

the flags of 'our' environment – slip from the category of 'nationalism'. And having slipped through the categorical net, they get lost. There is no other theoretical term to rescue them from oblivion.

The double neglect is critically examined in this chapter. This involves examining the rhetoric of the sociological common sense which routinely reduces nationalism to a surplus phenomenon and which forgets to analyse how established nation-states are daily reproduced as nations. If the narrowing of the concept of 'nationalism' has led to the forgetting of banal nationalism, then it is hoped that a widening of the concept will lead to a remembering. The double neglect is to be reversed by a double remembering: the banal nationalism by which nation-states are reproduced is to be remembered, as are the habits of thought which have encouraged a neglect of this reproduction.

Waved and Unwaved Flags

The place of national flags in contemporary life bears a moment's consideration. Particular attention should be paid to the case of the United States, whose filling-station forecourts are arrayed with uncounted Stars and Stripes. The US legislature has decreed strict laws about how the flag should be displayed and what is forbidden to be done, on pain of penalty, to the precious pattern of stars and stripes. Desecration of the flag is met with reactions of outrage (Marvin, 1991). Of all countries, the United States is arguably today the home of what Renan called "the cult of the flag" (1990, p. 17).

The anthropologist, Raymond Firth (1973), in one of the few studies of the role of flags in contemporary life, distinguished between the symbolic and signalling functions of flags. The forerunners of modern national flags were often employed as signals, reducing entropy in situations of uncertainty. The mediaeval gonfanon presented a clear rallying point for soldiers in the confusion of the battleground. The *semeion*, in ancient Greece, indicated the presence of the commander to other ships of the fleet (Perrin, 1922). Since the eighteenth century, a complex system of signalling with flags has been developed for vessels at sea. In all these cases, flags are a pragmatically useful means of communicating messages. By contrast, argues Firth, the national flag today performs a symbolic function, being a 'condensation symbol' and "a focus for sentiment about society" (p. 356). The national flag, according to Firth, symbolizes the sacred character of the nation; it is revered by loyal citizens and ritually defiled by those who wish to make a protest. It carries no informational message, although, as Firth points out, the manner of a flag's display can, on special occasions, provide a signal. A national flag hung at half mast may communicate the death of an important figure. Notwithstanding this, the majority of national flags likely to be seen by the modern citizen in the course of a lifetime will not be signalling a particular message.

Other distinctions, besides that between symbol and signal, can be made. The signal, if it is to be effective, must pass into the conscious awareness of its recipients. However, the symbol need not have a direct emotional impact, as Firth seemed to assume. That being so, one can distinguish between the ways in which national flags are treated. Some are consciously waved and saluted symbols, often accompanied by a pageant of outward emotion. Others – probably the most numerous in the contemporary environment – remain unsaluted and unwaved. They are merely there as symbols, whether on a forecourt or flashed on to a television screen; as such they are given hardly a second glance from day to day.

The distinction between the waved and unwaved (or saluted and unsaluted) flag can be illustrated with reference to Roland Barthes' classic essay 'Myth Today'. Barthes discussed an issue of the magazine *Paris-Match*, which he was offered in a barber-shop. On its cover, "a young Negro in French army uniform is saluting, with his eyes uplifted, probably fixed on the fold of the tricolor" (Barthes, 1983b, pp. 101f.). Barthes does not make clear whether the Tricolor which the soldier was saluting was to be seen in the photograph. For the sake of illustration, let us presume it was. The three-coloured flag which the soldier actually faced was clearly a flag to be saluted in the appropriate way. However, the photographed flag on the *Paris-Match* cover was not for saluting. It could lie around the corner of the barber-shop. Eyes could flick over it, to be reminded unconsciously of the myth of imperial power, whose photographic image Barthes so brilliantly analysed. But no one stops to wave or salute this image of a symbol. The barber does not straighten up in mid-haircut, his right hand imitating that of the photographed 'young Negro'. The customer in the barber's chair, on catching sight of the cover in the mirror, does not spring to patriotic attention, risking blade and scissor in the service of the nation. The magazine is picked up and put down without ceremony. Ultimately, without risk of penalty, the *Paris-Match* flag is tossed into the rubbish bin.

The young soldier was saluting a single flag in a unique instant, which was caught by the photographer. Thousands upon thousands of the *Paris-Match* flag were distributed, gazed at and discarded. They join other flags, some of which do have recognizable, signalling functions. The French Tricolor, when displayed on loaves of bread, can indicate an approved standard of baking, or *pain de tradition française*. When the government gives such flags *lettres de noblesse*, as Monsieur Balladur's did in September 1993, the Tricolor not only signals the quality of baking; it also flags the quality of the national tradition and the quality of the national state, benevolently supervising the daily bread of its citizenry.

The uncounted millions of flags which mark the homeland of the United States do not demand immediate, obedient attention. On their flagpoles by the street and stitched on to the uniforms of public officials, they are unwaved, unsaluted and unnoticed. These are mindless flags. Perhaps if all the unwaved flags which decorate the familiar environment were to be

removed, they would suddenly be noticed, rather like the clock that stops ticking. If the reds and blues were changed into greens and oranges, there would be close, scandalized scrutiny, as well as criminal charges to follow.

One can ask what are all these unwaved flags doing, not just in the USA but around the world? In an obvious sense, they are providing banal reminders of nationhood: they are 'flagging' it unflaggingly. The reminding, involved in the routine business of flagging, is not a conscious activity; it differs from the collective rememberings of a commemoration. The remembering is mindless, occurring as other activities are being consciously engaged in.

These routine flags are different from those that seem to call attention to themselves and their symbolic message. Belfast in Northern Ireland is divided into mutually suspicious Catholic and Protestant districts. In the former, the Irish tricolor is widely displayed as a gesture of defiance against British sovereignty. In the backstreets of Protestant neighbourhoods, the kerb-stones are often painted with the pattern of the Union Jack (Beattie, 1993). These are not mindless symbols, for each side is consciously displaying its position and distancing itself from its neighbour. The tricolors, in this respect, differ from those hanging on public buildings south of the border. One might predict that, as a nation-state becomes established in its sovereignty, and if it faces little internal challenge, then the symbols of nationhood, which might once have been consciously displayed, do not disappear from sight, but instead become absorbed into the environment of the established homeland. There is, then, a movement from symbolic mindfulness to mindlessness.

Yassar Arafat, the leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization, declared as a peace deal with Israel was becoming a real possibility:

The Palestine state is within our grasp. Soon the Palestine flag will fly on the walls, the minarets and the cathedrals of Jerusalem. (*Guardian*, 3 September 1993)

Arafat was using the notion of the flag as a metonym: by citing the flag, he was flagging Palestine nationhood. If he was discursively waving the flag of Palestine, he was hoping that the flags would actually be waved within the recovered homeland. Yet, in a longer view, Arafat's hope was that the waving would stop. The Palestine flags, displayed routinely on walls and roofs in a Palestine state, would be barely noticed by a citizenry freely going about their business. Occasionally, on special days – an Independence Day or an Annual Arafat Thanksgiving Parade – the streets would be filled with waved, commemorating flags.

Flags are not the only symbols of modern statehood. Coins and bank notes typically bear national emblems, which remain unnoticed in daily financial transactions. Naming the unit of currency can be a highly symbolic and controversial business, especially in the early days of a nation. In 1994, President Franjo Tudjman of Croatia decided that the dinar should be replaced by the 'kuna', which was the unit of currency used

in the Nazi-backed state of Croatia between 1941 and 1945. 'Kuna' is the term for the furry marten which inhabits the forests of Croatia. The president defended his decision by claiming that "the kuna defends our national tradition and confirms our sovereignty" (*Independent*, 15 May 1994). This tradition and sovereignty would become symbolically banalized when the citizenry exchange their kunas without a second thought for furry creatures, President Tudjman or the victims of Nazism. In this way, the tradition, including the Nazi heritage, would be neither consciously remembered, nor forgotten: it would be preserved in daily life.

Psychologically, conscious remembering and forgetting are not polar opposites which exclude all middle ground. Similarly, traditions are not either consciously remembered (or co-memorated) in flag-waving collective activity, or consigned to a collective amnesia. They can be simultaneously present and absent, in actions which preserve collective memory without the conscious activity of individuals remembering. Serge Moscovici has discussed how most social activity is itself a remembering, although it is not experienced as such: "Social and intellectual activity is, after all, a rehearsal or recital, yet most social psychologists treat it as if it were amnesic" (1983, p. 10). Behaviour and thoughts are never totally created anew, but they follow, and thus repeat, familiar patterns, even when they change such patterns. To act and to speak, one must remember. Nevertheless, actors do not typically experience their actions as repetitions, and, ordinarily, speakers are not conscious of the extent to which their own words repeat, and thereby transmit, past grammars and semantics.

If banal life is to be routinely practised, then this form of remembering must occur without conscious awareness: it occurs when one is doing other things, including forgetting. Pierre Bourdieu's notion of the 'habitus' expresses well this dialectic of remembering and forgetting. The 'habitus' refers to the dispositions, practices and routines of the familiar social world. It describes 'the second nature' which people must acquire in order to pass mindlessly (and also mindfully) through the banal routines of daily life. Bourdieu emphasizes the elements of remembering and the forgetting: "The *habitus* – embodied history, internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history – is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product" (1990, p. 56).

Patterns of social life become habitual or routine, and in so doing embody the past. One might describe this process of routine-formation as *enhabitation*: thoughts, reactions and symbols become turned into routine habits and, thus, they become *enhabited*. The result is that the past is inhabited in the present in a dialectic of forgotten remembrance. President Tudjman was hoping that the kuna (and, with it, the history of the previous Croatian republic) would become inhabited as a living, unremembered, collective memory. Once inhabited it would flag the very things which the President could only mention mindfully and controversially.

The forgetting of the national past, of which Renan wrote, is continually reproduced in nation-states. The unwaved national flag – whether literally