

# Come Home, America

During what we call the “C” segment on our MSNBC daily show, Bill Press and I were debating Canada’s decision to issue a travel warning to all Canadians

thinking of visiting the United States.

Seems a Syrian-born Canadian citizen, flying home via JFK, was interrogated by U.S. officials, finger-printed, photographed—and sent back to Damascus. This was in line with a new U.S. policy that singles out travelers from five nations—Syria, Libya, Sudan, Iran, Iraq—that have a history of harboring terrorists.

Press took Canada’s side, accusing the Bushites of ethnic profiling. I replied that the insult came from a country that freeloads off U.S. defense and is itself a haven for terrorists. *Final bon mot*: We Americans don’t “need lectures from Soviet Canuckistan.”

That set the cat down among the pigeons. Before the show ended, correspondents for Canadian press and TV were in the lobby. Some of my interviewers agreed with me. Others bristled with controlled rage. Yet, the Canuckistan crack aside, is it not time our whining and carping allies heard what some of us think of them?

Was I wrong about Canada? Here is Diane Francis, columnist for the *National Post*: “Canada’s immigration, refugee and legal system facilitates the entry into the continent of ... terrorists.” Here is U.S. anti-terrorism expert Buck Revell: “Unless and until Canada can tighten its controls on immigration and refugees, these controls will have to be imposed at the [U.S.] border...”

As for Canada’s military, *The American Enterprise*, the magazine of AEI, writes: “Canadian military spending stands at \$265 per capita — the worst among the NATO members.” Her

defense effort is not half the NATO average and but a fourth of the U.S. effort. Canada is exactly what I said it was: a free rider on the U.S. defense budget.

With only 34 ships in a navy that boasted 300 in World War II (only 12 are up to U.S. standards), Canada has “stopped air and sea patrols around its coastline, the world’s longest ... Smugglers already run rampant, and terrorists can’t be stopped,” writes *TAE*.

“We have sovereignty over the Arctic areas only by the grace of other nations,” says Canadian defense critic Rob Anders.

And though we let Canada devalue its dollar and run up \$50 billion trade surpluses at the expense of our timber men and farmers, we still hear the endless belly-aching from up north.

*TAE*’s December issue debates a parallel deepening divide between the U.S. and Europe. Writes editor Karl Zinsmeister: “The simple reality needs to be faced squarely by Americans: In a great variety of ways — Americans and Europeans are growing apart.”

The three “critical structural breaks” in Zinsmeister’s view: The U.S. is dynamic, Europe is dying, and Europeans have lost the stomach for military action. When FDR called welfare a “narcotic, a subtle destroyer of the human spirit,” it applied to nations as well as men. Ike was right: We should have pulled our troops out in 1961. Europe might today be standing on her own feet with her own robust continental defense, not mooching off America and behaving with the sneering resentment of a 40-year-old still living under his old man’s roof.

While the writers in Zinsmeister’s symposium are, almost all of them, neo-conservatives, they sound like Sam Francis and Charley Reese.

“Old and in the Way” is Zinsmeister’s own title. “Irrational Anti-Americanism Takes Root Across the Atlantic,” “Goodbye Europe,” “A One-Sided Alliance,” “Irritating and Irrelevant,” “The Real Problem is European Elites,” are the titles of the other essays. Only pro-American Brit John O’Sullivan offers relief from the remorseless Euro-bashing.

Yet, when one reads on the eve of an Armistice Day that recalls the Doughboys who died rescuing Europe in World War I, that 500,000 marched through Florence in a parade that featured “communist hymns, red flags and portraits of Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara,” perhaps we can now all agree: It is time we came home.

Whatever one may think of war with Iraq, George Bush is not Hitler, and America is not the Third Reich. We don’t need this. We don’t need these people. Now that the Cold War is over, let us graciously cede NATO to the Europeans, bring our boys home, let Europeans provide for their own defense, and go our separate way in the world. If they don’t like us, fine. Our forefathers didn’t much like them either.

Rising anti-Americanism in Canada and Europe testifies anew to the wisdom of our founding fathers. “It is our true policy to steer clear of any permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world,” said George Washington. Echoed Jefferson: Our policy should be “peace, commerce and honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none.”

Amen. Even the neocons seem to be getting the message. ■

[genius and zest]

## “I Am Not For World Empire”

A conversation with Norman Mailer about Iraq, Israel, the perils of technology and why he is a Left-Conservative.

*On a crystalline day in October, Taki, Kara Hopkins, and Scott McConnell met at Logan Airport and drove up the Cape to Norman Mailer's home in Provincetown, Mass. Taki is an old friend of Mailer's; McConnell and Hopkins knew his writing well but had never met the man.*

*The vagaries of literary reputation are not the main beat of The American Conservative, but we were struck by how many people told us how important Mailer was at a certain time of life and how invariably that time was young adulthood—somewhere between 18 and 21. Perhaps that is the moment in life when readers are most receptive to a certain kind of bold writing.*

*What follows is a conversation about what most interested the four of us on that day, as well as an addendum Mailer wrote later. We spoke of the present and future more than the past: a mixture of politics (Iraq, the imperial urge, styles of conservatism) and more typically Maileresque*

*themes (the problem of technology). After several hours of talk and the gracious hospitality of Norris Church Mailer we made our way back to normal life, not doubting that we had spent an extraordinary afternoon with the greatest living American writer.*

**AMERICAN CONSERVATIVE:** You're just back from Europe...

**NORMAN MAILER:** My wife, Norris, and I went with George Plimpton and his wife Sarah. We did George's play, *Zelda, Scott & Earnest* (Terry Quinn, co-author) in six capitals over two visits.

We were in Paris and Amsterdam in June, then at end of summer, in Vienna and Berlin and Moscow and London. It is the most amazing play. There is not one original word in it. It is all taken from Scott's writings, Zelda's writings, and Hemingway's, plus their letters back and forth. The first time we did it, I said to John Irving, "Can you imagine how

good this will be with top-flight actors?" He said, no, no, no. The fact that you people are doing it makes it interesting because sitting in the audience, you go back and forth between the originals and the people who are doing it on this night.

I think that is a part of it. Americans need mythos, certainly, in the literary world. Nationally, we have Abraham Lincoln and George Washington and FDR and Camelot, and in some quarters I fear there is Ronald Reagan, but nonetheless, in the literary world, it is probably Hemingway and Fitzgerald and *Zelda*, the nearest thing to a literary mythos within living reach. People take to it.

**AC:** Why do you think so? Because they are good, but not necessarily the best.

**NM:** Hemingway and Fitzgerald? Well, they are arguably the best. Who would you call on in that period? Going back, you could certainly argue that Melville's