

BCA Dispatch

Newsletter of the **July**
Boston-Cambridge Alliance for Democracy **2006**

Why did they elect Hamas? Because they hated the corruption in Fatah. They weren't opting for Hamas politics, rather for Hamas purity.

One is reminded of the correspondence between dancer Isadora Duncan and scrawny playwright George Bernard Shaw. Duncan proposed that they engender a child together.

"Think of it!" she exclaimed. "With my body and your brains, what a wonder it would be!"

"Yes," Shaw answered, "but what if it turns out to have my body and your brains?"

—Roni Ben Efrat

CHAPTER NEWS (Continued on Page 8)

* * **Summer Vacation** * *

The next meeting of the Boston-Cambridge Alliance for Democracy will be on **Wednesday, 20 September, 2006**. Time and place to be announced—probably the usual: Cambridge Friends Meeting. We need to talk about continuing with monthly mini-forums, pursuing our five projects, or focusing on one or two projects, and who will coordinate and lead.

Meanwhile, while you are not relaxing during the summer, continue with your good work in changing the system, or at least some part that may have a ripple effect. Educate yourself and others. Even if you are not part of an action group, "amicably connect with other local groups, listening and injecting into their deliberations questions and understandings regarding corporatism and democratic alternatives. Those groups may include fraternal, religious, and civic organizations, but more importantly governance forums such as hearings of city councils and state legislatures, and political party associations."

—from "Alliance's Second Decade", *BCA Dispatch*, June 2006, p.14.

In lieu of the *Dispatch* for August, we will send out a new edition of *BCA Reader*—Articles of Lasting Interest.

Baghdad to Be Another Saigon? Iraqi US Employees Fear Militia Endgame

by Immanuel Wallerstein, Fernand Braudel Ctr., Binghamton U.
1 July 2006

The U.S. government tries to keep a brave face about Iraq. It regularly claims it is making progress in its objectives.

The recent publication in the press of a June 6 memo that U.S. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad sent to the Secretary of State shows internal discussion that is much more pessimistic.

It relates the multiple and growing problems of the Iraqi staff who work for the U.S. government in the ultra-protected Green Zone. It is not a happy story. The Iraqi staff is complaining, says Khalilzad, that "Islamist and/or militia groups have been negatively affecting their daily routine." (Continued on page 7 >>)



PRD Liberal
Obrador

Citizen Hortensia
Ramos Pineda

PAN Conservative
Calderón

Hortensia supported >100 flower sellers & supporters beaten and raped by police for trying to hold ground in Wal-Mart takeover, Atenco, Mexico

Rebellion in Oaxaca, Mexico Create Popular Assemblies to Oust Governor

by Nancy Davies*, *Narco News*, 21 June 2006

[Mexico City, Oaxaca City and Tuxtla Gutierrez (capital of Chiapas) are about the same distances apart, heading S or SE, as Boston, New York City, and Washington respectively. —Ed.]

In Mexico, at the time of writing [June 2006], 70,000 teachers in the state of Oaxaca are striking for higher wages. Following attacks by 1,700 riot police, teachers armed with sticks and stones fought running battles and eventually overpowered them. The movement has broadened into a popular rebellion demanding the resignation of the state governor, **Ulises Ruiz**, from the corrupt dictatorial PRI (Partido Revolucionario Institucional) which ruled Mexico for over 70 years. Workers have taken to the streets with banners proclaiming: 'Popular resistance', and 'Revolution – out with Ulises'. According to some reports, teachers have taken over 20 town halls in small villages, the town squares becoming one giant protest.

—*Socialism Today*, Jul-Aug 2006

The Oaxacan local of the Mexican National Education Workers' Union (SNTE) held the first Popular Assembly of the People of Oaxaca on June 17 to create a permanent space for citizens to exercise their guaranteed constitutional rights and assume a political position in analyzing the social and political realities that presently prevail in the state.

The first Popular Assembly (*Asamblea Popular del Pueblo Oaxacaqueño*) was attended by 170 people representing 85 organizations. Invited to attend were all the SNTE delegates, union members, social and political organizations, non-governmental organizations, collectives, human rights organizations, parents, tenant farmers, municipalities, and citizens of the entire state of Oaxaca. A second Popular Assembly took place today, Tuesday, June 20. The Popular Assembly calls for the removal from office of Governor Ulises Ruiz Ortiz as its first goal.

The federal Department of the Interior...refuses to deal with Ruiz' removal because it is not an education issue. The teachers refuse to agree to anything less. (Continued on page 2 >>)

The *zócalo* (main city square) and three blocks in each direction surrounding was once again under the control of the teachers. Because their camp tents were destroyed in the police attack on June 14, teachers sat on the sidewalks on pieces of newspaper or cardboard. They plan to sleep in a safer area and return by day. The *zócalo* is also adorned by artisans selling their blouses, skirts, huipiles, etc. Most of the shops on the *zócalo* are open and a few cafes also; a few tourists were in sight.

Governor Ruiz, for his part, is apparently paying people 1,000 pesos each to march in a "silent march" in his support on Thursday, June 22. The university radio station also broadcast a presentation by a professor confirming payments of 400, 500 or 1,000 pesos (\$35, \$44, and \$87 dollars, respectively) and recommending that people not sell their dignity. One person reported a message left on his cell phone offering the 1,000 peso payment, which is more than Ruiz usually offers. As Victor Cruz Romero, a teacher from Loma Bonita in Oaxaca, put it, "a bag of food for a vote is what the poor receive."

The week following the early morning police assault on June 14th, the maestros [assembly organizers] and supporters occupied the *zócalo* only from the hours of 8 AM to 8 PM. However, they have been doing other things. Friday June 16th they organized the Third Megamarch in Oaxaca, with a reported 300,000 turning out. The folks in the town have also showed huge support, cheering from the streets alongside the march and bringing food to the striking teachers and their supporters.



400,000 people in Oaxaca demand PRI Gov. Ulises Ruiz's removal

Tuesday June 20th marked the Maestros statewide assembly, which I don't have a huge amount of information on, other than that they've decided to make decisions by taking a vote. Since the beginning of the maestros planton, many other social groups have been involved helping out, and promoting their interests. Saturday June 17th was the first Oaxacan Popular Assembly, a meeting of many of the more radical folks who have been helping out, as well as more mainstream groups trying to get a neck in on the action.

—Nancy Davies, *Narco News*, 7 July 2006

As one of its first actions, the Popular Assembly will convoke more than 500,000 people in the next few days, according to the SNTE local's secretary of "alliances and social administration," José Antonio Hernández Santos, in a press conference held in the Law and Social Science Building of the Benito Juárez Autonomous University of Oaxaca after the assembly.

The SNTE members have received no salaries since May 30, when their checks were cut by five days' pay. The strike began May 22. Teachers are receiving food and other assistance from the residents of Oaxaca. They say that this struggle is worth it and they won't give up until Ruiz is out.

That Ruiz must go, as have three of his historic predecessors in this volatile state, is an opinion held by many people, excluding the hotel owners of Oaxaca City who suffer 1500 room vacancies at this time. Owners believe that the SNTE is responsible for destroying tourism, the only industry in the state, which supports "thousands", according to Charles Gray, an American expatriate who referred to the importance of "trickle down" economics. However, I spoke to three waiters, a baker and a house cleaner, and heard from them clear support for ridding the state of Ruiz' dictatorial regime, despite the personal sacrifice they are now enduring along with the teachers.

The holding of a Popular Assembly echoes the Oaxacan tradition of "uses and customs" by which many towns still govern themselves in open citizen assemblies. The presence of political parties within such assemblies is not permitted; it is also forbidden in the Popular Assembly of the People of Oaxaca.

The justification named in the first Popular Assembly document states, "Given that sovereignty resides in the people and for the people who have the inalienable right to expel their governments when those do not comply with the mandate for which they were elected, the people of Oaxaca are justified in soliciting the revocation of powers in the State of Oaxaca." This reflects the traditional idea that the leaders are supposed to respond to their people's will. The declaration of the Popular Assembly also states they will fight for the revocation of judicial, legislative and executive leadership powers within the state.

"Furthermore, the conduct of Ruiz has generated all types of antipathy and repudiation by the different sectors of Oaxaca society." The marches of June 2, 7 and 16 are mentioned. The popular voice, as repeated by Cruz Romero, does not forgive the attack on June 14 in which he claims three children died, one was blinded and one is gravely ill. In addition, Cruz Romero believes, seven teachers died, including one by a heart attack and a pregnant woman who suffered an abortion.

Thursday June 22nd CIPO-RFM and other social rights groups occupied the offices of TV channel 9 from 8 AM to 4 PM to protest media disinformation and privatization. There have also been marches in the towns outside of Oaxaca City, and yesterday a group of maestros blocked the highway on the Isthmus of Tehuantepec for a number of hours, burning a bus in the action. Wednesday the 28th will mark the 4th Megamarch in Oaxaca, demanding the dismissal of Ulises Ruiz Ortiz.

—Nancy Davies, *Narco News*, 7 July 2006

Arbitrary detentions of leaders of social organizations throughout the state have increased. The destruction of the historic patrimony, both natural and cultural was cited.

Meanwhile, ten municipal town halls have been taken over in Oaxaca state, among which are Juchitan, Zimatlan, Huautla de Jimenez, Teotitlan de Flores Magon, Matias Romero, Huajuapán de Leon, Puerto Angel and Puerto Escondido. Farmers have marched in from Tuxtepec. Inhabitants of San Salvador Atenco, in Mexico state, have made their way towards the Oaxaca City. Followers of the popular uprising in San Blas Atempa retook their municipal building in solidarity with the teachers' movement. The government buildings of Pinotepa Nacional, Tuxtepec, San José Chiltepec, Valle Nacional, San Pedro Pochutla and Asunción Nochixtlán have all been occupied.

The Popular Assembly organization says that assemblies will take place statewide.

* Nancy Davies, Zapatist reporter and fiction writer, formerly of Boston, lives and works in Oaxaca with George Salzman, former UMB professor and BCA member.

EDITORIAL

Redoing Democracy

by Dave Lewit, Alliance for Democracy, 17 July 2006

THE CLOCK IS TICKING. It used to be the clock of nuclear disaster, where the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists reset the hands—four minutes before doomsday, or after some hard negotiating, ten minutes back. The nuclear terror is still there, and major social change might actually end the threat.

But a second clock is ticking—toward ecological collapse. Global Warming continues relentlessly as we move past Peak Oil and into the frantic search for energy alternatives that will rescue us from the nightmare of the end of manufacturing and transport, freezing homes, tattered clothes, walking miles for food and water, guarding our property with shotguns, tanks in the streets, riots, militias, Big Brother on emergency radio.

We think of quick fixes—hybrid cars, wind power, recycling trash, going to church, joining a street protest, hugs, prayers. We watch or listen to commentators ranting for or against government controls on consumer behavior, but it's a bit harder to do our own research and know that **most oil consumption is industrial, agricultural, and military**. Some of us fear that wars and dictatorships and socialism may come to our shores, but deny that the necessary rare mineral—coltan (metallic ore comprising niobium and tantalum)—is reluctantly mined by virtual slaves in Africa because we want our cell phones and laptops.

How are we to control the industrial (chemical, transport, manufacturing), agricultural (factory farming), and military consumption of oil and gas, and of the limited fresh water supply of the earth? Clearly a political solution is necessary. So yes, we can try to elect more responsible legislators and administrators, and (does it have to be through them?) judges. To do this we may have to change the system of elections, and the way campaigns are done—especially TV and other media, campaign finance, and voting. These are formidable tasks. Perhaps the reform with the highest leverage would be IRV—Instant Runoff Voting—enabling a variety of policy options to be taken seriously by a variety of candidates, without citizens worrying about being “spoilers”. Political parties with responsible, multi-issue platforms would be fostered.

Beyond this, **we must deal with the institutions of government** into which we place elected officials—congressional/state house rules determining committee control, ways of involving legislators in getting vital information, debate and feedback—citizen as well as technical. End the presidential veto and military command. Change such rules and we may solve 90 percent of our public problems. Voter participation might double, since what voters do would have real effects. With respect to climate change, we are more likely to get control of the main sources of greenhouse gases, and eventually better distribution of profits and benefits as well as reduction of costs—environmental, social, and financial.

Pie in the sky? Not if we go local. When we start leveraging municipal “home rule” for citizen—not commercial—participation and benefit, we will come to see what we're up against: the state and federal establishments. The federal system dictating the rights and responsibilities of units of government vertically needs to be overhauled, with an eye toward creating responsible **horizontal systems**—direct relations among municipalities across state lines, and with a minimum of federal

interference. The federal law makers and administrators are too far away, and too vulnerable to massive corporate lobbies, for us folks to have much influence there anymore. Like, whatever happened to Civil Rights? The threat most likely to melt this system would be activated horizontal power. To regain power, federal institutions would be more likely to make accommodations—a “new federalism”.

How to get started? **Why not send a delegation to Spain?** They have recently emerged from a fascist dictatorship (think Bush) and established a high-participation capitalist-socialist democracy. Their vibrant northeast region of Catalonia (think New England) was recently granted autonomy (partial separatism, but still cooperating). In the north, yes, they have militant Basque separatists (think Dixie or Indians), but they also have the giant co-op complex Mondragon, a model for socially responsible manufacturing, finance, and outreach. They had their train bombing (think 9-11) and still withdrew troops from Iraq. They have gay marriage and racial tolerance. They actively cooperate in the European Union. They speak the same language as in Argentina and Venezuela, with similar wishes to ensure basic decent living standards for all. They have late dinner with wine.

Can we learn from them? *Adelante!*

“AMERICA: FREEDOM TO FASCISM”

Through interviews with U.S. Congressmen, a former IRS Commissioner, former IRS and FBI agents and tax attorneys and authors, Aaron Russo connects the dots between money creation, federal income tax, and the national identity card which becomes law in May 2008. This ID card will use Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) chips which are essentially homing devices used to track people. This film shows in great detail and undeniable facts that America is moving headlong into a fascist police state. **** Coming to a theater near you in August.****

Neo-Nazis, Skinheads Enter US Army Pentagon Winks At Hate-Group Policy

by Amy Goodman, DemocracyNow.org, 7 July 2006

IN MILITARY NEWS, the Southern Poverty Law Center is warning the Pentagon's recruiting difficulties have allowed “large numbers of violent neo-Nazis and skinheads extremists” to join the armed forces. The Center says the numbers could reach into the thousands. Pentagon investigator Scott Barfield said graffiti advocating the Aryan Nations has appeared in Baghdad. He said commanders are not taking action even after being notified of the presence of extremists or gang members amidst their ranks. Barfield added: “They don't want to make a big deal again about neo-Nazis in the military because then parents who are already worried about their kids signing up and dying in Iraq are going to be even more reluctant about their kids enlisting if they feel they'll be exposed to gangs and white supremacists.”

Ed. Note: “A decade after the Pentagon declared a zero-tolerance policy for racist hate groups, recruiting shortfalls caused by the war in Iraq have allowed ‘large numbers of neo-Nazis and skinhead extremists’ to infiltrate the military, according to watchdog organization Southern Poverty Law Center..”
—*NYTimes* 7 Jul 2006. So, what about black troops? If skinheads are promoting race war, won't this split the Army?

Theft of an Election: Mexico US Meddling, Like Florida & Ohio

by Greg Palast, film transcript, * ~10 July 2006

July 3rd, I was in my office in London when the phone rang. It was Mexico City. I was told, "Take a look at the Mexican papers." The exit polls in the presidential election there showed a clear win for Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, the left wing's candidate for president, but the official count gave the election to George Bush's ally, Felipe Calderon, of the rightwing ruling party, the PAN. Hmmm. Exit polls that don't match the official vote count. I had heard that story before.

In Ohio in 2004, John Kerry led Bush in the exit polls, and in 2000, Al Gore won in the Florida exit polls. But in both cases, George Bush won in the official count.

So I booked the first flight out to Mexico City to answer the question: 'Did Felipe Calderon of the conservative PAN, the party in power, win the presidential election fairly or was this just another Florida *con salsa*?' The official numbers just didn't add up. So my first stop was to meet one of Mexico's top numbers experts, statistician Victor Romero of Mexico's National University. Dr. Romero had charted the official government elections returns from each of Mexico's 113,000 voting stations...

On a computer printout, Dr. Romero showed how the official tallies matched the exit polls, with challenger Lopez Obrador ahead by 2% all night. That is, until the very end, when several precincts came in for the ruling party by 10-to-1, and then 100-to-1, putting their candidate Felipe Calderon over the top, literally in the last minutes. The doctor found that statistically improbable...

The results may not seem so miraculous if you take a look at these voter sheets. This is from a district in Guanajuato, which shows that Calderon picked up 192 votes, but Obrador, the challenger, got only 12. And here's how this miraculous total can be explained. We were given a videotape of a poll worker, seen here stuffing ballots into the unguarded cardboard ballot box. Mexico has virtually zero ballot security in rural areas. There is no system for accounting for unused paper ballots. Stuffing them into the cardboard boxes is absurdly easy.

Despite the evidence of ballot stuffing, the conflict with exit polls and the miraculous returns, the Federal Election Commission** in Mexico named Calderon the winner by a margin thin as a tortilla, by less than 0.5%. The rush to announce a winner was all the more surprising given the wave of other reported irregularities. This is Cesar Yanez who directed the campaign for Lopez Obrador's party, the PRD. He noted there were 300,000 fewer votes for president than for senator, a drop-off that voting experts say never happens without fraud. Yanez guessed maybe they ate their votes.

"Blank" Ballots for Obrador

The Federal Election Commission's rush to announce a winner caught my attention because of the astonishingly high pile of supposedly uncountable votes: nearly one million blank unreadable ballots, four times the alleged margin of victory. The smell of Florida was unmistakable. In the 2000 U.S. election, Florida's Secretary of State Katherine Harris stopped a hand count of 179,000 supposedly blank ballots. Mexico's Electoral Commission, taking the exact same stance as Harris, is refusing to have a public hand count of those supposedly blank one million ballots.

Yanez noted that the commission agreed to open a fragment

of 1% of the ballot packets. In most cases, ballots that were totaled as blank were, in fact, votes for Obrador. Each box opened produced enough newfound votes for Obrador that opening all the boxes should statistically change the outcome of the election. But all the boxes won't be opened. The ruling party, the PAN, and the Electoral Commission refuse a full public recount, and the government says that it's over.

Felipe Calderon and his ally George Bush say it's all over, but there are hundreds of thousands of people here who say, not until all the votes are counted one by one. On Saturday, half a million Obrador supporters filled the capital to make one simple demand: *voto pro voto*, count every vote.

We've come here to the ruling party's compound to ask Felipe Calderon exactly why he doesn't want to count all the votes.

"Mr. Calderon, why not count all the ballots?" would be a question from England. Calderon gave me the brush-off, but the man tipped to be his foreign minister, Arturo Sarukhan, defended his man: *There is a process called the rule of law in this country, and it is not to be used willy-nilly to bend depending on whether you fancy the results of an election or you don't fancy the results of an election. What we have said is that we are convinced that what was not obtained through the ballot box should not be obtained through the streets.*

But in Washington, President Bush was too impatient for the full vote count. While the European Union was waiting for a full legal review, Bush called Calderon to congratulate him on his victory, and evidence suggests that George Bush may have secretly tried to help in that victory. We have obtained from U.S. FBI files a copy of a secret government contract with a private firm, ChoicePoint of Alpharetta, Georgia. ChoicePoint, you may recall, is the company that provided a list to Katherine Harris in 2000, which permitted her office to wrongly scrub thousands of African Americans from Florida voter rolls.

ChoicePoint, this document indicates, was back in the vote list business in Mexico at the request of the Bush administration. While the cover of their September 2001 contract says it is to gather intelligence for counterterrorism investigations, the still classified appendix, which we have, clarifies that the contract is limited to gathering citizen files and voter lists of Latin American nations, specifically those nations which have leftist presidents or leading leftist candidates for president.

The company, we have learned, did, in fact, obtain the voter files of Venezuela and Mexico for the FBI. It's difficult to imagine how these files will help in the war on terror, but they can be very useful in influencing Latin American elections. And, indeed, we filmed voters in Mexico who found themselves mysteriously scrubbed from voter rolls: *---Scrubbed voter: I wasn't able to vote. I wasn't on the list. I waited seven hours here for nothing, seven hours in the rain, seven hours hungry, just so the electoral representatives could laugh at me. The Electoral Commission is a real fraud. I tell you that as a Mexican.*

Whistleblower Hands Over Key to Calderon Web Site

In Mexico City, I met with an Obrador supporter who discovered that, in fact, the ruling party, the PAN, had somehow got a hold of the voter files. She discovered this information after she obtained the secret passwords to the party's website from a whistleblower. We were not allowed to film her face: *I can't tell you how they were using this information, but I can assure you this is illegal. This is a crime.*

Are you aware of the fact that a contractor for George Bush and the U.S. FBI obtained all these citizen files?

Yes, *ChoicePoint* was the name of the company who got that. Yes, we were aware of that.

But we don't know where this information comes from? We know that it's in the official page of the candidate.

But they're not supposed to have these for these purposes? No, no, no. They're not supposed to have it. And, of course, they are by no way supposed to use it. That's a crime.

But it could be very helpful. Well, much more than we ever thought.

She showed me on a computer how to get into the hidden pages of the PAN's website. This was Calderon's page, right? If you go into the user *hildebrando117* and you typed in the password, you could type your name, any name. You could find all her information, where she lives, where she stay, or everything. These are the electoral votes.

Our source believes that the vote-counting software was key to the election victory. She showed us proof that the candidate's brother-in-law was paid to write the vote-counting software. Was the election stolen?

Yes, we can be sure of that. The election was definitely stolen. And people should be there counting the votes one by one. Democracy doesn't have a time limit...

Why would the Bush administration be so concerned about the presidency of Mexico? There are many issues, but one stands out. It's the oil.

—*Demonstrator 1: We have to fight to defend our oil so they don't take it to another country. Lopez Obrador is going to fight for what we haven't been able to fight for.*

—*Demonstrator 2: We have to save our oil. The oil is ours. It belongs to Mexicans.*

Mexico sells more oil to the U.S.A. than Saudi Arabia. Leftist Lopez Obrador has stood steadfast against allowing U.S. oil companies to own any part of the Mexican oil system. The PAN, however, has suggested allowing the U.S. oil majors to have a stake in the Mexican oil operations.

—*PAN supporter: We want a country where people aren't persecuted for being rich. People who work have the right to live well. And people who don't work, too bad, tough luck.*

This week, I hung around Mexico City, waiting for the inevitable concession speech from Obrador. In the face of ruling party intransigence over recounting the votes, he had no choice but to follow the path of Al Gore and John Kerry: concede defeat. While killing time in a dive with some loud mariachis, I ran into filmmaker Luis Mandoki, Obrador's film biographer. Over chicken mole, he told me that Obrador was of a different character than his U.S. counterparts: *The difference between AMLO (A M Lopez Obrador) and Gore or Kerry is the people. He said, "If I wanted, I could stop the country tomorrow. I can. I can block airports, communications, highways. I'm never going to do that. That's not good for the people." He's somebody who is very prudent, very careful. But at the same time, he said, "But I'm not going to let him get it, because I won the election." I mean, neither Gore nor Kerry had that connection with the country, which he does. And that's where his strength comes from.*

He invited me to meet with Obrador the next day. When Mandoki introduced me to the candidate, I asked the upbeat Obrador what he would do if the ruling party simply refused to count the votes: If they refuse to count the vote, what are you going to do?

"Espera," he said, "wait" for my answer. It came later that day, before thousands of his chanting supporters. He's saying we won't give up. We won't concede. The election is a fraud.

And we will fight in the courts and in the streets peacefully. And he called for his supporters to march from each of the 300 voting districts to the capital beginning Wednesday. Two million are expected to arrive in Mexico City this weekend to demand a recount. They say it's not over. The fat lady hasn't sung, not until all ballots are counted, vote by vote.

Ed. Note: At least this balloting wasn't electronic—just paper ballots, in unsecured boxes. Obrador is contesting the announced (by a PAN-dominated commission) Calderon win because Mexican law requires review by a special Tribunal. He wants a total recount. Soon—stay tuned, e.g., by listening to DemocracyNow.org.

* We abridged this transcript only by cutting polite or redundant speech from interviews

** Palast incorrectly refers throughout to Federal Electoral Commission when he should have said Federal Electoral Institute. The final arbiter which will announce the winner by August 31 after considering evidence of error and fraud is the Federal Electoral Tribunal. —Ed.

The film, "Florida con Salsa: Vote Fraud in the Mexican Election — A Greg Palast report," is produced by Rick Rowley and filmed by Rowley and Jacquie Soohen (Big Noise Films). Matt Pascarella contributed to this investigation. www.GregPalast.com. Greg Palast is the Author the New York Times Bestseller: *Armed Madhouse: Who's Afraid of Osama Wolf, China Floats, Bush Sinks, the Scheme to Steal '08, No Child's Behind Left, and other Dispatches from the Frontlines of a Class War.*

LETTER FROM IRELAND

Mortgages, Low Wages Saddle "Tiger"

by Richard K. Moore, Wexford, July 2006

IF YOU ASKED THE AVERAGE IRISH PERSON about the European Union, chances are they'd tell you that it's been a very good thing for Ireland. They might tell you about all the infrastructure funding Ireland has received from the EU (mainly for new roads), and the economic boom that Ireland (the "Celtic Tiger") has experienced since joining the EU. With considerable justification, they might tell you that Ireland has never had it so good. Such a perspective is an easy one to adopt, given what's happened visibly in Ireland, and it's a perspective that is consistently reinforced, in various ways, by the mainstream media and by most politicians.

This perspective is not, however, shared by everyone. Richard Douthwaite, author of "The Growth Illusion", pointed out one of the problems at a meeting I attended in Dublin, when he said, "The Celtic Tiger is based on debt." As Ireland began to experience jobs growth, the banks opened up the credit flood gates. Jubilant at their recent escape from relative poverty, people were eager to enjoy the trappings of prosperity. They got credit cards, borrowed money for new cars, paid exorbitant rates for insurance, and took on mortgage payments for new homes.

Banks drove up the price of houses by offering 100% financing at low interest rates, and by being lax about borrower qualifications. House prices skyrocketed, and the average first-time home-buyer family now pays something like a third of their income in mortgage payments. These are variable-rate mortgages, so as interest rates go up, along with fuel prices and inflation generally, an increasing number of people are being squeezed financially. (Continued on Page 6 >>)

Gaza-Lebanon War A Global Strategy

Neocons To Rise From Mideast Ashes

by Robert Dreyfuss, TomPaine.com, 17 July 2006

Israel's reckless, high-stakes decision to launch simultaneous wars against both Hamas and Hezbollah last week is a critical, perhaps world-shattering event. It cannot be seen merely in its local context, that is, as an act by the unilateralist regime in Jerusalem to crush the armed wings of two Islamic fundamentalist organizations in Gaza, the West Bank and southern Lebanon. Nor can it be seen merely in its regional context, that is, as an effort to raise the stakes in the struggle against Syria, Iran and rejectionist factions in occupied Iraq. Rather, Israel's actions must be seen, first and foremost, in the context of global politics.

The key question: Is the Israeli offensive designed as a calculated effort to catapult the hard-right, neoconservative ideologues back to power in Washington?

The terrorist attacks of 9/11, the 21st century's Pearl Harbor, allowed Vice President Dick Cheney—along with Paul Wolfowitz, Doug Feith, John Bolton, et al. —to steer President George W. Bush and the U.S. government toward a global war, including the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq; the endless “war on terrorism” and the militarization of American foreign policy. Since then, and especially as the adventure in Iraq bogged down, the less adventurous realists in the American foreign policy establishment have begun to eclipse the previously hegemonic neoconservatives. For the past year or so, the Pollyannas amid the chattering classes have told us that the neoconservatives' moment has passed, and that the adults are back in control in the nation's capital. What they forgot—and what Israel's criminal attacks on Gaza and Lebanon have reminded us—is that the neoconservative war party is global, not domestic. Outflanked, temporarily, in the United States, the neocons are now flexing their muscle outside the United States in a way that can give them added new leverage at home.

Let's analyze the current crisis, piece by piece.

First, Israel's actions in no way can be seen as a legitimate response to the small-scale attacks from Hamas and Hezbollah. Instead, what Israel has done has used the pretext of those pinprick attacks—a couple of border raids and a handful of errant rockets—to launch a strategic attack whose goals are to crush Hamas and the remaining institutions of Palestinian self-rule and decapitate and destroy Hezbollah politically and militarily in Lebanon.

Second, it's clear that Israel would never have launched this war without having made the calculation that it would win the support of the United States. The rest of the world is solidly aligned against Israel's outrageously disproportionate attacks, but none of that matters. No diplomatic mission from the feeble United Nations, no angry statements from the Arab League, no fulminations from Western Europe will deter Israel. As long as Israel has the support of the United States, it will forge ahead relentlessly. So far, in a shocking display of craven capitulation to the Israeli fait accompli, President Bush has repeatedly endorsed Israel's aggression. But Israel is clearly counting on more than just Bush's support for its actions in Gaza and Lebanon. More broadly, Israel is seeking to shift the balance in the Bush administration back in favor of the neocons, the hawks and their radical “New American Century” comrades.

Third, by invading and bombing Lebanon and acting brutally to crush the Palestinian Authority, Israel has created a unified

field theory of the Middle East's crises, uniting the escalating world showdown with Iran, the unraveling civil war in Iraq, the crisis over Syria's role in Lebanon, and the Arab-Israeli conflict itself into one big tangle. To be sure, all of those conflicts were always linked. But now they are as one. And in each case, the United States now faces a huge dilemma.

A sane U.S. policy would (1) exert backbreaking pressure on Israel to halt its attacks; (2) open a dialogue with Iran and Syria about containing Hezbollah and Hamas; (3) take drastic steps to stop the Iraqi civil war by making across-the-board concessions to Iraq's Sunnis and forcing the Shiites to swallow it, while starting a phased U.S. withdrawal; and (4) get the White House directly involved in the Israel-Palestine peace process as if their lives depended on it.

But Israel, and its neoconservative allies, are counting on none of that to happen. Instead, they've gambled that in each case President Bush will fall back under the spell of Dick Cheney and the neocons, and do precisely the opposite: continue to give Israel the green light, throw rhetorical bombs at Damascus and Teheran, escalate the counterinsurgency campaign in Iraq and take Israel's side in its wall-building, settlement-defending, no-talks-with-Hamas unilateralism.

Make no mistake: Until last week, before Israel went to war, the neoconservatives were losing across the board. They watched in horror as the war in Iraq faltered, and they were appalled by President Bush's Condi-led opening to Iran. Indeed, to many it seemed as if the entire post-9/11 project to remake the Middle East and build American hegemony on that cornerstone was in jeopardy.

Speaking at a forum at the American Enterprise Institute last week, Frederick Kagan warned that the United States is in “danger of losing everything” because the war in Iraq is not being pursued aggressively enough. “All of this success can and will be undone ... if we do not get the security situation [in Iraq] under control, and fast,” he said, accurately enough. Now that Israel is at war, they have the chance once again to go on the offensive, against Iran, in Iraq, against Syria and against the mythical Terrorist International that they warn about so regularly. You can imagine what Cheney and his allies are whispering to the president: Be resolute, be strong—and bring 'em on!

Robert Dreyfuss is the author of Devil's Game: How the United States Helped Unleash Fundamentalist Islam (Henry Holt/Metropolitan Books, 2005). www.robertdreyfuss.com.

LETTER FROM IRELAND (Continued from Page 5)

The cure for inflation, according to the bankers, is further increases in interest rates. That's a convenient position for them to take, given that it represents a direct cash transfer to them. The logic of their position, however, leaves something to be desired. Controlling inflation, one might assume, has to do with keeping prices down for families. But for a typical family the mortgage payment is their single greatest expense. For them increased interest rates represent a significant INCREASE in inflation—in the price they are paying to live in their home. As usual, however, the 'logic' of banking decisions is not questioned, least of all by politicians or governments. Banks are the high priests of the economy; their pronouncements are taken as divine revelations, not to be understood or questioned by mere mortals.

The role of the banks in the Celtic Tiger episode is a bit like the strategy of a smart drug dealer. First you flood the market with cheap product (credit or cocaine), you keep this up until

you've got a large clientele with heavy habits, and then you start increasing the price of the product. In this way you can siphon off a significant portion of the cash flow in the target community - for many years to come.

"Competitiveness" Mangles Hopes

Talks are currently being held between labor unions, employers, and government officials. They are seeking agreement on a new "Partnership Agreement". The idea here is to negotiate wage levels and other working conditions on a national level, thus minimizing strikes and labor unrest generally.

In these negotiations inflation is at the center of the discussions. As workers are squeezed by inflation (in all its forms), unions are understandably demanding some gains in the wage area. With all the billions flowing in the Irish economy, why is it that those doing the work can't even keep level with inflation? In these negotiations the government takes the side of the employers, who naturally want wages as low as possible. The government position is that wages must be kept on a tight leash—so that Ireland can remain 'competitive'.

Meanwhile, with the expansion of the EU into Eastern Europe, Ireland is being flooded with workers from low-wage areas, particularly Poland at the moment. The government has shown itself to be extremely lax when it comes to enforcing the law, as regards exploitation of the immigrant workers. In many cases, illegal exploitive practices have occurred even on internal government projects. While this is unfair to these workers, and while it undermines the ability of Irish workers to obtain better salaries, the government doesn't want to know. The net effect, after all, is to increase Irish 'competitiveness'.

I've focused here on a few aspects of the EU experience that have special relevance to Ireland. In "Escaping the Matrix", I go into some depth regarding the EU, globalization, and the role of banks and finance.

Native to California, Richard Moore lives and writes in Wexford, Ireland. He is the author of "Escaping the Matrix: How We the People can change the world", published by The Cyberjournal Project, ISBN: 0-9770983-0-3, <http://EscapingTheMatrix.org>.

China Builds in Africa Pairs with Oil-Rich, War-Weary Angola

Agence France Presse, 20 Jun 2006

Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao arrived on a landmark visit to oil-rich Angola on Tuesday, where Chinese firms are leading efforts to step up production from rich offshore oil blocks and rebuild the country after nearly 30 years of war.

Wen, the senior-most Chinese official to visit Angola since its brutal 27-year civil war ended in 2002, was received at the airport by Prime Minister Fernando Dias da Piedade, an AFP reporter said. The Chinese premier was scheduled to hold talks with President Jose Eduardo dos Santos, discuss economic ties and visit a Chinese-funded hospital in the capital Luanda. He is also due to sign the second phase of a \$2-billion oil-backed loan from China's Export and Import bank (Eximbank) that is to run until 2016 and through which reconstruction work is being financed, Angolan Finance Minister Jose de Morais told reporters before Wen's arrival.

Across Angola, China's largest oil supplier, Chinese workers are busy rebuilding roads, railways and technical institutes.

Chinese state-owned oil giant Sinopec has just won stakes in

three offshore blocks that are expected to yield 100,000 barrels a day when operations begin next year. The reserves from blocks 15, 17 and 18 are estimated at more than three billion barrels. In February Angola became the top source of crude imports to oil-hungry China, replacing Saudi Arabia, according to Swiss-based analyst Petromatrix GmbH.

Sub-Saharan Africa's second-largest oil producer after Nigeria, Angola is on course to produce two million barrels a day in 2007. Despite the oil wealth, more than 70 percent of Angolans live in poverty and the country ranks in the bottom ten countries of the UN development scale.

Wen is on a seven-nation tour of Africa and is due to travel on to South Africa on Wednesday.

Angola lacks a financing agreement with the International Monetary Fund, in part because of IMF misgivings about how it accounts for the massive revenues it receives from oil. China has proved a more supportive and less critical partner, providing financing and skills to a country that lost many educated people to post-colonial emigration and war. For China, Angola's chief attraction is its oil, of which it rivals the US as the largest importer.
—*Financial Times 4 Mar 06*

IRAQI US EMPLOYEES (Continued from Page 1)

Female employees are under great pressure to wear so-called modest dress, sometimes more extreme than that required in Iran. One of them reports that the taxi driver who brings her to work daily has informed her that "he cannot let her ride unless she wears a headcover." In addition to the multiple pressures concerning dresswear (for men as well - no shorts), the employees complain of daily lack of power in their apartments and of having to spend 12 hours on a Saturday on lines for gas.

The situation has become so risky for the employees that they are hiding their employment from everyone, including their own families. They do not use cellphones outside the Green Zone, or even carry them, because this is a dangerous giveaway, especially for females. They reply only in Arabic if called by the Embassy at home. The Embassy has, as a result, ceased calling them at all because they've decided it blows their "cover." Nor can the Iraqi employees be used to translate if press cameras are there.

To enter the Green Zone, the employees must pass checkpoints. Since April the Iraqi guards at these checkpoints have been more "militia-like" and "taunting." One employee asked the Embassy to give her press credentials rather than an employee pass, so that these guards cannot hold up her pass publicly, loudly proclaiming her status to bystanders. "Such information is a death sentence if heard by the wrong people."

Nor are these problems only true of those living in poorer districts. It has affected the so-called "upscale" districts in Baghdad as well, the nearest of which has become an "unrecognizable ghost town" because of fear of being on the streets and growing emigration of the Iraqi middle class. Employees report that their safety depends on their relations with what are in effect neighborhood governments, in which "even local mukhtars have been displaced or coopted by militias." One result is that "people no longer trust most neighbors."

In turn the U.S. Embassy is no longer sure it trusts its very apprehensive Iraqi employees. "We fear they may exaggerate developments or steer us towards news that comports with their own worldview." It makes for a dysfunctional workplace. The Ambassador feels it necessary to report the view of an Arab

newspaper editor that "ethnic cleansing...is taking place in almost every Iraqi province."

But the most extraordinary segment of the cable needs to be reproduced in full: "More recently, we have begun shredding documents printed out that show local staff surnames. In March, a few staff members approached us to ask what provisions would we make for them if we evacuate."

Shredding documents? If the United States evacuates? Obviously, the Iraqi employees are remembering Saigon in 1975 as Vietnamese employees of the U.S. embassy and armed forces struggled to get on departing helicopters. Are we already coming to that point? It seems some of the Iraqi employees of the U.S. embassy in Baghdad think so, and the U.S. ambassador is so informing Washington.

Get on Prof. Wallerstein's email list at devoist@binghamton.edu for monthly mailings.

CHAPTER NEWS

"Troubled times abroad; time for change at home." That's true on the political scene of war, corporatism, etc. But for different reasons it may be true as well for the Boston-Cambridge Alliance and the Alliance for Democracy. In *BCA Dispatch's* June issue we discussed (Page 1-2) the chapter's evolution and present initiatives for action. Our email and phones have been silent on this issue. We need added leadership and reorganization along project lines.

PLEASE send us your email address if you didn't receive "Three Requests" by email earlier this month. We will add you, and make project communication faster and more compete.

Similarly, with the national Alliance for Democracy we have heard from only two readers so far regarding a vision for the coming years (June *Dispatch*, Pages 12-15). **Elise Boulding**, author most recently of *Cultures of Peace*, noted "Fine vision!" **Ruth Weizenbaum**, AfD regional rep, thought the writing style was bad, but spent an hour with it, and is giving more thought to the substance. She would put *regaining members* as top priority and would focus on water projects and the election integrity project (Election Defense Alliance) as issues to draw new members and involve current ones. She strongly believes that localization is key, and recommends reading Michael Shuman's *Going Local* and James Kunstler's *Long Emergency*. North Bridge maestro **Cynthia Ritsher** would add Colin Hines' *Localization—a Global Manifesto*. She and **Diana Licht**, **Barbara Clancy**, and **Joanna Herlihy** continue to meet and discuss Hines' and others' books. They are willing to add a few others or help others who might want to start another reading group.

Speaking of *Election Defense Alliance*, **Sally Castleman** and **Jonathan Simon** asked if BCA would affiliate with EDA. We sent out an email ballot to all members on our email list, and 6 out of 6 thus far have said YES. We had asked for a clear majority of at least 10 respondents, so if you want to vote **Yes**, **Yes if...**, or **No** please call or email the *BCA Dispatch* editor now—see numbers at bottom of this page. We have to apologize for false advertising about Jonathan & Sally's presentation at our May meeting— We said it would be part workshop, when in fact it turned out to be lecture and discussion. We believe they will have workshops on specific skills for ensuring voting integrity. In the meantime, Sally says that several BCA participants have called her and have lent a hand in EDA's development. Thanks! Sally's number: 781-862-0454.

Regarding the *Venezuela trip* project, by the time you read this column **Jorge Marín** will have returned from Venezuela, and we will see what connections he may have made for our project-

ed trip in late November-early December. Contact BCA editor.

Gandhi participatory-reading circles first need to complete the suggested reading packet. Then we will phone a number of local organizations to form ad hoc circles. Contact BCA editor.

Corporations-Out-of-Schools will get into high gear when **Jose Duarte**, headmaster of English High School in Jamaica Plain, returns to this project in mid-August. If you'd like to work with kids, teachers, and city officials please contact BCA editor.

Finally among our projects, we would be delighted to have a co-chair with **Dave Lewit** to research and phone experts, civic leaders, and elected officials in all 6 New England states to put together our projected roundtable on Local-Based Regional Economy. This is an expansion of our two earlier roundtables in Amherst MA and Burlington VT. Please contact BCA editor. We want to make all 5 of these projects more inclusive for BCA members and allies.

ACTION ALERTS

Wed-Sat. 12-29 July, 7:30pm, Chelsea. Ionesco's Rhinoceros presented by TheaterZone in the Park. Famous satirical play in which people turn into a stampeding herd of rhinos. FREE!

English performances: July 12, 13, 15, 20, 22, 26, 27, 29

Spanish performances: July 14, 19, 21, 28

Mary O'Malley Park, Chelsea Waterfront—bring a blanket or lawn chair! #111 Bus from Haymarket. (617) 887-2336 • www.theatrezone.org

Fri eve—Sun. 28-30 July, Lewiston ME. Maine Social Forum. Lectures, workshops, film, networking, fun, etc. www.mainesocialforum.org
AfD is one of 65 cosponsors: contact BonniePreston@earthlink.net

Fri eve—Sun. 22-24 Sept, Amherst MA. Our Communities, Our Water: Connecting the Local & the Global. Conference on ending water privatization in municipal systems, bottled water, bulk exports—background, cases, effective campaigning, planning for US northeast and Canada. Union/labor & activist roles. Arnie Alpert, Ruth Caplan, Karl Flecker, Jonathan Leavitt, &c. UMass www.massglobalaction.org
water@massglobalaction.org 978-683-3967. Rides: 617-266-8687.

JOIN THE BCA

YOU DON'T HAVE TO LIVE IN BOSTON TO LOVE BCA

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., Boston, MA 02116.)

BOSTON-CAMBRIDGE ALLIANCE for DEMOCRACY PLEDGE
___ \$26/Year - "Count me in!"
___ \$52/Year - "Contributor" (We need to average this amount.)
___ \$104/Year - "Sustainer" (Helping us thrive.)
___ \$208/Year - "Community Steward"
___ \$500/Year - "Realize the vision"
___ What's fair for YOU? \$___

Name : _____ Date: _____
Street, No./Box/Apt: _____
Town and Zip: _____
Phone: Day _____ Night: _____
E-mail: _____

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Visit the Alliance web site: www.TheAllianceForDemocracy.org

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

Web builder: Sergio Reyes. Webmaster: Stan Robinson.