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URBANIZATION: THE CASE OF GREECE

Abstract: From an economic viewpoint, Greece has always been a country of farmers and sailors. Following a worldwide tendency, its population has rapidly and unschedulely rushed to urban centers, abandoning fields and cattle and running after unproductive jobs financed by the State. The crisis that actually strikes the Greek population, has become more serious because of the increasing affluence of illegal emigrants. A partial return of the urbanized population to its productive fields and the improvement of the Country's competitiveness would be of some help in the present situation.

Since immemorial times, human individuals have tended to group themselves into societies, to protect each other or to fight against other groups than theirs, and often against their own tribe. Nevertheless, within such societies, everlasting links among them were created, due to the development of various primitive techniques, initially for mere survival and, thereafter, for further strengthening structures allowing further development of magic, art and fundamental institutions as well. The creation myth in Plato's *Protagoras* (326 a ff) is extremely eloquent on this issue.

The first crisis in prehistory occurred during the transition from the hunters' societies (Paleolithic age) to the settlers' ones (Neolithic age). The latter would diversify themselves into land cultivators (farmers) and cattle-breeders (shepherds), even if obliged to follow seasonal migrations. Due to commercial needs, navigation also flourished and the foundation of prosperous colonies followed. Invasions of relative tribes entailed mixtures of populations and a slight unification of particular cultures.

Greece's cultural evolution attained its peak in Athens, due to its democratic constitution. Soon after, the Middle East became Hellenized under the rule of Alexander, the Ptolemies and the Sedeucides. As a consequence of this change, the Greek city-states fainted as such, before the whole Hellenized world succumbed to the Roman empire. The so-called *pax romana* was maintained thanks to a strong and vigilant army. Demilitarized Roman soldiers were given land to cultivate. The

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founding of Constantinople as a strategic rival of Rome attracted learned citizens from every part of the Hellenized world. Nevertheless, the Byzantine area mainly remained agricultural, even after the fall of its Capital to the Franks and subsequently to the Turks.

Such a situation lasted up to the independence of Greece. The inhabitants of the town of Athens in 1830 did not exceed 10.000. As the capital of the Country it was scheduled to become a city of a population of only 100.000. During the 20th century, due to historical events, its population raised to 2.000.000 after WWI and, up to the present day, to at least 5.000.000 about the half of the Country's whole population. The same phenomenon occurs with other Greek cities, all of them apparently following the worldwide experience movement of urbanization, which was the consequence of the industrial revolution, without, however, any sufficient industrialization in Greece itself.

Farmers have abandoned their villages, their fields and their herds, to rush to urban areas seeking for unproductive jobs financed by the State. In their desire to match the living standards of the citizens already installed in urban centers, they succumbed to the temptation of contracting loans for housing, buying cars and even for vacations, which they are now unable to retribute, since their income has dramatically decreased. The present economic crisis, fatally strikes a country totally lacking any possibility to recover its equilibrium. Alternative policies proposed by various political groups are merely unjustified and hence would probably reveal themselves as insufficient inefficient. This situation has recently been deteriorated through an increased affluence of illegal emigrants. Its direct consequences are galloping unemployment and criminality, aggravated by social unrest in urban centers, which is stimulated by politicians.

It seems that the only remaining solution is, at least, a partial return of the urbanized population to its fields and a quick amelioration of the techniques of land cultivating in order to ameliorate the quality and the quantity of agricultural production and to forward it towards international markets thanks to the improvement of the Country's competitiveness. It is self-understood that such a measure needs an adequate organization by the State whose political leadership should become exempt of its chronic corruption, if the Nation is willing to look after a better future.

CONCLUSION

From an economic viewpoint, Greece has always been a country of farmers and sailors. Following a worldwide tendency, its population has rapidly and unscheduledy rushed to urban centers, abandoning fields and cattle and running after unproductive jobs financed by the State. The crisis that actually strikes the Greek population, has become more serious because of the increasing affluence of illegal emigrants. A partial return of the urbanized population to its productive fields and the improvement of the Country's competitiveness would be of some help in the present situation.