

Fichte nation could  
not dispense with  
arrogance. even



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Fichte was responsible for a scheme of an international league to enforce peace, and nationhood was to him “ a manifestation of the primordial, the divine, the eternal—the absolute.” Yet he felt that a nation could not dispense with arrogance. Even Mazzini attacked the cosmopolitans on the ground that it was impossible to love all without distinction of nationality. Some statesmen bluntly stated the extreme implications of nationalism.

While defending his Polish Policy, Von Bulow declared that “ in the struggle between nationalities, one nation is the hammer and other the anvil; one is the victor and the other the vanquished. It is a law of life and development that when two civilizations meet they fight for supremacy.” When the nation is glorified and the State idolized, the characteristic of such a State is vigour and force. Tensions and conflicts mount and disputes between States, real or imaginary, are decided by the arbitrament of war.

There had been a regular succession of wars, major and minor, since the birth of the nation- State and there seems no end to such wars. In fact, mankind is scared by past wars and is scared of new ones. In the nuclear age of our times, no country can afford to wait for defence to ward off the probabilities of war and to win it, if it actually comes. It is a contagion that ruthlessly spreads with disastrous results.

The nation-State is an exclusive State and it has two aspects. In the first place it means race superiority and its supremacy. The race problem becomes aggravated in proportion to the conjecture of physiological and cultural differences with economic conditions and political clash. On the economic side, the ideal of economic self-sufficiency combines with the

exigencies of modern industry—its ever present needs of raw supplies and markets and sometimes cheap labour—to prompt the annexation or control of territories inhabited by weaker peoples. There is an old maxim that flag follows the trade and economic nationalism has its counterpart in economic imperialism. Big industry and high finance manipulate the patriotic sentiments and enthusiasms and equate nationalism with imperialism. At this point nationalism merges itself into the wider questions of race, especially of colour, and we come to the “ sliding scale of diplomatic language, hinterland, sphere of interest, sphere of influence, paramountcy, in protectorate, veiled or open... lease, rectification of frontier concession, etc.

” The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw many wars between the imperial powers. It was estimated that about half the population of the world spread over more than half the surface of the earth had been under the suzerainty of the imperial powers. This phase in the history of the Colonial powers is more or less over now, but colonialism has taken a new form. There is a regular race between the “ big” powers to establish and extend their spheres of influence and the obvious victims are the underdeveloped and strategically important States. The most recent example of this political manoeuvring is Afghanistan and Kuwait. Internationalism: The rationale of the nation-State was democratic as it joined nationality with the twin principles of self-government and equality. But nationality became, in the words of Tagore, “ one of the most powerful anesthetics” that the ingenuity of man has ever invented. Education often inculcates the type of patriotism which sanctifies an attitude of “ my nation, right or wrong”.

The feelings of patriotism so drummed into us from the earliest childhood that it is “ only by a considerable intellectual effort that any of us can liberate themselves from these forms of thought, to which we have been moulded.” Such a patriotic fervour to which nationals of all States had been taught and trained did not usher an era of peace, cordiality, mutual trust, goodwill and cooperation in the family of nations. On the other hand, the nation-State system is a dismal chronicle of national arrogance, aggression, chauvinism, expansionism and all the worst that human nature can display. Hayes, accordingly, comes to the conclusion that it is highly doubtful if “ the recasting of political geography on national lines has actually promoted either humanity or justice and whether nationalism is a reliable harbinger of a quieter and better world in the immediate future.” But the old ideas in the relations of races and nations have become anachronistic and the former notions of nationalism are breaking down in the atmosphere of contemporary civilisation.

Laski says that “ the scale of modern civilisation has made the national and sovereign State an institutional expedient of which the political unwisdom and moral danger are both manifest.” He categorically affirms that the notion of a sovereign independent State, on the international side, is “ fatal to the well-being of humanity. The way in which a State should live in relation to other States is clearly not a matter to which the State is entitled to be the sole judge. The common life of States is a matter of common agreement between States.

” So strong is the contemporary opinion in favour of internationalism that one may even say that if our forefathers thought nationally, we think  
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internationally. Suggestions have also been made for a World State on the basis of a world federation. It is not implied that the tangles of centuries can be resolved so immediately. It is not given to any generation of men to write on a clean slate. The logic of history rules out the sudden dawn of internationalism. But much leeway has been made during the past seven decades or so. The rapid technological advancement in every country and the consequent economic growth and economy of plenty has removed the root causes of the conflict which made nations so exclusive in spirit and aim. The new means of transport and communication, the new industry and the new commerce have made the world a single economic unit and produced a new economic homogeneity in the economic interests of all the nations.

In the seventeenth century an English writer vigorously propounded the doctrine that commercially a country could progress only at the expense of another. That is no longer true and with general economic improvement it "will become the exact antithesis of the truth." Easy and frequent travel in all the countries has not only broken the barriers of distance, but has produced a better appreciation of the peoples, increased mutual understanding and removed crude notions so far held by the Western nations particularly about the Asiatic and the Africans. Internationalism is a way of life and pattern of behaviour and its prerequisite is to master the art of living together. Its rationale is the well-known dictum of Kant; "So act as to treat humanity whether in your person or that of another, in any case as an end, and never merely as a means." If nations follow the voice of reason and eschew emotions, parochial loyalties and narrow considerations ipso facto disappear

and an atmosphere of fellow-feelings prevails that knows no territorial limits. The brotherhood of man is the basis of internationalism.

It rouses no passions and does not blur man's vision to distort his notions. Reason is the just steward of man's mind. Internationalism presupposes the existence of sovereign national States and the voice of reason enjoins to reconcile national interests with the larger interests of mankind with a just mind in an atmosphere of mutual trust and goodwill.

Interdependence is the natural necessity of nations and all are integral parts of one single human society and their weal and woe is inseparably intertwined. Laski has succinctly said that there are "no longer lotus-fields where men may linger careless of life about them. The world is one and indivisible in a sense so compelling that the only question before us is the method by which we represent this unity.

"The method of this unity and international solidarity is reflected in a vast network of inter-governmental bodies and in a series of international organisations and voluntary international organisations that have been established during the course of the present century. Any problem which affects or is likely to affect the peace, security and well-being of mankind is a matter of common concern and it is obligatory on all States to accept the decisions arrived at in the inter-governmental bodies and international conferences. The scope and subject matter that the international conferences and agencies deal with have expanded so tremendously that there is virtually no topic excluded from international treatment. For example, discussions on values of national currencies are frequent and a

matter of vital common concern as the rise or fall in the value of the currency of one State has an impact on the economy of other States, if not to the same extent at least to a disturbing level of disequilibrium. Similarly, it is true of self-employment policies, health measures, educational policies, labour problems, population, protection of human rights and multitude of such other problems. A sovereign nation-State, however, remain the basic foundation of all international activity. Laski and many other eminent thinkers have assailed the moral validity of the doctrine that attributes sovereignty to the State and emphatically maintain that it " will pass, as the divine right of the kings had its day." But it seems highly doubtful to happen in the foreseeable future.

Sovereignty remains sovereignty and no State is prepared to surrender it, not even the communist countries whose ideological base is a stateless society. Even the subject matter of International Law are the sovereign States and membership of the United Nations is open for them alone. It is, accordingly, within the framework of the national State that sovereignty is to be interpreted restrictively in order to broaden the scope and obligatory nature of the decisions arrived at the international conferences. Obligatory character of the decisions by majority votes in various organs of the United Nations go counter to the principle of sovereignty and its orthodox attributes. The modern nation-State, to sum up, is a sovereign State and it is within the four walls of this framework that nationalism is to be reconciled to internationalism. A revision of present-day political arrangements is the sine qua non of the emergence of nationalism free from the taints of intolerance and aggression. It has two dimensions.

Nationalism and internationalism are not antagonistic and exclusive, provided nationalism, as Laski says, is equated with right. The right of every nation to be equal to others, to preserve and promote its individuality and ensure its security with the corresponding obligation of recognising the same right of other nations and States. Thus, harmonising and balancing of diverse national interests in a spirit of mutual trust, cooperation and goodwill.

Secondly, the spirit of exclusiveness and aggrandizement, which has long characterised human relationships and which the educational machinery in every nation-State has been used to inculcate, is out of tune with the present trends.

It must give way to that of political equality and cooperation among all the peoples of the world. If this can happen, it may be safely said with Zimmern that “ the road to internationalism lies through nationalism.”