

Graffiti for intellectuals



Simon says



APRIL
9
2007



Si Frumkin

THE FEAR WE HAVE TO FEAR

There is a lot to be afraid of these days, especially if you live in Washington. I just got this email: *There has been a monthly average of 160,000 troops in the Iraq theatre of operations during the last 22 months, and a total of 2,112 deaths. That gives a firearm death rate of 60 per 100,000 soldiers. The firearm death rate in Washington D.C. is 80.6 per 100,000 persons for the same period.*

That means that you are about 25% more likely to be shot and killed in the U.S. Capital than you are in Iraq. Conclusion: The U.S. should pull out of Washington.

And you know, I wouldn't be surprised if some people would take this seriously and started packing up. The problem is, where would they go? The murder rate or a hundred other statistical reasons might make your life just as dangerous elsewhere.

There is no escape. Hysteria, and fear caused by the hysteria, have become ingrained in us and we accept, cherish and spread this fear.



We now have a great deal on Chilean peaches and nectarines at 79 cents a pound in California markets, *but what*

about Alar? I remember Alar well. In the early 1990s we were told that Alar, a pesticide used in Chile, would poison us.

The hysteria almost did kill the Chilean economy and the Washington apple industry but Alar never harmed a single person and is now used again. So should we have been afraid? Probably not, but when hysteria begins, it can't be stopped until much time has passed.

Malaria is doing well in Africa after DDT had almost completely eradicated it. Then we got hysterical about using DDT and so, over a million kids will die from malaria this year. And you know what? Not a single human being ever died of DDT- not one, not ever! Supposedly the bald eagle and some seagulls laid

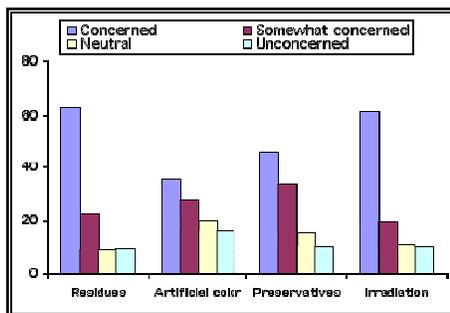
thin-shelled eggs and didn't breed as well, but even this is questionable. No people were hurt by DDT but we got frightened and so, no DDT for Africa, hey, let them die and let's instead use mosquito nets to be placed in huts or around beds that many Africans don't even have. A net costs about \$5 - cheap but unaffordable to most Africans and the five

bucks can buy a year's supply of DDT, but no, no, no! DDT is out and the kids will keep on dying. I was 14 when U.S. army medics covered me and other Dachau survivors with DDT powder to kill the body and head lice that were all over us. This was over 60 years ago and I had no consequences - of course, any eggs I might have laid might have had thin shells, but, hey, mammals don't lay eggs.

So what's my point? Isn't there anything to fear? For example, should we not be afraid of nuclear power plants? Isn't radiation a danger? There was the nuclear 4-Mile Island Disaster, right? So there is something to fear, right?

Well, actually, not in this case. Go to Google and punch in "4 Mile Island disasters". Quite a few pages and references, right? Can you tell me how many died? No? Well, not surprising. No one did. No explosions, no radiation, no nothing. Some disaster.

Nuclear power is by far the safest and most efficient provider of energy but it scares us so, if you want to fear it go ahead - you probably already carry the hysteria virus inside you.



it is minuscule. Just think of this: less than 3000 people died in the 9/11 attacks but over 40,000 die each year in automobile accidents.

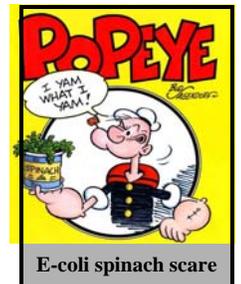
Here are a few facts: even in 2001 - the year of 9/11 - you were 15 times more likely to die in an auto accident than as a result of a



terrorist attack, seven more times likely to die of alcohol related causes, and five times more likely to die of HIV or accidental poisoning.

The terrorist attacks in 2001 increased our chance of dying in an air crash from a probability of 0.00000128 to 0000024! Since 1960s as many Americans were killed by international terrorism as by lightning or accidents caused by deer.

Let's put it this way: if attacks like 9/11 occurred every three months for the next five years, the probability of being killed would remain a tiny 0.02%



And so, let us listen to FDR who told America that, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself!" - in other words, cool out! The politicians and the media are working very hard - and succeeding - to get the hysteria going and growing and we may be on the way of destroying ourselves long before global warming, pollution, overpopulation, deforestation, environmental toxicity, cholesterol, silicone implants, red ocean tides, bird flu, mad cow disease, asbestos, gun ownership, DDT, second hand smoke and AIDS manage to do the job. Most of what frightens us will probably end up forgotten just like Alar, herpes, envelopes with anthrax, global cooling/nuclear winter, needles and razor blades in Halloween candy, acid rain, shortages of water, oil or electricity, and all those other horrible dark clouds that silently disappeared from our horizons.

But if you still feel like being scared, just remember that flatulence by cows produces more global warming gases than all of the man-made transportation machinery worldwide so that when you see a cow, be afraid, be very afraid! ¥

SO PLEASE STOP KVETCHING! Larry Derfner, J'lem Post

Security in Israel is about as good as it gets around here. Suicide bombings have become a rarity; just the threat of one is now a big news story. The northern border is again quiet, Sderot is, if not quiet, considerably quieter than it's been. Israelis don't think twice about getting on buses or shopping downtown. Judging by their behavior, as opposed to their words, people in this country feel safe.

Meanwhile, the economy keeps growing. The war in Lebanon last summer didn't cause anything more than a brief downturn. True, about half the Israeli population is either poor or close to it, but that's nothing new. For this country's "haves," and for the national economy overall, it's clear sailing.

Even driving a car in Israel is becoming safer all the time, believe it or not. Last year there were fewer road deaths than there have been in 20 years.

Yet to listen to Israelis, and to listen to the news media, the whole country is falling apart. All systems are in collapse. The leaders stink. Corruption and incompetence are everywhere. Tragically, people have become alienated from the state, from the society.

Oh, do me a favor.

First of all, Israelis have no real problem with corruption. No elected Israeli politician ever lost popularity because he was corrupt, or suspected of corruption. Some, like Arye Deri, Binyamin Netanyahu and Avigdor Lieberman, even gained popularity by claiming the police were persecuting them for political reasons.

Is Arkadi Gaydamak not suspected of massive corruption? Did this stop him from becoming one of the most powerful, popular men in Israel?

I don't know which complaint I'm hearing more - that the leaders are corrupt, or that the justice system is too hard on the leaders. Could it be that Israelis just need to kvetch about whoever's in the headlines?

What a terrible situation, they moan. The new chief of police is already in hot water, the one before him was forced to resign, the head of the army resigns before he can be fired, the justice minister is convicted of sexual molestation, the president is going to be indicted for rape, the prime minister may be forced out for corruption or incompetence, or both, and the defense minister may be forced to go with him.

What can I say, except: That's entertainment. Because the point is that this country is not falling apart. Can anybody explain how Moshe Katsav's disgrace has hurt anyone but himself? If his disgrace has hurt the institution of the presidency, does anyone

give a rip? If Shimon Peres becomes the new president, will it make a difference to anybody but Shimon Peres?

This is a very interesting show we're watching, that's all. These resignations and firings and investigations don't hurt Israelis' lives, and they don't hurt the life of the nation, either.

While I think Dan Halutz got a bum rap, is the IDF lost without him? Do we have any less personal security, does Israel have any less national security, now that Gabi Ashkenazi is the chief of staff? Is any 18-year-old Israeli boy going to dodge the draft, or become any less of a soldier, because of the Winograd Commission?

The same holds true for the rest of the leaders under fire, or fired already. Can Israel survive, can we Israelis survive, without Moshe Katsav as president, without Moshe Karadi (or even Yaakov Genot) as chief of police, without Haim Ramon as justice minister, without Amir Peretz as defense minister, without Ehud Olmert as prime minister?

I think we can survive just fine. Maybe even better.

People are saying this is a corrupt country, a dysfunctional country. I think all these investigations show just the opposite; but even among those who think Israel is going to the dogs - are any of them leaving the country, or thinking of leaving, because of what Katsav did to "A" or what Ramon did to "H"? Is anyone

holding off on having another child, or remodeling the house, because Halutz failed to make Hizbullah disappear, or because Karadi fiddled while the mafia bought a few police officers?

IN 22 years of living in Israel, I've never been approached by a civil servant for a bribe, I don't know any woman who's been raped or sexually molested by a politician, I haven't been threatened by the mafia - and I don't know anybody who has. These things happen here, but corruption and lawlessness are not the way of life in Israel like they are in Russia, China or dozens upon dozens of other countries in the world.

Furthermore, the IDF is one of the world's best armies, and if the Israel Police isn't one of the world's best police forces, it's

not because of corruption.

I think the reason we're seeing Israeli leaders dropping like flies is partly because law enforcement is getting tougher and more victims are coming forward, which are good reasons; partly because Attorney-General Menahem Mazuz is a real go-getter, which is another good reason; and, in the case of Halutz, Olmert, Peretz and the Winograd Commission, because the public needs scapegoats for a war that failed on account of its goal - the vanquishing of Hizbullah - being totally unrealistic. That's a bad reason.

Israelis may be in a terrible mood about the country, but the country is in very good shape. There are security threats, but there always have been and always will be. The important thing is that except for the 33 days of war last summer and the intermittent rocketing over the border from Gaza, this has been a safe country to live in for the last three years, and there's a good chance it will go on being safe for years to come.

The economy offers a Western standard of living to people with good professional skills, which is a lot of people. The Israeli middle-class lives well.

The only problems in this country that I would call grievous are: 1. the extent of poverty; 2. the second-class citizenship of Israeli Arabs; and 3. the increasingly extreme attitudes of many citizens, Jewish and Arab.

As for Israel's occupation of the West Bank, I know Palestinian civilians are suffering terribly, but I must admit - I find it hard to grieve for them that much when the blame lies predominantly with their own elected leadership, not Israel's.

And if Israel is passing up a chance for peace with Syria, which I think it is, are we realistically talking about much of a chance?

Only a few years ago this country was exploding with terror, businesses were closing left and right, Israelis were being thrown out of work, foreigners were afraid to visit or invest here, and soldiers and settlers were being killed regularly in Gaza as well as in the West Bank.

Today we have some corruption in high places, some incompetence, a few instances of office sex-crime. No national tragedies here. In fact, the only reason this stuff is making such big headlines is because, thank God, there's so little genuine national tragedy to report.

So would everybody please stop kvetching?



SEWAGE RESERVOIR FLOODS IN GAZA, KILLING 5

Associated Press, March 27, 2007

GAZA, March 27 (AP) — AN EARTHEN EMBANKMENT AROUND A SEWAGE RESERVOIR THAT WAS FILLED TO CAPACITY COLLAPSED TUESDAY, AND OFFICIALS SAID IT SPEWED A "TSUNAMI" OF WASTE AND MUD THAT KILLED FIVE PEOPLE AND FORCED RESIDENTS TO FLEE UMM NASER, A VILLAGE IN THE NORTHERN GAZA STRIP.



One local official blamed the collapse on shoddy infrastructure, and [United Nations](#) officials said they had warned of such a catastrophe for more than two years.

Emergency workers traveled among the houses on flat-bottomed boats, and chickens fled their coops to perch high on power lines. The stench of sewage mixed with mud and dead animals caused people to cover their mouths.

Ziad Abu Farya, the leader of the village council, described the scene as "our tsunami."

A 2004 United Nations report warned that the sewage plant was at maximum capacity and that flooding was inevitable unless a new waste treatment plant was built. It said the effluent lake was a breeding ground for mosquitoes and waterborne diseases, posing a

serious health hazard.

Efforts to build a new waste treatment plant were repeatedly hampered by fighting between Israel and the Palestinians. Stuart Shepherd, of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, said that since the report was published, international money for a new plant had been secured but construction could not proceed because the area was too dangerous.

Umm Naser is about 300 yards from the border with Israel in an area where Palestinians have frequently launched rockets into Israel, and Israeli artillery and aircraft have fired back.

Fawzi Barhoum, a [Hamas](#) spokesman, blamed the international

sanctions imposed on the Palestinians after the Hamas victory in elections in January 2006 for the condition of the infrastructure in Gaza. But Mr. Shepherd said the Umm Naser project had not been affected by the boycott.

Two women in their 70s, two toddlers and a teenage girl died in the sudden flood, and 25 people were injured, said Dr. Muawiya Hassanin of the Palestinian Health Ministry. At least 25

houses were submerged.

Fadel Kawash, director of the Palestinian Water Authority, said the level of sewage in the pool had increased over the last few days, creeping up the earthen embankments around it until one collapsed, "causing the sewage to pour toward the village."

Rescue crews and gunmen from Hamas rushed to the area to search for people feared buried. Most residents fled or were evacuated.

Angry residents drove reporters out of the area and mobbed arriving government officials. When Interior Minister Hani Kawasmeah arrived to survey the damage, his bodyguards fired in the air to disperse the crowd.

"We lost everything," said Amina Afif, 65, whose small shack had been destroyed. "Everything was covered by the flood. It's a disaster."

The Israeli Army offered to help clean up. Whether the offer was accepted was not clear.Ω



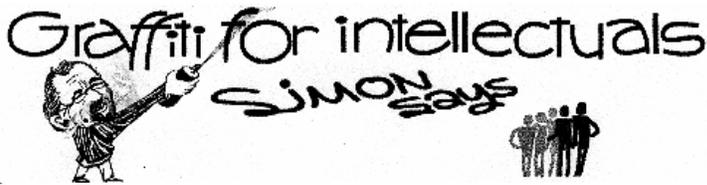
A COMMENT : This time of the year, at Passover, when we are reminded of the divinely caused drowning of Israel's Egyptian enemies, the news from Gaza of Palestinians drowning in their own feces seems quite coincidental/symbolic/ fascinating — maybe even a cautionary warning to our contemporary enemies.

It certainly seems that their yearly \$1 1/2 billion in world aid - quite a large portion of it in U.S. taxpayer funds - would have been better spent building and repairing sewage systems and hospitals than on weapons to kill Jews.

I wonder if the angels in heaven celebrated the Palestinian "feces tsunami" and whether the Lord reprimanded them for it like He did 3000 years ago.

As for me, I have tried to feel compassion for the Gazans who overwhelmingly voted for a government pledged to destroy us, but it is difficult. If sewage flooded an Israeli city there would be celebrations throughout the Moslem world but Jews do not— or should not—celebrate others' tragedies. But we do have a sense of humor and is it all that inappropriate to wonder who might be a better deserving candidate to be destined to drown in their own excrement?

Si F.



Southern California Council for Soviet Jews publication
 (affiliate member of Union of Councils for Soviet Jews)
 P.O.Box 1542, Studio City, CA 91614 (web: www.sifrumkin.com)

**APRIL
 9
 2007**

NON- PROFIT ORG.
 U.S.POSTAGE
 PAID
 STUDIO CITY CA
 PERMIT NO.62

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Fax: 818-766-4321
 Phone: 818-769-8862
Esfrumkin@roadrunner.com

www.sifrumkin.com

A TALE OF TWO CRIMES By Michael Barone, U.S. News and World Report, 3/19/2007

HISTORY WILL BE KIND TO ME," Winston Churchill once said, "for I intend to write it." Indeed, he did. His multiple-volume histories of the two world wars are still widely read, though discounted by professional historians as incomplete and in some ways misleading.

Churchill is not the only politician who has wanted to write the history of his times; most politicians and political operatives want at least to shape the way history views their actions.

Some are better at this than others. In the previous century, Democrats did much better at this than Republicans.

Most of us still see the events of the first two-thirds of the 20th century through the words of gifted New Deal historians like the late Arthur Schlesinger Jr., who told the story as Franklin Roosevelt hoped and expected it to be told. And, to judge from the response to two recent criminal proceedings, Democrats are doing it better in this century, too.

The first of these criminal proceedings, not much noticed, was the plea bargain of former national security adviser Sandy Berger for removing classified documents from the National Archives, where he had been reviewing them under the authorization of Bill Clinton in preparation for testimony about 9/11.

What he admitted to doing, after first denying it, is extraordinary. On multiple occasions he removed documents from the room where he was reading em, concealed them in his pants and socks, hid them at a construction site outside the building, took them home, and, in some cases, destroyed them.

Some of these documents may have been unique and may have contained handwritten comments that could have looked bad

in light of what happened on September 11. I have known Berger more than 30 years and find it unlikely that he would have done something like this on his own.

Did Bill Clinton ask him to destroy documents that would make him look bad in history? I get a sick feeling in the pit of my stomach when I ask that question. But this or something very much like it seems to be the only explanation that makes sense. The Berger case was prosecuted by career staff in the Department of Justice, with little publicity. In 2005 Berger was fined \$50,000 -- not a ruinous sum for one of his earning capacity -- ordered to perform 100 hours of community service, and had his security clearance lifted for three years, which means he could come back in a new administration after the 2008 election. The attempt to write, or un-write, history -- if it was that -- evidently succeeded.

Berger's treatment was light compared with that of Dick Cheney's former chief of staff, Scooter Libby. Special counsel Patrick Fitzgerald prosecuted him for perjury and obstruction of justice for making statements contradicted by journalists Tim Russert and Matt Cooper, and last week, the 11-member jury found him guilty on four counts. He could face years in jail. The case arose out of attempts by Libby and others to refute the charges of retired diplomat Joseph Wilson that the administration had manipulated intelligence before the Iraq war.

Wilson is the Titus Oates of our time, a liar whose lies served the needs of a political

faction. Oates's lie was that there was a "popish plot" to murder King Charles II; Wilson's lie was part of the "Bush lied and people died" mantra that has become the canonical version of history to much of the mainstream media and the Democratic Party.

Wilson's story, retailed to journalists and then presented in a column in The New York Times, was that he had debunked evidence that Iraq was seeking uranium from Niger and that his report had circulated in the highest levels of the administration; he suggested that he had been sent to Niger in response to a request by Cheney.

In fact, as a 2004 bipartisan report of the Senate Intelligence Committee found, all those claims were false, as well as his denial that his wife had recommended him for the Niger trip.

Still, the "Bush lied and people died" mantra resonates. Yet there was no lie. Given Saddam Hussein's previous use of weapons of mass destruction and his refusal to cooperate with weapons inspectors, George W. Bush had to assume he had WMDs, just as Bill Clinton had before him -- as we were reminded by Hillary Rodham Clinton's speech in favor of the Iraq war resolution.

The Libby verdict in no way undercuts that. But the Republicans are running behind in the battle to write history.

Michael Barone is a senior writer with U.S. News & World Report and the principal co-author of The Almanac of American Politics