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SALAZAR SAYS

OUR
NATIONAL
INTERESTS

SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL ON THE 23RD. FEBRUARY 1946 IN THE LIBRARY OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, ON THE OCCASION OF THE MEETING OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE, THE ADVISORY BOARD AND THE PRESIDENTS OF THE DISTRICT COMMITTEES OF THE NATIONAL UNION

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The purpose of this meeting of the Central Committee, the Advisory Board and the Presidents of the District Committees of the National Union, is to exchange ideas concerning the present political situation, and to approve certain alterations in the Statute of organisation. At a moment when, throughout the whole country, the political forces which are the basis of the regime are being reorganised, it is well to call attention to the importance of the work in hand. This is the reason for my speech.

The opposition did not take an effective part in the voting at the last election, but the debate preceding the election was so extensive and so free that a fairly close idea can be obtained of purposes, methods and possibilities. Although the enemy — let us call them that for the sake of clarity — conducted the discussions with more passion than practical understanding and sacrificed much to the subjective outlook of the old party struggles, most of the problems constituting the actual life of the nation seem to have been discussed during the election campaign, and also all the ideas with which a people can be governed and — unfortunately — ruined as well.

The points of view may broadly be stated as follows: The existing regime had two great arguments in its favour — the unquestioned success of its wartime policy and the extensive and far-reaching achievements of nearly twenty years of office. The passing difficulties and the high cost of living afforded the only argument the enemy could adduce to strike at the corporative organisation as a whole, supported in its attack on a regime of discipline and order by the kind of catchwords with which starving Europe is being fed in default of wheat.

When the majority of the British people, though they owed their victory to Churchill, denied him and his party their confidence to govern, a great newspaper, voicing a warning to the world against mistaken inferences, embodied the verdict of public opinion in a single remark: gratitude belongs to history, not to politics. I do not deny the value of the decision, which, with due allowances for circumstances, might well have saved us too, and which in any case provides some consolation for the great who are sacrificed in the electoral struggle. But the problem has other aspects, and the outstanding one is that, in the continuous life of a people, the past is the best foundation for the future, and completed achievements are the best surety of future capabilities.

I think the result of last November's election, when the nation made its final balance after weighing the various possibilities, may be expressed by the two sentiments of gratitude and confidence. And this is true not only of the election. Those expressive and almost ingenuous messages from whole populations, such as those of the archipelagoes and the collective expression of gratitude from the women of Portugal, sincere and spontaneous as if the anxiety felt found natural expression in good wishes and blessings, — these, I think, are the outcome of deep feeling and are correspondingly binding upon us. But we have to examine the reverse of the medal.

It is a mistake to say that the elections *created* an opposition to the regime; the more correct view is that the existing opposition, the outcome of discontent with the acts of the go-

vernment and of a desire to try new men or new social and political principles, decided to fight. What the opposition did with the freedom granted is not worth while noting; in this as in other cases it showed that it had learnt nothing and forgotten nothing of the very little it had to forget. Nor in the fever of the struggle did any realise the discrepancy between their attacks on the lack of freedom and the positions from which they launched their blows — positions created, maintained, upheld and paid for by the forbearance, broadmindedness and public spirit of the Government. Another thing was clear and is becoming increasingly so, — freedom in Portugal cannot limit or discipline itself. If together with all the eloquence that was allowed more scope for action had been permitted too, order might have been overthrown.

What are the opposition's proposals? The best hypothesis would be to consider them merely as an aspiration to a change of men in the world of politics. We in Portugal are all of much the same stature and we can all accept the same average pattern of morality. Other men, though following the same system of ideas, guided by the same principles, animated by the same ambition to serve, and with eyes fixed on the same national needs, might nevertheless by other routes find other roads and other means of access. Yet such is not the case.

The aim is to attempt *regression* or a *revolution*, by constitutional means if possible, or by other means if not possible. In the front ranks of the opposition a welcome is given to the survivors of all the political parties that once were uncompromising and irreconcilable. These have shown a most touching loyalty (with slight adjustments) to the same principles and methods that once discredited the politics and administration of the country, and which, instead of uniting us in prosperity and greatness, reduced us to poverty and anarchy. That, apart from what is due do the deserving action of a few, is an unquestionable historical fact.

But, remaining cautiously in the background, there also appeared among the random associates of the opposition some

who, recognising as we do that certain principles have become outdated and unsuited for modern times, fear the social revolution we have undertaken, and would like by force to turn it to account for themselves — or for others.

The proposals of the former had little reality. Even apart from the particular circumstances obtaining in Portugal, the world, weary and disillusioned, is sweeping half-measures from the political field and is forming up clearly on the right or on the left. The question at issue is no longer the social movement now on the march, but the best political methods to ensure its triumph without destruction of the material and moral values of the social community. It is becoming increasingly clear that, since what is dead cannot be revived, the Constitution of 1911 must be left a corpse in a cemetery of ruins.

Hence the only possible solutions are the *national* one which we are employing or one of *extremists*, even though these graciously condescend to reach theirs through the antechamber of reborn party strife. They have at least rigidly erected, though by false principles, their system with great logical power, and they will be little concerned about freedom. We know very well that they demand freedom to conquer and that they dispense with it to govern.

If the opposition had taken part in the election and had seen its way to add itself to our strength to some extent, we should have had it with us now in the National Assembly. With problems of such magnitude in the electoral field the uncertain outcome of the poll could have been accepted as a matter of course. But the good Portuguese people, frankly faced with realities and dangers, had perforce to realise, in its own interest, that the issue did not consist in personal preferences but in the choice of principles, or, in the final analysis, the interpretation of the actual life of men and of nations.

Having abstained from voting for reasons and pretexts already known, some will follow those murky bypaths, where, however, our vigilance has seen to it that the poisonous growth

of conspiracy shall not take root and flourish; others will blossom forth openly in opposition to everything, everywhere. This will mean that party politics, leaving the proper field of debate, will invade indiscriminately all aspects of social life. I must make myself clear on this point.

We have shown, throughout the institutions, laws and acts of the Government, an all-absorbing concern to bring back everything to, and into, the national plane. We have always had the nation in mind, not only as the indefinable essence of historical continuity in our people throughout the centuries, but as its material and moral patrimony. We all owe ourselves to the nation, we sacrifice ourselves to its higher interests, we all benefit directly or indirectly from its greatness and prestige. In order to protect this sentiment and ensure its latent or active effectiveness, it has been necessary to shut out from current life, in view of the passionate unruliness of the Portuguese, all that might break the moral unity of the nation. Hence our care and concern that cultural, recreational, vocational and other organisations, and as far as possible the administrative organs themselves, should not engage in or become the theatre of party strife, but should lead their life freely, only governed by the broad lines of the national interest. Thus we have conceived of the nation as a unit which is or ought to be homogeneous and cohesive in all the essentials of its collective life. On this basis we have stubbornly defended its dignity and prestige and what we have singlemindedly considered to be the general interest.

Hence, since other ways will harm the ethical conception of the regime, we are obliged to prevent by all means in our power the destruction of what has been so laboriously built up; and since experience has shown that some are unable to rise above their petty party sentiments, we want it to be clearly understood that we can hardly continue to treat on the national plane those who themselves obstinately persist in remaining on the party plane.

I think it is of great advantage to be sure of our political

thought, especially in these critical years after the war, because the world atmosphere seems to be singularly confused, and it is hard to discover precisely on what ideas the world is being rebuilt. I do not refer to the hatred which is poisoning the international atmosphere, and which in some respects has set us back centuries to the sorry disrepute of the common right of peoples. But the hatred will die down and pass away in time. The war has opened up abysses of passion. The misery and suffering of the peoples who have had to fight, the strain of the struggle, the wealth that has been lost for ever, the long-lasting spectacle of suffering, — these have hardened men's souls, and call before heaven and earth for punishment. Let us hope that men's minds will grow calmer, and rules of life will be restored under which the vanquished too may one day live again. I do not refer to what is directly affected by the passion that rules between victors and vanquished, but to what the dispassionate observer, who is concerned in the result of the struggle and not in the debate itself, may discern beyond the passing speeches of solemn congratulation in great international assemblies. I have the impression — a mistaken one, I hope — that there are on the threshold of this new world ambiguities, inconsistencies and weaknesses that are disturbing the atmosphere. I will take as illustration one example of each.

No really civilised people can cease to guarantee, by law and in practice, the fundamental rights of the individual. It was largely for the sake of these rights that the war was waged; yet they are surrounded by equivocation which may give a fatal turn to European institutions. This is due to the fact that a threefold equation has been accepted as axiomatic without mature consideration, namely that freedom means democracy, democracy means parliamentarism, and parliamentarism means opposition, and has become unluckily responsible for the action of the Portuguese opposition, which, in an official document, has accused the regime of dictatorship because the Government does not bow to the Chambers. The problem resolves itself into this: do the extent and effectiveness of

individual freedom depend essentially on a specified form of organisation of power? The answer is definitely in the negative, both in theory and in practice; but those who wished to evade awkward discussions solved the difficulty straightway by clothing, or not even clothing, or rather confirming, their institutions in accordance with the prevailing fashion. God grant that the only resultant evil may be a paper form of anarchy.

Here is another point. The world today is talking of nothing but liberty; and this means sometimes political and sometimes economic independence; sometimes racial emancipation and equality and sometimes the extinction of class privileges; sometimes the abolition of Monarchies (which in some cases are at least as liberal as Republics), sometimes again the actual absence of public authority. Repeated in every tongue and flaunted under every sky, it is certain that this famous but elusive goddess of liberty will not give her name to our epoch; hence the contradiction. I still think that for the good of men and their social life there should be «the authority *necessary* and the liberty *possible*»; but whatever the degree of political liberty in the future, economic liberty is already dying.

We are among those who have remained convinced supporters of the idea of a reasonable measure of liberty as being salutary for economic life, and we unhesitatingly maintain it in so far, and in such fields, as is compatible with the general interest. Yet it is becoming increasingly clear that, apart from reasons peculiar to wartime, there still remain motives for maintaining and intensifying two tendencies which in themselves involve restrictions on liberty, — state organisation and state intervention. The social policy which in our view is inseparable from the present epoch requires better application and more equitable distribution of wealth, and neither is possible without plans which will often transcend the national plane and enter the world plane. On the other hand such work is not possible unless the national elements are systematised first, unless the various organs are put in order;

as also the factors of production. Whether the state itself becomes the producer and distributor of the wealth that is created or whether it merely gives the impulse and higher direction to the national economy, imposing rules of justice on distribution and ensuring the discipline of labour, (a state of affairs that will distinguish us for example from the Socialists and Communists), in either case the organisation and intervention will be a matter of law, and, whether we like it or not, such law means the twilight of economic liberty. Certainly indeed men cannot define their liberty; they can only enjoy the fruits of what life grants them.

It has always seemed to me a mistaken and dangerous tendency to defend, whether in theory or in practice, uniformity of political regimes as the indispensable basis of international cooperation. Man should be content with the common principles of modern civilisation; and sometimes he will have to remain content with less. But if international life is to be as intense as is announced, it seems to me that political regimes are not a matter of indifference in the conduct of world affairs. It is in this respect that I see the weaknesses I have already mentioned.

It is not a matter of purity of purpose or of the justice of questions, nor the correctness of the processes adopted; it is a matter of the means of political action. At every moment the need arises for rapid decisions which can only be taken by a strong executive power supported by public opinion. The first requisite depends largely on the institutions, and it is within them that the solution of difficulties has to be sought. The second is largely a question of ethics, since in general civilised states cannot act independently of or contrary to the national conscience. But it will be found impossible for a great state to play a leading part in world policy unless it takes special care to form its public opinion. In this connection two problems arise,—the wireless and world information; and these must be solved in such a way as to ensure objectivity, justice and respect for others, or else they will become serious

sources of disturbance in the world. No one today can say that the solution achieved through capitalist organisations without political responsibility or objects other than gain, or public organisations that are in the service of incendiary ideologies, meet the needs and concerns of the nation. It is a bad thing that the small states should be driven by winds contrary to their own formation and interests; it would be disastrous if the Great Powers were not provided with due guarantees in the moral and political field for their part as directors.

In discussing certain aspects and principles of international life I have made no mention of the new organisation for coordination and cooperation known as the United Nations. I did so deliberately for two reasons, — because we are not yet members of that organisation and because the spirit of men is more important for world peace than the words of a Charter or its organs.

In April we shall be in Geneva in order to vote for the dissolution of the League of Nations and the liquidation and transfer of its property to the United Nations. We have always been loyal to the League, and we shall not fail when the time comes for the last act in its existence, which has not always been a brilliant one or always crowned with success but, we would fain hope, has always been well-intentioned. There will be a certain illogicality in the vote which we and others will give, because we shall be depriving ourselves of that to which we ourselves have contributed in favour of an organisation to which we do not belong. But this solution is the only possible one, and life is so bereft of logic that the point is not worth labouring.

A matter that is more strange is the carefreeness which, in the absence of and without the knowledge of certain interested powers, they have proceeded in London to choose the judges for the International Court of Justice at The Hague. I can only conclude that study of the transition from the old regime to the new, approved at San Francisco, cannot have been carried out very thoroughly or such incongruities would

have been avoided. But the world is sick, and there are problems to be solved that are so serious that small matters cannot be troubled about.

This first session of the United Nations was a meeting only of the victors, including of course some who only joined at the last moment. The organisation will be obliged, after its first work of constitution has been completed, to begin to open its doors and enlarge its membership by embodying not only the neutrals (although some of them have not collaborated so much as ourselves) but also to the vanquished of yesterday. Only in this way can the organisation aspire to become truly representative of the world, without any unjustified exclusions.

For these reasons we have not yet sent in to the Secretariate, as is required, our request for admission, although both the letter and the spirit of our Constitution authorise us and indeed to some extent require us to join international organisations for the peaceful settlement of disputes between nations and to cooperate with all for the greater well-being and progress of mankind. We think however that it is as yet too early to do so, because any reasonable observer cannot fail to see that the admission of new members would prejudicially affect for the moment the internal equilibrium of the United Nations. Perhaps for this reason none of the nations which might legitimately have done so has asked to be admitted, as indeed has been officially stated.

This fact has not the least significance for the development of our life and the defence of our interests. It does not seem to me desirable to encourage the false idea that any organisation of that kind should be burdened overmuch with international difficulties or should undertake to solve everyone's problems. I am sure it will be much more likely to succeed, the less it is overburdened with questions which are proper to individual nations. So long as the nation, with its attributes of juridical equality and independence, continues to be the basis of the international organisation, it will remain equally true that all nations will benefit by the order, progress and work

of each people, and its action cannot be enhanced or promoted by halting or precarious sovereignties. In other words international cooperation presupposes a well-ordered and well-understood nationalism.

Whether within or outside the United Nations, our foreign policy has only to follow, side by side with the traditional historical and geographical imperatives, the clear indications of this last war. As I have already said, the centre of gravity of European politics, if not of world politics, has shifted further Westward and now lies primarily on the Atlantic and in the states that border it. In recognising this fact we have not ceased to be Europeans, we are merely giving a wider meaning to the West.

On these simple lines we propose to continue to work without, we hope, either dust in our eyes or hatred in our hearts. We think that we are building for the future and aspiring to a state of relations that will be more secure and peaceful than before. But since among everything that changes man changes least, what we will call «the human constants» cannot be disregarded if a policy is to succeed.

We are convinced that it is necessary not only to cure the wounds of war but to establish, normally and for the general well-being, close, friendly and confident collaboration. We hold out our arms to help and serve, so far as our modest means allow, those who are in a worse condition than ourselves. Thus we are establishing economic and financial relations with those who are rising up from the abyss of their tribulations, and we are only sorry that the available resources of our mother country and empire are not greater so that we could give more. We may say that we have embodied in our economic agreements — and is it a mistake to do so at the present time? — more heart than business. I think that in doing so we are following the best spirit of the time, not because we have acceded to that spirit but because, to our honour, we have inherited it.

I now draw to a close. I may have ventured along paths which were not within my original intention and which many

may suppose did not logically proceed from what I said at the outset. I think not.

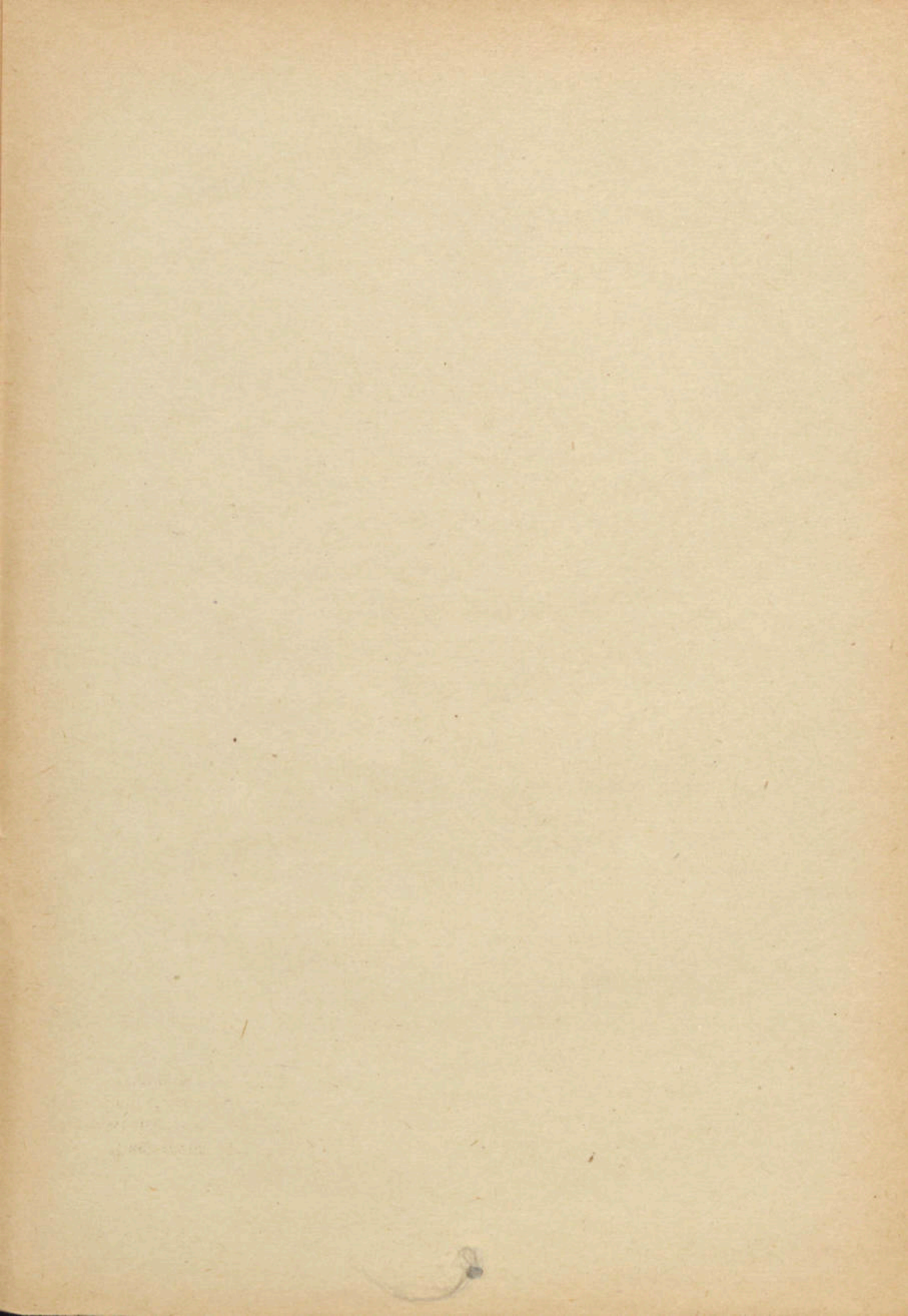
The world is full of false ideas and vain words. While both are prevalent outside our territory, concordance or disagreement are of purely academic interest and are irrelevant. But when they begin to invade our territory and threaten to do damage among us, then the time has come to examine them more carefully and determine how far they affect our independence of judgement, our spiritual health and our national interests.

Is the political debate now being conducted in general only a party dispute? No. In many respects it is one aspect of the eternal struggle between good and evil, between truth and error, between life and death. My desire and my task is to enable the Portuguese to rise at times above their own small preoccupations and troubles and to consider the problems that transcend everyday life and the right solution of which is a matter of concern to the future of the country.

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