



Anti-Americanism in Iowa

by David Hogberg

Most reasonable people probably think that America was the victim of the terrorist attacks of September 11. However, on the far left of the political spectrum there are quite a few folks who feel that America bares partial, if not total, responsibility. Their anti-American vitriol has been catalogued effectively by Ross Douthat in his “Kumbaya Watch” column on National Review Online.¹

Unfortunately, the State of Iowa has seen its share of leftist anti-Americanism in the wake of the September 11 massacre. The locus of this sentiment is, not surprisingly, Iowa City. Much of this rubbish was on display at a forum at the University of Iowa on September 20. UI student Elena Perhunkova gave the typical leftist view of Old Glory: “The (U.S.) Flag, to me, seems to support militarism.” She also rang the bell of moral relativism: “Attacking with terror the people of Afghanistan, who are fleeing their country in fear, is not an appropriate answer for us if we consider ourselves a civil democracy. We should not respond to this with more terrorism.” Meanwhile, graduate student Doug Anderson suggested “Lifting sanctions in Iraq,” and other changes in U.S. foreign policy to alleviate the anti-American feelings that fueled the attacks.²

Similar ideas have appeared in the opinion page of the *Iowa City Press-Citizen*. Iowa City resident Ann Stromquist urges us to “[a]ttend a peace vigil. Write to President Bush. Write to our Senators and representatives [sic]. And tell them that it is in the best American tradition to respond with reason and caution, rather than to respond with violence that can only escalate, causing the loss of lives of Americans and other innocent people around the world...and perhaps move us closer to a nuclear war.”³ Ms. Stromquist’s comments reflect many typical leftist breakdowns in logic, but perhaps most prominent among them is the so-called “cycle of escalating violence” theory. This is the theory that if the U.S. responds with force, those on the receiving end will be angered to the point that they will respond with another, and more devastating, terrorist attack. This will lead to the U.S. responding with even more force, and thus the process repeats itself. The folly of this theory is addressed shortly.

Then there are the commentators who contend that America is at fault. One example is Jane Yoder-Short who, in a recent column, rhetorically asked “What are we doing that breeds the possibility for terrorism?...What is born from our disregard at the world’s efforts at combating racism, global warming and nuclear proliferation?”⁴ The most outrageous commentary to appear in the *Press-Citizen* came from socialist and former Iowa City Councilwoman Karen Kubby. In a column exactly one week after the atrocity, Kubby wrote:

“I believe it is our responsibility to try to understand why these individuals or organizations or states who may have been involved felt the need to be part of such insidious violence. As a taxpaying citizen of the United States of America, I am not innocent when it comes to being part of terrorism. Some of my tax dollars go to the training of

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military and paramilitary forces that perform acts of terrorism on their own people or on neighboring states. As a consumer, I am not innocent when it comes to being an accomplice to terrorism. Corporations perform economic and environmental terrorism on a regular basis across the globe.”⁵

What is disturbing about this naive nonsense is where it leads. After all, the passengers on those four jets and those killed in the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were taxpayers and consumers too. If we follow Kubby’s reasoning, that means they are also part of terrorism. Thus, they were not really victims on Sept. 11, but got what was coming to them. That Kubby does not consider the creepy implications of her logic is typical of the muddle-headed thinking on the left.

A similar lack of careful thinking is apparent in her exhortation that we need to “understand why” the terrorists committed their vile acts. Presumably, a proper understanding would lead us to realize that the imperialist, oppressive foreign policy of America caused the pain and hurt of the terrorists and their followers, and hence we would be dissuaded from a military response. That would be a complete misunderstanding of our enemy. Osama Bin-Laden and his ilk do not hate us because of anything we have done, but because of what we are. They hate our culture, they hate our freedom, they hate our prosperity. If given the chance, those responsible for the terrorism will enslave or destroy us. That is why we must respond militarily: to not do so will give the terrorists more chances.

It is also the reason why the cycle of escalating violence is bunk. Contrary to this theory, the violence will escalate if we *don’t* respond with force. If we respond with understanding and kindness, like Kubby and Stromquist want, fanatics like Bin-Laden will take that as a sign of weakness. That will only encourage them to engage in more terrorist attacks. By responding with force, we will stop them in one of the only two ways such murderers are stopped, by beating them into submission or killing them.

The terrorists are not patients in need of psycho-therapy. They are monsters who must be eliminated. Unfortunately, many on the political left will never realize this. They will persist in the belief that if we just make nice, our enemies will respond in kind. And they will continue to believe that it was something that America did that caused this atrocity. For in their world, America is always to blame.

ENDNOTES:

¹ National Review Online is at <http://www.nationalreview.com>.

² Langenberg, Sara. “Anti-war sentiment emerges at UI,” *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, Friday, September 21, 2001, pp. 1A and 4A.

³ Stromquist, Ann. “We can make a small difference,” *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, Saturday, September 29, 2001, p. 11A.

⁴ Yoder-Short, Jane. “Can violence heal our wounds?” *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, Tuesday, October 9, 2001, p. 13A.

⁵ Kubby, Karen. “Retaliation won’t stop terrorism,” *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, Tuesday, September 18, 2001, p. 9A.

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