

Marta Dębska

A BRIEF HISTORY OF AMERICANIZATION

Introduction

The commonly used term “Americanization” is nowadays one of the most misinterpreted and burdened with negative connotations terms there are. It is usually identified by non-Americans with the globalization process, which is, in fact, much broader and older than Americanization. Significant here is the fact that both the expression “America” and the concept of Americanization consist of an inaccuracy themselves. They should be used to refer to two continents and all the countries situated there. In fact, though, they refer just to the United States of America. What is more, the original concept of Americanization, which is still essential for the internal affairs of the US, is commonly forgotten outside the country. This phenomenon therefore needs some explanation and attention.

The aim of this paper is to point out the duality of the concept of Americanization and briefly present its evolution and transformation into contemporary forms. Another issue which the paper examines is the essence and reasons for the huge popularity of this phenomenon all around the world.

Concept and duality of Americanization

One of the tasks of language dictionaries is the reflection of reality. When we trace the clarification of the term “Americanization” in a few of them, of course, we find

linguistic links mostly with America. For instance, according to the *Small Polish Language Dictionary* (Skorupka et al. 1989: 10) the term “Americanization” means to copy America, to follow Americans and the absorption of American culture. A connected word – Americanism – is explained here as a set of characteristics of North American civilization. Similarly, in a later edition of another dictionary, the contemporary general concept of Americanization means the introduction of American patterns, traditions, and lifestyle, and also the exertion of influence on individuals to adopt specifically American behaviours and standards (Sobol 1995: 41). However, “American” is not understood only as a person born in or living on the American continent. It is considered as a citizen of the United States of America as well¹ (Skorupka et al. 1989: 10). In practice, most non-Americans usually treat the phrases “America” and “the United States of America” on equal terms. A result of this simplification is clearly visible in the up-to-date online Cambridge Dictionary², explaining the term “Americanize” as “become or make something typical of the U.S. or U.S. culture”. The confusion results from the convergence of meaning of the dominant country and the continent on which it is located, as the status of the U.S. has risen gradually, especially after the Second World War. Even linguistic resistance seemed to collapse when NAFTA included Mexico in North America (Slater et al. 1999: 318). There is still one more ambiguity about the definition of Americanization which is usually not addressed sufficiently in the contemporary world. The point is that we focus mainly on the process of Americanization outside the U.S., whereas we forget about its prior form inside its country of origin. The naturalization process, which is under consideration here, consists in instruction of new immigrants in English and in United States history, government and culture³. This is so that they can fulfil the duties of an U.S. citizen and feel unity with a new nation in the close future. This process was an initial one, and is still lively and crucial in the existence of the United States of America.

Original Americanization

According to the Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology⁴, the word *Americanization* has been in use since U.S. colonial times, but its ideological meaning has changed repeatedly. Shortly after the Revolutionary War, it was used to describe two aspects of the new nation. On the one hand, the united colonies needed to create a common culture and their own standards in law, weights and measurement or currencies. On the other hand, there was also an internal ideological dynamic of new citizens car-

¹ *Grolier New Webster's Dictionary*, Connecticut 1992, p. 12.

² www.dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/americanize?q=americanization (05.2011).

³ www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/americanization?show=0&t=1306505358 (05.2011).

⁴ www.sociologencyclopedia.com/public/tocname?id=g9781405124331_chunk_g97814051243317_ss1-50 (05.2011).

ried forward by discussion, debate, and simple expediency. Americans needed systems of governance, roads, trade, schools, and social conventions. This huge need for separation from Europe and self-awareness came not only from the contrast with the Old Continent, but also that with newer immigrants. The latter quickly became the essential role in the case of Americanization. From 1790 dictionaries explains the phrase *Americanize* as to acculturate foreigners⁵. Actually, this was the point which started the present form of the interior process of Americanization.

Originally, the concept of Americanization was associated only with adaptation to White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (*WASP*)⁶ values and patterns by new immigrants arriving in the United States. Thus Americanization was understood as assimilation at that time. This continued to function until the beginning of the 20th century. The Anglo-conformity ideology was the oldest one which this course of policy was based on. It was created at the beginning of the 19th century to explain the attitude of the primarily English inhabitants of the original 13 colonies towards Native Americans and black people, and then to protect the WASPs' Christian-conservative system of values and interests. This took place under the banner "One flag – one language – one school" and was made possible by the public school system that put stress on immigrants' education in the right spirit. The dominant role of WASPs in American society and authority allowed them to announce the predominance of their culture and the necessity of its introduction for all citizens' own good, even by force.

Therefore, Anglo-conformity also became the national ideology, and the governmental immigration policy was made in accordance with it as well⁷. In fact, the loss of newcomers' ethnicity and the exclusion of blacks from society which were promoted within it denied the fundamental rules of democracy of which the New Nation was so proud. Anglo-conformity was an underlying premise of the Immigration Act of 1924, which reinforced the primacy of immigration from Northwestern Europe by an appropriate quota policy. This strict policy even let the authorities exclude some groups of U.S.-Chinese (1882) and Japanese (1924) people. The restrictions on newcomers were chiefly a reaction to the millions of Southern and Eastern European immigrants who arrived in the United States from about 1880 to 1914. In view of this great immigration flow, the naturalization process also escalated into a feverish crusade at the turn of the 20th century. The new dwellers were perceived as much more "foreign," and therefore threatening, than had been earlier immigrants. At that time another option of assimilation model appeared – the so-called "melting pot".

⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁶ *White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP)* – the immigrants of the Colonial Era in America, who came mainly from England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, and in smaller numbers Denmark, Sweden, and Germany.

⁷ A. Kapiszewski, *Ideologia i teorie procesów asymilacji w USA. Szkic problemu*, "Przegląd Polonijny" 1981, Vol. 1, p. 6.

This was the social minorities' answer to the WASP ideology. Contrary to the prior subordination of immigrant culture, values and customs to American ones, this model propagated the emergence of a new, specifically American culture. This could be made possible by "melting" the best components of ethnic cultures into a new alloy, based on equal rights. The ideology of the melting pot was enriched with the idea of *Homo Americus* – a new American born by the biological amalgamation of races and blood of all U.S. inhabitants. Both of the above assimilation ideologies, asserting a loss of native ethnicity, were very utopian and did not survive. The alternative to them, pluralistic models, emerged at the beginning of the 20th century. The most classical of them presented America as nation of nations. This federal pluralism assured each ethnic group of the preservation of its origin culture within the state⁸. There were many mix models of American society consisting of either pluralistic or assimilation elements from the middle of the 20th century, for instance: religious triple melting pot, racial double melting pot, transmuted pot, and so-called New Ethnicity. To some extent all of them led to fast-track assimilation as well as Americanization. Regardless of immigrants' method of adaptation, the fact is that they felt some duality just after coming. On the one hand they were pressed to learn English, wear American clothes and know American reality. On the other hand, they spoke their native languages and found familiar food or their fellowmen in the neighbourhood (Davidson et al. 1994: 705).

The Anglo-Saxon core of American society felt threatened every time when new waves of unfamiliar immigrants arrived. The German and Irish were those European groups which had met with the greatest prejudices during colonial times, but the real danger came in America at the turn of the 20th century with the huge immigration flow from South-eastern Europe. About 30 million people arrived in the New World by 1920. They made up almost 15 percent of the American population. They were young people, mostly men, between 15 and 40 years old. Not many of them knew English and had skills or much education and, more importantly, they were mainly Catholics or Greek or Russian Orthodox and Jewish (Davidson et al. 1994: 693).

Moreover, industrialization brought the rapid development of cities and interior migration from the countryside to urban areas in the 19th century. Also, newcomers mostly settled in the large towns, especially in the industrial ones of the Northeast and Midwest. As a result the cities started to be even more overcrowded. Thus, it was no wonder that distrust of the strangers turned into a frenzy of xenophobia at that time. The ancestors of former settlers and colonists were afraid that the traditional American – that is to say Protestant – values would melt and their cities transform into slums, which could cause the broad stratification of society. Owing to these anxieties, many nationalist groups, such as the Daughters of the American Revolution or the American Legion, organized educational programs to indoctrinate foreigners with loyalty to America. This was done through

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 10.

lectures on American history and government or classes in English (Tamura 1994: 52–55). Although teaching was quite a popular form of fostering proper American values among immigrants, it did not bring the expected results. For hard-working workers it was not easy to attend evening classes. Thus, the progressives focused on the immigrants' children to teach them English, the value of good citizenship, respect for authority and care for their health. By the 1890s a system of compulsory public education was a fact for children aged 8–14 in most states with an increasing immigrant population⁹. Apart from educational programs, there also existed employer and patriotic programs and the so-called settlement house movement¹⁰. This, transplanted from Great Britain, helped to assimilate and ease the transition of immigrants into the labour force not only by teaching history or art but also by some social services like a daycare center, homeless shelter, public kitchen or public bath¹¹. The varied ethnic institutions and foreign-language press were also especially helpful in this process (Luedtke 1992: 77). Equally important was the church, where the sermons affected not only the religious aspect of life but also obedience to American law and awareness of the dangers of European radicalism. Besides the above organizations, there were some social workers who tried to alleviate the living conditions of immigrants and help them adjust to their new environment. Similar activities were conducted after 1910 by state and federal agencies as well (Tamura 1994: 52–55).

The apprehension of immigrants and unusual care of high level of patriotism and loyalty towards the United States of America intensified between 1915 and 1921, in the background to World War I. At that time, the European roots of all U.S. inhabitants, especially new ones, were a highly problematic and awkward matter. Jacob Needleman emphasized (2002: 39):

that America is the only nation formed by philosophical ideas that have been thought through by human beings. So, to be American was an idea and American identity is not a tribal, ethnic or racial one. But is a philosophical identity composed of ideas of freedom, liberty, independent thoughts and conscience, self-reliance, hard work, justice. This is both the weakness and the strength of America.

All of these ideas together create the State ideology – Americanism, which describes a genuinely original kind of patriotism. Its singularity was emphasized in *The Forum Magazine* in 1894 by President Theodore Roosevelt, who described Americanism as “a question of spirit, conviction, and purpose, not of creed or bir-

⁹ www.immigration-online.org/341-americanization-programs.html (05.2011).

¹⁰ This is also called the *social settlement movement*. It contained the community centers run by middle-class Americans to help poor and foreign-born people. The first settlement house was opened in 1884 in an East London slum. The first one in America was founded in 1886 in the worst New York slums. The most famous one was Hull House in Chicago. At the turn of the century there were more than 100 of them in America (J. Davidson et al., *Nations of Nations...*, p. 703–704; www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/1135.html) (05/2011).

¹¹ www.immigration-online.org/341-americanization-programs.html (05.2011).

thplace¹². Taking this unique nature of American identity and the fundamentals of the United States into account it is much easier to comprehend all the efforts for Americanization that are made at times of international conflict or war. A shared fever of all Americans, who had to be dedicated to Americanism and the U.S., was plainly visible just at the beginning of the 20th century.

The stability and coherence of American society depended on strong national identity and the undoubted loyalty of all Americans, either citizens or newcomers. There was no place for naturalized citizens who advocated the countries where they had arrived from. This was clearly stated in *The Forum Magazine* in 1894 by President Roosevelt, and then in President Woodrow Wilson's address to four thousand newly naturalized citizens in Philadelphia in 1915. What is more, also presented was the federal authorities' attitude to new immigrants and the strong tendency not only for naturalization but also for Americanization of them in many fields of life.

We must Americanize them [newcomers – author's note] in every way, in speech, in political ideas and principles, and in their way of looking at the relations between Church and State. We welcome the German or the Irishman who becomes an American. We have no use for the German or Irishman who remains such. We do not wish German-Americans and Irish-Americans who figure as such in our social and political life; we want only Americans, and, provided they are such, we do not care whether they are of native or of Irish or of German ancestry. [...] We have no room for any people who do not act and vote simply as Americans, and as nothing else. Moreover, we have as little use for people who carry religious prejudices into our politics as for those who carry prejudices of caste or nationality. (President T. Roosevelt, *True Americanism, The Forum Magazine*, April 1894)¹³

You cannot dedicate yourself to America unless you become in every respect and with every purpose of your will thorough Americans. You cannot become thorough Americans if you think of yourselves in groups. America does not consist of groups. A man who thinks of himself as belonging to a particular national group in America has not yet become an American, and the man who goes among you to trade upon your nationality is no worthy son to live under the Stars and Stripes. (President W. Wilson's address to newly naturalized citizens, Philadelphia, May 10, 1915)¹⁴

The new arrivals were persuaded to naturalize by many U.S. organizations. The Nativism movement in the United States, which flourished between 1830 and 1925¹⁵, was among the most hostile anti-immigrant movements in American history. Its activities, first anti-Catholic, anti-German or anti-Chinese, was focused mainly on naturalization of immigrants after World War I.

This was the aim of, for example, the *American Association of Foreign-Language Newspapers*, the *American National Americanization Committee*, the *Civil League of America in Boston* and the *League of Foreign Born Citizens*.

As Adam Walaszek writes (1983: 50–51), there were two possibilities for Americanization: compulsory and voluntary. The former happened when naturali-

¹² www.theodore-roosevelt.com/images/research/speeches/trta.pdf (05.2011).

¹³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴ www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=65388#axzz1O7EnuczB (05.2011).

¹⁵ www.publiceye.org/ark/immigrants/Nativism.html (05.2011).

zation was a condition for getting a job. The latter was an attempt of conviction of the superiority of U.S. civilization, the better standard of life there or all advantages possible by citizenship and knowledge of English. The latter was characteristic of the *Bureau of Naturalization*, the federal organization which tried to establish itself as the leading body in citizenship education and Americanization from 1914. It was the first federal institution to try incessantly to standardize citizenship education in the whole country.

Americanization, together with issues of loyalty and patriotism, was particularly important from 1917, when the United States abandoned a neutral policy and joined in World War I. In order to improve the patriotic and moral attitude among American society at that time, a nationwide contest for writing a National Creed was announced, to be a brief summary of the American political faith founded upon things fundamental to American history and tradition. The winning entry, declared in April 1918, expressed the special kind of spiritual patriotism mentioned above – Americanism – in the best way. Keeping this ideology vital constantly was made possible by the daily flag salutation, celebrating national holidays and promotion of patriotic symbols, for instance: Uncle Sam, the national flag and monuments, and the eagle. In April 1917, President Wilson even created the *Committee on Public Information* to promote and reinforce public support for the war¹⁶.

Availing itself of advertising methods and new psychological knowledge, this government agenda disseminated three basic ideas of Americanism: democracy, unity and freedom.

Therefore, immigrants became more aware of American ideology, the gap between them and citizens was diminished, wartime patriotism was fostered and all Americans were instructed how to help win the war. The Committee used all possible media at that time: the press, telegraph, films, radio, posters, photographs and cable. Among its many divisions, particularly visible and useful for the sometimes illiterate audience were the *Films Division* and the *Division of Pictorial Publicity*.

The alliance between the advertising industry, artists and government was unusual effective within them (Sivulka 1997: 134–136). Despite the fact that the *Committee on Public Information* was abolished in August 1919¹⁷, similar propaganda activities were also conducted during World War II by the *War Advertising Council* created in 1942.

¹⁶ www.firstworldwar.com/features/propaganda.htm (05.2011).

¹⁷ www.archives.gov/research/guide-fed-records/groups/063.html.

The patriotic posters issued during World War I:



Source: www.archives.gov/publications/posters/ww1.html (05/2011); www.images.google.com (11/2003); www.immigration-online.org/341-americanization-programs.html (05/2011).

According to Juliann Sivulka (1998: 232), the council “produced the largest, most extensive advertising campaign in history, promoting war bond sales, internal security, rationing”. The advertising industry provided a real lift for American patriotism at that time. Nevertheless, there were also profits on the other side. The huge number of immigrants who arrived at the end of the 19th century were perceived as worthwhile market targets, and the process of Americanization as an opportunity for expansive consumerism (Kammen 1999: 66).

The patriotic posters distributed during World War II:



Source: <http://www.archives.gov/publications/posters/ww2.html>

Consequently, the advertising industry and mass media were among the most important tools of the widespread phenomenon of Americanization, not only inside but also outside the United States of America. It is hard to say that internal Americanization of non-citizens achieved great success when the internment camps existed and race segregation was still a fact in the U.S. However, the war experience of fascism halted the Nativism movement there. Moreover, Americanization took place on battlefields where all draftees fought together, especially during World War II. There were also some facilities in the naturalization way for eager immigrants who enlisted in the U.S. army. What is more, the G.I. Bill of Rights (1944) allowed all veterans to learn in colleges and universities which had not been accessible to many of them before. The wartime effort of the U.S. army, similarly to patriotic ads, apart from its main goals also had some side effects. The presence of American soldiers abroad was a sort of promotion of America outside the continent, which eased the emergence and fast development of the other Americanization so popular nowadays, that taking place outside the United States.

Americanization after 1945

The stimulation of the naturalization process remained a lively issue in the United States of America throughout the 20th century. Many American politicians underlined the desire for assimilation and the inclusion of immigrants in political life there still. For instance, Jimmy Carter had stated even before he won the presidential election that the Democratic Party, of which he was a member,

[...] welcomed generations of immigrants – the Jews, the Irish, the Italians, the Poles, and all the others, enlisted them in its ranks and fought the political battles that helped bring them into the American mainstream.¹⁸

In view of the renewed increase in immigration after World War II this liberal attitude to newcomers was quite comprehensible. There were still many problems and the character of immigration had changed. The new arrivals came from Latin America and Asia for the most part. Nonetheless, the phenomenon of immigration had been inscribed in the U.S. democratic fundamentals forever, and to some extent American economic power and development have depended on immigrants.

The immigration policy has only fluctuated between the liberal and restrictive one in view of historic events. The real landmark in internal Americanization was the U.S. Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* in 1954, which declared segregation of races illegal. This opened the way to legal equality for other minority groups in almost each area of life – education, work or

¹⁸ Jimmy Carter's acceptance speech *Our nation's past and future...*, presented during the Democratic National Convention meeting at Madison Square Garden in New York City on July 15, 1976 (www.4president.org/speeches/carter1976acceptance.htm) (06.2011).

housing. So the assimilation and integration of all Americans was finally possible in the eyes of the law¹⁹.

The 20th century took place rather under the other banner of Americanization – convincing the rest of the world of American values, ideas or features and trying to make others similar to Americans. This is visible in many aspect of our life. Briefly: in the economy, with the domination of the U.S. in world markets and the introduction of the American way of production and organization of companies, or the expansion of the business activities of American-based multinational companies; in politics, Americanization appears as the promotion of the democratic system, especially the American model, and support for human rights; in culture: this process consists in imposing American patterns of culture and lifestyle on other nations.

The history of enlarging the sense of Americanization started no earlier than the 19th century. The national messianic idea of inculcation of democracy evolved from the settlers' profound belief that America was this place where they were able to bring to life God's Kingdom on Earth, which would serve as a model for the rest of the world. At the age of Enlightenment that ideal kingdom evolved into democracy as the only social system that was natural for people and applied to the moral individual's conscience, which is the guarantee of justice and democratic and moral order in the society. The resounding success of the American Revolution, the proclamation of the State and cultivation of the unique Catholic-Judeo-Christian tradition led to Americans believing in the uniqueness of their society and the right to Americanize others all over the world. This messianic idea as moral duty had already been announced towards Asia at the beginning of 19th century by a small group of Williams College students in Massachusetts (Handlin 1963: 181). Then, for the sake of American destiny the imperial expansion was started at the end of the 19th century. Of course, it assumed not only the shape of military conflict but also humanitarian help or democratic education, as could be seen many times throughout the next century. Without a doubt, this conviction of mission is a genuine source of national pride. As President Carter emphasized in 1976:

America's birth opened a new chapter in mankind's history. Ours was the first nation to dedicate itself clearly to basic moral and philosophical principles: that all people are created equal and endowed with inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and that the power of government is derived from the consent of the governed. [...] Today, two hundred years later, we must address ourselves to that role, both in what we do at home and how we act abroad—among people everywhere who have become politically more alert, socially more congested, and increasingly impatient with global inequities, and who are now organized, as you know, into some one hundred and fifty different nations. This calls for nothing less than a sustained architectural effort to shape an international framework of peace within which our own ideals gradually can become a global reality²⁰.

¹⁹ www.american-education.org/102-americanization.html (05.2011).

²⁰ Jimmy Carter's acceptance speech *Our nation's past and future...* (www.4president.org/speeches/carter1976acceptance.htm) (06.2011).

American determination to be a political world leader was caused also by the political and economic situation after World War II. The United States of America was the only one real winner of that war. It doubled its industrial production during the war and possessed three quarters of the world's gold reserves (Lubbe 1994: 152–153). This predestined the United States to become the global banker and to take over leadership from the British. The political and economic domination of the U.S. in the post-war world lent itself to the rebuilding of Europe, which also led to a surplus in exports of American production and increased popularity and familiarity with the “Made in the USA” tag around the world. The Marshall Plan (1948–1951) and the Truman Doctrine (1947), declaring the U.S. to be the guardian of the world's democracies, initiated *Pax Americana*, a global conception of American hegemony. As Henry Kissinger points out (2002: 495), the documents confirmed American willingness to heal what inheres in its national nature.

The brilliant Marshall Plan, besides U.S. economic benefits, led not only to the rebuilding of Western European economies, but also instituted liberal economic practices, such as lower tariffs and instruments to coordinate economic policies (Sibley 2002: 95). Considering the territorial extent of influence (17 European countries), generous financial assistance (about \$13 billion for Europe in grants and loans), and its wide variety of activities, the Marshall Plan simply cannot be downplayed in terms of the Americanization of the Old Continent. Furthermore, there were many additional benefits, such as the European sense of hope, economic and political security, and the subliminal positive image of America.

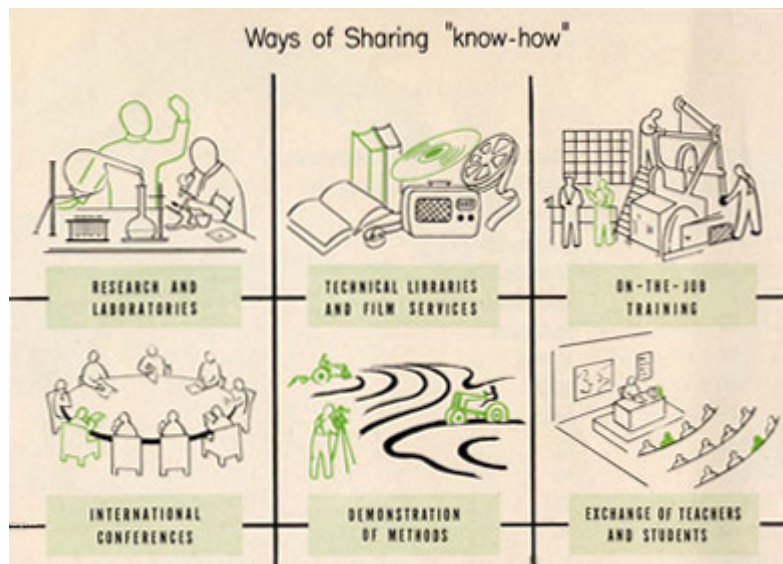
The plan's concept was extended to less developed countries under President Truman's *Point Four Program* in 1949. But this time the aim was mostly creation of a new lifestyle there. Apart from financial aid, American technologies, scientific achievements or natural resources were shared with the poorest countries (Boorstin 1995: 552). American aid programs were really a popular way of broadening democracy, and thus the American lifestyle as well, all over the world in the 20th century. This was especially the case after World War II, when American foreign policy was more and more a mix of humanitarian, economical, political, ideological and military reasons (Boorstin 1995: 549).

The departure from isolationist to global foreign policy was visible also in such unforgettable American aid programs as *UNRRA*²¹, the *Peace Corps* or *Fulbright*. The last two continue to this day. The Peace Corps, established in 1961 by President John F. Kennedy to promote world peace and friendship, has been active in 139 countries to date. Its main goals consist in helping people in developing countries to better understand: their needs, other people and Americans²².

²¹ *UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration)* organization created in 1943 to rehabilitate the liberated area of Europe and Asia during World War II. The aid, in the shape of food, medicine, clothes, fuel and restoration of industry or agriculture, was financed mainly by the U.S. and reached China, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Italy, Poland, the Ukrainian SSR and Yugoslavia. The operation lasted until 1949.

²² www.peacecorps.gov/index.cfm?shell=about (05.2011).

A drawing presenting *The Point Four Program* from a Department of State publication released in December 1949



Source: www.trumanlibrary.org/hstpape/point4.htm (06/2011).

Volunteers have therefore worked in the area of information technology, business, health and education. Equally extensive, but different in character, is the Fulbright Program, initiated in 1946 in order to promote international partnership and mutual understanding²³. Focusing chiefly on educational exchange has brought long-lasting effects not only in the minds not only of present generations, but also future generations. Another type of institution which has been able to propagate American values abroad is philanthropic foundations, based on private grants, whose existence and quick development was closely connected with America's industrial growth. The number of these bodies rose in the U.S. from five in the 19th century to nearly two hundred in 1930, and even more since World War II. The Ford, Rockefeller, W. K. Kellogg Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation of New York were the oldest ones (Bell 1999: 284). There have been almost countless numbers of this kind of undertakings, but it has to be pointed out that capability to create a positive self-image is definitely one of the strongest and the most effective tools of America, which supports so-called *soft power*.

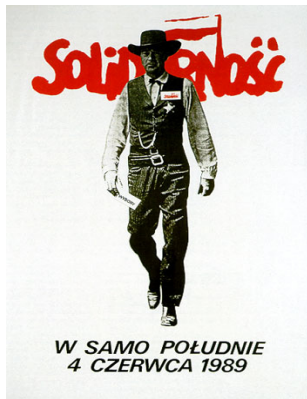
In contrast to traditional *hard power*, as Joseph Nye explains (2007: 34–36), this is the ability to obtain what one wants through cooperation and attraction. Which is possible thanks to common values and sense of justice and duty. So the source of *soft power* comes from a seductive country's culture. There were two

²³ www.fulbright.state.gov/history.html (05.2011).

essential propelling mechanisms: the political and moral duality of the post-war world and mass culture.

The rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War was perfectly visible in space research or the arms race. That competitive policy was running in every area of life on both sides, but there was also some additional psychological aspect expressed in many myths and beliefs arising from people's fear and desires. America as forbidden fruit or mythical West was perceived as a symbol of democracy and personal and political freedom, as well as a synonym for prosperity and wealth, by most citizens of communist countries at that time. The most meaningful example of that belief was the election poster of the *Solidarity* movement in 1989 in Poland, referring to the famous western *High Noon*. The ideal image of America was also shared by its habitants, who believed in their homeland as a bastion against communism. The vehicle of the *American Dream* was the entertainment industry, especially the movies, in the service of mass culture which emerged back in history. Rapid industrialization and urbanization brought new technological facilities and a system of production that shortened work time and enforced the changing form of spending leisure time. Thus, a solution appeared in the form of mass culture, which found the best condition to develop in multinational America, where the strong requirement for universal, neutral and mass available culture weakening the original Anglo-Saxon one was visible at the turn of the 19th century (Chalasiński 1962: 542).

An election poster for *Solidarity*, 1989



Source: www.pilsudczyk.wrzuca.pl/obraz/7IBIpYN3LY/solidarnosc_w_samo_poludnie_4_czerwca_1989.

In the course of time, the need for one common culture has become stronger and stronger as the idea of globalization has spread all around the world. Due to unlimited availability or low cost of access, this type of culture has characterized itself with some really democratic traits and quickly became the other medium of

Americanization in and outside the U.S. The popularity of American normative popular culture, which grew out of mass culture, lies in its democratic character and receptiveness to new trends and other cultures, which is a necessity in multi-ethnic and multi-cultural country like the U.S. As a result, it is also familiar to some extent to other societies and easily adaptable outside of its home. What is characteristic here is the fact that Americans themselves describe their culture as mass production of mass entertainment (Portes 2003: 60). The fast industrial development in America at the turn of the 19th century, some accumulation capital and the huge number of mostly illiterate and isolated immigrants made possible the quickest evolution of mass culture here. Therefore, by 1929 the image industries had already become an American specialty (Harris 1992: 155). Hollywood existed as an icon of success and prosperity. Similarly, its film stars embodied excellent taste and high life in people's minds, which was also visible in Poland. For instance, *Penny Gilot* perfume was the secret of some Hollywood actresses' success, according to advertisements published in Polish *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* in 1938²⁴. American cinematography, which was involved in the war propaganda industry, as with other media, which had already been mass, became much more popular all over the world. The broadcast information agency *Voice of America*, operating from 1942 until now, is one of the most recognizable examples of the cooperation between federal government and mass media. Transforming over time according to the relevant goals, political situation or new technology, *Voice of America* became the global trademark of democracy and freedom with reliable news, cultural programs and many other ones about the world and America overseas. The American presence that began in the 1940s with war and occupation in the Old Continent caused the growth of familiarity with American cultural codes, meanings or lifestyle. The European unconscious learned to dress and eat like an American, to listen to American music and watch American films, to consume in the proper way American material and immaterial products, so that not surprisingly they soon learned to understand and adapt American meanings. Moreover, the American standards often started to prove better than their own ones and Europeans treated them as the reference system without taking into account historical or cultural aspects in ordinary life and policy, industry or the education system as well.

The turning point in the history of Americanization occurred in the second half of the 20th century, when the U.S. as the primary source of the communication and technological revolution assumed for itself a privileged place in the global superpower race. The rapid popularization of TV and the incredible development of the mass aviation industry allowed time and space to be compressed. As David Harvey argues, "the world of the 1960s is about one-fiftieth the size of the world of the sixteenth century precisely because jet aircraft can travel at about fifty times the speed of a sailing ship" (cited in Waters 1995: 55). The objectification and

²⁴ References were made to Deanna Durbin and Loretta Young in 1938 in *Tygodnik Ilustrowany*, Vol. 4, January 23, Vol. 5, January 30, Vol. 6, February 6, 1938.

universalization of concepts of space and time, which is encompassed in Harvey's concept of *time-space compression*, allowed time to annihilate space mostly thanks to inventions mostly coming from American military research centers. New means of communication and transport made the relations between America and the other continents, such as the migration of ideas, cultures and people, much easier, faster and more common than they had been before. For economic reasons America, where television achieved resounding success first, became a monopolistic purveyor of TV productions for the Western European market, which was profitable for both sides. The Western European television industry, which appeared in the 1950s when the first government-controlled television channels were established, suffered from a shortage of funds, productions skills and artistic talents. American productions were therefore necessary for them. Even if they later produced their own films and programs the American ones for a long time remained much cheaper, and covered 75 percent of the airtime in Western Europe and Britain by the 1990s. For the American television industry, which cooperated closely with the Hollywood studios, the Western European market was the most important due to film and TV overproduction in the U.S. (Pells 1997: 230–231). The liberalization of trade policy that took place starting with the creation of GATT (1947) eased the circulation of American media productions and other goods as well. The transfer of them, together with American democratic ideas, lifestyle and myths of the self-made man or shoeshine boy, was made to a great extent by American corporations. The economic situation and lack of rivals after World War II, control of technology and capital as well as management and marketing skills gave American corporations so strong a position that even if other countries' corporations started to compete with them after 1970, things did not change much. As Henry C. Dethloff shows (1997: 128), American business investment abroad rose from \$32 billion in 1960 to \$1.7 trillion by 1987. What is more, the power of all corporations, not only American ones, is that they "are creatures of political economy rather than merely economic actors" (Dicken 1999: 35), a fact that is highly visible in post-communist countries. A symbolic mark of their transformation was the international success of the McDonald's franchise business in the 1980s.

American leadership was confirmed in the 1980s and the 1990s when the computer and then the internet and cyber revolution occurred²⁵. The initiator of this technological watershed came again from the U.S., and was widespread all over the globe. Thus, entirely new tools of self-promotion were gained too. Apart from the technological explosion, a new impact in economy could be observed at this time. It was a time of synergy, joint ventures and cross-selling. Generally, U.S. media companies continued to dominate in the 1990s, when the multilevel media pyra-

²⁵ The first personal computer was introduced in 1977 by the American companies *Tandy Corporation* (*Radio Shack*) and *Apple Computer Company*; the Internet evolved from *ARPANET* – a communication network founded in 1969 by the *Defense Department's Advanced Research Project Agency* in the Pentagon and then, at the end of the 1970s, propagated first in academic and next in public life.

mid emerged on the global market. According to Herman and McChesney (2000: 220–221), there were ten giant vertically integrated conglomerates: *News Corporation*, *Time Warner*, *Disney*, *Bertelsmann*, *Viacom*, *TCI*, and the slightly smaller *PolyGram*, *NBC*, *Universal* and *Sony* in the first tier. The second tier belonged to thirty large media firms which filled regional or niche markets and cooperated with the first ones. The last level consisted of thousands of relatively small national and local companies which to some extent were dependent on the large companies. Visible was a really close connection between the entertainment, telecommunications and IT industries within this pyramid. What is essential here is that the biggest media corporations at the top, even if they have become transnational, are mostly American in character, so their headquarters have been situated in the U.S. (except Bertelsmann).

As a result, America as a media empire became some kind of mediator and propagator of a new global order in world economy, policy and culture. The audience is always the last link of the media chain. The message, even if strange, is placed in the local context by them. A recipient thus understands another cultural code as his own, and is ready to consume American goods appropriately. Which, of course, should not happen. As a consequence, European or Asian streets are full of American signs, trademarks or services. The American background of advertisements which a viewer watches is comprehended perfectly. Companies cultivate spending leisure time within the community of employees. Tourists in the United States of America just see in reality something that they already knew from TV or movies and which is for them almost routine.

It is also worth noting that nowadays it is becoming harder and harder to recognize what is truly American due to an emerging global culture and lifestyle whose roots are starting to blur. But the fact is that these new universal cultural elements mostly came from America originally. So, each of us is American to some extent, because American ideas are the components of global citizenship.

In the background of the globalization processes the origin of Americanization is still continuing in the interior of the U.S. Due to the 7.9 million immigrants who are eligible to file an application for naturalization but do not do so, a national advertising campaign is being conducted in print, on the radio and in digital media to encourage them to do this²⁶. *The Citizen's Almanac* is one of the most recognizable USCIS publications, where the most cherished symbols of freedom, liberty and American history are presented.

²⁶ *Seattle Times*, 25.05.2011, www.article.wn.com/view/2011/05/25/US_govt_to_promote_citizenship_in_ad_campaign_7, (05.2011).

A café in the Polish sea resort Darłówko, 2008; RTV EURO AGD advertisement, Krakow, 2006



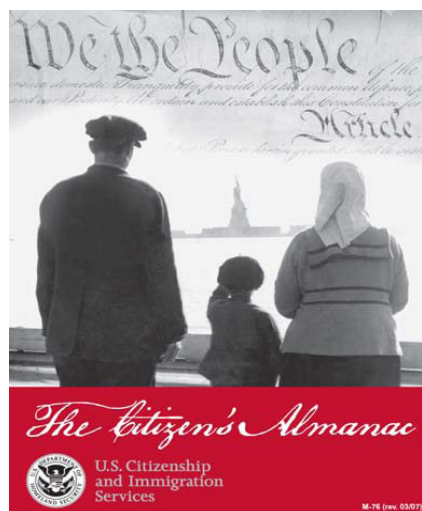
Source: author's photograph

The federal *U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)* awarded \$8 million in federal grants to promote citizenship and immigrant integration by education on citizenship, English classes and naturalization-preparation services in 2010.

Seventy-five organizations from twenty-seven states were recognized as part of this agency's *Citizenship and Integration Grant Program*, which is operated mainly in the ten largest citizenship-eligible permanent resident populations – California, New York, Texas, Florida, New Jersey, Illinois, Massachusetts, Washington, Virginia, and Arizona²⁷. In the view of bilingual lobbies in some states or the rapid progression of global society the importance of the naturalization issue is entirely necessary for the unity of the country.

²⁷ www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=5949&fuseaction=topics.event_summary&event_id=632146 (05.2011).

The cover of The Citizens' Almanac



Source: USCIS Monthly, May 2007, p. 3, www.uscis.gov/files/nativedocuments/USCIS_Monthly_May_07.pdf (05/2011).

Conclusions

To sum up, Americanization has for many years been among the most emotionally charged concepts. It is often blamed for the destructive influence on national culture. It is also equally often misinterpreted and conflated with the globalization process, which is in fact much older and broader than Americanization. Nevertheless, the latter leaves an unmistakable inscription on the former. In fact, no one can understand the globalization process and participate totally in it without adopting a distinctly American code of cultural meanings. It happens unintentionally and subconsciously frequently. Sometimes even contrary to the announced intention of the individual, who is not aware of the origin of consuming material and immaterial goods. On the other hand, American ideas, patterns or icons are accepted quite consciously when they are treated as the aim and ideal model of existence.

It must be remembered that there are two types of Americanization process, which nowadays are running parallel to each other. The older one in fact means assimilation of immigrants in order to adapt them to American middle-class norms and finally to naturalize newcomers. This assumed a less or more organized effort in the United States of America dependent on historic events. Thus, it is a deep process on the political and ideological base inside the country. The other type of

Americanization emerged in the 20th century and takes place outside the U.S. It developed especially after World War II and then accelerated after the end of the Cold War, which was itself a sign of victory of democratic ideas, so a win for America as well. Especially at the turn of the 20th century, this kind of Americanization transformed its character from mostly political to rather economic reasons, becoming a tool of liberal capitalism and its consumer culture.

This paper does not exhaust the subject. Its aim was rather to bring readers' attention to the ambiguity of describing this phenomenon and to draw clearly the winning route of Americanization in the world than to analyze it deeply. It was also focused mainly on the relations between America and Europe. There is, then, still much more to say about this process. Moreover, Americanization is difficult to analyze because it is constantly in progress in the contemporary world. But it seems obvious that nowadays, like never before, people all around the world are perfectly able to understand and consume America.

References

- Boorstin D. J., *Amerykanie: Fenomen demokracji*, Warszawa 1995.
- Chałasiński J., *Kultura amerykańska: formowanie się kultury narodowej w Stanach Zjednoczonych Ameryki*, Warszawa 1962.
- Davidson J. W., Gienapp W. E., Heyman C. L., Lytle M. H., Stoff M. B., *Nations of Nations: A Narrative History of American Republic*, New York 1994.
- Dethloff H. C., *The United States and the Global Economy since 1945*, Fort Worth 1997.
- Handlin O., *The American People: The History of a Society*, London 1963.
- Harris N., *American Manners*, [in:] *Making America: the Society & Culture of the United States*, ed. L. S. Luedtke, Chapel Hill & London 1992.
- Herman E., McChesney R., *The Global Media*, [in:] *The Global Transformation Reader: an Introduction to the Globalization Debate*, ed. D. Held, A. McGrew, Cambridge 2000.
- Kammen M., *American Culture, American Taste. Social Change and the 20th Century*, New York 1999.
- Kapiszewski A., *Ideologia i teorie procesów asymilacji w USA. Szkic problemu*, „Przegląd Polonijny” 1981, Vol. 1, pp. 5–24.
- Kissinger H., *Dyplomacja*, Warszawa 2003.
- Lubbe A., *Dominacja i współzależność. Ekonomiczne podstawy Pax Britannica i Pax Americana*, Warszawa 1994.
- Making America: the Society & Culture of the United States*, ed. L. S. Luedtke, Chapel Hill–London 1992.
- Mały słownik języka polskiego*, ed. S. Skorupka, H. Anderska, Z. Łempicka, Warszawa 1989.
- Needleman J., *The American Soul. Rediscovering the Wisdom of the Founders*, New York 2002.
- Nye J. S., *Soft Power. Jak osiągnąć sukces w polityce światowej*, Warszawa 2007.
- Pells R., *Not Like us: How Europeans Have Loved, Hated and Transformed American Culture Since World War II*, New York 1997.
- Portes J., *Stany Zjednoczone dzisiaj. Władcy świata?*, Wrocław 2003.
- Sibley K. A. S., *Foreign Aid*, [in:] *Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy*, Vol. 2, ed. A. DeConde et. al., New York 2002.
- Sivulka J., *Soap, Sex, and Cigarettes. A Cultural History of American Advertising*, Belmont CA 1998.
- Sobol E., *Słownik wyrazów obcych*, Warszawa 1995.

Tamura E. H., *Americanization, Acculturation and Ethnic Identity. The Nisei Generation in Hawaii*, Chicago 1994.

The American Century: Consensus and Coercion in the Projection of American Power, ed. D. Slater, P. J. Taylor, Oxford–Malden 1999.

Walaszek A., *Reemigracja ze Stanów Zjednoczonych do Polski po I wojnie światowej (1919–1924)*, Warszawa–Kraków, 1983.

Waters M., *Globalization*, London–New York 1995.

<http://dictionary.cambridge.org>

<http://www.merriam-webster.com>

<http://www.sociologyencyclopedia.com>

<http://immigration-online.org>

<http://www.wilsoncenter.org>

<http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org>

<http://www.theodore-roosevelt.com>

<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu>

<http://www.publiceye.org>

<http://www.firstworldwar.com>

<http://www.archives.gov>

<http://www.images.google.com>

<http://immigration-online.org>

<http://www.4president.org>

<http://american-education.org>

<http://www.trumanlibrary.org>

<http://www.peacecorps.gov>

<http://fulbright.state.gov>

<http://article.wn.com>

<http://www.uscis.gov>