

NATIONALISM AND DEMOCRACY

Hon'ble V. S. Srinivasa Sastri Lectureship, 1956-'57]

Dr. JOHN MATTHAI



UNIVERSITY OF MADRAS
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John Matthai
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LECTURE—I

The idea of Nationalism in Europe was largely a product of the French Revolution, in the sense that the concepts of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity required for their implementation the achievement of sovereignty by the people. The great protagonists of the French Revolution did not consciously put forward nationalism as a necessary corollary of the Revolution. But during the hundred years that followed the Revolution, many countries in Europe that attempted to achieve the ideals embodied in the French Revolution were compelled to transform their governments from dynastic to nation states—i.e. to states which comprised peoples bound together by common ties and the formation of an active national self-consciousness. In the light of the circumstances which gave birth to the movement of nationalism in Europe, it is important to remember that nationalism was looked upon, and indeed originated, as an instrument of political democracy, that a nation state was assumed in principle to be a prerequisite to democratic government, although its later developments did not always justify this assumption.

Before we proceed further, it is necessary to analyse the forces that lead to the formation of that national self-consciousness which is the essence of a nation state. They group themselves ultimately into two broad categories, positive and negative. The positive forces include such factors as a common culture, a common language, a common historical background, a common racial origin, common social habits, a common administrative organisation and a system of transport and communications that link the different parts of the country together. It is not essential

to the attainment of a sense of national unity that all these factors should be present at the same time. Nor can it be said with certainty that any of them are more important than others. It is indeed doubtful if any of these positive factors can be regarded as indispensable to the development of nationalism. It is conceivable that a sense of nationality may develop with none of these factors operating to any perceptible extent among a people. It happens not infrequently that the positive bonds come into active force only after a national sense is achieved; they are often artificially created as a matter of after thought in order to strengthen a sense of unity which has come into existence independently of them. To create a common language of indigenous origin as a national language, to re-write the country's history in the light of the prevailing nationalist sentiment, to revive ancient art and culture which had ceased to enthuse people's imagination, to formulate theories which emphasise racial distinctiveness and unity—these are some of the ways in which the positive factors that create unity are reinforced where they are lacking in strength or re-created where they have ceased to exist.

What ultimately makes for national unity and develops it into a dynamic force leading to the formation of a nation state is, however, a negative factor rather than any of these positive bonds we have been considering. This negative factor is a strong feeling of opposition to a common obstacle, of which the people as a whole are acutely conscious and which they are anxious and determined to remove. This common obstacle generally takes the form of a foreign government, a government whose roots are elsewhere and whose actions are determined primarily by public opinion in another country. But it is not always a foreign government which provides the common obstacle. It is sufficient of the obstacle takes the form of a neighbouring state which does not govern the country in question but adopts generally a hostile attitude which reflects itself either in hostile acts

or in the public expression of hostile opinions. The existence of Israel as a neighbouring state to which Arab countries are generally opposed has provided the motive force which has laid the beginnings of Arab nationalism. The origin of nationalism in England may be traced to the hostilities with France during the 13th and 14th centuries and with Spain in Elizabethan times. The words that Shakespeare puts into the mouth of John of Gaunt in his play, *King Richard II*, express the nascent nationalist sentiment in England provoked by the wars with France :

“This royal throne of kings, this scepter’d isle,
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
This other Eden, demi-paradise,
This fortress built by nature for herself
Against infection and the hand of War,
This happy breed of men, this little world,
This precious stone set in the silver sea”

Several centuries later, on the eve of the first World War, when Britain was torn by internal strife, partly due to the social tensions resulting from the Liberal and Labour victories in the elections of 1906 and partly to the repercussions of the Irish dispute and the talk of civil war to which it gave rise, the outbreak of the war restored a sense of national unity such perhaps as had not been known in England since the Napoleonic wars. Lloyd George in a famous speech delivered in the first year of the War gave eloquent expression to this new found sense of unity: “We have been living”, he said, “in a sheltered valley for generations. We have been too comfortable and too indulgent, many perhaps too selfish, and the stern hand of Fate has scourged us to an elevation where we can see the everlasting things that matter for a nation—the high peaks we had forgotten, of Honour, Duty, Patriotism and, clad in glittering white, the great pinnacle of Sacrifice pointing like a rugged finger to Heaven. We shall descend into the valley again but as

long as the men and women of this generation last, they will carry in their hearts the image of those great mountain peaks whose foundations are not shaken, though Europe rock and sway in the convulsions of a great war”.

As I said at the beginning, it was the French Revolution that gave conscious birth to the nationalist movement in Europe. It arose as a practical corollary to the democratic ideology set forth by the Revolution. When the initial enthusiasm engendered by the Revolution subsided and gave place to Napoleon's imperialistic ambitions, Europe generally found the national movement a strong ally in the campaign against Napoleon and full use was made of it by the countries waging war against him. The settlement of Europe after the widespread dislocation caused by Napoleon was effected at the Congress of Vienna in 1815. The upshot of the Congress of Vienna was to suppress nationalism as a political force and replace it by the doctrine of legitimism which in effect meant, subject to compromises of conflicting interests, the restoration of dynastic states in place of nation states. The men who guided the deliberations of the Congress of Vienna were among the foremost statesmen of Europe at the time who according to their lights did on the whole an honest job of work. They were essentially European in their outlook, anxious to preserve the potential unity of the Europe they knew and safeguard it against the disintegrating forces equally of Nationalism and of Liberalism. In the words of a British historian, “The main features of Europe after the Congress of Vienna had completed its labours and avoided the open quarrels which seemed likely to interrupt its efforts, were the National States of England, France, Spain and Portugal in the west, nearly forty States of varying size in Germany, seven States, together with Austrian provinces in Italy, an Austrian Empire centred round Austria and Hungary, which included various Slav areas as well as the Italian provinces, the continued partition of Poland among Russia, Prussia and Austria; a Sweden

which included Norway, transferred from Denmark; a very large Russia in the East; and a Turkish Empire in the Balkans which was already tottering". The history of the 19th century, according to him, may be viewed as the story of the undoing of the work of the Congress of Vienna by the force of Nationalism.

Among the national movements in Europe during the 19th century, the most important and perhaps the most colourful were the revolt of Greece against Turkey, of Italy against Austria and of Ireland against Great Britain. The revolt of Greece against Turkey aroused general sympathy in European countries. This was partly due to Christian reaction against the Turk, a survival of the crusading tradition, partly also to the classical associations of Greece which appealed to educated men throughout Europe. The romantic figure of Lord Byron as a protagonist of the cause of Greek freedom strengthened European interest in the Greek movement —

“Fair Grece ! sad relic of departed worth,
Immortal, though no more, though fallen, great,
Who now shall lead thy scatter'd children forth,
And long accustomed bondage uncreate ?”

Perhaps the best known national movement in the 19th century is Italy's struggle for freedom. That movement produced three leaders whose names and achievements constitute a heritage which has been a source of inspiration ever since to people in every country who have fought for national freedom. Of the three, Mazzini was the prophet, Garibaldi the soldier and Cavour the statesman, who inspite of their differences in outlook and methods of approach combined to achieve a revolution which holds a unique place in the history of freedom. Mazzini's utterances on Italian unity and freedom still have a ring to which national leaders engaged in the fight for freedom everywhere respond —

“You are twenty-five millions of men endowed with active and brilliant faculties and heirs to a glory, the envy of all the nations of Europe. An immense vista stretches down the years before you. You raise your eyes to the loveliest heaven, and around you smiles the loveliest land, in Europe; you are encircled by the Alps and the sea, frontiers traced out by the finger of God for a nation of giants; you are bound to be such or nothing. Let not a man of these twenty-five millions remain outside the brotherhood that is fated to unite you; let not a glance be lifted to that Heaven which is not that of a free man. Let Rome be the ark of your redemption, the temple of your land. Has she not twice already been the temple of the destinies of Europe? In Rome two extinct worlds—the pagan and the papal—are superposed like the double jewels of a diadem; fashion from them a third world greater than these twain”.

The Nationalist revolt in Ireland is interesting to us in India as it resembles in many respects—in its origin, its methods and its final settlement—the movement in India. Partly because the revolt took place against the same government, the general course of its development and the reaction it provoked have a broad similarity to the parallel revolution in India. A land inhabited by a peasant population steeped in poverty and governed for many years by a country whose people held large vested interests in its economy and whose methods of government alternated between severe repression and mild palliatives provide a marked parallel to what occurred in India. There was the same division among the leaders into moderates and extremists, the same tendency to bolster nationalist sentiment by historical reminiscences not always scrupulously accurate, the same attempt to give new life to the language and culture of the country. The difficulty in finding an effective solution was hampered in both countries by the existence of religious differences, between Catholic and Protestant in one case and Hindu and Moslem in the other and the final

determination to resolve the differences by the facile but potentially dangerous device of partitioning the country. The resemblance may be traced further in the feeling of partial disillusionment that has followed the success of the national movement in both countries as a result of the the increasing gulf between expectation and achievement and the realisation that the task of government is not rendered easier but infinitely more difficult by the fulfilment of nationalism in the formation of a nation state.

A notable feature of the struggle for freedom in Ireland is the remarkable contribution which the speeches of its leaders have made to the spoken literature of English prose. One of the last of the long list of Irish martyrs was Sir Roger Casement, a highly controversial figure to this day, who landed in a German submarine on the Irish coast during the first World War to take part in a projected civil war and was duly arrested and placed for trial before a British jury. Some passages from his address to the jury are worth quoting as examples of the lofty emotional prose in which Irish nationalism expressed itself.

“It is not necessary to tread the painful stairs of Irish history—that treadmill of a nation whose labours are as vain for her own uplifting as the convict’s exertions are for his redemption—to review the long list of Irish promises made only to be broken, of Irish hopes raised only to be dashed to the ground. Home rule, when it comes, if come it does, will find an Ireland drained of all that is vital to its very existence, unless it be that unquenchable hope we build on the graves of the dead. We are told that if Irishmen go by the thousand to die, not for Ireland but for Flanders, for Belgium, for a patch of sand on the deserts of Mesopotamia or a rocky trench on the heights of Gallipoli, they are winning self-Government for Ireland. But if they dare to lay down their lives on their native soil, if they dare to dream even that freedom can be won only at home by men resolved to fight for it there, then they are traitors to their country,

and their dream and their deaths alike are phases of a dishonourable phantasy. But history is not so recorded in other lands. In Ireland alone in this twentieth century is loyalty held to be a crime. If loyalty be something less than love and more than law, then we have had enough of such loyalty for Ireland or Irishmen. If we are to be indicted as criminals, to be shot as murderers, to be imprisoned as convicts because our offence is that we love Ireland more than we value our lives, then I know not what virtue resides in any offer of self-government held out to brave men on such terms. Self-Government is our right, a thing born in us at birth, a thing no more to be doled out to us or withheld from us by another people than the right to life itself, than the right to feel the sun or smell the flowers or to love our kind. It is only from the convict that these things are withheld for crime committed and proven—and Ireland that has wronged no man, that has injured no land, that has sought no dominion over others, Ireland is treated today among the nations of the world as if she was a convicted criminal. If it be treason to fight against such an unnatural fate as this, then I am proud to be a rebel and shall cling to my “rebellion” with the last drop of my blood. If there be no right of rebellion against a state of things that no savage tribe would endure without resistance, then I am sure that it is better for men to fight and die without right than to live in such a state of right as this. Where all your rights become only an accumulated wrong; where men must beg with bated breath for leave to subsist in their own land, to think their own thoughts, to sing their own songs, to garner the fruits of their own labours and even while they beg, to see things inexorably withdrawn from them, then surely it a braver, a saner and a truer thing to be a rebel in act and deed against such circumstances as these than tamely to accept it as the natural lot of men”.

If the Congress of Vienna in 1815 settled Europe ostensibly on the basis of the legitimist doctrine, that is, in defi-

ance of the principle of nationality, so the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 settled Europe ostensibly on the basis of nationalism in contrast with dynastic claims. But in neither case was the doctrine which was adopted as the ostensible basis at all fully implemented. In the give and take of political negotiations, large compromises are made in the interests of contending participants, and the final settlement assumes a form which bears little resemblance to what the logical fulfilment of the basic principle might be presumed to take. The basic principle in the event becomes a mere pretence, a slogan cut off from realities. The creation of nation states out of an existing pattern of multi-national states is in any case a formidable problem. But when this is accompanied by the need to carry out secret bargains entered into during the war, the task becomes almost impossible. The big problem in this respect which faced the framers of the Treaty of Versailles was the problem of national minorities who were torn from the nation states to which they legitimately belonged and incorporated into states ruled by majorities of a different nationality. This was the case in many of the states newly created by the treaty; e.g., Rumania, Italy, Czecho-Slovakia, and Poland and in the older states reorganised such as France and Germany. What the First World War did was to uphold in theory the principle of the nation state but substantially to give the lie to it in the territorial redistribution which resulted from it.

The participation of the United Kingdom and the United States of America in the war was officially justified on the ground that the central issue involved in it was the principle of nationality and of self-determination based on the nation state. Mr. Asquith speaking as Prime Minister in the House of Commons said: "We are fighting to vindicate the principle—which in these days when force, material force, sometimes seems to be the dominant influence and factor in the development of mankind, we are fighting to

vindicate the principle that small nationalities are not to be crushed in defiance of international good faith, by the will of a strong and over-mastering power." President Woodrow Wilson in February 1918 laid down four principles as the essential conditions of peace. Among these were the following: "Every territorial settlement involved in this war must be made in the interest and for the benefit of the populations concerned and not as a part of any mere adjustment or compromise of claims amongst rival states and that all well defined national aspirations should be accorded the utmost satisfaction that can be accorded them without introducing new, or perpetuating old, elements of discord and antagonism that would be likely in time to break the peace of Europe and consequently of the world". We shall examine later how far these conditions were fulfilled in the years following the war and the light that postwar experience throws on the principle of nationality as a basis of government.

If the First World War gave an impetus to nationalism in European countries, the Second World War extended it to Asian and African countries in the form of a widespread movement against European domination in colonial countries. The outstanding development in the history of nationalism during the twentieth century is the growth of anti-colonialism which in effect is the awakening of national self-consciousness in these countries by reaction against the common obstacle of a foreign government. Two factors contributed to this development. The astonishing successes of Japan during the war destroyed the prestige which sustained colonial rule by European countries and the realisation that these countries could not any longer afford the protection which primarily justified colonial rule. The second factor was the deliberate policy adopted by Japan, when the prospect of her defeat in the war became a certainty, of rousing national feeling in these countries against European domination, a policy reminiscent of the tactics adopted by the

governments in Europe who were fighting against Napoleon in the early years of the 19th century. The war materials left behind in Asian countries by Japan on the eve of her withdrawal provided the people with the means of waging, if not an organised, at least a persistent guerilla campaign. The formation of the United Nations Organisation, if it has not finally abolished colonial rule, has set world opinion firmly against its continuance. The burden of proof now rests upon those who wish to maintain colonial rule. The White Man's Burden has lost its sanctity as a civilising mission. It has instead become tainted in world opinion to an extent that makes inevitable its final dissolution.

The case of India is somewhat different from those of other Asian countries. There was no armed revolt; the primary sanction employed was the marshalling of public opinion into a concentrated passive resistance movement. The non-violent character of the revolution reflects credit on those who led it. It reflects credit equally on Great Britain who recognised the moral force behind the movement and voluntarily surrendered authority. Whatever form the revolution finally assumed, the growth of an active national self-consciousness in India must be traced to the general feeling of opposition to the existence of a foreign government in the country. Jawaharlal Nehru in an article which he wrote for the well known American journal, "Foreign Affairs", in 1938 laying stress on the underlying cultural and spiritual unity of India appears to attribute to this unity the origin of the national movement which resulted in the attainment of independence. Speaking of a united and free India, he says "it was not a superficial idea imposed from above but the natural outcome of that fundamental unity which had been the background of Indian life for thousands of years". It was not a natural outcome of this fundamental unity. In fact the fundamental unity of the country would have remained a dormant force but for the political movement which actively roused people's con-

sciousness of a foreign government and the need for removing it. The contribution of the Indian National Congress does not lie in the stress it laid on the fundamental unity of the country but rather in bringing home to people the existence of a common obstacle facing the country in the shape of a foreign government and thereby creating a dynamic force working for political unity. As Bernard Shaw puts it in the preface to his play, *John Bull's Other Island*, nationalism is like a bone in the human system, you are not aware of it until it gets broken.

The development of India into a free nation state has provided the pattern on which other subordinate governments forming part of the British Empire have attained or are in process of attaining nationhood and self-determination. This is the replacement of the concept of Empire by that of a Commonwealth of Nations and the evolution of a tradition by which national movements starting as organs of resistance are in their final stages accepted as a process of inevitable growth and the points in dispute are settled on a basis of friendly consultation and mutual accommodation. The idea of fitting countries which have attained nationhood by revolting against a centralised authority into an association of free and independent peoples along with the original rulers is both a novel and an impressive idea. But whether the Commonwealth serves any significant purpose in the international set-up in which we find ourselves, it is difficult to say. A group of nations differing fundamentally among themselves on many questions that matter to them individually and bound together only by the fact of a common historical origin and by their governments being imitations in varying degrees of the British system of Parliamentary Government can hardly be an adequate clearing-house of political opinion. It registers neither opinions nor any indications of them but mental reservations which betray disunity of thought and lack of coherence in face of the international situation.

The thesis I have tried to set out is that the decisive factor in the formation of a nation state is a feeling of common antagonism to another state or group of states. From this are derived two characteristics which have distinguished nation states. One is a sense of separateness and the other is a tendency to rely on power for the enforcement of its rights. The League of Nations failed in the main to achieve its objectives and the United Nations Organisation which has taken its place is yet to prove, in spite of its superiority in many respects over its predecessor, that it is capable of fulfilling its essential purpose. The eighty odd nations who form the United Nations Organisation while paying lip service to its ideals use it as a forum for voicing their separate interests and as a convenient vantage ground for forming useful alliances in the incessant war of wits and votes which goes on within its walls. Groups of human beings are generally more self-centred and less tolerant than individuals. A person acting as political representative of a country is a trustee for his people and cannot sacrifice their interests as he could his own. Nationalism is a powerful force for unifying a people but it is an equally powerful force for segregating the peoples of the world against one another. By its very nature and origin nationalism operates as a disintegrating force.

On the political side, the growth of nation states in Europe during the 19th century led to a state of imbalance and instability in which peace could be maintained only by a delicately adjusted balance of power in a world of mutual suspicion and antagonism. The emergence of nationalism into the twentieth century, extended and reinforced by the two World Wars, made the continuance of the principle of balance of power inevitable, with this difference that in the twentieth century it is accompanied on the one hand by a greater accumulation of armed forces by the Great Powers and on the other hand by the institution of international organisations for ventilating

grievances and settling disputes. The latter, however, seems too weak at present to withstand the strong disintegrating character of nationalism as a political force. One of the most remarkable revelations of the two World Wars is that the Marxist belief that class consciousness would prove a stronger weapon than national consciousness in European countries was disproved by events. Nationalism still remains the most potent political force in the world today. A notable illustration of this is the manner in which communism seeks its allies in Asian countries among people who have recently achieved or are in process of achieving national independence. This is based on the realisation that nationalism has a greater hold on people than socialism and that unless the latter is linked with nationalism it has little chance of making headway. The recent revolts in Poland and Hungary and the experience of Yugoslavia bear testimony to the inherent strength of nationalism as compared with socialism as a motive force in international politics.

The proposition receives added confirmation from the economic development of the world during the past fifty years. The interwar period was characterised by economic policies in the nation states of Europe which aimed at national self-sufficiency in contrast with international co-operation. The advent of the Great Depression in 1929 accentuated the tendency towards national economic autarchy enforced by appropriate measures for controlling migration, trade, taxation and foreign exchange in the interest of each state. The emergence of the idea of the Welfare State since the last war has greatly strengthened this process because public opinion in every country compels national leaders to devote their attention primarily to promoting the welfare of their own countries. Prof. Gunnar Myrdal makes this his main thesis in his recent book 'An International Economy', from which I quote the following: "National political machinery is strong and effective and has

a firm basis in people's attitudes of allegiance and solidarity; this machinery is getting stronger and its psychological basis firmer every year. It is used in the service of interests that are felt to be commonly shared within the nation. Machinery for international co-operation is, by contrast, weak and ineffective and it lacks a solid basis in people's valuations and expectations. Even without any real inherent conflict between the two goals, this tremendous and steadily increasing preponderance of national political machinery has deflected, and if a radical change of the trend is not induced, will continue to deflect the development of practical policy towards economic nationalism".

It is interesting to observe that along with the movement to develop a sense of world unity through the United Nations Organisation and its various agencies, there is a parallel movement to create regional organisations in which supra-national interests seek to over-ride a sentiment of unity confined within national limits. The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and military pacts like Baghdad and SEATO are cases in point. But the most notable example of a movement which seeks to supplant nationalism by a wider sense of unity is the gradual development of the concept of a United Europe consisting in the main of Western European countries. On the political side the effort to create a European Defense Community and a European Political Community has for the time being failed because nationalism has proved again too strong a political force. But on the economic side the creation of a European Coal and Steel Community and the proposal to establish a common European Organisation for the production and control of Atomic Energy and a European Free Market apparently give promise of better success. What is of interest from our point of view in these movements is that the motive force behind them is a common antagonism to Soviet Russia and the Eastern European block which it controls. It is in fact the economic counter-

part of the political balance of power which a system of nation states invariably creates.

If international integration is incompatible with national integration, what are the prospects of achieving world peace? The conflicting interests of sovereign nation states would always tend towards war unless adequate machinery was organised to settle them and unless—and this is important—war as the only alternative to arbitration becomes impracticable. The problem reduces itself to two issues—The first is, will the United Nations Organisation meet with greater success in adjusting national differences hereafter, and the second is, will the increasing destructiveness, expensiveness and uncertainties of war finally rule it out as a practicable method of settling quarrels between nations? It is dangerous to prophesy but the indications are that a state of cold war will persist but a shooting war is perhaps farther off than at any time since the termination of the war.

LECTURE—II

At the commencement of my Lecture yesterday, I referred to the historical connection between Nationalism and Democracy and suggested that in its origin the former was looked upon as a means of achieving the objectives of Democracy. Whether this expectation has been fulfilled in the years following the French Revolution is a matter of doubt and it is worthwhile examining the political shape that nation states have assumed in different countries and at different periods. It would appear in the case of several nation states that the ideas of freedom and equality as constituent elements of democracy have given place to the desire for separateness and the craving for power and prestige which the origin of nationalism in an atmosphere of antagonism to a common obstacle inevitably breeds. If a leader arises who inspires the confidence and loyalty of the people and has a personality which impresses them, the national feeling finds its sole embodiment in him. Democratic forms and machinery may still remain but they become no more than a cover for personal rule. National self-respect is enhanced if the gifts of leadership are employed for creating a sense of distinctness from, and superiority to, other people rather than for strengthening the processes of freedom within the state. The temptation which this presents to those who by choice or by circumstances are raised to positions of unquestioned leadership is a strong one and often meets with little resistance.

The dictatorships which arose after the First World War illustrate how nationalism can spell the negation of freedom. Nazism in Germany, Fascism in Italy and Communism in Russia represented in each case an outburst of national consciousness which owing to the hostile forces by which it was faced called for intense discipline and control

by the state. Hitler, Mussolini and Lenin depended for their strength in the last resort on the aggressively self-conscious national spirit which external circumstances created in their respective countries. Although the system meant increasing reliance on the army or the police for maintaining power, the fact still remains that in the final analysis the system was rendered possible by the assent or at any rate the active acquiescence of the people. Nationalism is a powerful force but like other social forces its usefulness depends on the ends for which it is employed. It is an embodiment of individual wills welded by a strong corporate sense and functioning as the main instrument of the community for social ends. The instrument was originally conceived as an organ of nineteenth century Liberalism in Europe but in the antagonism and frustration which the World Wars produced in several countries it became equally an instrument for accomplishing objectives which are the reverse of democratic.

The democratic traditions of a country with so long a history of successful parliamentary institutions as Great Britain necessarily made their impact on countries within the Empire when they attained the status of nation states. Freedom and equality, the essential concepts of democracy, provide the ideological foundation on which they have built their political institutions. But although the forms of parliamentary government prevail in these countries, not all of them accept in substance the principles of freedom and equality. Pakistan has had a parliamentary system of government since 1947 but has so far held no general elections. Further, the idea of a professedly Islamic State in a country consisting of other religious groupings besides Moslems runs counter to democratic thinking.

South Africa among Commonwealth countries represents perhaps the grossest violation of democratic ideas. The principle of racial segregation which forms so important

a part of her national policy can by no stretch of reasoning be reconciled with modern ideas of democracy. Athens under Pericles which in the early history of European Civilisation represents the peak of the democratic tradition denied the rights of citizenship to slaves although they formed the majority of the city's population. But there was nothing approaching the colour problem in Athens in the sense of colour being recognised as a basis of political distinction among human beings. Neither was it recognised in the Roman Empire. In the city States of ancient Greece the distinction which was generally recognised was one of culture—Greek and Barbarian. The distinction that Rome knew was one of legal status—citizen and non-citizen. Probably the earliest extant literature in which colour and other physical characteristics of a people are made the basis of political and social distinction is the Rig Veda in which the fair skinned Aryan people sharply differentiated themselves from the dark skinned aboriginal natives. The problem exists in the United States of America today but it is different in character from that of South Africa. Ever since the Civil War in the sixties of last century, the Federal Government in America has fought the problem with a persistence which is in marked contrast with South Africa. The recent decision of the Federal Court in the matter of integration in public schools and the intervention of the President in enforcing it, place the American Government in a different category and beyond reproach.

. In discussing the possibility of employing nationalism for undemocratic ends, it is relevant to notice the developments in the newly constituted nation state of Ghana in West Africa which is a member of the Commonwealth. They seem to show a tendency to use the power of the state to suppress parliamentary opposition and the freedom of the press. World criticism has for the time being checked the tendency. But a statement like the following by the Minister for the Interior in a parliamentary government shows an

extraordinary conception of democracy: "Anybody who makes a speech to the discredit of the government will be removed to a concentration camp, I have power—and I am going to use it sternly and strongly, no matter what—I will issue orders to arrest members of the opposition who indulge in criticising the government to the advantage of the opposition. My sword of power is two-edged and any civil servant or politician who plays the fool will be cut down at once".

The developments in Ghana were the subject of a recent interview granted by the Prime Minister, Nkrumah, to the editor of the British Weekly 'New Statesman'. The statements made by the Prime Minister in obvious good faith to the editor throw a flood of light on the psychology underlying these developments. According to the Prime Minister, the deportations ordered by the Minister for the Interior had unfortunately been necessary and justified as the only way of quieting the country and in this they had been successful. The outside world must appreciate that Africa thought and felt differently from the West and that African mentality and tradition could not be neglected. The charge of dictatorship was based on a misconception of the African attitude towards a ruler, which is not easily understood in the West. When an African chief is installed, he is subjected to various ordeals by the common people to remind him that he must behave well when he is in power. But once he is accepted as a chief, he is expected to command and he loses all respect if he does not make himself obeyed. What happened recently in Ghana was that people wanted to be assured who the government was and to see it executed strongly. This was not an attack on the democratic form of government but only a way of preserving it.

If these statements mean anything, they indicate that in Africa and possibly also in Asia the growth of independent nation states, in spite of the effort to preserve outward appearances in the early stages, may mean the first step on

the high road to despotism. This type of despotism is the more dangerous because unlike the old mediaeval type, it will appear to have its roots not in traditional authority but in the willing acceptance of the people and wear all the outward symbols of democracy. Not merely in Africa but in Asia, in the Near and Middle as well as the Far East, we are witnessing the phenomenon of nationalism gradually shedding its historical associations with Liberalism.

The great danger to democracy which arises in a nation state is that since decisions are taken by a majority vote in the Legislature, and government represents the majority, the machinery of the state is apt to be employed with insufficient regard for the interests and opinions of the minorities in the state. Indeed it generally happens that when the people of a country pass under the government of a nation state, the majority party who wield authority in the name of the people invest the state with a power and a sanctity which more experienced democratic countries do not accept. The excessive use of the state for directing the personal lives of citizens, the economic activities of the community and the moral and social habits of the people is a not infrequent feature of nation states in the initial stages of their existence. What perhaps is more disconcerting is that not merely is the machinery of the state put to excessive use but that it is not realised that the task of a democratic government is to effect a harmonising, wherever practicable, of the views of the majority and of the minorities and not to override the latter because they lack the power which control of the state machinery confers. The presumption that the government represents the national will and that it is based on the support of the people as a whole provides a temptation for it to encroach on the lives and liberties of individual citizens. An independent judiciary may provide a partial remedy for this. But ultimately the solution must come from political experience and education

and from the organisation of a strong political opposition in the country and in the Legislature.

A well organised political opposition is indispensable to the proper working of democracy in a nation state. Without it democracy will lose the substance of freedom and become a mere facade for authoritarian rule. The chief purposes of an opposition in a parliamentary system of government are these. First, it will keep the government constantly on the alert, alive to its responsibilities and aware of changes in the political climate and general conditions in the country. Secondly, it will help the average citizen to form a better judgment regarding the main issues before the country because public discussion of the issues by the government and by the opposition will enable him to appreciate the conflicting considerations that bear on them. Thirdly, an opposition provides the nucleus for an alternative government, failing which in times of emergency there will be a strong incentive for direct action to take the place of constitutional action.

If the purpose of government in a nation state is to see that the general will of the people constituting the nation should find expression in the policies adopted by the state, a rigid adherence to the principle of arriving at decisions by a majority vote would in effect be a negation of democracy. The idea of counting heads as a means of determining the common will is relatively modern. In the Homeric assemblies in ancient Greece, opinion was voiced by a general shout. In our own village communities the idea of dividing the village council for reaching decisions was unknown. In the Uttaramerur inscription, for example, relating to rules for the conduct of village assemblies in South India, no reference is made to this practice. On the other hand, decision by compromise and agreement is presumed to be the normal practice. Even today, in the House of Commons the first step in the process of arriving at a deci-

sion is for members to shout 'aye' or 'no' collectively before a division is taken. The vast size of popular assemblies today, the complexity of the problems coming before them and the emphasis placed on individual personality make it difficult to arrive at decisions except by a process of voting. Voting again is difficult unless the matter under consideration is condensed by discussion and compromise as far as possible into two alternative propositions. This accounts for the origin of the two-party system and the inevitable tendency to it in most democratic countries. Although the two-party system helps to avoid the division of public opinion into minute groups and thereby makes decision easier, it still remains a matter of the highest importance in a country which has attained nationhood for the majority party to endeavour to understand the point of view of the minorities and not to disregard it, if nationalism and liberty are to remain realities in a people's life. Since possession of power generally creates a desire for greater power, there will be little willingness for the ruling party to consult the views and interests of minorities unless the latter can wield the sanction born of a strong, well-knit opposition.

While the existence of an effective party system is indispensable to parliamentary government, it is worthwhile emphasising that unless a live sense of national unity is maintained and provides a common background for the majority and minority parties, the whole fabric of democracy will stand in danger of breaking up. The state must remain one and undivided if the party system is to function without exerting a disintegrating influence. This explains the practice which generally prevails in democratic countries of regarding foreign affairs as a matter outside the sphere of party controversy. Since nationalism as an effective bond of unity arises, as we have seen, from a common reaction to external developments, it is inherent in nationalism that any signs of hostility on the part of a foreign power act instinctively as a rallying force and keep the

people united. On the outbreak of a war, it is common experience that political parties sink their differences and combine to form coalition governments. It is also common experience that to the disunity which differences of opinion in internal matters create, differences with foreign states act as an invariable corrective. While political parties in India are divided on several matters of internal policy, such as the institution of a national language, the reorganisation of states, and the financial measures for implementing planned development, there is unity among all parties on the two issues of Kashmir and Goa. Pakistan appears to be in the throes of an internal political crisis but Kashmir serves as a strong rallying point. Wars and threats of wars are fundamentally bad things but in the inscrutable dispensation of Providence, they seem to have uses which redeem them while they last. This is not to justify war as an institution but only registering facts as we know them.

The idea of freedom is the foundation of democracy but freedom is difficult to analyse and equally difficult to practise. Freedom in the true sense means the replacement in the life of the individual of external control by self-control. Freedom does not mean the absence of control, but on the hand, the substitution of the difficult art of self-discipline for passive obedience to authority imposed from outside. Freedom so defined constitutes the essence of citizenship and can flourish only in a society based on a live sense of mutual respect and mutual obligation. Freedom in the context of citizenship is freedom subjected to discipline and directed to service and requires for its prevalence and growth a consciousness of unity such as nationalism represents. It is this that enables nationalism to make its biggest contribution to democracy and that redeems it in spite of its recognised failings.

Next to freedom the most important constituent of democracy is equality. When the principle of nationality

made its appeal to the peoples of Europe soon after the French Revolution, it arose in combination with the philosophy of progress based on Liberalism which distinguished nineteenth century thinking. Equality presented itself as a necessary concomitant of liberty to the leaders of the French Revolution and equality to them was not merely political in its scope but also economic. It meant besides wider sharing of political rights among the people the breaking down of the barriers that in a feudal society confined opportunities of economic betterment to certain privileged classes. The political implications of the principle of equality have received increasing recognition since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Most democratic countries today have accepted the demand for basing government on the widest possible franchise without regard to property, class or sex. When Karl Marx, writing in the middle of the nineteenth century, envisaged an international proletarian revolution as the only solution for the condition of the working classes, his mind was dominated by the fact that most countries in Europe were then under despotic governments in which only the richer classes were allowed to participate. The political reforms which have taken place since his time in Europe have resulted in adult franchise in most countries, so that every class of people have now the right of representation in the deliberations of government. The nation state with a broad based democratic government has proved a more effective instrument for achieving equality than an organisation based on class conscious international solidarity on which Karl Marx had rested his hopes.

There is no form of political equality which in a modern state is more important from the point of view of enabling it to put to the fullest use its moral and psychological resources than the admission of women to equal status with men. A few years ago in a fact finding enquiry conducted under the auspices of the UNESCO led by Prof. Duverger, Professor of Political science in the University of Paris, into

the effects of conferring the franchise on women in European countries, it was found that while in the rough and tumble of political debates in Parliament, women, largely through their inexperience as compared with men, so far have not held their own with men, in their capacity as voters they have shown a greater sense of responsibility and better judgment in choosing Members of Parliament. Women generally have a power of intuitive judgment which men often lack which fits them to play an important part in political life of a country. This does not mean that intellectually they are behind men. I was impressed, during my term as Vice-Chancellor of the University of Bombay, with the increasing number of women students who won the highest academic distinctions of the University and who at the same time acquitted themselves with credit in the athletic and social activities of their colleges. In view of the general belief that so far women have not made the full contribution expected of them to parliamentary discussions, I was surprised time after time in the colleges of Bombay with the number of women students who won the top prize in elocution competitions. I presume that women students in Madras have not in this respect lagged behind their sisters in Bombay. If they have, may I suggest it is time they made amends?

It is a remarkable fact that in democratically governed countries which possess a strong national consciousness, the greater part of the matters that come for deliberation before parliament have a social and economic rather than a purely political significance. In matters affecting the social and economic development of the community, women naturally take a keener and more practical interest. This is possibly derived from the fact that as mothers they are organically more closely related to children and emotionally more deeply concerned with them. They have therefore a greater interest in what happens to the next generation and a greater faith in the future of the race. As they find more oppor-

tunities and gather more experience, I have little doubt their participation in the tasks of government on an equal footing with men will make for a better and happier world.

A question that naturally arises in this connection is that if women have their responsibilities in the home, their capacity to participate in politics and in the business of government must be greatly limited. It is for this reason that the idea of family planning, to which increasing attention is being given, becomes important. Family planning is generally regarded as a means of birth control and regulation of population but it is perhaps more important as a means of securing the health and leisure necessary for women to take their part in the life of the community.

Political equality as an essential element of democracy has found general acceptance and provision for it is made in the constitutions of most countries which are founded on the twin principles of nationality and democracy. But political equality is not fully implemented unless along with it provision is also made for economic equality. The latter is a necessary corollary to the former although it is more difficult to achieve. In under-developed countries economic inequalities occur in a more accentuated form than in more developed countries and therefore when they achieve national independence, the problem is found to be both more urgent and more difficult. India as a country which falls within this category has made stupendous efforts in the past ten years in the direction of reducing economic inequality and her experience in this field is worth examining. Her principal effort towards this objective has been in raising the general standard of living, so that the margin between the highest and lowest levels of income tends to be smaller. The effort to raise the income at the lowest level by plans of economic development is supplemented by fiscal measures designed to reduce net income at higher levels by progressive taxation. The danger involved in this process is that

the reduction of net income at the higher levels tends to reduce saving and investment among classes who are able to save and have formed the habit of saving and investment. Efforts to collect small savings and stimulate the investment habit among classes not used to it by appropriate institutional machinery will provide a corrective to the consequent decline in capital formation which is so essential to economic development.

It is not merely the developmental aspect of inequality but its psychological aspect which requires consideration in a society which has newly attained political independence and has adopted a democratic system of government based on a wide franchise. The Indian Taxation Enquiry Commission suggested a ceiling on personal income fixed on the basis that the maximum net income, i.e., income after tax is deducted, should not exceed a prescribed multiple of the average income per family, a family being assumed to consist of a father, a mother and three children. The idea underlying the formula was that the maximum income and the average per capita income should be so related that they move together up or down. Under a programme of planned development, it may be assumed that the average per capita income would gradually rise and consequently the maximum income would also rise. The important point is that the maximum income will not increase unless there is an increase at the same time in the level of average income. The formula therefore would not merely be a first step towards the removal of gross inequalities in income but provide an incentive for greater production and increase of national income. As conceived by the Taxation Enquiry Commission, it was not meant as a formula for enforcement by legislation and by *ad hoc* administrative measures but as a guiding principle for determining the share of income at the higher levels which the state might appropriate by taxation, having regard to economic development as well as social justice. The accomplishment of this objective

however, as the Commission has pointed out, cannot merely be the result of tax changes but must be related to an integrated approach along several directions.

The proposal did not receive the approval of the Government although it was supported in principal by the Planning Commission. But a proposal aimed in effect at limiting agricultural income as distinct from professional, commercial and industrial income, by means of a ceiling on the size of individual holdings of land has found general acceptance. The logical justification of the differentiation between agricultural and non-agricultural income in this respect is open to doubt. But a practical justification is to be found in the fact that the land surface of the earth, especially that part of it which is suitable for cultivation, is strictly limited while the demand for land in consequence of a steady increase in population is growing. The argument receives further support from two facts. First, the demand for land is directly related to the primary physical necessities of human life. Secondly, in an agricultural society a sense of having a definite stake in land serves as a powerful motive for productive effort.

There is no type of organisation in which in the economic sphere democracy finds more adequate expression than the cooperative movement. The proposition however is more true in principle than in practice. In theory co-operation comes nearest as a form of economic organisation to the fulfilment of the democratic ideas of freedom and equality. But in actual fact, if we take India as an illustration, although the movement has been in existence for over fifty years, it is still far from fulfilling the expectations with which it was started. Co-operative credit judged by numbers has been the most successful form of co-operation in India but its actual contribution to agricultural finance has been on the whole insignificant. What is perhaps the least satisfactory feature of the co-operative movement in India

today is that in rural areas societies are dominated by local vested interests and the democratic principle as in effect given the go-by. Since the policy of placing a ceiling on individual holdings on land has been generally accepted, it has become a matter of great practical importance that small holders should organise themselves into co-operative societies. If crop yield is to increase and agricultural production maintained at the highest level, it is not enough to depend on the increased interest with which the peasant may be expected to cultivate his own land but to supplement this by the economies of co-operative purchase, sale, finance and cultivation. The problem is beset with practical difficulties, and it is doubtful if in the initial stages the strong individualist instinct of the small man who comes into possession of land for the first time can be broken down except by some measure of compulsion by the state. The element of compulsion necessary is that when land is redistributed under a land reform scheme or is reclaimed by the state, it must be made a condition that those to whom the land is allotted in contiguous areas should agree to form themselves into societies for co-operative servicing and co-operative farming. Further, the societies should be so organised as to give equal opportunities to those who join it and to provide for them the assistance of a well trained executive staff.

I have endeavoured to cover a wide range of matters in these Lectures. In conclusion, may I sum up the main thoughts that form their substance? Nationalism passing through many ups and downs remains still the strongest political force in the world. Neither class consciousness nor a sense of world unity can replace it in the measurable future. By promoting unity among a people, living within defined territorial limits, it helps the growth of democratic ideas and institutions among them. But it does not invariably do so. The fact that nationalism originates as an exercise of power in antagonism to other people, the sense of unity it creates may provide in times of emergency under

ambitious and powerful leadership the basis for authoritarian rule. To employ this unity for sustaining democratic rule, political opinion within the state should be organised into voluntary groups as few in number and as well balanced as possible. The possibility of effectively counteracting the negative influence of nationalism by international organisation is still remote. The utmost that may be expected of such organisation is that the exclusive spirit inherent in nationalism does not ordinarily result in war and that constructive work in things that affect mankind as a whole promotes an active international spirit. Nationalism as a basis of democracy must not confine its attention to politics. Freedom and equality are concepts which have as great a bearing on the economic as on the political life of a people. It is conceivable that the growing awareness of the interdependence of nation states in economic matters may in spite of the depressing events of the recent past open up a fresh avenue to international goodwill and co-operation.