

SOURCE SPOTLIGHT:

Appealing to immigrants to support World War I, 1917

INTRODUCTION

According to the census of 1910, in a total population of almost 92 million, 15 percent had been born outside of the United States. In the years prior to World War I, refugees fleeing the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Russian Revolution, and anti-Semitic pogroms changed the demographics of the immigrant population as more people from Eastern and Southern Europe arrived on American shores. Census data from the early twentieth century shows the shift in immigration in the first two decades of the twentieth century.

FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION OF THE UNITED STATES BY REGION



In 1917, the United States entered the war and began to simultaneously recruit soldiers and raise money for the war effort. Highly patriotic and emotionally charged propaganda was designed to increase support for the war. This propaganda often targeted immigrant and ethnic groups, calling on them to demonstrate their loyalty.

The documents presented here provide examples of the ways propaganda was used to appeal to immigrants. “Americans All!” and “Food Will Win the War” both send a generalized message that everyone needs to come together for the Allies’ success. In contrast, the Allied Printing Trades Council posters encouraging immigrants to buy war bonds were printed in different languages to promote patriotism among specific groups. In “Why Did You Come to America?” from the book *An Appeal and Warning to Every Immigrant in America*, Dionys Moldovan appeals to fellow immigrants to assimilate and support the United States’ entry into WWI.

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QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Read the Introduction and study the graphs and the census data, and then answer the following question. Cite textual evidence and your background knowledge to answer.

1. Why would it be a challenge to convince different groups of immigrants to support the American war effort?
2. Look at the posters and answer the following questions:
 - a. Which image/poster do you believe had the greatest impact on encouraging immigrants to support the war effort? What specific elements of the poster make you think so? Explain.
 - b. Which poster do you believe would have been the least effective? Explain.
3. In your opinion, what are the most compelling arguments that the author of “Why Did You Come to America?” for immigrants to support the United States rather than their homeland during the war? Explain.
4. According to the author, what are the benefits of assimilation? What are the possible consequences of not supporting the American war effort? Cite textual evidence to support.

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"Americans All!," 1919. (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC09676.02)

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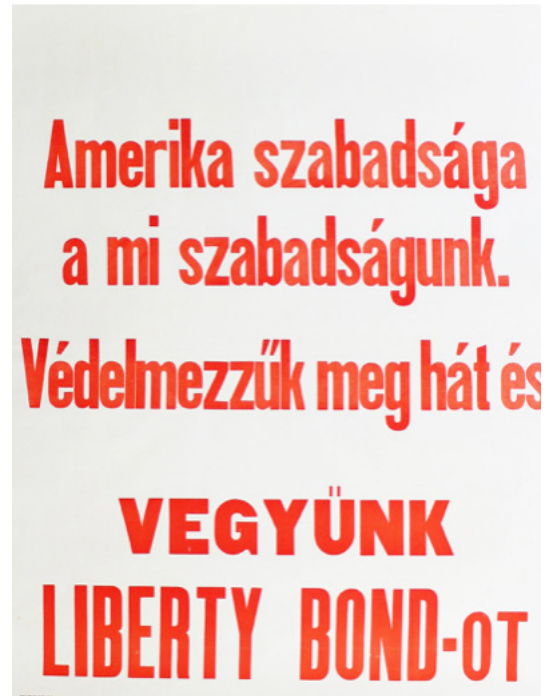
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[Allied Printing Trades Council poster printed in Yiddish], 1917-1918. (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC09815.01)

"America's freedom is ours. Let's protect it. Buy liberty bonds"

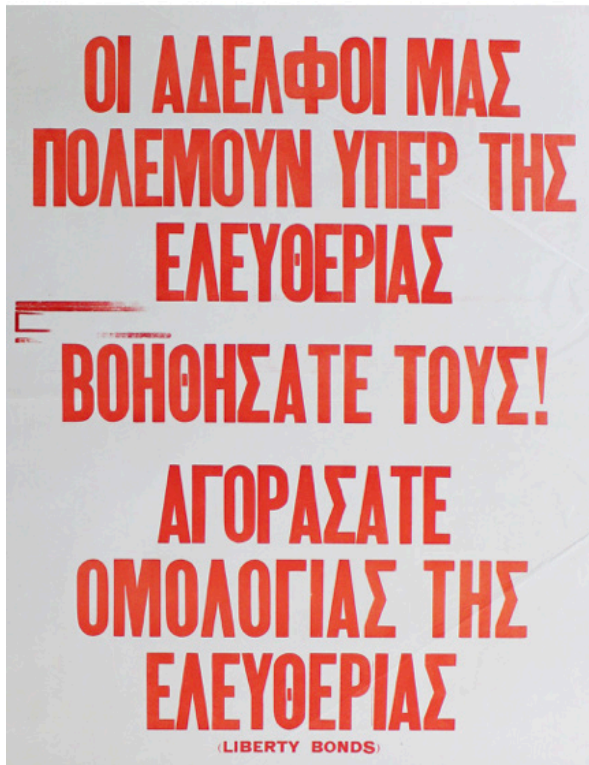


[Allied Printing Trades Council poster printed in Hungarian], 1917-1918. (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC09815.02)

"America's freedom is our freedom. Protect it and Buy Liberty Bonds"

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[Allied Printing Trades Council poster printed in Greek], 1917–1918. (Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC09815.03)

“Our brothers fight for freedom Help Them! Buy Freedom Bonds.”



[Allied Printing Trades Council poster printed in Italian], 1917–1918. (Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC09815.04)

“Our Brothers Are Fighting For Freedom! Help them. Buy Liberty Bonds”

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WHY DID YOU COME TO AMERICA?

If you judge impartially, you must, before all, know and understand one fundamental thing, that: *one and one makes two* and that *taking two from two leaves nothing*.

This is an axiom.

If you, dear reader, conceive this great truth, you will also understand that as much as sometimes one would like to, no human power is capable of changing it

We do not intend to make you hate the land where you first saw the light of day.

God forbid!

We intend to show you the truth, and although you may not acknowledge it as such, you will be forced to do so by the power of the truth itself.

There is no use in fooling yourself!

The truth is this:

The land where your forefathers lived for good and bad, *was not able to give you and your family the piece of bread to which you were entitled* by your endless drudging and plugging.

You were the slave of the inherited soil; you rose from your bed before sunrise, and you worked and sweat till late in the night.

For whom?

For yourself?

No!

For the "state" and for the privileged class, who owns the "state".

You worked to earn money for taxes, on the income of which lived thousands and thousands of idle dukes, counts, barons and other titled beings, who all in all, did nothing but hold the whip ready to force you to work like a brute, and keep the tax-collector ready to take the bread from the mouths of your children and the pillows from under your tired head.

Their "highnesses", the counts and barons, who have tens of thousands of acres of land, paid in taxes only about three or four crowns per acre, while you with your five to ten acres had to pay twenty-eight to forty-three crowns per acre.

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Dionys Moldovan, *Where will be your home?: An appeal and warning to every immigrant in America*. Cleveland, 1917. (Hathi Trust Digital Library)

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*You were a born slave, who toiled for the idle.
This is the pure, but bitter truth.*

This you must understand, and if you are a man worthy of confessing the truth, you must confess this.

There is no use in fooling yourself!

If it had not been thus, you would not be now in America.

You must admit that, industrious as you were in the old country, your work did not seem to show any gain.

Your gain was eaten up by the "state ideas" of the "privileged class", which needed millions of soldiers, military police and sheriffs to force you into the yoke of slavery, with the help of the money which they took from you and which left your purse empty.

Schools were not made for your sake, as it was always the red tape in the politics of these governments, that "the peasant is good only so long as he is poor, ignorant, timid and submissive".

This is the truth!

It has also forced you into the hands of the loan sharks and of the banks which have been established for this purpose.

"They have done good work."

When you were about to "buy a new piece of land" or to repair your house, you had "only" to sign a note and the money for this purpose was given to you.

After that,—bad crops,—big interests,—still bigger taxes,—court proceedings,—lawyers,—sleepless nights,— and.... the only way you had left was to ask many of your good friends to indorse another note so that you could obtain another loan sufficient to cover your traveling expenses to America.

America,—the land without counts, barons and many other idle beings;—the land created by God, where the industrious man can make his living by thrifty and honest labor without being deprived and despoiled of everything he has been able to make.

This is your story and the story of many

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hundreds of thousands of immigrants, who were seeking liberty and freedom.

In the old country the one half of your earnings were taken by the state, county and township as taxes, and the other half you spent for the maintenance of your family and the paying of interest.

This is why you were not able to save anything.

This is the truth!

You came to the land where there are no dreams and vain worship, but where there is appreciation of honest work and sound justice, as God decreed it to be.

You came to the country where there is plenty of work, and plenty of opportunities, to assure you the comfort in your declining years that you deserve.

This is true!

In the U. S. you are not heavily taxed; you have a chance to deposit about one-half of your earnings in a bank which pays *you* interest; or you may invest it in safe and sound enterprises. You can easily do this, as the cost of living in normal times does not require more than one half of what you earn. In this way, after some time, you have a few thousand dollars which as far as money goes, gives you happiness and the satisfaction that you and your family are assured against "rainy days".

This is the truth, dear reader!

Shortly and precisely: — *in the old country*, out of two pennies you earned, one was taken by the state, the other by the cost of living, and you were compelled to seek happiness elsewhere or starve; whereas *in America*, you lay the one penny beside the other and after a few years you realize that you have a few thousand.

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Do you realize this truth, dear reader?

* * *

This was true before the war let loose its fury over Europe.

But what will the conditions be after peace has been concluded?

What will you do, dear reader?

Where will be your "home"?

In the old country which has been submerged in debt?

Or: —

In this country, which is the banker of the entire world and which produces all needed industrial products?

Will your "home" be there, where life will be many times harder than it was before the war?

Or: —

Will it here, where life will be many times more worthwhile than it was before the war?

Reason with a clear mind: Do you want *yourself and your family to be the work horses of the selected class?*

Or: —

Do you want to be a *free and worthy citizen* of a blessed country, which gives you freedom and happiness and your family a future of the brightest hopes?

It is up to you to make your choice.

You *must* make your choice:

WHERE WILL YOUR "HOME" BE IN THE FUTURE?

?

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COUNTRY OF ORIGIN OF FOREIGN-BORN PERSONS IN THE US COMPILED FROM 1900, 1910, AND 1920 CENSUS DATA.

		1900	1910	1920
REGION	COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	POPULATION	POPULATION	POPULATION
NORTHWESTERN EUROPE	England	843,491	877,719	813,853
	Scotland	234,699	261,076	254,570
	Wales	93,744	82,488	67,066
	Ireland	1,619,469	1,352,251	1,037,234
	Norway	338,426	403,877	363,863
	Sweden	574,625	665,207	625,585
	Denmark	154,616	181,640	180,154
	Netherlands		120,063	131,766
	Belgium	29,848	49,400	62,687
	Luxemburg	3,042	3,071	12,585
	Switzerland	115,959	124,818	118,659
	France	104,534	117,418	153,072
	Alsace-Lorraine	no data	no data	34,321
CENTRAL EUROPE	Germany	2,669,164	2,311,237	1,686,108
	Poland	383,645	937,881	1,139,979
	Czechoslovakia	no data	no data	362,438
	Austria	276,702	845,555	575,627
	Hungary	145,815	495,609	397,283
	Jugo-Slavia	no data	no data	109,439
	Serbia	no data	4,630	no data
	Montenegro	no data	5,374	no data
	Holland	105,098	no data	no data
	Bohemia	156,999	no data	no data

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		1900	1910	1920
REGION	COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	POPULATION	POPULATION	POPULATION
EASTERN EUROPE	Russia	8,655	1,181,412	1,400,495
	Lithuania	no data	no data	135,068
	Finland	63,440	120,680	149,824
	Romania	15,043	65,923	102,823
	Bulgaria	no data	11,498	10,477
	Turkey in Europe	9,949	32,230	5,284
SOUTHERN EUROPE	Greece	843,491	877,719	813,853
	Albania	234,699	261,076	254,570
	Italy	93,744	82,488	67,066
	Spain	1,619,469	1,352,251	1,037,234
	Portugal			
OTHER EUROPE/NOT SPECIFIED		2,272	2,858	5,901
ASIA	Armenia	no data	no data	36,628
	Palestine	no data	no data	3,203
	Syria	no data	no data	51,901
	Turkey in Asia	no data	59,729	11,019
	China	106,659	50,756	43,560
	Japan	81,590	67,744	81,502
	India	2,069	4,664	4,901
	Other Asia	11,928	2,591	5,236

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		1900	1910	1920
REGION	COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	POPULATION	POPULATION	POPULATION
AMERICA	Canada and Newfoundland	-	1,200,717	1,138,174
	Canada	1,183,225	-	-
	West Indies	14,468	47,635	78,962
	Mexico	103,445	221,915	486,418
	Central and South America	8,725	9,964	23,463
	Cuba	11,159	no data	no data
REST	Africa	2,577	3,992	5,781
	Australia	7,041	9,035	10,914
	Atlantic Islands	10,955	18,274	44,340
	Pacific Islands	2,659	2,415	3,712
	Country not specified	2,587	2,687	3,589