

Olivia de Havilland, R.I.P.

It's a rarity when a woman is as beautiful on the inside as the outside, but Olivia de Havilland could be described in such terms, in addition to being one of the most beautiful women in the world.

Her beauty and talent were strikingly evident in most of the 49 films she made, particularly "***The Adventures of Robin Hood***," ***Santa Fe Trail*** and "***Gone with the Wind***." Her radiant beauty lit up the screen in endless scenes she innocently stole from other actors.

However, she stole my heart for her courageous efforts to oppose the communist infiltration of Hollywood in the mid-1940s. Few men at the time showed as much pluck or principle, and it made her a lifelong friend and supporter of the guy who went on to win the "Cold War" without firing a shot.

Ronald Reagan was a naive liberal in the 1940s, and later conceded that he blindly joined every "*progressive*" organization vowing to "*save the world*." Some of these turned out to be communist fronts, such as the ***Hollywood Independent Citizens Committee of the Arts, Sciences and Professions***, or HICCASP. He assumed its members consisted of fellow liberals, so he happily joined and was even asked to serve on its Board.

Olivia de Havilland was already a member of HICCASP at the time that Reagan joined, but she had grown increasingly suspicious of its goals and agenda. She couldn't help noticing that the group never hesitated to denounce Fascism, but conspicuously avoided uttering any criticism of communism, whatsoever.

The Gipper's epiphany occurred at a July 2, 1946 HICCASP meeting attended by Olivia de Havilland, Ronald Reagan and FDR's son, James

Roosevelt, among many others. Reagan and James Roosevelt proposed that HICCASP issue an official statement denouncing communism. As the *Gipper* often described it, Roosevelt's proposal generated what he referred to as a "*Kilkenny brawl*."

The vicious and abusive reaction to Roosevelt's proposal from a variety of communists in the group -- such as Dalton Trumbo, John Howard Lawson and musician Artie Shaw -- was an *epiphany* for Ronald Reagan. They denounced both Reagan and James Roosevelt as "*witch-hunters*," "*Fascists*," "*capitalist scum*," and "*enemies of the people*."

As if to demonstrate the benign motives of their Soviet masters, Artie Shaw even offered to recite the Soviet "*constitution*" to Olivia de Havilland, and asked her if she had read it. She replied "***No I haven't -- and how recently have you read ours?***"

Never again would *The Gipper* naively assume that all "*liberal*" groups were necessarily innocent, nor would he ever again fail to recognize the motives and the intentions of his communist enemy.

By then, Olivia de Havilland was no longer under any illusions when it came to Hollywood's communists. A few days before the July 2 HICCASP meeting, she was handed a speech by CPUSA member Dalton Trumbo to deliver at a meeting in Seattle. It was glaringly pro-Soviet, so she threw it away and gave an anti-communist speech, instead.

In her speech, she defiantly told her Seattle audience that "***We believe in democracy, and not in communism.***" She also warned any well-meaning liberals about manipulation by communists, who frequently joined or established liberal organizations to prey on naive and gullible individuals. Hollywood communists were outraged, and Trumbo and Lawson thereafter denounced her in vicious fits of invective.

An RKO executive attending the HICCASP meeting that night observed the appalling manner in which Reagan and Roosevelt were treated, and discretely invited them to attend a quiet gathering at Olivia de Havilland's home later that evening. When he arrived, Reagan was relieved to discover that Olivia de Havilland was not "*one of them*," as he put it, and they both had a laugh after realizing each had suspected the other of being a communist or sympathizer.

Reagan left HICCASP, and sincere liberals followed soon after. In the wake of her Seattle speech and the explosive HICCASP meeting, Olivia de Havilland was routinely labeled an "*anti-communist liberal*." There really were such people in those days.

A historian named John Meroney interviewed her in 2006 and concluded: "***Ms. de Havilland felt a great sense of personal betrayal that the communists had used her, other celebrities, and liberalism as covers for their party work.***" She redeemed herself by courageously speaking out against communism for the rest of her life, just as her friend *The Gipper* would do.

May flights of Angels sing her to her rest.

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