

Notes on Immigration Crises - II

Immigration in Europe, the Mediterranean & the Mideast

--reading: esp.: "Blockage of Mobility..", "Wave of Middle East Migration", "To Saudi with Love..."

The European Crackdown: Side Effect of Depression or Response to Worker's Power?

- the usual account of the spread of anti-immigration laws and policies in Western Europe in the early 1970s argues that the attacks on immigrants began with downturn of 1974-75; that attacks were a way of exporting unemployment (an argument similar to Acuna's account of the cyclical nature of anti-immigrant crack-downs in the U.S.; thus capitalism and its representatives in the state are the bad guys, immigrants the victims)
- M&E in their article on the "Blockage of Mobility.." on the contrary show
 - that the crackdowns *predate* the rapid rise in unemployment
 - that the crackdowns were a *response* to the growing ability of immigrants and French workers to collaborate plus growing demands of foreign workers on employers (wages, etc) and state (housing, etc)
 - that the crackdowns were thus a response to a failure of old means of control (pitting cheap foreign against more expensive --or potentially even more expensive-- labor) that no longer worked
- an important element of the problem of control was the so-called "second generation problem", i.e., the phenomenon that while first generation immigrants were willing to take lousy jobs at rock-bottom wages, their kids, raised in the host countries have not been; they have refused such jobs as second-class and refused to be treated in school as if they were destined for such jobs; instead they have been rebellious, either individually, in gangs, or in political groups
- M&E also extend their analysis from the "host" countries to the "source" countries and analyze the immigration phenomenon in terms of the ways in which the immigrant subjects are carriers of antagonism who circulate their experiences of life (and new needs) and struggle from source to host and back to source to create an interlinkage among geographical sites of crisis (compare their analysis with materials already read on Tunisia and Morocco)
 - circulation and transformation of conflict *with* immigration
 - increased conflict with *cut-off* of immigration (reexamine articles on bread-riots in Tunisia, especially the one by Seddon and compare and contrast with the kind of analysis suggested here, thinking about the impact of both repatriated wages and later reduced wages and deportees on the mix of political tensions in Tunisia; also in that piece there was mention of Tunisian workers in Libya)

Oil and Immigrant Labor in the Mideast

- in the 1978 IMF article, we see an account of the importation of some 2 million foreign workers, accelerated by increased oil revenues after 1974
- the IMF speaks quite clearly in terms of "supply and demand *management* measures" for state policy makers to maximize pecuniary benefits and minimize costs, including social & political costs
- the Midnight Notes material, on the other hand, while recognizing the managerial side of the immigrant labor force
 - in the oil producing Gulf states, makes the antagonistic agency of the immigrant workers qua problem much more visible and thus also the political aspect of labor market "management"
- the MN's perspective emphasizes the entire community (unwaged family as well as waged oil field labor) as the site
 - of the maintenance and reproduction of oil industry labor, which makes the "economic" issues political
- at the same time such labor of reproduction is itself often done by immigrant labor, usually female, e.g. Sri Lankans and Philipinos; such work is low paid with few rights and often under terrible working conditions (beatings, rapes, and other kinds of mistreatment) with very little or no backup from the immigrants' governments. In the sphere of reproduction, like that of production, immigrants are also pitted against each other with some hired to control others (often of different nationalities), even as police.
- MN also points out the implications of immigration for the work of reproduction in the countries of origin; those left behind are often faced with more work (women have to handle jobs previously done by the men who have left, etc); although in some cases women find they have access to new sources of power (handling repatriated wages, land) which has a transformative impact on the gender relationship in the home country.
- all this analysis provides support for the argument that the Gulf War was less about controlling Saddam Husain and the Iraqi military than about controlling the oil-producing labor force of the area; prior to the war there was increasing instability in the area because of the resistance of all these various kinds of workers ; as a result of the War there was a major reorganization of the labor force with wholesale deportation of troublesome workers

(Palestinians from Kuwait; Yemenis from Saudi Arabia) to achieve a massive decomposition of the power of the area's labor force. (Remember to reread the piece in the Energy Packet about oil workers in Nigeria --which came from the same volume as this chapter)