

1980s without credit-default swaps and without securitization and without CDOs. . . . I do not know if something happened that suddenly made these innovations essential for growth. In fact, we had greater speed of growth and particularly did not put the whole economy at risk of collapse. That is the main concern that I think we all need to have.

President Obama should move to repeal the 2000 law legalizing derivatives. That law is propping up a volatile \$600-

\$800 trillion casino. And the next time it fails, the taxpayer will not prop it up; our resources and patience are exhausted.

The President is said to admire Teddy Roosevelt. He should take a page from Teddy's book and start busting up the banks. The Big Five should become the Very Large Twenty. That would be a start. "Too big to fail" must be killed.

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Triptych: Crows

by Jon Dressel

i

They came roistering through the city
every day at dusk, finished with
their pillaging in fields of corn

to east, and bound for woods out to
the west to make a roost for night;
they were part of the darkening of the sky.

They came at first by fours and fives
but soon great squadrons filled the air,
circling, swooping, rasping caws,

descenders peeling by the drove
to rest in clusters like black fruit
atop the shade trees of our yards.

We watched through windows, then went out,
like shamans of some threatened tribe,
to drive them on with banging pans.

ii

When the virus hit, West Nile they named
it, brought to our parts harboring plague,
they took the brunt. Better they

than we, it struck us, as they died
by thousands in the woods and fields;
we read it in the papers, heard it

on the news, stood witness with each
twilight as they wasted down;
then they were gone. We did not miss

them early on, we still had starlings,
robins, sparrows, brilliant cardinals,
mottled doves, birds of the neighborhood,

not intruders, little in their presence
to stir rufflings of unease;
the pans hung silent on our walls.

iii

We sensed it slowly, vaguely, a strange
vacancy at dusk; we almost
grieved lost clusterings of blackness

in the trees. And when at last,
by twos and threes, we spied them
in the evening sky again,

we felt a quickening of the heart,
as if some thing gone vagrant in
our being was returning, tentative,

probing, bent on repossession of
its place in our blood scheme.
And now, as dark matures each day

we mark their slow and sure increase,
at peace with their resurgent presence,
armed against it, pans to hand.



Middle Eastern Hijackers

HAVE THE ISRAELIS GONE CRAZY?

We have recently witnessed a number of incidents in which Israeli hostility to the West has been made manifest. Yet the Western world has been the biggest—indeed, the only—supporter of the Zionist project outside the Jewish Diaspora.

First, consider the ambush of Joe Biden in Israel, where he went to talk some sense to Tel Aviv on the troublesome issue of the settlements, the primary obstacle to restarting the peace process. No sooner had Biden's plane touched down than the Israeli minister of the interior made a startling announcement: The Israeli government would proceed with the construction of 1,600 more settlement houses in East Jerusalem. Blindsided, Biden remonstrated with his inhospitable "hosts" and then went back to Washington with his tail between his legs, while the Obama administration—in a rare display of American anger at our increasingly contentious "ally"—denounced the announcement (and its timing) as an "insult." Netanyahu then arrived in Washington, where he openly incited the large and very loud Israel lobby to push back hard against the administration.

Such defiance is nothing new for the Israelis, whose capacity for aggression isn't limited to shooting rock-throwing adolescents and demolishing their thousand-year-old homes. What's interesting is that this open and increasingly acrimonious rift with the United States occurs within the context of an unfolding scandal that may

signal a break with the West. The murder of a top Hamas commander in Dubai by a team of some 27 Mossad agents has stirred an international diplomatic storm. Disguised as tourists, the assassins used passports forged by means of a massive identity-theft operation. According to the report filed by Britain's Serious Organised Crimes Agency, information gleaned from passports handed over to Israeli customs officials at Ben Gurion Airport and abroad was stolen and used to create, in effect, a passport "farm."

The revelation sent shock waves from London to Paris and even to Washington. London was the first to retaliate, with the expulsion of an unnamed "diplomat" from the Jewish state's London embassy.

The outcry in Parliament was well-nigh unanimous, with the Tory shadow foreign minister, William Hague, rising to remark that Israel is a repeat offender when it comes to forging British passports—referring to the early 1980's, when a Mossad agent left a sack of forged British passports, enclosed in an Israeli embassy envelope, in a phone booth.

More serious was the time when members of a PLO cell in London were arrested on suspicion of murder. Under interrogation, one member of the cell admitted to being a Mossad agent. The Brits were furious: The Israelis might have prevented the brutal murder of a Kuwaiti caricaturist who had dared mock Yasser Arafat. Instead of merely expelling a single Israeli "diplomat," the Thatcher govern-

ment sent a number of them packing and effectively shut down the Mossad in the United Kingdom.

The Israelis pledged never to do it again. Hague's implication that sterner measures are called for seems justified merely by what we already know—that Israel has compromised, perhaps fatally, our primary defense against terrorism, which is our ability to track who is coming into this country. The security of every other country on earth—excepting Israel—is threatened by this brazen violation of trust and the standards of civilized conduct. The cold fury of the British government was expressed in a terse announcement on the website of the Foreign Office:

UK passport holders should be aware of a recent Serious Organised Crime Agency investigation into the misuse of UK passports in the murder of Mahmud al-Mabhuh in Dubai on 19 January 2010. The SOCA investigation found circumstantial evidence of Israeli involvement in the fraudulent use of British passports. This has raised the possibility that your passport details could be captured for improper uses while your passport is out of your control. . . . We recommend that you only hand your passport over to third parties including Israeli officials when absolutely necessary.

Individuals from Britain, France, Germany, and the Netherlands have been identified as having had their personal information stolen by the Mossad. So much for the Israeli tourist industry, which will now have to cater to those who don't mind having their identities stolen for a "good" cause. I'm just wondering when we will discover how many Americans have had their identities hijacked. ♦