



The Problem of Immigration

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The country is upset because of the great numbers of illegal immigrants that reach our shores every day. Residents in the Canary Islands demand a system like the one used by the police to control the Straits of Gibraltar, the famous SIVE. They are even asking for the Army's help to stop the little boats from reaching their coastline.

We are truly facing something new, both because it is intense and long term. The problem is that we are seeing just the beginning of something that is sure to get worse. The situation will get worse because everything depends on the demographic growth among our southern neighbors. They are incapable of integrating millions of young people into their economic and social systems; meanwhile the expectation of wealth and well-being offered by Europe is irresistible. It is undeniable that as long as Spain keeps growing and enjoying high standards of living, the immigrants will keep coming to our country. That is why they concentrate in the richest and most dynamic areas of the country.

Controlling the flow is destined to fail, no matter how much we try. Nobody is going to sink a little boat or abandon a

group of immigrants at sea. There is not much to do but to watch the routes they take.

What we can and should do, however, is to end the legal hypocrisy surrounding the issue. If an immigrant comes to Spain and finds a job it is because the market and the law of demand and supply encourage it. But it is unacceptable that, in an attempt to be what is wrongly understood as "good" or "humane," an illegal immigrant has more rights than a legal one or even a native Spaniard. We should never allow, unless we want to destroy ourselves, immigrants to think that breaking the law will assure them residency or that once they are legal, they can easily become citizens after some paperwork.

The problem of immigration does not have to be an economic problem, but it is an issue related to security because current laws favor foreign criminals. Spain's laws are very soft. Immigration does bring a real problem, the problem of national identity. It is an exaggeration to think all Muslims are terrorists, but it is also true that if we had not had a large Muslim population in our country, March 11 would have been impos-

sible. When certain religious practices, such as Islam, or Arab or North African national attitudes prevent full integration, the Spanish identity is at stake. The French have had a bad experience with this.

The economy needs immigrants. They should be welcome as long as they are honest people. If they commit a crime they should be punished and promptly deported. But Spain does not need more Spaniards in name only. That's the problem. Mustafá, Mohamed, Amil

and others might be born in Madrid but they have a different identity and different behavior. Integration cannot mean giving them all the social benefits with nothing in return. It can't mean giving them the right to be the way the way they are, that is, to respect they are different. If we keep acting like this, our culture and identity will be dominated by them. It is a matter of time and math.

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