

Editorials for Migration

Wall Street Journal 1973-1992

Selected quotes from these editorials:

March 28, 1973

Re John and Yoko

The Immigration and Naturalization Service has ordered Mr. Lennon deported; it seems he was once convicted in England for the possession of hashish. Miss Ono has been given temporary status as a resident alien...

We do not think it the mark of a civilized society that Miss Ono is forced to choose between abandoning the search for her daughter or living apart from her husband, whose presence in the United States is certainly no danger to anyone...

June 18, 1976

The Illegal Alien Non-Problem

Illegal aliens have emerged as a favorite whipping boy in several of our largest cities. Taxpayers complain that they burden public services; unions complain that they take away jobs from citizens; and mayors like New York's Abraham Beame complain that the federal government should pay the

cities more to compensate for these social costs. We offer a simple solution - make the aliens legal...

The easiest, cheapest and fairest way to protect the labor market will be to legalize the immigrants, putting the law to work protecting them rather than persecuting them. Legal or not, the present wave of Western Hemisphere immigrants is already enriching and contributing to North American society. As we ought to know from our historical experience, that is what can be expected of those whose desire to immigrate is demonstrably so strong...

July 6, 1978

Reflections on Independence

Over the Fourth of July... one item of news that made the New York Times over the weekend just past was a leak that the administration is planning to reorganize the government's frontier forces, those agencies that control, or try to control, legal and illegal immigration and foreign travel.

The official reasons for agitation over immigration, legal or illegal, do not hold water: the assertions that this continent is running out of resources or space are too obviously silly. That immigrants must be "protected from exploitation" won't bear scrutiny either; they want those jobs, and would rather be "exploited" here than abroad. That immigrants are taking employment away from natives also doesn't wash; the newcomers do work that the native born

cannot or will not do...

The historians make much of our forebears who fled religious and political persecution, but their books tend to play down the great majority who came to escape *economic* persecution. Whether from the mercantilist states of the past or the socialist states of the present, most immigration to America was for economic reasons which, as Prof. Galbraith sneeringly but correctly noted, means, in the main, freedom to make money...

August 24, 1981

Refugees and Reason

Two years after the great exodus of refugees from Communist Indochina reached its height, a huge number of Indochinese - particularly Vietnamese - are still trying to escape to the U.S. and other Free World havens, and they'll probably continue trying to do so for years...

And if Indochina's refugees are fleeing so they can get to a place where they can keep the fruits of their labors, we ought to write a law that is generous toward them.

America has special obligations in Indochina, obligations going far beyond any we might have toward refugees from trouble, oppression, and poverty in other parts of the world. The U.S. shares in the responsibility for Indochina's plight. America asked for and won the faith of millions in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. It failed them in war. But it need not fail them in defeat, and is now faced with the opportunity of

demonstrating the nobility that has been all along its cause.

June 1, 1983

Free Markets Except When It Comes To People

OXFORD, England - Few can remember a world without passports and borders. Yet that's how it was only 70 years ago. In Europe, you needed your passport only to go to Russia or Turkey.

The freedom to travel was a part of Europe's liberal civilization. During the hundred years before World War I, most European economies enjoyed price stability - thanks to the gold standard - and an unprecedented growth in the standard of living. There were no major wars. Civil liberties and parliamentary institutions strengthened throughout Europe and seemed likely to spread over the whole world. Everyone believed that free migration promoted prosperity. Statesmen took for granted that the freedom to travel was part of the market economy...

If the defense of capitalism is to have the humane and liberating aspect it had in the heyday of the free market, however, and if conservatism is not to be a merely defensive and reactionary creed, it is high time attempts were made to relax and liberalize the controls in free movement.

Contributed by John Gray, Jesus College, Oxford, UK

August 31, 1983

Invite the Palestinians to America

Now the question has arisen: Why not invite the Palestinians to live in America? ...

The most urgent dimension is probably the refugee camps, which hold about 730,000 Palestinians. They are in the Gaza Strip, Syria, Jordan, the West Bank and Lebanon. They have existed for more than a generation, sinks of misery and despair. They are a stain not only for their host countries, including Israel since 1967, but also for the principal funding countries (including the U.S.) of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, which administers them... Under the Refugee Act of 1980, the U.S. has a framework for initiating a program to bring in any or all of these refugees...

Would they come? Certainly the Palestinians could decide for themselves. To venture a conclusion, though, one doesn't have to walk far through the refugee camps in Lebanon, to talk a lot with the men, women, and children amid the flies and dust and bombed-out buildings or to linger long beside the mass grave of the hundreds buried at Chatilla. At least for this generation of Palestinians the brightest hope might be found in America's call to the tired, homeless and tempest tossed. It's still engraved at the base of the Statue of Liberty, whence in 1980 President Reagan launched his campaign for the White House. [by Seth Lipsky, foreign editor]

July 3, 1984

In Praise of Huddled Masses

If Washington wants to “do something” about immigration, we propose a five-word constitutional amendment: There shall be open borders. Perhaps this policy is overly ambitious in today’s world, but the U.S. became the world’s envy by trumpeting precisely this kind of heresy. Our greatest heresy is that we believe in people as *the* great resource of our land. Those who would live in freedom have voted over the centuries with their feet. Wherever the state abused its people, beginning with the Puritan pilgrims and continuing today in places like Ho Chi Minh City and Managua, they’ve aimed for our shores. They - we - have astonished the world with the country’s success...

America, above all, is a nation founded upon optimism. The Republic will prosper so long as it does not disavow this taproot. The issue is not what we offer the teeming masses, but what they offer us: their hands, their minds, their spirit, and above all the chance to be true to our own past and our own future.

December 30, 1985

Wetbacks as People

... we have been perusing the results of two studies just published on the economic and social effects of recent Mexican immigration into California. Both studies came to

a very similar conclusion: All those Mexicans have on the whole been a benefit to California. Yes, you can argue about certain localities or service functions (mainly schools) under pressure from the heavy influx of Mexicans. What is becoming evident, however, is that we are not being “swamped,” our culture isn’t being “obliterated,” our work force isn’t being driven onto the dole by these Mexicans...

The immigration-control bill passed by the Senate in September contains an enforcement mechanism that requires job-providers to assume that Hispanic-looking job-seekers are breaking the law until they provide documentation to prove otherwise. We continue to believe that it would be odious and embarrassing to see such a policy become law in the U.S.

July 3, 1986

The Rekindled Flame

This Fourth of July belongs to the Statue of Liberty, refurbished for her centenary. Ships of all nations are gathering to wish her well, as are tourists who will crowd lower Manhattan for a view of the cherished symbol. The world will reflect on this wonderland of immigrants, this nation of tempest-tossed, huddled masses breathing free.

These are largely happy times for most citizens of the United States, but another, less noble image lurks in the background of our celebrations. It is that of the ubiquitous guards who patrol our 2,000-mile border with Mexico. A

recent news photo depicted guards wearing helmets equipped with infrared telescopes to better track today's tired and poor. The question for this Independence Day is which symbol more accurately represents this country's attitude toward the modern equivalent of our desperate immigrant forbears - the Statue of Liberty or the Darth Vaders trying to "get control of our borders"?

July 8, 1986

The Next Hundred

The Statue of Liberty's centennial was clearly a cause for pride among the descendants of the first immigrants who passed below her – Germans, Irish, Jews, Poles, Italians, and the rest of Europe's ambitious refugees. However, touring Lower Manhattan on the Fourth, we were struck by how many faces we saw that aren't normally associated with the statue or Ellis Island. These newcomers weren't there to stare at the tall ships, they were working, selling the sightseers everything from hot dogs to sponge Liberty crowns. They have arrived from Pakistan, Mexico, Jamaica, Senegal and elsewhere. Most probably they arrived through the portal at Kennedy airport, Miami, or a dry spot along the Rio Grande. The next hundred years in America will be theirs. For the 200th anniversary of the Statue of Liberty, their grandchildren will be watching. Some other newcomers will be selling.

February 26, 1987

Bus People

... The enormous political capital spent in passing federal sanctions means that at least some attempt will be made at enforcement and, therefore, at least some people whose only crime is crossing a border will be denied a means of supporting their families. But soon enforcement nightmares, clogged courts and economic costs will force reconsideration of this anti-worker legislation.

Congress eventually will realize that fostering economic growth in Latin America and other areas of potential conflict is the only way to reduce the numbers of people who feel compelled to leave their homes. That means encouraging countries to lower incentive-killing tax rates, break up state-sanctioned monopolies and free flourishing underground economies. It means making certain that such countries as the Philippines and El Salvador are able to fight off communist guerrillas and communist neighbors whose victory would create untold [suffering]. That is a more humane approach to immigration than the law concocted by Sen. Simpson and others – a law that has transformed the U.S. from a country noted for accepting refugees to one that is now creating refugees.

June 2, 1988

Let Them In

... With the crackup of Vietnam's centrally planned economy, millions of Vietnamese are facing not only political repression, but also starvation. So they are taking desperate action...

The increasingly strident and shortsighted refrain one hears is that these people are a burden – a cost to taxpaying citizens, a headache for border patrols. Some would like to repatriate anyone found to be an “economic” refugee – as if it were somehow unacceptable to flee the poverty brought on by bankrupt communist policies.

It is important to recognize that given the chance these refugees can be assets. Those leaking boats are carrying some of Vietnam's most precious resources: People who will risk their lives to reach a free society in which they can put their labor and abilities to good use. The Free World – in Asia, Europe, and the United States – should let them in.

November 10, 1989

Reagan: Tear Down This Wall!

The following are excerpts from Ronald Reagan's June 12, 1987 speech in West Berlin. They are preceded by his recollections in “Speaking My Mind,” a collection of his presidential speeches. A related editorial appears today.

Our advance people had put up speakers aimed at East Berlin hoping that my speech might be heard on the other side. I could see the East German police keeping people away so they couldn't hear. They simply don't realize it's

going to take more than that to keep out the stirrings of freedom.

There's a couple other sentences in this speech about tearing down the wall and opening the gate that I like quite a bit, and it actually makes the speech. I'm told that the State Department and the National Security Council thought the lines were too provocative.

Just because our relationship with the Soviet Union is improving doesn't mean we have to begin denying the truth. That is what got us into such a weak position with the Soviet Union in the first place. The line stayed and got quite a reaction from the crowd.

Twenty-four years ago, President John F. Kennedy visited Berlin, speaking to the people of this city and the world at the City Hall. Well, since then two other presidents have come, each in his turn, to Berlin. And today I, myself, make my second visit to your city. We come to Berlin, we American presidents, because it's our duty to speak, in this place, of freedom.

Our gathering today is being broadcast throughout Western Europe and North America. I understand that it is being seen and heard as well in the East. To those listening throughout Eastern Europe, a special word: Although I cannot be with you, I address my remarks to you just as surely as to those standing here before me. For I join you, as I join your fellow countrymen in the West, in this firm, this unalterable belief: Es gibt nur ein Berlin. [There is only one Berlin.]

Behind me stands a wall that encircles the free sectors of this city, part of a vast system of barriers that divides the entire continent of Europe. From the Baltic, south, those barriers cut across Germany in a gash of barbed wire, concrete, dog runs, and guard towers. Farther south, there may be no visible, no obvious wall. But there remain armed guards and checkpoints all the same--still a restriction on the right to travel, still an instrument to impose upon ordinary men and women the will of a totalitarian state. Yet it is here in Berlin where the wall emerges most clearly; here, cutting across your city, where the news photo and the television screen have imprinted this brutal division of a continent upon the mind of the world. Standing before the Brandenburg Gate, every man is a German, separated from his fellow men. Every man is a Berliner, forced to look upon a scar.

President von Weizsacker has said, "The German question is open as long as the Brandenburg Gate is closed." Today I say: As long as the gate is closed, as long as this scar of a wall is permitted to stand, it is not the German question alone that remains open, but the question of freedom for all mankind. Yet I do not come here to lament. For I find in Berlin a message of hope, even in the shadow of this wall, a message of triumph.

In the 1950s, Khrushchev predicted: "We will bury you." But in the West today, we see a free world that has achieved a level of prosperity and well-being unprecedented in all human history. In the Communist world, we see failure,

technological backwardness, declining standards of health, even want of the most basic kind--too little food. Even today, the Soviet Union still cannot feed itself. After these four decades, then, there stands before the entire world one great and inescapable conclusion: Freedom leads to prosperity. Freedom replaces the ancient hatreds among the nations with comity and peace. Freedom is the victor.

And now the Soviets themselves may, in a limited way, be coming to understand the importance of freedom. We hear much from Moscow about a new policy of reform and openness. Some political prisoners have been released. Certain foreign news broadcasts are no longer being jammed. Some economic enterprises have been permitted to operate with greater freedom from state control.

Are these the beginnings of profound changes in the Soviet state? Or are they token gestures, intended to raise false hopes in the West, or to strengthen the Soviet system without changing it? We welcome change and openness; for we believe that freedom and security go together, that the advance of human liberty can only strengthen the cause of world peace. There is one sign the Soviets can make that would be unmistakable, that would advance dramatically the cause of freedom and peace.

General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, if you seek liberalization: Come here to this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!

In Europe, only one nation and those it controls refuse to join the community of freedom. Yet in this age of redoubled economic growth, of information and innovation, the Soviet Union faces a choice: It must make fundamental changes, or it will become obsolete.

Today thus represents a moment of hope. We in the West stand ready to cooperate with the East to promote true openness, to break down barriers that separate people, to create a safe, freer world. And surely there is no better place than Berlin, the meeting place of East and West, to make a start.

The totalitarian world produces backwardness because it does such violence to the spirit, thwarting the human impulse to create, to enjoy, to worship. The totalitarian world finds even symbols of love and of worship an affront. Years ago, before the East Germans began rebuilding their churches, they erected a secular structure: the television tower at Alexander Platz. Virtually ever since, the authorities have been working to correct what they view as the tower's one major flaw, treating the glass sphere at the top with paints and chemicals of every kind. Yet even today when the sun strikes that sphere--that sphere that towers over all Berlin--the light makes the sign of the cross. There in Berlin, like the city itself, symbols of love, symbols of worship, cannot be suppressed.

As I looked out a moment ago from the Reichstag, that embodiment of German unity, I noticed words crudely spray-painted upon the wall, perhaps by a young Berliner:

"This wall will fall. Beliefs become reality." Yes, across Europe, this wall will fall. For it cannot withstand faith; it cannot withstand truth. The wall cannot withstand freedom.

October 9, 1991

Vietnam's Vanishing Refugees

... Southeast Asian authorities who must deal with Indochina's refugees have cultivated the fine art of distinguishing "economic migrants" from genuine refugees, classified as people fleeing a well-founded fear of persecution. The problem is that countries where economic migration becomes so important that people will die to achieve it tend also to be countries where the entire population suffers a well-founded fear of persecution. Economic and political freedoms are part of the same package. That's why capitalist governments such as those of South Korea and Taiwan end up on a democratic track, while communist China and Vietnam end up shooting or jailing patriots.

If the architects of the New World Order truly want to shape a better, freer world community, one of the best starting points would be to approach the Indochinese refugee situation not as a burden, but as an opportunity to encourage freedom by welcoming those who at great risk come asking for it.

November 27, 1991

Fleeing to America

... Today, some 370 years after the Pilgrims' arrival, the men who preside over the American government that grew out of that voyage have made it their policy to push refugee Haitians, crowded onto boats, away from the U.S. mainland.

... The President said that the U.S. embraces *political* refugees but not *economic* refugees. Journalists in Haiti this week reported that because of the embargo imposed on that impoverished, poverty-stricken island by the Organization of American States, people in the countryside were feeding themselves with wild plants.

So far, the Coast Guard has picked up 5,054 Haitians at sea. We continue to believe that the United States hasn't yet filled its 3,623,000 square miles with too many people. Thanksgiving is not a day dedicated to getting fatter; it is an annual and living remembrance of people who came toward this land, on boats.

September 11, 1992

U.S. Open to All

For those who issue dire warnings about the dangers of immigration, we serve up the following example of immigrants who made it good: Of the five American men who made the quarter-finals of the U.S. Open tennis tournament now taking place in New York, one is an immigrant and three are sons of immigrants. Michael Chang

is the son of Taiwan immigrants. Pete Sampras's father made his way to America from Greece via Ellis Island. Andre Agassi's dad is an Armenian who was born in Iran. Ivan Lendl is a naturalized citizen born in Czechoslovakia. The fifth, Jim Courier, was born in the U.S. The list could go on: Mary Jo Fernandez was on the gold medal doubles team for the U.S. in Barcelona. Born in the Dominican Republic to a Cuban mother and Spanish father, she came to the U.S. at six months. Jennifer Capriati's father Stefano was a soccer player in Italy and Spain before becoming a Hollywood stuntman.

Whatever their ethnic origin, what all these stars have in common are parents who understood that in America, skill and hard work pay off. This is the message that immigrants have been imparting to their children ever since this country was born and it's the one that is still prominent in immigrant households today. Not all the sons and daughters of immigrants will grow up to be tennis pros, but, as statistics show us again and again, most will grow up to be winning contributors to American society.

November 25, 1992

All Politics Is Global

We have used this space in recent years to reassert our support at Thanksgiving for the idea of liberal immigration policies. This year will be no exception. We do not see how it is possible for America to hold onto any other belief.

... In difficult times, immigrants will continue to seek a better life. They should be welcome. In a complex world, we should continue to seek better leaders. That too, would be welcome.

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