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## AMERICANIZATION AND REACTION

BY ALFONSO ARBIB COSTA

THE two terms of my title form a combination very disagreeable to the ear in Italian, but in America they go together. Ever since the stream of immigration to the United States began to assume its present immense proportions, a vigorous effort has been under way to assimilate the new arrivals. America is often described as a gigantic melting pot where all the nations of the earth lose their distinctive tongues, temperament, and even physical appearance. This process, it is supposed, will result in the production of a new race, a composite of all the types that have been mingled to produce it, speaking one language, possessing identical political and social ideals, inspired with ardent American patriotism and having those habits of material and spiritual life that the natives complacently refer to as 'the American standard of living.'

Such a transformation is relatively easy for those who arrive in childhood with their parents, and for those who are born in the country of foreign parents. The schools are effective agencies for modeling all their pupils to a single type; by the second generation the process of fusion is well under way and in the third generation only the faintest traces of diverse inheritance remain. But those immigrants who arrive at a mature age are less plastic. They encounter the difficulty of learning a new language; they are disposed to live in separate colonies and to seek friendships and associations only among those of their own tongue.

They like to eat the same food and to wear the same style of clothing to which they were accustomed in the Old World. Consequently, these older people do not easily adjust themselves to their new surroundings or borrow the characteristics of the Americans. The process is slow, the results unsatisfactory. However, this has hitherto been tolerated in the faith that by the time the second generation came these difficulties would disappear. Consequently, the country was not much embarrassed in times of peace by the vast number of foreigners who lived in its midst.

But when the war came all this changed. In the first place, the spontaneous affection of the immigrants for their native country, the turning back of their hearts to the land they had abandoned, the instinctive impulse to draw nearer to those of their own race, their intense interest in the military success of their native land rather than of their adopted country, all received a new and vigorous impulse. Men that had gradually and insensibly come to think of themselves as Americans, suddenly discovered that they were passionate Italians, Germans, Russians, or Englishmen. At the same time, the necessity of Americanizing the immigrants suddenly became imperious and urgent. It was no longer possible to trust to time and to limit efforts to the children in the schools. It was imperative that the aliens who lived in America should be Americanized, not only provided with naturali-

zation papers, which signify little or nothing, but changed in heart and mind. They must cancel their old allegiance and commit themselves to their new allegiance, without reserve or qualifications.

During the war, and still more, since the armistice, the efforts of the nation have therefore been concentrated upon making the whole population '100 per cent American.' Lectures, night schools for studying English, the exclusion of unnaturalized citizens from public and private employment, and the personal efforts of well-intentioned proselyters have been brought to bear on this task in every community.

But most unhappily, just when it was peculiarly desirable to make immigrants love and respect their new home and remain there, a conjunction of adverse circumstances and officious blunders went far to nullify this programme of Americanization and to substitute for the slow process of assimilation occurring before the war, not more rapid progress, but real aversion to America, accompanied by a revival of affection for the country of birth. Italians were turned in this direction first by America's lack of recognition for Italy's services in the war, and later by the unfavorable attitude of the President and his colleagues toward Italy's claims at the Peace Conference. The French in the United States are filled with jealousy, because they feel that France alone won the war. The Irish are alienated by the evident partiality shown to England. The hordes of Russian Jews hate America because the press of this country reviles the Bolshevist revolution, which 90 per cent of them approve and admire. The Germans are naturally hostile because America entered the war. So, all have some immediate reason for resisting the effort to make them Americans.

Prohibition came to accentuate this antipathy. A fine country of liberty, these foreigners thought, when you cannot drink a glass of wine or a stein of beer! Who is coming here to sing the songs of liberty, when the laws imprison a man who manufactures, sells, possesses, or offers to any person, a drink of spirits? This is really a serious question, more serious than might appear at first glance. Prohibition of wines and spiritous liquors engenders in some people not only aversion but lively hatred of America. Not only that, but the law was enacted after the sort of a campaign that makes one say, 'I dislike you for the manner in which you present yourself.'

However, all these influences — the revival of patriotism for their own country, prohibition, and the other things — would have been forgotten as time went on. But there is another influence, of an infinitely more dangerous and lasting character. That is the current of reaction that is sweeping everything before it in America, and that has found expression in the deportation *en masse* of those who sympathize with communism; denying seats in the Legislature to Socialist deputies regularly elected solely because of their party; proposed laws of extreme severity limiting liberty of speech and freedom of the press; and wholesale dismissals from employment on mere suspicion of radical sympathies. Last of all, the schools are permeated with the same spirit of reaction, and to-day in many of the principal cities of the United States a graduation diploma will not be granted to a pupil who does not swear allegiance to the government of the United States — something that in itself is perfectly proper and just — and who also has not declared his repudiation and abhorrence of Bolshevist, Syndicalist, and Communist doctrine.

This situation is serious, and its consequences may seriously imperil the peace and harmony of America. Violent repression is blind. It has never succeeded in doing anything but increase the pressure of subterranean forces. How will it inspire immigrants with loyalty to a country which has boasted of being the most free and democratic in the world, but where newcomers find actually in force laws so repressive as to be worthy of the most tyrannical rulers of ancient times? To be sure, important organs of public opinion and eminent men of all political parties are opposing these repressive measures with all their power. The Bar Association of New York, headed by former Justice Charles E. Hughes, late candidate for the presidency of the United States, has decided to send to Albany, the capital of the State of New York, a committee composed of six of its members, including Mr. Hughes, to defend the six Socialist deputies to the Legislature to whom the State Assembly has denied their seats. These men carry with them a protest stating that such action is subversive of democratic ideas and is anti-American.

Every American citizen of well-balanced judgment and clear vision is asking himself with concern where this movement is going to end. Arrests and expulsions *en masse*, like those we have witnessed during the past few days in the United States, special laws proposed and passed light-heartedly by legislative assemblies — such meas-

ures as these cannot increase respect for the government in its own citizens, or love for that government in those who are not citizens. Neither will such measures check in the least Socialism and Communism. They will merely strengthen the conviction that free speech, free discussion, and the free publication of opinions — whether by citizens or aliens — are rights to be exercised only by men endorsed by the government and by powerful private interests. If rights guaranteed by the constitution to every citizen and by general consent hitherto assured to strangers within the country, are to be placed in peril merely because a few demagogues and agitators have abused those rights, it is practically certain that new and revolutionary doctrines will spring up and flourish, under the very effort to suppress them. You cannot safeguard liberty by denying liberty. Neither will it add to the prestige of America in other lands to return to their countries beyond the ocean the disillusioned and non-assimilated people who had come to its shores. In the opinion of many citizens, the only way to heal radically the discontent existing in the United States is to remove the causes for that discontent. To continue in the road of reaction will not only check an inflow of labor which the country needs, and prevent the assimilation of the foreign elements already in its midst, but will breed new perils that may threaten the very life of the nation. Those who sow the wind will reap the tempest.

[*Le Populaire* (Radical Socialist Daily), February 16]  
SYRIA WANTS ITS INDEPENDENCE

BY AN ARABIAN DEPUTY

YOUR great official organ of France, *Le Temps*, constantly denies the truth of events that are occurring in Syria.

It goes without saying that, after having assured the French people a thousand times that the Syrians are seeking France, it is difficult for that journal, as for any of its imperialist clientele, to confess that the Syrians are vigorously resisting foreign occupation.

For several months such papers have been trying to prove to the people whom they have constantly deceived, that the popular protests against the French occupation were due solely to an underground English propaganda. That legend is proved false by the simple fact that English occupation is even more hated by the Arabs than that of the French, and that the resistance to the English at several places in Arabia and Mesopotamia is more obstinate than that which the French have anywhere encountered.

In England public opinion is beginning to see through the deceptions of its imperialist press, which has tried to persuade it that the Arabs would love nothing better than to have the Union Jack fly over them. Let us hope that French opinion in its turn will open its eyes. Both the French and the English should know once for all that the Arabs are joined by a common religion with the Turks, and have been politically identified with them for centuries, and therefore do not wish to separate themselves from their fellow believers and brothers in arms merely to submit to the domination of a

European nation, no matter what form the latter's suzerainty may assume.

There is a good deal of talk about Emir Faisal. That plays no part in our demand for complete independence. Not only his throne, but his very life would be in danger, were he to consent to any curtailment of Arabian independence.

*Le Temps* is very angry because some English newspapers in Cairo have published reports from Syria. It claims that since the French papers have refrained from telling what is happening in Egypt, the English press ought to keep silent about the situation in Syria. It assumes an air of telling the English: 'We might have made public all your disgraceful doings in Egypt, but we have not done so out of regard for our alliance. Now why do you not treat us on the same footing?' That paper gives the English to understand that opposition to the French is directed equally against the English, and it urges that the Allies must maintain a solid front in the Near East — that is, a united front for the purpose of oppressing the weak and helpless.

This is perfectly logical, if you intend to follow the policy of political bandits, but what is it from the standpoint of truly French principles? Those disturbances are not due to brigands. Of course, there may have been robberies and all that, but they have no connection with the resistance being offered by the people of Syria to foreign occupation. There have been no battles or even heavy skirmishes, but