

The Impossible Courtship

Cultural division in the Western Hemisphere

Book review by Donald A. Collins

Harrison, a Visiting Scholar at the Center for International Studies at MIT, knows his subject first hand, serving between 1965 and 1981 as a director of five missions in Latin America for the U.S. Agency for International Development. In this, his third major book, his purpose is to deal with the very difficult and controversial subject of why extensive American efforts to forge a Western Hemisphere community have not yet succeeded. For example, efforts under both Bush and Clinton have suffered greatly because of Mexico's economic and political crisis. Earlier, JFK and FDR tried an "Alliance for Progress" and a "Good Neighbor Policy" which ended in the cemetery of frustrated Pan American dreams.

Harrison, with excellent documentation, outlines why the U.S. and Canada are prosperous First World countries with centuries old democratic institutions, while Latin American countries are poor and, in most cases, experimenting with democratic capitalism for the first time.

The key question: Can we reasonably expect to construct a Western Hemisphere version of the European Union (which has been successful, albeit with many traumas) from such different cultural, economic and political backgrounds?

A central contrast between these two very different cultures, Harrison notes, is the Hispanic/Catholic tradition of the one and the English/Protestant background of the other. In the latter case, a few mentioned by the author are: a

Donald A. Collins, a free-lance writer living in Washington, D.C., serves as a director of many family planning (non-governmental) organizations and often writes on immigration and fertility issues.

history of work ethic, educational priority, rewards based not on caste or position but on merit, a true sense of community obligation (as reflected in our strong private charities), a high sense of personal ethics, and a healthy competition before granting democratic authority.

In short, says Harrison, if we are to succeed in melting these obdurate cultures, we must acquire a sense of shared values and institutions. However, it will doubtless take leadership different than that evidenced — in Mexico, for example — which has shown the antithesis of all the values mentioned in

the preceding paragraph. If Latin America does not produce political and intellectual leaders who can confront the traditional values and attitudes largely responsible for the region's underdevelopment by making sweeping reforms in education and child rearing practices, this long-standing Pan American dream will remain just that.

One of the worst results of this flawed leadership can be seen in the efforts of Mexico, Cuba and

other governments to shunt excess (read "unemployed, undereducated, unwanted") populations onto the United States. The response of our own leadership to this massive legal and illegal migration threat, truly a "silent invasion" which could not be accomplished by the Axis Powers in two World Wars in this century, has been evasive, feeble, politically driven by money and moral weakness.

The 1996 immigration reform legislation ignored the need to require proper identification for employees and failed to limit massive *legal* immigration, while pretending that the only problem was *illegal* immigration. This was the result of a conspiracy of venial interests, of the professional ethnic organizations without constituency but with massive money from Ford and other foundations, the Catholic Church, and greedy American companies which want to duck paying fair wages, but

The Pan American Dream: Do Latin America's Cultural Values Discourage True Partnership with the U.S. and Canada?
by Lawrence E. Harrison
New York: Basic Books, 1997
288 pages, price \$25.00



don't mind paying handsomely for political influence.

The solution is a political one, but not complicated. We need to guard our borders, including the internal borders of entitlement, by requiring citizenship ID for government and other benefits, while making sure that the cultural values which made us great are offered under a common language. If we dally as we are, the wake up call will

come, but too late for us to avoid reaching 500 million in population in the 21st Century, mostly of non-European origin.

If the 70 percent of Americans who want far less immigration don't step forward, the United States will soon take on so many from the Latin American culture that, as Harrison so eloquently warns, we too can share in their failed systems and begin the sad downhill trek toward Third World status. **TSC**

The Challenges of People on the Move

Migration raises political, economic, moral issues

Book review by David Payne

This is a book about problems, not solutions. If you are looking for a clear exposition of the problems of migration, then look no further, for Weiner sets them out in exquisite detail. There is a need for this type of exposition, for how can we answer problems we do not fully understand? If, on the other hand, you are looking for solutions once you understand the problems, you will be disappointed, for Weiner does not see his mission as one of providing answers to the hard questions he analyzes. His thoroughness is evident in the topics discussed briefly below.

Migration is a worldwide problem — a problem not limited merely to advanced industrial countries. In the recent past, world population movements were not considered threatening, at least as long as economies were growing. Refugee flows were seen as the main problem, particularly after World War II. Beginning in the early 1970s, though, a change began to take place. Labor markets narrowed, making jobs less available; yet migration continued unabated. As governments began to restrict immigration, *illegal* immigration

became a problem along with political asylum. Moreover, as world populations continue to increase, population and migration issues become more and more linked to issues of national defense and social welfare. These issues arise with respect to both emigration and immigration.

Emigration is often a foreign policy tool of the sending governments, used in order to gain explicit objectives. But even when this is not overtly the case, emigration has been regarded as a means of extending political and cultural influence. (Example: the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, an organization supported by the

Indian government, promotes Indian culture in the U.S.) *Restricting* emigration has its own intricate motivations. In addition to forced and restricted emigration, governments sometimes encourage emigration for macroeconomic goals such as partial relief for unemployment. Weiner gives three major reasons why a government might encourage emigration:

- Governments encourage migration to ease unemployment among the lower-income, less skilled classes rather than from among the better-educated. At times, though, even the better-educated are encouraged to leave — this when there are too many well-educated individuals in a particular field. (But,

The Global Migration Crisis
by Myron Weiner
New York:
HarperCollins, 1995
253 pages, price \$23.50



David Payne, Ph.D. teaches logic and philosophy at North Central Michigan College in Petoskey, Michigan.