

Scene 1.

We meet Ze Povo, the Portuguese Everyman, narrator and actor. Maria leaves her family in Portugal to go to work in England. Her father is embarrassed that he can give her so little money to take.

Ze's speech: 'In towns and villages everywhere in Portugal, Spain, Greece, or Turkey, people are leaving because there is no work. Don't the people here need food, tractors, houses, and hospitals? Why don't they stay to work here? Yes, they need all these things, but fertilizers, factories, tiles and cement cost money that people haven't got. So who has the money?

Well, there are two kinds of people. There are the capitalists from Great Britain, America and West Germany. They come for our fruit, our wine, our cork, and our fish. They build factories in Portugal because labour here is cheaper. Their huge profits aren't reinvested in our country; they take them abroad with them.

But there is another kind of person who lives from our sweat: the Portuguese capitalist. The profits that we, the workers, give him go for his luxuries. Part of his riches is used to buy land. But he doesn't work the land. The land is hired out to farmers who work it and pay the boss for the privilege. And we mustn't forget the part of his wealth that he uses to play the Stock Exchange. But even the rich have problems. Since the 25th April the capitalists have been worried: they are nervous about the rapid fall in value of the escudo, and afraid that the communists will advance again so that they could lose their factories and the privilege of exploiting the workers. And if the banks go bankrupt? To cover himself our friend sends the rest of his huge fortune to a safe bank-vault in Switzerland.

So the riches of Portugal are either badly used or go abroad, exported like a tin of Portuguese sardines. And in order to survive the workers have to follow the money out of the country and lead a life of work abroad.'

Scene 2.

The Immigration Officer. The tourists and businessmen pass easily; the immigrants are questioned. Maria passes successfully but Luis is turned back.

Ze's speech: 'Back in his own country Luis' hands got their callouses from hard and honest work in the fields. Today, for the first time, he was ashamed of his hands. But the bosses aren't interested in that. For them the immigrants aren't men and women but machine minders, cleaners, cooks, and labourers. The immigrants are immortal because they come and go like money changing hands. There are hundreds of people like Luis trying to win where he failed... But why do the bosses employ foreigners when unemployment is so high? The answer is simple: there aren't enough English, German, or French workers ready to do such dirty, boring, but necessary work for so little money.'

Scene 3.

Maria is cleaning in her hotel while the housekeepers spy on her. The manager arrives and makes a tour of inspection.

Scene 4.

The hotel porter and cook are talking while they eat their dinner, the remains of the guests food. The porter has trouble filling in an application form to bring his brother to England. Maria comes in and says she has been sacked for putting a torn sheet on an important guest's bed. The cook suggests going to the union for help, but the porter is doubtful.

Ze's speech: 'Manuel wants to bring his brother to this country. One more present from Portugal to Britain. A present? you ask. But he's a person, not a piece of machinery or a ton of fruit that you could give as a present. That's where you're wrong. Listen: When my father sold a young donkey, he worked out the price by calculating what he'd spent to bring it up and the work it had given him. But how much does it cost to produce a worker? Well, you have to take into account the food, clothing, housing, medicine, and if he's lucky, a little education. In countries like Portugal that all adds up to



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Fernanda Oliveira
22 Odessa Rd
London NW10 5YH

about £2,000. One worker ready for export. So, he comes to Britain ready to work, a present of £2,000. But there's more. In countries like England it costs them between £8-16,000 to produce a worker. So the industrialized countries save even more- about £6,000,000,000 a year by using workers produced in other countries.

And when Manuel's brother is old or sick, when he's no longer any use for work, he goes back to his old country. So he won't use the British hospitals, or the old people's homes, or the other facilities, which cost the government money. You must admit it's a great bargain, a nice trade they have in immigrants. And on top of that they talk as if they were doing us a great favour by letting us work here.

Well, going back to donkeys... you can't give donkeys back when they get old, only people. But on the other hand... donkeys don't get organized and they can't complain.

Scene 5.

Maria is writing to her parents to explain what has happened while the manager describe the situation to his boss. Maria says her fellow workers have decided to strike in her support and for better conditions, and that they hope to be able to persuade the immigrants of other nationalities to support them.

Scene 6.

Maria and the cook arrive outside the hotel to form a picket. Manuel is hesitant but joins them. A waiter arrives and says he will try to persuade the other waiters to support them. The manager appears at the door and threatens them. The waiter comes out and says the others have decided to support them.

Ze: 'And thats how our play ends: not with victory or failure, but with a question mark. As I said at the beginning this isn't a story where everyone lives happily ever after, but the day to day struggle of the workers. Sometimes we can win the struggle, sometimes lose it: But we can only win with struggle. *Vencido*

