



The Music of Peace

THE WORLD'S CONCERT OF NATIONS

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The old phrase, "the concert of Europe," might seem almost a derisive one to-day, but what is being increasingly realized is that the *ideal* implied by such a phrase is right. And further, that we should be thinking in terms of a possible concert of all the people of the earth. In the analogy of a concert, an orchestra, we have the thought that though there are several different instruments, each with its distinctive function, there is but one composition being played out. Each instrument has to offer its own efficiency, its own influence, but beyond that giving of its own individual efficiency it must be played as a part of the *whole symphony*. An individual efficiency and excellence must not obviously be allowed to upset the proper proportion of the whole. The analogy also suggests that there is a master-conductor who already knows the whole piece of music to perfection, and whose function it is to harmonize all the several instruments into the one pattern. The score has already been written, but its manifestation awaits time and experience.

With nations, each has its own contribution to offer; nay more, each is destined one day to make that offering as a part of the whole. In the national orchestra too often we have individual instruments desiring to play and to be heard at all times, and few of such instruments have yet learnt that often their best contribution may be in a pause, a rest. In Europe, a number of small and large communities each claim the sovereign right to declare war upon another. That surely is an outworn, out-of-date right, even if we admit it ever was a right. We need to re-value such words as "rights," "freedom," "independence." All members of an orchestra have rights, but not to play at their own sweet will; the only true rights are the rights to co-operate with the conductor. Nationalism has, of course, its place, but nationalism and patriotism have often been

exaggerated and over-emphasized to a degree that literally defeated its own ends. A school or other community usefully has its own loyalty, but it is a dis-service when such a loyalty is allowed to encroach on one's loyalty to the larger group, of which the smaller is but a part. Advocates of party issues must be ready to let them take second place to world issues. The leader we are looking for is one who is big, big in views and big in the power to unify.

No one definition of what a nation is has ever been agreed upon. Religion, language, territory, ethnic types, forms of government—these may belong to a nation, but *yet are not the nation*. In earlier days, maybe, a nation could be accurately defined in terms of a religion, or even by a set of particular customs, but to-day a nation offers harbourage to many religions and to many different types. Mankind is obviously far older than any race or nation. The many races come and go as do the waves on an ocean, but there remains the continuing ocean on whose bosom innumerable waves have their little day. Is it not possible that a nation exists primarily for SOULS, for giving particular experience to souls (as a school does to pupils) and hence the length of a nation's life depends upon the work intended to be done?

So it is that the best historians are those who speak to us in the form of poetry and folklore. Such poets give us an interpretation of those passing facts, which mostly fill our school histories. The poets help us to grasp the true meaning and purpose of any great period; they help us to see the essential solidarity of mankind. Too often the teaching of history has kept alive national enmities. H. G. Wells says "a nation is a spiritual entity." In studying nations we are trying to read the pilgrimage of a spiritual adventure.

The words "nationalism" and "internationalism" are not opposite words, they are complementary. True nationalism implies internationalism. The word "internationalism" means "between nations" so therefore obviously presupposes a co-operation between them. The word most certainly does not suggest un-nationality; still less anti-nationality.

The one life, common to all, has infinite possibilities and aspects and any one individual or any one nation can but express a few of those aspects at any one time. In the early stages of evolution the nations, in order to *become* nations, had to develop separateness, even selfishness, but as evolution proceeds a new factor becomes important and co-operation rather than competition should be the order of the day. Those in whom the pioneer spirit consciously lives must ever be trying to play out the yet unsounded note, knowing that real progress will inevitably be in terms of that new note. We need not condemn the past deeds of the nations; to us, now, it seems they followed lesser light than we now know but let us at any rate determine to think and act in terms of a greater light. Everything that tends to Union now is on the line of evolution, and everything that tends toward separation is on the line of the past. The old patriotism was "my country, right or wrong" but the new gives way to the newer patriotism which seeks to discover the note that each nation has to sound in the concert of the world.

So strong to-day is the feeling for internationalism, that some writers have even gone to the extreme and condemned nationalism. But true nationalism is a precious and choice flower. Though we do well to discard a counterfeit coin, yet the existence of a counterfeit implies that a real coin exists. An individual is born into a nation because he needs to learn the lesson that nation can teach, and it is high education that our youths and maidens should be taught to be finely and nobly national.

If every nation has a special word in the world-song of life, may we make a humble attempt to determine what that word is for some of the nations in the world to-day?

Australia; the spirit of adventure and brotherhood, and a wide-spread appreciation of the beautiful. Also love of the open-air.

Austria; the spirit of culture, into which the spirit of the quest largely enters.

Belgium; the spirit of independence and virility.

Holland; practical idealism, the spirit of common-sense.

Germany; the spirit of discipline, strangely and wonderfully permeated by the spirit of the Quest.

India; the spirit of the Aryan civilization and culture—rightness and appropriateness for every particular occasion.

England; the spirit of respect for law and order and practical capacity.

Russia; the spirit of Holiness, mysticism, culture. This I believe is the real Russia which will re-emerge after its years of obscuration.

Italy; is experimenting with new type nationalism, which, whether we agree with it personally or not, should not prevent us from trying to understand it.

And what should a visitor, such as I am, say of America? I believe that you have here splendid evidences of a Quest of The New Age, and of giving spiritual values to material things. In material things, it may be that yours is the work of solving the pressing problem of distribution. Production has been solved, it has been said. How can these goods and materials be universally and fairly distributed so that humanity may have leisure rather than unemployment?

Whatever may be your contribution, it must be for the whole world. There is no reality in isolation. The only legitimate isolation is the temporary one provided by an Isolation Hospital. We all need to sit round a common table. An attempt to do this has been called a League of Nations. It was an experiment, an early experiment, and being but an infant it has had many tumbles. But is the idea behind it right? I believe it is. Let us re-name it, if need be, re-constitute it, change its form; but it is only as we strengthen the will for peace, organize for peace, want peace, be prepared to sacrifice for peace, that peace will come, and the true harmony, the symphony of the Nations heard to perfection.

(Radio Talk given by Captain Sidney Ransom at Columbus, Ohio, Station WOSU, May 23rd, 1936, and over WKRC, Cincinnati Ohio, May 28th, 1936.)

