



Lectura 3 - GODKIN LECTURES
BREAKTHROUGH FROM NATIONALISM - A Small Island Looks At a
Big Trouble - 28 al 30 de abril de 1959.

(Discurso pronunciado en Inglés)

I should like to return this evening to some of the main concepts that were put forth in our first meeting. Let me once more state our theme: a small island looks at a big trouble. Now, we have seen that our big trouble lies in the world's incapacity to conceive itself as a basic unit facing the basic problem posed by the possibility of nuclear extinction of all of our membership -- the membership of man. The incapacity is rooted, to a very high degree, in the entangling web of nationalistic feelings and values which prevent the liberation of our thinking and our action.

I have looked at our predicament as one coming from a people who once considered themselves caught in a seemingly impossible trap and yet, by transcending the emotions of nationalism, were able to create a new, imaginative form of political association, well fitted to their needs and aspirations.

Puerto Rico modestly, shows that there is plenty of life in the dynamic of federalism. Can we try, then, of federalistic calisthenics? Can we imagine, even if for only what we in embrace nationalism for an emotional readiness to the world can do, if we substitute our emotional along with federalism?

We start with a simple assumption: That in view of the absolute power of nuclear weapons there can be no victor in any great war, Victory is a word that properly can never again be used meaningfully in connection with war, not by anybody. Wars in the past between national states or national blocs were fought with the expectation that victory was possible, and recently with a mutual expectation of unconditional surrender. The next unconditional surrender would be that of mankind to the Moloch of nuclear energy itself.

A few days ago, Senator Fulbright, in talking about the European democracies, gave some pertinent advice: "Federate or perish", he said. This holds true beyond Europe. Nuclear force has decreed a compulsory solidarity for all.

The idea of federation on a world scale, has, of course, been approached many times before as a general and vague aspiration. Aside from its historical and poetic projection, Wendell Wilkie eloquently expressed the idea in his ONE WORLD, and at the end of the war a group of distinguished citizens brought forth proposals for world federation. I remember how at one time some kind of public discussion was going on as to who should be president of the world. My recollection is that I voted for Ghandi.

The mention of these things brings to mind the thought of noble but utopian ideas. At the time I am referring to they were that. But I cannot believe that we can afford, as the danger to our survival becomes more and more acute, to continue discarding such Ideas as only proper for discussion in what used to be called "a little group of serious thinkers." While I do not believe, of course, that any such solution can be pulled out of a hat or established by a few rapid and masterly strokes of statesmen, it seems obvious there is need of giving the most effective thought to transcending nationalism and



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developing a deep conviction that man must unite somehow, not too late, against the menace of nuclear force.

We are on the threshold of an era of great explorations, very much like Mediterranean Europe was at the end of the Fifteenth Century. Just as we then sailed many an uncharted sea, so are we now about to fly into space. As menacing nuclear force is a powerful negative motivation for changing our ways, the threshold of this new era in which an infinite field for the adventurous man's spirit is opening is a positive motivation of the utmost validity, changing our ways, for looking to a great federalism as a difficult, a tremendously difficult, but unavoidable purpose. It would seem so puny if in this great adventure to a sidereal Cathay, we take with us the petty concepts and emotions of nationalism, the clashing wills of empire, the intense jealousies and hates of a divided humanity.

We are engaged in an intense rivalry of economic systems, as part of our Civil War. Each side believes that the other side is resolved to the destruction of its system. It is true that those systems have been proclaimed as irreconcilable. But it is also true that with time each system has been taking on the more workable or the more necessary characteristics of the other. Certainly, Capitalism is not today what Marx saw nor is it anything like the future that he envisaged for it. Certainly, Communism as a way of production, (to be distinguished from its aspect as a political system) is not only different from what Marx calculated the historical process would make of it, but even substantially what the Bolsheviks of 1917 decreed. Mikoyan, a vastly important Russian manager, seemed to get along very well with the vastly important American managers during his recent visit. But what makes the most important change is the growth of science and technology, the common growth, on both sides of the Curtain, of this massive and decisive fact. The Russian leaders keep up a propaganda barrage on the theme of exploitation: certain evil capitalists get many pounds of labor out of the worker, giving him as few ounces of pay as possible. On the Western side, the insistence was that the bureaucratic Russian state could not provide a decent living for its people, even if it did not support a vast war machine, because without private initiative and private property and the incentive of profits, prosperity cannot be built. The West is not insisting on this any more, but only on the fact that whatever is achieved economically it is at the expense of freedom.

Let us look at this clash from a different angle, the angle of the great technological revolution. Suppose we accept that this revolution that is taking place can bring about prosperity in the Socialist system, even if all the drawbacks assigned to that system by the West were true, and this same technology of production can abolish poverty under free enterprise, even if all the evils attributed by the Soviet to Capitalism were true. Suppose we say that poverty can be abolished under both Capitalism and Socialism and that our remaining differences are in political freedom and religious attitudes. Does anyone sincerely think that once the economic realities that I have briefly dwelt upon have been understood, anyone in Russia can believe that the United States and the West will deliberately risk nuclear destruction to impose congressional or parliamentary government on the



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Russians or to compel their leaders to join the Greek Orthodox Church? Can anyone in the West think that Russians will deliberately risk destruction to impose their manner of production on the West or their doctrine of the withering of the state? This doctrine, by the way, must hold some allure for reactionary capitalists, if they only believed it! Both these assumptions would credit mankind with a deadlier fanaticism than it has exhibited even at its most fanatical periods. The deepest religious differences have accommodated themselves to coexistence after struggles which would perhaps have been final if there had been Moslem and Christian atomic bombs or Catholic and Protestant guided missiles.

Each system of abolishing poverty, because of the common treasury of science and technology, can function, is functioning in different parts of the world. And the peoples concerned will decide, according to their own psychological and cultural traits, as well as to their historical circumstances, whether the political institutions under which this prosperity grows and functions are to their liking or not.

With these diverse manners of providing an ample base for the cultures of the world, the competition will be highly useful and profoundly interesting. This is a revolution in the manner in which economic systems can creatively use their rivalry. It should help us all toward the state of grace -- of federalist grace -- we are seeking, for that is the profound, the obvious, the disregarded revolution of our time.

(Economic rivalry in a world of great productivity cannot be the same as economic rivalry in a world of scarcity.)

Either in rivalry or in supranational cooperation, the underdeveloped areas of the world must be helped so that the gap between their economic facilities and that of the areas that have been more active or more fortunate can be closed, bringing a great sense of equality to all the peoples.

With the right kind of help, wisely given, the impoverished peoples of the world can develop, we can be sure, tremendous unused energies. I am speaking from knowledge of a people that did. They will seek out their naturally gifted sons and daughters, as was done in Puerto Rico, and give them educational opportunities limited only by their capacity to use it. They will develop groups of young people who will show extraordinary enterprise in converting inert natural resources into national wealth, who will be dedicated to their communities progress, who will endeavor to endow all this with a meaning and a serenity, perhaps by reaching, deep into their ancient philosophies.

When these young people dig into the great stock of innovations of the Twentieth Century, it should not be expected that they will come out every time with mere imitations. Every innovation has to be grappled with indigenously. They may prefer, for example, to form cooperatives instead of companies. They may prefer village community work, administered by the people themselves, to government directed work. All of us must respect them, even when they do not imitate the known



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systems. Perhaps they deserve even more respect for having the creative courage not to imitate, side by side with a non-nationalistic eagerness to learn freely all that there is to be learned from whatever source. The great and only question is whether the product of their hands and minds goes to increase human freedom and human happiness.

Let us, then, accept diversity as a basic need of human creatures and human society, yielding precedence only to survival, peace. Let us look at it as the living and multiple and dynamic method through which mankind achieves its potentialities.

This diversity, this rich pluralism of experiences, might require a new habit of looking at the living society of men and forces and facts. It demands an understanding that our goal is not a homogenous world, dominated by any given system and economically determined either by capitalism or socialism. We should insist that the spirit of man, in the new federalist era that we are envisaging should more than ever be in command and not in attendance of the economic process.

On my previous visit to Harvard in 1955, I described this task as Operation Serenity. "A society in which Operation Serenity has been successful" -- I said -- "would use its economic power increasingly for the extension of freedom, of knowledge, and of the understanding imagination rather than for a rapid multiplication of wants. It is a basic duty, although clearly an insufficient one, to fight poverty. Priority obviously goes to fighting the old-fashioned poverty that consists of vast masses of people being ill-fed, ill-housed, ill-clad, ignorant, insecure in illness, orphanhood and old age; That is an undebatable common denominator of the social conscience. There is room also, it seems to me, for an awareness of a new fangled poverty, that of the feverish desires outstripping the feverish production and of the feverish production provoking new desires that must go for many unfulfilled.

We are in the midst of a technological revolution that will require more than what Dr. Galbraith has called the conventional wisdom. With an all-frontal attack on a world-wide basis -- through strong joint, or rival action -- very few barren rooms will eventually be left in our house of the world. But as Professor Galbraith in his brilliant, provocative book *THE AFFLUENT SOCIETY*, has indicated, "To furnish a barren room is one thing. To continue to crowd in furniture until the foundation buckles is quite another. To have failed to solve the problem of producing goods would have been to continue man in his oldest and most grievous misfortune. But to fail to see that we have solved it and fall to proceed thence to the next task, would be fully as tragic."

What, then, shall be our dominant aspiration? Can we possibly be efficient in production and at the same time wise and modest in consumption? Can we be feverish in output and serene in intake?

Some economists could tell us that a higher and higher rate of multiple consumption is necessary to a high rate of production, and therefore of employment and of income, and that what I am talking about would bring economies tumbling down on our heads. It need not be so, because of the evident possibility of re-gearing high productivity to higher ends. If it were so it would most certainly



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be time to ponder what to do about a situation in which Serenity could bring about catastrophe.

Perhaps it is well at this stage to hear some wise words from the Orient for just as the West has brilliantly applied to human productivity the gift of science, so has the East probed deep for centuries into the concept of serenity as a refutation of disorder and chaos. "To say that it is necessary to adhere to old methods in order to maintain our old standards and values" -Premier Nehru has written -- "means that we must remain poor and backward and only then can we maintain those values. It is true that as we adopt higher techniques for productive and creative activities these will affect our thinking and our lives. But it does not necessarily follow that this must lead to our discarding spiritual and higher cultural values of life. We must not combine spirituality and culture with privilege on the one hand and poverty on the other. We must separate basic values from the temporary and changing social or economic setup in which we live.

"Indeed it has become inevitable for us to fit in with the modern world of science and technology and it will be dangerous for us to imagine that we can live apart from it. It will be equally dangerous for us to think that we should accept technology without those basic values which are the essence of civilized man."

To give effectiveness to that synthesis so ably expressed by Nehru, involves a basic investment in education, a tremendously increased educational effort, quantitatively and qualitatively.

A great debate has been going on about education for a better world. I am, of course, not going into it as to technical merits. Since the first Sputnik flew into orbit, it has become increasingly dramatic to many of us that certain basic concepts in American education require searching reconsideration. In Russia, where educational methods are said to have had a very direct relation to the space progress symbolized by the first and subsequent artificial satellites, there seems to be no complacency with even the scientific education that made possible such results; we hear of Mr. Khrushchev calling for a tightening of the system. Russian education, geared to the purposes of the state, does not make it less efficient in the service of those purposes. We may question the purposes, but the effectiveness seems clear. "We should be wiser" says Admiral Rickover, "to investigate how Europe educates her children, for she prepares them better than we do, for a more difficult life we must expect in the future, yet she maintains a decent and comfortable standard of living on her very limited resources and her crowded land." Although I do not share the Admirals certainty that if we overcome the cold war the future will be harder than the present, (I don't think it will be, saving as it should develop into a civilization in which man imposes upon himself higher tasks) his counsel is a profoundly valid one, to look to Europe, to the successful European democracies, when seeking important growth in the educational system, to make each man as effective an intellectual force as God gave him the potential to be. The spirit of this should not be that of a humble pilgrimage to sit at the feet of masters as much as of an opening of windows to let in fresh winds. In Puerto Rico, where United States education has been very influential,



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we say that one should feel a reasonable pride in his home, but keep the windows open on all sides.

The dichotomy of mass education and the education of the exceptionally gifted should be broken through; it should not be a matter of choice. Both are profoundly needed. One should not take means away from the other. They should both raid the conspicuous consumption fund.

The dichotomy of education - for - adjustment and education - for - knowledge and intellectual skill should be broken through, putting the emphasis on knowledge and skill and accepting whatever of the adjustment method may have proven to have validity.

The dichotomy that there is a time - of - life in which one studies and a time in which one does not certainly ought to be broken through. Education in a world of affluence and serenity would have to be woven into the whole pattern of the way - of - life.

It would have, furthermore, the task of making quite compatible the love of country with the adherence to a great federalist idea, surpassing the narrow bonds of nationalism. We should divorce the love of country from the narrow habits of the nationalist attitude.

There is a Spanish word, "patria", which can be translated as fatherland. Once, while speaking to Puerto Ricans of the process by which I had come to feel the need of a new form of political freedom, I described the "patria" as the colors of the landscape, the changes of seasons, the smell of the earth wet with fresh rain, the voices of the streams, the crash of the ocean against the shore, the fruits, the songs, the habits of work and of leisure, the flowers, the typical dishes for special occasions and the austere ones for everyday, the valleys, the pathways; but even more than these things, "patria" is the people, their way - of - life, spirit, folkways, songs, the way of getting along with each other. Without these things, "patria" is only an abstraction, a piece of scenery. With them it is an integral whole, the homeland and the people.

"Love of country," I went on to say, "must mean both the love of "patria" and the people. But some of us confused love of the homeland with a narrow and petty concept of the national state. We felt that love of Puerto Rico had as a necessary corollary the desire for separate independence. We had not yet comprehended that no law, divine or human, demands that countries must be suspicious, vain and hostile, that they must live separate from other countries whose peoples are apart of the broad equality which the Lord created on earth."

During the time of reappraisal that I am alluding to, I learned much from the wisdom of simple men and women, and that to them freedom is something deep in the heart, in the conscience, in everyday life, in personal dignity, in the furrow, the plow and the tools. I learned that among them, the nationalistic concept is as absent as the love of their native land is present; in its place there is a deep understanding of freedom. I learned that in their wisdom they preferred -- if they should be put in the of choosing, to be governed respectfully from a distance rather than to be governed despotically from



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nearby. Those imbued with the nationalist concept would prefer the despotic government of the nearby to the democratic government of the remote. Naturally, this need not and should not be the choice: democratic federalism requires that this dichotomy be not allowed and that freedom be prevalent at all levels. Such an understanding is the strong root for great federalist concepts, for great unions of men and women cutting across climates, races and languages, leaving unviolated, but not necessarily sacrosanct the things that make them love their native land.

We have heard much of the revolution of rising expectations. Could we not then proclaim another revolution, the revolution of deepening expectations, a revolution that would send to a common grave stultifying nationalism and power-polities, a revolution that would break through the world of gadgets and superficiality, through the wastelands of scarcity, and the jungles of illness and ignorance, into the exhilarating air where man, diverse in his creations, is one in the freedom of his intelligence? Thus it "we" , the world, may suddenly discover how strong and powerful and free is the membership of Man. If we don't succeed fairly soon in this discovery, in the face of the big trouble now confronting us, we might as well say with E. B. White: "Our science will have won the day, and the people can retire from the field, to lie down with the dinosaur and the heath-hen -- who didn't belong here either, apparently."