

Han Ryner

Anti-patriotism

1934

Will I manage to avoid here those considerations that belong more in the articles on Fatherland and Patriotism?

Anti-patriotism was the reaction of reason and sentiment the moment patriotism reigned. It took on diverse forms in accordance with the degree to which it relied more or less consciously on individualism, on love for all men, on love for one man (as with Camille, the sister of the Horatii), or even on a reasoned or sentimental preference for the laws and morals of a foreign country.

Buddha was necessarily hostile to any patriotic exclusivism, this man who doesn't even admit what can be called human chauvinism, but extends to all living beings his loving mercy. In Greece the Sophists were anti-patriotic. Socrates, the greatest of them, proclaimed: "I am not Athenian; I am a citizen of the world." He condemned the fatherland in the name of "unwritten laws," i.e., in the name of conscience. Other Sophists rejected it in the name of a more interested individualism. Nevertheless, their contemporary Aristophanes detested his democratic fatherland because he admired the aristocratic organization of Lacedemonia. (Thus M. Paul Bourget and M. Leon Daudet, dazzled by the precision power of the German command had their years of naive patriotism: little gigolos who almost inevitably surrender themselves to the most fearsome "terror.") Plato and Xenophon, poor disciples of Socrates who falsify and use him a bit like M. Charles Maurras falsifies and uses M. Auguste Comte, have sentiments similar to those of Aristophanes. Xenophon ended by fighting against his fatherland in the ranks of the Lacedemonians.

The Cyrenaic philosophers were anti-patriotic. One of them, Theodore the Atheist, repeated the line of many wise men: "The world is my fatherland." He added, "Sacrificing oneself to the fatherland means renouncing wisdom in order to save the mad." In which he is wrong: it means assisting the mad in destroying themselves.

The Cynics daringly professed anti-patriotism. Antisthenes mocks those who are proud of being autochthonous, a glory they share — he notes — with a certain number of slugs and marvelous grasshoppers. Diogenes, in order to make fun of the emotional activities of patriots, rolled his barrel across a besieged city. His disciple, the Cretan Krates, declared: "I am a citizen not of Thebes, but of Diogenes."

Plutarch reproaches the Epicureans and Stoics the disdainful practical anti-patriotism that kept them from all public employment. The Epicurean only admitted chosen sentiments and reserved his heart for a few friends, who might be from any country. The Stoic extended his love to all men. He obeyed "the nature that made man the friend of man, not from interest, but from the heart." Four centuries before Christianity he invented charity, which unites in one family all those who participate in reason, men and gods.

The first Christians were as anti-patriotic as the Stoics, the Epicureans and the other wise men. Those of Judea were not moved by the ruin of Jerusalem. Those from Rome stubbornly predicted the fall of Rome. They only loved the celestial fatherland, and Tertullian said in their name: "The thing that is most foreign to us is the public thing." They were faithful to the spirit of the Gospel, where a certain parable of the Good Samaritan would be translated by a truly Christian Frenchman into the parable of the good Prussian, though an evangelical German would make of it the parable of the good Frenchman. And "good" wouldn't have the same meaning that it does with a Hindenburg of the academician Joffre.

Catholicity means universality. Catholicism is international and consequently, if it is conscious and sincere, is form of anti-patriotism. A more recent International wants to replace war by revolution, and hostilities between nations by the class struggle. The principles of Catholicism don't allow a distinction between the faithful and the non-believers. Modern Catholics brag of their patriotism without realizing that this means denying their catholicity. Thus the members of the Socialist or Communist parties who consent to "national defense" would knowingly or not cease to be able to call themselves socialists. The catholic meaning still lives in a few men, in Gustave Dupin, author of "*La Guerre Infernale*," in Grillot de Givry, author of "*Le Christ et la Patrie*," in Dr. Henri Mariave, author of "*La Philosophie Suprême*." They are thus considered an abomination by their so-called brothers.

The anti-patriotic truth was never explained by anyone with more balanced force and clear consciousness than by Tolstoy. His pamphlet "Patriotism and the Government" shows to what extent "patriotism is a backward idea, inopportune and harmful. . . . As a sentiment patriotism is an evil and harmful sentiment; as a doctrine it is nonsensical, since it is clear that if every people and every state takes itself for the for the best of peoples and states then they have all made an outlandish and harmful mistake." He then explains how "this old idea, though in flagrant contradiction with the entire order of things, which has changed in other aspects, continues to influence men and guide their acts." Only those in power, using the easily hypnotizable foolishness of the people, find it "advantageous to maintain this idea, which no longer has any meaning or usefulness." They succeed in this because they own the sold-out press, the servile university, the brutal army, the corrupting budget, the most powerful means for influencing men."

Except when it's a question of demands by natives of the colonies, or the separatist sentiments of a few Irishmen, a few Bretons, or a few Occitanians, the word patriotism is almost always used today in a lying fashion. The sacrifices that are requested for "for the fatherland" they in reality have us offer to another divinity, to the nation which destroyed and robbed our fatherland, whichever it

might be. No one any longer has a fatherland in the large and heterogeneous modern nations. . . .

The love for the land of our birth is foolish, absurd, and the enemy of progress if it remains exclusive. If it were to become a means of intelligence I would praise it in the same way that the man who rests in the shade of a tree praises the seed. From my love for the land of my childhood and for the language that, I might say, first smiled on our ears should, comes love for the beauties of all of nature and the pensive music of all human languages. May my pride in my mountain teach me to admire other summits; may the gentleness of my river teach me to commune with the dream of all waters; from the charm of my forest, may I learn to find it in the measured grace of all woods; may the love of a known idea never turn me from a new idea or an enrichment that comes from afar. In the same way that a man grows beyond the size of a child, the first beauties met serve to have us ideally understand, taste, and conquer all beauties. What poverty to hear in these naive memories a poor and moving language that prevents our hearing other languages! Let us love, in our childhood memories the alphabet that allows us to read all the texts offered by the successive or simultaneous riches of our life.

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