

When he was arrested for illegal gambling, Meyer Lansky did not want to testify against his friends. After serving a brief prison term, he took over legal gambling activities in Cuba. The little man from the north became very close friends with Fulgencio Batista, Cuba's president.

Thinking that Cuba would continue to be a safe place for investment, Lansky pulled together his resources and built the country's first air-conditioned hotel - the Riviera - in Havana. He never imagined that Fidel Castro would overthrow Batista. After the Cuban Revolution, however, the Riviera became a place for soldiers, not paying guests.

When Castro nationalized all hotels and casinos, Lansky lost his fortune. Meyer would have to find a new way to earn a living.

In 1962, he suffered a heart attack - but that was not his only source of trouble.

Unknown to him, his house was under surveillance and bugging devices had been illegally planted in key places. Listening to a conversation between Lansky and his second wife Thelma (whom he called "Teddy"), FBI agents reportedly heard Meyer say that organized crime was "bigger than U.S. Steel."

The feds believed that Lansky was the chief financial officer of a vast criminal organization. With his on-tape "admission," Lansky had apparently confirmed those suspicions. Since the tapes were unauthorized, however, they were illegal evidence and could not be used against him.

Not giving up their quest to indict Meyer, the feds formed a "Lansky Strike Force" to catch him engaging in something illegal. Then he was arrested for having ulcer medicine without a prescription.

Tired of being a target, he and his wife flew to Israel. Lansky, a Jewish man born in Russia, wanted to become a citizen of Israel, under "The Law of Return."

The process would become far more difficult than Meyer could have ever contemplated.

See, also:

Meyer Lansky - Boardwalk Empire

Meyer Lansky - Friend of Lucky Luciano

Meyer Lansky - Chairman of the Board

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