

## EDITORIALS

## A Churchillian warning against appeasement

WASHINGTON • Benjamin Netanyahu's address to Congress was notable in two respects. Queen Esther got her first standing "O" in 2,500 years. And President Obama came up empty in his campaign to pre-emptively undermine Netanyahu before the Israeli prime minister could present his case on the Iran negotiations.

On the contrary. The steady stream of slights and insults turned an irritant into an international event and vastly increased the speech's audience and reach. Instead of dramatically unveiling an Iranian nuclear deal as a *fait accompli*, Obama must now first defend his Iranian diplomacy.

In particular, argues the Washington Post, he must defend its fundamental premise. It had been the policy of every president since 1979 that Islamist Iran must be sanctioned and contained. Obama, however, is betting, instead, on detente to tame Iran's aggressive behavior and nuclear ambitions.

For six years, Obama has offered the mullahs an extended hand. He has imagined that with Kissingerian brilliance he would turn the Khamenei regime into a de facto U.S. ally in pacifying the Middle East. For his pains, Obama has been rewarded with an Iran that has ramped up its aggressiveness in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Gaza and Yemen, and brazenly defied the world on uranium enrichment.

He did the same with Russia. He offered Vladimir Putin a new detente. "Reset" he called it. Putin responded by decimating his domestic opposition, unleashing a vicious anti-American propaganda campaign, ravaging Ukraine and shaking the post-Cold War European order to its foundations.

Like the Bourbons, however, Obama learns nothing. He persists in believing that Iran's radical Islamist regime can be turned by sweet reason and fine parchment into a force for stability. It's akin to his refusal to face the true nature of the Islamic State, Iran's Sunni counterpart. He simply can't believe that such people actually believe what they say.

That's what made Netanyahu's critique of the U.S.-Iran deal so powerful. Especially his dissection of the sunset clause. In about 10 years, the deal expires. Sanctions are lifted and Iran is permitted unlimited uranium enrichment with an unlimited number of centrifuges of unlimited sophistication. As the Wall Street Journal's Bret Stephens points out, we don't even allow that for democratic South Korea.

The prime minister offered a concrete alternative. Sunset? Yes, but only after Iran changes its behavior, giving up its regional aggression and worldwide support for terror.

Netanyahu's veiled suggestion was that such a modification – plus a sizable reduction in Iran's current nuclear infrastructure, which the Obama deal leaves intact – could produce a deal that "Israel and its [Arab] neighbors may not like, but with which we could live, literally."

Obama's petulant response was: "The prime minister didn't offer any viable alternatives." But he just did: conditional sunset, smaller infrastructure. And if the Iranians walk away, then you ratchet up sanctions, as Congress is urging, which, with collapsed oil prices, would render the regime extremely vulnerable.

And if that doesn't work? Hence Netanyahu's final point: Israel is prepared to stand alone, a declaration that was met with enthusiastic applause reflecting widespread popular support.

It was an important moment, especially because of the libel being perpetrated by some that Netanyahu is trying to get America to go to war with Iran. This is as malicious a calumny as Charles Lindbergh's charge on Sept. 11, 1941, that "the three most important groups who have been pressing this country toward war are the British, the Jewish and the Roosevelt administration."

Israel has never once asked America to fight for it. Not in 1948, when 650,000 Jews faced 40 million Arabs. Not in 1967, when Israel was being encircled and strangled by three Arab armies. Not in 1973, when Israel was on the brink of destruction. Not in the three Gaza wars or the two Lebanon wars.

Compare that with a very partial list of nations for which America has fought and for which so many Americans have fallen: Kuwait, Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, Vietnam, Korea and every West European country, beginning with France (twice).

Change the deal, strengthen the sanctions, give Israel a free hand. Netanyahu offered a different path in his clear, bold and often moving address, Churchillian in its appeal to resist appeasement. This was not Churchill of the 1940s, but Churchill of the 1930s, the wilderness prophet. Which is why, for all its sonorous strength, Netanyahu's speech had a terrible poignancy. After all, Churchill was ignored.

## Split sentencing not to blame for rise in crime

Misleading claims made during race for district attorney.

Crime rates became a curious political issue in last year's contest for district attorney. On his campaign website, then-challenger Mike Hestrin charged that an "unprecedented crime wave" was occurring in the county, and "thousands of serious criminals are being released into our communities year after year," a "direct result" of then-district attorney Paul Zellerbach's policies.

It is true that crime rose in 2011 and 2012. According to crime statistics from the Riverside County Sheriff's Department and the city of Riverside, it is also true that crime has declined since then.

That aside, the policies at the center of Mr. Hestrin's successful campaign revolved around the issue of split-sentencing and early releases from the county's overcrowded jail system.

Split sentencing is a relatively straightforward practice: A split sentence is a term partially served in jail followed by a period of supervised release.

While it is true that Mr. Zellerbach defended the practice, he hasn't been alone. Riverside County Sheriff Stan Sniff has long defended the practice as an effective law enforcement tool. San Bernardino County Sheriff John McMahon told county supervisors that the practice is "critical" to recidivism reduction. The practice is increasingly used

throughout the state. Further, there has never been any evidence that split sentencing leads to more crime.

As assertions about split sentencing have proven unfounded, claims by Mr. Hestrin about early releases were misleading.

It is true that the Riverside County jail system releases inmates early, but that has nothing to do with split sentencing. The jail system is overcrowded and is under court order to keep its inmate population under control. When that population exceeds court-ordered limits, the Sheriff's Department has no choice but to release inmates early.

If someone is sentenced to a split sentence, their supervision begins upon release. If they were sentenced to straight jail time, no matter how long, then they are released without supervision. Both people with and without split sentences are released early, at the discretion of the Sheriff's Department. Therefore, split sentencing is a useful tool for law enforcement to monitor offenders and, possibly, reduce crime.

Since taking office in January, Mr. Hestrin has charged that split sentencing is a way for the county to "paper over" the crisis in the jail system. This may be true, but it is incorrect to contend that split sentencing is responsible for the mass release of dangerous criminals or for increases in crime.

## Making it tougher on middle class

California's taxes, policies push more into ranks of the poor.

A modest economic recovery finally seems to be underway in the United States, but this comes as little comfort to many still struggling to get by, particularly in California.

Nearly one in four people in the state – 23.4 percent – are in poverty, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's supplemental poverty measure, which incorporates a broader measure of the cost of living than the official poverty rate. And a recent analysis by 24/7 Wall St. pegged California as the No. 1 state where the middle class is dying, placing a damper on the Golden State's prospects for a stronger recovery and long-term economic growth.

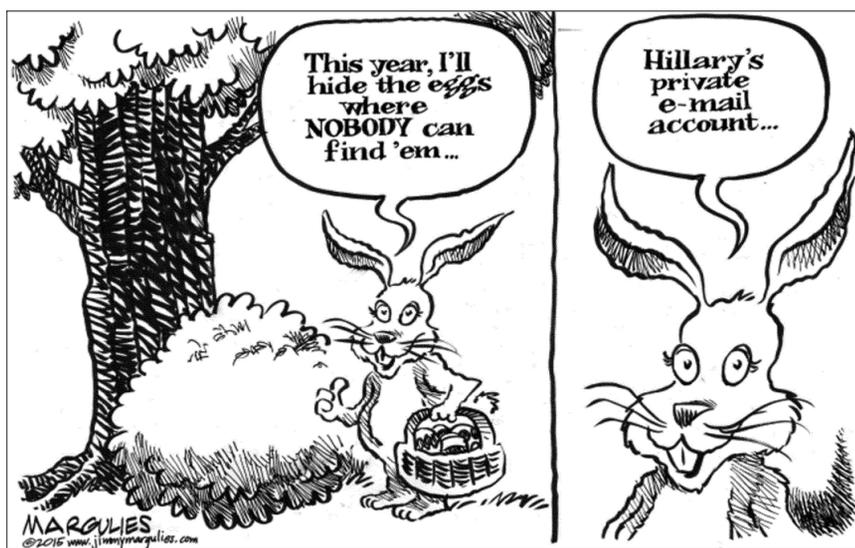
The analysis found that in California the average pretax income of the middle 20 percent of earners fell 6.9 percent from 2009-13, significantly more than the national average drop of 4.3 percent, while income for the top

20 percent gained 1.3 percent, higher than the 0.4 percent increase in the national average. The wealthiest 20 percent accounted for 52.2 percent of the state's aggregate income, the third-highest share in the nation.

The state's highest-in-the-nation 7.5 percent sales tax (not counting additional local sales taxes), a regressive levy that consumes more of middle- and low-income earners' disposable incomes than those of the rich, is an aggravating factor, according to the analysis.

State and local policies that raise taxes, increase regulations, redistribute wealth and restrict housing and business development have all contributed to raising the costs of living and running a business in California. The middle class will continue to leave, or slide down into the ranks of the poor, unless these harmful policies are reversed.

### JIMMY MARGULIES / SYNDICATED CARTOONIST



### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### U.S. military power has limits

Both Prime Minister Netanyahu and the P-E fail to provide us with a viable alternative to an agreement with Iran ["Persuasive case against deal with Iran," Editorial, March 4]. That is because there isn't one. If Iran truly wants to build a bomb, there is only one way to stop it – invade the country and occupy it. Iran has more than twice the population of Iraq. Why didn't President Bush stop North Korea from getting the bomb? Because he faced the same dilemma.

The same people who think we should use force against Iran also want us to get more involved in Syria and Iraq and stay in Afghanistan. This is unrealistic to

the point of delusion.

Gary Page  
Hemet

#### CLINTON'S LATEST SCANDAL

There is another stink coming out of the Hillary Clinton camp, this time regarding her emails ["House panel issues subpoena for Clinton's personal emails," News, March 5].

She had her own personal email server in her home and had been using it for all of her emails, both private and official government business as secretary of state. This last part is against the law because all official government emails are kept in a federal archive. Clinton chose to pur-

posefully ignore this requirement, likely to hide from the public what she has done.

Clinton's latest response is that she is willing to have the State Department release all

of her official emails. But wait, why doesn't she release all of the emails from her own private server?

Here is the problem for the Democrats: If she is prosecuted she is facing time in prison. This could destroy any chance of ever becoming president – not that she has any chance to begin with. The Democrats also don't have anyone waiting in the wings to replace her as their presidential nominee.

David Baker  
Riverside

## Another Putin critic gunned down in Russia

BY ARTHUR CYR  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

The gangland-style murder of Russian opposition leader Boris Nemtsov starkly demonstrates the considerable distance still separating Russia from stable and reliable rule of law.

The influential leader of opponents of President Vladimir Putin's regime was gunned down Feb. 27 on a Moscow street near the Kremlin. A public rally Nemtsov was supposed to lead March 1 was transformed into a mass protest against the corruption and brutality that characterize Russia today.

Nemtsov was a leader of the pro-democracy Republican Party of Russia-People's Freedom Party. He had been a principal leader in transforming the Russian economy to capitalism, and a relentless critic of Putin's government.

Shortly before his death, he predicted Putin would have him killed. Speculation after the murder swirls in that direction, but also in others. Conspiracy theories include the possibility that Putin enemies actually carried out the hit to weaken him. In a March 4 speech, Putin condemned the killing.

This is the latest in a string of murders of Putin critics. Six years ago, a strikingly similar killing of two prominent young human-rights advocates occurred. On Jan. 19, 2009, on a sunny public street also near the Kremlin, activist attorney Stanislav Markelov was murdered. Journalist Anastasia Baburova was killed while trying to aid him. The hit man was a practiced pro, his pistol equipped with a silencer.

Baburova worked for "Novaya Gazeta," an opposition newspaper. Journalist Anna Politkovskaya, who also worked for that paper, publicized human-rights abuses in Chechnya until her murder in 2006.

While Putin has not been formally implicated in any murders, there is broad belief that the killers were operating under orders. Justice should be pursued in the despicable murder of Boris Nemtsov. Sustained global public attention is important.

The regime's practices foster an atmosphere of threat and danger for dissident reporters and politicians. There has been a return to more repressive practices regarding news media, but Putin cannot completely seal off Russian society. That feature of 20th century totalitarianism is no longer possible in our time of pervasive global media – and global economic integration.

Russia desperately needs foreign capital. Its economic strength in recent years has been a function of high oil prices. Today, falling oil prices directly weakens Putin and his associates.

Russian aggression in Ukraine has led to economic sanctions by the European Union, the U.S. and a range of other nations. Reinforcing and expanding the impacts, Russia is now suffering from substantial, accelerating flight of both capital and educated professionals.

During the Cold War, the Eisenhower administration wisely promoted scientific and cultural/educational exchanges with the Soviet Union. The U.S. and our allies should give renewed emphasis to such efforts.

History is on our side.

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