

Graffiti for intellectuals



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Si Frumkin

WHEN THE RED STAR AND THE SWASTIKA FLEW IN MOSCOW

In one

of my recent Russian language articles I mentioned that in 1939 Hitler and Stalin attacked and divided Poland between them. A week or so later I received a letter from a puzzled reader.

"Hitler attacked and occupied Poland. Stalin had nothing to do with it until 1944 when the Soviet army liberated

It was only when I did some research among my immigrant friends – some of them well-educated and well-informed – that I realized that quite a bit of recent history was simply not known to many of them as Soviet textbooks, encyclopedias and media ignored inconvenient facts.



Joint victory parade in Brest-Litovsk, 1939

The period of Soviet-Nazi friendship that followed the signing of the Non-Aggression Pact on August 23, 1939 and the Friendship and Borders Pact of September 28,

1939 is one of the blacked-out areas.

Here is an excerpt from a "Pravda" editorial on the day after the first pact was signed:

"...Differences in ideologies and political systems must not and cannot serve as obstacles to the establishment of good neighborly policies between the two nations. Friendship of the Soviet and German people that had been forced into a dead end by the efforts of the enemies of Germany and the Soviet Union will now create the necessary conditions for its development and growth."

The second pact was followed by a joint Soviet-German declaration which stressed that if their efforts to achieve peace on the question of a "final rectification of Polish borders" were unsuccessful, then this failure would be the ultimate proof that France and England bear the responsibility for the continuation of the war and that the governments of Germany and the USSR would consult with one another on measures that needed to be taken. This was followed up by numerous editorials placing the blame for the war directly and exclusively on Britain and France and their ruling classes.

This was followed by a declaration of Ko-

mintern's support of Hitler, as well as declarations of opposition to the "imperialist" war by French, British and other communist parties. On October 31, 1939 Molotov declared that England and France were "aggressors":

"During the last several months the words "aggression" and "aggressor" have acquired a new meaning... Germany is now a nation that is striving for a speedy end of the war and the coming of peace while England and France who only yesterday condemned aggression now stand for the continuation of war and against peace. The roles, as you can see, have changed."

The changes in Soviet policy were immediate. The Mosfilm studios provided Nazi banners to fly in the Moscow streets for German negotiators on their way to the Kremlin; the flags were meant for a production of an anti-fascist film that was speedily abandoned. The radio played the International and the Horst Wessel song – the anthem of the Nazi party. Movies and exhibits extolled the achievements of friendly Germany. The use of the word "fascist" on the radio and the print media was forbidden. Anti-German propaganda was criminalized to the point of



Soviet and Nazi comrades in arms

absurdity: a Pole was imprisoned for "anti-German activities" five weeks after Germany invaded the Soviet Union, as was a former Soviet Counselor at the Paris embassy a month later!

Soviet help to Germany was massive: 500,000 tons of phosphates, 900,000 tons of petroleum products, 1,500,000 tons of grain and even enormous quantities of rubber and zinc – purchased from Germany's enemies, Britain and Holland, – were shipped. The German navy established repair facilities at Murmansk and a joint naval base at Zapadnaya Litza Bay, near Murmansk. The Soviet navy helped German cruisers to navigate the ice around Siberia to the Pacific to attack and sink British ships. A

number of German ships engaged in breaking the British blockade of Germany found refuge in Murmansk and the Germans were allowed to take to Germany the City of Flint, a captured American vessel. German sailors who returned from Murmansk to Germany were greeted at railroad stations by cheering children bearing flowers.



Signing the friendship pact

Throughout, the Jews of the Soviet Union remained unaware of the situation of Jews in areas Germany occupied. In July 1941, a report submitted by the administration of occupied Belorussia expresses astonishment at the ignorance of local Jews of the fate of Jews in Poland and in Germany.

Hitler invaded Poland on September 1, 1939. After cautiously waiting for a possibly dangerous reaction from Britain, Stalin invaded on September 17. There was little resistance – most Polish forces were engaging the Germans. The fortress of Brest-Litovsk fell on September 19 after a joint bombardment by the Nazis and Soviets with both forces holding a joint victory parade.

On September 27, Ribbentrop again flew to Moscow and the second treaty was signed. It provided for a partition of Poland, the addition of Lithuania to the Baltic territories assigned to Soviets and a grim warning that "both parties will not tolerate in their territories Polish agitation which affects the territory of the other party. They will suppress in their territories all beginnings of such agitation and inform each other concerning suitable measures for this purpose."

On June 16 Soviet troops poured into the Baltic countries. In mid-July elections were held in Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia. They were won by communists with 99% majorities and on August 5, 1940, the Supreme Soviet generously agreed to admit the three nations as constituent members of the USSR. ★

WESTERN FICTIONS, ARAB REALITIES

JONAH GOLDBERG, L.A. TIMES, 6/19/07

I HAVE been scouring EBay for the last couple of days, hoping to snag a one-of-a-kind item. But, alas, it hasn't turned up yet. I'm looking for the late Yasser Arafat's Nobel Peace Prize. It was looted from Arafat's Gaza compound by the victorious forces of Hamas, a jihadist group backed by Iran and Syria that has routed the once-mighty forces of Fatah from power in Gaza. According to the Jerusalem Post, a Fatah spokesman said: "They stole all the widow's clothes and shoes."

The widow in question would be Suha Arafat, Arafat's photo-op wife. Who can blame the looters for wanting to grab as much of her swag as possible? First of all,

mantra, a peaceful society should have sprouted like a stalk from Jack's magic beans. Instead, nearly 49% of the Palestinian people voted for a band of Islamic fanatics — even the European Union calls them terrorists, not that it matters much — dedicated to the destruction of Israel. But the diplomacy-uber-alles crowd has long been immune to contrary evidence. Remember when Arafat fanned the second intifada in spite of a generous peace offer from the

Hamas, the party promising the destruction of Israel, won the Palestinian elections in 2005? Meanwhile, the leaders of Fatah — the "moderates" — had not long ago set the standard for Israel-hated themselves.

The great irony is that Hamas now labels members of Fatah as Jewish "collaborators," a designation that apparently justifies even the execution of wounded Fatah prisoners in hospitals.

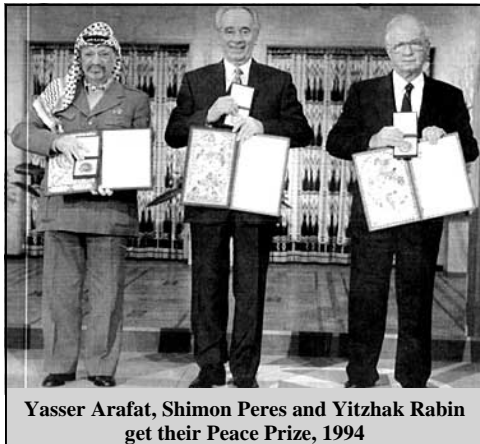
The German foreign ministry went so far as to suggest that the triumph of Hamas — and the hardships it will cause civilians — are clear grounds for increasing aid to Gaza. It seems that if you choose terrorism, either at the ballot box or in the streets, the Europeans, like the good hands at Allstate, will be there to pay for the mess.

But there's another, perhaps more important, lesson to be drawn from the Hamas ascendancy. The Bush administration pushed for democracy in the Palestinian territories, and it got what it wished for — in spades. The assumption behind the push for democracy in Gaza and in Iraq is that Arabs can be trusted to handle political freedom. The Democrats who demand an immediate pullout from Iraq also hope that with democracy, the Iraqis will be able to figure out their problems themselves via some euphemistic "political solution." That is unless the antiwar Democrats are really advocating turning all of Mesopotamia into one giant Gaza Strip, the far more likely result of U.S. withdrawal.

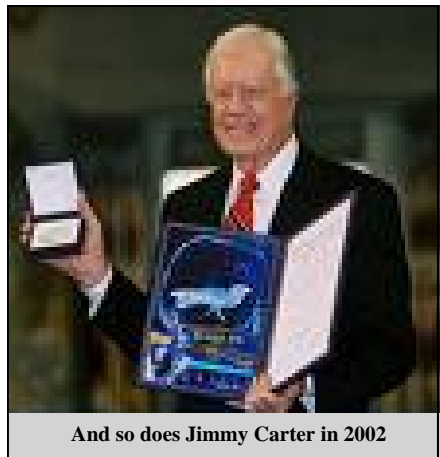
For many disciples of the "international peace process," it's a matter of faith that the Palestinians just have to want peace, because how else can you have a peace process?

For many supporters of the Bush Doctrine, Iraqis have to want democracy, because if they don't, what's the point of having a freedom agenda? But what if these are just beloved Western fictions? We see a well-lit path to the good life: democracy, tolerance, rule of law, markets. But what if the

Arab world just isn't interested in our path? As a believer in the freedom agenda, that's what scares me most. Ω



Yasser Arafat, Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin get their Peace Prize, 1994



And so does Jimmy Carter in 2002

raelis and brokered by President Clinton? Members of the Nobel committee openly talked of revoking the peace prize — from Peres.

And now, the editors of the New York Times, President Bush and the leaders of the EU all say that this is the moment for Israel to offer more concessions to Arafat's successor, Mahmoud Abbas. So much for the fresh-from-Iraq cliché that it's pointless to choose sides in a civil war.

Margaret Beckett, the British foreign secretary, lamented, "Once again, extremists carrying guns have prevented progress against the wishes of the majority who seek a peaceful two-state solution." But how do you square this with the fact that

she wasn't using it. Suha hasn't been to Gaza for years. And her favorite shoe designer is Christian Louboutin, whose wares can fetch about \$1,000 a pair, which is more than many Palestinians make in a year.

But it's that peace prize, won by Arafat and Shimon Peres for agreeing to the 1993 Oslo accords, that really captures the lunacy of it all. It's the perfect reminder for everyone, myself included, of the Arabs' refusal to yield to idealism, hope or good intentions — and the West's refusal to recognize reality.

"The genius of you Americans is that you never make clear-cut stupid moves, only complicated stupid moves which make us wonder at the possibility that there may be something to them which we are missing," former Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser once said. But from the U.S. point of view, the Palestinians never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity. Maybe they just don't want what we're selling?

For example, in 2005, Israel simply gave Gaza to the Palestinians. According to the "international community's" land-for-peace



The peace of death! Thank you, you geniuses of the Nobel Committee! Thanks for the slaughter, the rockets, the violence, thanks a lot!

WHAT IF ISRAELIS HAD ABDUCTED BBC MAN?

By Charles Moore, Daily Telegraph, London, 6/2/07,

Watching the horrible video of Alan Johnston of the BBC broadcasting Palestinian propaganda under orders from his kidnappers, I found myself asking what it would have been like had he been kidnapped by Israelis, and made to do the same thing the other way round.

The first point is that it would never happen. There are no Israeli organizations - governmental or freelance - that would contemplate such a thing. That fact is itself significant. But just suppose that some fanatical Jews had grabbed Mr Johnston and forced him to spout their message, abusing his own country as he did so. What would the world have said? There would have been none of the caution which has characterized the response of the BBC and of the Government since Mr. Johnston was abducted on March 12.

The Israeli government would immediately have been condemned for its readiness to harbor terrorists or its failure to track them down. Loud would have been the denunciations of the extremist doctrines of Zionism which had given rise to this vile act. The world isolation of Israel, if it failed to get Mr Johnston freed, would have been complete.

If Mr Johnston had been forced to broadcast saying, for example, that Israel was entitled to all the territories held since the Six-Day War, and calling on the release of all Israeli soldiers held by Arabs in return for his own release, his words would have been scorned. The cause of Israel in the world would have been irreparably damaged by thus torturing him on television. No one would have been shy of saying so.

But of course in real life it is Arabs holding Mr Johnston, and so everyone treads on tip-toe. Bridget Kendall of the BBC opined that Mr. Johnston had been "asked" to say what he said in his video. Asked! If it were merely an "ask", why did he not say no?

Throughout Mr. Johnston's captivity, the BBC has continually emphasized that he gave "a voice" to the Palestinian people, the implication being that he supported their cause, and should therefore be let out. One cannot imagine the equivalent being said if he had been held by Israelis.

Well, he is certainly giving a voice to the Palestinian people now. And the truth is that, although it is under horrible duress, what he says is not all that different from what the BBC says every day through the mouths of reporters who are not kidnapped and threatened, but are merely collecting their wages. The language is more lurid in the Johnston video, but the narrative is essentially the same as we have heard over the years from Orla Guerin and Jeremy Bowen and virtually the whole pack of them.

It is that everything that is wrong in the Middle East and the wider Muslim world is the result of aggression or "heavy-handedness" (have you noticed how all actions by American or Israeli troops are "heavy-handed", just as surely as all racism is "unacceptable" by America or Israel or Britain?)

Alan Johnston, under terrorist orders, spoke of the "absolute despair" of the Palestinians and attributed it to 40 years of Israeli occupation, "supported by the West". That is how it is presented, night after night, by the BBC. The other side is almost unexamined. There is little to explain the internecine strife in the Arab world, particularly in Gaza, or the cynical motivations of Arab leaders for whom Palestinian miseries are politically convenient.



U.S. reporter
Danny Pearl
before being
murdered

You get precious little investigation of the networks and mentalities of Islamist extremism - the methods and money of Hamas or Hizbollah and comparable groups - which produce acts of pure evil like that in which Mr.

Johnston is involuntarily complicit.

The spotlight is not shone on how the "militants" (the BBC does not even permit the word "terrorist" in the Middle East context) and the warlords maintain their corruption and rule of fear, persecuting, among others, the Palestinians. Instead it shines pitilessly on Blair and Bush and on Israel. From the hellish to the ridiculous, the pattern is the same.

Back at home, the Universities and Colleges Union has just voted for its members to "consider the moral implications of existing and proposed links with Israeli academic institutions". Well, they could consider how work by scientists at the Technion in Haifa has led to the production of the drug Velcade, which treats multiple myeloma. Or they could look at the professor at Ben-Gurion University who discovered a bacterium that fights malaria and river blindness by killing mosquitoes and black fly.

Or they could study the co-operation between researchers at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, who have isolated the protein that triggers stress in order to try to treat post-traumatic stress disorder, and their equivalents at the Medical Research Council Laboratory of Molecular Biology in Cambridge.

The main universities of Israel are, in fact, everything that we in the West would recognize as proper universities. They have intellectual freedom. They do not require an

ethnic or religious qualification for entry. They are not controlled by the government. They have world-class standards of research, often producing discoveries which benefit all humanity. In all this, they are virtually unique in the Middle East.

The silly dons are not alone. The National Union of Journalists, of which I am proud never to have been a member, has recently passed a comparable motion, brilliantly singling out the only country in the region with a free press for pariah treatment. Unison, which is a big, serious union, is being pressed to support a boycott of Israeli goods, products of the only country in the region with a free trade union movement.

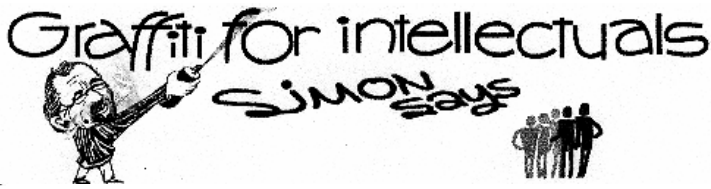
The doctrine is that Israel practices "apartheid" and that it must therefore be boycotted.

All this is moral madness. It is not mad, of course, to criticize Israeli policy. In some respects, indeed, it would be mad not to. It is not mad— though I think it is mistaken - to see the presence of Israel as the main reason for the lack of peace in the region.

But it is mad or, perhaps one should rather say, bad to try to raid Western culture's reserves of moral indignation and expend them on a country that is part of that culture in favor of surrounding countries that aren't. How can we have got ourselves into a situation in which we half-excuse turbaned torturers for kidnapping our fellow-citizens while trying to exclude Jewish biochemists from lecturing to our students?

Nobody yet knows the precise motivations of Mr. Johnston's captors, but it is surely not a coincidence that they held him in silence until the 40th anniversary of the Six-Day War approached, and only then made him speak. They wanted him to give the world their historical explanation - Israeli oppression - for their cause. Yet that war took place because President Nasser of Egypt led his country and his allies declaring "our basic aim will be to destroy Israel". He failed, abjectly, and Egypt and Jordan later gave up the aspiration. But many others maintain it to this day, now with a pseudo-religious gloss added. We keep giving sympathetic air-time to their death cult. In a way, Mr. Johnston is paying the price: his captors are high on the oxygen of his corporation's publicity.

As for Israel, many sins can be laid to its charge. But it is morally serious in a way that we are not, because it has to be. Forty years after its greatest victory, it has to work out each morning how it can survive. ✨



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REVIVING THE EVIL EMPIRE Neal Ferguson, L.A. Times, May 28, 2007

THERE is no such thing as the future. There are only futures, plural. Historians are supposed to confine themselves to the study of the past, but by drawing analogies between yesterday and today, they can sometimes suggest plausible tomorrows.

Seven years ago, the economist Brigitte Granville and I published an article in which we argued that the experience of 1990s Russia bore many resemblances to the experience of 1920s Germany.

No historical analogy is exact, needless to say. Russia's currency did not collapse as completely as Germany's did in 1923, though the annual inflation rate did come close to 300% in 1992. Our hunch, nevertheless, was that the traumatic economic events of the 1990s would prove as harmful to Russian democracy as hyperinflation had been for German democracy 70 years earlier.

"By discrediting free markets, the rule of law, parliamentary institutions and international economic openness," we concluded, "the Weimar inflation proved the perfect seedbed for national socialism. In Russia, too, the immediate social costs of high inflation may have grave political consequences in the medium term. As in Weimar Germany, the losers may yet become the natural constituency for a political backlash against both foreign creditors and domestic profiteers."

Seven years later, the man who succeeded Boris N. Yeltsin is doing much to vindicate our analysis.

The rule of law is the keystone of both liberal democracy and international order. Yet, the Russian government showed its contempt for the rule of law by flatly refusing to extradite the man who is the prime suspect in the case of Alexander Litvinenko, poisoned in London in November. The British authorities say they have sufficient evidence to warrant prosecution of Andrei Lugovoy. But the Russians refuse to hand him over.

It is tempting to regard the spat over Lugovoy's extradition as part of a new Cold

War between Russia and the West. The list of strategic bones of contention is a long one: the U.S. invasion of Iraq; Russia's assistance to Iran; U.S. missile defenses in Eastern Europe; Russian pipelines in Kazakhstan.... And the rhetoric is getting colder too. Only three months ago, I heard Russian President Vladimir V. Putin give a speech in Munich in which he bluntly warned that Washington's "hyper use of force" was "plunging the world into an abyss of permanent conflicts."

Yet this is not Cold War II. Unlike in the 1950s and 1960s, Russia is not self-confident but insecure. It is reliant on exports of natural resources, not its own ability to match American technological accomplishments. It is a waning power. The value of the parallel with Weimar Germany is precisely that it captures the dangers of a backlash against such weakness.

As Granville and I anticipated, one of Putin's earliest moves was to launch a campaign against the oligarchs who had been the principal beneficiaries of Yeltsin's (admittedly crooked) privatization, securing the imprisonment of Mikhail Khodorkovsky and the destruction of his oil company. Having frightened the other oligarchs into exile or submission, Putin set about renationalizing energy resources through the state-controlled Gazprom and Rosneft.

Foreign investors have also felt the backlash. Having reduced Royal Dutch Shell's stake in the Sakhalin II oil and gas field, Moscow now seems intent on doing the same to BP. As before, the tactic is to accuse the for-

eign company of violating the terms of its license.

Russia under Putin has remained outwardly a democracy. Yet there is no mistaking the erosion of democracy's foundations. In the name of "sovereign democracy," the direct election of regional governors and presidents was replaced with a centralized presidential nomination system. Opposition groups can no longer operate freely. Chess maestro and Putin critic Garry Kasparov and other anti-government activists were prevented from boarding a plane to Samara, where Russian and European Union leaders were meeting.

On Putin's watch there also has been a discernible reduction in the freedom of the press. The three major TV networks are under direct or indirect government control, and reporters who antagonize the authorities no longer feel safe. Last year, investigative journalist Anna Politkovskaya was murdered, one of 14 Russian journalists who have been slain since Putin came to power.

Having more or less stifled internal dissent, Russia is now ready to play a more aggressive role on the international stage. Remember, it was Putin who restored the old Soviet national anthem. And it was he who described the collapse of the Soviet Union as a "national tragedy on an enormous scale."

It would be a bigger tragedy if he or his successor tried to restore that evil empire. Unfortunately, that is precisely what the Weimar analogy predicts will happen. Ω