

# HOMO AMERICANUS

## The Dissolution of American materialism

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The Latin neologism “*homo americanus*” may stand in derogatory fashion for the Americanized citizen and his life style. The American man, or *homo americanus*, and his Puritan ethics are often the subject of derision in Europe. The American system, the American mindset, and in particular American foreign policy form the subject matter of critical, anthropological, and political studies in Europe. Some of these possess a predominantly polemical and pamphleteering character; some fall into the category of social and political satire;<sup>1</sup> and some attempt scientifically to demonstrate the flaws of American foreign policy. Although the vast majority of both Europeans and Americans descend from the same racial stock, there are serious differences between their societies. Yet with the increasing Americanization of European society, one might wonder: Why study *homo americanus* in America only? The transnational uniqueness of the American system at the beginning of the twenty-first century can best be critically examined by research work in discrete academic fields. The best approach, however, to a critical examination of *homo americanus* and his peculiar system is by means of interdisciplinary research and historical comparison.

Who is this *homo americanus*, and by whom has he been defined? In what time frame, in which location, and by whose vocabulary? When we speak of an average *homo americanus* are we referring to an East Coast shark, or to an antebellum poet like Edgar Allan Poe; to a revolutionary American heretic like Thomas Jefferson, or an equally robust antebellum American heretic like George Fitzhugh? If we were to take a contemporary neoconservative scholar as the embodiment of *homo americanus*, then might we as well endorse his judgments regarding the American system? The neocon of today might consider himself to be as genuinely American as the Southern agrarian of yesteryear, although their respective ethnic and political allegiances would be light miles apart. Therefore, properly defining *homo americanus* must hinge on the social, intellectual, racial, and ethnic pedigree of the observer and the observed.

By the late twentieth century, Americanism had become a concave mirror reflecting social changes all over the world. America continues to exert an enormous attraction, even on those countries and individuals who voice the most vulgar and most critical statements against America and its citizens.

*Homo americanus* and his system are no longer confined to the United States of America. Today they thrive in all corners of the globe.

America is neither dream nor reality. It is a hyper-reality because it is a utopia which has behaved from the very beginning as though it were already achieved. Everything here is real and pragmatic, and yet it is all the stuff of dreams too. It may be that the truth of America can only be seen by a European, since he alone will discover here the perfect simulacrum – that of the immanence and material transcription of all values.<sup>2</sup>

Traditionally, both the European and the American radical left and radical right have been critical of Americanism, with the qualification that the left, both European and American, in criticizing America, claims that America is “not American enough,” i.e., that it has departed from its egalitarian founding myths. In other words the left claims that modern America has not achieved enough equality, enough democracy, and enough progress. Consequently, America should return to its originally charted goals. The same deductive logic has been displayed by disenchanting Marxist intellectuals, both in the United States and Europe, after the breakdown of communism. These Marxists often argue that the Gulag and communist repression were just unintended results of Marxism, and that true Marxian socialism was betrayed by the Soviets. True communism (whatever “true” may mean) still deserves a second chance. When an American Jewish writer, Noam Chomsky, attacks the U.S. system for its alleged or real corruption, he never impugns the sanctity of the American founding fathers, or the crucial influence that Jeffersonianism has persistently exerted on scores of American social scientists. Instead, Chomsky often sounds full of praise for the Jeffersonian legacy; he has attempted to assimilate Jefferson to his own leftism, writing that “Jefferson and John Dewey today sound like crazed Marxist lunatics.”<sup>3</sup> By contrast, many European authors on the (so-called) “radical right,” along with some exceptional Americans, emphatically reject the ideology of Americanism.

One must be cautious, however, in formulating value judgments about the alleged European bias against Americans. Ironically, the most cynical remarks about the American system and *homo americanus* have come not from European authors, but from certain isolated, yet well-known, American authors. H. L. Mencken, for instance, calls the American species “*boobus americanus*,” since “the only thing that made life difficult for him was his congenital dunderheadedness”; “a nation of senescent Europeans”; “Anglo-Saxon immigrants”; “the botched and unfit”; “Scandinavians run to all bone and no brain”; “Jews too incompetent to swindle even the barbarous peasants of Russia and Poland.” In short, early Americans, who were all European immigrants, were, according to Mencken, “weary peasants eager only for the comfortable security of a pig in a sty.”<sup>4</sup> It is hardly conceivable that prose of such virulence would be published in the mainstream press today, during Americanism’s heyday, at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

TWIN BROTHERS: *HOMO SOVIETICUS* AND *HOMO AMERICANUS*

Both *homo sovieticus* and *homo americanus* were, and still are, enamored of the ideology of rationalism, the so-called Enlightenment, and egalitarianism. Both species believe in the idea of progress. Both herald the slogan that all men are created equal. The early Bolsheviks were as much inspired by French radicals as were the American founding fathers, who would in turn become, a decade later, the inspirers of the French Revolution. Now, in hindsight, the assertion in the famed proclamation of independence written by Jefferson that all men are “created equal” may seem, to many conservatives in the United States, let alone in Europe, to be devoid of any empirical basis. In the light of new research in genetics it could be better argued that all men are different, and that their differential IQs will largely predetermine whether they shall live free or as corporate serfs. “The study of human biological nature, which has been endlessly moving ahead over the last past decades,” writes Alain de Benoist, “shows that “nature” has very little egalitarianism in her makeup. Far from it being the fact that each individual makes the basis of each collectivity, rather it is the collectivity which constitutes his individual existence.”<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, when a document of the importance of the American Declaration of Independence lays so much stress on the word “self-evident,” then serious questions must arise as to the soundness of that document’s contentions. If something is “self-evident,” it does not need to be repeated ad infinitum. Conversely, if a political belief or idea is founded on feeble evidence, then the political system it serves will naturally tend to enshrine that belief or idea as a dogma, and under no circumstance must anyone be permitted to question it – short of becoming a pariah. All the grand ideologies of the past two hundred years have resorted to the verbal construct of “self-evidence.” By the same logic, today, should a person have second thoughts on the meaning of such words as “human rights” or “democracy,” so freely tossed about in modern America and Europe, he or she risks being rejected by society. It would be a waste of time to speculate earnestly as to what was crossing Jefferson’s mind when he was writing the Declaration. Jefferson and his compatriots were men of the Enlightenment. Jefferson was a man of his epoch, and our understanding of him and his legacy can only be achieved with a good knowledge of the spirit of his time. Jefferson certainly did not consider American Indians or Africans his equals. From the perspective of the twenty-first century, however, the vast majority of white European and American politicians, regardless of their official braggadocio, certainly do not believe – that is, in *private* – in the equality of all people or every race. The haunting terror of any violation of the code of political correctness, and of the thought police who enforce it, functions as a scarecrow of self-censoring that inhibits doubters from challenging “self-evident” “truths” in public. If anything, is it not that all men are different which is self-evident? Whatever Jefferson and his colleagues had in mind, what is important is how their

successors have interpreted the American founding fathers in the two centuries following their revolution. Jefferson's words were easily taken out of context, and have often served to justify the copying of many communistic practices, including the promotion of mass immigration of the non-European proletariat to the United States and Europe. Ideas have consequences.

History means comparing. To better understand the American system, we should compare American citizens to citizens of the former Soviet Union. During the cold war, Americans liked to contrast themselves with Russians, concluding by proclaiming self-righteously that the American system was far superior to the Soviet system. In those days it was perfectly legitimate to refer to the average Soviet citizen, in a rather derogatory manner, as "*homo sovieticus*." It was a Russian dissident author, Alexander Zinoviev, who coined—in exile—this expression; Zinoviev devoted one of his novels to this curious species, which for the author is characterized by a low level of personal integrity conjoined with a phenomenal ability to adapt to any political system.<sup>6</sup> Millions of dollars were spent by the American government on studies of Sovietology, Kremlinology, the behavior of Soviet citizens, and the communist nomenklatura. American anti-communists, whether "experts" or amateurs, liked to depict the Soviet Union as a totalitarian hell in comparison to which democratic America shone brightly. (In hindsight, this expertise on the ex-Soviet Union does not sound at all convincing, since none of the experts were able to predict the sudden demise of the Soviet system.) Now that Soviet communism has collapsed, such negative legitimization is no longer able to mask the very serious flaws of the American system. Today, studies in "Americanology" and critical examination of the "American man" and of the American ideology are what is needed.<sup>7</sup> Americans might thereby better grasp why so many informed authors in Europe resent America, and why so many European writers have long considered the American system a serious threat to Western civilization itself.

The American system has been implementing a philocommunist model of social engineering much more efficiently and in a fashion far more digestible to the masses than did the Soviet Union, and without resort to mass terror. It must be remembered that both systems have aimed at achieving global democracy. During World War Two, they entered into a natural alliance. Their differences in style were obvious; their similarities in substance were not, but both strove for, and indeed contributed to, the establishment of a New World Order. In fact the meaning of the Soviet terror, as well as its longevity, cannot be fully grasped without looking at America's full role in the war, one to some extent copied by the postwar Soviet Union in the occupied territories of Eastern Europe. Later, during the cold war, it became entirely legitimate, from the American perspective, to examine the communist killing fields, given that in many respects America wanted to become a champion of world anticommunism. It might be just as worthwhile to examine the American role in enabling

the construction and preservation of communist systems in East Europe and Russia following World War II.

America's passionate desire to make the world safe for democracy led to the Nuremberg tribunal, the legal structures of which still make up the judiciary framework of modern Europe, including the European Criminal Code and its enforcers in the thought police. Certain eloquent American revisionist historians, who examined the American system during and after the World War II, do not fall into the category of "*homo americanus*." In fact, they opened the Pandora's box into which contemporary European historians are not allowed to look – under any circumstances.

How many conservative intellectuals, particularly American, must be out of work in these early years of the twenty-first century, only because their nemesis, the Soviet Union, no longer exists! Yet, ironically, while Soviet communism appears to be dead, its ideology seems to have received a new lease on life in the West, particularly in the U.S. Now that it stands alone as the one and only hegemon on the world stage, those communistic features and affinities of the United States that had been masked during the cold war have begun to emerge in the post-cold war daylight. American anti-communism was always possessed of a superficial ideological substance; it smacked more of a Christian crusade against an atheist Russia and which failed to focus on the egalitarian dynamic that has characterized both systems. But how could it have been otherwise, given that America is, no less than was the Soviet Union, anchored, legally and ideologically, in egalitarian principles? If the Soviet Union had managed to achieve even a marginally affluent society, as America has, few around the world would have given a thought to the millions who perished in the Soviet Gulag.

The political meta-language in use in modern America is reminiscent of the communist rhetoric, and it deserves special attention. It bears striking similarities to the language once used by the communist media and party nomenclature. The only difference lies in the fact that communism, beneath its mask of semantics, was a make-believe system, a system in which no communized citizen ever believed, and one which everybody, including party dignitaries, made fun of in private life. In America, by contrast, many serious people and scholars, let alone the masses, believe passionately in equality. It is worth observing that after the cold war millions of former communist sympathizers and activists, both in the U.S. and in the European Union, renewed their former Marxist romanticism by adding a stiff dose of ultraliberal\* discourse. It would be false to explain their sudden change of mind by calling them opportunists, since, after all, fickleness has always been standard behavior for intellectuals. It must be underlined that both Soviet Marxism and American liberalism share the same technomorphic roots. The ideas of the Enlightenment, the idea of progress, the creation of a new posthistorical and ahistorical man, are common features of both the American and the Soviet systems, however much they may vary in their manipulation of political iconography.

We've seen that former Marxists and communists had no qualms when it came time to shrug off – with impunity – their former love affair with Marx, to embrace a more advanced form of egalitarianism and democratism. This time the brand on the label read: Made in America. Former European and American Marxists often see in Americanism and its accompanying dogma of liberalism a safe haven that enables them to save face while at the same time to continue mouthing the same slogans about global humanity, albeit in a more respectable and nonviolent fashion. Time was when European and American left-leaning intellectuals made their pilgrimages to Havana and to Moscow. Now, in the aftermath of the cold war, the obligatory new Jerusalems for such pilgrims are Tel Aviv and New York.

While communism as a programmatic religion may be dead, its verbal and psychological substrates still thrive, not only among left-leaning intellectuals but even among Americans who profess a staunch anticommunism. Here one must disregard the signifiers, and instead examine the signified. Many American conservative politicians and academics seriously believe in the truth of egalitarian and panracial signifiers, although they package them in subtly different verbiage. The red star and the hammer and sickle have become dated; what is important is the meaning that underlies them. Communism and Americanism are not simply dogmas; each is a way of life in a peculiar sociohistorical setting. Contemporary American public discourse teems with communistic phrases like “sensitivity training,” “political correctness,” and “affirmative action.” These are simply belated copies of their communist predecessors dating back to the 1940s and 1950s, which were parroted in different languages by millions of communized subjects in Eastern Europe and Russia. Now they are mouthed by *homo americanus*.

However gross and vulgar was its political stance, communism had one saving grace over Americanism. Its vulgarity made it more transparent and more rigid, and therefore speeded its demise.<sup>8</sup>

One example of the opacity of Americanism is its openness to floods of Third World immigrants. Americans often forget that the Soviet system was also originally designed to attract mass foreign immigration. Ironically, its Spartan nature failed to attract many. It was the West, and the U.S. in particular, that became safe havens for the “wretched of the earth” – a utopia achieved! Conversely, the rigidity of communism helped Eastern Europeans and Russians remain more or less racially homogeneous. Due in large measure to its hardships under communism, Eastern Europe is now better prepared to face the multiracial challenges of the future.

It would be a serious failure to dismiss communism as redundant, as merely a brief historical anomaly. Communism is the most violent form of egalitarianism. It is the system that is nearest and dearest to the masses, regardless of the dreadful consequences it brings upon them as well as to the despised capitalists and aristocrats.<sup>9</sup> Communism promises economic predictability and psychologi-

cal security, that is, seemingly an ideal model for future mass societies marked by shrinking natural resources. After communism's formal disintegration in the Soviet Union, palæocommunist beliefs, coupled with permanent economic growth, have been brought to their perfection in America.

### THE BIBLE AND THE ORIGINS OF POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

To decipher the intricacies of the American system, a student must look to the religious phenomenon of Puritanism. In the British context the strongest political standard bearer of Puritanism, Oliver Cromwell, was a transient figure who had no lasting political impact either on the United Kingdom or continental Europe. Yet Cromwell's political legacy has had more effect on the American mentality than Lenin's rhetoric had on Bolshevik Russia. Just as Cromwell used the Bible in order to justify the murder of King Charles and to defend his policies during the Commonwealth's expeditions against the Scots and Irish, so his Puritan cousins in America used the Bible as a warrant for conquest and the basis for their polity.

A deep understanding of the Puritan mental framework is indispensable for anyone engaged in attempting to understand all its various secular transpositions in the American system. Simplifying their message by stripping their mode of Christianity of every pagan element, including the transcendental and the sacred, and reducing the biblical message to very basic utilitarian and moralistic precepts of behavior conferred a distinct advantage on the evangelizing Puritans. To understand the psychology of *homo americanus* and in particular his irrational outbursts in foreign policy—under cover of a much vaunted “pragmatism”—one must study carefully all elements of Puritanism. First, Puritanism introduced a peculiar form of hypermoralism and a self-serving messianism into American behavior patterns.<sup>10</sup> It is a political theology that finds its justification solely in Biblical precepts. Hence we discern the deeply rooted idea of “self-election” (self-chosenness) among American elites and these elites' inherent belief in the democratic predestination of America. Regardless of the odds, *homo americanus* will pursue his foreign adventures in perfectly good conscience—adventures that will always be justified “for the greater glory of the Lord.” As a form of political theology, Americanism, with its Puritan derivatives, must always remain resistant to all criticism.

Excessive moralism has always been an American trademark. The compulsive political drive to lecture Europeans, Arabs, or Japanese on the virtues of democracy, to preach or pontificate about human rights, that is, to “reeducate” authoritarian heretics—all of these political urges derive directly from the Puritan heritage. By moralizing every aspect of life in the U.S., the American system attempts to remove America from the tragic dimension and from every rubric of power politics. This returns us to a point made earlier, namely, that Americans tend to reject political ideology, yet fully embrace their own parabolic political theology, American democracy.

The Puritan mindset took hold in New England in the early seventeenth century, and subsequently spread to the entirety of America. By the beginning of the twentieth century, it had captivated the minds of peoples and nations around the world. Modern American elites are profoundly convinced that the American system is the best on earth and that it must be spread all over the world. The American endeavor aims to subject the entire globe to the neo-Puritan conception of manifest destiny. The early Puritan asceticism, the cult of work, the spirit of money, gave birth, after World War II, to a new hero, one who functions as a role model for the early twenty-first century. One may speculate whether, under the impact of Puritanism, a new sociobiological selection has occurred in America, just as it did under communism, giving rise to *homines sovietici*. The Americans desired not only to break away from Europe, but to found a society that would later be capable of regenerating all mankind as well. They wanted to create a promised land that would become a universal republic. This Biblical theme, which is at the heart of the Puritan mind, recurs again and again as the *leitmotiv* of the course of American history.<sup>11</sup>

American Puritans have succeeded in imposing their code of behavior in both domestic and foreign affairs. M. E. Bradford notes that this type of Puritan self-righteousness can be observed from James Monroe to Abraham Lincoln and his lieutenants Sherman and Grant. "As an American long exposed to political Puritanism I cannot help thinking of Cromwell by way of analogy to other men 'on an errand'; to our version of the species, and especially to the late gnostics who in God's name forged a Union of 'fire and iron' in our great Civil War." Bradford relates:

In Stark Young's fine novel *So Red the Rose*, the latter [Sherman] calls upon the parents of a former student and offers human courtesy. Shortly thereafter, in their official capacity Sherman's troopers burn the family out. These Southerners are puzzled by such schizophrenia. They should have studied a life of Cromwell and then emptied the house.<sup>12</sup>

The Puritan-induced behavior of American decision makers is still a mystery to many Europeans, which explains why Europeans cannot comprehend the sudden shifts that characterize American behavior. The neurotic attitude that underlies this behavior has been visible among its elites throughout America's past. The conduct of President George W. Bush during the current Iraq war is quite in line with that of his predecessors. "Bush's government is forced back to the doctrines of Puritanism as an historical necessity. If we are to understand what it's up to, we must look not to the 1930s, but to the 1630s."<sup>13</sup> This self-serving, world-improving conduct applies not only to Bush but to nearly every American president since George Washington. It was natural, given the Puritans' concept of God, that the American Pilgrims would take special delight in the Old Testament. From it, almost exclusively, they drew their texts, and it never failed to provide them with justification for their often inhumane conduct of war. Their God was the God of the Old Testament, their laws were the laws of the Old Testament, their guides to

conduct were the characters of the Old Testament. Their Sabbath was Jewish, not Christian. It was natural sympathy that attracted the Puritans to the Old Testament, that long protest against paganism, with its "thou shalt nots." The positive side of the New Testament seems to have left them singularly cold. Indeed, so little appeal did the words of Jesus Christ have to the Pilgrims that, for once, they abandoned their textual literalism and questioned the the Lord's Prayer should be permitted.<sup>14</sup>

America's Puritan legacy has fostered a quasi-neurotic attitude in U.S. foreign policy. On the one hand that policy has embraced an extreme autism, isolationism; on the other it has frequently embarked on pandemic, quasi-Samaritan global military enterprises, often conducted by barbaric methods against the "Other, » the "non-believer," "the Evil Empire," "the Axis of Evil," "Islamofascism," in short against "bad guys" – all in the name of "democracy." America also introduced, for the first time in history of warfare, the discriminatory factor, very similar to subsequent practice by Soviet Russia. American wars henceforth become total wars aimed at regenerating humanity, with no end in sight.

Puritanism owes much to Hebrew thought. The phantasm of the "city on the hill" and the sense of American self-chosenness were borrowed from the legacy of the Old Testament and the Hebrew people. Puritanism, of all Christian beliefs, was the closest to Judaism. Some authors argue that the United States owes its very existence to the Jews. "For what we call Americanism," writes Werner Sombart, "is nothing else than the Jewish spirit distilled."<sup>15</sup> The author, a well-known German sociologist of the early twentieth century, was quite sympathetic to Jews, and his description of the Jewish influence on America has some credibility. Sombart also writes that "the United States are filled to the brim with the Jewish spirit."<sup>16</sup>

One sometimes encounters the assertion that Jews have a disproportionate influence in American life given their overrepresentation within America's political, cultural, and societal elites. A few conservatives seem obsessed with the real or purported Jewish role in America. But was not Jesus a Jew? The philosopher Alain de Benoist calls anti-Semitism, either latent or open, a "neurosis." Anti-Semites naively assume that the disappearance of Jews would open a golden era for the West. This assumption is false. The entire history of Europe, and to some extent America, has abundantly shown that Europeans and Americans are perfectly capable of hacking each other to pieces – often for trivial reasons – in the absence of Jews: Witness the Civil War in America, the endless conflicts between Croats and Serbs, Scots and English, Irish and English, Flemings and French, etc.

It is the proximity of Christianity to Judaism that explains their seeming alliance under Puritanism and their frequent murderous wars. "Anti-Semitism was born from the Christian desire to fulfill Judaism, to 'finish it up,' to attribute to it its 'real' meaning."<sup>17</sup> American Puritans had exactly that in mind when they

came to New England. Their secular successors did the same in attempting to export American democracy to the ends of the earth. In the eyes of Christians “just as the Law, with Christ, had come to its end (in both senses of the word) and has become useless, in the same vein each distinction between Israel and other nations has become redundant: there are no more Jews or Greeks” (Gal. 3, 28). It is universal Christianity which is *versus* Israel.”<sup>18</sup> De Benoist further writes:

This process, which emerged by the Pauline reforms had a double consequence. On the one hand it ended in the persecution of the Jews, who were depicted as the worst enemies of Christianity, on the grounds of their genealogical proximity and their refusal to convert, that is, to recognize Christianity as “true Israel.” On the other hand, as Shmuel Trigano noted, while setting itself up as “new Israel,” the West recognized in Jewishness, a factual, if not a juridical, jurisdiction over itself. Which boils down to saying that the West has become “Israelite” to the extent that it forbade to Jews to remain Israelites. It follows from this that the name “Judeo-Christianity” is a double incarceration; it imprisons the Christian West, which by its own act subordinates itself to a jurisdiction which is not its own, and in order to regain it, puts it in a position to deny this jurisdiction to its legitimate custodians...<sup>19</sup>

The West became anti-Semitic to the extent that it wanted to become Israelite. The West will cease to be Israelite once it abandons this neurosis, once it returns to its own founding myths, once it ceases being what it is not and it allows the Other to continue to remain what it is.

A deep suspicion between American gentiles and American Jew is often veiled in servile mendacity and a simulated mutual mimicry, which is especially strong in the American establishment. America’s protectiveness toward the state of Israel has of course had little to do with America’s geopolitical security. Rather, Israel is the receptacle for American political theology and its Puritan founding myths, which make up America’s own democratic super-ego. Early on, America’s Pilgrims, pioneers, and politicians identified themselves as Jews who had come to a new Canaan from pestilent Europe. In Freudian terms, the Pilgrim and the pioneer were obliged to kill their European father in order to facilitate the spreading of American democracy throughout the whole world. “Heaven ha[s] placed our country in this situation to try us; to see whether we would faithfully use the incalculable power in our hands for speeding forward the world’s regeneration.”<sup>20</sup>

### SOUTHERN COMFORT: THE THIRD WAY?

Sundry European critics of the American system who have succumbed to the process of Americanization, more often voluntarily than by force, have substituted an often unfounded derision of the American lifestyle and culture in place of combating American political influence. This emphasis on the

part of European critics is false and even hypocritical, in view of the postwar enormous influence America has exerted on its foes and friends alike.

It is only through hindsight that one realizes how events in Europe after the World War Two bear strange parallels with those in the postbellum American South. The psychological effects on many Southerners of Reconstruction display many similarities to the effects of the Allied occupation in Europe, Eastern and Western. The attempts by certain American writers in the first half of the twentieth century to contextualize America in a different historical light and a different set of values bore little fruit at home in America, and they remain practically unknown in Europe. At best these were exercises in the revival of forgotten memories, however much these memories might have appealed to European conservatives. What would have happened if the South had successfully seceded and been able to preserve its way of life? Trying to answer these questions today would seem to be little more than futile guesswork.

The destructive nature of the belief in progress that is inherent in both liberalism and communism was described by the American Southern Agrarians, writing in the early 1930s. In many instances their work is reminiscent of that of European revolutionary conservatives of the same epoch, whose echo we later find among European New Right thinkers. These Southern critics of the American system resemble like authors in Europe in that they add a touch of literary and poetic verve to their prose. Their manifesto *I'll Take My Stand* is a valuable literary document that helps us to understand the other, would-be America. Indeed, that manifesto now seems a gloomy foreshadowing of to the fate of Europe at the hands of the Allies after 1945. The authors evidently well understood what is presently termed "crisis of the modern polity," insofar as they glimpsed in American capitalism not the foe of Soviet communism, but its twin brother, aspiring to the same goal with nicer methods. In this sense one can say that the Southern Agrarians were—to use the modern liberal vernacular—a very "un-American" group of thinkers. They conceived of the true American not just as "*homo oeconomicus*," that is, a happy consumer in thrall to the delights of the shopping mall, but first and foremost as a man with spiritual needs which industrialism and the New Dealers were to grind mercilessly into the dust. Reading them now, a reader can obtain a different taste of what the South was all about and what America in its entirety might have become under different historical and political circumstances.

The Southern Agrarians were keenly aware of the re-education program that was forced on the defeated South. One of them writes:

The rising generation read Northern literature, shot through with the New England tradition. Northern textbooks were used in Southern schools; Northern histories, despite the frantic protest of local patriotic organizations, were almost universally taught in Southern high schools and colleges...<sup>21</sup>

The South has been pressured to deny its history, just as Europe, particularly Eastern Europe, was forced by America's communist allies to deny and to rewrite its own history. Similarly, in line with the mandatory "anti-fascist" credo, revisionism in literature, let alone in historiography, is subject to severe censure, and often legal penalties, throughout much of Europe today. Former Marxist terrorists and rabble-rousers have achieved prominent places in government in Eastern Europe, and here and there in Western Europe as well—this despite the breakdown of communism and the end of the so-called cold war.

The term "agrarian" chosen for themselves by the Southern authors discussed above is not entirely adequate. One might better substitute the word as "organic," because it was an organic society that these Southern authors had in mind. They did not mean that the rural life is sufficient in itself for man. It is man's destiny to realize his spiritual values, show sacrifice, safeguard his racial and ethnic roots, and to place all of these things above the evanescent materialistic values that have always been so dear to liberalism and communism. One Southern Agrarian, Lyle Lanier, seems to have grasped the substance behind the liberal propaganda much earlier than many of our modern contemporaries, especially in his criticism of the ideology of progress. He knew that "industrialism" stood for big business and for all that late capitalism stands for. The fears of the Agrarians have been amply justified by such current realities as capitalist growth without substance, downsizing, outsourcing, and the like.<sup>22</sup> Lanier denounces liberalism when he attacks Dewey, adding that "man is not tabula rasa on which arbitrary patterns of conduct may be inscribed without regard to his natural propensities."<sup>23</sup> Lanier's words seem directed straight at the heart of liberal double-talk and its offshoots in the speech of *homo americanus*, who radiates fake optimism in his belief that the future must result in ever more equality and unlimited consumer goods.

The twelve Southern Agrarians were impressive intellectuals, surpassing even their like in Europe. They would have surely left more of a mark had they had more prolific successors in America. That didn't happen. While their work was subject to the standard cud-chewing in academia and provided fodder for the publication of many a scholarly study, it had no discernible impact at the grass-roots level. The Southern Agrarians' few score successors in America work in isolation, known only to the tiny cohort of like persuasion and playing no role in American opinion-making circles.

It is peculiar that American and European critics of the American system have not been more aware of an earlier writer, the singular antebellum Southern author and scholar George Fitzhugh. The Southern Agrarians, his successors, owed him much, as do all critics of modernity, including those who study the spirit of democratic totalitarianism. Fitzhugh, a lawyer by education and a connoisseur of not just the Latin language, but also of ancient Roman thought and Roman law, had a peculiar sense for linguistic nuance. He understood

that words such as “freedom,” “free trade,” and “justice” can be used to disguise horrendous barbarism. Conversely, in a curious reverse Orwellian twist, Fitzhugh can sound like a spokesman for slavery, because it was his unfashionable understanding that every honorable person must be in a sense a slave. A soldier, a general, a statesman, every man who accepts the duty to fight for a higher cause, must abandon the “state of nature” and become a slave. For McHugh black slavery was a necessity for blacks, who, due to their incapacity to participate equally in free trade with its cut-throat competition, were far better off in bondage on the Southern farm. McHugh thought that they fared better when supervised by a paternalistic white farmer than under the control of Northern abolitionists who pontificated to them about human rights, while at the same time stripping them of all dignity. Left on their own, as the abolitionists demanded, the blacks would end up completely destitute, adrift in large cities at the mercy of capitalist sharks. Fitzhugh attacked the iconic leader of American democracy, Thomas Jefferson, and in particular Jefferson’s Declaration of Independence, the words of which McHugh described as “abstractions.” He understood that the grandiloquent words of the Declaration would open the flood gates of incessant and insatiable economic appetites which would eventually lead to the war of all against all. He was aware that verbal flights such as “We hold these truths to be self-evident. that all men are created equal,” could only result in unleashing torrents of illusions:

It is, we believe, conceded on all hands, that men are not born physically, morally or intellectually equal – some are males, some females, some from birth large, strong and healthy, others weak, small and sickly – some are naturally amiable, others prone to all kinds of wickedness – some brave, others timid. Their natural inequalities beget inequalities of rights.<sup>24</sup>

Is it not self-evident that all people are unequal, and that, in a period of crisis, they all yearn more for security than for abstract freedom? “The bestowing upon men of equality of rights,” Fitzhugh wrote, “is but giving license to the strong to oppress the weak. It begets the grossest inequality of condition.”<sup>25</sup> Again we can observe how the dogma of the free market can often lead to the worst form of discrimination, which Fitzhugh witnessed first hand by observing the status of “freed” slaves working in the abolitionists’ North. The verbal clichés that assert that all people are equal must lead to the final conclusion of the liberal dynamics: communist totalitarianism. Only a truly aristocratic society, one in which leaders are role models, can have lasting legitimacy. Every person who assumes some honorable duty is a slave. In this sense “the masters in free society or slave society, if they perform properly their duties, have more cares and less liberty than the slaves themselves.”<sup>26</sup>

We seem to be back at the beginning, namely the egalitarian and rootless species known as *homo sovieticus* and his postmodern version *homo americanus*, both wholly obsessed with guaranteed psychological security and economic predictability. The only difference between the two is that the latter thrives on the purely survivalist instincts bred by economism and democratism; *homo*

*americanus* is blind to all principles of hierarchy of value. Yet the increasing frequency of race riots, particularly in Europe, the failure of multicultural experiments, and the ongoing destabilization of the Middle East may well augur that things must get worse before they get any better. ■

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### ENDNOTES

1. Numerous essays by European antiegalitarian novelists, essayists, and poets express anti-American views. Among many: Aldous Huxley, *America and the Future* (Austin and New York: Jenkins Publishing Company, 1970); Robert Steuckers, "L'Ennemi américain," in the quarterly *Synergies européennes* (Brussels, 1996); Jean Cau, *Discours de la décadence* (Paris: Copernic, 1978); D. H. Lawrence, "Europe v. America," and "America, Listen to Your Own," in *Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D. H. Lawrence* (London, New York: Penguin Books, 1978), 87–91; 117–118; Gottfried Benn, "Über den amerikanischen Geist," in *Vermischte Schriften, vol. 7, Gesammelte Werke*: (Wiesbaden: Limes, 1963). Benn writes: "Personally I am against Americanism. I hold the opinion that the philosophy of purely utilitarian thought, of optimism 'à tout prix' [at any cost—French as in original] of 'keep smiling' [English as in original] with the everlasting smirk on the face, is not worthy of Occidental man and his history" (1658). See also the recently deceased Serbian elitist antiliberal author Dragos Kalajic, *Americko zlo* (Belgrade: Izdavacki graficki zavod, 1993), and the Italian neopagan philosopher Julius Evola "Civilta" Americana [American "Civilization"], first published in 1945, and reprinted in 1983 by the Julius Evola Foundation in Rome. For Evola's "Civilta" Americana, see also: <http://www.feastofhateandfear.com/archives/jevola3.html>.
2. Jean Baudrillard, *America*, translated by Chris Turner, (NY, London: Verso, 1988), 28.
3. Noam Chomsky, *Secrets, Lies and Democracy* (Tucson: Ordonian, 1994) 16.
4. H. L. Mencken, "On Being an American," in *Prejudices: A Selection* (New York: Vintage Books, 1955) 98–99 and passim.
5. Alain de Benoist, *Au-delà des droits de l'homme* (Paris: Krisis, 2004), 44.
6. Alexander Zinoviev, *Homo sovieticus* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1985).
7. Thomas Molnar, *Américanologie: Triomphe d'un model planétaire?* (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1991) 12–17
8. Augusto del Noce, "Le marxisme meurt à l'Est parce qu'il s'est réalisé à l'Ouest," in the quarterly *Krisis* (Paris) (October, 1990): 124–129.
9. Alexander Zinoviev, *The Reality of Communism* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1984), 28.

10. Arnold Gehlen, *Moral und Hypermoral* (Frankfurt: V. Klostermann, 2004), especially the chapter "Humanitarismus," 75–90.
11. Alain de Benoist, "L'Amérique," in *Critiques–Théoriques* (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 2002), 142. See also Louis Rougier's classic, *La mystique démocratique* (Paris: Albatros, 1983), 212– 221.
12. M. E. Bradford, "Politics of Oliver Cromwell," in *The Reactionary Imperative* (Peru, IL: Sherwood Sugden, 1990), 214.
13. George Monbiot, "Puritanism of the Rich," *The Guardian* (London), November 9, 2004.
14. James Truslow Adams, *The Founding of New England* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1921), 82 and passim; Carl Schmitt, *Der Nomos der Erde* (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1950), 253–254 and passim. In his numerous essays and books Schmitt criticized the indiscriminate aspects of America's wars, which to him are the results of American (Puritan) "political theology;" Carl Schmitt, *Politische Theologie* (Munich: Duncker und Humblot, 1922).
15. Werner Sombart, *The Jews and Modern Capitalism*, translated by M. Epstein (New York: Burt Franklin, 1969), 43–44. See also the influential American Jewish neoconservative journal *Commentary*, especially Jerold Auerbach, "Liberalism and the Hebrew Prophets" *Commentary* 84(2) (August 1987).
16. Sombart, "Puritanism Is Judaism," *The Jews and Modern Capitalism*, 249.
17. Alain de Benoist, *Comment peut-on être païen?* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1981), 168.
18. *Ibid.*, 169.
19. *Ibid.* 170.
20. *American Life in the 1840s*, ed. Carl Bode (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1967), 315
21. Frank Lawrence Owsley, "The Irrepressible Conflict," in *I'll Take My Stand* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 64.
22. Lyle Lanier, "A Critique of the Philosophy of Progress," *I'll Take My Stand*, 123.
23. *Ibid.*, 142.
24. George Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South, or the Failure of Free Society* (Richmond, VA: A. Morris Publisher, 1854), 177–178.
25. *Ibid.* 233.
26. *Ibid.*, 86

#### FOOTNOTE

\* Throughout, all forms of the word "liberal" refer to the advocacy of economic laissez-faire rather than to the moderately leftist political stance the term usually denotes in the U.S.

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