

## Explorers, Settlers – Francisco Pizarro and others

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When we talk in Germany about immigrants nowadays we might, in the first place, think about Turks, as they are the biggest group of citizens from abroad. Because of their different religious and cultural background, a lot of Germans seem to have problems with them. Even for the multicultural society it is at times not easy to understand and respect some patterns of behavior and attitude of some of the immigrant groups. For instance it was the case with building of oversized mosques or, as happened lately, with the visit of the Turkish Prime Minister for his election campaign in one of the major cities of Germany.

But if you look at it closely, these Turks are not even immigrants. In the last century they were invited for work by the German Government, which couldn't imagine, that these once welcome workers would like to stay. But what nowadays really matters when it comes to emigrants, not only in Germany but also in Europe, is that there thousands and thousands of people who don't see a chance for a decent living in their home countries.

This follows very much the same pattern as, in earlier centuries, the Europeans showed when they went to America. About that constant European migration since the time of Columbus, I want to speak today. Therefore I choose two regions, Peru in South America and the state of Michigan in the United States. But there then was one big difference: The Europeans didn't come as underdogs, looking for shelter and support. The Europeans came with the attitude of conquerors, in other words, to take over land or to exploit it.

Already in the middle of the last millennial, an enormous number of Europeans, who were starving in Europe or were at the edge of society, were drawn to the New World, with big hopes for happiness and wealth. Tens of thousands from villages and towns left Spain, after the discovery of America. They were mostly adventurers and desperados, outlaws and criminals. All the scum of failed existences. They were all going for the promised land of silver and gold. No matter how to get at it. The mass was hardly to be controlled by the few soldiers and noblemen. The greed rushes them forward.

In between is Francisco Pizarro, a half-nobleman without land or income that had to

shepherd pigs for a living, back in Spain. Still with empty hands, in the New World, in what is called now Panama, he has a vision. The vision of a land of gold. The land is called Peru. He has heard some vague reports of this legendary country where people are eating from plates and drinking from mugs made out of pure gold. He wants to get it all. And he knows, there can be only one to get it all, and he shall be the one.

In Peru, in the 16th century, we find a strictly centralistic administration of the State with the Sapa Inca, the son of the golden sun, at the top. He is considered the earthly incarnation of the sun. The administration of the empire is hierarchically structured. Under the ruler is the royal family and the aristocracy, the state officials and the elite, and finally, at the base, is the great mass of artisans and farmers. The population lives mainly from agriculture, which is tightly organized according to a guideline that seems socialistic. The management of the country is carried out under strict public control. A portion of each harvest has to be handed over to the state and deposited in public storehouses from where it is distributed to the population of distressed areas.

Between November 1524 and the end of 1527, Pizarro entered the region twice, but didn't succeed the way he wanted. So, he decides to go back to Toledo, Spain, to see the Kaiser Karl V. and his Queen, Isabella of Spain. After that visit, Pizarro can call himself the official representative of the crown and of the catholic church, namely, the Vice King of Peru, with the task to finish his conquest. And so he did. With a little over hundred men he succeeds finally and conquers a territory with a seven million inhabitants.

How could that be? First of all, there were the vastly superior weapons, hence firearms that the Incas didn't have. They didn't have horses either. Plus at that given time the country of Peru was weak after a civil war. Two princes were struggling for succession of a king that has past away recently.

But that is only half the answer. Even when you have superior arms doesn't mean you are going and conquer a foreign territory, destroy their culture, exploit the land and kill almost 90 percent of the inhabitants. The issue that really matters is the superior attitude of the Europeans. That for example can be traced back to the 1494 -"Treaty of Tordesillas", which, under the auspices of the Catholic Church, divided the newly discovered lands outside Europe amongst Portugal and Spain. A line of demarcation was drawn along the meridian west of the Cape Verde islands. The land to the East would belong to Portugal and that to

the West to Spain.

In other words, although in my opinion, Pizarro is driven by greed for gold and wealth, he does so symptomatically and according to the system. He later was killed by other greedy men, thus having to face a fate he justly deserved.

Nevertheless, his public legacy is that of a hero. I came to write about him, because I couldn't believe what I saw and read: A man who exploited an entire nation plus the inhabitants, a murderer, enjoys still today the honor that streets, places, airplanes etc. are named after him. Even in Peru. And the hotel I once stayed in Cusco, the old Inca capital, I was told it is build on the remains of Pizarro's palace. And they speak about it with pride. That shows the culture not only in Europe, but also in South America, is still the culture of the conquerors.

In a different way, and a little bit later, but with the same result, the superior centralizing thinking of Europeans was imposed on North America. And they, too, are still remembered as heroes. In the traditional reports the role of Europeans is romanticized. Their reckless behavior is not condemned, but considered necessary to cultivate land and to missionize people.

When they entered, they met in the area, now known as Michigan, and as big parts of Canada, the Anishinabeg, or more precisely, tribes of Chippewa, Potawatomi, and Ottawa. Those tribes were strictly organized in bands and family societies, in what may be called a highly democratic social system. They lived and worked together and for each other with minimal personal possession. Thus, they didn't know any stealing or other property crime.

First Europeans came from France. Fur traders mostly. In general they got along with the natives and often married American native women. The French are often thought to have had a less arrogant attitude towards the native people than the English did, who came a little later. Those, by contrast, were often settlers and claimed land. Like the Portuguese and Spanish in South America who with royal permission had dealt out land that didn't really belong to them. The English in North America now made use of the Magna Carta. I was told by a former member of the Governors Commission for Indian Affairs about the relevance of that act also for the Indians. In his research, regarding the Indian Civil Rights Movements,

he had to go back to old documents that affected the Indians. Doing so, he came to take a look at the Magna Carta. He said:

“That affected us as well, because tribalism existed also in England. With some freedom for the tribes, they nevertheless were all subject of the king. So, as the English came to us, they already had a 500-years-old system holding down the tribes. As a consequence, they didn’t like what they saw here and proceeded to take us apart. The French were different. They saw how we lived and said: ‘okay, we can live this way too.’ I mean,” he added, “they got their revolution and all.”

But everything turned even worse, when the Americans arrived, that is to say, the settlers from all parts of Europe. Then it was no longer a case of mere Colonialism out ruling the existing indigenous people. Colonialism now also meant acquisition, expansion, exploitation – the same which had happened in Peru. In fact, the whole process here must be referred to as real colonization rather than migration, because it means that people from abroad take over and populate an area where other people are already living.

Unfortunately for the Anishinabeg and other Natives in North America, the biggest nation of the UN List of Colonized Territory Holders is the United States. Next are France and England themselves, colonized in earlier times, of course.

In the beginning, the Americans contracted treaties. In 1836, they granted the natives access to millions of acres of land. But that got revoked and since 1855 the Indians just have access to what they have today. Treaties, as an Anishinabe said to me once, are really touchy subjects, because all of them were broken.

“And mind you,” he added, “immediately after they were signed!”

This already happened to one of the first, the treaty of Greenville in 1795, establishing what is called the “Indian territory of the Great Lakes Tribes”. This should have been Michigan and parts of an area, now called the state of Indiana. As it turned out, there wasn’t any white settler that kept the treaty. And that went on and on, from treaty to treaty, until the so called “removal policy” under President Andrew Jackson. Every Indians from east of the Mississippi was to be transferred to the west – by force, if necessary.

After the first Anishinabeg were removed, their leaders went to Washington for the purpose of negotiating a staying in their homeland and enabling them to remain. They were successful because the land in Northern Michigan wasn't considered suitable for farming.

However you look at it, the nation that welcomed in the past a lot of immigrants from all over the world, denied more or less the existence of their own natives. Here again we can perceive the "centralizing thinking of superior Europeans": They welcomed only those that fitted into their system.

Thus, it is not wrong to state that in reality this nation is founded illegally, namely, on stolen property. Stolen from the natives but illegal even from the point of the American law system. In the early days there were many treaties made, international treaties, involving the Indians in the process of future development. The Natives signed all these treaties because they were told, you are becoming part of the United States, your children will be educated in our schools and universities. It was a big problem for them to give up all what they had, but they did. Mostly they couldn't stand against the white power anyway, and hoped for peace and good neighborhood. But to no avail.

Eventually, because of the ongoing "Indian problems" the US-Government was looking for a solution. A decision was made to start a boarding school system for Indian children. With that system, the white Americans took away all children from the Natives, thus forcing them to give up their family bonds, their culture, religion, and language. The idea behind it was stated as: "Kill the Indian, save the men". The extremely low appreciation which the white class had for the Anishinabeg is shown also by the fact that they weren't even citizens on their own territory. This "privilege" they got back only as late as 1924.

That the Anishinabeg are living better nowadays, is owed to the Indian Civil Rights Acts of 1968, in other words, less than fifty years ago, after they had struggled for an endless period of time. These Acts finally gave them, apart from other adjustments, the right of free speech as is, in fact, since long established as one of the substantial human rights.

To sum it up: throughout the centuries, the Europeans intruded areas with people that had a totally different culture and social understanding:

- In Peru there was no notion that gold could be used other than for tools, appliances, and trinkets like any other suitable material.
- In North America, the natives never could imagine possession in general, let alone possession of land.

One of the Native chiefs, a man named Tacumseh, is quoted with the following statement: "No tribe has the right to sell (land), not even to each other, so much less to strangers... Sell a country!? Why not sell the air, the great sea, as well as the earth? "

Migration is a topic of mankind since the first being erected. As science claims the human race comes from Africa. The here mentioned migrations have taken place a long time ago. The population on our earth has increased dramatically since. Such movements as colonialism or colonization are hardly thinkable any longer.

People leaving their countries nowadays, either coming to get a better life or to escape violence and war, are not even coming as emigrants. They are coming as workers to earn money not only for themselves, but for the families back home. Or as refugees. They mostly didn't have any choice and don't think about the consequences of entering another country and culture. Those consequences to them, after all, appear to be better than what they experienced or have to face in their home countries.

The impulse to strive for the best is evident in every being's life, not only in that of humans. But in the life of humans, we find another impulse: fear. Fear of moving, fear of the new and unknown situation, fear of the strange environment. Only when the fear to move is smaller than the fear connected to the current situation, only then, human beings are ready to move.

So, we can conclude, all people that are leaving their home and their mother country are desperate, no matter if they are looking for a better life or fleeing from violence.

Alas, they will meet people and societies that have the same fears. People and societies that want to keep their lives and their traditions like they are. But as we have seen, workers and

refugees can turn into immigrants, and the fear is that immigration of a vast number of foreigners might destroy the nation, economically, culturally, and politically.

But human beings are, of course, not only steered by anxiety. There is also compassion. Whatever happens, in different societies, there is no way to really reject desperate people. Even when it is not ruled out they become immigrants one day. We owe that to our sense of humanity.

We, that is to say, the Europeans that came to America didn't act neither with compassion nor humanity. All we had was the technocratic "centralizing thinking of superior Europeans", which I have tried to characterize here. Most of our gains and progresses in the so-called New World were reached at the expense of the indigenous people, stated as the old demand of the bible: *Subdue the World*.

But from another demand of the bible, or better to say a commandment, namely that of Christian charity, we have to conclude: Shame on us.

May all beings be happy.