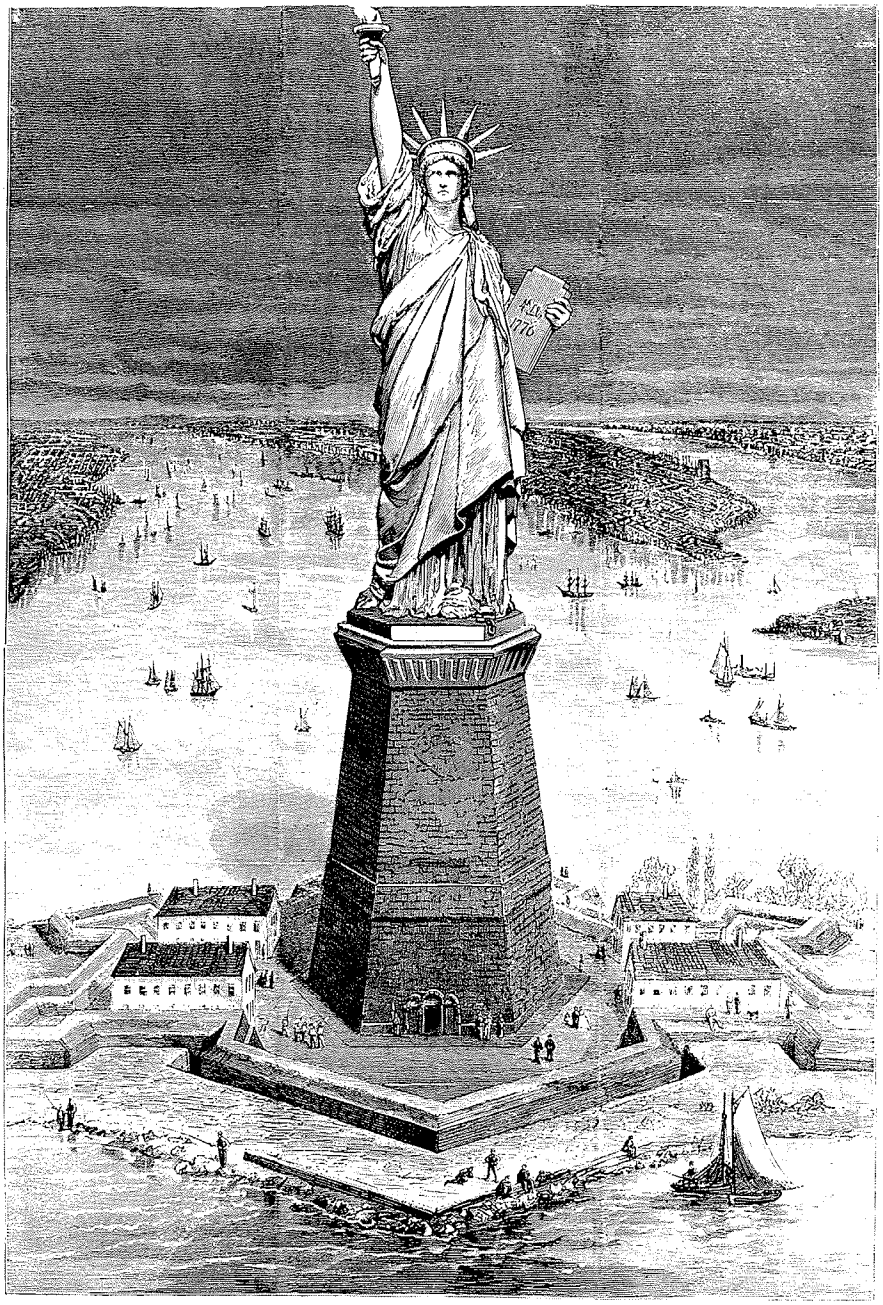
JULY
1776

Immigration

"The history of every country," wrote novelist Willa Cather, "begins in the heart of a man or a woman." In America's case, those men and women were immigrants. The first newcomers were Asian nomads who crossed the Bering Sea "land bridge" into North America. Unlike subsequent arrivals, they met no opposition. Americans have long been of two minds about immigrants, proud of the nation's claim to be the "asylum of mankind" yet suspicious, even fearful, of the new arrivals in their midst. Here, historian Willi Paul Adams traces shifting attitudes toward immigration since the days of the Founding Fathers; political scientist Aaron Segal surveys the latest entrants—Mexicans, Cubans, Haitians, Vietnamese—and the debate they have sparked on Capitol Hill and elsewhere.

A DUBIOUS HOST

by Willi Paul Adams

The enduring image of America as a "melting pot" was stamped on the national consciousness by the English Zionist Israel Zangwill in 1908, when his simple-minded melodrama, *The Melting Pot,* opened in Washington and New York. The play featured two Russian immigrants, a Jew, and a Christian, who found love and happiness in America—America, "God's crucible, the great melting pot where all the races of Europe are melting and reforming!" Expertly larded with bathos and cliché, the play was an immediate hit.

Zangwill's play assured immigrants that Yes, in America the closest ties were possible even between persons whose parents in Europe had confronted each other as murderer and victim. To home-grown Americans, it affirmed the idealistic tradition of the United States as a safe harbor for freedom-seeking refugees, who would repay trust and freedom with loyalty and hard work. "Restrictionists" such as Henry Pratt Fairchild winced at the mass appeal of Zangwill's metaphor. "It swept over this country and other countries like wildfire. It

calmed the rising tide of misgiving. . . . America was a Melting-Pot, the apparent evidences of national disintegration were illusions, and that settled it." At a time when thousands of immigrants, most of them poor, few of them able to speak English, were pouring into the United States every day, there was considerable sentiment in favor of slamming the doors shut.

'Useful Artificers' Only

Between Zangwill's optimism and Fairchild's fears lies the basic ambivalence that has bedeviled American thinking about immigration since colonial times. The steady influx of foreigners has set, variously, Protestants against Catholics against Jews, employers against job-seekers, workers against workers, neighborhoods against neighborhoods, generations against generations. It has produced an ever-changing roster of ethnic winners and losers. Sudden surges of immigration have prompted worries over the preservation of a (mythical?) "national character" —and calls for acceptance of (divisive?) "cultural pluralism." The phenomenon has appealed at once to Americans' most idealistic cosmopolitanism and most self-seeking isolationism. A conflict of values was paradoxical but unavoidable: Every newcomer could be regarded as live testimony to the superiority of America, but he also contributed to growing fears about the continuation of that superiority and about the strength of the nation's identity and its social order.

Migration, of course, has always been a large part of what America is all about. Between 1720 and 1770, an estimated 270,000 settlers arrived from Europe, mostly from the British Isles and Germany; during the entire English colonial period (1607–1776), more than a million newcomers arrived. The colonists encouraged continued in-migration to promote the opening of new territory, the development of local industries and the expansion of trade. When British colonial administrators, after the Seven Years' War, began to sense the growing self-

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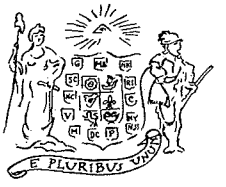
E PLURIBUS UNUM?



If Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and Benjamin Franklin had had their way, the United States would have a "Great Seal" that reflects the American people's diverse national origins.

Hours after the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, the Continental Congress picked the trio as a committee to propose a design for a seal for the new nation. The committee consulted a Philadelphia painter, Eugène Pierre du Simitière. According to Adams, du Simitière suggested that the seal bear "the arms of the several nations from whence America has been peopled, as English, Scotch, Irish, Dutch, German, etc., each in a shield." And indeed, the committee's proposed design, submitted to the Congress in August, featured a shield that was divided into six parts, each with its own ethnic emblem: "a Rose . . . for England," "a Harp . . . for Ireland," "a Thistle proper for Scotland," "a Flower de Luce . . . for France," "the Imperial Eagle . . . for Germany," and "the Belgic Lion . . . for Holland." Among the seal's other elements: a motto, "E Pluribus Unum" ("Out of Many, One").

Congress, however, took no action. Finally—two more committees and nearly six years later—on June 20, 1782, it approved a design. The Great Seal (to be impressed on documents signed by the President) now featured an American eagle clutching an olive branch in one talon, arrows in the other, and upon its breast, a shield with 13 stripes. The motto, "E Pluribus Unum," remained, but it referred now to the states in the union—not to "the several nations from whence America has been peopled."

confidence of colonial leaders, they warned against further uncontrolled immigration from the Old World. London's Proclamation Line of 1763 diminished the appeal of an arduous trans-Atlantic voyage by forbidding land-hungry colonists to settle beyond the Alleghenies. When the Declaration of Independence was drafted, it charged, among other grievances, that George III had "endeavoured to prevent the population of these states."

The makers of the American Revolution did not, however, celebrate ethnic diversity. Benjamin Franklin had warned as early as 1751 that Pennsylvania, a colony founded by Englishmen, was in danger of becoming a colony of aliens. The Germans, he feared, "will shortly become so numerous as to Germanize us instead of our Anglifying them." Less than three decades later, in the contest with Britain, unity and cohesion were essential.

Even after Independence, the Founding Fathers accepted but did not actively encourage immigration lest the virtues of the new Republic of the free and equal be jeopardized by the addition to its citizenry of politically immature subjects of European princes. "Are there no inconveniences to be thrown into the scale against the advantage expected from a multiplication of numbers by the importation of foreigners?" asked Thomas Jefferson in 1782. He doubted the wisdom of employing "extraordinary encouragements" to attract the European masses to America. Still, as for "useful artificers," Jefferson advised, "spare no expense in obtaining them." And once immigrants were in America, he considered them entitled to all the rights of citizenship.

A Pox on Ethnicity

Jefferson's attitude was fairly typical of those of men in responsible public positions in the young Republic, as distinct from such intellectual individualists as Thomas Paine, who envisioned America as "the asylum for the persecuted lovers of civil and religious liberty from every part of Europe." Alexander Hamilton, in many respects Jefferson's adversary, did not differ with him on the immigration question. When Hamilton developed his plans for disposing of public lands in the West, he rejected the idea of a special "family grant" to attract immigrants. Nor did Hamilton think much of the suggestion that the fledgling U.S. Navy should transport English and Irish workers who could not afford to pay for their passage. One of the consequences was that the practice of indentured servitude—by which thousands bought passage to America by agreeing to work as servants here for two to seven years—persisted into the second decade of the 19th century.

The idea of America as "the asylum of mankind" remained nevertheless a durable part of the American founding myth. But that notion was firmly linked to something else: a conviction that American society was a model for the whole world. Newcomers found that their hosts harbored strong sentiments of national superiority; all were expected to leave the inferior Old World behind and, as Americans rather than as Europeans in exile, to join in building the New. The successful creation of the nation-state, its political evolution under a federal system, and the rise, within a few decades, of the United States as the dominant power in North America, meant to America's leaders, regardless of their political affiliations, that North America was no longer open to the colonizing experiments of European pow-

ers. It had been decided, once and for all, that besides British-dominated Canada, there could be only one other nation-state north of the Rio Grande. And there was to be no second Quebec, no new ethnic enclave threatening the unity and stability of the nation.

The level of immigration in the decades after Independence remained modest. According to recent estimates, the average annual influx during the late 1780s was about 6,000 persons. After 1790, it rose to around 10,000, but during the Napoleonic Wars it declined to about 3,000. Altogether, some 250,000 immigrants are believed to have arrived in the United States between 1783 and 1815. Of the nation's 3.9 million inhabitants in 1790, about 60 percent are estimated to have been of English stock. Perhaps nine percent were of Irish ancestry, nine percent German, eight percent Scottish, three percent Dutch, less than two percent French, and less than one percent Swedish.

During the second half of the 1790s, John Adams and the Federalists strongly differed with the Jeffersonian Republicans. Many matters were at issue. The Federalists resented immigrants, especially as potential voters. A new influx of politically active, radically democratic Englishmen and Irishmen, and of a very mixed group of Frenchmen (aristocrats, alleged Jacobins, and planters fleeing the slave revolt in Haiti) caused the Federalists finally to lose their nerve. The result, in 1798, was the Alien and Sedition Acts, designed by Congress in part to curb quick naturalization of immigrants. Nevertheless, the immigrant vote may have proved decisive in Thomas Jefferson's victory over John Adams, the incumbent President, in the presidential election of 1800. A Federalist broadside from 1810 suggests that Adams's party soon learned to sing a different tune:

> Come Dutch and Yankees, Irish, Scot
> with intermixed relation;
> From where we come, it matters not;
> We all make, now, one nation.

Ethnic politics had arrived on the national scene. But "Anglo-conformity" (to use a 20th-century sociological term) remained the standard that immigrants ultimately had to embrace. The Indians, along with the free and enslaved Africans, presented problems whose solutions already required more tolerance for ethnic, cultural, and racial diversity than most European Americans were able to muster. There was no wish to confuse the situation further. Not "ethnic diversity," but "Constitution," "nation," "race," and "Protestantism" as an integral part of the American national identity became the principal cer-

tainties in American public discourse.

The United States's territorial expansion in the first half of the 19th century, its industrialization and urbanization, and continued immigration, were perceived by many an editor and politician not only as signs of success and healthy growth but also on occasion as potential threats to an established order, as severe tests of the American system. The relative success of the anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic "Know Nothing" movement of the 1840s and '50s showed how widespread the feeling of insecurity was. Then, of course, came the main event—a war waged by the North for the preservation of national unity.

The Civil War accomplished many things, but it did not prompt Americans to make an about-face: to begin encouraging various immigrant groups to cherish and develop their unique ethnic traits. Rather the reverse. Indeed, by the 1880s, the picture from a nativist point of view was rather grim. Dislocations caused by fierce competition in the world market for agricultural products and slow industrialization in southern and eastern Europe resulted in the immigration to America of a new wave of economic refugees. They came in the millions, often wearing "peculiar" national dress, speaking "strange" tongues, and crowding into the immigrant ghettos of many American cities. During the four decades after 1880, more than 18 million immigrants entered the United States, and the U.S. population more than doubled, from 50 to 105 million. The proportion of southern and eastern Europeans among the new arrivals—Italians, Greeks, Poles, Slovaks, Czechs, Hungarians, Ukrainians, Russians, Lithuanians, Bulgarians, Armenians, and Romanians, and, among them, a significant segment of eastern Europe's Jewish population—rose from a scant 10 percent in 1882 to 75 percent in 1907. By 1920, fully one-third of the U.S. population consisted of immigrants, children of immigrants, and children with one foreign-born parent.

Immigration (even immigration of Protestant northern

In this 1926 Washington's Birthday photo, 19 New York City schoolgirls show that, despite their 19 different nationalities, their loyalty is undivided.

Europeans) was viewed now with anger and alarm. If the number of articles on a particular question published in magazines may be taken as an indicator of public interest, then public interest was considerable: Almost 1,500 articles for the period 1882–1930 are listed under the headings "Immigrants" and "Immigration" in the relevant indices of American periodical literature. The worries over the influx of foreigners reached hysterical proportions during World War I, before subsiding during the late 1920s as the restrictive Quota Act of 1924 began taking effect and subsiding further as the Great Depression set in.

The most influential document produced during this round of the immigration debate was the 42-volume report of the U.S. Immigration Commission headed by Senator William Dillingham (R.-Vt.). Published in 1911 after three-and-a-half years of hearings and evaluations, the Dillingham report consisted mostly of statistics. The commission described the immigrants' ethnic origins and distribution by ethnic group in various industries and between city and country. The commission also dug up data on immigrants' family structure, literacy, knowledge of English, the school attendance of their children, and their crime rates—and, in a particularly sensational finding, the changes in bodily form of the immigrants' children and grandchildren. The patina of objectivity provided by the commission's statistics, however, scarcely concealed a profound unease. Could the nation absorb new immigrants without creating permanent ethnic ghettos in Cleveland, Chicago, Boston, Pittsburgh, and other big cities? Could the newcomers acquire the language and technical skills necessary to become part of a modern industrial society? The immigrants, the commissioners feared, endangered the American standard of living by their willingness to accept conditions of labor (e.g., long, dangerous hours for low pay) against which American trade unions and social reformers were fighting a fierce battle.

Dillingham and company effectively rejected the notion of

U.P.I.

THE REVOLVING DOOR

The influx of foreigners to the United States has stirred much debate. Far less noticed is the substantial emigration of aliens and even citizens *from* the United States.

Of the 3.4 million immigrants legally admitted during the 1960s, some 619,000 (according to U.S. Census Bureau demographers Robert Warren and Jennifer Marks) left before the decade was out. Another 521,000 foreign-born persons also departed. Thus, 1.14 million immigrants and former immigrants exited during the 60s—one-third the number that entered. A similar pattern existed between 1908 and 1957 (when the Immigration and Naturalization Service stopped counting the emigration of aliens): 15.7 million immigrants came—and at least 4.8 million (30.6 percent) went. Some who had accumulated savings left in triumph, but many went back home in despair. Edward Corsi, FDR's immigration commissioner, recalled how even before his mother's return to Italy, she and her husband had realized that "America had failed to offer its pot of gold. It had offered instead suffering, privations, and defeat."

During 1969–74, the largest numbers of alien emigrants had been born in Mexico (an annual average of 16,100) and Canada (14,000). Other "top" countries: Italy, the Dominican Republic, Germany, Jamaica, Greece, Haiti, the Philippines, and China.

U.S. citizens also emigrate, for various reasons. During the Vietnam War, thousands of American youths fled to Canada to avoid military service. All told, on the basis of data from foreign countries, some 385,468 U.S. citizens emigrated during the 1960s, with Canada (164,310) and Australia (63,474) the most popular destinations.

America as the asylum of mankind. "While the American people, as in the past, welcome the oppressed of other lands," the commissioners declared, "care should be taken that immigration be such both in quality and in quantity as not to make too difficult the process of assimilation." Least desirable, decided the commission, were unskilled bachelors, who intended to return to Europe after a season's work in the United States. Immigrants with young children who attended U.S. public schools, by contrast, tended to be assimilated relatively rapidly.

Underlying the commission's views was the widely shared assumption that America was a fully developed national community, of which immigrants had only to become part. The United States was a nation like other nations, possessing, for instance, but one national language—no matter how many different tongues could be heard in the streets of New York, Chicago, and San Francisco.

Requiring immigrants to become unreserved members of

the mature body of free citizens was a logical outgrowth of the voluntaristic "social contract" thinking that had predominated in America ever since the 17th century. American tradition did not allow for permanently foreign elements within the "body" of the people. Immigrants from Asia, the commissioners judged, had shown by their refusal to assimilate that they did not intend ever to become American; therefore, the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882) and other measures which barred further immigration from Asia were justified. Those Europeans who failed to learn how to read and write even their native language or to acquire the skills of a craft, the commissioners suspected, would become more of a burden than an asset to American society. Hence, the commissioners recommended the adoption of a literacy test (enacted by Congress in 1917 over President Woodrow Wilson's veto) as a prerequisite to entry, and the exclusion of unskilled laborers. The commissioners also urged annual quotas by "race" such as were later imposed in 1921, 1924, and 1927.*

The Dillingham commission's notions about immigration, on the whole, echoed those of most Americans—as the laws of the following decades attest. The commission's position was more chauvinistic than crudely racist, more restrictionist than isolationist, and uncompromisingly assimilationist.

Reblending the Stocks

Yet grotesquely racist arguments *did* play an important part in public discussion. Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts, a leading restrictionist, argued in 1904 that the best "amalgamation" of "stocks" had already been achieved in centuries past: the combination of Saxons, Angles and Jutes, along with Normans and Celts, to form one "English race." "The process in the New World," explained the Boston Republican, "was merely a reblending of the old stocks." The influx of different immigrants since 1880, Lodge warned, endangered the

*Taking note of the various, mostly contradictory, anthropological schemes of racial classification, the commission in its *Dictionary of Races or Peoples* relied mainly on language-based categories. About the English "race," the *Dictionary* stated that it was "a very composite product" by linguistic as well as physical criteria. As for the "German race," the *Dictionary* noted that it did not exist, if a definition were based on purely physical characteristics. (Among the Germans, it declared, were to be found "some of the broadest-headed men in Europe" as well as "some of the longest-headed.") The report thus eschewed the crudest form of pseudo-biological racism that undergirded many arguments in favor of immigration restriction. In deciding whether to classify Jewish immigrants according to the countries they were leaving, or as one racial group, the commission pragmatically accepted the majority opinion among Jewish scholars who were asked for advice, and grouped all Jews together.

superior quality of the blend.

After Israel Zangwill's theatrical triumph of 1908, racists sought to conscript the melting-pot image into their parade of alarums. "If the Melting Pot is allowed to boil without control," asserted amateur anthropologist and historian Madison Grant in 1916, "the type of native American of colonial descent will become as extinct as the Athenian of the age of Pericles and the Viking of the days of Rollo." Popular discussion of immigration throughout this period took for granted the existence of fixed, inherited "racial" characteristics. Thus, a University of Nebraska sociologist, Edward Ross, declared in 1901, "When peoples and races meet there is a silent struggle to determine *which* shall do the assimilating," and he warned against the possibility of "race suicide."

'Americanization Day'

But most U.S. sociologists before World War I seem to have been confident of American society's assimilative powers. They looked at fiercer struggles between nations and nationality groups elsewhere in the world, and judged America relatively successful by comparison. Sarah Simons, a Washington, D.C., sociologist, in 1901 even advanced a distinction between "democratic" assimilation (i.e., what was happening in the United States) and "aristocratic" assimilation (i.e., the repressive measures taken by European governments against ethnic minorities, such as the Germanizing campaign against the Danes in Schleswig and the various Russification programs of the tsars).

Sociologists also contrasted the southern and eastern European immigrants with three racial groups in America—the Chinese, the Indians, and the blacks—and concluded that the U.S. system had already dealt with its severest challenges. The United States had excluded Chinese unskilled laborers by law since 1882, and rightly, argued Simons and her mentor, Columbia sociologist Richmond Mayo Smith. The Indians continued to pose a "problem" but certainly no threat to the social order. As for the Afro-Americans, biological "amalgamation" was never to be expected; yet the progress blacks had made since Emancipation led Simons to conclude that a "partial assimilation" had occurred. Eventually, she was sure, there would be "approximate" assimilation.

With the advent of World War I, however, confidence in the melting pot's efficacy was shaken. So-called hundred-percent patriots viewed any objections to U.S. support for Britain and

France or, later, to America's entry into the war as nothing short of treason. The chauvinistic elements of the German-American press, hailing the Kaiser's early triumphs over the Allies, scarcely eased Anglophiles' suspicions. Indeed, hysteria was spread by publishers and orators. Beginning in 1915, not only German-Americans but all "hyphenate" Americans were widely suspected of being disloyal and potential spies and saboteurs.

The 1917–18 war effort left no room for any "un-American" attachment to an ethnic subculture. American nationalism proved far stronger than the appeals of intellectuals such as antiwar essayist Randolph Bourne for a "transnational" American society. Shortly after the sinking of the *Lusitania,* President Woodrow Wilson advised a group of newly naturalized citizens: "A man who thinks of himself as belonging to a particular national group in America has not yet become an American." Former President Theodore Roosevelt, to whom the 1914 edition of *The Melting Pot* was dedicated, and other hundred-percenters were much distressed when it was disclosed that one-fourth of the Army's recruits in 1917 and 1918 could not read English, and that of the 105 million inhabitants of the United States in 1918, five million could not speak it.

The Last Yankee, *an 1888 cartoon by a British immigrant, expressed nativists' fears that strange newcomers endangered the "race" of true Americans, the Anglo-Saxons.*

Library of Congress.

The Great War spurred the growth of an "Americanization" movement that had been born in the 1900s. (The first "Americanization Day" was celebrated on July 4, 1915.) The loosely organized movement aimed, through intensive adult education programs, to solve the language problem, the (largely imaginary) loyalty problem, and a medley of social problems, too (e.g., substandard diets and housing). The programs were mainly administered by private organizations, including the YMCA, churches, the Daughters of the American Revolution, and such self-help groups as the Hebrew Educational Society of Brooklyn and the Society for Italian Immigrants. Prominent businessmen, notably Henry Ford, helped by allowing Americanization classes to be held in their factories.

Another Switzerland?

The movement was encouraged and partly funded by the federal and state governments. The U.S. Department of the Interior published an *Americanization Bulletin* during 1918 and 1919. "We are fashioning a new people," proclaimed Interior Secretary Franklin Lane. "We are doing the unprecedented thing in saying that Slav, Teuton, Celt, and the other races that make up the civilized world are capable of being blended here." The Americanization movement, indeed, was founded on the "melting-pot" concept, although the Interior Department's Americanization Office favored the less vivid term "blend." A committee of specialists had advised federal officials in 1919 that "to the native-born American the term [melting pot] has no unpleasant meaning, but to the foreign-born . . . it suggests the kind of melting down which means to them the sacrifice of their native culture and character."

After the war, the Americanization movement was first overshadowed by the Red scare, then weakened by the recession in 1921 that undermined its financial support. Passage of the first quota law that same year made the need for an Americanization crusade seem less urgent. By then, many states had passed laws to promote the education of adult immigrants.

The first comprehensive sociological analysis of the immigration question—including a look back at the wartime experience—was also published in 1921. In *Old World Traits Transplanted,* Robert Park and Herbert Miller criticized the Americanization movement for having been overly aggressive. Assimilation of the third generation, they argued, was all but inevitable in a society so clearly defined as the United States. Americans needed only to show some tolerance while the pro-

cess took place—tolerance of all sorts of immigrant organizations and of the use of languages other than English.

Whereas Park and Miller deemed "cultural pluralism" a transitory stage, a few young liberal intellectuals thought America should embrace it as an ideal. One of them, philosopher Horace M. Kallen, a founder of the New School for Social Research in New York and the son of a rabbi from Germany, in fact coined the term "cultural pluralism" in 1924. Immigrants, he observed, "may change their clothes, their politics, their wives, their religion, their philosophies, to a greater or lesser extent: they cannot change their grandfathers." Kallen urged the United States to become "a federation or commonwealth of nationalities" roughly on the model of Switzerland.

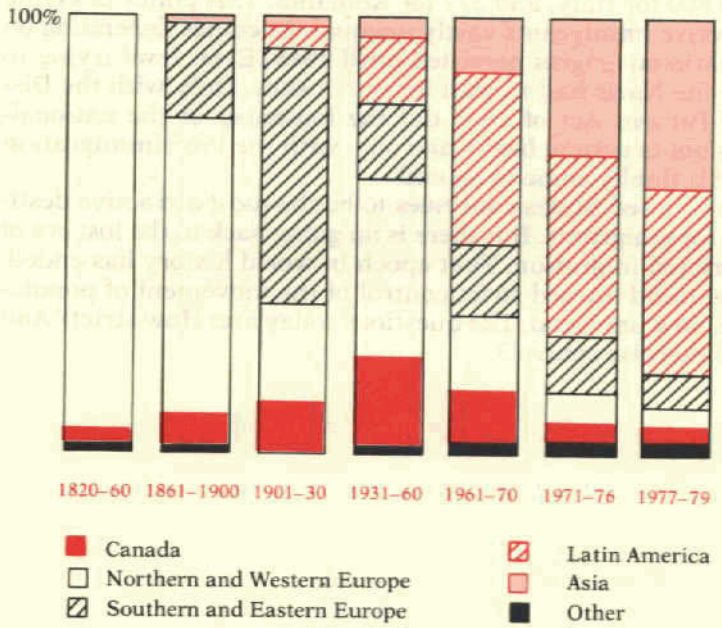
He did not find many sympathizers. The majority of Americans and their elected representatives took a less idealistic view. In three separate pieces of legislation passed by the U.S. Congress during the 1920s, they decided not to take chances and determined that from 1927 on, the annual number of immigrants from Europe was to be limited to a bit over 150,000. Only immigration from Canada and Latin America would be unrestricted. The 150,000 places, moreover, were to be allotted according to national quotas: e.g., 65,000 for Great Britain, 30,000 for Germany, 17,000 for Ireland—but only 6,500 for Poland, 5,800 for Italy, and 377 for Romania. This policy of giving prospective immigrants vastly unequal welcomes depending on their national origins persisted until 1965. Even Jews trying to escape the Nazis had to wait for quota slots. Only with the Displaced Persons Act of 1948 did the loosening of the national-origins quota system begin, and only with the 1965 Immigration Act did it finally come to an end.

The United States continues to be the most attractive destination for emigrants. But there is no going back to the lost era of unrestricted migration. That epoch in world history has ended, and the trend toward strict control of the movement of populations is now universal. The questions today are: How strict? And how to exercise control?

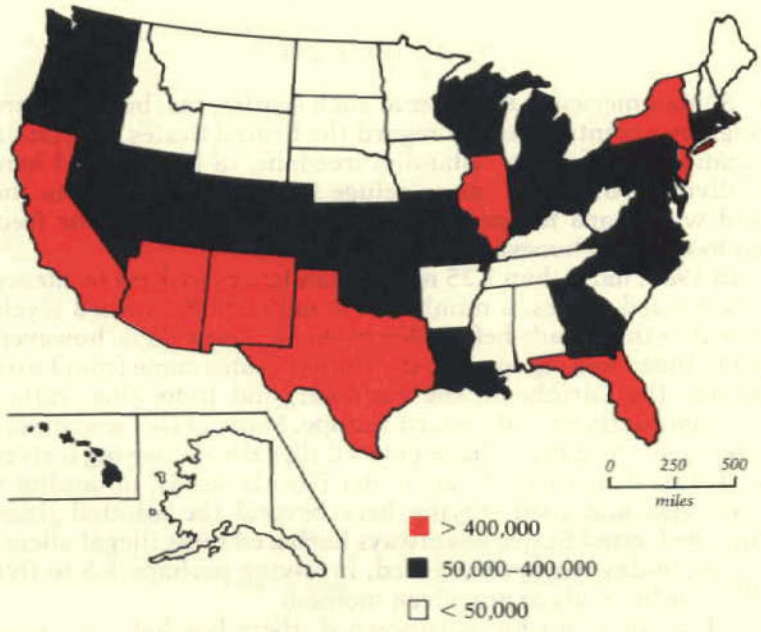
IMMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES, by decade, 1821–1979

During the 1970s, the U.S. Spanish-origin population increased by 60 percent to 14.6 million. The black population, meanwhile, grew by only 17 percent—to 26.5 million. The number of Asians and Pacific Islanders rose from 1.5 million to 3.5 million—one-third of them living in California.

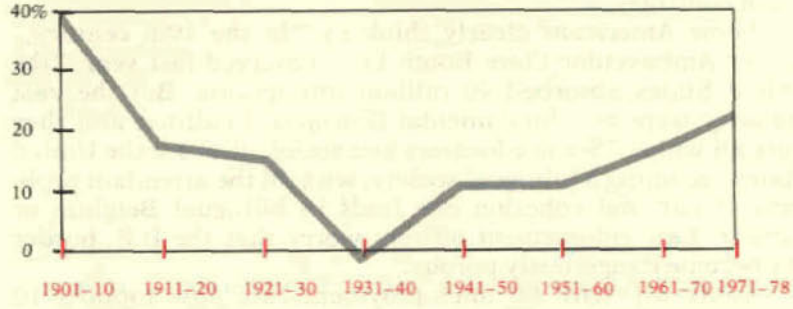
IMMIGRANTS ADMITTED TO THE UNITED STATES, by region of birth, 1820–1979



WHERE SPANISH-ORIGIN PEOPLE SETTLE, 1980



NET IMMIGRATION* AS A PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION GROWTH, by decade, 1901–1978



*Net immigration: legal immigration minus emigration. Emigration is estimated. In 1931–1940, emigration exceeded immigration by 85,000.

Source: Immigration and Naturalization Service Statistical Branch; Population Reference Bureau, Leon F. Bouvier, *Immigration and its Impact on U.S. Society* and *The Impact of Immigration on U.S. Population Size;* U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Persons of Spanish Origin by State: 1980,* 1980 Census of Population Supplementary Report.