

The Meaning of Nationality

ONE of the most serious obstacles in the way of international peace and of the international organization which must precede it is the prevalent confusion of mind on the subject of nationality. There has been much talk in the last hundred years on both sides of the Atlantic about the principle of nationality and the rights and destinies of nations, but very little attempt has been made to subject the conceptions "nation" and "nationality" to any strict analysis. Men are not purely logical animals, and there are few spheres where they are less logical than in politics. It is not surprising that they should be ready to spend their devotion and pour out their lives in thousands for a cause or a principle of which they have never tried, and would not be able, to give a rational account. There is indeed a natural reluctance to submit what we feel to be intimate and sacred to the cold analysis of reason or to "peep and botanize" in a field where other men have shed their blood without doubt or question. Nor should I venture to suggest discussion on the matter at all had I not come to feel that it is only after having grasped the distinctive meaning and value of nationality, and having disentangled it from other conceptions with which it has unhappily become associated, that men will ever begin to see their way towards a better political organization of the world and the effective prevention of war.

There are two great difficulties which confront the inquirer into the meaning of nationality. The first is the difficulty of nomenclature. The whole question has become confused owing to the loose use of words. Different words are used to express the same idea, and the same word is used to cover several different ideas. For instance, the most vital distinction in the discussion is that between citizenship and nationality—between the perfectly clear and definite conception of legal and moral obligation conveyed by the words citizen and civic, and the vaguer and more intimate conception of nationality. The distinction is really a very simple one, and is familiar to every thinking person who lives, as English-speaking people do, in a community in which nationality and citizenship are not co-extensive; it is familiar, in fact, to everyone who has not what I make bold to say is the misfortune to live in the confined atmosphere of a "national state."

Yet this perfectly simple distinction is obscured by the fact that the words state and nation have become specialized for Americans in a way exactly contrary to that in which British citizens, whether English or Canadian or Indian, are beginning to

think of them. If the British commonwealth is ever federalized it will not consist of United States but of Dominions; and no one is ever likely to speak or think of its component members, spread over five continents, as a "British nation." British nationality is a non-existent thing. The British commonwealth, like the American, consists of a congeries of nationalities, many of which, like the French Canadians, the Dutch South Africans and the Indian Moslems, have close national affinities, racial, linguistic or religious, with nationalities outside. A distinguished English thinker wrote a book the other day under the title "Towards International Government," making proposals for the enlargement of The Hague tribunal after the war. But in reality international government is a thing which we have long had with us. English-speaking people on both sides of the Atlantic are perfectly familiar with the exercise of authority by a single government and a single system of law over peoples of many different races and languages and at many different levels of intellectual development. It is only the backward or backsliding governments of Central and Eastern Europe which find it difficult to recognize the duty of meting out equal justice to the different nationalities under their sway. The problem before The Hague is to organize not international government—for that concerns the internal policy of the various sovereign states—but interstate government. And the way to promote its solution is not by attempting to minimize the inherent differences between nation and nation, or to empty the conception of nationality of all its wealth of traditional meaning and association, but to disentangle from it the clear and familiar conception of civic obligation, and so to enable men, whatever their nationality, more and more to think of themselves as citizens of the world and responsible, through the actions of their government, for the welfare of the world as a political whole.

There is a second difficulty. The real reason why nationality has never been clearly analyzed is because its manifestations are so various and disparate as to defy definition. We speak of the "sentiment" or the "principle" of nationality. But sentiments and principles, as the psychologists tell us, are not ultimate things. They are compounded or have grown up, under the influence of environment, out of instincts and dispositions which are inherent in man's nature. The sentiment of nationality is thus in every case a composite growth, due partly to innate qualities and partly to a social tradition in which environment has played its part. Thus

no two manifestations of nationality are really identical. Mother-love is mother-love all the world over. We need no knowledge of history or literature to explain to us how an Irish or Polish or Jewish mother feels towards her children. But without a knowledge of Irish and Polish and Jewish history and social traditions, and without a deliberate and difficult imaginative effort based upon that knowledge, it is impossible for us to understand or appreciate the complex social forces which are roughly summed up in the words Irish, Polish, and Jewish nationalism. National consciousness is in fact a Proteus; it is always changing its form and substance, it varies from place to place and from age to age. Sometimes, as in eighteenth century Italy, it seems to be entirely submerged as a driving force; sometimes, as the history of the Roman Empire shows, it dies out or can be educated out altogether or improved away out of recognition; yet it is strangely tenacious and has unexpected possibilities of hidden life and sudden re-emergence, as is shown not only by the nineteenth century experience of the Ottoman Empire and Austria-Hungary, but by recent developments in the British Empire and the United States.

This is not the place to analyze why some nationalities have died and others survived. When Paul the Jew spoke in Greek to an audience of Lycaonians, as a man might speak in English to an audience of immigrants in America to-day, the simple folk were so much stirred that they cried out in their native language—emphatically no *Kultursprache*. Lycaonia was a nationality then. But it has long since passed into the limbo of history, and the descendants of that audience have become just nameless “Anatolians,” though scholars think they can trace a faint connection, the very ghost of a social tradition, between the designs on their ancient tombstones and their modern peasant embroidery. (The curious reader may care to look up the *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, Vol. XXIV, pp. 260 and 289.) The Jews, however, in spite of the standardizing influence of Greek culture and Roman institutions, we have always with us, and the world is the richer for them in more senses than one. So again Babylon and Assyria have been taken while Armenia and Egypt and Persia remain.

It is hard to explain these vicissitudes of ancient history, but one thing seems clear. However nationalities may have died out through assimilation and the decay of self-consciousness in the past, they are not likely to continue to do so. The apostles of uniformity and standardization are in fact nowadays in a dilemma. If they attempt to stamp out a national consciousness by oppression they only kindle it into new life, as there is ample recent history to show. If they try “killing by kindness”

they are apt to find that the favored population begins to take an interest in its past, and that a national movement springs up in the happier and more wholesome field of education and literature. There must be many instances of this in the United States. In the British Isles Sir Walter Scott's novels and the recent achievements of Irish and Welsh drama are sufficient examples. Scott did a great service to the United Kingdom by interesting English readers in Scotland and so overlaying—or sublimating, as I believe the psychologists call it—the traditional atmosphere of enmity and suspicion between the two nations—the legacy of the Jacobite risings of the eighteenth century. Yeats and Synge have done something of the same kind for Ireland, and Rabindranath Tagore is doing it for India. I cannot help feeling, though I speak with diffidence, that imaginative work of the same kind remains to be done for Slavic and Jewish and Italian and German America, and that this would do more to knit together the peoples of the American commonwealth than the policy of assimilation and the melting-pot can hope to achieve.

For the central fact about nationality as I see it is that it is not, as so many Europeans and even Americans believe, a political force at all, but a spiritual force. In essence it has nothing to do with politics. Its connection with law and government is accidental and due to the folly of governments in interfering with intimate spheres into which it is not their business to penetrate. Civic obligation does not require and could not possibly compel a British citizen of German descent to feel about Germany as ordinary Englishmen do. How can he help feeling differently, and more intensely? But if citizenship cannot prescribe to us how we should feel, neither should nationality prescribe to us how we should think. It may lay down for us the way in which we think—for there seems to be something innate in modes of thought and feeling, as the persistence of national and even family types seems to show—but there is nothing national about the actual processes either of reasoning or of moral judgment. These are universal human faculties. The opinions which they enable us to form are ours in virtue of the fact that we are human beings living in society, and we accept them, or should accept them, not from blood or tradition or sentiment, but at the bar of reason and conscience alone. And if this is true of opinion, still more it is true of conduct in relation to public affairs. The distinction between the two spheres is surely clear, and certainly vital; yet both chauvinists and sentimentalists in all countries are constantly ignoring it.

Politics is a science and an art that has been developed, still very imperfectly, to meet certain universal human needs. Its conceptions and its

achievements are not national but universal; they belong to the higher life of the human race as a whole. No nation or section of mankind can claim or desire a monopoly or a patent right in respect to law or liberty or democracy or the principle of representation. These are great universal discoveries, or landmarks of human progress, which serve to bind men together, not to herd them off into national pens. The idea or ideal that every nationality must have its own independent government, which became prevalent during the nineteenth century, is a purely modern growth and, as Lord Acton pointed out at the time, a palpable absurdity. It is moreover quite incompatible with the migration and mobility which have become permanent and increasing features of modern civilized life. Men who are living together in society need justice and liberty not in virtue of their intimate sentiments or their race or language or religion, but in virtue of their needs as social beings. No one would dream of putting the Norwegians of Minnesota or the

Germans of Wisconsin under a separate government in virtue of their particular sentiments, and the ideal of the national state would seem equally misplaced in the east of Europe had not the political evolution of that part of the world been hopelessly retarded by the wickedness or imbecility of the governments concerned. The state is not the expression of national individuality, like art or literature or intimate modes of thought and feeling. It is a community of human beings organized on the basis of mutual service. Thus it is that as commerce and intercourse are gradually causing the world to shrink and bringing into existence a world society, we are slowly moving towards a single World-State. But it is equally certain that nationality is alive and will prove indestructible, and that in a world exposed at every turn to vulgar and soulless standardization, its conscious preservation is essential to meet the deeper needs of the human spirit.

ALFRED E. ZIMMERN.

London.

"Cheap Clothes and Nasty"

THE twelve weeks' strike of the Chicago garment workers which is just breaking up may be looked upon as the most recent chapter in the long struggle of the workers to raise their standard of living in what has been historically the worst paid, or, in the words of the sociologist, the most thoroughly "parasitic" trade that modern industry has developed. What the Christian Socialists of an earlier generation called "the dishonorable trade of the slop-shops" still counts its victims by the thousand score, and the victims still belong chiefly to what is known as the weaker sex. As long ago as the Christmas season of 1843, Thomas Hood immortalized the misery of the sweated needle-trades when he published the "Song of the Shirt" in the holiday number of an English comic weekly. Kingsley was the next prophet in this field who undertook to preach the gospel of the poor, and under the signature of Parson Lot he wrote the famous indictment called "Cheap Clothes and Nasty," in which he charged that "slavery, starvation, and waste of life" were the cost of the ready-made garments that men so thoughtlessly put on their backs. "Cheap clothes and nasty" they remain to this day, and anyone who reviews the long history of overwork and underpay in this industry may be tempted to question whether all the ready-made garments in the world are worth the misery that has been sewed into them.

Not only in England but in America the ready-made trade was founded on the misery of the poor-

est of those who work to live. As early as 1835 Philadelphia's sober economist, Matthew Carey, published a "Plea for the Poor" which was a vehement protest on behalf of the starving tailoresses and other victims of the sewing-machines of that early day—"poor creatures," as he mildly said, who were living "in a situation almost too trying for human nature." But of late years it has not been the philanthropists but the workers themselves who have attempted to raise this submerged trade to the level of a self-respecting industry. As a result of their hard efforts and heavy sacrifices certain unmistakable and permanent gains have been won. We need only recall the Hart, Shaffner and Marx agreement in Chicago, the New York protocol, and the English Trade Boards act, which was placed on the statute books through the efforts of the Labor party, as evidence that along this line progress lies.

It is scarcely necessary to enumerate the grievances of the striking clothing-workers in Chicago, for these grievances are common to the trade save where they have been remedied in recent years by collective bargaining. Especially interesting, however, was the submission as evidence before the City Council's Investigating Committee of the pay envelopes of the workers in some of the leading strike-bound firms. The incontrovertible testimony of pay envelopes showing, for example, weekly earnings of \$2.40 for 32 hours' work, \$2.17 for 23 hours' work, \$1.24 for 17 hours' work, \$1.23 for 13 hours' work, all of which received due news-