

**Immigration and Migration --
A Historical Perspective – By John Lukacs**

I

We must begin with the distinction between “migration” and “immigration.” About the first the *Oxford English Dictionary* states: “to pass from one place to another.” About the second: “to settle in a country (not one’s own).” At once we may glimpse the difference. The dictionary definition of “migration” suggests impermanence: a nomadic, or near-nomadic condition of existence. “Immigration” suggests something more definite: a more-or-less orderly purpose, “to settle.” Animals as well as human beings migrate; but only human beings immigrate or emigrate. In the midst of the present crisis in the United States these two categories overlap. They are indistinct, to the peril of the nation. In this essay I shall suggest, among other things, that the peril has the portents of a migration, and not only that of an immigration, crisis. (Consider, for example, the imprecise use of the term “migrant” workers, many of whom are, in reality, illegal immigrants.)

The history of mankind is a combination of continuity and change. No human being can know what form civilization may assume in the future. A historian cannot, and should not, say what is going to happen; but he may know something about what is not likely to happen. One thing that we ought to know is that no civilization of any worth has ever arisen without the essential attribute of permanence of residence. Civilization, including such elements as patriotism and public morals and established religion, inescapably depends on settlement, on a sense of belonging not only to one’s kin and tribe (which is true of nomadic peoples, too) but to a certain place on this earth, the cultivation and the defense of which, physically as well as mentally, is the minimal but essential basis of civilization. So there is this inescapable relationship of men and women to land -- something especially important now, in the so-called Space Age, and at a time when humankind is beginning to fill up some of the emptier spaces of the globe, in often dangerous and disorderly and thoughtless ways.

Again we see an illustration of this in our very language. When we say “a native,” we refer not to a tribe or race but to the land where this person was born: a black American is a native American, and the son of an Italian anarchist born in Massachusetts is a native New Englander. The word “citizen,” which originally meant belonging to the community of a medieval city in Europe (that is: an urban “freeman”), by the eighteenth century, especially in France and the United States, came to include all free members of the modern

state, even though the majority of them were not city-dwellers. The citizenship and immigration laws and regulations of the United States unequivocally give the attributes and rights of citizenship to anyone born within the land (territory) of the United States.

Two hundred years later the United States faces the danger of an enormous and uncontrolled flood of people coming largely from the south. It is not only that among these masses the earlier distinction between the purposes of a more-or-less orderly and lawful immigration and those of a more-or-less disorderly and unlawful migration are being washed away; but also that these dangers include a radical change in the composition of the American people as well as the meaning of civilized and traditional citizenship, together with a drastic weakening of the sovereignty and actual autonomy of the United States.

II

This has been a specifically American problem: but it may not be properly comprehensible apart from the general development of migrations within the history of Western civilization.

This is not a grandiloquent statement, because the history of the United States -- despite the frequent assertions of its "exceptionalism" -- is part and parcel of the history of Western civilization.

Yet in the event of further uncontrolled immigration and inter-American migration it is conceivable that not only the composition of the national population but the very civilization of the United States may change into something that, whatever its merits, would be in content as well as in form essentially different from the rest of the civilization of other nations predominantly of the white race.

There have been five large periods in the histories of settlement and migration of the white race:

- The approximately fifteen hundred years from the formation of Greek civilization to the decline of the Roman Empire;
- From about 200 A.D. to about 1000 A.D.: through the so-called Dark Ages, the migration of peoples;
- From about 1000 A.D. to about 1800: the European period, generally marked by permanence of residence;
- From about 1800 to 1945: the period of transoceanic migrations, together with the consolidations of nationalities;
- After 1945: the beginning of transnational migrations, increasingly from the so-called Third World.

For the Greeks "barbarians" meant people who were not Greeks -- that is, not "primitive" people who were "behind" Greeks in development but who were "outside" in space, not in time.* For the free Roman, his citizenship was a proud possession, whether he lived in Italy or not -- until about 210 A.D. when, because of a declining population and the declining availability of soldiers, a Roman emperor chose to offer citizenship to most inhabitants, and to potential immigrants, of the territories

* This has limited meaning for us, in our present situation. Yet we must consider a significant condition. Both the Greek and Roman concept of community -- as indeed the Greek word for politics -- had come from the Greek word, and idea, of the city. Since that time there has never been a civilization in the Western World that has not depended on cities. This is reflected not only in the language of politics and of civilization but of culture: in words such as "politics," "citizen," "urban," and in the adjective "urbane," meaning a cultured person -- and this may have a certain bearing on the prospects of our present crisis when our cities are declining and when the vast majority of new immigrants and migrants do not come from urban civilizations.

within the Roman Empire.

Around that time the Great Migration of Peoples had begun. During the first thousand years after the birth of Christ, the majority of the white race began to move. They were moving from the east to the west, across the continent of Europe: Celts, Gauls, other Latin-speaking peoples, Germanic tribes, Magyars, western and eastern Slavs, etc. At the same time, many of the inhabitants of the Roman Empire abandoned their cities, since it had become more dangerous and difficult to live in a city than in the countryside. This great migration of peoples was the time of the so-called Dark Ages.

By the year 1000 most of our ancestors had settled down in their distinct countries. The ethnic geography of present-day Europe began to emerge. Most of the ancestors of the present English or French or Italian or German or Polish or Hungarian peoples had settled in approximately what are England or France or Italy or Germany or Poland or Hungary now. This is an imprecise and generalized summary statement, but for the purposes of this essay -- which is that of furnishing a historical perspective -- it ought to do.

Then came a long period of about eight hundred years, when the vast majority of the white people of the earth moved little or not at all. If we could trace the dwelling places of the great majority of the white race back from 1800, we would find that many of our ancestors in Europe lived within thirty miles from the place where their ancestors had lived seven or eight hundred years before. In other words: wars, forced population movements, deportations, foreign conquests, urbanizations, etc. notwithstanding, the eight hundred years from about 1000 to 1800 -- from the beginning of the Middle Ages to the zenith of the Modern Age -- were marked, in Europe, by the vast (and sometimes deadening) habit of permanence of residence. And we must consider that these centuries, from 1000 to 1800, were the greatest in the high civilization of the white race: from the Middle Ages throughout the Renaissance and the Reformation

and the Enlightenment, together with the development of trade and of the book; of music and the fine arts; of humanism and the beginnings of democracy; of the commerce of goods and ideas and literature; and of the formation of the scientific method and of historical consciousness.

Even after the magnificent discoveries of the Americas and of other continents, for more than three hundred years after Columbus we cannot speak of a large-scale migration of peoples. It is true that the adventurous men and women who left their homelands in Europe to settle in new continents changed the history of the world. Yet the numbers of these emigrants were small. There was no large-scale migration before the nineteenth century. It is true that before 1492 “white” and “Christian” and “European”* meant the same thing. There were no white people, and hardly any Christians, living outside Europe in 1500 –

* In 1492, the noun “Europe” existed; but the adjective “European” did not replace the adjective “Christian” until two or more centuries later.

whereas by 1800 entire continents, such as North America and Australia, were becoming peopled by majorities of whites and Christians. Yet these were still empty continents, vast continents with but a small scattering of settlements along their coasts.

During the nineteenth century a new migration of peoples began. During the one hundred years from the end of Napoleon’s wars to the beginning of World War I, perhaps fifty million or more people in Europe and the British Isles (and, for the first time, in Eastern Europe) chose to abandon their native lands and seek settlement in other continents across the seas. These people have not only changed, they make up the present composition of nations such as the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and many Latin-American states. Within Europe there arose another movement that was very much larger than the transoceanic migrations. Millions of peasants abandoned their villages to settle in the great cities of the continent. Thus by 1900 (and surely by 1945) people who lived in the same place where they had lived one hundred years before had become a small minority, especially in Western Europe and in the United States.

But when we consider the nature of this second great migration of white peoples we must also remark the existence of something new -- which was an element of relative, and long-range, stability. Within Europe (and also within America) very few people moved from one country to another. While millions of Frenchmen or Germans moved from the countryside to the cities, very few of them moved to an adjoining country, across the already existing national frontiers. (There were a few exceptions to this, but never involving large numbers: Italians moving to Southern France, French-Canadians to New England, and -- perhaps most significantly -- Jews, of whom perhaps nine out of ten in 1800 still lived in the western domains of the Russian Empire, but who began to move westward during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.)

The new, and most important, matter in the evolution of history was that of the national state, and of national consciousness. In 1800, the political history of the world consisted predominantly of the relations of states. During the next century the framework of states began to be filled with their national elements. (World War I was no longer a war between states: it was a war between entire nations.) And it was because of the importance of nationality, and of national consciousness, that most of the nations of the white race became increasingly homogeneous; that the modern national state had come into existence; that the nation and state had become, in most instances, largely congruous and coterminous -- which is why during this new period of migrations few people chose to migrate from one country to another, that is, to a place where the language was different from their own. Even in the case of the transoceanic migrations, until about 1870 most people* chose to relocate

* There were only a few exceptions to this. Ireland and Lithuania may be the two European countries wherefrom more than a minority -- that is, at least a near-majority -- had left (in the case of Ireland, not only across the Atlantic but across the Irish Sea, to England and Scotland).

themselves to countries across the ocean where the language spoken was the same as theirs.

III

Now we come to the -- from the very beginning, quite unusual -- immigration history of the United States. At the time of the formation of the United States its population consisted of a very small minority of native Indians; of a rapidly increasing majority of native-born white Americans; of a constant but small trickle of white immigrants; and of a fourth, exceptional, group of American blacks, who could not be categorized either as self-willed migrants or immigrants, since they were brought across the Atlantic by forced transport. It is perhaps significant that -- notwithstanding very large fluctuations in the birth- and death-rates of American whites and blacks, and of course, gradual as well as radical changes in their respective freedoms and in their patterns of coexistence and cohabitation -- the proportion of blacks and whites has varied remarkably little during the last two hundred years. Indeed, the national proportion of the black population has been slowly decreasing from about 17% of the total population in 1790 to about 14.5% in 1886 (the Statue of Liberty year) and to about 12% one hundred years later, at this time of writing.

Before we consider the fairly well-known -- but, alas, seldom realistically, that is, historically, considered -- changes in the composition of the people of the United States (that is, the evolving history of immigration, emigration and migration), we must contemplate certain seldom observed conditions of the American conceptions of sovereignty and citizenship. Many of these have been the consequences of the evolving American democratic dogma; but they have been due, too, to the fact that

the United States, in contrast to Europe, has been an under-populated continent. Whereas the social, if not the political, conditions of the Old World were marked for long centuries by the relative scarcity of land, in the United States, at least until recently, the opposite was true: a condition obscured by the extremely uneven distribution of the American population, with immense crowds in certain cities (and at certain times), together with vast uninhabited lands elsewhere across the Republic.

The generation of the founders of the Republic was very much aware of the problems of national sovereignty and of immigration, and of the consequent necessity to establish regulations for these matters. In the Constitution and, indeed, during the first decade of the existence of the United States, several distinctions were made between the rights of native Americans and those of immigrants (for example, that the President of the United States must be native born; or of the necessary time that had to elapse before an immigrant could become a citizen). The effects of the Jewish immigration were ambiguous, since the descendants of Jews who two hundred years ago had been a distinct and segregated minority in the Russias became Germans, Frenchmen, Americans as well as Jews: for this is how they considered themselves, and this is how they were eventually accepted by the majority of their host peoples.

Time elapsed between the arrival of an immigrant and his naturalization; or between his naturalization and eligibility to certain public offices). Yet soon conditions had come to prevail in the United States that were different both from the concepts of sovereignty and from those of naturalization in most of the states of the Old World. One of them was the existence of strong states' rights during the first decades of the Republic: the concept that one was a citizen of a state first, and of the United States only consequently (a concept still practiced in part by the cantons of Switzerland). Thus American citizens before 1840 were often issued a passport by state authorities rather than by the federal government; and an immigrant would often be naturalized not by the federal judiciary but by the judicial institutions of the state where he lived. Another condition -- flowing, no doubt, from the evolving democratic dogma together with the idea of American exceptionalism -- was the unusual practice whereby immigrants could vote even when they were not American citizens (a practice observed in Arkansas until as late as 1926).

This was probably connected with another unusual practice: with all of the statist bent of American government, for a very long time the national immigration authorities made absolutely no distinction between persons who came to the United States temporarily (on business or on a visit) and those who came with the purpose of settling here -- that is, between non-immigrants and immigrants. This is one of the factors which has made our immigration statistics often inaccurate and unreliable. It also suggests the prevalence of the American idea that anyone who landed in the United States necessarily came with the purpose of staying. It was not until World War I that these curious and unusual practices were eliminated; and that had much to do with the then overwhelming national reaction to the dangers of unrestricted immigration because of the vastly changed composition of the immigrant crowds at that time.

The changing quantity and character of immigration to the United States is well known, wherefore I shall sum it up as briefly as possible. From 1790 to 1920 the total number of immigrants to the United States was about 30 million. For fifty years after 1790, immigration was a small trickle -- less than 10,000 immigrants each year. The first year that more than 10,000 immigrants entered the United States was 1825; in 1842, for the first time, more than 100,000; in 1881 more than 600,000; in 1905 more than one million. The vast majority of these immigrants came from Europe. In 1850, 2.5 million of the population were foreign-born, in 1910 more than 14 million (a total that equalled the number of natives in twenty-two states of the Union). By 1920 foreign-born women bore four children to every three born to native mothers. The majority of immigrants were males. In 1920 hardly more than 25% of the people in New York City had native parents. In 1850 English was the native language of 97% of foreign-born citizens; in 1920 hardly more than half. After 1880, the provenance of the immigrants had changed: most of them no longer came from the British Isles and from northwestern Europe; most immigrants were now Italians, Jews, Greeks, Slavs, and other natives of southern and eastern Europe. Against this kind of "new" immigration there gathered a vast national sentiment.

But before we come to the discussion of the legislation restricting immigration, we must make another, often unnoticed, observation. The "new immigration," after 1880, consisted of large numbers of people who were not immigrants but migrants. By this I mean that most of them came to the United States not to settle but to earn and save some money and return to their native countries. (Exceptions to this were almost all Jews and the majority of the Irish.) That this is not a psychological imputation may be glimpsed from the, otherwise often unreliable, immigration statistics. Between 1900 and 1935 there were many emigrants, that is, people who *left* the United States after some years of residence. At times emigrants amounted to 40% of the number of immigrants; in some years and among some national groups they were occasionally a majority. It is true that some of these migrant returnees came back to the United States for a second (and sometimes for a third) time, but this phenomenon of pendular migration is something to which few American historians or sociologists of immigration have paid attention. It meant that many of these "new" immigrants -- or, rather, migrants -- were not only hardly "assimilable"; they did not wish to be assimilated. Few people know that such famous assassins as Czolgosz (the murderer of President McKinley) or Sacco and Vanzetti were not American citizens. Among Italian-Americans, for example, many people did not decide to take out their citizenship papers until after decades of American residence (often not until the 1930s, perhaps spurred by the welfare provisions of the New Deal).

At this point we must recognize that "nativist" -- or, more precisely anti-immigration -- sentiment had been widespread in the United States long before the Immigration Acts of 1921 and 1924. "Nativist" prejudices were, of course, current among the American people throughout the nineteenth century (mostly among the working classes), but it was not until the 1880s

that a wider, and more concerned, national sentiment began to congeal and to crystalize. It is an ironic paradox that this happened at the time when the erection of the Statue of Liberty began a new chapter in the historical symbolization of the United States: The Colossus of Refuge. (Emma Lazarus's famous poem, added to the statue some years later, bore the title "The New Colossus.") It corresponded, too, with the beginning of American globalism. (When the Chicago Columbian Exposition opened in 1893, Chauncey M. Depew gave the speech of dedication: "This day belongs not to America but to the world. . . . We celebrate the emancipation of man.")

Yet at this very time of the flood of the "new" immigration and its poetic and monumental celebration, American public opinion and popular sentiment were already turning against unrestricted immigration. And now, two hundred years after the writing of the Constitution and one hundred years after the erection of the Statue of Liberty, we may distinguish between the two centuries. From 1787 to 1886 (the Statue of Liberty year), unrestricted immigration may have been a problem -- but it was not the main problem of the Republic. Since 1886, immigration and its consequences have changed the character of the nation and its institutions during a century when immigration flowed and ebbed and then flowed again, because of variations in its restrictions. And now it is surely arguable that during the third century of American existence the main problem of this nation will be--it already is--that of immigration and migration, mostly from the so-called Third World.

Why was the national concern with unrestricted immigration, already widely prevalent in the mid-1880s, not translated into legislation until 1921? The answer lies in the peculiar arithmetic of American electoral politics. In the most populous states of the Union, the usual margin between Republican and Democratic votes was so small that politicians were loath to alienate a substantial number of immigrant, or immigrant-related, voters. It is thus wrong to think that the overwhelming congressional votes for the restrictive Immigration Acts of 1921 and 1924 were only a response to an episodic upsurge of anti-foreign sentiments, part and parcel of the so-called Red Scare of 1919 and 1920. That was undoubtedly a factor in the proposition of these Acts and the consequent votes, but not the major one.

The ease and speed with which the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 -- the first restrictive act of immigration legislation -- passed indicate this: it was not only representative of national (mostly Western) sentiment, but it could pass easily because of the virtual absence of a Chinese voting bloc. The ease and speed of the passage of the 1921 and 1924 Acts indicate the existence of a national and popular sentiment that had become finally overwhelming. Cumbersome, restrictive, and narrowly prejudiced as some of their features were, these Acts were still, broadly speaking, representative of the wishes of the great majority of the American people at the time. They also represented the first great turning point in the history of American immigration. A generation later, in 1965-66, they were, as we shall see, superseded by very different Acts, leading to the present crisis.

At any event, the purpose of the 1921 and 1924 Acts and the problems of the United States during the last twenty years have been altogether different. The purpose of the former was to restrict immigration from certain nations of Europe. The problem now is whether the United States may be able to control, or even to cope at all, with the flood of migrants and immigrants from the Third World.

IV

When we look at the history of the last sixty-five years, we may observe the following general pattern involving, among other matters, the changing composition of the population of the United States: immigration, rather than migration, from 1921 until about 1945; migration, even more than immigration, during the last forty years.

For forty-five years -- from about 1921 to 1966 -- immigration to the United States was relatively limited. The seemingly precise statistics of the Immigration and Naturalization Service are not very reliable even during this period,* and not only because of the everlasting problem of recognizing and enumerating illegal immigrants; but it is fair to assume that during these forty-five years legal immigration seldom exceeded

* About this see my *Outgrowing Democracy: A History of the United States in the Twentieth Century*, New York, 1984, PP. 123-132.

150,000 persons in a year. (During some of the Depression years more people left the United States than came in.) It is at least interesting to notice that this, fairly severe, restriction of mass immigration had no adverse effect on the growth of the American population. It is certainly true that mass immigration before 1920 had hugely contributed to the increase of the American population which, far more than the natural resources of the American land, has been the main element of American power. Yet the most spectacular increase of the population occurred during the forty-five years when immigration was largely restricted. From 1880 (the beginning of the "new immigration") to 1920, the American population rose from about 50 to 100 million -- no doubt to a considerable extent due to the immigrants and to their increasing fertility in the United States* --yet the next, even more stupendous, doubling, from 100 to 200 million, occurred between 1920 and 1960, when immigration was relatively low. And during the last twenty years, from 1966 to 1986, the rate of increase has slowed despite the new, vast, uncontrolled waves of legal and illegal immigration and migration. This has been due to a perhaps fateful mutation of inclinations and habits among the native American population, that is, their unwillingness or at least disinclination to have many children--an illustrative example of an argument to which I must return later in these pages, to the effect that the history of populations is inevitably involved with non-computable and non-projectable essences, with matters of belief and sentiment; matters of quality, not of quantity.

But we are running ahead of our main story. The reason why immigration remained restricted for forty-five years after 1920, and why the -- I repeat, in some ways crudely fabricated and perhaps unduly restrictive -- 1921 and 1924 Acts were not revised or reformed was that the majority of Congress knew that such a revision would be unpopular and unwanted by the majority of native Americans. At the same time, new elements began appearing on the surface of public opinion, which were sooner or later represented in immigration regulations. Before and during World War II, Franklin Roosevelt's administration knew that even a strongly Democratic Congress would be unwilling to change the existing immigration laws, wherefore Roosevelt did not propose a reform of those laws. At the same time, he went to considerable lengths through administrative directives to stretch the provisions of these laws for the purpose of facilitating the admission of men and women whose existence was threatened by Hitler's Third Reich.**

* This is an interesting phenomenon worthy of notice. Most of the immigrants arriving in the United States had few children. This was even true of married immigrants. It was after a few years in this country that the size of their families began to increase.

** It is therefore that some of the late-coming critics of Roosevelt (and Churchill) have been talking nonsense. They berate this President for not having admitted more Jewish refugees at a time when Hitler's orders were driving so many of them toward the unspeakable death camps. These latter-day writers do not wish to realize that such a drastic reform of immigration procedures would not have passed Congress. Moreover, even if, according to their silly scenario, Roosevelt and Churchill would have stopped the war in its tracks in order to ship these masses of unfortunate victims across the seas, this would have played straight into Hitler's hands --propaganda proving to the American and British peoples that this war was not their war, and that Roosevelt and Churchill were plainly the agents and instruments of "World Jewry," etc.

(The total number of these admissions was relatively small: but the presence of these often highly-educated Central European, mostly German, Jews has had a vast influence in American intellectual and scientific life -- another illustration of the non-quantitative results of immigration.) This was perhaps the first example in the history of American immigration when special measures were taken by the government itself to ease the immigration of certain political (and religious and racial) refugees. After World War II others were to follow. President Truman, with his customary generosity, overrode the opposition of some of his old senatorial colleagues and pushed through Congress the 1948 Displaced Persons Act, admitting about 340,000 people who fled, or did not wish to return to, the then Soviet-controlled states of Eastern Europe. During the last thirty-five years other revisionary laws and presidential directives followed, providing for Greek orphans, Hungarian refugees after the 1956 Rising, Cuban and Indochinese refugees after the Communist takeover of their

countries, etc.*

Most of this happened before the large-scale revision of the Immigration Acts in 1965-66; but the portents were already there.** For example, there was no longer any considerable difference between Democrats and Republicans in this matter. Whereas previously the Democrats had been, by and large, more “liberal” and the Republicans more “conservative” about immigration, the congressional votes for the Displaced Persons Act and for other succeeding regulations showed no significant differences between the parties. In this respect the attitudes of the Truman and the Eisenhower administrations were similar; and by 1956 the Republican Party for the first time declared that it favored the broad easing of immigration restrictions. (Perhaps it is not coincidental that in the same 1956 platform the foreign policy plank of that previously “conservative” and “isolationist” Republican party called for nothing less than “the establishment of American naval and air bases all around the world.”)

There were now two novel elements in these revisions of the national immigration pattern. One of them, plainly, was the expression of a sentiment of expiation: a corrective to uneasy sentiments of guilt or of responsibility, or both. In 1945 the United States had to share the victory over Germany with the Churchill would have stopped the war in its tracks in order to ship these masses of unfortunate victims across the seas, this would have played straight into Hitler’s hands --propaganda proving to the American and British peoples that this war was not their war, and that Roosevelt and Churchill were plainly the agents and instruments of “World Jewry,” etc.

* The so-called McCarran Act – a small-scale amendment of the 1921 and 1924 Acts, passed in 1952 --was but a minor revision.

** One illustration of changing legal attitudes: a few years before 1965 the Supreme Court of the United States ruled that the residence requirements of foreign-born citizens, fixed in the 1924 Act, were unconstitutional. (These requirements had prohibited the sustained residence of such citizens abroad, especially in their native countries -- therefore, in some sense, restricting some of the liberties of people who could be thus regarded as second-class citizens.)

Soviet Union. Thereby much of Eastern Europe had fallen into the Soviet sphere of influence. All of the strident propaganda of anti-Communism (and the irresponsible Republican propaganda of “liberation”) notwithstanding, the United States had enough trouble containing Soviet Russia on this side of the so-called Iron Curtain. It would not risk an atomic war with the Soviet Union for the sake of liberating Czechs or Poles or Rumanians. Consequently, succeeding American governments thought, and acted, as if the least the United States could do was to help refugees from these countries (the extent of governmental assistance to the so-called Displaced Persons went beyond facilitating their immigration) to settle in the free world. Similar sentiments motivated successive administrations and the

Congress, in dealing with Cuban or Indochinese refugees after the United States had failed to liberate Cuba from Castro or secure the existence of non-Communist governments in Indochina. The attitudes and the diplomatic and publicity efforts of Republican as well as Democratic administrations in favor of Soviet Jews fall within this pattern, too, even though no special legislation was passed in this instance.

The other element was the emergence of what, somewhat imprecisely, came to be called the Third World. Beginning with the Truman Administration and continuing with the 1954 desegregation ruling of the Supreme Court of the United States, racial barriers within the United States began to be dismantled. The McCarran Act of 1952 -- albeit to a minimal extent -- ended the categorical exclusion of Oriental immigrants to the United States. Within the United States itself an important migration began after 1945: the air travel of millions of Puerto Ricans to the large American cities of the eastern seaboard. Anti-colonialism was an element in the foreign policies of the Eisenhower as well as of the Kennedy administrations. In 1956 it was President Eisenhower and John Foster Dulles (rather than the Russians) who stopped the British and French forces from retaking the Suez Canal when an Egyptian dictator had expropriated it; and John Kennedy, even before his presidency, supported the cause of Algerian independence from France.

By the 1960s, anti-colonialism, anti-racism, and consideration for much of the so-called Third World had become accepted ideas and foregone conclusions. The British and the French (and the Dutch and Belgian and Spanish) colonial empires were gone. Within the United States, the perhaps long overdue legal enforcement of civil rights was on its way. The drastic revision of the national immigration law in 1965 was, therefore, "an idea whose time had come." Like many such ideas, it was adopted with little opposition; and, lamentably, without much contemplation or forethought.

Publications by the American Immigration Control Foundation and by other concerned organizations, experts and scholars furnish us with abundant information about both the immediate and potential demographic consequences of the 1965 reform. (I write "reform" because what Congress passed in 1965 was not an altogether new Immigration Act but a spate of amendments to the still existing one.) That the writers of these publications are no longer voices crying in the wilderness is evident from the fact that since 1981 legislation has been pending in Congress -- and, moreover, proposed jointly by Republicans and Democrats -- for a new Immigration Act that would control, or at least mitigate, these potentially disastrous conditions. A description of these conditions, as well as of the Simpson-Mazzoli bill, is not within the province of this essay, the purpose of which is to describe the immigration and migration crisis from the longer, historical perspective. In any event, we must remark that, as happened in 1921, the very proposition of this new (and at the time of this writing, still not enacted) legislation has occurred many years after more and more Americans had become uneasily aware of the problem of a new and uncontrolled immigration.

The extent of this problem may be summed up briefly. From 1967 to 1976, the number of legal immigrants was more than

one-third larger than during the previous decade; and there is reason to believe that from 1976 to 1986, the number of legally admitted immigrants and refugees alone rose by another 50%. During the same time, immigrants from Europe, including Eastern and Southern Europe, were a definitely declining minority. Their proportion was about one-third less than in preceding decades, whereas the number of immigrants from Asia rose by about 400%, from Africa by about 200%, from Oceania by about 150%, from Mexico about 400%, from Haiti by almost 400%, from Jamaica by about 700%, from Guyana by about 1,000% and from India alone by more than 2,000% -- at the same time when, for example, immigration from "white" Canada fell by more than half. From 1977 to 1979 alone, legal immigrants from Europe amounted to less than 13% (less than 5% from Northern and Western Europe), while 42% came from Central and South America, and nearly 40% from Asia.

But these numbers tell only a portion of our story. Some time during the 1960s, the previously at least partly recognizable line between legal and illegal immigration became washed away. Together with the above-mentioned new mass immigration, the United States now became the receptacle for a vast and uncontrolled migration from the southwest and the southeast, including perhaps as many as 12 to 14 million illegal migrants. The consequences of these novel mass movements are enormous. If continued, they would lead not only to a gradual but to a radical mutation in the composition of the American people, and the transformation of the very essence of the present civilization of the United States -- in sum, a vast change, if not a catastrophe. It may also lead to the loss of sovereignty (or, in other words, the autonomy) of the United States -- in sum, a vast change, if not a catastrophe, in the history of a state. I shall now attempt to deal with these matters in turn.

V

At this point, let me make a surprising statement. The United States is faced with the present prospect of perhaps more than one million immigrants each year, and with that of perhaps more than twelve million illegal migrants already within its borders. Yet the problem is not that of overpopulation. It involves not so much the numbers of certain people but their characteristics. It is the problem of quality, rather than of quantity. It is a problem of existing cultural essences and assets that cannot be quantified and computerized.

The United States is still a relatively under-populated country. The population density of the United States is one-eighteenth that of certain comparable democracies, say, Holland or West Germany -- which, too, have their own immigration problems, but not because of their population density. I write "comparable," because democracy in America, the democratic nature of American government and society, is no longer a unique phenomenon. There exist now states, especially in Western Europe, whose governments and social structures are comparable to those of the United States; and the per capita income of whose citizens, for the first time in history, approximates, equals or in some instances even exceeds that of Americans.

It is true that the population pattern of the United States

is rather unusual, consisting of conditions of mass crowding and environmental degradation in certain places and of large portions of hardly inhabited regions elsewhere. Under ideal conditions, the United States could maintain a population considerably larger than at present, without a loss in its standard of living. Consider, for example, the very high living standards and per capita income in states such as Switzerland or Japan or Holland or Belgium, states with population densities much higher than that of the United States -- and the execrable living standards of peoples of African and even South American states, say, Ethiopia or Bolivia, with their very low population densities.

But this is just the point. "Ideal conditions," by the twentieth century, refer to the quality, not the quantity, of populations. Consider the example of Switzerland. With its limited extent of arable and pasturable land, it was one of the poorest countries of Western Europe two hundred years ago. Thereafter a considerable portion of the Swiss peasant population turned to occupations in light manufacturing and in service industries. The condition that Switzerland had practically no mineral assets (or, at that, cocoa trees) did not matter. So the fine mechanical products of the Swiss (together with other odd items such as Swiss chocolate) produced the great surge of Swiss prosperity. The main assets, in sum, were the discipline, reliability, and intelligence of the Swiss working population -- factors of quality, not quantity. It is also remarkable that Switzerland, which practiced nearly unlimited immigration policies during the nineteenth century because of its long humanitarian and democratic traditions (it was a traditional safe haven for political refugees), began to restrict immigration during the twentieth century more severely than most other states in Western Europe.

Something comparable has been occurring in Japan since the end of World War II. As a consequence of that war, Japan lost all of her outlying possessions. The living space of Japan became constricted to the four small islands of the Nipponese state, with an extremely high density of population. Yet this state eventually became a leading industrial and economic world power -- again, largely due to the discipline and industry of its largely homogeneous people. It is again remarkable that (apart from a necessity-dictated absorption of a number of Koreans after the war), with all of its prosperity dependent on world trade and international contacts, for the last thirty years foreign immigration into Japan has been severely restricted.*

The case of postwar Germany furnishes us with an even more startling example. For a long time before 1945, the German people were told that they lacked adequate "life-space," that is, that their population density was explosively high, while their arable and pasturable land area was insufficient to sustain them. The expansionist propaganda of the Third Reich emphasized this argument, often in extreme ways. Then, after the German collapse in 1945, a large portion of eastern Germany was transferred to Poland. What remained of the reduced Germany now had to support millions of Allied soldiers occupying it, while the German population huddled in the ruins of their cities that had been demolished or burned out by bombs. Into the midst of this ravaged land then arrived a flood of perhaps as many as twelve million new immigrants and migrants, amounting

to a 20% increase of the indigenous population. The immigrants were almost ten million German men, women and children fleeing from Eastern Europe, where their ancestors had settled centuries before, expelled now from their German-speaking settlements by their enemies or taking refuge in the West from the Sovietized portions of Germany itself. (The migrants were perhaps two million of non-Germanic "displaced persons," most of whom eventually were to leave Germany for overseas.)

All this had the portents of a material catastrophe, of a famine of unknown proportions. Yet the condition and the development of postwar West Germany proved the fallacy of the overpopulation argument. In less than ten years, West Germany emerged as the most prosperous and stable state in Europe. It was able to absorb the eleven million expellees and refugees with very little trouble. It was able to absorb the lesser and unending stream of refugees from East Germany with no trouble at all (until in 1961 the East German government decided to staunch this drain with the brutal method of raising the Berlin Wall). By 1986 the main demographic problem of West Germany -- again, to some extent comparable to that of the United States -- is its potential under-, and not over-population.

Because of many factors, including the regrettable loosening of traditional family structures, the West German birthrate has fallen to a point where it is among the lowest in the world --that is, the people of West Germany are no longer reproducing themselves. But this is a long-range problem. The short-range problem is quite different: increasing friction due to the presence of non-German (mostly Turkish and Near Eastern) immigrants and migrant workers in a country whose immigration policies are still very liberal. The numerical extent of these minorities is small; but that is not the issue. The same Germany that has had hardly any problem in absorbing eleven million Germans, has a serious problem in trying to accommodate one hundred thousand Turks.

* Among all of the allies of the United States, Japan is the only one requiring a visa for Americans and other visitors, no matter how brief their intended stay.

Here we come to the essence of our problem. In the imaginary event of another great Atlantic migration, the United States could possibly absorb fifty million English, Welsh, Scots, or Irish immigrants without much trouble -- whereas the immigration of, say, five million Iranians or Bolivians would present dangerous problems for the government and the people of this even now relatively under-populated Republic. This is not a racist or racial -- that is, quantitative or biological -- statement. The essence of the problem is cultural, not racial; mental rather than material; historical and not economic.

This writer, a historian, has no Anglo-Saxon blood in his veins, and he professes no blind admiration for some mythical virtues of the Anglo-Saxon race and its peoples. He must, however, insist on the obvious matter (often to the surprise of his native American students in whose education this obvious matter

has become lamentably obscured) that the English-speaking character of the United States must not be taken for granted. The most important element in this matter is the English language itself.

Blood is often thicker than water; but speech, with its habits, may be even more important than blood. Contrary to many shallow modern psychological asseverations, speech is not merely the expression of thought or merely an instrument of communication. Speech is the very completion and the formation of thought; and habits of speech will form habits of thought as much, if not more, than the reverse. American and English habits of speech have diverged through the centuries, but the United States is still an English-speaking country, something which is not merely a matter of a communications skill or of a literary convention. The still extant freedoms of Americans -- of all Americans -- are inseparable from their English-speaking roots. It is not only that the founders of this Republic were largely Americans of English, Welsh, Scots, Scotch-Irish or Irish stock. It is that the freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution -- and the consequent prosperity and relative stability of the country flowing therefrom -- were not abstract liberties but English liberties, dependent on practical as well as sentimental attachments and habits of English laws.

If four hundred years ago the Spanish Armada of the Duke of Medina Sidonia had conquered the English, there is reason to think that the then -- already curiously belated -- conquest and settlement of North America, like that of Central and South America, would not have been undertaken by English-speaking peoples. Centuries later the native populations of North America would still have rebelled against their Old World governments and eventually established their political independence; but if the language and the culture of North America would have been Spanish and not English, this would be a very different country now. If in 1759 Montcalm had beaten Wolfe at Quebec, there is again reason to think that much of the present United States might have become French-ruled, and presumably French-speaking; again, sooner or later, wrenching its independence from a central authority in Paris or Versailles -- but, again, this would be a very different country now. The still present prosperity and power of the United States has been due only to a small degree to its natural and mineral resources, and to a larger, but still not predominant, degree to the swelling of its original population stock by millions of originally non-English-speaking immigrants. It has been due, for the most part, to its laws and institutions -- dependent as they were, and still are, on the English language.

During the two hundred years of American sovereign existence the numbers and the influence of its originally Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Celtic stock has been decreasing. One hundred years ago these people were already a minority of the American population; yet they maintained their leadership not only in American society but in most of the political, financial, industrial, and cultural institutions of the United States. Another one hundred years later much of this leadership, too, has been eroding (the faddish use of the silly term WASP is but a symptom of this devolution). This devolution had already produced

transformations in the very practices of American law and education, not to speak of other, protean but perhaps less important, manifestations. Some of this devolution has been regrettable; and it has affected the usage of our public language, too. But this Republic is still an English-speaking country -- which is, I repeat, the great fundamental guarantee for the continued existence of American freedoms.

The present tendency of certain Hispanic groups and politicians within the United States to insist upon the legal and educational extension of "bilingualism" should be, of course, resisted, and in all probability it will be resisted. Only fools and bigots would deny the manliness and the directness and the rhetorical beauty of the Spanish language, and of many of the manifestations of Hispanic culture. It would be also foolish to deny the evident, and overwhelming, probability that at least the children of the new immigrants from the south and the west will be English-speaking, just as the children of the Turkish immigrants to West Germany learn German. Yet even this kind of linguistic adaptation does not eliminate the problem of assimilating millions of immigrants whose culture is often fundamentally different.

The purpose of any community, from family to tribe and to nation, is to maintain the quality of its cohesiveness. The progeny of our present immigrants may be absorbed within the vast spaces of this country (and within the large subterranean habitats of our urban wastelands). Yet it is at least possible that their absorption could not only mean a drastic mutation in the very composition of the American people but also a fatal weakening of their culture and civilization, dissolving altogether the last strong traces of the freedoms and laws and institutions bequeathed to them two hundred years ago.

VI

The present crisis would perhaps still be manageable somehow if these "new" immigrants would be the only additions to the population of the United States. But this accumulation is already inseparable from -- indeed, part and parcel of-- a much larger, elemental wave of migration. This is represented, among other things, by the fluctuating presence of probably as many as 12 to 14 million illegal migrants within the United States. The proponents of the cumbersome, and much belated, Simpson-Mazzoli-Rodino bill now before Congress are aware of this: their bill proposes to control both immigrants and migrants.

Again we may observe that we are in the presence of a new worldwide phenomenon. At the end of the Modern Age, as also near the end of the Graeco-Roman Age, a new worldwide movement of mass migrations may have begun. Already during World War II we have seen, for the first time in many centuries, the forced migration and resettlement of millions of people, especially in Eastern Europe. Yet (perhaps with the then exception of the Puerto Rican migration to the eastern cities of the United States), thirty years ago it seemed that, just as the preceding century had led to a crystallization of the ethnic geography of much of Europe, the present century may be marked by the crystallization of the ethnic geography of the globe. With the end of the colonial empires, Frenchmen, Englishmen, Dutchmen,

etc. were returning to their motherlands.

During the last thirty or forty years, however, there have been increasing signs of a vast restlessness in many portions of the globe* (there are many examples of this in Africa and Southeast Asia) whereby not only larger and larger masses of people may be on the move but whereby the state frontiers are losing some of the significance they may have had before. (The present flux of guerrilla wars and the movements of masses of peoples in places such as Ethiopia and Chad are examples of this.) We may have entered the first phase of an enormous new chapter in the history of the globe: the uncontrolled and uncontrollable migration of vast numbers of peoples from one country to another, from one subcontinent to another, and perhaps even from one traditional racial habitat to another.

With its 12 to 14 million illegal migrants, the United States may be the prime example, and the prime target, of this ominous and oceanic development. For some time Americans themselves were responsible for this, because of their preference for cheap agricultural labor coming from Mexico. In Europe, the repugnance of peoples to the memories of Hitler's racism, as well as their need for inexpensive labor, was responsible for the largely unrestricted (and, for a while, actually encouraged) migration of "guest workers" -- with results that turned out to be disturbing and even dangerous in the long run.

Within Britain, with its difficult economic conditions, the postwar absorption of a considerable immigration of young Irishmen and Irishwomen presented no problem at all, while the liberal citizenship laws of what had remained of the British Commonwealth led to a numerically smaller yet qualitatively much more disturbing and difficult presence of nonwhite immigration to Britain. After about twenty-five years, popular sentiment and political concern with the nation's future forced British governments to curb this influx of people. During the same time the proportions and the purposes of migration to the United States have subtly but profoundly changed, from the more-or-less definite and short-range purposes of finding temporary employment to the more or-less definite purpose of staying within the host country.

* In 1974, the then president of Algeria, M. Boumedienne, declared: "Some day millions will leave the world's poor Southern regions and surge into the Northern hemisphere seeking survival."

At the same time the United States, alone among the great states of the world, has lost virtual control over its frontiers in the south. The directors of the Immigration and Naturalization Service admitted this as early as twelve years ago; and by 1983 the present President of the United States made a similar statement, even though this vast problem is still far from the top of the present "conservative"* and Republican agenda. But before I venture to discuss the long-range historical portents of this new migration of peoples, I must draw some attention to some of the traditional roots of this American inability of controlling it and of the unwillingness to recognize its meaning.

In spite of the fact that during at least the last five hundred

years the history of the world, its main conflicts and its main wars, its changing pattern of dominations and powers, consisted principally of the relations of states, these very relations -- surely after the Founders' generation had passed, and in accord with the development of American democratic dogmas -- have evoked generally scant interest among the American people and their elected representatives. There are many evidences of this. They include the American distrust for traditional diplomacy; the fact that the history and the development of American foreign relations has remained something "foreign," a preoccupation of small specialized groups of American scholars; the regrettable absence of political geography in the curricula of American schools and colleges; the American inclination to establish state and even international boundaries not along the natural existing geographic configurations but along the abstract lines of latitudes and longitudes; ** and -- last but not least-- the abstract American tendency to regard the conflicts of states as if these were primarily conflicts of ideologies (as evidenced by the lasting national and ideological preoccupation with International Communism, obscuring the more enduring existence of the political and geographic reality of the Russian imperial state).

One offspring of these inclinations has been the inadequate control of the state frontiers of the United States almost from the beginning, especially in the southwest (where as late as 1916 the Mexican bandit Pancho Villa could intrude, roam, and kill people in American territory). Other results were the earlier mentioned failure of the Immigration and Naturalization Service to distinguish between immigrants and visitors to the United States; and the present inability to control, let alone seal, the now pervasively porous boundary separating the United States from Mexico.

* Professing their belief in the so-called free enterprise system, many American "conservatives" have been unwilling to confront this vast national problem; indeed, some of them have been insisting that the incoming masses represent a large potential for American prosperity.

** Recent examples of this include the division of Korea along the 38th and that of Indochina along the 17th parallel (the former demarcation was drawn in haste by Dean Rusk in 1945, who sixteen years later became Secretary of State).

There are many Americans who believe that the greatest blessing that may come to a man or a woman is that of becoming an American citizen; and that the greatest blessing that may become a portion of the earth is that of becoming a state of the Union, adding yet another star to the American flag. There is little reason to doubt that most Americans would either welcome, or, at worst, would be indifferent to the admission of Puerto Rico as a fifty-first state of the Union, something that is still a possibility in our days. Yet how many Americans know that the radical and extremist Puerto Rican Independence Party in the last twenty years has grown from a small fringe group (2%) to the third-largest political party on that island, gathering almost 20% of the vote? History is unpredictable; but

if the admission of Puerto Rico as a state would eventually be succeeded by the expressed wish of the majority of its people to be independent, this would, for the first time in American national history, mean the removal of a star from the American flag.

Allow me to carry these projections a bit further. The population of southern Florida consists of many Cubans. Most of these Cuban-Americans are opponents of the Communist dictator Castro. Yet Castro (and surely, the hybrid Communist experiment in Cuba) will not last forever. Is it not conceivable that, at some future time, the majority of Cubans (and other Caribbean-Americans) in south Florida may wish to be joined closer with their brethren in Cuba than with the rest of the non-Spanish speaking Americans? What will happen when the majority of a state will cease to be "Anglo," that is, English-speaking? Along our southern borders a vast new Alsace-Lorraine may be in the making.*

* In an important article ("Mexican Immigration: Specter of a Fortress America?" by Sol Sanders in *Strategic Review* (Winter 1986), the author writes: "Mexican immigrants -- because of their language, the constant flow of new arrivals into relatively concentrated geographical areas, and the history of widespread discrimination against them in the Southwest -- have tended to remain less assimilated into the general U.S. population, and more a national subgroup than most other immigrant groups." Also: "The fact that larger numbers of emigrants are now coming from the states of Oaxaca, Chiapas and Tabasco in southern Mexico presents a host of new problems. The populations of these states are culturally different from the older sources of Mexican migration to the United States: they tend to be poorer, less integrated into the modern Mexican economy and more Indian -- both culturally and racially -- than the people in the north and the central plateau. Some Mexicans would argue, too, that because they come from areas of the country which were pre-Columbian Mayan-speaking. . . they constitute a quite different ethnic group with different problems of integration in any U.S. environment." Also: "Although the statistical information is scarce and subject to debate, indications that the Mexican emigrants are staying longer and more permanently than in the past are implicit in the growing evidence that they are moving into occupational areas other than simple agricultural labor, which was once virtually their only source of employment. . . ."

Contrary to the lucubrations of most economists and sociologists, this flow of migrants has little to do with quantifiable economic conditions. All of the fluctuations of the Mexican economy notwithstanding, the oceanic rise of this migration has occurred during the last thirty years, when both in absolute and relative numbers the economic standards of Mexico have been rising, not falling. (The Castro revolution in Cuba, too, occurred at a time when Cuba had the third-highest per capita income among all Central and South American nations.) That there are still great differences between the living standards of lowerclass Americans and lower-class Mexicans is obvious. But the motive forces of great migrations -- as indeed of great revolutions -- are seldom, if ever, economic. They involve not rising

hunger but rising expectations: and expectations are an element in people's lives that cannot be quantified or simply translated into economic terms.

Recent statements by President Reagan suggest his -- belated -- awareness of this problem, as he told the American people that one of the reasons for his preoccupation with Nicaragua is the prospect of yet another enormous wave of refugees pressing on (and through) our frontiers in the event of a protracted Communist presence in Central America. This may be so; yet there is absolutely no reason to believe that with the elimination of a Marxist regime somewhere in Central America these pressures would abate, and the restlessness cease. The motive forces of this south-north migration are deeper and more powerful than that.

Before the alarming portents of this great migration, the present preoccupations of the American government are disproportionate. The existence of nuclear armaments, of space explorations, of space weapons, or the assumed ambitions of "International" Communism are hardly relevant to this new, and increasing, American problem. The Soviet Union and the United States have little in common; yet their leaders have never threatened the very existence of one another. In the long run, both the Soviet Union and the United States are threatened by something else. During the third century of American statehood it is already arguable that the greatest potential threat to the United States is not that posed by the Soviet Union, but by the so-called Third World.