

VIVA MEXICO??

I admit it – I am jealous! I am jealous because I remember that the largest demonstration on behalf of Soviet Jews was in Los Angeles over 30 years ago – we drew about 10,000 people.

But just a few weeks ago, about 500,000 people went into Los Angeles streets on behalf of illegal immigrants. I watched it on television and all I could say was “Wow!”

There were giant demonstrations all across America and you can bet your bottom dollar that no matter what the opposition and the criticism, the politicians have been impressed and will do something about fixing the problem. After all, we never had crowds nearly as large and the politicians were eagerly helping us to save Soviet Jews. So, with millions demonstrating, attention will be paid.

But there was something about all this that amazed me even more. It would have been unthinkable – obscene – to wave Soviet flags at our demonstrations. It would have been just as unthinkable to have immigrants from Germany carry nazi flags to protest that U.S. borders were closed to refugees from Hitler. I doubt that Ethiopian Jews in Israel carry Ethiopian flags or yell the equivalent of “Viva Ethiopia” when they demand that Israel lets in more Ethiopians. And in California, when a store in Orange County flew a communist North Vietnamese flag, it was demolished by Vietnamese refugees who had been lucky enough to get into the U.S.

So why were the recent demonstrations on behalf of people who wanted to leave Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and the rest displaying thousands of flags of those supposedly awful places and yelling “Viva!” to them?

I have written in the past that my definition of what is the most important difference between a good and a bad country is validated by those who vote with their feet: a good country is one that is faced with hordes of people who would like to come in and has to protect itself from an unmanageable influx, while the bad country’s population would like to leave, at any price, but is not allowed to do so. By these criteria, North Korea, Cuba, China, the former Soviet Union, East Germany and the rest of the East European bloc were bad while the U.S. and the West were good.

But this presents a problem: what about Mexico? On one hand, it doesn’t stop its people from leaving; in fact, it pressures its northern neighbor to admit them unconditionally. But on the other hand, when it comes to treating its own immigrants is

probably more cruel, inconsiderate, discriminatory and unfair than just about any other country – certainly much worse than the U.S.

Here are some of Mexico's current laws – according to the 1917 Constitution, later amended, and officially translated by the Organization of American States – on illegal and *legal* immigrants who had the misfortune of having landed in Mexico.

Article 33: *Foreigners may not, in any way, participate in the political affairs of the country.* This is interpreted as banning, among other things, the participation in demonstrations and expressions of opinions about domestic politics.

Article 32: *Given the equality of other criteria, Mexicans shall have the priority over foreigners for all classes of concessions and for all employment, positions or commissions of the government where citizenship is not mandatory. In any case, no foreigner may serve in the armed forces or in police or security forces in peacetime. All foreigners, legal immigrants and **naturalized citizens** are banned from serving as military officers, crews of Mexican-flag ships or aircraft, and chiefs of airports or seaports.*

Article 55: Immigrants may not become federal lawmakers – a Mexican senator or congressman must be a Mexican citizen by birth. Article 91 puts the same ban on becoming a member of the Cabinet, a justice of the Supreme Court (Article 95) and a member of the clergy (Article 130).

Article 27: *Only Mexicans by birth or naturalization and Mexican companies have the right to acquire ownership of lands, waters and their appurtenances or to obtain concessions for the same.* I guess there goes my hope for buying a farm or a house in Mexico...

Article 11 guarantees protection against “undesirable aliens resident in the country” and article 16 gives private citizens the right to make citizen's arrests: “...*any person may arrest illegal aliens and hand them over to the police for prosecution.*”

And on deportation, here is article 33: *The Federal Executive shall have the exclusive power to compel; any foreigner whose remaining here may be deemed inexpedient to abandon the national territory immediately and **without the necessity for previous legal action.***

Mexico currently deports about 160,000 undocumented immigrants yearly. They come mostly from Central America with a smaller number from Asia, Africa and the Middle East – all on their way to the U.S. The cost ranges from about \$1500 to as much as \$10,000 for Asians and Europeans. Half of the money is usually paid in advance with the

balance due after arrival in America. According to the Mexican National Human Rights commission, they are vulnerable to maltreatment by both criminals and the authorities – robbed, sexually exploited, extorted, beaten and even killed.

So, should they scream “Viva Mexico!” and wave flags of the countries they escaped from?