

Graffiti for intellectuals



SIMON SAYS



JANUARY
10
2008



By Si Frumkin

THE MYSTERIOUS MISPLACED BILLIONS

Some called it “the biggest scandal in human history”. Others reduced the scale some what to “most extensive fraud in the history of the U.N.” Whatever the scale, there is no doubt that it was a gigantic scam, a crime where tens of billions of dollars were involved and hundreds of participants were willing and eager accomplices. It not for the fall of Saddam it might still be going on with more billions being earned for his palaces and weapons, for subsidies to terror groups and rewards to the families of suicide bombers, and, more prosaically, to line the pockets of the greedy but influential international crooks.

The outrage was the “Oil for Food” (OFF) program. It ended 4 years ago and memories have grown dim. Here is a very much simplified and abbreviated story of what happened and what *hasn't*

happened since then.

In 1990, after Iraq invaded Kuwait, U.N. reacted by imposing sanctions that prohibited exports



of Iraqi oil. In 1996, after the conclusion of the first Gulf War and several years of usual U.N. procrastination, the U.N. with American cooperation, in response to reports of civilian suffering, implemented a program to allow Iraq to sell oil on the world market in exchange for food, medicine and other humanitarian needs.

In November 2003, after Saddam's defeat, the program was terminated and handed over to the Iraqi national coalition.

The OFF program ran for seven years. During that time Saddam's regime collected more than \$21 billion in illicit profits from illegal oil sales under the program that was supposedly closely supervised, controlled and administered by the U.N. According to reports by the U.S. Senate, CIA and other reputable sources, about 2/3 of this amount - \$13.6 billion - came from “smuggling”, direct sales to countries like Syria, Turkey, Jordan and others. This was obviously illegal but tolerated and ignored by the U.N. administrators.

The rest of Saddam's illicit income - estimated at between \$6 and \$13 billion - came from a somewhat more complicated scheme. Saddam was granted the right to select the buyer of Iraq's oil and negotiate the selling price. He then selected the buyers from an array of influential politicians, businessmen, corporations and regime

bank accounts. They were offered to buy oil at a substantial discount and re-sell it at a higher price to legitimate final users and brokers, keep part of the profit and kick-back the rest to Saddam.

Put it another way, if oil was at \$50 a barrel at the time, Saddam would offer to sell a million barrels at \$40 to an influential Frenchman, Russian or U.N. bureaucrat. The oil would then be resold at \$50 per barrel to an oil company and the \$10 million difference would be split between Saddam and the original buyer.

The scope of the scheme was gigantic. In January 2004, an Iraqi newspaper published a list of 270 people from 40 countries who participated in it. The list was based on over 15,000 documents that came from an Iraqi oil corporation with close link to Saddam's government. The majority of the names were from France, Russia and China - the three countries that were most sympathetic to Iraq in the U.N. and kept obstructing any steps at lessening the sanctions or tightening



arms control inspections. The list of Russian individuals and corporations covered 15 single spaced pages and included many Kremlin officials. The French names included several former Cabinet ministers, highly placed foreign ministry officials and other influential political figures that included some of the directors of the Banque Nationale de Paris-Paribas, an independent private bank - the only bank that was administering the \$64 billion FOF program. U.S., Britain and U.S. participation was insignificant - they were listed among 20 minor “others”.

The U.N. administrator of the OFF program, Benon Sevan was one of the more visible culprits. Eventually, Sevan was suspended by U.N.'s Secretary General Kofi

Annan, however, without loss of diplomatic immunity or retirement benefits. Since then, Sevan fled the U.S. to his native Cyprus which does not have an extradition treaty with the U.S.

Kofi Annan had an additional problem as well. His son, Kojo Annan, was employed by Cotecna, a Swiss company that won a \$4.8 million contract to monitor the FOF shipments to Iraq. Kofi Annan, who was never directly accused of participating in the scam, reacted with surprise at this revelation and expressed his disappointment. He was also very surprised when his son bought a Mercedes through U.N. auspices to avoid sales tax and import duties.

There were investigations, reports, commissions of inquiry. U.N. refused - and is still refusing - to open its records on the matter. The net result now, 4 years after FOF ended, is depressing.

In the U.S., three oilmen were tried and convicted. One of them, O.S. Wyatt was sentenced to one year in prison. On December 14, a tiny item on page 20 of the N.Y. Times reported that “Ludmil Dionisiev, an oil trader, was sentenced in New York to two years of probation and a \$5,000 fine for his role in a conspiracy to defraud the U.N. oi-for-food program”. Another, David B. Chalmers pled guilty and



was supposed to be sentenced in November, 2007; strangely enough I was unable to find any record of a sentence.

Still, the U.S. is an exception in at least having prosecuted and punished someone. After a thorough Internet search I was unable to find a single conviction or trial of anyone anywhere else on the globe. €

Secular Europe or Religious America?

Dennis Prager responds to the Times' Roger Cohen 12/18/07

Last week, New York *Times* columnist Roger Cohen wrote a column titled "Secular Europe's Merits," in which he explained why he prefers the secularism of Europe to the religiosity of America.

To his credit (other New York *Times* columnists do not generally agree to debate anything they write -- Paul Krugman, for example, has refused to discuss his new book on liberalism with me), Cohen agreed to come on my show, and proved to be a charming guest.

A distinguished foreign correspondent for Reuters and the International Herald Tribune, Cohen nevertheless betrayed what I believe is endemic to those who favor Europe's secularism to America's religiosity -- emotion rather than reason. Here are some of the points from his opinion piece followed by my responses.

Cohen: "The Continent has paid a heavy price in blood for religious fervor and decided some time ago, as a French king put it, that 'Paris is well worth a Mass.'"

There is no doubt that Western Europe abandoned religion and opted for secularism largely because of the blood spilled in religious wars, just as it abandoned nationalism



because of all the blood it spilled in the name of nationalism during World War I.

However, Cohen and others who argue for a secular society ignore the even heavier price in blood Europe has paid for secular fervor. Secular fervor, i.e., communism and Nazism, slaughtered, tortured and enslaved more people in 50 years than all Europe's religious wars did in the course of centuries.

This point is so obvious, and so devastating to the pro-secularists, that you wonder how they deal with it. But having debated secularists for decades, I predicted Cohen's response virtually word for word on my radio show the day before I spoke with him. He labeled communism and Nazism "religions."

This response completely avoids the issue. Communism and Nazism were indeed religion-like in their hold on people, but they were completely secular movements and doctrines. Moreover, communism was violently anti-religious, and Nazism affirmed pre-Christian -- what we tend to call "pagan" -- values and beliefs.

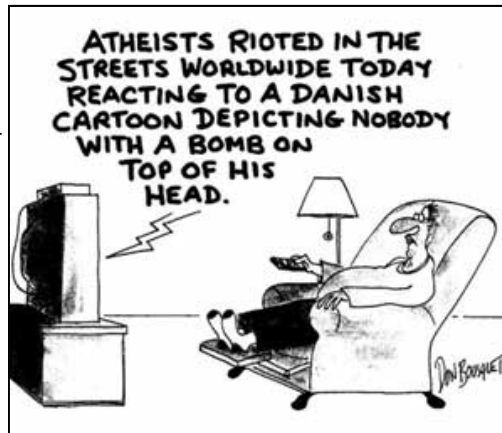
In fact, the emergence of communism and Nazism in an increasingly secular Europe is one of the most powerful arguments for the need for Judeo-Christian religions. Europe's two secular totalitarian systems perfectly illustrate what G.K. Chesterton predicted a hundred years ago: "When people stop believing in God, they don't believe

in nothing -- they believe in anything."

Cohen: "The U.S. culture wars have produced . . . 'the injection of religion into politics in a very overt way.'"

Cohen gives no examples, and though this charge is constantly repeated by many on the left, I have yet to figure out what exactly these critics mean. Do they mean, for example, that those who deem abortion immoral and wish to ban it (except to save the mother's life or in the cases of incest or rape) have injected religion into politics? If so, why is this objectionable?

What are those who derive their values from religion supposed to do -- stay out of the political process? Are only those who derive their values from secular sources or their own hearts allowed to attempt to influence the political process? It seems that this is precisely what Cohen and other secularists argue. But they are not even consistent here. I recall no secularist who protested that those, like the Rev. Martin Luther King, who used religion to fight for black equality "injected religion into politics in a very overt way."



The leftist argument against religious Americans' "injection of religion into politics" is merely its way of trying to keep only the secular and religious left in the political arena -- and the religious right, primarily evangelical Christians, out.

Cohen: "Much too overt for Europeans, whose alarm at George W. Bush's presidency has been fed by his allusions to divine guidance -- 'the hand of a just and faithful God' in shaping events, or his trust in 'the ways of Providence.'"

Cohen and his fellow Europeans sound paranoid here. President Bush has invoked God less than most presidents in American history, and the examples Cohen offers are thoroughly innocuous.

Cohen: "Such beliefs seem to remove decision-making from the realm of the rational at the very moment when the West's enemy acts in the name of fanatical theocracy."

At least in my lifetime, it is the secular left that has embraced far more irrationality than the religious right. It was people on the secular left, not anyone on the religious right, who found Marxism, one of the most irrational doctrines in history, rational. It was only on the secular left that people morally equated the United States and the Soviet Union. It was secular leftists, not religious Jews or Christians, who believed the irrational nonsense that men and women were basically the same.

It is overwhelmingly among the secular (and religious) left that people have bought into the myriad irrational hysterias of my lifetime -- without zero population growth humanity will begin to starve, huge mortality rates in America from heterosexual AIDS, mass death caused by secondhand smoke, and now destruction of the planet by man-induced global warming. It is extremely revealing that with regard to global warming scenarios of man-induced doom, the world's most powerful religious figure, Pope Benedict XVI, has just warned against accepting political dogma in the guise of science. We'll see who turns out to be more rational on this issue -- the secular left or the religious right. I bet everything on the religious.

There is no question but that most religious people have irrational religious views.

However, as I wrote in my last column, theology and values are not the same. I am convinced that the human being is programmed to believe in the non-rational. The healthy religious confine their irrationality to their theologies and are quite rational on social issues. On the other hand, vast numbers of secular people in the West have done the very opposite -- rejected irrational religiosity and affirmed irrational social beliefs. ●



This is the time of year, as Hillary Clinton once put it, when Christians celebrate "the birth of a homeless child" — or, in Al Gore's words, "a homeless woman gave birth to a homeless child."

Just for the record, Jesus wasn't "homeless." He had a perfectly nice home back in Nazareth. But he happened to be born in Bethlehem. It was census time and Joseph was obliged to schlep halfway across the country to register in the town of his birth. Which is such an absurdly bureaucratic overregulatory cockamamie Big Government nightmare it's surely only a matter of time before Massachusetts or California reintroduce it.

But the point is: the Christmas story isn't about affordable housing. Joseph and Mary couldn't get a hotel room: that's the only accommodation aspect of the event. Senator Clinton and Vice-President Gore are over-complicating things: December 25th is not the celebration of "a homeless child," but a child, period.

Just for a moment, let us take it as read, as Christopher Hitchens and Richard Dawkins and the other bestselling atheists insist, that what happened in Bethlehem two millennia is a lot of mumbo-jumbo. As I wrote a year ago, consider it not as an event but as a narrative: You want to launch a big new global movement from scratch. So what do you use?



The birth of a child. On the one hand, what could be more powerless than a newborn

babe? On the other, without a newborn babe, man is ultimately powerless. For, without new life, there can be no civilization, no society, no nothing. Even if it's superstitious mumbo-jumbo, the decision to root Christ's divinity in the miracle of His birth expresses a profound — and rational — truth about "eternal life" here on earth. Last year I wrote a book on demographic decline and became a big demography bore, and it's tempting just to do an annual December audit on the demographic weakness of what we used to call Christendom. Today, in the corporate headquarters of the Christian faith, Pope Benedict looks out of his window at a city where children's voices are rarer and rarer. Italy has one of the lowest birth rates in Europe. Go to a big rural family wedding: lots of aunts, uncles, gram'pas, gran'mas, but ever fewer bambinos. The International Herald Tribune this week carried the latest update on the remorseless geriatrication: On the Miss Italia beauty pageant, the median age of the co-hosts was 70; the country is second only to Sweden in the proportion of its population over 85, and has the fewest under 15. Etc.

So in post-Catholic Italy there is no miracle of a child this Christmas — unless you count the 70 percent of Italians between the ages of 20 and 30 who still live at home, the world's oldest teenagers still trudging up the stairs to the room they slept

in as a child even as they approach their fourth decade. That's worth bearing in mind if you're an American gal heading to Rome on vacation: When that cool 29-year old with the Mediterranean charm in the singles bar asks you back to his pad for a nightcap, it'll be his mom and dad's place.

I'm often told that my demographics-is-destiny argument is anachronistic: Countries needed manpower in the industrial age, when we worked in mills and factories. But now advanced societies are "knowledge economies," and they require fewer working stiff. Oddly enough, the Lisbon Council's European Human Capital Index, released in October, thinks precisely the opposite — that the calamitous decline in population will prevent Eastern and Central Europe from being able to function as "innovation economies." A "knowledge economy" will be as smart as the brains it can call on.

Meanwhile, a few Europeans are still having children: The British government just announced that Mohammed is now the most popular boy's name in the United Kingdom. As I say, the above demographic audit has become something of an annual tradition in this space. But here's something new that took hold in the year 2007: a radical anti-humanism, long present just below the surface, bobbed up and became explicit and respectable. In Britain, the Optimum Population Trust said that "the biggest cause of climate change is climate changers — in other words, human beings," and Professor John Guillebaud called on Britons to voluntarily reduce the number of children they have. Last week, in The Medical Journal Of Australia, Barry Walters went further: To hell with this wimp-o pantywaist "voluntary" child-reduction. Professor Walters wants a "carbon tax" on babies, with, conversely, "carbon credits" for those who undergo sterilization procedures. So that'd be great news for the female eco-activists recently profiled in London's Daily Mail boasting about how they'd had their tubes tied and babies aborted in order to save the planet. "Every person who is born," says Toni Vernelli, "produces more rubbish, more pollution, more greenhouse gases, and adds to the problem of overpopulation." We are the pollution, and sterilization is the solution. The best way to bequeath a more sustainable environment to our children is not to have any.

What's the "pro-choice" line? "Every child should be wanted"? Not anymore.

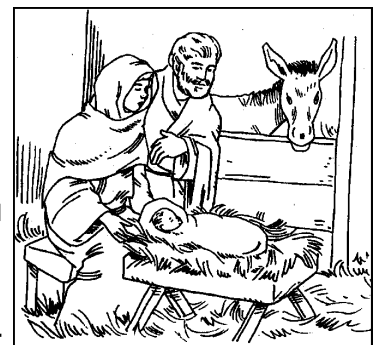
The progressive position has subtly evolved: Every child should be unwanted.

By the way, if you're looking for some last-minute stocking stuffers, Oxford University Press has published a book by Professor David Benatar of the University of Cape Town called *Better Never To Have Been: The Harm Of Coming Into Existence*. The author "argues for the 'anti-natal' view — that it is always wrong to have children... Anti-natalism also implies that it would be better if humanity became extinct." As does Alan Weisman's *The World Without Us* — which Publishers Weekly hails as "an enthralling tour of the world... anticipating, often poetically, what a planet without us would be like." It's a good thing it "anticipates" it poetically, because, once it happens, there will be no more poetry. Lest you think the above are "extremists," consider how deeply invested the "mainstream" is in a total fiction. At the recent climate jamboree in Bali, the Reverend Al Gore told the assembled faithful: "My own country the United States is principally responsible for obstructing progress here." Really? The American Thinker's website ran the numbers. In the seven years between the signing of Kyoto in 1997 and 2004, here's what happened:

Emissions worldwide increased 18.0%.

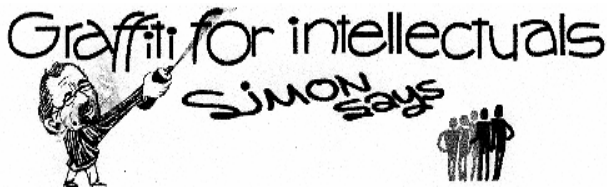
Emissions from countries that signed the treaty increased 21.1%.

Emissions from non-signers increased 10.0%.



Emissions from the U.S. increased 6.6%.

It's hard not to conclude a form of mental illness has gripped the world's elites. If you're one of that dwindling band of westerners who'll be celebrating the birth of a child, "homeless" or otherwise, next week, make the most of it. A year or two on, and the eco-professors will propose banning nativity scenes because they set a bad example.



JANUARY 10 2008

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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)

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DOCTORS FOR DISASTER PREPAREDNESS—NEWSLETTER XXIV—#6—November 2007

20 YEARS OF THE MONTREAL PROTOCOL

The 1987 Montreal Protocol, which required the phasing out of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), some of mankind's most useful chemicals used in refrigeration machinery, is cited as the model for an international treaty on cutting emissions of greenhouse gases. Delegates to the 2007 meeting "determined to clamp down on ozone-harming refrigerants that have become prevalent in the developing world, and to do it in a way that could provide tangible side benefits for climate." Delegates agreed to push forward by a decade a legally binding agreement to also phase out hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) in developing nations. A "black mark" was continuing an exemption for the agricultural fumigant methyl bromide at the insistence of U.S. delegates.



In a March 2007 article in the N.Y. Times, chemistry professor Charles K. Bradsher wrote that, "Experts found that the Montreal Protocol had proved to be 5.5 times as effective as the Kyoto accord was intended to be [but hasn't been] in cutting emissions of global-warming gases since HCFCs are thousands of times more potent than CO2 as greenhouse gases, but are released in far smaller quantities."



China is now the leading manufacturer of air-conditioners that rely on HCFC-22. Its use in China and India is growing by 35% yearly. Most building air-conditioning systems in the U.S. also rely on it. No one has agreed on what should replace it.

An accelerated phaseout "could speed up by five years the healing of the ozone layer of the atmosphere," Bradsher reports. But

what evidence of "healing" has occurred to date?

The ozone thinning that occurred throughout the 1980s, stopped in the early 1990s, too early to credit the Montreal Protocol, especially as stratospheric concentrations of the supposedly offending compounds were still increasing through 1998.

"The search for signs of recovery of the ozone layer is mystified and confounded by natural phenomena-such as the solar cycle," wrote "Nature" magazine in 2006. Strangely, there is no suggestion in the article that the same solar phenomena might have been involved in the previous depletion.

Harvard atmospheric physicists, S. Baliunas and W. Soon, wrote as early as 1999 that satellite data from official websites showed no significant global trend in ozone since 1985 and that the decreasing trend prior to 1985 is limited to high latitudes in the Southern Hemisphere. The implication was that "stratospheric ozone concentration over most of the world is largely unrelated to CFC usage. The rapid phase-out of CFCs will be almost irrelevant to ozone concentration and was therefore scientifically unjustified." In their view, the 1985 ozone decrease over Antarc-

tica remains unexplained while the imminent "Arctic" ozone hole predicted over Kennebunkport, ME, which triggered the accelerated CFC phase-out, never happened.

In the words of Ben Lieberman, Senior Policy Analyst at The Heritage Foundation, "The parallels with global warming panic mongering are striking: Al Gore's claims of animals blinded by ultra violet solar radiation (despite lack of increase in ground-level radiation) have simply been replaced by equally dubious assertions about the flooding of Florida.

"Perhaps decades from now, participants in the Kyoto Protocol, the global warming treaty modeled after the Montreal Protocol, will meet and congratulate themselves because none of their scary assertions came true," Lieberman writes.

But how much damage will have been done to liberty and prosperity-and how many human lives will have been wasted-to Save a Planet that was never endangered? Ω

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