

GLOBALIZATION AND THE NEW MIGRATORY QUESTION

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1. INTRODUCTION AND MOTIVATION

It happens that there are words which are added to our lexicon (even non-specialized one) so strongly and so frequently that they provoke heated debate and deep wounds even before they are properly understood or, at least, clarified. This is definitely the case of the term 'globalization'. First used in 1983 by American economist Theodore Levitt and made popular some years later, in 1988, by Japanese scholar and business consultant Kinichi Ohmae in his work on the worldwide strategies of multinationals, the term 'globalization' has obsessively progressed in just a few years to surpass the confines of economic debate and be included in the areas of sociology, anthropology, politics, philosophy and technico-scientific disciplines. Its use has progressed to such an extent that the 1991 edition of the *Oxford Dictionary of New Words* considered 'global' to be a new word with great potential. (In point of fact, the said dictionary sustains that this use of the word 'global' originated from the idea of the 'global village' in Marshall McLuhan's renowned *Explorations in Communication* of 1960). It is therefore certainly true to say that globalization is a typically complex phenomenon, using the word 'complex' in its literal sense (*cum-plexus*) of 'consisting of interconnected parts', which consists of anything that simultaneously implies distinctions and tensions of the parties involved, and converging and contradictory aspects. It will consequently be no surprise to see the myriad of interpretations and ways of responding to the associated risks of globalization that can be found in the literature of the past decade.

In fact, globalization divides scholars and policymakers as much as it unites them. Given the many different aspects it includes, globalization cannot be examined from a single angle, not even the economic-financial

angle. It would therefore be deceptive to try and capture the in-depth realities (not the superficial ones) of globalization within a specific field of study, even after fine-tuning the techniques and analytical instruments. We can aspire to tracing the borders between disciplines, but we run the risk of coming up against an arbitrary dividing line, as Michel Foucault reminds us in his *L'archéologie du savoir* with regard to the aporias found when discontinuities are sought in historical research.

In what follows, after a brief characterization of what I consider the core of the globalization phenomenon (Sect. 2), I will examine the major risks of the current transition towards a globalized world. (Section 3). One of these risks has to do with the new features the migratory question is being taking in these days. (Sect. 4). Finally, in Sect. 5, I shall be putting forward a proposal to set up an international agency for migrations, starting from the recognition that world governance of population movements is today surprisingly inadequate and insufficient.

2. ABOUT THE *RES NOVAE* OF GLOBALIZATION

Let me delve a bit into the heart of the globalization phenomenon by illustrating the most significant differences between industrial and post-industrial society. With the advent of manufacturing, a lifestyle based on the *separation* of production and consumption spread throughout Western societies: a separation between man as a worker (contributor of productive force) and man as a consumer (holder of needs). Work and consumption refer us back to two opposing but complementary principles: the obligation (the discipline of production) and the freedom (free time). This separation is justified (and glorified) by resorting to the different possibilities of achieving economies of scale in both areas; significant economies of scale can only be obtained in the area of production. Let us try to identify the significance of this condition more precisely.

The industrial society is a society that produces goods. Machines have a predominant role and the rhythms of life assume a mechanical cadence. Energy has replaced muscle power and accounts for the enormous growth of productivity, which is responsible for the mass-production of goods. Energy and machines have transformed the nature of work: abilities have been broken down into elementary components and the artisan of pre-industrial times has been replaced by the new figure of the technician and the semi-specialized worker. It is a world of coordination and organization,

in which people are treated as 'things' because it is easier to coordinate things than people. It becomes necessary to make a distinction between roles and people. Organizations are concerned with the requirements of roles, not people. The *techné* criterion is that of efficiency and the way of life is adapted to the economic model, whose key words are maximization and optimization. Some traditional elements and characteristics do remain, but repetitive, subdivided work is the main feature of industrial mode of production. In fact, the division of work not only determines people's roles or functions inside the factory, but also in society in general. From the moment they enter the job market, people find that professions have already been determined and that they must adapt their personalities to the functions society has given them. Taylorism is an attempt to theorize this new phase in the organization of work. The rhythm of work is controlled by the assembly line and workers' initiative and experience are reduced to the minimum. Thus, large-scale mass production brings about a total disqualification and impersonalization of worker as a person.

It should be noted that these consequences of the division of labour on working conditions do not depend on the way in which the control of the productive process is organized, whether on a model of capitalist property or centralized planning. A socialist state may abolish private ownership of production means, eliminate the middle classes, impose conditions of ambitious equalitarianism for all, but it cannot abolish workers' subordination to the inflexible laws of mechanized production. 'The last word on Capitalism', wrote Lenin in 1918, 'is contained in the Taylor system ... the refined cruelty of bourgeois exploitation combined with a series of extraordinarily rich scientific achievements relating to the analysis of the mechanical movements of labor ... The Soviet Republic must do whatever is necessary to possess everything of value of the scientific and technical achievements in this field ... The Taylor system must be studied and taught in Russia' (*Opere Scelte*, Editori Riuniti, Rome, 1978). It will be observed that Lenin fell into the trap of believing that he could use Ford-Taylorism without 'disinfecting' it. Indeed, Gramsci himself did not manage to escape completely from this sort of cultural conditioning: when talking about Fordism Gramsci did not fail to point out how it could enable workers' minds to be free and therefore available for political involvement.

The changes in the structure and organization of work that Fordism signified were accompanied by similarly radical modifications in consumer habits. The affirmation of the 'assembly line' had its correlation in the affirmation of consumerism, with the consequent typical dichotomy of 'modern

times': on the one hand, the loss of the sense of work (alienation) and, on the other hand, as if it were a compensation, the opulence of consumerism. It may be recollected that Ford and Taylor considered themselves to be benefactors of mankind precisely because, by relieving workers of the fatigue of thinking, they allowed them to devote an increasing part of their income to recreational and regenerative activities.

The advent of post-Fordist society has created the conditions for overcoming both the separation between the generation of an idea and its execution on the job and the concept of consumption as an antidote to the alienation of work. However, it brought about a new dilemma: free time versus work. It can be summarized as follows: nowadays, the poor have little money and plenty of time, whereas the rich have plenty of money and little free time. The rich of the past, on the contrary, had plenty of both time and money. The new fact is therefore that the increase in the production of goods, and particularly the unceasing increase in productivity levels, has generated a new scarcity: time for consuming. As Cross effectively documents and argues,¹ it has always been known that it takes time to produce things; the novelty in today's stage of development is that the scarcity of time has also begun to make itself felt in the process of consumption itself: more time is needed to consume growing quantities of goods and services. The result is that time has become money, not only with respect to work (which has always been true), but also with respect to consumption. And this explains the continual creation of new activities and products whose purpose is to save time *in* the process of consuming, i.e. with the aim of raising what in economics is called the consumativity rate – an index that measures the quantities of goods and services that can be consumed within a unit of time. Just think of what mail orders, fast food, e-commerce, etc. mean to us today. As Baumann accurately observes, the fact that consumption takes up time is, in fact, the ruin of the consumption society. The consumption society – not the society of consumers – would, in fact, require consumer satisfaction to be instantaneous from two points of view: consumed goods should generate satisfaction without obliging the consumer to acquire any special new abilities (the use of computers should be more and more user friendly if it is intended to make surfing on the Internet an instrument of consumption, as a way of occupying free time); the satisfaction linked to the consumption of a specific good or service should be fulfilled as quickly as possible to make way for other wants and needs and, consequently, the consumption of new goods and services.

¹ G. Cross, *Time and money*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1996.

However, although it is true that consuming more quickly will lead to increased quantities of consumed goods – and consequently the production levels of consumer goods – it is also true that it does not lead to more free time, the time in which people are ‘capable’ of practicing free choice. The reality before our eyes is clearly that work is no longer surrounded by that Messianic aura with which it was bestowed during the Fordist era – man is work, according to the theories of J. Locke, K. Marx and others; the history of humankind is the history of work – but that does not mean to say that we are working less. Just the opposite: work is increasing and taking up more of our time. As Totaro² opportunely observed, the rejection of the typical Fordist utopian concept of work has been surpassed as the time taken up by work has lengthened, and a new paradox has been created: nowadays, people know more than before about the need, for example, to travel, but they have less time to do it. This gives rise to the subjective frustration of seeing one’s life absorbed by work and consumption.

In the past, people’s lives were taken up mainly by work alone; consumption was confined to satisfying more or less fundamental needs (In fact, except on very rare occasions, such as the case of N. Georgescu Roegen, economic theory has always perceived consumption as an unproductive economic activity). Nowadays, consumption is also a ‘means of production’ because goods ‘need’ to be consumed, and if the need for the goods is not spontaneous, if people do not feel the need to have more goods, the need is generated in one way or another all the same. And this is the difference between the ‘inducement of consumption’ of former times and the ‘manipulation of consumption’ of current times. And this, in turn, is the difference between consumerism and hyperconsumerism. In this process, production uses consumers as its allies by involving them to a certain extent in the decision-making process. This was not the case when Henry Ford could say, ‘My customers can choose whatever color they want for their car, provided they buy a black one’. In the words of Baudrillard, we currently live in a world in which all environments are directly or indirectly focused on consumptions.

What does all this have to do with lifestyles? The organization of present-day society, and consequently production, is bent on reducing people’s free time, because consumption is perceived as the economic activity par excellence. This presents us with a great challenge: to find a satisfactory, high-profile balance between work, consumption and free time.

² F. Totaro, ‘Ansie e aspirazioni del mondo del lavoro di oggi’, CEI, Rome, 2000.

Upon reflection, the real current challenge for developed societies is the way in which the fruits of economic growth linked to the use of information technologies are shared out between time and money, i.e. between having more free time and having more money with which to consume. In the past, the challenge used to be what portion of one's income should be spent on consumption and what should be set aside as savings for the accumulation of capital.

In point of fact, we are now in a condition to take Seneca's recommendation seriously, as he wrote in his first letter to Lucilius, 'If you think about it, a large part of life slips by while we're doing things wrong, mostly by not doing anything; our whole life long, we're doing anything rather than what we should be doing. Can you show me anyone who gives due value to his time and to the whole of every day, and who realizes that life's slipping by day after day? ... Everything, Lucilius, depends on other people; we are only masters of our own time. Time is the only possession of which Nature made us masters and it flies by and we let the first person who comes along take it away from us. We are so foolish that, when we acquire goods that are of no value but have to be paid for, we let others charge us for them; but no one who has caused others to waste time feels he owes anyone anything, although this is the only asset we cannot return, despite having all the will in the world'. Insofar as the subject of this paper is concerned, this fragment from Seneca can be taken as an incentive to look for new ways of using time in a society that has been defined as a consumer society. We must therefore be on the lookout and adopt a culture that will enable us to correct the weak points of a civilization obsessively built on *homo faber* (the production man) in favor of *homo agens*, a man capable of acting so as to manifest the being which is in himself.³

3. THE RISKS OF THE CURRENT TRANSITION

Based on the above, I will now touch upon some of the serious risks linked to the current transition. One of these risks has to do with the fact that globalization is a positive sum game, a game that increases overall wealth and income, but at the same time tends to increase the social distances between countries and inside each country, even wealthy, the dis-

³ See, in this respect, the penetrating considerations in K. Woytila, *The acting person* Cracow, 1969.

tances between a social group and another. In other words, globalization reduces absolute poverty while spreading relative poverty. This is a paradox: something that, according to the Greek etymology of the word, marvels, surprises. While overall wealth increases and absolute poverty (the inability of a person or group of people to attain the threshold conditions of subsistence) decreases, relative poverty is on the increase. According to recent official studies,⁴ globalization has reduced absolute poverty over the past 25 years: there would have been approximately 2 billion people living in absolute poverty, whereas currently there are 1.2 billion. This is clearly still a tragic figure, but lower than it would have been without globalization. Many observers, who do not distinguish between people living in absolute poverty and relative poverty, sustain that the existence of 1.2 billion people living in absolute poverty is a result of globalization. This is not true. However, it is true that globalization increases the gaps, and that is a serious problem. It has been shown that when inequalities – relative poverty – exceed a certain critical threshold in a given country or region, the conditions become ripe for the outbreak of a real, full-scale civil war. There have been 49 civil wars in the world over the last 40 years, the vast majority being triggered by ever greater inequality. Therefore, no one who values peace can remain silent in light of the increase in relative poverty. This explains why Pope John Paul II supplements the traditional definition ‘Opus iustitiae pax’ with the new ‘Opus solidaritatis pax’ (peace as the fruit of solidarity). Moreover, when relative poverty increases significantly, democracy itself comes under fire. This cause/effect relationship has been demonstrated: when inequality in a country exceeds a certain level, those in a position of relative disadvantage stop participating in the democratic community life, which leads the way to the varying forms of totalitarianism, the most prevalent at present being technocratic, not military, totalitarianism.

A second major risk has to do with the emergence of a specific rule regarding community life, a rule based on the new type of competition economists call positional competition. It is quite true that competition has always existed ever since the market economy took shape, i.e. at least since the 15th century. But until recently, competition only appeared as a

⁴ B. Milanovic, ‘How great is world inequality?’, *WIDER Angle*, 1, 2000. According to a recent research of the World Bank, the world Gini coefficient – which is the most widely used indicator to measure inequality – was, in 1988, 62.5. In 1993, it went up to 65.9 and in 1999 to 69. Such an increase in the Gini coefficient is something extraordinary.

regulating principle in the economic sphere. Now, however, it has entered other areas of life: family, politics and civil society itself, and the results are beginning to be felt. For example, when the rule of competition enters family life, it shatters it: the family cannot work according to competitive principles. Can you imagine what would happen if the relationships between parents and children, husband and wife, brothers and sisters were ruled by competitive principles? But politics does not work well either if based on competitive principles because, as Aristotle taught, the main task of politics is to achieve the common good. The same can be said for civil society at large. People are born to be happy, but happiness can only be found in relationships with others: no one can be happy by themselves: at least two people are necessary. One can live by oneself to maximize utility – as the celebrated parable of Robinson Crusoe teaches us – but, to be happy, one needs someone to relate and refer to. Here we are up against a paradox: if the rule of community life becomes that of positional competition, the other person becomes our adversary, someone we must figure out a way to beat. But at the same time, to be happy I need to relate with another person, who becomes the efficient cause of my self-consciousness. With the constancy he is known for, John Paul II jumps right in to harp on this point: his denouncement of this risk of globalization was the underlying argument of his message for World Peace Day of January 1st, 2001. Rivalry is necessary for the market economy: an economist certainly cannot deny the importance of competition on the market. But it cannot become the rule of behaviour nor the measure of judgment within the family, politics and civil society.

A third risk concerns the connection between globalization and democracy. We should be aware of a new factor that members of the legal profession have been looking into for some time now: in the era of globalization, new entities are being created that exercise normative and regulatory powers but often are not democratically legitimized, i.e. they are not accountable to any specific *demos* or constituency. There are examples among the great international organizations (the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the World Trade Organization), but there are also some non-governmental organizations that are more powerful than many nations. These entities are capable of moving considerable resources and imposing rules of behavior but have not been invested with powers by the people. This is a new problem: international organizations used to answer directly or indirectly to governments, but this is no longer the case. Transnational companies (now taking the place of multinationals, which are on their way

out) are often self-referential. These entities are even capable of generating their own laws. Consider the new *Lex Mercatoria* that is not the result of any democratic process involving voting like in a parliamentary session. Instead, agreement comes in the form of a contract between the parties concerned.⁵ It is becoming more and more common for political authorities to give way to technocratic authorities, which means that the legitimization of power is shifting away from traditional positions. It is not difficult to apprehend the dangers inherent to such processes, the most serious being the possible threat to human rights.

Finally, a fourth major risk of the present transition is related to the circumstance that the movements of people from one country to another, or from one region to another, have never known the intensity and problematic nature of recent years. It is of course true that migration is as old as humanity itself. Yet it cannot be denied that over the last few decades characteristics and trends have emerged, especially after the fall of the Berlin Wall, that are completely new. Two issues need to be focused on at once.

The first concerns the disconcerting paradox of the present historical phase: economic globalization, while it accelerates and magnifies the freedom to transfer goods and capital, would seem, sometimes explicitly but more often implicitly, to hinder the movements of people, imperiling the proper functioning of their freedom of movement which is, a basic right that is recognized as such by everyone. In other words, at a time like the present in which the culture of the market is becoming universal and pervading all the domains of social life, it should seem normal to see in migration a resource for the advancement of human progress. And yet when that same market culture is applied to the movement of people, the terms that recur are expulsion, rationing of entries, special permits. To tell the truth, it is not difficult to discover the root of such an asynchrony of attitudes. Hindrances and obstacles to the movement of people are not applied to all immigrants indiscriminately, but only to those who, coming from certain geographical areas, are the bearers of specific needs. This is a typical manifestation of the so-called 'Johannesburg syndrome', according to which the 'rich' must begin to defend themselves from the 'poor', reducing or hindering their movements. A new rhetoric is thus spreading at the cultural level: the migrants are deemed responsible for the crises of society, for new collective fears, and constitute a serious threat to the preservation of national identities.

⁵ On the issue of the relationship between globalization and democracy, see M.R. Ferrarese, *Le istituzioni della globalizzazione*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2000.

The second question raised by the new migrations is that of the definition of belonging: who can be considered a member of a given political community, and who is excluded from it. I am persuaded that the belonging question is a more urgent one than the considerably older one of distributive justice. Indeed, only after identifying those who are entitled to specific rights can one pass on to discussing the principles of justice to be applied to a given population. In this sense, the solution to the migration issue constitutes a *primis* with respect to the problematic of social justice. How does the question of belonging, with specific reference to the figure of *homo migrans*, concretely manifest itself? Not so much in denying the migrants certain kinds of assistance or access to any particular service or facility, but rather by denying them their dignity and self-esteem. This happens every time the migrant is subjected to systematic practices of humiliation.⁶

4. MIGRATIONS IN THE EPOCH OF GLOBALIZATION

Without making any claim to comprehensiveness, a picture of the situation at the world level shows that around 140 million people today live outside their country of birth or origin (the figures are those of the UNHCR); in 1965 there were around 75 million. Of these 140 million, 75 million are distributed among the various developing countries, and the remaining 65 million in the advanced countries. Of the latter, there are around 30 million foreigners present in Western Europe. Of special interest are the data on migratory flows in the last few years. In 1998, for example, it has been calculated that about 450,000 people sought asylum, either as refugees or as migrants, in the 29 more advanced countries. In 1997 the applications stood at 445,000, and in 1996 about 480,000. If it is true that one may speak of a relatively stabilized situation for the total number of applications, 1998 saw important changes in the structure of the geographical areas to which the applications were addressed. Overall, Europe received 366,000 applications for asylum (compared to 260,000 in 1997), and of these, 299,000 were addressed to the 15 countries of the European Union (252,000 in 1997). The USA, on the other hand, saw a remarkable decline in numbers: from 84,800 in 1997 to 35,000 in 1998; and the same goes for Japan (a reduction of 46%) and for Australia (a reduction of 16%).

⁶ M. Robinson, 'Making the global economy work for human rights', in G. Sampson (ed.), *The role of the WTO in Global Governance*, UNU Press, New York, 2001.

Though crude, the data demonstrate that Europe, and especially the European Union, is becoming the principal magnet for migratory flows at the world level. Furthermore, if one takes into consideration the so-called *load* quota (defined by the ratio between the number of those applying for asylum and the resident population in each country), still with reference to the UNHCR survey, it can be seen that in 1998 Europe had on average one application per 1,300 inhabitants; Germany accepted 28% of all the applications for asylum addressed to Europe; Great Britain 14.7%; Switzerland 11.7%; France 5%; Italy 1.2% etc. Finally, it may be interesting to recall that the flows of refugees tend to favor the direction South – South (from Vietnam to Hong Kong; from eastern Pakistan to India; from Myanmar to Thailand etc.) whereas the flows of migrants, both legal and illegal, tend to favor the South-North axis. Clearly, since the LDCs are not a homogeneous reality, conspicuous flows of migrants of the South-South type are present and will continue to be present (the most emblematic case is perhaps the one concerning the movement of people from Central America to Mexico).

In which sense can one say present-day migrations are different from those which occurred in the past? As some scholars point out, today's migrations and the first mass movements that occurred in the 19th century have several features in common. One recalls in fact that in the 19th century and up to the outbreak of the First World War, some 52 million Europeans migrated from their native countries. Up to 34 million of these people moved to the USA. The famous *Passenger Act*, passed by the Westminster Parliament in 1803, encouraged migration to the former British colonies. By 1860 Great Britain provided 66%, and Germany 32%, of all Europeans migrating to the Americas and Oceania. By 1880, Germany was to become a net importer of workers. If these data have to be remembered in order not to overemphasize differences between the past situation and today's, one should at the same time also recognise striking dissimilarities. One is the introduction of new technologies into production processes, a change that brings countries that are spatially far apart much closer to each other. However, this process has not removed the cultural gaps but in fact has widened them. That the connection between cultural realities and the adoption of new technologies is of central importance in social integration processes is now clear to everyone. As long as all that is expected of the immigrant is that he or she performs purely mechanical operations, the cultural gap between host and immigrant populations is hardly perceivable. This is not the case when, in order profitably to enter the workforce arena, the immigrant has to acquire and master logical and

organisational patterns that are rooted in a clearly defined cultural matrix. The integration of the immigrant in technologically advanced societies produces problems that are far more delicate than those that existed even in the recent past.

A second element of marked differentiation between today's migrations and yesterday's is that facts do not seem to confirm the thesis, so fashionable until the 1980s, that the most efficient device to relieve migratory pressure would be increased employment opportunities in developing countries. If such a proposition were correct, it would suffice to suggest that these countries adopt labour intensive techniques to stop, or at least reduce the extent of migratory flows. However, this is not how things are at the moment. In the first place, in developing countries emigration, far from being an alternative to the process of growth, is an instrument to set this process in motion. This occurs thanks partly to the money that emigrants send back home. This makes it possible for financial resources to reach potential users without it having to go through governmental or public agencies. Also, emigration provides the fastest and cheapest way to acquire the skills and knowledge required by the new technological paradigms. In the second place, during the first phases of the growth process, migration specific incentives are generated. Indeed, the increase in socio-economic inequalities that invariably marks the first stages of development leads growing segments of the population to turn to the migration path. Moreover, as the *new economics of migration* has clearly demonstrated, one ought to focus on the family rather than on the individual. Within such a perspective, the decision to migrate is perceived as a strategy to diversify risks: some family members emigrate in order to enable those who stay at home to stand a better chance of improving their situation. To sum up, it would be fallacy to think that migratory flows can be stopped simply by relying on the growth factor. If growth is certainly necessary, it is nevertheless insufficient to counteract the push to migration at least in the short and medium run.

In the light of the above considerations, one can understand the feeling of fear pervading western populations: a fear that our societies may in the end turn out to be incapable of controlling growing masses of immigrants who are bearers of cultures remote from our own. Faced with fear and uncertainty, the prevailing attitude seems to be that of the blockade, and to deal with the problem by 'sweeping it under the carpet' and thereby not to deal creatively with a problem of epoch making significance. As Pope John Paul II writes in his message of June 2, 2000 to the Jubilee for migrants and

itinerants, 'Unfortunately, nowadays one still witnesses exclusion and even rejection behaviour due to unjustified fear, and a withdrawal into one's own concern. Such discrimination is not compatible with devotion to Christ and membership of the Church'.⁷

5. TOWARDS A WORLD MIGRATION ORGANIZATION

What is new in the present age is the globalization of capitalism, and more specifically, the removal from the social control of national communities of their power over capital. The economy has become global, whereas politics has not. At best, it is international. This has eliminated a stable connection between state, population and wealth: 'wealth without nations', as the saying goes.

At the same time, our age has also witnessed the emergence of a new idea, that of the existence of essential inalienable rights for everyone, and for all peoples. From this we have the gradual recognition of a single universal right, whose point of departure is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, and whose legitimacy is no longer derived from individual states, but directly from the human being (obviously, there are still many countries that in the name of their different cultural identity do not accept this uniqueness of universal right). It is through an increasing awareness of this unique universal right, later codified in various agreements (and in particular by the International Convention on economic, social, and cultural rights of 1966), that we can now speak of the rights of the migrant. 'The International Convention on the rights of all migrant workers and members of their families' adopted by the General Assembly in December 1990, is one of the most significant results of this movement of ideas and actions.

Nevertheless, at the moment of writing, only sixteen states have ratified the Convention, and only ten have signed it. Yet the Convention requires at least twenty ratifications before it can begin to produce its effect. Why is this the case? The real problem with the Convention is that it does not contain the incentive mechanisms that promote participation and compliance. And in the absence of a transnational agency or authority capable of enforcing

⁷ For an elaboration of the whole question see my 'The migrant question in the third millenium: tendencies and perspectives', Geneva International Yearbook, Geneva, XV°, 2001, from which sections 4 and 5 draw with some changes.

compliance with the rules set down in the Convention, the countries of the North have no interest in ratifying it. The result is obvious to everyone: to the present time, there has been no international governance of migration. We do have the ILO (International Labor Organization) but this only deals with the legal flows of labor. We do have the UNHCR, but this important agency of the United Nations deals only with the question of refugees, and more recently, of internally displaced people. And so on. It is thus not at all surprising that the migration question tends to get more and more complicated.

Just as we need institutions to ensure that closer integration of markets produces real benefits for all (this is the ultimate *raison d'être* of the World Trade Organization), in the same way we need a transnational institution (not bureaucracies) to protect migrants' rights and to punish the increasing number of violations of those rights around the world. Following Bhagwati's proposal,⁸ I am of the opinion that the time has come to loudly demand the constitution of a World Migration Organization (WMO) to go beyond national *ad hoc* measures, as well as the various bilateral and multilateral agreements that are making the situation worse. This will be an agency which can be asked not only to monitor and facilitate the implementation of the rules already in existence, but to carry out two further tasks: first, to foster cooperation between countries belonging to the same area so that they may adopt homogeneous migration policies, and secondly, to function as arbitrator for the settling of disputes.

Two important objectives could be reached by such a WMO in a short time. The first concerns the reliability of the statistics on migration. Reliable statistics are still not available on migration flows. We do know the proportion of foreigners present in a country. But the variation over time of these proportions do not provide us with useful information about the dimension of the flows of migrants, and about the qualitative characteristics of migrants. And yet without this, not only is it impossible to set up serious and coherent policies of intervention or aid (it has to be borne in mind that migrants are by no means an undifferentiated mass of individuals and therefore the various segments they form express qualitatively different needs and aspirations), but it is also difficult to argue convincingly against certain kinds of political opportunism, or effectively oppose the diffusion of false information whose only aim would seem to be to spread panic and apprehension among the native populations.

⁸ J. Bhagwati, *A Stream of Windows: unsettling reflections on trade, immigration and democracy*, MIT Press, Cambridge (Mass.), 1998, ch. 31.

The question arises: why should it be so difficult to arrive at an adequate information base, or at least one whose sources were uniform? The main reason lies in problems of definition. The Convention of the United Nations on Refugees in 1951 defined a refugee as a person who found him\herself outside his\her country, and unable to go back for the 'well-founded fear of persecution'. This is the definition still adopted by all first world countries. On the other hand the Convention on Refugees of the Organization of African Countries of 1993 tells us the refugee is he\she who seeks 'refuge in another country as a consequence of attack, the occupation of the territory, generalized violence, and events that seriously disturb public order'. It does not require a great deal of imagination to realize how, depending on which definition one adopts, quite considerably different quantifications can be arrived at. In quite recent years, among people officially or professionally involved, the idea also has begun to circulate of 'internally displaced people', to refer to those people in difficulties who live in countries like Afghanistan, Angola, Somalia, the Sudan, the Kosovo etc., and that cannot be called refugees in either of the senses indicated above.

Clearly, hidden behind difficulties that appear to be technical there lie precise choices of a political nature. A first line of attack must lie in putting pressure on WMO so that a revision and updating of the 1951 Convention can be reached (as everyone knows, this Convention was heavily affected by the pressure of contemporary events, i.e. the Cold War), so that a uniform method of arriving at reliable statistics be found.

The second objective a newly instituted WMO could urgently attain concerns whether it is still a good idea to keep asylum applications aiming at obtaining refugee and exile status separate from those aiming at obtaining migrant worker status. In 1998 the percentage made up of the former category was 34%, a significant proportion. Yet I doubt whether it helps the cause to insist on the distinction, for two reasons: in the first place, because it is increasingly hard to make a clear distinction between voluntary and involuntary movements of population. How is it possible to differentiate between those who flee their country because of the threat to their lives they have received, from those who leave because of poverty, intolerable social injustice, or inhumane discrimination in general? As so many NGO documents confirm, the migrant today is moved by a combination of fear, hope, and aspirations, a combination it is impossible to split up into separate components.

Again, while the borders of Western Europe were relatively easy to pass through, the migrant could count on his own financial resources to succeed

in arriving at destination. But since more rigorous controls have been introduced, especially to discourage applications for asylum aiming at obtaining refugee status, a highly profitable so-called industry has been born: the traffickers in permits and transport for migrants. This has enormously increased the cost of illicit migrations, with the result that the neediest or most deserving have been replaced by those that in one way or another have been able to procure easy money for themselves. We should not be at all surprised therefore at newspaper reports of asylum applications being made by the least deserving types. If restrictive policies are carried out, for example, on the refugees, it is obvious that the migrant, in his attempt to reach his goal, turns to the channel of immigration for work reasons, and vice versa. The problem of migrations should be faced up to in its entirety, and not with sub-sector policies tending to set in opposition the urgent needs of the various types of migrant, establishing a sort of scale of priorities among them. In this perspective, a statute common to all countries must be insisted upon. The more the asylum procedures are standardized, and the more our information is transparent and exhaustive, the less room there will be for the flowering of criminal organizations who gain their profits from the market of illegal immigrants.

6. IN LIEU OF A CONCLUSION

The refugee and migrant question is today very complex; much more complex than it was in the past. A sense of frustration seems to pervade all those who dedicate their energies and efforts to it. This is certainly understandable, but cannot be justified. What is required is to avoid the double risk of remaining, on the one hand, above reality through adopting utopian perspectives, and on the other, beneath reality through resignation. In other words, one cannot oscillate between the disenchanting optimism of those who believe the migratory question may be entrusted to the anonymous and impersonal mechanism of the market, and, on the opposite front, the political cynicism of those who believe, *à la* Kafka, that 'there is a point of arrival, but no way leading to it'.

Indeed, there is a viable way, which is within our reach. But two conditions must be met. First, we must free ourselves of the rhetoric of catastrophe at all costs: we are constantly surrounded by scholars (and mass media) that want to convince us that nothing can be done, that globalization is an inevitable mechanism. This is absolutely untrue: there are no

socioeconomic problems (as opposed to natural problems) that cannot be solved by people of 'good will'. The second condition is to operate culturally to avoid a specific 'crime' from being committed. Let me explain. As ever, for better and for worst, science is a guide for action. In the case of economics, it is acknowledged that modern economic science has played its part of responsibility in those actions and measures which legitimized colonialism, exploitative practices, and the creation of new forms of poverty. As paradoxical as it may seem, this has come about whilst economics has established itself as a science free from value judgements; i.e. as a science which, in order to assume the epistemological status of natural sciences, had to declare that the world of life lays outside its domain of knowledge. Well, we have to prevent another crime from being committed today: that economic science destroys the hope – above all in young generations – that change is possible, i.e. that it is possible to envisage an economic organization for our societies where to give without loosing and take without taking away is compatible with reason.