PHILIP WAYNE POWELL: ***Tree of Hate: Propaganda and Prejudices Affecting United States Relations with the Hispanic World.*** Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2008.

In *Tree of Hate*, Philip Wayne Powell purportedly intends to uproot the "tree of hate" which he argues has distorted relations between the United States and the Hispanic world. Yet the author displays a remarkable insensitivity to his own prejudices and distortions, which ultimately reduces his work to little more than a useless polemic.

When Powell first published the book in 1971, Latin America was undergoing a transformation from a mostly democratic region to one dominated by brutal tyrannies. Powell devotes little attention to this context. But it seems to provide the *raison d'être* for the book, as he plaintively urges the reader to overlook Franco's atrocities and those of Latin American governments as not reflective of true Spanish character.

Spanish culture, and by extension Latin American culture, were denigrated for centuries, Powell asserts, by the so-called "Black Legend … that Spaniards have shown themselves, historically, to be *uniquely* cruel, bigoted, tyrannical, obscurantist, lazy, fanatical, greedy, and treacherous" (11; emphasis in the original). Ironically, Powell observes, "The Jew who is interested in historical justice and who can, perhaps, still taste the poison of the famed 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion' … should have little trouble understanding the long-suffering Spaniard, even though Jews themselves have contributed to past and continuing denigration of Spain" (9). Jewish "hispanophobia" after 1500 may have been understandable, Powell notes, because of the Inquisition. But it was unwarranted, because "the danger that Spaniards saw with the Jews" was their potential as a "fifth column" (55). Despite the illogic of Jewish anger, Powell argues, the Jews took revenge against Spain by contributing to the propagation of the Black Legend through their influence in Europe's "rapidly growing printing and publishing industry" (56).

Powell acknowledges that the Jews were not alone. The Italians, Germans, French, English, Dutch and Portuguese also used propaganda and the imagery of the Black Legend as a means of challenging Spain's growing power. Here Powell documents the deliberate diffusion of anti-Spanish and anti-Catholic dogma and disinformation, and aptly places these techniques in a context of competing empires.

But *The Tree of Hate* then goes beyond solid historical documentation to present a counter image—the White Legend, a myth of benign, altruistic Spanish colonialism—that is equally illegitimate. Powell contends that Spanish colonizers, soldiers, citizens and policies were relatively commendable as compared

to their European contemporaries. He describes Spain itself as the center and source of European culture, the country that "was cleansing and reforming its Church well before Luther," that "first 'democratized' literature," that created "literary characters and concepts of timeless fame and universality," and that "was also leading Europe in the advancement of jurisprudence" (91). In his ultimate whitewash, Powell asserts that the unfairness Spain has suffered for centuries is evident today in the kind of people who remain its critics: "fundamentalist anti-Catholics, Communists, and the die-hard anti-Franco chorus" (145).

Undoubtedly the United States foreign policy towards Latin America has been infused with racism for two hundred years. The Monroe Doctrine belittled the newly independent nations of South America, characterizing them as incapable of fending for themselves and claiming that they needed a superior United States for protection and, implicitly, guidance. This is one reason the region vilifies *monroeism.* Consider the observations by one of America's most pre-eminent diplomats, George Kennan, in a 1950 report on his first visit to Latin America:

> Human history, it seems to me, bears no record of anything more terrible ever having been done to entire peoples … . Here is the true illustration of the crimes of the fathers being visited on their progeny: for, as the Spaniards intermarried with these native peoples the course of whose history had so ruthlessly been interrupted, they came to share the scars and weaknesses which they had themselves inflicted. Elsewhere in Latin America, the large scale importation of Negro slave elements into considerable parts of the Spanish and other colonial empires, and the extensive intermarriage of all these elements, produced other unfortunate results which seemed to have weighed scarcely less heavily on the chances for human progress. In these circumstances, the shadow of a tremendous helplessness and impotence falls today over most of the Latin American world.[1]

Powell does not cite Kennan's report. Had he examined it, he may have learned that North American racism had multiple elements: anti-Spanish, anti-indigenous, anti-black. But this kind of complexity eludes the author of *Tree of Hate*.

Similarly, Powell fails to consider seriously the way racism may have functioned to rationalize, not to cause, the United States intervention in Latin America, e.g., to protect American business interests in Cuba and Nicaragua or seeming security interests in creating the Panama Canal and occupying the Dominican Republic. Instead, Powell opts for easy generalizations based on evidence that

appears to have no systematic basis. His examples are useful for his argument that the Black Legend shapes the United States policy towards Latin America, but they do not add up to a scholarly case that would support his thesis.

Since the first publication of *Tree of Hate*, several excellent studies have appeared about the racialized character of the policy of the United States towards Latin America.[2] These newer works better fulfill Powell's goal to help Europeans and North Americans in "recognizing and resolving [their] anti-Spanish, anti-Hispanic, and anti-Catholic beliefs," as Robert Himmerich y Valencia states in a new introduction to the book's third printing (xvi). In light of the solid scholarship now available, there was no need for the University of New Mexico Press to re-print *Tree of Hate*.

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**Notes**

1 George Kennan, "Report on Latin America, March 29, 1950" in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950*, Volume II (Washington, DC: US Department of State), pp. 598-624.

2 For example, Frederick B. Pike, *The United States and Latin America: Myths and Stereotypes of Civilization and Nature* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992); Lars Schoultz, *Beneath the United States: A History of U.S. Policy Toward Latin America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

FRED ROSEN (ed.): ***Empire and Dissent: The United States and Latin America.*** Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008.

This is an ambitious but often frustrating book. Its goal, as laid out by Fred Rosen in the introduction, is to "explore the ways in which the contours of dissent and resistance have been generated by the activities of empire, as well as the ways in which the contours of empire have been given shape by opposition, resistance, and disaffection" (5). The ambition is to demonstrate the causal relationships between the empire of the United States on the one hand, and the resistance that has emerged as a result.

My frustration stems primarily from the fact that the book offers no definition of "empire" despite its centrality to the chapters. Rosen does not define it in the introduction. Indeed, one has to dig deeply into Alan Knight's impressive discussion of U.S. imperialism and hegemony to find the following in endnote 24: "I have deliberately refrained from trying to define *imperialism*" (47; emphasis in original). Endnote 99 states very plainly that "I have made the prudent but