

IMMIGRATION AND NATIONALISM

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The immigrants have no alternative but to fight in order to see their right to multiculturalism respected in the new country

The emigration of poor populations to rich countries is today a global social phenomenon that shows the unavoidable nature of nationalism. The world would be a more beautiful place if it were one large community and if nations did not exist, but this will only happen when inequalities are reduced so that a world State can be established. Meanwhile, nationalism will be among us, and it may represent both the legitimation of the power of the mightiest populations over others (imperialism) and the necessary ideology for weaker populations to defend themselves. It may be an ethnic and aggressive nationalism or a defensive patriotism.

Nationalism is the ideology of formation of the nation-state. To be a nationalist, one must fulfill two conditions: first, to understand that it is the obligation of his/her country's government to protect the interests of their inhabitants, and, second, to consider that this government, when taking decisions, should think for itself rather than submitting to the advice and pressures of wealthier nations. According to this definition, nationalism is economic and may be merely defensive. Yet aggressive economic nationalism characterizes rich countries that explore weaker ones, but their citizens believe that they are helping or orienting them. As for ethnic nationalism, it is the perverse nationalism of individuals and populations that discriminate according to criteria of race, religion, or national origin. It is the nationalism that affirms that every homogeneous ethnic group should have its own nation-state it is the nationalism that, by rejecting immigration, is confused with economic nationalism.

Economic nationalism is unavoidable because the world and every individual are organized in families, organizations, and countries that compete and collaborate among themselves. The government of a rich country will hardly be re-elected if its decisions are not in line with national interests. In those countries there is today an economic and ethnic nationalism. Few citizens have doubts about the role of their government, few recognize the exploitation of weaker countries, and many discriminate and reject immigrants. All of them defend their wages, which face competition from the immigrants cheap work, and fortunately a much smaller number defend their "ethnic purity". In Europe and Japan there is a veritable siege against immigrants. In the U.S. the situation is just slightly better. In Italy, a new law has recently classified the condition of illegal immigrant as crime. Immigrants are not only subject to extradition but also to serve time for having immigrated.

There are of course those who do not agree with this discrimination, as showed by a beautiful French movie now playing in São Paulo, "Welcomer". In Europe, left-wing parties resist this discrimination, but maybe this is the main reason why they have had bad electoral results.

In certain cases, the only defense against other peoples nationalism is our own nationalism it is to organize as a nation-state. But immigrants lack this alternative. They have no alternative but, on one hand, to become integrated in the societies to where they emigrate, and, on the other hand, to fight in order to see their right to multiculturalism respected in the new country. Both are difficult social and political processes, full of contradictions. As long as they are not completed, there will be a lot of pain for immigrants and a lot of social stress in rich countries.