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Wilders on trial

08.10.10: The New York Times prides itself on covering "all the news that's fit to print," whether in America or abroad, but when it comes to Islam, with a very few exceptions, its editors have been exceedingly...careful about what they print. Thus writes Bruce Bawer.

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Wilders on trial

By Bruce Bawer, HRS

I have long lamented the failure of the *New York Times*, a newspaper for which I have, in the past, had great respect and for which I have written on dozens of occasions over a period of many years, to acknowledge what is really going on – and what is really at stake – in the struggle between the democratic West and Islam. The *New York Times* prides itself on covering "all the news that's fit to print," whether in America or abroad, but when it comes to Islam, with a very few exceptions, its editors have been exceedingly...careful about what they print.

And there are few better examples of this failure of nerve than the newspaper's coverage, or more correctly lack of coverage, of the current trial of Geert Wilders, member of the Dutch Parliament and head of the Freedom Party. Wilders is on trial for doing nothing other than speaking his mind – for expressing what in the U.S. would be called his First Amendment rights. That such a trial should be taking place in a country which not long ago was almost universally viewed as the bastion of liberal tolerance and openness should be sending shivers down the spine of every freedom-loving person in the West. Instead, it is hardly being covered in the American media at all. This week, when Wilders went on trial – a trial which is as important to the fate of the West as any in living memory – the *Times found room* in its pages for a couple of relatively minor stories from the Netherlands, but it relegated its report on the Wilders trial, such as it was, to a blog on its website. **And that online report** – whose original headline was apparently the outrageously flippant and *Schadenfreude*-rich "Powerful Dutch politician moonlights as defendant in hate speech trial" (note the file name) but was changed to the more innocuous "Anti-Islam Film Shown at Hate Speech Trial of Dutch Politician" – was written by someone who either didn't have the slightest grasp of the gravity of the issues involved, or who, under the thumb of his *Times* bosses, felt obliged to write a tepid "he said/she said" account of the opening of the trial, as if there were respectable arguments on both sides.

But if the article itself was a feeble piece of work, several of the reader comments on this pathetic blog item were welcome reminders that there are, indeed, still sane people out there, and that some of them even read the *Times*. Among them was **Kenneth Ellman** of Newton, New Jersey. I don't know Kenneth Ellman and I don't know anything about him, but I know that he has captured in a posting of 500-odd words a profound truth that the highly paid opinion-mongers at the *Times* have been shying away from ever since this Wilders *megilla* started. Ellman has kindly given permission to quote his posting in full; here it is:

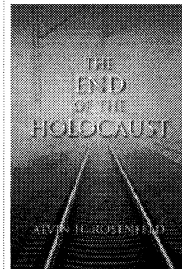
When the people allow their government to prosecute a man for speaking, they are terrorizing the communication between human beings. There is a reason that under the United States Constitution the right to speak, particularly political speech, is immune from criminal prosecution. You do not have to agree and that is the point of open and free speech. The right of each man's voice to make the noise of speech is sacred in a community that wants ideas to flourish, conflict and

Søk i Rights.no:

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Wilders: freed, but not free
30.06.11: The Dutch politician and critic of Islam has been found not guilty. But he remains an unfree man – and the mainstream media continue to smear him and distort his message, writes Bruce Bawer. [Read more](#)



Holocaust and memory
23.06.11: An important new book contemplates the ways in which the Holocaust has been remembered – and the ways in which that memory had been distorted. [Read more](#)

Aktuelt/International news:

04.07.11: Minister who dares to speak the truth: IDS exposes Cabinet tension, warning the majority of jobs created in Britain go to foreigners
27.06.11: Population in the UK will hit 70m even earlier than feared thanks to 'immigrant baby boom'
23.06.11: Children's minister: Asian communities hampering child sex inquiries
15.06.11: 'Sex gang groomed girls of 13': Asian men accused of luring teens and turning them into prostitutes
09.06.11: The secret world of the child bride: Heartbreaking pictures of the girls as young as FIVE who are married off to middle-aged men

resolve by the mixing and confrontation of thoughts. There can be no freedom without the unlimited right to speak your mind and express the ideas that you perceive and advocate, free of governmental threats. And without the unlimited freedom to speak, there can be no equality and freedom among men.

You do not have to agree. You may in fact abhor the ideas that are expressed by others. Hopefully you will express your condemnation of those things you despise just as you will exalt those things you hold close. It is the ability to speak without fear of governmental reprisal that we as Americans have made so much a part of our identity that the idea of freedom of speech is inseparable from the concept of being an American. The idea of prosecution of a political figure and member of the legislature as is taking place now with Geert Wilders in democratic Holland is an example of how fragile freedom can be. We would expect this to occur in China, Zimbabwe, or the former Soviet Union or even Russia today, but not in Western Europe which should very, very well, know better. Such prosecution is the act of a gangster government.

How terrible that the European Union and Holland would allow criminal prosecution of a man for his words and mouth. Perhaps some good will come out of this when a realization of the horror of such governmental acts is seen for what it is. The best way to expose those ideas that we do not want is to let them be seen in the full sunshine of day and the citizens will then choose the political path they want. IF evil has a following then the best way to defeat evil is to see it and expose it. And if the dangers that Geert Wilders speaks about are real, then the best protection for our civilization is to hear Wilders. A free people has nothing to fear from the speech of the mouth. What we have to fear is the oppression of a government that curtails the ability of each citizen to be heard. Prosecution of speech causes terror and fear, whereas confrontation of ideas causes revelation and knowledge. The best safety is the security of knowledge and free communication. Not terror and fear that a government may bring you to bar.


Once you give a government a power to silence any speech, you give it the power to regulate and stop communication among men and oppress and degrade the debate and free exchange of ideas.

Nothing, absolutely nothing, is more important than the right to freely speak and exchange your ideas and mind with other human beings.

Eloquent words. And it's sad to find them not on the editorial page of the *New York Times* but in a reader commentary on a story that the editors of the *Times*, in their wisdom (or cowardice), have chosen to relegate to a toothless blog entry.

07.06.11: Axe funding for anti-democracy Muslim groups, says former minister
06.06.11: 40 UK universities are now breeding grounds for terror as hardline groups peddle hate on campus
05.05.11: Honeymoon murder: Dewani would be 'sexually abused' if he was sent to South African prison
15.04.11: Almost one in eight people living in UK are born abroad
15.04.11: David Cameron on immigration: full text of the speech
15.04.11: David Cameron: migration threatens our way of life
12.04.11: Dr. Taj Hargey: Burkas are the product of male chauvinism and not religious necessity
18.03.11: Forced Marriage in Our Own Backyard
17.03.11: Gang rape: Is it a race issue?
08.03.11: 'Islam has no place in our country': New German minister sparks immigration row
08.03.11: £50 insult to Britain's war dead: Veteran's fury as poppy burner enjoying a life on benefits gets paltry fine and mocks soldiers

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