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"Let's All Be Americans Now"

The Drive for Americanization during the Great War

The purpose of the article is to present a brief overview of the Americanization movement during the Great War, which strongly impacted the national policy on this matter and its evolution. National unity became particularly important and urgent in the context of war, especially after the U.S. entered the conflict. This involvement led to vigorous efforts to Americanize "all Americans," as advocated by key players. Consequently, considerable attention from the government, various agencies, state and local offices, and several organizations focused on the foreign-born and unassimilated immigrants, who were expected to demonstrate full loyalty, contribute to the U.S. workforce, and engage in patriotic service for the adopted country. The war's urgent demands for workers, recruits, and loyal Americans accelerated the implementation of new Americanization avenues and sped up the assimilation policy for immigrants and the foreign-born. The government, businesses, philanthropies, and various organizations propagated, conducted and implemented numerous programs addressed to these groups. The primary aim was to educate and prepare them for their duties to their new country, particularly aiding the war effort. Many immigrants assimilated through English language courses and thus were better prepared for American life. They contributed to the war effort by Hooverizing, working on the home front, buying Liberty Bonds and enlisting in the U.S. Army. Immigrant women were also a focus, with programs designed to prepare them for American values and community life through education and patriotic initiatives.

Keywords: Great War/World War I, U.S. war effort, Americanization, assimilation, education, national unity, immigrants, foreign-born soldiers, women

During the immigration peak, the increasing numbers of non-English-speaking newcomers alarmed native-born Americans, highlighting a growing problem. There were two main approaches to addressing the issue. Progressive reformers supported adapting the foreign-born and newcomers to American democratic ideals while accepting their old traditions. Others categorically and consequently propagated "100% Americanism," which meant Americanization through the English language and the abandonment of immigrants' traditions and cultures. The goals and methods of Americanization programs at the turn of the 20th century varied across states and regions, influenced by groups and organizations implementing their visions. Most plans focused primarily on teaching the language and civic education to "greenhorns," as newcomers were called, with employers, politicians, teachers, social workers, and various activists encouraging them to learn English, integrate into American society, and eventually become U.S. citizens. By World War I, the problem of millions of unassimilated immigrants led to the creation of various programs to educate them and accelerate their assimilation.[1]

Upon the outbreak of the war in Europe in August 1914, Americans were deeply divided, privately expressing a wide range of opinions on the conflict. President Woodrow Wilson declared U.S. neutrality on 4 August 1914, a stance supported by many Americans who saw no reason to get involved in European "quarrels and intrigues," as portrayed in the media. A song published in January 1915, *I Didn't Raise My Boy to be a Soldier!*, became a well-known and immensely popular tune supporting the official policy of neutrality. This was an anti-war hit connected with pacifism and the suffrage movement, with 700,000 copies sold and played on Victrolas and in concert halls. Imitations and parodies of the song, such as *I Did Not Raise My Boy to Be a Coward*, *I Didn't Raise My Boy to Be a Soldier, But I'll Send My Girl to Be a Nurse* and *I Didn't Raise My Girl to Be a Voter*, were also produced (Van Wienen 57-60).

As the European war continued, loyalty and internal relations in the multiethnic American society became more essential for national integrity and unity. One of the first initiatives to unite citizens "sharing common values under one flag" was the creation of the National Americanization Committee (NAC) in May 1915, to support the celebration of Independence Day by all Americans, native-born and foreign-born alike, as their common privilege and duty. The Committee collaborated with many agencies promoting Americanization, including governmental departments, courts, schools, churches, Woman's Committee clubs and various patriotic organizations (Hill 617-618).

Since 1915, the Bureau of Education and the Bureau of Naturalization organized a network of the assimilation programs. The main goal was to teach adult immigrants English, American history, government, and ideals, preparing them for naturalization as loyal citizens adopted to American life. The Bureau of Education inaugurated the "America First" campaign to support Americanization and distributed over 150,000 America First posters advertising night schools for immigrants and encouraging them to learn English and be better prepared to serve the country as efficient workers (Hahner 43; Van Nuys 42).

In 1916, President Woodrow Wilson declared 14 June as Flag Day, which became in years to come a nationwide observance for both native-born and foreign-born

[1] For more see Daniels; Zeidel.

Americans to demonstrate their patriotism, unity and loyalty. Marches, banners with national slogans, and singing American patriotic songs became visible parts of Americanization and proof of participants' patriotism and their loyalty to the country. The national anthem, community-singing, the flag on the porch, and the Pledge of Allegiance by schoolchildren became important symbols and noticeable effects of Americanization. Obviously, immigrants and Americans alike were encouraged to participate in these nationalistic performances that integrated them into American culture and society (Van Nuys 44-45).

During the first three years of enormous destructive and bloody fighting in Europe, the U.S. remained neutral, but the public opinion in America was divided. Rising tensions with Germany led to increasingly anti-German sentiments, and the country prepared for entry into the conflict. Early in 1917, the song *America, Here's My Boy* appeared, offering pro-war sentiment and appealing for national sacrifice. This vision of patriotic motherhood grew more popular after America entered the war against Germany in April 1917. The danger of German propaganda and the loyalty of the foreign-born became pressing issues for the U.S. government (Kazin 38; Parafianowicz 111-115).

The war fueled nationalism, xenophobia, and jingoism, increasing the demand for American unity and forcing assimilation. Immigrants and newcomers were particularly pressured to declare and act as "Americans." Many educators, industry leaders, politicians and military personnel realized how important it was to reach out and integrate all Americans. The country had to face – as it was publicly repeated – the severe necessities of sped-up Americanization of foreign-born residents and unassimilated ethnic groups, which were treated with hesitance and suspicion. By 1917, 33 million Americans – one third of all – were of foreign origin, most of them spoke a foreign language and continued their old traditions and culture (Hill 611).

Military service by Americans was extensively promoted by governmental agencies, various organizations, and media. Irving Berlin **(**1888-1989)**,** a son of a Jewish cantor and immigrant from Russia, became well-known for his patriotic tunes, including *For Your Country and My Country*, and his best known piece *Let's All Be Americans Now*, a patriotic declaration for Americans' diverse backgrounds. The song as a message of American identity, unity and patriotism was very popular during World War I (Mirel 21-33; Parafianowicz 115).

In early April 1917, the government established the Committee on Public Information (CPI), directed by George Creel, to use propaganda to convince Americans, including the foreign-born, of the war's justice and the significance of their contribution to the war effort. The Committee labeled English as the "American language," distributed advertisements in newspapers and magazines, published millions of pamphlets, posters and leaflets, and also used radio and films.[2] The CPI, commonly known as Creel's Committee, organized public speaking and exhibitions to increase public support for the war at home and abroad. They created special sections such as the *Four Minute Men*. Seventy-five thousand public speakers delivered short, informative speeches during meetings. These speeches were also addressed to immigrants in their native languages. All of them were mobilized to support America's

[2] For more on CPI, see Creel; Axelrod.

cause and demonstrate their loyalty, patriotism, and devotion to the country (Barnes and Belmonte 107-108; Ford 23-24).

According to George Creel and many other propagandists, billboards were the most useful and effective tools for capturing the attention of millions of people and gaining their support for governmental policy. The Committee created hundreds of mobilizing patriotic posters during the war, which were addressed to different segments of public opinion, including ethnic communities and foreign-born Americans.[3] Many posters called for the loyal service of all Americans through various activities, such as military service, factory work, food conservation and Hooverizing, and fundraising. These posters were distributed and displayed in workplaces, post offices, schools, courthouses, and other public places. Printed materials, music, and films all helped to conduct the national patriotic campaign and recruit, first and foremost, native-born whites, and then African Americans, American Indians, and the growing number of immigrants (Ross 226-231, 244-250).

To unite a nation during the war, more was required than patriotic rhetoric and symbolic gestures. Woodrow Wilson's administration embraced the program of Americanization, driven by fears of disunity, diversity and disloyalty, through a fervent national patriotic crusade. The war "crystallized the mission of Americanization and led to its significant expansion" (Hahner XXVI).

Each European ethnic group in the U.S. responded differently to American involvement in the conflict, leading to varied treatment of immigrants and newcomers. Residents of German and Austrian descent were considered "enemy aliens," while Irish Americans were less enthusiastic about fighting alongside the British. The foreign-born approach to the war, their loyalty, and participation in the war effort were often connected to their aspiration and national goals. Polish, Czech, or Slovak immigrants, in contrast, dreamed of an Allied victory (Sterba 31-32).

Americanization of the foreign-born became even more urgent and timely because many had foreign citizenship, which raised questions about their loyalty. U.S. political and military leaders wondered if people with such backgrounds could balance allegiances between their old countries and their new homeland. Immigrant communities, particularly newcomers, were relatively often targeted by hostile attitudes and comments questioning their loyalty. Monitoring any suspected or imagined dissent among countrymen and promoting Americanization of the foreign-born became powerful governmental policies toward unity and integration. Soon after the declaration of war against Germany, President Wilson asked Congress to take steps against potential disloyalty. On 15 June 1917, Congress passed the Espionage Act, and a year later, on 16 May 1918, amended it with the Sedition Act to enforce loyalty of all Americans and silence dissent (Kennedy XII-XIII).

With the war's outbreak and particularly after U.S. military involvement, reformers and advocates of assimilation redefined it mostly as a citizenship and loyalty issue. Proponents of Americanization focused their extensive attention on "enemy aliens" as potentially disloyal and non-patriotic groups. Consequently, some ethnic communities found the atmosphere and push for Americanization very oppressive. German Americans became prime targets of propaganda and lived under government and public criticism and surveillance. Many of them were suspected

[3] For more on posters, see Rawls; Borkan; Pearl.

of sedition and disloyalty, and many others were more or less isolated from their American neighbors. Occasionally, they were punished for real or presumed disloyalty, speaking German, or "anti-American" behavior such as not purchasing Liberty Bonds or even for eating traditional German food (Barnes and Belmonte 105-106; Van Nuys 51).

A State Americanization Committee fighting against the German language in schools and newspapers in Colorado propagated a poster:

EVERY LOYAL AMERICAN
SHOULD USE THE
AMERICAN LANGUAGE
IT IS THE LANGUAGE OF
YOUR COUNTRY
IF YOU DON'T KNOW IT –
LET US HELP YOU LEARN IT (Van Nuys 57).

Hamburgers and sauerkraut were renamed "liberty sandwiches" and "liberty cabbage." Many schools canceled German language courses, various streets named after Germans were changed, and German art was removed from museums. In the months to come, targeting German culture became a dynamic factor in the Americanization of German Americans (Ford 24).

The war fueled fervent nationalism and anti-German hysteria, but also affected many other foreign-born and immigrant civilians, who became frequent targets of criticism, hostility, harassment and discrimination. Politicians, journalists and leaders of various organizations often complained about "alien slackers" and non--patriots who "were living comfortably" while American boys risked their lives in Europe. Yet, there was also a strong pressure and drive to Americanize immigrants and involve them in the U.S. war effort, which accelerated the process of national patriotism and building American unity.

The main goals of the National Americanization Committee (NAC) since its inception were teaching English and "interpreting American ideals, traditions, standards, and institutions to foreign-born peoples." After the United States entered the war, the NAC turned over a majority of its staff, equipment, and activities to national projects of further Americanization. The flyer "What You Can Do for Americanization," distributed in state and local government offices, emphasized urgent and important goals, such as the necessity to "unite in a common citizenship under one flag," "combat anti-American propaganda," and "create an understanding of and love for America and the desire of immigrants to remain in America, have a home here, and support American institutions and laws" (Hill 630).

In the months to come, Americanization as a patriotic duty and complex process became a task organized and implemented by a network of federal and state agencies and institutions, businesses, unions, the army, schools, libraries, and various organizations. Churches were also expected to work on converting the foreign-born into loyal and patriotic Americans. America at war, as presented everywhere in the public sphere, needed not only soldiers in training camps and fighting in Europe but also "Americans all" on the home front, supporting the war effort by working efficiently in coal mines and industry, on farms, Hooverizing on certain days, buying bonds, etc.

During the war, many Americanizers demanded more aggressive and sometimes even forced assimilation of immigrants. As a result, the intensity of Americanization, as a mix of persuasion and compulsion, expanded. The Bureau of Naturalization, the Bureau of Education and the CPI became the most active agencies conducting and promoting the "Americanization crusade." From February 1918, the Council of National Defense acted as a transmitting agency for various federal, state, and local organs propagating Americanization. The institutional network of the NAC was expanded by newly created offices in states, public schools, main Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish organizations, the Red Cross, industrial corporations, Woman's Committee organizations, public libraries, newspapers, and countless other groups and individuals. The slogan "All for America! Native born and foreign-born! Anything is good that brings us together!" was used in public gatherings, media, and many distributed leaflets and posters (Mirel 24-25; Van Nuys 52-53; Ziegler-McPherson 95-98).

Activists argued that Americanization education during the war should consistently teach ideals and ideas that all Americans, native and foreign-born, should share, such as devotion to the United States, defense of the country, and respect for democratic principles, the government, and the law. They sought support from ethnic leaders and local newspapers, arguing that because of war, it was necessary to "speed up" the Americanization.

A poster printed in 1917, "Are you 100% American? Prove it! Buy U.S. Government Bonds Third Liberty Loan," was addressed to all countrymen, challenging them to prove their true American identity and support the war effort by purchasing government bonds. Members of the Americanization Committees organized in states propagated the idea of purchasing bonds by the foreign-born and immigrants as a way to integrate them into native-born society. It is worth mentioning that foreign-language Americanization Committees, including ethnic leaders, were responsible for organizing local community meetings and supporting educational activities for those not fluent in English. The goal was not only to sell bonds but also to teach English to immigrants and prepare them to become "true American citizens."

The federal government used Americanization agencies to ensure support for the war on the home front by various ethnic groups. They could prove their loyalty, patriotism and "being American" by intensifying their work in mines and factories. The U.S. Fuel Administration poster focused on immigrant miners. The slogans "Stay by the boys in the trenches" and "Mine more coal" were urging them to increase coal production. The poster directly addressed ethnic workers in their native languages, such as Italian, Slovenian, Bosnian, Polish, or German (Barnes and Belmonte 104-105). It is worth noting that posters as "weapons of persuasion" played a significant role in mobilizing and integrating various groups of American society during the Great War (Pedrini, plate 21-32).

Several posters featuring the Statue of Liberty became a useful tool of propaganda directed to immigrants. The Statue was not only a meaningful symbol of ethnic groups, particularly in New York, but also a visible reminder to the foreign-born that they should show their gratitude and repay "Lady Liberty's" generosity. First of all, as it was commonly expected, they should be loyal to their new homeland and contribute to the U.S. war effort in any possible way. They were also expected to be loyal and "true Americans" sharing American values and principles in their

daily lives, contributing to the patriotic effort, for example through Hooverizing, purchasing war bonds, and supporting the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF). New immigrants, as future citizens, were urged to join the Americanization process and properly raise and educate their children as true Americans devoted to American democracy and its values (Barnes and Belmonte 103-105).

The nationalistic and super-patriotic atmosphere pushed Americanization onto immigrants, emphasizing loyalty and compliance with governmental war aims. A poster showing an immigrant woman with two children reads: "I pledge allegiance to my flag and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." A placard, also presented at the Library of Congress exhibition, reads:

"This is an American house.
You earn a better living here, and
Live better than you ever did before.
Do not criticize our PRESIDENT,
Our GOVERNMENT, and our ALLIES.
If you do not like the way we
Run our GOVERNMENT, go back
To your own country.
If you are just a NATURAL REBEL
Or if you have no country,
THEN GO TO HELL"[4].

Theodore Roosevelt, the former president, was a strong supporter of the „melting pot" and full loyalty of the foreign-born and newcomers. He first presented his views in writings and speeches at the turn of the 20th century, and later articulated them with increasing urgency and declared that new immigrants had to be Americanized "in every way, in speech, in political ideas and principles, and in their way of looking at the relations between church and state" (Mirel 26). On several occasions during the Great War, Roosevelt publicly criticized hyphenated Americans and strongly appealed for the Americanization of all foreign-born populations. In July 1918, during the Republican Party convention in New York, he once more called for full loyalty of foreign-born Americans and their recruitment to the AEF, and contributions in other possible ways to the U.S. war effort. He emphasized: "There can be no fifty-fifty Americanism in this country. There is room here for only 100 percent Americanism, only for those who are Americans and nothing else" (Kazin 189; Hahner 68-69).

School, industry, and social workers were the primary forces driving the Americanization of the entire U.S. population. Many corporations employing foreign-born workmen established kindergartens to Americanize children early in life. Immigrants' children were assimilated and Americanized in public schools through patriotism lessons, flag ceremonies and the Pledge of Allegiance. Evening classes for workers were held in various factories and mines, allowing men to become Americanized primarily at the workplace, in clubs, at public gatherings, and as

[4] Library of Congress. *Echoes of the Great War: American Experiences of World War I* [exhibition]. February 2020.

army recruits. The Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) focused on foreign-born girls – future mothers – teaching them English, U.S. history, patriotism, loyalty, and "compliance with national war aims," Americanizing them in this way. Howard Chandler Walker's poster "For United America," distributed by the YWCA's division for foreign-born women, played a helpful role in the Americanization process (Ziegler-McPherson 94-100).

Many organizations, women's clubs, industrial concerns, schools, and private citizens were encouraged to participate in the "Americanization of America." Under the guidance of state and local Americanization Committees, they arranged mass meetings for immigrants, day and night English classes for the foreign-born, and encouraged them to apply for citizenship.

The U.S. government and its agencies focused on influencing immigrant communities, including women. The Bureau of Education, tasked by the government with overseeing the Americanization process, enlisted the Council of National Defense, and through it, the Woman's Committee to support the program and intensify efforts to target women, including the foreign-born. Dr. Anna Howard Shaw, chair of the Woman's Committee of the Council of National Defense and former president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) argued in *Ladies' Home Journal*: "It is possible to win this war only by the combined effort of all the people, in service, in devotion and with patriotic zeal. That we may be one in this aim, the work of Americanization is of the first importance and calls for the utmost tolerance and patience. It is our duty to show our aliens that Americanization is justice, liberty and equal chance for all, and that loyalty to these principles is being upon all; that by industry, thrift, economy and loyalty, and in no other way, can they hope these blessings may continue to them and their children". (Shaw 3).

The nationalist pressure of the war pushed Americanization primarily towards unifying, supporting and aligning everyone with U.S. war goals. Particular attention, according to instructions, was to be focused on the 13 million foreign-born and 33 million of foreign origin, "whose mothers and grandmothers spoke a foreign language, clung to foreign methods of homemaking and to foreign systems of education." The immigrant women, as emphasized by the editor of the "The Woman and the War" section in *Ladies' Home Journal*, should be Americanized in any possible ways in order to form get them "into a unified American reserve back of the fighting line." She concluded: "It is a fertile field, and if Americans do not utilize it, German agents will" (Harmon 3).

Many educational programs were addressed particularly to immigrant women who had limited English proficiency and thus "were not informed correctly about the U.S. war goals." The journalist asked if a Polish or a Norwegian mother is well informed about war news and goals "so vital to her because her son or her nephew are in the service. And you wonder how she gets along in Red Cross rooms, and if she can understand the food demonstrator's explanations. (…) Does she understand why she must buy Liberty Bonds, why she must teach the children to save their pennies and buy thrift stamps?" (Harmon 3).

Members and campaigners of state Woman's Committees actively helped the foreign-born learn about war job opportunities, Hooverizing, food conservation, and other services or contributions to the war effort. Immigrant women were taught patriotism and loyalty to American institutions and the country. In other words,

Americanization became everyone's patriotic duty and was considered "as definitely a war problem to the United States Government as providing shipping and building airplanes." The Woman's Committees also organized public meetings to inform about draft regulations and laws affecting immigrants, regulations regarding naturalization, and opportunities for learning or improving English: "The alien mother who learns these English lessons not only learns a language, but she learns valuable lessons about how to become American." Therefore, the mother of an immigrant could help herself and the country – as the writer argued – by making sure that there were no half-Americans in her community (Harmon 3). That was a simple explanation why immigrant women should learn English and then, as well prepared and informed subjects, consciously contribute to the war effort as much as all other Americans.

The Woman's Committee was particularly active in the field of Americanization and its implementation in Illinois. It organized English classes for groups of foreign women employed in factories, who also received lessons in sewing, cooking, and housekeeping. Teaching courses were also provided for small groups of girls in their homes or schools. Foreign-born women had access to publications and pamphlets about basics for the American home and things that housewives should know, such as food preparation and economizing, proper feeding of children, sanitation, personal hygiene, etc. (Hill 621).

The national Americanization program utilized various channels, mainly the press, speakers' bureaus, public lectures, rallies, and posters. Women were active players in the Americanization process, particularly as teachers and members of various administrative bodies in individual states and local communities. Campaigners used foreign-born speakers to address ethnic communities in their languages, published editorials in foreign languages, organized English classes, and taught immigrants how to become American citizens. The campaign on Americanization through education, philanthropy, and religion was addressed in particular to foreign mothers. The slogan "Americanization begins at home" became a useful and effective means of achieving the main goal. The immigrant wife was involved purposely in the Americanization process, with the expectation that the results would impact children and the whole family. As Kathleen Kennedy said: "As war approached, Americanization became an important avenue by which nationalists examined motherhood for its role in reproducing patriotism and national values" (15).

The Americanizers focused their activities on collective and loyal cooperation of all groups of society, with recruits to the army being a special concern and priority for politicians and military leaders during the war. In 1917, nearly one-fifth of soldiers were born abroad, raising concerns about loyalty and possible reactions at the European front. The variety of languages spoken by recruits aggravated training and discipline issues. Many immigrant volunteers were not fluent in English – some of them could not read, speak, or understand English – and they knew very little about the army (Ford 67; Barnes and Belmonte 28-30).

The Council of National Defense popularized and sponsored free classes for thousands of draftees and soldiers. The Army, working with specialists and the Bureau of Education, prepared pamphlets, series of books, and dictionaries for non-English speaking recruits used in classes organized for them. Soon, in military bases and training camps, foreign-born soldiers were supplied with books in

various languages, including Yiddish, Russian, Italian, Polish, Romanian, Spanish, etc. YMCA, YWCA and Red Cross volunteers provided assistance, propagating American values and patriotic spirit. Various English-language classes were offered, preparing recruits for military service as well as for civic life as American citizens in the future (Ford 105-110; Sterba 149).

The War Department established a special foreign-speaking unit that cooperated with ethnic organizations and local community leaders. Their main goal was to transform "unskilled immigrants" into "good and efficient soldiers." Ethnic leaders translated instructions, regulations, and various pamphlets into several languages and delivered informative speeches for recruits. They "negotiated" the Americanization process and guided the military to respect diverse cultures, ethnic traditions, and religions of immigrant soldiers (Ford 13-14, 68-69, 80; Mirel 79). The army, driven by the urgent need for recruits, became an important, active, and effective Americanizing center (Sterba 79).

Many immigrant volunteers wanted to demonstrate (and they did so) their patriotism, loyalty, and devotion for the new homeland. Some military units became known as "melting pots" because they included soldiers of all races, creeds, and languages. One notable example is the 82nd Division, commonly known as the All--American Division. This quite unique military unit, composed of a diverse group of draftees, "was a mirror of the United States at the turn of the century. There were sturdy Southern men, immigrants from the great eastern cities, and soldiers from small Midwestern towns. With strong leadership and meaningful training the division became a unified body despite obvious cultural, linguistic, and ethnic differences. (…) The 82nd Division, the melting-pot division, had indeed become real All--Americans" (Cooke 132).

Foreign-born soldiers composed about 20 percent of the American Expeditionary Forces during the Great War. The Pershing Army, which included soldiers from various ethnic groups speaking 46 languages, was presented as a U.S. Army based on national patriotism and fighting for American values (Barnes and Belmonte 9; Sterba 27-28). As one author stated: "In all that American Army you can see no Jew, no Gentile, no Roman Catholic, no Protestant. Within their khaki uniforms, look as closely as you may, you will see nothing but a soldier of this Republic: *an American by the grace of God*. The enlisted man hates a hyphen, resents being labeled with a tag and set apart from his fellows. To him, a comrade is a comrade, heart of his heart, bone of his bone, blood of his blood – only that and nothing more" (Dickinson 26).

Esther Everett Lape, a well-known suffragist and consultant from the Committee of Immigrants in America (CIA), acknowledged and appreciated the patriotic service of foreign-born soldiers. She highlighted the visible results of Americanization in immigrant communities that contributed to the U.S. Army fighting in Europe. As she wrote: "Over in France, many thousands of our foreign-born men marched shoulder to shoulder with our sons and husbands and brothers under the American flag into the Argonne Forest. In the fellowship of service, they became Americanized, the native-born no less than the foreign-born. They understood America. Forget, as they did, the 'foreign-born.' Remember America!" (Lape, "Putting America into Your City" 93). They became U.S. soldiers, simple Americans.

The war contribution of the foreign-born Americans was acknowledged and recognized on certain occasions by U.S. officials, and particularly by the media and

local communities. One symbolic, yet notable example, was A Victory Liberty Loan poster, "Americans All!" by Howard Chandler Christy. It included an "honor roll" of a dozen ethnic names, such as Du Bois, Smith, O'Brien, Cejka, Haucke, Pappandrikopolous, Andrassi, Villotto, Levy, Turovich, Kowalski, Chriczanevicz, Knutson, and Gonzales. The war experience redefined the meaning of "Americans All" for the foreign-born and immigrants, who were accepted a dual identity that "made both American and ethnic pride acceptable" (Ford 15).

The challenge of Americanizing multi-ethnic immigrant communities did not disappear after the war, although new circumstances led to different goals and directions. Some institutions, such as the CPI, terminated their activities, while others continued their work, mainly in the field of education and naturalization. Country women clubs nationwide were encouraged to continue educating the illiterate foreign-born, teaching them English and thus preparing them for active social and public life in America.

Education of all Americans became a national concern, as Secretary of the Interior Frank K. Lane announced, focusing on millions of illiterate and foreign-born Americans. He appealed to "good Americans" to help new immigrants understand the country's ideals and "do their bit" to accelerate Americanization. The government and its institutions pushed for the acceleration of educational programs, advocating, first of all and foremost, more active participation of the native-born – particularly educated women – and various associations in the process. Appeals and instructions were sent to numerous organizations and periodicals, asking for accurate information on educational Americanization programs for their audiences and readers.

In the article "What I Mean by Americanization?" published in *Ladies' Home Journal* in May 1919, Secretary Lane focused on serious education problems, particularly adult literacy. He pointed out the large number of non-English speaking people, illiterate adults, inadequate financial funding in public schools, and low teachers' salaries. He asked sarcastically: "What should be said of a democracy which expends in a year twice as much for chewing gum as for schoolbooks, more for automobiles than for all primary and secondary education, and in which the average teacher's salary is less than that of the average day laborer? What should be said of a democracy which permits tens of thousands of its native-born children to be taught American history in a foreign language – the Declaration of Independence and Lincoln's Gettysburg speech in German and other tongues? What should be said of a democracy which permits men and women to work in masses where they seldom or never hear a word of English spoken? Yet, this is all true of the United States of America." Thus, he expressed the need for definite changes and accelerated Americanization (Lane, "What I Mean…" 33).

Esther Everett Lape, who closely cooperated with Secretary Lane and the Department of Interior, led efforts to promote Americanization of education programs. She arranged exhibitions of posters and billboards publicizing night school classes in factories, public libraries, parishes, charities, and local foreign language newspapers. In a series of articles for *Ladies' Home Journal* ("Putting America into Your City," "Putting America into Your Town," and "Putting America into Your Village"), she presented arguments for Americanization and ways to implement it in ethnic communities. She described effective methods and everyday practices for immigrant

families, teaching them American values, traditions, the political and legal system, and then implementing this theoretical knowledge into practical life in their local communities – cities, towns, and villages (Lape).

Lape's activities and writings on education programs were endorsed by Secretary Lane, who wrote in *Ladies' Home Journal*: "We must believe and feel that we want our new Americans not to be merely our laborers or our servants, but that they are entitled as well to our citizenship and to our every social, educational and religious advantage; that they are, in brief, welcome to all we have to give and to all that we are ourselves. (…) Nor must we believe that Americanization begins and ends with teaching our new Americans to read, write and speak the English language. Important though this is, the learning of the English language should be used merely as a vehicle for the clear understanding of American ways, American ideals and American institutions" (Lane, "The New Americans" 35).

The government's effort on Americanization was focused on preparing the 1919 bill for the extension of national aid in the education of illiterates in America by Secretary Lane. The Bureau of Education was in charge of cooperating with states to educate non-English-speaking and illiterate residents, thereby Americanizing them. The important task, as Secretary Lane emphasized, was to teach new immigrants, the foreign-born, and their children "the true meaning of national principles and ideals" and help them adopt "the spirit of America." The bill, commonly called the Americanization bill, was introduced but "disappeared in the House," so "all efforts along the lines of forging a massive federal Americanization program went nowhere" (Van Nuys 163; Hill 625).

However, discussions on Americanization and clarification "who really is an American" continued in public debate. Journalist Anne Warwick tried to answer: "An American is a person who can read and write, who swears loyalty to the Constitution, and who has had a residence in the United States long enough to entitle him to the privileges of citizenship." She immediately added: "Talking does not make an American. Nor does applauding the flag, standing up when *The Star-Spangled Banner* is played, or cheering the returning soldiers. Well, then, what does? A true American is one who truly represents in himself and his daily life and action the ideas which constitute America." Thus, she concluded, there was a real prospect of being American for all who believe in and practice American ideas, accommodate themselves to everyday life, and obtain U.S. citizenship (Warwick 49).

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The Americanization movement during the Great War focused on promoting the use of English, fostering loyalty and general allegiance to the U.S., and helping immigrants better understand American ideals, the political system, and governmental institutions, thereby preparing them for citizenship. Despite the aggressive campaign, as one author stated, "ethnic groups did not simply give up their ethnicity and assimilate to the 'official culture' of the dominant society, nor did they blindly demonstrate their loyalty under nativist threat. Instead, immigrants utilized patriotic rhetoric and imagery employed by both reigning nativists and the government propaganda machine to prove their own loyalty and make their ethnicity acceptable" (Ford 44).

Polish, Italian, Greek, and Jewish Americans became more fortunate and could articulate their concerns, desires and aspirations. Many became U.S. citizens after the war. Immigrants, the foreign-born, and their children, particularly from Southern and Eastern Europe, knew they had contributed to the war efforts. Many truly believed that their war service "would remove the hyphen that labeled" them as Polish-American, Italian-American, Greek-American, etc., and all would be simply Americans (Barnes and Belmonte 154). Their story, some claim, is a microcosm of the American Dream.

The Americanization drive during the Great War was a strong and effective policy. In the years that followed, it seems to have had a moderately small and rather ephemeral impact on ethnic communities, which became more "Polish," "Greek," and "Italian" in the interwar period than ever before.

The strong Americanization movement, which began in response to both massive European immigration and the Great War, reached its peak around 1921 when more than thirty states adopted Americanization measures. After the Great War, some conservative groups, such as the American Legion and the Daughters of the American Revolution, began supporting immigration restrictions, which impacted immigration laws in 1921 and 1924 (Ziegler-McPherson 163).

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