

MARCH
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OBAMA'S BLACK MAGIC

One of the most basic strategies in a successful magic trick is the use of misdirection and diversion. A great magician amazes by doing the obviously impossible and the audience applauds, despite the fact that they were lighted to be fooled, misdirected to

Of course, stage magic is not the only art to use misdirection and diversion. Attorneys, salespersons, criminals and interrogators would be out of business if they couldn't divert the dialogue. But most of all, the magic of diversion, the ability to persuade the listener that what he hears is what the speaker really means is the mother milk of politics. The responses at press conferences, the campaign promises that do not really promise anything substantial, the impossible dreams that are created for those who have come to enjoy to be fooled by cunning rhetoric require a gift that only a few possess.

Barack Obama is one of those favored few.

I am usually frustrated by magic shows. I leave trying to understand how it was done and I cannot. But in the case of Obama's now famous speech in Philadelphia on March 18, my frustration is unprecedented. I think, no, I believe, that I know what the trick was

but I can't come to terms with the idea that, apparently, very few do. The media, depending on their political predilection, either describe the speech as being on par with the best of Lincoln, Kennedy and Churchill for analyzing and defining our racial dilemma, or else as painting a wrong and distorted picture of racial reality in America.

I think both views are wrong. The speech was indeed about race but that was a diversion – a clever one, worthy of a genius – since what caused the outrage against Rev. Wright was not his racist cant but his anti-Americanism. Black racism is not new and doesn't shock – we have become used to apologizing for slavery that existed before



but didn't—celebrate the law that prohibited the importation of slaves to the US on January 1, 1808, almost exactly 200 years ago!

The outrage over Jeremiah Wright was his anti-Americanism. It wasn't unprecedented – similar accusations were and are voiced in Islamic *madrassahs* around the world, by the demented presidents of Venezuela and Iran, by the neo-fascists, skinheads and anarchists, by the nuts of the right and the left.

These ravings about AIDS being created and spread by the United States, by CIA's drug distribution to blacks, of America having deserved – or even orchestrated – 9/11 are heard from radicals who hate us and want us dead.

They should not be heard from a pastor of a recognized church who is admittedly the religious adviser, close friend and mentor of a presumptive President of the United States. And this is what the outrage was all about until Barack Obama diverted us to a discussion of the racial problem in the United States, a topic that is important and interesting but has no more to do with America's outrage over Rev. Wright's unacceptable hatred than sawing a woman in half by a magician.

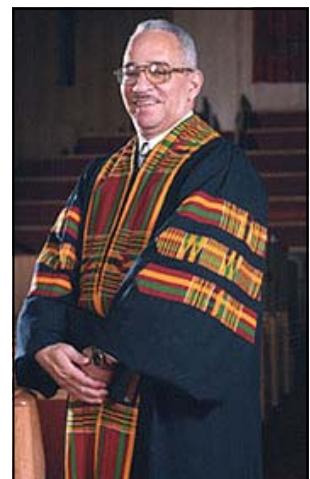
Obama's masterful sleight of hand went unnoticed. There was deafening applause, a few muted boos and the discussion was diverted away from the hatred of America that

possible and the audience applauds, despite the fact that they were looking left when the real action is on the right,

the Obama family listened to for 20 years without protest or complaint.

So here is a scenario: A white (or Hispanic or Asian or Jewish) clergyman calls on his congregation to join him in chanting "God Damn America!" and says that the AIDS virus was created and distributed by the U.S. government. At the same time, this clergyman remains a close longtime religious and ideological adviser to a white (or Hispanic or Asian or Jewish) Presidential contender. Don't you think that the same storm of disapproval for himself and for the candidate would erupt? I do. Americans do not want a President who did not have the intelligence, dedication and guts to reject an America-hater. And it has nothing to do with race.

And as to Obama's not being aware of or taking seriously Rev. Wright's ideology here is another scenario. How credible would I be if I had attended KKK meetings for 20 years and still claimed that I had no idea what that organization stands for? Anybody – of any race – would be thought to be either very stupid or a liar, neither of which is a qualification for the most important job in the world. So, the solution is: talk about race.



Did it work? Apparently it did. But maybe, just maybe the American people are too smart for this bit of sleight of hand even if it is presented eloquently, charismatically and by a great orator in sonorous tones. ★

By Si Frumkin

HOW I SPENT THREE WEEKS AT AN ARMY BASE or HOW I DIDN'T GET TO BE THE ISRAELI KILROY - Part 3

Kilroy was probably the most famous American soldier during World War II. He was totally anonymous. No one knows who he was or how the whole thing started, but anywhere that American soldiers went there was always a wall with a picture of a pair of hands and a face peeking over a wall and the inscription "Kilroy was here!" You never heard of it? Well, go to Google and on "Images" punch in "Kilroy was here". You'll get over 30 pages!

Now that I was going to Israel, as a volunteer, I was seriously thinking of becoming the Israeli Kilroy. We were told that we were going to repairing tanks in the Negev and I was secretly going to write on a tank – with pink paint – "Frumkin was here!" Then, I thought, someone else may do the same thing and who knows, the thing would spread.

Childish? Of course, but I was going to do it anyway. Still, as it turned out we had nothing to do with tanks at all. The army base where we were sent was a place where, in the words of the base commander, colonel Yossi, medical supplies were "refreshed". He briefed us the day after we arrived and when he saw us looking puzzled he explained that we would be unpacking medical supplies returned from bases all over Israel, checking them for expiration dates or damage, and, if needed, replacing the old stuff with new so it would be



Shower room. The unisex toilet on the right.

shipped back "refreshed". Some of the stuff we replaced was more than old – it was practically ancient. There were even boxes of bandages that had been issued to the British army stationed in Palestine in 1943 – 50 years ago! Never mind, if the wrapping was intact they would go into the "refreshed" pile and go back to the troops.

Colonel Yossi was a very charming man. He told us that he was eager to solve any problems we may have and that we shouldn't hesitate in coming to him for help, any help at all. (I never learned his last name. The Israeli army is not a very formal organization. All privates call their officers by their first names and I never saw anyone salute anybody. On our last day there the volunteers assembled in a small hall where we were going to be given certificates, pins and a farewell speech. When the colonel came in, wise guy that I am, I jumped up and yelled 'Attenhut!' at



Colonel Yossi

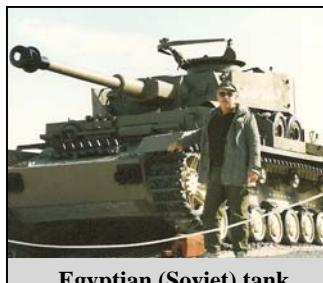
were narrow metal frames supporting a sheet of canvas topped with foam rubber. The heat was supplied by a tiny table top electric heater that had two coils but only the top one worked. After the first freezing night we complained and were issued one more blanket and a replacement heater – it also had two coils but this time only the bottom one worked so we still froze but after a few days the weather improved, the nights got warmer and we stopped complaining.

"There is a problem with the showerheads and with hooks in the walls of the



the top of my lungs. All volunteers stood up as the colonel walked to the podium, a look of utter confusion on his face. Helplessly he waved for us to sit down. "Thank you," he said. "This never happened to me before."

Colonel Yossi told us how proud he was to have these really nice quarters for us. "This year you have floors and ceilings," he said. When someone asked what it was that the volunteers had last year instead of floors and ceilings he grimaced. "Don't ask," he said. Actually the rooms were clean and looked brand new. The walls were corrugated metal, the floors were linoleum, the bunks for the 5 of us in the room



Egyptian (Soviet) tank

room," I said to colonel Yossi. "What's the problem?" he said. "There aren't any," I said.

The barracks with the wash-rooms and toilets were about 150 yards from our barracks. Inside the sinks had one faucet only - cold - but the showers were designed for both hot and cold water. The problem was that someone had stolen the shower-heads and the hot water heater was broken so all we had were pipes pouring cold water all over the room. The walls of our sleeping quarters were virginally white - no nails, no hooks, no place to hang anything. Our stuff was piled on the floor and in the tiny square footlockers at each bed.

"I am glad you told me," said colonel Yossi. "It will all be taken care of. As soon as possible."

A week later I took a showerhead from the home of my nephew and screwed it on the pipe coming out of the wall. It was an instant success - there were lines in front of it every morning. I asked colonel Yossi if he would consider putting up a plaque: "Showerhead Donated to the Israeli Defense Forces by the Frumkin Family", but he didn't feel this was appropriate.

The closest we came to a tank was when we went to the Israeli tank museum at Latrun. There was always a guard watching us and so I never had a chance to write my name on a captured Egyptian or Syrian tank. I guess I'll never be the Israeli Kilroy. *



THE REAL WORLD THREAT: CLIMATE ALARMISTS

By Vaclav Klaus, President of the Czech Republic, March 12, 2008

From speech at the International Conference on Climate Change, 3/4/08, New York

You probably didn't know about the conference—It was largely ignored by our media.

A few weeks ago I gave a speech at an official gathering at Prague Castle commemorating the 60th anniversary of the 1948 communist putsch in the former Czechoslovakia. One of the arguments of my speech, quoted in all the leading newspapers in the country the next morning, went as follows: Future dangers will not come from the same source. The ideology will be different. Its essence will nevertheless be identical: the attractive, pathetic, at first sight noble idea that transcends the individual in the name of the common good, and the enormous self-confidence on the side of its proponents about their right to sacrifice the man and his freedom in order to make this idea reality. What I had in mind was, of course, environmentalism and its present strongest version, climate alarmism.

As an economist, I have to start by stressing the obvious. Carbon dioxide emissions do not fall from heaven. Their volume (ECO2) is a function of gross domestic product per capita (which means of the size of economic activity, SEA), of the number of people (POP) and of the emissions intensity (EI), which is the amount of CO2 emissions per dollar of GDP. This is usually expressed in a simple relationship: $ECO2 = EI \times SEA \times POP$. What this relationship tells is simple: If we really want to decrease ECO2 we have to either stop the economic growth and thus block further rise in the standard of living, stop the population growth, or make miracles with the emissions intensity.



I am afraid there are people who want to stop the economic growth, the rise in the standard of living (though not their own) and the ability of man to use the expanding wealth, science and technology for solving the actual pressing problems of mankind, especially of the developing countries. This ambition goes very much against past human experience which has always been connected with a strong motivation to better human conditions. There is no reason to make the change just now, especially with arguments based on such incomplete and faulty science. Human wants are unlimited and should stay so. Asceticism is a respectable individual attitude but should not be forcefully imposed upon the rest of us.

I am also afraid that the same people, imprisoned in the Malthusian tenets and in their own megalomaniacal ambitions, want to regulate and constrain demographic development, which is something only the totalitarian regimes have until now dared to experiment with. Without resisting it we would find ourselves on the slippery road to serfdom. The freedom to have children without regulation and control is one of the undisputable human rights.

There are people among the global-warming alarmists who would protest against being included in any of these categories, but who do call for a radical de-

crease in carbon dioxide emissions. It can be achieved only by means of a radical decline in the emissions intensity.

This is surprising because we probably believe in technical progress more than our opponents. We know, however, that such revolutions in economic efficiency (and emissions intensity is part of it) have never been realised in the past and will not happen in the future either. To expect anything like that is a non-serious speculation.

I recently looked at the European CO2 emissions data covering the period 1990-2005, the Kyoto protocol era.

You don't need huge computer models to very easily distinguish three different types of countries in Europe.

In the less developed countries, Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain, which during this period were trying to catch up with the economic performance of the more developed EU countries, rapid economic growth led to a 53 per cent increase in CO2 emissions. In the post-communist countries, which went through a radical economic restructuring with the heavy industry disappearing, GDP drastically declined. These countries decreased their CO2 emissions in the same period by 32 per cent. In the EU's slow-growing if not stagnating countries (excluding Germany where it's difficult to eliminate the impact of the fact that the east German economy almost ceased to exist in that period) CO2 emissions increased by 4 per cent.

The huge differences in these three figures are fascinating. And yet there is a dream among European politicians to reduce CO2 emissions for the entire EU by 30 per cent in the next 13 years compared to the 1990 level.

What does it mean? Do they assume that all countries would undergo a similar economic shock as was experienced by the central and eastern European countries after the fall of communism? Do they assume that economically weaker countries

will stop their catching-up process? Do they intend to organise a decrease in the number of people living in Europe? Or do they expect a technological revolution of unheard-of proportions?

What I see in Europe, the US and other countries is a powerful combination of irresponsibility and wishful thinking together with the strong belief in the possibility of changing the economic nature of things through a radical political project.

This brings me to politics. As a politician who personally experienced communist central planning of all kinds of human activities, I feel obliged to bring back the already almost forgotten arguments used in the famous plan-versus-market debate in the 1930s in economic theory (between



Mises and Hayek on the one side and Lange and Lerner on the other), the arguments we had been using for decades until the moment of the fall of communism. The innocence with which climate alarmists and their fellow-travellers in politics and media now present and justify their ambitions to mastermind human society belongs to the same fatal conceit. To my great despair, this is not sufficiently challenged, neither in the field of social sciences, nor in the field of climatology.

The climate alarmists believe in their own omnipotency, in knowing better than millions of rationally behaving men and women what is right or wrong. They believe in their own ability to assemble all relevant data into their Central Climate Change Regulatory Office equipped with huge supercomputers, in the possibility of giving adequate instructions to hundreds of millions of individuals and institutions.

We have to restart the discussion about the very nature of government and about the relationship between the individual and society. We need to learn the uncompromising lesson from the inevitable collapse of communism 18 years ago. It is not about climatology. It is about freedom. Ω



Graffiti for intellectuals

simon says

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ISRAEL'S DISPROPORTIONATE RESPONSE

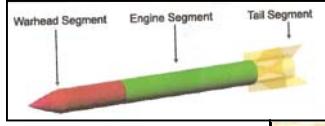
New York Sun editorial, March 11, 2008

Here's a good comeback the next time some left-wing "human rights" type argues that Israel's response to the more than 4,000 rockets and mortars lobbed into Israeli territory from Gaza since Israel withdrew in 2005 has been "disproportionate": agree. And then recite the following from a column by Jonathan Mark in the latest issue of the New York Jewish Week:

On June 21, 2007, to pick a random day when hundreds of children in Sderot were being medically treated for trauma from the rockets, Israel responded not by sending tanks but by sending trucks. The trucks gave Hamas five tons of tea, 34 tons of macaroni, 15 tons of hummus, and 33 tons of lentils.

That didn't stop the rockets, so on June 27, a summer day when hundreds of Sderot children were too scared to play outside, Israel sent Gaza five tons of semolina and 27 tons of seedlings. That didn't stop the rockets, so the next day Israel sent into the land of Hamas 143 tons of bananas. One may wonder if that was proportionate to the number of rockets.

On July 1, a day when the Jews of Sderot were afraid to go shopping without looking into the sky, Israel sent into Hamas territory 20 tons of cof-



fee and 20 tons of cocoa. The next day, Israel sent Gaza 54 tons of jam. The day after that, as rockets fell, Israel sent Hamas 28 tons of pasta.

All of this was announced by Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Cocoa and jam are hardly necessities. Even

as Gaza was smoking from Israel's retaliatory raids this past week, Israel sent in (on March 2), 62 trucks carrying sugar, milk and fruit, along with meat and fish, among other things.

If that was done for good will, or whether it was proportionate, has gone unreported. Chances are this is the first time you're hearing about Israel send-



ing tea and jam behind Hamas lines.

We're not faulting Israel for making sure that Gaza doesn't starve. But it does underscore that if there is something disproportionate about the Israeli response to the attacks on its civilians, it isn't the military retaliation. ☩