

Home, Sweet Home: Dispatches from the Manchurian Candidate Factory

#4

*Dédicassé à monsieur Obama et ses ouailles : au singulier : obombino, pluriel: obombini. (Dedicated to mister Obama and his flock: singular: obombino, plural: obombini)
Κύριε, ἐλέησον. (Lord, have mercy.)*

Distribution: Book group, HRW, ICC, DOJ, LAHD, Adams Blvd./Cochran Ave. and Environs, Selected Tenants of My Apartment Complex.

Purpose: To Ridicule Few. To Amuse Many. To Inform All.

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*"M'étant mêlé d'écrire, j'ai été puni de mon impudence ;
Rebelle aux modes, j'ai offensé la mentalité de mon époque.
Les calomnies accumulées peuvent bien avoir raison de ma carcasse ;
Tout inutile qu'elle soit, ma voix n'en survivra pas moins dans ces pages."*

— Traduction du poème autographe de Lu Xun (1933)

("Having gotten mixed-up in writing, I have been punished for my impudence;
Refractory, I have offended my era's mentality.
The accumulated calumnies could very well get the better of my carcass;
As useless as it may be, my voice will nevertheless survive in these pages.)

— Lu Xun's autograph/poem (1933) My translation

Twelve reasons for me to believe that, in my dealings with the police over the last five decades, I've gotten better service as criminal than as victim:

1. I once complained about an assault, nothing serious, to police who, after investigating, decided that the location was not in their jurisdiction. This after an extended tête-à-tête between the policeman and someone in the personnel department of the Jet Propulsion Lab where I was working at the time. Decades later, this incident was to have psychological repercussions for me.
2. A mysterious envelope I transported by car from a customer in Northern California to Los Angeles before reporting it to Santa Monica police; contents of which were later confirmed to be cocaine, did not lead to further investigation.
3. A call to local police(?) did not result in action forcing me to go there in person at which time I was told that officers would be sent out.
4. A police officer refuses to file complaint of a break-in to my car after filling a form out, telling me to take it to another station. It later goes missing.
5. The order of an officer at Southwest Community police station who told me to sign in was immediately countermanded by another officer.
6. A DNA sample left behind after a burglary and vandalism in my bungalow, with item later shown to police, has never been examined.
7. An identified and named suspect who assaults me in my bungalow is not arrested. I occasionally see him in the apartment complex we share.
8. Police are not sent to investigate phone complaint of multiple residential burglaries. Instead, I'm told to install security cameras.
9. Two bank officers refuse, one of them in writing, to file complaint with police after one or more of my safe deposit box(es) are burglarized.
10. FBI(?) agent(?) makes racial joke during a phone call in which I make a complaint.
11. After I file a complaint of residential burglary, LAPD officers give me an incident number I, in spite of several attempts to do so, cannot confirm.
12. I was once arrested on felony charges at the Santa Monica main library. Three decades later, I eventually applied for and got the police report, with contents resembling nothing so much as the elucubrations of fabulists...

Something's not right here, folks a-and after fifty years of this, even I begin to notice.

Wanted to bring to your attention a book covering a topic you've all heard of, Mao's Long March; a book with the title *Mao's Long March ; an epic of human courage* by Edmonds, I. G. Knowing little more about the subject than the title of this book, I was shocked at what I found inside. Dwarfing Xenophon's *Anabasis* (The March Up Country), the Long March showed me at an opportune time what man's spirit is capable of. Mao and Chu (known as Mao-Chu to the troops, so inseparable were they) took human beings who had been treated as lower than whale shit for three thousand years and accomplished a feat with *no* parallels in history, a feat which may never be equaled. This story nudged me further in the direction of considering my current environment, peculiar though it is, as little more than a sort of Disneyland (albeit a Disneyland with that SuperMax and with the caveat that I feel I'm being babysat) as I once retorted to Tub-thumper's wife, a neighbor, when she attempted to "commiserate" with me over my plight some months ago. This was confirmed by some recent, tiresome really, experiences with eBay and a customer, poor fellow, whose package is lost somewhere in the wastes of Baluchistan or I know not where. With him holding me responsible, yet. As I said to customer service before ending an interminable conversation: "This is Mickey Mouse."

(8-18-22) Today, trying to sort out problems arising from the increasingly circus-like atmosphere in my complex. I signed up for a Zoom meeting with Bet Tzedek, eventually speaking with a lawyer by the name of Gigi. After some difficulties ascertaining whether she was a lawyer, our conversation got underway. She began droning on about COVID and the City. When I tried to stem the torrent of irrelevant words she, coming on like a *Gauleiter*, curtly told me not to interrupt. Properly put in my place, I did not, for some time, so much as try to put in a word edgewise; attempting, instead, to salve my wounded pride. I'm beginning to think that, beginning with that lawyer in the Valley I visited during one of my lunch hours at Signum Systems, decades ago, as I tried to make sense of my arrest at the Santa Monica library in 1988, I don't seem to have better luck with that lot (with one or two stellar exceptions) than with police.

La Rubrique des Gueules Cassées (A Section on War-wounded):

Here, I will periodically touch on a ticklish subject: the state of my health (judging from the difficulty I have in extracting details from Kaiser Permanente, a closely guarded state secret, perhaps?). I'll provide updates if and when information becomes available.

1. Happy to report that aside from an inability to urinate from my right ear anymore, I've made a full recovery after the pepper spraying incident.
2. A-and regarding that other outrage in which, the mountain being unwilling to come to Mohamed, it was Mohamed who went to the mountain instead, i.e., my neighbor Tyson barging into my bungalow to hit me when I prove reluctant to come outside to explain myself. Aside from a temporary sore spot on my head, situation stable.
3. I confess to not sleeping the sleep of the just these days after no coffee for two months, sleeping in a dark room, using a red night light. Nuthin' doin'.
4. After referral by Bergman, MD, to the neurosurgery department at Sunset, I spoke with Yi, PA (I had assumed I'd be speaking to an MD), before being sent back to Bergman for answers to questions about the several neurological symptoms I had initially raised with her.
5. Without my asking, Bergman then put in a request for a consultation with the orthopedic department at the Kaiser facility on Cadillac Avenue.
6. On 8-24-22, I got a call from a Kaiser employee who, answering my question concerning the qualifications of the person I would be talking to, replied "Correct!" to the two options I put forward. I then said "Thank you" before hanging up. *Non mais!* Hours later, had a phone visit with Vuong, MD, in orthopedic, to see if my condition warrants further tests. Luckily not. However, the several questions I again raised about my nerve-related symptoms, questions I had originally asked of Bergman months ago, were promptly referred back to her.

Let's not get carried away here, lest I be thought a Stalin-class paranoiac wiv' another "Doctors' Plot" in the works, Eh? So, here's a quick summary as I apprehend it: my health's merely the proverbial curate's egg (i.e., with some parts better than others).

Sassenach and His Yankee Damyankee Tricks:

In this new section I will periodically describe instances of the "Tricknology" (as I've heard it referred to by black people) on occasional display in my life. As you read this, try to keep in mind the ever-present mystification factor and its potential for magnification of the emotional impact.

1. "Blended speech" where specific words are inserted in a conventional stream of talk. Two examples: The one in a Spanish-speaking sport commentator's voice coming from the Gomez household in my complex. The other, more recent and frequent, coming from "Brother *Cantinflas*," either from his radio or TV as he sits outside. Both sounding like a normal sports announcer's voice yet peppered with hot button words, what I call "synthetic ideas of reference," randomly added. Sync also present at times.
2. Very loud car engines revving up, ambulance and/or police sirens blaring, near and far with sync occasionally observed in both cases.
3. Randomly occurring cursor movements while editing text on my computer. Often accompanied by block selection and deletion, both on Ubuntu and, possibly, FreeDOS. Also, the same keystroke repeated as though a key is stuck, this last behavior started some days ago only to abruptly end.
4. Phone calls on my landline from numbers which, when called back, turn out to be disconnected. Answering machine now no longer works reliably either.
5. Cell phone sometimes reboots so often I cannot even turn it off, having to listen to it rebooting for tens of minutes at a time (when I need it most).
6. Cannot run "Tickr," a program used to scroll text/my book across a 24" LCD monitor as a substitute for the LED sign Santa Monica will not allow.
7. Music I play from my MP3 collection on my laptop seems altered, with some words faint or not heard. Going on for several days now.
8. Loud children's voices and piercing screams, usually from across the street, sometimes in sync with my movements.

Les Casses de l'Oncle Sam (Uncle Sam's Robberies) - With Apologies to Harriet Beecher Stowe and Frédéric Dard:

1. A small, blue, scrolling LED sign I sometimes wear, displaying nothing more harmful than a ditty, adapted from a Helen Reddy song, with the words: "I am *Bergie*/Hear me bitch/Buy my book/and make me rich" is missing. (Update 8-15-22: Found it where I did not expect it).
2. So many small anomalies and discrepancies, noted in my bungalow and in my computers that, not being entirely sure anymore, I hesitate to list them. Given the number of such events I've documented over the last decade, a few false negatives cannot hurt when compared to the potential harm of too many false positives.
3. Various recent petty thefts and vandalism, all happening outside my bungalow.
4. For a week, my glucose test strips (I'm a type 2 diabetic) gave results 20-30 points higher than expected. In later tests at Kaiser Permanente Urgent Care where measurements were taken with both their equipment and my meter, the problem was found to be with my strips.

Speed Bumps on the Road to Ragnarök:

A timeline of my dealings with the City of Santa Monica on my application for a street selling permit allowing me to flog my book from a sidewalk stand.

1. On 5-26-22, after some inconclusive phone calls, I make my first inquiries.
2. Received by email application packet on May 27th, 2022.
3. On June 23, I fill out and email my application including all required documents and pictures.
4. June 30th, requested status of application by email.
5. July 20th, received reply from Ms. Haley Favre-Smith, Business License Administrator, City of Santa Monica to my sidewalk vendor application-242572. Request denied. Reason given (I quote): "*Good Morning Lawson, I have reviewed your operational set up. The LED pole would not be permitted as it may pose a public safety hazard. Please update your operational setup and send an updated picture.*"
6. July 20th, 2022, I replied with request for clarifications
7. On July 26th, 2022 I received the following reply to my request: "*Good Evening Berg, The height of the led light would be deemed a public safety hazard. If you can reduce the height of the led light you will be in compliance. Sincerely, Haley Favre-Smith, Business License Administrator*"
8. On July 26th, 2022, I again replied to Ms. Favre-Smith, requesting further clarifications.

Some numbers regarding the LED pole:

1. The unit is 10 feet high, folding in two for transportation.

2. As of now, the top 8 feet are made up of the LED display which scrolls text.
3. The bottom 2 feet do not contain any displays, consisting of metal and wood only.
4. The whole LED post weights about 20 pounds with protective plastic cover, not including the wood base.
5. The LED pole fits snugly into a pedestal sitting on the ground and is strapped to a table, preventing the pole from moving either sideways or back and forth.
6. The pedestal is itself held in place by one of the table legs which goes through a hole in the pedestal making contact with the ground like the other 3 legs of the table.

Let me add that:

1. Days ago, on July 7, I got approval and a street selling permit from the City of Los Angeles for the exact same setup with the 10 foot LED pole (registration # 2000548).
2. I can shorten the pole to whatever dimension the City of Santa Monica will find acceptable.
3. I will be using the LED pole to display, by scrolling vertically, the following: 1) A book in its entirety 2) Advertising messages such as where to place orders 3) Additional information about the book 4) Contents of emails.
4. In addition to the expected visual impact of a tall sign, it would be helpful if the sign were as big as possible to allow much text to be displayed at any one time, making displayed content more easily readable.

All that remains is for me to know what would be an acceptable height for the LED pole.

Thanks,

P.S. To my sister Irene: May our wordless tears, both yours and mine, eventually prove invincible.

9. On 8-9-22, I received the following email from Ms. Favre-Smith:

Good Morning Berg,

I attempted to call you but I was unable to leave a voicemail. I had a chance to chat with our Code Enforcement team and there are some additional issues with the sign. The Santa Monica Municipal Code states the following regarding Animated Signs:

9.61.030.030 Animated Sign. Any sign that has any visible moving part, flashing or oscillating lights, visible mechanical movement of any description, or other apparent visible movement achieved by any means.

9.61.180 Prohibited Signs

A. The following signs, and any sign not authorized by Section 9.61.150, 9.61.160, or 9.61.170, are prohibited:

1. Animated Signs. Animated signs, except that:
 - a. The City may use animated signs to preserve roadway safety and traffic circulation; and
 - b. Primary and secondary schools may use animated signs on school property for school purposes.

So in addition to the high concern, having an animated sign is not permitted. Do you want to move forward with application without the animated sign? If so, please provide an updated image removing the sign.

Sincerely,

10. On August 22, I emailed the following reply:

Haley Favre-Smith, Business License Administrator, City of Santa Monica

About my application for a street-selling license: Sidewalk Vendor Application-242572

Please see the attached pictures showing the change made according to your request as well as some additions.

Modifications made:

- Removal of the 10' high by approximately 8" wide LED scrolling sign.
- Addition of a 24" LCD monitor. The monitor, sitting on a table, will display a scrolling text banner alternating with a slideshow presenting parts of the book I'm flogging as well as other documents, pictures and lists. The text banner will allow passersby to read the book in its entirety without having to make a purchase.
- Addition of a ground mounted display stand I call the "Democracy Wall," an idea adapted from the well-known Chinese movement of some decades ago. It will be made of recycled wood pallets, measuring about 4' by 3' when opened and will display various items of interest in newspaper-like format, as was once done in Peking and elsewhere. The hinged stand will fold in half for transportation.
- All other parts of my setup: the folding table and seat, solar panel, battery pack, etc., remain unchanged.
- Whenever I sell in Santa Monica, there will no longer be the LED sign you raised objections about.

Let me know if the changes are satisfactory and how much I can expect to pay for a year's license.

Thanks,

Bergendahl/Berg (as in Nuremberg)/Bergie Hawkins

P.S. To my sisters Irene and Colette (the latter dead of cancer in 2018): May our wordless tears, yours and mine, eventually prove invincible.

11. On August 25, my application was approved. Problem: fees seem to be too high. Street selling licenses for books written by the seller are cheaper.
12. On August 26, after paying the excessive fee anyway, I sent the following email to Santa Monica:

Hi,

According to the following City of Santa Monica business license regulations:

6.36.060 Exemptions.

This Chapter shall not apply to:

- (a) An approved participant in a certified farmers' market;
- (b) A vendor operating pursuant to or under the authority of an approved license agreement;
- (c) An approved participant in a community event authorized by the City;
- (d) An individual vending newspapers, leaflets, pamphlets, bumper stickers or buttons;
- (e) An individual or organization vending the following items, which are inherently communicative, have nominal utility apart from their communication, and have been created, written, or composed by the vendor: books, recorded music (sic), poetry, prose, sculptures, paintings, prints, or photographs. (Added by Ord. No. 2607CCS § 2, adopted 4/9/19)

My application for a street-selling permit, granted on 8/25/2022 (Business License#: 242572), for which I paid \$126.68 + handling charge (see attached PDF) should fall under the above rules, resulting in a fee considerably lower.

Could someone review my case and adjust the permit fees downward on the basis of (e) (relevant words underlined) as I'm selling samizdat and samizdat only (a book, written by me, titled: Schizophrenia Weaponized, ISBN 978-1-7371788-1-1, also available on eBay), as stated on my application of 6/23/2022?

Thanks,

(signed)

el Descamisado

Bergendahl/Berg (as in Nuremberg)/Bergie Hawkins

P.S. To my sisters Irene and Colette (the latter dead of cancer in 2018): May our wordless tears, both yours and mine, eventually prove invincible.

13. On 8-30-22, Ms. Favre-Smith replied. Unfortunately, due to pressing demands on my time, I've not had the opportunity to examine her email closely and give it the attention it, no doubt, deserves...

Kommentar überflüssig.

(8-15-22) Last night was hectic. Though I believe no animals were harmed in this production; things were, at times, frenetic. Beginning around midnight, winding down around 3AM only to resume with a rousing aria by Lady Lurk at about five, concluding near eight. Content, you ask? May I reply with that cliché of McLuhan's, "The medium is the message." A-and may I summarize the night thus: "Never a Dulles moment."

(8-18-22) There is new behavior to report from Lady Lurk and the man staying with her: the singalong. To music usually loud, jarring and discordant. Music with lyrics like: "Go, go, go!" And: "Go to hell for heaven's sake!" Words enthusiastically shouted by both of them.

(9-1-22) Set a new record today: four westbound #37 buses didn't stop as I sat waiting. Was on my way to Costco, around 7PM, at Dunsmuir and Adams.

(9-8-22) Another westbound #37, again at Dunsmuir and Adams, does not stop. Not feeling particularly lucky, I opted to walk, and so walk I did, for over three miles that day.

The Creature's Lament with Love's Labors Lost?

Whatsa matter, guys, you don't care for your creation anymore? Now that doctor Frankenstein's monster threatens to go off the rails (I even move like it, lurching so visibly that people in my complex, children even, imitate my walk). Is the good doctor disappointed with the results of his experiment? Would the good doctor like to abort at this point? Has the good doctor perhaps even tried to press the self-destruct button as they used to in the old days, down at Cape Canaveral, when an errant rocket went off-course, threatening civilized areas?

I allude here to recent events of a somewhat forceful nature. Namely the incident in which it was shown that I'm allergic to aerosolized pepper. And the other incident involving my neighbor Tyson, the man I'll forevermore, most spitefully, too, refer to as "that Ingrate." An incident in which he, seeking satisfaction for my having dared to put a flier on his windshield, came *inside* my bungalow and hit me on the head, once, almost perfunctorily. Leaving me puzzled but free to call 911. "That Ingrate" because, a few months ago, during the "*Scheißminister*" era, I went to him, sitting in his car with his wife, extended my hand which he shook, and said I'd eventually speak for him. What's more, should Tyson operating, I presume, under the strictest of orders, ever tear off his arm and proceed to beat me to death with it, I will steadfastly endeavor to ignore him as he does so. This is and has been my longstanding habit regarding his antics and those of his whole family. As. A. Matter. Of. Doctrine. A bit of the old (very old, actually) 無為; (wu wei, action through inaction; something very much in line with my passive-aggressive nature — or so I'm told).

Specialization?

In at least two instances, I was the target of "meets cute" involved women who went on to have or had just ended liaisons with blacks. They are:

1. Colette Walczak who, when we first met at the main branch of Santa Monica library, was on the rebound from and pregnant by an older black jazz musician by the name of Clifton Eddy.
2. Julie Branica who, I now realize, picked me up at UCLA's Research Library, and would go on to meet at least one other black that I know of.

In both cases, I was at some point asked if I would marry.

Conclusions

Those of you old enough to remember the Vietnam war might also have heard of *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia*, by Alfred McCoy, a book portraying the CIA in an unflattering light. McCoy eventually moved to Australia, where he remained for over a decade, later returning to take a position as an academic. I've read his book and, by comparison to mine, it seems like a tempest in a teacup.

Events of the last weeks, I'm writing this on 9-7-22, suggest we may have turned a page. A page in which more concrete, physical acts are no longer to be excluded. I, therefore, will now greatly limit my output in these emails and diary (which, poor thing, can no longer keep up), limiting myself to describing the more lurid and concrete events. And anyway, I already have plenty of other documentation, stuff written in the last decade or so to serve, should my story ever become of general interest. No need to be tiresome about this, Eh?

Oddly, not a single neighbor at ground zero of this veritable circus, namely my apartment complex, has so much as commented to me, even in an oblique fashion, on the surreal scenes I've attempted to describe in these pages and my diaries, of which only a limited sample has so far been made public. Neither, as far as I know, have any of my neighbors ever complained to police. While my landlord, long-suffering Tiffany Anderson of AFJ Investment, merely limited herself, when I visited her office to give her a copy of my book, to a mild comment about the loud music I play and gently murmured that my nearest neighbor, the woman I call Lady Lurk, is "angry."

I now mention three violent events; events which, thankfully, have not yet happen to me to the same degree of severity as to the unfortunate victims mentioned below.

1. The first involves Jon Howard, a friend, someone I've known for over a decade. Jon who is mentally ill and now homeless, was hospitalized a few years ago in Santa Rosa, California with blood in his urine and cracked ribs, among other injuries. This according to Colette Walczak. She volunteered few other details other than to say he claimed to have fallen off a dumpster.
2. The second happened to Matt Horns, another friend, also an acquaintance of Colette. First some background. She once called, asking for his number, though they had known each other for a number of years (I complied, curse me for a fool). Then, sometime later, she had me drive her to his rented room in the Pico-Union district of Los Angeles. While I waited in my car, she went inside, remaining with him for some time. Afterwards, she accompanied me to Whittier to visit another friend, Janusz Hetman. Once there, for some reason, Colette insisted on accompanying me inside. Suspecting something was not right, I refused. She became adamant, there was a struggle, I then pulled her away from my car as she would not allow me to close the door. There was at least one witness to this incident. Finally able to drive off, I left her stranded in Whittier at the Haendiges Plumbing building where Janusz lived. There were no further repercussions and I wrote up the incident in one of my emails. Some time later I believe, Matt, Colette was to tell me, tried to separate a homeless couple he had befriended as they fought on the street. The man, turning on Matt, proceeded to beat him so severely that he was taken to hospital by police, unconscious and suffering from a skull fracture. Later, after relating this to me over the phone, Colette asked the (rhetorical?) question: "Should Matt file a complaint with police?"
3. There was also the car accident in the early eighties, before Colette and I had met, involving her then-boyfriend, Clifton Eddy. An accident in which Colette was injured, she bore a scar on her chin until the end of her life. This, too, puts my dozen or so accidents of the last two decades in perspective. As an aside, Colette would at times comment that the reason I was having so many accidents is that, quote, "You drive too slowly." Never say she lost her sense of humor entirely.

Though it has now been years since the incidents, neither Jon nor Matt have ever spoken of them to me. Compare this to the bagatelle of the last couple of weeks involving my neighbor Tyson and the other assailant. "Thar ain't no law west of the Pecos," as the saying once went. A-and precious little east of it, I'd wager.

There is an anecdote about Anwar Sadat, a man whose stupidity was legendary, at least according to an Albanian-born journalist, mother of writer Eric Margolis who, after interviewing Sadat sometime in the fifties or sixties, judged him to be, in her words, a clown. The story has it that Nasser, unwilling to show his hand too soon as he was uncertain his coup against King Farouk would succeed, chose Sadat to go on radio to make the announcement and be its public face. Sadat obliged. *Kommentar überflüssig...* (Any comment would be superfluous).

Lastly, if I may generalize from my and my sister Irene's cases, part of what may be going on is a "decapitation strike." Specifically, blacks (I believe Irene and I are "grandfathered in" – so to speak) felt to be above average, i.e., part of W. E. B. Du Bois' "talented tenth," are identified (in my case, at the age of sixteen, if not earlier), before being targeted. "Neutralization by burning," I'd call it. Conceivably generation after generation? Somewhat reminiscent of what the Israeli Government does to Palestinian Arabs. Only, over there, some call it "Mowing the Grass." Interesting.

Democracy free from tears. Democracy amid what appears to be incipient near-chaos. Are such things even possible? And most think democracy to be the default political arrangement in the West.

Anyways, enough of my Obscure and Pretentious Malarkey™ (for now).

(signed)
Fulminata!

"Thunder is good, thunder is impressive; but it is lightning that does the work."

— Mark Twain

A disclaimer here. I consider myself, in spite of the nickname, to be the thunder and definitely *not* the lightning.

P.S. To my sisters, Irene and Colette (the latter dead of breast cancer in 2018): May our wordless tears, both yours and mine, eventually prove invincible.

P.P.S. In a fitting coda to this here missive, I include the following picture, taken soon after I got up on the morning of 9-7-22. Quite the *suggestive* scene, wot? Provocation most foul (i.e. another “microwave moment”)? The warning sinister? A harbinger of things to come? Or all of them? I leave it to you to decide, Gentle Reader™.



Figure 1: Desperate times call forth desperate measures, Eh? Or is this just another instance of someone’s imagination (mine perhaps) running away with them? After all, we are in Disneyland, are we not? *Oder?* Taken at 9AM on 9-7-22.

P.P.P.S. On finishing Anne Applebaum’s *Gulag* yesterday, I was struck by an observation made by one of her sources. “The Russian government will not make a clean breast of it until the ones responsible are all dead.” After all, in the words of Anastas Mikoyan, former Politburo member, “Pointing to too much error won’t do. It implies the *country is not being run by a legal government but by a group of gangsters.*” (Italics mine) Quote taken from *Gulag*, p. 514.

Does not the same situation obtain here? Are we not fated to reach the same terminus? And for much the same reasons? Because of what in Nixonian parlance could be termed “a limited, modified hangout.”

I guess that with so many here, high and low, thoroughly compromised over the decades, could there be any outcome other than an impasse of some sort?

Going further, any victim/dissident from that time and place (Soviet Russia from the 20s to the 80s, say), apprised of my baggage would, no doubt, have run, screaming. And yet, here I am, potentially to be feted as your fair-haired boy...

Lastly I ask, Gentle Reader™, who among us, in this place, can claim the uprightness shown by the Ukrainian mathematician, Mykhailo Kravchuk who, when asked to shop his colleagues to the secret police in the thirties(?), opted instead for the all-expense-paid extended holiday in that winter wonderland, Siberia? He took a long time to die.

“Live not by lies.”

— A. Solzhenitsyn