

Migration in Europe

An international symposium for specialists arranged by the Dominicans and the Catholic Academy in Berlin

We are facing the challenge of developing a common European migration policy. Which yardsticks will the European countries and Europe as a whole apply to this process? The term "Fortress Europe" is an expression of the widespread desire for self-preservation, dissociation and defence. But at the same time, pressure is increasing on the borders.

Europeans are ruled by two conflicting impulses: on the one hand, there is the demand for universal solidarity with all those who practice "border crossing" as one of the major elements of a European identity. On the other hand, there are widespread anxieties that cannot simply be ignored: people are afraid of losing their identity, of being confronted with different cultural and religious backgrounds and mentalities and of having to share their prosperity with others. European Union citizens expect their political representatives to govern and control this area in an efficient and methodical way. How can an ethically responsible migration policy be defined against this background?

To pursue this question, at the end of November 2003, the Catholic Academy in Berlin and three institutions of the Dominican Order – the *Institut M.-Dominique Chenu* (Berlin), *Espaces Europa* (Brussels) and the Social Studies Faculty of the *Pontificia Università San Tommaso d'Aquino PUST* (Rome) invited to an international specialist symposium on the subject of "Migration in Europe" in Berlin. The three-day function was sponsored by the Directorate-General for Education and Culture of the European Commission. More than 80 "multipliers" from 13 countries (from Denmark to Croatia, from Albania to Switzerland, from Great Britain to the Czech Republic) accepted the invitation: representatives of church organisations and federations (International Catholic Migration Commission [ICMC], the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community [COMECE], various national bishops' conferences, Caritas, *Iustitia et Pax*, the Jesuit Refugee Service, inter alia) took part, along with politicians (members of the German Federal Government and Bundestag), civil servants (Interior Ministry in Berlin, Ministry of Defence in London, inter alia), representatives of European and international institutions (European Commission, European Parliament, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR]), activists of initiatives concerned with the politics of migration, networks and NGOs as well as those responsible for educational institutions, journalists, social ethicists and theologians. Amongst the participants there were 13 Dominicans from Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, Spain and Croatia!

The dialogue between policy-makers, moral philosophers and people from practice should examine current decision-making processes to see whether ethical-theological reflections can provide a sense of

direction and should show practical examples (Asylum law, Immigration law, Illegal immigration) to illustrate the scope of action for a sustainable European migration policy.

In spite of secularisation processes, Christianity still has a forming influence on the European value system regarding the "appropriate" treatment of foreigners. Christianity has radically broken with group and clan ethics and interprets the word community in a universal way.

Accordingly – as the Archbishop of Berlin, Cardinal Georg Sterzinsky pointed out forcefully – the Christian Churches insist on the right to freedom of movement. From this ethical tradition, many people derive the obligation to show unconditional solidarity with people in need and foreigners and to generally support the dismantling (instead of the creation) of borders (as the Anglican theologian *Graham Ward* from Manchester University says in his lecture on the subject of "Hospitality and Justice towards 'Strangers'"). But nowadays such values and attitudes are often criticized as "overtaxing"; "unrealistic" or "naïve" – here *Hans-Joachim Stange* (Federal Interior Ministry, Berlin) reminded the participants that political regulation of the politics of migration is a long way from being able to solve the real, basic problem of international (in-) justice. Beyond that, all were nevertheless agreed that it is not to be maintained that Asylum law should be sacrificed to the current "hidden agenda" of many national politicians (*Bruno Kapfer*, Caritas Europe), because of, for example, the increased need for all-embracing security after the 11th September.

Apparently there is a gap between the "prophetic" postulation of strong values and the practical problems and conflicts arising in the context of migration. This gap between ethical claims and political practice was accentuated, in a remarkably self-critical openness, by the representative of the German Federal Government for Migration, Refugees and Integration, *Marieluise Beck MdB*. The central task is to set up ethical guidelines that take into account the historical, cultural and spiritual traditions of Europe as well as our contemporary political realities. *Kapfer* reminded us that there is a number pertaining to these realities: the distribution of the burden of admitting migrants between Europe and Africa is 1:25! In connection with this, the social ethicist *Walter Lesch*, who teaches in Louvain-La-Neuve in Belgium, pleaded for a more exact definition of what we understand by the catchwords "own interest" and "common weal". *Rita Süssmuth*, the president of the German Expert Council for Immigration and Integration, strongly emphasized that the task of ethical orientation not merely benefits the Churches, but must also always flow into concrete politics. What can we expect from ourselves, what may we expect from others? What should guide our culture, what do hospitality and justice mean, and what about identity in the concrete dealings with the hopes and claims of migrants? What, asked the Spanish sociologist *Ramón López de la Osa González OP* (PUST, Rome) does national and European responsibility for migrants mean, in a globalized world? What, following on from this, does this mean in the context of the problem of

gender? The Berlin symposium was nowhere near answering all these questions...

(http://www.katholische-akademie-berlin.de/includes/pol_ges_texte_gr.php?id=10)

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