TURKISH AIRLINES' THREE STOOGES

Posted on June 28, 2016 by Keghart

Category: Opinions

By Jirair Tutunjian, Toronto, 28 June 2016

The appointment of actor Ben Affleck as Turkish Airlines' (THY) most recent carny angered some Armenians. Several years ago similar outrage was expressed when Los Angeles Lakers' Kobe Bryant was hired by THY to do the same hustling job. Of course there's nothing in the background of Affleck or Bryant to suggest they know anything about airlines or THY. But that's no handicap for celebrity-spokesmen. All they are expected to do is to bring their star power and unctuous heartiness in front of the camera. Their fame is their currency while faux sincerity comes with the territory.

While in recent years THY has spread its wings far and wide, and boasts an oxygen-sucking annual marketing budget of $1.2 billion, the airline has been scandalously inept in its choice of spokesmen. The celebrities THY has picked have been dubious characters with chequered careers. THY's decision to pick morally questionable pitchmen is especially bizarre in light of fundamentalist President Erdogan's edict that THY female flight attendants' uniforms look like modified hijabs. Erdogan the Couturier of Chez Taxim can have his tailoring effusions imposed especially since his authoritarian government owns more than 49% of THY shares.

Let's take a look at the most recent North American THY spokesmen: actors Kevin Costner and Affleck, and basketball player Kobe Bryant.

KEVIN COSTNER

One of the fast-fading star's early movies was the pornographic "Malibu Hot Summer". Of the more than 50 movies he has made only three or four have been critically or commercially successful. He has made at least 20 straight-to-video stinkers ("The Daughter", "Black and White", "Swing Vote") in addition to the almost-studio-bankrupting mega-disaster "Waterworld". That movie's budget ($175 million in 1995) ballooned many times over but no one could tell the prima donna star to slow the financial profligacy. Eventually it made the list of "Fiscal Times" all-time 12 most momentous flops.

Costner also produced, directed and starred in another genormous flop. "The Postman" cost $80 million to produce and grossed all of $8 million. Critic Gene Siskel called the movie "Dances with Myself" (in reference of Costner's "Dances With Wolves") while the "New York Times" described the movie as "bogus sentimentality" and "mawkish jingoism".

Costner has two movies listed in "Fiasco—A History of Hollywood's Iconic Flops" compiled by James Parish. The one-time THY salesman was also picked "Worst Actor" in 1991, 1994, and 1997—an unmatched record. As well, more than once he was nominated for the Golden Raspberry Award for Worse Picture. Years after the release of his "Dances with Wolves" it was revealed that the Native American tribe depicted by Costner as angelic, had a habit of massacring its peaceful neighbors.

Costner was accused in 2006 of performing a "disgusting sex act before a hotel masseuse" while actor Stephen Baldwin filed a lawsuit against Costner claiming that the actor had duped him in a

business transaction.

A notorious serial womanizer—even when married—Costner was accused by close friend and baseball great Cal Ripken of having an affair with his wife. Costner's wife divorced him because of his womanizing. Costner has had affairs with Mira Sorvino, Cheryl Tiegs, Courtney Cox, Elle Macpherson, Naomi Campbell and Marla Maples (one of the Mrs. Trumps) and has fathered an illegitimate son with heiress Bridget Rooney.

KOBE BRYANT

He was accused of sexual assault by a 19-year-old hotel concierge. He cut a check to silence his accuser.

Bryant feuded with his coach and team mates who eventually nicknamed him The Black Mamba. The mamba is a deadly snake. He also "threw teammate Shaquille O'Neal under the bus," according to newspapers. In 2011 Bryant's wife sought divorce because of his frequent affairs but later changed her mind.

BEN AFFLECK

When Affleck and Matt Damon acted/wrote "Good Will Hunting", the movie's marketers claimed that the two were novices who had, in a creative burst, written the screenplay. There was no mention that Affleck had been acting since his childhood. To this day rumours persist that the script was written by William Goldman ("All the President's Men").

Of the 40 or so movies Affleck has made only a few have been critical and commercial successes. He has made more than a dozen screen-ripping bombs such as "Gigli", "Paycheck", "Daredevil", "Pearl Harbor", "Armageddon" and "Jersey Girl". His straight-to-video opus includes "Joseph: King of Dreams", "Clerks II", "Extract"… "Gigli" (2003), co-starring his paramour at the time Jennifer Lopez, cost $75.6 million and grossed $7.2 million. It too made the "Fiscal Times" all-time flop list.

Affleck won the 2003 Golden Raspberry Award for Worst Picture and was nominated for the award in 2001 and 2004.

Affleck has been tabloid fodder for years. He was involved with a Vancouver exotic dancer and was photographed partying at a strip tease joint. He has made the rounds at alcohol rehabs. A friend of outrageous Charlie Sheen, Affleck has had affairs with groupies and actresses including erratic Lindsay Lohan.

After his tempestuous engagement to Jennifer Lopez broke up, he married Jennifer Garner. The second marriage ended when he was caught carrying an affair with nanny Christine Ouzounian.

A recent Affleck-directed and -starred movie was "Argo" about American diplomats who hid in the Canadian embassy during the Iranian Revolution. The plot minimized the role of the Canadian diplomats and enhanced the role of the fictional Affleck character. A U.S. intelligence expert said the

film's purpose was to "convince the American people to go along with Israel's plan to draw America into a war with Iran."

Since Turkey's Prime Ministry Privatization Administration owns 49.2% of THY shares, it means Affleck is working for Turkey—a major human rights violator, main supporter of ISIS, killer of the Kurds, a pariah state, a bellicose neighbour and a state which threatens its long-time guardian Germany.

And now Affleck is Batman chasing Gotham bad guys. Perhaps Erdogan should play the Joker and the pixelated moonbeam Erdogan-appointed prime minister should don the Robin cape.

There you have it: the three shiny gems of THY. But THY is not just another airline. It's the flag carrier of fundamentalist Turkey. It's a propaganda arm of Ankara and the most visible Turkish presence in the world, right behind Mad Bad Erdogan and his bon mots.

Who will be the next THY spokesperson?

Rocker Gene Simmons of KISS?

Foul-mouthed Amy Schumer?

Porno queen Jenna Jameson?

Only Sultan Erdogan of the $600-million Presidential Palace knows for sure.