

## Book Reviews

**F. Fauri, A.C. Masi, C. Withol de Wenden, D. Strangio, S. Strozza,** *Migrations. Countries of immigrants, countries of migrants. Canada, Italy.* With a Foreword by Cormac O' Grada, Nuova Cultura Editions, Rome, 2019, pp. 180.

Migrations have always marked human history, but they are traversing our present epoch with special intensity. The paradox is that while we are aware of the drastic changes to our civilization imposed by migratory flows, historical analysis has tended to focus on the dynamics of migration in earlier centuries. A specific literature on the most recent changes has been slow to develop. It is almost as if this topic were dominated by news reports and not historical research. But this approach forces us to consider migration solely from the emergency and not the structural perspective. Only in the last few years has scientific investigation of the migratory phenomenon begun to build up.

This volume's authors are among the most attentive researchers on this issue, with important contributions on migration processes in their own countries. This book is innovative in its comparative analysis of two countries – Canada and Italy – which have had differing histories but are now both at the center of migration dynamics. It is, as Donatella Strangio points out in the introduction, the first in a planned series of studies aimed at “bridging a cultural void around migration” (p. 13). Comparative analysis is indeed the best way to approach this issue. As Strangio again notes (page 14): “The relationship with historical world issues means identifying different types of approaches: the analysis of transnational connections,

the history of civilizations, and the variations of global and world history in the strict sense.”

Migrations, that is, are by their very nature processes to be viewed in the global dimension, demanding supranational interpretation. And it is precisely through historical interpretation that the gaps in the recent globalization can be truly grasped. In this vision, scientific research is the key, also to counter the spread of populist parties that see the battle against immigrants, even to the point of violence, as emblematic for their political action. As Cormac O’Grada notes in the Preface, these parties have a strong hold on public opinion and have been successful in imposing highly restrictive legislation in a number of European countries, including Italy, creating “an urgent need for further analyses that make the benefits of migration more transparent and dispel some myths about its costs and extent” (p. 11).

In the first chapter Catherine Withol de Wenden examines the evolution of Euro-Mediterranean migratory flows, as in recent decades this area has become the epicenter of migration, including migrants for economic and climatic reasons but also increasing numbers of war refugees, as in the case of Syria. This growing migration has been countered by restrictive legislation enacted by individual countries to prevent arrivals. Constraints have also been placed on traditional reception policies, as in the definition of “*couples migratoires*,” a concept that facilitates the presence of considerable numbers of persons of African nationality in European countries (e.g., Algerians in France).

The inability of the European Union to govern migration has emerged clearly. A global response could serve to resolve problems that are in many respects tragic. Just consider the deaths that have occurred in attempts to cross the Mediterranean, which amounted to approximately 40,000 victims in 1990-2017. But other efforts at comprehensive strategy have also failed, such as the initiatives of the UNHCR and the UN. Generally speaking, the reason for failure is the lack of “transnational mobilization for such a cause” (p. 33). If we seek to proceed along this path, the consequence will be increasingly open clashes, in the face of unstoppable migration flows.

The second chapter, by Francesca Fauri, Donatella Strangio and Salvatore Strozza, focuses instead on migration dynamics in Italy. Traditionally a country of emigrants, since the 1970s Italy has been one of immigration, although the transformation did not become truly evident until the 1980s. The change was connected with the liberalization of travel, which became a reality within the European Union in those decades. Italy, in fact, had long insisted on the right to free travel within the Community, and eventually the principle of “the total elimination of national priority in accessing employment” (p. 46) was established. At least in theory, this guaranteed “the same conditions to applications coming from national and EU workers” (p. 46). And yet – despite the benefits of emigration – in Italy unemployment rates remained high, especially among young people, so emigration always remained a viable option.

That is, Italy’s transformation into a land of immigration must be seen as complementary to the continuing emigration of many young Italians. The contradiction is that if at European Community level Italy insisted on freedom of movement, domestically it was reluctant to enact laws that could guarantee the right of asylum to refugees. The story of Jerry Essan Masslo, for instance, was sensational. A young South African fleeing apartheid, when he arrived at Fiumicino airport in Rome he was detained by the police for weeks because the law granted refugee status only to people from Eastern Europe. The authors point out that it has been only through exceptional measures, such as amnesties and regularizations – the last of which enacted in recent months – that migrants’ movements could be quantified. Immigration has become quite a sizable phenomenon, and indeed is now “the only growth factor in the resident population in Italy” (p. 52). In twenty-five years the presence of migrants has increased tenfold, from 500,000 to 5 million. Even so, this growth has not matched the rise in Italian emigration, a trend that has intensified in recent years. At the end of the chapter the authors discuss Italy’s migration policies, which on the whole have been inadequate: triggered by an emergency situation, they lack any

long-term prospect of integration. The lack of realistic policies is confirmed by two features. One is the “flows decrees,” which should allow a certain number of migrants to enter Italy every year, taking into account the domestic economy’s requirements in all sectors. Consider, say, the emergency in agriculture stemming from inability to ensure a sufficient number of migrant labourers owing to the Covid-19 pandemic. The second is the country’s shameful slowness to enact a citizenship law enabling migrants’ children – about a quarter of all Italian minors – to feel fully Italian. As the authors observe, “the question is not just how to best integrate immigrants, but how to best identify specific objectives of the process” (p. 68).

The third chapter analyzes the migration policies of Canada, which are often compared to those of the United States. This is a difficult comparison since, as Antony C. Masi points out, the definition of “migrant” differs between the two countries and the parameters are imprecise, making the association even more complicated. However, what links Canada and the U.S. is a longstanding tradition of immigration and the benefits it has brought to both economies, although from the outset they had two distinct models. That is, “each country created its own distinctive national identity, made choices about whom to accept into the fold, and dealt with new immigrants in distinctive ways” (p. 86). These models, despite obvious problems, are designed to assimilate migrants more quickly than in most other countries. Between the two, Canada is the real “nation of immigrants”: demographic trends indicate that by 2031 half the population will have been born abroad or will be members of families in which at least one parent came as an immigrant. In absolute terms, however, the U.S. takes in the largest number of migrants in the world. So it is evident that migration policies are of the greatest importance in both countries. A historical review reveals immediately that there have been significant changes, such as Canada’s introduction of the “points system” between 1962 and 1973, which differed sharply from the country’s traditional approach to migration. The idea was to link immigration flows to

labour market requirements, on the basis of regularly updated parameters for the selection of migrants. This principle was reaffirmed in subsequent measures, and indeed still today it is “the way in which different individuals are chosen” (p. 95). This model has attracted interest in recent years also in the U.S., which, however, has long relied heavily on the policy of family reunification. However, as the author notes, differences in migration policies between the two countries are also determined geographically: the U.S.-Mexican border is crossed by large numbers of migrants from Central and South America, while Canada has no land border save that with the United States. Two distinct models have thus emerged, commonly summarized as “multiculturalism” for Canada and “melting pot” for the U.S., to emphasize the greater success of Canada’s policies. But such an analysis is unfortunately true only in part. Delving deeper into the Canadian case, one finds that the ‘points system’ does not automatically solve the problem of integration, which has recently become a disruptive topic. Nor does it do away with the need to allow family reunifications as well, which are in fact an important feature of Canadian migration policies. And at the same time, there is no denying that by selecting high-skilled workers the “points system” impoverishes the migrants’ countries of origin. Overall, however, Canadian migration policies are unquestionably at the forefront internationally, having aroused interest not only in the United States but in many European countries as well. In particular, the ability to strike a balance between ensuring the reception of migrants and guaranteeing security is much appreciated. This is clear from Masi’s effective description of the network of services migrants are offered when they arrive in Canada. These services represent an important investment for the entire country, in that the purpose is to ensure that the migrants’ presence will quickly benefit the Canadian economy. In this way, it is clear that Canada adopts a “whole society” approach to migration. Naturally, there are a good many challenges for the Canadian reception system today, which Masi lists in precise fashion. It is clear as well that the Canadian model does not represent

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a universal option. In any case, it shows the many opportunities that an economically advanced country can seize by welcoming and integrating migrants, under definite rules, while avoiding the kind of political exploitation that depicts the presence of migrants as a never-ending emergency rather than a structural opportunity for the destination countries. In short, many ideas and suggestions for the present can be drawn from the comparison between Canadian and Italian migration policies. Although the two countries come from very different traditions, the common challenges they face can only be dealt with on the basis of objective, rational, far-sighted analysis. This perspective, as this fine book demonstrates, can be attained either by ruling elites or by civil society as a whole only through knowledge of historical events.

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