EVEN AS A SCHOOLBOY-reciting the pledge of allegiance, I thought America an odd sort of place. It was not one country, apparently, but two. It said so in the flag oath. "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America," we chirped in unison, and then concluded triumphantly that it was "one nation indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." That was one America, the "nation," whose "alabaster cities gleam," we piped at other times, "undimmed by human tears." But the flag hanging limply in the corner represented something else as well. There was "the Republic for which it stands," an extra-added America, the "republic" whose nature and purport proved a puzzle too deep for the schoolboy mind to solve. Solve it, however, we must, because there are two distinct Americas, two separate objects of a patriot's devotion, two distinct foundations of two contrary codes of political virtue. One is the American nation, the other is the American republic. At every important juncture of our public life these two Americas conflict with each other.

On a famous occasion some years ago, the President of the United States secured an injunction against the *New York Times* ordering it to cease publishing certain classified government documents, known collectively as "the Pentagon Papers." Faced with an unprecedented attempt at press censorship, the *Times* promptly called on the aid of a distinguished law firm that it had been retaining for several decades. The distinguished law firm flatly refused to defend the *Times* against the violation of its constitutional liberties. To publish the documents in wartime, a senior partner said, was shameful, disgraceful, and unpatriotic. It would weaken the nation's resolve and give aid and comfort to its enemies. As its patriotic duty to the country, the distinguished law firm willingly sacrificed its most prestigious client. But which America did the law firm so patriotically serve? It served the corporate entity known as the nation. What it did not serve was the American republic. To defend the infringement of liberty, to refuse to uphold the Constitution in a crisis, to support the alien methods of despotism—surely that in a republic is shameful, disgraceful, and unpatriotic. The nation pulls one way, the republic another. They are today deadly rivals for the love and loyalty of the American people.

Choosing Up Sides

It is an odd sort of rivalry, one that the republic, on the face of it, ought to win hands down. The republic is the great central fact of American life. It is the constitution of liberty and self-government, the frame and arena of all American politics. It gives laws their legitimacy and cloaks public office with public authority. The republic is what Americans founded when they founded America. The nation, by comparison, is a poor, dim thing, for the nation is merely America conceived as a corporate unit, a hollow shell. The flag is its emblem, "Uncle Sam" is its nickname; yet there is virtually nothing in the internal life of America that can bring that abstract entity to life.

It is not the people writ large, the way it is, say, in France or Iran. Americans are not fellow nationals, we are fellow citizens. As G. K. Chesterton rightly remarked after paying a visit, America is more a creed than a country, and the creed is republicanism. The ties of a common nationality do not bind Americans together and never did. Even when the overwhelming majority of Americans were of English descent the very act that created America was a solemn declaration of independence from mere ties of nationality. Spurning nationality is our deepest political experience as Americans. I used to wonder as a child why the Boston Tea Party rebels dressed up as red Indians. It seemed a queer thing to do, since the rebels, by and large, were not fond of Indians. Now I see what they meant. The tea dumpers were rebelling not only against English rule but also against English nationality. They were either free citizens or rude savages, but "true-born Englishmen" they were insisting they were not. Love of the nation, mistakenly called nationalism, does not spring from nationality in America. It is not the flame that once burned in the hearts of stateless Poles and colonized Irishmen, that once fired Italians with a dream of political unity. We were citizens of the republic long before we ever saw ourselves as members of a nation. In the early days of the republic, the very word *nation*, innocuous of itself, actually offended fastidious republicans. They detected an aroma of despotism about it, and they were not, it turns out, all that far wrong.

We have traveled a long way since then, but devotion to the nation in America is still, inherently, devotion to an abstract entity. Orators at American Legion conventions call the sentiment "old-fashioned patriotism," but American memories are short. Devotion to the nation—"nationism," I will call it—is not very old in America. In 1852 Abraham Lincoln lauded his hero Henry Clay for being a patriot in two sorts of ways. Clay loved his country, Lincoln said, "partly because it was his own country, but mostly because it was a free country." To love America because you cherish the constitution of liberty is republican patriotism—what the distinguished law firm cared nothing about. To love America because America helped rear you Lincoln took to be merely natural; but nationism is not even patriotism of this natural kind. Natural patriotism is personal and concrete. It is love not of an entity but of things familiar and formative. During World War II a much-repeated story went around about the GI slogging through Italy's mud who was asked what he thought he was fighting for. He was fighting, he said, for Mom's apple pie, hot dogs, and the right to cheer the Brooklyn Dodgers. It sounded childish at the time, and it was. Natural patriotism *is* childlike. At bottom it is scarcely more than love of one's own childhood. There is nothing childlike about nationism, however, and nothing natural about it. We were a patriotic people long before nationism existed.

That would be hard to prove in a paragraph, but occasionally history recovers from the past a forgotten voice that reveals with wonderful economy the historical novelty of the new. One such voice was an angry editorial published by the New York *Journal of Commerce* in the year 1895. What aroused the ire of the newspaper was what it called "the artificial patriotism being worked up at the present time." And how was it being "worked up," this fabricated patriotism that was neither natural nor republican? Through the new and, to the *Journal of Commerce*, repugnant "fashion of hanging the flag from every schoolhouse and giving the boys military drill." America was well into its second century before those in authority thought patriotism required flagpoles on schools.

For that matter we were well into our second century before anyone thought patriotism required schoolchildren to pledge allegiance to the flag. The first time the pledge

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was ever recited in a classroom was in 1892. Until then the only civilian American required to swear fealty to the country was the President of the United States, but he pledged himself to "preserve, protect, and defend" not the nation, which has no legal existence, but the Constitution.

The paraphernalia of nationism is quite new. Even flag-worship is new. In the late nineteenth century "Old Glory" was indeed a popular emblem, so popular that merchants used it to hawk corsets, cough drops, and player pianos. There was nothing *sacred* then about the flag, precisely because the cult of the nation did not yet exist. The elaborate etiquette that now surrounds the national regalia was not concocted until 1923, the handiwork of the War Department and the newly formed American Legion. The object of the flag code was to transform the country's banner into a semi-holy talisman and so give the abstraction called the nation a semblance of life. No doubt the War Department half succeeded. When certain anti-Vietnam War protesters wanted to enrage their fellow citizens they burned American flags, proving how caught up in the flag cult, one way or another, most Americans had become.

I can still remember my own terrifying introduction to the more recondite aspects of twentieth-century flag-worship. It occurred at a Boy Scout meeting in April, 1946, when the scoutmaster asked the assembled tenderfoots what we were supposed to do when the family's flag had grown tattered and unseemly. Throw it in the garbage, yelled one heathen with no future in scouting. If you did that, the scoutmaster replied in hushed and portentous tones, you would be arrested and sent to prison. Fear and awe swept over us at the thought that an ordinary little flag—*private property* your father might have bought at a Woolworth's—could bring down upon you the majestic wrath of the all-seeing American Government, a thunderbolt, as it were, from Mount Olympus. The scoutmaster was exaggerating, but not by much. What he did not tell us, however, was that the law you broke by rudely disposing of a tattered flag did not originate in the misty, immemorial past. It had been enacted by Congress just four years before, in 1942.

A Nation Abroad

In creating the cult of the nation—"the artificial patriotism" of 1895—the mummery of flag-worship played its part, but the part is minor. It took far more than sacred bunting and schoolroom pledges to transform a lifeless abstraction—rooted in nothing, springing from nothing, legally non-existent—into the powerful rival of the venerable American republic. What it took was the whole weight and force of American foreign policy since the late nineteenth century. The reason for this is quite simple. The American nation, which has no life at home beyond what bunting will impart, comes to life internationally, for only in active dealings with other countries does the abstract entity, the nation, genuinely act as an entity. The republic exists for its own sake. The American nation lives abroad, and nationism in America is always a species of internationalism.

Once, on a radio discussion show, the moderator, vexed with me for "tearing down America," began delivering a long harangue about the horrors of dictatorship in Yugoslavia, a country he had recently visited. However, he asked in conclusion, could anyone really criticize American politics when you compare our freedom with Tito's repressions? That is the true international voice of the nationist. He extols liberty in America by comparing it with despotism abroad. The republican, by contrast, compares liberty in America with one standard only, the one established in the principles and promise of the American republic itself. To the nationist, new-fashioned patriot of the twentieth century, America is always a nation among nations.

It is most fully a nation, most intensely alive as an entity, when it wages war against other nations. Even in peacetime it is the memory of past wars and the menace of future wars that keep the idea of the nation alive in America. War and the cult of the nation are virtually one and the same. That is why the "artificial patriotism" of 1895 included "giving the boys military drill"; why it was the War Department that promoted the flag code; why "patriotic" parades are almost invariably military displays; why the veterans organizations are the most strenuous guardians of nationism—America, to the Legionnaire, is America at war, the war in which he himself served. Therein lies the radical distinction between patriotism and the cult of the nation. Americans needed no wars to love their country because it was their own; still less did they need war to love that country because it was free. It is the artificial patriotism of the nation that requires war, for without war the nation is but a shade wrapped in bunting.

Not many Americans love war for its own sake. Indeed, the only genuinely popular war we ever fought was the Spanish–American War, partly because it lasted only a few months. In America the cult of the nation does not exalt military glory. What it exalts are the repressive virtues of wartime. What it cloaks with patriotic ardor is hostility toward the virtues of a republic at peace.

During the two years preceding America's entry into World War I—a war that the overwhelming majority of Americans were desperately determined to stay out of—those who favored intervention actually set forth in a fierce pamphleteering agitation the virtues they hoped war would instill in postwar America. Mindful that nationism was still in its infancy (whipping a fifth-rate power in 1898 had helped, but not much), the pamphleteers wanted to "forge a national soul" for America, which apparently had no "soul" since it was just a venerated republic. They hoped war would give birth to "a new religion of vital patriotism—that is, of consecration to the State," a consecration sadly lacking in the republic, like the very concept of America as a "State." Mindful that the nation can only live abroad, they hoped an overseas war would permanently imbue Americans with "a strong sense of international duty." Otherwise the nation would fade from our minds. Above all, they wanted war to bring about a "change in the whole attitude of the people toward government." It would teach the rising generations, seared by memories of a great foreign war, to think more of what they "owed" to their rulers and less about what they could "get" from them. It would teach them, too, a "wholesome respect" for the powerful. The result would be a postwar America that would enjoy, the interventionists said, the blessings of "complete internal peace."

American State

The interventionists of 1916 wanted war to bring forth a new America—the second America—conceived in trench warfare and dedicated to the proposition that a few should rule and the rest should serve. Citizens of the republic would be transformed into docile agents of the American

"State." A people taught for 150 years to guard and cherish its liberties would learn, instead, to guard and cherish the "national soul." An exacting and troublesome citizenry (which Americans had been during the years between 1890 and 1916) would henceforth ask no more of its governors than the humble opportunity to serve their international objectives. A "new religion" of nationism would eclipse and even supplant the old republican patriotism. That, in truth, was the point, the Archimedean point, of the interventionist enterprise. Among liberal intellectuals a few years ago, it was fashionable to deride the popular American "cult of the Constitution." They thought it a bulwark of "reaction" and the American people, by implication, the dupes of the rich. The interventionists of 1916 knew better. It was the cult of the Constitution that they wished to obliterate and the cult of the nation that they hoped to erect in its place, through a titanic foreign war—the only possible way of doing it. As Bertolt Brecht once said, If the rulers cannot get along with the people they will just have to elect a new people.

The virtues of the citizen-turned-nationist would be simple, logical, and straightforward. For the sake of the nation, whose strength abroad demands "complete internal peace," he would do all that "internal peace" requires. He would forgo the exercise of his liberties—to speak, to act, to voice independent judgments—and urge his fellow citizens to do likewise, for the sea of liberty is turbulent and weakens the nation in the performance of its "international duties." For the sake of internal peace he would rest content with his lot and cease dividing the counsels of the powerful with selfish demands upon his government. In domestic affairs he would mind his own business and ask for nothing. In foreign affairs he would mind everyone else's business and call hotly for action. Eternal vigilance, liberty's steep price, he would willingly abandon because only a people that shows "confidence" in its rulers can provide them with the power to act forcefully abroad. Mutual respect, which citizens pay to each other simply because they are fellow citizens, he would replace with the patriotism of mutual suspicion—"positive polarization," as a Presidential Administration was to call it fifty-five years later. His own "vital patriotism" he would display by condemning as "disloyal" and "un-American" those who still cherished the republic and still fought to preserve and perfect it. Sedition, the crime of weakening the nation by critical words, he would undertake to root out among his neighbors ("America—Love it or leave it!"), although officially no such crime exists in America. Such was the new-modeled citizen envisioned by the warmongers of 1916 and extolled ever since by the promoters of nationism.

An Indestructible Republic

The agitators of 1916 did not go unanswered, for the republic had not yet been eclipsed. We had not yet reached the stage, for example, at which a respected political commentator describing "America as a civilization" could call the Constitution "at most" a "symbol" of national unity, a flag made of parchment. Despite the agitators' fine talk about fighting in Europe for "democracy against autocracy," their critics (who spoke for the great majority of Americans) were not deceived. They understood quite clearly that the interventionists wanted to establish a deadly rival to the American republic and a fount of new virtues that snuffed out republican virtues. The war agitation itself, said one antiwar Senator, James Vardaman of Mississippi, was "a colossal blood-stained monument marking the turning point in the life of this Government." And he was right. If we enter the European war, said another antiwar Senator, William J. Stone of Missouri, "we will never again have this same old republic." And he, too, was right. What the interventionists wanted, their critics said, was a "Prussianized" America, an America whose citizens no longer loved their country because it was free but merely because it was feared. The critics' voices have long been forgotten, but like the angry editorial in the *Journal of Commerce* they reveal in their quaint, out-of-date language the historical novelty of the way we live now.

The novelty has long since worn off. In 1916 only a handful of Americans dared call openly for a "change in the whole attitude of the people toward government." Forty-five years and three foreign wars later, it was an American President, freshly sworn in, who was hailed for telling his fellow citizens to "ask not" what their country could do for them but to ask what they could do for their country while it paid "any price," bore "any burden," met "any hardship" to defend liberty *abroad*. Sixty-one years after 1916 another President, newly inaugurated, warned his fellow citizens that the chief "crisis" facing America was *their* lack of "confidence" in their betters. In the corridors of power the promoters of nationism are triumphant. Understandably they trust and advance only their own kind.

When the Nixon Administration was shopping around for a new legal counsel to the President, a bright young attorney working for the House Judiciary Committee caught the eye of the White House. Searching scrutiny certified him as a loyal unblemished patriot who met the stringent requirements of the highest level of security clearance (something not required for any government service until World War II). And what did this eminently trustworthy young patriot believe? That an American President had the right to do whatever he could get away with. Had the young attorney shown signs of doubting that truly subversive proposition, would the FBI have "cleared" him? I doubt it. For the past twenty-five years the FBI, which, like the nation, first blossomed in World War I, has kept a secret file on the American Civil Liberties Union in Chicago, an allegedly "disloyal" organization. That assessment reveals much about the two Americas. Disloyal to the republic the ACLU certainly is not, since its chief activity is providing legal aid to citizens whose constitutional rights have been violated. Is it disloyal to the nation? Of course it is. Citizens active enough to require government infringement of their rights obviously disrupt the nation's "internal peace." Who but the disloyal would think it a duty to defend them? There is nothing illogical about nationism. Much of its strength in the country derives from its simple logic.

Hearts Divided

What confounds and unnerves the nationist is the indestructible fact of the American republic. He lives in enemy territory among a people still only half-conquered. That is one reason why J. Edgar Hoover strained every resource of his organization to provide Americans with a reassuring image—efficient yet politically innocuous—of the FBI. He didn't do so because he thought Americans would inevitably admire his G-men. Nobody labors to achieve the inevitable. On the contrary, Hoover feared that citizens-turned-nationists might just revert back again. So long as

'the republic endures, nothing can wholly prevent that reversion. The great historian of ancient Rome Theodor Mommsen once observed that a republic founded by popular consent exerts an authority over its citizens so strong, so pervasive, so intimately entwined with their lives that the citizenry cannot even imagine a life outside its sway. So it is with the American republic. If nationism runs strong in the country—and it does—the hearts of Americans are nonetheless divided, like the country in which we now live.

Until 1965 the division of our hearts, part nationist, part republican, lay concealed under the crushing weight of a quarter-century of war and continual foreign crisis. Then something happened. The nationists in power overreached themselves. A President who promised a war against poverty and no wider war in Asia launched a massive war in Asia and left the poor as poor as ever. To his shock and dismay, divided American hearts did not "rally to the flag." There was no outpouring of nationist sentiment. A magazine writer visiting Kansas in 1967 described the strange war temper in what was soon to be called "Middle America." On the one hand, not a single Kansas town had played host to an antiwar demonstration. On the other, local draft boards were cheerfully deferring every youth who offered any plausible grounds for deferment. Angry moral arguments against the war played little part in producing that surprisingly tepid response—a response that no contemporary poll could detect. What lay behind it was a profound sense of political betrayal. A President had promised peace and given us war, had committed a gross breach of faith and treated his countrymen with sovereign contempt. We were not nationists enough to cheer the fruits of a betrayal so deep: we were still republican enough to resent the contempt of the mighty. Loathed from coast to coast, the faithless President was peacefully driven from power. Six years later, another President, as lawless as his predecessor had been faithless, discovered, too, that Americans were not nationist enough to "stand by" a President for the sake of the nation, that we were still republican enough to resent the lawlessness of the mighty. He, too, was peacefully driven from power.

A half-conquered people had asserted, if only in a negative way, their old republican patriotism. There were still limits to what even citizens-turned-nationists would tolerate, and they were republican limits, so deeply American that Europeans, nationists to their marrow, could not even begin to fathom the events of that riotous decade. In those events the profound antagonism between nation and republic at last stood fully revealed.

That Americans would not tolerate faithless or lawless Presidents should have been grounds for modest rejoicing. I think the American people did rejoice—in private. I think we did take quiet pride in acting, for once, as a free people should. I think we felt a measure of public happiness in seeing the ponderous machinery of the Constitution set in motion for a republican end. What else can explain the extraordinary outpouring of good feeling on July 4, 1976, a celebration of the birth of the Republic that turned the strife-torn streets of New York into a scene of tumultuous good will and mutual respect so palpable it seemed for a few sweet hours that republican patriotism had had a rebirth?

In the corridors of power where nationists congregate, there was no rejoicing whatever. That the "religion of vital patriotism" had not entirely snuffed out republican sentiment in America brought only wringing of hands, gnashing of teeth, and dire warnings of imminent disaster. Americans had refused to rally behind a war treacherously begun and dubiously justified. What was that, the nationists say, but proof of the people's lack of "will" and "resolve" to fulfill their "international duty"—as if only the powerful were licensed to define our duties. Americans had refused to let two successive Presidents abuse power and betray their trust. What was that, the nationists say, but a dangerous "weakening of the Presidency"—as if Presidential despotism alone kept America intact. Americans had shaken off their political torpor and participated in public affairs. What was that, a future aide of President Carter wrote in 1975, but a perilous want of "deference" in the American people—as if servility (pronounced "civility" by so-called neo-conservatives) could possibly be a virtue in a republic constituted for self-government. Americans had exercised keen vigilance over the powerful. What was that, the nationists say, but a national "crisis of confidence"—as if the powerful enjoyed a divine right to our trust. To impugn the republican virtue of vigilance, the nationists even coined a new name for it. They called it "post-Watergate morality," as if submission to corrupt power and blind faith in one's leaders were the old, the hallowed morality, like the "old-fashioned patriotism" of the American Legion. Every republican virtue that surfaced so surprisingly in the tumultuous decade, the nationists, citing the rival virtues of wartime, have by now obliquely condemned. They are still trying to elect a new people.

The Energizing Principle

Offspring of war, the cult of the nation is itself a weapon of political warfare, the undeclared war waged by the powerful few against the political vitality of the American republic. It is the only popular weapon they have. The republic cannot be destroyed—its collapse would bring ruin to all. Its legitimacy cannot be subverted—it is the source of all legitimacy in America. Even today the elementary maxims of the republic cannot be defied with impunity, as President Nixon learned to his regret. The moment he claimed to stand above the laws his political doom was in sight. Too many Americans still remembered the copybook rule: "We are a government of laws, not of men." Americans, I think, can even distinguish in a general way the few genuine heroes of the republic from the common herd of famous leaders. In Washington, D.C., a city crammed with memorials to the undeserving—think of the Sam Rayburn Building and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts—Congress has not yet dared to create more than three major monuments: to Washington, to Jefferson, and to Lincoln, the two great founders and the one great savior of the American republic.

Still, that does not add up to much. The republic is more than the form of our government plus a few rudimentary maxims and memories. It embodies a profound principle of political action—an "energizing" principle, as Jefferson called it. It is supposed to operate at all times and under all conditions against oligarchy, special privilege, and arbitrary power. The energizing principle is the preservation and perfecting of self-government, the securing to each citizen of an equal voice in his own government. That grand object, as Lincoln once said, we must as republicans constantly strive for, constantly try to "approximate" even if we can never perfectly achieve it. Without its energizing principle a republic becomes a hollow form, or still worse, a ponderous hindrance. Yet it is a truly burdensome principle

to live by. It is easier to be servile than free, easier to submit to the rule of a few than to keep up the endless struggle for self-rule. It is easier to fight enemies abroad than to fight for the republic at home. That is why the virtue of virtues in a republic, as Montesquieu long ago observed, is the citizens' love of the republic—"to be jealous of naught save the republican character of their country," as the Workingmen's party put it 150 years ago when it campaigned for free public schools in America. That is why the enemies of popular self-government have striven to erect and strengthen the rival cult of the nation, by war if possible, by the menace of war when there is a perilous lull in the fighting. It is the only way to undermine the people's love of the republic and subvert among the citizenry themselves its energizing principle.

In the name of the nation, that undermining goes on unceasingly. It is the reason why the one thing never taught in our free public schools is "to be jealous of naught save the republican character" of our country. In my own schooldays we learned more about Betsy Ross and the wonders of the Panama Canal than we did about Abraham Lincoln, whose birthday is no longer celebrated in a dozen states that once paid his memory that homage. Above all, it is the reason why what old Henry Cabot Lodge called the "large" foreign policy—the policy of having a busy foreign policy—has governed our foreign affairs for so many long years. It is precisely the "large" policy that keeps the nation alive and the republic in twilight.

After forty consecutive years of war and rumor of war—one-fifth the republic's entire span of existence—it is a wonder, perhaps, that republican virtues survive at all. That they do bears witness to the awesome authority of our republican foundations, since almost nothing else in contemporary America keeps them alive. What has not survived is honest political utterance. In the two Americas everything gets mislabeled. Subverters of the republic hunt down "subversives," and enemies of the republican principle decide who is and who is not "un-American." We describe as "old-fashioned patriots" those who warn us that American liberties endanger the nation, and the "religion of vital patriotism—that is, of consecration to the State," nonexistent in 1916, is the "neo-conservatism" of 1979.

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