before he ran for mayor in 1945, he might not have had to depart for Mexico, and this remarkable election, which gave opportunities to three other Italian Americans, might never have taken place. The principal problem of the campaign, for both Pecora and Impellitteri, was to convince the electorate that the other was more deeply implicated in relations with underworld figures, and for Corsi, to convince the electorate that both were equally implicated.

The campaign illustrates three major themes that have characterized the Italian-American role in New York City politics.

First, despite the evidence of this campaign, the Italian Americans were slow and late in gaining an important place in the considerations of party leaders. Impellitteri had been, only five years before, the first Italian American to be placed on a citywide Democratic ticket. The formula for ticket balancing now requires that an Italian American fill one of the three major posts for which the entire city votes, but until 1945 this was not so. In 1941 O'Dwyer ran against La Guardia, McGoldrick, and Newbold Morris. La Guardia's appeal was varied and rich, and his Italian-American background was no particular source of strength in the three mayoralty elections that he won. If it had been, it would not have taken the Democratic party leaders three unsuccessful campaigns to come up with an Italian-American candidate for comptroller or president of the City Council.

The Italians were late in arriving at the forefront of the New York political scene because, despite their numbers, they had relatively few men of wealth and education. Through the twenties La Guardia was the only

THE ITALIANS

Congressman of Italian background from the city—and, as we have already suggested, he was in no sense chosen by party leaders as a “representative” of his ethnic group (this was the nature of Impellitteri’s political rise).³⁹ La Guardia’s personal gifts made it possible for him to win elections ten years before the Italian Americans, in the course of their slow ascent, achieved recognition. But in the forties this began to change. Generoso Pope and Frank Costello became powers in the affairs of New York City’s Democrats. The number of Italian-American Assemblymen and judges rose. In 1949 Carmine DeSapio became the first Tammany leader of Italian background.

A second major theme in the Italian-American role in New York politics is involvement with crime. Daniel Bell has brilliantly analyzed the relationship between crime, American life, and politics.⁴⁰ He points out that each ethnic group trying to achieve wealth and recognition, to find a place on the American scene, has, in sequence, produced underworld figures. The early Irish gangsters were succeeded by the Jews, and Arnold Rothstein, “Czar” of the New York underworld in the 1920’s, was as closely linked to Democratic judges in Jimmy Walker’s day as Frank Costello was fifteen years later. After the middle thirties, the most prominent gangsters in New York were of Italian origin, though their careers had begun in the 1920’s.

But the matter, as Bell points out, is not so simple, because the role of crime in each community has varied with the other sources of wealth and prominence that were available to it. The Irish controlled the political machines and city administrations, and Irish wealth developed in construction, contracting, trucking, and public utilities, on the basis in part of this political link. There was no major role for strong-arm men and underworld elements, though Irish thugs helped control the polls. Jewish wealth developed somewhat more independently of political power in the garment industry, merchandising, and building, and offered opportunities to the large numbers of Jewish lawyers, of whom a relatively small proportion went into politics. Jewish gangsters became involved with Jewish wealth as industrial racketeers in the garment industry, but

they played no important function, and were finally driven out.

Opportunities for wealth and prominence came slow and late to Italian Americans. Meanwhile, gambling, drugs, and the waterfront succeeded industrial racketeering and bootlegging as the major sources of illegal wealth. Into this field, as the older groups withdrew, the new group moved. By the time of the Kefauver investigations in the early 1950's, a large part of the gambling and other illegal industries had fallen almost completely into the hands of Italian Americans. And in their hands they apparently remain, because the Negroes and Puerto Ricans have not shown the ability to capture them.

The link between the illegal businessmen and the politicians was complex. The politicians of course needed money; and political protection was on the whole more important to illegitimate than to legitimate businessmen. Other elements were mixed in. There was ethnic pride, which motivated a Frank Costello as much as it did a businessman who had not become rich as a bootlegger. There was a desire to help out relatives and friends. There was the fact that bootleggers, politicians, lawyers, judges, and policemen had all grown up on the block together, and had never lost touch. How was one to sort out the influences, and decide the significance of the fact that judges and ex-bootleggers and gamblers all sat around the same table to raise money for an orphan's home?

In 1952, the New York State Crime Commission held hearings in New York City on the links between politicians and criminals. Here is a bit of testimony on which anyone trying to unravel the relationship among crime, politics, and the Italian community may muse. Francis X. Mancuso, who had been a judge of the Court of General Sessions and a Tammany district leader, is testifying:

"Do you know Frank Costello?"

"I do, sir."

"How long have you known him?"

"About thirty-five years or so. His people come from the same town my people come from. They know each other. I may say there is intermarriage in the family; my first cousin married his first cousin."

"There has been some notoriety about a meeting supposedly attended by you with Costello and Mr. Pope [Generoso Pope, publisher of *Il Progresso Italo Americano*, in the sand and gravel business], and the present county leader [Carmine DeSapio] at the Hotel Biltmore."

"That's right."

"You were at that meeting?"

"Yes, sir."

"All four of you?"

"Four: Mr. Pope, Sr., Costello, Judge Valente—Louis Valente, DeSapio, and myself—five. I have no present recollection of the precise date; either the year '46 or '47."

"Can you relate it to nominations or elections of any particular official?"

"No. Just shortly after the first World War Gene Pope was interested in raising funds for orphan children of Italy—or the destitute children. He wanted to form a committee for the purpose of raising funds, and that was the prime object of the meeting."⁴¹

Obviously, the investigators thought the fine hand of Mr. Costello, who had received the gratitude of Thomas A. Aurelio in 1943 for helping with his nomination to the Supreme Court of New York, might again be involved in judicial nominations. Yet the people at the meeting would have been pretty much the same whether the purpose was to discuss judicial nominations or raise money for the poor children of Italy. The vulnerability of Italian-American political figures to charges of links with criminals will remain great as long as substantial wealth in the Italian-American community is derived from illegitimate enterprises.

Mr. Impellitteri won the election. This illustrates the third theme of Italian-American politics in New York—the emergence of the smooth, affable, middle-class, good Catholic as a representative of the group. It would be hard to prove it was this image that won the election for Impellitteri. Yet it is interesting to contrast New York's second Italian-American mayor with its first. La Guardia was a Protestant, his mother was from Trieste and of an Italian Jewish family, his father was from Foggia in Apulia, and he had been raised and educated in the Far West. This background made him as untypical a representative of New

York's Italians as one can imagine. La Guardia was in fact the last white Protestant mayor of New York—and we do not use this designation in a simple demographic or classificatory sense. He made more appointments from the old-stock, Anglo-Saxon population of the city than any other mayor since John Purroy Mitchel.⁴² Like Mitchel, he represented Reform, and in his day Reform meant the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant elements in New York's population, allied with Jews.

After representing the East Harlem district in Congress through most of the twenties, La Guardia lost to a Tammany candidate, James J. Lanzetta, in 1932, when he was at the height of his national prominence. This surprise has been analyzed by La Guardia's biographer, Arthur Mann:

Jimmy Lanzetta, born and raised in East Harlem and educated as an engineer and a lawyer at Columbia University, was thirty-eight, a Catholic, and the uptown hope of Tammany Hall. Witty and affable, good looking and hard-working, he had no public philosophy and entered politics by making himself known to the district family by family and by pleasing the local leaders.

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. . . Lanzetta challenged La Guardia's popularity among the Italo-Americans. Their fathers held the Mayor in awe, named their children after him, and tipped their hats in deference to him. He was still their village *Signore*. But in a decade the sons and daughters of the immigrants came of voting age and "these youthful iconoclasts do not hold the great La Guardia in the same veneration as do their elders."

The Italo-Americans were only part of La Guardia's district; he also lost votes among the Puerto Ricans. He held only the Jewish vote.⁴³

La Guardia's loss to Lanzetta in 1932 presaged the development of Italian political opinion. When La Guardia defeated O'Dwyer in 1941, he did worse in the Italian districts than in the city as a whole. O'Dwyer got 57 per cent of the vote in the Italian districts and 50 per cent of the votes in the city. In 1945, when Newbold Morris ran against O'Dwyer and Jonah Goldstein with La Guardia's

THE ITALIANS

support, he did worse in the Italian areas than anywhere in the city. He got 11 per cent of the vote there as against 18 per cent in the city as a whole.⁴⁴

The rejection of La Guardia symbolized the fact that there had never developed among the Italian-American proletarian group a generalized ideology in support of liberalism and progressivism. Roosevelt got the Italian votes in his early elections, as he got votes from all low-income groups. However, when he spoke out against Mussolini's attack on France in 1940—"the hand that held the dagger has plunged it into the back of its neighbor"—the Italian Americans became probably the most anti-Roosevelt of all low-income groups. In 1944 he got only 41 per cent of the vote in Italian districts of the city, while getting 61 per cent in the city as a whole.⁴⁵ Because there had never developed a strong socialist, liberal, or labor tradition and ideology, because the leaders of the community were generally conservative businessmen, because the community press expressed their opinion, it was relatively easy for the pro-Roosevelt feeling in the community to be overcome. The vacuum of ideology of the socialist and liberal type was filled in part with a vague sort of national feeling. Except for a handful of radicals and socialists, almost everyone in the Italian community supported Mussolini, or at least did not oppose him.⁴⁶ The vacuum was also in part filled by the ideological outlook of small homeowners, which many Italian Americans were or aspired to be; this involved opposition to high taxes, welfare programs, and the like. The comptroller of the city in Wagner's first two administrations, Lawrence Gerosa, exemplified this point of view perfectly. He was against "frills" in the building of schools (art, murals), in favor of a conservative financial policy, and without any views on the general problems of the city. Such views are hardly necessary when one's major concern is the neighborhood and its homeowners.

One aspect of this conservatism can unquestionably be traced to insecurity. The Italian American is still uncertain about his acceptance, concerned about his image, and consequently many—in a style similar to that of other second generations—become more American than the

Americans, more nationalist than the Mayflower descendants. This, combined with the need, in the war and early postwar years, to dissociate oneself from any suspicion of support of an enemy nation, makes it all the easier for the Italian American to adopt the political outlook of the conservative nationalist, the present-day descendant of the old-time isolationist.

Holding this point of view (which is not very different from that held by the small-town dwellers of the Midwest), it is understandable that Italian Americans should find the Republican party, and the conservative wing of the Democratic party, ever more congenial.⁴⁷ This is occurring at a time when New York Italians are producing a number of singularly able political leaders. Both responding to and reflecting their political base, these leaders have not been notably articulate or adventurous in their views of the great issues of state, and this has generally cost them the good opinion of the liberals, but as with conservatives elsewhere, they have shown a keen understanding of the ways and uses of power. Carmine DeSapio was far and away the most competent politician the New York Democrats produced in the postwar era. Significantly, the middle-class reformers, while able to destroy him, were quite incapable of replacing him. The immediate result was not a transfer of power but a vacuum.

Mayor Wagner's running mate in the 1961 primary and election campaigns was Paul R. Screvane, who thereafter emerged as a distinct political power in the city. Reared in the Bronx, Screvane began life as a truck driver in the City Sanitation Department, rose from private to lieutenant colonel during World War II, became Sanitation Commissioner at the age of 42, was appointed Deputy Mayor at 46, and the same year was elected president of the City Council. As with many Italian leaders, Screvane combines a high level of vitality and administrative ability with a plain manner and a sure sense of public opinion. One may see develop in New York City, and in the state, the situation we see in Massachusetts and Rhode Island, where competent Italian political leaders have come near to establishing a political hegemony.

THE ITALIANS

In moving from the age of La Guardia and Poletti to the age of Impellitteri and Gerosa, the Italian Americans have moved from the working class to (in increasing measure) the middle class, from the city to the suburbs, and from secularism to Catholicism. Young Italian intellectuals do not find this a very congenial atmosphere. But there are as yet not enough of them to develop any steady criticism of the style of Italian-American life; and the few who might do this have neither the organs nor the audience that would make such an enterprise worthwhile. If they are novelists, they celebrate the rich content of the old proletarian, city life. They know this is disappearing, and is being replaced by a new middle-class style, which is American Catholic more than it is anything that may be called American Italian. But it is still too new to have found anyone to record it, to criticize it, and perhaps transcend it.

the Irish

NEW YORK used to be an Irish city. Or so it seemed. There were sixty or seventy years when the Irish were everywhere. *They* felt it was their town. It is no longer, and they know it. That is one of the things bothering them.

The Irish era began in the early 1870's, about the time Charles O'Connor, "the ablest member of the New York bar,"¹ began the prosecution of Honorable William March Tweed. It ended in the 1930's. A symbolic point might be the day ex-Mayor James J. Walker sailed for Europe and exile with his beloved, but unwed, Betty.

Boss Tweed was the last vulgar white Protestant to win a prominent place in the city's life. The Protestants who have since entered public life have represented the "better element." Tweed was a roughneck, a ward heeler, a man of the people at a time when the people still contained a large body of native-born Protestant workers of Scotch and English antecedents. By the time of his death