

disguises) the Nazi past took during the 1960s in both Germanies, and how do we cope with the “triple burden of history” (National Socialism, communism, and “1968”) that seems to be at the core of our own historiographical concerns? How did generational conflict and natural generational transitions influence 1960s discourses as well as *Vergangenheitspolitik*? Finally, how honest and how accurate was the “coming to terms” during the 1960s? We will have to wait a few more years for more conclusive answers to many of the issues that were discussed in Lincoln. Although participants may have raised many more questions than they could probably answer, the Nebraska conference, the first international meeting of its kind that was exclusively devoted to the issue of the Nazi past during the 1960s, turned out to be a stimulating event.

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ANTI-AMERICANISM IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Conference at the GHI, July 6–7, 2001. Co-sponsored by the American Institute for Contemporary German Studies (AICGS). Conveners: Patrice G. Poutrus (GHI/AICGS and Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung, Potsdam) and Ingrid Creppel (George Washington University). Participants: Jan C. Behrends (University of Bielefeld), James W. Caeser (University of Virginia), Arpad von Klimó (Humboldt University, Berlin), Peter Krause, (Europa University, Frankfurt/Oder), Richard Kuisel (State University of New York, Stony Brook, and Georgetown University), Alan Levine (American University), Robert McGeehan (University of London), Gabor Rittersporn (Centre Marc Bloch, Paris/Berlin), Bernd Schäfer (GHI), Christoph Strupp (GHI).

After September 11, it is difficult to write a report about the subject of anti-Americanism in the twentieth century. The horrible pictures of the airplanes hitting the Twin Towers and the subsequent catastrophes have not left my mind. I also believe, however, that if we do not want to be dominated by terrorism we have to remain open to and willing to engage in intellectual controversy. Such is the task of intellectuals in open societies. To avoid any potential misunderstanding, I would like to begin by explaining why I chose anti-Americanism as the subject for this conference.

Although the history of ideas and transatlantic relations are not my own field of research, thinking about communist dictatorship and the mentality of post-communist societies led me directly to it. After the close

of the twentieth century and its bipolar world order, the debate over liberal Western values and their universal validity has gained new relevance. Whereas at the beginning of the twentieth century Western values were represented by states such as Great Britain, France, the United States and the Netherlands, the United States has gradually become *the* representative of Western ideas in public perception. This dominant status of the United States did not remain unchallenged in the discussions of the past century. Sharp criticisms and harsh polemics against “America,” whose origins can be traced back to the Romantic Age, were constants of political thought on both the right and left of the political spectrum. These findings allow us to speak of nationalistic, popular, socialist and religious fundamentalist regimes of the twentieth century as embodiments of an anti-liberal and anti-American consensus. Many of these regimes succeeded in legitimizing themselves negatively, through the public rejection and proclaimed overcoming of the ideas of 1776 and 1789. In place of America’s model of an “open society,” these regimes claimed to have established a more authentic form of society. Blaming of the United States and its allies for failing to establish their own systems is also part of authoritarian discourse.

Using the German case with its many shades of radical anti-Americanism as a point of departure, our conference sought to gain new insights into the phenomenon of anti-Americanism through a comparative perspective. Recognizing the central role that the American-Soviet conflict played in the twentieth century, it seemed useful to explore the ramifications of anti-Americanism on the periphery of this conflict and in their specific historical constellations. We also thought that it would be valuable to examine the issue outside the European context, perhaps in Latin America or the Middle East. Through a comparative perspective, we hoped to be able to sketch the constants and specifics of antiliberalism in the twentieth century.

The workshop started with a lecture by Alan Levine on “The Idea of America in European Political Thought, 1492 to Today.” Levine divided his presentation into four parts: First Attempts to Explain America: 1492–1580s; America as Nature: Montaigne and the Enlightenment Debate; Reactions to America’s Great Political Experiment after the American Revolution; America as Technology. Levine explained that in the eyes of European political theorists, America had gone from the symbol of nature to the symbol of technology, its opposite. America was first blamed for being insufficiently natural, then praised as the epitome of nature and the home of natural rights, then, finally, blamed for losing all touch with the natural human spirit. In these debates, so Levine’s final statement, America has served both as Europe’s past and as Europe’s future, but in

debating America European thinkers were really engaged in a battle for Europe. The stakes were—and are—the fate of modernity.

James W. Caeser followed this up with a lecture on “Forgotten Early-Twentieth-Century German Views of America: Theodor Lessing and Müller Freienfels.” Based on these two cases, he sketched the dominant idea of America in European thought that was created at the end of the nineteenth century, when “Americanization” became associated with a spiritually empty project to conquer nature, imposing a sterile understanding of materialism on Western (and world) culture. Caeser argued that this image of America was a forerunner of the current term “globalization,” which he sees as a synonym for Americanization.

Jan C. Behrends’s presentation “Anti-Americanism as Legitimatory Narrative: German Traditions and Communist Inventions in the Early GDR” showed that anti-Americanism took various shapes during the existence of the GDR. It proved to be a very flexible ideology and was tied to many different ideas: the peace discourse as well as the comparison between the USA and the USSR, which tended to disappear later in the East German state’s existence. East German anti-Americanism contained traditional motifs of German anti-Western thought, but also a type of Sovietized anti-Americanism, which used images imported from the Soviet propaganda cosmos. In many ways, the Socialist Unity Party (SED) tried to connect traditional ideas of German political thought with its own ideology. In a way, the SED leadership stuck to a world view that had been adopted in the 1930s. But although this propaganda failed and American culture was just as successful in everyday life in East as in West Germany, Behrends argued that the regime did succeed in installing deep skepticism or even distrust towards American politics and society in large segments of the East German population.

Peter Krause’s paper “America as a Model? Images of the United States in the German Press of the 50s and 60s” presented the West German counterpart to Behrends’s paper. Examining West German media coverage of issues related to the United States, Krause concentrated on the coverage of two issues, McCarthy and the race riots of the 50s and 60s, in the German news magazine *Der Spiegel*. He argued that German self-identity is mirrored in the way images of the U.S. are presented in public discourse.

The second day began with the Richard Kuisel’s lecture “The Gallic Rooster Crows Again: The Paradox of French Anti-Americanism.” The principal issue Kuisel addressed was the paradox that even though America and France are more tightly connected than ever before, by both trade and popular culture, the French have expressed harsh criticisms of the U.S., such as the criticism of America’s “hyperpower” voiced by high government officials as well as the increasing antipathy voiced in French

opinion polls towards certain aspects of American culture and society. To explain the paradox of anti-Americanism in an Americanized Europe, Kuisel stressed three recurring fundamentals: (1) certain constants, that is, stereotypes, notions of cultural superiority, domestic political infighting; (2) circumstances (The 1990s, for instance, have been much like the 1950s and 1960s, in the sense of the U.S. posing as a superpower and a socio-economic model for Europe); (3) and "real" issues or rivalries, such as trade, competition for global influence, and security issues. In addition to this historical pattern, Kuisel analyzed what is new about the current bout of U.S.-bashing. Here globalization is the most obvious new element. American dominance and triumphalism are perceived as having created a sense of powerlessness that have put a traditional sense of "Frenchness" or identity in jeopardy. The new strain of French anti-Americanism, Kuisel concluded, is a form of retaliation: retaliation against a seemingly omnipotent United States that tries to impose the self-serving process of globalization on France; retaliation against Washington's obstructionist and unreliable hegemony in international politics; and retaliation against America's promotion of its flawed social model, which challenges a traditional construction of Frenchness.

In his talk "Anti-Americanism in Hungary? Functions of Anti-U.S.-Ideology in Hungary after WW I," Arpad von Klimó moved the focus from Western to Eastern Europe. He explained that Hungary was at war with the U.S. twice in the twentieth century. Hungary was characterized by a "Prussian" social structure with a ruling stratum of large landed property owners and a very aggressive and militaristic gentry. Antiliberalism and antimodernism were strong elements in Hungarian political discourse after 1918. But there were always counterbalances to the German orientation. Klimó saw the reasons for this continuing phenomenon in the geo-political location of Hungary in the twentieth century.

Gabor Rittersporn's presentation "Hopeless to be Alike, Impossible Not to Imitate: America in Soviet and Post-Soviet Eyes" showed that hostility towards all the values that America is supposed to embody was not a constant feature of Soviet attitudes vis-à-vis the United States. Anti-Americanism did not permeate every milieu even when it became a permanent fixture of Soviet policy. On the contrary, periods of the most vehement officially sponsored hatred for America saw the emergence of an increasingly sympathetic understanding of the values that the United States was perceived to stand for. If at the beginning this understanding was mainly confined to intellectuals or circles close to them, it became fairly widespread with time. In one way or another, American achievements and norms became the yardstick of everything the Soviet regime managed to accomplish. But the dubious modernity of the USSR left a heavy heritage to post-Soviet Russia. The sympathy toward the United

States that contributed to the collapse of the Soviet system runs the danger of becoming captive to the same dialectics of Enlightenment that had characterized the evolution of Soviet perspectives on America.

At the conference's conclusion, academic discussion gave way to political debate. In his paper "European Unity and Anti-Americanism: Are They Inseparable?" Robert McGeehan argued that, with the collapse of the USSR and the end of the Cold War, "Europe" can now experiment with ventures that would present the option of not only separating from but opposing the United States. The only political force strong enough to justify the economic sacrifices necessary to achieve a militarily operational Europe, he suggested, is anti-Americanism. Will European anti-Americanism, liberated from the closet of the Cold War, develop sufficiently to achieve the unity which has so far been frustrated by the necessity of Atlanticism? This threat to NATO is of great concern to the Bush Administration, even as George W. Bush's policies on defense, the environment, and human rights make easy targets for what is emerging as "the ugly European."

Both the style and viewpoint of McGeehan's paper were surprising and made the discussion of the subject difficult and unsatisfactory. The original goal of the workshop was to compare and discuss different cases of anti-Americanism, not to engage in political argument. For a historian, watching a scholarly argument about the past turn into a heated political debate about the present was an exceptional experience that reflected the differences between the academic cultures of history and political science. It became clear that we reached the border between academic analysis and political opinion and that this border is porous. Nevertheless, especially after September 11, it is necessary to distinguish between political interests and fundamental values. Academic analysis can, of course, address both, and the answers should not be limited. That is one of the strengths of open societies. The question about the importance of anti-Americanism in the twentieth century was not answered by this conference, but it was opened up. This made the event interesting.

Patrice G. Poutrus

A WORLD AT TOTAL WAR: GLOBAL CONFLICT AND THE POLITICS OF DESTRUCTION, 1937–1945

Conference at the Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung, Hamburg, August 29 to September 1, 2001. Co-sponsored by GHI Washington, GHI London, Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung, and Max-Planck-