

- The present rise of nationalism has presented a significant challenge to the great powers today — Russia and the United States.

THE GREAT POWERS FACING NATIONALISM

Nationalism means, first of all, the determination to assert national identity, national dignity, and national freedom of action. It can also mean, as the memory of prewar Germany, Italy, and Japan reminds us, the determination to assert these things at the expense of other nations; and in this sense nationalism has been and will be a source of tremendous danger to the world. But the nationalism which arose after the second world war, in the main, not the aggressive and hysterical nationalism which had led nations before the war to try and dominate other nations. It was rather the nationalism generated by the desire to create or restore a sense of nationhood.

In the years since 1945 nationalism has redrawn lines of force around the planet. Take Europe, which Chur-

chill described twenty years ago as "a rubble heap, a charnel house, a breeding ground for pestilence and hate." Economically shattered, politically demoralized, militarily defenseless, Western Europe in the Forties was absolutely dependent on America for social reconstruction and military protection. Then the Marshall Plan set in motion the process of economic recovery. Economic recovery led to the revival of political self-confidence, and political self-confidence to a determination to assert European autonomy. No doubt the turn given this mood in recent years by General de Gaulle is exaggerated and extravagant. But it would be a great error, I believe, to suppose that Gaulism does not spring from a profoundly real impulse in contemporary Europe: a deep pride in

European traditions and capacities, a growing will to reaffirm European independence against the twin colossi. And even those who reject the narrow nationalism of de Gaulle do so in the name of the large nationalism of Europe.

The contagion of nationalism runs everywhere. Today nationalism is seeking home rule in Scotland and Wales; it is dividing the country of Belgium; it is threatening Canada with the secession of French Quebec; in our own country it finds expression in the mystique of Black Power. And it has wrought even more spectacular changes within the empire which Stalin once ruled so calmly and implacably. The Yugoslav heresy of 1948 represented the first serious rebellion of national Communism against Russian primacy. In another decade China burst forth as independent Communist state, increasingly determined to challenge Russia for the domination of Asia and for the leadership of the international Communist movement. With the clash between China and Russia, the uni-

fied Communist empire began to break up. Moscow long ago had to accept the Yugoslav heresy, and on Yugoslav terms. It has conceded a measure of national initiative to the once cowed and complaint satellites of Eastern Europe. Albania and Romania are going their own way. In a desperate effort to preserve the dominant Russian position, the Soviet Union had to resort to military intervention in order to discipline Communist Czechoslovakia. Even Poland, even East Germany may some day insist on national freedom. "Everyone chooses the truths he likes. In this way faith disintegrates." This was said by Pope Paul VI, but it might as well have been said by Brezhnev.

The unity of Communist discipline, the unity of Communist dogma — all are vanishing as international phenomena, crumbling away under the pressure of nationalism. In the contemporary age of polycentrism there is no longer any such thing as "world Communism." A Communist takeover no longer means the

automatic extension of Russian, or even of Chinese power. Every Communist government, every Communist party, has been set free to begin to respond to its own national concerns and to pursue its own national policies. One Communist state, Cuba, has even performed the ingenious feat of being simultaneously at odds with both Moscow and Peking.

The reason for the failure of Communism in the developing world is the same as the reason for the expulsion of colonialism from that world: what the new nations want more than anything else is the assurance of their national freedom of decision. And this very fact too, while it has endowed the new nations with spirit and audacity, has prevented them from forming, as some once feared they might do, a unified block against the West.

My guess is that the most realistic evolution in the fu-

ture would be along the lines of the proposal made by Churchill in 1943 — a development of regional groupings within the United Nations, thereby merging universalist and sphere-of-influence conceptions, strengthening the "middle powers" and discharging the great powers from the supposed obligation to rush about putting down every presumed threat to world peace.

This would be a policy neither of universalism nor of isolationism but of discrimination. It would imply the existence of what President Kennedy called the "world of diversity" — "a robust and vital world community, founded on nations secure in their own independence, and united by allegiance to world peace." By Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. *Vietnam and the End of the Age of Superpowers*, from Harper's Magazine, March 1969.