

Freedom's View

A Commentary on Government from Atop the Capitol

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TRUMP'S EXECUTIVE ORDERS: THE GANG WHO COULDN'T SHOOT STRAIGHT?

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WASHINGTON, DC ~ Before he was widely regarded as having died, our reporter Will Rogers made reference to the House of Representatives and promised, "Even after I'm gone, I'm gonna keep an eye on you." And how! He's now expanded his beat and is snooping over at the White House. He says that Trump and his closest advisers put together the latest Holocaust Remembrance Day Presidential Proclamation - not to mention the executive order on immigration - in the same way the Keystone Cops went about chasing bad guys. I asked Will to give me a flavor of those Oval Office conversations.

"Well," he drawled, "since I'm a proud Westerner, the best I can do is have you remember a famous scene in *Blazing Saddles*. California's schemin' State Attorney General, Hedley Lamarr, would stop at nothing to construct the 1874 railroad. Now, you might say that Lamarr was an aggressive land developer and you'd be right. See, the problem was that the town of Rock Ridge was in the way of the railroad. Ironically, perhaps, it was populated only by white folks with the last name of 'Johnson.' When they refused to relocate their town so that he could acquire their land at cut-rate prices, he rounded up a bunch of scoundrels to destroy it. Anyhow, the dialogue between Lamarr and his Chief Assistant, Taggart, reminds me a whole lot of what I overheard.



Taggart: What do you want me to do, sir?

Lamarr: I want you to round up every vicious criminal and gunslinger in the west. Take this down.

[Taggart looks for a pen and paper while Hedley talks]

Lamarr: I want rustlers, cut throats, murderers, bounty hunters, desperados, mugs, pugs, thugs, nitwits, halfwits, dimwits, vipers, snipers, con men, Indian agents, Mexican bandits, muggers, buggerers, bushwhackers, hornswogglers, horse thieves, bull dykes, train robbers, bank robbers, ass-kickers, shit-kickers *and Methodists!*

Taggart: *[finding pen and paper]* Could you repeat that, sir?

We both had a good laugh at that comparison and then Will grew serious. "You know, Freedom, either they're just as discombobulated as that or . . .", and his voice trailed off. He cleared his throat and said, "You know, I never met a man I didn't like, but if it's not ineptitude then it's something darker. I'm talkin' pitch black darker. Like out on the prairie at midnight: lonely, scary, wolves howlin', ill wind blowin' dark. It's the kind of dark that goes straight through your clothes, skin and bones until your soul starts shakin' darkness."

"Good heavens, Will! I never heard you talk like this. You always struck me as a more comedic sort of truth-teller. What's going on?"

"Well, Freedom, it's like I've said before, 'everything is funny, as long as it's happenin' to somebody else.' But this is happenin' to us. Besides comedy mainly comes out of the dark side. Someone once told me that a very wise French writer once said, 'The duty of comedy is to correct men by amusing them.' But I gotta tell you, the President's Proclamation on Holocaust Remembrance Day has me strugglin' to find my comic muse right now. If you've the stomach for it, I'll tell you what my investigations are leadin' me to think."

"You've got my attention, Will. What's up?"

"Well, Freedom, government does a lot of things that you can see every day; and as I've said before, most of the time 'we can be thankful we're not getting' all the government we're payin' for.' But we've got to start lookin' at the things that government is *not* doin', too. The President's Holocaust Remembrance Day Proclamation is a case in point. 'It is with a heavy heart and somber mind that we remember and honor the victims, survivors, heroes of the Holocaust. It is impossible to fully fathom the depravity and horror inflicted on innocent people by Nazi terror.' Sure, that hits some of the right notes. But look: it doesn't mention that *11 million people were killed in the Holocaust which included 5 million mentally ill, disabled, socialists, etc., and 6 million Jews who were fatally scapegoated as Hitler's 'final solution' to all of Germany's problems.*

"That omission is what gives me the darkest of heebie jeebies, Freedom. Oh sure, we could dismiss it as the sort of incompetence that comes with any new endeavor. But look: Stephen K. Bannon - a Holocaust-denier - is the President's new 'Trusted Advisor.' A moment ago I told you that it was 'perhaps ironic' that the people of Rock Ridge were all white folks. That funny movie connects in more than one way to our time. Bannon's name means 'White.' Interestingly, his name has a Semitic root which translates as 'White.' And in Old Gaelic it means 'White,' but more literally translates as 'son of the fair-haired-one.' Weirdly coincidental, that? But don't worry, Freedom, I'm not going Dan Brown on you!

It's just that Bannon was in the Oval Office when I overheard them. They don't talk straight at all. The dark thing is this: just as Hitler tried to unite an economically and emotionally depressed Germany by targeting Jews, now it looks awfully much the same . . . *and this time he's doing it by what he's not saying in that Proclamation.*

"Trump is talking to a bunch of folks he's told are victims of 'wealthy elites' and other forces. He tells them terrorists are coming to our shores in droves. He's stirred up their fears just like a Sunday mornin' preacher scares the bejesus out of his congregation before offering a simple, final solution: the once- and-for-all-sacrifice of Jesus; and that if they'd just believe that, they'd be saved. I don't regard Trump as Hitler. That's not his agenda. But there's a scary similarity to Hitler in the solutions the Oval Office Gang is promoting: identify certain groups and types of people as the problem that's making us so afraid and depressed. Then disparage, wall out, expel and eliminate them. The President will have clean little hands. When, in a *Kristallnacht* sort of way, hooligans attack minorities in our schools, mosques and neighborhoods, he can again say they shouldn't do that. But he's set up these targeted minorities for the mob's retribution as surely as Pilate set up Jesus.

"I'm thinkin' we're now in a dark time, Freedom. You and I have got to help the people realize what I've said before: 'we will never have true civilization until we have learned to recognize the rights of others.' Then we've got to take action. 'Even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there.'"

"Great work, Will! I'm thankful for your excellent reporting. Just don't get caught, hear? We'll both do our part. We're not going to just sit there on our ever so right track! No. In addition to organizing resistance, I'm going to ask folks to Google two great domes: the U S Capitol dome which is my perch, and the 'dome' of the Holocaust Museum, *Yad Vashem*, in Jerusalem. Inside *its* dome are pictures and names of 600 of the people who were killed in the Nazi Holocaust. It's fitting - yet so very difficult to look at them. If you look inside *my* dome, you'll see the fresco painting at the very top. It's called *The Apotheosis of George Washington*, and while its symbolism is a bit over the top, it was intended to exalt the Father of our Country *and all the values that he stood for*. Some of those values were expressed in his 1790 letter to the Hebrew Congregation of Newport, RI. It reads in part:

"May the Children of the Stock of Abraham, who dwell in this land, continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other Inhabitants; while everyone shall sit in safety under his own vine and fig tree, and there shall be none to make him afraid. May the father of all mercies scatter light and not darkness in our paths, and make us all in our several vocations useful here, and in his own due time and way, everlastingly happy." Will, let us both say "AMEN."



Yad Vashem, Jerusalem



U. S. Capitol