

FIGHTING FOR OUR COUNTRY ON THE FOURTH

(Stole the YouTube from Athenae)

Back before George Bush shat on the Constitution and back before I got dual-citizenship, through mr. emptywheel, in Ireland, I spent a summer studying Czech in Prague. I was in the most advanced class, which meant that (because most Americans never get much further than "pivo" in Czech) I was one of just two Americans in the class. In fact, several of the other students were people who had been born in Czechoslovakia, but had fled communism when they were kids. They were spending the summer re-learning Czech so they could, now that Czech Republic was a free country, contribute to the country of their birth.

Though the other American woman was the daughter of a Czech, she was in some ways an "ugly American." I remember, for example, when she said she could not, would not, ever live without a car, not even if she lived in Manhattan (she lived in Ithaca, NY). She was pretty jingoistic, too—America had the power and force, goddamnit, so it could do what it wanted to do.

One day, the other American woman was gone for some reason and, in the course of some speaking exercise I suggested that America wasn't all it could be. Everyone in the class took that opportunity to express their surprise. "You're not like other Americans" they said (this was in the period when young Americans treated Prague like an extended frat party). "I can't believe you haven't moved to Europe."

But immediately several of them, at once, said, "But please stay where you are, to make America better. To make America what it should be."

There have been times—after I got my EU

citizenship and after Bush won the 2004 election—when I've been tempted to leave this country. But I always think back to that commitment I made to a bunch of Europeans (some of whom, remember, had fled communism and experienced the return of freedom to their own country) to make America what it should be again. I think back to that commitment I made to myself to make America what it should be again.

Two hundred-some years ago, a bunch of guys fought hard to make this country special. It's our fight now, to make our country back into the leader and beacon of hope it ought to be.

May you and yours have a wonderful Fourth!