

# the case for patriotism

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I INTEND to write something of a plea for patriotism. That intention is so uncongenial to almost everybody who is likely to read the essay that I want to spell it out with some care. In doing this, I wish not to disarm the critics, but to help them find the right target.

Consider first the state of opinion and sentiment on the subject.

Patriotism is unwelcome in many quarters of the land today, and unknown in many others. There is virtually no thoughtful discussion of the subject, for the word has settled, in most people's minds, deep into a brackish pond of sentiment where thought cannot reach. Politicians and members of patriotic associations praise it, of course, but official and professional patriotism too often sounds like nationalism, patriotism's bloody brother. On the other hand, patriotism has a bad name among many thoughtful people, who see it as a horror at worst, a vestigial passion largely confined to the thoughtless at best: as enlightenment advances, patriotism recedes. The intellectuals are virtually required to repudiate it as a condition of class membership. The radical and dropout young loathe it. Most troublesome of all, for one who would make the argument I intend to make, is the fact that both the groups that hate and those that glorify patriotism largely agree that it and nationalism are the same thing. I hope to show that they are different things—related, but separable.

Opponents of patriotism might agree that if the two could be separated then patriotism would look

fairly attractive. But the opinion is widespread, almost atmospheric, that the separation is impossible, that with the triumph of the nation state, nationalism has indelibly stained patriotism: the two are warp and woof. The argument against patriotism goes on to say that, psychologically considered, patriot and nationalist are the same: both are characterized by exaggerated love for one's own collectivity combined with more or less contempt and hostility toward outsiders. In addition, advanced political opinion holds that positive, new ideas and forces—e.g., internationalism, universal humanism, economic interdependence, socialist solidarity—are healthier bonds of unity, and more to be encouraged, than the older ties of patriotism. These are genuine objections, and they are held by many thoughtful people. I shall try to respond to them toward the end of the essay.

The obstacles to speaking for patriotism do not end with brackishness of opinion. For if some people favor patriotism, largely for the wrong reasons, and if some oppose it, largely for the wrong reasons, others hardly think about it at all. Millions of Americans are simply without patriotism, and this large group includes all classes and kinds of persons. They do not think unpatriotic thoughts, but they do not think patriotic thoughts either. The republic for them is a vague and distant thing, absent from their hearts, lost to their eyes. Reflecting this indifference, our great patriotic holidays, now administratively arranged to provide long weekends, are less occasions for shared remembrance and renewal of the political covenant than boosts to the consumer economy. That modern compendium of man's knowledge of man, the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, apparently agrees that patriotism is a nonthing, for it is silent on the subject.

There is another obstacle to discussion. The word patriotism is a member of a family of words and largely takes its meanings from its membership. Some other

members of the family are legacy, covenant, reverence, loyalty, nurture, roots, citizen, debt, gift, republic. These words, which once clarified the matter, today encounter the same barrier of mystification-distrust-indifference as does patriotism itself. All these words must appear in the discussion: there are no satisfactory alternatives. Furthermore, these words cannot be cut out of our political lives as easily as they have been dropped from our encyclopedia. If we lose them, it will not be easy to find replacements, and we may learn too late that the loss was grievous. Still, many people do not now share this view of the matter, and this sets a difficult obstacle in the path of discussion.

Patriotism has certainly declined in the United States. Nor is this decline the result of recent or transient causes. Most of the widely known patriotic associations were formed in the last decade of the nineteenth century, which suggests that as the natural springs of patriotic sentiment dried up, the land had to be irrigated. By now the land is so parched that even if American participation in the war in Southeast Asia does come to an end, along with all the reports of American corruption and exploitation at home and abroad, I doubt whether we would love this country any the more, although we would despise it less.

I have little hope that my plea for patriotism will succeed, and much anxiety that it will be heard by many as fatuous or wrong-headed. Citizens would not need the argument, and noncitizens probably cannot hear it. Still, I shall make the argument. I do so partly out of blockheadedness, partly out of a wish to repay a welcome debt to patriotic predecessors and contemporaries, and partly for two reasons that might carry more weight. The first reason stems from my affection and respect for fellow-citizens, and from my wish to see them even more respectable than they are. We have lost patriotism. Although many count the loss small, and many others do not know it has occurred,

I believe that the loss is great. The second reason stems from my wish to see a revitalized radical politics in this country, and from my conviction that Susan Sontag is correct when she says that "probably no serious radical movement has any future in America unless it can revalidate the tarnished idea of patriotism."<sup>1</sup> The radicals of the 1960s did not persuade their fellow-Americans, high or low, that they genuinely cared for and shared a country with them. And no one who has contempt for others can hope to teach those others. A revived radicalism must be a patriotic radicalism. It must share and care for the common things, even while it has a "lover's quarrel" with fellow-citizens.

## I

## Natural Patriotism

SINCE PATRIOTISM is a complex and dangerous word, we must give some care to definition. But not too much care, for like all the important political words, it cannot be protected against the vicissitudes of history and passion; and not the wrong kind of care either, for the word comes not from the laboratory but from life. The word will not hold still while we attach a single, universal meaning to it, but we can describe a nucleus of meanings.

At its core, patriotism means love of one's homeplace, and of the familiar things and scenes associated with the homeplace. In this sense, patriotism is one of the basic human sentiments. If not a natural tendency in the species, it is at least a proclivity produced by realities basic to human life, for territoriality, along with family, has always been a primary associative bond. We become devoted to the people, places, and

<sup>1</sup> *Trip to Hanoi* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968), p. 82.

ways that nurture us, and what is familiar and nurturing seems also natural and right. This is the root of patriotism. Furthermore, we are all subject to the immense power of habit, and patriotism has habit in its service. Even if we leave the homeplace for a larger world, finding delight in its variety and novelty, we delight as much in returning to familiar things. The theme of homecoming is the central motif of patriotic discourse, as old and as deep as the return of Odysseus from Troy, and the feeling is always the same:

When we saw the top of the mountain from Albuquerque we wondered if it was our mountain, and we felt like talking to the ground, we loved it so, and some of the old men and women cried with joy when they reached their homes.<sup>2</sup>

The other side of the case is the melancholy figure of the lone wanderer, or of the Stoic whose "my home is everywhere" meant he had a home nowhere.

To be a patriot is to have a patrimony; or, perhaps more accurately, the patriot is one who is grateful for a legacy and recognizes that the legacy makes him a debtor. There is a whole way of being in the world, captured best by the word reverence, which defines life by its debts: one is what one owes, what one acknowledges as a rightful debt or obligation. The patriot moves within that mentality. The gift of land, people, language, gods, memories, and customs, which is the patrimony of the patriot, defines what he or she is. Patrimony is mixed with person; the two are barely separable. The very tone and rhythm of a life, the shapes of perception, the texture of its hopes and fears come from membership in a territorially rooted

<sup>2</sup> The words are Manuelito's, a chief of the Navaho, describing the return of his people to their ancestral lands. Quoted here from Dee Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), p. 35.

group. The conscious patriot is one who feels deeply indebted for these gifts, grateful to the people and places through which they come, and determined to defend the legacy against enemies and pass it unspoiled to those who will come after.

But such primary experiences are nearly inaccessible to us. We are not taught to define our lives by our debts and legacies, but by our rights and opportunities. Robert Frost's stark line, "This land was ours, before we were the land's," condenses the whole story of American patriotism. We do not and cannot love this land the way the Greek and the Navaho loved theirs. The graves of some of our ancestors are here, to be sure, but most of us would be hard pressed to find them: name and locate the graves of your great-grandparents. The land was not granted to us in trust by a Great Spirit, nor are there in this land a thousand places sacred to lesser deities. Having purged ourselves of pantheism, we do not dwell in a realm alive with sacred groves and fountains.<sup>3</sup> We are all doctrinal monotheists and our only patriotic god is the god of battles. We took the land from others whom we regarded as of no account. The land itself we saw as a resource for comfort and power available to all who had the strength to take it. Among us, only persons (artificial as well as natural) have rights. The homestead has none. We may buy, sell, and use it as we wish. It has no claims we need heed or even hear. Still today, and even in the ecology movement, the same attitude prevails: Save *Our* Coast. Still possession, not union and stewardship.

Perhaps this lack of natural patriotism is some part of the explanation of American restlessness and root-

<sup>3</sup> The early Christians were poor patriots. Their monotheism killed the lesser gods, denuding the land of sacred groves and local shrines. Machiavelli also thought that the Christians were poor patriots.

lessness.<sup>4</sup> When Europeans first came to this land they saw nothing but savages in a howling wilderness, both of which had to be conquered. Seeking neither welcome nor permission from those already here, they imposed their alien god and ways on the "new land." That original act of conquest and sacrilege was repeated innumerable times as the wave rolled west, until now the very land accuses the intruders. There can be no experience of homecoming without welcome, and we shall not feel welcome here until we learn how to ask it of those who alone have it to give. That we may be slowly coming to understand this is one of the few hopeful signs for American patriotism.<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps it is impossible to know whether the nature of the conquest helped produce American restlessness and rootlessness, but it is certain that the restlessness and rootlessness in their turn make a natural patriotism nearly impossible. The seeds of patriotism can germinate even on the stoniest ground, but they must have time to put-down roots. We are a nation on the go, always moving, and always with somewhere left to move to. Many of us now even have mobile homes, with no roots in the earth at all. The purpose of life is to get ahead, and getting ahead means leaving others behind—an outlook, I think, which makes us distinctive among the nomadic peoples. There is little piety toward the past and the future is something to be

<sup>4</sup> See Chapter 1, "The Spirit of Place," in D. H. Lawrence's *Studies in Classic American Literature* for a suggestive development of this theme.

<sup>5</sup> These lines were written on Thanksgiving Day, one of the purest of American holidays. And yet, there are complexities to be remembered here as well. The Puritans had not only days of thanksgiving but days of penance too, and they were reluctant to routinize high occasions. They remembered that their plenty was a gift. And what of the Indians? There is not enough whiskey in the land to drown their pain on this day when the conquerors feast.

conquered. Ages and generations of care are required for the nurturing of that primary patriotism of place which has been a treasured and defining experience of most of humankind. In recent American letters, perhaps only William Faulkner, Robert Frost, and Edmund Wilson wrote in the language of natural patriotism—and Wilson became querulous toward the end. We are a people to whom the experience of displacement is so natural that we do not know we are displaced, and it is hard for us to appreciate how desolating the experience can be for others. The following words were written by a Laotian poet pleading for a way of life now destroyed by American bombs:

Pity—our houses, ricefields, inheritance—we must abandon. The ricefields will grow jungles. They will become a wild place filled with tigers. Have pity; the lands, the ponds with fish, everything; pity the bathing hole where no one will come to swim and muddy the cool waters. Pity the crabs, fish, game, bamboo shoots; our kind of food. Sorrow for the fruit trees we planted in the garden and around the village, the clumps of large and small bamboo; have pity! . . . The day does not exist when we will forget.<sup>6</sup>

Can we for whom “relocation” means moving elsewhere in pursuit of income and opportunity understand this? Have we found satisfactory substitutes for it in batting averages, or color television, or flights to the moon?

In sum, then, that kind of patriotism which Tocqueville called instinctive is not available to us.<sup>7</sup> There

<sup>6</sup> Fred Branfman, *Voices from the Plain of Jars: Life Under an Air War* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972). Quoted here from *New York Review of Books*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (August 10, 1972), p. 20.

<sup>7</sup> *Democracy in America* (New York: Schocken, 1961), Vol. I, p. 282.

is no way to measure the weight of this loss, but if instinctive patriotism is the basic urge I think it is, then the loss is heavy. Surely, human beings can feel the lack of something they need even though they might never have had it. To feel the loss of something, it is not necessary first to have had that thing. (Consider “love,” for example, which many psychologists say we all need, even though many of us have never had it.) The trouble is, that when a deprivation is of this sort the victim may not interpret his condition correctly: people attempted all sorts of cures for goiter before they learned about iodine. Not knowing what it is one needs, one mistakes symptoms for cause, and tries to fill the need through harmful substitutes for the real thing. Perhaps this is the case with us.

JUST ONE STEP removed from land patriotism is patriotism of the city. Both center on the idea and sentiment of home and nurture. Both acknowledge that the foundation of life is debt. Both shape individual life by reference to the common and familiar things. Their only important difference is in the object of attachment. The city is the creation of human beings and is in that obvious sense artificial, the image of an ideal, while the land, even when altered by labor and love, remains fundamentally the work of nature. The supreme expression of city patriotism is to be found in Pericles’ eulogy for the Athenian dead, and a study of that discourse will teach one all that can be learned about the subject.

Certainly city patriotism can be as intense as patriotism of the land. Machiavelli cared more for his city than for his own soul. And Fustel de Coulanges’ book on *The Ancient City* describes how much of human life could be founded on the city’s gods, exhibited in the city’s temples and public spaces, and protected by the city’s walls. Each family had its private home and hearth, but the city was a second home, made by all

and common to all. City patriotism was profoundly "social" in its orientations: Socrates did not like to leave Athens for even a day in the country, because he could not talk with trees.

City patriotism, then, is not profoundly different from land patriotism, though it is a step beyond it in the direction of the artificial and the ideal. Like land patriotism, it too is declining. In the times when cities were few, they were precious to their citizens by reason of their very artificiality. A small man-made thing protected by its walls from the vast wilderness without, the city nourished a life which was distinctively human. As time went on, the works of the humankind appeared everywhere, becoming less valuable as they became more common. That is true the world over. In the United States, in addition, cities have been from the beginning products largely of the impulse of profit and hustle, owing little to the sacred and the traditional. Hence, there is as little of city patriotism among us as there is of the ancient patriotism of place. Furthermore, the people and shapes, as well as the monuments and traditions, of our cities change so rapidly that citizens have no time to form solid and enduring attachments. Even the sports teams, closest modern equivalent to the gods of the ancient city, can be moved by a few million dollars.

## II

### Covenanted Patriotism

BUT if instinctive patriotism and the patriotism of the city cannot be ours, what can be? Is there a type of patriotism peculiarly American; if so, is it anything more than patriotism's violent relative, nationalism?

Abraham Lincoln, the supreme authority on this subject, thought there was a patriotism unique to America. Americans, a motley gathering of various

racess and cultures, were bonded together not by blood or religion, not by tradition or territory, not by the walls and traditions of a city, but by a political idea. We are a nation formed by a covenant, by dedication to a set of principles and by an exchange of promises to uphold and advance certain commitments among ourselves and throughout the world. Those principles and commitments are the core of American identity, the soul of the body politic. They make the American nation unique, and uniquely valuable, among and to the other nations. But the other side of this conception contains a warning very like the warnings spoken by the prophets to Israel: if we fail in our promises to each other, and lose the principles of the covenant, then we lose everything, for they are we. This makes it quite clear that we are dealing here with a conception very different from Rousseau's advocacy of a civil religion as the bond of political community. For Lincoln, the principles of the covenant set the standard by which the nation must judge itself: the nation is righteous and to be honored only insofar as it honors the covenant. For Rousseau, the civil religion is designed to induce the individual to venerate the nation itself. I shall hope to show that the best way to define the failure of American patriotism is to see it as a decline from the noble example and promise of Lincoln's conception, to the banal performance of Rousseau's.

Lincoln developed and expounded his conception of the national covenant over a number of years and on a number of significant occasions. One of his fullest statements of the idea came when he was about to enter the highest office in the land. On his way to Washington to take up the Presidency, Lincoln was invited to speak in Independence Hall, Philadelphia. Deeply moved by the place, he expressed his understanding of America's meaning and mission in a hand-

ful of memorable words—and half consciously revealed his own and the nation's future. The whole speech should be read. Here are some critical passages:

I am filled with deep emotion at finding myself standing here in the place where were collected together the wisdom, the patriotism, the devotion to principle, from which sprang the institutions under which we live. . . . I can say . . . that all the political sentiments I entertain have been drawn . . . from the sentiments which originated, and were given to the world from this hall in which we stand. I have never had a feeling politically that did not spring from the sentiments embodied in the Declaration of Independence. . . . I have often inquired of myself, what great principle or idea it was that kept this confederacy so long together. It was . . . something in that Declaration giving liberty, not alone to the people of this country, but hope to the world for all future time. It was that which gave promise that in due time the weights should be lifted from the shoulders of all men, and that *all* should have an equal chance. . . .

Now, my friends, can this country be saved upon that basis? If it can, I will consider myself one of the happiest men in the world if I can help to save it. If it can't be saved upon that principle, it will be truly awful. But, if this country cannot be saved without giving up that principle—I was about to I say I would rather be assassinated on this spot than to surrender it.<sup>8</sup>

In this discourse Lincoln asserted that the articles of the political covenant are both perfectly clear and grounded in the firmest authority. Three years later, on land consecrated by blood, he repeated the same

<sup>8</sup> Roy P. Basler, ed., *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1953), Vol. IV, p. 240

themes. The nation born in 1776 was “conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.” Continuing in unbroken line, generation was tied to generation by that common birth and promise. In a fragment written early in 1861, but not published, Lincoln stated his understanding of the relation between covenant and people—between the Declaration of Independence on the one side and the Constitution and Union on the other. He expressed the connection by a luminous metaphor drawn from the Book of Proverbs. The principle announced in the Declaration he called an “apple of gold,” while “the Union and the Constitution are the pictures of silver, subsequently framed around it. The picture was made, not to conceal, or destroy the apple; but to adorn and preserve it. The picture was made for the apple—not the apple for the picture.” (IV, 240)

One more statement, this time from the young Lincoln. Again the occasion is significant. Lincoln had just been elected to the Illinois legislature, and he accepted an invitation to address the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield: an occasion of beginning, then, like the speech in Independence Hall. Lincoln chose as his theme “the perpetuation of our political institutions.” (I, 108–15)

He opened the discourse by reminding his listeners that the men of the Revolution had fought to found a polity dedicated to liberty and self-government. Those principles were safe while the founders lived for they knew the price that had been paid for them. The scenes and memories of the struggle were visible to their eyes and lively to their memories. Many individuals and families treasured and retold the stories of sacrifice and danger. But now those scenes are distant. We who came after the struggle and had no part in it cannot see it in the scars on our bodies, cannot even relive it through the eyes and voices of the actors. Being distant, we easily forget why those others fought

and died, and we cannot justly value the gift they gave to us. Our forgetting opens the path to talented persons of great ambition who, if they cannot gain fame by preserving the principles of the founding, will gain fame by wrecking them. Only if the founding principles are kept alive and pure in the minds and hearts of the citizenry shall we be safe from perverted ambition—or, indeed, safe from ourselves. We must, then, see as the chief task of political life the task of political education: inculcate respect for valid laws as a “political religion”; retell on every possible occasion the story of the struggle; teach tirelessly the principles of the founding. The only guardian of the compact is an informed citizenry, and the first task of leadership is the formation of such a citizenry.<sup>9</sup>

This is a conception of patriotic devotion that fits a nation as large and heterogeneous as our own. It sets a mission and provides a standard of judgment. It tells us when we are acting justly and it does not confuse martial fervor with dedication to country. Lincoln also reminded us that the covenant is not a static legacy, a gift outright, but a burden and a promise. The nation exists only in repeated acts of remembrance and renewal of the covenant through changing circumstances. Patriotism here is more than a frame of mind. It is also activity guided by and directed toward the mission established in the founding covenant. This conception of political membership also decisively transcends the parochial and primitive fraternities of blood and race, for it calls kin all who accept the authority of the covenant. And finally, this covenanted

<sup>9</sup> Lincoln returned time and again to this theme of forgetting, nowhere more powerfully than in his great speech at Peoria (October 16, 1854) where he argued that the Nebraska bill was but one more step along the path whereby “little by little, but steadily as man’s march to the grave, we have been giving up the *Old* for the *New* faith.” *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 275.

patriotism assigns America a teaching mission among the nations, rather than a superiority over or a hostility toward them.<sup>10</sup> This patriotism is compatible with the most generous humanism.<sup>11</sup>

Now, ONLY THE willfully blind could fail to see that American patriotism in practice has failed to live up to Lincoln’s teaching of the ideal. Most of the reasons are obvious; others are more subtle.

First of all, certain peoples were excluded from the covenant, some from the beginning, some later on: Indians, Negroes, Mexican Americans, Orientals. Then too, from early on, liberty was largely interpreted as private liberty, and equality soon came to mean equal opportunity to compete for the prizes of wealth and power. There was little teaching of liberty as public liberty—the power of acting with others to shape the conditions of the common life. (Henry Adams thought the political age had ended by 1816, supplanted by the economic age.) The activity of politics was seen as but another of the instrumentalities by which self-interested individuals advanced toward private goals. The very notion of a public good dissolved into an aggre-

<sup>10</sup> This mission used to matter to others elsewhere in the world. A report from Russia: “On the morning of the Fourth of July, 1876 . . . hundreds of small, rude American flags or strips of red, white and blue cloth fluttered from the grated windows of the [political prisoners] around the whole quadrangle of the great St. Petersburg prison . . .” Reported in Ira Woods Howerth, “Patriotism, Instinctive and Intelligent,” (1912); quoted here as reprinted in Maurice G. Fulton, ed., *National Ideals and Problems* (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1968), p. 213.

<sup>11</sup> I want to call the reader’s attention to Randolph Bourne’s essay “Trans-National America” in Bourne, *War and the Intellectuals*, ed. and with introduction by Carl Resek (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1964), pp. 107–24. It is the only American writing on patriotism known to me that is not shamed by Lincoln’s understanding of the matter.

gate of particular goods, and Lincoln's conception of the patriotic citizen as one who treasures and upholds the basic principles of the political covenant dissolved along with it.<sup>12</sup>

Today our skepticism toward all notions of disinterested, public-regarding behavior is so thoroughgoing that the patriot can hardly appear. We are inclined to regard all professions of disinterested and altruistic motive as the blandishments of a charlatan or the intrigues of a schemer—and we are largely right, for over time, a people gets the politics it expects and asks for. When these political conceptions were added to the ethic of competition and mastery in the economic sphere, the ground was prepared for the full flowering of that individualism which Tocqueville diagnosed as the deadliest enemy of civic virtue. In sum, liberalism and capitalism corrupted the covenant, while racism denied it to large groups of the population.

Other forces completed the work which liberalism, capitalism, and racism had begun. The idea and experience of a covenanted community has deeper roots in the American past than those exposed by Lincoln. The Puritan Commonwealth of New England was exactly such a community. Individuals became members of the community only upon acceptance of certain articles of religious faith and morals. That acceptance had to be proved in practice, and to the satisfaction of the guardians of the covenant. Social institutions were designed to encourage performance of the covenant. The Puritans discouraged the formation of isolated, private farmsteads and tried to keep all persons in the towns, in sight of each other, and with life centered in the meetinghouse. In sum, membership was not a right of birth. It had to be

<sup>12</sup> For a more sanguine account of the development of American patriotism than the one which follows, see Merle Curti, *The Growth of American Thought*, 3rd ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), ch. 16.

earned, and was the reward of choice and effort. Institutions were designed to encourage the choice and supervise the effort.

That idea of earned membership still forms the center of American nationality, but time and circumstances have worked strange changes on it.<sup>13</sup> As time went on, America opened her doors to the stranger on easy terms. Only one restriction remained: the stranger had to become a republican. He had to accept the fundamental terms of the founding covenant. The Constitution even specifies that each state shall have a republican form of government. We imposed no religious tests for membership, no tests of cultural or linguistic background, no tests—with well-known exceptions—of blood or race. But we did require a profession of republican faith. In that decisive way, the New England idea of earned membership in a covenanted community persisted. It is a fascinating idea, at once universal and generous and parochial and narrow: universal and generous in that it is willing to embrace as members a great variety of human and cultural types, rejecting neither Turk nor Greek *qua* Turk or Greek, blind to divisions that had for centuries brought the Old World to repression and war; narrow in that it reduced the person to official beliefs, denying the significance of all those other things that go to make up character and style, all those things that human conversation is about.

As time went on, the narrowness prevailed against the generosity. First of all, the social institutions that provided the nursery and school for learning and following the covenant declined. The close New England town gave way to the isolated homestead, or to the city of recent immigrants. No longer was life lived and tested under the eyes of familiars. Then, the forgetting

<sup>13</sup> The seed of the following analysis comes from G. K. Chesterton's crotchety and brilliant essay in his *What I Saw in America*.

that Lincoln so feared took its toll so that the gift of public liberty seemed a small one. Our teachers began to teach, and we to value, private life and liberty above all. The growth of capitalist enterprise and the spread of the competitive ethic hastened the work of isolation and privatization. And then, during the last third of the nineteenth century, capitalism became equated with America herself. At the very time when the free enterprise system was being swallowed by the corporate system, the ideology of free enterprise became identified with the spirit of Americanism. Finally, with the huge immigrations of 1890-1920, and with the emergence of the United States as a world power, efforts to assimilate the foreign-born and assure their loyalty were greatly accelerated. More and more we turned to propaganda and to one or another form of loyalty test. An American became one who would *not* profess certain beliefs or who would *not* do certain things: from belief in anarchism, to the practice of polygamy, to joining the Communist Party, and on to disavowing the use of revolutionary force and violence. A nation of strangers, ignorant of the most important things about the man next door, we attempted to assure predictable behavior by requiring ritual disavowals of feared beliefs and practices. The quest for consensus in national politics followed almost naturally—as though patriots were persons who did not disagree, as though patriotism were a matter of professing certain doctrines and supporting the party policies of the day, rather than a steadfast devotion to the founding principles and a disinterested search for the good of the whole.

THE "APPLE OF GOLD" tarnished, while we polished the "picture of silver." Rousseau's conception of a civic religion drove out Lincoln's conception of a covenanted citizenry whose patriotism was exercised in active dedication to the promises and goals of the republic.

Even so, Lincoln's idea remains alive as possibly

the only saving conception of patriotism possible for us. It is surely the understanding of patriotic duty that inspired the civil rights activity of the 1960s, and that for one glorious moment called more Harvard seniors, among others, to the Peace Corps than to the Business School. It is the only idea of civic obligation that can provide a full defense for civilly disobeying laws or orders circumscribing liberty or violating the principle of equal justice for all. The idea was expressed by many of the young men who publicly refused conscription during the late 1960s on the grounds that the Vietnam War violated America's obligations to herself and to the nations—expressed not by those who fled or hid, or who used the labyrinth of the law to avoid the burdens of moral choice and political action, but by those who publicly resisted and publicly paid the penalties of resistance.

Lincoln's conception of covenanted patriotism also offers the noblest rationale for active citizenship (government of, *by*, and for the people) resident in our tradition. Virtually every other argument for participation familiar to Americans starts from the premise of self-interest and sees political participation in exclusively instrumental and economic terms. Seen in this light, SDS's "Port Huron Statement" of 1962, with its conviction that the individual should "share in those social decisions determining the quality and direction of his life," is the finest expression of the Lincolnian idea in recent times. The Port Huron Statement offers a vision of an active and cooperative citizenry who see the political system as *their* system, and who understand that if the system is to survive according to its own principles, it will survive only by their efforts, and not by the ministrations of an elected monarch and an elite of managers, no matter how benign and competent. Such an elite might be able to keep order and distribute comfort, and might even be able to defend the populace against external enemies and help

it adjust to the strains of incessant change at home, but it cannot preserve the system on its own principles. It cannot do that because one of those principles is that the system belongs to the citizens. It is theirs; and at the moment an elite "saves" it for them, at that moment it dies.

Finally, Lincoln's idea proposes a strictly political definition of our nationhood, one which liberates us from the parochialisms of race and religion, and one which severs patriotic devotion from the cult of national power. It is, in my estimation, a calamity that this idea of patriotism has been so corrupted and subverted among us. The work of reviving, purifying, and establishing it is the supreme task of American political education.

### III Nationalism

A COVENANTED POLITY might be our finest tradition and best hope. It is not our reality. That reality is nationalism.

Even natural patriotism has a face less attractive than the one drawn above. Our preference for our own home and ways is easily understandable, and on the whole, admirable. Understandable too, but less admirable, is the easy step from preference to pride. Our peculiar characteristics easily come to seem not just the best for us, but the best. And they remain the best because they are ours. The logic may be weak, but the psycho-logic is very strong. Furthermore, the strange ways of others may seem to us not merely inferior to our own, but dangerous and threatening. Fear and distrust of the stranger are the dark force of patriotism, and they are as potent and flammable as the saving force of love for one's own.

The moral thrust of patriotism, then, is inherently ambivalent. It simultaneously unites and divides, en-

courages both concord and discord. There is no way to eradicate that ambivalence. It is this feature of the sentiment that has brought many to yearn for its disappearance. But that is a mistaken yearning, based on failure to see that not just patriotism but every human devotion both unites and divides. Every devotion draws a magic circle around some people and things, excluding others, and thereby automatically divides the world into those within and those outside the circle. Love does that, and so do faith and loyalty. Division and conflict are built into the dialectic of devotion.

The real trouble enters with the recognition that patriotism is not just a moral devotion but also a political passion, an attachment to political objects. From a group's political history come most of the points of pride, the revered heroes, the memories of sacrifice and courage, and the goals and values which form the ordinary member's sense of shared identity and shape his conception of patriotic duty. Through that history one becomes a participant in the corporate life, sharing its destiny, appropriating its triumphs and defeats, making its will one's own. Socrates called the laws of Athens his parents.

That corporate life is organized. It has a focus and a structure. And when that organization takes the form of the state, patriotism is easily warped to destructive ends. States are in their very nature combat organizations. They claim a monopoly of the legitimate use of force, and they employ propaganda to shape the thoughts and emotions of members. Through propaganda, the state incessantly tries to convince citizens that the support and enlargement of state power is their first duty, even to the point of overriding all other duties, even to the point of excusing lies and murder. The state may be, as Nietzsche called it, the coldest of cold monsters, but it knows well how to heat up the passions of its subjects. That is the elementary and

invaluable political knowledge of the statesmen of our day, right or left: Fidel Castro's exploitation of the theme of anti-Americanism has been a more valuable resource in the consolidation of the Cuban state than any amount of material aid the United States could possibly provide; the architects of the Cold War, using anti-Communist propaganda, gave the Pentagon a stronger foundation than could ever have been built from tradition and prudence.

In our time the nation state has successfully claimed itself to be the sole legitimate object of patriotic attachment, with results that have been on the whole disastrous. Many lesser loyalties fell before the surge of nationalism, and patriotism, too, had to be reduced in its objects and meanings. In earlier times, when people were enclosed in narrow circles of experience and devotion, the proper vocation of education was to call them out of the parochial, urging them toward higher and more general loyalties. But now the situation is different, and perhaps the task of education is different too. E. M. Forster spoke the untimely words appropriate to our time when he said that if ever it became necessary to choose between betraying his country or his friend, he hoped he would have the courage to betray his country.

Because nationalism is so pervasive today, it seems to be almost in the order of nature. But that is wrong. It is patriotism of the kind described at the outset of this essay that is natural. Nationalism is artificial. It is the product of specific social, economic, and intellectual forces and just as it was born only yesterday, it could die tomorrow. Nationalism takes sentiments basic to the nurture of human life, welds them to a certain political structure, and warps them in an almost entirely bellicose direction. It appeared in the states of the West at a definite stage of history and it filled definite needs. Nationalism could triumph only when liberalism had proceeded so far in its work of breaking

the bonds among men that new ones were needed to provide at least a minimum of warmth and some measure of connectedness and direction. In all the liberal states, the same two myths were forged to replace the broken links: nationalism was one, the cult of progress the other. Outside the West, nationalism has typically flared up in response to humiliations imposed by Western states on traditional cultures and regimes.

FEELINGS OF NATIONALITY existed long before the modern age, to be sure, but they were largely inarticulate and unorganized. They were not shaped and sharpened by propaganda into a unity of emotion, thought and will: Machiavelli's appeal for a prince to unify Italy and liberate her from the foreigners had to wait three hundred and fifty years for an answer. But patriotism and nationalism were not the same, and nationality was not regarded as the foundation of the political order. In the classical age, for example, those who called themselves Greeks had a strong sense of common nationality which distinguished them from non-Greeks. Greeks spoke the same language and had many gods and ceremonies in common, but they gathered themselves politically into a large number of city-states, each autonomous and with its distinctive regime. The Greek treasured his unique city as much as he treasured his common Greekness, and did not think that common nationality required a single political organization encompassing and commanding the loyalty of all Greeks. Similarly, for nearly the whole of recorded history, right up until quite recent times, most wars took place not between different national groups, but either between great empires or between tribes, regions, and cities of kindred nationality. Struggles were either cosmopolitan or local, not nationalistic. Admittedly, the war between the Jews and the Philistines provides an early example of na-

tionalist conflict—complete even to the use of inflammatory propaganda—but the case is anomalous.

We live so fully enclosed in the circle of nationalism that we can hardly see beyond it. Hence, it is useful to emphasize just how recent the phenomenon is. Up until only yesterday in China, family and clan set the horizons of loyalty. What we call Italy and Germany have been unified states for less than a century. When George Washington said “my country,” he meant Virginia, a usage which persisted until some time after the revolution of 1776. Our own civil war was the greatest nationalist struggle of the nineteenth century.<sup>14</sup> The South surely had the better of the Constitutional argument, and only arms could clear the way for the definition of the American polity as an “indestructible Union, composed of indestructible States” (Texas v. White, 1869).

Vast changes in the foundations of social life were required for the appearance and triumph of nationalism, changes that in sum amount to a characterization of modernity. The decline of religious faith as the basic bond among people and as the primary source of cultural life prepared the way. So too did the breakdown of cultural isolation consequent upon the development of improved means of travel and communication. These gave persons experience of others who before had hardly been present. Up until very recently, the whole territory inhabited by what we would today call a nationality, a territory often characterized by great variety of climate, landforms, and customs, was practically unknown to ordinary persons. It could become known only through travel or instruction, and these were restricted to a tiny minority. Another force decisive in the production of nationalism was the

<sup>14</sup> See Edmund Wilson's introductory essay in his *Patriotic Gore* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962).

(still continuing) consolidation and growth of centralized state power. By imposing the same laws and officers on large numbers of people, by subjecting those people to the same historical experiences, the great monarchies of England, France, Sweden, and Prussia, and the huge republic of the United States were instrumental in producing common attitudes and traits among a large population. In time, this formed what is loosely called a national character—a thing real enough, though hard to define, and by no means immutable: the French used to think the English riotous. The centralized state simultaneously molded national character and claimed to be its sole legitimate defender and spokesman.

Another factor in the production of nationalism was the dissolution of the monarchical and dynastic principle of political legitimacy. Modern nationalism is inconceivable without the idea of popular sovereignty as the base of political legitimacy, and without the breakup of the feudal and monarchical orders. Popular sovereignty promised that the ruled would henceforth be the rulers. When the disintegration of the old order was completed, and societies became aggregates of individuals, then nationalism became the cement which held these particles together, and popular sovereignty the myth that told them they were now in charge of their own futures.

IN OUR OWN DAY, a number of forces have given nationalism new vitality, and further corrupted the primary meanings of patriotism. One such force is the fiction that blood or race is the biological source of nationality and the basic bond among human groups. Another is the doctrine that sees the *Volksgeist* as the everwelling fountain of nationality in all of its cultural and political manifestations. Still a third is the conviction on the part of certain nations—a conviction

fostered by propaganda always and by terror and repression when necessary—that they are the bearers of precious cultural and biological seeds which must be safeguarded against enemies and planted among the unconvinced and the ignorant. Under the crusading impact of these ideas, nationalism in recent times has been a force almost wholly productive of death and exploitation.

We are still in the middle of the story of nationalism. No one can say where it will end, how long it will last, or whether it is even compatible with the survival of civilization. Two contrary tendencies vie at the moment. On the one hand, the formation of dozens of new states since World War II has meant the spread of nationalism on a world scale. On the other hand, in the older states of Europe and to a lesser degree in the United States, nationalism is ebbing. State centralization continues apace, certainly, but more under the cool logic of technology and rationalization than under the hot ideology of nationalism. But no new cohesive or cementing forces which might take the place of nationalism are yet visible (even such supranationalist ideologies as socialism and race are bent to nationalist ends), and it is doubtful whether nationalist faiths will disappear until other faiths arise to replace them.

The task of the patriot today, I think, at least in the United States, is to work to weaken the principle of nationalism and to cut its connections with the state. Nationality can be severed from nationalism, and nationalism can be depoliticized—just as religion was. No one can say if or when that day will arrive, but the struggle to hasten it is perhaps the most worthy political struggle of our time. Through that struggle, people might begin to rebuild the conditions for patriotism, and to revitalize the life-giving devotion for the things of the homeplace, a devotion whose absence now leaves us all displaced persons—tribeless,

homeless, hearthless ones bounced between a narrow egotism on the one side and an unsustaining universalism on the other, to be caught by a fierce nationalism in the middle.<sup>15</sup>

#### IV

##### Some Objections:

##### Historical, Moral, Psychological

AT THE OUTSET, I described certain obstacles in the path of an argument for patriotism, acknowledged their severity, and promised to return to them.

1. Some will object to the word itself. It is a fact that the word does not appear in English usage until 1726 (though all the “ism” words are relatively recent; nationalism, for example, does not appear until 1844). Thus, it seems risky to associate the term with primitive emotions and ancient political experiences, as I have done. Furthermore, the banner of patriotism has been waved by at least as many scoundrels as noble men: for every Lincoln there is a Stalin. Hence, it seems risky to recommend a revival of the word and the emotion, as I have done.

I admit these troubles with the word, but no other will do. Just because the word is new is no evidence that the thing is: there were viruses before there was a word for them. Besides, when Lincoln (and he was not the only one) said “patriotism” he meant something noble and interesting.

It won't do to banish words because we dislike some of their associations. Most rich words are a little rank. Of course language is often confusing, but it is also

<sup>15</sup> The patriot who needs texts for this work might find them in Abraham Lincoln and Mary Parker Follett: Lincoln for the principles of the covenant; Follett for the practices of organization and action. I shall return to this matter of program at the end of the essay.

the most wonderful expression of our humanity. When we banish a word or truncate its meaning, we also truncate ourselves. There is a good bit of evidence that our humanity is today being abbreviated by this process.

It might also be politically dangerous to banish the word, because we may need it someday. Suppose the President were to suspend the writ of *habeas corpus* for persons opposed to his Court appointments. We might consider it our patriotic duty to resist; and if we did, we would probably see ourselves as acting in the tradition set by patriotic forefathers—taking the mantle of Jefferson, for example, who called upon his countrymen to fight for the ancient rights of Englishmen. We would be much weaker politically if that patriotic argument and tradition were not available to us.

Hence, it is right and prudent to keep the word alive, and to recommend the experience. Ben Jonson called patriots “sound lovers of their country.” I want to restore that sense of the word.

2. Readers might be willing to let me use the word as I want, but they might still argue that the taint of history cannot be removed from it. Specifically, patriotism has been so tied up with nationalism and all its horrors in the modern age that the two can never be separated. Prussian officers served the Nazi state out of patriotism. General Curtis B. LeMay proposed bombing Vietnam into the Stone Age out of patriotism. In recent American politics, the only man who talks more about patriotism than President Nixon is Governor Wallace. Patriotism and nationalism are inextricably linked in modern history, and both spell ignorance and hate.

In response, one would say first that it is not satisfactory here to reel off the names of monsters: for every scoundrel who called himself a patriot one could name a good man who also claimed the name. The enemies of nationalism, fighting against the state and

for their families, their city, their land, or their conception of a just society—such have called themselves patriots, too.

Certainly some ignorant and cruel people have claimed the name of patriot, but that does not mean that ignorance, cruelty, and patriotism are all the same. We really do use different words for the different phenomena. Few today would call Senator Joseph McCarthy a patriot—vicious perhaps, a fool possibly, but not a patriot. As for ignorance, there are of course ignorant patriots as well as ignorant nationalists. But there are also sophisticated versions of each. It does not help thought to collapse the words or the things.

Moreover, I think that the modes of knowledge and ignorance characteristic of nationalism and patriotism are different. The knowledge of the patriot, especially of the natural patriot, is rich in memory or history and is solid and sensuous in its texture. This kind of knowledge is concrete and conservative. Its emotional tone is made up of reverence mixed with nostalgia. Such knowledge has little of the abstract about it and is not easily packaged for export. Hence, its main military expression is characteristically defense against invaders. It does not claim universality, and patriots do not comfortably support wars of expansion or wars of “principle.” Edmund Burke, whose writings embody all these characteristics of patriotic thought, defended one revolution and opposed another, precisely on the grounds that the one was conservative and concrete while the other was abstract and universalist in its claims. What is today called “people’s war” can only succeed when the military fish can swim in the sea of the people. That is to say, people’s war is defensive and local. I think this is the kind of war characteristic of patriotism. Should it turn out that people’s war, rightly conducted, has the capacity to endure and prevail against huge invading forces, that could show the way to a tremendous change in world history—a

real shift in the balance between nationalism and patriotism.

Nationalism, on the other hand, is rich in the knowledge of instrumental rationality, the knowledge needed to define the properties of the world as resources and to convert those resources into power. The organization of the nation state is the political expression of the process of technique, as Jacques Ellul calls it, the process of systematically converting the things of the world into resources of power. Consider this passage from Karl Polanyi's discussion of the early stages of the modern nation state:

Politically, the centralized state was a new creation . . . which . . . compelled the backward peoples of larger agrarian countries to organize for commerce and trade. In external politics, the setting up of sovereign power was the need of the day; accordingly, mercantilist statecraft involved the marshaling of the resources of the whole national territory to the purposes of power in foreign affairs. In internal politics, unification of the countries fragmented by feudal and municipal particularism was the necessary by-product of such an endeavor.<sup>16</sup>

That is to say, nationalism was specifically built out of the rubble of patriotism, and the chief tool in the destruction was instrumental rationality systematically employed to convert the world into resources for economic and political power.

Very early in its progress the nation state added ideology to its armory of weapons for aggression and expansion. Those ideologies have been many, but each claims that it is not partial, so that the expansion of the nation state can be presented as something

<sup>16</sup> Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* [1944] (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), p. 65.

other than the victory of the stronger. Ideology lets the nation state parade its might and cloak its ambition as the embodiment of a universal principle. From G. W. F. Hegel to W. W. Rostow the process has been the same. "Modernization" is our version of Hegel's idealization of the Prussian State. Like every good nationalist ideology, it ranks the U.S. number one on a universal scale of values and is made for export to other countries.

Patriots make no such claims to universality, and, in that way at least, are wise in their ignorance.

Certainly there can be a patriotism more "advanced" than devotion to place alone, more devoted to ideals and principles, which is still not aggressive and expansionist. That kind of patriotism can even believe its own principles superior and yet feel no missionary urge to impose them on others. The New England Puritan intention to build a "city on a hill" is one example; Lincoln's vision of America as a promise and hope to the oppressed everywhere is another; Mazzini's idea of a patriotism based on mutual respect and acceptance of variety is a third. This patriotism can have a teaching mission, but the teaching is done by example: others will see the shining city and take from it such light as they need.

We need a principle of political loyalty that can keep alive a noble tension between love for one's own place and respect for the places of others. It is very difficult for either the militant nationalist or the promiscuous universalist to honor that tension. Both of them smash through the complexities of cultural diversity, reducing them by a principle: for the nationalist, the principle is "ours is superior to the others"; for the universalist, the principle is "all are equal." The obscurantism and aggressiveness of the former obviously produce injustice. So does the eclecticism which rejects nothing, though here the injustice is

less obvious. If a group within a foreign society which we will not judge protests against an injustice within its own social order, shall we still not judge? Suppose the same injustice should exist among ourselves. Have we any right to oppose it at home if we kept silent when we saw it abroad? The position of critic at home but conformist elsewhere, and the position of conformist at home but critic elsewhere, are equally contradictory and productive of injustice.

I THINK THE patriotic mentality has a fair chance of keeping the noble tension alive. To be a patriot means to live out of a recognition that one is a member of a particular society and culture. But so are all other human beings; and their particular memberships are as important to them as ours are to us. Hence, there is no contradiction—only a tension—between taking up one's particular place and acknowledging one's condition as a member of humanity, for each member of humanity has a local habitation. We may believe that other societies, or some other society, are not as good as our own. But even if we believe that, we have no method for proving it. Recognizing that no society can be judged absolutely good or absolutely evil, it is still possible to treasure our own, even while criticizing it, and to judge others', even while respecting them. Toward all other societies than one's own one may take up a privileged position, as it were, liking them or not, as one wishes. One's own society is the only one in which one *must* be involved, and from which one *must* struggle for disengagement: there is no privileged position possible here, only the necessities of social existence. The patriot, I think, easily grasps this lesson, and easily applies it to his thinking about other peoples. He knows, for example—and the knowledge is almost instinctive—that only residents, not outsiders, can radically change a society's ways and customs without wrecking the society, for the changes

are made from within, and that makes all the difference. This attitude by no means denies, though it admittedly does not indiscriminately encourage, borrowing from other cultures to improve one's own. At the same time, the patriotic orientation is basically conservative. Indeed, the emotion itself seems a throwback to what Rousseau called that "middle ground between the indolence of the primitive state and the questing activity" of the expansionist and technological states. Perhaps that middle condition really was, as Rousseau held, the "best for man." Perhaps too the emotions peculiar to it were healthier than the emotions associated with both the nationalism and the universalism of our day.<sup>17</sup>

So, it is possible and important to distinguish between patriotism and nationalism; or, more specifically, to break the confused connection between patriotism and the modern nation state. If the whole world were to become American territory (or Russian, or Japanese, etcetera) the conception of the American state as we know it would become unnecessary. But the conception of the community will never be discarded. The word "state" represents (usually) hostile divisions of the earth, and signifies the progressive formation of connections among villages, cities, and regions. This development occurs in response to the need of all men to live together, and in response to the urge of some men to dominate that living together. But if all the boundary lines representing states were erased, and the state as we know it disappeared, the conception of the community would not be threatened. It will exist as long as mankind exists. Patriotism is the emotion and bond characteristic of community.

<sup>17</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, tr. by John Russell (New York: Atheneum, 1967) pp. 381-393, makes a powerfully suggestive argument that Rousseau really was right on this matter. I am indebted to Lévi-Strauss for many of the ideas in the foregoing paragraphs.

Hence, it too will exist, in more-or-less pure form, as long as mankind exists. Nationalism is an aberration.<sup>18</sup>

3. Why bother to separate patriotism from nationalism, its bloody brother? Why not let both die their historical deaths, while we look and work toward other modes of unity? Today, we are called to be neither patriots nor nationalists, but something more cosmopolitan and more hopeful than both.

The two most frequently recommended alternatives are international (socialist) class consciousness, and internationalism as such. I shall deal with the former only in passing, because I believe it to be a feckless alternative, and that for two reasons. First, World War I showed the weakness of the dream of international class solidarity when confronted by the reality of nationalism. Secondly, there are many kinds of socialists, and there is no inherent incompatibility between being a socialist and being a patriot. Eugene V. Debs was a profound patriot, and so was Ho Chi Minh. Mao Tse-Tung is a patriot, and so is Fidel Castro. I am inclined to judge, on the evidence, that any socialist who thinks his socialism has nothing to do with any special place or special people is either foolish, or dangerous, or both. The examples are legion, beginning with Robert Owen's villages of cooperation, each a tidy parallelogram, relentlessly projected across all the spaces of the New and Old Worlds, even into the backcountry of Bolivia, where they might bump against the *focos* of Che Guevara and Regis Debray. The history of the Comintern provides a particularly instructive chapter.

Internationalism, however, seems more promising. Some varieties of it are very old, e.g., the cosmopolitanism of the ancient Stoics and Epicureans. Others, of greater interest and importance today, are newer. Ex-

<sup>18</sup> I owe this argument to Douglas C. Lummis, who drew it from Gondo Seikyo, a Japanese agrarian anarchist of the prewar period.

amples here are the projects of Kant and the abbe' de Saint-Pierre for world peace achieved through international administrative institutions. There is a direct line of descent from those proposals to the United Nations Organization and the World Federalist movement of our day, with certain contemporary "functionalist" theorists of integration not far off to the side.

These are the responses of humane and enlightened people to the horrors of war and the complexities of living in an ever-shrinking and more crowded world. The great dangers we face if we do not become more international are strong reasons for trying to become so. Obviously, we must have nuclear disarmament. With the threat of annihilation removed, we might then go on to deal with the problems of disease, hunger, crowding, sane and equitable use of world resources, and so forth. Simple patriots, many will say, are not equal to such tasks. They are too narrow in their loyalties, too old-fashioned in their outlooks. We need people of broader views and sharper skills. Patriots, indeed, are part of the problem, rather than part of the solution.

These are serious points. Patriotism obviously costs too much if its price is world peace and justice. I have no arguments that will convert the internationalist—none, even, that satisfy myself. Only a few proposals that might put the debate on a sounder footing.

First of all, I am not sure that patriots by their nature oppose treaties of disarmament or arms regulations. Nationalists are more likely to do that, if their state is one of the mighty ones. One who rightly loves his country is not eager to see it blown up. Secondly, there are forms of internationalism that are entirely congenial to patriots. An American patriot can enjoy French wine and Russian novels and Greek philosophy as much as any other person. More than that, a patriot can have genuine toleration and even respect for other

peoples, and an earnest wish that they share equally with him in the blessings of justice and liberty. Thomas Jefferson and Tom Paine, devoted American patriots, were also in this sense devoted internationalists, and saw no clash between the two. They were right, and they might still serve as models of enlightened patriotism.

Those points are worth making, but they do not go to the heart of the matter. That is found in the basic character of the actual internationalizing forces of today, and of the internationalist schemes that are proposed as responses to those forces.

It is a *fact* that the world today is small, crowded, and explosive. But what has produced that fact? Regardless of one's political outlook, the basic answer has to be technology, with some help from imperialism and cupidity. The main expressions and agents of internationalization today are the multinational corporation, propaganda, neocolonialist development and exploitation of weak countries, expansion of the technological mode of production into new territories, highly technologized military systems capable of dealing death at a distance, ruthless destruction of "backward" peoples and cultures, the increasing standardization of life, and meaningless tourism. These are not lovely things. Let's agree to call them, at best, mixed blessings. Surely they have not made the world more peaceful. Nor have they improved the quality of life. On the contrary. The forces that are pushing us toward international uniformity are sterile and life denying. It is not clear to me that we should enlist under this banner.

PATRIOTISM, I HAVE tried to argue, is less a program and a set of forces than a way or style of being in the world. The patriot keeps his eye on the past, on places and things, on traditions. For these reasons, patriotism is often called conservative. It is conservative, although

it is perfectly possible for a conservative patriot to be a revolutionary. Today, a care for roots is genuinely revolutionary and is connected with freedom: it can slow down the rush toward chaos powered by the innovating, internationalizing forces of today. I am of course aware that innovations can be rich and human, but it is obvious that most of them today are not. Rather, they partake of the machines whose children they are. Compared to the technological outlook, patriotism is a complexly human and rich idea, connected with life, supportive of liberty and diversity.

In sum, I am suggesting that most internationalism today has utterly confused humanity and its possibilities with technology and its possibilities. No doubt, technology has unified the world in a thousand ways, producing a call on the part of many humane people for world law and the brotherhood of man. But it would be more straightforward for the internationalist to speak less about the brotherhood of man and more about the standardization of the technological order, for it is a brute fact that technology has destroyed and is destroying hundreds of forms of human life. It is a cruel confusion to call that brotherhood, unless one holds that brotherhood can appear only after those who were different are dead.<sup>19</sup>

There are, of course, a few actual tribes and primitive peoples left on the planet, and a handful of older cultures not yet hopelessly debauched. My patriotic recommendation is to leave them alone. No aid; no anthropologists; no tourists.

<sup>19</sup> R. Buckminster Fuller is a great internationalist and a great prophet of technological unification. Anyone who thinks I have overstated the deadly confusion of technological with human possibilities should read his works. Start with *Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth* (Carbondale, Illinois; 1969). (Lewis Mumford thinks the place of publication must be an editorial error, for "such a manual could come only from Heaven.")

## V A Modest Program

I HAVE ARGUED throughout that patriotism is a way of being in the world, rather than a doctrine or program of action. Still, one might suggest a few programmatic steps which, to recall Susan Sontag's words, might help to "revalidate the tarnished idea of patriotism."

The main thing is to strengthen the bonds among ourselves, specifically, the bonds of common projects and participation in common situations. Given our reality, that strengthening will require a huge effort to decentralize and to simplify the gigantic structures that now dominate every sector of society—work, education, communications, government. "All Power to the Fragments!"—that, I think, is the right watchword. Everywhere we look today, the tendency of power to autonomize itself, to cut itself off from its subjects and become an alien force over them, grows apace.<sup>20</sup> That tendency is always basic to complex social systems and may even be an inevitable law of their nature. We must struggle to devise institutions capable of checking power without canceling it. On the theoretical level, that will require the development of conceptions of authority and community appropriate to our time, and able to supplant the alienating conceptions and practices which now prevail. On the practical level, it will require endless experimentation with and reflection on new ways of living and working together, especially ways that emphasize community, simplicity, and stability.

Education must be approached as a task of preparing

<sup>20</sup> See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, translated by Richard C. McCleary (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 223.

persons for freedom and participation. Local and ethnic history should have a large place in the curriculum, and history should be taught not as the flow of some process, but as accounts of decision, action, and conflict, stories of times when men rose above the ordinary and tried to take charge of their lives, thereby doing something memorable in the world. Nothing should be done to encourage on the part of the individual the sense that "someone else is in charge, and I just live here." Everything possible should be done to dismantle the educational bureaucracy and break the stranglehold of officialdom on education. Encourage nonpublic educational ventures: let a hundred flowers bloom.

We must also begin to move toward what must almost be called a revolution of competence in the arts of daily living, so that we no longer stand helpless among our machines and organizations, stupefied by our own productions. This will require a disciplined austerity in material things, the reduction of luxury, and the suppression by moral and educational means of idle consumption and display. We must reduce the intricacies and rigidities of the divisions of labor, and we must reject the gods of efficiency and comfort. Everything that teaches us to regard the earth as a home, rather than as a mine, must be encouraged. Simplify. Stabilize. Develop personal and small community landscapes. Combat consumerism.

On a more theoretical level, we must formulate new answers to the question, under what conditions does inequality of power and status not pave the way to—or even mean the same as—exploitation and domination? Our slogan of equality of opportunity has shown itself to be a false answer to this question, setting persons against each other as it does, falsifying and obscuring the real grounds of the inequalities among us. But that must not mean throwing out the question

with the answer, thereby sinking into the squalid promiscuity that says anything goes and all desires are equal.

Finally, we must rework the swarm of questions around the troubled theme of the relations between vanguard and main army in the struggle for radical change. It is a rock-bottom fact of our condition that if opinions are consulted and votes counted, there will be no radical change. The forces that are transforming the United States today as so basic and pervasive—the chaotic release of energy, the exploitative disruption of all natural and human networks—that they cannot be formulated or mastered in narrowly political terms. What is needed is a new social mind, as Henry Adams called it, a social mind centered on conservation, variety, and balance. That kind of change cannot be deliberately and rapidly introduced and supervised by the few, nor implemented from the top down. A supervised revolution can only enlarge police and administration.

The main activity, then, must be educational. But the education cannot be limited to the writing and speaking of alternative views. The most powerful political-moral teaching combines action and knowledge. Resistance, for example, opens up a space in the political world which would not otherwise have been there. Once open, it remains forever after a possibility, a course which once was taken and which might once again be taken. Action becomes part of history, and is thus available for rediscovery in the future. Nor is the scope of the action the most important factor here: consider the importance in American—even world—history of Thoreau's night in jail. It is enormously important to keep intact the memory of such actions of resistance. One of the greatest weaknesses of the New Left in the 1960s was that the thread had been broken. There really was a silent generation cutting off the sixties from the thirties. No matter how thin the thread

becomes, it must never be permitted to break. Keeping it intact does not of course assure or constitute success, but it is sufficient reason for acting. Without memory, there is no identity. ("The seat of mind is in memory," as St. Augustine said.) Patriots, I have argued, specialize in that form of knowledge which is memory of action. That is part of their radicalism, especially in an age which grows more and more mindless.

Finally, if political education is to be effective it must grow from a spirit of humility on the part of the teachers, and they must overcome the tendencies toward self-righteousness and self-pity which set the tone of youth and student politics in the sixties.<sup>21</sup> The teachers must acknowledge common origins and common burdens with the taught, stressing connection and membership, rather than distance and superiority. Only from those roots can trust and hopeful common action grow.

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<sup>21</sup> "God we were smug and self-righteous," Dotson Rader has recently said of the Freedom Riders, "no wonder the crackers hated us." (*I Ain't Marchin' Anymore*, 1969, p. 16). And no wonder they still do, when the author, professing a new self-knowledge, can still call them crackers. The cracker has little reason for trying to distinguish between high-minded and low-minded carpetbaggers. SNCC soon reached the same conclusion. The ecology movement, largely upper-middle-class in composition, has been insufferably high-minded and self-righteous, and unwilling even to consider the economic impact of their proposals on the lower classes. The lower classes have lived with pollution for a long time. The upper-middle-classes became aware of it when their playgrounds were threatened.