

The Future of Migration Conference of National Experts

held on May 13, 14 and 15, 1986, in Paris
organized by the OECD

The opening, participants and agenda of the Conference

The Conference was opened by Jean-Claude Paye, Secretary General of the OECD. Invited to serve as Chairman was Pierre Laroque, of France. Professor Normin Abadan-Unat, of Turkey, was invited to act as General Reporter and Professor Reginald Appleyard, of Australia, as his deputy.

Represented at the Conference were the member countries of the OECD with the exception of Ireland. Although the Conference had been organized on the expert level, certain of the delegations (among them, Sweden's) also included delegates on the ministerial level. In addition, the Conference was attended by observers from Yugoslavia and a number of international organizations (ILO, the Council of Europe, ICM, EEC, TUAC, BIAC).

The Conference was divided into four sessions, which were assigned the following themes: 1) Experience gained from countries on the receiving and the sending ends of migration. 2) The economic and demographic connections between the streams of migrants affecting the OECD countries. 3) The future status of immigrants in industrial countries, taking into account high rates of unemployment, slow economic growth and rapid structural change. 4) Problems and future

prospects relating to emigration of the countries of southern Europe. The themes were dealt with on the basis of background reports prepared by researchers invited as consultants; these reports in turn were based in part on national reports requested from the member countries.

The Conference had not set as its aim producing any jointly accepted final document (recommendation, resolution or declaration). The task of those invited to act as official Reporters was, however, to draw up - on their own, personal responsibility - a summary, including conclusions, of the discussion held.

Observations on the discussion and points of view presented in the background documents

The most significant difference in attitudes toward migration was to be observed between European and non-European receiving countries. Whereas the industrial countries of Europe have taken vigorous measures to restrict immigration, basing their policy on economic problems and unemployment, Canada and Australia in particular emphasized that immigration continues to be highly important to their economic and demographic development. Professor Glenn Withers, of Australia, even reached the conclusion in his

presentation that immigration does not increase the unemployment rate and that the measures taken in Australia in the early 1970s to restrict immigration actually led to a worsening of the recession of those days.

Even though, therefore, the afore-mentioned difference between the European and non-European receiving countries with regard to their immigration policies is clear-cut, the traditional division into "immigration for settlement" and "immigration for labor" has to a large extent lost its significance. Immigrant workers have settled down for good and in the end brought over other members of their families to European industrial countries, which at first regarded themselves as countries only temporarily utilizing foreign labor. The integration of the immigrants into the social order of the receiving country, a self-evident process in the countries admitting immigrants for permanent settlement, has thus had to be accepted as part of the immigration policy of the receiving countries and as a matter requiring appropriate measures. On the other hand, non-European countries have also experienced immigration in the form of temporarily utilized labor. Further, the division into receiving and sending countries is no longer a clear-cut one, either. The countries of southern Europe, which have traditionally experienced emigration on a major scale, are nowadays also on the receiving end of the migratory flow. For they have of late been witnessing an influx of migrants from, for instance, northern Africa. To some extent, this has been a consequence precisely of the restrictive immigration measures taken by the industrial nations. The OECD countries have thereby drawn closer together in the area of immigration policy, as expressed in English by the term "convergence."

In spite of the fact that the industrial nations of Europe (the Federal Republic of Germany, France, Belgium) have for several years been restricting immigration, it was observed that the employment situation has

not necessarily thereby improved and that, on the other hand, there continues to be a demand in the labor market for workers to do poorly paid jobs held in low social esteem. Alien workers do not, in other words, necessarily compete for the same jobs with the native labor force. After the regulations governing immigration have been stiffened, illegal immigration has to a large extent satisfied the demand for menial labor.

Although there might still exist a certain demand for alien workers, the industrial nations continued to have their reservations about amending their immigration policy. The Germans, in particular, took the view that in any case the demand for unskilled labor would diminish decisively with the adoption of new technology. The restriction of immigration by admitting only family members and refugees is a prerequisite to a country's being able to do more toward the integration of the immigrants already settled there. In this connection, it was also pointed out that the entry of Greece, Portugal and Spain into the EEC fold would gradually bring the citizens of those countries into Common Market's sphere of freely mobile manpower.

The industrial countries of Europe have undeniably benefited from the influx of alien labor. On the other hand, the circumstance that enterprises could easily draw on such a labor supply had negative effects too. It has been noted that enterprises have neglected to invest in the development of productive techniques, the utilization of new technology and in general the improvement of productivity for the precise reason that alien workers have been available at relatively low cost.

In a report on the significance of immigration from the standpoint of the sending countries, Professor Heiko Körner, of Germany, observed that in the long run the outward migratory flow has had solely a detrimental effect on the economic development of those countries. Nor has the repatriation of emigrants had any stimulating effect on their economies. On the contrary, return

migration is nowadays something of a threat because, promoted by the receiving countries, it leads to growing unemployment in the old homelands. The report dealt exclusively with southern European countries.

The representatives of these countries did not accept altogether without reservations the view of the wholly negative effects of emigration, although the benefits from, for example, the sums of money sent back home by the emigrants have proved to be less than anticipated, as has also the creation of entrepreneurial activity through repatriations.

In the report on Finland, the experience from emigration was examined and the observation was made that the large-scale wave of emigration at the turn of the 1960s and 1970s was both a consequence of the great change in the structure of production and also a factor contributing to quicken the rate of structural change. Other branches of economic activity could not absorb the elements of the population released from the initial stages of production, with the result that part of the country's internal migratory movement was discharged as emigration to neighboring Sweden. Further, the report pointed up the favorable aspects of repatriation, which is not, it was stated, experienced in Finland as a threat.

As for the theme itself of the Conference, "the future of migration," the continuation of the phenomenon of migration was not questioned in any quarter. Migratory movements have always been part of the history of mankind. The directions of the migratory streams have changed in the course of time and continue to change in response to the influence of economic and demographic factors. Europe used to be a significant point of departure for overseas migrations. Nowadays, Canada and Australia, for example, no longer depend very much on Europe as a potential source of manpower. With the tightening of restrictive controls on immigration by the industrial nations of Europe, the migratory tide from southern Europe has turned to the project labor sites established

by oil-producing states. As enterprises have become multinational, trained personnel has been shifted from one country to another to serve subsidiaries of parent companies - and the other way around. These are just illustrative examples.

The migratory pressures on developing countries are bound to persist. In the industrial countries, the populations are aging and the growth of the portion of working age is slowing down or ceasing and reversing itself. Signs of this can be seen also in certain of the southern European countries where the migratory flow has been outward, whereas in the developing countries the population growth continues to be strong. Among the OECD countries, Turkey was noted in the light of population trends, to be potentially the biggest future source of migratory manpower.

Inasmuch as people will continue in any case to migrate, the negative effects of migration, from the standpoint of both the sending countries and the emigrants themselves, ought to be minimized. Although there was unanimity as regards the fact that this should be done, no really new models for the solution of the problem could be presented. Prof. Körner summarized his analysis dealing with the sending countries by observing that "the best migration policy is development policy." He cited as the reason that migration policy cannot influence the causes as such but must rest content with guiding to some extent the migratory streams. As for illegal immigration, it was stated that it cannot be prevented simply by intensifying the control of immigration but that an influence should be brought to bear on the causes of the phenomenon. Cooperation between states bi- and multilaterally should be promoted toward improving conditions in sending countries, the developing countries in particular, and toward eliminating the causes of migration with detrimental consequences to both individuals and communities.

The theme "capital should move instead of labor" has been reiterated countless times

in the past 10-15 years at international conferences dealing with migration. Against this background, the American researchers Weintraub and Stolp reached a paradoxical conclusion in their examination of the effects on migration of economic intercourse between nations. These researchers observed in their report that precisely the sending countries are the ones that have been most inclined to impose restrictions on the movement of capital in the form of direct foreign investments. The net flow of capital has actually moved from developing countries on the sending end of migration to receiving countries at the other end.

Finland and international migrations

In past years, Finland has in many connections been referred to as "the world's wealthiest country delivering emigrants abroad." It also appears as if, when countries are classified according to their being on the receiving or sending end of migratory movements, international assemblages tend to fall into a certain state of hesitancy in considering how to deal with Finland. In corridor discussions, the question is often raised as to whether Finland should be classified as a sending or a receiving country. Also an Italian radio correspondent covering

the Conference expressed interest in this question during an interview with the present writer.

As one example of the problems involving Finland, the following merits mention: In her analysis of the regulations governing migration and the immigration policies in effect in the OECD countries, the French researcher Catherine Withol de Wenden placed France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Belgium and Finland in the same category on the basis of the fact that these nations have controls on immigration and at the same time encourage voluntary repatriation!

An interesting characterization of Finland's position as regards migration was presented in a report submitted by the Italian researchers Golini and Bonifazi examining the effect of demographic developments on migration. In dealing with the migratory pressure generated by the total population increase of the traditionally sending countries in the OECD sphere, these researchers point out that Turkey's share of this increase amounts to between 80 and 85 per cent, whereas "Finland, on the other hand, will contribute next to nothing. It has a rate of 0.1 to 0.2 per cent and, looking at the trends of the last few years, could be considered as a receiving country."
