

Casse-Tête - puzzle, brain-teaser, headache

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L'Affaire DSK

There's anguish and disapproval how the U.S. criminal justice system handles DSK. I share many of those concerns.

But* (except, notwithstanding, save, with the exception of) (= seulement voila) he was not mis-handled* (treat roughly). DSK got no worse (and certainly no better) than anyone else. What DSK encountered was the full bouquet of **U.S. criminal justice**, as permanently redefined by someone you have no doubt heard of.

Nelson Rockefeller. Governor of New York. Hot presidential ambitions. Trying hard to erase his spots* (plight, predicament, mess) as a liberal elephant. At a time when passions, prejudices* (preconceptions, partiality) and panic erupted in a paranoia of lawlessness* (injustice) gone wild* (crazy). Politicians outbid* (offering more to = surenchérir sur) each other. Rockefeller topped* (won, overrun) them all. Thus **the emergence of America's civilian* (non military) para-military-public safety industrial complex.**

Policing* (controlling, oversseing), prosecution* (legal action) and prisons exploded. Along with more money. Much more money to fight street crime. Rockefeller set in motion* (started) a **panicky war on domestic criminal terror.** Which would gather momentum* (impulse, impetus) as it traveled from New York to California with the enactment* (make into an act, edicting, establish by law or decree = promulgation) of a law called "3 strikes and you're out," meaning that anyone with a criminal record of 2 previous crimes would automatically face obscenely* (outrageously) long prison sentencing for a third crime, no matter how trivial. Following the World Trade Center disaster, there would be more policing, more prosecutions and more prisons, more spying, more surveillance. Along with even more money.

What we (and DSK) experienced was **the gluttonous American criminal justice system.** Which includes the accoutrements of bureaucratic gluttony: handcuffs* (to hold hands tied as being made prisoner).

Pictured squeezing themselves alongside DSK when arrested, we saw young prosecutors*(public prosecutors conducting legal procedure) competing with each other for headlines and visual recognition. Which troubled one Frenchwoman I know. As she sees it, DSK was treated unfairly. Not so, I explained. I explained that U.S. law school graduates often get their first jobs in public prosecution. Good pay. Excellent visibility for promotion or recruitment or politics. And it sure beats sitting at a desk day after day drafting contracts.

Those handcuffs: not as offensive to American sensibilities as French sensibilities. We are accustomed to what we call the "perp walk" (the suspect is called a perpetrator* , author or criminal, thus the expression the "perp walk") in front of press cameras. **The more eyes a prosecutor can assemble, the bigger the prize.** How often does a prize the size of DSK fall into the lap* (the track) of an ambitious, **headline seeking prosecutor?**

Publicity pays rich dividends:

1. American taxpayers like to know their generous investment in criminal justice pays off* (being paid-back) ;
2. publicity pollutes/propagandizes the potential jury pool at trial* (during hardship in front of justice / hardship = l'épreuve) ;
3. publicity-hungry, ambitious young prosecutors **get visibility** which means rich job offers, rich clients and rich lives.

And here are three more reasons:

1. To my eyes the **DSK case** has as many elements of what are called **"white collar crimes."** That is, the crimes that highly successful, highly visible, supposedly respected businessmen and bureaucrats cross paths* (go too far , break the law, to infringe) with the law. It's customary* (useful, accustomed) to publicly degrade and humiliate them. Why? In part because **we enjoy dancing on fallen idols**; more importantly, because white collar crimes are hard to present to a jury. White collar crime convictions* (accusations, to be convicted with / a convict) are hard to come by* (get, acquire). It helps to create an image of a **disheveled*** (untidy, disarranged, disarrayed, hanging loose, frowzy, uncombed), , handcuffed, humbled executive on the nightly news and morning newspaper.
2. Although DSK was not arrested for a white collar crime, his profile has more in common with an uncommonly successful business executive than a common street criminal.
3. DSK is French. Although I do not believe for a second that the American judicial system takes notice, I do believe in a half-second that the American public does. I believe this is a minor element in a mean* (unkind)-spirited brew* (mix).

Not very pretty. I agree. I do not defend it. I just explain it's mysteries.

Is Barak Obama "different"?

Most of us don't want to be "different." Whether we admit it or not, **most want to conform. No more true than in politics.** Speaking only for the U.S., politicians pose as what's called **"good old boys,"** the sort of man you want to stand next to at the bar, share a beer and debate, depending on the season, the best football team, basketball player, baseball hero. **Once assured you and they have things in common, he earns your vote.**

If it's a woman candidate, God be with her. Important primal criteria come into play : cleavage, androgynous appearances, marital fidelity, modulated aggressiveness, coiffeur and a record of experience, not too much to be taken too seriously, nor too little not to be taken seriously at all. (None of these criteria are meant to trivialize* (to make sth trivial) the importance of skirt length; or my personal acid test: the appearance of or lack of appearance of facial hair.)

Anyone different stands out* (appear) differently. All our presidents have been Christians. All white. All men. All of European heritage. **Along comes Barak Obama.** Barak Obama introduces himself as someone whose name is "different."

Which delights the U.S. right-wing: **is Barak Obama too "different" to be president?**

Characterizing Obama as "different," of mixed-race parentage, of African-American descent, questioning **whether he is a natural born American citizen** (as is required by the U.S. constitution), not a Christian but a practicing Muslim, right-wing crazies feed on doubts, fears, conspiracies. [For the record, President Obama **is not a Muslim.**]

We have **President George Herbert Walker Bush (the first of the series)** to thank. Author of the expanded presidential curriculum vitae to include beef jerky* (dried beef, a sort of German sausage) and NASCAR (National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing) fanatic.

Enter another kind of race. The black and white kind. George Herbert Walker Bush, made Willie Horton a household name. (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Willie_Horton). Horton, a criminal's criminal, an African-American, convicted of committing a horrible crime for which he served a lengthy prison sentence as a model prisoner in Massachusetts. That state's then Governor, a man named Michael Dukakis, furloughed* (to be granted the right to leave place or duties for a while = one permission) Willie Horton. That was before Governor Dukakis became the Democratic Party nominee to oppose Bush for president in 1988. And before Willie Horton relocated to Maryland where he committed yet another horrible crime. Dukakis was "different." Dukakis' name was "different." Dukakis, in contrast with Bush's privileged genealogy, was of Greek ancestry. Dukakis' wife was Jewish.

A mean-spirited stew* (brew, mix) : black. crime. bleeding-heart liberal. Greeks. Jews. immigrants.

George Bush knew how to play "he's different."

Willie Horton was George Bush's cynical, hateful, fear-mongering* (promoting fear) gift to the American political lexicon* (terminology).

His son, the other George Bush, used similar tactics against John Kerry, the 2004 Democratic presidential candidate who opposed him.

As the saying goes, the acorn* (the fruit of an oak tree) doesn't fall far from the tree. Or, like father like son. Or, fear-mongering. Or, racial politics. Or, in Bush's case, "swift-boating."

"Swift-Boating," as in Bush attacks and revise Kerry's distinguished Vietnam War military record, presenting Kerry as a common school-yard braggart* (big mouth, bluffer, blusterer, boaster, brag) with an undeserved bloated* (enlarged, expanded, inflated, blown up, puffed up, puffy, swollen) military record* (account, memorandum, report).

"SWIFT-BOATING" = a smear campaign = libel (defamation)

*The **term 'swift boat'** itself refers to a class of U.S. Navy vessel used during the Vietnam War. In 2004, a political 527 organization called Swift Boat Veterans for Truth (later called Swift Vets and POWs for Truth or SVPT), composed of Vietnam veterans who served on swift boats, formed with the intent of opposing the presidential candidacy of John Kerry. Kerry himself had served for four months as a swift boat commander in Vietnam. The group produced a series of television ads and a bestselling book that challenged Kerry's military record and criticized his subsequent antiwar activities as a member of Vietnam Veterans Against the War. The unsubstantiated charges against Kerry by the SVPT gave rise to the term 'swiftboating' to describe political tactics that are essentially synonymous with a 'smear campaign' (libel, slander, calumny, defamation, whispering campaign)'.*

From Swift-Boating (=libel or smear campaign) to Birther (Birther movement -see below)

Today we have our first non-white president, whatever his modest genealogy, a well-deserved beneficiary of an elite education, whose credentials * (certificate, letter of recommendation) to be president are challenged in what is called the "Birther Movement."

The U.S. Constitution specifies only **two qualifications*** (criteria / one criterion) for president: he or she must be a **native born American and 35 years old.**

Barak Obama was **born in Hawaii.** Hawaii is our 50th and last state. People born in Hawaii are native born American citizens. **Yet, we have a "Birther Movement" industry that manufactures doubt, insinuating that he was born in Kenya.**

Some thoughtful* (helpful, mindful, wary, well-thought-out ≠ thoughtless, unthinking) commentators try to square the circle. Some explain "**Birthers**" as **conspiracy-theorists** - the same bunch that insists John Kennedy's assassination was Soviet conspiracy. Or that the 9/11 World Trade Center event was committed by the U.S. government. You know the kind.

Birther = L'Affaire Dreyfus

Kate Zernike is a serious journalist, working her way to the top at The New York Times since 2000. Making a stretch* (spread, unfold) connection between the Birther Movement and L'Affaire Dreyfus, Zernike wrote on the front page of the 5 May 2011 New York Times: "The Persistence of Conspiracy Theories":

"... The Dreyfus affair is a concise example of the damned-if-you-do, damned-if-you-don't nature of conspiracy theories ... Military officers argued that his handwriting appeared on incriminating documents, writes Louis Begley in a book on the subject. When one expert doubted the handwritings' similarity, the government produced another to argue that dissimilarity was proof of his guilt -- Dreyfus had altered his writing to throw people off his trail ..."

Is Barak Obama "different?" Well, I suppose he is. Which cuts both ways. **For those of us who admire him, being different is a good thing. And others see him as a Willie Horton or a swift-boat denier*** (sb who denies a situation), or, as provided in the U.S. Constitution, 3/5^{ths} of a person.

My Dear Prime Minister Netanyahu

How can you ignore the revolutions on your very doorstep?

Your neighborhood changes. You don't. Yesterday Israel could control events and regimes on your doorstep. That was yesterday. All that has changed. Wise up* (take into account).

Are you unaware of the historic turmoil* (trouble) that's happening?

Tunisia. Egypt. Libya. Sudan. Syria. Morocco. Yemen.

Perhaps no one can broker* (negotiate) a peace between Israel and the Palestinians. But, if anyone can, his name is Barak Obama. Yes. The man you just offended.

Far more eloquently than I can paraphrase, Winston Churchill once warned don't offend someone not already dead or whose demise* (death or end) you cannot arrange* (organize). Good advice.

Congratulations! You got a bounce* (rebound, vitality) in Israel's political polls for having bested President Obama. Don't think you will not pay dearly* (expensive) for having offended Obama and alienated U.S. public opinion. No Israeli politician can afford to alienate the U.S. Not even you. Putting aside your stupid manners, putting aside your state of petrified denial, the next thing we need to put on the table is, to the best of knowledge, the United States has entered into treaty agreements with the State of Israel which, under some set of circumstances, obliges the U.S. to come to Israel's defense in the event of your War.

Which means if Israel has a war, we, that is the U.S. could be treaty-bound to rescue you.

Don't count on it.

If you want to conduct yourself in a manner that threatens the security of Israel, that's between you and the Israelis. If you want to conduct yourself in a manner that threatens to involve the U.S. in your defense, you're bloody crazy.

Israel is isolated internationally. I worry that the U.S. alliance with Israel will further and further isolate the U.S. internationally. If you think Americans will continue to support Israel as you conduct your stupid policies, you are bloody crazy.

A few days after President Obama took office I sent an email to the White House suggesting that he publicly state that by the end of his term in office, he would unilaterally recognize Israel if the PLO were to agree and demonstrate its political stability, its recognition of Israel, defense of its borders, stable governmental institutions, and all the many other perquisites for nationhood. That was good advice then. It's good advice now.

You want the U.S. to use its veto in the United Nations to deny U.N. recognition of the State of Palestine. Why should we?

Finally, Mr. Prime Minister, have you given any thought to joining the E.U.? No doubt you haven't. Maybe you should.

[Ex-Israeli spymaster takes swipe at* \(hit out, give a blow in the direction of\) Netanyahu](#)

AP Associated Press

By JOSEF FEDERMAN, Associated Press Josef Federman,
Associated Press - Thu Jun 2, 5:19 pm ET

The newly retired head of Israel's fabled Mossad spy agency has turned his sights toward Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, repeatedly criticizing the Israeli leader's approach to Iran and the Palestinians.

After earning a reputation as a fearless operator against Israel's enemies, now Meir Dagan is showing public concern over how Israel's government deals with them.

Dagan's statements, rare for a man known for discretion and secrecy during a three-decade career in the intelligence service, have startled many Israelis.

In a speech at Tel Aviv University on Wednesday, Dagan issued a stern (at the back of the boat) warning against attacking Iran, saying a strike would risk unleashing* (let go, let loose, release) a region-wide war and only encourage Tehran to push forward with a nuclear program that is widely believed to be aimed at developing weapons. Iran denies that.*

"The war won't be against Iran, but will be a regional war," he said, according to a transcript obtained by The Associated Press. "I recommend that the prime minister not decide to attack."

Dagan also lamented the dire (alarming, woeful) state of peace efforts with the Palestinians, which have been frozen for months.*

"There needs to be an Israeli peace initiative," he said. "If we don't offer things and don't take the initiative, we might be put in a corner. Given the choice between put in a corner or taking the initiative, initiative is better." He suggested that Israel accept a nine-year-old peace initiative proposed by Saudi Arabia, offering peace with the Arab world in return for a full withdrawal from all territories captured by Israel in the 1967 war. With the comments, Dagan took a swipe (a slap, a blow, a criticism) at two cornerstones* (key, basis, premise, starting point) of Netanyahu's foreign policy ...*