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How Scary is Joe Miller?

Michael Sean Winters | Oct. 21, 2010 Distinctly Catholic

Ah, what a year. Christine O?Donnell dabbling in witchcraft. Sharron Angle suggesting ?Second Amendment Remedies.? Ken Buck equating homosexuality with alcoholism. The inimitable Alvin Greene suggesting that action figures of himself might fix the nation?s unemployment woes. Could it get any more weird? And, dangerous. O?Donnell appears headed to a well-deserved defeat, and Greene is going to become a Trivial Pursuit question, but Angle is tied in her race and Buck is leading in his.

Still, kookie though they are, there has emerged in recent days someone who is dangerous in a different way from the danger posed by the prospect of Sharron Angle pontificating in the Senate about her devotion to the Constitution. Joe Miller, the GOP nominee for Senate in Alaska, has emerged as the most frightening candidate in 2010, a designation with more competition this year than any year I can remember, because he seems completely unaware of the dangers of violence to democracy, provided the violence works for him.

If you have not taken the time to see the videos related to the ?arrest? of a reporter by Miller?s private security guards, take a moment to do so. In the first, we see one reporter ?arrested? and handcuffed by men whom we know now were dressed up to look like Secret Service men but who, in fact, had no official authority to conduct an arrest. They were not Secret Service. They were not local police. They were hired by the Miller campaign to provide security at this event in a school, at which, I might add, there did not appear to be anything resembling a threat to public order. Two of the men were active duty military, perhaps friends of the candidate who is a West Point alum. Here is the first video:

In the second video, we meet the third member of the security trio, Bill Fulton, who is trying to keep a second reporter from discerning what is going on with the first ?arrested? reporter. At first blush, he appears to be merely a self-important Pooh-Bah, of the type one encounters sometimes with an peculiarly obnoxious maitre ?d or at the DMV. But, at second blush, one realizes that he is manhandling a reporter, using simple methods of intimidation, and this at a public event. At third blush, we now know that Mr. Fulton has ties with a paramilitary Militia group. This plot is getting thicker and creepier by the minute. And, it tells us all we need to know about Mr. Miller?s fitness for office that he has not apologized for the incidents. Here is the second video:

Any fair-minded observer will have noted that the Tea Partyers like only those parts of the Constitution that agree with their agenda. They like the 10th Amendment but are strangely silent about the 14th. But, you would think that people who are constantly ranting about civil liberties would be truly aghast at the methods used by Miller?s goons. These three security guards were not acting on behalf of the state. They had not authority to arrest anyone. They were employed by a political campaign, which is, or should be, in the business of persuasion not intimidation.

But, Mr. Miller sees the world through a different set of lenses from the ones I have. In a discussion of border security [1]at the same event where the goons were busy outside, he held up the former Soviet-dominated, and criminal, regime of East Germany as an example of a government that knew how to handle border security. You read that correctly. Even by the ugly standards of brutality that reigned in the former Soviet satellites, the East German regime was the most brutal, the most ferocious, and the most deadly. That historical memory stands as

a witness for how governments should not execute their legitimate duties, not as an examplar. That Miller would so cavalierly invoke the former totalitarian regime would be bizarre if it were not so frightening.

On one of the cable news talk shows, someone said of these incidents that this was the kind of behavior exhibited by the Nazis in the 1930s. That goes too far. The Nazis rounded up Jews and burnt synagogues. The Nazis did not just intimidate the press, they shut them down. Miller and his goons are not the Gestapo to be clear. But, we can be forgiven for entertaining the idea that Mr. Miller and Mr. Mussolini might have shared more than a cup of espresso.

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