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## THEY SAID IT

When I was nineteen, I embarked on the obligatory collegiate flirtation with Marxism and announced it loudly to everyone. Once, when I was home at Christmas, my grandmother took me aside. "Pat", she said, "I've been worrying about you. You're not turning into a Democrat, are you?"

"Grandma", I said. "Democrats and Republicans are both fascist pigs. LBJ is slaughtering helpless Vietcong and causing riots in America's inner cities and oppressing workers and ripping off the masses. I'm not a Democrat! I'm a *Maoist!*"

"Just so long as you're not a Democrat", said my grandmother.

P.J. O'Rourke, *Republican Party Reptile*, 1987.

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## ISLAM AND THE LEFT.

Over the past couple of weeks, there's been a great deal of discussion about and a great deal of hand-wringing over the "Islamist threat" hearings being held by Republican House Homeland Security Committee Chairman Peter King. Most of the commentary has been absurd, hysterical, and downright sad. Some of it has been merely stupid. An occasional piece here or there has actually been comparatively reasonable.

Of all the blathering and bloviating, though, the one piece that made us think more deeply about the hearings, their subject matter, and the opposition to them was one penned by the *Washington Post's* resident super-snark, Dana Milbank. That piece, titled "Rep. King's Red Scare" begins as follows:

Peter King staged his investigation into the loyalty of Muslim Americans in an appropriate place: a hearing room once used by the House Un-American Activities Committee.

The New York Republican was eager to avoid the Red Scare taint, and he allowed the 84-year-old dean of the House, Democrat John Dingell of Michigan, to open the session with wisdom learned during his time as a chairman. "I kept a picture of Joe McCarthy hanging on the wall so that I would know what it was I did not want to look like," Dingell said, cautioning the committee not to "blot the good name or the loyalty" of Arabs or Muslims.

But the ghost of Tail-Gunner Joe would not be denied.

This is good stuff, for a number of reasons. For starters, it reminds us that for all his bullying, bellyaching, and general jackassery, "Tailgunner Joe" was right about a great many things, including the infiltration of the State Department by Soviet agents. We know that Milbank means the comparison to be insulting to King, and

maybe it is. But if King can have the same kind of impact on the exposure of a real, serious, and deadly menace as McCarthy did, then we should all be quite grateful. As Jonah Goldberg put it nearly a decade ago now:

What is a matter of fact — unmitigated, irrefutable, undeniable fact — is that there were hundreds of Communists working for Moscow, directly or indirectly, in the United States during the Roosevelt and Truman administrations. The Rosenbergs were guilty and got what they deserved. Alger Hiss too. Victor Perlo, Judith Coplon, Morton Sobell, William Perl, Alfred Sarant, Joel Barr, and Harry Gold were all either pawns or lackeys of a foreign and evil foe. We know the Hollywood Ten were all Communists, but what else they were we can't know for sure, because they believed taking the Fifth was more important than protecting the country (and if you think it's unfair to cavalierly call people who devotedly followed the Moscow line for all their adult lives "Communists," I sure hope you don't ever call, say, President Bush a "fascist" on the basis of no evidence at all). The American Communist Party (CP-USA) was in fact a Soviet franchise.

In other words, you are free to describe McCarthyism as a witchhunt if and only if you are willing to concede that actual witches existed in our midst. The evidence — from declassified Venona transcripts, Soviet archives, memoirs, etc. — is still mounting, but what we have so far is plenty in itself.

Now, we don't think that there is really any likelihood that the State Department — or the Homeland Security Department, or any government agency, for that matter — is as full of Islamist radicals today, as the State Department was full of Communists back in the bad old days of real McCarthyism. But then, it doesn't

really need to be, does it? Best we can recall — and granted, it's been a long time — there was never a case of a Communist infiltrator opening fire on an army base in Texas, killing 13 and wounding 20 others. Or maybe we're misremembering . . .

In any case, it was nice of Dana Milbank to remind us — even if unwittingly — that no matter what the talking heads say; no matter what the "outraged" *artistes* in Hollywood think; no matter what the Pulitzer-Prize-winning columnists write; no matter how many times the solitary Muslim member of Congress weeps, the fact remains that there are radical Islamists in this country and they are ready, willing, and occasionally able to carry out acts of heinous violence against Americans. And while some may, indeed, be the "lone wolves" that our betters seem all too eager to insist they are, a great many are not. In fact, a great many have received training and orders. And, sadly, at least some of them will employ that training and carry out their orders.

Of course, this is the place in the story where we are obliged, by the tenets of the terrible swift sword of political correctness, to insert the boilerplate acknowledgement that most Muslims (and especially most American Muslims) are peaceful, God-fearing, country-loving men, women, and children who have no desire to hurt anyone. And we are happy to do so, because we believe it to be true. Still, we cannot help but wonder about the motives of those who continue to insist on this banality, since, to our knowledge at least, no one in any position of authority anywhere in the nation has ever suggested otherwise, even in the days immediately following the September 11 outrage.

When thinking about this oddity, we recall that back in the 1950s, the Communist Party of America went to great lengths to vilify anyone who implied that the nation's peace-loving Communists and their sympathizers were a breeding ground and hiding place for individuals who meant harm to the country, even after Ethel and Julius Rosenberg helped the Soviets build an atom bomb and thereby exacerbated the Cold War and precipitated the nuclear arms race. Just a thought, mind you.

The fact is that Dana Milbank's attempted slander reminded us that the "red scare" was real and that the Communists, in fact, did wish to do real and tangible harm to the governing institutions of the United States. And we should further note that the Communists that Senator McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) pursued in the 1950s were not the Communists we thought of first after reading Milbank's silly "Red Scare" column. Those Communists, for all their manifest faults and foolishness, were, at heart, earnest Communists, men and women who thought that the Soviet system represented a better, fairer, more perfect means to a more equitable end. They were stupid, foolish, naïve, arrogant, conniving, and, in some cases, traitorous. But they were, at the very least, earnest and earnestly Communist.

The same cannot necessarily be said of the "Communists" we thought of first, who followed the others roughly a decade later. And please note that we use the scare-quotes here purposefully.

The "Communists" of the mid-to-late 1960s – the Baby Boomer protesters and activists – were dedicated to rebellion and radicalism; about this there is no doubt. But their "Communism" was something less than genuine, about as authentic as the Mexican cuisine at Taco Bell.

Tom Hayden, the Students for a Democratic Society, Abbie Hoffman, the New Left, Bernadine Dohrn, the Weather Underground, William Ayers, Jane Fonda, *etc., etc., ad nauseam* were all radical lefties. And they were "Communists," at least in their own fantasies. But their communism was, well, affected. As the inimitable P.J. O'Rourke, himself a '60s Commie-wannabe, put it:

The thing that's forgotten about the '60s, because it's so clownish-looking in pictures, was that in the late '60s, very serious, solemn, save-the-world 18 year olds high on dope were going to reform the entire world and tell all the people who lived for the past 5,000

years what they were doing wrong. A very silly period. We were having a lot of fun and we thought that these underground newspapers didn't quite adequately reflect all the fun that we were having growing our hair long, making our parents mad, getting laid constantly and smoking a bunch of dope. This was great! We were having a ball! We knew that the bill would come due someday probably, but for the time being we were having a lot of fun.

Unlike their predecessors, the "Communists" of the '60s weren't really all that Communistic. They were poseurs. They liked communism because it was transgressive. They liked it because it pissed their parents off. They liked it because it was intellectual and serious. They liked it because it was cool. And most of all, they liked it because it was anti-American. The "good guys" in Vietnam were Communists, after all. And so was Castro. And his uber-hip murderous sidekick Che. Sure, they knew all about Stalin and his "necessary" reforms. But Mao was still cool.

The '60s "Communists" were upper-middle-class kids, attending upper-middle-class colleges, living upper-middle-class lives, and dreaming upper-middle-class dreams. But the ethos of the era demanded rebellion, most especially against the "rich, white, patriarchy" and its source, the American/Western/Christian "establishment." And what could be more anti-American, anti-Western, and anti-Christian than wearing a Mao jacket, carrying a little red book, and blathering on endlessly about "the revolution?"

None of this is to imply that this lack of earnest ideology made these "Communists" less of a threat to the country. Indeed, one could argue that, outside of the Rosenbergs, the real Communists of the 1950s were far less damaging to the nation than their parodic heirs. The 60s "Communists" helped turn victory into defeat in Vietnam. They caused immeasurable social and civil unrest. They fomented riots. Some – like the aforementioned Dohrn and Ayers – committed actual acts of terrorism against the United States.

Most damagingly, perhaps, this crowd undermined the public confidence in the Judeo-Christian tradition and the institutions and canon that underpin it.

All of this and more they did in Marx's name, despite the fact that the workers of the world, the means of production, dialectical materialism, and the rest were afterthoughts at best. The 60s "Communists" didn't care about Communism. What they cared about was raging against the proverbial machine, standing up to "The Man," and destroying the very culture and traditions that made their adolescent mania possible.

What does any of this have to do with Muslims, you ask? Well, like the "Communists" of the 1960s, with their Black Power movement, much of the feminist movement, much of the environmental movement, and dozens of other such "movements" and "causes," the radicalization of Muslims in America -- the purported focus of Congressman King's hearings - - has a significant component that has nothing to do with Islam or Islamism and everything to do with the politics of hating America.

If you look at some of the most visible of the Americans who have been radicalized into committing acts of Islamic terrorism -- John Walker Lindh, Adam Gadahn, Jose Padilla -- their conversions began in much the same way and in many of the same places as did earlier conversions to the New Left and its various racial offshoots. That is to say among well-to-do loners and nihilists alienated from their peers in school or, as in Padilla's case, in the penal system, while contemplating the "unfairness" of American "justice." Other American jihadists, like Samir Khan, Omar Hammami, and the infamous Anwar al-Awlaki, were radicalized on college campuses, listening daily to their Baby Boomer professors prattle on and on about the glorious war they had waged against the evil, American-capitalist "establishment."

As best we can tell, the only difference between the poseur, anti-American, wannabe-murderer John Walker Lindh and the poseur, anti-American *actual* murderers Bill Ayers and Bernadine Dohrn is that Lindh had the great misfortune of being captured

during the presidency of George W. Bush, while Ayers and Dohrn enjoyed the leniency of the Carter presidency. Lindh will serve twenty years. Ayers had all charges dropped; Dohrn paid a \$1,500 fine; and both went on to get rich as celebrity "intellectuals" in Chicago's left-wing political community, the same community, by the way, that produced the current President of the United States.

Of course, as with the anti-Americanism of the 1960s, the real problem with America and Islamism today is the fact that what might otherwise be a lesser matter involving a handful of people has been exacerbated by a massive contingent of fellow travelers or, to borrow Lenin's term, useful idiots. Today, these "idiots" encourage and facilitate Islamism by insisting that any attempt to control it, to hamper it, or even to investigate it is somehow hateful, deranged, racist, un-American, and, naturally, "Islamophobic."

Islamism is to the nihilistic left today what Communism was in the 1960s and what radical environmentalism was in the 1990s, namely the locus of anti-American, anti-Western, and anti-Christian sentiment. If you hate America; if you hate the "rich, white patriarchy"; if you hate the dead white males who dominate the history of Western civilization; if you think that colonialism is the source of all modern evils; if you think that the world would be a better place if Americans would quit shoving their noses into everyone's business, quit using all the world's resources, and quit being so greedy and materialistic; then there is a good chance that you "support" the Islamists and think that people like Peter King are on a pointless, mindless witch hunt.

Over the years, the political left has had an affinity for Islamism that defies what might loosely be defined as "logic." All of the things the left claims to want -- pluralism, multiculturalism, women's rights, gay rights, sexual license, etc. -- are anathema to Islamists, and even to a great many non-Islamist Muslims. Yet because Islamism represents a threat to the Western order, because it is waging an actual war against the West and America in particular, it has earned the admiration, affection, and support of much of the left.

We are not, by any stretch of the imagination, the first or the smartest people ever to notice this connection. Some of the best and most accomplished writers and observers of American and Western politics have long noted the intellectual collaboration between the radical Islamists and the secularist left. The following, written by the noted atheist Christopher Hitchens just after George W. Bush was re-elected in 2004, gives the flavor of the case against the left:

Only one faction in American politics has found itself able to make excuses for the kind of religious fanaticism that immediately menaces us in the here and now. And that faction, I am sorry and furious to say, is the left. From the first day of the immolation of the World Trade Center, right down to the present moment, a gallery of pseudointellectuals has been willing to represent the worst face of Islam as the voice of the oppressed. How can these people bear to reread their own propaganda? Suicide murderers in Palestine—disowned and denounced by the new leader of the PLO—described as the victims of “despair.” The forces of al-Qaida and the Taliban represented as misguided spokespeople for antiglobalization. The blood-maddened thugs in Iraq, who would rather bring down the roof on a suffering people than allow them to vote, pictured prettily as “insurgents” or even, by Michael Moore, as the moral equivalent of our Founding Fathers. If this is liberal secularism, I’ll take a modest, God-fearing, deer-hunting Baptist from Kentucky every time, as long as he didn’t want to impose his principles on me (which our Constitution forbids him to do).

One probably should not rest too much on the similarity between Bin Laden’s last video and the newly available DVD of Fahrenheit 9/11. I would only say

that, if Bin Laden had issued a tape that with equal fealty followed the playbook of Karl Rove (and do please by all means cross yourself at the mention of this unholy name), it might have garnered some more attention. The Bearded One moved pedantically through Moore’s bill of indictment, checking off the Florida vote-count in 2000, the “Pet Goat” episode on the day of hell, the violent intrusion into hitherto peaceful and Muslim Iraq, and the division between Bush and the much nicer Europeans.

Others, like Andrew McCarthy, the former federal prosecutor who handled the first World Trade Center bombing case, have argued that the political left and the Islamists have a great deal in common: a desire for control, a totalitarian impulse, anti-capitalism, collectivist urges. And while that may well be true, we also think that it is extraneous to a certain extent. What the left has in common with Islamism on practical matters and visions of governance is largely immaterial in comparison to what it had in common with Islamism in terms of enemies, i.e. the Western, Christian patriarchy.

We fear that Congressman Peter King’s hearings on Islamism and radicalization in America will produce much sound and fury signifying nothing. We will learn very little that we didn’t already know about the Saudi funding of prison ministries, the Palestinian connections of American front groups, and the American ties of a handful of global jihadists. In this sense, King’s “red scare” will be a bust.

King’s problem, you see, is his focus. While he’s out looking for terrorists, he ought to be exposing their facilitators, the enablers who prove their usefulness by shrieking in the papers about racism and witch hunts, by crying before the committee during hearings, and by labeling the whole exercise “Islamophobic.”

King is right in that there is a problem in this country that relates to the encouragement of America’s enemies. But this problem not a new one and it really

has nothing to do with Islam specifically, but with the blame-America-first, anti-Western, anti-Christian, pseudointellectual nihilism that has characterized the accepted wisdom of the spoiled, upper-middle-class left for decades now. Communist, radical environmentalist, Islamist, whatever. The enemy of my enemy is my friend.

Useful idiots indeed.

## WHAT VICTORY LOOKS LIKE.

The world these days is a rather gloomy place. Libyans are being slaughtered one after another, as their rebellion fails and as the rest of the world watches idly, hoping that something, somehow might happen to change the course of events. In Japan, it might appear the world has actually come to an end. Between the earthquake, the subsequent tsunami, the aftershocks, and the ongoing problems with a number of nuclear power plants, that island nation has been through hell in just over a weekend. And as countless commentators have noted, this is not your usual third-world basket case destroyed by an earthquake, but world's third largest economy and a massive holder of U.S. treasuries.

Meanwhile, rebellion and unrest continue throughout the Middle East. The Euro looks again to have problems, with Spanish sovereign debt downgraded by Moody's last week. And the newly divided U.S. federal government continues to quibble about irrelevancies. The President is either in hiding or at some "secure, undisclosed location" filling out his NCAA tournament bracket. The House is bickering over relatively trivial sums to cut from the budget, maybe, someday. And the Senate Majority Leader is off riding the range, eating beans from a can, accosting hookers, and writing cowboy poetry – errrr . . . well . . . something like that.

So where does one look for good news these days? To Wisconsin, of course.

Now, we know what you're thinking: Wisconsin? Are you people serious? Did you happen to see the protests there this weekend? They were huge; the

biggest protests in Madison's history; bigger even than that city's Vietnam protests, which is really saying something, given how much Madisonians love to protest. Wisconsin is a mess. And this war over public-sector unions is far from over, with recall efforts and legal challenges to the bill's passage already in the works.

Yeah. That's all true. But so what?

In the grand scheme of things, the protesters don't matter. Indeed, as far as we can tell the ultimate outcome of any legal challenges doesn't really matter.

What matters is that Republicans are actually standing up for smaller government, actually fighting to take state and local government back from the unions, and actually trying to rein in spending and balance the books. What matters, in short, is that adult behavior is back in fashion and the forces of restraint and discipline appear to be winning.

Please note that we make this declaration about one side "winning" with some great trepidation. As we have said and written on countless occasions over the years, we gave up long ago trying figure out, explain, or prophesy what American voters will want and why. More to the point, political fortunes these days seem to shift rather quickly, with yesterday's victors morphing rapidly into today's losers, and then back into champions again next week. Heck, it wasn't even a year ago that we were reading pieces such as the following by *The Washington Post's* E.J. Dionne (brought to our attention by *The Wall Street Journal's* James Taranto) declaring that liberalism had finally won and was therefore on the semi-permanent ascendant:

Yes, we did. . . . the first piece of incontestable evidence that Washington has changed. Congress is, indeed, capable of carrying through fundamental social reform. No longer will the United States be the outlier among wealthy nations in leaving so many of its citizens without basic health coverage. In

approving the most sweeping piece of social legislation since the mid-1960s, Democrats proved that they can govern.

Yep. Democrats proved that they can govern. By jamming an unpopular bill down the gullets of an unhappy public under false pretenses and with unflattering results. No wonder they managed to “govern” for only a few months longer.

If we have any concern about what happened in Wisconsin last week, when the fed-up Republicans removed the fiscal provisions from their budget bill and passed the union-limiting bits without the input of absentee-Senate Democrats, it is that the trajectory of this bill reminds us, in part, of the Democrats’ health care bill. A newly elected executive, backed by both houses of the legislature, proposes a bill near and dear to the hearts of his ideological compatriots, only to find the opposition unwilling to play along and prepared to use any and all possible procedural delays. The executive sees his personal popularity drop, the popularity of the bill drop, and the spawning of a new populist movement, but proceeds anyway, passing the bill with only partisan support.

You’ll agree, we think, that, on the surface at least, this seems to be health care in reverse. But there are differences. And they are notable, and critical, you might say.

For starters, the problems associated with the bill in Wisconsin are related almost entirely to the public perception of Governor Walker as a bully and the union members as the victims. That is a condition which is both fluid and largely unique to Wisconsin.

Wisconsin, it should be noted, is, in many ways, the home of the labor movement. And certainly it is the home of the public-sector labor movement, having been the first state to grant public employees collective bargaining rights in 1959. Wisconsin fancies itself a bastion of progressivism, and there is little doubt that its capital city, Madison, is. Madison is the home to one of the most liberal public universities in the country and, as we said, to a proud tradition

of protest. All of which is to say that the massive demonstrations in Madison are unique. They are the product of Madison’s “insta-mob” culture, which, naturally, favors the left.

But, as we have seen elsewhere, this type of turnout is hardly transferable. Liberals nationwide may be upset about the “busting” of public-sector unions, but the residents of the states following Wisconsin’s lead in attempting to reform their public sectors are not. The protests in Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Kansas, and Iowa have been rather sad events, with rather few attendees. Wisconsin is Wisconsin. But Iowa is not. Ohio is not. Etc.

Additionally, and perhaps more to the point, the reaction of the Wisconsin protesters to the passage of the bill last week calls into question their hold on the moral high-ground, even among those who would otherwise support them. In the wake of last week’s vote, the crowds gathered in Madison quite literally swarmed the Capitol building, forced armed guards to rescue the Republican members of the state Senate, attacked the bus carrying those senators, and generally behaved like you’d expect a union mob to behave. Now there are reports of credible death threats made against Republican legislators. The *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* reports that one death threat, sent to Republican Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald read, in part, as follows:

This is how it’s going to happen: I as well as many others know where you and your family live, it’s a matter of public records. We have all planned to assault [sic] you by arriving at your house and putting a nice little bullet in your head. However, this isn’t enough. We also have decided that this may not be enough to send the message. So we have built several bombs that we have placed in various locations around the areas in which we know that you frequent . . .

So much for that new civility, eh?

The public may be unhappy with the process in Wisconsin. But the manifestations of that unhappiness may well turn the public in other states even more adamantly against the union thuggishness that has met this process. Time will tell.

In the meantime, the other politicians pursuing legislative reform of public-sector unions – Governors John Kasich of Ohio, Chris Christie of New Jersey, Mitch Daniels of Indiana, and Sam Brownback of Kansas, to name just a few – are far more accomplished politicians than Walker. And they have been far more tactful and far more deliberate in engineering their reforms. Part of the reaction in Wisconsin, at least among the public, was a reaction to Walker’s apparent ham-handedness. The other governors on this list are far more seasoned and unlikely to repeat Walker’s mistakes. And that will undoubtedly help their efforts to win public support, where Walker’s did not.

Finally, we believe – with all our hearts and all our souls – that the fact that the labor bill was passed by a state government means that it better reflects the trends governing the current political environment. As corny and counterintuitive as that might sound,

regular readers will note that we have long argued that Washington is, in terms of political trends and shifts in philosophy, an irrelevancy. Washington is where the score is kept, but the real action takes place in the states and municipalities.

Yes, Washington can do more damage and can screw everything up at once. But the states and the municipalities are closer to the people, have more direct interaction with them, and therefore better reflect their preferences. Equally important, because of this proximity, leaders in the states and municipalities can and do make specific arguments to convince their voters of the value of specific policy options. This is a task that national leaders are, in general, not as good at and not nearly as inclined to make.

We have been writing for some time now about the inevitability of “war” over resources in this country. That war, obviously, is raging. And while it may not appear so superficially, the events in Wisconsin last week are, we believe, what victory in this war looks like. Or at least we’ll believe they are until someone or something proves us wrong.

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