

Anti-Americanism and Its Themes

(Controversies between Europe and America)

By František Šebej

Aggressive and irrational anti-Americanism is the most disconcerting and most dangerous political and social phenomena in current post modern Europe. It not only endangers the connection between Europe and America but from inside it endangers directly the soul of the European civilisation.

1. Leftist roots

One of the thick roots of anti-Americanism is planted in the familiar soil of Marxism and its intellectually indestructible followers. Liberal America with its religion of individualism and free market is still red cloth to the eyes of the Left of any type.

“A bugaboo walks around the world and this bugaboo is America.” With this sentence Lee Harris starts his article dealing with intellectual roots of attacks on America published in the magazine Policy Review. “It is not the America that you may find in an atlas, it is not the America visitors may see. It is a mythical America that is the object of a new form of anti-Americanism.” It is the mythical America that Noah Chomsky has many times described as the main terrorist state of the world - by the way, he has done it absolutely scot-free because, in fact, America respects also his freedom to say dangerous and insulting nonsense. It is America who is responsible for all the evil in the world. It is America seen with hatred blurred eyes of Nobel Prize winner for literature Dario Fo, who allowed himself to be heard saying immediately after the 11th of September 2001 (as published in the New York Times): “Great speculators (of American capitalism) wallow in an economy that every year kills tens of millions people by poverty (in the third world) – so what is 20 000 dead in New York? No matter who committed this massacre (11 September), this violent act is a legitimate daughter of the culture of violence, hunger and inhuman exploitation.” It seems that even the Nobel Prize for literature does not work as a protective filter against the stupefying enticement of conspiratorial mentality. How, for heaven’s sake, does the American economy kill tens of millions of people every year? Well, Dario Fo is not, after all, the only important European intellectual who has sunk into such paranoid depths. Maybe, it is better to say that among European (and American) intellectuals, and particularly among those who have signed up to the Left (which is an absolute majority of them), the opposite is an exception. The conviction that it is America (that in fact usually has nothing to do with it) who is responsible for poverty in the majority of the third world countries when neither their corrupted and violent political elites, nor stupid economic experiments inspired by the export of communist ideas from the Soviet Union, must have come from somewhere. Lee Harris shows where from. Of course, it is a theory promoted by Marx’s followers and the theory is only a revised version of the original theory that blamed concrete domestic capitalists for the poverty of a nation. Harris says: “This is the bugaboo that walks around the world. In

fact, one may come to a belief that this America is a fundamental principle on which the current Left is being organized: to be against America means to be on the right side of history; to be in favour of America means to be on the wrong side.” Being on the right side of history is an old Marxist concept: history is ruled by iron laws.

Lee Harris mentions Paul Baran, an American Marxist economist of Polish origin, who is according to Harris, undoubtedly one of the originators of this world concept. In 1957 Baran published the book “Political Economy of Growth” in which he for the first time described supposed causal links between the prosperity of developed capitalist countries and poverty of the third world. It was a quite radical change in the formulation of Marx’s theory of impoverishment, the theory which obviously did not apply to the situation of the working class in rich capitalist countries. It is possible to say that Baran saved this theory of Marx by making it global – of course without providing any relevant proof. America is, of course, a personification of capitalism that is responsible for all this poverty. In 1974, Immanuel Wallerstein joined Paul Baran with his monumental study “Modern World System” that represents a statistical and historical elaboration of Baran’s thesis. The thesis of global impoverishment, that Harris calls a Baran-Wallerstein revision of classic Marxism, has lived its own obstinate life ever since and obscures the real picture of the world and reasons for its misery before the eyes of 40 thousand members of the intellectual class and through the media before the eyes of millions of people, who do not have time to read real statistics and analyze real data. A direct consequence of this thesis is a statement that America’s wealth has grown on the poverty of other countries. People believe this conspiratorial fallacy although it is obvious that the majority of the most desperate regions in the world like e.g. sub-Sahara Africa or North Korea where almost 2 million people have died because of hunger during the last decade have never had anything to do either with America or its capitalism or firms. All this phantasm ideology has been concentrated into the stupidity written by the pen of Nobel Prize holder Dario Fo, and by many others.

2. Good old Europe

The genealogy of anti-Americanism as a conspiratorial theory is much more complicated and some of its roots really lead to the European dark ages. In some places in good old Europe the theory substitutes an entire political program. French analyst Jean-François Revel wrote: “ If you take away anti-Americanism, there will be nothing left from today’s French political thinking, neither on the Left nor on the Right.” Professor of political science at the University of Virginia James W. Ceaser tried to find the roots of today’s anti-Americanism in his article published in the magazine Public Interest. According to him a “symbolic America” which has almost nothing in common with the real America was created ages ago. This symbolic America, which is an object of all the hatred and fears that resemble just a trivial xenophobic prejudice, was mostly created by “high-ranking” thinkers, very often by philosophers. Many of those who played a key role in revealing this symbolic America had never visited the real one and did not show much interest in it either. They even gave the world new words – “Americanisation” which is, in fact, a synonym for globalisation, only it is much darker. It turns out that the arguments of both anti-Americanism and Islamic fundamentalism have not at all

originated from the Koran but is fully the fruit of European thinking. It is the leasing of ideas, so to speak.

In Europe, the first phase of anti-Americanism was represented by a theory saying that America with its climate causes the degeneration of all living things, a decrease in stature, gradual stupidity and so on. Similar nonsense was made famous for instance by French biologist Count de Buffon, Cornelius Pauw and great encyclopaedist Abbe Raynal in the 18th century. This, understandably, did not hold with reality, it did not hold against American criticism – expressed by Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson who were the first two ambassadors of the United States to France – either. So came the period of rationalist illusions. America also irritated conservatives like Edmund Burke and Joseph de Maistre. They claimed that the entire Declaration of Independence altogether with fundamental human rights is based on incorrect presumptions. De Maistre even disproved the existence of “humanity” and the statement that “all people are created as equal”. Already at that time they accused America of dull materialism. The German poet Heinrich Heine called America “a giant prison of freedom” where “the greatest of all tyrannies, the tyranny of the masses exercises its brute force.” He was obviously a democrat.

Then there was the third historical stage of anti-Americanism that brought an accusation of race impurity. For people like Arthur de Gobineau, the spiritual father of European racism, the blending of the races was a way to a hell of mediocrity and inferiority. He claimed that the American universalistic idea of natural equality means “a democracy of blood” causing the demise of “a holy idea of race”. He also said that Europe disposes of its “waste” races (e.g. Slavs) and sends them to America where they crossbreed with Anglo-Saxons.

According to Caesar, the fourth phase of anti-Americanism was a rejection of “the empire of technology”. One of the first proponents of this prejudice was the philosopher Nietzsche. He hated mass production and its methods and considered American culture to be some kind of a disease long before Hollywood. Caesar writes that the last and final stage of the creation of the modern anti-Americanism concept was a contribution by the philosopher Martin Heidegger who was an existentialist having had a long love affair with Hitler’s Nazism. Heidegger offered a definition saying that “Americanism” (the German expression “Amerikanertum” was invented by Arthur Moeller Van der Bruck, better known as a promoter of the term “Third Reich”) is still “only developing and not a completely finished essence of surfacing monstrousness of modern times.” Heidegger considered America to be something “katastrophenhaft.” He considered Russia and America to be, in fact, the same and thrown into “unlimited et cetera of indifference and omnipresent sameness.” According to him the result was, in both countries, “an active strain that will destroy all qualities and every creative impulse in the world...this strain is what we call daemonic in the meaning of destructive evil.” The active Nazi Heidegger considered America to be a greater threat than Bolshevism. According to him it was possible to have a dialogue with Marxism but not with America because America does not mean anything for history. America simply means the destruction of the essence of Europe’s spirit. His affair with Nazism did not bury Heidegger intellectually. On the contrary, through the writings of Jean Paul Sartre his ideas betrothed intellectual

communism and created an intoxicating drink of anti-American conspiracy and anti-Semitism for the entire next generations of the European Left.

America is perceived by the majority of conspiratorial thinking Europe as a symbolic object, a myth created by a crowd of confused thinkers from Abbe Raynal through racist Gobineau to venerated philosopher Martin Heidegger. So, if today (yesterday) the former French minister of foreign affairs Hubert Védrine babbles about American “hyper power” and unilateralism and “simplicity” he is standing on the shoulders of giants. Giants of narrowness, giants of conspiratorial stupidity who helped to form the intellectual history of today’s Europe.

3. What the controversies are about

When we speak about European anti-Americanism, and also about today’s permanently growing anti-European moods in America, usually we have a specific controversy, or it is better to say a series of controversies in mind. A fundamentally opposite stance in any argument does not always mean a factually different opinion. Conflicts among people are often about a somehow materialised form of certain inner negative and often hostile predisposition that looks for and finds specific themes in opinions and deeds of the other person and chooses an opposite opinion automatically – and an argument starts. Negative relations simply surface and need to be expressed. Political arguments are almost always very personal arguments into which people get involved with the emotions that are usually reserved for lovers and relationships. Europe gave birth to America, lost her, then married her and started arguing again. She then put into her cradle an amazing legacy of thought which in Europe is almost forgotten, even though Europe now supplies America with new generations of those with rebellious hearts, and courage, who either run away from the violent history of European nations, or just try to escape the stifling provincial atmosphere. That is why Europe and America have a relationship like this. And that is exactly also why their arguments are so passionate. By this I did not mean to say that their arguments are always without subject matter and irrational. Only, that they are often like that.

I think that to illustrate the point it is enough just to go through themes of controversies between Europe and America in the past one or two decades. Maybe it will suffice if we mention only the themes of the 90s of the 20th century and the newest themes of controversies – even this is a quite impressive list: developments and solutions to conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, where one after another perversity, atrocity and ethnic cleansing in Croatia, then in Bosnia and finally in Kosovo appeared on the scene; the situation in the Near East and argument between Israel and Palestine; nullification of the Antiballistic Missile Treaty about antiballistic defence signed by the USA and the former Soviet Union; ratification of so-called Kyoto Protocol (about reduction in greenhouse gasses emission); ratification of a treaty about a ban on land mines; capital punishment; military action against the Taliban in Afghanistan; treatment of captured Taliban and al-Kaida fighters interned at the Guantanamo military base in Cuba; the International Criminal Court; military intervention intending the disarmament of Saddam Hussein’s regime in Iraq; developments in the global war against terrorism in general. There is probably no need to mention everyday mutual troubles regarding trade

policy – customs barriers, subventions, etc. Some of these controversies are not only controversies between an old and a new continent, between Europe and America, but they represent legitimate intra-American controversies. In my opinion, the deepest and the most painful (and permanent) theme of European-American controversy is the problem between Israel and Palestine. We can say that it is, first of all, an ideological controversy but at the same time it is also an ethic and moral controversy (in Europe it is being presented as a purely matter-of-fact argument although it is not) and therefore I perceive it as a feud for the soul. Therefore it is not quite appropriate to use Israel to illustrate the absurd character of European-American quarrels if you want to do it impartially. The most suitable are probably the argument regarding nullification of the Antiballistic Missile Treaty (ABM) and the argument regarding the International Criminal Court. These two disclose the psychology of European-American controversies without tearing open terrible wounds of European history.

There have only been a very few arguments during which politicians declared so willingly so much nonsense as was said in the argument about the demise of the ABM Treaty. Today the argument does not exist anymore because the subject matter – the ABM Treaty – died ingloriously. The ABM Treaty died silently on the 13th of June 2002, aged 30 years. What happened was what president Bush had announced to Russia, exactly in accordance with the treaty procedure, a half year before and which was accompanied by terrible shouting by a great many European politicians and journalists – the United States withdrew from the ABM Treaty. On this day, John J. Miller, a reporter from the magazine National Review, wrote an article and gave it the headline „ABM Treaty, RIP“ (rest in peace), with the subtitle “the world is a little less MAD” which is a pun involving two meanings of the word – crazy and MAD as an abbreviation made up by Donald Brennan from the Hudson Institute, a critic of the ABM Treaty. The abbreviation stands for the concept of Mutually Assured Destruction, the concept that he considered to be truly mad. The concept is really insane – in 1972 Russians and Americans came to an agreement that none of the parties would build a defence against ballistic nuclear warheads. They would stand one against another practically naked and defenceless, face to face with thousands of nuclear warheads on both sides, with the certainty that no matter who launches the first missile, both states (and the rest of the world with them) would be totally destroyed in the case of a nuclear conflict. This dark certitude should have guaranteed that none of the parties would ever, not even in a dream, assume the risk. But only if somebody did not go mad – which is something that we can never exclude – as history has proved many times. American president Ronald Reagan considered this concept to be abhorrent and senseless, in 1983 he presented an alternative: “What if free people could live safely knowing that their safety does not depend on the threat posed by immediate American response that should deter a Soviet attack, but it is based on the fact that we are able to hunt and destroy strategic ballistic missiles before they reach either our land or lands of our allies? Is this not worth any investment that is necessary to free the world from the nuclear war threat?” Those who remember know that the SDI project, i.e. building of antiballistic missile defence, along with similarly hated famous Pershing intermediate range ballistic missiles helped to bring communism down on its knees at the end. Two decades later, after the factual

demise of one of the treaty partners (U.S.S.R.) and in completely different circumstances, after dramatic improvement in relations between the East and the West, and after similarly dramatic reduction in the amount of immediately available nuclear warheads and missiles on both sides, some European allies of the USA, who had neither *de iure* nor *de facto* anything to do with the ABM Treaty, suddenly found out that the ABM Treaty is not a carcass from the cold war times, but a sacred and only guarantee for European and global safety. Some European politicians spoke again about American unilateralism, about the danger to global stability, about the ignorance as to European views, about provocation towards Russia and so on. Crowds of journalists pulled out absurd and common sense insulting comparisons of the American president and Hitler, they accused the president and all of America either of stupidity or bad intentions, or both at the same time. I will return to the arguments of those who were capable of matter-of-fact reservations later. It is also necessary to recall why the ABM Treaty was created and why it was signed by Nixon and Brezhnev in 1972.

There is no one who could explain it better than Henry Kissinger who was the secretary of state during Nixon's term of office and was asked by him to prepare the ABM Treaty. He recalls (in his book "Does America Need a Foreign Policy?") that in 1969 republican president Nixon came to office significantly disconcerted by the MAD concept that he seriously doubted, and in the same year he presented in the Congress a proposal concerning twelve bases that were supposed to provide protection from a limited attack coming from the Soviet Union, from attacks coming from new nuclear powers and from an accidental or unauthorised missile launch from any source. At that time the Russians were building and installing up to 200 new launchers for intercontinental ballistic missiles with nuclear warheads every year. The Congress ruled by democrats and to an extent neutralized by the war in Vietnam approved Nixon's plan with a majority of only one vote, and in the following years the Congress almost eliminated the whole plan by budgetary restrictions. The only money left was enough just for two bases and Nixon decided to save these two bases by the ABM Treaty (that, in its final wording, allowed having two bases). The Soviets, according to Kissinger, knew very well about the American domestic pressures put on Nixon and kept the talks about the reduction in strategic weapons going while building new launchers at feverish speed. Only in 1972, at the summit in Moscow did they agree to American demands to limit both offensive and defensive weapons at the same time. This is the basis of the ABM Treaty. Anxiety and fear from the end of the world became an untouchable institutional treaty in 1972. European and American opponents of antiballistic defence were saying practically the same as they are saying now, 30 years later. Neither today's young European enthusiasts on the anti-American and anti global battlefield (they were not even here at the time) nor the "Clinton-Schroeder-Fischer" leftist generation (this generation did not follow the fine nuances of foreign policy because they were intensively occupied with protests against America, the war in Vietnam, building barricades and throwing stones) do not have to be familiar with this story of the forced creation of the ABM Treaty, but French president Chirac certainly knows the story, he is older.

I know by heart the so called factual arguments of opponents of the cancellation of the ABM Treaty – I, personally, have heard them too many times from European leftist members of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. The arguments are the same as those

mentioned by Henry Kissinger: a) it is not possible to build a feasible defence system, b) even if yes, it would undermine a sacred strategic doctrine (MAD) and thus endanger the world, c) it would separate European defence from American defence and thus endanger Europe, d) it would endanger Russian – American relations and arouse an increase in the Russian armament process and reassessment of their peace intentions, e) it would arouse a general arms race and the proliferation of nuclear weapons and missiles (this was said by Chirac and Putin). The ABM Treaty has not been in force for more than six months and nothing of what was said has happened. It seems that it is possible to build a reliable system in the end. The sacred doctrine MAD is only an empty bubble and a memory of Stalin's and Brezhnev's empire. The world today is not being endangered by Russian and American nuclear ballistic missiles that the ABM Treaty dealt with, but by nuclear weapons from those countries that have never had anything to do with this treaty. Europe is safer than ever before especially thanks to the fall of communism, the crash of the Soviet empire and rapprochement between Russia and America. The conception that Europe will be safe only when America is defencelessly exposed to a nuclear attack coming from anywhere was weak-minded from the very beginning because a defenceless America would certainly have many reasons for not to risk burning her fingers if European allies are in danger. Relations with Russia have not been spoiled, in contrast – Russia, after obligatory rhetoric exercises, accepted the American withdrawal from the ABM Treaty quite calmly and now negotiates with America about a further decrease in the numbers of strategic nuclear weapons. The ones who now look like idiots are neither Russians nor Americans, it is the hysterical Europeans. Russians will not hesitate for a moment to abuse them in their strategic games that they play with Americans. The Russians knew exactly that currently feasible anti-missile system might stop only a few ballistic missiles – not the thousands that Russia has at its disposal. Therefore it could really be effective only against attacks with a few missiles from so called “naughty” states. And on the contrary - the states that have only recently started thinking about missile and nuclear technologies and dream about an opportunity to blackmail the West or America, have a lower motivation. Henry Kissinger also writes that these are the same idle arguments that appear on the European side with every new strategic doctrine of the USA. So, what is the résumé of this demurely forgotten controversy? Nothing but another aftertaste in the mouth that follows accusations and curse words. It does not seem that these mentioned politicians and journalist feel bad about it in particular. They are too absorbed by another theme in the fight against America.

The author is a foreign policy analyst, and an editor of the conservative weekly magazine *Týždeň* and co-worker of the Conservative Institute of M. R. Štefánik.

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