

Anti-Americanism Abroad

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The stereotypical image of "the hated American abroad" is a worn-out image in novels, television and movies. Perhaps the best known of these brash caricatures is "the Unsinkable" Molly Brown. This "new-moneyed" wife of an American industrialist created lasting impressions on the more cultured European elite before becoming a heroine when the *Titanic* sank to the bottom of the North Atlantic.

This caricature has its roots in fact. Europeans, especially, consider Americans to be loud, obnoxious, uncultured, greedy, uninformed, violent, and a host of other negative characteristics. Some of these are generally true when measured against accepted standards of decorum on the Continent. Add to the mix that Americans often flaunt and spend large amounts of money during their European vacations, and one can see how foreign citizens take a dim view of Yanks.

We have our admirable qualities. We are good in a pinch, especially when no one else is around to help. We are very generous with our money, our aid, our research, our arms and our ideas. We manufacture interesting gadgets and export much of what the world views as entertainment. However, these pluses are not enough to cancel out the minuses—not by a long shot!

The problem is that the United States is just too powerful and wealthy and that Americans know it and make sure everyone else knows it too. On this side of the Atlantic, such an attitude is thought to be "self-confidence," while many "over there" see it as pure arrogance. Were the U.S. to do anything with snow-white motives, the rest of the world would consider it an American ploy to gain more power, wealth or prestige over them. A sole superpower can do nothing right.

Though the hated-American image has been in circulation for decades, the end of the Cold War has brought it back into sharp focus. The Clinton Administration has only aggravated matters by its persistent ability to turn easy victories into prolonged fiascoes. Acting on pragmatism instead of principle, the U.S. or U.S.-led coalitions have turned international police-keeping forces into the Keystone Cops in Iraq, Serbia, Indonesia, and wherever else they have been deployed. Foreigners view this, not with amusement, but with disdain.

Such an antagonistic attitude has prophetic implications. God prophesies that the Beast power, symbolized by ancient Assyria, will conquer the nations of Israel, currently led by America (Isaiah 10:5-11). *Something* must ignite their hatred and desire to destroy. What is more satisfying to the carnal mind than to slap down the arrogant bully?

If this is the case, America is walking into an ambush. Recent events abroad are exposing mounting anti-American attitudes, and it cannot be long before such attitudes become actions.

U.S. the "Hyperpower"

Several examples of anti-Americanism surfaced in Davos, Switzerland, during the World Economic Forum's annual meeting. Delegates frequently spoke of their resentment toward America's overwhelming preponderance in military, economic and technical spheres. French Foreign Minister

Hubert Vedrine called America "the Hyper-power" to accentuate his negative remarks about the United States' global dominance in vital economic and political areas.

On the Saturday during the Forum, a group of protesters tried to storm the conference center. They claimed they were demonstrating against globalization, but it became clear that their main target was America when, their march foiled, they resorted to attacking the local McDonald's restaurant.

As is typical, the American delegation to the Forum defended American interests and actions rather than make concessions or attempt conciliation. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright struck back at America's critics, warning that if they continued, the U.S. would take its ball and go home. "It's very strange," she said. "The U.S. did not ask to be the only superpower. But when we were not on the international stage, in the Twenties and Thirties, our absence was a huge vacuum that led to great horrors. . . . [America] is at a very delicate period. A lot of Americans would rather pack up and go home."

Adding to the poor impression was the attendance of nearly a thousand American businessmen and women parading their successes and telling the rest of the world how to follow their example. President Bill Clinton's arrival only emphasized "American triumphalism," as London's *Daily Telegraph* opined on January 31. His huge retinue—his staff, five cabinet members and their staffs, as well as dozens of Secret Service men—took over the town, "forcing delegates to trudge for miles through the snow to get to lunches and brainstorming sessions." Europeans felt like peasants in their own homes.

In the grand scheme of world events, the snobbery and sniping at the World Economic Forum may be insignificant, but it illustrates a larger trend. Partly because of America's position and partly because of her people's condescending attitude toward those of other nations, anti-American feeling is rising. Unless one or the other of these factors changes, the feeling can only grow more heated.

Enemy Attacks?

We would expect antagonism from our enemies, but officially, America does not have any. The obvious suspects—Russia, China, Iran, Iraq, North Korea—are all involved in a love-hate relationship with the United States to some degree. Even Iraq, having survived ten years of American military siege and occasional intrusions, is not overly anxious for the U.S. to recall its jets and personnel. Saddam Hussein finds the American presence helpful in generating international sympathy and aid for his regime. His subjects burn an American flag or an effigy of Clinton on occasion, and this only boosts Hussein's internal popularity, prestige and strength.

While hardline Iranian clerics still decry America as the "Great Satan," more moderate reformers have made solid gains in recent elections. Under them, Iran has begun to take a more active and benign role on the world stage, even interdicting ships smuggling out Iraqi oil through the Persian Gulf, thus supporting the U.S.-led U.N. sanctions on Iraqi oil exports. It has also cut back on its support of international terrorism to distance itself from its "rogue nation" reputation. With a weakened Russia to its north, Iran must at least play friendly with the world's sole superpower because of America's dominance in Middle Eastern affairs.

Under newly elected President Vladimir Putin, Russia walks a fine line between their need for dollars and its desire to oppose the U.S. at every turn. Like many other nations, Russia feels that America wants to dominate the world, and her leaders believe only they can stop the onslaught. Putin's views

coordinate with the Communist speaker of the Duma, Gennady Seleznyov, who blasted the recent visit of Secretary Albright to several former Russian republics in Central Asia, saying, "As soon as links weaken, they [the Americans] show up. Their principle is to divide and rule. And that's how it will be in the 21st century." Powerless to do anything but shake a fist in rage, Russia's leadership holds an olive branch in the other hand, hoping their deprecations of U.S. dominance do not lead to cutbacks in aid.

North Korea, long a pariah state, is actually attempting to normalize relations with its capitalist sister, South Korea, brokered by the U.S. and China. Too long left to itself, North Korea needs more help than China can give it, and it hopes that generous aid from the other Korea, backed by America, will get it back on its feet. It may even make concessions on its weapons research and development in exchange for aid. However, it will still align itself politically with its bigger and more powerful neighbor to the west, China.

The People's Republic of China may be the most anti-American nation on earth. It has dreams of becoming a superpower, and until the Asian economic crisis, its dreams had substance. Now that its economic engine has slowed, it finds American opposition everywhere it turns: Taiwan, Japan, India, Tibet, Kosovo, human rights, weapons, technology, trade, and many other areas of international concern. Its leaders have taken to giving venomous speeches against "American imperialism" and "Western [read "American"] conspiracies" to ruin China. However, like the Russians, the Chinese do not want to go too far. They are in no position, particularly militarily and economically, to take on Uncle Sam.

Strange as it seems, the nations that most frequently oppose America are somewhat muted in their hatred. Ironically, the most vocally anti-American nations are among her European allies, specifically France.

With Friends Like These . . .

In its Sunday, April 9, 2000, edition, *The Charlotte Observer* reran a *New York Times* article titled "Europe sees little to admire in U.S." by Suzanne Daley. The article's theme comes as a quotation of Noel Mamere, a member of the French Parliament: "[At this moment,] it is appropriate to be downright anti-American." Mamere has recently written a book on the subject: *No Thanks, Uncle Sam*

Among the items he lists to prove America to be unworthy of trust or emulation are its profit-driven economy, its vast numbers of armed citizens, its 38 states that enforce the death penalty, its rejection of socialized medicine, and its failure to ratify the nuclear test ban treaty. Even with these "deficiencies," America has the hubris to dictate international policies and bid the world follow its example in government, economics and culture.

Mamere is not alone in his assessment. Many members of Europe's political, intellectual and cultural elite deplore the American model. A European bookstore might sell any or all of these recent offerings: *The World Is Not Merchandise*; *Who Is Killing France?* *The American Strategy*; and *American Totalitarianism*. With publications like these in circulation, writes Daley, it is no wonder that "more and more often, Europeans talk about America as a menacing, even dangerous force intent on remaking the world in its image."

For instance, most Americans saw the U.S.-led NATO involvement in Kosovo as helping Europe purge human rights abuses from its back porch. Europeans, however, considered it blatant manipulation of NATO to further U.S. interests at the expense of a sovereign nation. That American air power dominated the sorties only heightened the feeling that Europe cannot match its military superiority. Adding to the distrust is President Clinton's recent description of America as the "indispensable nation," which sounds to Europeans as if he is saying, "You can't do without us, and we know it."

Europeans have other gripes, as well: trade disagreements, the Echelon spy network, U.S. meddling in the World Trade Organization and International Monetary Fund, as well as perceived cultural deficiencies, led by Big Macs, Hollywood and Jerry Falwell. Opinion polls bear this out. An April 1999 poll shows that 68% in France worry about America being the sole superpower, while only 30% think America has anything to admire. Six months earlier, a poll comparing attitudes across Europe found Italians to be the most appreciative of the U.S., though nearly 60% of those polled felt their countrymen should not look to American ways or culture for inspiration.

What is merely criticized in good times is often condemned during downturns.

Coming: Israel's Fall

It does not take long for a student of Bible prophecy to realize that the nations of Israel will fall in the end time. Many prophecies of Scripture foretell the coming of the sword, disease, famine and captivity for the Israelites before Christ's return (e.g., Jeremiah 6; Ezekiel 5; Hosea 9-10; Amos 9; etc.). An attack on Israel, particularly America, may have its roots in the anti-Americanism we see in today's headlines abroad.

Unwarranted Israelite arrogance seems to be one of the points the Assyrian-led conquerors want to exterminate:

Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower. . . . Behold, the Lord has a mighty and strong one, like a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, like a flood of mighty waters overflowing, who will bring them down to the earth with His hand. The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim, will be trampled underfoot. . . . (Isaiah 28:1-3)

In the end, however, God uses this invasion to punish His people and bring them back to Him. Once this enemy nation's job is complete, God punishes it for its own arrogance and sin:

Therefore it shall come to pass, when the LORD has performed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, that He will say, "I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his haughty looks." For he says: "By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, for I am prudent; also I have removed the boundaries of the people, and have robbed their treasures; so I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man." (Isaiah 10:12-13)

God says to a defeated Israel in Isaiah 41:11: "Behold, all those who were incensed against you shall be ashamed and disgraced; they shall be as nothing, and those who strive with you shall perish. . . ."

Though these events seem over the horizon, they could rise with alarming swiftness if triggered by the right chain of events. The prophecies stand, and they will occur in God's time. As God's church we need to remember to pray as the apostle Paul instructed in I Timothy 2:1-3:

Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior. . . .