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THE Italic Way

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The magazine of the Italic Institute of America

THE NOBLE ROMANS WHERE HAVE THEY GONE?

IN THIS ISSUE

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LEPANTO: THE BATTLE THAT STOPPED ISLAM

KILLING MUSSOLINI: WHO AND WHY?

ELLIS ISLAND: A LOOK BACK

ST. PETERSBURG, RUSSIA: THE ITALIAN TOUCH

REFLECTIONS ON OUR CULTURE

**CAESAR AUGUSTUS
63 B.C - 14 A.D.**



The Italic Way

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Managing Editor - John L. Mancini
Associate Editor - Bill Dal Cerro
Design Editor - Andrew Ricci
Production Manager - Rita L. Mancini
Technical Support - Vincent Elarde
Research Associates - Peggy Fox, Joseph Graziose, Joseph D'Alelio
Feature Writers - Bill Dal Cerro, Alfred Cardone, Don Fiore, Rosario Iaconis, Bob Masullo, Louis Cornaro, Anthony Vecchione

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Direct all inquiries to (516) 488-7400.
 Website: www.italic.org
 email: ItalicOne@italic.org

Quotable

"ROMANA POTENS ITALA VIRTUTE PROPAGO."

The secret of the Roman Empire: "The power of Roman stock infused with Italian valor."

- P. Virgilius Maro, *The Aeneid*, Book XII

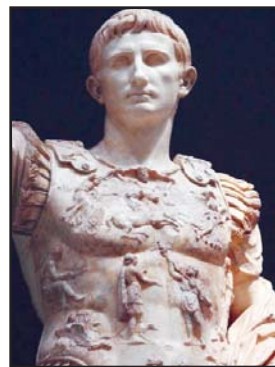
ITALY'S GREATEST SON

[Cover Photo] Caesar Augustus (63 B.C. – 14 A.D.) as *Pontifex Maximus*, head of Rome's state religion.

Born Caius Octavius, the nephew of Julius Caesar, Octavius was adopted by Caesar and became his heir. At age 31, he had avenged Caesar's murder to become the ruler of the Roman domain. He reorganized this domain creating the Roman Empire with Italy as its homeland and a unified state.

That our Western World is secular and stands on a Greco-Roman foundation stems from his life and work. "Despite a hundred defects and half a dozen idiots on the throne...the principate that he established...would be accounted the supreme achievement in the history of statesmanship." – Will Durant, *Caesar and Christ*.

As a man, he may share the blood-stained hands of any leader, secular or religious, but his vision was fully based on human nature and what Cicero termed "right reason." His guiding motto was *festina lente* ("make haste slowly") which accounted for his amazing statesmanship. Yet, he suffered setbacks and disappointments. His dream to annex and civilize the German tribes ended when he lost four legions on the far side of the Rhine. He exiled his only daughter for violating the morality he imposed on all Roman citizens. He was married three times but spent the last 52 years of his life with Livia, dying peacefully at age 76 in Nola, not far from Naples, exactly 2,000 years ago.



He may be "ancient history" to most but what he created for us can be better appreciated when we look at those peoples on earth who never embraced human progress or a secular outlook and are now fleeing to America and Europe. ****



SURPRISING THINGS

by Anthony Vecchione

COLD CASE SOLVED?

In June, the Italian news agency ANSA reported that Domenico Palazzoto boasted to a mafia associate that his great-uncle, Paolo Palazzoto, assassinated New York City Police Lieutenant Giuseppe Petrosino in 1909. Italian police intercepted grand-nephew's claim via a wiretap. Petrosino, a homicide detective, was gunned-down by a Mafia leader in Palermo, Sicily. The name of the shooter involved in the famous case has remained a mystery until now. Petrosino helmed the NYPD's Italian Squad that was charged with rooting-out crime within the Italian American community at the turn of the century. His primary targets were the Black Hand and other criminal elements that preyed on the Italian immigrant population. Petrosino, considered a hero among New York's Italian American community and the police department, is credited with also creating both the canine unit and the bomb squad. Petrosino's courage and honor is still recognized 105 years after his tragic death. That tradition has been carried on by Petrosino's grand-nephew, Joseph A. Petrosino, a retired Brooklyn prosecutor, and his son, Joseph, a New York City detective.



ALITALIA GETS 'SHEIKH'

Nothing speaks to national pride like a country's flagship airline. Italy's *Alitalia* recently entered into a partnership with Abu Dhabi's state-owned Etihad Airways. The deal would give Etihad a 49% share of *Alitalia*. The troubled Italian airline is facing bankruptcy and *Alitalia*'s creditors are hoping that the alliance will return the ailing carrier to profitability. Etihad is the second largest airline in the United Arab Emirates. *Alitalia* and the Italian government have faced criticism in recent years for almost letting the airline's "Italian" identity slip away. In 2013, several foreign carriers including Air France and KLM considered investing in the Italian carrier, to no avail. (Note the imaginative calligraphy in the cartoon.)

EXPLODING LIFESAVER

Nitroglycerin, an essential drug in every hospital emergency room, is in short supply. The sole manufacturer of injectable nitroglycerin, Baxter International, recently began reducing shipments to hospitals. The drug, discovered by Italian chemist Ascanio Sobrero in 1847, is used to treat angina (chest pain) in patients who have coronary artery disease and is also taken by people prior to activities that may cause episodes of angina. Nitroglycerin belongs to a class of medications called vasodilators and works by relaxing the blood vessels so the heart does not need to work as hard and subsequently does not need as much oxygen. According to the Royal Society of Chemistry, Sobrero called his new discovery pyroglycerine but was terrified of its explosive power and warned of its dangers. In 1863, Sweden's Alfred Nobel found a way to safely manufacture the compound which led to the creation of the blasting cap and dynamite. He later established the Nobel Prize.



BIKING WIZ

"The Shark of Messina," Vincenzo Nibali, has won the Tour de France after a commanding performance. He is the seventh Italian to win the title since 1903 after Bottecchia, Bartali, Coppi, Nencini, Gimondi, and Pantani.



AMAZING THINGS

CELEBRATING THE SHE-WOLF

Italians have a saying that probably dates back to the Etruscans: *In bocca al lupo!*, literally “In the wolf’s mouth!” It’s their version of “break a leg!” – an equally odd good luck wish. Wolves figure large in Italian history. The she-wolf (*lupa*) is the symbol of Rome’s founding, the infants Romulus and Remus saved by its milk. In fact, an original Etruscan bronze (right) of this provocative scene still resides on Capitoline Hill in Rome. What may surprise you is that copies of this statue can be found around the world, often donated to other cities by the City of Rome. *Ecce Lupae!* (Behold the she-wolves!)



Romania



Sault Ste Marie, MI,



Sweden



New Zealand



France



Segovia, Spain



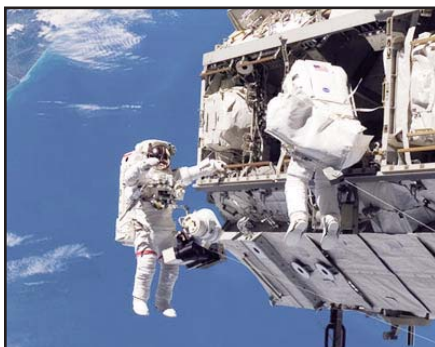
Cincinnati, OH



Tajikistan, Asia

SPACE LADY TO GET A JOLT

Italians love their *espresso*. In fact, Italian astronaut Luca Parmitano, who visited the International Space Station (ISS) last year, complained that the one thing missing in space was a good cup of *espresso*. Resourceful Italian engineers in Italy were on the same page with Parmitano and created the first capsule-based *espresso* system [ISSpresso] able to work in the extreme conditions of space. The project is a joint venture by Argotec, an



Italian aerospace firm that specializes in the space food sector, the Italian coffee company Lavazza, and the Italian space agency, ASA. Roberto Battison, President of the Italian Space Agency, said “the ISA will bring ISSpresso aboard the ISS, thanks to



shares with the project partners the objective of improving the quality of life of ISS astronauts, as well as the astronauts who will take part in future long interplanetary exploration missions. At the same time, we are also proud to contribute to the promotion of the image and spreading of the

Made-in-Italy brand at international, or better ‘space’ level.” And the timing for the launch of ISSpresso couldn’t be better. In November, Captain Samantha Cristoforetti (r), Italy’s first female to go into space, will also become the first astronaut to enjoy an authentic Italian *espresso* when she heads to the ISS on a six-month mission.



bilateral cooperation agreements with the NASA, as it

All'Italiana

Sic Transit Gloria Mundi

Louis Zamperini, 97, was one tough American, having survived in a lifeboat for 47 days when his bomber went down during World War II only to be rescued by the Japanese and imprisoned under the most horrid conditions for two years. Before the war, he was a track star who competed in the 1936 Berlin Olympics, receiving praise and a handshake from Adolph Hitler. Zamperini's life story, *Unbroken*, has been on the *New York Times* Best-Seller List for over three years with the movie version scheduled for release in December.



Robert Panara, 94, was a leading educator of the deaf. Having lost his hearing at 10 after a bout of spinal meningitis, Panara embraced the challenge learning sign language, reading lips, and becoming the first deaf person to earn a Master's Degree in English at New York University. In 1965, he was appointed by the U.S. Secretary of Education to help found the National Technical Institute for the Deaf in Rochester, NY, where he also taught until 1987. His lip-reading talent was put to use in 1957 when *Life Magazine* asked him to report the private observations of Queen Elizabeth as she first watched an American football game. He gave the magazine full quotes.



Captain Walter Mazzone, 96, was a lifelong Navy man specializing in submarine operations. As the dive master aboard the U.S.S. *Crevalle* during the Second World War, Mazzone managed to save the boat from capsizing during a Japanese attack. In 1962, he helped design and conduct deep-sea trials for the Sealab project that tested human endurance. His obsession with detail earned him the praise of everyone involved in Sealab: "Neither the Navy

nor Dr. Bond [medical director] would have gotten anywhere without Mazzone," wrote author Ben Hellwarth in his 2012 history of the Sealab project.

Cartoonist **Charles Barsotti**, 80, was a mainstay at *New Yorker Magazine*, producing some 1,400 pithy cartoons during his career there. While many of his cartoons featured dogs, one memorable Italian subject featured a straightlaced piece of Rigatoni talking to his curly friend Fusilli on the phone with the caption: "Fusilli, you crazy bastard! How are you?"

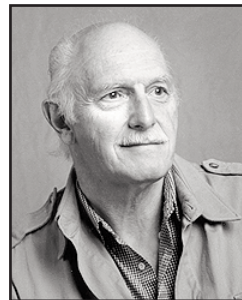
Graphic artist **Massimo Vignelli**, 83, designed home furnishings and corporate logos. His familiar works include Bloomingdale's bags and boxes, IBM packaging, the American Airlines logo, and even a simplified New York City subway map. The essence of his style was simplify and clarify, whether in a map or nesting chairs

and dinnerware.

Barbara (Dorini) Turf, 71, was former CEO of Crate and Barrel. She went from a part-time sales position in 1966 to CEO in 2008. Her people skills and flair for fashion served her well as a buyer and retailer. She retired in 2012 when the chain was sold to a German company. It now has 111 stores throughout the U.S. and Canada with some 6,500 employees.



Joseph E. Persico, 84, was honored by the Italic Institute with its Silver Medallion in 2002. Early in his career he was the chief



speechwriter for Governor, then U.S. Vice President, Nelson Rockefeller. The bulk of his life was devoted to authoring histories that included biographies of broadcaster Edward R. Murrow, CIA chief William Casey, Nelson Rockefeller, and coauthoring General Colin Powell's autobiography. His *Roosevelt's Secret War* became a 2001 bestseller and his *Nuremberg: Infamy on Trial* became an

Emmy-winning miniseries in 2000.

Tony Americo Palladino, 84, was an innovative illustrator and designer. Growing up with two immigrant parents in New York's East Harlem, Palladino recalled "there wasn't what you would call a great excitement about art." Still, he took some minimal formal training and taught himself conceptual art. His most familiar design was for the book *Psycho* which captured the very insanity of the title – stark bright letters torn and pasted together. Alfred Hitchcock purchased the design rights for marketing the movie version. From the 1970s through the 1990s he designed promotions for PBS's *Masterpiece Theatre*. But it was mostly in advertising on Madison Avenue that earned Palladino a living during the 1950s and 60s. He was one of the breed of "Mad Men" chronicled in the cable series.



Rock pioneer **Cosimo Matassa**, 88, made Roll 'n' Rock happen. He opened his J & M Recording Studio in New Orleans after World War II and is credited with the first Rock 'n' Roll recording in 1947 — Roy Brown singing *Good Rockin' Tonight*. Fats Domino cut eight songs in 1949. Other artists through the years included Little Richard (*Good Golly Miss Molly*), Big Joe Turner (*Shake, Rattle and Roll*), Frankie Ford (*Sea Cruise*), and Jimmy Clanton (*Just a Dream*). Matassa racked up 250 national chart singles and 21 gold records, winning him a lifetime achievement award at the 2007 Emmys and induction into the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame in 2010.

Walter (Invernizzi) Walsh, 106, was a gangster's worst nightmare in the 1930s. Before the Mafia became the dar-



ling of America's media, names like John Dillinger, Ma Barker, Baby Face Nelson, and the Brady Gang held the nation's attention. FBI agent Walter Walsh became a legend with his marksmanship and shoot-outs with public enemies. He killed at least eleven gangsters including Brady gang members Clarence Lee Shaffer and Alfred Brady during a holdup in Maine. During the Second World War Walsh trained Marine snipers for two years and later requested combat duty. At Okinawa, he was able to take down a Japanese sniper with one pistol shot. At 87, he was captain of the U.S. team at the world muzzle loading championships in Switzerland. He competed without eyeglasses.



ROYAL TOMBS

Did you know that Italy has a traditional resting place for its former royal House of Savoy? It's not the Vittoriano, that huge gleaming monument near the Colosseum also known as the "wedding cake," the tomb of Italy's unknown soldier. Rather, it's the ancient Roman Pantheon. There, one can find the tombs of the *Risorgimento's* King Victor Emanuel II and King Umberto I who was assassinated in 1900. But that's where they end. Since the



proclamation of the republic, none of the four exiled Savoy royals buried outside of Italy have been allowed back for internment in the Pantheon. Nevertheless, every year there is a ceremony within the Pantheon by the Honor Guard of the Royal Tombs, an organization of citizens, to honor the old Kingdom of Italy. The rest of the year the Guard presses the Italian Parliament to allow the four missing Savoy's to reunite with their ancestors.

MONTESSORI KOSHER

The *New York Times* reports that secular, Orthodox, and even Hasidic yeshivas are opting to be Montessori schools, adopting the innovative approach pioneered by Italian Catholic Maria Montessori over one hundred years ago. Her system focuses on allowing young students freedom to roam around the classroom and to explore the various educational materials stocked there with guidance from trained Montessori teachers. For Jewish schools this encompasses Biblical studies, Hebrew language, and Jewish rituals as the means to learn reading, writing, and arithmetic. But Montessori schooling comes with risks for the orthodox

Jewish family. Many schools may be too secular, causing some children to question home practices. Or worse, Montessori encourages co-education which is anathema to many rabbis. There are estimated to be about 40 Jewish Montessoris in North America and 30 in Israel. Perhaps more Italian American parents should embrace the Montessori option.

REAL SPORTSMEN

The National Football league has been rocked with disturbing scandals this year, mostly generated off the field. But Italian surnames have passed every test of dignity and honor - on and off the field. Whether in college or professional, there has also been a long and noble tradition of Italic leadership in the football profession. We have had such early Heisman Trophy winners as



Angelo Bertelli (1943, Notre Dame) and Lino Dante "Alan" Ameche (1954, University of Wisconsin), not to mention legendary coach Vince Lombardi. And quarterbacks, the key leaders on any football team, have also had vowels at the end of their names, from all-time Miami Dolphins great Dan Marino to recent Baltimore Colts Super Bowl Champion Joe

Flacco (top photo). Perhaps the greatest field leader of them all was Joe Montana of the San Francisco 49ers, whose lightning-quick instincts appear to have been reborn in Jimmy Garoppolo (bottom photo), a 22-year old phenom from Eastern Illinois University.



After breaking college records and then dazzling NFL talent scouts earlier this year, Garoppolo was the 62nd pick in the NFL draft in May, specifically recruited by the New England Patriots to be the possible successor to media superstar Tom Brady. More impressive than Garoppolo's stats, however, is his poised, classy demeanor both on and off the field. The NFL could use more role models like him.

MADE IN ITALY. BY WHOM?

Italy may still be the homeland of fashion and foods but also of Chinese, Bangladeshi, and Africans. Somebody has to staff the garment factories, pick the tomatoes, and care for aging Italians. Some 50,000 Chinese live and work around Prato, outside of Florence, to sustain the Made in Italy clothing and textiles prized the world over. Cheaper labor, illegal sweatshops, and globalization have left Italy riddled with ethnic enclaves and possibly millions of illegal aliens. Unlike the U.S., children born to aliens in Italy do not automatically become Italian citizens. What will become of their Italianized children has many immigrants worried.





WORLD NOTES

AN ITALO-INDIAN POL

In 1984, Geraldine Ferraro became the first Italian American to be nominated for Vice President of the U.S. That was a milestone for us. It's a little more difficult for Italics in India. Rahul Gandhi, 43, is Italian on his mother's side: Sonia Gandhi, who is head of India's Congress Party. This year Rahul campaigned on behalf of the liberal Congress Party in national elections. Had the party won last May, Rahul was expected to be chosen by party leaders as India's Prime Minister, by virtue of his famous Indian blood line. But he would



also have been the first Italo-Indian to rule India. Not to be. The electorate voted in the conservative Bharatiya Janata Party. Young Rahul may now have three strikes against him in the future: liberal, "aristocratic," and Italic.

CONNECTED FOR FIFTY YEARS

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge (right) connecting Brooklyn with Staten Island. In 1964, it was the longest suspension bridge in the world. Today it is only Number Ten. It was named for the first European to enter New York Harbor, Giovanni da Verrazzano (with an extra z) in 1524. But honoring Verrazzano wasn't on anyone's wish-list in 1964 except late Italian American activist John La Corte's. At the time the working title was the Narrows Bridge. The name Verrazano was nixed by authorities who felt it too difficult to spell. La Corte countered by pointing to another city bridge named for Kosciusko. Then there was New York State's master builder Robert Moses who wanted no suggestions. But La Corte had an ace in the federal agency that was to build access roads to the new bridge. Moses caved. The final obstacle was a movement to honor John F. Kennedy, slain the year before. Fortunately, that was nixed by brother Robert Kennedy. La Corte had won! Not bad for a Brooklyn insurance salesman by trade and founder of the modest

Italian Historical Society of America. Appropriately, the Verrazano Bridge serves the borough with the largest Italian American population – 175,000 souls, 36% of Staten Island.

ADDIO ITALIA!

The global economy is literally sucking tax revenue out of Italy and the U.S. Fiat Chrysler Automobiles, the new combo engineered by industrial wizard Sergio Marchionne, is incorporating under Dutch law and will be based in Britain.

The same thing is happening with Italian lottery giant Gtech. The feds have approved its purchase of the U.S. slot machine manufacturer IGT. The Italians are kicking in some \$5 billion in cash to acquire the U.S. company. But Italy and the U.S. will probably lose tax revenue since the new entity will also be headquartered in the United Kingdom.

OLD SHIPS NEVER DIE

This was a big year for finding old wrecks. Along the coast of Haiti some previously discovered underwater debris has tentatively been identified as the remains of the *Santa Maria*. Columbus' flagship ran aground on Christmas Eve during his first voyage. The Great Navigator blamed an inexperienced crewmember for the disaster. But he used the timbers and cannon to build the first settlement in America. Unfortunately, the sailor/colonists he left there never lived to see Columbus return the following year.

The second wreck to be discovered is at the bottom of Lake Michigan. It is presumed to be the *Griffin*, a vessel built by French explorers Robert La Salle and Enrico Tonti in 1679. The Griffin disappeared on its maiden voyage with the loss of its six-man crew. Tonti was second in command of the French expedition that eventually opened middle America to European trappers and merchants. Tonti and LaSalle traversed the entire Mississippi by canoe from the Great Lakes, reaching the Gulf of Mexico in 1682. LaSalle was



murdered some time later by his own men somewhere in Texas, leaving Tonti to carry on the development of France's Louisiana Territory for the next seventeen years.

ITALIAN TOYS

Would you buy an old car for \$38 million? Someone did just that for a 1962 Ferrari 250 Berlinetta this year, the highest price ever paid for an automobile. There were only 32 Ferraris built by hand between 1962 and 1964. But a hand-made Italian product doesn't always break the stratosphere. There was that 1700s Stradivari viola for \$45 million on auction at Sotheby's last spring. Even with the strings attached it was a no sale. The owner was trying to trump a 2011 auction when a Strad fetched nearly \$16 million.



A VINE ITALIAN HAND

As we noted in a past article on Thomas Jefferson (issue XXXIV, 2008), our nation's third president was a noted Italophile who traveled to Italy, knew Latin and Italian, and applied architect Andrea Palladio's ideas to his own estate in Virginia, naming it *Monticello*. Jefferson was also inspired by the vineyards of Italy and was determined to recreate them in America. Despite his best attempts, Jefferson could neither outfox hungry animals nor conquer Virginia's irregular climate. His grapes literally withered on the vine.

Nearly two hundred years later (1976), a young immigrant from the



Veneto region of Italy, Gabriele Rausse (above), found himself in Virginia. After decades of helping to establish wineries in that state, leading to the appellation "the father of Virginia's wine industry," Rausse has fulfilled Jefferson's dream. As director of gar-

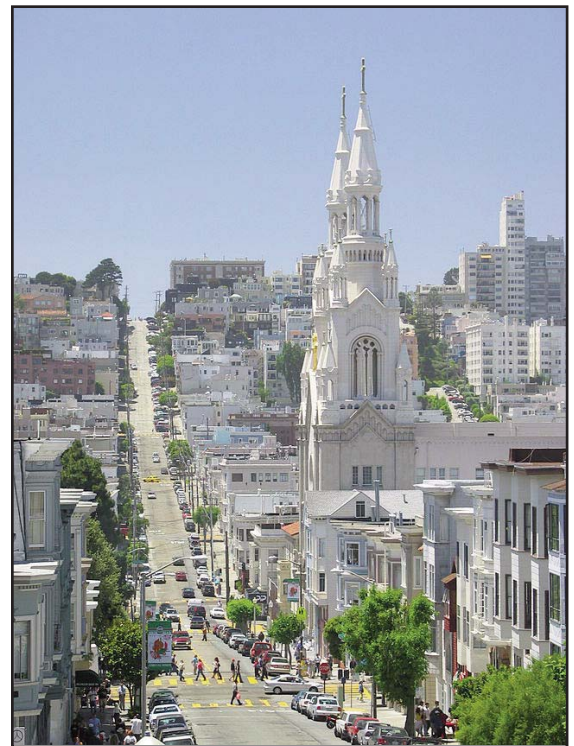
dens and grounds at Monticello, Rausse oversees the now-flourishing wine business which flows from the hills near Jefferson's home. Rausse's fine Italian hand succeeded where a Founding Father's had failed.

Rausse is a bit of a Founding Father himself—he established 14 of the earliest wineries in Virginia. There are now 238. Rausse's expertise, both on wine as well as food (he's a self-taught cook), is recognized by fellow vintners and Virginians throughout the state. And the Italian link to *Monticello* has come full circle: The patch of land where Rausse's grapes grow was co-owned by Jefferson and his Virginia neighbor, Filippo Mazzei, the Tuscan political writer who gave the young lawyer feedback for the Declaration of Independence. *Alla salute!*

OLD SAN FRANCISCO

Some 80% of Americans with Italian roots can trace their ancestry to the *Mezzogiorno* (Italy's south). These eighty-percenters can be found everywhere across the USA. But the other 20%, from northern Italy, are mostly found in California. Many of them came at the same time as all other non-Mexican, non-Native American people.

California Italics are not considered johnny-come-latelies, as their Italic kin elsewhere are. In fact, they laid the foundations for the huge agricultural and viticultural industries of California. But like so many other pockets of *italianita`*, California's Italian neighborhoods are under ethnic stress.



San Francisco's North Beach (above) may be booming, but not with *italianita`*. It has been overwhelmed by the ever-expanding nature of neighboring Chinatown (just like New York), gentrification (i.e., moving in of many yuppie-type non-Italians), and the lack of replenishment with new immigrants from Italy. There is no longer an Italian newspaper in San Francisco, where there used to be several. The centrally-located bocce courts in, ironically, the Joe Di Maggio Playground, have been allowed to go to weed, due to lack of use. The Italian language is rarely heard on the streets of North Beach anymore; as late as the 1970s it was very common. And the Cavalli "bookstore," a 130-year-old center of Italian culture in the heart of North Beach, has become a Starbucks-like cafe with a cliché Italian gloss. Like they say, "things change."



Editorials



FROM THE CHAIRMAN'S DESK

Italy at the Rubicon

Rosario A. Iaconis

According to *La Stampa's* Claudio Gallo, featured in our adjacent **Forum** column, Italy has become America's "Mediterranean Launchpad"—a supine aircraft carrier for U.S. and NATO military operations. Others view *il bel Paese* as nothing more than George Clooney's idyll. In some quarters, the Magic Boot is considered a peripheral nation akin to the original fiscal P.I.G.S. (Portugal, Ireland, Greece and Spain) that nearly destroyed the European Union.

As we commemorate the 2,000th anniversary of Caesar Augustus' death this year, Italy's role in world affairs looms ever larger in light of ISIS, Iran, Israel, Gaza, Ukraine and Crimea. In addition to a double-dip recession, Rome must cope with a new Cold War between NATO and Putin's resurgent Russia. Not to mention a veritable human tsunami of refugees.

To date, the Italian government's Operation *Mare Nostrum* has saved more than 106,000 boat migrants fleeing chaos and disorder in Africa and the Middle East. However, despite its geographic centrality in the Mediterranean—and proximity to the Levant and Iran, and its sacrifices in Iraq and Afghanistan—Italy has been excluded from the Iran Contact Group known as the P5+1 (the Permanent Members of the UN Security Council plus Germany).

When he assumed office, Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi appeared to be a vigorous leader who could inspire the nation and lead Italy to higher things. He has stood up to German Chancellor Angela Merkel's austerity *diktats*. By cutting taxes, promoting infrastructure revitalization and introducing comprehensive labor market reforms, Matteo Renzi aims to "strengthen the powers of the central government over the regions" and diminish the separatist prospects of the noxious *Lega Nord*.

Matteo Renzi is a telegenic politico who believes pragmatism outweighs ideological purity. Since taking control of his Democratic Party—and expunging any links to its old Communist foundations—he has demonstrated an uncommon political adroitness. Yet Premier Renzi must do more. And that requires reinvigorating Italy's diplomatic corps.

The reality of Italy's importance has not always been reflected in the activities of its consular offices. Italy's consuls general must eschew the social teas and concentrate on raising Italy's political profile on the world stage. A strong image is vital in global politics.

Italy deserves no less.

- RAI



FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Replacing Bad Guys

Bill Dal Cerro

As you can see by our article on the Battle of Lepanto (p.14), the current antagonism between the Muslim and Western worlds didn't take place in a vacuum. It has a history. And part of that history includes the inflammatory use of the Koran by fanatical Muslims to push their agenda of establishing a world caliphate. Hello, ISIS!

So it comes as a shock to read a quote in a recent issue of *Newsday* by an unidentified "U.S. intelligence official" who compares the mind-boggling money-making skills of ISIS to "a mafia-like organization." The kicker is that ISIS raises its vast cash flow through oil smuggling and beheadings, not exactly mainstays of the American mafia, which gained whatever power it had through political corruption, extortion, and sports betting. In short, although the horrors of ISIS and other modern-day Islamic groups have been far deadlier—and much more of a world threat—than the machinations of the *Cosa Nostra*, the U.S. media and government officials continue to view Italic criminals as the *numero uno* standard of evil. (After 9/11, President George W. Bush likewise compared Al-Qaeda to "the mafia.")

Part of this, of course, is because of relentless Hollywood stereotyping. Even in an age of post-Obama diversity, Tinsel Town refuses to change its tune when it comes to Americans of Italian heritage. In film after film, Italian surnamed characters exude criminality, depravity, and amorality. The lone exception, the upcoming *Unbroken*, the heroic account of a real Italian American, is a mere blip on the radar. Young, impressionable Italian Americans are being fed the same diet of mob movies as their parents, thus perpetuating this vicious cycle of perverse "pride."

The real-life stylings of ISIS and other terror groups, though, are giving Hollywood a deadlier run for its money, attracting young Muslims eager to lap up hateful propaganda about the West and its secular values. Ironically, Hollywood execs held a press conference after 9/11, vowing to pull Arab caricatures from their movies. Indeed, even prior to 9/11, animations like Disney's *Aladdin* caught grief for inadvertently spreading anti-Arab stereotypes.

Hollywood can't have it both ways: Either you stereotype all ethnic groups and religions or you stereotype none of them. Movie moguls' noble, pro-active stance toward Muslims hasn't exactly made the world a safer place. If America still needs bad guys, there are plenty of new ones to replace the usual GoodFellas.

- BDC



Forum Italicum



Is Italy the U.S. Empire's Mediterranean Launchpad?

by Claudio Gallo

Claudio Gallo is an Italian journalist currently working as a Culture Editor at La Stampa, where he was also foreign desk editor and London correspondent. His main interest is Middle East politics. Many Italian Americans may find Claudio Gallo's perspective on U.S.- Italy relations disturbing.



Italian journalist Claudio Gallo

Imperial soldiers cannot be judged. In Italy it's almost impossible. In the last 15 months, the Italian Judiciary has asked to proceed against 113 American soldiers for various crimes, but the Italian minister of justice denied authorization in 91 cases.

It works like this: when the US Army wants to judge a soldier in the USA who commits a

crime in Italy, they have to ask the relevant Italian minister for permission. As you have seen, Italian authorities are uncompromising! After a thorough examination they usually say 'yes.' At home, American judges don't even bother to ask for case files from Italy, and the ensuing trial, although there are no statistics on this, turns out to be a rather benevolent process. This story, by Alessio Schiesari, was recently featured on the first page of the Italian newspaper, *Il Fatto Quotidiano*. describes Italy as, in fact, a limited sovereignty country:

"Italy appears in many respects to be a colony," says the Italian philosopher, Gianni Vattimo, former European MP. "On one hand it is a Vatican colony, on the other it is an American colony, an American State even, without the power to elect the president. We are a limited sovereignty country indeed. We are a kind of Batista's Cuba with military bases instead of brothels."

Well, the bases are obviously not simply an old gift from the Cold War, they are the claws and antennas of the Empire. Calling the U.S. an empire is not some kind of hippie 1968 revolt jargon. If you have

any doubts, read the *US 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance (DSG)*.

You will see that it speaks of U.S. military power expanding globally exactly as empires have always done in history. This is said to be in the "national interest" (a phrase that only the U.S. can use) and, more superficially, i.e. ideologically, in the "common interest." Obviously, they



Italians were horrified when showboating U.S. pilots from Aviano Air Base accidentally cut the cables of an aerial tram, killing 20 people in 1998.

never speak of aggression but always about facing global threats. To quote the DSG at its most ideological level the global philosophy is this: *"Across the globe we will seek to be the security partner of choice, pursuing new partnerships with a growing number of nations — including those in Africa and Latin America — whose interests and viewpoints are merging into a common vision of freedom, stability, and prosperity."*

To achieve this, the U.S. has more than 1,000 bases around the world, plus 4,000 at home. Pressed by Congress, the Pentagon said that this network in 2012 had a cost of \$22 billion, but in reality no one is really capable of fathoming the depths of the US military annual balance sheet. A recent calculation by David Vine, assistant professor of anthropology at American University, in Washington, DC, estimated that the real cost is around \$170 billion. In Vine's definition, U.S. bases are the "Launch Pad" for the

Pentagon's unending war program.

"Especially since the start of the Global War on Terror in 2001, the military has been shifting its European center of gravity south from Germany, where the overwhelming majority of US forces in the region have been stationed since the end of World War II. In the process, the Pentagon has turned the Italian peninsula into a launch pad for future wars in Africa, the Middle East, and beyond," he wrote on Tomdispatch.com

(Cont'd. on p. 24)

***Should Italy be
more independent
and assertive?
Some Italians think so***

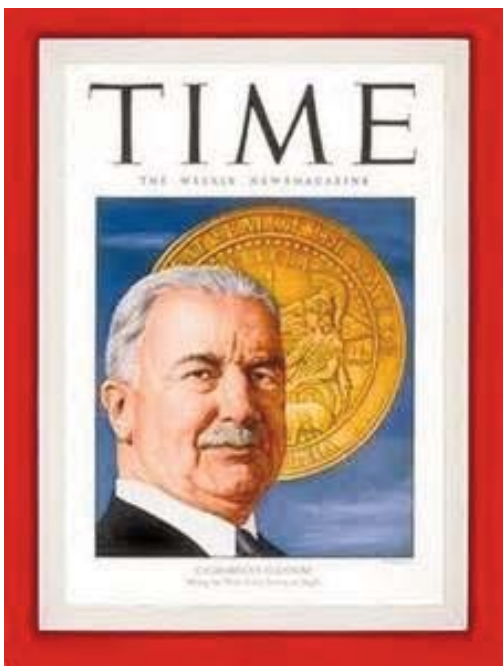


A. P. GIANNINI: An Extraordinary Life

An American Banking Genius

by Bob Masullo

You're on the committee charged with selecting "The Greatest Italian American of Them All." For whom would you vote? Choosing is difficult. Italian Americans have an embarrassment of riches when it comes to heroic people.



Some possibilities: a) Filippo Mazzei (many of his ideas were incorporated into the Declaration of Independence by his friend and neighbor, Thomas Jefferson), b) Fiorello La Guardia (widely considered New York's greatest mayor), c) Constantino Brumidi (the artist who did the magnificent frescoes in the U.S. Capitol), d) the list could go on and on.

The hero, I think, should be one all Italian Americans could rally around—the way African Americans do Martin Luther King, or Mexican Americans, Cesar Chavez, or Polish Americans, Casimir Pulaski. So, I'll go out on a limb.

My choice, for the Italian American who contributed the most to the United States and to Italian Americans' reputation as a people, would be the banker Amadeo Pietro Giannini.

Unfortunately, mention of his name would likely prompt the question "Who?" from many people, including many Italian Americans. "History books don't say anything about him," was the rueful comment of Virginia Hammerness, Giannini's octogenarian granddaughter, when I interviewed her at her home in San Jose, Calif., last year. "Kids that study history don't see anything about grandpa, even though he did change the face of banking." So, who was this man?

American Born / Italian Bred

Giannini was born May 6, 1870, in San Jose, CA, to Luigi and Maria Virginia (de Martini) Giannini. That fact alone makes him a

rarity among Italian Americans. The massive wave of Italian immigration to the United States didn't begin until 1880. Between 1880 and 1924 some 5 million Italians came to the United States. (The bigotry-inspired Johnson-Reed Act limited the immigration of Italians and other "undesirables" to token numbers after 1924.) Giannini, however, was born in America 10 years prior to the start of this wave. His parents were among the few Italians, mostly *genovesi*, who came to California in the wake of the discovery of gold there in 1848, as did people from virtually every nation. Luigi Giannini, like most gold seekers, didn't find any gold and drifted into farming and running a boarding house.

His son, commonly known simply as "A.P.," founded the Bank of Italy in North Beach, the Little Italy of San Francisco, primarily to serve that community's burgeoning immigrant population, in 1904. It did that, but quickly grew far beyond its home base. It became the Bank of America in 1930 and the largest bank in the world in 1947.

The current Bank of America, alas, is not Giannini's bank. Since his time the bank has undergone many mergers and changes in ownership. In its early days every member of its board of directors was Italian American; today none are. (Despite repeated inquiries, the current bank officials would not comment on why this is so.) From an Italic standpoint, it is quite curious. But that does not take away from Giannini, who ran the bank until 1949, for the ethnic changes came long after his time.

Why consider Giannini the greatest Italian American? Because what he did affected America in myriad positive ways, more directly than did any other Italian American. And he was an American, born on American soil, and worked exclusively in the United States. Coming from a humble background, he was able to challenge the likes of J.P. Morgan and other leading bankers of his day, almost all of whom were on Wall Street, and beat them from far off California.

His mental acuity was remarkable. His granddaughter said: "He could meet somebody once and then not see him for 10 years and then say, 'Oh Mr. So and So, I remember meeting you at thus and so.' He had a terrific memory for faces and names." Yet his education was limited



to high school and a short course in a business college.

Physically he was imposing — 6-foot-

Giannini's granddaughter Virginia Hammerness



2 and more than 200 pounds — and very handsome. Until he married, he was considered one of the most eligible bachelors in San Francisco.

These are some of A.P.'s gifts to America:

Individual Banking Accounts

Savings and checking accounts, small loans (including home mortgages) and numerous other banking services for average people are the norm now. But prior to Giannini, banks dealt primarily with businesses and the very wealthy. They regarded convenience services for common people (which included most Italian Americans) a nuisance with little profit potential. Giannini, however, felt the middle class was the backbone of society and deserved banking services as much, if not more, than the wealthy. Before A.P., if the average Joe (or Giuseppe) needed a loan, he went to a relative, friend, or loan shark. If he had any savings, he kept them under a mattress.

Branch Banking

Although branch banking had been tried in foreign countries, notably in Canada, it was not successfully implemented in the United States until Giannini did so. Prior to this most banks had but one location in a city, usually in the middle of its financial district. Imagine how inconvenient this was in an agricultural state like California, where most people lived miles from such banks. Additionally, having multiple branches allowed those in the more prosperous areas to back up branches in the less prosperous ones.

Earthquake Relief

The Bank of Italy was only two years old in 1906 when San Francisco was virtually destroyed by an earthquake and subsequent fires. But quick action in securing his bank's deposits before fire consumed them — something no other San Francisco bank did — and the making of loans to average people shortly thereafter, long before the other banks re-opened for business, enabled the city to go from ruins to one of the great metropolises of the world in just a few years.

Financing Hollywood

Although Hollywood had gone from zero to financial heights in the first three decades of the 20th century, in the early '30s most studios, like most other businesses, were victims of the Great Depression. Paramount had gone into receivership by 1932. MGM, RKO, United Artists, Universal and Warner Bros. were in dire straits. The Bank of Italy had long supported Hollywood with loans, but in 1930, as the Bank of America, it started making loans to Hollywood aggressively. A.P. authorized a \$3 million loan to Darryl Zanuck and Joseph Schneck to form 20th Century-Fox. Louis B. Mayer, David Selznick, and many other movie moguls were bailed out of near-bankruptcy by A.P. Major films might never have been made but for Giannini's support, including *The Bowery*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *The Prisoner of Zenda* and *A Star Is Born*. *Gone with the Wind*, among the greatest movies ever made, would not have been completed had not Giannini authorized a \$1.5 million loan to Selznick in 1935, when the film, in mid-production, ran grossly over budget.



Giannini's customized 1933 Lincoln

Bankrolling Disney

When just getting started in the 1920s, Walt Disney borrowed heavily from the Bank of Italy. One such loan financed the production of *Steamboat Willie*, the 1928 cartoon that introduced Mickey and Minnie Mouse to the world. Later, when Disney ran out of money midway in the production of the first full-length cartoon feature film, he begged Giannini for a loan and A.P. came through with one for \$630,000. Had he not given it, the world might never have seen *Snow White* or any of the other Disney films, or Disneyland, Disney World, Disney Cruises, etc.

The Golden Gate Bridge

A \$30 million bond issue was approved for construction of the bridge in 1930, shortly after the stock market crashed and the Great Depression began. No one was buying the bonds and it looked like the bridge was going

to be stillborn. Giannini, however, felt the bridge was needed for commerce, for jobs, and to help the California economy. His bank bought the entire issue. (Incidentally, from the completion of the structure in 1937 until 1964, when it was surpassed by the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge in New York, the Golden Gate Bridge was the longest suspension bridge in the world.)

Sustaining Global Industry

The agriculture, wine, and aerospace industries, so associated with California, were financed in their infancy, youth and maturity by Giannini's bank. He bankrolled Henry Kaiser and his enterprises supporting the war effort during World War II and, after the war, he set up loans to help rebuild the Fiat factories in Italy. Giannini also provided capital to William Hewlett and David Packard to help form Hewlett-Packard.

A Rare One-Percenter

Unlike so many present leaders of the banking industry who have enriched themselves with bad loans, shady deals and crooked accounting (including, unfortunately, those of the current Bank of America), Giannini was a scrupulously honest man who never allowed himself to become part of the "one percent." Much of the time he took no salary or a very modest one. At the time of his death (June 3, 1949), at age 79, his total estate was only \$480,000, less than the

(Cont'd. on p. 30)

It started as the Bank of Italy and became Bank of America



THE NOBLE ROMANS:

by John Mancini

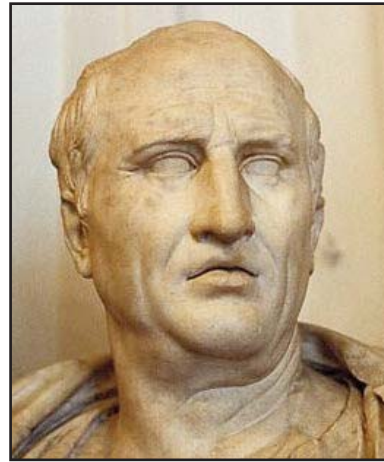
The idea of the “noble Roman” comes from another era. The “noblest Roman of them all” is out of Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, uttered by Antony during his funeral oration. The Romans have been noble in the eyes of educated Europeans for the past two thousand years, and still are. It was no coincidence that the Treaty of Rome in 1957 creating what is now the European Union was signed in the Eternal City. Rome has always been the touchstone of European unity since the fall of the empire. The words *kaiser*, *czar*, and *shah* all derive from Caesar, the surname that became a title with the death of Julius. Rome’s republic and imperial system became the models for Europe and our own United States. The Founding Fathers were all grounded in Roman history.

We may know them by their works, but where did the noble Romans actually go? If Rome fell in 476 A.D., what happened to the Romans? Were they the same Romans who fought against Hannibal some six hundred years before, the same ones who managed an empire of 80 million people? Clearly, time and interbreeding changed their DNA, but is there a genetic thread somewhere? We can look at Mayan or Incan ruins and assume that the present day impoverished Amerindians living around them are related to those advanced peoples. Ashkenazi Jews consider themselves one with the ancient Hebrews, despite appearances to the contrary. But can we assume that today’s inhabitants of Italy and those that migrated across the globe are related to forebears who lived in the Roman ruins found throughout Italy? Back in 1990, noted geneticist Cavalli-Sforza did an extensive genetic study purporting that southern Italians were really Greeks. This was before the human genome was mapped out fully and the northern doctor’s research may have had a social motive. It doesn’t help the cause of science

Do we carry “genetic memories” that may link us to our ancestors?



The Giglio (Lilly) Procession in Brooklyn dates from Roman times and the city of Nola, east of Naples.



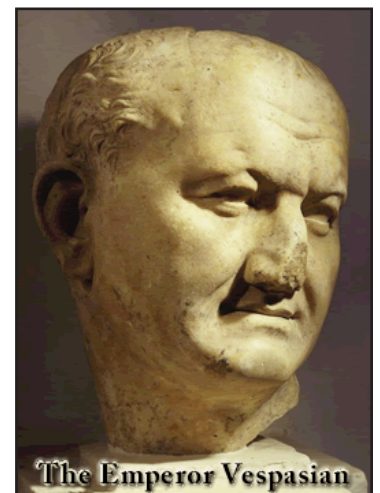
Marcus Tullius Cicero,
Roman senator, philosopher, and attorney.
His Italian features are unmistakable.

Some might consider genetic memory an occult belief. Its cousin is *déjà vu*. But there is credible evidence of DNA at work in some non-physical characteristics such as personality, skills, or habits. There are certainly stimuli that “ring a bell” or things to which you are “drawn.” Are they something you picked up in the womb or from your childhood, or might they be a genetic memory passed on from a distant ancestor?

Genetic memory got a bad rap years ago with anecdotes about people under hypnosis speaking long dead languages. The idea that a learned language is passed on through the genes crosses the line of reason. But embedded emotions and predispositions are not at all beyond the realm of understanding. Babies have personalities the minute they are born. Biologists are now learning how social behavior may actually be embedded in our genes. Some 30 such genes have been detected, according to Nicholas Wade, author of *Before the Dawn*, a

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Emperor Flavius Vespasianus suppressed Zealot terrorists in Judea and began the Flavian Amphitheater (aka Colosseum). He may resemble the late Lyndon B. Johnson but he hailed from Italian peasant stock.



The Emperor Vespasian

that the Romans cremated their dead leaving few bones from which to extract DNA.

Genetic Memories

On a cable show called *Who Do You Think You Are?* celebrity roots are traced. In one episode, actress Brooke Shields discovered that her Italian father’s side was actually French and that her roots go back to King Louis the First, founder of the Bourbon dynasty. Suddenly, Shields realized that her choice in majoring in French literature at college may have been preordained. This is a fine example of genetic memory – how your ancestors may pass on more than physical traits to you.

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Where Did They Go?

summary of genetic knowledge.

So, how does this relate to a Roman connection?

Hellenes, Italics, Etruscans, and many other ethnic groups, including Celts, all inhabited Italy in the centuries before Christ. Could it be that each provided genetic memories that found their way into the modern Italian? The Hellenes had a knack for commerce and scholarship, the Etruscans were obsessed with the supernatural, creativity, and fine living, the Italic Romans were builders, engineers, pragmatists and managers.

Here then was the raw material, eventually alloyed with the DNA and genetic memories of countless slaves, athletes, pirates, and conquerors who found their way to Italy.

Both David Chase (*The Sopranos*) and Francis Coppola (*The Godfather*) consider Italian Americans the genetic product of Roman slaves from southern Italy. (Chase has speculated that his actual surname De Cesare means “[slave] from the House of Caesar.” A slave past rings true to him.) Their works depicting Italian Americans as craven forms of humanity buttress their belief. In other words, for Chase, Coppola, Scorsese and the myriad actors and academics who conjure up Italians as thieves, liars, murderers and social misfits, there are no genetic memories of Roman, Greek, or Etruscan traits. Southern Italy for them was basically a cesspool that drained into America. The resulting books and movies may be labeled “art” but art comes from the “soul” of these artists, or perhaps their genetic memory in this case.

Yet, our own experience with Italian Americans, through family, social interaction and public record, has shown that there is an impressive array of positive ancient traits still embedded within them. From Sicily come distant memories of the benevolent Norman occupation manifested in the old marionette theaters. Even the genius of Magna Graecia, the Greek colonies of Sicily and Southern Italy personified by Archimedes and Pythagorus, course through our veins. The old Roman values of *industria*, *disciplina*, *frugalitas*, *pietas* (duty), and *tenacitas* are still the hallmarks of most Italian Americans. The one that got away is *gravitas* – group dignity. Protests to the contrary, in the four decades since *The Godfather*, whatever dignity resided in our collective genetic memory has been sold to the highest bidder or washed away by apathy.



Julius Caesar and Augustus settled thousands of Italic veterans in Sicily at Messina, Taormina, Syracuse, Catania between 44 B.C. and 21 A.D.

The majority of Italian Americans will roll their eyes at the mention of a Roman past

something disturbing is amidst.

Let us not fool ourselves into thinking that 17 million Italian Americans, somewhere, down deep, all carry a genetic memory of Classical Italy. Two thousand years of interbreeding with slaves, pirates, Germans, French, Spaniards, Saracens, Turks, Albanians, and North Africans have further diluted the ancient mix. Were we to educate every last Italian American in our classical history, it

would still not “ring a bell” for 99% of them. (But that still leaves 170,000 potential members for the Italic Institute!)

Tell-Tale Signs

Although they may not think themselves products of ancient Rome, actually Classical Italy, the signs are

unmistakable. Many religious and secular holidays common in Italy and here date to ancient times. The fact that they have survived bears witness to genetic memories that are embedded in our culture. Carrying saints in processions is clearly a pagan ritual. The famous Giglio Procession in (Cont'd. on p. 16)



The Naples area was Rome's Hamptons -- a getaway place. The rich and famous spread their wealth and genes there.

Hard Truths

Talk to a Norwegian, Swede, or Dane about the Vikings



STOPPING ISLAM:

Since the birth of Islam in the 600s, Western Civilization has been engaged in both hot and cold wars of attrition with radical Islam. From its birth in Mecca, Islam has spread mostly with forced conversions from a once-Christian Middle East across a once-Christian North Africa and into Christian Europe until it was stopped in France by Frankish King Charles Martel in 732 A.D. Islam wasn't expelled from Spain until 1492.

For one thousand years, until the end of the second seige of Vienna (1683) Islamic powers terrorized the Mediterranean and southern and eastern Europe. While the imperialist Christian Crusades (1096-1291) have dominated the conversation between Muslims and Christians, very few people know of the wholesale atrocities visited upon Europeans by Muslims. The late Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci summarized these atrocities in her book *A Call to Reason*. Clearly, Fallaci was a rabid anti-Muslim but her facts were true and her fears of Muslim subversion of secular societies should not be dismissed out of hand.

As Mediterraneans, the Italians have always been engaged with Islamic powers both as allies and enemies. No history of Western-Islamic relations is complete without knowledge of the Battle of Lepanto.

The Battle of Lepanto

by Alfred Cardone

The Battle of Lepanto (October 7, 1571) is regarded as one of the major turning points in Western Civilization and one of the greatest naval engagements in history. It was fought in the waters of Greece by a combined European fleet to halt an expanding Islamic Ottoman Empire.

The Ottoman Turks came out of the Asian steppes to capture Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine or Eastern Roman Empire, in 1453. Their conquests were characterized by great slaughter and merciless savagery. After Constantinople fell, much of the city was burned while the Ottoman soldiers proceeded to crucify, hang and impale the innocent, including children. Over four thousand nuns were raped and butchered in a matter of hours. The survivors were put in chains to be sold at the slave markets of Ankara. At his victory feast, Mehmet II raped the fourteen year-old son of the Greek Orthodox Grand Duke Notaras in front of his guests. He then forced the poor boy to watch as his parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins were beheaded in front of him.

The Ottomans continued their conquest west into Greece by 1456 and Italy with attacks on

Friuli and Otranto. The pattern of atrocities was always repeated. After the usual mass killings at Otranto, eight hundred survivors aged fifteen to eighteen refused to convert to Islam and were beheaded at a rate of one hundred per day over the course of eight days.

By the 16th century, Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent annexed large areas of the Middle East and North Africa and personally led his armies in the conquest of Rhodes and Hungary. After his advance was checked at the first Siege of Vienna in 1529, he had 30,000 Christian peasants impaled. During his reign, the Muslim fleet spread death and destruction along the coasts of the western Mediterranean burning villages, raping, destroying crops and livestock, and killing or enslaving thousands.

When in 1566 Suleiman's son Selim II declared a jihad or holy war, the future of Europe looked bleak, and the growing Turkish threat seemed unstoppable. The Protestant Reformation had shattered the unity of Christendom, and the Muslims saw their opportunity for further expansion and conversions.

Muslims beheaded 800 Italians for refusing to convert



Admiral Andrea Doria



Admiral Agostino Barbarigo



In 1570, Selim II targeted the Venetian island of Cyprus. When the Venetian Senate rejected the demands for the surrender of the

Admiral Ulich Ali (nee Giovanni Dionigi Galeni). Though an enemy, his statue stands in Crotona, Italy, his hometown.



The Battle of Lepanto



A typical Venetian galley of the period.

island, the Turks laid siege to the fortress city of Nicosia. Outgunned, the city fell and was plundered. Some 20,000 civilians were massacred, women raped, and churches and homes sacked. The

more attractive boys and girls were gathered and shipped to Istanbul as slaves.

The Turks then attacked Famagusta, another city on Cyprus, defended by 7,000 Venetian troops and commanded by Governor Marcantonio Bragadino. The determined defenders beat back all assaults, and the Ottoman forces sailed home for the winter.

Meanwhile, Pope Pius V attempted to assemble an alliance among the squabbling Catholic powers, the various Italian city-states among them. The Pope's diplomacy finally succeeded and the Holy League was formed on May 25, 1571. It consisted of Venice, Spanish Naples and Sicily, Genoa, the Papal States, the Duchies of Savoy, Parma and Urbino and the Knights of Malta.

By now, the Ottoman fleet had returned to Cyprus for a final attack on Famagusta. By late July, the defenders had exhausted their gunpowder and food supplies. Without relief by the Holy League, Governor Bragadino negotiated a surrender. The Turkish commander Lala Mustafa promised that the city would be spared and that the Italians would be granted safe passage off the island. On August 4, 1571 Bragadino and a party of Venetian officers and officials presented the keys of Famagusta to Mustafa. Without warning, Mustafa ordered the seizure and beheading of the Italian party. Bragadino was singled out for particularly vicious treatment. His ears and nose were cut off. He was then subjected to public ridicule and finally flayed alive two weeks later, refusing throughout this torture to convert to Islam. Famagusta was pillaged, and all Italians were slaughtered. Perhaps Mustafa's savage betrayal can be explained by the fact that the ten-month siege of the city had cost the lives of 50,000 Turks.

The fleet of the Holy League finally assembled at Messina, Sicily, in August. Of a total of 210 ships, fully three-quarters were Italian. They were manned by 28,500 soldiers and 40,000 sailors and oarsmen. The commander was Don Juan of Austria, the half-brother of King Phillip II of Spain. The papal admiral Marco Colonna was appointed as second-in-command. The various wings were led by Venetian admirals Sebastiano Venier and Agostino Barbarigo, Genoese Admiral Andrea Doria and Spaniard

Alvaro de Bazan. At the suggestion of Andrea Doria, the beaks of all galleys were cut off to lower the bow cannons to aim at the waterline of the enemy ships. This would be a key to victory.

By October 4th, the Holy League fleet arrived at the Greek island of Cephalonia where it received the news of Turkish atrocities at Famagusta. The religious crusade was now fueled with vengeance.

The two fleets met at dawn on October 7th off Lepanto, Greece. Ironically, the left wing of the Ottoman fleet was under the command of Ulich Ali, a Calabrian by birth (real name: Giovanni Dionigi Galeni), who had been kidnapped by pirates as a youth and converted to Islam.

The Spanish ships managed to capture the Turkish flagship, killing the fleet's Grand Admiral. This took a heavy toll on Turkish morale. The Italians on the right wing led by Admiral Andrea Doria faced the superior force of fellow Italic Ulich Ali. What followed was the bloodiest clash of the day with very heavy losses suffered on both sides. The arrival of additional reserves under Alvaro de Bazan and Juan de Cardona finally compelled Ulich Ali to withdraw with his remaining Turkish ships.

Three-quarters of the allied ships were Italian

The Ottomans suffered huge losses at Lepanto, with over 200 warships sunk or captured, 30,000 men killed and wounded including Grand Admiral Ali Pasha, and 8,000 prisoners. In addition, some 15,000 Christian galley slaves were set free. The Holy League lost

17 galleys and 15,000 men killed and wounded.

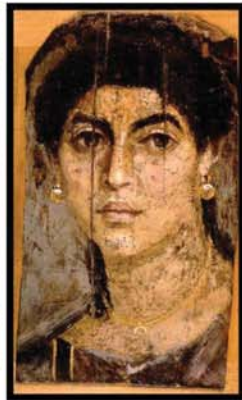
The Battle of Lepanto marked the end of an era in naval warfare. From that time onward, sea battles would be decided by cannon rather than hand-to-hand combat and ramming.

After Lepanto, the spell of Ottoman invincibility was shattered, and the military initiative shifted to the West. The spread of Turkish dominance had been halted. A veteran of Lepanto, Miguel de Cervantes, renowned author of *Don Quixote*, called it, "The most noble and memorable event that past centuries have seen or future generations can ever hope to witness." ****

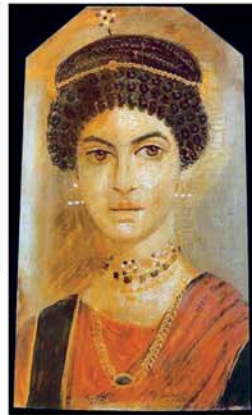
[Joseph D'Alelio assisted in this article]



The Noble Romans (continued from p.13)



Behold your ancestors!



What is truly amazing about being Italian is that we can literally see where we came from. The faces you see actually lived in Pompeii, Italy, two thousand years ago. The Romans not only believed in graven images but, unlike the Greeks, insisted artists paint and sculpt them as they actually

looked. Note the diversity in features and coloring. But note that Romans liked women pale and men suntanned. Even so, classical Italians were genetically mixed. Emperor Augustus had sandy hair and Nero had blue eyes. What other nationality on earth has such details of its heritage?

Williamsburg, Brooklyn, dates from Roman Italy, as does *Carnevale* and Christmas (*Saturnalia*). We know the sacred summer vacation of *ferragosto* literally means feast (fair) of Augustus. Italy's so-called Liberation Day on April 25th was a conscious replacement of the Roman/Fascist holiday of Rome's founding (April 21st). Italy's national anthem contains the words "*Italy has arisen with Scipio's helmet upon her head. Where is Victory? Let her bow down, for God has made her the slave of Rome.*" How many students or scholars of Italian studies appreciate the classical significance of this refrain?

It is a common fallacy, even among academics, that Rome - the city - conquered the world and enslaved Italians along with 75 million other folks. Cities don't conquer the world, countries do.

According to historian Donald Dudley, "*To create Italy was the first great historical achievement of Rome.*" There weren't enough



A rare find: the skeleton of a Roman soldier was unearthed in Wales and reconstructed. He is said to resemble the Welsh actor Richard Burton.

men and resources within Rome's city limits to acquire an empire and run it for 500 years. Chances are overwhelming that your Italian (that includes Sicily and Sardinia) blood has some Roman DNA. Essentially, Rome ruled by colonization. At the time of Christ the terms Roman and Italian (*Italicus*) were interchangeable. These *Italici*, among them veterans of the legions, were settled as farmers throughout Italy, Europe and the Mediterranean. If they were honorable bachelors, local women were preferably courted, not raped, producing a Latin-speaking hybrid population known as Latins. One British DNA study has it that 6% of English males

(one million!) are direct Roman descendants, and 13% of Italians.* Notwithstanding, many parts of southern Italy and Sicily consider the Romans foreign invaders instead of ancestors.

*UK *Telegraph*, 22 Feb. 2013

Rome's legionaries were part-time builders, famous for the construction of roads, bridges, and infrastructure. Rome's other secret of success was engineering an empire. That predisposition to build and create is still embedded in the Italian psyche. No doubt we all have relatives who succeeded in America with a cement trowel or hammer. It is what we are known for, still.

British study: 6% of English and 13% of Italians are direct descendants of Romans

Of course, language is a key to our Roman connection. Despite the nostalgia for regional dialects, despite the claim to separatism and foreign roots, every dialect from

Piedmont to Sicily is of Italic (Latin) origin. If you listen carefully, even standard Italian echoes the old Roman pronunciation of the v as w. Conjugate *volere* (to want) and it changes from *voglio* to *vuoi* and *vuole* before proceeding to *vogliamo*, *volete*, *vogliamo*. Those two oddball forms mimic the v as w in our ancestors' speech. (In Spanish, the v is likewise pronounced as a b for that reason.) Likewise, in the Sicilian dialect words end in *-u* (oo) rather than *-o*, a clue that the original word ended in the Latin *-us* (oos). Among southern dialects the word for he/she is *esse/essa* (pronounced ees-) instead of the standard *lui/lei*. This comes directly from the Latin pronoun *is*, also pronounced ees.

Anti-Roman

The noble Romans disappeared from our pantheon of ancestors because, as Catholics and Americans, we have been taught from childhood that Rome was the scourge of mankind and the executioner of Jesus. It was the Romans who destroyed the Second Temple in Judea and scattered the Jews. It was the Romans who threw

(Cont'd. on p. 18)



KILLING MUSSOLINI

We have been told that during the final days of the war, dictator Benito Mussolini was captured by Italian partisans as he tried to escape to Switzerland in April, 1945. The story gets a bit fuzzy after that as to why and how he was executed and hung upside-down at a gas station in Milan. But one thing is certain. He was captured and executed by Italian Communists in direct violation of Article Art. 29 of the Allied-Italian Armistice of 1943: *“Benito Mussolini, his Chief Fascist associates and all persons suspected of having committed war crimes or analogous offenses whose names appear on lists to be communicated by the United Nations will forthwith be apprehended and surrendered into the hands of the United Nations. Any instructions given by the United Nations for this purpose will be complied with.”*



Stalinist Palmiro Togliatti ordered Mussolini's execution.

So, why was Mussolini executed in spite of Allied demands? Was his execution the “justice” of the Italian people or a political murder necessary for a Communist revolution in Italy? Were all partisans the noble democratic freedom-fighters that the popular media portrays?

“In the partisan movement there were the good and the bad, the heroes and the looters, the generous and the cruel. There was a people with its virtues and its vices. There were the partisans of the eleventh hour, in general a detestable race. And then the

exploiters and profiteers of the partisan movement.” - Ferruccio Parri, a partisan leader and Italy's first post-war prime minister*.

[*Mussolini: The Last 600 Days of Il Duce, by Ray Moseley.]

KILLING MUSSOLINI

by Alfred Cardone

At the insistence of Winston Churchill, the Allies invaded Sicily in July, 1943, and provoked the overthrow of Mussolini's Fascist regime. Indeed, Mussolini was arrested and imprisoned on July 25th by King Victor Emanuel III. On September 8th, the Royal Italian government signed an armistice with the Allies and declared war on Germany. In a spectacular feat, German commandos rescued Mussolini from his mountain captivity on September 12th. Hitler made it very clear that if Mussolini did not set up a new Fascist regime in the north, Italy would suffer the consequences of her betrayal and be treated no better than German-occupied Poland. Preferring to retire, the Duce nevertheless agreed to shield his nation from Nazi wrath as head of the new Italian Social Republic.

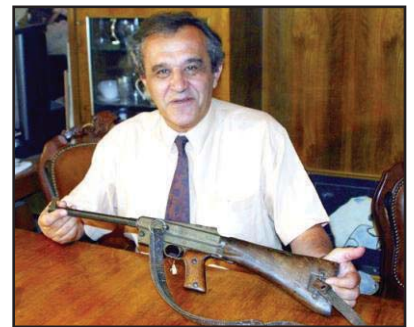
Meanwhile, the Allied armies found the Italian mainland to be far from Churchill's vision of the “soft underbelly of Europe.” The Anglo-American forces encountered very stiff German and Fascist resistance as they slowly advanced up the Italian peninsula. By April, 1945, after almost two years of fighting, Allied forces

Benito Mussolini was to be captured alive and put on trial

had only reached the Po Valley in north Italy. (The Soviets had already reached Berlin.)

Among the anti-Fascist partisans many were Communists determined to seize power for themselves after the war and make Italy a Soviet satellite. These Communists eventually dominated the Italian Resistance movement and maintained strong links to Moscow, which ordered them to keep collaboration with Allied forces to

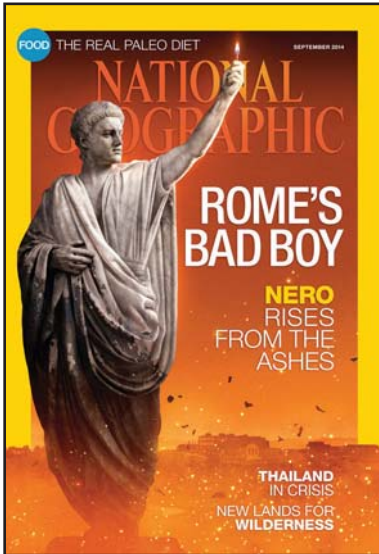
(Cont'd on p. 25)



Executioner Walter Audisio (left) donated the French automatic rifle he used to kill Mussolini and Claretta Petacci to the Communist government of Albania after the war.



The Noble Romans (continued from p.16)



This September 2014 issue re-examines Emperor Nero's reputation.

Christians to the lions and martyred half the saints. Every other Roman emperor was mad and every non-Roman, including Italians, was either an enemy or a slave. Movies like *Ben Hur*, *Spartacus*, *The Passion of Christ*, and all the movies ever made about Jesus or Judea feed this one-dimensional image of Rome. Yet, it lives side by side, almost in secret, with the documented debt we owe to the Romans in government, language, engineering, law, urban development, sports, civil rights, tolerance, and the very infrastructure of the Catholic Church. Were these positive

contributions commonly known, both Christians and Jews would have a difficult time explaining their version of history.

Catholic means “universal.” And contrary to Vatican politics, the Catholic Church is not proprietary to Italians. In other words, the Church is not the guardian of our classical or modern Italian heritage. Since it was officially established by Emperor Constantine (see our “13th Apostle” in issue XXXV), the Church was a stalwart opponent of the Italian reunification until 1929, when it finally accepted the sovereignty of Italy and limitation to Vatican City. Unlike the Anglican Church which protects the English legacy, or the Presbyterian connection to Scots, or the Greek Orthodox’s unity with the Hellenic people, the Catholic Church has absolutely no reason to glorify classical Italy or the reputation of pagan Rome. That disdain for our classical roots translates into general amnesia among Italian Catholics for anything in the past unrelated to Catholicism.

The Roman Mind

The Romans could be cruel when they had to be. It was a tougher world back then. Conquer or be conquered was the reality of life. Italy was always ripe for the taking. But cruelty can never explain Rome’s success. Rather, it was those virtues we listed above — a sense of duty, of honor, of responsibility. Above all, we know the Romans were the most pragmatic of people. Classical scholar Edith Hamilton wrote: “they were persistently indifferent to theory...they were not interested in why, only in how.” They knew that conquered people would accept their rule if Rome provided the basic comforts of life: security, clean water, food, entertainment, and religious freedom. Some historians mock Rome for “bread &



This cameo of Augustus was produced two thousand years ago in Naples, like most of today's cameos. For \$5,000 you can purchase the five-pound pure silver commemorative of it being sold in the Virgin Islands.

circuses,” but they worked, as did public baths, public libraries, freedom of religion, bridges, and roads. Even the arena served many purposes. It wasn’t always about death. The great philosopher Seneca once wrote how he visited an arena for some entertaining distraction and was shocked to see public executions taking place. It illustrates that amphitheaters could host a variety of events, just like our stadiums do today. Public executions, gladiator combats, and beasts gone wild may have served the purpose to toughen the Roman people as well as deal with undesirables, but they weren’t the daily fare.

The Romans always saw the big picture. They had a world to tame, “to teach the ways of peace,” in the words of their greatest poet Virgil. One only has to see today what purports to be religion in the

The Romans could be cruel when they had to be. But cruelty can never explain Rome’s success

Middle East to understand Roman impatience with Jewish Zealots, for example. It was not intolerance that caused Roman military power to crush two Judean revolts. It was to demonstrate that no one, whether it was a rabbi who claimed to be King of the Jews or Zealots who wanted to restore Solomon’s Israel, could disturb the *Pax Romana* (Roman Peace).

Romans may have gone through the motions to propitiate their gods, but at heart they were humanists. Rome’s law came before the supernatural. But as pragmatists, they understood that Rome’s law could be tailored to local ethnic customs, hence, the Law of Nations, a judicial system for the millions of non-citizens within their vast empire. For example, Jews were exempt from military service because of their Sabbath and dietary laws.

Final Tally

While we cannot trace Roman DNA too far, we can compare *romanita* (Romanness) with *italianita* (Italianness) among our modern Italic brethren. Clearly, (Cont’d. on p. 20)



Reflections

SOME MUSINGS, MUSICAL AND OTHERWISE

by Bob Masullo

Now that I've broken the three-fourths of a century barrier (as of last June) my love and passion for things, places and people Italic has grown stronger. And having spent a relaxing year in *la Patria* (2005-2006, my first year of retirement following a 40-year career in newspaper journalism), and having hosted a radio show specializing in Italian and Italian-American music for 20 years, I have many ethnic tidbits, especially about music, to pass on. A few follow. More may come in future issues of *The Italic Way*.

"Santa Lucia" is not about St. Lucy

The popular Neapolitan folk song *Santa Lucia* references a waterfront area in Naples known as Borgo Santa Lucia (literally the Saint Lucy District), from which many small boats begin and end their



Forget religion. This dock was the real inspiration of *Santa Lucia*.

sails. In the song's lyrics a sailor is trying to entice someone (a customer or maybe a girlfriend) to go for a cooling evening ride in his little boat. Although originally (and still occasionally) sung in Neapolitan it was translated

into standard Italian by Teodoro Cottrau (1827-1879), the son of Guillaume Cottrau, a French composer who moved to Naples in the early 19th century) and now is most often sung in standard Italian, although there are versions of it in many languages, including English. It has been recorded by scores of singers, even by Elvis Presley (in pretty fair phonetic Italian).

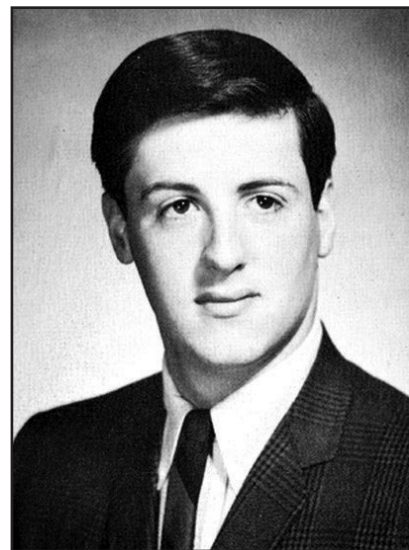
Italian names but not their originals

Singers Vic Damone, Mario Lanza, Al Martino, Frankie Valli and Lou Monte, and actors Robert Alda (father) and Alan Alda (son) all have or had Italian-sounding professional names. But they were not the names with which they were born. Vic Damone originally was Vito Farinola; Mario Lanza began as Alfred Cocozza; Frankie Valli as Francesco Castelluccio; Al Martino as Jasper Cini; Lou Monte as Louis Scaglione. Alda, incidentally, is an

aportmanteau of *Al* from *Alfonso* (both Robert and Alan's original first name) and *DA* from D'Abruzzo (their real last name).

What do Alda, Stallone, and De Niro have in common?

Alan Alda, Sylvester Stallone and Robert De Niro are all successful actors. But they have more than acting in common: Although usually thought of as Italian Americans not one of them has a 100 percent Italian bloodline. Alda is half Italian, half Irish. Stallone is half Italian, one-fourth Jewish and one-fourth French. And De Niro, who ironically is often thought of as "very Italian," is only one-fourth Italian; a mixture of Irish, Dutch, English, French and German accounts for the other three-fourths of his heritage.



A not-so-Italian-Stallion: Sylvester Labofish Stallone

Things are not always what they seem. There are still mysteries left in the Italian heritage.

Make the Most of Mozzarella

Mozzarella, the most widely used Italian cheese, must be made from the milk of the water buffalo. A similar cheese made from cow's milk, often mislabeled mozzarella, is really *fior di latte* (literally, "milk flower"). The name moz-

(Cont'd. on p. 22)

Forget cows. The real stuff comes from the ancient Neapolitan *bufalo*.



The Noble Romans (continued from p.18)

both ancient and modern Italians share humanism as an overriding characteristic. It shows itself in deep family ties, tolerance of others, pity for the less fortunate, and outgoing personalities.

Certainly, Italians are as industrious and generally hardworking as their forebears. Our parents and grandparents were frugal to the nth degree, and many of us still weep at a lost dollar. We are pious in our respect for our elders, our religion, and the duty we owe them and to our children.

Discipline and tenacity vary from person to person. On the whole, many Italian Americans carry these Roman traits individually, but as a community they are foreign to us. If the ancient Romans could observe us today they would consider us a chaotic and a wishy-washy bunch. As a group, we have no spirit for confrontation and little imagination for grand projects. As for tenacity—holding on to our heritage and persisting until victory—we are the poster children of apathy and surrender.

Even *gravitas*—the Roman sense of responsibility and ethnic dignity—is as scarce among us as a classical sense. Few Italians or Italian Americans even understand the concept of *gravitas* as they mock their own ethnicity in public and in the media or allow others to do it. In a puerile way, they disassociate ethnic ridicule in the media from any effect on them individually or on their families. A Roman would be appalled by such pitiful behavior in a multi-ethnic society. “*Thou oh Roman must the peoples rule!*” -Virgil

All the evidence indicates that if the nobility of Rome exists today in our genetic memory it is hidden so deeply that it barely has a heartbeat. Italian Americans rarely become Latin teachers or Roman scholars. Their culture has little if any Roman mythology buried in it. Ancient Rome has few places in most regional folklore, except in religious processions and occasional restaurant décor. In lieu of this sort of folklore our brethren carry on the mythology of the Mafia as warriors and protectors, a telling mindset. Few, if any, of our homes have busts of a great Roman or models of Roman monuments. Even classical names like Augustus, Marius, Julius, or Marcellus rarely join our surnames. Authentic



Italians don't forget.

Visit Anzio today and you will see a this statue of its favorite son Nero.

The Romans admired and copied the Greeks but ultimately believed their own virtues and humanism were superior.

For them, escape is the norm. Whenever things get tough Italians get going. Italy joined the Euro Zone partly to escape its own financial profligacy. It serves as an American underling because it lacks confidence in its own importance. Italian Americans have chosen ignorance and amnesia to escape cultural ridicule and media degradation. Some have embraced Judean, Celtic, or Anglo culture to satisfy intellectual needs. They do so because only a shallow peasant culture has surrounded them from the cradle.

Salvation

As gloomy as this may all sound, there is a way to touch the soul of Classical Italy. It begins with a physical return to the homeland and it deepens

with self-education. All that is needed to reinvigorate genetic memory lies on the shelves of a decent library. Study Latin for kicks. Wonder at immortal Italy, homeland of the Roman Empire and the “Mother of all Studies” (*Mater Studiorum*).

Reflect often on what ancient Italy did, subduing and ruling a world of 80 million people, inspiring generations thereafter in its statecraft, its rule of law, and its still-visible infrastructure. Why Italian Americans would trade such a legacy for fictional Mafia movies and a blue-collar culture has amazed rational people. According to sociologists Nathan Glazer and Patrick Moynihan (*Beyond the Melting Pot*), a prominent (though unidentified) Yale professor opined: “If Italians aren’t actually an inferior race, they do the best imitation of one I’ve seen.”

Only ignorance and an aversion to history separate Italian Americans, mired as they are in a provincial mentality, from their noble Roman ancestors.

[Don Fiore assisted in this article.]



Ellis Island Remembered

This article by Richard Gambino, whose own father passed through Ellis Island from Sicily, was originally published in *Attenzione* magazine in 1980. It has been updated by the author for *The Italic Way*.

It should be noted that Italians made up one of the largest groups to land on Ellis Island. In 1982, Italian American businessman Lee Iacocca was given the awesome task of raising restoration funds for Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty. Ironically, plans for the post-restoration ceremony failed to include any former Italian immigrants among the myriad ethnic groups – a telling oversight soon corrected.

ISLAND OF TEARS

by Richard Gambino

The ferry eased into the boat slip. Fifty-eight years after my father stepped ashore there, and more than six decades after my maternal grandparents, I set foot on Ellis Island. Historians refer to it as the “Golden Door” or “The Gate of Freedom,” but to immigrants it was – in many languages – *L’Isola delle Lacrime*, “the island of tears.”

My father – accompanied by my grandfather – had come through Ellis Island at the age of 13. Once in New York, he went to work nights in a bakery; during the day, he assisted my grandfather, a tailor. They brought over my father’s three sisters, one by one. Only my father’s brother, four years old when the rest of the family left Palermo, never made it to America.

Today, Ellis Island’s French Renaissance-style buildings, of red brick and white stone, look almost new.

After a \$156 million restoration in the 1980s, it is now hard to

Doctors would watch immigrants climbing the central stairs to flag physical disabilities.



**Over 3.5 million Italians
were processed at
Ellis Island**



imagine the “huddled masses” of rag-tag immigrants, rope-tied bundles filling their arms, burdening their backs, numbered tags gripped between their teeth.

The first building I entered was the cavernous baggage room. Immigrants were urged to leave their parcels there for convenience. Few consented to abandon their possessions. They were permitted to bring into the country only what they could carry. Everything they owned was in those boxes, baskets, and sacks, and hard experience had taught them never to let them out of their sight. Most of the arrivals, weary and often sick from the journey in the foul steerage of ships, carried everything with them through the long, slow, snaking march through the “processing” buildings.

Now the U.S. National Park Service has charge of the island, and I listened as earnest college-age guides in Smokey the Bear hats tried to conjure up for us visitors the desperation of people as they were subjected to the Island’s inspections and interrogations. I glanced around at the other tourists. How could we understand the threat of being sent back to grinding poverty in Italy, or to conscription into the czar’s armies in Eastern Europe, or to a famine-stricken homeland?

Mario La Mastro remembers the Island in its busiest time. He came in 1919, from Teano, near Naples, on the French ship *Patria*. (In the late 1940s Mario read in a newspaper that the same ship had been sunk while carrying illegal Jewish immigrants to Palestine.) He was thirteen at the time, traveling with his mother, 86-year-old grandmother, uncle, and three of his uncle’s family. They had been sent for by Mario’s father, who had come to the United States and labored for seven years to bring over his family. Mario’s father was a skilled shoemaker, but his trade had provided less than a living in Teano. Those few who bought shoes usually paid in goods. In Campania, the province surrounding Naples, unemployment ran as high as 65 percent, and a barter system replaced cash business. In later years, Mario’s mother was to say, “Better to be dead in America than alive in Italy.”

The *Patria* took sixteen days to cross the Atlantic. Mario spent them in the men’s sec- (Cont’d. on p. 28)



zarella is derived from the Italian verb *mozzare* (“to cut”) because in the process of making the cheese it is stretched and cut.

It’s not gold and it doesn’t *GLI*-tter

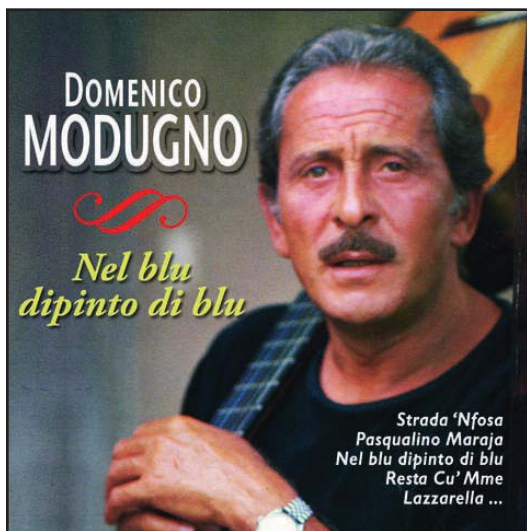
Most Italian letters (or groups of letters that form a single sound) are pronounced the same or nearly the same as in English. One big exception, though, is the letter “g,” especially in the combination *gli*. The rule is simple: “g” when followed by an “e” or an “i” is pronounced like the English “j” (example: *gente*). When followed by an “a,” “o” or “u” it is pronounced like the “g” in “gun” (example: *gusto*). And *gli* is pronounced like “yee.” English-speakers are notorious for mangling Italian *gli* words. Baseball announcers, for example, will usually say “Ko-NIG-lee-arrow” when talking about the great Red Sox outfielder Tony Conigliaro. They should say “Co-nee-YEEAR-row.” Finally, the combination *gn* in Italian is the equivalent of the “ny” sound in the English word “canyon” (examples: *lasagna*, *gnocchi*). It is the same as the Spanish “ñ” but since Italian doesn’t use the tilde (the curly line above the “n”) the combination *gn* is used to make the sound. [Note more examples below]

An Italian song inspired by a pair of French paintings

Volare: Singing the “Blues” Italian Style

Volare made it bigger in America and many other countries than any other Italian song of the 20th century. Alas, that was more than a half-century ago.

Written by Franco Migliacci and Domenico Modugno, it was first released in Italy as a single, sung by Modugno, on Feb. 1, 1958. The song was later covered with scores of versions by singers in multiple languages and was a hit in many countries. Although Modugno’s own version (all in Italian) became a major hit in the



United States, the part-English, part-Italian version by Dean Martin (born Dino Crocetti) also charted.

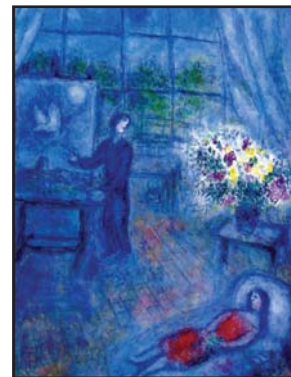
The tune’s actual title is *Nel blu dipinto di blu* (“In the Sky Painted Blue”), which was taken from a line in its chorus, but most

people know it as *Volare* (“To Fly”), a word also found in the chorus, that Modugno is said to have added as an afterthought.

It won the Best Song Award at the 1958 San Remo Music Festival, the Italian equivalent (more or less) of the Grammys. It spent five weeks in Billboard’s No. 1 spot in the United States and sold more than 22 million copies worldwide, making it financially the most successful Italian song of all time.



Our English version of *Volare* doesn’t mention painting a face and hands blue.



Volare was inspired by a dream Migliacci had after being intrigued by two paintings by the French-Russian-Jewish artist Marc Chagall: *Le coq rouge* (“The Red Rooster”), which shows a blue-faced man suspended in midair, and *Le peintre et la modelle* (“The Painter and the Model”), a self-portrait of Chagall in which his hands and clothes are blue.

Here are *Volare*’s first verse and chorus:

ITALIAN

*Penso che un sogno così non ritorni mai più
Mi dipingevo le mani e la faccia di blu
Poi d’improvviso venivo dal vento rapito
E incominciavo a volare nel cielo infinito*

*Volare oh, oh
Cantare oh, oh, oh, oh
Nel blu dipinto di blu
Felice di stare lassu’*

ENGLISH (literal)

I think this dream may never come back:
(In it) I painted my face and hands blue
Then suddenly I was being kidnapped by the wind
And I began to fly in the endless sky

To fly, oh, oh
To sing, oh, oh, oh, oh
In the sky painted blue
(I’m) happy to be up there

[Note: There are good video versions of Domenico Modugno and Dean Martin singing *Volare* on youtube.com.]



ST. PETERSBURG

How Italian Genius Transformed Mother Russia

by Bill Dal Cerro

The 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi was interpreted by some pundits as Russian President Vladimir Putin's attempt to project, via sports, the power and glory of Mother Russia. Although the jury is still out, both on the ultimate financial success of the games and on Russia's renewed super-power status, Putin could have hedged his bets by turning to a historical ally, Italy. For it was during the reign of Peter the Great (1672-1725) that an imperial city was built: St. Petersburg, specifically commissioned to represent the emergence of a powerful new European nation. And to whom did Peter, as well as subsequent Russian rulers, entrust to create such a vision? Italian architects, sculptors, painters, and composers.

Indeed, that fine Italian hand was so central to St. Petersburg's greatness that it should probably be called (with apologies to Pope Francis) *Vatican City II*.

Ironically, hostility toward the Roman Catholic Church, and to Western Europe in general, is what retarded Russia's entry onto the world stage. The foundations for the Russian state were actually laid down in the early 15th century by Czar Ivan I, but his close ties to the Russian Orthodox Church, and his general disdain toward outsiders (understandable, given his battles with the Mongols), kept his world-view very parochial. (The word Czar also has ties to Italy: it is a Russian derivative of "Caesar.") Then, as now, Moscow was the seat of Russia's secular power symbolized by its famous Kremlin walls, commissioned by another Ivan (III) between 1485-1493. Auspiciously, Ivan III set the tone for what was to come: the men



The Peterhof Palace by Nicola Michetti, inspired by Villa D'Este at Tivoli

hired to build those walls were all Italian architects—Antonio Gilardi, Marco Ruffo, Pietro Antonio Solari, and Aloisio da Milano.

Italians brought the Renaissance to Russia

Czar Peter Builds His City

Centuries later, the ascension of Czar Peter the Great was a wake-up call for the nation. After a series of military victories, mostly against the Swedes,

Peter felt confident enough to relocate Russia's capital from Moscow by creating, in 1703, a new city that would be "a window opened up to Europe." To achieve this dream he recruited talented artists and architects from various nations, including Germany, Denmark, and the Netherlands. But, by far, it was the work of the Italian artists whom he hired which had the most influential and lasting impact on the new city of St. Petersburg.

Like the Italian explorers who opened up the North American continent centuries earlier (Columbus, Cabot, Verrazzano, and Vespucci), the architects who created St. Petersburg were cultural ambassadors, of sorts. No



Carlo Bartolomeo Rastrelli

longer unified via the Roman Empire, Italy had become a patchwork of city-states, which, however, did not inhibit the innate genius of its citizens. The Renaissance (or *Il Rinascimento*) of the 15th century, begun in Florence but which soon spread throughout Italy and then the (Cont'd. on p. 27)



Peter the Great at St. Michael's Castle, by Carlo Rastrelli



Forum (cont'd. from p. 9)

Oddly enough, US officials insist that there are no U.S. bases in Italy: all garrisons are inside Italian NATO bases. As a matter of fact, in Italy there are 64 U.S. installations, with more than 10,000 soldiers and several nuclear bombs.

Dal Molin Airport in Vicenza, where some of the population is opposing the building of the second US military base, is one of them.

Sigonella, in Sicily, is a base for drones that operate from Central Asia to the Mediterranean and as far as the Balkans.

Only 60 kilometers from Sigonella, in Niscemi, there is a base for the new MUOS system (Mobile User Objective System), an array of geosynchronous satellites being developed to provide global satellite communications narrowband connectivity for U.S. military communications. Local people have staged several protest marches against the new base. Their main fear is that high power broadcast transmitters at mobile frequencies may cause diseases and other health hazards.

Italian General Fabio Mini, who was in charge of the South Europe NATO Command, puts it like this: *“The lack of U.S. bases in the Southern Mediterranean is a sign of the U.S.’s strategic deficit and one of the reasons for the increasing importance of U.S. bases in Italy.”*

The Italian proclivity of depending on U.S. power is not new. It is an old and sly habit to be servile in order to gain some advantages, like picking up the crumbs dropped from the giant U.S. weapons market table -- crumbs that for such firms as Finmeccanica constitute important income.

To see this obsequious manner at work, let’s take a look at the new Italian premier Matteo Renzi, the latest saviour of the country. What is he doing to address the shameful and scandalous case of two Italian soldiers on trial in India? The soldiers, while they were officially protecting civilian cargo vessel, allegedly murdered two Indian fishermen, having mistaken them for pirates. The answer is that in front of TV cameras, the premier pleaded for Obama’s help during the Emperor’s Grand Italian Tour.

By ourselves we really count for nothing, we have no national pride. This is the message: please Uncle Sam help us to solve this problem, so we can go on eating pizza and spaghetti and playing the mandolin.

Since 1954, when the still classified Bilateral Infrastructure Agreement was signed, Americans have liked Italy, because the Italians don’t ask tough questions. The American military in Italy is exempt from paying tax on gasoline, gas, cigarettes, and alcohol. A concession that is not applied in Germany for example. Of course, the figures are not so huge, but it is another *“act of submission”* that Italians pay to their defenders.

But are they really there to defend Italy? Hear what a U.S. official—who asked not to be named—said to David Vine: *“I’m sorry,*



Italian mothers protest the Pentagon’s plan to install new microwave communication dishes in Italy.

Italy, but this is not the Cold War. We’re not here to defend Vicenza from a [Soviet] attack. We’re here because we agreed they need to be here to do other things, whether that’s the Middle East or the Balkans or Africa.”

Last year the Rand Corporation wrote a report, commissioned by the U.S. Department of Defense, about the future of American bases in the world. According to Rand, the famous *“pivot to Asia”* and the new technologies may suggest a kind of reshaping of imperial bases, but only to a certain extent. It is interesting that, although indirectly, this is recognition of the political and symbolic role of the bases abroad. In the document it states: *“At a higher level of strategic consideration, these forces have underpinned U.S. relationships with partners in Europe. A posture that if removed would move those relationships into uncharted waters, in which it would be difficult to predict the consequences.”*

In his last book, *“Base Nation,”* that is about to be published by Metropolitan, David Vine succinctly explains the twist of local interests behind the bases: *“While bases are often portrayed as a gift of security, the new base at Dal Molin suggests that bases can be something of a Trojan horse: Once*

established, bases provide U.S. officials with a powerful tool to influence foreign governments’ decisions about bases and a range of policy issues. The threat of with-drawing a base, alone, given the perceived economic damage of base closure, becomes a way to bend the will of host governments and populations (although, base closures have actually often helped local economies as experienced in Germany, the U.S., and elsewhere has shown).”

The new military pivot may shift the balance towards the south and the bases may have fewer soldiers and more robots. But a permanent U.S. presence must remain, because, as General Mini puts it: *“Permanent bases are also the image of permanent war.”* To maintain itself, the empire requires in fact a state of permanent war.

“By ourselves we [Italians] really count for nothing, we have no national pride.”



Killing Mussolini (from p. 17)

a minimum. They were ideologically anti-American and were subordinate to the Communist Party of Yugoslavia from which they obtained many of their arms and instructions. As such, they even accepted Yugoslavia's territorial claims against Italy for Friuli and Trieste.

The Italian Stalin

At that time, the leader of the Italian Communists was Palmiro Togliatti who was also the Vice Premier of the wartime coalition government in the south. Togliatti had led the party and lived in exile since 1927. He went to the Soviet Union in 1939 and remained there during most of World War II, directing Italian-language propaganda broadcasts from Radio Moscow. Ominously, even though an Italian, he refused to intercede with the Soviet authorities for better treatment of the 80,000 to 115,000 Italian prisoners of war held by the Soviets in extremely harsh and deplorable conditions.



Mussolini during his final months – a fight to the finish

what he termed “historical justice” had apparently been satisfied.

In April 1945, from Rome, Togliatti called Luigi Longo, the Milan Communist chief, instructing him to liquidate any Fascists before the arrival of Allied forces. Longo responded by calling for a war of extermination in which captured Fascists would be murdered without even the pretense of a trial. Meanwhile, Allied Forces Headquarters had instructed twenty-five OSS teams to find Mussolini and take him alive. He

was to be held securely and turned over to Allied troops after which he would stand trial for presumed war crimes. This was in accordance with the terms of the Armistice imposed on Italy when it surrendered. This led to two unsuccessful American attempts to locate the Duce and rescue him from falling

(Cont'd. on p. 26)

There are still unanswered questions about Mussolini's ouster and his relations with Hitler.

In a letter dated February 15, 1943, to Vincenzo Bianco, the Italian representative on the Comintern Executive Committee, Togliatti rebuffed his suggestion to intervene on behalf of these prisoners and spoke of the Italian people being poisoned by Fascism. He stated, “*The fact that for thousands of families, Mussolini's war and especially the expedition against Russia will end in tragedy and personal bereavement is the best, the most effective antidote...As I have already told you: by no means do I believe the prisoners should be liquidated, especially since they can be useful in reaching some of our objectives. But if the objectively difficult conditions should mean the end of many, I see no cause to argue against a concrete manifestation of historical justice.*” [Stalin and Togliatti, by Agarossi and Zaslavsky, pp 167-168, emphasis added]

There was no quarter given on the Eastern Front. Thousands of Italian prisoners were executed upon capture. The survivors of these massacres were subjected to extreme cold, malnutrition, lack of sanitation, forced labor and brutality. Based on data released after the collapse of the Soviet Union, it has been revealed that only 14.4% of the Italian prisoners of war that fell into Soviet hands returned to Italy alive. This stands in stark contrast to the 99.9%, 98.7% and 94.4% who survived American, British and German internment respectively. Togliatti's desire for

MUSSOLINI ON TRIAL

The murder of Benito Mussolini cheated the world of a momentous trial. What sort of war crimes he could be accused of can only be conjectured. His defense of Italy's colonial wars and other interventions would surely have presented an intellectual dilemma for all the imperialist powers, including the United States, standing in judgement of him. The reasons for his Axis alliance might also have shed an embarrassing light on 1930s European politics.

It is known that Mussolini was preparing a defense of his actions. He had a trunk loaded with classified documents that disappeared with his murder. Some of those purported documents have surfaced over the years and can be found on the internet, including correspondence with Churchill during the war.

Even in death some world leaders wanted to understand Mussolini's motives. At his autopsy, his brain matter was analyzed for syphilis to explain why the rational Duce had succumbed to Hitler's charms. The results were negative. Had he lived to explain himself, history would be better served.

A trial might have been a mockery but no doubt provocative. How can we truly say that the history of the Second World War is complete? As British Cabinet member Duff Cooper wrote in *Old Men Forget*, “[without Italy] the Axis, which was to prove the pivot of Hitler's assault upon Europe, and without which he could hardly have launched the Second World War, would never have been formed.” Mussolini was the key. But Togliatti and Stalin weren't much interested in the past. It was a new world they envisioned.



Killing Mussolini (cont'd. from p.25)

into the hands of the Communists. The Italian government in the South even tried a similar rescue mission.

The Ring Closes

Everywhere in northern Italy, Fascists and their families were being hunted down and massacred by Communist partisans. Mussolini's followers urged him to flee to Switzerland or fly to Spain to save his life. He refused and was determined to make a last stand in the Alps at Val Tellina with 3,000 Blackshirts that his key minister Alessandro Pavolini was attempting to gather. Milan was filled with Fascist officials, some detachments of the Fascist Republic, armed partisans and German troops stationed mainly in their barracks. At this point, Milan's Cardinal Schuster attempted to mediate between Mussolini and the National Council of the Resistance, which was recognized by the Italian government and the Allied High Command and had authority over both Communist and non-Communist partisans.

Mussolini asked if the partisans and Allied commanders would guarantee his life and the lives of his ministers and their families if he surrendered. Fascist troops should be treated as prisoners of war under the Hague Convention. General Cadorna, of the Council, explained that in accordance with British Field Marshal Sir Harold Alexander's announcement, surrendering forces of the Italian Social Republic would be treated as prisoners of war while anyone accused of war crimes would be put on trial. The Duce insisted that he could not surrender without first consulting his German allies. It was then revealed that German General Wolff had already offered to surrender his forces in North Italy without informing Mussolini and that he would be coming to the Cardinal's palace later that day to sign the Armistice. The Duce was shocked by this news and angrily denounced the Germans for their treachery. Cardinal Schuster tried unsuccessfully to calm him and urged him to stay, but Mussolini broke off negotiations and left the meeting stating that he would return in an hour.

Rather than return to Cardinal Schuster's office Mussolini decided to leave for Como about thirty miles to the north in order to await the arrival of Pavolini and his Fascists.

But he arrived too late. The Fascist force of 3,000 men and two hundred vehicles had come earlier. When it became known that Mussolini was not there, rumors began to spread among the ranks that the Duce had escaped to Switzerland. Without their leader and rallying point, the troops became convinced that there was no point in further resistance and soon began to melt away. As the hours passed with no word from Mussolini, the force gradually dissipated and only a handful of loyal troops remained.

Mussolini now realized that there was no longer any hope of a last stand in the Alps. His only chance of escape was to link up with a nearby German anti-aircraft unit of about two hundred men that was retreating north. Taking along a collection of secret papers that he had been compiling for weeks, the Duce and the other Fascists



Communist hatred for Mussolini dated back to the Fascist rise to power. Moreover, the murder of the Roselli brothers by French fascists (above) and the Italian victory in the Spanish Civil war made him a marked man.

Some believe that Winston Churchill also had a motive to eliminate the Duce. Oddly, Churchill chose to "vacation" in wartorn Italy in 1945, possibly seeking Mussolini's stash of secret papers, including correspondence with Churchill himself (right).



joined the German convoy on April 27th as they headed up the west shore of Lake Como. They were shortly joined by Mussolini's mistress Claretta Petacci. The convoy was soon blocked at the town of Musso by partisans who indicated that they would let the Germans proceed, but only if they surrendered any Italians. Despite the Duce's protests, the Germans left all other Italians behind, including Claretta Petacci, who were seized and taken to Dongo. The Germans proceeded with Mussolini disguised as a wounded German soldier.

Would Mussolini had lived to stand trial if he returned to Cardinal Schuster's office?

The Capture and Murder

At Dongo, the German convoy was again stopped by Communist partisans who demanded to search all vehicles for Fascists. A rumor had spread that the Duce was present.

The Germans wanted to avoid a fight and complied. Mussolini was discovered and seized by the partisans. Claretta Petacci, who was captured previously, was allowed to join him.

The Communist partisans were initially ordered by their command in Milan to bring Mussolini back to that city alive. When Togliatti in Rome heard that the Duce had been captured, he unilaterally countermanded this order as head of the Italian Communist Party and Vice Premier of Italy. He gave the order by radio that Mussolini was not to be turned over alive to the British or Americans under any circumstances. Instead, he was to be executed without trial as soon as his identity was established. The same fate was ordered for all

(Cont'd. on p. 31)



St. Petersburg (cont'd. from p.23)

rest of the world, forever lifted the shroud of darkness of the Middle Ages. New insights into philosophy, science, and, especially, the arts, transformed the planet. The Italian artisans hired to design St. Petersburg were products of that enlightened age.

Perhaps the most influential of these architects was Domenico Trezzini (1670-1734). Born in Ticino, Trezzini's Rome-inspired studies laid the groundwork for what would become known as *Petrine Baroque*, a new architectural style blending Western European traditions with Russian ideas. Among the buildings he designed were St. Peter and Paul Cathedral, the Twelve Collegia Building (now the main building of St. Petersburg University), and the Alexander



The Hermitage Theater by Giacomo Guarenghi



Enrico Cecchetti (1850 -1928) was among a long line of Italians who trained Russian ballarinas.

(1675-1758), who became his court architect for a five year period, from 1718 to 1723. During this time, Michetti designed the garden and cascading fountains at Peterhof Palace on the outskirts of St. Petersburg. Though meant to evoke the *magnifique* Palace of Versailles in France, Peterhof Palace, with its classical structure and flowing streams of water, is more akin to Villa D'Este just outside of Rome, the 16th century estate owned by Cardinal Ippolito D'Este.

Carlo Bartolomeo Rastrelli, born in Florence (1675-1744), came to St. Petersburg in 1716 and remained there for the rest of his life. Although an architect by trade, Rastrelli's skills as a sculptor are what impressed Peter's court. Over a thirty-eight year peri-

od, appropriately, some Italian architects are now buried). Trezzini was so admired by Peter the Great that the czar served as godfather to Trezzini's son, Pietro, who would himself become a famous architect.

Another favorite of Peter the Great was Nicola Michetti

of the style known as Russian Baroque. Bartolomeo even surpassed his father's reign in the city, designing buildings and painting interiors for almost fifty years.

And St. Michael's Castle? It was designed by Vincenzo Brenna (1745-1820), who, like Domenico Trezzini, was born in Ticino. And a fellow Ticino protégé of Brenna's, Luigi Rusca (1762-1822), moved on to assist in decorating a myriad of buildings throughout St. Petersburg.

Carlo Rossi, born in Naples (1775-1849), first arrived in St. Petersburg as a child via his mother, Guertruda, a ballet dancer invited to perform at court (more on ballet later). In 1795, after working as an apprentice with Vincenzo Brenna, another Italian architect in St. Petersburg, Rossi returned to Italy and earned his

Italian architects also worked in Moscow on the Kremlin wall and Red Square

architectural degree in 1808.

As soon as the ink dried on his parchment, Rossi brought his prolific talents back to St. Petersburg that

(Cont'd. on p. 32)

Giulio de Litta (1763-1839) became a Russian general in 1789 at twenty-six years old, the youngest such officer in Russian history.



Ellis Island (cont'd from p. 21)

tion of the steerage hold, his bunk on the top of five tiers. He hung on with both hands as the ship pitched and rolled through the November Atlantic weather. Once in New York harbor, the ship was quarantined for two days because of sickness on board.

Finally the La Mastro family was ferried to Ellis Island, carrying wool stuffing from their mattresses in Teano, a luxurious possession in Italy. Mario remembers meeting an Italian woman in her eighties on the Island. She was dressed in black, traveling alone. The officials tied a tag around her neck. On it they wrote her destination: California. She would go to the Island's "railroad room" where she could buy a rail ticket and from which she would be ferried to the mainland rail lines in New Jersey.

A tag was tied to Mario's wrist, and he settled down on a bench with his family to await his father. "There were bars all over the place," he recalls. His father arrived, recognizable to Mario only through pictures. The La Mastro family stood anxiously before a high, round desk while his father proved to an official that he had a job and enough income to support his family. After a lengthy questioning, they were admitted to the U.S. and went to the lodgings Mario's father had rented for them at 506 Metropolitan Avenue in Brooklyn – a converted stable, with horses just beyond their wall next door.

Mario grows pensive for a moment. "You know," he says, "this is the first time I have talked about Ellis Island since I arrived there exactly sixty years ago this month. I guess for us, we wanted to forget it."

Maria Baccili has *not* forgotten Ellis Island, where she arrived, at age 21, in September 1927, carrying her 18-month-old son in her arms. Her husband Pietro had come earlier, and had sent for them. He had a history of migrations. Born in Brazil, where his Italian parents had gone seeking a better life, he went to Italy at the age of 19. He met Maria in a small village near Lucca, and married in 1923. Pietro found a job in a marble quarry. "There was just enough work to keep going," Maria remembers. They decided to try their luck in America.

Maria and her son were detained on Ellis Island for two days and nights – first, because they had arrived on a holiday weekend, and second, because they were suspected of having an infectious skin disease. (Actually, the "disease" turned out to be inflamed insect bites, a souvenir of the ship.)

"It was a harsh place," Maria says, gesturing emphatically with her hands. *Severo* is the word she repeats again and again in describing it. "All the walls were covered with white tiles. The guards didn't speak Italian, and they never smiled." At night she, her baby, and another woman were locked into a detention room by a guard with a huge ring of keys. Maria was ill from an intestinal disorder.

Although many people believe the term WOP means "With-Out Papers," there is no evidence of it being used at Ellis Island. The ship's manifest was your papers. Stowaways were an exception and of any ethnic origin.

And scared. Her baggage, containing all her possessions in the New World, had been taken from her.

On Monday, the Island's staff returned to work and Pietro was able to take his wife and son off the Island. The area in the Bronx where Maria and Pietro settled was farmland, cultivated by Italian immigrants, mostly Neapolitans, who grew all sorts of vegetables. Goats wandered on Gun Hill Road, now one of the busiest thoroughfares in New York City. Maria worked in a laundry with Pietro until the birth of their second child; she then quit and began making money by knitting sweaters and embroidering infants' wear at home.

Would she still make the trip to America if she had to do it over? Maria's twinkling eyes and cheerful face become serious. "I don't know how to answer that," she says. "My children are here, but my brother, sister, and *nipoti* are still in Italy." How many nieces and nephews? She counts for a moment. "Fourteen," she laughs. "But the Church of the Immaculate Conception on Gun Hill Road....

The Italians were already building it when we came. We finished it in 1930. It's beautiful. *Bella!*"

Today the large staircase which led from the baggage area up to the great hall has been relocated and rebuilt. Every one of the immigrants who came through the Island climbed those steps. Unbeknownst to them, they were taking the Island's first medical examination.

Doctors stood at the top of the stairs. Their eyes searched out anyone having difficulty, anyone breathing too hard, limping or sweating too much. Such people were pulled from the procession.

Their clothing was marked with white chalk – an L for lame, an H for heart and lungs. (Tuberculosis, then unarrestable, was the leading disease causing death in the U.S. at the turn of the century.) They were escorted by uniformed officials – and they feared uniforms with old-world dread – to steel-mesh cages that lined both sides of the Great Hall. All the Hs, all the Ls, and so forth, were put together, detained for extensive examination and observation.

The Great Hall is 200 feet long, 100 feet wide, and its vaulted ceiling is 56 feet high. Its floor was divided by iron fences into a maze of narrow passages through which the immigrants



Questioning each immigrant by using the ship's manifest. Translators were seated next to each applicant.



shuffled up and down to the various examinations. Five thousand people every day. Uniformed officials sat behind desks at points along the line. The desks were high, like those of court judges, which was fitting because the new arrivals depended on those officials for acceptance or rejection to the new land. Translators shouted their rapid-fire questions over a veritable babel of noise.

“They would try to trick us,” a woman recalled. A few minutes after answering that she had never been married, the interpreter asked casually, “What was your husband’s first name again?”

An official wrote the responses in a file envelope. A wrong or suspicious response would lead to his calling one of the guards who roamed the hall. He would take the person out of line, chalk an SI on his clothes for “Special Inquiry,” and lock him or her in a cage with other SIs. Later, each SI would face a board of interrogators seated at a table in an inquiry room. A particularly tricky question for single women was “Who sent for you?” If she answered, “my fiancé,” she was detained until he showed up. Frequently, officials required that a marriage ceremony be performed on Ellis Island before they would allow the woman to enter the country.

The remaining immigrants moved along to another medical exam – of the face, neck, hair, and hands. Those with lice or possible skin diseases were sent into cages. The next exam was the “mental” one, to discover the “feble-minded.” It consisted of being asked “common sense questions.” For example, literate immigrants might be shown a watch and asked to tell the time.

There was still more interrogation at the next desk. Two of the most troublesome questions for Italians were: “Do you have a job waiting?” and “Who paid your passage?” Being the poorest of the large national groups immigrating, Italians often could not pay the cost of their passage. Many signed labor contracts, agreeing, in return for a ticket, to work for a boss (*padrone*) in the U.S. – for exploitative wages and a length of time set by the *padrone*. The problem: The U.S. Congress had made the practice illegal, forcing many Italians to become liars on entering their new country.

The most dreaded exam for many was the “button hook exam” for trachoma, a highly contagious disease, then incurable, which caused blindness. A doctor took an ordinary iron hook used to lace up the high, buttoned shoes of the era and now used for ice-skate laces. He would, when he didn’t forget to do so, dip it in an antiseptic solution. Then he would place it over the eyelid of the immigrant, and pull the lid all the way back. People balked. Children screamed and fought. The exam was the bottleneck in the processing.

All in all, the work of the Island was awesome. During its peak period, one million arrivals per year came through it. (Its present buildings, opened in 1900, were made to handle at most a half million a year.) The former supervising historian of the National Park Service, Thomas M. Pitkin, wrote in his excellent 1975 study that the history of Ellis Island was “plagued by corruption, swindling, brutality, and exploitation, on the Island and near it [con men and thugs waited for the successful immigrants to land at Manhattan’s battery]; attacks from restrictionists and antirestrictionists



Immigrants had their hair checked for lice and eyelids painfully lifted with shoehooks to inspect for hookworms.

alike; misunderstanding with distant superiors who were often subjected to powerful lobby pressure; increasingly complex legislation to be applied at once to exhausted human beings, and enormous numbers of people to be sifted through inadequate facilities as quickly as possible.” The Island’s superintendent in 1907, Robert Watchorn, was moved to complain, “a saint from heaven actuated by all his saintliness would fail to give satisfaction in this place.”

The U.S. government, using incomplete records, claims that 80 percent of the immigrants passed all exams and were off the island in one day, leaving the other 20 percent behind. For Italians, *padrone*-linked and frequently diseased because of poor living conditions at home, the percentage of detainees was undoubtedly higher. Before the lucky ones would board the ferry for Manhattan, they were taken to the Island’s money exchange. There, as often as not, they were cheated. At one point cigar coupons were distributed as U.S. currency. Although the Italian government bombastically spoke of its “subjects” in its “American colonies,” it provided no real protection for them on the Island; American officials did little better. Scandal after scandal marks the Island’s record. In October 1921, *Outlook*

magazine commented that Ellis Island was “one of the most efficient factories in the world for the production of hatred for America and American institutions.” Around the same time, New York City’s Commissioner of Health inspected the Island. He found that five times more doctors were needed to handle the medical problems there. A pile of vermin-infested blankets had been used the night before by immigrants sleeping on the floor. Moreover, there was a backlog of fifteen thousand immigrants locked in the steerage holds of ships in the harbor, waiting to be taken to the Island. The Newspaper Enterprise Association investigated Ellis Island and found major health and sanitation hazards.

Appropriately, on Ellis Island one has a fine view of the nearby Statue of Liberty. But of Miss Liberty’s back. Only those admitted to Manhattan would see her face.

Those who couldn’t pass Ellis Island’s tests were sent back on the next ship bound for their country, regardless of the port for which it was headed. If they had no money (they were searched), their passage was at the expense of the steamship company who brought them to Ellis. Children under 10 had to be accompanied by an adult. But any child over 10 who did not have an adult with him who could afford two tickets was consid-

(Cont’d. on p. 31)

***The trick question at Ellis Island was, “Do you have a job waiting for you?”
The correct answer was “no.”***



average single-family home is currently worth in many parts of the United States — and the bulk of this was given to charities, not his children.

He felt great wealth would make him lose touch with the common people, the people he wanted to serve. *“Money itch is a bad thing,”* Giannini said. *“I never had that trouble.”* Giannini was noted for his modest lifestyle, but had he wished, he could have lived more luxuriously than any king or potentate and become one of the richest people in the world.

Giannini was also famous for making pithy remarks that were widely circulated in the media and the business world. Online, at www.quoteswise.com/amadeo-peter-giannini-quotes.html there are one hundred of A.P.’s quotes. They give a measure of the man:

- *“No man actually owns a fortune; it owns him.”*
- *“I believe in using money to help worthy causes while one is still living, and thus get some fun out of it. Of course, it is every man’s duty to strive to give his children the best possible equipment for life. But to leave millions to young sons is dangerous. Each of us is better for having to make our own way in the world. God meant us to work. Those who don’t work never amount to anything. To take from anyone the incentive to work is a questionable service.”*
- *“We consider the wage-earner or small business man who deposits his savings regularly, no matter how small the amount may be, to be the most valuable client our bank can have.”*
- *“The main thing is to run your business absolutely straight. When you have a good, clean bank, absolutely unentangled in any speculative exploits, nothing can happen to you. Whenever banks fail, you find it is because of outside ventures or crookedness by someone inside the institution. No man, no bank, no business, should put itself into the grip of anyone else. Failure usually comes from doing things that shouldn’t have been done*



Giannini’s modest home in San Mateo, CA

— often things of questionable ethics.”

A Family Man

Granddaughter Hammerness recalls that while the banking business was always on his mind, A.P. did take time to enjoy his family. “Sometimes in the morning before he’d go to the city (San Francisco, from suburban San Mateo), he’d get my sister and I into the car (a specially designed 1933 Lincoln) and we’d go to Crystal Springs Road (a winding, mountainous street). He had a siren on the car and going up the road one of us would be allowed to work the siren all the way to a particular spot, then he’d turn around, we’d trade seats, and the other one



Amadeo Pietro Giannini

would work the siren all the way down. And grandpa would be laughing all the way,”

“We’d go to the movies on Sunday afternoons, especially if it was an Abbot & Costello movie. He just loved them. He’d roar through the whole movie. And of course we’d be

watching him and laughing at him more than at the movie. Well, not laughing at him but with him. It was just a lot of fun and he’d get out, be chuckling, and really enjoy himself. He liked the ‘Road’ movies, too—Bob Hope and Bing Crosby, Dorothy Lamour and Veronica Lake. He liked all that stuff. You know, B of A did a whole lot for the movie industry.”

Known Only to a Few

It is ironic, though, that the man who enjoyed movies so much and did so much to help the movie industry—and whose life story has incredible dramatic potentials—has never been the subject of a major film. There were two films, *American Madness* (1932) and *House of Strangers* (1949), that some critics, who were not very familiar with Giannini’s life, thought were based on him, but the connections were inaccurate and, in the case of the latter film, insulting.

His granddaughter may have the explanation for why a true film about him has not been made. Said Hammerness: “To a lot of people he was just ‘that Dago banker,’ that’s all. That’s what a lot of people, especially the eastern bankers, called him.”

[Bob Masullo is a retired newspaperman. For many years he was an arts and entertainment writer for *The Sacramento Bee*.]



Ellis Island (cont'd from p. 29)

ered an “adult” and sent back alone. The despair of these deportees was well captured in Elia Kazan’s film *America, America*, in which a young Armenian, rejected because of TB, jumped overboard from a ship at night rather than return to the genocidal slaughter by the Turks. The Island’s history of hopelessness and suicide cannot be accurately chronicled; early records were lost in a fire in 1897, and a huge chunk of the remaining papers was inexplicably destroyed by the National Archives in 1960. We do know, however, that the Island needed its own crematorium.

Numerous efforts were undertaken to make life on the Island more tolerable. For example, the kitchens were ordered to fix “national” dishes instead of their usual bland fare. In typical bureaucratic fashion, the staff couldn’t manage to serve the right ethnic dishes to their respective groups. There are stories, probably apocryphal, of non-Italians looking at spaghetti and tomato sauce and vowing they’d be damned before they would eat “a bunch of bloody worms.”

In the nineteenth century Herman Melville rhapsodized that “we are not a narrow tribe of men.... No: Our blood is as the flood of the Amazon, made up of a thousand noble currents all pouring into one.” If this is so, it was only in spite of the efforts of the restrictionists, who had enormous support in the country. Italians and Jews were at the top of the nativists’ hate list. They were late arrivals, and made up a disproportionately large part of those coming through the Island. *Leslie’s Weekly*, an influential magazine in 1902, expressed typical prejudice of the time, noting that arrivals on the Island were “of the poorer class, often grimy and strangely and shabbily dressed.... These include Italians, Russian Jews, and several other nationalities. They appear generally to be of a low order of knowledge, if not intelligence, as well as of physical development. The better class, comprising natives of Great Britain, Germany, and Scandinavia, frequently are as well attired as are average Americans. Better developed physically, and mentally superior to the former class, they are more desirable acquisitions to American citizenship.”

Ellis Island opened as an immigration station on January 1, 1892. When the Island shut down on November 29, 1954, 16 million immigrants had passed through it. An astonishing figure made more remarkable when one notes that the entire U.S. population in 1890 was only 62.5 million. Most of the 16 million came through during the Island’s peak years, 1892 to 1915, and 1918 to 1924, and three quarters of all immigrants in those years came through the Island. Because Italians were the largest national group coming to America during that period (over 3.5 million were from Italy; the czarist empire was second with more than 3.3 million), it is certain that they were the largest group processed at the Island.

We can thank former Chrysler (now FIAT-Chrysler) chairman Lee Iacocca for accepting the challenge in 1982 to restore Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty. This son of Italian immigrants raised not only the funds for the physical restoration but restored long forgotten memories.

Killing Mussolini (from p. 26)

the other major figures of Mussolini’s Italian Social Republic. This order was never revealed to the non-Communist members of the National Council of the Resistance because it was known that they felt bound by the terms of the Armistice, which stipulated that Mussolini should be surrendered to the Allies. In fact, Premier Ivanoe Bonomi, Togliatti’s superior in the cabinet, insisted that he had never even heard of Togliatti’s order to execute.

The chosen executioner was a Communist partisan named Walter Audisio who went by the alias Colonel Valerio. The following day Audisio selected fifteen captured Fascists for execution. That afternoon, he brought Mussolini and Claretta Petacci to a crossroads a few miles from the farmhouse where they were being held and shot them both. He then returned to Dongo to take charge of the killing of the fifteen Fascists he had earlier selected. The mayor’s protests were dismissed as they were all gunned down including Claretta Petacci’s brother Marcello. The bodies of Mussolini and the other victims were dumped at Piazzale Loreto in Milan, the scene of a previous Fascist execution of partisans. The bodies were subjected



A cross on the left wall marks the spot where Mussolini and Petacci were gunned down.

to ghastly physical abuse then hung upside down from a gas station framework.

The murder of the Duce, and his ministers, along with Claretta and Marcello Petacci, proved to be only the beginning of a bloodbath that engulfed Italy at the end of the war. Communist partisans murdered thousands of Fascists and their families, as well as other political opponents. These mass killings were often accompanied by personal vendettas, score settling, and banditry. Togliatti secretly reported back to Joseph Stalin in Moscow that 50,000 Fascists and their families had been killed during this period. This fit in perfectly with the Soviet plan to eliminate any opponents who could stand in the way of a post-war Communist takeover.

Togliatti was never called to justice for his many crimes and continued to play a prominent role in Italian politics until his death in 1964. His plan for a Communist takeover of Italy, however, was never realized. But his overriding loyalty to the Soviet Union (he also encouraged the brutal suppression of the 1956 Hungarian uprising) was acknowledged in the renaming of the Russian city of Stavropol on the Volga River to Tolyattigrad in 1964.



St. Petersburg (cont'd. from p.27)

same year. He not only constructed numerous buildings but, as part of his over-all view, actually laid out the city's grid in conjunction with each new work, thus combining city planning with artistic genius. The buildings, palaces, and estates designed and beautified by Rossi and his assistants, the painters Giovanni Scotti (Venice, 1776-1830) and Antonio Vighi (born in France to Italian parents, 1764-1844), are so numerous they would be enough to fill three small European cities.

Catherine Embraces the Italian Style

Russian rulers who followed Peter the Great knew a good thing when they saw it. One of them, Catherine the Great (1729-1796), was responsible for hiring two more great Italian architects: Antonio Rinaldi (born near Naples, 1709-1794) and Giacomo Quarenghi (born in Bergamo, 1744-1817). Rinaldi designed the Marble Palace, one of the first neo-classical buildings in St. Petersburg. Construction began in 1768, where workers carefully followed Rinaldi's blueprints, which exalted classical perspectives. He also designed Gatchina Palace just outside of St. Petersburg, a country residence for the imperial families of Russia.

Quarenghi brought his love of Venetian architect Andrea Palladio's work to St. Petersburg via his wide variety of commissions: homes, summer houses, bridges, theaters, hospices, and gardens. But his most famous building in St. Petersburg remains a popular local and tourist favorite: the Hermitage Theater built between 1783-1789, often frequented by Catherine herself.

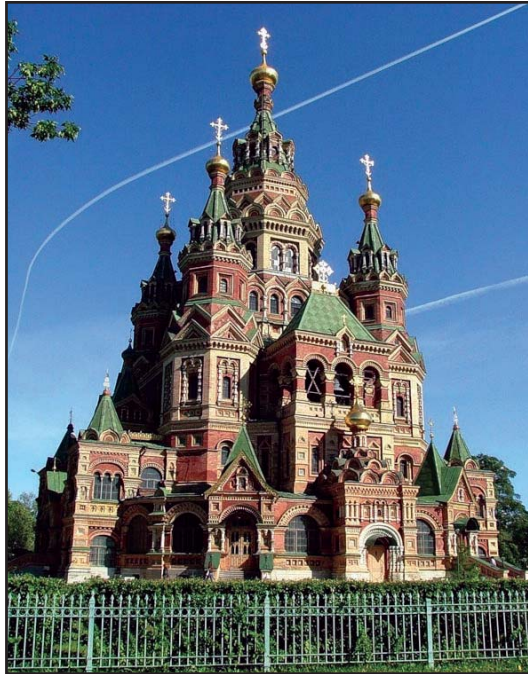
As a testament to the depth of Italic genius, consider Rinaldi and Quarenghi's other famous projects: Rinaldi had worked on the sumptuous palace in Caserta, near Naples, and, toward the end of his career, Quarenghi's talents moved to Moscow, where he redesigned Red Square, giving it a Palladian flair.

Italy's Other Gifts

The Italic influence on St. Petersburg wasn't just limited to architecture.

Without the use of digital cameras, painters like Pietro Antoni Rotari (Verona, 1702-1762), Francesco Fontebasso (Venice, 1707-1769), Stefano Torelli (Bologna, 1712-1780), Salvatore Tonci (Rome, 1756-1844), and Alessandro Molinari (born in Germany to Italian parents, 1772-1831) distilled images of Russian noble families and their surroundings, both indoor and outdoor. Two Italian painters from Venice, Giuseppe Valeriani (1701-1762) and Antonio Peresinotti (1708-1778), even became teachers at the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts.

The art of opera, invented by Italians a century earlier, also made its way to St. Petersburg via composers such as the Venetians Baldassare Galuppi (1706-1785) and Catarino Cavos (1775-1840) and the Neapolitans Giovanni Paisello (1741-1816) and Domenico Cimarosa (1749-1801). Two composers in particular had a direct influence on Russian music: Francesco Araja (Naples, 1709-1762) wrote the first-ever opera in the Russian language, and Giuseppe Sarti (Faenza, 1729-1802) taught music to budding Russian composers.



Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul by Domenico Trezzini where Czar Nicholas II is interred.

As for ballet: Although the French and Russians often get the credit, this graceful art form first appeared during the Renaissance via the court of Queen Catherine de Medici of France, who was born in Italy. And in St. Petersburg, the impresario Giovanni Battista Locatelli (Bologna, 1713-1785), former dancer Giuseppe Canziani (Venice, 1750-1792), and composer Cesare Pugni (Genoa, 1802-1870) re-introduced this graceful art to both the elite and the *hoi polloi*. The Italian ballet tradition was carried into the 20th century via Enrico Cecchetti (Rome, 1850-1928), a former dancer-turned-teacher in St. Petersburg whose students included future superstars Anna Pavola and Vaslav Nijinsky.

Italian influence in St. Petersburg also extends to military leadership: Giulio de Litta of Milan (1763-1839) adopted Russian citizenship and became a general in 1789, making him, at twenty six years old, the youngest such officer in Russian history.

And if you followed the 2014 World Cup in Brazil, you may have noticed that Russia's national team has an Italian coach: former footballer Fabio Capello, who holds practice sessions in stadiums located in...St. Petersburg.

A City At Risk

St. Petersburg has seen its share of hardship over the past two centuries: Napoleon attacked it in 1812, Stalin purged its dissidents in the 1930s, and the Nazis laid seize to it from 1941-1944. And it also underwent some name changes over the past century: It became Petrograd in 1914 and then Leningrad in 1924, finally reclaiming its original name when the former Soviet Union dissolved in 1991.

Yet St. Petersburg had another reason to cheer in 1991: Its historic center and related monuments were named a UNESCO World Heritage site. And on July 17, 1998, the historical importance of the city made world headlines yet again: the remains of Czar Nicholas II and other members of the royal Romanov family were interred at St. Peter and Paul Church, the house of worship built by Domenico Trezzini centuries earlier.

Though it is Russia's "second city," St. Petersburg and its five million residents can take pride in the fact that their city played—and still plays—a crucial role in Russian identity. And Italic people around the globe can also take pride that Peter the Great's imperial city still glitters with Italian genius.



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JOSEPH L. TROMBA, M.D., F.A.C.P., F.A.C.G.
ANTHONY J. MASSIMILLO, M.D.**

GASTROENTEROLOGY • HEPATOLOGY

901 STEWART AVENUE
SUITE 235
GARDEN CITY, NY 11530

TEL. (516) 742-5252
FAX (516) 742-7623

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220 East 42nd Street,
Ste 3105, New York, NY 10017

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