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January 27, 1993

002594 FEB 193

C-Span
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Sirs:

*I really appreciate your extensive coverage on "Rhodes Scholars", The Oxford/American Connection." You devoted many hours to this program and I wondered if the average American viewer would ascribe to your presentation to any degree of the esoteric world of higher education shown, since there exists a long standing antiintellectual sentiment harbored by a large segment of Americans. I was particularly interested in the remarks of Dean George Caukwell who for me typifies the view of a number of English scholars who believe that the origin of Western Civilization began with the Greek people who are identified as a branch of the Caucasian race.

These scholars refuse to accept the fact that civilization did not begin with the Greeks. They either downplay or ignore archeological anthropological and historical evidence which bares for all to see that the spark of creative genius which fashioned the essentials of civilization was ignited at least three/four thousand years before the coming of white migrating tribes who occupied Southeastern Europe and who later became known as Greeks. They scorn the idea that the gift of civilization to humanity was the result of the ingenuity and intelligence of dark skin peoples. Also we must remember that the conquest of Rome by Germanic tribes plunged Western Europe for approximately seven hundred years into a quagmire of intellectual and scientific stagnation called the "Dark Ages".

Interestingly, the major center of scientific/technological learning in the ancient world was not in Greece but in Egypt. Greece had no great library during the time of Alexander the Great comparable to the library in Alexandria Egypt. In addition, many ancient Greek scholars were persecuted in their own homeland because their teachings did not conform to the social moral and philosophical norms of the Greek people. Their teachings were viewed as foreign.

As I listened further to Dean Caukwell's commentary on Western Civilization I wondered if he would credit the Islamic Moors and Arabs during the period of their domination of Spain, circa, eight to thirteenth centuries, for their contribution to reigniting learning establishing many universities and fostering an intellectual climate that led to the subsequent demise of "The Dark Ages" in Western Europe.

The intellectual agricultural, scientific and cultural contribution of the Muslim, as exemplified by the Moors of North Africa and Spain, brought to the fore the wisdom and knowledge of the ancient Nile Valley, Summarian, Indus Valley, Chinese and Greek civilizations. As legatees of prehistoric African culture with close ties with Nile Valley cultures the Moors were able to bring to the Western portion of the Islamic world a spirit and legacy which deeply energized them to propagate and revere learning. They added to and enhanced this wealth of knowledge particularly in the areas of applied sciences ie., mathematics, the introduction of the cipher and decimal point plus trigonometry, applying algebra to every day use, chemistry, medicine, astronomy, navigation, world geography, etc. The Church in the meantime, preoccupied by

their focus on ecclesiastical dogma, considered the pursuit of such knowledge sinful and persecuted thinkers who espoused the scientific philosophical erudition of the Moors. (The Moors knew the world was round long before Magellan made his trip.) In contrast these Moors practiced a religious tolerance which permitted other religious Jews and Christians alike to follow their beliefs in a climate of fairness and just laws. Out of this milieu a number of Jews who had studied under the Moors in the tenth century ventured to England to start a scientific school which through diverse foces evolved into Oxford. Oxford, among the earliest Christian universities, was behind other Christian schools ie., Salerno in Italy, Chartres in France, among others in academic attainment in the sciences and medicine. In fact English students preferred to attend these schools as well as the University of Paris because of their Moorish curriculum. Oxford did in time adopt an approach to learning undergirded by the scholarship of the Moors. One of the early instructors at Oxford was of Moorish descent. (I wonder if Dean Caukwell was privy to this information). During this period Europe lacked public hospitals and libraries and had an illiteracy rate of about 95%, while the Moorish cities of Spain, Seville, et al. were plentifully endowed with both hospitals, libraries and schools.

The Moors of Andulusia placed great importance on the acquisition of knowledge; they considered the quest for knowledge a divine calling. Their reputation for learning and the knowledge they compiled spread throughout Europe attracting many European students to attend Muslim institutions in Spain. Students translated many Moorish works from Arabic to Latin despite the fact these authors were routinely magligned as heathens. However, their texts were readily disseminated throughout Europe by these students who educated in the methods of the Moors traversed Christian Europe and laid the ground work for the advancement of European enlightenment. Yet it took centuries before Europeans masses were lifted out of their ignorance.

With the final defeat of the Moors at Granada in 1492 Spain for a brief period basked in the reflected light of these harbingers of secular knowledge. Unfortunately, for Spain, convulsed by the expulsion of Jews and over a million Moors out of Spain, the advent of the Inquisition and battered by the defeat of the Armada by the English in 1588 there began in less than a hundred years after that Spanish victory orchestrated by Ferdinand and Isabella the decline of the glory that was Spain which opened the way for the rise of northern Europe and the future hegemony of Oxford University.

*The above commentary was culled from the writings of a number of experts on the role of the Moors in Spain and their impact on the revitalization of learning in Europe.

Sincerely,

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area of the letter.