The lessons of appeasement

by Cal_Thomas

As Americans begin a two-year celebration of the bicentennial of Abraham Lincoln's birth, another anniversary approaches with far more significant and immediate implications.This fall will mark the 70th anniversary of British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's accord with Adolf Hitler at Munich, a bargain with the devil that sought to buy "peace for our time" but cost Czechoslovakia its freedom and led to World War II, which cost even more in freedom and blood.Some elements in modern Britain apparently refuse to learn from the past and what happens when human nature is misdiagnosed.The Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, moves from one controversy to another; from approval of same-sex marriage (a position from which he has since moved, after a split in the worldwide Anglican church), to a proposal that Islamic Sharia law should co-exist with British common law. In a radio interview, Williams said that integration of parts of Muslim law in Britain is "unavoidable."After an uproar, Lambeth Palace sought to clarify Williams' remarks, saying he was not advocating, "parallel jurisdiction to the civil law."But some other people are advocating just such a thing. The Washington Times reports that the British government has cleared the way for Muslim men with more than one wife to be able to claim welfare benefits for all of their partners. The qualifier is that the multiple marriages must have taken place in countries where polygamy is legal. Having more than one wife is illegal under British law.According to the Council on Foreign Relations, under Sharia law, a Muslim husband "has the unilateral right to divorce his wife without cause. He can accomplish this by uttering the phrase 'I divorce you' three times over the course of three months. Classical Sharia lays out very limited conditions under which a woman can divorce a man." Contrast this farce with the announcement that six of the alleged co-conspirators in the 9/11 terrorist attack on America will be afforded rights even greater than those given defendants at the Nuremberg Trials. According to Air Force Brigadier General Thomas Hartmann, who announced that, "formal charges have been received," against the six, if a convening authority refers the charges to trial, "the prosecution bears the burden of proving the case beyond a reasonable doubt, which is the standard applied in all U.S. and military criminal trials." The six individuals will also have the right to appeal if they are convicted of any of the 169 charges against them. Gen. Hartmann said these are the same rights afforded members of the U.S. military, whom he called "our national treasure." Judge Susan Crawford, head of military tribunals, will determine whether the charges allow the prosecution to seek the death penalty.In a phone interview, I asked Gen. Hartmann if a strategy had been developed for the predictable domestic and world outcry from activists and nations opposed to the death penalty. He said there is no such plan. There should be.What the United States still understands (though some presidential candidates apparently do not) is that there are serious, dedicated people who do not tire in their objective to see us dead. While 9/11 was an overt act, many covert acts are occurring that will render Britain and America less able (and less willing) to respond to the next attack. An estimated 2.5 million Muslims have invaded Britain. No one knows how many are committed to the violent destruction of the West.In America, there are similar threats. Debra Burlingame, sister of American Airlines pilot Charles Burlingame, who died when terrorists hijacked his plane on 9/11 and flew it into the Pentagon, wrote in The Wall Street Journal, "Radical Islamists are a sophisticated and determined enemy who understand that violence alone will not achieve their goals. Islamist front groups, representing themselves as rights organizations, are attempting to get a foothold here as they have already in parts of Western Europe by deftly exploiting ethnic and racial politics, agitating under the banner of civil liberties even as they are clamoring for the imposition of special Sharia law privileges in the public domain."There is a myth that the Emperor Nero fiddled while Rome burned. Too many of the rest of us, including the Archbishop of Canterbury and elements of the British government, are playing in a full orchestra of denial, oblivious to the approaching firestorm. Neville Chamberlain's example should have been enough for our time, but some people and nations have learned nothing from history and so are doomed to repeat it.(Direct all MAIL for Cal Thomas to: 2225 Kenmore Ave., Suite 114, Buffalo, N.Y. 14207. Readers may also e-mail Cal Thomas.(C) 2008 Tribune Media Services, Inc.