

Committee III
Nationalism And World Unity: How
To Educate for the 21st Century

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**NATIONALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM--A NEED
FOR BALANCED IDENTITIES**

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Nationalism and Internationalism - A Need for balanced
Identities (Political Science Perspectives)

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Abstract.

This article gives a sketchy survey of perspectives developed by political scientists on the problems of nationalism and world government. It stresses the importance of collective self-consciousness built on common memories, common symbolic actions and, common value orders, in forming larger political units. It comes to the conclusion that the prerequisites for free and peaceful societies are best met by nations which treat other nations as possessing equal status and equal rights. Therefore the idea of a world government should be abandoned in favour of an international order in which the nations keep to their own identity but are willing to co-operate with others and to transfer an increasing part of their sovereign rights to international organisations and courts. In order to prepare the individuals for such a co-operation the education should also be humanistic, i.e. aiming at the understanding of other nations humanity, expressed by their value orders and by the symbolic forms of their collective self-consciousness.

1. Nationalism: A Heresy or the dominant idea of modern age?

"Today, there are no longer Frenchmen, Germans, Spaniards, even Englishmen: whatever people say, there are only Europeans. All have the same tastes, the same feelings, the same customs, because none has experienced any particular national formation". This sentence was not spoken by some Eurocrats in Brussels. It was written by Voltaire in 1740¹. But while his description might have applied to the small intellectual elite among his contemporaries educated in the same scientific and humanistic traditions, the situation changed radically by the time of the French Revolution a half century later. Voltaire's "particular national formation" which was called "nationalism" occasionally by individual scholars since Herder (1774)², l'Abbé Barruel (1798-9)³, Newman (1854)⁴ and generally by social scientists in the twentieth century, was indispensable for the formation of nation-states in the Western hemisphere. It spread to central Europe in 1848 and became the dominant political, cultural and economic force all over the world in the late nineteenth and the twentieth century.

On the hight of the Second World War which revealed the barbarous perversions of nationalism the latter was denounced as "the heresy of the age" in a book dealing with the idea of the "United Nations"⁵. This name had been coined by President

Roosevelt in 1941 to describe the countries fighting against the axis. The "Declaration by the United Nations" of January 1, 1942, opened a discussion in the United States how this military treaty could be changed after the war into an international organisation which would eliminate the causes of war and would prevent nation states from attacking and oppressing; the League of Nations had been intended to do this and had failed. In his book with the significant title "Common Cause", Giuseppe Borgese, an antifascist emigrant, came to conclusions which illustrate the fundamental problems concerning the topic of my paper:

The United Nations is a beautiful slogan, destined nonetheless to remain a stillborn phrase until their rulers, or the leaders among them, reach an upper level where they agree on the essentials of religion -i.e., on the goals of civilization- as well as on the essentials of a social and economic order -i.e., on the ways and means for striving toward those goals- to be held valid in the whole bodysoul of the human race.

From a level of essential homogeneity, incidental differences may and must be warranted. But discord on the fundamentals wrecks all unity, makes all rallies to lies. There will be no United Nations -to stress once more the most striking instance- as long as what is law in Russia is crime in the West and conversely.

This warning was written in March 1943. Six months later the Moscow Declaration stated the necessity of the United Nations Organisation. After its institutionalisation in 1945 it took more than forty years until the essentials for its functioning went on the way of realisation. But will the expansion of free market economy and the application of the rule of law in East and West eliminate aggressive nationalism? Forty years before Gorbachev Borgese used for his vision the image of a "common house", not limited to Europe: "The House of Man is, first of all, an abode of the spirit" and its keystone "is the union in faith and purpose of the English-speaking world with the Russian world"⁷.

The totalitarian excesses of nationalism made the antifascist professor Borgese clear-sighted with regard to the necessity of bridging the distance, ideological and social, between the superpowers. The same experience induced him to denounce nationalism as "the heresy of the age". A heresy is antithetical to the one true faith. For this reason he rejected internationalism which would construct the world order as a corporate body constituted by national entities. The power of an international institution would be "the sum of such percentages of sovereignty as the sovereign states will agree to pour into it". Instead of internationalism he pleaded for supranationalism which "premises that the absolute nation-states were born of the dissolution of the ancient and medieval unities. As they were born and grew, so will they pass".⁸ In consequence Borgese and after him many outstanding

persons have aimed at a world-wide superstate in which there would be no more foreign affairs. Such a world-wide society would have to deal only with domestic affairs.

In the newspapers of one day one could find headlines on discussions about Sacharov's proposal for a Russian state confined to the Slavic nation, on Slovakian aspirations for an independent national state, on terrorist actions by Irish, Basque, and Palestinian nationalists, and on the persecution of the Hungarian minority in Rumania. From Lithuania to Sri-Lanka, from Quebec to Kashmir innumerable examples of the irrepressible power which nationalism exercises on political life, make the idea of world government seem utopian. In the face of similar skepticism about his own idea of a world constitution Borgese answered "that the final goal must never be forgotten"¹⁰.

But should world government be the final goal? Is nationalism really the heresy of our age? In 1944 Hans Kohn, an other European immigrant in the United States, published a book on "The Idea of Nationalism" which was much more influential than Borgese's brilliant but soon forgotten essay. Kohn presented nationalism not as the heresy but as the dominant idea of the modern age. In 1962 he returned to the problem in a book entitled "The Age of Nationalism"¹¹. In 1972 he returned to the problem; this time he said that the second third of the twentieth century was "the age of pan-nationalism" which has made possible "the first universal intercourse of nations and civilisations" and hence "the first

global epoch in human history"'. In his various historical works on the growth of nationalism Kohn pointed both to the elements which can explain its role in providing the motive of modern societies and to its perilous consequences for the liberty of man and the maintenance of peace. Up to now an extensive literature produced many comparative studies on nationalism and put forward different theories which give prominence to one or another of these elements.' In the second part of my paper I shall examine some of these elements in relation to our question: Is the nation-state only a transient phase of the historical process of political integration which moves from tribal agglomerations and dynastic states to the world-superstate? I shall ask whether the nation-state includes structural components of such fundamental importance for modern societies that if a liberal and peaceful order of the world is to exist it must be conceived as an international federation of states? The title and subtitle of my paper which were proposed to me, already imply the answer. What are the arguments for a balance among nationalism and internationalism? If there are good arguments for striving to this balance, what are the implications of this for education? This will be the topic of the concluding part.

2. Nations as social artefacts.

Nationalism refers "to political movements seeking or

exercising state power and justifying such actions with nationalist arguments" i.e. with

a political doctrine built upon three basic assertions:

- (a) There exists a nation with an explicit and peculiar character;
- (b) The interests and values of this nation take priority over all other interests and values;
- (c) The nation must be as independent as possible. This usually requires at least the attainment of political sovereignty.¹³

This definition proposed by the British historian John Breuilly has the advantage of avoiding explicit statements about the character, the composition and the values of the nation, except for striving to attain political sovereignty. As a matter of fact, definitions which try to characterise nationalities by common properties such as ethnicity, language, culture, religion, economic networks etc. can easily be shown to be inapplicable: The American nation is composed of many ethnic groups. Belgium, Canada, India, Switzerland all include two or more linguistic groups. There are many nations of diverse religions, Christian, Hindu, Muslim eg. and nearly all are culturally diverse. Economies and business firms cut accross national boundaries.

But when occupants of a given territory assert that ethnicity or language which they share with others make them members of a distinctive collectivity and if they recognize certain mutual rights and duties to each other as members of this collectivity, than that category of persons belonging to

the same ethnic group or speaking the same language becomes a nation. "In other words, nations maketh man; nations are the artefacts of men's convictions and loyalties and solidarities."¹⁴ This is even more the case in pluralistically ethnic nations like America or in multilingual nations like Switzerland whose political cohesion is only based on the common will to form in this territory an independent and coherent state.

Nationalism had and has -as we all know- important historical consequences. Nationalism goes hand in hand with the emancipation and self-determination of the people as the sovereign of the state. In challenging feudal or colonial rule by the idea of giving the supreme power to the whole nation the rise of nationalism is linked with the process of democratisation and modernisation of societies¹⁵. In some countries nationalism appears as the integrative force unifying separate territorial units into a nation-state, in other countries it is a disintegrative power which aims to emancipate and separate component territorial units from the territory of the existing state.

In these and all other cases nationalism legitimates national identity by tracing it back to a partially real, partially fictional common past and by strengthening the national identity as well as the will for national cooperation through symbolic actions. Fictions about the past seek to demonstrate the distinctiveness or the superiority of the particular nation. The Swedes identified themselves with the

Goths of ancient time, an Uppsala professor even linked them with the Atlantides and claimed Sweden to be the original home of all European civilisation¹². The Swiss explained their origin either by a mythical migration of Swedes from the north to the Alps or by their descent from the Celtic Helvetii and thus justified by historical argumentation their independence won by wars from the Hapsburg monarchy and the German Empire. The legitimization of national distinctiveness or superiority by fictions and historical representations is less difficult than the integration of the different and often antagonistic parts into a nation.

The rise of nationalism in the nineteenth century was accompanied by many symbolic actions in order to affirm the national identity. Its proponents arranged national festivals entailing all kinds of activities, including especially choir singing, gymnastics, rifle shooting. They invented national holidays to celebrate national anniversaries. National anthems and historical folk songs were composed, national flags designed, statues of national heroes erected, national museums built, national societies and clubs founded, national expositions and world fairs with national pavillons organised, and last but not least mythical, political and literary personalities were presented as embodiments of national values and interests.

I would like to illustrate the importance of symbolic actions for national self-consciousness by a relatively recent phenomenon: Sociological surveys show that in most West

European countries nationalist values are shared only by a small minority of the population.¹⁷ Nevertheless in the same countries victories or defeats of national soccer teams or ski champions are experienced by a large majority of the population as heroic deeds or tragedies of national importance. The passionate participation in the actions of people with whom they ostensibly have nothing in common than the passport demonstrates that citizens who are ordinarily indifferent to what happens in their own country participate intensely if only intermittently in their national collective self-consciousness and give the values of nationality priority over all other values: The actual quality of the teams or of the competing skiers does not matter in comparison with the wish that the representatives of their own nation should win.

Nationality is an extension of primordial group identity and solidarity to larger social units which cannot be experienced immediately. The appreciation of the value of the national collectivity gives great emotional satisfaction, happiness, pride, hope and strength and develops into patriotism. The patriotic desire that the national collectivity be acknowledged and esteemed in the world sometimes rises to chauvinism as in an international football match or eventually in a war. Some features of primordial face-to-face relations are experienced by participation in the national collective self-consciousness, e.g. the notion of fatherland, by which the abstract and distant nation-state receives a familiar touch, personal models whose experiences

and actions represent national values in a dramatic form. The more recent national unity is, the more frequent and important are national heroes and the bigger their statues e.g. those of Washington, Jefferson and Lincoln in the United States, of Lenin in communist countries, of Vittorio Emanuele in Rome.

3. Problems of world government and chances for internationalism.

How could it be possible to extend the process of collective self-consciousness to a society of global size?. Where could one find supranational heroes? Buddha, Confucius, Jesus Christ, Mahomet represent particular religious traditions, Marx, Lenin, Mao, Che Guevara ideological ones. One or the other could become the embodiment of a common past and the form of a global collective self-consciousness for all of mankind only if his religion or ideology would win over the others. Or they would have to be included in a pantheon as it was the case in the Roman Empire; but there the emperor himself became the religious symbol of the actual political unity. As we know, that created great difficulties with religions of an absolute character as it was the case with Christianity and which applies to-day even more to Islam.

The fundamental importance of a set of common symbols for the formation and self-maintenance of larger social units was also shown by Karl W. Deutsch. He stated in 1953 that national separation and differentiation is

to some extent fundamental in the nature of communication. The more effective a social communication system gets, the more sharply separate does it become from all those groups or languages which it cannot incorporate...

The alternative would be social learning leading to a universal communication system, uniting all mankind. Yet such uniform social learning is impossible in a world which is not uniform, so long as the power of the physical environment looms large in the life of every individual.¹⁸

In a book for the general reader published in 1969 Deutsch dealt explicitly with "The Vision of a World Government". Even if the big differences between the Haves and the Have-Nots could be eliminated¹⁹, the problem of the world government would still exist. Besides the difficulties in administration it "would be without human communication networks that are needed to keep feedback processes and the circuits of information working. Nor is there now available a stock of relevant memories".²⁰ Deutsch concludes that

the whole thrust of the technical development of our time pushes beyond wars and beyond the economic fences of nation-states. It seems to push toward a pluralistic world of limited international law, limited, but growing international cooperation, and regional pluralistic security communities. In a few favored regions these may even give place to regional federations, but this will be a slow development.²¹

These predictions seem quite realistic. In any case the last twenty years and especially the developments of the last year

point in this direction.

From all these arguments we can draw the conclusion that the construction of larger social units needs mechanism which produce social cohesion and consciousness and strengthen the will to accept and exercise the rights and duties involved in the more abstract common cause. These mechanism imply

- political structures which guarantee freedom and peace for the participants and allow democratic procedures of the delegation, exercise, and control of political power,
- a market oriented economic order steered by competition and the responsibility for its impact on the welfare of man and biosphere,
- a symbolic order which binds the participants together by common memories, values, customs, feelings, and communication networks,
- and a common belief in the sacrality of all of the earth surface.

These prerequisites are best met by nations which, consistent with the third clause of Breuilly's definition are as independent as possible and retain political sovereignty, i.e. are organized as states. This does not exclude the integration of states into larger national units. The United States of America proclaim by their name that they are a federation of states. The same is the case with the Swiss Confederation and the Federal Republic of Germany, in which the Free State of Bavaria by its name explicitly claims to be in some respect sovereign. The degree to which the federated

states remain "as independent as possible" will always be a matter of discussion and of the balance of power between the different levels of political units.

On the international level present-day national states are certainly not absolutely independent. The worldwide exchange of goods, services, ideas and persons as well as the worldwide consequences of technological innovations and military actions has led them to transfer some parts of their sovereign rights to international organisations and international courts. Therefore internationalism becomes more and more a necessary corollary of the pan-nationalism of our epoch if all these nation-states are to be brought into a peaceful coexistence or cooperation. In the issue of TIME devoted to "Men of the Year" (1990), the editor Strobe Talbott pointed to the chances of internationalism in the following way:

While 1990 witnessed a resurgence of nationalism in its most divisive, destructive forms, it also brought a countervailing trend: an increase in the willingness of many nations to pool energies, resources, political will, even sovereignty, on behalf of shared objectives and mutual interests. The example that has dominated the headlines, and the one for which Bush personally deserves the most credit, is the multilateral response to the gulf crisis. The end of the cold war has also permitted the United Nations to broker the settlement of one long-simmering conflict in South-Africa and make strides toward resolving another in South-east Asia. The idea of numerous states join-

ing in a single market is nowhere as close to becoming reality as in Europe, but other regions will, over time, almost certainly follow suit. Bush has contributed to that prospect with his call on June 27 for a free-trade zone that would embrace the U.S., Canada and all of Latin America. One powerful argument for supranational structures is that they can help contain the threat of nationalism... The more Croates think of themselves as part of a continental union with the headquarters in Brussels, the less they may nurture grievances against Belgrade. By the same token, Quebeckers may be more willing to accept ties to Ottawa if they are part of a close-knit and prosperous hemisphere community.... The more closely integrated the international system, the less the disintegration of the Soviet Union is likely to turn ugly."²²

The spiritual fathers of modern nationalism, Rousseau and Herder, were simultaneously internationalists. Rousseau stressed "the need of a fervent nationalism as the essential basis of the moral and democratic regeneration of a people" and Herder discovered "the Volk -the national community based upon the so-called 'lower classes'- as a genetic, developing, and creative unit". But both "were conscious of the dangers contained in a nationalism that does not treat all other peoples, whatever their power or their degree of development, as possessing equal status and equal rights."²³ A Swiss writer, Gottfried Keller, expressed the balance between the two identities with the following motto: "Achte jedes Mannes

Waterland, das Deinige aber liebe!- Respect every one's fatherland, but love your own!"²⁴

4. Humanistic education for the respect of alien humanity.

In my own writings I have tried to show the importance of the humanities for the education of the new political elites of pluralistic societies²⁵. Since nationalism is usually propagated by new political elites I shall point to one aspect, in which symbols are involved which play a crucial role in the individual and national collective self-consciousness.

In forming his own self-image, every human being at the same time forms a view of the world by interaction with his environment and in communication with other persons. Individuals form restricted perspectives which inevitably produce different views of the world. Hence the individual must also learn to understand the other views of the world and communicate with their bearers. With this in mind, the humanistic education confronts the student with symbols used by men in literature, mathematics and art, and enquires into the structure of the symbols, by which other persons and cultures try to understand the world. As soon as a humanistic education attempts to do more and to assert the ontological truth of the individual's own symbolic order and the inferiority, even falsehood of others, it becomes the vehicle of a partial humanism. Insofar as such a humanistic education

comes into the possession of national elites, it promotes a chauvinistic nationalism. In contrast with this, as long as humanistic education tries to understand alien symbols as expressions of other collective self-consciousness with their own intrinsic value, it educates the student not only in humanities but it also educates him in humanity. It leads the student to listen to alien peoples, to look into their eyes, to communicate with them in a friendly way, and to do all this joyfully - to quote the meaning which Karl Barth gave for the notion of humanity²²⁸.

It is the role of the primordial groups, family, neighborhood, church, and parish school to educate the child according to their specific values. But in a pluralistic society education has not only to provide the elements for an individual self-image by answering the fundamental questions concerning the "whence and whereto", but it must also train the children in human responsibility towards alien peoples and their cultures. This task becomes the genuine function of secondary and higher education the students of which come from different social, ethnic, sometimes cultural and national settings. Since one understands the alien others only if one experiences their language as the symbolic expression of their own cultural world, humanistic education has to turn to their spiritual ancestors. The humanistic value of what has been received by these spiritual ancestors lies less in the content, e.g. in the originality or the present relevance of their ideas. It consists primarily in the distant encounter,

in the dialogue over time and space, with the personalities who contributed to the formation of these symbolic orders.

The extent of such a humanistic education will depend on the circle of persons with whom one has to communicate. As long as an American, for example, has to deal with other Americans on matters related to their country, it may be sufficient to go back to their common spiritual ancestors. But as soon as the American depends on the scientific use of symbols which derive from the whole tradition of natural and social sciences he or she must enter into a dialogue with the authors of these symbols, i. e. to the great books of the European and the ancient world. And when these Americans come into existential contacts with citizen belonging to nations with alien cultural traditions they will have to learn to understand the symbols of these cultures by communicating with their representatives. For this task, they will have to translate the structures and contents of the alien symbolic orders into their own symbolic world. The art of translation is in itself already one of the fundamentals of humanistic education. An ideal way towards a balance between one's own nationality and other nationalities ones would consist in having at least some familiarity with the four or five most important languages of the world. Otherwise it will be necessary for the individual to depend on specialists, who can explain and translate the alien symbolic orders without falsifying them too much. When translations are read in schools it is important that the teacher should know the

original language in order to explain the original structures and contents and thus enable the student to communicate with Confucius or Plato and not with the world view of the translators.

Humanistic education is by no means the only way to a better cooperation between nations. Economy and science are today the basis for worldwide communication and cooperation. But they are not able to bridge the conflicts arising from pan-nationalism. International private and public law can establish the principles, develop the mechanism and form the experts who have to work towards a peaceful solution of these conflicts. The growing agreement of the super-powers about the fundamentals of a new world order will strengthen the role of international institutions. But the consciousness of a fruitful balance between our own identity and the humanity of alien identities can only be achieved by the long and painful task of humanistic éducation.

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