

ON DESECRATING THE FLAG

The Congress of the United States, in its wisdom, has now moved to make a federal offense out of "desecrating the flag". No doubt the great bulk of those who fought for, and voted for, this law, believe themselves to be devoted Christians and champions of the rights of private property. We shall prove that they are nothing of the kind.

The first thing that should be clear about the flag is that it is simply a piece of cloth with parallel stripes of certain colors. So the first thing that we should ask ourselves is: what is there about a piece of cloth that suddenly renders it sacred, holy, and above defilement when red and white stripes are woven into it? Contrary to many of our hysterical politicians, the flag is not our country; still less is the flag the freedom of the individual. The flag is simply a piece of cloth. Period. Therefore he who tampers with or "desecrates" that piece of cloth is not posing any kind of a threat to our freedoms or our way of life.

Consider the implications of taking the contrary position: if the flag is not just a piece of cloth, then this means that some form of mystical transsubstantiation must take place, and therefore that weaving a piece of cloth in a certain manner suddenly invests it with great and awesome sanctity. Indeed Webster's defines "desecrate": as "to divest of a sacred character or office". Most people who revere and worship the flag in this way are religious; but to apply to a secular object this kind of adoration is nothing more nor less than idolatry. Religious people should be always on their guard against the worship of

graven images; but their worship of State flags is nothing less than that kind of idolatry.

If, indeed, the flag is a symbol of anything throughout history, it has been the battle standard of the thugs of the State apparatus, the banner that the State raises when it goes into battle to kill, burn, and maim innocent people of some other land. All flags are soaked in innocent blood, and to revere these particular kinds of cloth, then, becomes not only idolatry but grotesque idolatry at that, for it is the worship of crime and murder on a massive scale.

There is another critical point in this whole controversy that nobody, least of all the defenders of anti-desecration laws, seems to have mentioned. When someone buys flag cloth, this cloth is his private property, to do with as he sees fit: to revere, to place in the closet... or to desecrate. How can anyone deny this who believes in the rights of private property? Anti-desecration laws and ordinances are clear-cut and outrageous invasions of the rights of private property, and on this ground alone they should be repealed forthwith.

Freedom must mean, among other things, the freedom to desecrate.