

be irreparably loosened from each other. From this perspective, the immense increase of refugees and stateless persons in Europe (in a short span of time 1,500,000 White Russians, 700,000 Armenians, 500,000 Bulgarians, 1,000,000 Greeks, and hundreds of thousands of Germans, Hungarians, and Rumanians were displaced from their countries) is one of the two most significant phenomena. The other is the contemporaneous institution by many European states of juridical measures allowing for the mass denaturalization and denationalization of large portions of their own populations. The first introduction of such rules into the juridical order took place in France in 1915 with respect to naturalized citizens of "enemy" origin; in 1922, Belgium followed the French example and revoked the naturalization of citizens who had committed "antinational" acts during the war; in 1926, the fascist regime issued an analogous law with respect to citizens who had shown themselves to be "unworthy of Italian citizenship"; in 1933, it was Austria's turn; and so it continued until the Nuremberg laws on "citizenship in the Reich" and the "protection of German blood and honor" brought this process to the most extreme point of its development, introducing the principle according to which citizenship was something of which one had to prove oneself worthy and which could therefore always be called into question. And one of the few rules to which the Nazis constantly adhered during the course of the "Final Solution" was that Jews could be sent to the extermination camps only after they had been fully denationalized (stripped even of the residual citizenship left to them after the Nuremberg laws).

These two phenomena—which are, after all, absolutely correlative—show that the birth-nation link, on which the declaration of 1789 had founded national sovereignty, had already lost its mechanical force and power of self-regulation by the time of the First World War. On the one hand, the nation-states become greatly concerned with natural life, discriminating within it between a so-to-speak authentic life and a life lacking every political value. (Nazi racism and eugenics are only comprehensible if they are brought back to this context.) On the other hand, the very rights of man that once made sense as the presupposition of the rights of the

citizen are now progressively separated from and used outside the context of citizenship, for the sake of the supposed representation and protection of a bare life that is more and more driven to the margins of the nation-states, ultimately to be recodified into a new national identity. The contradictory character of these processes is certainly one of the reasons for the failure of the attempts of the various committees and organizations by which states, the League of Nations, and, later, the United Nations confronted the problem of refugees and the protection of human rights, from the Bureau Nansen (1922) to the contemporary High Commission for Refugees (1951), whose actions, according to statute, are to have not a political but rather a "solely humanitarian and social" mission. What is essential is that, every time refugees represent not individual cases but—as happens more and more often today—a mass phenomenon, both these organizations and individual states prove themselves, despite their solemn invocations of the "sacred and inalienable" rights of man, absolutely incapable of resolving the problem and even of confronting it adequately.

2.4. The separation between humanitarianism and politics that we are experiencing today is the extreme phase of the separation of the rights of man from the rights of the citizen. In the final analysis, however, humanitarian organizations—which today are more and more supported by international commissions—can only grasp human life in the figure of bare or sacred life, and therefore, despite themselves, maintain a secret solidarity with the very powers they ought to fight. It takes only a glance at the recent publicity campaigns to gather funds for refugees from Rwanda to realize that here human life is exclusively considered (and there are certainly good reasons for this) as sacred life—which is to say, as life that can be killed but not sacrificed—and that only as such is it made into the object of aid and protection. The "imploring eyes" of the Rwandan child, whose photograph is shown to obtain money but who "is now becoming more and more difficult to find alive," may well be the most telling contemporary cipher of the bare life that humanitarian organizations, in perfect symmetry with state power,