

## When patriotism goes bad

Patriotism is great.

What a wonderful feeling to love and be proud of the nation in which one lives.

But given tempestuous times, when a nation's actions raise questions among its people, is it unpatriotic to criticize or to dissent from the government's prevailing ideology?

If the majority of a nation's people decide that dissent is indeed unpatriotic or, worse, treasonous, then how does that nation distinguish itself from a fascist state?

Let me once again state: We should fully support our military for they are our flesh and blood and among their ranks there are none better in the world.

But what if they are being misused and abused? What if they are being utilized to make a region safe for gluttonous profiteering for an elite few?

What do you make of Henry Kissinger's comments, as recorded by Bob Woodward in his book *The Final Days*, that our soldiers are "'dumb, stupid animals to be used' as pawns for foreign policy"?

And Kissinger, the ghoul that he is, still haunts the Oval Office. He seems never to go away.

In past columns, I've made much of George Orwell.

It is documented that Orwell was not a proponent of totalitarianism and was quite opposed to fascism, having gotten a good look at where the world was headed through his experiences.

How did he know?

Orwell, for one, was British intelligence. He had also gotten a taste of the European continent's scraps leading up to World War II, including an eye-opening stint in Spain's civil war in the early thirties.

It is reported that Orwell spent time at one of the nastiest and most powerful think tanks in the world: Tavistock.

Located in the United Kingdom, Tavistock was a major force in the production of radio plays and other forms of entertainment that early on were preparing the British masses for a second war with their cousins in Germany.

Orwell wrote allegorically in *Animal Farm* and more literally in *1984* about what future generations would face by way of propaganda and psychological manipulation made all the more facilitous by electronic media: radio and television.

Orwell witnessed how patriotism morphed into nationalism in Nazi Germany.

Patriotism is meritorious. Nationalism is malevolent.

The difference?

The following excerpt from Orwell's treatise on patriotism and nationalism makes clear the divide between the two.

And, remember, the rise of the Third Reich was greatly overlooked by the German people.

We in the United States are now ignoring some very serious signs that this nation is headed in the same direction. We are being brainwashed that whatever we do is okay because we are a *good* nation and everything we do is right.

The spirits of nationalism, statism, and fascism are rearing its head here.

It's not a Republican or Democrat thing.

It's in the genes of all peoples.

Don't be fooled like the German people were. It *can* happen here.

Orwell on patriotism and nationalism:

By "nationalism" I mean first of all the habit of assuming that human beings can be classified like insects and that whole blocks of millions or tens of millions of people can be confidently labeled "good" or "bad."

But secondly—and this is much more important—I mean the habit of identifying oneself with a single nation or other unit, placing it beyond good and evil and recognizing no other duty than that of advancing its interests.

Nationalism is not to be confused with patriotism. Both words are normally used in so vague a way that any definition is liable to be challenged, but one must draw a distinction between them, since two different and even opposing ideas are involved.

By "patriotism" I mean devotion to a particular place and a particular way of life, which one believes to be the best in the world but has no wish to force on other people. Patriotism is of its nature defensive, both militarily and culturally.

Nationalism, on the other hand, is inseparable from the desire for power. The abiding purpose of every nationalist is to secure more power and more prestige, not for himself but for the nation or other unit in which he has chosen to sink his own individuality.

But here I must repeat what I said above, that I am only using the word "nationalism" for lack of a better. Nationalism, in the extended sense in which I am using the word, includes such movements and tendencies as Communism, political Catholicism, Zionism, Anti-Semitism, Trotskyism and Pacifism.

A nationalist is one who thinks solely, or mainly, in terms of competitive prestige. He may be a positive or a negative nationalist—that is, he may use his mental energy either in boosting or in denigrating—but at any rate his thoughts always turn on victories, defeats, triumphs and humiliations.

He sees history, especially contemporary history, as the endless rise and decline of great power units, and every event that happens seems to him a demonstration that his own side is on the upgrade and some hated rival is on the downgrade. But finally, it is important not to confuse nationalism with mere worship of success.

The nationalist does not go on the principle of simply ganging up with the strongest side. On the contrary, having picked his side, he persuades himself that it *is* the strongest, and is able to stick to his belief even when the facts are overwhelmingly against him. Nationalism is power-hunger tempered by self-deception. Every nationalist is capable of the most flagrant dishonesty, but he is also—since he is conscious of serving something bigger than himself—unshakably certain of being in the right.

As for the nationalistic loves and hatreds that I have spoken of, they are part of the make-up of most of us, whether we like it or not. Whether it is possible to get rid of them I do not know, but I do believe that it is possible to struggle against them, and that this is essentially a *moral* effort.