

Graffiti for intellectuals



SIMON SAYS



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By Si Frumkin

THE UNHOLY TRINITY

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The 1936 Berlin Olympics are remembered as "Hitler's Olympics". They had been planned for Berlin before Hitler came to power but showcased the ideal of Arian superiority and the glories of the Nazi state while denigrating the "inferior" races and attempting to limit their participation in the Games. An American campaign for a boycott of the games collapsed after the American representative of the Olympic Organizing Committee (OIC) met with Hitler and got him to agree to admit a single token Jew to Germany's team. Hitler allowed himself to be persuaded, invited a Jewish high-jumper to join the team and then, after the boycott collapsed, barred her.

Avery Brundage, a leading American sport official and future OIC president, announced that the boycott was an "alien and un-American idea, part of an evil scheme to politicize the Olympics" and that "Jews had better understand that they cannot use the games as weapons in their boycott against the Nazis".

In the end, Germany was triumphant with 33 gold medals, nine more than the second place U.S. and with fascist Italy finishing third.

The 1980 Olympics in Moscow also were also made possible by OIC's decision to ignore the actuality of the Soviet regime where athletics were strictly controlled by the government. The athletes were trained and financed by the State; the overriding purpose was to prove Soviet superiority to the rest of the world. Thus two diverging

systems emerged: in the West the athletes carefully preserved amateur status while in the Communist world they were trained, treated and rewarded as professionals.

The only coincidence that prevented these Olympics from being an undiluted Soviet triumph was the Soviet invasion into Afghanistan in 1979. A surprised and stunned president Carter responded by decreeing a boycott of the Moscow games. The OIC was aghast. It refused to consider an alternate venue, urged that the boycott be disregarded and only gave in after Carter threatened legal action against it. Still, the world reaction was very different



from that in 1936 – China and most Moslem countries joined the American boycott and, in the end, more than 40 countries decided not to participate.

The result was a crushing blow to Soviet morale.

So did the OIC learn the lesson that games should not be awarded to oppressive dictatorships? Apparently not.

Jacques Rogge, the current chairman of the OIC, admits that China is a closed society but predicts that the games would "open China" and rejects comparisons of China with Nazi Germany or the USSR. The Bush administration has concurred by claiming that the Olympics would prove to be a powerful incentive for democratic change and President Bush has already accepted an invitation to attend. The Chinese understand that their political system is not an obstacle to OIC approval and are concentrating on environmental issues that appear to be much more important to the West than China's leading the world in the number of imprisoned journalists and "misusers" of the Internet.

China has carefully listed what it will do to improve Beijing's polluted air: 200 facto-

ries would be relocated out of the city, "green zones" would be established, natural gas would replace coal as the city's primary fuel, subways would be expanded and automobile traffic reduced, sand storms that blow in the summer would be reduced by massive projects to reverse soil erosion, and much else.

In February 2001, when a team of IOC inspectors visited the city, the government placed a prohibition on the use of coal to heat apartment buildings; this temporarily improved air quality but left millions without heat in the middle of winter! Older housing is being destroyed and over a million residents have been forcibly evicted and made homeless without a right of appeal or compensation. None of this had been reported either by the foreign or domestic media.

China promises "tight but friendly and peaceful security measures". In the past this meant house arrests and detentions of prospective dissidents, harassment of foreign journalists and those who may want to share grievances with them, and lengthy prison terms for expressing "subversive" views. Chinese intelligence services have already compiled lists of foreign organizations that may cause "trouble" during the games. The OIC has meanwhile assumed its traditional role: an official has described plans for citizen protests at the Olympics as "regrettable".



It seems that the IOC hasn't learned from its mistakes. It is proceeding with the 2008 celebration of an oppressive regime and has already indicated that it intends to continue doing so by deciding to award Putin's Russia the 2014 winter games. Ω

SEEING THE WORLD AS IT IS

By Fouad Adjami, 2/4/08, US News&World Report.

During that seminal election of 1960, John F. Kennedy's campaign promised to close the "missile gap" with the Soviet Union. It was a stirring call, and of course as we now know, a great inversion of things. The United States had 2,000 missiles, the Soviets only 67. Today's equivalent of that liberty with the truth is the talk of America's standing abroad. Virtually all the presidential campaigns promise to fix the problem. We are alone, the contenders tell us, having squandered the respect of others. This is an old American tradition of self-flagellation, but after 9/11 and Iraq it has acquired the status of undisputed truth.



French President Sarkozy addresses U.S. Congress

of Islam and from multilateralist opinion in Europe.

But this narrative is defective; news of our demise in foreign lands is greatly exaggerated. The world of the 1990s had come to a catastrophic end on 9/11. It was the luck of the new custodians of American power to come into that inheritance. And truth be known, in its

final year in office, this administration can boast of having measured up to some great challenges abroad. In Europe, the tide has

tion with its emphasis on freedom versus tyranny. Instead of Jacques Chirac in Paris,

there is President Nicolas Sarkozy. Last November, before a joint session of Congress, he spoke movingly of those Americans who had fallen on the beaches of Normandy in World War II. France will never forget their sacrifices, Sarkozy said; it is to them that the French "owed the fact that we were free people and not slaves."

Conventional wisdom. It is the fate of those who provide

order and protection in the world to be needed by others and to be resented at the same time. The conventional wisdom of this moment assumes that the Arab-Muslim world has been poisoned by America's military campaigns. But in these lands, anti-Americanism is at once a condition that can never be healed and a pose. It is claimed that America under George W. Bush has made its own poor bed among the Arabs by taking up the cause of freedom in Arab lands; we are damned for this interventionism. But America had been denounced the day before for befriending autocrats. Such sentiments about America are not amenable to reason. So we are hated in Turkey, what of it? It could be that we sinned against the Turks; conversely, it could be that Turkey today is an unhappy land, that the cultural war between the secularists and the Islamists has become fierce and intolerable and that the Turks are looking for a scapegoat. There is no way of conciliating anti-Americanism in Cairo; it infects even the men and women standing in line at the U.S. Embassy, dreaming of visas and green cards.



Bush greeted in Europe

The new canon has even made it into Republican ranks of late. Here is former Gov. Mike Huckabee, writing in the journal *Foreign Affairs*: "The Bush administration's arrogant bunker mentality has been counterproductive at home and abroad. My administration will recognize that the United States' main fight today does not pit us against the world but pits the world against the terrorists." In the circles associated with the Democrats and with liberal opinion, the canon of America's embattled isolation is fierce and uncompromising. We had been multilateralists once and are now



Bush in Israel

loners; we had been skilled and now we ride unprepared into swaths of the world we barely know.

There are the Pew global opinion surveys, essential to this canon: The Turks once loved us but now have a dread of America, and only 9 percent of them have a favorable opinion of the United States. We are unloved in Cairo and Karachi, and candidates Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton and John Edwards will close that "credibility gap." They will cast Pakistani ruler Pervez Musharraf adrift, and they will bring an end to our isolation from the lands



Line for U.S. student visa

turned against Islamic radicalism; America had emboldened the Europeans with its refusal to relent in the face of Islamism. Consider Germany and France: The leaders who traded on anti-Americanism are gone, replaced by a new generation of men and women who know a deeper truth about order and radicalism. For Gerhard Schroeder—a quintessential panderer—there is now Chancellor Angela Merkel, reared in East Germany, who is much closer to the *zeitgeist* of the Bush administra-

tion with its emphasis on freedom versus tyranny. Instead of Jacques Chirac in Paris, there is President Nicolas Sarkozy. Last November, before a joint session of Congress, he spoke movingly of those Americans who had fallen on the beaches of Normandy in World War II. France will never forget their sacrifices, Sarkozy said; it is to them that the French "owed the fact that we were free people and not slaves."



German Chancellor Merkel greeting Bush

Presidential campaigns never take up painful truths. Otherwise, we would have a serious debate about our imperial burdens, and interests, abroad. We would look with appropriate irreverence and skepticism at the numbers given us by pollsters who pretend to know the mood and attitudes on foreign shores.

THE GREAT EMINENT DOMAIN CASE YOU NEVER HEARD ABOUT

By Gideon Kanner, 1/12/08

Professor Kanner is past president of the California Academy of Appellate Lawyers. He has served on the Advisory Committee on the Uniform Eminent Domain Code and is a consultant on eminent domain to the California Law Revision Commission. He has been quoted extensively in the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal. In addition to being an eminent scholar he is clever, witty and has a great sense of humor even on serious subjects like this one.

It's that time again, and the silly season is upon us with front-page news of yet another official hegira to the Middle East in pursuit of the elusive peace. On the one hand there are the downtrodden Palestinians who in pursuit of their just cause want no more than to liquidate Israel, and kill the Israelis along with as many Americans as they can. On the other hand, for some strange reason, the Israelis don't fancy being killed and tend to fight back when attacked - an activity that all progressive thinkers know to be intolerably wicked. So what does all that familiar and depressing stuff have to do with this blog on eminent domain, you ask? Good question. It seems that according to the front page of the New York Times, of January 11, 2008, President Bush has called *inter alia* for "compensating Palestinians and their descendants for homes they left in what is now Israel," (emphasis added). That sounds like El Presidente has wandered onto our turf, and since compensation for lost property is our bag, some comment appears appropriate.

We hope that this won't come as too much of a shock to our readers, so maybe you better sit down before going on, but in spite of all the propaganda on this subject, the Israelis have already paid for those Arab homes, at least for those of them whose Arab owners would accept payment, and have for years stood ready to pay the others if they would only take the money. We understand that this is not what you have been reading in your newspaper, nor what you have seen and heard on the tube, but that's the way it is. Since your faithful servant is well into what's sometimes called the "golden years," we realize that there are many younger folks out there who have not lived through these events and may think of them as history rather than as current events, so it may be a good idea to review the bidding so to speak.

When Israel declared its independence in 1948 it was promptly attacked by a half-dozen Arab armies plus a bunch of irregulars under the leadership of a guy named el Kawukji. The ideological godfather of this genocidal effort was Haj Amin al Hussein, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, who spent World War II in Germany, helping Hitler to raise SS troops from the Moslem communities in the German-occupied Balkans. Having seen that in WW II nobody lifted a finger to save the Jews from being exterminated by the Germans, good ol' Haj Amin figured that he could do an encore in the Middle

East. And so, all those attacking Arab worthies made no bones about their aim which was to "drive the Jews into the sea" as they never tired of asserting, seize their land and keep it. The strategy of the attacking Arabs was to persuade or intimidate their Arab compatriots to leave their homes and get out of the way of the advancing Arab armies, giving them a clear field of fire, the idea being that once the Jews were duly driven into the sea, those Arabs could return to their abandoned homes and seize the homes of the departed Jews as well. What a deal!

But it didn't work out that way. Even before the fighting started, Arab leaders decamped for safe places outside the British-controlled Palestine Mandate territory, and the Arabs on lower rungs of their socio-economic ladder figured out that they had been abandoned by their betters, so many of them sensibly responded to the Arab Higher Committee's threats and importunings and split too. But as you know, in spite of their inferior armaments and lack of modern armor and artillery, the Israelis kicked ass. With the exception of the British-led, British-armed and British-financed Transjordanian Arab Legion which captured and hung on to Judea and Samaria (which became known in the press as "the West Bank,") the Arab armies skedaddled in large numbers. That left high and dry those unfortunate Arabs who listened to their leaders and left their homes, only to be left homeless and herded by their own compatriots into wretched refugee camps.

But all those heady military deeds of derring-do left Israel with a problem: what to do with the Arab properties whose erstwhile owners fled, leaving their homes behind? To deal with this problem, in 1950 Israel established an office of Custodian of Absentee Property, who took charge and under the terms of the Israeli law would return possession of those abandoned properties to any Arab owner who presented evidence of ownership. Many Arabs regained their land in this fashion. Later, under the Israeli Land Acquisition (Validation and Compensation) Law of 1953, the unclaimed Arab land was acquired by eminent domain and its record owners were paid its fair market value with interest, or at least, the money was made available to those of them who would take it. But many Arabs refused to accept their compensation. Why? Some took the extremist position that any dealings with Israel implied its recognition and they would have none of that, or they were intimidated into inaction by

Arab extremists' threats of violence. Remember that it is Arab law (including the law of our Glorious Ally, Jordan), that selling land to a Jew is a capital offense.

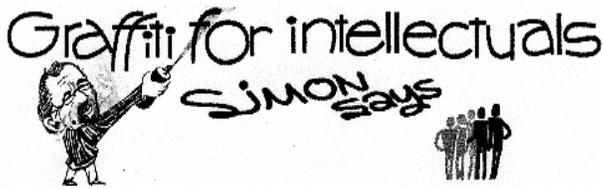
But in spite of the Arab extremists' threats, by 1994 some 14,692 absentee Arab land owners claimed their compensation, and settlements were reached as to 200,905 dunams of land (a dunam is about 0.25 acre). A total of 9,956,828 shekels (approximately \$2,457,000) was paid as compensation. In addition, 54,482 dunams of land were granted to Arab farmers as a substitute for their cultivated land - a measure of compensation that is more generous than what is available here in the good ol' U.S. of A. If these acreages seem modest to you, remember that we are not dealing here with endless Nebraska ag land - this is the arid, barren Middle East where cultivated land comes in much smaller tracts than what we are accustomed to, and where the whole shebang could probably fit into San Bernardino County..

The problem was complicated (and still is) because under Ottoman Turkish, British, Jordanian and Israeli law some of the land in question was so-called *miri* land, a type of state-owned land on which some Arab claimants had been squatting without complying with local law and perfecting title.

No doubt, what happened to those Arabs who naively followed the bad counsel of their leaders was a tragedy that war brings. But in this case the war was started by the Arabs' 1948 attempt to destroy Israel and exterminate its people. So the tragedy that befell so many of them was self-inflicted - a harsh case of just deserts.

To hark back to the beginning of this post, we don't know what President Bush had in mind when he called for "compensating Palestinians for homes they left in what is now Israel," but he must have meant *something*, even though the nature of that something is a mystery to us. If any of our readers know what the Pres was talking about, by all means let us know.

Oh, we almost forgot. At the time these things happened, some 800,000 Jews had *their* property seized without cause, and were driven out of Arab countries. But we don't see anything in the New York Times about President Bush urging compensation of these folks by their Arab tormentors. We wonder why. Maybe it's just a manifestation of what Arab apologists like to call "even handed treatment."



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ARE THE POOR GETTING POORER?

By Walter E. Williams, Townhall Magazine, January 2008



Most "impoverished" Americans today own DVD players and cars. Being poor just ain't what it used to be. People who want more government income- redistribution programs often sell their agenda with the lament, "The poor are getting poorer and the rich are getting richer," but how about some evidence, and you decide? I think the rich are getting richer, and so are the poor.

According to the most recent census, about 35 million Americans live in poverty. Heritage Foundation scholar Robert Rector, using several government reports, gives us some insights about these people in his paper: "Understanding Poverty and Economic Inequality in the United States"

"In 1971, only about 32 percent of all Americans enjoyed air conditioning in their homes. By 2001, 76 percent of poor people had air conditioning. In 1971, only 43 percent of Americans owned a color television; in 2001, 97 percent of poor people owned at least one. In 1971, 1 percent of American homes had a microwave oven; in 2001, 73 percent of poor people had one. Forty-six percent of poor households own their homes. Only about 6 percent of poor households are overcrowded. The average poor American has more living space than the average non-poor individual living in Paris, London, Vienna, Athens and other European cities.

What do you think distinguishes the high and low poverty populations?

Nearly three-quarters of poor households own a car; 30 percent own two or more cars. Seventy-eight percent of the poor have a VCR or DVD player; 62 percent have cable or satellite TV reception; and one-third have an automatic dishwasher.

For the most part, long-term poverty today is self-inflicted. To see this, let's examine

some numbers from the Census Bureau's 2004 Current Population Survey.

There's one segment of the black population that suffers only a 9.9 percent poverty rate, and only 13.7 percent of its under-5-year-olds are poor.

There's another segment of the black population that suffers a 39.5 percent poverty rate, and 58.1 percent of its under-5-year-olds are poor.

Among whites, one population segment suffers a 6 percent poverty rate, and only 9.9 percent of its under-5-year-olds are poor. Another segment of the white population suffers a 26.4 percent poverty rate, and 52 percent of its under-5-year-olds are poor.

What do you think distinguishes the high and low poverty populations?

The only statistical distinction between both the black and white populations is marriage. There is far less poverty in married - couple families, where presumably at least one of the spouses is employed. Fully 85 percent of black children living in poverty reside in a female-headed household.

Poverty is not static for people willing to work. A University of Michigan study shows that only 5 percent of those in the bottom fifth of the income distribution in 1975 remained there in 1991. What hap-pened to them? They moved up to the top three-fifths of the income distribution -middle class or higher. Moreover, three out of 10 of the lowest income earners in

1975 moved all the way into the top fifth of income earners by 1991. Those who were poor in 1975 had an inflation-adjusted average income gain of \$27,745 by 1991. Those workers who were in the top fifth of income earners in 1975 were better off in 1991 by an average of only \$4,354. The bottom line is, the richer are getting richer and the poor are getting richer.

Poverty in the United States, in an absolute sense, has virtually disappeared. Today, there's nothing remotely resembling poverty of yesteryear. However, if poverty is defined in the relative sense, the lowest fifth of income-earners, "poverty" will always be with us. No matter how poverty is defined, if I were an unborn spirit, condemned to a life of poverty, but God allowed me to choose which nation I wanted to be poor in, I'd choose the United States. Our poor must be the envy of the world's poor. ☺

The only statistical distinction between the poor and not-poor populations—black or white—is marriage

Dr. Williams serves on the faculty of George Mason University as A John M. Olin Distinguished Professor of Economics. He is a prolific author. You can read more of his columns on Townhall.com/columnists/walterewilliams