

# Reagan: Eye-Witness to the Holocaust?

by Prof. Revilo P. Oliver

When, after a flourish from the orchestra, an actor, bedight in a kimono and his face glistening with grease paint, appears on the stage and sings, “A wand’ring minstrel I,” we know very well that he is not a minstrel, is not Nanki-Poo, is not even Japanese, but we never think of him as a liar. When a president of the United States exhibits his phiz on the boob-tube and asseverates that he is going to “fight inflation” or “protect American interests” somewhere, we, unless very naive, know that he is just reciting from his script and wooing the boobs with a politician’s jabber, so we don’t think of him as lying, although we may wish that he would perform in the manner of a Gilbert-and-Sullivan musical, and so be entertaining instead of boring. We still distinguish, however, between what an actor says on the stage and what he says off-stage, and when he appears *in propria persona* and professes to report what he has personally seen or experienced, we expect him to be truthful—or, at least, plausible.

Some of us, therefore, were a little shocked when old Reagan, in a private conference with some of his Jewish patrons, solemnly asserted that he was a witness to the truth of their fictitious Holofoax because he had been an Army photographer in Germany in 1945 and had seen with his own bright eyes the awful wickedness of the Germans, who had exterminated so many millions of God’s Darlings. Some of us were disappointed that he lied; more were disappointed that he lied so brazenly, when he knew full well that the records, available to everyone, showed that he was never in Germany or even abroad while he was in the Army, and that he fought the war in Hollywood, where he manufactured “morale” for the men at the front, while preserving his own precious skin from the risk of abrasions.

Now there is in politics, as such things go in a “democracy,” a curious phenomenon that we may call the “me too” rule, although it is just a special

case of the old axiom, “monkey see, monkey do.” When one aspirant to a place in the cast of the extravaganza performed in Washington makes some claim that seems to please his audience, the others who are trying-out for the play immediately claim they can do it, only better.

A recent example of that is particularly amusing. Quite a few hopefuls are currently excited by a promotion called the “Populist Party,” which will collect a fairly large sum of money, obtain a place on the ballot in perhaps a third of the states, and will in those states obtain from 2% to 8% of the votes—possibly 10% in a few districts—and could conceivably affect in one or more states the choice between the two competitors for the job as leading mouth-piece in future productions in the White House theatre. The “Populist” candidate for that exalted rôle is one Robert “Bob” Richards, whose ingenuity advanced him from humble origins in the Mid-West through various corporate positions to the status in which he is said to make his home on a little plot of 6400 acres near Waco, Texas, while not running businesses in Minneapolis. I have before me a newsletter which purports to quote from a press conference given by Richards, which was broadcast on Thursday, 5 July 1984, at 11 P.M. Pacific Time, over a local television system in California. I naturally have no means of being certain that Richards actually made the statements attributed to him in the newsletter, but I do know, from long observation, how politicians, even small ones, behave. According to the newsletter, Richards made the three following statements, which are quoted verbatim:

- (1) “I believe all people and all races are equal.”
- (2) “Bring three and one-half million Jews from Israel and put them into Texas and they would turn Texas into a paradise.”
- (3) “I don’t believe in Liberty Lobby’s anti-Holocaust position. I know the furnaces were a fact, *I was there. I know.*”

Passing over the first two assertions, mind-boggling if we suppose them to have been meant by the speaker, we may note that the Liberty Lobby, thus denounced in the third, has been, through its weekly publication, *Spotlight*, Richards' principal sponsor and has given him most of the publicity he has enjoyed, so that it received a politician's normal thanks to his non-professional supporters.

Richards' statement sounds, of course, as though he were claiming to have been peering from a mouse hole while the awful Germans shoveled God's Own into the ovens, but we may charitably suppose that he really was in the Army in Europe, was shown some of the small ovens used to cremate the bodies of prisoners who died of disease, and did not have intelligence enough to take pencil and paper and calculate how many corpses could have been disposed of in those few ovens and how many decades would have been required to cremate all the Jews that thereafter rose from their ashes and crawled into the United States.

But whatever the explanation, it is obvious that Richards was playing the game of "me too" with old Ronnie. That's what always happens in the national hullabaloo that gives many innocents the impression that their opinions count in a "democracy."

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