

2nd Page

Class A
2nd Subject

ROYAL EMPIRE SOCIETY

ESSAY - CLASS A

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'Consider some of the present day problems arising from nationalism in the Commonwealth and Empire.'

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Synopsis

1. Introduction. The relation between nationalism and the Commonwealth and Empire.
2. Nationalism of the dominions in its international and imperial aspects: particularly the clash of India and South Africa.
3. Nationalism of the Colonies, leading to the demand for selfgovernment, the difficulties in granting it, and the weakness of a state built on emotional nationalism.
4. Nationalism and the multi-racial society. Need to create a new nationalism for each society.
5. Nationalism as the enemy of economic progress.

Some of the present day problems
arising from nationalism
in the Commonwealth and Empire.

Nationalism might be described as the self awareness of a community. It is a state of mind, and can therefore be healthy or unhealthy. Indeed, it can be very unreasonable: often nationalistic feeling is stirred up by unscrupulous propagandists, and a sense of pride or injustice and hate grows up without sufficient reason. Miss Margery Perham in her controversy about Kenya with Mrs. Elspeth Huxley remarked how much misunderstanding and prejudice there seemed to be between them - two reasonable and tolerant people, and how serious therefore the results of prejudice and ignorance could be in a whole community.

The Commonwealth and Empire has been the product of British nationalism as expressed in colonisation, conquest and imperialism, and then of the growing nationalism of the Colonies. First, the colonies of British origin became nations, and as Britain had learnt her lesson after attempting to thwart the American colonies, they became nations in the Commonwealth. More recently, African and Indian nations have become Dominions, and because their nationalism has rather different circumstances and ideals from the Anglo-Saxon Dominions, there have been problems arising from this.

Nationalism really created Dominion status:

a nationalism which arose from different cultural and geographical characteristics, and did not mean a serious difference with the mother country on political ideals and practice. A Commonwealth of independent nations of equal status was therefore possible. It was spontaneous, coming from the people of growing nations, and the united strength of the Dominions depends on the attitude of their peoples. Ignorance of the Commonwealth is therefore dangerous and divisions of theory cannot easily be repaired by government action only.

This belief in the Commonwealth may be threatened by ~~examples~~ concessions to nationalism, like for example, allowing India to remain in the Commonwealth as a republic. Mr Menzies complained in 1950, "The old structural unity of the Empire has gone; it has been succeeded by structural variety." "He feared lest former unity should give way to a purely functional association based upon friendship and common interests but necessarily lacking the old high instincts and instantaneous cohesion ... "*" Thus many people feel that India's attitude to the Crown indicates serious weakness, and this feeling is strengthened when Great Britain supports S.E.A.T.O. but India does not. The exclusion of Britain from the ANZUS pact and the growing link of Canada with U.S.A., both results of healthy economic and strategic nationalism, are sometimes interpreted as showing that the Commonwealth does little practical economic or political work (which, of course, is not true) and is just

Prof. N.
Mansergh
in "The Listener"
Dec 9, 1954.

a collection of vague loyalties and idealisms.

The Commonwealth can only gain the prestige needed to lead the world, and the strength to take effective action in world affairs if the aims of its members are the same and its peoples are therefore united. For example, India and South Africa take different views on the questions of race and colour. South Africa follows the nationalist policy of apartheid, while India supports "her children abroad" in South and East Africa, and the native Africans, and so has aroused fears of "cuckoo imperialism." Britain is experimenting in racial problems in the Central African Federation and in East Africa, and so no one is quite sure what is the Commonwealth's attitude to racial problems. Moreover when Dominions quarrel over these matters in the United Nations, the world no doubt thinks that an organization which cannot keep such differences private is decadent. As before the last war they will say "A house divided against itself cannot stand," and so the Commonwealth, despite its opportunities, loses its influence. As C. I. M. Alport says, apartheid "has provided ammunition for the enemies of South Africa and of the whole democratic western tradition which they have not been slow to use."

The kernel of this problem of nationalism among equal Dominions and the key to its solution lies here: the Commonwealth is not just an economic and political association, but one where the strength of the bond springs from a loyalty to common ideals, such as the democratic principle

Mr. Nehru
1947.

of equal rights for all men; ideals which transcend the various nationalisms of the Commonwealth. It is clear that there is not this unity of spirit between India and South Africa, and unless either of them compromises, which does not seem likely, it appears inevitable that one must leave the Commonwealth, or the Commonwealth will become an association as Mr Menzies said, "lacking the old high instincts." It would be a ~~big~~ pity if either seceded: for if South Africa left, it might mean that the position would become more hopeless with the Commonwealth's influence removed, and if India left, it would suggest that the Commonwealth has little to offer an Asian country where the indigenous culture has been proof against the white man's, and to a Great power with a tender political conscience, and a constructive if unorthodox policy. Nevertheless, secession may be necessary, for though the Commonwealth can embrace different ~~and~~ national energies it can scarcely do so when they are pulling against the most fundamental principles of the Commonwealth.

Nationalism is not sufficient foundation for a sovereign state. Among the Colonies there is often much national pride; this must, however, be coupled with social standards and political stability which can stand without the props of the imperial government.

Demands for self government can be made by an educated minority which may well be out of sympathy with its less advanced compatriots. When its demands are refused, the minority stirs up

the mass to opposition, great hate is produced, and political progress is prevented. For instance to enable colonies to become independent, education is necessary but it is not aided by the haste and insecurity that nationalism produces. Schools in Cyprus and Singapore have been hotbeds of extremism.

Moreover, a new state needs political parties which have a fuller philosophy than the (often too) early attainment of selfgovernment, and which are national, not racial or local parties. The issue is often complicated by groups which do not want ~~to~~ be the rule of the educated minority: either because they are not so politically advanced, as the Northern tribes in Nigeria, or because they are a minority as the Turks in Cyprus. Such groups feel that Colonial Office rule is likely to be more just.

The Colonial Office has not until recently perhaps recognized the importance of this growth of nationalism in the larger colonies, and has tended to aggravate it by tactlessness, or more often by indifference. Miss Margery Perham has often pleaded for a more constructive policy towards this developing nationalism. The Colonial Office should be reorganized and expanded, and a timetable for achieving selfgovernment given. "By dramatic schemes of education and training for selfgovernment, openly planned with the drive we devote to military operations, we could at once pacify and prolong the period of approach (to selfgovernment). She says our administrators must seek out and teach native administrators as their primary aim, for "the pioneers of nationalism still too often

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Dec 30. 1954

feel themselves forced into the wilderness of sedition." Such a progressive policy has so far been largely successful in West Africa, Malaya and the West Indies.

The alternative seems to be the violent expulsion of the colonial government, followed by a period when the new sovereign state is estranged from its former rulers, and struggles alone with immense problems. India is perhaps suffering under this feeling now, and is showing it in her awareness of colonial problems and her suspicion of even the British in Africa. Even if there is no such estrangement, serious problems may develop after independence gained through violent nationalism. Politicians who won mass support by extreme policies must become responsible statesmen. Dr Nkrumah has found in the Gold Coast that he must for his country's sake cut out diseased cocoa trees, rather than give free bus rides as he had promised, and so the more moderate parties have revived now that independence is found to be a serious thing. Too often, the colonies' nationalism is based on antipathy of the ruling nation, not in a pride of their own national heritage, and so when the colonial power withdraws, local loyalties resume their hold. Thus in Africa, tribalism reemerges, and in India, the Bombay riots suggest a conflict between the new federal and the old local powers. Violent nationalism therefore tends to create independent states on unsure foundations.

Ronald E.
Robinson.
Listener
Dec 16 1954

Multi-racial societies have been described as "about the toughest problem facing the Commonwealth today". At the same time they are our greatest opportunity. In them, nationalism is seen "in the raw" "The

C.J.M. Alport
"Hope in Africa".

fears of each community exacerbate the extremism of the other with the result that moderate and tolerant opinion is swept aside and the prospects of a peaceful expanding future ~~and~~ becomes increasingly insecure." On the other hand, if the Commonwealth can defeat nationalism and racialism in these multi-racial societies, the problems of nationalism in the Commonwealth generally will be nearer solution.

At the root of the problem is the fear of the minority lest their cultural and social standards should be overwhelmed by the backward majority. Coupled with this is the fear, perhaps less honourable, that a rise in the majority's standard of living would mean a drop in their own: labour for example would become dearer. Vernon Bartlett has remarked that apartheid in South Africa which should theoretically give all groups the best opportunities, seemed to be designed to benefit the whites only. To maintain their cultural and political and economic position the white minority has become exclusive, and fearful of even social contact. Legislation in South Africa has been designed to consolidate the political power of the Whites — the Afrikaners especially, to provide industry and agriculture with abundant cheap labour, to prevent the natives attaining political influence and to keep the races apart, by separate amenities and areas, and by making social intercourse, and intermarriage illegal. There are practical difficulties in carrying this out: for instance, the native Reserves are inadequate and so native vagrancy and native encroachment on reserved

areas in towns is ~~is~~ serious. Moreover the whites in Johannesburg for example do not want to lose their domestic servants, who form a large proportion of the population ~~of~~ in the white areas, through a rigorous application of the policy.

The nationalism in South Africa, as in most multiracial societies is strongly racial: but it is increased by the Afrikaners' nationalism. There is considerable animosity between them and the Anglo Saxon whites, and culturally they are a separate nation. The history of the last 150 years has embittered them so that many want South Africa to be the Afrikaners' land. Consequently, the English fear for example that their language should no longer be official, for if one entrenched clause can be removed so can the other.

This feeling of the Afrikaners has been expressed by Dr Otto du Toit: - "Nationalist... Afrikanerdom is fully determined that South Africa's destiny can be nothing else but a free Republic; that South Africa will be completely torn away from the British Connection." And at present the British Connection is an obstacle to the nationalists, for Britain will not hand over the three High Commission Territories to South Africa while racialism is supreme in the Union and the Natives in the territories oppose the transference. Thus, nationalism has divided South Africa, arousing violent passion, made trouble for the future, and brought difficulties with Britain, India and in the United Nations.

Kenya is another example of a multiracial society, ~~where~~ but under the colonial office. The conflict is well revealed by Mrs Elspeth Huxley and Miss Margery Perham, in "Race and Politics in Kenya". Again the white minority is afraid of the native majority, and are rightly proud of their ^{developing} achievement in Kenya. The

Colonial Office backed by strong public opinion in Great Britain, is suspicious of the settlers, and has tended to regard them rather as opponents of its policy of "the paramountcy of native interests". The Africans, lately in an uneasy alliance with the Indian minority, and led by some brilliant but frustrated leaders, have been suspicious of ~~the~~^{all} white men, because of the settlers' position. Thus the three racial groups and the Colonial Office have not been able to work together for the good of all.

It might seem that so far the Commonwealth has no answer to this problem: but it has been very successful in Canada. Since self government was granted the English and French communities have worked together for the good of their country: a "subnationality" has developed, in the Commonwealth, and neither British nor French. The two communities have been able to keep their own culture and religion, but have been united in political and economic matters. Political parties are Canadian, and not British or French. New immigrants become Canadian, under the policy of "integration", and their old nationality enriches and develops the growing Canadian one. At the same time, Canada is still in the Commonwealth, and newcomers support the Commonwealth "not because ~~like~~^{as} Mr Herbert Morrison has said "it is British, but because it is good". The troubles of South Africa, Kenya and the Central Africa Federation arise from a conflict between the old idea of Empire, where the British were the senior partner, and the new ideal of equality between the Dominions, united by common ideals, working for the common good. The white populations in Africa have not yet succeeded in adapting their position and outlook to this new ideal.

It is true that in Africa the problem of the multi-racial society is complicated by the deeprooted colour prejudice. Even this, however, can be broken: first by recognizing that no race is by nature inferior. The Royal Commission on East Africa has suggested that the zoning of land and urban development should be by income and not colour. ~~Same~~ The same rates should be paid to black and white workers for the same work. Opportunities for social intercourse should be increased, and so both social injustice and disunity will be removed, and ~~but~~ each group will be able to maintain its own tradition, for as the Dutch found in Indonesia, it is probable that people will on the whole prefer the society of their own race. Thus a new nation will be born: a native from Kenya or South Africa will then be called a Kenyan or South African like their white compatriots are now. The choice is clear though perhaps hard. Will the wound be allowed to fester until the minority's achievement and standards are swamped by the resurging barbarism of the majority or can the peoples in Africa mortify their pride and greed and work together to build new democratic nations?

Nationalism retards economic progress in several ways. In South Africa the policy of apartheid prevents the need for skilled labour being supplied from native sources, and ^{the} immigration of skilled whites is discouraged by the bad racial relations. Already the theory of apartheid has been modified to allow Africans to ~~take~~^{do} more in industry and Vernon Bartlett believes that economic necessity will in the end defeat apartheid. So, just for an unpleasant political theory, the South Africans

are embittering racial relations and retarding their country's development.

The partition of India and Pakistan is the product of religious nationalism and is not warranted by economic or geographical reasons. Pakistan is in two parts, and is poor and mainly agricultural. If she were united to India her economy would be more balanced and stable. "Few lands are so clearly . . . a single whole as India," writes Prof. C. H. Philips, and yet ~~nationalism~~ this advantage is not exploited because of nationalism.

Nationalism frightens foreign investors and nationalism is strongest where investment is most needed. Nationalism has become more moderate since self government was promised in West Africa because their leaders realise the need for capital which much largely come from Britain — the main butt of nationalist outbreaks! Investors are frightened by the possibility of "nationalization" and by the fact that political unrest reduces the chances of profits.

In a multiracial society like Kenya, politics have priority and essential problems like soil erosion are neglected. There can be little economic progress until it is decided whether Kenya is to be the settlers' country, or the natives or is to be a home for all. The East African Commission reports that African tribalism as well as European racialism has fettered economic growth. Miss Margery Perham has said that it showed her the importance of economic factors in "problems which / among others, have so long been seen as mainly political and administrative"

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1958.

Yet as we, with our democratic ideals, cannot use compulsion, the solution of these economic problems depends on the willingness of all parties to work together. Here again, nationalistic ignorance of prejudice can retard economic progress.

These then are some of the problems arising from nationalism in the Commonwealth and Empire. Let us hope that by greater tolerance and constructive effort, the Commonwealth may be able to achieve its ideals, and that all nations in the Commonwealth may feel happy and secure in their own achievement and yet, even more, may be aware of the far ~~not~~ greater opportunities and responsibilities of the Commonwealth and Empire in the world at large, and may be true to this deeper loyalty.

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