THE NATION AND THE WORLD

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Nationalism - internationalism. These abstract words, so often abused, so often misunderstood, cover high ideals and strong emotions, reflect modes of thought and action which shape our world.

We often see the word "nationalism" used in a derogatory sense. The same is true of the word "internationalism." When nationalism connotes, for example, a "go-it-alone" isolationism, and internationalism an outlook which belittles the significance of national life and of nations as centers of political action and spiritual tradition, the words become contradictory and the attitudes they describe irreconcilable. From such interpretations of the words comes the tendency to think of nationalism as in fundamental conflict with an internationalist attitude.

But other interpretations lead to a quite different result. Nationalism and internationalism, when understood as meaning recognition of the value and the rights of the nation, and of the dependence of the nation on the world, represent essential parts of the mental and spiritual equipment of all responsible men in our time. Everybody today, with part of his being, belongs to one country, with its specific traditions and problems, while with another part he has become a citizen of a world which no longer permits national isolation. Seen in this light there could not be any conflict between nationalism and internationalism, between the nation and the world.

The German poet and philosopher Friedrich von Schiller, conscious of the importance of his message of freedom and brotherhood, said that he would find it a miserable idea to write only for one nation. A philosopher could not limit himself to but a fraction of mankind. This nation or that national event could inspire him only in so far as it was of importance to all mankind. In his biography of Schiller, Thomas Carlyle criticized this attitude. He feared that a feeling
which extended to all mankind would be too diffuse to operate as it should for individual life. The world idea would not provide the necessary guidance for personal conduct and might lead to anarchy. Schiller's own enthusiasm, he felt, would move us more strongly if he had directed himself to a narrower field.

In a speech on the 150th anniversary of Schiller's death last spring Thomas Mann dealt with this conflict between the idea of the world and the idea of the nation as represented respectively by Schiller and Carlyle. He felt that in our time the narrow field, the nation, was sinking back into the past. Everyone should realize that no problem, be it political or spiritual, could any longer be resolved on the basis of Carlyle's approach. Our world of today in his view required a universal vision -- indeed, our anguished hearts demanded it. Man­kind as an ideal was not too weak a guide for our conduct. It was necessary, more necessary than ever, to seek in it an inspiration for all our actions.

We may well feel that there is truth both in the attitude of Schiller and Mann and in the attitude of Carlyle, but that these great authors in their own personalities reveal that the concepts of the nation and of the world to which they have given expression, are, each, incomplete and onesided. Are they not firmly rooted in a national tradition, and yet, do they not belong to all mankind? Are they not internationalists in truth and spirit, and in being so, have they not served their own peoples? The question is not either the nation or the world. It is, rather, how to serve the world by service to our nation, and how to serve the nation by service to the world.

The dilemma is as old as mankind. There has always been the problem of how to harmonize loyalty to the smaller group, inside which we are working, with loyalty to the larger unit to which this group belongs. However, in our time this problem has taken on new proportions and a new significance. It has also developed aspects unknown to previous generations.

For vast multitudes this is an era when, for the first time, they have fully sensed the rights and responsibilities of free peoples and sovereign nations. It is also the era when freedom and sovereignty for the first time have been actually within their reach. Parallel with great social and economic revolutions within many countries, we witness now a world revolution from which peoples long dependent on others, begin to emerge as strong, dynamic national states.

In the pride of self-realization natural to these new states we should welcome the constructive element -- a self-assertion like that of a young man coming of age, conscious of his powers, eager to find his own way, to make his voice heard and to render his contribution to progress. We should meet this new enthusiasm with understanding, in full appreciation of the rich gifts it may bring to a world of many nations and peoples in friendly competition. In world affairs such an attitude, which is in line with the great traditions of this country, may be regarded as an expression of true democracy in international life.
I have spoken about the positive aspect of the nationalism of a young state. Let us not forget that these positive elements can be turned into an explosive force if repressed or unguided. It is a sign of true statesmanship, both in the new countries and in older nations, so to direct national policies as to avoid collisions developing out of unwise reactions to the new forces. History places a burden on our shoulders. The creative urges of the emergent nations are tinged with strong emotions from the past. It is for all of us, denying neither the good nor the ills of that past, to look ahead and not to permit old conflicts to envenom the spirit of the creative work before us.

We have to face also another kind of new nationalism, which is a strong force in every state. It is a commonplace that recent technological changes have created a new kind of interdependence among nations and brought all peoples much closer to each other. For reasons which lie outside the political sphere, practically all mankind today must be regarded as a unit in important economic, technical and political respects. Economic changes tend to sweep over all the world. New inventions influence quickly the life of all peoples. Because it is more difficult to limit wars to a single area, all wars are of concern to all nations. Not only construction, but also destruction may today be global.

It is natural that this new situation should provoke a resistance, inspired by the fear that our own country and her own private world might find itself submerged in some global development. And so we find people trying to find ways to isolate themselves from general trends and to build up closed, protected units. We can understand, or even sympathize with such a reaction, but we must recognize that if it represents a resistance to change, it is doomed to failure. Such self-sought isolation may persevere for some time. It will not endure forever, and the longer the change is resisted and adjustment shirked, the more violent will be the final reaction when the walls collapse.

The reply to nationalists who wish to remain aloof in such vain efforts at self-protection is that the way to safeguard what they rightly want to defend is not isolation. The way is a vigorous and self-confident development, in free contact with the world, of the special qualities and assets of their nation and their people -- a development which should give them their just weight in the international balance. Giving thus to the world what is specifically ours, we could manifest and protect our national character, while accepting change and opening our minds to the influences of the world.

It has been said that in our world of today, united in an outward sense by technical developments, international organization has ceased to be a utopian idea and has become a practical necessity. But what do we mean by international organization? The term seems to cover a vast range, from agreed cooperation, freely entered into by all nations or by a group of nations, to various kinds of federal arrangements involving varying degrees of surrender of sovereignty.

We undoubtedly need world organization, but we are far from ripe for world government. Indeed, even modest attempts at regional "integration" have met with considerable difficulties, not because of any (more)
superstitious respect for national sovereignty, but because the peoples want to know in whose hands they put their fate, if they are to surrender part of their self-determination as nations. Further: how often have we not seen those who most eagerly plead for integration among other countries themselves shrink back from even the slightest discipline of their own sovereign rights?

Discussion about international integration, world organization and world government throws much light on the problem of the nation versus the world. I would not regard the wide-spread and often vocal resistance to anything which might be construed as tending to limit national sovereignty as a new upsurge of nationalism. It should rather be regarded as a symptom of how heavily faith in national self-determination weighs in the scales in every effort to reconcile the nation and the world. Such expression of national feelings is both an asset and a liability. It is an asset to the extent that it reflects the determination to shape one's own fate and to take the responsibility for it. It is an asset as a brake on immature experiments in international integration. But it is a liability when it blinds our eyes to the necessity of that degree of international organization which has become necessary to national life.

So far we have considered the question of the nation and the world in what I may call pragmatic and practical terms. The problem has also an ideological aspect. Every nation has its heroes, its martyrs and its saints. The world also has its heroes and saints. One, who long ago spoke among a small, oppressed people for the brotherhood of all men, was sacrificed as a danger to the safety of his own nation. Western civilization has aspired for nearly 2,000 years to follow the life and teachings of this apostle of peace. But all through those 2,000 years nationalism in the narrow and dangerous sense of the word has remained a major force. In the light of history, one might well ascribe to mankind the words of Milton's Lucifer: "For only in destroying I find ease to my relentless thoughts."

The cynic may well ask: where in the political and national histories of this period do we see a reflection of the creed professed by sovereigns and peoples alike? The cynic may also say that as the past has been, so will the future be. It is my belief that he is wrong on both scores. Whatever doubts history may cast, I believe that the hope for a world of peace and order, inspired by respect for man, has never ceased to agitate the minds of men. I believe that it accounts for the great and noble human spirit behind the ravaged exterior of a history whose self-inflicted wounds have become more and more atrocious. And I believe that, at the point we have now reached in our technical development, our creed may gain new possibilities to shape history. A faith like that which has inspired the spiritual life of the West could seem only a dream to the leader of the people of a powerful nation which can dominate others, or to consider itself untouched by their actions. There is a new situation the day you have to recognize that you cannot dictate to other nations and that you are not independent of the actions of other nations. It is more difficult to see your brother in a slave or a master. It is easier to see him in somebody with whom you have to live without giving or taking orders. Looking back into the past we see how peoples have been oppressed --
and how peoples have accepted oppression -- in the name of God. May we not be approaching a time when in His name they will instead be giving and accepting freedom?

This week we will celebrate here on the West coast and all over the world the 10th anniversary of the signing of the United Nations Charter. It will be an occasion for fresh thinking about the problems and the challenge of our world. The United Nations is an expression of our will to find a synthesis between the nation and the world, overcoming the one-sidedness reflected in the words of Schiller and Carlyle. It is an attempt to provide us with a framework inside which it is possible to serve the world by serving our nation, and to serve our nation by serving the world. Whatever may be the past shortcomings of this experiment in world organization, it gives sense and direction to the efforts of all men who are striving towards a better world. The Organization was born out of the cataclysms of the Second World War. It should justify the sacrifices of all fighters for freedom and justice in that war. I remember the bitter lines of a great Anglo-American poet who writes in an "Epitaph on an Unknown Soldier":

"To save your world, you asked this man to die,
Would this man, could he see you now, ask why?"

It is our duty to the past, and it is our duty to the future, so to serve both our nations and the world as to be able to give a reply to that anguished question.

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