

Graffiti for intellectuals



SIMON SAYS



By Si Frumkin

WHY DID IT CHANGE?

It was one of the first movies I saw after coming to the U.S. in 1949. It didn't impress me. I didn't think that Jewish problems in America were all that serious. I had graduated from Dachau just five years before and the Jewish problems there were more immediate than getting a room in a "restricted" hotel or finding a job at a firm that hired only Christians. I accepted antisemitism as a fact of life that I couldn't do anything about. I was alone in New York, busy trying to graduate from college, studying unfamiliar subjects in a strange language, and I had neither time nor interest in trying to change America to suit me. And as far as movies, frankly at 19, I was much more interested in pretty girls in skimpy costumes dancing with Gene Kelly or Fred Astaire than in the social problems of my host country.

The movie was "Gentleman's Agreement", starring Gregory Peck and Dorothy McGuire. It was directed by Ella Kazan who is now being attacked again by many Hollywoodians for having exposed some of his show business colleagues as supporters of the most murderous and despicable political movement of this century - the communists. The movie got 8 Academy award nominations and ended up with 3 Oscars - Best Picture, Best Director (yes, Elia Kazan) and Best Supporting Actress, Celeste Holm. She played Peck's Jewish secretary pretending to be a *shiksa* in order to get a job.



Eventually I graduated college and moved to Los Angeles after realizing that I couldn't get into medical school. They had an unofficial but very real 10% maximum quota on Jews and also I had immigration problems - the INS summoned me every year, usually during final exams, and threatened to cancel my student visa within 72 hours. By the time I moved to L.A. the INS problem was solved - I married a third generation American. And yes, for the cynics, I did so because I was in love, not because I wanted a green card.

In L.A. we were told that my wife - a highly qualified and very well paid secretary - shouldn't even think of applying for a job at a bank or an insurance company. They weren't

hiring Jews (or for that matter Japanese, or Chinese, and certainly not Blacks). Rhoda found a good job anyway and eventually I started making more money than she did, fathered two sons, went through a painful divorce, married again, and later, after getting deeply involved in saving Soviet Jews, saved one for myself, my lovely Ella, who has just come to the U.S. 6 years ago.

One of the joys of my life is showing Ella the country that is as new and unfamiliar to her as it was to me in 1949 when I was 19 years old and madly in lust with Rita Hayworth, Virginia Mayo and Esther Williams. We watch old movies - she had never heard of Shirley Temple or Judy Garland, she had never seen Gene Kelly or Fred Astaire dance, she never laughed with Danny Kaye or knew the embarrassing truth about Rock Hudson.

One day I rented "Gentleman's Agreement". Let me recap the plot for you. Gregory Peck, who plays a non-Jewish investigative reporter with a "neutral" last name of Green, pretends to be a Jew in order to write an expose for the magazine he works for. He discovers that his secretary got her job at the magazine by pretending to be a Christian, that he is not admitted to a resort hotel when they think he is a Jew, and that the very understanding and liberal relatives of his non-Jewish fiancée are reluctant to let him rent

their summer house because it might upset the neighbors. His son comes back from school crying when schoolmates call him names, and eventually he faces the anger of his friends who resent the fact that he had fooled them.

Ella's reaction to the movie was not what I would have expected. "Was it really like this?" she said. "Jews couldn't get into hotels? Jews couldn't get jobs? There was that much discrimination?" she asked. And then she said, "What happened? Why did it change?"

I had no response. She was right. It didn't change in Europe. There a Jew is still a Jew - somehow different. And Russia, well, there a Jew can only wish to be a Jew - not a kike, a *zhid*. But it did change here. Oh, there are anti-Semites, but I would guess that there are more Americans who believe that the earth is flat or that the moon walk was a hoax filmed in Hollywood than those who think that Jews are evil. Anti-Semitism - gentle or violent - is no longer *in*.

So what happened? And why didn't it happen anywhere else? I don't know, but I am grateful that it did. And so, thank you America, and thanks for the movie that would be meaningless now, just 50 years later. And thank you Ella for letting me see the changes that have taken place without me noticing them. And yes, rent the movie - you might get a few insights yourself. ☆

Breaking News: Backlash greets kosher food in Belarus (I wish this was a joke but it's real. S.F.)

The production of a new kosher bread in a city in Belarus caused a string of anti-Semitic newspaper articles.

An editorial in the Mogilev Register, a local daily, warned those of the Russian Orthodox faith to keep away from kosher "products in the same way they keep away from idol sacrifice," claiming that the blood of sacrificed animals is used in kosher rituals.

It also claimed that the bakery's management, in its drive for profit, is turning the city into a Jewish community, the Russian AEN news agency reported.

FAMILY FEUD by Kristen Gillespie

Jordanians have never much cared for airing family grievances in public. In a small country where pretty much everyone, on hearing a last name, can immediately pinpoint its ethnic and geographic origin and reel off any number of relatives, Jordanians sincerely concern themselves with "what the neighbors will say." Culturally, it explains why reality TV will never get off the ground here. It's also one reason why family members who embarrass the greater clan are usually cast out.

When the black sheep of the family happens to be one Abu Musab al Zarqawi - the Jordanian head of Al-Qaeda in Iraq who masterminded the horrific November bombings in the Jordanian capital - the family crisis inevitably takes on national proportions. Zarqawi hails from one of Jordan's largest tribes, the ubiquitous Bani Hassan, with about 100,000 members. The name of the tribe and names of its related families crop up in the top military and political echelons.

Eleven days after the bombings, on November 20, 57 members of Zarqawi's clan, including his brother and a close cousin, signed a pledge ousting their unwanted relative, publicly disowning him through front-page statements in Jordan's biggest daily newspapers. It seemed the matter was closed.

Then, a week later, on November 28, something strange happened. Zarqawi's acolytes, part of the evolving "Al-Qaeda in Iraq" network, challenged the Jordanian tribe via an Internet statement. "How can you disavow the mujahid Abu Musab?" It must have been the "enemy of God" who forced this, likely referring to Jordan's King Abdullah II, mused the incredulous Al-

Qaeda author.

The tribe hit back the next day. More than 370 family members, this time including the notables of the Bani Hassan tribe and even a related member of parliament, practically shouted back their rejection of Zarqawi, again, from the front pages of the Jordanian newspapers. "We... express solidarity with the decision to sever ties with the terrorist," the letter stated, directed at the hearts and minds of the shocked Jordanian public.

Prior to the triple suicide bombings of November 9, which killed 60, many Jordanians had admired Zarqawi for taking on the American occupation of Iraq. A poll conducted before the attacks by the Center for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan found that about 70 percent of the Jordanian public considered Al-Qaeda an armed resistance organization, not a terrorist outfit. But for many, bombing the conservative Muslim wedding at the Radisson SAS hotel was too much. Even the most militant of Islamists felt Zarqawi had gone too far, according to reports tracking chatter on the extremist websites.

Another disowned son - from neighbor-

ing Saudi Arabia - Osama Bin Laden, popularly imagined to be attached to a kidney dialysis machine and skulking around the hills of Tora Bora looking for a place to crash for the night, seems almost mild compared with Zarqawi and his blood-curdling appetite for violence. Zarqawi, who has pledged to personally slice the head off King Abdullah, has reportedly posted tapes of himself on Islamist websites sawing through the necks of his victims in Iraq, their screams eventually drowning in gurgling blood.

Unfortunately, disowning Abu Musab al Zarqawi does not banish the fear. As an American reporter living in Jordan, I can attest to that.

Often, when pushing a latenight deadline in front of the computer in my Amman apartment, I have imagined Islamist terrorists smashing through the front door, screaming "Allahu Akbar," killing the cat and dragging me away to a basement where a camera will film my demise. Afterwards, everyone will watch the grainy footage and wonder why I did not pack up and leave Jordan after the bomb exploded in the Hyatt hotel, a block from where I sit. ﷻ

AND THEN THERE WERE HUNS By Rabbi Baruch Cohon

It could be minus a thousand years, or minus two thousand years, or it could be now. A bright shining vital civilization rises, builds great cities, wins wars, perfects brilliant inventions, creates noble art. That civilization even develops a social system that extends freedom to almost all its people. It extends its hegemony far and wide, dominating other countries.

This prosperous and magnetic nation enjoys top status, then exclusive status as The super power, The world empire, The leading nation, object of outside desire and envy, a hero on a pedestal. Enjoy enjoy enjoy.

Years go by and changes chip away at the hero's pedestal. Some citizens of the super power question its right to dominate or to hegemonize. They identify with the dominated. They write many books and make many movies. Universities honor them.

Parallel to complacency in the super power, comes an angry challenge from the barbarians. They don't have brilliant inventions, only yaks, camels, DC7s; only clubs, spears, Kalashnikovs. But they have vast numbers of young men with nothing to lose. They begin attacking the super power. People in the super power are fat and self-absorbed. Nobody can convince them they are in danger. The attackers are lean and brutal and full of holy hate. They are ready to destroy the super power but

they hesitate. What they need is an ally on the inside.

Sooner or later the barbarians and the librarians get together. The authors and the filmmakers join them. And the energy tycoons subsidize them. Bring in the barbarians; send them to universities.

They will star in the next Iliad or Western - not a William S. Hart or John Wayne epic, but a limp-wristed story of two married cowboys having a homosexual affair. Bring in the barbarians and let them tell their slant on the world - not just how to murder some Olympic athletes, but why they had a right to murder them.

Super Power fed its citizens bread and circuses, or fast food and theme parks. Barbarians were fed on Mongol supremacy, or on Muslim hatred. Which diet has greater food value?

Attila walloped Caesar. There was the Pax Romana and the Via Appia and the Coliseum and the World Trade center --- and then there were Huns. Ω





Somalization

“WE CANNOT EVEN BEGIN TO IMAGINE to what extent the Gaza Strip has fallen to tribal rule and become ensnared in the gang warfare of rival clans,” writes Samih Khalaf, a prominent Palestinian commentator, in the small-circulation organ “Al-Sabah” (Morning), put out by the political commissars of the Fatah old guard, the veteran loyalists of the late Yasser Arafat. “This clan has an armed militia, that family has an armed militia, they control Southistan, or Westistan, or Northistan of the Gaza Strip... Every day the satellite TV networks report about one tribe that attacked government offices and fought another to divide the city in two... Gaza is heading for the worst. As if the organized anarchy of the factional and militia splits weren’t enough, we now have the amazing development of *hamula* (clan) armies fighting each other, while the Palestinian Authority stands powerlessly by.”

Adds Dr. Eyad Sarraj, the liberal, respected Gaza psychiatrist, writing on the popular Palestinian Internet news site “Al-Watan Voice” in Arabic: “Who does not know that in the Gaza Strip, the word ‘law’ has no meaning? And that the term ‘security’ has no translation in the lexicon of the Palestinian environment... What is happening is the effective divvying up of the Gaza Strip between different groups, which sometimes involve the various splinters of Fatah or other factions, or tribal clans who have a share in the money and weapons produced by the system left behind by the former [Arafat] regime — a system built up at the expense of the central authority.

“The Palestinian police,” Sarraj continues, “is still not capable of directing the street traffic when a wedding convoy passes by, firing shots of celebration into the sky. It appears that the Palestinian security forces are trained only to escort the president’s convoy or the convoys of other VIPs by blocking the roads to the rest of the citizens. That is the policing situation while the houses of the attorney general and the chief justice of the Supreme Court are being attacked...” Laments Sarraj: “Who, therefore, controls Gaza? Is it the security apparatuses, or the armed clans and tribes? Or the resistance organizations? Or the feudal corporations? Or perhaps it is all of them together and we are turning into Somalia, in the sense that the Strip will be divided into armed, feudal principalities, each with its own ruler, that nobody will be allowed to enter without permission... It is no wonder that there are individuals in Gaza now seriously considering setting up private militias to defend their family and property.”

And Dr. Mustafa Barghouti, leader of a reformist list running in the Palestinian elections, calls the PA an “absentee government.”

This is the picture painted by those on the inside, and nobody can argue with the accuracy of their description. The PA security forces themselves are part of a mottled mosaic of tribes and armed militias.

More importantly, the Palestinian police are acting primarily as members of family militias, and only in a secondary role, if at all, as the wearers of official uniforms.

That explains how foreigners are taken hostage one after the other and their kidnapers are never punished. On the contrary, they are paid money or granted other privileges in order to get them to release their prey. That explains how government offices are ransacked and looted one after the other, and yet no attempt is made to stop the phenomenon. And that is how the Egyptian border terminal at Rafah got overrun for several hours in late December by armed men from the Hassanain family because of a dispute with a rival clan, and the whole incident ended with handshakes and smiles. Often, armed gangs block roads in protest over some matter or other.



AVI KATZ

Nobody ever takes action to open them.

The process of the Somalization of Gaza is in full swing. Arafat used to say that the Palestinians had to choose between Singapore and Somalia. The choice has apparently been made, and Arafat’s legacy is leading this society to the abyss of total disintegration. The Fatah movement, on the eve of elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council, is breaking up in the vortex of internal disputes. Hamas is standing aside and refraining from using its power to stop the anarchy. And Israel continues to pretend that the PA is an “address.”

The Gaza Strip has turned into a non-state with a façade of government and multiple armies. The situation in the West Bank is slightly better, but not for long. In Nablus a similar process is already effectively underway, and the same is going on to a lesser extent in Jenin, Tul Karm and Bethlehem. Only the massive Israeli army presence is preventing Somalization all over the West Bank. But the direction is already clear: The Palestinians are heading not for better government, but for no government at all. ●



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KATRINA A RACIST HURRICANE?

WELL, NO — AND HOW THE MEDIA MISSED IT!

Did New Orleans blacks die at a higher rate than whites in the wake of Hurricane Katrina? On the evidence so far, the answer is no. Of the 1,100 bodies recovered in Louisiana after Katrina, 836 were found in New Orleans, and the state has released data on 568 of those that were judged to be storm-related. As of last week, blacks, which were 67.2 percent of the pre-storm population of New Orleans, account for 50.9 percent of the city victims so far identified by race. It was New Orleans Caucasians who died way out of proportion to their numbers—28 percent of the population, 45.6 percent of the city's known Katrina deaths by race.

This is far from the impression that the media have managed to leave, both during the crisis and in the months since. It's possible, though unlikely, that these percentages may change in the final figures. Louisiana is not releasing any information on the rest of the dead until they are identified and their families notified.

In the chaos of Katrina, the press was hardly in a position to know that whites were dying as fast as blacks. But it was responsible for strumming the racial theme so relentlessly in the absence of actual information. A mix of factors were operating—faces shown on TV were mostly black, quotable black spokesmen kept insisting that racism was at work, and national reporters on the scene may have thought that since this was the south, blacks were probably being victimized in some way. This hardened into a narrative line for New Orleans that stressed race, and to lesser extent, class.

Jack Shafer of Slate.com said, "(We) in the media are ignoring that fact that almost all the victims in New Orleans are black and poor." Wolf Blitzer said the victims were "so poor, so black." The Washington Post, reflecting the resentment of its majority-black city, pumped up the racial theme. A questionable page one story headlined "To Me, It

Just Seems Like Black People are Marked." An unusually gassy essay in the style section talked about the sins of mainstream America and its "tattered racial legacy." A story on the decline of Bush's approval rating kept the racial theme aloft with the subhead "He Says Race Didn't Affect Efforts; Blacks in Poll Disagree." As Bob Somerby of The Daily Howler said in a different context, "When the press corps reaches an overall judgment, they often start looking for easy-to-tell stories to illustrate their global belief."



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Racial agitators and entertainers played a big role. Randall Robinson, the former head of TransAfrica said, "This is what we have come to. This defining watershed moment in America's racial history." Jesse Jackson said, "Today I saw 5,000 African-Americans desperate, perishing, dehydrated, babies dying." (That would be 5,000 blacks dying out of a total of 1,349 known dead of all races in all Gulf States combined.) The morning show host of a New York City rap station saw the New Orleans situation as "genocide." Robert Parham of the Baptist Center for Ethics, said Katrina "disclosed our racism in multiple ways." Comedian and activist Dick Gregory saw an anti-black con-

spiracy in New Orleans. And rapper Kanye West offered the opinion that "America is set up to help the poor, the black people, the less well off, as slow as possible," adding his soon to be famous accusation, "George Bush doesn't care about black people." The media carried all the race chatter without much in the way of caution or evidence. Even now, mainstream media have done little to set the record straight. The numbers and percentages of death by race are easy to find among bloggers, very hard to find in mainstream reporting. On December 18, three days after the state of Louisiana delivered a breakdown of deaths by race, The New York Times ran a long analysis of Katrina that omitted the racial breakdown from the state report. By contrast, the Los Angeles Times ran an excellent article, also on December 18, that began this way: "The bodies of New Orleans residents killed by Hurricane Katrina were almost as likely to be recovered from middle-class neighborhoods as from the city's poorer districts, such as the Lower 9th Ward." The paper reported that its own analysis "contradicts what swiftly became conventional wisdom in the days after the storm hit—that it was the city's poorest African American residents who bore the brunt of the hurricane." Good journalism. Will the rest of the media catch on?

John Leo is a columnist and editor for U.S. News & World Report and a contributing columnist on Townhall.com.