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THEY SAID IT

In a Pew Research Center report issued on Thursday and entitled "Growing Number of Americans Say Obama Is a Muslim" (tragic in its own right), there was another bit of bad news for Obama: the number of Jews who identify as Republican or as independents who lean Republican has increased by more than half since the year he was elected. At 33 percent it now stands at the highest level since the data have been kept. In 2008, the ratio of Democratic Jews to Republican Jews was far more than three to one. Now it's less than two to one.

This is no doubt a reaction, at least in part, to the Obama administration having taken a hard rhetorical stance with Israel, while taking "special time and care on our relationship with the Muslim world," as Robert Gibbs, the White House press secretary, put it in June. If that sounds like courtship, it is....

Fair or not, these criticisms are crystallizing into a shared belief among many: Obama is burning bridges with the Jewish community in order to build bridges to the Muslim world....

In April, the Republican polling firm McLaughlin & Associates released a survey that they said showed that only 42 percent of American Jews would vote to re-elect President Obama. He captured 78 percent of the Jewish vote in 2008.

Recently, the democratic pollster Stanley Greenberg and the Israel Project, a nonprofit in Washington, conducted a poll that they said found American support of Israel was dropping like a rock.

Wherever the truth lies, it is fair to say that it doesn't bode well for Obama.

Charles Blow, "Oy Vey, Obama," *New York Times*, August 20, 2010.

OBAMA THE ALIEN.

Barack Obama is an alien.

No. Seriously. He is.

We mean it. And not in a birther-esque sense that the guy is an illegal "alien" born in Kenya.

He's a genuine, bona fide, six-legged, saucer-flying, man from Mars. Or somewhere similar.

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Do we have proof? Well . . . no. But so what? It explains so much. And more than that, proof or no proof, just making the claim is all but certain to do big things for this little company of ours. We are on our way, baby.

You see, last week, in a hard-hitting news investigation, the intrepid reporters at *The New York Times* debunked a different, but equally heinous rumor about the President of these here United States. And they did so by calling out, in print, the publisher of said rumor. To wit:

Americans need only stand in line at the grocery checkout counter to glimpse the conspiracy theories percolating about President Obama. “Birthplace Cover-Up,” screams the current issue of the racy tabloid *Globe*. “Obama’s Secret Life Exposed!”

The article claims, without proof, that Mr. Obama uses a phony Social Security number as “part of an elaborate scheme to conceal that he is not a natural-born U.S. citizen.” Despite evidence to the contrary from Obama aides – they posted his birth certificate, from Hawaii, on the Internet during his presidential campaign – polls show that as many as one quarter of Americans still believe Mr. Obama was born outside the United States.

EEEEEEK! *The Globe*? “Without proof?” You don’t say?

Good job fellas. Not only did you sniff out the true, dangerous, seditious conspirators in this great land of ours, but you put them in their place good. We can’t wait to see what you do with the explosive new Oprah-Steadman rumors. Or better yet, your interview with the elusive Batboy. And of course, eventually, our alien bit. Please just make sure you spell our names correctly. We struggle sometimes, not having a sales force and all that, but a mention from the Old Gray

Lady will raise our profile immeasurably. Hold on to those I.I. ballots, boys and girls. We’re about to get back in the game!

What’s our point really? Well, the left and the media (we know; we know; same thing . . .) are pretty excited about the new polls published last week that show that a significant percentage of the population, and of Republicans in particular, is convinced that Barack Obama is a Muslim. This, in case you hadn’t figured it out, is horrifying! Now, we’re not sure how they reconcile their insistence last week that all Muslims everywhere are wonderful, sweet, nonviolent, peace-loving religious moderates and their claim this week that calling the President a Muslim is tantamount to slander. But that’s their problem, not ours.

In any case, the left and its media pals are desperate now to find an explanation for the prevalence of this “slander.” They know Obama’s a Christian, one who attended the same Christian church for twenty-some years, but never managed to hear even one sermon. And they absolutely need to figure out exactly what nefariousness is at work in American politics to explain the poll results showing that nearly one-in-five Americans is unaware of this obvious fact.

Some, like the *New York Times*, are so desperate that they’ll treat supermarket tabloids as “real” news, worthy of debunking and lamenting. Most others aren’t quite as pathetic as the *Times* – as is usually the case – but they’re still desperate. Fortunately, this type of “problem” fits their worldview perfectly.

Why do Americans think Obama is a Muslim? Because they’re dumb. Or racist. Or both. Case closed.

The White House’s initial reaction was to blame the confusion about the President’s religious affiliation on an intentional “misinformation campaign.” We’re not entirely sure who, exactly, is executing this campaign. But we do know that irrespective of the campaign’s source, the White House just knows, deep in its collective bones, that Americans are dumb enough to

fall for it. After all, if there's one issue on which this administration has been completely and unflinchingly consistent, it is its belief in the stupidity of the American public.

As for Obama's media defenders, they appear more inclined to presume that Americans are, in the words of MSNBC's Keith Olbermann, Islamophobic. CBS's Bob Schieffer actually suggested that, thanks to the Internet, "the nuts and the perverts and those who are simply looking to validate their prejudices" can find one another. Same song, new verse.

Even those who sought to defend the public – such as the folks who conducted one of the polls – did so by claiming that American people are not totally ignorant and not totally bigoted. They're just a little of both. The nice folks at the Pew Center thought it possible that since Americans hate Obama and they hate Muslims, they might just be confusing the two. Or as Center director Andrew Kohut suggested, the misunderstanding of Obama's religiosity is likely the result of "the intensification of negative views about Obama among his critics." *Time* Magazine's "religion" writer Amy Sullivan, summed up the argument thusly:

I'm inclined to agree with Ben Smith and Cathy Grossman, who see something else going on in these poll results, namely that calling Obama a Muslim has become a way for some conservatives to express their distrust of and opposition to him. The idea that "Muslim" is being used as that kind of pejorative shorthand is a disturbing development on its own. But it does mean that the White House and Obama's allies don't necessarily need to launch into a campaign to educate those poor deluded Americans who have somehow gotten the mistaken impression that the president is a follower of Islam instead of Christianity.

Ahhh. You see there. Ms. Sullivan puts it so delicately that it hardly stings. Americans, you see, are just

prone to logical fallacies, poor, uneducated, easily led bastards that they are. Muslims is bad. Obama is bad. Therefore Obama is a Muslim.

Now, it never seems to have occurred to any of these brilliant analysts that Obama himself may have something to do with his religious-image problem. They seem never to have recognized that He himself has made quite a production out of his Muslim heritage; that, in fact, he has often used it as a tool to increase outreach to Muslims worldwide. Nor do they seem to understand that some people find it odd that he has been so subdued about his expressions of his actual religious beliefs, breaking with his two immediate predecessors and failing even to find a church to attend in the more than two years since he ditched the Rev. Jeremiah "Goddamn America" Wright.

More problematic for the president and for those who fret over his image is that Obama is identifiable with Islam, not because of his skin color or the birthplace of his father and grandfather, but because of his politics and his status among this country's cultural elites. Let us explain.

In a piece over the weekend, Bill Kristol, the publisher of *The Weekly Standard*, trotted out an old line by Russell Kirk about Eisenhower and updated it for Obama. In response to the Birchers, who claimed that Eisenhower was a Communist, Kirk wrote, "Ike's not a Communist, he's a golfer." In the same vein, Kristol wrote of Obama "He's No Muslim, He's a Progressive."

Unfortunately for Kristol, his brilliant thought didn't turn into a brilliant essay, since the focus of the piece turned out to be Obama's falling popularity, not the American public's confusion about his religion.

Nevertheless, there is a seed of wisdom and of explanation in that phrase: "He's No Muslim, He's a Progressive." Any fair-minded examination of the principles of the far left these days – those who mistakenly claim the term "progressive" over "liberal" – shows that many of the values and policies

embraced by the left are indistinguishable from those of the Islamists. The Islamist-Leftist alliance is a very real, if rather self-defeating phenomenon.

The far left is, as we have argued in these pages countless times, rabidly anti-Semitic. The Islamists are rabidly anti-Semitic. The far left – and the “academic” left in particular – embrace “anti-colonialism” as a principle of foreign affairs. The radical Islamists, in turn, detest what they see as Western neo-colonialism. The far left is, in many ways and dating back at least to Ambassador Kirkpatrick’s 1984 Republican National Convention address, eager to blame America for all of the world’s ills. The radical Islamists, naturally, blame “The Great Satan” for all of the Islamic World’s ills. And the list goes on.

Our old friend, Daniel Pipes, put it this way in a July, 2008 piece, nearly a year-and-a-half after he had debated London’s then-Mayor, “Red Ken” Livingstone, on this very subject:

Ken Livingstone, the Trotskyite former mayor of London, literally hugged prominent Islamist thinker Yusuf al-Qaradawi. Ramsey Clark, the former U.S. attorney general, visited Ayatollah Khomeini and offered his support. Noam Chomsky, the MIT professor, visited Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah and endorsed Hezbollah’s keeping its arms. Ella Vogelaar, the Dutch minister for housing, neighborhoods, and integration, is so sympathetic to Islamism that one critic, the Iranian-born professor Afshin Ellian, has called her “the minister of Islamization.”

Dennis Kucinich, during his first presidential campaign in 2004, quoted the Koran and roused a Muslim audience to chant “Allahu akbar” (“God is great”) and he even announced, “I keep a copy of the Koran in my office.” *Spark*, youth paper of Britain’s Socialist Labour party, praised Asif

Mohammed Hanif, the British suicide bomber who attacked a Tel Aviv bar, as a “hero of the revolutionary youth” who had carried out his mission “in the spirit of internationalism.” *Workers World*, an American Communist newspaper, ran an obituary lauding Hezbollah’s master terrorist, Imad Mughniyeh.

Some leftists go farther. Several — Carlos the Jackal, Roger Garaudy, Jacques Vergès, Yvonne Ridley, and H. Rap Brown — have actually converted to Islam. Others respond with exhilaration to the violence and brutality of Islamism. German composer Karlheinz Stockhausen termed 9/11 “the greatest work of art for the whole cosmos,” while the late American novelist Norman Mailer called its perpetrators “brilliant.” . . .

In 1978-79, the French philosopher Michel Foucault expressed great enthusiasm for the Iranian revolution . . . Another French philosopher, Jean Baudrillard, portrayed Islamists as slaves rebelling against a repressive order. In 1978, Foucault called Ayatollah Khomeini a “saint” and a year later, Jimmy Carter’s ambassador to the United Nations, Andrew Young, called him “some kind of saint.” . . .

As British politician George Galloway explains, “the progressive movement around the world and the Muslims have the same enemies,” namely Western civilization in general and the United States, Great Britain, and Israel in particular, plus Jews, believing Christians, and international capitalists. In Iran, according to Tehran political analyst Saeed Leylaz, “the government practically permitted the left to operate since five years ago so that they would confront religious liberals.”

Listen to their interchangeable words: Harold Pinter describes America as “a country run by a bunch of criminal lunatics” and Osama bin Laden calls the country “unjust, criminal and tyrannical.” Noam Chomsky terms America a “leading terrorist state” and Hafiz Hussain Ahmed, a Pakistani political leader, deems it “the biggest terrorist state.” These commonalities suffice to convince the two sides to set aside their many differences in favor of cooperation.

Second, the two sides share some political goals. A mammoth 2003 joint demonstration in London to oppose war against Saddam Hussein symbolically forged their alliance. Both sides want coalition forces to lose in Iraq, the War on Terror to be closed down, anti-Americanism to spread, and the elimination of Israel. They agree on mass immigration to and multiculturalism in the West. They cooperate on these goals at meetings such as the annual Cairo Anti-War Conference, which brings leftists and Islamists together to forge “an international alliance against imperialism and Zionism.”

In fairness, none of this has a great deal to do with Obama specifically, except for the fact that he is associated with the strain of American leftism that embraces the anti-Western, anti-colonial, anti-American themes in modern history.

In the aftermath of 9/11, the feminist author Katha Pollitt wrote that, “My daughter, who goes to Stuyvesant High School only blocks from the World Trade Center, thinks we should fly an American flag out our window. Definitely not, I say: The flag stands for jingoism and vengeance and war.”

During the presidential campaign Barack Obama conspicuously and deliberately refused to wear the American flag lapel pin that all the other candidates wore. Does this necessarily mean that he shares Pollitt’s few of the flag? Absolutely not. But American voters – who look for flag-waving symbolism from their politicians – could certainly be forgiven for thinking otherwise and, at the very least, for thinking that Obama is uncomfortable with overt displays of patriotism.

Also during the campaign, Michelle, the President’s wife and confidant, said that she believed the United States to be a “mean” country, and declared that in her entire adult life, she had never been proud of her country until the Democratic Party had chosen her husband to be its presidential nominee. The Obama campaign insisted that these quotes were taken out of context and didn’t mean what Michelle’s critics claimed they meant. But again, voters could be forgiven for thinking that the woman who would become First Lady actually meant what she said.

On the issue of American exceptionalism, Obama famously/infamously declared: “I believe in American exceptionalism, just as I suspect that the Brits believe in British exceptionalism, and the Greeks believe in Greek exceptionalism.” Again, average Americans could be forgiven for being confused about the President’s political predilections.

The fact of the matter is that Barack Obama is a creature of the far left, even if his policies are somewhat more moderate (and we use the term “somewhat” with due caution). He has, throughout his adult life, moved exclusively through the corridors of the liberal establishment. He went from prep-school to elite university, from “community organizer” to Ivy League law school, from visiting fellow and well-paid novice author to elite university law professor. He is steeped in the culture of the academic left, and he is, very much, the academic left’s creation.

All of which is to say that it is possible – we’d say likely – that part of the reason that an increasing number of Americans think that Barack Obama is

a Muslim is because he has, in many key instances, associated himself with policy positions, ideological traditions, and cultural fashions that are themselves associated with those who wish the United States of America ill, be they anti-American western intellectuals or anti-American Islamists.

Certainly, this is not entirely fair to Obama, who has never expressed any of the America-disparaging sentiments associated with many on the far left and has, in fact, expressed his appreciation for the country repeatedly. But it's not entirely unfair either. When you launch your political career at the home of two well-known anti-American leftists and domestic terrorists and spend the majority of your adult life socializing with, working with, and worshipping with people who find nothing wrong with asking God to "damn America," then you have to accept some responsibility if voters associate you with your, well, associates. That's just the way it works.

All of this, we believe, brings us back to our initial claim, offered in jest, that Barack Obama is an alien. In a very real – though not extra-terrestrial – sense, Obama is an alien to many Americans. The left has, over the last week, begun hyperventilating again about how the unsophisticated American right-wing is trying to portray Obama as "the other." In a sense that's right. He *is* "the other," though not in the sense that the academic left would use the term, i.e. to denote status as racial and/or ethnic outsider. Rather, he is "the other" specifically because he is a part of and a creature of this same academic left, which is to say that he is part of a political faction that explicitly seeks to distance itself from the normal, "mean," and boorish American masses and to be more generally cosmopolitan and urbane.

These sentiments are alien to most Americans. And in many ways, so is Obama.

So call the *Globe!* Have we got a story for them!

FALSE COMFORT FROM REAGAN.

As Barack Obama's polls continue their slide, as the economic news continues grim, and as the midterm elections begin to look more and more like a lost cause, the White House and a handful of its most dedicated media toadies are, once again, drawing the analogy between "The One" and President Ronald Reagan.

You may recall that, during the campaign, Obama compared himself to Reagan, rather than Bill Clinton, insisting that he wanted his to be a "transformative" presidency, as Reagan's was. Today, the folks in the administration are apparently looking again to Reagan for inspiration. *The Washington Post's* Dan Balz explains:

Obama's presidency has looked like Reagan's in some broad ways. Both men succeeded unpopular presidents of the opposite party. Both offered big and bold plans – Reagan with massive tax cuts, Obama with a massive stimulus package and national health care – that set the country in a new direction. Reagan's goal was to shrink government. Obama's efforts have enlarged government.

Both presidents were forced by events that preceded their elections to contend with economies in serious trouble. Both saw the unemployment rate rise sharply during their first two years in office – under Reagan, the rate hit 10.8 percent by November 1982 – and both saw their approval ratings decline as the numbers of jobless grew.

For much of this year, Obama and his team have taken some solace from the fact that Reagan's approval ratings were even lower at comparable points in his presidency. That is no longer the case. In the past week, Obama has hit a new low in his approval rating, according to Gallup's daily tracking. It now stands at

42 percent, virtually identical to Reagan's in August 1982. (Both Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter dipped below 40 percent during their second year in office.)

Republicans suffered significant losses in the House in Reagan's first midterm election, giving Democrats an even larger majority. Most Democrats are braced for a similarly bad night this November.

We understand why the Obama folks would want their guy to be considered Reagan-esque, rather than Clinton-like. That doesn't take any particular insight. Even discounting the notion of "transforming" the country, who wouldn't rather be remembered as more like Ronnie and less like Slick Willy?

All of that notwithstanding, anyone who is pushing the idea that Obama can be like Reagan – particularly if he or she is pushing it to Obama himself – is doing this president a tremendous disservice. At this point, the transformative Reagan-like presidency is out. It's just not going to happen. And frankly, modeling their guy's "comeback" after Clinton's is a best-case scenario for Team Obama. The only other option is to follow in Carter's footsteps and hope that it somehow turns out differently.

It is, we think, important to remember that the United States is, in general, a center-right nation. And of the four presidents under discussion – Carter, Reagan, Clinton, and Obama – two ran as centrists, one as a conservative, and only one as a bona fide liberal.

Reagan, the conservative, won his campaign for two principal reasons. First, he ran against Carter. And second, he was a known entity; the former governor of California, the former movie actor, and a conservative spokesman for nearly two decades. He was a man whose views were well known and were broadly compatible with those of the electorate.

Clinton and Obama, the centrists, won election for a couple of primary reasons as well. Both were/are charismatic speakers and generally amiable men. And

both convinced the electorate that they would govern from the great political center, which played well after twelve and eight years, respectively, of Republican Party rule.

Carter, the liberal, by contrast to all of the above, won for one reason and one reason only: Watergate.

Now, it is also important to remember, that despite their campaign personae, three of these presidents governed this center-right nation as liberals, and suffered for it. Carter, obviously, was what he said he was, and with memory of Nixon fading, that wasn't enough. Clinton and Obama, in turn, took sharp left turns after their inaugurations and found themselves at odds with the electorate.

Reagan too found himself at odds with the electorate, but not for governing differently than he promised he would, but for precisely the opposite, keeping his promises despite the obvious short-term economic pain they caused. He promised voters a conservative. He delivered a conservative. And he – along with Fed Chairman Paul Volcker – did what it took to break the grip of stagflation, conservatively.

Now, we understand that the Obama gang would like very much to believe that this is a matter of economics alone, and that a return to growth will ensure his re-election just as it did Reagan's. But that's not likely, in our opinion.

For starter's, the idea that this is all about the economy is faulty. It's not. It's about governing to the left of the electorate. If economics were all that mattered, as the Obama people hope, then the Republican Revolution of 1994 would never have happened. Clinton took over a strong economy in recovery, and he never looked back. But he pushed the country too far left, particularly on health care, just as Obama has done, and he got smacked around for it.

Second, and more to the point, the economic distress that the country suffered under Reagan was directed at a specific and identifiable end, namely that of decreasing long-term inflation and increasing the long-

term strength of the dollar, regardless of the short-term anguish. Once those goals had been achieved, the economy raced forward, propelled precisely as promised.

Obama's economic pain, by contrast, is directed at no apparent specific end whatsoever. Indeed, it is about as aimless as one could imagine. If he and his people have any idea whatsoever what the nation's economic problems are and how to solve them, they have been amazingly successful at keeping them secret. And to make matters worse, the only people associated with the administration with any previously known economic knowledge – including the very same Paul Volcker – complain openly and frequently that no one listens to them or even pays them much attention.

The economy will, someday, recover. But given the aimlessness of the current economic team, it's highly doubtful that Obama will be able to claim personal success as credibly as Reagan did.

Given all of this, we think the Reagan model is out. Reagan was in tune with the electorate. Obama is not. Reagan had an economic plan that, despite some fits and starts, eventually paid off. Obama is economically aimless.

What that leaves, then, for Obama are the Carter and Clinton precedents. Both men, like Obama governed from the left initially, but only one stayed there. Clinton, obviously, adjusted his presidency to suit the electorate. Seeing that they were far fonder of Candidate Clinton than President Clinton, he – and Dick Morris – decided to bring Candidate Clinton back and to “triangulate,” which is just a fancy name for governing from the center, as he had promised to do.

Carter, again by contrast, was neither as smart nor as ideologically malleable as Clinton. And so he stayed where he was, firmly to the left of the electorate. Eventually, he came to the same realization as did

Clinton, namely that he was out of step with his constituents. But instead of accepting blame and changing to meet the electorate's demands, Carter blamed the electorate for not “getting” him. He accused the country of suffering from a “crisis of confidence” and suggested that voters get their act together and be better constituents.

And he got drubbed for it.

Today, Barack Obama faces a choice: Clinton or Carter? Which model does he want to follow? The Reagan bit is and always was a fantasy. Reagan's plan wasn't to “transform” the country, but to restore it to its former greatness. Obama's plan was and is to make the country greater than it ever has been by remaking it in his image. And the voters are rebelling.

So does he admit his error in judgment, or blame the electorate for not “getting” him?

Based on past performance, we'd have to guess that he'll choose the latter. The public, as he tells us constantly, is stupid, while he is brilliant. The public is unable to grasp the brilliance of his plan and should, again as he has told us, sit down, shut up, and get out of the way.

Obviously, as they say in our business, past performance is no guarantee of future results, but unless the guy changes – and changes significantly – we don't see this midterm as being the kind of wake-up call that the '94 election was for Clinton.

Obama's only hope for re-election, then – assuming he even cares about re-election – is the GOP, which has more than earned its characterization as the “stupid party.” The GOP's stupidity and arrogance may be enough to get the guy another four years, but we're not sure we'd want to bet on it.

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