

We continue to pursue our intention to open and consolidate a space for debate among researchers dedicated to the study of the nation and the various problems inherent to this study.

In the present issue of "World Tensions", we inaugurate a section of interviews starting with a well known scholar on ethnicity and the construction of nationalities, John Breuilly, from The London School of Economic. A solid knowledge of the specialized literature enables this veteran English historian to sketch a rich panorama of the issues that distinguish the field especially in Europe. Trying to foresee new paths and possibilities, Breuilly points out the need to give more attention to the on-going national experiences of Africa, the Americas and Asia.

In "Meanings of Nationalism and Internationalism," we begin a systematic exposition of theoretical reflections developed in the context of the **Nationalities Watch** research group. Our article discusses the connotations that the terms 'nationalism' and 'internationalism' have acquired in the last few centuries and it introduces the specific features of national community, while attempting to distinguish it from social forms that preceded it. We think that the effort to find the bases of this community through an examination of individual historical cases, even when developed in a comparative perspective, has limited usefulness. Therefore, we cast our attention onto world processes which, in our view, lead to the emergence and affirmation of national communities. We sustain that nations result essentially from the global integration of the productive system and the accompanying widespread dissemination of norms and values. In this way, we distance ourselves from the mainstream view that globalization is making nation-states obsolete.

Various authors, among whom one can single out Benedict Anderson, observe how religiosity plays a part in the construction of nationalities. The same can be said for global integration. The universalization of secular as well as spiritual values is one of the most well known aspects of 'modern civilization,' which, on the political level, has gained concrete expression in the nation-state. In a thought-provoking article, "Missioning in the post-colonial world: a view from Brazil and elsewhere", the anthropologist Otávio Velho shows the most recent vicissitudes encountered by those who engage in the conversion of souls abroad. Otávio holds that recognition of the 'mission' category can avoid some of the common errors in appreciating the historical as well as contemporary panorama of religious activity. The majority of social scientists insist upon staying away from studies on religion. This is a fatal mistake for those who crave understanding of the community that structures modern life.

The persistence and relative worsening of poverty, in a world that pretends to be guided by the advance of scientific knowledge and the recognition of equality of rights, constitutes one of the most difficult problems in the construction of national entities. In this number, two articles explore this theme: that of Patrick Bond, the Irish political economist living in South Africa and that of Pierre Salama, the French intellectual turned towards that which until very recently was called the 'Third World.'

Patrick sustains that African poverty is not due to tribal wars, endemic causes, corruption or the absence of 'modern' values, but is the fruit of global capitalist exploitation of its wealth. He shows how bureaucrats, politicians, non-governmental organizations, the mass media and so-called multilateral institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, contribute to mystifying the dynamics of poverty in African nations.

For his part, Pierre Salama makes evident the portrait of poverty in Latin American and Asian countries. By presenting a range of valuable data on growth, on the distribution of income and on social inequalities, this author shows that the proclaimed qualitative improvements in infant malnutrition, in life expectancy and in the level of school attendance are far from 'alleviating' poverty in Latin America. Significant poverty reduction happens, above all, through State capacity to enact public policies for the great mass of the population.

The common sense understanding of nations is that they are the fruit of arduous and historic struggles of communities against their oppressors. There is no better way to undo this limited conception than through raising awareness of the activities of the organization that typify the dominant idea of 'internationalism.' Describing the peace-keeping operations of the United Nations after the Cold War, Raquel Melo shows how an international organization can assume a salient role in nation-building. Her report emphasizes the pretensions of the UN bureaucracy in the areas of human rights, policing and the holding of elections.

There is no way to deny our pleasure in offering our readers this group of studies, which has great meaning for the study of nationalities. This satisfaction is even greater because we have been able to widen the circle of readers of 'World Tensions' with a bilingual edition.

***The Editors***