

Graffiti for intellectuals



SIMON SAYS



NOVEMBER
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By Si Frumkin

THIS DEJAVU IS 68 YEARS OLD

At my ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN LITHUANIA WE WERE TAUGHT THAT OUR CITY, KAUNAS, WAS ONLY THE PROVISIONAL CAPITAL. THE PRESIDENTIAL OFFICES AND all the ministries were located here, but that was temporary, our real capital was and forever would be Vilnius. It was taken away by the Poles in 1920 and they never gave it back. I believed that this was horrible; I could never understand why our heroic and brave Lithuanian army didn't take it back – we were strong, brave and valiant enough, all 3 million of us to take on, what, only 30 million or so Poles, right?

I was a Lithuanian patriot. And when Vilnius was returned to Lithuania in 1939, I celebrated with rest of country. The Soviet Union and Germany had attacked and divided Poland between them and the Soviets got (among other, much bigger, parts) the area with Vilnius which they then gave to Lithuania. The only thing that Lithuania was supposed to do in return was to allow the Red Army to base some soldiers in the Lithuanian countryside - not in the larger cities. Frankly, I didn't mind. I was just nine years old and a fan of Soviet films; I knew that Red Army soldiers were heroic, friendly, handsome, and great fighters.



A couple of months later, after our government moved to the true historic capital that was liberated for us by the great Stalin, strange articles appeared in the official Soviet media.

On May 30, 1930, the major newspaper, "Izvestia" published an official report by the Peoples Commissariat of Foreign Affairs. It reported despicable crimes by the Lithuanian military who had kidnapped and tortured a number of Red Army soldiers to learn Soviet military secrets. Two weeks later, on June 13, this was followed up by a directive of the Political Administration of the Red Army which said that, "The Lithuanian government under the cloak of pursuing investigations and apprehension of criminals is engaged in the elimination of friends of the Soviet Union."

Then on June 14, at 11:30 at night, the foreign minister of Lithuania, who had already been in Moscow for two weeks, was called to the office of Soviet Foreign Minister, Molotov to accept a list of Soviet demands.

Lithuania was informed that the Soviet Union wanted the immediate arrest and trial

of the Internal Affairs Minister and the chief of police of Lithuania; that a new government be immediately formed to truly carry out the spirit of the friendship and cooperation accords signed previously; that the frontiers be immediately opened for free transit of Red Army troops that would be based in the important areas of the country; and that the response to these demands should be transmitted to the Soviet government by 10:00AM on June 14 – in just 10 hours!

Analogous ultimatums were transmitted next day to Latvia and Estonia who had not even been accused of kidnapping and torture of Soviet soldiers.

(These soldiers were never mentioned again. I can't help but wonder whether, 68 years later, the Russian peacekeepers who were supposedly assassinated by "Georgian criminal provocateurs" and were the alleged cause of Russian reaction against the Georgian "war criminals" will ever have their names and the circumstances of their demise revealed. Somehow, I don't think so.)



On June 16 and 17, 1940, the Red Army moved. There was no resistance. I was nine years old but I remember standing on the sidewalk of our main thoroughfare – the "Liberty Avenue", soon to be renamed "Stalin Avenue" – watching the horse drawn artillery, carts and trucks move. I was disappointed; the small, skinny horses were not at all like the heroic stallions that demolished the enemies of communism in the movies. In

fact, the Red Army soldiers were not all that heroic either – they seemed to be undernourished, short, sloppy, not at all like cinematic Red Army warriors.

A few weeks later we were told that the Lithuanian people – as well as the Latvians and Estonians – had appealed to comrade Stalin to be admitted as full fledged members to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Shortly after that, we were told that our pleas were heard and just like that, we were Soviet citizens. Our president fled to the U.S. to live to a ripe old age, the U.S. and Britain never did recognize the annexation – they maintained Baltic embassies in Washington and London. Nothing was done that meant anything.

And *what* could be done? In June 1940, France, Holland and Belgium had surrendered to Germany. America was neutral and Germany and the Soviets were friends and allies in full support of each other's policies. There probably were quite a few in the countries that were not yet affected who sincerely believed that war wasn't an answer that there was another way to oppose evil. They still exist – look at all the cars with the incredibly asinine bumper stickers, "War Isn't The Answer".

Sixty eight years ago the Baltic nations were enslaved by one tyrant. Czechoslovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia and many others were wiped off the map by another. The world allowed this to happen. It took much blood to show that they were wrong, that evil has to be fought. History – past and present – is proof that if we believe that war is not the answer, the bad guys will win. ★



ENOUGH ALREADY! By Victor Volsky

MR. VOLSKY IS A BRILLIANT WRITER, HISTORIAN, AND POLITICAL ANALYST AND COMMENTATOR WHO, AFTER IMMIGRATING FROM THE Soviet Union SEVERAL DECADES ago, worked for the Russian language section of Voice of America. He understands—and worries about—America more than most who were born here. His views are shared by most of us who have lived elsewhere under oppressive regimes; we are puzzled and angered by American naïveté, its rejection of the existence of evil and the need to fight it, and the predilection for self-loathing that will lead to self-destruction.

I am mad as hell and can't take it anymore. The venerable quote from the movie "Network" aptly describes my feelings. I have just about had it with the conservative punditry and their plaintive wailings about the unfairness of the self-proclaimed "mainstream media" (I think the designation "Big Media" would be more appropriate as applied to the information service of the leftist elites, which is anything but mainstream). "Where is the outrage?"... "Why does the mainstream media concentrate exclusively on the failings of the right, real or perceived, while completely ignoring the failings of the left?"... "Why does the mainstream media worship at the temple of Barack Obama while brutally savaging Sarah Palin?"... pitifully lament conservatives.

Will they ever learn? What makes them think that the Big Media would or, for that matter, should behave otherwise? Would any of the conservative journalists perplexed by the "unfair" attitude of the Big Media wax indignant about the German Propaganda Ministry of the 1930's spreading outrageous lies about the opponents of the Nazi regime and extolling the virtues of their beloved Fuehrer. Of course, not. They know that Dr. Goebbels' outfit was part and parcel of Hitler's government and its mission consisted in meeting the propaganda needs of the regime. Naturally, it couldn't behave in any other way; that's what it did.

Why then are they so dumbfounded by the position of the U.S. Big Media? Don't they realize that it is every bit as partisan as the Nazi Propaganda Ministry was in its heyday? Dr. Johnson described the second marriage as the triumph of hope over experience. So too conservatives, in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, desperately cling to a belief that deep in the bosom of the Big Media there lives an honest broker yearning to break free, and if it hasn't happened so far, the conservatives have no one else to blame but themselves because they have failed to convince the media to repent.

Hope springs eternal in the conservative breast that we are on the verge of an imminent breakthrough: just one more fact laid out, just one more liberal smear blown out of the water – and the scales will fall off the liberal journalists' eyes, they will see the light and embark upon the path of righteousness and objectivity. This hope is as baseless as it is stupid - akin to blowing one's lunch money on lottery tickets in the fervent

belief that this time, finally, one will hit the jackpot.

One might argue that such misplaced faith in the Big Media's good intentions is innocuous and makes no real difference in the larger scheme of things. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Wishful thinking and willful blindness disarm, disorient and debilitate the fighter who needs to marshal all his resources for the coming battle. If he is to climb into the ring in peak form, clear-eyed appraisal of the strengths and weaknesses of the opponent is paramount. Instead, he lulls himself to sleep with false hope.

Rather than mobilizing for the task in hand, he wastes precious time and energy on mealy-mouthed attempts to open the enemy's eyes to the sinfulness of his ways. So long as the conservatives accept the rules of engagement dictated by the opposition, they will have to fight with one hand tied behind their back. They have to realize one simple truth: the Big Media is not the enemy's ally who can be won over; it is the enemy itself. The U.S. Big Media is every bit the propaganda arm of the Democratic Party's left wing as Dr. Goebbels' organization was the propaganda arm of the Nazi regime.

Attempts to shame the Big Media into objectivity will go nowhere, it will not be moved by gentle rebukes and reminders of the precepts supposedly taught at journalism schools. The Big Media's vitriolic campaign to vilify and destroy Sarah Palin, unprecedented in its sheer viciousness, is not primarily driven by the elite's perception of her as an alien life form (although there is that, too), but by the plain fact that she endangers the prospects of their idol, Obama, and hence has to be eliminated by any means necessary. It's that simple. But until the conservatives realize what's going on and resolve to fight the enemy every step of the way, they have no hope of effectively countering its stratagems.

Incidentally, it is only conservatives who insist on treating their opponents fairly: "our liberal friends", "our friends on the left." They never forget to carefully spread the blame on both sides of the political divide, trying mightily to be objective and avoid accusations of bias. (The few exceptions, such as the redoubtable Ann Coulter, only sharpen the distinction). Other than the unctuous Lanny Davis, I have never heard any liberal return the favor. Instead, they miss no opportunity to castigate, sometime quite

boorishly, their conservative or Republican opposite numbers. A minor, but telling detail.

Pessimists would say that the fight is hopeless anyway. I don't buy it. There is every reason to believe that once the conservatives start pushing back, they can count on at least some measure of success. Remember the budget battles of the mid-nineties? The Big Media was driving Congressional Republicans to distraction by gleefully depicting a planned reduction in the rate of increase of entitlement spending from nine percent to seven as a "cut in benefits." Finally, Speaker Newt Gingrich decided that it was time to fight back. He declared that any journalist engaging in this distortion would have his or her access to the Republican lawmakers totally cut off. It worked like a charm; the media, unaccustomed to resistance, caved immediately and dropped the insidious lie like a hot potato.

I am particularly incensed by the latest example of the limp-wristed attitude of conservatives who are only too willing to accept the rules of the game imposed on them by the enemy: the ready acceptance by some conservative pundits of the newly coined term of opprobrium, "swiftboating", meaning an outright smear without any basis in fact. Don't they remember its provenance? After all, it's of very recent vintage, going back merely four years.

Let's recall: In 2004, over 250 Vietnam veterans of the Swiftboat Division, including nearly the entire chain of command, attacked Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry as unfit for the highest office in the land, offering overwhelming evidence that his "heroic" military biography was actually a tissue of lies and exaggerations. Some media outlets and Kerry sycophants desperately tried to refute the accusations but failed miserably - not least because the most damning piece of anti-Kerry material was a video recording of the Democratic candidate's testimony before the Senate where he solemnly recited a propaganda tract that sounded as if it had been cobbled together in the ideological department of the North Vietnamese Communist Party. How can you refute documentary evidence?

Taken aback, the big guns of the liberal press kept silent for a few weeks. Then the Big Bertha, The New York Times, sallied forth with a tentative formula: "the largely discredited Swiftboaters' accusations". Some time later, the qualifying "largely" was **(SEE "ENOUGH ALREADY" page 4)**

MEMO FROM LONDON: "DEAR PRUDENCE"

By Sarah Lyall, New York Times, 10/21/ 08

Can we learn something from the Brits? Can recession bring a return to traditional values? Should we have a cuppa, a crum-pet and a share of the Queen? Does cricket trump baseball? Does Britannia rule the waves? What say ye all? Hmmm?

LONDON — The expensive stores along Bond Street and Sloane Street have fallen eerily quiet, as have the cheaper ones scattered all over town. Britons are coming down from their huge spending spree, and alarm about the future is coursing through the nation like an electric current, as it is everywhere.

But there is a parallel thought in the air: perhaps the downturn, however painful, will lead to a return to the values of the past. Perhaps the last 15 years or so will be considered a sort of madness, an anomaly, a strange dream. In a country whose modern identity was forged in part by postwar principles like thrift, prudence and living within your means, perhaps people will lower their widely inflated expectations and go back to making do.

"I think there is a mood of austerity," Vince Cable, the treasury spokesman for the Liberal Democrat Party, said in a recent speech. "A reaction against greed, excess, waste, tax cheating and selfish, self-indulgent behavior."

Already, people are losing their jobs and houses, consumers are staying home and businesses are failing across Britain; the downturn, which is being called a recession here, is likely to be very bad. But what is striking about the past era is that much of the incredible boom in consumer spending was stimulated by people who, even in good times, could not afford the things they were buying.

Buoyed by easy credit and inflated property prices, the British public spent itself into debt, a total of \$2.49 trillion of it. The average British household now owes \$102,000, including mortgages. One-third of consumer debt in all of Europe is held by people in Britain, said Chris Tapp, director of Credit Action, which counsels people about how to handle debt.

Audrey Hurren, 65, a retired secretary who was waiting for the subway in central London the other day, said that it had all been too much.

"I think it wouldn't do any harm at all for some of the younger generation to be less greedy," she said. "It's not a very nice thing to

say, but maybe they could behave a little more sensibly."

Mrs. Hurren was raised just after World War II believing that if you couldn't afford it, you didn't buy it. By contrast, she said, her granddaughters have more than she ever dreamed of, and are still dissatisfied. "They don't appreciate anything," she said. "It's easy come, easy go. They get a mobile phone; if they don't like it, they throw it away and get a new one."

In an interview, Mr. Tapp said people in their 30s and younger, too young to have experienced the last recession, in the early 1990s, had grown up in a world "where credit has always been cheap and easy and available." For them, there is no precedent for frugality. The austerity of the late 1940s and early 1950s, and the privations of the 1970s — when electricity was briefly rationed and the country put on a three-day work week to save fuel — are stories to read about in books.

"The idea of saving up for what you buy, that's what you did when there weren't any credit cards," Mr. Tapp said.

In the boom years, the so-called soft sections of London newspapers grew fat on articles about ever more expensive goods and services geared toward the conspicuously consuming masses. But suddenly, even the papers are talking as if they have woken up with a jolt after a long drug-and-sugar binge.

"I am happy to observe that the decades of vulgar excess are finally over," the columnist India Knight wrote in *The Times* of London. "There is a strong collective sense of us all coming back down to earth. It's like a huge national reality check and, unwelcome as it may be, there is a possibility that it will result in us straightening out our priorities."

The *Times* recently featured an article about how to make old clothes fashionable by, for instance, cutting the sleeves off coats (and wearing the coats over long-sleeved sweaters). Another article, in *The Sunday Times*, offered tips on "Fifty Ways to be a Recessionista." A working mother told *The Sunday Telegraph*, "I feel slightly sick at our decadence."

The author David Kynaston, whose book "Austerity Britain: 1945- 1951" discusses the difficulties of the post-World War II period, said that until the mid-1980s — the Thatcher

era — Britain was "careful, cautious, understated, naturally socially conservative." But, he added in an interview: "In the 1980s, there was essentially a psychic shift in how to use money. What went out the window was the old Puritan self-consciousness, even a sense of guilt, about money."



After the recession in the early 1990s, everything changed even faster. Spending was glorified; so was borrowing. Banks began offering mortgages with no down payments. People got used to more expensive things.

Organic food was presented as a necessity for good health; supermarkets emphasized "luxury" ranges of foods. Britons abandoned traditional seashore vacations and began flying to the Continent, ate at trendy new restaurants, went crazy with new gadgets. In a recent book, the psychiatrist Oliver James complained that the country was suffering from "affluenza."

All of that feels expendable now, said Allison Burton, a 31-year-old hairdresser. She mentioned a friend whose husband had just lost his job. "She wrote down what their outgoings were, and managed to save herself a grand a month," Ms. Burton said, by doing things like switching to a less expensive cable-channel package.

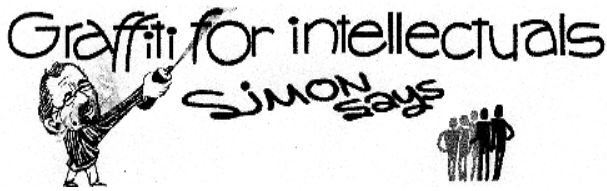
Stores are now marketing themselves on the basis of value rather than quality or exclusivity. Supermarkets have unveiled new no-frills foods and pledged to match their rivals' low prices. Up-market Tesco has refashioned itself as "Britain's biggest dis-counter."



Lindie Parry, a 25-year-old transportation project manager walking down Victoria Street with her husband, James Bain, 40, said she had begun shopping at less expensive supermarkets. Mr. Bain said that people were remembering that they could often get free coffee at work (not as good as *Starbucks*, but coffee nonetheless), and that bringing lunch from home was cheaper than buying it in a shop.

"It was great while it lasted," Ms. Parry said of the boom time, "but nothing lasts forever." £





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HOW TAXES WORK By Anonymous

This has been CIRCULATING FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS AND I THOUGHT THAT IT WOULD BE APPROPRIATE TO RE-PRINT IT. IT DOESN'T MATTER IF YOU HAVE SEEN IT BEFORE—THIS IS A GOOD TIME TO REFRESH YOUR MEMORY ABOUT IT AND LOOK AGAIN AT THIS VERY SIMPLE WAY TO UNDERSTAND TAX LAWS. I WAS UNABLE TO FIND WHO WROTE IT TO BEGIN WITH—APPARENTLY IT HAS BEEN ATTRIBUTED TO A NUMBER OF DIFFERENT PEOPLE AND ALL OF THEM DENY THAT THEY HAD DONE SO. IT DOESN'T MATTER. IT IS AN EXCELLENT LESSON. READ ON – IT WILL MAKE YOU THINK!

Suppose that every day 10 men go to a restaurant for dinner. The bill for all ten comes to \$100. If they paid their bill the way we pay our taxes, the first four men would pay nothing; the fifth would pay \$1; the sixth would pay \$3; the seventh \$7; the eighth \$12; the ninth \$18. The tenth man (the richest) would pay \$59.

The 10 men ate dinner in the restaurant every day and seemed quite happy with the arrangement until the owner threw them a curve. "Since you are all such good customers," he said, "I'm going to reduce the cost of your daily meal by \$20. Now dinner for the 10 only costs \$80." The group still wanted to pay their bill the way we pay our taxes. So, the first four are unaffected. They still eat for free. But what about the other six – the paying customers? How could they divvy up the \$20 windfall so that everyone would get his "fair share" The

6 men realized that \$20 divided by 6 is \$3.33, but if they subtracted that from everybody's share, then the fifth man and the sixth man would end up being paid to eat their meal. So the restaurant owner suggested that it would be fair to reduce each man's bill by roughly the same percentage, being sure to give each a break, and he proceeded to work out the amounts each should pay. And so now the fifth man paid nothing, the sixth pitched in \$2, the seventh paid \$5, the eighth paid \$9, the ninth paid \$12, leaving the tenth man with a bill of \$52 instead of \$59.



Outside the restaurant, the men began to compare their savings. "I only got a dollar out of the \$20," complained the sixth man, pointing to the tenth, "and he got \$7!" "Yeah, that's

right," exclaimed the fifth man. "I only saved a dollar, too. It's unfair that he got seven times more than me!"

"That's true," shouted the seventh man. "Why should he get \$7 back when I got only \$2? The wealthy get all the breaks!" "Wait a minute," yelled the first four men in unison. "We didn't get anything at all. The system exploits the poor."

The nine men surrounded the tenth man and beat him up. The next night he didn't show up for dinner, so the nine sat down and ate without him. But when it came time to pay the bill, they discovered something important. They were \$52 short! And that, boys, girls and college instructors, is how America's tax system works. The people who pay the highest taxes should get the most benefit from a tax reduction. Tax them too much, attack them for being wealthy, and they just may not show up at the table any more.

Where would that leave the rest? Unfortunately, most politicians – especially those running for office – cannot grasp this straightforward logic! \$

ENOUGH ALREADY—From page 2

quietly dropped, and the final talking point emerged to be picked up by the rest of the Big Media: the Swiftboaters's accusations are outright lies. From there it was only a short step to developing a new pejorative: "swiftboating". That the left appropriated the opposition's term and adapted it to its needs is hardly surprising. But for conservatives to meekly acquiesce in the opposition's blatant propaganda ploy by bleating about "attempts to swiftboat Sarah Palin" is nothing short of

shameful

It is a truism that to fight on a battlefield not of your choosing is to concede an enormous advantage to the opposition. The sooner the conservatives abandon their delusional belief in the innate goodness of the liberal heart and realize that the Big Media is their bitter enemy that has to be fought tooth and nail, the better their chances will be. Enough is enough. It's time for the conservatives to wake up and smell the coffee. Ω