NATIONALITY

THREE writers¹—all, as it chances, known to the writer of this article—have addressed themselves of late to the solution of a riddle which the Sphinx of history is propounding to our generation. "What is a nation," the impassive Sphinx inquires, "and what are the rights that belong to a nation?"

"What is a nation?" "The product of various concurrent forces"—Lord Bryce cautiously replies, adducing as examples of such forces race, language, religion, a common literature and common memories—"which have given to a section or group of men a sense of their unity, as the conscious possessors of common qualities and tendencies which are in some way distinctive, marking off the group from others, and creating in it the feeling of a corporate life." In this answer we may note the last two phrases, which imply, or seem to imply, that a nation is something exclusive, something "marked off" from other similar things, and again that it has the "feeling" (if not, perhaps, the fact) of a "corporate life," which demands (so one may guess) some measure of autonomy for its expression. The implications of Lord Bryce's definition seem to become explicit in that of Professor Muir. A nation is "a body of people who feel themselves to be naturally linked together by certain affinities which are so strong and real for them that they can live happily together, are dissatisfied when disunited, and cannot tolerate subjection to peoples who do not share these ties." It is obvious from the concluding words of this definition that Professor Muir assumes—apparently without doubt or examination—that a nation is, or should be, a State, and that it has a right (a sort of "natural right") to political independence. This is a large assumption, and in fact a *petitio principii*. It is a grave question, needing much deliberation, whether nations, as such, ought also to be States; and to demand an affirmative answer in a pre-

¹ Viscount Bryce, *Essays and Addresses in War-time*, Macmillan and Co., 1918 (chapter vii); A. E. Zimmern, *Nationality and Government*, Chatto and Windus, 1918 (chapters ii.-iv.); Ramsay Muir, *Nationalism and Internationalism*, Constable, 1916 (chapter ii.); *The Expansion of Europe*, 1917; *National Self-Government*, 1918.

liminary definition of terms is to evade the core and gist of the riddle that stands in debate. Mr. Zimmern's definition makes no such demand. On the contrary—so far as political rights are concerned—it contains a piece of significant reticence. A nation—so runs Mr. Zimmern's definition, thrice repeated in three different chapters—is “a body of people united by a corporate sentiment of peculiar intensity, intimacy, and dignity, related to a definite home-country.” In this definition it is the silence that is really suggestive. As Mr. Zimmern develops his argument, this silence, already suggestive, becomes very definite. A nation, he believes, has no necessary right to a separate and independent political existence. There is no divine right of the nation to govern itself. The rights of a nation are *social* rights. They belong to the sphere of education and literature, but not to the sphere of politics. The members of a nation should be free to be educated in their own schools, by their own Press, in their own way, according to their own culture; but politically they may be members of a State too broad and too wide in its membership to be limited to a single nation.

In many ways, and for many reasons, it is impossible not to sympathise with Mr. Zimmern. History does not prove that a nation should be a State, or a State a nation. On the contrary, it shows that a single nation may be divided, and live its best life while it is divided, in a number of States; and, conversely, that a State may embrace, and embrace in contentment and prosperity, a number of nations. Ancient Greece is an example of the first possibility; the Roman Empire in its best days, and the British Empire of to-day (or at any rate, one hopes, of to-morrow) are examples of the second. The example of ancient Greece is peculiarly interesting. The Greeks were, and knew that they were, a nation. They were, as Herodotus remarks in a famous passage, of one blood, one tongue, one religion (“with common shrines and sacrifices to the Gods”), and one culture (“with ways of life after the same fashion”). Plato, in a passage of the *Laws*, almost repeats Herodotus: he speaks of one stock, one speech, one religion, one law. We may roughly paraphrase Herodotus and Plato by saying that the Greeks had a common stock of ideas, both about the other world and about the right way of behaviour in this world, and a common language (in spite of varieties of dialect) for communicating their ideas, and that, on the strength of these common elements, they regarded themselves as constituting a single society. But if they were one society, they were not, and they were resolved not to be, one

State. The State in which they believed, and in which they lived, was a city; and they had many cities, and therefore many States. These Greek City-States gave their members the good life they sought, and gave it fully and abundantly. A national Greek State would have been pitched on a lower key, and would have made a poorer music. A prophet of nationality in Greece who identified the nation with the State would hardly have been a prophet of progress. The national State would have been a bigger thing; but is the Big necessarily the Good?

The Greeks, then, did not identify the national society with the political State. Mr. Zimmern, who, if any man, understands "the Greek Commonwealth," has good precedent for the distinction which he seeks to draw between the nation and the State. To Professor Muir, a modernist, the Greeks are perhaps old-fashioned. His interest is in the nineteenth century; and his reading of the nineteenth century leads him to believe that "every nation has a *right* to freedom and unity"—in other words, that nationality is a political principle, and that nations either are or ought to be States. He accepts as "the culmination of modern history" this principle, which has been at work—not without rivals—for about one hundred, or at the most for four hundred, years (the recorded history of our race is now about seven thousand years old); and he thinks that its out-and-out acceptance might bring "good hope of a cessation of strife." The same principle of a "divine right of nationality" to an independent political expression would also appear to commend itself to Lord Bryce. He sees, indeed, the practical difficulties in the way of its application; and he occupies himself in examining those difficulties in the different areas of Europe and Asia in which they present themselves. Against Lord Bryce and Professor Muir Mr. Zimmern takes his stand with a totally different principle. He denies their major premiss. Nationality, he asserts, is a social fact—and therefore (if we may father upon him a paradox which he may himself reject) it is a matter for the individual. It is a social fact in the sense that it belongs to the area of education and social intercourse; it is a matter of wearing kilts, or talking dialect, or keeping Saturday instead of Sunday, or educating your children in a traditional way. Now these things are all things that touch the individual in his daily life; and that is the sense in which this "social" nationality is really individual. It is not a matter of a corporate life finding corporate expression in a political structure controlled by the common action of all the corporators; it is a matter of individual tastes and fancies—

which happen, it is true, to agree with those of many other individuals—finding free play within a State which eschews all interference with these manifestations of the individual's liberty.

One's heart warms to a brave heretic—particularly if one is inclined to a little gentle heresy on one's own account. Some, indeed, of Mr. Zimmern's heresies are perhaps really exaggerated orthodoxies; and his adoration of the State and its "Statehood" (to use the vocabulary of the *Round Table*)—an adoration which is the other side of his doubts about the nation and its "nationhood," and leads him, incidentally, to throw as much doubt on internationalism as upon nationalism—excites heretical feelings in the writer of these lines. Not all of us would agree that the State (as Mr. Zimmern makes Aristotle say; but where did he say it?) is "a sovereign association, embracing *and superseding* all other associations." But we may dismiss, in spite of all temptations to controversy, this reverse side of Mr. Zimmern's views on nationality, and we may turn at once to some appreciation of their obverse and obvious side. Roughly, he desires a moderate and non-political nationalism, manifested in the realm of social life and social intercourse and education, as an antidote to the vapid and *banal* cosmopolitanism which the agglomeration of all types in the great industrial machinery of our times is tending to produce. He sees two extremes and a golden mean. One extreme is that of denationalised, delocalised, deracinated cosmopolitanism; it is represented by the Argive greengrocer, at home on holiday from the U.S.A. in ancient Argos, who, being asked by Mr. Zimmern if he thought of marrying in his old country, replied: "Not on your life. I mean to marry an American girl. Think of the custom I shall get from my wife's relations." The other extreme is that of fervent, exclusive political nationalism: it is represented by the Balkan prince, who, being promised in a dream any boon he craved, with the proviso that a double portion of that boon should descend on the people of a neighbouring nation, prayed that all his people might be smitten blind of one eye. Between the Argive greengrocer and the Balkan prince Mr. Zimmern erects a figure of animated moderation, which (as it were) wears trows and speaks Gaelic, but does not and will not care about nationalist politics, though it is willing to pay homage (apparently) to the Statehood of a great multi-national State or Commonwealth. Nationality thus appears "not as a political creed for oppressed peoples, but rather as an educational creed for the diverse national groups of which the industrialised and largely migratory democracies in our large

modern States must be increasingly composed." As Mr. Zimmern says in another place, it is "not a political, but an educational conception."

There are thus three factors in Mr. Zimmern's thought. The first is a belief in the great State or Commonwealth, such as the British Empire, which "*embraces and supersedes* all other associations." This belief in the great political society, not resting on any one nationalist basis, or on anything peculiar or particular, but ordered to universal ends of liberty and law—this belief, in spite of its elements of truth and in spite of its nobler aspects, seems almost to run to an adoration or *proskynesis* of political organisation that is Hellenistic rather than British. And this first factor is also the dominant factor; the two others are secondary and consequential. These two other factors are a grading and a classification of nationality as something in the sphere not of the State, but of society (belonging, as Hegel would say, not to *der Staat*, but to *der bürgerliche Gesellschaft*), and a doubt and fear—at any rate in the earlier essays in Mr. Zimmern's book; there is a modification in the later essays—a doubt and a fear of international organisation that interferes untimely or too rudely with the sovereign State. These, then, are the factors of Mr. Zimmern's philosophy; what are the causes and reasons of his embracing that philosophy? In the first place, he belongs himself to the Jewish nationality; and that nationality (perhaps in this respect unlike other nationalities, and perhaps, therefore, not a safe basis for generalisation) has been content to exist in the social sphere, being a nationality of the dispersion, and has not claimed political expression or independence. In the second place, he belongs to the *étatistes* of the Round Table; and the Round Table, dealing in terms of mechanics rather than of biology, thinks rather of political structures and systems than of national groups and their growth. It is perhaps for this latter reason that Mr. Zimmern appears to think that Nationalism is a peculiar product of Europe, and that elsewhere, "if left to itself, it would slowly die of inanition"—an implication which hardly seems just or true when one thinks of the growth of Nationalism in Australia or Canada or South Africa, or, again—most striking of all instances—in the United States, where the war appears to have produced a degree of Nationalism before unknown.

To Mr. Zimmern the State which is based on Nationalism is based on the particular, and not on the universal—on a particular national temperament and point of view, and not on the universal principles of law and justice, of liberty and equality.

There is much propriety in this accusation, especially as it affects the German State, and the German theory of the State, of the last fifty years; and there is much truth in Mr. Zimmern's paradox that it was the Germans and their allies, and not Great Britain and her allies, who were the protagonists of Nationalism during the war. The Germans identified the "folk" with the State, and grounded the State on "folk-will" and "folk-right" to so dire an extent, and to such sad confusion of universal principles of right and wrong, that they were ultimately ready to condone their violation of the neutrality of Belgium on the plea of what one may call "folk-necessity." It is not good that a State should be based peculiarly or primarily on Nationalism. But if Nationalism is a poor foundation, perhaps it is a necessary, or at any rate a very useful, mortar. It supplies a cohesion, or unity of sentiment, to the various members living in the shelter of a political structure, which goes a long way to keep that structure together. In the old days loyalty to a common monarch kept the State at unity; in these days—more equalitarian and more republican—the sentiment of a common national brotherhood seems to take the place of filial devotion to a patriarchal king. At any rate one thing is sure—and that is that you cannot at present confine Nationalism, as Mr. Zimmern is eager to do, to the social side of life. It is easy to make dichotomies and divisions; but the penetrating and percolating waters of life ooze through the dams and banks of logic. "The State for politics; Nationalism only permitted in social intercourse"—one may erect the warning; but will it be obeyed? Will it be obeyed on *either* side? Will the State refrain from interfering with social manifestations of Nationalism, or social manifestations of Nationalism refrain themselves from spilling over (or—perhaps it is better to say—blazing up) into political issues? Experience—the actual record and digest of facts—gives a negative answer. The State does actually interfere with the social manifestations of Nationalism, such as the use of a vernacular speech in the Press or in schools. It has done so in Germany; it does so, according to the testimony of French Canadians, in the Dominion of Canada; and the reason for what it does is its sense of the increased cohesion due to the use of a single common speech in daily intercourse. Perhaps the State is foolish in what it does—you only encourage a vernacular literature when you try to discourage it by the use of force—but the point of importance for our argument is simply the fact that it actually makes the attempt. *Vice versa*, social manifestations of Nationalism cannot

but tend to issue in political aspirations and propaganda. Mr. Zimmern seems to expect that you may have a Gaelic League for the use of Erse, and never proceed to think of an Irish Republic. Actually you do proceed to think of an Irish Republic. Mr. Zimmern argues that this result only follows "when arbitrary government, by repressing the spontaneous manifestations of nationality, lures it into political channels." But the British Government has not repressed the "spontaneous manifestation" of the desire to speak Erse. This instance of Ireland, it would seem, is somewhat adverse to Mr. Zimmern's philosophy. Indeed, that philosophy becomes somewhat inconsistent with itself when Mr. Zimmern applies it to Ireland. He writes in one passage of the soul of the true Irish Nationalist as satisfied, when he knows that "somewhere Irish life is being lived under true Irish conditions"—the "somewhere" being "in the definite home-country" which, it will be remembered, is part of his definition of nationality. But "the living of an Irish life in Ireland under true Irish conditions" surely means something political; and to nine Irishmen out of ten (outside Ulster) it would mean an Irish Republic. *Ergo*, Irish Nationalism, even in Mr. Zimmern's sense of the word, ultimately issues "somewhere" into politics.

The theory of an exclusively "social" Nationalism is one which has long been familiar in that mosaic of nationalities—Austria-Hungary. Msr. Eisenmann, in *Le Compromis*, has discussed the various theories of the "rights of nationality" which a State so rich in nationalities has produced. Some writers (he explains) have taken pride in the multi-national character of their State. These writers would tell Mr. Zimmern, who sets his hope "not in the Nation-State, which is only a stage, and in the West an outworn stage . . . but in States which find room for all sorts and conditions of communities and nations"—they would tell him (or they would have told him, before the war shattered Austria-Hungary into fragments) that his hopes were already realised in Austria-Hungary. He is not likely to be comforted by receiving any such news. He has, as it were, an assignation with the British Empire in his hopes of a multi-national State; and when Austria-Hungary turns up instead to keep the assignation, he is likely to look ruefully upon her. But Austria-Hungary remains worthy of study. Many of her thinkers had come upon Mr. Zimmern's philosophy—that nationality belongs to social life, and is a matter for each individual in his daily intercourse with other individuals; and they had pitted their philosophy

against the counter-philosophy of those who held that nationality belonged to political life, and was a matter for the corporate nation seeking to find political emancipation and embodiment. The school to which Mr. Zimmern inclines has not been victorious. Nationality has proved in Austria-Hungary that it is a political fact. Mr. Zimmern, like the Austro-Hungarian thinkers to whom he is akin, wrote before the collapse of the multi-national Austrian State in November, 1918.

Yet on the whole it may be said that Mr. Zimmern administers shrewd thrusts to the easy-going Victorian cult of nationality (as embodied in Kossuth and Garibaldi) which survives in an eloquent simplicity in the pages of Professor Muir. He presents a point of view new to many of us, and presents it freshly, new smelted, as it were, from the ore of his own experience. He can understand the artificial and factitious character which Nationalism can assume in the Balkans, where journalists can fan (and indeed create) nationalist passions by articles composed over the midnight oil (how much literary propaganda may go to the making of a nation!), and where bishops may distribute rifles to guerilla bands for purposes which one may gently call by the name of national (here synonymous with that of religious) proselytisation. He realises the difficulties of the whole question; but his solution can hardly stand. It is really impossible to draw a firm line and to say "Thus far and no further" to Nationalism. Nationalism may never reach that line, or it may overflow it; but it will not be greatly affected by the line in any case. Nationalism is one of the fundamental human sentiments, like religion. Like other human sentiments (just because it is human) it may make for good, and it may make for evil. It may make for good, in developing a new aspect or facet of humanity—a new way of looking at life, peculiar to some single nation; it may make for evil, in narrowing the mind and its outlook, in intensifying oppositions, in dividing peoples and countries. Sometimes the fullness of the good it can do will only come if it attains political expression; sometimes the unbinding of political Nationalism may only be the unbinding of Satan. Exclusive introspective Nationalism of the German type has been a worse scourge to Europe than any nomadic incursion from Central Asia. A broad inclusive Nationalism after the heart of Mazzini—a Nationalism which makes a nation ask itself, "What can I do for the world?" and then go and do it—this may well be a light to lighten humanity.

The writer has dwelled long on Mr. Zimmern, and has left

himself little space for dealing with Lord Bryce or Professor Muir. Lord Bryce, writing a year ago, is chiefly concerned with the application of the principle of nationality to the coming negotiations for peace; Professor Muir, who has written three volumes round the theme of nationality during the war, is concerned to prove that, of four developments which a review of modern history suggests, the growth of the idea of nationality is the first, and the foundation of all the rest. Lord Bryce can see spots in the sun of Nationalism, and can admit that it has led to quasi-religious wars as terrible as the religious wars of the sixteenth century; Professor Muir appears to be too much blinded by the sun to maintain any critical poise. He can defend Nationalism by saying that the German interpretation of it is not Nationalism, but racialism—an assertion which involves a curious twisting of the sense of the word “race.” He can lay down the proposition (it is true with the qualification that it is “loosely” asserted) that “every nation has a right to freedom,” but he never explains what this freedom is, or why every nation has a right to it. He can write that “the principle of nationality . . . asserts that the unity of sentiment which we call the national spirit constitutes the only sound basis for the organisation of the State”; but he does not tell us why this should be the case, and he never examines Lord Acton’s contention (which Mr. Zimmern more than once quotes) that the principle of nationality ruins the true universal character of the State. But nationality in Professor Muir’s hands is a Protean thing; and it is difficult to grip his terminology firmly. In one sentence Britain is a “super-nationality,” which incorporates, without weakening, four nationalities; in the next we are confronted with the “nationhood” of the British Empire.

As the connotation of Nationalism seems to vary in Professor Muir’s view, so do its connections. It is connected with war, in the sense that (in spite of its right to freedom) “nationhood must mainly determine itself by conflict”; it is connected with peace, in the sense that “if the whole of Europe could once be . . . divided on national lines, there might be good hope of a cessation of strife.” In the volume on the *Expansion of Europe* it is connected with imperialism; it is no accident, we are told, that “all the great colonising Powers have been unified Nation-States, and that imperial activities have been most vigorous when national sentiment has been strongest.” In the volume on *National Self-Government* Nationalism is connected with democracy: “the national spirit has alone made modern self-government possible”;

"the era of national unification was also the era of constitutional settlement—the triumph of Nationalism was the decay of revolutionism." But this Protean and elusive spirit, though it seems inconsistent in its manifestations, appears in the pages of Professor Muir to be uniformly beneficent. Of the Satanic aspect which it can assume—of its dividingness; of its exclusiveness; of the atmosphere of a forcing-house which it can generate for rancours and animosities—we hear little or nothing. Yet surely the historian—sweeping on broad pinions over the past, and remembering the days of City-States, of Hellenistic monarchies, of the Roman Empire, of the mediæval polity—must recognise that Nationalism is a fairly recent, perhaps a temporary, and at any rate a mixed force. Nationalism is not all; and patriotism—so far as it is based on Nationalism—is not enough.

For Nationalism, after all, is only one of the bases on which men can organise their group-life. There are other and rival bases. There is the basis of even-handed law and equal liberty, which gives us the State. There is the basis of contiguity, which gives us the geographical region within whose bounds men buy and sell and meet in many other ways. There is the basis of common occupation, which gives us the organised guild or *syndicat*. All these bases, and all the structures built on these bases, are rivals with one another to-day. There is the nation, and there is also the State; there is the region, and there is also the occupation. Some men are Nationalists, and some are *Étatistes*; some men are Regionalists, and some are Occupationalists—or, as the name generally goes, Syndicalists. The interest of the hour in which we live is the struggle of these different conceptions. Two of them are in high fashion—two which are not very compatible with one another—Nationalism with one set of thinkers, Syndicalism with another. Nationalism can make its peace with the State, and, in the form of Collectivism, it can come to terms with Socialism. Syndicalism is the enemy of the nation, and no friend of the State. While Nationalism and Syndicalism fight, there may be a chance for the State—a State, one may hope, based on contiguity and brotherly neighbourliness—to come by its own. After all, it is in some ways better—better and easier—to love one's neighbour than to love one's kinsman or fellow-national. Neighbourliness is a quiet virtue—quiet but deep and permeating. It is a virtue that pays. To get on well with one's neighbours across the water, or across the ridges, means business ties and common economic interests. That is why the economist is enamoured of contiguity as a basis

of political grouping ; but the political theorist may well share his affection. There is one great thing about neighbourliness : it can grow to include more and more, while Nationalism is limited to the given number of its nationals. For the extent of a neighbourhood, and the number of persons included in a neighbourhood, depend on the communications that make the neighbourhood. Steam has made neighbourhoods of vastly greater scope. The internal combustion engine, working in motor car and aeroplane, is making neighbourhoods greater still. It is along these lines that some of us can confidently and quietly look forward to a time when the whole of our planet will be one connected neighbourhood, and, one hopes, a single connected commonwealth. In that day Mr. Zimmern's vision may be realised ; and Nationalism may become an undisturbed and undisturbing factor of social life, while over its head, based on the fundamental neighbourliness of humanity, and ordered to the common human ends of law and liberty, the universal State moves on its solemn task.

ERNEST BARKER