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If bad faith has discredited some forms of patriotism, the lack of faith makes others impossible. Last month *The Public Interest* issued its tenth anniversary issue. Distinguished contributors such as Daniel P. Moynihan, Irving Kristol, and Nathan Glazer analyze the dismal prospects of liberty, of democracy, and of America for the years ahead. Their hunger for a plausible patriotism is almost palpable. But, because they will not bluff like the Romantics and do not believe like the Puritans, they offer little reason for hope.

They are rational men all, and rational men know that intelligent people are no longer able to believe. Religion need not, therefore, enter into a serious and scientific survey of America and the world. Faith is a remnant from a less enlightened past—very much like patriotism. "Despite their distaste for, and perhaps fear of, the mass of believing Americans, they do not need to dissociate themselves from America because they have already dissociated the mass from the rationalized American ideal."

To be sure, the belief of believing Americans has been largely privatized, depoliticized, and made irrelevant to discourse about the public interest. The fault lies both with religionists who have struck pay dirt in the cult of subjectivism—and with secularists who have outlawed the naming of God in public.

Patriotism has to do with the pursuit of intuitions, the dreaming of dreams, the rites of community, the hopes of vindication—in short, with those very human things that are for the mass of American people, and for most people, associated with religion. Patriotism needs more than the Enlightenment's social contract; it requires a sense of covenant with history. The American experiment rests not only upon rational calculation; it invokes a hoped-for destiny. So commonly and so cheaply do we disparage past notions of Manifest Destiny that we have squelched the suspicion of a hidden destiny that could, just maybe, offer hope for the American future. Without such hope, patriotism—the identification of self as American—is neither promising nor even possible.

Patriotism should not be revived by the deceits of Romanticism. It cannot be revived by the sterile formulas of secular rationalism. There are, however, unexamined resources in a tempered Puritanism—shorn of its lust for theocracy and of its strident millennialism—for a patriotism that is modest in the knowledge that America is under judgment, and confident in the hope that America may yet be a blessing and not a curse to the nations of the earth.

RJN

EXCURSUS II

Remembering Cambodia

The suffering of Cambodia continues. This small country of little more than seven million people was, for many Americans, primarily an appendage to Vietnam, where the real war was going on. The outcome in Vietnam, it was assumed, would determine the future of Cambodia. And so, in a sense, it has.

Once U.S. forces were withdrawn from combat there was little doubt that Communist forces would prevail in Cambodia. The only question was one of time, and that question was answered in the spring of this year when the government of Marshal Lon Nol fell to armed opposition. A respite, at least, from the grinding land war and the heavy bombing of the U.S. Air Force—the last a violation of international laws which President Nixon and Air Force generals long conspired to hide from the American public. These violations and the grievous suffering they inflicted roused justifiable protests in the United States and other countries. Prominent people in the peace movement were particularly effective in mounting these protests against the policies of a hostile administration.

Cambodia under its new rulers was not, however, to receive the expected respite. The new Communist rulers expelled foreigners from the country and Cambodian citizens from their cities. Young and old, male and female, healthy and sick were given equal opportunity to survive a forced trek into the countryside. The few Cambodians who successfully fled the country told of harsh and casual treatment administered to those who did not respond with sufficient alacrity.

The Mayaguez incident, in which the U.S. once again used an impressive amount of force for a limited operation, once again roused protests in this country, protests soon smothered by official self-congratulations. But that incident was soon over, self-contained, buried under the weight of heavier news.

More recently, we have learned that the suffering of Cambodia has not yet ended. The leaders of the Lon Nol government, who had agreed to an orderly surrender of power, have all been killed. And members of families separated in the great exodus from the cities are being actively discouraged from attempts to reunite. This is not quite the bloodbath that some hawks had predicted, but neither is it the kiss of peace. Those who are concerned with the violation of human rights in countries around the world—in Spain, in Chile, in Russia, in Brazil, in South Africa and Uganda—should add Cambodia to the dismal list.

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