

LIBERAL OPINION



THE CHALLENGE OF NATIONALISM

By PETER ROYLE

(Readers are invited to send in their comments on the views expressed in this article.)

In the twentieth century European nationalists have almost always been reactionaries of the deepest dye. The usual features of this nationalism are the desire to dominate, anti-Semitism, the glorification of war, and the conviction that chaos is the natural order in international affairs and that supra-national institutions are the work of the Devil. **It is essentially a relapse into tribalism, a recourse to magic, born of a refusal to come to terms with the real world and to work out rational solutions to the problems which arise in it.** It is probable that all political ideals are rooted in something deeper than reason, but not all political parties are irrationalist in the sense that they abjure rational discussion of their aims. But this is precisely what European nationalism does: for ultimately, beyond the simple one of uniting the nation, it has no aims; its policies, when it is in power, being dictated solely by what it considers to be the exigencies of the moment. If asked what it plans to do when it has united the nation, it will have no answer; but it will hope, secretly or openly, that Providence will furnish it with a "casus belli"; and failing that, it can, of course, always play the part of Providence itself. That it should have no aims that lend themselves to

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IN THIS ISSUE:

- 1 The Challenge of Nationalism
 - 2 Two Significant Election Results
 - 3 Nif Government to Act Against Summerteurs
-

rational discussion is quite natural: for its appreciation of the problems which confront the nation scarcely extends beyond the feeling that "things are bad"; and the Jew, the enemy in the midst, the scapegoat against whom the people must unite, is one second accused of capitalist exploitation and the next of Bolshevism; anyway, deal with "him", and "alles sal regkom".

EUROPEAN MINDLESSNESS

European nationalism is, therefore, a very different political phenomenon from, say, socialism or liberalism; for it is mindless, a thing among things, and must be discussed in terms of efficient instead of final causes, irrational motives instead of rational purposes; **and the nationalist, with whom debate is impossible, can only be psycho-analysed, with a view to curing him where possible and rendering him impotent when not.** Because nationalist sentiment has often been exploited to prevent the growth of working-class solidarity and to blur basic economic issues, nationalism in Europe, even when its escutcheon has not been blotted by the more obnoxious features I have mentioned, has always been strenuously opposed by the Left.

There is in Africa nowadays, however, a different form of nationalism, a nationalism of the left, whose slogan is equality and which stands, theoretically at least, committed to the realization of the brotherhood of man: this is African nationalism. The basic features of this nationalism are anti-colonialism, anti-tribalism, a newly awakened patriotism, a sincere commitment to world peace and a concomitant attachment to supra-national institutions, and an increasingly militant trade unionism on an international level. **Now, all these ideals and policies will be seen to involve aims which are susceptible of rational discussion: for even the patriotism of the Africa nationalist is not merely an emotion (although it is this, and should be respected): it is also, and perhaps fundamentally, the expression of his determination to carry out the manifold tasks, educational, economic and social, which confront him, and to generate in his compatriots the zeal and enthusiasm necessary for their accomplishment.** The European nationalist is justly proud—and his pride is an important element in his patriotism—of his cultural heritage, but he errs in making it the pretext for superiority feelings which express themselves in a desire to dominate the "lesser breeds"; in so doing, he

betrays it, makes a thing of it instead of an opportunity for further cultural achievements, and ultimately renders himself incapable of appreciating it: by making his culture the historical expression of his eternal, noumenal pre-eminence, he turns it into something achieved, completed, a closed chapter in the historical process which becomes for him, ironically, a closed book; so that when his imperialist urges are thwarted and it becomes necessary for him to understand and even to contribute to his culture instead of smugly "spreading" it, he cannot do so and is left with the desolate feeling that the world is coming to an end.

CULTURE

The patriotism (perhaps racial pride would be a better term) of the African nationalist is unlike this. He has realized, if he is intelligent, that culture, even though often national in origin, in the last analysis transcends frontiers; and the European heritage is in the process of becoming his own. But his patriotism insists that he make his own distinctive contribution, and this he is keenly attempting to do. His patriotism is therefore orientated to the future and not to the past, to a future conceived as belonging not to a dominant nation or **bloc** but to mankind as a whole, in whose cultural, political, and economic development he aspires to play a significant and vital rôle.

Far from being incompatible with internationalism, therefore, African nationalism, like much of Asian nationalism, will find its logical fulfilment only in the establishment of fully-fledged supra-national institutions. Already, in its opposition to tribalism, made necessary, of course, by its aim to throw off the colonial yoke, it has shown itself capable of broadening African allegiances and ready to come to terms with an exciting, if terrifying, new world, against which tribalists, like the chiefs who support Matanzima in the Transkei, are fighting a desperate rearguard action. **And its commitment to the United Nations and its officers, impressively demonstrated in its support of Hammarskjöld against the attacks of the Soviet Union, shows that it has grasped the all-important truth that absolute independence in the modern world is a myth or a mirage.** We all, whether we like it or not, depend on one another for our safety and economic well-being, not to speak of other less tangible things. In a nuclear war between the Soviet Union and the United States, it would not only be the combatants who ran the risk of

being wiped out or permanently contaminated: the whole of mankind would be imperilled. In this situation it is, of course, only natural that African nationalists, who for very good reasons feel uncommitted to either side in the Cold War, should stand four-square behind an organization which at the moment seems the best hope of preventing Africans being exterminated in a war that does not directly concern them; it is only just that through this organization they should demand a share in the control of weapons that threaten to bring about their own destruction; yet it is also extremely encouraging that they have assumed their responsibility in this matter, all the more so since their neutralism, and the wooing this has led to on the part of both power blocs, have put them in the position of potential peacemakers. **Much of the stridency of their propaganda is perhaps attributable to their appreciation of the fact of collective human responsibility, and the additional responsibility this places on the individual and the group to convert others to what seems to them to be sanity.**

ECONOMICS

It is also due, however, to another fact of increasing importance: in a world of economic interdependence the primary producing nations are getting less than their fair share of the world's goods. Internationally, therefore, African nationalism, in conjunction with the nationalism of other poverty-stricken areas of the world, has been forced to adopt the rôle played on the national level by organized labour in the richer nations; and just as organized labour in Europe, through the medium of the socialist and communist parties, has demanded not only better pay and working conditions but also a share in controlling the national economy, so African nationalism is beginning to demand a share in the control of international economy. The fact that this would require the establishment of some form of world government, which alone would be capable of implementing a rational and just economic policy, and in which African nationalism would be able to play its part, can only serve to strengthen its commitment to internationalist aims.

Of course, all African nationalists are not as I have painted them. On the contrary, some who call themselves nationalists are clearly of the right-wing species and not the left; and an infallible way of deciding which is which is to observe which nationalists com-

mand the support of the South African Government. Whether Matanzima is himself of the right-wing variety or not, it is certain that he depends for his support upon people who are; and this is extremely dangerous for the non-Africans of the Transkei and ultimately for Afrikanerdom in the Republic.

What should the South African liberal's attitude be towards African nationalism? **In his essay "Wells, Hitler and the World State", Orwell writes:** "The energy that actually shapes the world springs from emotions—racial pride, leader-worship, religious belief, love of war—which liberal intellectuals mechanically write off as anachronisms, and which they have usually destroyed so completely in themselves as to have lost all power of action". **Now, this is an over-simple statement; but it is not devoid of truth. The aspirations of most members of the Liberal Party of South Africa coincide closely with those of left-wing African nationalism; but African nationalists are generally, for many and understandable reasons, more passionately dedicated to their fulfilment than their White Liberal counterparts. Should not Liberals, then, make use of this passion?**

LIBERALS HESITATE

There are, I think, two main reasons why liberals hesitate to give their all-out support to African nationalism. One of them is largely semantic; the word "nationalism", like "materialism" for many people who do not understand that it is a perfectly respectable philosophical term, has acquired unpleasant connotations. But further than this, the very idea that there is such a thing as a nation, that peoples, and not simply people, are different, sticks in the gullet of many a liberal. Some liberals are still, by and large, although they may not realize it, eighteenth century humanists, for whom all men are men, and individual men are the sum of their qualities, these qualities being conceived, not as the parts of a synthetically organized whole, a culture, but as abstract universals; whereas, in fact, different cultures exist just as surely as do different individuals. "The human essence", we might say, adapting and extending a well-known dictum, "is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social, cultural and international relations." Sartre says of the anti-Semite that he emphasizes the Jew's Jewishness and denies his common humanity; whereas the "democrat" stresses his humanity

crat" in relation to the African should be apparent; and in the Progressive Party at least, with its insistence on the need to preserve **Western** civilized values and its policy of advancement according to merit (what is "merit" if not the proven ability to fit into Western society?), the emphasis upon our common humanity cloaks a tacit determination to impose on the whole community the culture of the dominant group, thereby transforming the African into a Black European and reducing everyone to a dull uniformity. This, it will be noted, is the criticism levelled at liberalism by Afrikaner Nationalism. Coming from this quarter, it is, of course, an impertinence; how can White Nationalists speak of "dull uniformity", "dreary egalitarianism", and the like, when it is their policy to prevent any human contact whatsoever between members of different races? But it is a criticism that liberals may very well make of themselves. **For should not the liberal demand not uniformity but a world in which different cultures develop side by side, mingling and enriching one another? And to this end should not nationalism of the left-wing African variety, a nationalism shorn of the disquieting tendencies of European nationalism, be supported?**

ANOTHER OBJECTION

But at this point the other main liberal objection to nationalism is likely to be raised. This is all very well, it may be said, but have not African nationalists, upon achieving power, violated many of those principles we hold sacred, and for the infringement of which we are incessantly condemning the South African Government? This is true, but for liberals to withhold support from African nationalism on these or any other grounds is to make it virtually certain that liberal principles will go on being violated—and not only in other countries but in South Africa also: for the Liberal Party of South Africa, barring miracles, has no chance at all of ever governing this country alone and unaided. And how could it be otherwise? When democracy is

on left-wing nationalism), the Liberal Party will become, as it has become in other democracies, a contradiction in terms; Liberal Parties are necessary only in countries where liberal principles are trampled underfoot; where this is not the case, liberals naturally work through other parties. **Whereas the violation of liberal principles can be shown to be the necessary consequence of a policy of apartheid, the same cannot be said of African nationalism. In African countries where such principles have been infringed, this has been largely due to the autocratic characters of the effective head of state and his henchmen: it has not sprung inevitably from the nature of nationalist aims, which liberals should be able to show would be more certain of achievement under a democratic regime.**

EDUCATION

The biggest single factor in the economic prosperity of a nation is almost certainly the level of education attained by its inhabitants; and, as we all know, genuine education can be given, intellectual excitement can be generated, only in an atmosphere of freedom. This being so, and Liberalism and African Nationalism having so much in common, should not liberals, by actively co-operating with nationalism and (let us not shirk this) criticizing it where necessary, seek to keep it true to its deepest inspiration? Generosity and magnanimity are still virtues of the highest order; and the liberal, in the interests of everyone, must ask them of the nationalist when he achieves power, despite the temptation both, but particularly the nationalist, must feel to give their erstwhile persecutors a taste of their own medicine. If African nationalism is a tiger, it is a tiger that must be ridden. **The liberal has a noble calling in politics: it is, or should be, his rôle to draft constitutions and to fashion institutions. He must make absolutely sure, therefore, that at this critical stage in the history of Africa and the world he is in a position to make his voice heard.**

TWO SIGNIFICANT ELECTION RESULTS

Two election results of late 1964 provide an interesting commentary on the state of the South African nation—or, as Dr. Verwoerd might like to think of it, on the state of two parts of his future dream "South African Commonwealth of Nations".

On November 25th the all-Black electorate of the Gcalekaland constituency of the Transkei went to the polls to vote in the Territory's first by-election. On the same day, in another by-election, the all-White electorate of the Edenvale constituency of the Transvaal went to the polls to elect its representative to the all-White Republican Parliament. The voters' choice of the candidates in the two elections was as follows:—

GCALEKALAND

In Gcalekaland they could choose between Messrs. Paul Majavu, Moses Dumalisile and David Gwebityala. Mr. Majavu was Chief Kaizer Matanzima's Transkei National Independence Party's official candidate. He stood for apartheid, "separate development" for the Transkei and the eventual removal of all non-African Transkeians from the Territory. **Mr. Dumalisile was Chief Poto's Democratic Party's candidate.** He stood for the continued presence of non-Africans in the Transkei and of Transkeians in whatever part of the Republic they happened to live (significantly, about 50% of the Gcaleka people didn't live in the constituency in which they could vote). **He rejected the idea of "separate development"** and insisted that her 300-year history had forged South Africa into a single economic entity which could not possibly be broken up into a series of separate units. South Africa should be recognised for what it was, a single, integrated unit, throughout which the same rights and responsibilities should be accorded all her people. What Mr. Gwebityala stood for was not clear. He said he was an Independent,

supporting the policies of Chief Poto. Other people said he was put up by supporters of Chief Matanzima to split the pro-Poto vote. Certainly he refused to withdraw, in spite of repeated appeals from the Democratic Party's leadership.

EDENVALE

In Edenvale the voters could choose between Dr. Piet Koornhof and Mr. Gert du Preez. **Dr. Koornhof, leading member of the secret and highly sinister, Afrikaner Broederbond, was Dr. Verwoerd's apartheid candidate.** Mr. du Preez represented Sir Villiers Graaff's United Party. As in the case of Mr. Gwebityala, it was not very easy to say precisely what Mr. du Preez stood for. It wasn't apartheid, but it was certainly the maintenance of white supremacy.

Mr. Majavu and Dr. Koornhof believe the same thing. They say that race co-operation in South Africa is impossible, that each of the two principal racial groups, the White and the Black, will never be able to think in anything but racial terms, and whichever is the stronger will want to dominate the other. Mr. Majavu sees white domination in operation today, and he doesn't like it. Dr. Koornhof sees a future black domination as the inevitable result of a shared society, and he doesn't like the idea. **Both use appeals to race prejudice to get support and, whatever claims they may make for the virtues of their platforms, the main planks are cynicism and fear.**

RACISM REJECTED—AND STRENGTHENED

When the votes were counted in Edenvale it was found that **Dr. Koornhof had increased the Nationalist majority by nearly a thousand votes. The call into the white laager had worked.** When the votes were counted in Gcalekaland it was found that Mr. Dumalisile had beaten the pro-apartheid Majavu by nearly 7,500 votes and that the Independent Gwebityala had lost his deposit. **The Gcaleka people, on the first occasion in the Transkei on which the vote was clearly one between**

racialism and race co-operation, had rejected the racial call. It was an astonishing result, considering all the factors at work. Chief Matanzima had circularised chiefs and headmen in the constituency calling on them to see that their people supported his candidate. He did this, not as leader of a political party with a candidate in the field, but as Chief Minister of the Transkei, the man who appoints and pays chiefs and headmen. The Paramount Chief of Gcalekaland, a Matanzima man, gave tribal endorsement to the Majavu candidature and appealed to his tribesmen to support "their" candidate.

MATANZIMA'S CONFIDENCE

On the eve of the election Matanzima was so confident that he decided to turn it into a vote of confidence. He boasted that "the two Democratic Party candidates' votes together will hardly make up the number necessary to save their deposits" and then said, "The present members of the Democratic Party have no mandate from the electorate to form a party which opposes the road to freedom of the people of the Transkei . . . The result of this by-election will call for their resignation, as they have forsaken the African people and interested themselves in the future of the whites . . ."

Well, it was Matanzima who was rejected, and if anyone was going to resign, he was the man to do it. But he has shown no sign. He has, in fact, announced that he intends continuing in business as the governing party "acting on the mandate of the people of the Transkei". That he has no such mandate is now beyond dispute, and the only way in which he will be able to continue in business will be if the Chiefs of Gcalekaland and other areas continue to support him in the Transkei Legislative Assembly in the teeth of the opposition to him of their own people. Simple arithmetic shows that his majority there rests on the support of 36 chiefs from six constituencies in which the ordinary voters overwhelmingly reject his policy.

A CLEAR LESSON

The Gcaleka vote has proved what the Transkei General Election of November, 1963, implied very clearly, that the Transkei Legislative Assembly is far from representative, with its majority of Government-appointed chiefs, and that the people of the Transkei don't want apartheid or racialism. They want race co-operation and non-racialism. When will white South Africa respond to black South Africa's oft-held-out hand of friendship? Edenvale suggests not yet. When will the Koornhofs of this world take a grip on themselves, take their courage in their hands, take a step out of their laager and start talking to their fellow black and brown South Africans? If they only knew it, they would be much safer and more sure of their descendants' survival doing that, outside the laager, than they ever will be inside it.

EDITOR'S NOTE :

The following article was written to coincide with Spring. We make no apologies for printing it at this time of year—indeed, in some quarters it will never appear anything else than unseasonal. But, with the new Legislative Session now on in Parliament, we feel that this is the political, and thus the true, Springtime of South Africa. Hot gusts stir the innocent hearts of our leaders; like young lovers in September, they trip happily along, picking little daisies of freedom, one by one.

NIT GOVERNMENT TO ACT AGAINST SUMMERTEURS

In a speech lasting three weeks, two days and eleven hours, the Prime Minister of Looniestan, Dr. Henhouse Verwoes, has declared total war by the Government of Looniestan on Summer. The House was silent (there was no one else there) as Dr. Verwoes said, his voice shaking with emotion: "Summer is a Bantu thing".

The Prime Minister's speech was the focal point of a nation-wide campaign by leading members of the Nit Party against Summer. The campaign was sparked off by a rumour spread by subversive elements according to the Chief

of the Special Blanche—that the nights have been getting warmer recently. (The name was changed from Branch to Blanche because of the superior whiteness of the latter variant.)

BIBLICAL TEXTS

In his speech the Prime Minister adduced several socio-historico-economic-farcico factors which proved that summer was un-Loonie. Firstly, he said, snow occurred in the Winter, and snow was White. Therefore winter was more suitable for Loonies, in view of their traditional way of life. Secondly, Summer tended to make the White population group less White, although suitable for the Bantu population. Thirdly, Rugby, the national sport of Looniestan, is played in Winter. Finally, he said there were several Biblical texts which proved that God had ordained that Winter was the season which he had specifically created for the White man. It would be against the Public Interest to disclose these texts, he said, but he could assure the people of Looniestan that they were in the hands of top Government officials. In view of these factors, he said, the Government had no alternative but to ban Summer.

LEGISLATION

Suitable legislation was being drawn up to introduce Summer into the Bantu areas as these attained independence, said Dr. Verwoes. Just as the Loonies enjoyed Winter in their areas, so the Bantu would enjoy their own traditional season, Summer, in their own areas. Going into details of his plan, the Prime Minister assured the Coloured section that they would be delegated Autumn in their areas. Autumn, he said, had much in common with Winter. As for Indians, he said, their true home was India, and his Government did not feel called upon to give them a season. There was to be no season at all in Asiatic areas. Spring was to be abolished altogether, said Dr. Verwoes, as a very dangerous season, completely opposed to the interests of Looniestan. He referred to Spring as "the militant left wing of Summer".

DRASTIC NEW BILL

Following the lead of the Prime Minister (jocularly referred to as "Der Führer" by Nit backbenchers) several Cabinet Ministers came out with a strong anti-summer line. Mr. B. J. Voetsak, Minister of Jukskei, told cheering supporters: "I can assure the people of Looniestan that my Department has Summer absolutely under control. There remain only isolated pockets of summerteurs, who are known to us—and they will be dealt with". To back up his words, he has introduced into Parliament a Bill of hitherto unknown severity—some even say, harshness. The penalty for "summerteurs" (i.e., anyone who says or thinks that it is warm or getting warmer) is as follows: they will first be shot, then hanged, then drawn and quartered, gassed, jumped on by the national Rugby team, put on the rack, cut up into little pieces, put into a bath of sulphuric acid and, finally, made to walk the plank. They will be fairly tried in open court, from which the Press and all members of the public will be banned, the court to consist of one police officer (mental age not exceeding three years.)

RECORD DEFENCE BUDGET

Defence Minister Mr. J. J. "Jim" Fish announced that a record 99 per cent. of the country's budget would be devoted to build up a defence force capable of keeping Summer out of Looniestan. A network of radar stations would signal the approach of any task force of warm weather. This would then be ruthlessly destroyed by the best equipped Air Force on the continent. Guerilla forces of "pockets" of warm air would then be "mopped up" by the Army. "We are involved in a desperate struggle for survival," said Mr. Fish.

The Minister of Degradation, Mr. Frankie Werewolf, conclusively disproved a heckler's assertion that the temperature was rising. "That's a lie, that's a lie, that's a lie, you're a liar, you're a liar, you're a liar," he reasoned. The heckler was dragged out of the hall by the Special Blanche and his brains were beaten out with batons. This was quoted by Mr. Werewolf as proof that anyone who disagreed with him had no brains.

A LESSON

The final words on this epoch-making Plan for a Nation were those of Dr. Verwoes: "Looniestan," he said, "will in time to come be remembered as a lesson for the whole of Mankind".