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# **Anti-Americanism in Europe**

## **A historic disease**



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## Resumé

*L'anti-américanisme est un sentiment qui a l'âge des Etats-Unis eux-mêmes. Les clichés d'aujourd'hui ont été fomré pendant des siècles et un Michael Moore les exploite simplement. L'hostilité des Européens envers les USA n'est donc rien de nouveau: Elle s'est toujours transformé avec le temps et s'est adopté aux circonstances historiques, mais peu importe si c'était la deuxième guerre mondiale, la guerre froide ou le 11 septèmbre, elle était toujours présente.*

## Synopsis

Anti-Americanism in Europe is a sentiment that has existed since the creation of America itself. Since then, European thinkers have discussed and discredited America, often without a single visit to the country. They saw in America a degenerate nation with no culture and money as its only religion. These views were mostly born out of 19<sup>th</sup> Century Romanticism and remain today. **Before, between and after the world wars, America was perceived as the great liberator, and simultaneously an empire with imperialistic intentions.** During the Cold War, America was needed as protector, while despised as before. Especially true during the Vietnam War and by the socialists of '68 who saw in America nothing less than the imperialistic evil. After the fall of the Soviet empire, America remained the sole superpower on the globe. During this period, all the old clichés of America came back and Europe envied America's liberty to do whatever she liked - something the Europeans have lost. Today, the anti-Americans use such old prejudices rather more subtly, and sometimes not. The reactions to 9/11 have shown that the resentment is profound and that it reemerges even in America's hours of darkness.

## Introduction

America and Americans are confronted with antipathy all over the world, but that in Europe is different. At first sight, one would believe that Americans are loved in Europe: there is a McDonald's almost everywhere, most of the blockbusters are Hollywood movies and after all, America came to Europe's rescue twice. But a poll of the major Swiss weekly newspaper *Facts* points out that 55% of the Swiss have a hostile attitude towards the United States in general.<sup>1</sup>

The Pew Research Center reports that 62% of the Germans and 63% of the French share the negative views of their Helvetic neighbors.<sup>2</sup> The American journalist, Ted Stanger, who chose to live in Paris, writes in his book *Sacré français: Un Américain nous observe* (Wicked French: An American is watching us) "Every American who lives in Paris is constantly being demonized, criticized, verbally attacked and considered as the head of an unacceptable cultural invasion."<sup>3</sup>

As we look into history we will see that this sentiment is not caused by a single or even a few American policies, but has persisted over the years throughout different political and artistic movements, back to the American revolution itself.

An analysis of major German and French newspapers and the writings of European intellectuals prove this sentiment is still alive and has persisted beyond rationality following the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001.

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<sup>1</sup> Facts, September 2nd 2004, p. 75

<sup>2</sup> The Pew Research Center, A Year After Iraq War, (<http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=206>)

<sup>3</sup> Ted Stanger, *Sacré français: Un Américain nous observe*, p. 29

## Part I: Anti-Americanism yesterday

### America - A new day has come

From its very beginnings America was either loved or hated. Everybody entitled to an opinion had one. At least, most of Europe agreed that the discovery of America was a key event in history. John Locke stated “at the beginning the whole world was an America”<sup>4</sup>. This means nothing less than that the discovery of America recreated the world, brought it back to zero again. Long before John Locke, the Spanish Francisco Lopez de Gomara, called the discovery “the greatest event since the creation of the world”, adding “excluding the incarnation and death of Him who created it”<sup>5</sup> only out of respect to his faith. This combines with Locke's view of a new world once America is on the map. Today, Norman Fiering of the John Carter Brown Library, the only library in the world dedicated exclusively to the history of the Western Hemisphere, says that “The essential thing about 1492 is that it was the first step in the unification of the globe”<sup>6</sup>. But it was the American Revolution that got everything started: Adam Smith viewed 1776 as the most significant year in the history of mankind in his book *The Wealth of Nations*. And it is this 1776 Revolution that provided new fuel to the debate over America: the colony had just liberated itself from Britain and opinions in Europe diverged strongly. On one side we have people like the economist Turgot who stated that America represents something like the “hope of mankind”<sup>7</sup> or the strong America supporter Alexis de Tocqueville who believed America was “a land of wonders”<sup>8</sup> whereas Cornelius de Pauw describes America in his *Recherches philosophiques sur les américains* as the “biggest

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<sup>4</sup> Dan Diener, *Feindbild Amerika*, p. 13

<sup>5</sup> Robert Dvorchak, *Goodbye, Columbus?*  
(<http://muweb.millersville.edu/~columbus/data/art/DVORCHK1.ART>)

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Dan Diener, *Feindbild Amerika*, p. 14

<sup>8</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique*, tome 1

accident” that ever happened to mankind<sup>9</sup>.

## Uncivilized

However, most European thinkers were convinced that America was simply no good for people. Buffon, a naturalist like De Pauw, wrote in his book *Dégénération des animaux* that in a climate like that of America, people and animals would “degenerate”<sup>10</sup>.

The French bishop, Talleyrand, in exile in Philadelphia in the year of 1794, thought that “A nation that has 30 religions and one single dish is not a civilized nation”. What he could not tolerate was that America was an intensely God-loving Protestant nation.<sup>11</sup>

Although the Count of Buffon started the “degeneration” theory, it was Cornelius de Pauw who brought it into popularity through his “research”, regarded as the seminal reference on the subject. Not only was it theory, but was widely accepted as scientific truth - so accepted that Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, two of the greatest American thinkers, felt obliged to write a long and detailed response to these claims<sup>12</sup>. As one of these critics had success, the other prestige, this image of America quickly became self-evident in the minds of the intellectual elite in Europe even before the American Revolution.

Encyclopedist, Abbé Raynal, discovered other flaws: the American people did not love their women, because they had so few children. But this was the least of his concerns. This religious man stated that “Under the foreign sky, the spirit gets fed up with the body” which contributed to why “America has not yet produced a good poet, a gifted mathematician, a man of talent in one single art or one single

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<sup>9</sup> Dan Diener, *Feindbild Amerika*, p. 14

<sup>10</sup> François Ryssen, *Généalogie de l’antiaméricanisme français*, ([http://www.voxnr.com/cogit\\_content/documents/Gnalogiedelantiamricanisme.shtml](http://www.voxnr.com/cogit_content/documents/Gnalogiedelantiamricanisme.shtml))

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.lefigaro.fr/cgi/edition/genimprime?cle=20040906.FIG0214>

<sup>12</sup> James W. Ceaser, *A genealogy of anti-Americanism*, (<http://www.thepublicinterest.com/archives/2003summer/article1.html>)

science”<sup>13</sup>.

In America -- according these influential writers and intellectuals -- people degenerate physically and intellectually. In other words, they become ugly and stupid. So already at the time of the American Revolution, one observes the precursors of today's widespread cliché of the “stupid American”. Professor Spiro in the *Annals of the American Academy of Political Science* edition of 1988 in his analysis of anti-Americanism concluded that “Anti-Americanism has been endemic among the ruling classes in continental Europe since 1776 at the latest.”<sup>14</sup>

### Between heaven and hell

Europeans were very interested in the new continent. As opposed to Africa and Asia, the American continent was the place of Europe's imagination, of a place where life could go on without conflicts. John Locke's idea of America as the beginning of a new world can be read in another way: the “new world” as a place of everything that precedes civilization, America as paradise. The idea of an overseas paradise was not new. Considering the poor living standards in Europe, the worlds described in Thomas Morus' *Utopia* and Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* could possibly be allusions to America. The humanist movement saw in America a land where “people could live in simplicity and innocence”<sup>15</sup>. The Europeans felt they had to 'liberate' this world from wild nature, but at the same time they had to protect its purity from the evils of civilization.

### Freedom, money and America

The mostly negative images Europeans had of America, were heavily influenced by the romantic period. According to David Ellwood the well-established

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<sup>13</sup> François Ryssen, *Généalogie de l'antiaméricanisme français*, ([http://www.voxnr.com/cogit\\_content/documents/Gnalogiedelantiamricanisme.shtml](http://www.voxnr.com/cogit_content/documents/Gnalogiedelantiamricanisme.shtml))

<sup>14</sup> David Ellwood, *Anti-Americanism: Why Do Europeans Resent Us?*, (<http://hnn.us/articles/1426.html>)

<sup>15</sup> Dan Diener, *Feinbild Amerika*, p.15

stereotypes of commercial materialism, social fragmentation, lack of culture and the sheer artificiality of the American experience existed even before the 1830's.<sup>16</sup>

Balzac declared that only the “good-for-nothings” go to America, the Count comte Mosca de la Chartreuse de Parme sees America as “the victory of the stupid and egotistic mediocrity”.<sup>17</sup> During this same period the German poet, Nikolaus Lenau, went to the United States in order to make money, his return well planned.<sup>18</sup> He claimed his emigration had failed and in this way fueled even more anti-American sentiment in Europe. Everything appeared to be “bodenlos” (rootless) for Lenau, in particular the political institutions that only seemed to exist because of Americans’ desire for money, the state nothing more than a materialistic convention. As opposed to Germany that was a home, almost a father to him.<sup>19</sup> His short journey to America “healed” him of the idea of freedom and independence, and convinced him that real freedom resides in the heart.<sup>20</sup> He, too, claimed to have witnessed degeneration when he proclaimed the famous “Kein Nachtigall” (No hummingbird). According to him, the bird was absolutely right not to come to America and its absence had a “serious and deep” meaning. It was like a poetic curse.

This is similar to the observations of Baudelaire, when he took up the defense of Edgar Poe. Baudelaire said in *Edgar Poe, sa vie et ses œuvres* that the poet was “choked by the American atmosphere”<sup>21</sup> implying no culture could ever develop in America. Heinrich Heine spoke of a “horrible freedom prison where the

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<sup>16</sup> David Ellwood, *Anti-Americanism: Why Do Europeans Resent Us?*, (<http://hnn.us/articles/1426.html>)

<sup>17</sup> François Ryssen, *Généalogie de l'antiaméricanisme français*, ([http://www.voxnr.com/cogit\\_content/documents/Gnalogiedelantiamricanisme.shtml](http://www.voxnr.com/cogit_content/documents/Gnalogiedelantiamricanisme.shtml))

<sup>18</sup> Dan Diener, *Feindbild Amerika*, p. 48

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47

<sup>21</sup> François Ryssen, *Généalogie de l'antiaméricanisme français*, ([http://www.voxnr.com/cogit\\_content/documents/Gnalogiedelantiamricanisme.shtml](http://www.voxnr.com/cogit_content/documents/Gnalogiedelantiamricanisme.shtml))

invisible chains would hurt me [him] more than those visible at home” condemning the idea of freedom in the same way as Lenau. And again, with the same spirit as Lenau, he described money as America's “only, almighty God”<sup>22</sup>.

Even America’s seemingly great defender de Tocqueville admitted that he did not know “any other country with lesser real freedom of speech than America”. These lines became the most quoted from his *La Démocratie en Amérique*.<sup>23</sup> These intellectuals had essentially one thing in mind: to denounce America as a country where only money mattered and artistic development (culture) was impossible. This had an obvious influence upon European views -- or rather clichés -- of the United States of America.

We do not want to be like you!

Alexis de Tocqueville, among the most prominent supporters of America during this period, admitted he was not so much interested in America itself, but in its democracy.<sup>24</sup> It was this idea of democracy and freedom that irritated most of the Europeans who regarded state authority as a symbol of cultural superiority.

Europe did not want to accept a society where everybody was equal and America was the perfect incarnation of such a society with its purely capitalistic economy. It was not only the aristocracy that viewed this as the downfall of values, but even the middle class felt its noble ideals were fading away.<sup>25</sup> Hegel saw America as a place where “the mob, the most disgusting tyrant of all” carries out “its crude authority.” Again, no way of accepting the fact the *people* are in charge in America. He advised all the farmers to go overseas as “there, neither princes nor nobles exist; there, all people are equal; there, all are the same

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<sup>22</sup> Dan Diener, Feindbild Amerika, p. 51

<sup>23</sup> François Ryssen, Généalogie de l’antiaméricanisme français, ([http://www.voxnr.com/cogit\\_content/documents/Gnalogiedelantiamricanisme.shtml](http://www.voxnr.com/cogit_content/documents/Gnalogiedelantiamricanisme.shtml))

<sup>24</sup> Dan Diener, Feindbild Amerika, p. 20

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 25

boars!".<sup>26</sup> They were afraid of becoming like the country they disliked: Nietzsche (who used the term "Old Europe" well before Donald Rumsfeld<sup>27</sup>) warned that "The faith of the Americans is becoming the faith of the European as well."<sup>28</sup> Such views are precursors of Europe's notions of superiority today.

### The good and the evil

In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, the native inhabitants (Indians) of North America stood for what America was in European imagination: nature and purity. He was the innocent one fighting against the greedy white colonialist and technician. He represented the purity. This contributed to demand for Indian literature in Europe. The readers were not so much interested in the Indians themselves, but rather reflected Europe's need for an image that was opposed to the modernity they feared so much.

Indian literature rose to popularity with James F. Cooper. In *The Deerslayer* there was the white man who turned his back on civilization for it was not treating the natives justly and was destroying his forests. Karl May took this one step further. The white man destroyed everything in his quest for money. Wherever an American appears, except the ones who are attached to nature, it is in a context of profit. Herein establishes the image of the capitalist Yankee. Further proof that Indians were just a tool, not an object of interest, is the attitude of the baron of Mandat-Grancey. In his *En visite chez l'Oncle Sam* he criticizes America at the same time for the politics of extermination of the Indians as he decries it for its "culinary ignorance".

All in all, the Indians are being used to oppose the modernity coming from the new inhabitants of America, to guard the idea of America as a natural paradise. It comes, then, as no surprise that later on, Freud calls the new country the "anti-

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<sup>26</sup> Karl W. Deutsch, *European Anti-Americanism (and Anti-Semitism)*, p.8

<sup>27</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*

<sup>28</sup> James W. Ceaser, *A genealogy of anti-Americanism*,  
(<http://www.thepublicinterest.com/archives/2003summer/article1.html>)

paradise”<sup>29</sup>.

## Starting points

Until the beginning of the 20th century, anti-Americanism was already quite present among European elites, but for France and Germany there were two key events that really started the anti-American culture. The French couldn't accept America's declaration of war against Spain in 1898, whereas Germany's problem was more obvious: they lost a war because of America and felt betrayed by the Versailles treaty. These two major events helped transform a negative image into a real ideology.

## The American war against Spain

By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century *La Grande Nation* was already less than friendly toward America, perhaps because the Americans preferred to congratulate Wilhelm I in 1870, rather than feel sorry for France. However, in 1898 the Americans crossed the line: for the first time in history the United States declared war on a European country. They took action after one of their war ships exploded in the port of Havana. French public opinion was not convinced and felt it was simply an excuse for war. It quickly lamented the great defeat of Spain. This anti-American sentiment was the only value that kept a nation deeply divided by the Dreyfus case together. The French sympathized with the victims of the Yankee imperialism<sup>30</sup> and feared America would soon attack Europe. In 1899 Octave Noël warned in *Le Péril américain* (The American danger) of “a struggle for life [...] between Europe and America, with an unseen brutality”<sup>31</sup>.

It was at this time that anti-American literature got even more popular. Pierre Loti accused America of making the war look horrible (as opposed to the nobility of

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<sup>29</sup> Andrei S. Markovits, *European Anti-Americanism (and Anti-Semitism)*, (<http://www.ces.fas.harvard.edu/publications/Markovits.pdf>)

<sup>30</sup> François Ryssen, *Généalogie de l'antiaméricanisme français*, ([http://www.voxnr.com/cogit\\_content/documents/Gnalogiedelantiamricanisme.shtml](http://www.voxnr.com/cogit_content/documents/Gnalogiedelantiamricanisme.shtml))

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

European wars), and that it was not worthy of a civilized nation. Gustave Le Rouge warned of the globalization taking place and that Europe would be confronted with America in a cruel fight for economic supremacy. Along the same lines, Emile Barbier claimed in his *Voyage au pays des dollars* six years before Havana, that America was invading, flooding and would eventually submerge old Europe. To Edmond Demolins America seemed to be a bigger danger than what many believed to be France's biggest enemy: the Germans.<sup>32</sup> What we observe here is a short summary or precursor of anti-Americanism today: fear of modernity, fear of globalization, fear of losing power. These patterns are once again emerging post-September 11<sup>th</sup> and uniting Europe just as it united France.

### The lost war

The Americans were seen as those responsible for Germany's defeat in the First World War. The idea that America could influence a European conflict gave them enormous power over the old continent.<sup>33</sup> To the Germans, it did not matter that Wilson had in fact saved their country from a more devastating military defeat. Maybe it would have mattered, but the German government did not widely publicize that it had signed the Wilson Plan while surrendering. Rather it allowed Germans to think it had signed the 14 point plan in exchange for a fair peace.<sup>34</sup> This made Wilson look rather bad among the German public and he was quickly perceived as the incarnation of Anglo-Saxon hypocrisy.

It is around this time, that the idea of the imperialist American emerged. The Dawes plan brought the "Goldene Zwanziger" to Germany, but all many Germans could see was a conspiracy to enslave them.<sup>35</sup> Combined with their defeat, this prepared the foundation for a soon common view: the end of the war in 1918 made capitalist exploitation possible. This combines with the widespread

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Dan Diener, *Feindbild Amerika*, p. 67

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 69

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 68

idea - one that would again appear after the Second World War - that Germany is merely a colony of America.<sup>36</sup>

### Converging hate: Wilson and Europe

The Americans were warmly welcomed in 1917 when they arrived with “Lafayette, here we are” slogans on their boats. But, sadly, the enthusiasm for America did not last long. In 1919 Wilson arrived with his head held high for the peace conference in Paris. Such an attitude only reinforced European fear and distrust of everything coming from the United States. The image of Wilson was that of an arrogant American telling the wiser Europe what to do. In Wilson's peace plans, the French left saw a path to a new global conflict, whereas the right wing with Maurras started the anathema that America's president was opposed to France's national interest.

Once again, anti-Americanism – or anti-Wilsonism in this context -- united the entire political spectrum. Wilson “arrived like the second Jesus Christ” for Clemenceau; Maurras thought he was a neuropath; and for one the most significant thinkers of the 20th century, Sigmund Freud, he was simply paranoid.<sup>37</sup> Add to this, the German right who just like the French right saw a Jewish plot in Wilson's 14 points. It was said the Jews used the first World War to enrich themselves and gain ideological influence. Given the European history of anti-Semitism and the popularity of such an idea, accusing Wilson of working with the Jews adversely affected his popularity.

As already mentioned, the Germans interpreted America's entry into war as the “Zünglein an der Waage”.<sup>38</sup> The French, on the other hand, found in this exact same image of America grounds to declare everything it had contributed as unjustified. Clemenceau told the Americans that their “intervention was clement,

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 78

<sup>37</sup> François Ryssen, *Généalogie de l'antiaméricanisme français*, ([http://www.voxnr.com/cogit\\_content/documents/Gnalogiedelantiamricanisme.shtml](http://www.voxnr.com/cogit_content/documents/Gnalogiedelantiamricanisme.shtml))

<sup>38</sup> Dan Diener, *Feindbild Amerika*, p.66

because it cost you only 56,000 lives compared to our 1,364,000 dead”.<sup>39</sup> Again, France and Germany held completely opposing ideas, but, just as with the left and the right, anti-Americanism managed to reunite them. It is a paradox still alive and kicking as we will see later on.

The Paris Olympics in 1924 proved this anti-Americanism was not only a thing of the upper or political classes, but a general phenomenon. When the American rugby team beat the French (the best European team of the time), the public stormed the stadium, drove the American athletes into the streets and almost lynched them. While it is true, that -- especially today -- the worst anti-Americanism resides in the media and the intellectual milieus, there are forms of it everywhere.

## Nazi Germany and the United States of America

The tyranny of Adolf Hitler shows a slightly different type of anti-Americanism, although based on the same patterns. From their very beginnings in 1933, the Nazis held back, but this would soon end. Still, to a certain extent, Hitler tried not to upset defenders of an isolationist America, as their opposition to him would interfere with his plans of conquest. Ideologically, the Nazis made it quite clear the American way of life was degenerate.

Although they despised the American mass culture, outlawing Jazz and Swing in 1935 as “Niggerei und jüdische Frivolität”<sup>40</sup> (negro culture and Jewish frivolity), they had to broadcast such music in order to prevent German troops from listening to US-stations. Even the Nazis couldn't escape American mass culture. They copied it. Just as they did with technology: Ferdinand Porsche visited the Ford factories in Detroit in 1936 when preparing the mass production of the Volkswagen. But such admiration for technology could not hide Hitler's hate for the equality and way of life in America. He hated that it was a melting pot: “my

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<sup>39</sup> François Ryssen, *Généalogie de l'antiaméricanisme français*, ([http://www.voxnr.com/cogit\\_content/documents/Gnalogiedelantiamricanisme.shtml](http://www.voxnr.com/cogit_content/documents/Gnalogiedelantiamricanisme.shtml))

<sup>40</sup> Dan Diener, *Feindbild Amerika*, p. 96

feelings for America are full of hate and reluctance; half Jewified, half negroized (halb verjudet, halb vernegert) and all based on the dollar [...] the Americans have the brain of a chicken”.<sup>41</sup>

In 1940, America and President Roosevelt were declared an enemy. It was at this time that Goebbels didn't hold back anything anymore.<sup>42</sup> Roosevelt was declared a “second Wilson [...] first agitator, then an apostle of peace”.<sup>43</sup> The Nazis saw themselves, despite their adaptation of American technology, as the counterpart to America.<sup>44</sup> The United States was accused of hiding its imperialism under the banner of its “way of life”. It was Wirsing, who later became propaganda officer, who created the ideas of an America controlled by Jews: “Uncle Sam has become Uncle Shylock”.<sup>45</sup> Such ideas of accepting American culture and technology but refusing the political concept and the lifestyle of the United States are to this day popular in Germany and much of the rest of Europe too.

### After the war

The Second World War ended with the crushing defeat of Germany and its allies. France was liberated as was Germany and anyone with a logical mindset would think that at this point Europe should have been totally head over heels for America. To a certain extent, this was of course true and it would be absolutely false to say that all of Europe was against America, or hated it. But saying that Europe, especially the main players France and Germany, were in a pro-American mood would be just as wrong.

The anti-Americanism in both countries shared one common feature, the thought of being humiliated. First because both of them were unable to liberate

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 92

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 92

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 100

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 98

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p.105

themselves from the Nazis and second because of the Marshall Plan, welcomed but simultaneously seen as an enslavement of Europe, in particular of France and Germany. It is obvious that especially the first point has a completely different context for either nation and these views require separate explanations and yet they are unifying in their effect.

### Germany after the war

Shortly after the war, it did not take the Germans much time to believe that the Americans had now imposed themselves on Germany. Democracy was inflicted upon them, political science was taught by Americans and this took away the German sense of self-pride. Not only was democracy a problem, but America was being accused of imposing capitalism on Germany, which translated into imposing a soulless system and culture upon the sophisticated Germans. This was not simply a passing belief, as shown by Rolf Winter in his successful *Ami go home. Plädoyer für den Abschied von einem gewalttätigem Land* which accuses Germany of being manufactured by the United States of America.<sup>46</sup> He wrote the book in 1989.

Not surprisingly, the Eastern German propaganda machine planted all sorts of myths and lies about the USA in the minds of people. In 1950, an insect infestation affected many countries including the DDR. The East German communist party, or SED, propaganda claimed US planes dropped the bugs on territory in Eastern Germany. America was capable of anything, in this case they not only wanted East Germany's brave people to starve, but also force them to buy chemical products from US-companies. Berthold Brecht even wrote a poem, *Die Amiflieger*, about American planes flying over the countryside while children were dying because of the destroyed fields.<sup>47</sup> The Americans were blamed for bombing and destroying German towns. The bombing of the Frauenkirche in Dresden was *the* proof of evil embodied by the Americans and still arises in

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p.131

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p.126

nearly every discussion about a possible American war somewhere on the planet.<sup>48</sup> These examples, although all from Eastern Germany, added yet additional layers to the anti-Americanism found today.

The Germans were quick to realize the horrors of the Nazi regime. They were just as quick to compare it to the United States of America. Hess wrote in 1946, that he was glad that “in Germany, the criminals and the profiteers, the sadists and the gangster do not speak German anymore, but are American”.<sup>49</sup> At first glance this phenomenon seems strange, but makes much more sense knowing that America is often used as a catchall where one projects all negative personal qualities. And as in previous instances, it is a sentiment that not only existed after the war, it continues to this day. Rolf Winter went so far as to change roles in history: the Nazis were simply a copy of the Americans who killed the entire native population of America.<sup>50</sup> Detlef Hartmann, on the other hand, tried to prove the US had simply overtaken the Nazis plans for world domination. He insisted there was no difference anymore between the US and the Nazi-regime; a fairly popular theory in the seventies.<sup>51</sup> A similar lie, originating in the DDR but well received in Western Germany too, suggested that during secret talks at the end of the war, the Germans explained to the Americans how to carry on the project of world domination.

Once again, here is a sentiment based on myths and lies from the past, still used to feed cynicism and discredit all kinds of different American actions or even American society in general. Just as Zvi Rex stated “the Germans will never forgive the Jews Auschwitz”, they will probably never forgive America for reminding them of their past and actually saving them twice.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p.127

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p.129

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p.143

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p.145

<sup>52</sup> Karl W. Deutsch, *European Anti-Americanism (and Anti-Semitism)*, p.23



## France after the war: we did not need you anyway

In 1945 it was naturally the communist party on the front line against America. It denounced American occupation of France and warned that a war with the Soviets was possible. The Marshall Plan did not receive a very warm welcome: only implemented to further the economic interests of Americans, as they sought to enslave *la Grande Nation*. It was not only economic servitude but culture enslavement as well: in 1946, Etienne Gilson explained in *Le Monde* how Hollywood was a powerful instrument of imbecility.

In general, the French did not quite notice what America had done for them. When asked in 1944 who had contributed most to the German defeat, 61% replied the Soviets and only 29% thought the Americans had done more. In 1955, the most influential social philosopher of the day, Sartre, declared that the French destiny had not been decided in Normandy, but at the border with the Volga.<sup>53</sup> While this is true to a certain extent, one should not forget that, the allies liberated Paris in their race to Berlin to halt the Russians. Neglecting American sacrifice in such a way illustrates much about present day thinking in France. It is obvious that the negative feelings in France were not as significant as those in Germany, but they existed. Furthermore, France has volumes of additional anti-American history to fall back on.

## Vietnam: America's loss of credibility

The dirty Vietnam War was exactly what anti-Americans sought: proof of American evil. In Germany, this led - with help from the 68ers - to a blending of the Americans with the Nazis. The intellectual elite, and others, saw an excellent opportunity to make up for their crimes 20 years prior. The most obvious anti-Americanism came from the left. Hans Magnus Enzensberger, member of the "Gruppe 47" (Günter Grass - a German icon and Nobel prize winner who stated

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<sup>53</sup> François Ryssen, *Généalogie de l'antiaméricanisme français*, ([http://www.voxnr.com/cogit\\_content/documents/Gnalogiedelantiamricanisme.shtml](http://www.voxnr.com/cogit_content/documents/Gnalogiedelantiamricanisme.shtml))

he was ashamed that his country was an ally of the US<sup>54</sup> was the most prominent member), saw a Germany of the 30's in the United States of the 1960's and to prove his point, he resigned from his guest lecturer position at the university of Wesleyan to flee to Cuba. While he was in the air, the peace protestors on German soil were yelling "USA – SA – SS"<sup>55</sup>, acknowledging the change of evils: Hitler was forgotten and his successor was evil imperialism with the United States as its main actor.

France did not have to deal with a past such as Germany's, actually it did not have a burden (like the Germans) to deal with at all – at least in the 1960's. The resentment over the loss of old glory will be resurrected after the end of the Cold War. During the 1968-period, the French anti-war movement very quickly came to be dominated by socialists. It comes as no surprise that capitalism was their number one evil with the United States the incarnation and leader of it.

America's image as the evil imperialistic empire - and Vietnam proof of its inhumanity - may have had different roots in those two countries, but they both arrived at the same conclusion and both equally influenced by it. An American defeat was not an everyday occurrence and to this day (recent examples being Afghanistan and Iraq) no leftist journalist can resist references to a "new Vietnam" at some point.

### The defeat of communism and the sole superpower

While there has never been an era in which the European elite viewed the United States without resentment<sup>56</sup>, it has to be admitted that during the Cold War European hostility toward America was at a historic low. Perhaps because at least some understood that you should not bite the hand protecting you. But after the fall of the Soviet Empire there was no need for moderation, as the US

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<sup>54</sup> The philosophical origins of European anti-Americanism, p.2

<sup>55</sup> Gerd Langguth, Habermas, die deutschen Intellektuellen und der Antiamerikanismus in Deutschland, ([http://www.gerd-langguth.de/artikel/intellektuelle\\_antiamerikanismus\\_ip.htm](http://www.gerd-langguth.de/artikel/intellektuelle_antiamerikanismus_ip.htm))

<sup>56</sup> Andrei S. Markovits, European Anti-Americanism: Ever Present Though Always Denied, p.6

remained sole superpower or as Védrine put it, a “hyperpower”. It is intriguing that in 1988 while Ronald Reagan was President, 54% of the French had sympathy for America, whereas in 1996 with Clinton as president (and you cannot get away from the impression that today, Europeans would kill for the return of President Clinton as illustrated by the run on his autobiography) only 35% were favorable to the United States.

The only thing that changed was the uniqueness of America. Anybody with power is resented. This was and is especially true for France, still dreaming of lost glory. It invented the word “hyperpower” and came up with the idea to combat the “nivellement abusif” (caused by American globalization, of course!) with a French version!<sup>57</sup> To the French, the problem is not globalization, but its origin, motivated by envy of America’s influence throughout the world to this day. The French still feel invaded by American culture and lifestyle though this fear receded as a result of political necessity in the later half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. All the fears of modernity and change have come back again just as intense as they were before.

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<sup>57</sup> Jean-François Revel, L'obsession anti-américaine, p. 91



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## Part II: anti-Americanism today

Having briefly summarized anti-Americanism throughout more than two centuries of European history, it is interesting to observe its appearance today. The patterns remain similar to those witnessed in the past. Even an event such as 9/11 creates only superficial sympathy for the United States, while masking an often deeply rooted sense of twisted gratification.

### The Michael Moore phenomena

First, we have to get one thing straight: Americans can be anti-American, just as Jews can be anti-Semite and Blacks can hate blacks. The reason why I mention this is because many followers of Michael Moore stress he can't be anti-American because of his nationality. Moore himself is probably not a classical European anti-American, but he fuels those in Europe who are.

The *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, definitely not among the few relatively pro-American newspapers in Germany, called Moore the “cart horse of anti-Americanism”<sup>58</sup>. His huge success - he toured through Europe last winter filling theaters of considerable size and had three books that topped the German book charts in 2003 (*Stupid White Men* at number 1, *Dude, Where Is My Country* at number 3, published only seven weeks before the end of 2003, and *Downsize This!* at number 9. All three were translated editions)<sup>59</sup> - is mainly explained by the fact he is American and feeds the public with classical stereotypes of America and Americans.

As he himself states in the introduction to the German edition of *Dude, Where Is My Country?*, many Europeans think of him as “the only reasonable American”. So the anti-American public in Europe can easily hide behind his nationality and

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<sup>58</sup> Sueddeutsche, Adrian Kreye, Zugpferd des Antiamerikanismus, (<http://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/artikel/408/19389/>)

<sup>59</sup> <http://harenberg.de.synkron.corpex-net.de/sw2293.asp>

feel freed of any charges of what Paul Johnson called “racist envy”<sup>60</sup>. On tour, he was quick to simply tell crowds what they wanted to hear. In a blistering attack on the American people from an open letter to his friends in Germany<sup>61</sup> (to serve as the introduction to the German translation of *Dude, Where Is My Country* and printed in *Die Zeit* before publication of the book) he repeats the same old song: Americans can't find Germany on the map (but “King Moore” (Henryk M. Broder) comes up with the idea to add Finland to Scandinavia...), they are naive human beings with no knowledge about the rest of the world, but he reassures us that “not all” Americans are crazy – a classical attempt to inoculate allegations of anti-Americanism: “Look, there are normal ones out there!” Since an American said it, it's proof, Americans are stupid. People buy it: there were no letters of outrage to *Die Zeit*, nothing.

A closer look reveals why this could be: it contains every important feature of anti-Americanism from both today and yesterday. At the very beginning the author states what Germans (and even more the French) want to hear, that they're sticking up against “the sole superpower” and they “do not obey” her<sup>62</sup> He tells them how appreciated the “resistance” is (curiously the same word Europeans are using to describe terrorists beheading innocent civilians in Iraq...). Germans, still traumatized by the Second World War, take this as an “oh we're on the right side of history for once”, just like in Vietnam. The French get the impression they still matter and can revive their days of glory.

Then Moore falls even deeper into what may be considered anti-Bushism, but in his case isn't, because he's done the same thing with Clinton (remember the Bowling for Columbine-interview with Marilyn Manson?). He is insinuating an American conspiracy theory. Of course, he doesn't forget the famous “Blood for

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<sup>60</sup> Paul Johnson, Anti-Americanism Is Racist Envy, (<http://www.forbes.com/global/2003/0721/017.html>)

<sup>61</sup> Die Zeit, Michael Moore, »Nicht ganz Amerika ist verrückt«, (<http://www.zeit.de/2003/46/AbdruckMoor>)

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

Oil” reference. “Untergang”<sup>63</sup>, he predicts America’s downfall, satisfying Europeans who are not comfortable with the new status of America since the Cold War. The average American citizen, according to Moore, has no knowledge of anything outside the US: they are “ignorant”<sup>64</sup>. On top of that they only speak English (doh!) and don't have passports.<sup>65</sup> Such images of the American with no culture remind us of the 19th century stereotypes! He asks the very question Europeans are asking too: how can such an “ignorant” nation be leading the world?<sup>66</sup> He sees no reason, other than they have the “biggest guns”:

According to Moore the Soviet Empire collapsed because “the system was not working” and East Germans walked to freedom by “hammering against a wall”<sup>67</sup>. A regime change can't occur through the use of force, only through non-violent uprisings<sup>68</sup>. He says these things while sitting in Berlin and the German people let him get away with it! He also warns Europe of becoming America: “It's as if you transform yourselves into us, in a nation that believes the rich ought to get richer and all others have to kiss their asses. Oh, come on Germans, you know better!”<sup>69</sup> By saying this, he touches upon different forms of anti-Americanism: He implies that America is a thing not to emulate, but Europe is doing exactly this. He hits on something already hit upon by Nietzsche, Freud and Heidegger: fear of modernity coming from America! He portrays America as the kingdom of the rich, an image ever present throughout the history of anti-Americanism.

Finally he tells the Germans that they are morally better, which gives him naturally some extra sympathy points: “You read. Your media reports on what

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

happens on the other side of the Alps. You travel. You value education.”<sup>70</sup> His accusations against America and its citizens do not hold water. The United States is more than 25 times larger than Germany, asking them to know the history of Germany is like asking a German to know the history of say Zimbabwe or Ethiopia. Some Americans may not know where Iraq is, but my personal, although unscientific, experience shows that there are students in the 8th grade in Geneva, Switzerland that do not know that Poland is in Europe (Europe as in the continent, not the union). The dimension of the country is the reason why Americans mostly only speak English (even though that's not true: according to the CIA World Fact Book a sizable minority speaks Spanish, including President Bush himself. His Spanish may actually be better than his English).

Americans can travel for days in any direction and actually still be understood without any difficulties. This could be a reason why they don't have passports and why they travel less abroad, why should they? The American media focus on the United States is easily understood in this context and after all, the European media does not report too much on Africa or Asia unless there is some disaster. Michael Moore's vision of Germany is a bit romantic as well: the main German travel destination is Spain where all tourist locations speak German and offer "Bratwurst mit Pommes", the PISA-study showed that Germans rank below Americans when it comes to the ability to read and understand text. He does not only discredit America unjustly, but regards Germans perhaps a bit too highly in a move to gain public sympathy. But after all, we all like compliments.

Again, not scientific but still revealing, is reading through the reader comments on Amazon.de or .fr about the translation of his newest book, *Dude, Where Is My Country?*. While everybody in the United States knows that he is just a liberal response to Ann Coulter, Europeans believe him to be a messenger of divine truth. According to the Amazon-users he “informs only”, he is the “Voltaire of America”, “nobody explains America better than he”, he delivers “all the answers to hanky-panky of the US-government” and finally “Michael Moore writes, as an

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

American, the truth about this country”.

The media are almost just as unbalanced (although *Fahrenheit 9/11* got its share of bad reviews, but they did not prevent the movie from being much more successful than *Bowling for Columbine*): *Le Monde* calls Moore an “avenger”<sup>71</sup> and “a clown who tells the truth”<sup>72</sup>. *The Guardian* takes the extra step and calls Michael Moore's film “The beginning of history”<sup>73</sup>. *Le Matin* says he “decrypts the mechanisms of power and reveals the manipulations.”<sup>74</sup> According to *Die Welt* he is a “unique American phenomena”<sup>75</sup> (thus implying he's the only American criticizing Bush and American society in general). He's an American and he knows the truth, who better to give the European people a better picture of the United States? In America, he's making the case against Republicans (at least since *Stupid White Men*) and the rich, in Europe he's making, or being used to make the case against the whole country.

Nothing illustrates this better than the translation of *Stupid White Men* in France: *Mike contre-attaque ! Bienvenue aux Etats Stupides d'Amérique* (Mike fights back! Welcome to the Stupid States of America). A few stupid white men become the whole United States and Michael Moore remains the only one who opposes it. And it sells! A reason why Moore is seen as the harbinger of truth is that there's no counterweight to this propaganda. In America, in addition to Ann Coulter and Rush Limbaugh, there are films being made about Moore's methods and lies: *Michael Moore Hates America*, *FahrenHYPE 9/11*, *Celsius 41.11*. And there's David T. Hardy and Jason Clarke's *Michael Moore is a Big Fat Stupid White Man* which sells almost as well as Moore's books. In Europe, nobody even thinks about translating or heaven forbid distributing these books. Maybe

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<sup>71</sup> *Le Monde*, July 7th, 2004

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, May 25th, 2004

<sup>73</sup> John Berger, *The beginning of history*, (<http://film.guardian.co.uk/features/featurepages/0,4120,1289516,00.html>)

<sup>74</sup> Rafael Wolf, *Michael Moore fait trembler George Bush*, ([http://www.lematin.ch/nwmatinhome/nwmatinsoirtir/cinema/michael\\_moore\\_fait.html](http://www.lematin.ch/nwmatinhome/nwmatinsoirtir/cinema/michael_moore_fait.html))

<sup>75</sup> Mike Davis, *Die Feldzüge des Proleten*, (<http://www.zeit.de/2004/31/Fahrenheit>)

because there simply is no demand, historically there never really has been any either.

There's no anti-Michael Moore, he's in a position without enemies in Europe, he's the Mother Theresa of anti-Americanism providing them the vitriol they need. Then the media surfs the waves of public opinion. On the eve of the 2004 election, German ProSieben aired Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11*, praising it for the "power of the facts presented". In reality, the facts confirm that Moore's are rather weak. In a commentary presented on the German state television ZDF we find again the ignorant American: the only way of telling the American people something is to "entertain them" and the Americans have "*degenerated* to taking out the credit cards from their wallets"<sup>76</sup>. *Degenerated?* Buffon must be smiling... It's almost unbelievable how the Germans listen to Moore. It just proves the lust for anti-American "information", but better described as propaganda. After all, Moore dedicates a whole chapter in *Downsize This!* to a rant about the Germans who supposedly haven't paid enough for the Holocaust and states that all the Germans of a World War II-age who moved to Florida are simply Ex-Nazis<sup>77</sup>. This ought to upset the Germans, just witness how disgusted they were about Rumsfeld calling them "Old Europe" (they *are* getting older by the way...), but it does not. This could be due to the German editor's brilliant job editing out the chapter in the translation. I just can't help but wonder about the "what if they knew..." scenario.

## The ghost of Vietnam and other disasters

Within the German media there is one recurring way to describe the two recent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Few newspapers or commentators have avoided it. *Le Monde* started it off by dedicating the front page of its *sélection hebdomadaire* to a Soviet veteran who said that Afghanistan "will be ten times worse than

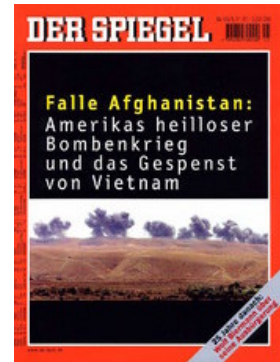
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<sup>76</sup> Frank Baloch, Lachen und Weinen um Amerika, (<http://www.zdf.de/ZDFde/inhalt/5/0,1872,2145477,00.html>)

<sup>77</sup> Michael Moore, *Downsize this!*, chapter »Germany still hasn't paid for its sins and I intend to collect«



Vietnam” and that it was a “fortress impossible to take”<sup>78</sup>. Günther Grass predicted a “second Vietnam”<sup>79</sup>. Germany's most respected weekly *Der Spiegel* followed suit by running a cover story about one month after the beginning of the Afghanistan war: “Falle Afghanistan: Amerikas heilloser Bombenkrieg und das Gespenst Vietnam” (Trap Afghanistan: America's incurable bombing war and the ghost of Vietnam). To make the headline even more absurd, this edition appeared on November 12th, 2001, the day the Northern Alliance took Kabul and men publicly shaved off their beards after years of tyranny. Three years later, the Afghans have a remarkably stable country and held successful democratic presidential and parliamentary elections. A task not all European countries can handle as we witnessed in December 2004. All the horrible predictions of a Soviet-like disaster, gone with the wind and with great help of the Northern Alliance the Americans managed in about a month what neither the British nor the Russians managed to do in years of bloody conflict: they took Afghanistan with a remarkably low number of casualties.



Cover of German weekly *Der Spiegel*

So the European media turned to Iraq. President of the Bundestag, Wolfgang Thierse, was concerned about the millions of civilians who would become victims of bombs and rockets (completely ignoring those dying under the sanctions regime and the Hussein dictatorship).<sup>80</sup> But before the war even started, Peter Scholl-Latour, the German “expert” on terrorism, wars and everything else US-related, appeared on television to announce that the buildings of Baghdad will be exactly the same as the jungles of Vietnam<sup>81</sup>. Later he predicted “an American

<sup>78</sup> Le Monde, September 22nd, 2001

<sup>79</sup> Henryk M. Broder, *Kein Krieg Nirgends*, p. 103

<sup>80</sup> Bild.de, Die peinlichen Prognosen unserer Politiker, ([http://www.bild.t-online.de/BTO/news/topthemen/irak\\_krise\\_special/2003/04/12/prognosen/prognosen.html](http://www.bild.t-online.de/BTO/news/topthemen/irak_krise_special/2003/04/12/prognosen/prognosen.html))

<sup>81</sup> Markus Bodler (ext.), Karl-Heinz Kamp, *Die Stunde der Phantasten*, ([www.ju-rheinbach.de/Stunde\\_der\\_Phantasten.pdf](http://www.ju-rheinbach.de/Stunde_der_Phantasten.pdf))

Stalingrad”<sup>82</sup>, just before the Coalition Forces took Baghdad and the first American tanks rolled into Saddam City greeted by Iraqi soldiers standing in their underwear after having stripped off their arms and uniforms). Interestingly, Saddam promised the same (his exact words were “Stalingrad on the Tigris”<sup>83</sup>) on March 1st. What a coincidence! Only three months later the famous ghost of Vietnam started manifesting once again: *n-tv* entitled a story about the possibility of guerilla war in Iraq “Das Vietnam-Trauma”<sup>84</sup> implying that it could easily become another Vietnam. In October, *Der Spiegel* brought its New York-correspondent Marc Pitzke into the game, he did not disappoint: “Bush’s Vietnam”<sup>85</sup> was the title of the story which predicted an endless war.



Cover of German weekly *Stern*

A month later *Stern*, the home of serious German journalism (remember the bogus Hitler diaries?), published a cover story asking if Iraq was the new Vietnam: “Iraq - Das Neue Vietnam?” (Iraq - The new Vietnam?). A few days before, the German state television network *ARD* hosted a debate asking the same question: “Irak - Amerikas neues Vietnam?”<sup>86</sup> (Iraq - America's new Vietnam?). But the discussion was more about Iraq's future and how Americans could pass the power to the Iraqi government without too much hassle. The other state sponsored TV station, *ZDF*, didn't have to ask, it affirmed: “Amerikas zweites Vietnam”<sup>87</sup> (America's second Vietnam). Remarkably, the long before discredited Scholl-

<sup>82</sup> Thomas Uwer and Thomas von der Osten-Sacken, Der Sturz Saddam Husseins, (<http://www.nahost-politik.de/irak/sturz.htm>)

<sup>83</sup> Abendblatt, Thomas Frankenfeld und John Lumpkin, Mann gegen Mann in Bagdad?, (<http://www2.abendblatt.de/daten/2003/03/01/129609.html>)

<sup>84</sup> N-tv, Das Vietnam-Trauma, (<http://www.n-tv.de/3173528.html>)

<sup>85</sup> Spiegel Online, Marc Pitzke, Bushs Vietnam, (<http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/0,1518,271610,00.html>)

<sup>86</sup> Das Erste, Irak - Amerikas neues Vietnam?, (<http://www.wdr.de/tv/presseclub/20031116/thema.phtml>)

<sup>87</sup> Frontal21, Amerikas zweites Vietnam, (<http://www.zdf.de/ZDFde/inhalt/30/0,1872,2078590,00.html>)



Latour reappeared in this show. Obviously viewers had already forgotten his completely false predictions six months earlier and probably believed him once again. It was a little bit more than a year after the start of “Operation Iraqi Freedom” when *Der Spiegel* reaffirmed its response, already given by Pitzke, to this question by running the following cover story: “Die Falle Irak: Bush’s Vietnam” (The Trap Iraq: Bush's Vietnam). The similarity with their cover story from fall 2001 about “Enduring Freedom” cannot be overlooked, it was yet another pot shot with the hope of actually turning out to be true.



Another cover of *Der Spiegel*

Let's have a look at the facts to see how wrong these comparisons are. Although the death toll of the first years of the Vietnam War and Iraq until now is comparable, one should not forget that the US has almost ten times as many troops in Iraq as they had at the beginning of the Vietnam War. Still, in Vietnam, in the weeks of intense fighting, American Forces lost up to 500 soldiers a week, in Iraq, when the Marines took Fallujah, the stronghold of the “resistance”, it took them just over a week and they suffered surprisingly limited casualties for an urban combat scenario. The quality of the US Army is no doubt far superior as well, the enemy is entirely opposite, much weaker and poorly equipped. The insurgents have basically no support, apart from Iran and Syria and perhaps a few other regions, whereas the Vietcong were backed by the Russians and Chinese. So when there is so little support for the Iraq-Vietnam connection, even less for Afghanistan and Vietnam, why do the media keep insisting on it?

Vietnam was the biggest humiliation and defeat America has suffered in recent history. As previously discussed, the superpower status of the United States is not well received in Europe (just as in much the rest of the world). By conjuring up a comparison of the current conflicts to Vietnam, the media recall a humiliation experienced by America - a way to prove America is not invincible, that she may struggle and to create doubt that it could happen again. Showing

images of crying soldiers at the graves of their comrades may not be entirely respectful, but it serves to convey an image and message that America is weak, crying and may one day fall again. It is a desperate attempt to hide the fact that America is in a position where she can do what she pleases whereas Europe would like to return to such a position of global influence once again. America did not fail in Afghanistan, but created a regional ally. So now the media are having a shot at Iraq. But the blistering defeat of the “rebels” in Fallujah shows that Iraq might just as well go the American way. A desert full of sand is after all NOT a jungle full of Vietcong.

### Nous sommes tous Américains?

No one can deny the wave of support and sympathy Europe and the World had for the United States in the days following the devastating terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001: people gathered in large numbers in front of American embassies, American flags were displayed in public (not being burned for a change) and even minutes of silence were recognized (in a part of the world increasingly proud of its “secular” culture). But what kind of sympathy was this? Were the media just as inclined toward America as the streets would have us believe?

There is of course Jean-Marie Colombani's famous editorial, appearing in *Le Monde* on September 13th (and not 12th): “Nous sommes tous Américains”<sup>88</sup> (We are all Americans). Jacques Amalric in *Libération* was a little bit less enthusiastic: “We are all New Yorkers, for lack of being Americans.”<sup>89</sup> Jean Levalois declared that “we feel a little bit like being New Yorkers today”<sup>90</sup> even before Colombani, on September 12th. *Le Monde diplomatique* got ironic in an article<sup>91</sup> that accused America of having a foreign policy “dictated by its very own

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<sup>88</sup> *Le Monde*, September 13th, 2001

<sup>89</sup> *Libération*, September 14th, 2001

<sup>90</sup> *La Presse de la Manche*, September 12th, 2001

<sup>91</sup> *Le Monde diplomatique*, October edition, p. 32

interest” in the edition following September 11th: “All Americans, living in New York and we all speak English.” It was probably *Spiegel Online* that published the first obvious negative commentary on the events: in “Der Gigant ist verletzbar”<sup>92</sup> no words were wasted about the horror of the attacks, but all attention given to the way George W. Bush would react. “No matter what measures President Bush will take, the world will not become more peaceful”<sup>93</sup>. Bush and America are not even given a chance to respond, barely ten hours after the attacks. Even before anybody in Washington indicated a form of response to the attacks, Harald Schumann already stated that it would be no good anyway.

Negative views were present even the very first day in the online edition of a leading German newspaper, which compels closer scrutiny of Colombani's column. While the headline is certainly a declaration of sympathy towards America, there are elements that can be interpreted as though Colombani wanted to hold America responsible for what had happened: America “has ceased to draw the peoples of the globe to it; or, more exactly, in certain parts of the globe, it seems no longer to attract anything but hatred.” This implies that the US must have done something that angered and provoked the terrorists to hate it so badly and commit these atrocities. In the following paragraph he falls for the well known legend of the CIA training bin Laden and asks if America “did not give birth to this devil” which would mean that she is responsible for what happened to her.

As for the facts, there were two separate groups united in the fight against the Soviets; and the United States never gave money to the Arab Afghans for whom bin Laden was fighting. Does this sound like pro-Americanism? A few months later, in an open letter to “our American friends” Colombani compared America to Saudi Arabia. Apparently because a few states refused to teach evolution, then tells America that it cannot fight a battle with the Taliban without fighting against

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<sup>92</sup> <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/0,1518,156623,00.html>

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

the bigotry within<sup>94</sup>. According to Fouad Ajami “The United States had not squandered Colombani's sympathy; it never had that sympathy in the first place.”

*Le Monde* kept insisting on the theory of America being responsible for the attacks by letting people who shared these views comment in their articles, mixing their voices with those of the writer, making the accusations appear reasonable. Daniel, an “artist”, was quoted saying that “we [Americans] were asking for it”<sup>95</sup> and the day before a front-page article appeared where Nadia Yassine, spokeswoman for Morocco's Isalmist “Justice and Welfare” party, and a “moderate” Muslim, “denounced the 'boomerang effect' of American domination. The dead at the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were only the 'most recent victims' of American Power”. Without having said anything themselves, the articles mixed the author's words and his subject's words creating the appearance of fact. *Le Monde's* affiliated *Le Monde diplomatique* used the exact same term “boomerang effect” as headline for a series of articles concerning 9/11 immediately after the tragedy.

Actually, the edition has a few more examples of the exact same thing. In the front page article “The enemy” Ignacio Ramonet self-righteously declares that America is “not innocent”, because she is far from being an angel, but he uses this idea to pretend that all the “violent, illegal action” in South America, Africa, Middle East and Asia is the cause of the attacks. He expresses his thoughts in disguise as those of “the countries of the South”: “What happens to them [the Americans] is really sad, but they did not steal it” meaning that they deserved it, a sort of payback. Steven C. Clemons writes in the other front page article “United States, Excess of Power” that “without a doubt America's triumphalism after the end of the Cold War explains a lot”.

On top of the pages concerning 9/11, we read “Total war against a diffuse

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<sup>94</sup> Fouad Ajami, *The Falseness of Anti-Americanism*, ([http://www.travelbrochuregraphics.com/extra/the\\_falseness\\_of\\_antiamericanism.htm](http://www.travelbrochuregraphics.com/extra/the_falseness_of_antiamericanism.htm))

<sup>95</sup> *Le Monde*, September 19th, 2001

danger". "Wollt ihr den totalen Krieg"<sup>96</sup> asked of an entirely different person on February 11th, 1943 after his country suffered from heavy bombardments. We see not only German political figures mixing up the present and the past, the French did too - only a few weeks after September 11th. In Germany, there was even a political party, the PDS (formed from what remained of the former communist party of East Germany, or SED), that distributed a flyer simply saying that "Such things come from such things"<sup>97</sup>.

A fair amount of intellectuals were almost cheering with joy: for composer Karlheinz Stockhausen, the attacks on the WTC were "the biggest work of art that the cosmos has ever seen"<sup>98</sup>. On November 3rd, 2001 Jean Baudrillard finally expressed his joy over the attacks: "How we have dreamt of this event, how all the world without exception dreamt of this event, for no one can avoid dreaming of the destruction of a power that has become hegemonic."<sup>99</sup> As far as I am concerned, I did not dream of it, Monsieur Baudrillard. This is fairly typical of the anti-American rhetoric after the fall of the Berlin wall: the wish of the destruction of the "hyperpower" America. Baudrillard's dream was definitely not singular, but he made this dream even more cynical than it already was.

It was the end of Europe's brief moment of sympathy, at least the huge waves of support. It quickly became clear that America would respond to the attacks militarily. On October 16th, barely one month after the Al Qaida attacks, people across Europe gathered to protest the American intervention in Afghanistan<sup>100</sup>: Berlin counted between 20,000 and 30,000 protestors; Stuttgart around 15,000; between 20,000 and 50,000 in London; in Glasgow around 2,000; in Italy about 30,000 demonstrated on Sunday at an annual peace march; and, last but not

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<sup>96</sup> [http://www.weltchronik.de/dch/dch\\_3373.htm](http://www.weltchronik.de/dch/dch_3373.htm)

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., nirgends, p. 200

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., nirgends, p. 184

<sup>99</sup> Fouad Ajami, The Falseness of Anti-Americanism, ([http://www.travelbrochuregraphics.com/extra/the\\_falseness\\_of\\_antiamericanism.htm](http://www.travelbrochuregraphics.com/extra/the_falseness_of_antiamericanism.htm))

<sup>100</sup> Anti-war demonstrations in Europe, (<http://www.wsws.org/articles/2001/oct2001/euro-o16.shtml>)

least, 5,000 in Berne.

In Germany the pacifist groups had trouble keeping away neo-fascist groups, which illustrated the common thread of anti-Americanism historically shared by the far left and the far right. One may interject that these people are demonstrating for peace and not against the United States. But then again, were there any peace-marches against the behavior of Russia in Chechnya or of the French massacres in the Ivory Coast? The comments made by the speakers and those in attendance were even more revealing: They “deplored the bombing of one of the world’s poorest and most backward countries”<sup>101</sup>, but apparently forgot that the Americans at that time were targeting one of the world’s most brutal regimes and that their main goal was *not* bombing innocent civilians.

Still, the worries about the population may be justified and cannot be classified as anti-Americanism (although the painful question of where the demonstrators were during the Taliban regime remains). A volunteer for Friends of the Earth said that by responding militarily to the attacks, Americans are “turning themselves into terrorists”<sup>102</sup>, and in reality America “is more of a dictatorship than any other country”. While the first part fits perfectly with the reflex of equating America to evil (like Hitler or in this case the Taliban), the second joins Heine's image of a “freedom prison”<sup>103</sup>. A student at Bristol University knew that “it is all for political and economic gain.”<sup>104</sup> Lenau's image of money as America’s only god is very well represented here. Satnam and Ishmael from Bradford said “They are not after bin Laden, they are after something more, something bigger, maybe oil.”<sup>105</sup> What else could it be? It's the Americans after all! That there really is not much of it to speak of in Afghanistan, remains just a

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> See chapter »Freedom, money and America«

<sup>104</sup> Anti-war demonstrations in Europe, (<http://www.wsws.org/articles/2001/oct2001/euro-o16.shtml>)

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

fact. It was during this period that European public support for America totally evaporated. Sympathy for America was present, but only when America was a victim. As soon as it decided to defend itself it became the imperialistic America ruled by the dollar once again.

### The quest for European identity

As already discussed and reaffirmed, Europe - France and Germany in particular - are not very comfortable with America's superpower position and in order to change the situation, they are trying to position the EU as a counter power to America. The outrage of Chirac's comment to new EU members and those who wish to become members, after they took a rather pro-American position on the Iraq question, stating they had missed an excellent opportunity to "shut up"<sup>106</sup> is an excellent example of the contempt behind the effort to define Europe as not being America. This reinforces a sentiment present in the history of Europe's superiority, of Europe not wanting to become America.<sup>107</sup>

Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida published a manifesto for a "Core-Europe"<sup>108</sup>. In the demonstrations against the intervention in Iraq on February 15th, 2003, they saw a "signal for the birth of a European public".<sup>109</sup> First of all, these demonstrations were a global, not a unique European phenomena, so it is rather naive to imply the creation of a new European identity from this single event. But defining it in terms of a demonstration against American policies is further proof of Europe's defining itself as not being America. Furthermore, they ask for a European policy to oppose "the hegemonic unilateralism of the United States"<sup>110</sup>, but knowing that Europe has no such single foreign policy, he

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<sup>106</sup> ZDFheute, Wirbel um Chiracs Schimpfriade, <http://www.heute.t-online.de/ZDFheute/artikel/27/0,1367,POL-0-2034395,00.html>

<sup>107</sup> See chapter »We do not want to be like you!«

<sup>108</sup> FAZ, May 31st, 2003, Nach dem Krieg: Die Wiedergeburt Europas, Habermas und Derrida

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.



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degrades new members to “invitees”<sup>111</sup> and calls for a “Core-Europe”<sup>112</sup> consisting of France and Germany, the two countries who knew before the search for WMD in Iraq ended how they would vote in the Security Council<sup>113</sup> - against the Americans. At present this is the core vision of those seeking a new United Europe, motivated by an intrinsic anti-Americanism, serving as its most defining feature.

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Gerd Langguth, Habermas, die deutschen Intellektuellen und der Antiamerikanismus in Deutschland, ([http://www.gerd-langguth.de/artikel/intellektuelle\\_antiamerikanismus\\_ip.htm](http://www.gerd-langguth.de/artikel/intellektuelle_antiamerikanismus_ip.htm))

## Conclusion: The song remains the same

Here we are concluding an analysis that is far from exhaustive. This work has at least shown the absurdity of anti-Americanism in Europe and how it operates, almost as a reflex. It is important to note that it is not the bad food at McDonald's, the high prices of Nikes or the cowboys Bush and Reagan that are the cause of this resentment. It has always been there in one form or another since the very "discovery" of America and will probably perpetuate, especially now. One may get the feeling that anti-Americanism has become more potent since 9/11. While this is essentially correct, it has much to do with the fall of the Soviet empire, the disappearance of the enemy from whom America protected Europe. There is no perceived need for America anymore and all the old feelings are slowly coming back, probably stronger than ever. 9/11 was just yet another breaking point.

But are we all anti-Americans in Europe? Anti-Americanism seems to be, at least for now, a plague affecting Western Europe, as the countries who have risen from communism are much friendlier to America. For instance, during Bush's visit in Europe in 2002, we witnessed enthusiastic pro-American crowds in Budapest, but angry anti-American mobs in Berlin. So there is still hope, but it is uncertain if those countries will not fall into the same reflexes as Germany and France following the Second World War or if they will not go down the German-French anti-American road.

But are all Europeans anti-Americans? Certainly not! There is a big rift between the intellectuals and the media on one side, the European people on the other. After all, apart from having to replace its windows from time to time, McDonald's is doing very well, Nike is doing well too and Hollywood movies are still not giving much of a chance to European cinema. The American people have come to experience for themselves, they generally like or at least do not hate. But their knowledge about American society, politics and - most importantly - its people, they get from "intellectuals" and the media (and a few anti-American Americans). Thus they follow the loud European anti-American bandwagon - for lack of exposure to more balanced, direct and unbiased views. In places where they



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have no first hand experience, the public simply adopts the opinion of the intellectual elite and believe themselves to be on the right track. It is as if anti-Americanism is an elitist and media sport with much of the public cheering, because they have no opinion or have no chance of forming their own. Therefore, when Michael Moore says that the Americans are fat and dumb, why not believe him? Much of the public doesn't know who Americans really are, on the other hand Moore is American, fat and... you know.

## Personal conclusion

As I started doing the research for this work I was very aware of anti- Americanism today, but I had almost no idea why it was so prevalent nor did I know that it was so deeply rooted, having persisted since the very founding of America. The search for anti-Americanism in history was very necessary for the second part of the work, but it was illuminating at the same time. I have learned where all the negative prejudices about Americans and America come from and while it is a bit shocking if not disturbing, it helps to illuminate European resentments against the United States. As for anti-Americanism today, the research uncovered - at least a little bit and at least for me - the methodology used by the press and other media to spread and maintain these perceptions largely rooted in the views of European philosophers. Both this research as well as 9/11 compelled me to contemplate the rift between intellectual elites and the “people”. There certainly seems to be something to this, but to analyze this issue in depth will take another *travail de maturité*... At first I thought that nobody had ever looked into this subject, but the more I researched, the more opinions, books and articles appeared. I was completely amazed by the amount of documentation I was able to find on a topic that is not much present in the media and in the people's minds here in Europe (not that anti-Americanism is not present in the media, because it is, but it is mostly shown as justifiable critiques of America). All in all, during the course of this research work, I not only grew older, but grew wiser too and no anti-American comment will pass me by. Bring it on Europe!



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## Your moment of Zen: the acknowledgments

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