

Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (<https://www.ncronline.org>)

July 13, 2010 at 9:21am

Polanski - I'm Just Saying...

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Distinctly Catholic

Okay. I love France and I love the French. But, their reactions to the Swiss decision not to extradite Roman Polanski to the United States were truly stunning. Polanski, you will recall, was convicted of statutory rape for having sex with a thirteen-year-old girl.

Polanski's backers, ranging from fellow directors to French culture and foreign ministers, criticized U.S. and Los Angeles judicial authorities for seeking what they called crude revenge against a major artist who deserved more respect, reports the *Washington Post*. According to the report, the French Culture Minister said that Polanski had been "thrown to the lions for an old story that doesn't really make any sense." The writer Bernard-Henri Levy pronounced himself "crazy with joy" at Polanski's dodging extradition.

It appears that the clericalism of the *artiste* remains in force in France, for these words have a recognizable echo to Catholic ears. The Culture Minister could have swapped notes with Cardinal Castrillon Hoyos, no? Can you imagine the outrage if a bishop announced himself "crazy with joy" at a judicial exoneration of a priest charged with having sex with a 13-year-old? I'm just saying?.

As I say, I love France and the French, but "hauteur" is not originally an English word and it is the one thing about the French that is difficult to swallow, unlike their food and their wine which is very easy to swallow. I am reminded of a remark made by Churchill after World War II regarding his extensive dealings with General DeGaulle. "Of all the crosses I had to bear," Churchill said, "the heaviest was the cross of Lorraine."

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