

Further comment on "the Africanization of Europe" comes in this article by George Melloan who discusses migration to Europe from the `Maghreb' or northwest Africa: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and western Libya. Published originally on November 5, 1990, it is reprinted with permission of The Wall Street Journal, © 1990 Dow Jones and Company, Inc. All rights reserved.

CAN EUROPE KEEP THEM DOWN ON THE MAGHREB?

By George Melloan

MADRID - Spain's foreign minister, Francisco Fernandez-Ordonez, tackled a daunting project last month. At a meeting in Rome, he and the foreign ministers of Italy, France, Portugal, Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania, Tunisia and Libya launched the "Conference for Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean."

The title is a euphemism. Security and Cooperation, yes, but a more specific objective of the CSCM is to do something about the large flow of North African immigrants into Europe. Luis F. Fernandez de la Pena, an aide to Mr. Fernandez-Ordonez, lays out the Spanish view of the problem:

"There is a growing divorce between the two shores of the Mediterranean. The income gap is widening. Our population will reach a certain stagnation and theirs will double over the next two or three decades. There is a resurgence of traditionalism in the south because of the failures of the development models imported from the north. That could lead to radicalization and a renewed conflict of words, there will be more Arabs, and they will be relatively poorer, they will be more radical, and they will be pushing northward."

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The CSCM draws its concept from the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, which set about years ago to try to diminish East-West tensions. The CSCM has a North-South focus.

Western Europe, with its expanding wealth, is a magnet for poor migrants. The traditional costumes of Morocco are now a familiar sight in Paris, Brussels and other Francophone cities. Turks are much in evidence in Germany. West Indians, Pakistanis and Indians populate parts of English cities. Interestingly enough, Spain and Italy, two main backers of the CSCM, have had less immigration than their richer neighbors, mainly because they started the 1980s with

large surpluses of domestic labor and were in fact labor exporters themselves. But they are growing fast and can see clearly the social problems Switzerland, Germany, France, Belgium, and the United Kingdom have had. This, along with their proximity to the North African Maghreb makes them nervous.

Germany, with its powerful industrial economy, has been importing labor for years. Turkish guest workers were among the earliest. More recently it repatriated large numbers of "Volga Germans" from the Soviet Union, only to learn that they have little in common with modern Germans except language. East Europeans, Poles in particular, have been arriving, Russians are defecting from army camps in eastern Germany and are seeking asylum. Increasingly worried about immigration, Germany a few weeks ago shut its doors to Soviet Jews but soon backtracked after world-wide protests.

In all cases, immigrants have been accepted because northern Europe needs labor, mainly for low-skill and low-pay jobs. The immigrants are more than willing to work as ditch-diggers and housemaids. Europe may discriminate against them, but still offers better economic prospects than they had back home.

It is mainly the attitudes of Europeans that worry politicians. A recent report by the European Parliament's "Committee of Inquiry into Racism and Xenophobia" is not reassuring. For example, it cites a survey conducted for French Prime Minister Michel Rocard finding "that 76% of French people think that there are too many Arabs in France, 46% too many Blacks and 24% too many Jews."

As to Germany, the report cites a survey published in the magazine *Der Spiegel* in September 1989, suggesting that 79% of West Germans felt that too many foreigners live in the Federal Republic. In Belgium, racism is "very pronounced" and in Denmark it is becoming more serious, according to the report. A poll finds that 51% of those surveyed in Italy think immigration should not be encouraged.

The EP report's views of the political consequences of these attitudes should be approached with some care. Its author, a British socialist, focuses heavily on the activities of the "right-wing" groups deemed to be racist or fascist. There also are "left-

wing" groups in Europe and some of them, such as the IRA in Britain and the Red Army Faction in Germany, are quite lethal. But since they kill indiscriminately and often target industrialists, one can presume that they are not racist or fascist. That must be the reason the report ignores them. Yet without doubt, "ultra-rightists" match their "ultra-leftist" brethren nastiness for nastiness.

Of more interest are the legitimate political parties with a strong element of xenophobia in their make-up. In Germany, for example, the Republikaner (REP) Party has had its ups and downs, but seems to be gathering strength, particularly in local elections in industrial cities such as Dusseldorf, Stuttgart and Mannheim. The EP report views with alarm the strength that the REP seems to have with the policemen in such places as Bavaria and Hesse with young factory workers.

In France, the Front National of Jean-Marie Le Pen seems to have capitalized on French concerns over immigration with its claims that France is in danger of becoming an Islamic nation. Mr. Le Pen won 14.4 percent of the vote in the 1988 presidential election and his party now has 842 elected officials at the local level, according to the EP report.

Not all of Europe's ethnic strife involves recent immigrants. For example, the EP report also cites recent gains in Belgium by Vlaams Blok, a group that wants to split off Flemish-speaking parts of that country and reunite them with the Netherlands. The hostility between French-speaking Belgians (Walloons) and the Flemish is very real and no joke.

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The problem Europe has, of course, is that the immigrants are a source of tension and yet it is hard to imagine the European economy functioning without them. Some parts of Europe are attempting to assimilate the immigrants. A controversial recommendation of the EP report is that they be given voting rights after five years' residence. That seems unlikely to happen very soon. Germany's highest court just last Wednesday (10/31/90) struck down laws in Schleswig-Holstein and the city-state of Hamburg that granted such rights. The laws had been backed by German social democrats and opposed by German conservatives.

The CSCM hopes to foster development of North Africa itself, creating jobs that will keep the local people at home. But where is the local political

leadership for that task? Moammar Gadhafi? Clearly there are problems, however good the intentions.

The encouraging thing is that despite the underlying tensions, Europe seems well short of explosion over racial issues. It is the future that Mr. Fernandez-Ordonez is worried about, and maybe he has good reasons.

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