

if it gives one certain advantages. It is better in Oakland, California, to be a Mexican than an Indian, and so some of the few Indians call themselves, at certain times, for certain occasions, 'Mexicans.' In the forming of ethnic groups subtle distinctions are overridden; there is an advantage to belonging to a big group, even if it is looked down upon. West Indian Negroes achieve important political positions, as representatives of Negroes; Spaniards and Latin Americans become the representatives of Puerto Ricans; German Jews rose to Congress from districts dominated by East European Jews.

Ethnic groups then, even after distinctive language, customs, and culture are lost, as they largely were in the second generation, and even more fully in the third generation, are continually recreated by new experiences in America. The mere existence of a name itself is perhaps sufficient to form group character in new situations, for the name associates an individual, who actually can be anything, with a certain past, country, race. But as a matter of fact, someone who is Irish or Jewish or Italian generally has other traits than the mere existence of the name that associates him with other people attached to the group. A man is connected to his group by ties of family and friendship. But he is also connected by ties of *interest*. The ethnic groups in New York are also *interest groups*.

This is perhaps the single most important fact about ethnic groups in New York City. When one speaks of the Negroes and Puerto Ricans, one also means unorganized and unskilled workers, who hold poorly paying jobs in the laundries, hotels, restaurants, small factories or who are on relief. When one says Jews, one also means small shopkeepers, professionals, better-paid skilled workers in the garment industries. When one says Italians, one also means homeowners in Staten Island, the North Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens.

[*Beyond the Melting Pot* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1963), 12-17.]

DANIEL BELL

23 Ethnicity and Social Change

Most societies in the world today are 'plural societies.' By plural societies, I simply mean the existence of segmented sociological groups which can establish effective cultural and political cohesion within the society and make cultural, economic, or political claims on the society, on the basis of that group identity.¹ Sometimes these cohesions are direct and primordial; sometimes these cohesions are created out of adversary conflicts.

In most countries, and this has been true historically, the plural society was a product of conquest in which various minority groups were subjugated by force and incorporated into a society. In North America, however, the plural

society was created largely out of the free mingling of peoples through immigration, and with impressed black slaves brought by traders.²

Until fairly recently, there was little overt competition between these plural groups. In colonial countries or empires, an open system of overt domination kept most of the indigenous peoples subjected. In multigroup societies such as the United States, the oldest settler segment exercised customary social and economic dominance. But with the destruction of imperialist rule in former colonial countries, and the erosion of the older authority structures in the industrial west, competition between the plural groups today has become the norm.

Except where minorities (or majorities even) are openly repressed (for example, South Africa, Angola), competition between plural groups takes place largely in the political arena. The reason is simple. Status competition is diffuse and lacks a specific site. Economic competition is dispersed between interests and occupations. But political competition is direct and tangible, the rewards are specified through legislation or by the direct allocation of jobs and privileges. The very nature of interest-group rivalry, where the plural groups are evidently distinct, makes it certain that the political arena becomes the most salient in the competition for the chief values of the society.

There is a second general reason why the political arena has become so salient. This is the 'shrinkage' of the economic order in advanced industrial societies. For two centuries, as Emile Durkheim pointed out seventy years ago, 'Economic life has taken on an expansion it never knew before. From being a secondary function, despised and left to inferior classes, it passed on to one of first rank. We see the military, governmental and religious functions falling back more and more in face of it.'³ In effect, the economic order 'swelled up' as if to encompass, almost, the entire life of society and the 'horizontal' divisions of the economic order, that of capitalist and worker, became the central socio-political division of the society as well. But now, as I have pointed out earlier, the economic order in almost all advanced industrial societies has become increasingly subordinated to the political system: first, because of the need to manage the economic system; and second, because the rise of noneconomic values (environment, ecology, health, culture, freer personal styles—elements subsumed under that phrase 'the quality of life') has led to the demand for the control of economic production.

The third major reason for the centrality of the political order is that the major processes of modernization—the transformation of societies—in Africa, Asia, the Soviet Union, and to some extent, Latin America, are being carried out 'from the top,' by elites, and through the force and coercion available only through the political system. Marx may have felt that social change is initiated in society in the economic substructure, but the most striking fact of the industrialization of the Soviet Union and the transforma-

tion of peasant agriculture into communes in China is that these are 'directed' efforts, carried out by political means.

But politics is more than just the arena of interests or of social transformations. Politics is also the arena of passions, where emotions can be readily mobilized behind one's own flag, and against another group. The 'risks' of such inflamed political competition is that issues may not be negotiable (as they are when tied to interests alone), but become 'causes' that invite violent conflict and even civil war.

In the western world, up to the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, such passions were expressed largely in religious terms, even where, as in the religious rhetoric of the English civil war, they masked a political content. Today the clashes are in overt political terms, though behind some of the political rhetoric lurk the passions of secular religions, the national, class, or ethnic embodiments of ideological politics.

In the nineteenth century, particularly in Europe, the most potent ideology was nationalism. Nationalism joins culture and politics in a common purpose. It brings together the high-born and the low and gives those, even of the meanest circumstance, a pride in being able to feel at one with the highest classes in the country, and in a common culture and history. Nationalism has the appeal of unifying a country behind a common loyalty, and focusing emotional aggression against an outside neighbor. For this obvious reason, where there has been a strong, aggressive nationalism, class and ethnic rivalries have been subdued or muted. As World War I and other wars have shown, country rather than class had the overriding appeal, even among workers.

It is questionable whether in the western world today that kind of inclusive nationalism any longer has such a compelling power. It may be that nationalism has an emotional power within Yugoslavia, or in eastern Europe, or in Northern Ireland, but these are almost entirely instances of national groups subordinated to a larger political entity whose cultural and social dominance is resented. There is much less emotional nationalism in the state of *Éire* itself, than in Northern Ireland. The nationalism of Ukrainians and Uzbeks within the Soviet-dominated world is a weapon for independence; under conditions of independence, would the passions remain?

If one takes the western powers, those along the Atlantic littoral, is there much emotional patriotism in Great Britain, France, Western Germany, Italy, or the United States? For one crucial fact, nationalism was an ideology fashioned by intellectuals who created the consciousness of a common culture out of the myths, folklore, songs, and literature of a people. Nationalism, to that extent, was a product of romanticism, with its emphasis on history and nature, against the rationalism of modern life. But that kind of romanticism is no longer attached to the mystical notion of an 'organic' nation, and the intellectuals have decamped from patriotism.⁴

The second fact is that almost all these western societies are 'fatigued.' Nations and peoples, where circumstances are favorable, often display historical energies which drive them forward to seek a place on the stage of history. These are the upsurges which reflect a military or economic vitality of a people. The historic drive of the western powers took place in the century between 1850 and 1950, largely in industrialization and imperialism, and took pride in technological achievement and empire. Yet those forces now seem spent, frayed by internal problems or exhausted in interdecade wars, and few of those countries display that sense of 'national will,' which is what unites historical destiny with national purpose. Nationalism in these countries is at a low ebb.

And that creates a problem for them. The historical lesson is that societies undergoing rapid social change, or nation building, or territorial or political expansion, can escape or postpone internal political difficulties—the fear of established groups for the loss of privilege, the demand of disadvantaged groups for the reallocation of privilege—by mobilizing the society against some 'external' force, or for some common ideological purpose. Yet both ends are spent.

In the American hemisphere, the external force, initially, was 'nature,' and the energies of the society were channeled into the opening and developing of a large new continent. Later, the source of internal cohesion became some ideologically defined outside enemy. In the United States, in the 1950s, there was a large degree of social unity because the society was mobilized during the Korean war and after, against the threat of communism. When that ideological threat, which had been defined in monolithic terms, began to dissipate (though great power rivalry remained), the internal social divisions in the society that had been held in bound erupted. A large number of structural changes had been taking place in the society—the creation of a national society and a communal society—and the claims of disadvantaged social groups, such as the blacks and the poor.⁵ Those now, inevitably, came to the fore, and they, too, were expressed in political terms.

The crucial question for all politics is what are the social bases of cohesion and cleavage—the objective basis for cohesion (interests), and the subjective basis for a common symbolism and shared consciousness (emotional tie); what determines the composition and character of corporate groups? Analytically speaking, there are two kinds of social movements: symbolic and expressive movements whose ties are primarily affective; and instrumental groups whose actions are bound by a set of common, usually material, interests.

Social units that are entirely symbolic-expressive are of two sorts: they may be simply fraternal, such as veterans' organizations reliving old glories, and thus become attenuated; or, if they are oriented to action, their life may be transient, since the need to heighten and mobilize feelings—in order to

keep their zeal alive—drives them to extremes (for example, the Weathermen in student politics). Where social units are entirely instrumental, it becomes difficult to extend their range beyond the limited interest which impelled the organization, so, lacking any emotional basis for cohesion, either new interests have to be found, or the attachments and purposes of the organization become diminished. In short, the problem for symbolic-expressive groups is that while they can be mobilized quickly in periods of stress and peak experience, without a sustained, continuing interest which is real, and which has tangible payoffs for the members, the movements burn themselves out. The problem for instrumental organizations is the need to readapt themselves to new purposes when the old goals have become realized.

Those social units are most highly effective, clearly, which can combine symbolic and instrumental purposes. In the political history of our times, it is clear that 'class' and 'ethnicity' have been the two such dominant modes of coherent group feeling and action, and we can raise the general question, under what conditions has one or the other become most salient for action, or under what conditions might the two be fused?

Class, in industrial society in the last two hundred or so years, has justly been defined in terms of property relations, and class issues as the conflicts between those who have to sell their labor power and those who buy it. Working class politics, in that period of time, has been oriented either to the complete change of the system, or a sharing of power within it.

The fundamental fact is that few working class movements in the advanced industrial societies in recent years have had a revolutionary purpose. Even those which, rhetorically, still seek such a change, such as the Communist-dominated labor movements in France and Italy, no longer act that way in practice. Their chief effort is to have an effective voice over the control of working conditions. Since the end of World War II, industrial conflict in most countries has been institutionalized. This does not mean, necessarily, that all militancy vanished, nor that some of the economic conflicts may not spill over into politics, as in Italy, where parliamentary impasses threaten to polarize the society, or England, where the successive governments, Labor and Tory, have sought to restrict the activities of the unions. But it does mean two things: that some rough and ready rules of the game have tended to limit the conflict, and to force some negotiated solutions; and that these conflicts, as Ralf Dahrendorf has put it, had become 'institutionally isolated' so that there was little carry-over from the job to other areas of life; the occupational milieu lost its ability to mold the personality and behavior of the worker; and the industrial issues were no longer the overriding issues that polarize a society.⁶

The second fact is that structural changes in the society have tended to reduce the role of property and introduce a new criterion, that of technical

skill, as the basis of class position. In more immediate terms, the changeover in most western societies from a goods producing to a service economy expands the proportion of white-collar jobs and emphasizes education as the mode of access to the expanding technical and professional vocations. The working class, as a proportion of the labor force, is shrinking, and the new service occupations and professional positions rarely carry the history or traditions of the older working class forms of activity. Thus, there is not a single but a double-based economic class system, of property and skill, in the society.⁷

One important consequence of the institutional change is that 'class' no longer seemed to carry any strong affective tie. To put it most baldly, what had once been an ideology had now become almost largely an interest. The labor movements in western industrial society have always been a cleft stick. On the one end, they have been part of a 'social movement' which seeks to transform society; on the other, a 'trade union' seeking a place within it. As a social movement, labor sought to mobilize affect as a means of maintaining a permanent hostility to an employer class, husbanding its zeal until the 'final conflict'. As a trade union, it has had to live on a day-to-day relation with particular employers and even, at times, adopt their point of view and interest, in order to save their jobs against competitive employers and other unions. The institutionalization of bargaining, necessarily, has meant a lowering of ideological sights. (One interesting indicator is the decline of 'labor songs' as a means of inspiring emotions; the only such songs in recent years have been those of the black civil rights movement.) The 'social movement' aspect of labor, with all the attendant aspects that the ideology sought to stimulate—fraternal organizations, cooperatives, theater and cultural groups—is no longer a 'way of life' for its members. The union has focused on the job, and little more.

The further fact, in the United States at least, is that this 'interest' often has been converted into a quasi-monopoly job position—either by the direct exclusion of blacks from certain occupations (a situation largely true in the building trades until recently), the operation of a 'merit' system as in teaching, which tends to restrict the opportunities of latecomer blacks for rapid advancement, or even the normal 'seniority' system in most union agreements, which acts to keep blacks and other minorities in the lower paying positions. For these reasons, one finds blacks often hostile to trade unions and, even though the overwhelming majority of them are workers, we find them in the unions emphasizing the 'ethnic' as against their 'class' identities. For the blacks, particularly, and more so for the radical blacks, the question whether they organize in 'race' or 'class' terms is a crucial one. Given the fact that their advancement has come largely through political pressure, and the ability to make gains by mobilizing votes, the emphasis, overwhelmingly, has been in race or nationalist terms.

In a plural society, class cuts across ethnic lines. Sometimes class becomes congruent with ethnicity, where there is a bipolar situation in which one ethnic group is economically predominant and another ethnic group economically exploited. More often than not, in the advanced countries at least, ethnicity cuts across class lines and members of the different ethnic groups are both in the economic majority and economic minority. Where class issues become attenuated, and communal questions come to the fore, understandably, the ethnic tie becomes more salient.

The conversion of the working class into an 'institutional interest,' with an elaborate bureaucratic structure of its own, is a process that has taken place primarily within the last twenty-five years. During that time the economic locus of conflict diminished. And where interests became institutionalized and instrumental, the adversary conflicts which tend to polarize emotions also diminished; for this reason the saliency of an identity as a worker tended to attenuate. At the same time, within this period, the political arena became more central. Where this has taken place on the local and community level, as has been evident in this period, interest-group unionism has become less important and other group memberships have come to the fore. For this double reason, ethnicity has become more salient in the last decade.⁸

Ethnicity has become more salient because it can combine an interest with an affective tie. Ethnicity provides a tangible set of common identifications—in language, food, music, names—when other social roles become more abstract and impersonal. In the competition for the values of the society to be realized politically, ethnicity can become a means of claiming place or advantage.

Ethnic groups—be they religious, linguistic, racial, or communal—are, it should be pointed out, *pre-industrial* units that, with the rise of industry, became cross-cut by economic and class interests. In trying to account for the upsurge of ethnicity today, one can see this ethnicity as the emergent expression of primordial feelings, long suppressed but now reawakened, or as a 'strategic site,' chosen by disadvantaged persons as a new mode of seeking political redress in the society.

Two historical factors are relevant here. One, which I have pointed to, is the loss of social dominance of the old social elites, a situation which derives from the breakup of the 'family capitalism,' which joined family directly to economic power in the western world.⁹ Within the family system there has been an erosion of the social authority, of the major 'family' names in high society, particularly of the WASPs. One finds less of 'society' and more of 'celebrity,' less emphasis on large social estates and great houses, and more on movement and travel. If there is a 'social hierarchy' in the United States, it tends to hide itself, rather than flaunt its position as in the Gilded Age.

The second historical fact is the breakup of imperialism, which I discussed previously from the point of view of its significance for ideological develop-

ments. Imperialism has been looked at largely in economic and political terms, but clearly it had a cultural component which emphasized the superiority of the older nations and which had extraordinary psychological effects on the personalities of those who lived under imperialist rule. The resurgence of ethnicity, in that respect, is part of the broader historical upsurge against imperialism, reflected now, on the cultural side. Since no group can now claim explicit superiority, each group can emphasize its own language, religion, and culture as of intrinsic value and can assert a pride in the aggressive declaration of one's own ethnicity. Ethnicity becomes a badge that one can wear more openly and show as a mode of personal self-assertion.

These two facts, social and cultural, merge with the changed context of economic advancement and political organization. In industrial societies, access to economic and professional position becomes defined increasingly by technical criteria. In the modernizing world, as well, achievement becomes linked with technical competence, which involves higher education, specialized skills, and professional achievement. The one route largely open is the political one. One can move ahead by mobilizing a following, become elected to office or get a job by supporting a victorious candidate; or one can make demands for quotas or some other means of enforcing an allocation of position on some criterion other than the technical and professional.

In this context, claims are made on the basis of ascriptive or group identity rather than individual achievement, and this is reinforced by the nature of the political process which emphasizes some group coherence as a means of being effective in that arena. *What takes place, then, is the welding of status issues to political demands through the ethnic groups.* In the recent historical situation, ethnic groups, being both expressive and instrumental, become sources of political strength.

In sum, there would be three reasons for the upsurge of the salience of ethnic identification:

1. In the greater mingling of peoples, with the expansion of more inclusive, yet attenuated, identities, in the simultaneous development of a culture that is more syncretistic and a social structure that is more bureaucratic, the desire for some particular or primordial anchorage becomes intensified. People want to belong to 'smaller' units, and find in ethnicity an easy attachment.
2. The breakup of the traditional authority structures and the previous affective social units—historically, nation and class—in turn make the ethnic attachment more salient.
3. The politicization of the decisions that affect the communal lives of persons makes the need for group organization more necessary, and ethnic grouping becomes a ready means of demanding group rights or providing defense against other groups.

What I think is clear is that ethnicity, in this context, is best understood not as a primordial phenomenon in which deeply held identities have to re-emerge, but as a strategic choice by individuals who, in other circumstances, would choose other group memberships as a means of gaining some power and privilege. In short, it is the *salience* not the *persona* which has to be the axial line for explanation. And because salience may be the decisive variable, the attachment to ethnicity may flush or fade very quickly depending on political and economic circumstances.

The paradox is that with more syncretism and intermingling, formal ethnic attachments may weaken, as evidenced by the high degree of intermarriage between groups, yet, if one wants to, one can now identify oneself more readily, and without lessened esteem, in ethnic terms, and make claims on that basis of that identity. The simple point, then, is that ethnicity has become fully legitimate—and sometimes necessary—as an identity, and this carries over, in a political situation, into a group attachment.

[‘Ethnicity and social change’, in N. Glazer and D. P. Moynihan (eds.), *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), 160–71.]

HERBERT J. GANS

24 Symbolic Ethnicity

Symbolic ethnicity can be expressed in a myriad of ways, but above all, I suspect, it is characterized by a nostalgic allegiance to the culture of the immigrant generation, or that of the old country; a love for and a pride in a tradition that can be felt without having to be incorporated in everyday behavior. The feelings can be directed at a generalized tradition, or at specific ones: a desire for the cohesive extended immigrant family, or for the obedience of children to parental authority, or the unambiguous orthodoxy of immigrant religion, or the old-fashioned despotic benevolence of the machine politician. People may even sincerely desire to ‘return’ to these imagined pasts, which are conveniently cleansed of the complexities that accompanied them in the real past, but while they may soon realize that they cannot go back, they may not surrender the wish. Or else they displace that wish on churches, schools, and the mass media, asking them to recreate a tradition, or rather, to create a symbolic tradition, even while their familial, occupational, religious and political lives are pragmatic responses to the imperatives of their roles and positions in local and national hierarchical social structures.

All of the cultural patterns which are transformed into symbols are themselves guided by a common pragmatic imperative: they must be visible and clear in meaning to large numbers of third generation ethnics, and they