

Graffiti for intellectuals



SIMON SAYS



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Si Frumkin

WILL THE QUEEN WEAR A VEIL AND A HIJAB?

When the Olympic Games open in London in 2012, 80,000 spectators will crowd in the new Olympic stadium. Few of them will know - or care - that the land on which the stadium was constructed had to be cleared of existing structures or that one of them was the biggest evangelical church in Europe, Kingsway Evangelical Christian Centre, with 12,000 worshippers on Sundays.

It is somewhat ironic that on that day the swarms of helicopters will transmit a picture of another religious structure near the stadium. It hasn't been built yet, but it will be completed in time for the Olympics and will probably become a London landmark that will be recognized worldwide – much larger than the House of Parliament, Buckingham Pal-



London Markaz project as planned

ace, St. Paul's Cathedral and the Westminster Abbey put together.

It is the Markaz – a gigantic 10-acre, three-story Islamic center with a mega-mosque that could accommodate as many as 70,000 visitors with schools, libraries, and living quarters. The mosque will have a capacity that is only 10,000 less than the Olympic stadium; it will have futuristic wind turbine minarets instead of the traditional domes, an enormous latticed translucent roof and will have the capability to be extended, through inflatable structures, to provide additional space.

The London Times reports that the project's cost will be around \$100 million but British Muslim sources estimate it to be in excess of \$500 million. What everyone seems to agree on, however, is that most of the money will come from Saudi Arabia.

By comparison, America's largest mega-church, the Lakewood Church in Houston, seats only 25,000. Britain's largest cathedral, in Liverpool, can accommodate only 3000. When completed, the 16-acre Merkaz complex will become the largest place of worship in Europe.

The first mosque in Britain was opened over 80 years ago. There are more than 1000 mosques in London now, more than in any European city and many converted from Anglican churches. The largest one can hold 5000 worshippers, more than any other in Western Europe. It was erected by the Ahmadi Muslims who also constructed the first London mosque in 1924. The Ahmadi mosques were funded entirely by donations from their congregations who lived harmoniously in Britain for many decades and who abhor extremism. Significantly, the Ahmadis are considered to be heretics by the rest of the Islamic world.

The new mega-mosque will be built by the *Tablighi Jamaat* – (Proselytizing Group) - movement that describes itself as a peaceful, non-political missionary movement dedicated to spreading Islam. There are indications, however, that this movement is not quite as peaceful as it would like to appear – two of the 7/7 London



Family photo in London

bombers were regular visitors at the group's headquarters in Yorkshire and U.S. anti-terror officials have been quoted as saying that the group had been infiltrated by extremists, including the "American Taliban" John Walker Lindh.

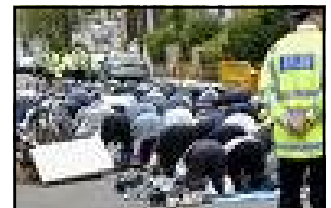
Steve Denny, a former FBI agent who followed al-Qaida's activities told NBC that, "If al-Qaida needed a fresh set of bodies in order to pull an operation, one of the places they would go would be *Tablighi Jamaat*". According to the French *Le Monde* newspaper, French intelligence officers have described it as "antechamber – entrance – to fundamentalism".

The size and location of the mega-mosque complex are a cause of concern to many Britons, especially since permission to

build the facility will not be granted by the elected local Newham city council but rather by an appointed committee of the London Thames Gateway Development Corporation whose decisions cannot be appealed or challenged. London's controversial leftist mayor, "Red" Ken Livingstone, who has been outspokenly anti-Israel, anti-US and anti-Jewish, has recently signaled through his London Development Commission that it would be a good thing for London to have a major Moslem landmark.

Newham councilor Alan Craig does not object to mosques or any other places of worship, but has serious concerns: "I am worried about community and security impact of the mosque. Permission has not yet been given but Muslims are moving into this area in preparation. The area where the *Tablighi Jamaat* is now based has a more than 90% Muslim population. This part of London was always very diverse and this is the way it should be kept. We can't have one group taking over."

Muslims are the largest minority faith community in Britain – about 2 million or 3%. In London the Muslims reach 9% - about 700,000. The latest polls indicate that 40-60% of British Muslims believe that strict fundamental Islamic Sharia laws should govern Britain. British intelligence has stated that about 1600 suicide bombers are primed and ready to go.



London street scene

So, it is likely that in 2012 London Olympics, the world's sports fans will be sitting in front of their TVs and wondering where the heck London went. By then, however, a mega-mosque may more accurately represent what the city of Big Ben and Tower of London had become. ●

Yes, it's true, a picture is worth a thousand words — but some are worth a whole dictionary. I came across one the other day on BBC.com. The story was headlined "Israeli Minister in Vision Gaffe."

Next to it is a picture showing Israel's defense minister, Amir Peretz, inspecting troops on the Golan Heights alongside Israel's military chief of staff, Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi. Both men are peering into the distance through binoculars, but with one big difference: Mr. Peretz was watching the maneuvers through binoculars with the lens caps still on.

"According to the photographer," the BBC reported, "Mr. Peretz looked through the capped binoculars three times, nodding as Gen. Ashkenazi explained what was in view."

Oh my, I'd rather misspell "potato" on national TV than be remembered for that.

That picture is so evocative not only because Mr. Peretz — a former labor organizer — has already been savagely criticized for being out of his depth as defense minister. It's also because much of Israel's leadership seems to have blinded itself lately with all sorts of bizarre and criminal behavior.

Where do I start? Israel's police commissioner just resigned after an investigative committee criticized his actions in a 1999 case involving an Israeli crime family. His resignation came in the wake of a rape allegation against Israel's president, Moshe Katsav, as well accusations of corruption against Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and the suspension of his office director, whose house arrest is part of a widening investigation into the Tax Authority — whose chief also just resigned under a cloud. The finance minister is being questioned about embezzlement at a non-profit, and the former justice minister has been convicted of indecent behavior for kissing a female soldier against her will. There's more, but I don't have space.



Israel's President in sex scandal

Here is the really bizarre thing: Israel's economy — particularly its high-tech sector — has never been better.

"The economy is blooming, growing in the last quarter of 2006 by almost 8%," said

Sever Plocker of the Yedioth Ahronoth newspaper, who is one of Israel's top economics writers. "Foreign direct investment is flowing in at unprecedented rate — \$13.4 billion in 2006. The high-tech sector exports are approaching \$18 billion, and the stock exchange is at an all-time high. The shekel is stronger



Israeli Defense Minister in Visual Gaffe

than ever, the inflation nonexistent. Interest rates are lower than in U.S. or Britain, the budget deficit less than 1% of G.D.P., and the balance of payments is positive, which means Israel achieved its economic independence and is actually a net creditor to the rest of the world.

"In short, we never had it so good in the economy."

Yossi Vardi, one of the founding fathers of Israel's high-tech industry, told me that in the last month alone, four start-ups that he was an investor in were sold: one to Cisco, one Microsoft, and two to Israeli companies. "In the last nine months I've probably invested in at least nine new companies," added Mr. Vardi, all started by "kids 25 to 35 years old."

So maybe Israel doesn't need any cabinet

ministers? It's not so simple. When the cabinet is so weak, no peace deal is likely with the Palestinians because no leader has the strength to push it through — and that is a ticking time bomb. Moreover, high-tech doesn't employ a lot of people, and if the cabinet that should be looking out for the rest of Israel is hobbled — another bomb is ticking.

"Almost half of the population does not enjoy the boom," Mr. Plocker said, noting these statistics: The unemployment rate is 8.3 percent. Israel's poverty rate is still the highest in the West, by far: 24.4 percent of the entire population and 35.2 percent of all children are described as poor, living under the official "poverty line." In the Arab and the ultra-Orthodox Jewish sectors, child poverty is especially high: more than 50 percent. The real income of the poorest quarter of Israelis is lower than six years ago.

"There is a growing feeling that something is deeply rotten in the Israeli political system," Mr. Plocker e-mailed, "as it can't deliver a decent social policy — reducing pov-



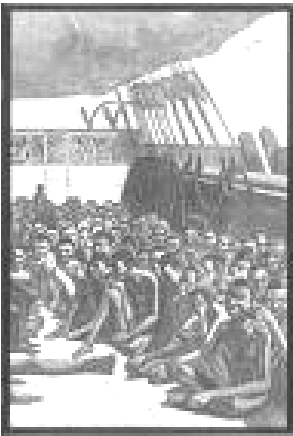
Israel's police chief resigns in scandal

erty, inequality and unemployment — even during the good times. "Tom, I never saw in the streets of Israel such a total contempt for the government by almost everybody — the poor and the rich, the Jews and the Arabs, the left, the right and the collapsing center. This is the essence of our situation — a contrast between the 'you never had it so good' economy and the 'you never had it so bad' government. This is the spring of our discontent. Excuse me for being rather lengthy, but it hurts."

MYTHS, LEGENDS AND REALITY by Si Frumkin

We like to assume that history is based on facts but we are wrong. Most history, ancient as well as relatively recent, is based on myths and legends. Some myths are based on facts that, with time, were embellished. Others are intentional falsifications or unsubstantiated tales passed on for generations by poets, dreamers and demagogues. What most myths have in common is that most of them are never questioned or investigated – they become unchallenged history.

Migration – the movement of masses of people from one place to another - is a fertile source of myths. One of the better known is the saga of Mayflower pilgrims landing at Plymouth Rock, making friends and sharing a turkey with the natives at the first Thanksgiving ceremony and founding the American nation. Just about everything about this story



is inaccurate and has been exposed by historical research, but it is believed by the overwhelming majority of Americans.

Another myth that is accepted without questioning it is the belief most black Africans were transported into slavery in the United States.

The fact is that of the ten million Africans who were kidnapped and sold by other black Africans to overwhelmingly Arab slave traders, less than 5 out of every hundred were taken to the U.S. – 96% were sold in Brazil and the Caribbean islands.

A more recent migration was that of about 4 million Jews from Czarist Russia between 1880 and 1917. Their descendants in the U.S. and South Africa firmly believe that their ancestors left because of pogroms and anti-Semitism, that Jews were murdered by the Cossacks daily and that they had to leave or perish.

The facts are different. Yes, there was anti-Semitism and there were pogroms but when compared to the bloody 20th century they were relatively insignificant – the infamous Kishinev pogrom of 1903 that outraged the world and gave the English language the word “pogrom”, lasted three days and was responsible for 47 Jews murdered and 92 severely injured, hardly a number to cause a flight of millions. At present, there is very little concern with much larger numbers that are murdered daily around the world.

Furthermore, most of the Jewish immigrants came from the Czarist Empire – not Russia itself where only very few Jews were

allowed to reside. Most Jews came from the Settlement, a giant ghetto that covered parts of Ukraine, Belarus, Poland and the Baltic areas where many towns and cities had Jewish majorities.

The reasons for the Jewish flight were primarily economic – as they were for the Irish and Italian emigrations – disruption by industrialization and development of urban economies. Jews were not allowed to be farmers; they were pauperized and had to eke out a living as artisans and laborers. There was no supporting community help and, in order to survive, some had to take a chance on leaving for an unknown country far away. The men came first and later, if it was possible, brought their families as well.

And here are five contemporary myths about a contemporary immigration: the influx of Mexicans and others like them across our porous borders. So, here for your consideration, are the largely ignored facts about it:

Myth #1. Migration is caused by lack of economic development.

International migrations do not originate in really poor countries, but in those that are developing and growing dynamically. (See, *immigration from Czarist Empire, above*) Mexico is not a poor country. It has a trillion dollar economy, a per capita income of \$9,000, (Russia has \$9,700), a fully industrialized economy, high urbanization and high life expectancy.

Myth #2: Rapid population growth causes migration.

The fertility rate in Mexico is 2.3 per woman, slightly above “replacement” level. Arab and sub-Saharan countries have the highest birth rates and minimal migration.

Myth #3: Migrants move because the wages are higher in target countries.

Research has shown that international migration is a tool to overcome the lack of credit opportunities. Mexico has virtually no mortgage banking and a large share of money earned by Mexican workers in the U.S. is used to build or buy homes in Mexico. Six out of every hundred of Mexican immigrants buy a house in Mexico after just 1 year in the U.S.; after 5-9 years – 41% will do so, and 64% after staying more than 10 years.

Myth #4: Mexican migrants are attracted



by generous public benefits.

Illegal immigrants are not likely to use public services. Only 10% have sent a child to a U.S. public school, 7% have received SSI and less than 5% have used food stamps, welfare or unemployment compensation. However, 60% had Social Security and income taxes withheld. Immigrants from Russia, Cuba, Vietnam, Thailand or Cambodia are more likely to use government benefits.

Myth #5: Most Mexican immigrants want to settle permanently in the U.S.

Mexican immigrants come and go. 80% say that they had made no more than three trips to the U.S. and 75% stayed less than two years. Most Mexican immigrants do not intend to permanently settle north of the border.

Recent research shows that about 17% of all able-bodied Mexicans between 17 and 35 are working in the U.S. This enables Mexico to maintain a viable economy and a sustainable rate of unemployment while providing a willing, cheap and, most importantly, **peaceful** working force for the U.S.

Can you imagine what the situation would be if Mexico were a Moslem country with a population eager to reoccupy Arizona, California, New Mexico and Nevada from the Gringos? The attacks of suicide bombers, riots, car burnings, bombs in supermarkets, sports stadiums and on freeways?



I think the myths are just that – myths. Let us stick to reality and be grateful for it. ¥



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GALL OF THE HASHEMITES New York Sun editorial, 3/8/07

If one were to distill 110% wrongheadedness and then distill it again a second, third, and fourth time, one couldn't come up with a speech as purely wrongheaded as the one that the Hashemite king, Abdullah II, delivered yesterday to a joint meeting of Congress. The king's aim amounted to blaming Israel for all the world's problems. "The wellspring of regional division, the source of resentment and frustration far beyond, is the denial of justice and peace in Palestine," the king said. "This is the core issue. And this core issue is not only producing severe consequences for our region, it is producing severe consequences for our world."

Balderdash is the kindest way to describe it. It doesn't track with the actions of the violent terrorists, and it doesn't track with their statements. If the terrorists are upset about Israel's treatment of the Palestinians, why are they setting off bombs in Indonesia and Spain and Saudi Arabia and Iraq, which are hardly in the vanguard of support for Israel? Given that the terrorists state publicly that their end goal is to make all of Europe and America subject to Islamic law, why should we believe that in fact they have the far more modest goal of merely seizing land belonging to the Jewish state?

In a speech on American soil, Abdullah incredibly snubbed his own country and his own family when he referred to "Sixty years of Palestinian dispossession." Why, his family knows all about Palestinian Arab dispossession. The gall of the son of King Hussein, who perpetrated what the Arabs call Black September, fetching up in the Congress to lecture the Americans on Palestinian Arab dispossession is astounding. Abdullah well knows that Jordan controlled

the West Bank and eastern Jerusalem between 1948 and 1967. If the Palestinian Arabs were dispossessed during that period it was no one's fault but the Hashemites', who didn't exactly use those decades, or the years after, to race to establish a Palestinian Arab state.



With Syrian Dictator Assad

Abdullah made reference to a Saudi proposal from 2002 that he described as the "Arab Peace Initiative." That plan would be more accurately described as the Arab Destruction of Israel Initiative. Its aim was to seek to reward the second so-called intifada, which followed the collapse of President Clinton's Camp David II, by giving the Palestinian Arabs half of the Israeli capital of Jerusalem. The Saudis not only sought to divide Israel's capital in Jerusalem but also to force Israel to abandon Jerusalem's Old City, retreat to militarily indefensible borders, and absorb within those borders enough Arab "refugees" so that its character as a Jewish state would be eradicated. No one fell for it save for Thomas Friedman of the New York Times.

Abdullah's speech yesterday won nega-

tive reviews from many of the Democratic lawmakers who now control Congress. The New York Times' Paris edition quoted Rep. Steve Israel of Long Island as saying, "I was troubled to hear the suggestion that the fact that Sunni and Shia are murdering each other is somehow the fault of the Israelis. This implication is a dangerous one and completely unacceptable." The chairman of the House Foreign Relations Committee, Rep. Thomas Lantos, was quoted by Fox News as saying the speech was "Profoundly disappointing ... a missed opportunity." One of the effects of the Islamist



Welcoming a grinning murderer

terrorist onslaught of recent years is that more Americans have thought more deeply about these matters. They will not be gulled by a foreign potentate offering up Israel as a scapegoat for troubles that originate with the failings of the Arab and Islamic world and their non-democratic lead-

ers, Abdullah among them. Ω