

Dispelling the Myth that Immigration is a Cure-all

Commentary on two papers from Europe

by James H. Walsh

Chesnais' "Flow of Peoples" and Miles' translation of "Saving the Germans from Extinction" reveal a concern by some Western Europeans regarding the impact of immigration on their cultural, ethnic, religious and social values. The authors discuss the hypothesis that immigration might solve the declining fertility rates of developed nations but also admit to problems. Professor Chesnais concludes that **u n c o n t r o l l e d** immigration creates more problems than it can ever possibly correct. The Germans understand this, yet saying so is another matter, in light of their sensitivity to the recent past. Both publications, however, agree that immigration is a possible cure-all to the aging-pyramid trend prevalent in developed nations.

The question remains, though, whether this trend requires a cure. It may be just what the environment ordered. Or the need for population stabilization may turn out to be a great fiction, should existing technologies continue to manufacture, plow, and harvest more with less, as downsizing suggests.

The authors send subliminal messages regarding the declining birth rates of their countries, which they link to the moral disintegration of the family, failed moral and personal responsibility, welfare entitlements, lack of religious practice, and

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the hedonist excesses of the last fifty years. It would be a mistake to expect Third World immigrants to cure these ills.

Balkanization of America

Chesnais makes passing reference to the U.S. immigration scene. Despite contentions by open-door advocates, recent waves of U.S. immigration are incomparable to earlier migrations. Between 1800 and 1978, the process was one of assimilation and permanence; in contrast, current immigration, especially illegal immigration, is characterized by

non-assimilation, lack of allegiance to the United States, and a resulting balkanization.

The situation is further compounded by the government's lack of a clear immigration policy and of a defined national direction.

"Will the last American out of Miami

please bring the flag" — a witticism making the rounds in Florida spoofs the somber prediction by Professor Chesnais that Anglos will soon be the minority in California, Florida, and Texas. Most U.S. citizens, however, including those of Asian and Hispanic extraction, are appalled by the fallout from the ongoing balkanization.

Geographic patterns are a factor. William Frey, a research scientist at the University of Michigan Population Studies Center, relates the heavy concentration of immigrants with the balkanization of broad areas across the United States. Immigrant population centers tend to resist assimilation and encourage national disintegration. Special interests, under the guise of multicultural diversity rights, encourage the creation of new ethnic ghettos in a nation once famous as a melting pot.

Marion Donhoff, et al
"Saving the Germans from Extinction"
pages 40-50 in *Weil Das Land Sich Andern Muss*
(Because the Land Must Change)
Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowholt Verlag, 1992
translated by Jack Miles

Jean-Claude Chesnais
"The Flow of Peoples"
Braudel Papers, No. 8 (1994)

What's a Nation To Do?

In his prefatory note, Jack Miles sums up the U.S. problem by declaring that the United States has no population policy — a deficiency coexistent with the lack of an immigration policy. The German authors look to Teutonic discipline for implementation of a restrictive immigration policy. From my studies in Germany, I would agree with Miles that this paradigm will work for the Germans but not for Americans. Chesnais sees the problem as one of globalization that may call into question the sanctity of borders. Nevertheless, any national immigration policy will be influenced by the following factors in the 21st century:

MEDICAL ETHICS — With the inevitable passing of the pontifical era of Pope John Paul II, a new theological analysis likely will emerge dealing with fertilization, reproduction, and population imperatives. Such changes should greatly influence the thinking of world leaders. The 21st century will see options that should help reduce the need for economic (population) migrations, which constitute 95 percent of current numbers. Governments will place greater stress on personal and moral responsibility and family obligations. Combined with theological changes, medical ethics will have a greater role in the world population ethos. The lack of a cure for AIDS will increase as a factor to both sending and receiving nations; and health concerns will become more determinative in migration matters.

WOMEN AND WORLD GOVERNMENTS — As women become more active in politics, they are holding the highest elected and appointed offices in both developed and developing nations. In Islamic countries, equalization, though slower, is occurring, with Pakistan and Turkey selecting women prime ministers. Although the tribal rituals of sub-Saharan Africa which subjugate women remain strong, the lessening of economic barriers will tend to overcome even these restraints.

FLOW OF ILLEGAL ALIENS — The Achilles tendon of the two publications, I found, is their failure to distinguish illegal aliens from legal, desirable immigrants and refugees. Chesnais, after acknow-

ledging illegal immigration as difficult to prevent, effectively dismisses illegal aliens as a non-factor. In truth, for France, Germany, England, and the United States, illegal aliens are the crux of the matter. These vast, uncounted ghost populations pose a real threat to the economic, social, and political stability of the host country. In the United States, California Proposition 187 and Florida's copycat effort grew from a national opposition to social benefits for persons violating U.S. immigration laws. Illegal aliens strain social entitlements — welfare payments, unemployment payments, educational costs, rent subsidies, and medical assistance. Although terrorism and drug smuggling are notorious examples of criminal conduct by Third World illegal aliens, related health problems such as AIDS, cholera, and tuberculosis may be far more deadly to the host population.

An Immigration Dilemma

Professor Chesnais, in his overview article, sketches the global immigration crisis. Meanwhile in his own country, problems of migration, immigration, and assimilation are literally tearing France apart. France with its history of tolerance — for even the most radical ideas — cannot put up with terrorist bombings and fanatical religious excesses forever. Recent bombings indicate, unfortunately, an introduced cultural and religious mentality with no room for tolerance.

The German publication, as a composite of thought, proves that the establishment, the older generation, understands the complexities of the immigration issue; it does not indicate whether Germany's energetic Generation X complies.

Prospects are not bright for a clear U.S. immigration policy any time soon, because no one is willing to wrestle with the immigration dilemma — that uncontrolled numbers create more problems than they solve. If we are to continue as a nation of immigrants, we must survive as a nation of laws. Yet we have a Republican-controlled Congress intent on rehashing old immigration bromides that have been around for more than a decade and a Democratic administration that uses immigration as a foreign policy cure-all.

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