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Democratic War, Repressive Peace

On Really Existing Anti-Americanism

Anti-Americanism in contemporary Europe has little to do with real policy disputes. Indeed, it has little to do with reality at all. On the contrary, it follows a topsy-turvy logic of obsessions driven by European fantasies about America. Drawing on long-standing cultural traditions rather than on contemporary conditions, anti-Americanism is trapped in a world of imagination. It is ideological in the sense that the ideals to which it adheres are never tested against hard facts. Chapter 2 explored how anti-Americanism is divorced from reality. This chapter discusses the consequence of this divorce: a political culture disconnected from the real world of facts and actions. In order to explore this aspect of anti-Americanism, it is necessary first to reflect on the standing of conflict in politics and culture. Against that background, this chapter proceeds to examine anti-Americanism's political instinct, its opposition to wars in the name of democracy, and its predisposition to maintaining the repressive peace of authoritarian regimes—the classical politics of appeasement. This political instinct has historical roots in the age of totalitarianism, but it is amplified, as will be shown, by the pursuit of an emerging European identity: the real voice behind the curtain of the anti-American Oz.

Conflict: Real and Imaginary

Politics typically involves conflicting interests, be it a matter of competition among individuals, parties, or states. The opposition of friend and foe in the international arena can grow into an enmity that takes the form of a dramatic scene, a confrontational face-off of two opponents. Accusation, recrimination, and attack unfold on the stage of doubled adversariness. It is doubled because the initial carrier of enmity, one side in the dispute, projects hostility on to the other, presuming that the opponent maintains a symmetrical counterview. The participant in the relationship of enmity assumes that the hostility is equally shared by the opponent. The drama of conflicting relations is therefore normally assumed to be a symmetrical arrangement.

Political theory offers alternative characterizations of conflict: either as an inescapable "state of nature," as an existential and irreducible struggle between irreconcilable foes, or as a precondition to an equally dramatic consensus-formation in a public sphere oriented toward compromise. The former model describes permanent war; the latter, the pursuit of a perpetual peace. As different as these outcomes are, the two alternatives and the gradations between them share an assumption: the substantiality of the opposition (i.e., the suggestion that a real, existence-defining conflict of interests underlies the hostility, whether the interests are religious or material, cultural or economic). In such a framework, enmity is understood to be the expression of conflict between genuine opponents. Real-world differences are presumed to be the underlying cause of political struggle.

Yet it is worth considering another sort of case, where conflict is not symmetrical in this sense and where prior or objective grounds are not the true cause of hostility. As was argued in

chapter 2, anti-Americanism in fact follows its own ideological logic rather than genuinely conflicting interests. It is a cultural phenomenon rather than a rational pursuit of policy. When hostility results from such internal processes rather than from external conditions, the insinuation that the opponent is driven by symmetrical enmity amounts to little more than a fiction. By inventing the other as the enemy, one in fact ascribes to the other the sentiments that are above all one's own: I hate you so you must hate me. Yet in such a case, where the imputation of hostility is a fiction, the explanatory model of genuinely symmetrical enmity turns out to be wrong. It is now more a matter of an ideological strategy designed to justify hostility than an accurate description of an objective clash of interests. In contrast to the forms of hostility that result from a real-world interest conflict, other forms are the consequence of solely endogenous processes, all on one side of the conflict. This asymmetrical model requires an alternative explanation.

A primary anger in one party turns into anger at the world and only then finds its target. This hostility should be judged not as a response to what the opponent may have done, since the opponent is only a belated discovery. This sort of hostility, on the contrary, is an expression of an internal cultural or psychological process that requires the invention of a threat: an imagined enemy representing the fictive danger required to sustain a troubled identity. The image of the enemy is not the result of a real opposition but acts instead as a mechanism to confirm the identity of the group. The enemy, in this sense, is just a scapegoat, and the vilification of the scapegoat confirms the cohesion of the community. The discourse of enmity, the sharply contoured external-oriented narrative of hostility, turns out to be largely internally driven; rather than describing an external world, it plays a role in the construction of identity.

Hostility, in such cases, is not about the enemy but about the self. It involves an animus that predates the encounter with the presumed enemy. Instead of a model in which a real opponent elicits a hostile response, there is an internally generated anger, which only subsequently finds an object to oppose. This is the case for European anti-Americanism: it is not a matter of a plausible response to a real threat but rather the construction of an external enemy in order to maintain the coherence of an identity for Europe.

This argument concerning an endogenous or subjective hostility is not meant to pertain to all conflicts. In other cases, tragedy and opposition do exist and lead to real-world struggle. Here, however, it is a matter of conflicts that are primarily subjective, driven by the internal logic of a cultural or psychological need to find an opponent, rather than by a confrontation with a particular opponent in an objective competition for a specific good. In the case of a subjective hostility, the passion of belligerence, be it on the individual or collective level, is ultimately separate from and prior to the choice of the target of vilification. In political propaganda, this is precisely the dynamic that George Orwell described so masterfully in *1984*: mass sentiment would be channeled into hatred for ever-shifting opponents for reasons that had little to do with those opponents and everything to do with ensuring the stability of the totalitarian political culture. Hatred becomes a free-floating instinct, available for redirection toward whatever object is most expedient. The ritual denunciation of the opponent may refer to distant circumstances, but it serves a purpose closer to home. It has ultimately nothing to do with the vilified opponent's real existence, about which it prefers to remain largely ignorant and uninformed. Because it depends on this distance from and denial of facts, this sort of mind-set unleashes a continuing process of reality loss.

The drama of enmity is therefore false drama, as we can explore in the case of current European anti-Americanism.

The Case of Anti-Americanism

To say that European anti-Americanism lacks a genuinely dramatic scene means that it is not a reciprocal conflict between equal opponents. Anti-Americanism cannot be explained as part of a mirror-image hostility. There is, to be sure, some diffuse blowback, moments of anti-European hostility in the United States, but it is hardly ever on the scale of European anti-Americanism. The silly case of “freedom fries” is about as exciting as it gets: there are no anti-European demonstrations, no burnings of French or German flags, no angry mobs with pitchforks and tractors in front of Louis Vuitton boutiques or BMW dealerships. American “anti-Europeanism” is not an equal partner but only an anemic afterthought to the European spectacles.

Europe is hardly a matter of regular concern for the American public, whereas the United States represents an object of constant obsession for the anti-American mind: an omnipresent and omnipotent opponent. The asymmetry is evident in the imbalanced structure of transatlantic name-calling. Former French foreign minister Hubert Vedrine’s complaint about the “simplistic” character of American foreign policy or German justice minister Herta Däubler-Gmelin’s blunder equating Bush and Hitler generated irritation and bemused curiosity in America, but these remarks quickly became yesterday’s news; in contrast, Donald Rumsfeld’s comment on old and new Europe elicited outrage and vitriol. A raw nerve had been touched, and European intellectuals showed themselves eager to be provoked by an American secretary of defense. Facing that real enemy, the non-European, old grudges melted away, and Jacques Derrida

and Jürgen Habermas, philosophers on two sides of the Rhine who have spent their careers attacking each other, promptly marched shoulder to shoulder against the perceived American threat. Where sober criticisms of Rumsfeld or American defense policy might have been plausible, the heavy hitters of the European spirit replied with the crude weapons of cultural denunciation and fantastic imagery that have characterized the anti-American mentality.¹

Anti-Americanism is not a reasoned response to American policies; it is the hysterical surplus that goes beyond reason. That difference is evident in the constant recycling of anti-American images that have a history that long antedates current policy. The traditional European response to the new world and the United States has, for centuries, involved themes of savagery, violence, and excess power, as well as the anxieties generated by capitalism and democracy.² These stale images recur in the current discourse with stereotypical regularity. Yet if the animus predates the policy, then the policy is clearly not the cause but only the pretext, and the animus itself is prepolitical. Moreover, the obsessive mentality of anti-Americanism shows up in countries with very different experiences of the United States: Germany against the background of an occupation that was never perceived as a liberation (and certainly elicited no street celebrations), and France with the history of liberation but

1. Cf. Jürgen Habermas, et al., "Das alte Europa antwortet Herrn Rumsfeld," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, January 24, 2003, 33.

2. All this has been amply documented in various studies. Cf. Dan Diner, *America in the Eyes of the Germans: An Essay on Anti-Americanism*, trans. Allison Brown (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 1996); Philippe Roger, *L'ennemi américain: Généalogie de l'antiaméricanisme français* (Paris: Seuil, 2002); Susanne Zantop, *Colonial Fantasies: Conquest, Family, and Nation in Precolonial Germany, 1770–1870* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).

no occupation. Two different menus leave the same taste in the mouth, as if the flavor had a life of its own.

Yet this separation of the affect of enmity from hypothetically objective causes explains why the anti-American perception of the present is marked by the regular loss of factual grounding and a nearly hermetic imperviousness to events. Reality disappears. Hence the predisposition to disbelieve any reports of real American success in the Afghanistan or Iraq wars, to denounce pro-American Iraqis, and to exclude any information that does not fit into a narrowly constructed myth: “nothing can shake it in its inner certitude, because it is imprisoned in its safe world—because it is incapable of experiencing anything”—thus the literary critic Georg Lukács, writing nearly a century ago on the problem of “abstract idealism.” His characterization precisely fits the substance of the anti-American mentality.³ In this vein, one has to count the willingness of the mainstream European media to treat the Iraqi information minister as a plausible source, until the very end, while at the same time directing an unrelenting skepticism toward any signs of coalition victory or Iraqi celebrations. Because the anti-Saddam Iraqis disappointed the European anti-Americans, it was claimed that they did not exist or, at best, were funded by Americans. This sort of fantastic thinking with regard to the Iraq war, however, involves the very same reality denial that characterized another episode, the response to the September 11 attacks: the grotesque suggestions of hidden conspiracies or a mere media spectacle or—perhaps most common—the European notion that it was not that bad after all. Reality that does not match politically

3. Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel: A Historico-Philosophical Essay on the Forms of Great Epic Literature*, trans. Anna Bostock (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971), 99.

correct opinion cannot exist. Uncomfortable facts and uncomfortable opinions are equally disallowed. The sort of debate that has raged through the American public and press was just absent in much of Europe.

For anti-Americanism, the issue is not facts, to which one might respond critically, but an obsession, an internally generated hostility, with no link to the real world. Hence the predilection to denial: the Iraqis are not celebrating, Al Qaeda did not attack the Twin Towers, the infidels are not in Baghdad.

Because of this separation of ideology from reality, images take over, propagandistic targets of enmity, negatively charged icons. A telling case in point is the anti-American journalism of the Indian writer and activist Arundhati Roy. Obviously, Roy cannot be taken as an example of a typical European intellectual, but she has achieved a particular celebrity status in the European press, from the *Manchester Guardian* to the *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, which has published her anti-American essays. This prominence gives her writings a symptomatic significance (i.e., they can tell us something about the anti-American mentality).

Roy's style entails the rhetoric of antipathy, strings of stereotypical denunciations, devoid of reasoned argument and sprinkled with targets of hatred. It is, especially, a language that relies on derogatory personifications that serve to focus the reader's hatred. In one essay, for example, she arbitrarily conjures up an otherwise unidentified "marrowy American panelist," and in another she points with disgust at an equally anonymous figure "who rolls his R's in his North American way."⁴ Neither of these figures plays any other role in her narratives, except to provide a negative image. Are they real people or merely

4. Arundhati Roy, *Power Politics* (Cambridge: South End Press, 2001), 36, 41.

invented? We never know, but Roy deploys these gratuitous fictions as objects of disdain, as if a marrowy physiognomy and a North American accent—rather than policy—were the true affront. Her writing will be discussed at greater length below in chapter 5 in relation to the anti-Americanism of the movement against globalization.

At this point, however, the concern is less Roy's more elaborate ideology than the fact that she is celebrated in the anti-American press and what this tells us about the ideology of anti-Americanism. For example, in the opening of her essay on "Mesopotamia," of April 2, 2003, in the *Manchester Guardian*, she conjures up the "adolescent American soldiers [who] scrawl colorful messages in childish handwritings" on missiles, and she dwells with a sort of lascivious interest on one private she saw in a CNN interview who "stuck his teenage tongue all the way down to the end of his chin." Her point is hardly sympathy with these "teenagers" who find themselves in a war—a plausible antiwar stance, concern for young people pulled into battlefield danger—but rather an explicit contempt for Americans, described as infantile, and their silly teenage behavior: this, she suggests, is the face of the enemy. What she subsequently musters as pseudoargument in the course of her diatribe is only secondary to the imagistic vilification of the opponent, classical propaganda, couched in a rhetoric tailored for a European audience: Americans are unmannered and have poor penmanship. The Indian author appeals to the elitism of European anti-Americanism that sees Americans as lacking culture.

Her focus on the motif of penmanship—irrelevant to policy substance but loaded as a cultural stereotype—is symptomatic of the role of anti-Americanism in the mainstream European press. A critique of Iraq policy is surely possible, but there is a surplus here that goes beyond the ostensible political substance.

It is apparently not the policy but the poor manners that matter. It is not the war that is the offense but the Americans themselves who are the real provocation to Roy's sensibility and to that of her readers. Opposition to the war in Iraq is ultimately therefore interchangeable with opposition to all the other aspects of American foreign policy. Opposition to the war does not lead to anti-Americanism; rather anti-Americanism, the primary affect, elicits opposition to the war. Iraq is really just one more item on a party platform. If pushed, the anti-Americans might concede that Saddam, the Taliban, and Milosevic were not particularly laudable (although we should not underestimate the degree of pro-Saddam sympathy, especially in France), but they only became issues because of that American foreign policy. Or to parse this even more closely: it is not what Americans do—since, in the end, most would be hard put to defend Milosevic, Saddam, and the rest—but the fact that it is Americans who act and not Europeans. It is therefore not European pacifism, a principled opposition to violence, that brings out the anti-American demonstrators but European passivity and an appeasement mentality that recoils at the American ability for action. The particular terrain where the action takes place becomes irrelevant. For the anti-American mind-set, the world—Iraq, Afghanistan, the Balkans—is always only a pretext, an emptied space, a blank sheet on which it tries to scrawl its own childish message: childish because incapable of political action.

What provokes the anti-American is American activism: not that America plays a particular role in the world but that it is in the world at all. Whatever the American action, the anti-American denounces it, particularly when the action is couched in a policy of defending the freedom to act, which in turn implies a set of democratic values. The absence of freedom in particular locales—Iraq, Afghanistan, the Balkans—is typically of concern

only for tiny nongovernmental organizations, not for mass protest movements, except when the United States intervenes. There were never mass demonstrations in Paris, Berlin, or Barcelona against Milosevic, the Taliban, or Saddam. There were never demonstrations for regime change. The mass protest movement only emerged when the authoritarian regime was challenged by the forces of democracy. Before the war, Iraq was noticed only because of the sanctions policy—an evil attributed to the United States—and never because of the regime's character. In the context of the war, however, the anti-American movement finds itself objectively, and often enough explicitly, on the side of a dictator whom it had failed to criticize earlier; and it is therefore even more scandalized by the American invocation of democracy. The historical record shows that mass demonstrations in Western Europe in the twentieth century more often than not have involved direct or indirect support for authoritarian leaders in order to oppose the United States.

This is an embarrassing political problem for the anti-American movement that pretends to be progressive but keeps waking up in bed with dictators. It shows willingness if not to celebrate, at least to tolerate, authoritarian regimes, no matter how brutal, in order to refrain from any association with capitalism, no matter how democratic. Any statism seems better than freedom if freedom means a free market. This willingness to rally around dictators and ignore the suffering in totalitarian regimes is an extraordinary feature of the political culture of Western Europe. Even after the demise of Communism, the Communist taboos hold sway, as does its irreparably damaged political culture. To be sure, anti-Americanism today is not primarily a matter of old-style Communism, but it is still stuck in the political culture of the Communist age. Old habits die hard. In fact, the moral hypocrisy of the anti-American movement

remains hopelessly trapped in the classic scenario of political blackmail that defined the limits of criticism in the century of totalitarianism. The traumatic scene of the Hitler-Stalin pact—the willingness of the Left to fall in line and oppose prospects for an antifascist war—continues to cast a long shadow on the possibility of political protest. It still promotes the sorry political formula: tolerance for an authoritarian peace, opposition to a democratic war. Hence the willingness to oppose regime change in Iraq: better to side, objectively, with Saddam Hussein than to support the American initiative for liberation. Peace at any price.

Brecht

This remarkable willingness to side with miserable regimes in order to avoid supporting the democracy of the United States repeats the pattern of the left in the years 1939 to 1941: the willingness to sacrifice substantive principles in the name of political expediency. It is useful therefore to turn back to that historical moment to see how one author in particular, the playwright Bertolt Brecht—a Marxist, close to the Communist movement, and an exile from Hitler's Germany—viewed the political situation. Since he had every reason to fear the Nazi regime, the peace between the two totalitarian dictatorships could hold no appeal for him, despite his own Communist sympathies. Nonetheless, he had to overcome many predispositions, the political correctness of his day, before recognizing the possibility that the West—Western capitalist democracies and Great Britain in particular—was ultimately worth supporting as a potential opponent to Hitler.

For a brief moment, the Marxist Brecht caught a glimpse of how capitalist democracy represented a more plausible opponent to Nazi totalitarianism than did the Communism of Stalin-

ist Russia. In two passages in his journals, he managed to work his way out of the politically correct Stalinist antiwar stance, the toleration for repressive peace, and came to advocate the democratic war. Despite his standard leftist starting points—anticapitalist, antibourgeois, antinationalist, and antiwar—he was ultimately able to comprehend how a willingness to wage war, to celebrate national identity, and to cultivate patriotism were desirable, at least in the context of patriotism within a democracy and a war against fascism. To do so, to recognize where the best hope lay for fighting Hitler, required a profound shift in his political instinct to reject war as such. He had to venture out of the ideological confines of Communism and its abstract idealism to embrace instead the vision of a heroic engagement in the drama of struggle. In order to fight for freedom, he had to escape from dogma. Brecht's successful, albeit brief, political opening provides a standard with which we can measure the ideological character of anti-Americanism.

In Scandinavian exile from Hitler's Germany, Brecht watched Europe collapse: "france fell at the maginot line, that underground 5-storey hotel, what an embodiment of parasitical french capital investment!" (journal entry of June 28, 1940).⁵ After the French capitulation, would England fight? Brecht had his doubts, in the context of the Hitler-Stalin pact and the Communist opposition to war. In fact, Brecht had his own inclinations to oppose both militarism and nationalism. After all, he had begun his writing career as a schoolboy during the First World War with an attack on the Roman poet Horace's *dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*, the famous verse declaring that it is sweet and honorable to die for one's homeland, and he was him-

5. Bertolt Brecht, *Journals 1934–1955*, trans. Hugh Rorrison (New York: Routledge, 1996), 71.

self the author of the fiercely antiwar poem "Legend of the Dead Soldier." Having witnessed the devastation that the First World War caused to Germany, especially to his generation, Brecht was inclined to an antiwar position and, even in the changed circumstances of 1940, he was an unlikely candidate to endorse the mission of the English army. Yet despite his pacifist leanings and despite the Stalinist tilt against war and against the Western democracies through the pact with Hitler, Brecht began to explore the prospect for British participation in a possible democratic war, even before the fall of France. These explorations involve two key points where war and literature overlap.

Throughout Brecht's oeuvre, the Anglo-American world carries negative associations of capitalism and crime, from the London of *The Threepenny Opera* to the Chicago of *Arturo Ui*, and of course the elegiac poetry of the exile years in Hollywood. These same terms of disparagement continue in contemporary anti-Americanism, so Brecht's coming to grips with England can be taken as an alternative resolution of some of the same cultural problems: Brecht could come to embrace democratic England as a force against Hitler in a way that today's anti-Americans refuse to support the United States in the war against Saddam Hussein. Of course, Brecht, who cultivated a tough-guy image, felt some affinity with the masculine brutality that he associated with England, but this predisposition stood increasingly under the ideological censor of standard anti-militarism and Communist dogma. Trying to come to grips with England, however, he gradually overcame this resistance, at least partially.

In order to understand England, the writer Brecht, not surprisingly, read literature and history. In a remarkable journal entry of February 2, 1940, he reports on his reading Thomas Macaulay's essay on the early eighteenth-century poet Joseph Addison. It is here that Brecht encounters the liberal revolution-

ary England, in the wake of the Glorious Revolution of 1688, with its burgeoning public sphere in which literature took on a prominent role. As Macaulay put it, “Now the press was free, and had begun to exercise unprecedented influence on the public mind. Parliament met annually and sat long. The chief power in the State had passed to the House of Commons. At such a conjuncture, it was natural that literary and oratorical talents should rise in value.”⁶ It is hardly surprising that Brecht, the advocate of an engaged literature and a political theater, would find this cultural model appealing, in contrast to what Macaulay disparaged as the “servile literature of France,”⁷ with its deep dependence on the power of the monarchy. Brecht concludes that English literature is strong “because a national life existed and the bourgeoisie came to power at an early stage”⁸—in contrast to German backwardness, without nationhood and without a national market. In other words, Brecht attributes the success of British literature to the vitality of nationhood and the energy of the market economy of the “bourgeoisie.” Those are certainly not the typical values associated with communism, and the Marxist Brecht immediately glosses his own remark with an expression of surprise and despair: “what criteria!” At odds with his past, he finds himself compelled to reconcile his admiration for the English cultural achievement with an initial distaste for the precondition of that same cultural success: liberal capitalism. For it is precisely that market-based political economy that supported the culture that—Brecht reports—promoted technological progress and an empirical worldview and epistemology:

6. Thomas Babington Macaulay, “The Life and Writings of Addison,” in Macaulay, *Essays on Milton and Addison* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1900), 112.

7. *Ibid.*, 115.

8. Brecht, *Journals 1934–1955*, 69.

German literature, he complains, is backward and idealistic, whereas British literature is up-to-date and engaged in the materiality of the real world.

Brecht then proceeds to draw these points from the critical debate on Addison's poem "Campaign," which celebrated the Duke of Marlborough's defeat of the French and Bavarian armies on August 13, 1704, at the Battle of Blenheim, a turning point in the War of Spanish Succession. The more literary his argument gets, the more pertinent it is for an analysis of political ideology. Thus, Brecht reports on how Dr. Johnson applauded Addison's use of concrete metaphors as exemplifying the advantage of the particular over the general: instead of bland generalizations or abstract connections, the comparisons are apt and grounded in reality. For Brecht, this concreteness of Addison's language and thought is tied to a model of heroic individualism: the hero who acts in the real world, instead of losing himself in cloudy vagueness. Addison's praise poem of Marlborough's military success is therefore simultaneously a celebration of the individualism of British liberty over the continental servitude of the absolutist French state. To cite Addison on Marlborough's army:

. . . with native freedom brave
The meanest Briton scorns the highest slave.⁹

For Brecht reading Macaulay reading Addison, the eighteenth-century battle of modern Britain against monarchist France represents a precedent for what Brecht hopes would ensue: a campaign by Britain—and the United States—pursuing

9. Joseph Addison, "The Campaign, A Poem to His Grace the Duke of Marlborough, 1705," *The Penn State Archive of Samuel Johnson's Lives of the Poets*, ed. Kathleen Nulton Kemmerer, <http://www.hn.psu.edu/faculty/kkemmerer/poets/addison/campaign.htm>.

the values of liberty and freedom against the oppressiveness of the continent. German literature, in contrast, remains for Brecht effete idealistic and underdeveloped, fundamentally unable to compete with the cultural revolution unleashed by the liberalizing dynamism of England.

Yet Brecht remains hesitant: the values of freedom and capitalism, nationhood and military strength are tough medicine for him to swallow, burdened as he is with his Communist loyalties and Central European pessimism. However, the February journal entry on Macaulay still preceded the fall of France. Once the Germans were in Paris, suddenly the Nazi threat loomed much larger, and by August we find him struggling again with his own resistance and hesitations. He reports that he has “skimmed”¹⁰ Matthew Arnold’s edition of Wordsworth—his underlining the brevity of his reading betrays an embarrassment to have to admit that he has been reading this presumably conservative literature—but he pushes immediately to the conclusion that it is dangerous “to lay down the law,” which, in this context, means to condemn this literature as “petty bourgeois”: the dogmatic judgment his Marxist aesthetic would most likely have reserved for Wordsworth’s poem “She Was a Phantom of Delight.” In other words, Brecht is announcing that the standard Marxist ideological rejection is wrong.

As Robert Kaufman has shown, Brecht works out his own aesthetic agenda here;¹¹ but he is also working out a politics, a willingness to accept the progressive character of a democratic capitalist culture personified by the British citizen-soldier in wartime: “the individual petty bourgeois currently patrolling the

10. Brecht, *Journals 1934–1955*, 90.

11. Robert Kaufman, “Aura, Still,” *October*, no. 99 (Winter 2002), 73–74, note 46.

fields of england equipped with a shotgun and a molotov cocktail ('as used against tanks in the spanish civil war,' so a general assured us on the wireless)."¹² Whom does the Marxist Brecht celebrate here? It is not a mythic proletarian revolutionary or a Communist cadre but the really existing citizen of a capitalist bourgeois society, who, moreover, carries the emblem of the antifascist fight, a weapon from the Spanish Civil War. But if this democratic and capitalist society has, as Brecht insists, a claim on a poetry that can "conjure up situations more worthy of the human race," he has effectively retracted his youthful attack on Horace: it is, so it turns out in the summer of 1940, proper to fight for one's country, and poetry can provide sweet comfort. Brecht has moved from support for the repressive peace to approval of a war fought for democracy.

Brecht goes on to comment on the poem at hand, Wordsworth's "Phantom of Delight." He distances himself from Wordsworth's suggestion that art serves only "to haunt, to startle, and to waylay." While Wordsworth seems to suggest that a poem is only about romantic beauty, Brecht calls for poetry to do more. Nonetheless, his comments follow the movement of the poem, which makes its way from a ghostly "apparition" or "phantom" to the recognition of reality and then from reality to an affiliation of art and freedom, or in Wordsworth's words: "Her household motions, light and free, / And steps of virgin liberty." Tracing the movement of the ideal apparition to the material embodiment of lived life, Wordsworth's poem in fact even goes beyond Brecht's own materialism, beating him at his own game:—unless one reads Brecht's meditation on the urgency of poetry for the soldier in the field as a commentary

12. Brecht, *Journals 1934–1955*, 91.

on the poem's telos. It was, one can conclude, a Wordsworthian "virgin liberty" that had fought in Catalonia, and so Brecht hopes, the same spirit of liberty will rally to defend England. Making freedom real is the beautiful: an aesthetic proposition where Brecht and Wordsworth, the Communist and the romantic, overlap.

Brecht's engagement with English literature has multiple components: autonomy, aesthetics, individualism, the mercantile ethos of capitalism, and the heroic ethos of war. Facing the danger posed by the authoritarian state on the continent, Brecht turned to the alternative: the parliamentary England of Addison's day that challenged Bourbon domination of the continent around 1700, and, a century later, Wordsworth's England of 1800 that defeated Napoleonic imperialism. Would the English-speaking world similarly withstand the Nazi threat of Hitler's *Festung Europa*, "fortress Europe"? Analyzing the British culture that could support the democratic wars—the poetry of Addison and Wordsworth—Brecht comes to admire it, even if he would never make it fully his own. Nonetheless, for the moment of 1940 at least, he could overcome his illiberal predispositions and express esteem for the democratic petty bourgeoisie, hoping that British capitalism would be able to live up to its historical legacy and act against fascism. His admiration for the soldier in the field, radiant with the aura of Wordsworth and the legitimacy of antifascism, is the diametrical opposite of Roy's disdain for the democratic soldier, with his childish scrawl and bad manners. The passages show Brecht working toward a rapprochement with the liberal institutions of England and the emancipatory character of bourgeois, which is to say, capitalist, life: for this same substance, shifted to the United States, today's anti-American only has contempt.

Anti-Americanism: A European Ideology

Is anti-Americanism an endogenous formation, the consequence of internal European cultural processes, or does it reflect genuine differences between Europe and the United States? This chapter began exploring the first model, according to which the enemy is understood to be a retroactive construction, necessary for the constitution of an identity. It followed that anti-Americanism had little to do with reality, or with real conflicts, and much more to do with cultural traditions and stereotypes. Yet Brecht's reflections of 1940 suggest an alternative account. At a particular point in history, he was able to shift loyalties from one culture to another, from continental ideologies of dogma to British liberalism and liberty. For all his Central European illiberalism (which is shared by today's European anti-American movements), he nonetheless imagined a personal rapprochement with the enemy, the culture across the channel. Brecht, the son of Augsburg, accepted Marlborough's victory at Blenheim and all that that implied—parliamentary ascendancy, commercial culture, military prowess as a progressive force, and, ultimately, autonomy aesthetics. This was no longer a one-sided story but a clash of civilizations; on the one hand, a "servile literature,"¹³ associated with the authoritarian states of the continent, and on the other, a democratic civic life prepared to defend itself. Brecht locates this militant democracy in English culture; it is the same Anglo-American culture that is the target of the anti-American mentality.

Yet these two explanations seem to be mutually incompatible: either anti-Americanism is the product of its own internal ideological fantasies or it is the effect of real differences between

13. Macaulay, *Life and Writings of Addison*, 115.

Europe and the United States. The model of an animus driven by internal concerns and therefore characterized by the loss of external reality would presumably exclude the thesis of a real-world distinction between the cultures of the Atlantic and the continent, between commercial parliamentarianism on the one hand and regulatory regimes of state authority on the other. If there is indeed a conflict between these two orders—with social, cultural, and political implications—then it is less obvious that the animus is merely the expression of an independent instinct. So we face again the alternative between explanatory models for European anti-American hostility as either symmetrical or asymmetrical.

When anti-Americanism claims to be a response to specific American policies, it fits the dramatic model: policy conflict produces hostility. Yet, as we have seen, this self-presentation in fact typically invokes American policy only as a pretext. Too many features of anti-Americanism as a rhetorical and cultural phenomenon call this dramatic explanation into question. At best, it dwindles into a matter of lyric drama, just so much fantasy and fairy tale. In this sense, it is telling that European anti-Americanism succumbs repeatedly to its own tales of Arabian nights: the warning that American policy will ignite the “Arab street” with unforeseeable consequences. Yet this fiction has always proven itself a projection, a European desire staged as a fantasy against an Orientalist backdrop. The real issue of anti-Americanism is not the Arab street but the streets of Paris and Berlin and, in particular, their masquerading in exotic costumes as if they were the “Arab street.” Far from toppling states in Jordan or Pakistan, the street demonstrations have only strengthened regimes in France and Germany; indeed the anti-American marches in Europe have in effect just been large progovernment rallies. The animosity toward the United States can be projected onto the

rest of the world because for the anti-American the world has been emptied of meaning. The appeal to the Arab street involves no empathy with the Arab world; on the contrary, that street is only invoked in order to manipulate its image to carry out a European agenda, rather than to address an American policy.

This anti-Americanism has little to do with specific American policies. It is not about changing American action in the Arab world but about distinguishing Europe from the United States—that is, inventing a European identity as an alternative to the United States. This anti-Americanism is therefore indeed endogenous (a matter of European identity formation) and, ultimately, prepolitical (i.e., primarily cultural) as further shown by the inconsistencies in the local form it takes in different venues. If the point were a reasoned opposition to a specific policy, then one would expect the same argument to be made in different European countries. Instead, the mentality involves considerable local variation. In Germany, one finds the plethora of metaphors designed to exculpate the German past: Bush as Hitler, the bombing of Baghdad as the bombing of Dresden, the attack on the World Trade Center as the burning of the Reichstag. These displacements in fact tell us little about the United States, but they indicate a disturbed relationship to the troubled German past and a desire to resolve it through the expression of animosity. These metaphors make little sense elsewhere. In France, in contrast, a much more pronounced antisemitism contributes to the movement culture, including physical violence, in ways (for various reasons) less likely in other European countries. In addition, the French imperative to position itself against the United States has to do with its own history and its fantasies about a lost world-power standing (the same power, after all, that Marlborough defeated at Blenheim).

Yet none of this has much to do with American policies. The

real goal is a European identity. Beyond the fantasies or the caricatures, we should look at the various components of real anti-Americanism, its political categories, to understand how it plays a role in the invention of a unified Europe: anti-Americanism as a European fantasy exercise. However, at the same time, and beyond local national variations, this unified Europe, which is coming into shape precisely under the ideological umbrella of anti-Americanism, does represent a real-world alternative and is, objectively, in a fundamental and exogenous conflict with the United States. There is a drama, so to speak, a polar opposition, between the United States and Europe, but it is one that the anti-Americans barely comprehend. The anti-American mass movement that opposes the United States understands itself as a progressive force in history and points an accusatory finger, therefore, to the pacts with the devil that the United States made in the cold war. (Its prepolitical moralism precludes its facing up to the difficult complexities of a lesser-of-two-evils choice.) However, the Soviet empire is gone now, the cold war is over; and the United States has shifted aggressively to a foreign policy of liberalization, a fundamental challenge to authoritarian regimes, and, in a deep historical sense, a return to the principles that underlay the rational freedom of Addison, whom Brecht could so appreciate. It is that liberalization that emergent Europe resists: no regime change, ever. Anti-Americanism is the ideology of maintaining the status quo while also providing a foil against which Europe can define itself.

Anti-Americanism has emerged as an ideology available to form a postnational European identity. In that sense, it is endogenous: not a response to an outside threat but an aspect of European political and cultural transformation. For the European Union to be credible, it has to carry some meaning and stand for more than a bureaucratic apparatus. Yet Europe has no ideal

content of its own; its failure to show leadership in the Balkans in the early 1990s—1992 was to have been the “year of Europe”—robbed it of the opportunity to define itself credibly through the values of human rights and democracy. It therefore has to define itself negatively, against outsiders, through the deployment of caricatured opponents. Anti-Americanism fills this ideological gap. In place of the nationalist anti-immigration mood of the 1990s, anti-Americanism permits a generalized European hostility toward the paradigmatic nation of immigrants. Europeans can therefore indulge in xenophobia without nationalism.

For individual European nations, the price of entry into a unified Europe is the gradual renunciation of national substance; this is a painful process, even in Germany, the country most eager to shed any remaining national legacy. This price includes a suppression of intra-European enmities. The European past is invoked as teaching that war must be avoided at all costs. Therefore: peace at any price, even repressive peace, and a prohibition on regime change, which was the common denominator between the governments and the European street. Anti-Americanism is the other side of the coin of appeasement. These are, moreover, not opportunistic positions but the necessary consequence of suppressing European nationhoods. As the irreversible transfer of authority to the supranational organizations of the European Union takes place, a deeply felt democracy deficit ensues. It is the direct result of the priority of regime (not to be changed) over nation (scheduled for elimination): more and more of European life is regulated by powers beyond electoral control or even public transparency. The political theorist Carl Schmitt long ago identified the process by which the power of democracies shifts increasingly into the undemocratic and arcane realms of closed committees and bureaucratic decision

making.¹⁴ Unified Europe is the prime example of this process. It has burgeoned into the generalized postnational and postdemocratic regime of multilateralism: government less by election and more by regulation. The international form of the same principle is represented by the United Nations (regarded by Europeans, strangely, as carrying some moral authority); domestically, it implies the bureaucratic social state and the regulated economy, impervious to reform.

Anti-Americanism, as the endogenous ideology formation necessary for European unification, does however ultimately confront an alternative—the United States—and enter into conflict with it. Both explanatory models hold. The objective substance of the conflict involves the opposition between multilateralism and unilateralism. Leaving aside the polemical points to be scored regarding Germany's unilateralism in prematurely opting out of an Iraq campaign (regardless of a potential U.N. decision) and similarly bracketing the character of the French role in the U.N. and the French abuse of this organization, one can nonetheless recognize that the choice between unilateralism and multilateralism points far beyond the technicalities of international relations. A difference between two fundamentally distinct cultural worldviews is at stake. Multilateralism involves, by definition, an infringement of individual prerogative and implies the deferral of responsibility to a regime of committees, which—as the political theorist Hannah Arendt would have put it—is a responsibility of no one. It has a consequence in domestic policy as well as international relations: the overcoming of egoism. The association of the United States with unilateralism, in contrast, involves a different notion of lib-

14. Cf. Carl Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, trans. Ellen Kennedy (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985).

erty, outside the state and outside the supracommunity. The European vitriol directed at the United States allows Europeans to enter the European community. It is however simultaneously—and dramatically—the expression of hostility to independence, both individual and national, and on a deeper cultural level, the distorted expression of the pain of having had to surrender local purviews to a supranational bureaucracy. Forced to renounce their particular pasts and their national instincts, Europeans condemn as archaic American nationhood, looking at it all the same with wistful jealousy. The enmity directed at the United States externalizes the pain of loss and protests against the unfairness: why has history permitted Americans to maintain a national identity, while Europeans feel compelled to surrender theirs? Mass demonstrations—much more a European form than an American—are the appropriate ritual for this identity loss, in which grief over one's fate is transformed into rage against another's fortune.

A different and better Europe, one that lived up to the best of its past and pursued its aspirations, might tell a different story. After all, it was once liberty that led the people, even in Paris. Instead, today, anti-Americanism serves as a peculiar social psychology, based on the collectivistic identity formation that provides an antireformist ideology for European unification. European anti-Americanism is the primary cultural and ideological substance for the otherwise only bureaucratic process of European unification. This was quite clear in German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder's election campaign: opposing American policy in Iraq was part of opposing *amerikanische Verhältnisse* (American conditions in general), meaning economic reform and deregulation. It remains to be seen whether Schroeder in Germany or the Chirac-Raffarin team in France will be able to cash in on their anti-American popularity in order to pass unpopular

economic reform. The more likely outcome is at best a minimally modified version of the status quo. The opposition to regime change is, in the final analysis, about preventing any change in the welfare-state regimes of Western Europe. Better indolence than independence.

Having probed the origins of European anti-Americanism as part of the identity formation of unified Europe, we can recognize the alternative models of the post-cold war world, which replace the myth of the Atlantic community of values. During the missile debate of the 1980s, Cornelius Castoriadis criticized the anti-NATO peace movement's willingness to subordinate all values to peace.¹⁵ Not all qualities of life should be sacrificed in order to maintain peace. The terrain is not much different in the context of the war on terror. A European predisposition to accept the status quo and to do nothing rather than to take risks, no matter how dire the situation, contrasts with an American predisposition to assert independence and insist on a responsibility to act, individually and as a nation. It is, however, ultimately not the American actions themselves but the European inability to act that provokes anti-American rage.

15. Cornelius Castoriadis, *Devant la guerre* (Paris: Fayard, 1981).