

Hating America

By Jamie Glazov

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Frontpage Magazine's

guest today is Prof. Paul Hollander, an expert on anti-Americanism and the author of two masterpiece works on the psychology of the Left: **Political Pilgrims** and **Anti-Americanism**. He is the editor of a new collection of essays by America's foremost scholars and thinkers, *Understanding Anti-Americanism: Its Origins and Impact at Home and Abroad* (*available in Frontpage's bookstore for the special offer of \$19.69*).

FP: Prof. Hollander, welcome to *Frontpage Interview*. It is a pleasure to have you with us. I have to also say that your work has played a large role in my own development and understanding of the Left. I am very grateful to you.

Hollander: Many thanks Jamie.

FP: First things first, let me congratulate you on the original essays written specifically for the volume. Your introduction examining the phenomenon in recent years and your suggestion for the reasons for its growth is especially profound and impressive.

So what motivated you to assemble this new collection of essays?

Hollander: I was considering to rewrite and revise my 1992 book on the same topic (following 9/11 and the new upsurge of global anti-Americanism), but instead I assembled this volume which could be done faster. Moreover I lack the expertise about particular regional varieties of anti-Americanism the contributors to the volume possess. I believed that this time it was important to focus on anti-Americanism abroad, which in fact is given more space in the volume than what I called "the domestic denunciations."

FP: How did you first become interested in anti-Americanism?

Hollander: I think it was an outgrowth of the book **POLITICAL PILGRIMS** which focused on the (pro-communist) political illusions of Western intellectuals stimulated by a mixture of anti-capitalism, anti-Americanism, disappointment with modernity and with the inability of the U.S. to measure up to the very high expectations it has always stimulated at home and abroad. A very idealistic society invites criticism since these ideals cannot be realized or very imperfectly.

FP: Have any of your views changed about anti-Americanism since your first book on the subject came out in 1992?

Hollander: My basic views have not changed but I certainly did not expect the intensification of Arab-Islamic anti-Americanism and the murderous forms it has taken in the last few years. Such fanaticism is quite unique historically -- I am thinking in particular of the willingness to self-destruct in order to maximise the killing of others, all of which is motivated in part by highly irrational religious beliefs (the other worldly rewards, short cut to paradise, etc)

FP: Arab-Islamic anti-Americanism is a hatred of temptation. The Arab-Islamic world represses and demonizes women and female sexuality – and myriad other pleasures that come with life. Sex and love are seen within the context of “group defense,” not through the lens of individuals pursuing their personal and individual desires. The entire culture is based on subjugating the individual, whereas America represents the exact opposite.

J.Lo, Mariah Carey and Britney Spears doing what they do on American television is a major threat to this culture. It is freedom, and freedom of the female on every level. The Arab-Islamic world must wage war on the culture that produces this temptation because it cannot allow itself to succumb to the love of life, appreciation of pleasure and the allowance of women doing what they want with their lives -- and with their sexuality. It cannot allow the exercise of free will by individuals engaged in the pursuit of personal happiness.

What is your slant on this? Do you agree with these themes?

Hollander: The liberation of women in Western societies and especially the U.S. is a part of modernity detested in the Arab-Islamic world. They also associate it with hedonism, decadence and pornography. The autonomy of women flies in the face of these traditions, it also part of Western individualism, similarly detested.

FP: Your work has shown that there are many different types of anti-Americanism, and that a lot of them contradict one another. Tell us a little bit about this.

Hollander: Anti-Americanism is an all purpose remedy or response to a wide range of grievances and frustrations (to be distinguished from rational and specific critiques of U.S. policies, needless to say).

Most of these contradictions have to do with a love-hate relationship to modernity.

Many people around the world crave modernity but once it becomes clear that some of its fruits or by products are problematic, they turn on the U.S. -- the major representative of modernity.

People also love American mass culture and despise it (intellectuals in particular, not the same people who consume it voraciously).

Some people blame the U.S. for throwing around its weight (globally) others for not doing enough good around the world. Everybody wants to have higher standards of living but many fail to recognize that this requires higher degrees of industrialization and productivity which impinge on the environment, plus capitalism which has proved far more productive than the varieties of socialism attempted.

The major contradiction is that millions of people want and try to come to this much vilified country from every corner of the world. At the same time few of the most embittered domestic critics would consider moving abroad to get away from all this evil, as they see it. (Gore Vidal is an exception, having denounced the U.S. from Italy, through much of his life).

FP: What are some differences between domestic and foreign anti-Americanism?

Hollander: On the whole foreign anti-Americanism is more rational because it often is associated with genuine nationalistic grievances as in Latin America - although they may be ancient like Mexico's loss of territory to the U.S.

The penetration of American mass culture (popular as it may be) is another more understandable concern since it does undermine indigenous culture and art. American fast food replacing local cuisine may also be resented by some but in all these cases imports from the U.S. are eagerly received and consumed, not forced upon the masses, these things are part of the package of modernization.

Domestic anti-Americanism is much more limited to intellectuals and elites than the foreign versions although intellectuals are everywhere in the forefront.

I think the major source of domestic anti-Americanism is the disappointment and bitterness over the failure of American society to attain its highest ideals, and promises, or the imperfect, partial realization of these ideals. American society from its beginnings stimulated unrealistically high expectations of personal happiness and fulfilment and social harmony; in particular it promised to combine freedom and equality which is not possible.

Much of American anti-Americanism got started, or was given an enormous boost in the protest movements of the 60s. Antiwar protest rapidly blossomed into a comprehensive rejection of American society. Domestic anti-Americanism could also be associated with the loss of meaning in an increasingly secular society (I know all about high church attendance and results of opinion polls about belief in heaven and hell, but this still is a largely secular society, religious institutions themselves have become increasingly secular and less spiritual)

FP: What are some of the major misconceptions about anti-Americanism?

Hollander: That it is a rational, justified response to wrongheaded American foreign policy or domestic failings. As I noted before one can be critical of many things in both foreign and domestic policies without being or becoming anti-American. Anti-Americanism is a sweeping, generalized rejection, a disposition that only partially depends on the actual wrongs the U.S. perpetrates.

FP: So how can one separate anti-Americanism from justified critiques?

Hollander: This is sometimes difficult because justified critiques merge, or converge with the anti-American disposition which is not fully rational. I may object to the energy and environmental policies of the Bush administration but it need not lead me to the conclusion that this is the most evil, unjust, wasteful society that ever existed. Others predisposed to anti-Americanism seize on such policies because they confirm their predisposition. The same with the personality of our current president seen as the incarnation of everything wrong with American culture and society. It is possible to be quite critical of him without such conclusions to be drawn.

The interesting question is: where does the anti-American predisposition comes from? I think (as I also noted before) much of it derives from a general and universal scape-goating impulse, from the relief we all feel when we can shift responsibility for our misfortunes to some outside entity or force. The choice of such entities depends on many historical-social and cultural conditions.

There is also anger that American society doesn't meet the need for meaning and community (this

applies to domestic anti-Americanism). Abroad it is mostly the hostility or ambivalence about modernity that feeds anti-Americanism (the U.S. being the major incarnation of modernity). Then there is of late the single super power status that makes the U.S. a plausible target as do the great wealth and visibility. Envy (abroad) plays a part too.

FP: Give us some examples of major figures representing anti-Americanism. Tell us, for instance, your thoughts on Michael Moore and Noam Chomsky.

Hollander: Certainly Chomsky is a fine example the purest representative of domestic anti-Americanism. He makes it clear, time and again, that he considers the U.S. the most uniquely evil society; almost by definition the wrongs committed by the U.S. are magnified and elevated.

For instance, of late he said that the American attack on the chemical factory in Sudan was a greater moral outrage than 9/11 -- or something to that effect. He also compared the U.S. to Nazi Germany, called it the foremost or greatest terrorist state etc.

He acts as if his views on the U.S. are self evidently true and expresses surprise if someone disagrees. Moreover, he has been at it non-stop since the 1960s, totally consumed, obsessed by it, endlessly repeats himself, this is all he has to say, that this is the most evil, inhumane, immoral system or society. People sharing his views but incapable of expressing it with the same level of fluency gravitate to him; his enthusiastic audiences confirm his beliefs. I don't know where it all comes from. He hates Israel just as much.

Michael Moore is a somewhat different case; first of all he is not an academic intellectual, doesn't come from an adversary subculture. His hatred of American society is not quite as intense as Chomsky's, but similarly visceral. He too gets plenty of sub-cultural support among the Hollywood celebrities and also reaps abundant material rewards.

Gore Vidal, Edward Said and Ramsey Clark are other examples of this kind of pure, visceral anti-Americanism. Abroad we see individuals such as Harold Pinter and Guenter Grass.

FP: Has there been an increase in anti-Americanism in the last few years? If so why?

Hollander: There has been. Due to the sole super power status, greater military-political assertiveness following 9/11, the linkage of anti-Americanism to anti-globalism (new version of anti-capitalism) and Islamic anti-Americanism. The European Union became more competitive, economically-politically. The personality of George Bush too attracts anti-Americanism, as do some of his policies.

FP: What is the future of anti-Americanism?

Hollander: It will be with us in the foreseeable future unless the U.S. ceases to be a super power, the major incarnation of modernity, a producer of mass culture and thus the most plausible target for all sorts of grievances discussed above. Particular forms or geographic locations may change.

Let me also add that the likely persistence of anti-Americanism will also, in all probability, be accompanied by the spectacle of millions seeking admission to this much maligned society. This is the great paradox of anti-Americanism: never in history has a society been so widely vilified while at the

same time attracting millions from every corner of the world.

FP: Prof. Hollander, our time is up. It was a pleasure to speak with you. We'll see you again soon.

Hollander: Thank you Jamie.

* Paul Hollander's *Understanding Anti-Americanism* is *available in Frontpage's bookstore for the special offer of \$19.69.*

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