

Imprimis

OVER 1,600,000 READERS MONTHLY

August 2008 · Volume 37, Number 8

Lights Out on Liberty

Mark Steyn

Author and Columnist



MARK STEYN'S column appears in the *New York Sun*, the *Washington Times*, Philadelphia's *Evening Bulletin*, and the *Orange County Register*. In addition, he writes for *The New Criterion*, *Maclean's* in Canada, the *Jerusalem Post*, *The Australian*, and *Hawke's Bay Today* in New Zealand. The author of *National Review's* Happy Warrior column, he also blogs on National Review Online and appears weekly on the Hugh Hewitt Radio Show. He is the author of several books, most recently *America Alone: The End of The World as We Know It*. Born in Toronto, Mr. Steyn lives with his family in New Hampshire.

INSIDE
THIS ISSUE >

REMEMBERING
JESSE HELMS
AND
TONY SNOW

The following is adapted from a lecture delivered at Hillsdale College on March 13, 2008, while Mr. Steyn was in residence as a Eugene C. Pulliam Visiting Fellow in Journalism.

On August 3, 1914, on the eve of the First World War, British Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey stood at the window of his office in the summer dusk and observed, "The lamps are going out all over Europe." Today, the lights are going out on liberty all over the Western world, but in a more subtle and profound way.

Much of the West is far too comfortable with state regulation of speech and expression, which puts freedom itself at risk. Let me cite some examples: The response of the European Union Commissioner for Justice, Freedom, and Security to the crisis over the Danish cartoons that sparked Muslim violence was to propose that newspapers exercise "prudence" on certain controversial subjects involving religions beginning with the letter "I." At the end of her life, the Italian writer Oriana Fallaci—after writing of the contradiction between Islam and the Western tradition of liberty—was being sued in France, Italy, Switzerland, and most other European jurisdictions by groups who believed her opinions were not merely offensive, but criminal. In France, author Michel Houellebecq was sued by Muslim and other "anti-racist groups" who believed the opinions of a fictional character in one of his novels were likewise criminal.

In Canada, the official complaint about my own so-called "flagrant Islamophobia"—filed by the Canadian Islamic Congress—attributes to me the following "assertions":

America will be an Islamic Republic by 2040. There will be a break for Muslim prayers during the Super Bowl. There will be a religious police enforcing Islamic norms. The USS Ronald Reagan will be renamed after Osama bin Laden. Females will not be allowed to be cheerleaders. Popular American radio and TV hosts will be replaced by Imams.

In fact, I didn't "assert" any of these things. They are plot twists I cited in my review of Robert Ferrigno's novel, *Prayers for the Assassin*. It's customary in reviewing novels to cite aspects of the plot. For example, a review of *Moby Dick* will usually mention the whale. These days, apparently, the Canadian Islamic Congress and the government's human rights investigators (who have taken up the case) believe that describing the plot of a novel should be illegal.

You may recall that Margaret Atwood, some years back, wrote a novel about her own dystopian theocratic fantasy, in which America was a Christian tyranny named the Republic of Gilead. What's to stop a Christian group from dragging a dotting reviewer of Margaret Atwood's book in front of a Canadian human rights court? As it happens, Christian groups tend not to do that, which is just as well, because otherwise there wouldn't be a lot to write about.

These are small parts of a very big picture. After the London Tube bombings and the French

riots a few years back, commentators lined up behind the idea that Western Muslims are insufficiently assimilated. But in their mastery of legalisms and the language of victimology, they're superbly assimilated. Since these are the principal means of discourse in multicultural societies, they've mastered all they need to know. Every day of the week, somewhere in the West, a Muslim lobbying group is engaging in an action similar to what I'm facing in Canada. Meanwhile, in London, masked men marched through the streets with signs reading "Behead the Enemies of Islam" and promising another 9/11 and another Holocaust, all while being protected by a phalanx of London policemen.

Thus we see that today's multicultural societies tolerate the explicitly intolerant and avowedly uncultural, while refusing to tolerate anyone pointing out that intolerance. It's been that way for 20 years now, ever since Valentine's Day 1989, when the

Ayatollah Khomeini issued his fatwa against the novelist Salman Rushdie, a British subject, and shortly thereafter large numbers of British Muslims marched through English cities openly calling for Rushdie to be killed. A reader in Bradford wrote to me recalling asking a West Yorkshire policeman on the street that day why the various "Muslim community leaders" weren't being arrested for incitement to murder. The officer said they'd been told to "play it cool." The calls for blood got more raucous. My correspondent asked his question again. The policeman told him to "Push off" (he expressed the sentiment rather more Anglo-Saxonly, but let

Imprimis (im-pri-mis),
[Latin]: in the first place

EDITOR

Douglas A. Jeffrey

DEPUTY EDITOR

Timothy W. Caspar

COPY EDITORS

Monica VanDerWeide
Jeremy Young

ART DIRECTOR

Angela Lashaway

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Lucinda Grimm

CIRCULATION MANAGER

Patricia A. DuBois

STAFF ASSISTANTS

Wanda Oxenger
Kim Tedders
Mary Jo Von Ewegen

Copyright © 2008 Hillsdale College

The opinions expressed in **Imprimis** are not necessarily the views of Hillsdale College.

Permission to reprint in whole or in part is hereby granted, provided the following credit line is used:
"Reprinted by permission from **Imprimis**, a publication of Hillsdale College."

SUBSCRIPTION FREE UPON REQUEST.

ISSN 0277-8432

Imprimis trademark registered in U.S. Patent and Trade Office #1563325.



that pass) “or I’ll arrest you.” Mr. Rushdie was infuriated when the then Archbishop of Canterbury lapsed into root-cause mode. “I well understand the devout Muslims’ reaction, wounded by what they hold most dear and would themselves die for,” said His Grace. Rushdie replied tersely: “There is only one person around here who is in any danger of dying.”

And that’s the way it’s gone ever since. For all the talk about rampant “Islamophobia,” it’s usually only the other party who is “in any danger of dying.”

War on the Homefront

I wrote my book *America Alone* because I wanted to reframe how we thought about the War on Terror—an insufficient and evasive designation that has long since outlasted whatever usefulness it may once have had. It remains true that we are good at military campaigns, such as those in Iraq and Afghanistan. Our tanks and ships are better, and our bombs and soldiers are smarter. But these are not ultimately the most important battlefronts. We do indeed face what the strategists call asymmetric warfare, but it is not in the Sunni triangle or the Hindu Kush. We face it right here in the Western world.

Norman Podhoretz, among others, has argued that we are engaged in a second Cold War. But it might be truer to call it a Cold Civil War, by which I mean a war within the West, a war waged in our major cities. We now have Muslim “honor killings,” for instance, not just in tribal Pakistan and Yemen, but in Germany and the Netherlands, in Toronto and Dallas. And even if there were no battles in Iraq and Afghanistan, and if no one was flying planes into tall buildings in New York City or blowing up trains, buses, and nightclubs in Madrid, London, and Bali, we would still be in danger of losing this war without a shot being fired.

The British government recently announced that it would be issuing Sharia-compliant Islamic bonds—that is, bonds compliant with Islamic law

and practice as prescribed in the Koran. This is another reason to be in favor of small government: The bigger government gets, the more it must look for funding in some pretty unusual places—in this case wealthy Saudis. As *The Mail on Sunday* put it, this innovation marks “one of the most significant economic advances of Sharia law in the non-Muslim world.”

At about the same time, *The Times* of London reported that “Knorbert the piglet has been dropped as the mascot of Fortis Bank, after it decided to stop giving piggy banks to children for fear of offending Muslims.” Now, I’m no Islamic scholar, but Mohammed expressed no view regarding Knorbert the piglet. There’s not a single sura about it. The Koran, an otherwise exhaustive text, is silent on the matter of anthropomorphic porcine representation.

I started keeping a file on pig controversies a couple of years ago, and you would be surprised at how routine they have become. Recently, for instance, a local government council prohibited its workers from having knickknacks on their desks representing Winnie the Pooh’s sidekick Piglet. As Pastor Martin Niemoller might have said, “First they came for Piglet and I did not speak out because I was not a Disney character, and if I was, I’d be more of an Eeyore. Then they came for the Three Little Pigs and Babe, and by the time I realized the Western world had turned into a 24/7 Looney Tunes, it was too late, because there was no Porky Pig to stammer, ‘Th-th-th-that’s all folks!’, and bring the nightmare to an end.”

What all these stories have in common is excessive deference to—and in fact fear of—Islam. If the story of the Three Little Pigs is forbidden when Muslims still comprise less than ten percent of Europe’s population, what else will be on the black list when they comprise 20 percent? In small but telling ways, non-Muslim communities are being persuaded that a kind of uber-Islamic law now applies to all. And if you don’t remember the Three Little Pigs, by the

way, one builds a house of straw, another of sticks, and both get blown down by the Big Bad Wolf. Western Civilization is a mighty house of bricks, but you don't need a Big Bad Wolf when the pig is so eager to demolish the house himself.

I would argue that these incremental concessions to Islam are ultimately a bigger threat than terrorism. What matters is not what the lads in the Afghan cave—the “extremists”—believe, but what the non-extremists believe, what people who are for the most part law-abiding taxpayers of functioning democracies believe. For example, a recent poll found that 36 percent of Muslims between the ages of 16 and 24 believe that those who convert to another religion should be punished by death. That's not 36 percent of young Muslims in Waziristan or Yemen or Sudan, but 36 percent of young Muslims in the United Kingdom. Forty percent of British Muslims would like to live under Sharia—in Britain. Twenty percent have sympathy for the July 7 Tube bombers. And, given that Islam is the principal source of population growth in every city down the spine of England from Manchester to Sheffield to Birmingham to London, and in every major Western European city, these statistics are not without significance for the future.

Because I discussed these facts in print, my publisher is now being sued before three Canadian human rights commissions. The plaintiff in my case is Dr. Mohamed Elmasry, a man who announced on Canadian TV that he approves of the murder of all Israeli civilians over the age of 18. He is thus an objective supporter of terrorism. I don't begrudge him the right to his opinions, but I wish he felt the same about mine. Far from that, posing as a leader of the “anti-hate” movement in Canada, he is using the squeamishness of a politically correct society to squash freedom.

As the famous saying goes, the price of liberty is eternal vigilance. What the Canadian Islamic Congress and similar groups in the West are trying to do is criminalize vigilance. They want to use the legal system to circumscribe debate

on one of the great questions of the age: the relationship between Islam and the West and the increasing Islamization of much of the Western world, in what the United Nations itself calls the fastest population transformation in history.

Slippery Slope

Our democratic governments today preside over multicultural societies that have less and less glue holding them together. They've grown comfortable with the idea of the state as the mediator between interest groups. And confronted by growing and restive Muslim populations, they're increasingly at ease with the idea of regulating freedom in the interests of social harmony.

It's a different situation in America, which has the First Amendment and a social consensus that increasingly does not exist in Europe. Europe's consensus seems to be that Danish cartoonists should be able to draw what they like, but not if it sparks Islamic violence. It is certainly odd that the requirement of self-restraint should only apply to one party.

Last month, in a characteristically clotted speech followed by a rather more careless BBC interview, the Archbishop of Canterbury said that it was dangerous to have one law for everyone and that the introduction of Sharia to the United Kingdom was “inevitable.” Within days of His Grace's remarks, the British and Ontario governments both confirmed that thousands of polygamous men in their jurisdictions are receiving welfare payments for each of their wives. Kipling wrote that East is East and West is West, and ne'er the twain shall meet. But when the twain do meet, you often wind up with the worst of both worlds. Say what you like about a polygamist in Waziristan or Somalia, but he has to do it on his own dime. To collect a welfare check for each spouse, he has to move to London or Toronto. Government-subsidized polygamy is an innovation of the Western world.

If you need another reason to be

opposed to socialized health care, one reason is because it fosters the insouciant attitude to basic hygiene procedures that has led to the rise of deadly “super-bugs.” I see British Muslim nurses in public hospitals riddled with *C. difficile* are refusing to comply with hygiene procedures on the grounds that scrubbing requires them to bare their arms, which is un-Islamic. Which is a thought to ponder just before you go under the anaesthetic. I mentioned to some of Hillsdale’s students in class that gay-bashing is on the rise in the most famously “tolerant” cities in Europe. As *Der Spiegel* reported, “With the number of homophobic attacks rising in the Dutch metropolis, Amsterdam officials are commissioning a study to determine why Moroccan men are targeting the city’s gays.”

Gee, whiz. That’s a toughie. Wonder what the reason could be. But don’t worry, the brain trust at the University of Amsterdam is on top of things: “Half of the crimes were committed by men of Moroccan origin and researchers believe they felt stigmatized by society and responded by attacking people they felt were lower on the social ladder. Another working theory is that the attackers may be struggling with their own sexual identity.”

Bingo! Telling young Moroccan men they’re closeted homosexuals seems certain to lessen tensions in the city! While you’re at it, a lot of those Turks seem a bit light in their loafers, don’t you think?

Our Suicidal Urge

So don’t worry, nothing’s happening. Just a few gay Muslims frustrated at the lack of gay Muslim nightclubs. Sharia in Britain? Taxpayer-subsidized polygamy in Toronto? Yawn. Nothing to see here. True, if you’d suggested such things on September 10, 2001, most Britons and Canadians would have said you were nuts. But a few years on and it doesn’t seem such a big deal, nor will the next concession, or the one after that.

The assumption that you can hop on

the Sharia Express and just ride a couple of stops is one almighty leap of faith. More to the point, who are you relying on to “hold the line”? Influential figures like the Archbishop of Canterbury? The politically correct bureaucrats at Canada’s Human Rights Commissions? The geniuses who run Harvard, and who’ve just introduced gender-segregated swimming and gym sessions at the behest of Harvard’s Islamic Society? (Would they have done that for Amish or Mennonite students?) The Western world is not run by fellows noted for their line-holding: Look at what they’re conceding now and then try to figure out what they’ll be conceding in five years’ time. The idea that the West’s multicultural establishment can hold the line would be more plausible if it was clear they had any idea where the line is, or even gave any indication of believing in one.

My book, supposedly Islamophobic, isn’t even really about Islam. The single most important line in it is the profound observation, by historian Arnold Toynbee, that “Civilizations die from suicide, not murder.” One manifestation of that suicidal urge is illiberal notions harnessed in the cause of liberalism. In calling for the introduction of Sharia, the Archbishop of Canterbury joins a long list of Western appeasers, including a Dutch cabinet minister who said if the country were to vote to introduce Islamic law that would be fine by him, and the Swedish cabinet minister who said we should be nice to Muslims now so that Muslims will be nice to us when they’re in the majority.

Ultimately, our crisis is not about Islam. It’s not about fire-breathing Imams or polygamists whooping it up on welfare. It’s not about them. It’s about us. And by us I mean the culture that shaped the modern world, and established the global networks, legal systems, and trading relationships on which the planet depends.

To reprise Sir Edward Grey, the lamps are going out all over the world, and an awful lot of the map will look an awful lot darker by the time many Americans realize the scale of this struggle. ■

Remembering Jesse Helms and Tony Snow

HILLSDALE COLLEGE mourns the deaths last month of former U.S. Senator Jesse Helms (1921-2008) and journalist Tony Snow (1955-2008). Both were contributors to *Imprimis*. We remember and honor them by reprinting the excerpts below.

The following is from a speech by Senator Helms at Hillsdale's annual Churchill Dinner on December 5, 2001, in Washington, D.C. It appeared in our January 2002 issue.

America is the only nation in history founded on an idea: the proposition that all men are created equal, and are endowed by their Creator with inalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. No other nation can make such a claim. This is what makes us unique. It is why, for more than two centuries, America has been a beacon of liberty for all who aspire to live in freedom. It is also why America was so brutally attacked on September 11.

it is altogether fitting that we gather to honor the memory of Sir Winston Churchill, whose courage, conviction and steely resolve led the Allies to victory over Fascism, and who went on to warn us about the danger of the emerging Communist threat and the Iron Curtain then descending across Europe.

Today we face a new and different enemy—one who hides in caves, and who strikes in new and unexpected ways. Yet in a larger respect, this new enemy is no different from the enemy Churchill faced 60 years ago. . . .

As we defend [our] principles abroad, let us also renew them here at home. As we go after the terrorists who committed those unspeakable acts against our people, let us, at the same time, get about the task of restoring our nation's moral and spiritual foundations. No matter how successfully we prosecute the war against terrorism—no matter how brilliantly we prepare for the threats of the future—we will never be truly secure if we do not return to the principles on which America was

founded, and which made America great.

This is already taking place. In the wake of September 11, flags are flying and church pews are overflowing. This great patriotic and spiritual outpouring is proof that the terrorists' plans have backfired. They thought that their attacks would frighten and divide us; instead they have drawn us closer to God—and to each other. We must encourage this spiritual rebirth, and nurture it so that it becomes another Great Awakening. We must instill in



Senator Helms with students in the Herbert H. Dow II Program in American Journalism at Hillsdale College

The terrorists who struck the Pentagon and the World Trade Towers despise what America stands for: freedom, religious toleration and individual liberty. They hate the success with which the American idea has spread around the world. And they want to terrorize us into retreat and inaction, so that we will be afraid to defend freedom abroad and live as free people at home. They will not succeed.

The terrorists we fight today are not the first aggressors of their kind to challenge us. Indeed, at this moment of trial,

our young people an understanding that theirs is a nation founded by Providence to serve as a shining city on a hill—a light to the nations, spreading the good news of God’s gift of human freedom.

Thank you, God bless you, and, as Ronald Reagan always said, God bless America. ■

The following is from a speech by Mr. Snow at a Hillsdale College dinner on October 15, 2001, in Scottsdale, Arizona. It appeared in our December 2001 issue.

... **As the** intelligentsia turned sharply leftward in the 1960s, so did the press. Scribes adopted the world-weary Cyril Connolly indolence that had become all the rage in college faculty lounges. Patriotism became deeply unfashionable. So did optimism. The things that made Americans proud had the opposite effect on media stars, who found the old-fashioned customs embarrassing. This mindset has led lately to some moments of high comedy. CNN for a long time refused to call Osama bin Laden a “terrorist.” ABC News President David Westin, an attorney by training, ordered his charges not to wear flag pins because to do so would constitute “taking sides” in the war against terror. Westin further embarrassed his company when he told students at the Columbia University School of Journalism that his standard of objectivity forbade his rendering judgment on the propriety of flying an occupied jet into the Pentagon. This would explain why the press, once seen as the voice of the Common Man, now has become his nemesis—and why polls continue to rate journalists just above felons in terms of public approval.

Fortunately, the Constitution—the forgotten document in the journalism biz—has come to the rescue. Court decisions have chipped away at old media monopolies, and now a profusion of new

media has risen to supply facts and points of view the old elite brazenly ignored. Talk radio, the Internet and cable television have shattered the mainstream media’s grip on the distribution of facts and ideas. Rush Limbaugh became the most successful radio personality of his generation, not just because of his great gifts as a broadcaster, but also because he was saying things people couldn’t hear elsewhere. The Internet also has become a public square for conservatives. One can find dozens of



Web sites devoted to supplying points of view still absent from ABC, CBS, CNN, NBC and NPR. Many of these sites are livelier, smarter and more informative than the old media they hope to supplant. The Constitution’s protections of free speech—reiterated in dozens of Supreme Court decisions over the years—have given protective cover to a new pluralism that bids to reinvigorate the business of journalism and sharpen public discourse.

The great and fitting irony is that the modern media establishment, in reviling America’s constitutional principles and established institutions, broke its traditional links to the public, creating a market for its successor and bringing forth a

tantalizing prospect: a full-fledged revival of the free, open, and spirited public debate, facilitated by a free and pluralistic press, that Americans took for granted throughout most of our nation’s history. ■



HILLSDALE COLLEGE
PURSUING TRUTH · DEFENDING LIBERTY SINCE 1844

DID YOU KNOW?

Hillsdale College offers its students a wide variety of off-campus study and internship options, including travel-study programs in Europe or South America; the Washington-Hillsdale Internship Program in Washington, D.C.; the Quayle Journalism Intern Program; and the Professional Sales Intern Program.