

BCA Dispatch

Newsletter of the **June**
Boston-Cambridge Alliance for Democracy **2005**

No matter how cynical I get, I just can't keep up.
—Lily Tomlin

CHAPTER NEWS (Continued on Page 7)

Chapter Calendar

* * **Greater Boston's Populist Force** * *

Boston-Cambridge Alliance for Democracy will meet on **Wednesday, June 15th at 7:00 p.m. at Cambridge Friends Meeting house, 5 Longfellow Park** (9-minute walk from Harvard Square T station, west on Brattle St.)

— Agenda —

Back in the 1940s, 50s, and 60s, Saul Alinsky empowered disenfranchised local groups by encouraging them to mobilize and use unconventional tactics to frustrate local officials until they got a fair shake—or more. Today the **Greater Boston Interfaith Organization** similarly achieves self-generated focus, discipline, and results. **Lee Ann Hoff** will introduce **Ari Lipman**, a GBIO staff organizer who will tell all and discuss possible connections with us.

We will also see if you might be engaged by any of several proposed study-and-action groups: **Understanding the Right; Networking New England; Organizing Progressives; Becoming System-Sensitizers; Progressive Finance; Defending Water for Life—Getting Corporations Out of Schools.**

— Refreshments —

Soldier of Christ

Bar Mitzvah and Pastor Ted's Megachurch

by Jeff Sharlet, *Harper's Magazine* (excerpt), May 2005

Want to be a "fly on the wall" of Pastor Ted Haggard and his New Life megachurch in Colorado Springs CO? Read the whole of this article at your library, or at <http://harpers.org/SoldiersOfChrist.html>.

"Pastor Ted, who talks to President George W. Bush or his advisers every Monday, is a handsome forty-eight-year-old Indianan, most comfortable in denim. He likes to say that his only disagreement with the President is automotive; Bush drives a Ford pickup, whereas Pastor Ted loves his Chevy. In addition to New Life, Pastor Ted presides over the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), whose 45,000 churches and 30 million believers make up the nation's most powerful religious lobbying group, and also over a smaller network of his own creation, the Association of Life-Giving Churches, 300 or so congregations modeled on New Life's 'free market' approach to the divine."

Possibly any of the 11,000 local members of New Life Church is "odd"—peculiar in his or her own way relative to other members. The personal story below is an excerpt of only about 10 percent of Sharlet's fascinating article. (Continued on Page 2>>)



European Constitution?

French Referendum: No Corporate Europe

by Doug Ireland, *L.A. Weekly*, 3-9 June 2005

The massive defeat of the new European Constitution by the French in a May 29 referendum means a virtual political revolution in France — a rebellion by the people against the political elites of both left and right. The French rejected the proposed EuroConstitution by a whopping 10 points, despite an overwhelming, mendacious campaign for a Yes vote by the mainstream French media (including a major pro-Yes bias in TV coverage) and tireless stumping for a Yes vote by nearly all the major political leaders of left, right and center. The No vote reflected the deep cleavage between what the froggies call "La France d'en haut et La France d'en bas" — the France of above and the France of below.

Seventy-two-year-old President Jacques Chirac, his popularity declining, had put his prestige on the line in calling for the referendum (rather than having the parliament ratify it and bypass the voters, as his canner partner in European construction, Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, had done). But after each of Chirac's two carefully staged, prime-time TV presentations in favor of a Yes vote, the No vote jumped several percentage points in the public-opinion polls, which simultaneously said the French found Chirac mediocre and unconvincing. (This was particularly true of a disastrous 90-minute TV show featuring Chirac being questioned by a hand-picked youth audience — Chirac, who has become deaf as a post and refuses to wear his hearing aid, couldn't hear half the questions. When one questioner asked him about gay rights under the Constitution, saying, "I'm a homosexual," Chirac responded, "You're a what?" "A homosexual." "Ah, oui . . .," grimaced the president, who clearly had no idea what, if anything, the Constitution said (Continued on Page 3>>)

Commander Tom Parker and his family live a long way from New Life, far south in a neighborhood of postage-stamp yards and houses without foundations.

Commander Tom used to make computer chips; his wife is a maid. Their living room is two couches a leg-stretch apart, with Commander Tom's recliner between. An upright piano, painted red-and-white, is backed against one wall; a TV, no longer much used, squats against the other. When I visited, Commander Tom's wife stayed in the kitchen, but his son, Junior Commander T.J., joined us in the living room. The two men—T.J. is only fifteen, but he's been bar mitzvahed, about which more in a moment—owe their officer's ranks to the Royal Rangers, a Christian alternative to the Boy Scouts. The largest "outpost" of the Rangers in the country, 475 boys and men, rallies at New Life.

Royal Rangers wear khaki military uniforms and black ties. They study rope craft and smallbore shooting and "American Cultures." There is a badge for "Atomic Energy," which boys can earn by making scale models of a nuclear reactor. Mainly, though, Rangers earn merit badges for reading the Bible. Most boys go book by book, which earns them a special vest stitched over entirely in badges; but truly dedicated Rangers take it all in one giant swallow, a feat of reading for which they earn a single Golden Achievement Badge. T.J., who traveled to Los Angeles last year to claim second place in the regional Ranger of the Year competition, has such a Golden Achievement Badge. His favorite book is Ecclesiastes—"Vanity of vanities, all is vanity"—a moody, introspective scripture at odds with his demeanor. He is a sturdy boy, with a swimmer's shoulders and an honest, rectangular face. He would be a teen dream, no question, but T.J. doesn't meet many girls. He is homeschooled, his "hobby" is reading, and most of his out-of-the-house hours are dedicated to the Rangers, an all-male organization. T.J.'s purity ring, which he wears on a delicate silver chain, is a symbol of his commitment to virginity until marriage. It was given to him two years ago by Commander Tom on the occasion of T.J.'s bar mitzvah.

The bar mitzvah was Commander Tom's idea. A heavysset man with glasses and a mustache, Commander Tom decided his son deserved a ritual to mark his entrance into manhood, just like the Jewish people have. T.J. took as his text not a portion of Torah but the song "Shine," by a Christian rock band called the Newsboys. Dull as dirt / You can't assert / The Kind of Light / That might persuade / A strict dictator to retire / Fire the army / Teach the poor origami—unless, the song goes on to say, you "shine" with Holy Ghost power.

When T.J. was coming up in the Rangers, little boys started as "Straight Arrows" and proceeded from there to "Buckaroos." T.J. and Commander Tom are both members of an elite Ranger cadre known as FCF, Frontier Christian Fellowship, in which boys and men regress to pioneer life in pursuit of ultimate Christian manhood. Father and son are still Frontiersmen, which is the lowest level, but they dream of becoming Buckskin Men. "The problem," said T.J., "is that it takes time and money. Because you have to make an outfit. And it has to be out of leather."

"If you're a Frontiersman, you can't wear regular clothes," Commander Tom explained.

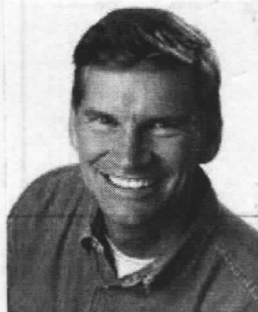
"You don't have to catch the deer yourself," said T.J. "You can just buy the leather at a store. But you gotta learn how to sew it."

"And you gotta make up something you can live off."

"A trade."

"Like making candles," said Commander Tom.

One day last August, Commander Tom had been at work, making computer chips, when for no apparent reason he found himself unable to move. When he regained control, the first thing he did was take himself to the doctor for an MRI. But the moment the nurse turned on the machine, his eyeballs felt as if they were popping; his hands clenched into claws. All he could do was whisper, "Turn . . . it . . . off." Electronics seem to exacerbate the condition. "I'm allergic," he said. He believes that



Pastor Ted Haggard

years of working with powerful magnets have broken his "polars." His company moved him to a desk job, but the computer made his eyes wobble. He can't talk on a cell phone, and TV causes a meltdown. His company pays him a modest sum for disability. He wouldn't dream of suing. Mostly he reads the Bible, and The Lord of the Rings, over and over. "God keeps saying to me, 'Tom, this is not about you. It's about Me,'" he told me. "There's

something going on. And God is just trying to get me ready."

In December, Commander Tom received a vision. It is not unheard of for ordinary New Lifers to experience visions, but most are wary about their provenance; what a secularist would call psychological they call satanic. But Commander Tom thinks that this one was real. He seemed close to tears as he told me the story. This is what he had seen: "Complete darkness over all of America. But there was a light coming down to the center of America," i.e., Colorado Springs. "And it was just a circle. And in it there were angels, and the angels were battling. And they were fighting hard as they could"—here Commander Tom's voice broke—"but they couldn't hold back the dark, and the Lord said to me, 'America has to repent, or this hole will close.'"

Commander Tom returned to the moment. "I'm not even saying I know what to do with it. It's just—that's what I see. And I pray. There's something going on here, and God's gonna explode it. There's gonna be an explosion from here bigger than anyone's ever seen."

Pastor Ted, he believed, would marshal the shock waves. "I think Pastor Ted is Gandalf," said Commander Tom. Tom had received a few mini-visions, just glimpses really, and in them he saw a pastor kneeling, praying, in spiritual battle.

"Who's the Balrog?" I asked, referring to a demon that nearly kills Gandalf, the Lord of the Rings's heroic wizard. I expected Commander Tom to reply with the usual enemies, "the culture" and the homosexuals and the humanists. But the Balrog, he said, is inside Pastor Ted, and inside every Christian. Before the church can condemn the world, it must cleanse itself, thought Tom; he believed that American evangelicals were filthy with pride.

"Pride's dangerous," he said. He was thinking of the last presidential election. "Like a football game. Us against them." Commander Tom was pleased with the results but dismayed by the political power surging through his congregation. "That is not the same as"—he paused—"going into God. God does not see politics as a victory." #

about gay rights, and responded with filibustering generalities.) The No vote leaves Chirac terribly enfeebled at home and abroad.

The French political revolt against the EuroConstitution was, as the exit polls confirmed, neither a rejection of the idea of a more united Europe nor principally a nationalist reaction. The No vote was largely motored by a socioeconomic cry of protest, in a France with 10 percent unemployment, against a Constitution that was designed to make Europe the unregulated playground of the multinational corporations. Movements of factories from France, with its strong trade-union movement and traditionally strong social safety net, to low-wage Eastern European countries with no effective unions and few or weak social protections — a migration already the cause of much anguish among the froggy employee class — would have been dramatically accelerated by the Constitution, which also would have abolished individual countries' restrictions on the movements of capital, and institutionalized deregulation, privatization and unrestricted free-market competition as the hallmarks of European economic policy. That's why two-thirds of salaried employees and three-quarters of the working class voted No (so did 59 percent of the under-25 young, who are traditionally quite pro-European, but who fear for their economic futures).

The Iraq war demonstrated that the arguments in favor of an ever-stronger Europe advanced by the Nobel Prize-winning American economist Joseph Stiglitz have been prophetic. The former chief economist of the World Bank, Stiglitz became one of the most forceful critics of the Bank and of the International Monetary Fund, the twin global enforcers for multinational capitalism. Long before George Bush's invasion of Iraq, Stiglitz argued — in a series of books and articles — that only a European Union that was both economically and politically puissant and coherent could provide a counterweight to the U.S.-led drive toward the economic globalization that gives the behemoth multinational corporations a free and untrammled reign over our destinies, and offer some hope of resistance to the U.S. military adventures from which those multinationals profit so handsomely. Franco-German opposition to the Iraq war reinforced the accuracy of this analysis.

The new European Constitution was not a step toward a stronger Europe, and would have actually lessened European influence on the world stage. In it, subordination of European security and military policy (and thus foreign policy) to NATO was set in concrete. And, as the former socialist defense minister of France, Jean-Pierre Chevenement (who resigned in protest over France's support for the first Gulf War), repeatedly pointed out during the referendum campaign, under the Constitution the crucial role France played at the United Nations in opposing the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq would no longer have been possible. The Constitution would have restricted the ability of any member of the U.N. Security Council that is also an EU country (like France — or, as in proposals for Security Council enlargement now being considered, Germany) to take a position contrary to that adopted by the European Commission. And any single EU country could veto a position contrary to Washington's. Thus, one would only need to buy a corrupt little country — like, say, Bulgaria — to block any EU action that would counter the American imperium.

Moreover, the Constitution was anti-democratic, for it kept real

power in the hands of the unelected European Commission (whose members are appointed by their national governments) rather than giving it to the elected EuroParliament in Strasbourg. The EU's presidency, currently a rotating one, was given a longer term — but the president, too, would have been appointed by the commission. The 300-page Constitution — the longest ever in the world's history, and written in obscure legalese incomprehensible to the average voter — would have irremovably enshrined matters of policy, including conservative economic policies, that would normally be decided by democratically elected governments. And it could only have been amended by a unanimous vote of all 25 EU countries — another boon to the multinationals, which also easily could have purchased a veto from a small country's government-for-sale.

For all these reasons, the French were quite right to vote No, effectively killing this unwieldy, undemocratic and conservative plan for a corporate Europe — a rejection that offers the hope of building a Europe for its peoples in the future.

Doug Ireland can be reached through his blog <http://direland.typepad.com/direland/>.

European Draft Constitution Long on Neoliberalism, Short on Democracy

by Dave Lewit (using Miguel Otero's analysis), 29 March 2004

After the parliaments of Lithuania, Hungary, Slovenia, Italy, Greece, Austria, and Slovakia and 76 percent of the voters themselves of Spain in referendum approved the draft Constitution of the European Union, 55 percent of French voters themselves and 62 percent of Dutch voters in referendum with heavy turnout voted "no" to the Constitution. Without unanimity of nations, the Constitution must be redrafted or dropped.

OK, why did the French and Dutch reject it? (Why didn't the vote designers leave a space to write in one's reasons?!) Might it be due to what's left out? There is no simple answer, but Prof. Otero examined its history, process, and contents. IndyMedia/UK published Otero's analysis in 2004 to foster study and discussion before any voting. We have abstracted below his discussion of the draft constitution's CONTENTS, as well as his final comments.

Initiative Option

In California and other US states, citizens can make laws by collecting many signatures to place a proposition on the ballot in a general election, a process called "initiative" followed by "referendum". Massachusetts allows this, but enables the state legislature to alter or annul it. Similarly, or worse, the European constitution would require ONE MILLION signatures with quotas for states, and then the Euro Commission "might" order a referendum—or might not!

Rights Charter

The UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights requires all states to ensure everyone's right to food, shelter, medical care, education, unbiased information, work, citizenship, marriage, clean water, and other things as well as civil rights like those guaranteed by the US Constitution. The draft Euro constitution contains a Charter of Fundamental Rights, but doesn't require Euro states to adopt them into their own system of laws—they

apply only to agencies of the Euro Union and the constitutional law which governs it. Kinda like "states rights".

Asylum and Duty to Protect

The draft contains a provision for "partnership and cooperation with third countries for the purpose of managing inflows of people applying for asylum or subsidiary or temporary protection."

Sounds good, but weak wording may allow for Euro countries to outsource their protection duties, and allow UK's Tony Blair to set up refugee camps on the outskirts of the Euro Union.

Immigrants' Rights

The draft constitution would protect only citizens of European countries, and leave the millions of immigrants in the EU without rights except as the country where they reside and work may grant them. Otero advocates a provision requiring integration of all resident immigrants in the Union allowing them to be citizens after five years.

Regional Rights

Although Europe has many "folk" regions such as Catalonia, Asturia, Celtic provinces, Transylvania, and so on, their rights are not recognized by the Euro constitution even though the the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights endorses their right to self-determination.

Arms Mandate

The draft Euro constitution requires states to "progressively improve their military capabilities" under a "common military policy". It creates a European Armaments, Research and Military Capabilities Agency to develop and expand armaments, making Europe a military superpower despite the millions who protested UK and Spanish entry into the Iraq war. The European Parliament is kept impotent, with the Council of Ministers deciding on war policy and intervention.

Otero advocates a provision to eliminate of weapons of mass destruction within the borders of the European Union.

Protesters and Civil Warriors May Be Called "Terrorists"

Article III-210-1 states that the Union may use civilian and military means in the fight against terrorism, including by supporting third countries in combating terrorism in their territories...[Its] definition is so broad and ambiguous that almost any act of protest might be considered a terrorist act. Countries may use the European constitution to intervene in civil wars by crying "terrorist".

Neoliberal Threat to Health, Education

As European Union trade commissioner, Pascal Lamy pushed to allow corporatization of education and health sectors in Europe and globally in GATS (General Agreement on Trade in Services). Someone in the Euro Council of Ministers vetoed that. But not to worry! The draft constitution does not recognize country vetos in health and education, but only in audiovisual services. This reverses a progressive provision of the Treaty of Nice. So among other things, the French and Dutch "no" votes protect free public education and health care.

Unfettered Capitalism, Vague Social Goals

"The Union shall work for the sustainable development of Europe based on balanced economic growth, a social market economy, highly competitive and aiming at full employment and social progress, and with a high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment."

This is Euro double-speak. "The draft [constitution] makes lawful the whole neo-liberal reform program, known as the 'Lisbon spirit', against which hundreds of thousands have protested since

the strikes in the public sector in France in 1995." Article I-3-2, dedicated to objectives, establishes "a single market where competition is free and undistorted"; article I-3-4 secures free trade; article I-4-1, the free movement of people, goods, services and capital, and article I-29-3 provides total independence in monetary affairs to the European Central Bank. High competition is great, so long as you—the megacorporation—hold most of the high cards—resources. The wording is that of the Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe (UNICE), rather than the European Social Model or Advanced Social Democracy as proposed by the European Trade Union Confederation.

Otero advocates an article on universal provision through public services of all basic necessities such as social security, health, education, justice, energy, water, communications, and housing.

Conclusion

Despite this criticism, Professor Otero sees many positive and progressive efforts in constructing the draft constitution. The convention was a better method than ministerial hot-houses agreeing to treaties behind closed doors in the dead of night. "The presence of national opposition parties through the medium of national parliamentary representatives and European parliamentary representatives, sitting in the same debating chamber and round the same negotiating table as national governmental representatives" was salutary. "Generally speaking it might be said...that the Convention has achieved the opening up of the debate about the future of Europe. Never before has been the European Union come under so much public scrutiny by the academia, press and civil society as now."

With regard to document content, Otero is glad to see the European Parliament given some co-decision power in policy-making and budgetary affairs. Even now, the popularly elected Parliament is only a moral force except that it can fire the whole European Commission—the executive and legislative rolled into one, only to be reconstituted by the member governments. He also hails the creation of flesh-and-blood, accountable President and Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Still, concludes Otero, "***the Constitution consolidates the European Union as an economic giant; it pushes the Union to be also a military giant; but it maintains the Union as a political and democratic gnome.*** The limitations to the implementation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights, the non-recognition of the European regions undermining the diversity of Europe in a dangerously globalizing world, the acceptance of neo-liberalism as the economic ideology of the Union which brings inherently more inequalities and attacks on the welfare state for which previous generations had to fight so hard, and the creation of a European Army with licence to intervene all over the world, are only some examples that support this idea."

Miguel Otero teaches in the Department of Government at the University of Manchester, UK. Read his full article at www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2004/03/288141.html



French Fried Friedman

Regional Socialism Enables E-Miracle in India

by Greg Palast, *The Observer* (UK), 3 June 2005

Vicente Fox got a well-deserved boot in the derriere for saying Mexicans come to America for taking jobs "not even Blacks want to do." But Thomas Friedman earns plaudits and Pulitzers for his column which today announces that East Indians are taking jobs the French are too lazy to do ["A Race to the Top," *New York Times*, June 3]. His fit of racial profiling was motivated by his pique over France's rejection of the globalizers' charter for corporate dominance known as the European Constitution.

It's not the implicit racism of Friedman's statement which is most irksome, it's his ghastly glee that "a world of benefits they [Western Europeans] have known for 50 years is coming apart," because the French and other Europeans "are trying to preserve a 35 hour work week in a world where Indian engineers are ready to work a 35-hour day." He forgot to add, "and where Indian families are ready to sell their children into sexual slavery to survive." Now, THERE'S a standard to reach for.

In his endless series of pukey paeans to globalization, Friedman promises that free trade, an end of regulation, slashing government welfare and privatization of industry will lead to an economic nirvana. Yet, all he and his globalization clique can point to as the free market's accomplishment is the murderous competition between workers across borders to cut their wages for the chance to work in the new digital sweatshops.

Friedman praises the New India, freed of the shackles of Old India's socialist welfare state. I've seen the New India: half a billion people in dirt huts supporting a tiny minority's right to shop in air-conditioned malls. It is a Fritz Lang film in Hindi.

There is, of course, a hopeful, growing India where the much-heralded cyber work is based. But, Mr. Friedman, please note these brains for hire are found in Karnataka and Kerala, states whose cussed adherence to social welfare makes them more French than France and nothing like Thatcherized dog-eat-dog Britain or Reaganized America.

The computer wizards of Bangalore (in Karnataka) and Kerala are the products of fully funded state education systems where, unlike the USA, no child is left behind. A huge apparatus of state-owned or state-controlled industries, redistributionist tax systems, subsidies of necessities from electricity to food, tight government regulation and affirmative action programs for the lower castes are what has created these comfortable refuges for Oracle and Microsoft.

And the successful Indian states, unlike the dreadful free-market Uttar Pradesh, have labor unions so tough they make the French CGT look like a luncheon club of baguette biters.

A few years ago, I dropped in on a fishing village in Kerala in Southern India. Most fisherman worked from motorless dug-out log boats. Their language is Malayalam, but a large banner slung between two coconut trees announced in English, "WordPerfect applications class today." After they brought in the catch, the locals practiced programming on cardboard replicas of keyboards.

What made this all possible was not capitalist competitive drive (there was no corporate "entrepreneur" in sight), but the

state's investment in universal education and the village's commitment to development of opportunity, not of a lucky few, but for the entire community. The village was 100% literate, 100% unionized, and 100% committed to sharing resources through a sophisticated credit union finance operation.

This was the communal welfare state at it's best. Microsoft did not build the schools for programmers -- the corporation only harvested what the socialist communities sowed.

The economist Amartya Sen won the Nobel Prize in 1998 for predicting that Southern India, with its strong communalist social welfare state, would lead the economic advance of South Asia -- and do so without the Thatcherite sleight-of-hand of pretending that riches for the few equates to progress for the many.

When I asked the fishermen on their way to programming lessons what the West could do to encourage their efforts, they did not suggest privatizing Kerala's social security system. Rather -- and this was before the Seattle demonstrations of 1999 brought the World Trade Organization to the West's attention -- they called for the abolition of the WTO and greater protection for their wooden fishing fleet against the foreign factory boats marauding in their waters. With protective trade barriers, they could do as the US did for a hundred years: build up local resources and industry that creates the infrastructure of growth.

And the programmers themselves do not dream, Mr. Friedman, of stealing work from indolent Frenchmen or slothful Seattle geeks. Indians are not in love with the new method of brain-drain by satellite. They would hope for the opportunity to write code in their own languages for their own industries.

Friedman ends with the typical globalizer's warning that, "it's a bad time for France and friends to lose their appetite for hard work," or they will lose their jobs to Indians and Chinese willing to work for noodles. What Friedman means is that the French should give up their taste for old age pensions, universal health care, top-quality public education, protection of their skies and waters and all those things we used to call advances but now, according to the Friedman world order, stand in the way of progress.

It is too bad that the Times' opinion columns have not been outsourced to India. Were it so, a Keralite might explain to Friedman that human advances are measured not by our willingness to crawl lower and lower to buy ourselves a job from Bill Gates, or by counting the number of Gap outlets in Delhi, but by our success in protecting and nurturing *liberté, égalité* and *fraternité* among all humanity.

Read investigative reporter Greg Palast regularly by clicking on him at www.CommonDreams.org.



"If you're being raptured, throw me your wallet."

Suicide Attacks Bewilder US Self Has Replaced Honor and Martyrdom

by Madeleine Bunting, *Guardian/UK*, 14 May 2005

How suicide has been used as a weapon and as a protest through history offers up many illuminating parallels to what might motivate those who undertake the suicide missions in Iraq. It was the Japanese who made the use of suicide as a military strategy so feared, and the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka in the 1980s who applied it as a technique for assassinations. Both were part of wider military efforts which were not always easily distinguishable from a suicide mission. The line in war between a suicidal mission and a reckless disregard for one's own life can be very blurred.

This was true in the Soviet struggle against the Germans in the second world war. Some Soviet pilots undertook explicit suicide missions to ram bridges in Germany in 1945; many others went into battle knowing they would die, and saw their death as a sacrifice for the "motherland". It is the powerful who determined how such events are understood; while the Japanese and Islamist militants are feared as inhuman, the Soviets are celebrated for their courageous defiance of nazism.

The idea of suicide to serve a set of beliefs is also deeply rooted in history. The staging of the current brilliant production of Julius Caesar in London pointedly refers to Iraq with its US military fatigues and the set of a military warehouse. Several suicides in the final scenes lead to Brutus's poignant comment that swords have been turned "in our own proper entrails". Roman republicanism, imperial Japanese militarism: both elevated suicide as an honorable part of military valor.

Even more closely related to Iraq's suicide bombers is the fascinating description of early Christian martyrdom in Farhad Khosrokhavar's new book, *Suicide Bombers*.^{*} The suicidal recklessness of a large number of early Christians, aimed precisely at bringing about their martyrdom, bewildered and horrified contemporary commentators. But martyrdom was an astonishingly effective propaganda tool designed to inspire awe - and converts. *The Greek origin of the word martyr is "witness"*. Interestingly, it prompted exactly the same sorts of criticism among pagan Romans as today's Islamist militants do in the west: the Christian martyrs were accused of dementia and irrationality. Such was the flood of Christians in pursuit of martyrdom by the third century that the theologians had to step in to declare this thirst for a holy death to be blasphemous.

That concept of using your death to bear witness to a cause, without killing others, has prompted more than 1,000 suicides since 1963, when a Buddhist monk set himself on fire in protest against the oppression of Buddhism in Vietnam. Global mass media ensure that this individual protest has impact across the world; it is a desperate but hugely effective way to give the cause prominence.

Elements of all these precedents can be traced in the research done on motivations of suicide bombers in Palestine, Chechnya and al-Qaida and probably now those in Iraq. A sense of humiliation and the need to avenge honor on the part of their faith and/or people (or a potent combination of both as in Iraq) is emphasized by Khosrokhavar. He also picks up on how hating the world

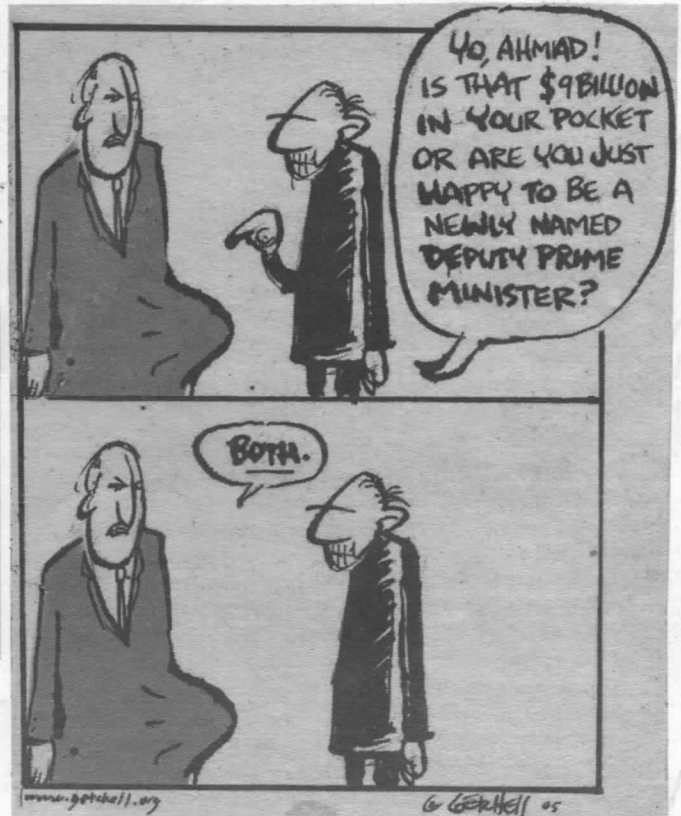
(because of the experience of injustice and oppression) leads to a longing for death—a rejection of this world's vale of tears.

These are concepts which are very difficult for westerners living largely comfortable lives to grasp. *Honor is meaningless to us; we have replaced it with a preoccupation with status and self-fulfillment.* We dimly grasp self-sacrifice but only apply the concept to our raising of children. Meanwhile, nothing can trump our dedication to the good life of consumer capitalism, and certainly not any system of abstract beliefs. Not having experienced the desperation of oppression, we have little purchase on the extremism it might engender. Meanwhile, we have medicalized rather than politicized the condition of hating the world and longing for death. The gulf in understanding yawns wide.

But our outraged incomprehension of suicide bombing is also partly because it is the opposite of how we have come to believe wars are fought. It is not the high technology of laser-guided bombs, nor the strangely sterile detachment of the airplane camera without any images of the screams, smashed bones and blood. The west can only now kill from a distance—preferably from several thousand feet up in the air or several hundred kilometers away on an aircraft carrier. *It is the very proximity of these suicide missions which is so shocking.* This kind of intimate killing is a reversion to pre-industrial warfare—the kind of brutality seen in the Thirty Years War, for example. Suicide bombers in Iraq are a new permutation of old traditions; they have no monopoly on the horrors they reveal of the human psyche and its capacity to destroy life.

^{*} Farhad Khosrokhavar. *Suicide Bombers: Allah's New Martyrs*. Pluto Press, 2005 Italics ours, throughout —Ed.

Where's the missing money in Iraq?
Let's ask Chalabi.



CHAPTER NEWS

HAPPY BIRTHDAY CHUCK!

Boston City Councilor Chuck Turner—about to celebrate his 65th birthday—is everywhere! Most BCA members know Chuck as an out-front leader for justice—for people unemployed, for kids needing better schools, for ex-convicts denied a chance for jobs, for neighborhoods threatened with toxic waste and biological warfare viruses, for knowing the local impacts of US trade agreements...everything humane and intelligent. Is it coincidence that he has been part of everything significant your BCA editor has experienced this month—and the coming season?:

1. Chuck was one of two featured speakers/discussants, along with Michael Shuman, at the May 25-29 seminar on sustainable local economies at the **E.L.Schumacher Society** ("small is beautiful") in Great Barrington MA. (Thanks, **Joanna Herlihy**, for your support!) He spoke at length about the giant Mòndragón cop enterprises in Spain, and led discussions about worker-owned and cooperative businesses and Boston's **Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative**, with excursions into Henry George theory, benefits, and alternatives to land trusts. Chuck surprised us with his cosmology going back to the Big Bang, ecological evolution and world economies, and its inspiration for creation of new communities. For his part, **Michael Shuman** elegantly elaborated LOIS—"locally-owned import-substituting" businesses which build strong local communities and prevent the social and ecological disasters of TINA—"there is no alternative" to free-trade.

2. Chuck has agreed to take part in the second roundtable of AfD's campaign **Popular Governance in New England**—responding to Burlington VT and Porto Alegre Brazil's great democratic experiment—participatory city budgeting. It's scheduled for Burlington this September.

3. For more than a year Chuck has been developing a broad initiative he calls **Funding the Dream** (see *Action Alerts* opposite) in which BCA and other AfD chapters could play useful parts.

4. Chuck is giving BCA advice in its upcoming campaign to **remove corporations from Boston schools**, starting with bottled water and giant beverage companies like Coca-Cola and Nestlé, spawning commodification of water, obesity, and diabetes as well as corruption of school curriculum.

5. Chuck was the butt of a virulent, juvenile, radical-right attack on the front page of *Pax Centurion*, a tabloid of the Boston Police Patrolmen's Association, Inc., by its editor **Jim Carnell**, which was distributed widely to lists including many progressives. When we phoned Chuck, he coolly recited the details of the anti-war rally and march of 20 March labeled "anarchist" and "illegal" by Carnell. Carnell similarly attacked **Howard Zinn**, who also spoke. Readers who wish to engage Carnell may contact your editor.

ACTION ALERTS

Mon. 13 June, 7-9pm. Boston. Local-and-beyond impact of BU's proposed "**bioterrorism lab**". Forum with Prof. **Daniel Goodenough** (cell biologist, Harvard Med.) and Prof. **Jonathan King** (molecular biology, MIT). Sponsors: Pax Christi Boston, Safety Net, others. **Paulist Center**, 5 Park St. Info: 617-442-7822.

Sat. 25 June, 10:15am. Boston. Film: "**Argentina---Hope In Hard Times** joins in the processions, protests, and street- corner neighborhood assemblies, visits workers' cooperatives and urban gardens, and takes a close-up look at the ways in which

Argentines are picking up the pieces of their devastated economy and creating new possibilities for the future. A spare narrative and rich location filming allow the humor strength, and resilience of the Argentine people to tell these tales. Their energy is reflected in the film's vibrant music and its lively pace; their optimism and pride in its message of hope." Free. **Boston Public Library**, Rabb Aud., Copley Square.

Thu. 14 July (Bastille Day!), 10am-1:30pm. Boston. Rally: "**Fund the Dream**" This is the kickoff event of a weekly series of rallies and marches organized by **Boston City Councilor Chuck Turner**, to combat unemployment, get housing, upgrade schools, &c. We'll interview unemployed people on video. Food, speeches, and music, followed by a march through downtown lunch-hour crowds. Long-term: realize Martin Luther King's dream of a "world without racism, militarism, or materialism." **Parkman Bandstand, Boston Common.**

At your convenience, archived on the Internet: **BBC's "The Power of Nightmares"**. A 3-part, 3-hour series on the **Neocons, the Radical Islamists, & the myth of Al Qaeda**—how Americans, the British, and their media have been incredibly conned. An historical documentary video by Adam Curtis, with script/text. "Fear of a phantom enemy is all the politicians have left to maintain their power." www.informationclearinghouse.info/video1040.htm



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Please help us as we fight to make a better future for ourselves and our children -- Join the Boston/Cambridge Alliance for Democracy. (Cut out this form and send it to:

Dave Lewit, 271 Dartmouth St. #2h, Boston, MA 02116.)

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COLOPHON

Dave Lewit, Editor 617-266-8687. Pls apply as Assoc Editor.

271 Dartmouth St. #2H, Boston MA 02116. dlewit@iqc.org

Visit the Alliance web site: www.TheAllianceForDemocracy.org

Visit our new regional web site: www.NewEnglandAlliance.org

Web builder: Sergio Reyes. Webmaster: Stan Robinson.

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