

GRUYERE

Kathi, my Swiss wife, and I were having lunch. She prepared a typical Swiss dish – bread slices, smeared with mustard, topped with Gruyere, grilled in the oven, and dusted with pepper. A glass of Shiraz-Cabernet. Sun coming through the windows. The setting was relaxing.

We talked about a “Travel” channel documentary showing Zurich, a wonderful city, full of great stores (expensive and very elegant), tea-rooms with delightful patisserie, private banks without names on their doors, exquisite and cozy restaurants, and an attractive lake framed by awesome mountains.

Yet, nothing is perfect in paradise, where a well educated population has made a mark in the world economy with their productivity and innovation.

In the 1960s Italian workers from the south migrated to Switzerland. Because of the shortage of labor they would work nine months and then go back to Italy to their families to rest and enjoy their earnings.

The Italians were followed by the Spanish. The conditions were harsh, but the pay (in Swiss Francs) went a long way in their country. Workers were well organized by the local authorities. Medical assistance and schooling was provided and encouraged. Swiss discipline in the behavior of the guests was expected.

The Swiss are always prompt in helping countries around the world where there is need of financial and medical assistance. It was natural to open their well guarded frontiers to the refugees of the Hungarian revolution in 1956.

However, things have changed. Immigrants from Eastern Europe and Asia are flooding Europe. Switzerland and Europe do not have the infrastructures to absorb all these poor people. Besides, work is difficult to find for so many persons. Even the tranquil and bucolic Switzerland (and other European countries) is experiencing crime and violence because survival demands it.

These people are desperate. We have to deal with them. We cannot brush them aside. We have to find solutions. The alternative is horrible crime and civil wars. Wars and hate will not do it. What are we doing about it?

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