

“Billy Wilder, The Pope & Me” and “Allah Be Damned”

My two favorite movie writer-directors were Preston Sturges and Billy Wilder. Both worked at Paramount Studios in the 40s, which was fortuitous for Wilder. That's because they were both successful screenwriters when Sturges persuaded the studio to let him direct his own scripts. That decision led to a flurry of such classic, huge-grossing, comedies as “The Great McGinty,” “The Lady Eve,” “The Palm Beach Story” and “Hail the Conquering Hero.”

It also led Wilder to plead his own case. “The bosses at Paramount,” he once told me, “gave me permission, assuming I would do something artsy-fartsy, which would flop, and that I'd then go back to being a nice little screenwriter. Instead, I made the comedy, “The Major and the Minor,” which was a big success.”

Paramount couldn't have been too sad, as it led in fairly short order to Wilder's turning out “Double Indemnity,” “The Lost Weekend,” “A Foreign Affair” and “Sunset Boulevard.”

Just as a sidebar, I thought it was interesting that once when we were having lunch, I mentioned to him that he had directed seven of his fellow directors, although three of them were actors who had only directed one or two movies. He was stumped. The only ones he came up with were Cecil B. DeMille and Eric Von Stroheim, both of whom appeared in “Sunset Blvd.,” and Otto Preminger, who portrayed the German commandant in “Stalag 17.” The others were Mitchell Leisen, Jack Lemmon, Charles Laughton and Ray Milland.

Although I have already devoted several articles to Pope Francis, attacking him for his statements in favor of redistribution of wealth and for siding with the Palestinians

during his recent visit to the Holy Land, I hope nobody takes me for an anti-Catholic bigot. The way I see it is the way my friend Tony Medley, a Catholic, saw it when the Church was embroiled in the sickening pedophile scandals of the 1990s. At the time, he pointed out that his religion was far greater than the sum of its human parts.

As a non-Catholic, I believe that is still true, even though the current object of my displeasure is the Pope, and not just a handful of perverted bishops and priests. Still, I would be remiss if I didn't share an email I received from a friend in Israel, Haim Goldman.

He wrote: "Something that neither you nor Caroline Glick mentioned was something that Francis never addressed during his visit, although as the leader of a billion Catholics it should have been at the top of his list. I refer to the fact that the Christian communities in Syria have almost been obliterated in the ongoing war; the vast majority of the 1.5 million Christians in Iraq were killed or expelled over the past decade; the once-thriving Christian community of Lebanon has been greatly diminished because of persecution; the Coptic Christians of Egypt are often butchered by followers of the Islamic Brotherhood; and the Christian communities in the so-called Palestinian Authority are constantly persecuted.

"Furthermore, the leader of the Fatah terrorist group greeted the Pope in his palace, which just happens to have been a Greek Orthodox monastery until the Muslims confiscated it.

"There is only one country in the Middle East in which the Christian community has increased in number and flourished over the past decade: Israel.

"And yet the Pope chose not to say anything on behalf of those persecuted Christians and did not praise the Jewish state of Israel for its treatment of both Christians and Arabs."

For that matter, he hasn't spoken up on behalf of the

Christian woman, Meriam Yehya, imprisoned in Sudan, who faces a hundred lashes and execution by hanging because she refuses to renounce her religion. Although I'm sure His Holiness will be only too happy to stand on his balcony, basking in the adoration of the crowd below, and pronounce her Saint Meriam at some point in the future.

Still, the contempt I feel for Pope Francis is nothing compared to the contempt I feel for President Obama. Even when he was addressing the throng gathered at Normandy to pay their respects to those who gave their lives 70 years ago in order that others could live in freedom, bile rose in my throat.

However you may have felt about President Bush's policies, you could never doubt that he respected those men and women he sent off to war. Does anybody believe that Obama regards those in uniform as anything but suckers?

When he defended his decision to swap five Islamic terrorists for one Army deserter, even those who might have approved of the deal knew that his actual motivation was to empty Gitmo. The truth is that every time Obama gives one of his self-serving speeches, my reaction is to channel my inner teenager and mumble, "Whatever."

If you didn't already know the depths to which this administration is willing to stoop, you might have been shocked at the way the White House has slandered the soldiers who served with Bergdahl. But, then, when you consider the nonchalance with which they sacrificed the four Americans in Benghazi, it's not too surprising that when Obama paid tribute to Bergdahl's military service, he not only ignored the lives that were lost while searching for the deserter, but the lives that, in retrospect, were wasted in capturing the five jihadists.

The fanciful notion that Obama could stand before the American people and expect anyone to take him seriously when he said

that this nation never leaves a soldier behind was belied by the fact that at that very moment a Marine, whose only crime had been driving in the wrong lane, was being brutalized in a Mexican jail.

And the proof that Obama was unconcerned about the injustice was that he didn't even bother to send Susan Rice out on the Sunday news shows to lie about the reasons behind his reluctance to confront Mexico.

It's my own guess that he tried but failed to persuade President Enrique Nieto to accept 100 jihadists in exchange for Sgt. Andrew Tahmoressi.

On the plus side, I'm sure he had no trouble at all getting Nieto to agree to keep sending us millions of future Democrats.

Allah Be Damned

I admit I don't see a sliver of difference between so-called good Muslims and the kind the rest of the world has become all too familiar with, and, what's more, I don't believe anyone who says otherwise is being honest.

If there were so many good, decent followers of Allah, doesn't it figure that the law of averages would ensure there would be at least a few civilized Islamic nations? Instead, they're all simply different degrees of rotten.

As I sit here, Obama is mulling over the offer from Iran's mullahs to give us a hand in Iraq. I know our glorious leader isn't much of an historical scholar, but even he should recall that the last time we allied ourselves with a tyrannical regime, it was with the Soviet Union during World War II.

Although American Communists were delighted to see Joseph Stalin and FDR embracing one another, the fact is that the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany had signed a mutual non-

aggression pact, and if Hitler hadn't double-crossed Stalin by invading his home turf, the Soviet Union probably would have sat it out. Instead, Stalin's hand was forced, and his bribe was all of Eastern Europe.

The point is, whether the devil looks like Stalin or the Ayatollah Khomeini, once you shake his hand, you not only lose your soul, but don't count on getting all of your fingers back.

Speaking of duplicity, at the same time that the head of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, was vowing to help Israel find the three abducted teenagers, the official Facebook page of his Fatah party ran a cartoon of three rats adorned with Stars of David dangling from a fishing rod.

It serves as a reminder of the days when Yasser Arafat had the job, and would make conciliatory speeches in English while simultaneously calling for the extinction of Israel in Arabic. Pretty clumsy, you would think, but good enough for the likes of Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton, who were only too happy to bully Israel into negotiating with the villains. Too often, our presidents have behaved like the sort of father who'd force his daughter to marry the guy who raped her.

Speaking of villains, Barack Obama demands that Iraq's President Maliki, a Shiite Muslim, invite the Sunnis to have a future say in running Iraq. The gall of the man! This is the same partisan clodhopper who, in 2009, ordered John McCain and his fellow Republicans to sit down, shut up and get out of his way.

I recently learned that NBC pays Chelsea Clinton \$600,000-a-year as a part-time reporter. In the words of an NBC executive, "It's as if she's been preparing her whole life for this job." I suppose in a way she has, in the same way that one might have said that Nelson Rockefeller prepared his whole life to be rich.

Interestingly enough, while colleges and universities continue to disinvite conservatives from delivering commencement addresses and receiving honors, Rev. Jeremiah Wright – who famously God-damned America, and who, in 2009, said he hadn't had any recent contact with President Obama, explaining, "Them Jews," no doubt referring to David Axelrod and Rahm Emanuel, "aren't going to let him talk to me" – hasn't suffered the same sort of indignities. In fact, he has received a Rockefeller Fellowship and seven honorary doctorates from the likes of Colgate University, Pennsylvania's Lincoln University and the Chicago Theological Seminary.

That brings up an interesting question: Why is it racist to attend a lecture by former KKK leader David Duke, but not racist to select Eric Holder, a man who refuses to indict blacks for hate crimes, to be your Attorney General?

Also, why are we supposed to believe that two years of Lois Lerner's emails are forever lost because her computer allegedly crashed when even a technological troglodyte like me knows that it was easier to dispose of Jimmy Hoffa's carcass than it is to eliminate email?

Furthermore, why aren't Republicans in Congress grilling FBI Director James Comey and former Director Robert Mueller now that it's been discovered that the IRS, in addition to denying Tea Party groups non-profit status in order to facilitate Obama's re-election, was having the FBI investigate Tea Party members as if they were foreign spies?

Finally, I have to say that I think the Democrats look more foolish than usual when they try to distract voters from such serious concerns as Obama's foreign policy, his contempt for the military and a stagnant economy, by carrying on about sports teams calling themselves the Braves, the Indians and the Redskins. Still, I'm not totally oblivious to the downside potential of such seemingly trivial matters.

So while I see no advantage to the Washington football team, in terms of revenue or fan support, to be named anything other than the Redskins, it makes perfect sense to me that the hometown baseball team that used to be known as the Senators, wised up and now calls itself the Washington Nationals.

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