

Schengenland And Its Discontents

After World War II, under the leadership of the French statesmen Jean Monnet and others, European governments were determined to find ways to bind their countries together in ways that might prevent the 20th century catastrophes from being repeated. Their first effort, not unnaturally, was to create in 1951 the European Coal and Steel Community, as a way to bind the economies of the two historic enemies, France and Germany. That effort was enlarged, both in number of members – in addition to France and Germany, Italy and the Benelux countries were added – and in the scope of the economic activities that were regulated, in 1958, with the European Economic Community. Over time this was enlarged, in both size and scope, and metamorphosed in 1995 into the European Union. The E.U. now has a total of 28 members (including some in eastern Europe from the former Soviet bloc) and is a politico-economic union for which various supranational institutions have been created: the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council of the European Union, the European Commission, the European Central Bank among them. And what had started in 1951 as the Coal and Steel Community linking only France and Germany now has become a single market, with more than two dozen countries as members, and with standardised laws to regulate that market. Common policies on agriculture, fisheries, trade, have been adopted, and a single unit of currency – the euro – introduced as legal tender (in 19 of the 28 member states) in 1999.

Based on a recognition that the peoples of Europe constituted a single civilization, those who created these supra-national institutions and rules were aiming not only for the unhindered movement of goods, services, and capital, but also wanted to encourage the free movement of people within Europe. They

wanted Europeans to be able to move around the Continent, to study, work, live anywhere within Europe. This ambitious last aim began to be met with the agreement signed at Schengen, initially by five members of the E.U., in 1985, with many more joining subsequently. According to this agreement, border checks among the signatories would be gradually abolished. In 1990, the Schengen Agreement was revised further, and with many more members of the E.U. now as signatories, now also included both the abolition of internal border controls and a common visa policy. For the purposes of travel, external border controls were to be retained only for those people entering or exiting the Schengen area; there were no longer any controls on travel purely inside that area.

In 1985, or 1990, or even 1995, no one could have guessed the terrible problem that would arise quite soon, with Muslim migrants making their way to Europe by the hundreds of thousands and exploiting the Schengen system so that, once they had managed to smuggle themselves into Schengenland at some particularly vulnerable ill-guarded point – and Greece and Italy have both been accused by other European countries of having insufficient border controls – they could then move about Europe unimpeded, aiming to settle in the countries that offered the best benefits. This result is not at all what the Europeans who drafted the original Schengen Agreement had in mind. They thought they were merely making it easier for people from one European country to travel to, live in, study and work in, another European country. The very idea that in a decade or so the main – and unintended – beneficiaries of Schengenland would be people indifferent at best, murderously hostile at worst, to everything we associate with European civilization, could not even be imagined. The idea that masses of non-European “refugees” would be moving around Europe for one and only one goal, to find the country offering the most generous benefits – and the Europeans (see Sweden, for example) have built up elaborate social welfare states – was never foreseen.

This is what is happening in Europe today: the countries of northern Europe, to which the Muslim immigrants aspire because of the greater handouts that await them, are fed up with having to accommodate so many of those Muslim migrants, who have proven to be a great financial burden on the local taxpayers, and a source, too, of social upheaval (such as a staggering rise in the crime rate), and of greater physical insecurity for the indigenous non-Muslims. These northern lands want the removal of internal passport controls to continue, but believe it can work only if the European countries that border on the Muslim south (by sea or land) take their monitoring of those borders seriously, and have the resources to monitor them, because these are now the borders for all of Schengenland. Germany, Austria, and other “northern” members of Schengenland believe that because Italy and Greece are insufficiently able to control their southern borders (the Muslims arrive by sea to southern Italy and, by both sea and overland –mainly through Macedonia – to Greece), their own citizens suffer. The Muslim migrants keep coming: in defensive response, Germany, Austria, and other “northern” states are in essence moving the Schengenland border northward.

Schengenland was supposed to create a Europe-wide zone of free movement of peoples, erasing or effacing unnecessary obstacles such as passport controls at supposedly out-of-date national borders. Had those “peoples” remained “European,” it might have worked. But the squabbling, the chaos, the charges and countercharges among members over the protection of the Schengenland borders, and today’s news that even terminally tolerant Sweden plans to expel 80,000 “refugees” – all this constitutes not the only example of the damage that mass Muslim migration is doing to Europe. It’s just the only one this week.

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