

Anti-Globalism = Anti-Americanism

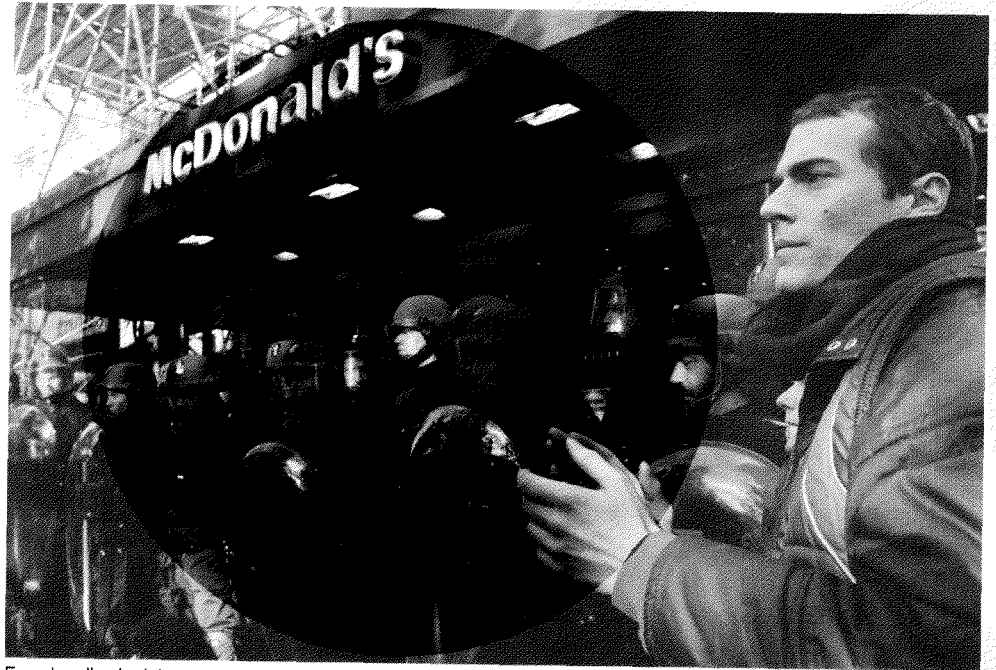
BY JEAN-FRANCOIS REVEL

How to understand this war against globalization, which has grown in scope and virulence over the past five years? First, we must realize that it is a war in the real, not the figurative, sense of the word. It is a physical struggle being fought in the streets, not just theoretically. The demonstrators who are its shock troops are organized by activist organizations, many of them subsidized by governments, and they sack cities and lay siege to international meetings during their battles.

What motivates this extraordinary resistance? Globalization simply means freedom of movement for goods and people, and it is hard to be violently hostile to that. But behind this fight lies an older and more fundamental struggle—against economic liberalization, and against the chief representative thereof, which is the United States. Anti-globalism carnivals often feature an Uncle Sam in a Stars-and-Stripes costume as their supreme scapegoat. In this way, the new movement taps into an old socialist tradition, where opposition to economic freedom and opposition to America are impossible to separate.

The simplistic article of Marxist faith that capitalism is absolute evil, and that it is incarnated in and directed by the United States, may be the most important principle shared by the current crop of anti-globalizers. America is the object of their loathing because for a half century or more it has been the most prosperous and creative society on earth. But ultimately it is something even bigger that the anti-globalizers want to destroy: liberal democracy and free-market economics. Or quite simply liberty itself.

According to the anti-globalists, the global marketplace will breed ever-increasing poverty for the profit of an ever-richer minority. This is of course the outcome Karl Marx predicted in the middle of the nineteenth century for the industrialized nations of Western Europe and North America. But we all know



French police in riot gear at a McDonald's restaurant during an anti-globalization protest in Paris.

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how history has confirmed that brilliant prophecy. So the old prediction has been transferred to a new locale, new time, and new active agency. Ah, the genius of “scientific socialism.”

But today's anti-globalists are much more than false prophets. Their violence has gone far beyond legitimate protest into real savagery. They have killed people through charming acts like bombing McDonald's restaurants. In Seattle, Nice, Genoa, and other cities, rioters destroyed millions of dollars worth of property and attacked officials and police.

Anti-globalists have tried to replace democracy with a despotism of the mob, advancing the brutal proposition that street demonstrators are more legitimate than elected governments. Wherever they have been active, their goal has been to prevent elected heads of state or appointed officials of international organizations from meeting. Like other totalitarians, they treat the mere expression of ideas contrary to their slogans as a crime.

Anti-globalizers have no ambition to advance a program by democratic means, for the simple reason that they don't have a

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program, or coherent ideas, or facts on their side. So instead they beat relentlessly on the archaic anti-capitalist and anti-American drum. In Genoa we saw red flags adorned with hammer and sickle, effigies of Che Guevara, and the acronym for the Red Brigades.

The anti-globalists are often incoherent. They brought mayhem to Seattle in the name of combating a “savage” globalism that “profits only the rich.” Yet which groups met in Seattle? The World Trade Organization (WTO), whose role is precisely to monitor international economic transactions so as to prevent them from being “savage.” There has not been a country in the world that hasn’t been eager to be admitted into the WTO, and the poorest are the most eager.

At Genoa, the hooligans who smashed the facades of banks before the conference even began said they objected to rich countries that didn’t care about the poor countries of the world. Actually, the goal of the international summit they were warring against was specifically to help poor countries. The eight leading industrial countries present were meeting to target aid for economic development in the Southern Hemisphere, and for creation of a global fund to finance the medical campaigns against AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis, especially in sub-Saharan Africa.

If you ask the developing countries what they want, they will tell you they want *more* globalization, not less. What they desire most of all is freer access to the world’s best markets for their products. So when well-heeled young radical protestors try to subvert meetings whose goal is to extend free trade and strengthen poor countries’ ability to export goods, they actually act as enemies of the world’s poor. The 2001 conference meeting in Quebec City that was invaded and wrecked by protestors, for example, had been organized to lay out the basis for a single American market that would open the rich northern countries of U.S. and Canada to the products of the poorer South American countries.

So it is astonishing when European leaders declare themselves “impressed” by the rioters, and convinced of the necessity to “dialogue” with them. It is grotesque to see the leftist press and political stratum, seemingly having learned nothing from the socialist catastrophes and absurdities of the last generation, now greet this new crusade against capitalism with open arms. The president of the French republic, Jacques Chirac, paid tribute to a “global social consciousness” and pleaded before his peers in favor of “normal and permanent dialogue” with the demonstrators.

Governments discredit themselves when they give in to violent demonstrators, because violence paralyzes democracy itself. Democrats worthy of the name should not forget that power is conferred by ballots, not by bricks hurled through windows. It is disturbing that the Left too often ignores this principle.

It’s important to recall that it is only *market* globalization that the Left rejects. In fact, the Left has always hoped for globalization *without* the market—an ideologically correct world government. Soviet and Maoist communists always felt the vocational urge to impose their models on the whole of humanity, if need be by armed subversion, which they did not hesitate to use on

five continents. Although they lack the means to undertake bellicose operations on such a scale, today’s anti-globalizers are no less internationalist in their ambitions.

But history shows that only capitalism can deliver a form of globalism whose balance sheet, while not without liabilities, is on the whole positive. The beneficial effects of widening commerce were evident as far back as the Middle Ages and ancient Rome. But it was not until after the great explorations of the late fifteenth century and the growth of transatlantic trade that globalization in the modern sense of the term began. Merchant capitalism developed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; the industrial revolution spread throughout Europe and North America from about 1840 to 1914.

It was Europe that created the first world markets, as her capital, technologies, languages, and people spread over every continent. She was the driving force of an international circulation of commodities, scientific knowledge, ideas, and techniques. After the catastrophe of World War I, Europe drew back and turned in on herself. Her supremacy became a thing of the past. She even became divided within as her countries erected barriers against each other.

On the other side of the Atlantic, the United States, Argentina, and Brazil, whose immense territories were traditionally open to immigrants and foreign products, barricaded themselves in turn. International trade plummeted, capital could no longer circulate, exchange controls were instituted and there were efforts to fix currencies by decree. All over the world, economic life stagnated and came to resemble what today’s enemies of globalism desire for us. The result was not long in coming: the stock market crash of 1929, followed by the Great Depression, with tens of millions unemployed. (France would not return to her 1914 per capita income level until the beginning of the 1950s.)

After World War II, the United States became a powerful advocate in favor of free world commerce. If world economic activity at the turn of the millennium is now thoroughly global, capitalist, and U.S.-led, this has nothing to do with “arrogance.” The enfeebling of the Europeans’ position in the world is self-caused: They alone are responsible for their own heaped-up aberrations and follies over the first half of the past century. This weakening entailed the corresponding and virtually automatic rise of the United States.

Strikingly, Americans continue to increase their lead, even since the consolidation of the European Union. That a united Europe hasn’t yet risen to the challenge is obviously not for lack of material and human resources, but rather for lack of understanding of how to use them. Inhibited by ideological prejudices, Europe, despite her successes, continues to live overshadowed by America. Witness the fact that the health of her economy is dependent on the state of America’s economy: Whenever the latter goes into recession, as in the beginning of 2001, Europe falters.

Elsewhere, American-style market capitalism is equally successful and dominant. Third World countries have developed at sharply different rates basically according to the degree to which they have respected free markets, and left economic activity to private enterprise rather than to undertakings of the state. Even in

nations like China where political communism has artificially prolonged its existence, it has done so only by thoroughly expunging economic socialism through privatization, appeals to foreign investors, deregulation of commerce, and establishment of cross-border trade agreements. Only Cuba and North Korea have clung to economic collectivism, with utterly disastrous results.

Will jealous activists from Europe and some other nations treat globalism as poisonous merely by virtue of its association with America? In July 2001, when the "Network of French Cultural Cooperation" gathered at France's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, French foreign minister Lionel Jospin called upon the participants to fight liberalizing, American-style globalization with *their* brand of globalization, which Jospin said would be based on the "affirmation of states against the unbridled laws of the market." In the process, France would replace America as the global leader.

This crusade has deep roots. Back in May 1944, Hubert Beuve-Méry, the future founder and editor of *Le Monde*, the most influential journal in France today, was able to write that "The Americans constitute a real danger for France.... They cling to a veritable cult of the idea of liberty [and] don't feel the need to liberate themselves from the servitudes that their capitalism entails." The fact that an important Frenchman was able to argue this even while France was occupied by the Nazis, with the possibility of American liberation being their only hope for a different future, indicates the depth of both the hatred for economic liberty and the anti-American obsession in France.

Resentments that lead to the rejection of every idea that comes from America simply because it is American can only weaken countries. To follow such a course is to let phobias become guiding principles. Does anyone really believe today that nations which substitute government edicts for economic markets are likelier to prosper? Must we close our eyes to the achievements of the last 50 years of increasing economic liberty, when worldwide production grew by a factor of six and the volume of exports by a factor of 17? Must investment capitalism abroad, the engine of extraordinary, racing progress for many previously poor countries, be banned just because it often brings links to America?

We French have had little to say against Saddam Hussein, Muammar Qaddafi, Kim Jong Il, Fidel Castro, Robert Mugabe, the imams of the Islamic Republic of Iran, or the bosses of China and Vietnam. We reserve our admonitions and our contempt and our attacks for the U.S., for Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush, and for Europeans like Margaret Thatcher, Silvio Berlusconi, and Tony Blair, because they are insufficiently hostile to capitalism. Our enemy is not the dictator but the free market economy.

Anti-globalizers make the same mistake. What's important to them is not the eradication of poverty. Rather, it is the propaganda value they gain from linking poverty to the spreading market economy. But this puts them on the wrong side of all evidence, of reality, of history.

Life expectancy in Third World countries has more than dou-

bled during the free-market dominated second half of the twentieth century. In India, food production has grown by a factor of ten, leading to the elimination of massive famines. In Latin America, per capita income doubled between 1950 and 1985. Over the past 50 years, Latin America on the whole has experienced an annual growth of 5 percent. No European country can boast an equivalent rate. These figures show to what an extent the mantras about ever-increasing poverty spring from ignorance or simple dishonesty. Where poverty continues to exist today it is almost wholly due to ruinously inefficient public sectors.

This is most obvious in Africa, the only Third World continent to have actually declined. Impoverishment there has political, not economic, causes. It is statism, not the market, and socialism, not capitalism, that has destroyed the African economies. After independence, the African elites who formed the political leadership generally adopted the Soviet and Chinese systems. Thus they were able to assume absolute power with access to the levers of personal enrichment. And from communism they borrowed an infallible recipe for agricultural ruin: collectivizing the land, from Algeria to Tanzania, setting up "cooperatives" that quickly became unproductive.

In these fatal mistakes the Third World has had false friends. In particular, the privileged pseudo-revolutionaries of Seattle and Göteborg have encouraged them down the primrose path of anti-capitalism. Lacking any real knowledge about the African cataclysm, and careless about finding remedies, the anti-globalist agitators prefer hurling brickbats at their perennial hobgoblin to the moral imperative of saving and improving lives.

This just licenses Africa's socialist dictators to commit their robberies. In Madagascar, the anti-American radical Didier Ratsiraka received a fortune in francs, but the starving Madagascan people never had the slightest whiff of it. An investigative journalist could do well to search for traces in Switzerland or elsewhere of the billions of dollars stolen by the late Nigerian dictator Sani Abacha. And what's the point (other than irritating America) of defending Robert Mugabe, a typical dictator who has rigged every election in Zimbabwe and managed in 20 years to transform one of the most fertile lands of Africa into one of the most desolate? Between 1960 and 2000, Africa received *four times* as much funding and aid per capita as Latin America or Asia. How was it that these last two continents took off, and not Africa? By practicing capitalism and establishing world trade.

But it is pointless to set forth facts like these to anti-globalizers; they simply howl in indignation. In spreading the lie that globalization impoverishes the most needy, the protestors simply act upon their twin enthusiasms: anti-American and anti-capitalism. Their floating mass of some hundreds of thousands of demonstrators is their compensation for the frustration of having seen all the socialisms and all the revolutions fail. At a time when they have no positive alternative, yelling slogans and trashing cities and blocking international gatherings provide them with the illusion of moral action.

Minority Report

Last year, a crowd of 80,000 Parisians gathered to say they had had enough of a strike by transportation unions which was paralyzing their city. This

counter-demonstration was organized by a tiny, cheeky free-enterprise think tank and lobby called “Liberte, j’ecris ton nom” (Liberty, I write your name). Sabine Herold, a young French woman enrolled in business school after earning a degree in political science from the University of Paris, is vice president of the group. She and her twentysomething friends present a fresh face of protest in France—as proponents of individual liberty and the free market, in a country long dominated by statism and socialist sentiment. When Herold electrified the 80,000 Parisians, thrilled admirers compared her to a young Margaret Thatcher or a new Joan of Arc. Critics suggested she must be a silly rich girl. In fact, Herold is neither silly nor rich, and her group intends to change France. Edward Grossman recently interviewed her for *The American Enterprise*.

TAE: Is there as much anti-globalization sentiment here in France as one is told?

HEROLD: Absolutely! France leads when it comes to that. But what is anti-globalization? It’s a refusal to face the world as it becomes one.

TAE: Does globalization imply Americanization?

HEROLD: Yes. Americanization means the global spread of products and ideas, especially that of individual liberty.

TAE: What’s the effect on various cultures?

HEROLD: It often does mean a loss of national cultures. Yet it’s up to the different people in each country to defend their own culture. If the French don’t want to speak French, or if they want to eat at McDonald’s, that’s their decision. And may the best culture win.

TAE: What do your parents do?

HEROLD: They’re schoolteachers in the little town where I grew up a hundred miles north of here.

TAE: Children of the Sixties?

HEROLD: Yes and no. They were in university in 1968, when the pseudo-revolutions took place, but they didn’t participate. If they have any political leaning I’d say it’s to the moderate right. They remember May 1968 as one enormous circus. Whereas many teachers well into their 50s romanticize the huge strikes, the students marching, etc. But these people tend to be socialists. Old ’68-ers who keep wearing their hair long and everything.

After the “revolution” of ’68 the cobblestones had to be removed from most of the streets so Parisians couldn’t throw them

A young pro-capitalist heroine shows that not all Europeans oppose economic liberty

at police. I don’t miss that. It’s reform we’re after, not revolution.

TAE: Are your parents responsible for your ideas then?

HEROLD: Not really. Of course, thanks to them I’ve always been anti-communist. But there wasn’t too much politics discussed at home.

TAE: And your teachers in high school?

HEROLD: Some used to rub me the wrong way by presenting the USSR as an alternative to the United States. I did have one teacher I valued. She had us read Montesquieu and Voltaire—our own writers preaching liberty.

TAE: Are French students exposed much to ideas of freedom and liberty?

HEROLD: Not much. It depends on what’s assigned by the teachers, and in the university most are leftists. I became libertarian thanks to my own reading and to friends I made.

TAE: Which writers have influenced you most?

HEROLD: Well, Hayek of course. Tocqueville. And then the brilliant Raymond Aron. Writers who champion the free market, but as a means, not an end in itself. The end is individual liberty. A free market is the best way to protect and nurture and maximize individual liberty.

TAE: Is that so in all places, at all times? What about China?

HEROLD: The problem there isn’t too much of a free market, but not enough. You haven’t got a market in the real sense. Instead there’s state monopolies and corruption. You need a license for everything at the local, regional, and national levels, and licenses mean bribes.

TAE: Is there something like a free market in the European Union or in your country?

HEROLD: Hardly. It’s very difficult to start a new business, it takes so much time, you’re crushed by taxes, and the greatest problem is bureaucracy.

TAE: What’s the solution?

HEROLD: More economic liberty. We want to encourage reforms across the board, starting with education. We’re preparing a report now on how the two national teachers’ unions, both Trotskyite, contribute to the fact that 10 percent of kids leave school illiterate. My mother tells me of kids who just plain can’t read.

TAE: What do talented French students want to do when they graduate?