

MINORITY RIGHTS OR INTEGRATION?

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This is by no means a new issue, but it is now arising in much more acute form than before. A clear-sighted approach is therefore needed. Obviously, all human rights activists are in favour of respect for others and also of brotherhood. But it is important to realise that placing the accent on the former leads to a completely different political -and therefore economic, social and cultural- approach from that produced by emphasising brotherhood. That will be apparent throughout this paper, which opts unequivocally for brotherhood and consequently for an integration policy.

Rejection of others, whether in the form of racism, xenophobia or mere intolerance, invariably stems from two series of causes: material and psychological. In addition, the globalisation of trade and communications has engendered such interdependence that if remedial measures are to be effective, they can no longer be confined to the national level, but must also be taken on a world scale.

As indicated above, there are only two basic attitudes to be adopted towards the growth of mutual rejection. Both consider the material and psychological causes as inevitable facts of human development. The emergence of economic, social and cultural cleavages is the result of human nature. Human beings are like that. There is nothing to be done about it. In fact it would be dangerous to try to interfere in depth with social process. One might cause even more harmful disruption. That is the liberal attitude. Or one considers that the effects, i.e. the entire spectrum of social hatred, can be eradicated only by getting rid of the root causes. So one refuses to accept fatality. One starts thinking about reorganising the world. That is interventionism.

Obviously, the dichotomy just outlined, like any other, is bound to be simplistic. In practice, an infinite variety of attitudes are adopted. It is nonetheless true that, basically, there are two conflicting world views. The various attitudes are in fact simply variants. And this is of paramount importance for our problem: the struggle against racism and anti-Semitism, or more precisely, against rejection of others.

The first attitude regards differences as natural factors and accordingly tries to preserve them in the name of respect for human nature. Its chief concern is the protection of minorities. The second attitude regards differences as historical factors, which are bound to evolve in different historical situations. So it is up to us to consciously create those new conditions. Everything that divides humankind will then gradually fade. It follows that the second approach lays the emphasis on integration and consequently on non-discrimination.

The root causes of all forms of rejection are primarily material. They lie in three main areas: population, environment and economics. Until these causes are eradicated, social hatred will always inevitably revive. But let there be no illusions on the subject. That will not be sufficient. Rejection of others does not simply reflect a series of material circumstances. It is also a psychological matter. It must also, therefore, be consciously fought in the ideological arena. As is briefly shown below, all this calls for a reversal of the prevailing liberal attitudes and policies.

The three basic causes of social unrest are overpopulation, the depletion of physical resources and the spread of an economic system based on the pursuit of profit at all costs.

Overpopulation derives in global terms from an absolute increase in the birth rate. That much is obvious. Locally, however, it may be due to another, equally important cause: migration flows. We must consequently adopt a worldwide policy of birth control and emigration control. This presupposes a fundamental change in attitudes. Procreation must no longer be regarded as an absolute right. Nations and families that refuse to practise birth control of their own accord must be financially penalised and morally condemned.

Development aid must be made conditional on birth control. Family allowances must be gradually abolished. Religions and all other, ethnic, national or racial ideologies that advocate increasing the numbers for a given group of human beings must be strongly opposed. Clearly, this demands a moral revolution. The goal is a situation in which couples should be ashamed to have more than two children. In addition, it is absolutely imperative to dissociate freedom to move about from freedom to settle where one wishes. Travel encourages contact between people. Colonisation poisons it. Worldwide regulation is needed in this area. Immigration countries all over the world, as well as oversize urban centres, must be protected against further population onslaughts. Here too, as with all the measures advocated, fundamental freedoms must obviously be safeguarded. That being said, however, worldwide awareness of this crucial problem is essential. And responsibility for it rests first and foremost with emigration countries.

Just as important as overpopulation is the depletion of humankind's physical resources. Ecology is not a luxury. The human race cannot go on shamelessly squandering its natural heritage. The exhaustion of fossil fuels, the degradation of land, the growing scarcity of drinking water supplies, forest clearance, marine pollution and the saturation of the atmosphere are all mortal dangers for the human race. The growth of these dangers will inevitably spark off worldwide conflict. The only rational solution is global regulation. This means setting up democratic international bodies vested with the necessary authority to take key decisions on restricting the use of natural resources and allocating them wisely. It must be clearly understood that ecology now stands as an objective barrier to liberalism. The first great spoliation, that of nature, has become self-destructive.

The day when the other spoliation, that of human beings, also proves unsustainable is not far off. The prevailing economic system, based on the pursuit of profit at all costs, generates social hatred to the same extent as overpopulation and the depletion of natural resources. That is where the trouble lies. And that is where most needs to be done. The new economic policies which have ruled the world for two decades have increased the dangers inherent in our economic system ten-fold. The various forms of deregulation, especially the lifting of controls on capital flows, have radically altered the world economic scene. Industry -that is, real production- has been pushed into the background. Finance now has the whip, technological revolution has done nothing to improve matters -quite the reverse. Perverted in the interests of the New World Order, it makes the latter even harder to replace. Monopolised by the "haves", it further widens the gulf between them and the "have nots".

The great masses of people have only one really effective weapon against the New World Order's fearsome political, military and ideological arsenal, and that is the state. The state is the only social organisation over which the greater number can exert some sort of influence and which can afford them a degree of protection against the damage caused by the New World Order. In the developed countries the poor were protected to some extent by the welfare state. In the developing countries it was the nation-state that tried to protect Third World peoples against the world powers. That explains the incredible ideological campaign directed against the state for the past two decades. The salient features of the campaign are globalisation, privatisation and regionalisation.

Globalisation is presented as the ultimate in modern economics. The world is regarded as a large village in which economic factors move about freely for the greater good of humanity as a whole. Anything that might hamper this freedom of movement is bound to be harmful. Hence the complete opposition to state regulation, planning, state property and state intervention to redistribute resources.

The hidden agenda behind these policies is the internationalisation of capital. It is an irony of history that the real international should be the one established by the forces of wealth. The only organisations capable of standing up to this formidable international are states. So every effort must be made to neutralise them. The first great strategy is to merge states into large entities -though this can be a progressive strategy if it provides for equality between the partners and, above all, if it results in the setting up of new democratic

authorities to regulate the new entities. So super-states replace the outdated states. The second great strategy is more insidious. It is to strip the state of its authority through regionalisation. If the regions coincide with clearly defined social groups -ethnic or religious ones, for instance, so much the better. Recognition of minority rights and regionalisation then overlap, and the break-up of central government is assured, for the greater good of the new international.

The ultimate in ideological mystification is the fact that this regionalisation is presented as the apex of democracy. Civil society is liberated at last, we are told. The framework for true democracy is local government. The more we divide, the more democracy we will have. No more state control, centralism or bureaucracy. And now that we have the upper hand, we must take the opportunity to institutionalise the break-up of the state so as to make it permanent. If the small fragments manage to forge lasting institutional ties across national borders, that will be the end of central government authority for good.

All these fine words naturally disregard the fact that the state is reorganising society, modernising it, marshalling its resources and arranging for its defence. The state is admittedly an extremely dangerous instrument, as history has often proved and as many contemporary societies continue to demonstrate. But the non-state cannot be the answer. The only answer is the democratic state. The non-state means the people's total surrender to the magnates of the New World Order. Only the democratic state can hold its own against the power of the financiers' international. Hence the will to crush it. As it would be unseemly to state the reasons for this openly, it is claimed that the state is always bad by nature and that real democracy means the weakening and breaking up of the state.

Like all ruling ideologies, the new glorification of minorities masks its real nature. That is also why there is nothing surprising in the good faith of the great majority, who now sing the praises of policies upholding minority rights. But this state of affairs makes it even more essential to be clear-sighted. It must be clearly understood that some of the sirens leading the chorus of anti-state sentiments in fact serve interests which have nothing to do with democracy.

The economic system underpinning the new world order bears such a large share of responsibility for the rise of social hatred that it was bound to be discussed here at some length. Together with overpopulation and the degradation of natural resources, the prevailing economic system is a major cause of social unrest and consequently of all forms of intolerance. It would be utterly hypocritical to turn a blind eye to this fact, while overtly advocating a more caring society. And it is because of the vested interests inherent in the system that the approach emphasising minority rights is a trap, to which it is imperative to alert human rights activists.

As indicated earlier, however, the various forms of exclusion do not simply reflect objective social difficulties. They are directly fuelled by currents of opinion, fads, prejudices and stereotypes -in fact by a whole ideological arsenal which continually reshapes individual attitudes. If integration is to be achieved, the struggle must also be waged in that arena. There are two key spheres of action, both calling for special treatment because their impact is so strong: the mass media and education. It is absolutely essential that the mass media and education systems should openly condemn all forms of racism, anti-Semitism, xenophobia and intolerance and, on the contrary, promote a spirit of brotherhood and freedom.

This feat cannot be achieved simply by giving orders. The relevant legal machinery must be set in motion. A certain false conception of freedom must be jettisoned for good. All forms of freedom must be limited by respect for human dignity. This means that both states and international organisations must cooperate closely to develop effective means of punishing the abuse of freedom, including freedom of expression.

The process of steering the mass media and educational systems towards promoting the integration of humankind can be guided only by human reason: reason is the sole truly human trait, the only one that can unite the human race regardless of each group's specific characteristics. The first essential step in this pursuit of reason is an ideological assessment of the state of the world today. The most striking feature at present is a general onslaught against rational thought. In the West this takes a variety of forms: post-modernism, rejection of rationalism, a return to biological determinism, glorification of instinct, genetic determinism and a pseudo-scientific reduction of human nature to animal status. This philosophical regression in the West is matched in the East by the rise of Islamism. This is quite obviously a factor for division and consequently for fanaticism and hatred. Seen from the West, that is the most frightening aspect of Islamism. Yet attention should be paid to a much more fundamental aspect. Like every resurgence of religious feeling, the Islamist surge strengthens the anti-rationalist camp. It is essentially a factor for disunity, not only because it fuels fanaticism but also because it weakens the only factor binding all humankind together, the only real bond between human beings: their reason. That is the great danger of the new obscurantist trends now gaining ground all over the world. Though blatantly obvious in backward countries, they often assume trivial forms, which are therefore hard to identify, in developed countries. This requires still greater vigilance on our part. Needless to say, there is only one possible response to this onslaught by the forces of darkness: the spread of enlightenment.

To sum up, eradicating intolerance in all its forms demands combined action to remove both the material and the ideological causes of social unrest. The aim must be integration in a spirit of respect for the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual. This calls for clear-sighted activism, taking account of the differences produced by history, not in order to perpetuate them, but to ensure that they wither away. That is the only way to bring about a truly humane society in which differences will no longer be imposed by blind tradition, but will stem from the self-fulfilment freely achieved by each individual.