

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### THE NATION-STATE, SUPRA-NATIONALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

Britain, for one, has an exceptionally centralised nation-state. On one side she is the most reluctant member of the new European supranationalism. On the other she is even more reluctant to decentralise powers downwards - be it functionally or territorially, to associations and interest groups in civil society, or to devolved regional or local government. In the last few years the situation has got worse rather than better mainly because of Mrs Thatcher's attachment to national parliamentary sovereignty according to which she has resisted all of these forms of decentralisation of power, whether upwards or downwards, despite her liberal commitment to rolling back the state,

#### *Beyond the Nation-State*

The situation in Ulster has not improved. Scotland has had imposed on it a draconian and unpopular poll tax by a government that it did not vote for. This has served only to foster nationalist aspirations for greater independence from Westminster. Local government has lost many of its powers, over finance and housing, for instance, to central government. A whole tier of local government has been abolished, primarily for political reasons. The Conservatives are predominantly a party of the South-East. In Scotland and in many inner cities and large swathes of the North and Wales their support is dwindling. Yet in many of these areas central government policies prevail with considerable effect but little support.

Other countries, comparable in other respects, perhaps the FRG is a prime example, have more federal or regionally devolved political systems. Variations in political and regional consciousness within the United Kingdom cry out for more decentralised government. According to the principle of subsidiarity many matters could be decentralised down to devolved assemblies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and to regional and local government. And, what is most important, government carried out at these levels could be more democratic and responsive to local needs than government from Westminster. Decentralisation allows for the expression of diversity and difference, for greater political participation at more proximate levels, for the profusion of countervailing centres of power obstructing the monopolisation of power in the hands of the central state and it provides forums for the development of community solidarism and co-operation.

Local and regional government is closer to the needs of local people than is central government. What is more, government at such levels is better placed to reach out and open up its structures to consultations and negotiations with local community interests. Centralised government is too distant to do this, able at best only to consult with regional government or national interests. When it comes to making decisions about regional development or regional matters such as local economic development this will just not do. A more pluralist state in the decentralist sense can be better at being a pluralist state in the corporatist sense. What are needed, therefore, are more federal and decentralised structures of regional government and local consultation. These have to be built upon real existing regional differences and not just invented out of thin air or structured according to centrally or abstractly formulated regional boundaries.

The problem here is that pluralist decentralisation can be a recipe for provincialism and for unnecessary and unproductive conflict. Solidarism may be promoted within decentralised units but this can end up being of a particularistic rather than a universal kind. In order for generalised rather than sectional solidarism to prevail structures of pluralist co-operation have to be built. The obvious space for this is at the level of the associational state.

But there is still a danger here that the solidarism of associations and decentralised communities amongst one another, gathered together at the level of the nation-state, or at the level of the regional or local state for that matter, will remain restricted to a particularistic solidarism, lodged in the state itself and not generalised further outwards to other states in the world. There is a danger, in other words, that the state as an association of associations will do exactly the same thing as the association itself, that it will become a provincial instrumental institution geared around the solidarism of its constituent parts behind the sectional interest of their whole without regard for wider supra- and international needs or for the priorities of other nation-states.

This leads us on to the question of the supra-national state and the international order. How can the nation-state be integrated into the world system in such a way as to minimise the antagonism and conflict between states and maximise the social conscientiousness of states towards one another's needs and priorities? My answer may by now be predictable but I would argue that there need to be supranational associations of states and, in order to transcend the possibility of private and sectional interests prevailing at this level also, national and supra-national states need to associate at the international level.

The proposal here is not for a supra-national or world state of the sort we are used to at national level. What is needed is an international associationalism in which the powers of global associational agencies are restricted by their corporate structure and by the diffusion of power amongst the countervailing and relatively self-determining states and communities of the world. Most of all international agencies should not be like external, exclusive 'representative' states. They should be socially and plurally inclusive and associational. Pluralist and corporatist strictures about the nation-state, in other words, need to be applied also to international inter-state relations.

Current developments in the structure of the international order, affecting the role of states and organisations of states at the national, supra-national and international levels have been amongst the most significant of the recent developments in the restructuring of democracy in the world. It is necessary to look at some of these changes and assess how far the idea of associational supra-national and international democratic arrangements fit into them.

### *The Nation State and Nationalism*

My argument is that the loss of status of the nation-state, undermined from above by supra-national developments and from below by nationalist movements for self-determination, has not lessened insularity or rivalry on the international scene so simply as it is often assumed. In fact it has fed regional and group self-interest as much as it has undermined it. What is needed, I will argue, is a much more internationalist perspective in which regional provincialism and conflict can be genuinely overcome.

The main features of the nation-state are twofold – territorial and political. Nation-states have arisen for a great variety of reasons and as a result of varying constellations of forces in different instances. But they have all arisen on the basis of a group's shared territorial residence and have all been based on the establishment of a national state holding sway over a given demarcated territory and claiming a monopoly over the means of physical coercion there. In short territorialism combined with political authority enforced by the threat or actual use of physical violence.

There are plenty of other properties of the nation-state which are frequently evoked but are nearly all, nearly always, spurious on closer examination. Nations do not, for instance, really have well established historical heritages. Nations in the sense just outlined have mostly existed in their present forms for little more than a couple of centuries or less. Most can claim no common shared language, culture or race. Most have a healthy mixture of all of these ingredients such that any attempt to define a nation's common characteristics can only be done by excluding many of its citizens. It is, in fact, in this excluding way that racist movements use the cause of nationalism.

Most nations cannot claim a clear hold on their citizens. Many of their citizens may claim allegiance also or alternatively to other parts of the world from which they or their ancestors have come. Many more claim

allegiance to two or more national identities, including national identities within a specific nation-state. Factors such as shared history, culture, religion, ethnicity, language and so on are artificially evoked by states to maintain unity and control over the populations within their territorial boundaries. They rarely bear much of a resemblance to the empirical composition of a population. Indeed periods of strong nationalism frequently result in the persecution of large sections of national populations who do not fit the mythical national type. So in talking about nation-states we have to restrict ourselves to some more limited and predominantly legal defining features - territory and political authority.

My thesis is that insularity and rivalry is still to the fore on the international scene despite the declining role of the nation-state and the rise of recent movements for separatist self-determination and the new European supra-nationalism. These latter phenomena are not nearly so progressive as many like to think. To some extent the markers of territorial and political exclusivity are not being disposed of so much as reconstructed. Territorial self-interest is, if anything, being given a new lease of life. The attempt to establish new politically and territorially distinctive and exclusive rights has in fact been part and parcel of the process of the destabilisation of the nation-state. The reconstruction of the role of the nation-state in the world has been a source for the revival as well as for the reverse of global rivalry and provincial self-interest. If the two features constitutive of the nation-state - territorial and political - are taken it can be seen that those recent upwards and downwards decentralising trends which have destabilised the nation state have, in fact, often been concerned merely with the re-establishment of territorial and political insularity at new levels. They have not attempted to override inward-looking aspirations, but to re-establish them elsewhere. It is precisely the attempt to establish such principles at new levels that has marked nationalist and supra-nationalist movements in the world system.

### *Nationalism and the Decline of the Nation-State*

Many of the most recent developments in the international system appear to have displaced the role of the nation-state. In particular its role has been challenged from two directions - from below by separatist movements for national self-determination and from above by supra-national and international developments in the global organisation of nation-states. I will look at the first in this section and at the second in the next.

There have been escalating pressures from nationalist movements for the break-up of existing nation-states and for the devolution of powers of self-determination to existing intra-national regions. In Britain the pressures have grown in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland. The inability of Mrs Thatcher to convincingly claim a mandate to govern in these regions when her party had meagre support there, not standing in the six counties and reduced to a rump in Scotland, did not strengthen her anachronistic attachment to the cause of national sovereignty. Welsh and Irish nationalism has fuelled nationalist political parties and terrorism. In Scotland the subjection of a nation to rule by English MPs of a party that barely any Scots voted for has fired the fortunes of the Scottish National Party.

In Europe, East and West, politics have been characterised by the growth of nationalist sentiments expressed through various means ranging from street protests to violent terrorism. In the changes in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s nationalist sentiments were mobilized to great effect against ruling communist regimes. It was national flags which were carried before the liberation movements in the East. The democratic revolutions were against communism but they were also carried along behind the banners of a national liberation from regimes imposed on them by a foreign power, the Soviet Union. The Eastern revolutions were characterised by a heady mixture of nationalism and consumerism as well as by simple anti-communism.

In the Soviet Union itself nationalism has been a force for reform. The Soviet Union's 'My Way' 'Sinatra doctrine' governing their foreign policy was geared around the conviction that the one-time satellite states should be left to determine their own futures. Within the Soviet Union religious, cultural and ethnic diversity is being tolerated for the first time since the revolution. On the other hand nationalism has so far been the most potent force threatening to destabilise the *perestroika* movement. Balkanisation is a major force

for change and it was Finland who were seen as the first friends of Lithuania when Moscow imposed an economic blockade on the republic following its declaration of independence. In the Asian Soviet republics the pull towards Islam and the Middle East is felt as strongly as the pull from Moscow. And just to complicate things further there are internal disputes, such as that over the government of the mainly Armenian Nagorno-Karabakh which is situated within Azerbaijani rather than Armenian territory.

Elsewhere in Eastern Europe the situation has been similar. Nationalism, as well as being a major force in the anti-communist revolutions, has become a major force determining the shape of the post-communist political scene, dividing Czechoslovakia while reuniting Germany to mention just two examples. Elsewhere this century nationalism has been a force for anti-imperialist liberation in the developing countries. The most recent new addition to the list of nation-states, Namibia, followed years of struggle by SWAPO, an organisation that characteristically combined the rhetoric of national liberation with that of socialism. In Quebec French language nationalism has been so forceful as to lead to national government resignations, Nationalism fired the tragic British war in the South Atlantic. The Palestinians have recently stepped up a struggle for an independent homeland that has been going on for ages.

Many of these nationalist movements threaten existing nation-states. But it could be argued that separatist nationalist movements are expanding rather than undermining the role of the nation-state, that they are a sign of the increasing significance of nationalism and nation-building in world politics. This claim is made both by those who fear nationalism and by those who celebrate it and it carries some truth. There are widespread nationalist conflicts going on throughout the world, and nationalism is at the centre of many of the major political changes across the globe. But, taken within a larger balanced view of the total context, it is clear, as Eric Hobsbawm points out in his (1990) *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, that what role nationalism is playing is being compromised by changes that undermine the significance of the nation-state in world politics. Even where the formation of nation-states is a great aspiration of many peoples across the globe, its role as a motor of historical development is qualified by the fact that nation-states themselves are declining in importance, if unevenly.

A real problem plaguing politics the world over is communal insularity and conflict but Hobsbawm argues that this often takes many forms other than nationalism and that while nationalism is very prominent it is of less historical and political significance than it used to be. Fifty years ago expansionary nation-building was coming to the end of a long run as the driving force of global history and politics. Now it plays a more negative and complicated role alongside other communal identities and conflicts and is balanced out by changes undermining the role of the nation-state. The basic building blocks in the world are no longer just nations but also transnational configurations, and where communities are locked into bloody conflict or devoted to their own parochial self-interests this is just as often based on religious, ethnic or cultural antagonism as on nationality.

Nations and nationalism have a long history still ahead of them and will remain powerful sources of identity and political importance. But they are diminishing in exclusivity and coherence as a result of migration, the interpenetration of nations and as a result of the rise in significance of many other sources of identity. Many regional identities which play an important role are not strictly national in that their regionalisms are not based on national political territories and do not particularly aspire to be so. Many nationalist movements have no ambitions to establish new independent states. They have more limited visions of devolution, linguistic safeguards, immigration restrictions and such like. Often they want what amounts to just less centralisation, or simply better treatment from the national authorities.

Nationalism in the late 20th century has not been expansionary or imperialist. It has, Hobsbawm argues, been more negative and divisive in character and it has been diluted by its merging into ethnic, religious and cultural conflict. It has often been based on hostility to 'alien' groups and fuelled by rapid increases in global demographic mobility and immigration. Often movements assumed to be nationalist are nothing of the sort and, in this respect, greater clarity of definition is needed. Fundamentalist religious movements, for instance, are taking on more of a role in the world yet where they are anti-western this is more a religious and cultural phenomenon, or one based on opposition to western foreign policy, than a nationalistic one. It is not centrally based on the political entity 'the nation'. Fundamentalism (of a variety of kinds) is held

together by doctrine - fundamentals - which often goes across nations - not by shared territorial, linguistic or even cultural or ethnic identities. Nationalism, on the other hand, does not have such a doctrinal character.

Nations also have less clear identities than they did, not that they have ever been homogeneous. They have been too broken down by internal diversity to foster or justify the idea of there being great national consciousnesses. Nations do not consist of one people and one government. Government of the nation is done by more than national powers and has been divided up and down to transnational and intra-national levels. The myth of the 'one people' has been exposed by the linguistic, ethnic, religious and cultural diversity of nations, caused by international migration and economic and social change, and blurred by the breaking down of the borders between nation-states. The nation is an imagined community, more a symbol and less something with a real referent. In practice it is a political unit above all else. Politicians constantly attempt to articulate other non-political criteria of national identity in order to build cohesion and unity. But they do so less easily and less convincingly now than they have been able to in the past. Once the 'state' is taken away, itself less exclusively national than it used to be, what is left of the 'nation' is bit shaky and threadbare.

### *Transnationalism and The Decline of the Nation-State*

National identity does still soldier on. But what has been hit harder than nationalist sentiment is the status of the nation-state and of nationalism as historical and political forces. Perhaps the most significant pressures which have undermined these have come from above rather than from internal separatist nationalisms. Transnational structures and processes are likely to have more to say in the major international political and historical developments of the foreseeable future. Important recent analyses of the state, such as those by Held (1989) and Hall and Ikenberry (1989) show a recognition of this fact by focusing their analyses on the implications of transnational developments.

As a result of recent developments in international relations more and more decisions are being discussed at supra-national and international levels. With the easing of global tensions following President Gorbachev's reforms in Soviet foreign policy the ability for the most powerful nations to wrap up internationally significant decisions has increased. On questions such as arms control, the environment and the drugs trade, nations are realising that their problems transcend national boundaries and can only be resolved at the transnational level. In Europe the EC is assuming increasing powers. Only Mrs Thatcher amongst the EC leaders persisted in standing against the tide of inevitability in this direction.

But supra-national and international trends undermining the powers of the nation-state go back beyond the most recent developments in the international climate. Since the Bolshevik revolution we have occupied not a world of nation-states but a bipolar world divided by ideology. It would be fair to say that the leading actors have been two nation-states - the Soviet Union and the USA - but they have represented an international system broken into two blocs, East and West, rather than into nations. The world in the latter half of the 20th century has not been unified, nor a world of many nation-states except in the most descriptive sense. It has essentially been a world of two superpowers and two superpower blocs. National issues have come a poor second. Greater multilateralism began to show itself only in the 1980s when the two superpowers began to lose their respective strength and hegemonic roles.

East-West bipolarity has tended to cover up another divide, this one between North and South, which could, and certainly should, attract greater attention from the major international powers in the future. A rise in the political significance of this second bipolar division and of global environmental and arms control issues, combined with the expanding role of economic and political transnationalism, could restrain the development of multilateralism and nationalism as major forces in the global history and politics of the 21st century. However successfully nationalist movements are restructuring the system of nation-states in the 1990s and beyond, new nations are unlikely to wield great influence in subsequent developments comparative to that wielded by transnational forces. Their influence will be swamped by that of the EC, the IMF, possibly the UN, and other transnational institutions, blocs and structures. Nationalism is by definition

nothing without the nation and with the declining influence of the nation-state goes also the role (if not the prevalence) of nationalism.

The transnationalisation of economics and politics has resulted from longstanding shifts in power from the nation-state up to higher levels. Politically, these changes have been accompanied in Britain by expressions of horror from little Englanders of the left and right fearing the loss of national sovereignty. From Margaret Thatcher to Tony Benn much has been made of the loss of the powers of the nation to pass and implement laws and policy within its own borders. The critics of supra-nationalism have lamented the declining effectivity of national policies in the face of the economic and political interpenetration of nation-states.

Britain's national sovereignty has been undermined firstly by developments in the economy, and secondly by the growth of supranational organisations and power blocs carrying legal and economic powers which can challenge those of the nation-state, changes well explained by David Held (1989).

1) *The Economy*. Taking the economy first, the most obvious changes have included the growing role of multinational companies, international finance and the international division of labour, all of which threaten the power of nation-states to control their own destinies. These developments have been facilitated by technological revolutions in transport and communications, by the growth of free trade on an international scale and by international migration. All of these have made the national community less of a relevant place of belonging exerting a weakening grip on productive and trading forces. As Eric Hobsbawm puts it:

'At present we are living through a curious combination of the technology of the late 20th century, the free trade of the 19th and the rebirth of the sort of interstitial centres characteristic of world trade in the Middle Ages'.

The increasing influence of multinational corporations and international finance undermines national economic policies because global economic organisations constantly impinge upon national economies yet are more and more beyond the control of national governments. The strength of a national economy is heavily influenced by decisions about where capital is invested or by where multinationals expand or contract their operations. Now that these decisions are made more on a global scale, less in the light of national loyalties and less within the bounds over which national governments hold sway, they undermine the control and direction of the economy in democratically determined ways by the nation-state. National economies are very interdependent, as the 1987 stock market crash demonstrated, and correspondingly less dependent on national economic policies. National fiscal and monetary policies are more influenced by international financial markets and less so by national governments, as was evidenced by the adoption of monetarist-inclined economic policies in many countries, including Britain, in the late '70s under pressure from the IMF and international finance. The internationalisation of the division of labour, meanwhile, whereby the most routine and undesirable work is done in the newly industrialising global periphery, which offers cheap labour and low levels of regulation and unionisation, breaks up the ability of national labour movements and national governments to represent and safeguard working class interests.

The tentacles of the global economy entrap different nations to differing extents. Some nations, for instance, are less integrated into global markets. After 1992 European nations will be more subject to the vagaries of transnational markets, as they operate across loosened domestic market boundaries, than other nations perhaps will. On the other hand European countries will as a bloc be able to protect themselves from global economic pressures by regional co-operation and co-ordination. Similarly within the global economy certain nations hold more power than others and so are more able to influence the nature of the constraints it imposes. The world economy was strongly influenced by a US economic hegemony which has lessened since the collapse of the Bretton Woods agreement and the decline of the US economy. Now Germany is assuming an increasingly dominant role in Europe and is likely to take on a leadership role following monetary union. But the fact of variation does not detract from the overall trend towards the loss of powers by the nation-state in the face of the internationalisation of the economy. In fact the influences of Germany and the US have as much been bases for transnational interdependence as they have been examples of national variations in the degree to which nations have become subordinated to it.

2) *Transnational Organisations*. The second area in which the nation-state is being undermined transnationally is in the growth of supra-national and international organisations and power blocs which are becoming more influential in determining national policies and formulating international forms of law which displace the role of national authority. In the field of international relations the world powers, the USA and the USSR, and the two major military alliances, NATO and the Warsaw Pact, make, or made, many decisions in a way that undercut national authority. Decisions about foreign and defence policy and about the control of weapons systems sited on domestic territory are displaced from the remit of national governments by such bodies. As a supranational defence organisation, NATO orchestrates defence decision-making at a level which is beyond the grasp of single member nation-states. Prior to the recent new detente, NATO would have overridden national governments in the event of a serious international military conflict by imposing strategies through its integrated authority structures in which the US has disproportionate influence. Within NATO different nations have had different statuses, the US, of course, being in a position of much greater power and preserving much greater national autonomy than the other member countries. In fact the Gulf crisis has shown that the US still has a mighty political and military influence, NATO or no NATO.

Britain has historically aspired to a privileged position in the western alliance as a result of its 'special relationship' with the US, although she is now being forced to become more integrated into European rather than transatlantic structures. It was Michael Heseltine's fight with Mrs Thatcher over the necessity for such a switch in alignment that lay behind the Westland affair and his resignation from the cabinet. Heseltine recognised what Mrs Thatcher had stubbornly tried to deny - that Britain has to accommodate itself to the fact that the idea of a special relationship with the US is an attempt to preserve the myth that Britain is still a great world power. Her real future lies as a much lesser power and with Europe rather than with the USA. If any country now has the ear of the US it is Germany within the Western alliance or even, for that matter, more generally, and it is remarkable to be able to say this at this new stage in history, the Soviet Union.

Supranational blocs and organisations exist on the economic and political as well as the military front, the IMF and the EC being good examples. In 1984 there were 365 intergovernmental and 4615 nongovernmental transnational organisations as compared to 37 and 176 respectively in 1909. Transnational organisations bypass national boundaries and powers, and have brought an increased place for multinational and collective state decision-making and new roles for international organisations and international interest group activity in the global political process.

The IMF is a good example of a particularly powerful transnational organisation and it showed what power it can wield in the '70s when it was called in to bail out nations like Britain suffering from the effects of the world recession. The IMF can and does impose conditions for loans, requiring reductions in public spending and currency devaluations from national governments, as was the case for Britain and as has also been the case for many 'third world' countries. In principle nations call on the IMF voluntarily. Yet such a call is often not much of a choice to a nation facing crisis and the IMF in effect carries huge powers which can undercut and overrule those of nation-states who are in difficult circumstances and need its help.

The European Community has transnational legal powers to pass and impose laws on member states which can override national laws. The EC is now a site of considerable governmental power, having great resources to distribute and power over the shape of regional structures and individual member (and non-member) states circumstances. The efforts of EC President Jacques Delors to forge a new Europe characterised by open markets, economic and political union, human rights safeguards and shared social provisions - shows the potential for establishing supra-national powers over nation-states in the EC. The EC's role in many economic, legal and social matters involves the transfer of national powers in these matters up to the supra-national level.

A particular source of annoyance to nationalist politicians has been the legal powers of the EC which give certain citizenship rights to individuals over and above those they enjoy as national citizens and which subject states to transnational regulations and obligations. Critics of the EC are particularly opposed to the way in which this system overrides and displaces national sovereignty on these matters. The European

Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms allows individuals to take legal action against their own governments for breaches of human rights. Individuals can petition the European Commission of Human Rights and go ultimately to the European Court of Human Rights which can make decisions undermining the freedom of states to follow their own whims on matters such as human rights, equality and discrimination.

Nations do not stand alone like islands in the world. The interrelations between nation-states mean that what goes on in one nation frequently has implications for citizens in others. The growth of international and economic forces means that national governments no longer have exclusive rights of control over their given territories and national citizenries no longer have exclusive control over the government of their nations, insofar as they ever did, through national representative democratic systems.

The role of the EC should not be exaggerated. The EC is not like a conventional nation-state in that it does not have a monopoly on the means of physical coercion within its own territory. It does not have formal agencies of social control such as a military or police force. Member states join the EC out of choice and they do so precisely to further their interests as nation-states rather than to undermine them.

Nation-states still retain many economic, social and political powers and the degree to which they have lost powers to transnational agencies varies from case to case. Some nations, for instance, hold particularly powerful positions in transnational configurations. This, as I have argued, has been the case for the USA and will increasingly be the case for Germany in the new Europe. Some states have just not got so involved in supra-nationalism. There are many Western European countries who have not joined the EC, even amidst the rush of the Eastern nations to do so. Norway, Sweden, Finland, Austria and Sweden have opted instead for a separate bloc in the European Free Trade Association, while some former Eastern bloc countries - namely Romania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, all nations who have retained stronger links with communism than have other former Eastern bloc states - are not showing an immediately obvious burning enthusiasm for joining the EC, although this may come.

Yet nations' controls over military coercion, or the threat of it, are compromised by the existence of organisations like NATO. And the choice to join blocs such as the EC may sometimes be more formal than real. International economic competition from Japan and the US and the growing powers of the EC mean that for a nation not to become involved in the EC can be greatly to their disadvantage. More and more nations are joining the queue for EC membership - Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland, for instance, - and after 1992 the path will be clear for them to join subject to their meeting requirements on standards of democratic and economic development. Overall the impinging of transnational powers into previously national matters has increased. Multinational powers intervene more now in domestic matters, and domestic decisions are increasingly made at higher collective transnational levels. Increasing global interconnections mean that domestic matters are becoming more often global matters. One nation's decisions affect the circumstances of other nations more now than ever before.

National governments do not represent only their citizens' wishes, if they ever did. Representative democracy is buffeted and barged by international forces well beyond the electoral mandate. Governments are influenced by considerations other than the needs or wishes of their national citizenries and are not accountable and responsible only to the electorate. The sovereignty and independence of the nation-state has, in short, been compromised, limited and divided by the growth of transnational dimensions of power. The nation-state and nationalism are declining as powers driving contemporary history and politics. The question is - what kind of alternative does the new transnationalism offer us?

### *The Limits of Nationalism and Supra-nationalism*

The mistake would be to celebrate current changes in the international system being wrought by nationalist movements and supra-nationalism on the grounds that they further self-determination and a greater internationalism. In fact insularity and self-interest in the global system is being sustained as much as reduced by such developments. Territorial exclusivity and political antagonism is not so much being eroded as re-constituted at new levels. These features are far from dying out under the pressure of attacks on the nation-state from above and below, but are being fired by them. Attacks on the nation state are occurring



in the name of nationalism and regional self-interest. Such motives are the driving forces behind the current restructuring rather than its victims.

Freshly influential movements in the world hope to re-establish their national identities and political rights of self-determination and to do so have to take on the nation-state system that has deprived them of precisely such a status. Nationalist movements are not directed towards the break up of the nation-state but towards the reconstitution of national powers or rights at new levels.

The allegiance of nation-states to supranational powers, meanwhile, is not fixed by a benevolent spirit of internationalism. Representatives of the so-called 'third world' have protested at EC events to make precisely this point. Nation-states hope to gain individually as members of new supra-national configurations from the strengthening of organisations like the EC in the world economy. The main purpose behind the increasing role of the EC is to find a place for Europe in the international economy where it can do battle with Japan and the US and sustain the economic interests of its members and of itself as a regional bloc. Nations join not in a spirit of regional solidarity or internationalism but in order to further their own interests as nation-states. The EC is not motivated by a familial affection amongst its members and certainly not by a broader internationalist compassion.

Countries participate in the EC for their own ends. The EC is likely in the future to rest more and more, for instance, upon the dominance of a newly re-unified Germany over the others in the community. You do not have to adhere to spurious essentialist ideas about the innate global ambitions of the German psyche to be pessimistic about the implications of a nation, any nation, assuming such economic and political power as Germany is likely to, particularly when the key German actors will be the bankers. Germany, like other nations in the community, is more likely than not to use the community as a forum within which it can create a climate favourable to its own interests.

This is the way supra-national and regional configurations work and there is no reason why it should be any different for the EC. Furthermore the EC, even as a genuinely unified community, is not going to be an organisation within the international order which contributes to the easing of global tensions and the resolution of international inequalities and starvation. It shows every sign of continuing to work as a new powerful bloc struggling for an economic and political role for its privileged members in the rivalry and jockeying for survival of global politics. It is on this basis that other regional associations in the world operate, in the Middle East for instance. Dominant nations within the various regional associations fight to establish dominance and defend their own interests, and blocs are formed to defend members interests in the scramble for global power and position.

The East European nations are clamouring to claim a place in the EC not because they have developed a sudden liking for their Western sisters but because they want to be in on the action, just as Britain's international compassion towards the residents of Hong Kong only extend to those frightened residents of the colony who will bring money and talent to the British economy. In Germany re-unification was fired by a rejuvenated wave of nationalist fervour and economic self-interest. The Easterners were, not without good reason, itching to reap some benefits from integration into the West, in particular into one of its strongest economies, while those in the West were either attracted to or repelled from such an idea by an ugly mixture of the same ingredients - nationalist fervour and economic self-interest. West Germans were either clamouring to lay their hands on their Eastern compatriots out of irrational nationalist sentiments or because assets lay rich for the picking. Or they resented the new place of the Easterners on the basis of a nationalism deriving from post-war boundaries and a self-interest that feared the deleterious effect that the addition of the East may have on their individual and national economic interests.

This is the shape of supra-nationalism and it is hardly the stuff of international harmony and co-operation. Yet without international co-operation global solutions to international war, environmental destruction and the poverty and starvation of the South are not going to be forthcoming. If anything associations and blocs in the international order have accentuated excessive pre-occupations with regional and national interests to the detriment of the poorer nations of the world and at the expense of good international relations and the securing of solutions to global problems. These blocs tend to see communities of nations in a highly

restricted and regional sense and not on an international dimension or with any great sensitivity to the question of North-South relations. They are more concerned with strengthening their own bloc than with establishing co-operative relations with others. In this sense my cynicism about supra-nationalism is based not on a 'little Englander' chauvinism but the opposite. It is based on a conviction that supra-nationalism does not do enough to get rid of the worst aspects of nationalism - insularity, self-interest and rivalry - and needs to be superseded by a more fully-blown internationalism.

What is needed is a transition from the current fetishes of Europeanism and Westernism to a more universal internationalism. Gorbachev's vision of the 'Common European Home' looks very thin when set against such an ambition. Although this is not how it is intended, the idea of the Common European Home amounts to a justification for Europe turning its back on the world beyond its own boundaries. A genuine appeal to the common good has to involve more universal political structures. European politicians need to turn outwards from their insular provincial pre-occupations. At present they are concerned with offering their nearest neighbours a share in the riches of the West. What they need to do to justify their claims to transnational compassion is to integrate the South into the riches of the North, and the only way this can be done initially is through making redistribution a priority and being prepared to face the sacrifices that this will involve.

On this point I am sceptical of critics of nationalism who propose its uprooting through the promulgation of new local or small-scale political identities or through a greater role for higher regional levels where nations are united. Progressive commentators who celebrate the death of nationalism with the rise of the supra-national state, and who criticise those who can give only qualified support to supra-national developments are taking a one-sided view. So are those who flock to greet the winning back by suppressed regions and oppressed nationalities of their rights of self-determination. I do not wish to denigrate national liberation movements or do down supranationalism. These can be tremendously liberatory forces for breaking up old forms of nationalism and re-asserting the rights of long suppressed ones.

But this is precisely the problem. Such developments more often than not merely replace old political and territorial blocs with new ones, simply reconstituting international antagonisms, global competition and parochial self-interests at new levels. In my opinion the problem is not with societies, or with the levels at which they are established, but with the relations between them and it is on this dimension that solutions to the nasty cause of nationalism need to be sought. The idea that the down-side of nationalism can be dealt with through the continuation of territorial and political units but merely at new levels misses the whole problem. It does nothing to address the rule of insularity and unproductive rivalry in inter-national relations. More often than not it just fuels it.

It is, in short, very problematic to search for alternatives to nationalism through the re-siting of democratic powers at new supra-national or local levels. On this point the advocacy by nationalism's critics of new supranational organisations or decentralised local communities, on the grounds that they can redirect peoples' senses of belonging to political units other than the nation-state, fail to engage with the real problems of nationalism. If anything such proposals espouse structures which will perpetuate the undesirable features of nationalism. The problem of nationalism derives not from the levels at which political units are established but from peoples' attachments to territorial identities in the first place, exclusive of and in abstraction from wider relations and identities. Europeanisation is doing a creditable job in breaking down British chauvinism but it is replacing it with a new regional provincialism. The shifting around of sites of democratic power may well redirect peoples' allegiances and belongings to groups and entities other than the nation-state. But whether it can shift the allegiances of millions of citizens from entities which exacerbate international strife and bloodshed and irrational nationalistic fervour is quite another thing. In my view rejigging the levels at which territorial, functional or political allegiance is held merely shifts parochial and nationalistic-type sentiments to new sites. It does not at all displace them.

### *International Associationalism*

What are needed are institutional structures and values which emphasise the differentiation and independence of societies in the world yet lead them into attitudes of social toleration and co-operation

towards one another. What is needed is not the simple realigning of particularistic loyalties to new levels and sites. The right of the community to self-determination cannot be over emphasised. But this right, the rights of other communities to pursue their own particular ends, and inter-communal social conscientiousness - these can only be secured by the integration of particularistic loyalties into social and solidaristic relations of association.

So what is the solution? What form of international relations might be appropriate for the resolution of the sort of global problems that plague us - international inequality and poverty, the environmental crisis, and international arms stocks, warfare and conflict?

The first thing to say is that there is no hard and fast solution and it is certainly not my intention to attempt to provide one here. It is my intention to outline possible ways in which the institutional and political conditions could be laid that might provide a framework within which solutions to some of these problems might be facilitated. Policy and programmatic solutions will vary and are too complex to be dealt with in the little space available here. But the political institutions capable of providing a framework for the formulation of policies and programmes is something that can be outlined. The democratic bases for a greater internationalism are what can be suggested at here.

What are needed are structures and institutions of international negotiation and co-ordination which recognise the rights of different social groups in the world to their own particularistic and diverse identities and to democratic self-determination. Yet these freedoms must be expressed within a framework of mutual toleration, reciprocity and compromise. Neo-liberal anarchy let loose on an international scale would be a disaster. Questions of how self-determination and harmonious communal relations can be promoted and made to co-exist are age-old dilemmas of philosophical enquiry as well as major practical international problems of the contemporary period. Solidaristically-minded association is needed on an international scale as well as on the more decentralised levels discussed so far, at the level of the enterprise, the decentralised community or the nation-state.

This means a much more internationalist attitude. Internationalism is an idea that the left has always claimed for itself and the global problems that face us do require an appeal to distinctively socialist values such as equality, co-operation and internationalism. Yet movements on the left have often been exceptionally nationalist in character. Think of the 'third world' liberation movements, the Stalinist drive to socialism in one country or the autarkic and protectionist attitudes of the left in social democratic parties since the war. Even where the left has been more internationalist it has not always had a glowing record in its interpretation of internationalism. Frequently internationalism has simply meant the export of socialism more often than not by force and regardless of the willingness of populations to live under such a system. Soviet socialist internationalism in the obvious case in point.

On the other hand internationalism itself is an idea worth rescuing, particularly in the present context. The point is that the 'international' has to be constituted through the democratic participation of the constellation of particular identities which compose it, rather than being imposed upon them from above or outside. As such it also has to tolerate the diversity of differences in the world rather than subsuming them within a singular identity. So far difference, in the form of endless national and ethnic conflicts, and commonality, in the form of regimes imposed across national and cultural boundaries and impervious to their differences, have made all the running. Approaches geared around combining difference with commonality have been sorely lacking.

The concept of association is appropriate here. What is needed is, first, a political structure in which the diversity of relevant interests can associate and negotiate, at transnational levels, compromises and agreements which can make inroads into international crises, for international is what the crises are in all the problem areas I have mentioned. International agencies must be composed of their constituent actors, not external to and imposed upon them. Second, and following from this, international structures need to be of the sort that bring together diverse parties in a way through which they can negotiate mutually agreed compromises and agreements which are sensitive to social interests and general needs rather than

to just different sectional interests yet do not subsume or suppress diverse particular identities. Government by association is what is implied. The association of interests themselves, rather than the external representation of their needs, and association, rather than simple communitarianism or cut-throat competition. These are the compromises required.

Concretely this implies a need for a greater role for world associational agencies like the UN. The qualification is that such agencies must be not external to or representative of the states of the world. They must be constituted by the participation of those states themselves and by the participation of the territorial and functional interests that lie within and across states. In short they must be constituted by, and not constitutive of, the states of the world.

The necessity for international agencies is simple. The major problems of the world - international arms stocks, warfare and conflict, environmental destruction, and international poverty and starvation - are problems which are created and sustained by the combined and interdependent actions of states. They cannot therefore be resolved by the individual isolated actions of any of those states individually. Such states are anyway unlikely to proceed with action and the sacrifices it involves unless others are likely also to take steps, and those other states are unlikely to take steps unless other states also take action, and so on. This is not to say that unilateralism is undesirable. Far from it. My point is that, sadly but understandably, nations are rarely willing to act unilaterally in a world where protection of the national interest is always the first priority. What are needed, therefore, are international forums for the negotiation and agreement of programmes of combined and multilateral action. At the moment these do not exist, are toothless or under developed, or informal and *ad-hoc*.

One initial step that can be taken is to reprioritise the scale of importance with which supra-national and international organisations are treated. On this count the role of something like the EC needs to be considerably reduced in favour of agencies like a strengthened UN. The EC is geared around joining in the economic competition between blocs in the world. The UN is much better suited to dealing with international problems, unaffected as it is, as an internationally inclusive agency, by any regional self-interest or competitive concerns.

The idea of world associationalism is not as utopian as it may sound. It is certainly less of a ridiculous proposition now than it was a few years ago. Trends are towards the increasing internationalisation of the economy and politics. Significant decisions are increasingly being made at supra-national and international levels. Multinational companies are becoming more dominant in the world economy. The international division of labour and the increasing interdependency of trade have added to this trend. Politically, transnational negotiations over arms reduction, economic union and the environment have increased. Agreement about the necessity for approaches to these issues has grown. If the momentum of these trends is to be sustained they must be formally institutionalised and channeled into democratic structures. At the beginning of the '80s when national autarky still seemed a serious proposition and international tensions and national insularity inhibited international negotiations and a consciousness of the global extent of the most serious problems of the world, internationalism of the sort being proposed here would have seemed more of a nonsense than it does now.

Furthermore the specific dual form of internationalism I propose runs with the grain of current economic, social and political restructuring, although this itself is not the reason to favour it, only a reason to see it as a feasible proposition. I propose an internationalism tolerant of difference and independence in the world yet conscious of the need for the diverse to be socially compassionate and compromising towards each other on the international level. This moves with the twin processes of decentralisation evident in the world at the moment, down from the nation-state to particular units and identities and up to supra-national and international co-ordination. An internationalism based on the growth of international interactions and negotiations on one hand and on the free expression of particular and fragmented identities on the other captures the dually (upwards and downwards) decentralising directions of global trends at the moment. The important thing is not to allow these dual processes to be rent apart so that small decentralised communities and huge supra- and inter-national agencies carry on insensitive to each others needs and without meshing together.

Another question hanging over the idea of world associationalism refers not just to its feasibility but also to the potential dangers of having ultimate international forms of centralised bureaucratic power and the threat they might pose to democracy and the liberties of different nations, groups and individuals. This is an important question because international agencies like the UN would have to have much more power and significance if they were to make inroads into the global crises I have mentioned. The general principle would have to be that pluralist, democratic and libertarian safeguards would always be absolutely primary in the world associationalism. Such a priority would always have to come before the power of world associations to pursue their ends. The matters over which they could exercise jurisdiction would have to be restricted to those which were strictly international in nature. They should never be given any sort of monopoly over physical coercion in the sense that states normally are (although the UN does at present operate a multi-national peacekeeping force and it has to be said that the concentration of military power under the control of a universal agency rather than in the hands of different nations would make it less of a potential instrument in inter-national disputes). In these senses international agencies or associations such as proposed here would not resemble states as we know them but would be more like beefed up versions, if albeit significantly so, of the UN.

Unless you think of socialism in terms of techniques - nationalisation, central planning and such like - it is far from a dead doctrine (although a role for these techniques should not be ruled out). In fact if you see socialism as a set of distinctive values nowhere else is it more alive and relevant than on the question of internationalism. Socialism is characterised by a concern with values such as co-operation, solidarity, equality, mutuality and, indeed, internationalism. Seen like this socialism has a power to respond to global crises that no other ideology has. The obstacles to breaking out from provincialism are thrown up by individualist and capitalist ideas, by the competitive economic reasoning of global capitalist markets geared around self-interest and private gain.

What global crises need, as the environmental challenge has shown, is a general collectivism, human solidarity on an international level and a universal rather than a provincial mentality. Only an approach like this can shift us from an East-West complacency to a North-South conscientiousness. And only socialist values offer the possibility of such an approach in principle and without qualification. The decline of the cold war has provided the basis for an East-West unity which can both create a more internationally co-operative culture and build a Northern bloc united and strong enough to take decisive action on global problems. But the danger that must be smothered right from the start is that the changes that are occurring along these lines do not degenerate into a Northern provincialism, a blood is thicker than water regional familialism, compounded by a triumphant smug western complacency. What is perhaps most important in the future of the East-West changes is not just that they are firmly cemented but also that they are extended into a global consciousness of the North-South divide which has outlived the collapse of the curtain between East and West. And the fragile and exaggerated mood of global reciprocity and peace that smothered western thinking at the end of the 1980s has to be institutionalized and politically entrenched and extended before it withers or is shattered by the next inevitable crisis in international relations.