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by the Rev. A. Birou (France)

METHODS OF IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION AND ITS PREPARATORY TRAINING

by the Rev.A.Birou (France)

The ideal conditions to be achieved in order to effect a complete and correct integration of immigrants must first be visualized. A theory concerning the scope of this training; i.e., to show its ideal norms and basic needs will be the aim of these remarks. Only the practical aspects of this training program will be broached, and these only briefly.

Characteristics of Migration

It is useful repetition say that immigration is the aim of emigration; it is a population movement in its geographical dimensions. If it were only a question of animals, one would speak of migratory movements. But it is a question of men: thus the phenomenon acquires at once new dimensions, specifically human, with psychological, sociological, and economic aspects. The last is almost always the first determining factor except in political emigration. Human migratory movements have, therefore, some causes, some aims and some results; and a knowledge of all these possibilities is indispensable when planning a training program or aid for these individuals in question. Immigration is different according to:

- a) The roots of the previous or original environment (a small landowner in the Apennines, a farmer, a trained factory worker),
- b) The isolated and individual, or family and collective character of the departure,
- c) Mode of settlement in the new environment,
- d) Distances, spacial separation, climatic, social, and psychological differences between the original homeland and the new destination,
- e) Settlement and adjustment of the newcomer whether isolated, individual, or in family groups, or tribal: an ethnic group, sometimes of the same community, which regroups itself (an Italian village in Grenoble and in the state of Sao Paulo, in Brazil),

- f) Economic motives of the departure,
- g) The double assets: material possessions and technical knowledge which the migrating individual brings with him,
- h) Facilities or difficulties for integration in a new economic, technical, and social world. (Discussed below).

What is Change of Environment?

In order to prepare individuals for emigration (in the country of origin) or for an immigration (to the country of arrival), it is necessary to be fully aware of both phases of the process: The previous or original environment and the psychosomatic, social-economic and other conditioning, etc... of this previous environment on the individual leaving it, as well as the new environment with its possible similarities and differences.

Environment is a complex whole: it is the totality of training, of background, of conditioning, and surroundings in which the human being finds his balance and his fulfillment.

Each of the following five main factors in itself complex:

a) The physical and climatic complex, with its repercussions on the biology of man: An engineer who goes to work in the tin mines of Potosi at 13,100 feet (4000 meters) will have a difficult acclimation; the same is true of a technician transferred to the mines of the Choco Pacifico in Colombia, where the annual precipitation is 32.8 feet (10 meters). It is necessary to take into consideration the influence of various elements of climate: rarefaction of air, ozone, ionization of the atmosphere, hygrometric degree, scale and variation of the temperatures, variation of electric field, and the suddenness of these variations.

b) The living biological complex is based not only on the level of possible vegetable and animal resource potentialities and their easy or difficult nutrition assimilation to the migrant, but also on the ever-present harmful elements (microbes, mosquitoes, all so-called tropical diseases) and even on the absence of necessary elements (mineral salts in food, bacteria **in the** ground).

c) Technical complex: type of agriculture, the artisanal and industrial work, ways of living and kinds of agglomerations, means of communication, clothing, etc.

d) Structural complex: Adjustment of individuals to each other and to techniques (property management, social-political organization, economic and social levels, social relations, etc...)

e) The complex of culture and civilization: Predominating values in a given country, the profound reasons for living, the aims of existence; collective attitudes before the Unknown and Destiny (religion, attitude towards death, etc.....)

The Problem of Integration

This is the problem of adaptation from the original background to the most parallel possibility in the new environment. Were we materialists, we would consider that the environmental complexes, herein previously analyzed, totally determine and radically condition the individual.

If that were so, the adaptation would consist in passively adjusting through various conditions of the new environment in order to conform and to be well adjusted to it. But we know that man, even if he is conditioned, is not absolutely determined, and that the nucleus of his personality and his liberty is maintained under all kinds of environment. The problem is, therefore, that of his integration without disintegration, the one of his uprooting and looking for a new rooting where he himself will find his own development in a new humus.

Integration may, therefore, be defined as a transplantation where a minimum of ground under the roots in necessary so that one "grows roots" in the new environment; i.e., where the immigrant may exercise his individual physical, intellectual and moral activities at the same time without being false to himself, or being conspicuous, without seeming a heterogeneous element in the society into which he enters. Since this is not so easy, very grave problems may be presented if the environment into which the individual enters is at a level inferior to that from which he comes.

It is, therefore, not only a question of a good adaptation to the new environment by means of a total loss of the former culture. It is a question of a type of adjustment, a type of authentic integration into the culture and a contribution of personal values not in order to implant the type of civilization from which he comes, but in order to add to, to better, and to help the civilization into which he enters, evolve.

Change of Civilization: Special Difficulty for Catholics

The problem presented, especially for the Catholic whose spiritual values and Faith are attached to a particular behavior and culture, is to know if and how it is possible to pass organically, vitally, and completely from one civilization to another.

A distinction between culture and civilization must, however, be made. Culture is the form that a civilization takes when it is transferred into the habits of a given environment. Culture is the manner in which individuals and micro-groups assimilate the techniques, behave in the structures, and consider and integrate the values of a civilization. Culture is the totality of modes of human relations, social contacts, collective attitudes, mentalities, patterns of behavior and values which constitute a given society. This whole is a common possession in a given environment; the majority of individuals of this environment adjust their existence to it and find in it the basis of their advancement.

The preparation of the immigrant for this change of culture, and especially when he is Catholic, must be given particular attention. Even when it seems that he remains in the same civilization, the immigrant almost always finds the mode of life and the cultural background quite different. He will be obliged at the same time to discover the real dimensions and the relative values and to integrate only the positive ones into his own life.

The Catholic believer cannot, nevertheless, accept the materialistic values so prevalent everywhere. He must reject the materialistic aspects of the new culture without refusing to give of himself. It is indeed a difficult and delicate problem.

Complexity of New Environments

A main phenomenon rarely given enough attention must be taken into account: it is the phenomenon of the rapid evolution and of the increasing complexity of environments in the modern and developed countries, and even more so in underdeveloped countries, or in those countries which are in the process of development.

Brazil, for example, in urban environment (Sao Paulo), has developed with a rapid North American or European-type evolution. Upon penetration into the Amazon interior, there are towns with colonial structure and climate, and along the Amazon neolithic types of culture. According to the place to which one emigrates, one may find oneself projected into a society of the future, or back into an almost prehistoric one. So to emigrate is not only to change countries but sometimes to change eras.

A further difficulty develops from the fact that "new" countries to which one emigrates are seeking their own adjustment; their development is in a formative stage and the structure has not as yet a solid, permanent, valid pattern. At present, they find themselves in many parts of the world in a critical phase in the search for their social, political and economic independence. Countries, people and masses want to expand. Political and economic growing pains are found everywhere, thereby making conditions for sound integration extremely delicate. Latin American society lacks a deep unity, and this Hispano-American civilization questions its own destiny. If the immigrant has not achieved a completely integrated personality and has not learned correct social behavior, he will become maladjusted and will either disintegrate, or be a parasite, floating on the surface without becoming a part of the whole.

Training Programs

The preparatory training of the immigrant, be it by individual or, preferably, in groups, consists in making them aware of all the phenomena and instilling in them a desire to want them. For a healthy integration, the individual must desire, or at least accept: a) The change of surroundings, b) The change of culture.

The integration in a new country presupposes the desire for harmonious adaptation to: a) The framework of existence, b) The activity patterns, c) The psychosocial background, d) The spiritual and religious climate, e) Leisure contacts, f) The whole of the society of the country of destination. This must be accomplished without rejecting certain profound reasons for existence and their acquired values.

In our opinion, the problem of integration is a global one; i.e., the problem of the human being as a whole. According to the level of analysis and to the training program, it will, undoubtedly, be necessary to learn the means of integration in rural areas or in urban areas, of social and economic integration, and of cultural and religious integration.

But it will be necessary to show that these various aspects are complimentary and not in juxtaposition, that the phenomenon is integral: the immigrant must adjust his personality to make the new universe of his destination his own and to adopt and assimilate it. Thus, phases and patterns of this double integration must be taken into account: psychological phases (training, welcome, personal contacts, financial adjustment), patterns (the desire to belong, acknowledged acceptance, by small groups, and afterwards by the various community levels which form the new world where the individual wishes to enter).

A good preparation presupposes exact knowledge of the following obstacles:

(1) Problems of the individual: Introvert or extrovert personality, age, type of work, technical knowledge, language, etc.

(2) Problems of environment: Under non-integrated European groups, native groups more or less welcoming, existing climatic, biological, material, and psychological difficulties.

An easy solution does not exist, naturally, because there are no two similar cases, even with the same type of immigrants going to the same place of immigration.

For Spaniards who go to Colombia, the case is different if they are Catalans, Basque, or Andalusians; and it also varies according to which of the fifty different zones of Colombia is the destination. There are, however, some analogous cases: the Italians from the Tyrol who settled in the mata zone of Rio Grande do Sul.

The ways of approach to a sound preparation for integration are:

- a) The suppression of subjective and obstacles which follow,
- b) Technical and professional training,
- c) The acquaintance, sympathy, and interest aroused on both sides.

Special Preparation for Catholics

What I find most important, especially for a Catholic who wants to be truly accepted and bear testimony of his Faith, is that aside from legitimate financial motives for his departure, the fundamental reasons for this change should derive from a purpose in life and not only in material profits. If the attainment of wealth is the first objective, the immigrant will always remain an outsider, an actor, an exploiter, never belonging nor bearing witness. He must be part of the game, one with the group, not participating to exploit others, but rather to help all to rise to a higher human plane. We should stress this aspect because in most cases the immigrant is all the more anxious to acquire, to have, to possess, and sometimes to enjoy, as he is removed from the sociological restraints which formerly

inhibited his ambitions. A grave problem, impossible to treat fully here, is that pertaining to the human and moral qualities which a European Catholic must have really to live an "indigenous," native, and personal Christianity in a new environment over and above his normal adjustment. How must the individual effect his social adjustment and in particular join the local Church and be a living witness of Christ?

Structure of Migration Organizations and Coordination of Tasks

From the foregoing analysis, a conclusion may be reached the effect that the management of migration is a complex task with a technique which includes the synthetic use of various sciences such as geography, economics, ethnology and the psychology of peoples, as well as a planned and ordered network of organizations.

Given the complexity of the question, the importance of cooperation and the avoidance of duplication of work, it becomes indispensable to couple an agency in the country of departure with one in the country of arrival, so that both organizations help prepare the immigrant for departure and acceptance. It also seems absolutely necessary to establish close cooperation among the various European centers devoted to preparing emigrants for emigration; otherwise aid will be only partial especially as concerns material facilities to those departing. All available technical means, competent personnel, and documentation will not be utilized otherwise in preparing and briefing those about to change their environment. Interesting and essential is the task of overcoming opposition to immigration; in this respect, the courage, and energy of various organizations are an example.

But is the preliminary work of "clearing the ground," which is not so easy in certain countries. The most important work, the decisive work is this one of a complete education in order to make the immigrant humanly worthwhile and capable so that he may pass without a grave

crisis from one environment to another, from a well-defined environment to another country with equally definite characteristics. A sounder coordination essential to obtain the necessary information and documentation both on the emigrants and their background and on the new land of adoption. Studies on the geography and economics of various countries of immigration, as well as on the psychology of their inhabitants, customs, practices, beliefs, and behavior should be compiled. In an international children's village made up of fifty young people between the ages of twelve and fourteen years, derived from thirteen different countries where I was aide to the psychologist, J. Genevay, we established the most natural possible tests concerning the attitudes, tensions, conflicts, sympathies, and understanding between nations. Even these children had stereotyped mental patterns, preconceived ideas about other nations. Initial and final tests showed the evolution during a month.

The cause of conflicts and tensions, the factors of evolution towards a greater comprehension were clearly visible. Would it then not be necessary to conduct similar experiments on the means of contact and understanding among people of various emigration and immigration countries? There are degrees of "strangeness," as there are degrees in xenophobia or in xenophilia. There are some races that enjoy spontaneous liking and congeniality for each other just as other races experience dislike and repulsion.

Conclusions

A summary of six important conclusions can be arrived at from this brief outline; the need for: (1) Knowledge on the economic, social and psychological complexity of phenomenon of migration. (2) Applying the various sciences of man and especially psychology in order to prepare and to help in the integration of immigrants as much as possible. (3) Conducting well-prepared leader studies on immigration in order to arrive at the most efficient

methods for a healthy integration. (4) A special training for Catholics who are emigrating. (5) Coordinating and federalizing the various Migration Organizations. (6) Cooperation and unification of work and for providing necessary equipment and techniques.

It would seem that these conclusion present problem rather than solutions; nevertheless, they lead to several main conclusions: The matter of migration must be considered from a general, synthetic point of view or the danger of only a partial, incomplete or unsatisfactory improvement will result; it is just as important to make some precise and methodological analyses to avoid a purely theoretical and artificial synthesis of the different problems presented by migration.

It would be possible to object that the task as a whole previously mentioned is beyond the means and the possibilities of Catholic migration organizations. It is possible and not presumptuous to consider cooperation in other sectors with national or non-Catholic organizations. But Catholic Migration Organizations, it seems to may must have an accurate and complete view of migration phenomena as a whole and of all its constituents however complex, so that it may function with efficiency and without error and that it may know where, and how certain of its contributing acts are situated in the whole. The purpose of these pages is only to help modestly in the elaboration of its doctrine.