

BCA Dispatch

Newsletter of the
Boston-Cambridge Alliance for Democracy

April
2005

From a letter to President Carter:
"You say that you are Christian. If you are really Christian, please stop sending military aid to the military here, because they use it only to kill my people." —Bishop Oscar Romero, El Salvador

ALLIANCE NEWS (Continued on Page 8)

Chapter Calendar

* * **Save Community Radio!** * *

Boston-Cambridge Alliance for Democracy will meet on **Wednesday, April 20 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 —

The airwaves belong to the people. The FCC has instead been giving them away to megacorporations, like Calvary Satellite Network International, with its heavy-duty fundamentalist message beamed to hundreds of communities from central production facilities. Their powerful signals tend to block truly community radio broadcasts.

John Grebe, producer and host of WZBC's "Sounds of Dissent", leads a fight in our area for community rights. Join us in conversation with John, and help keep community radio for home-grown broadcasting.

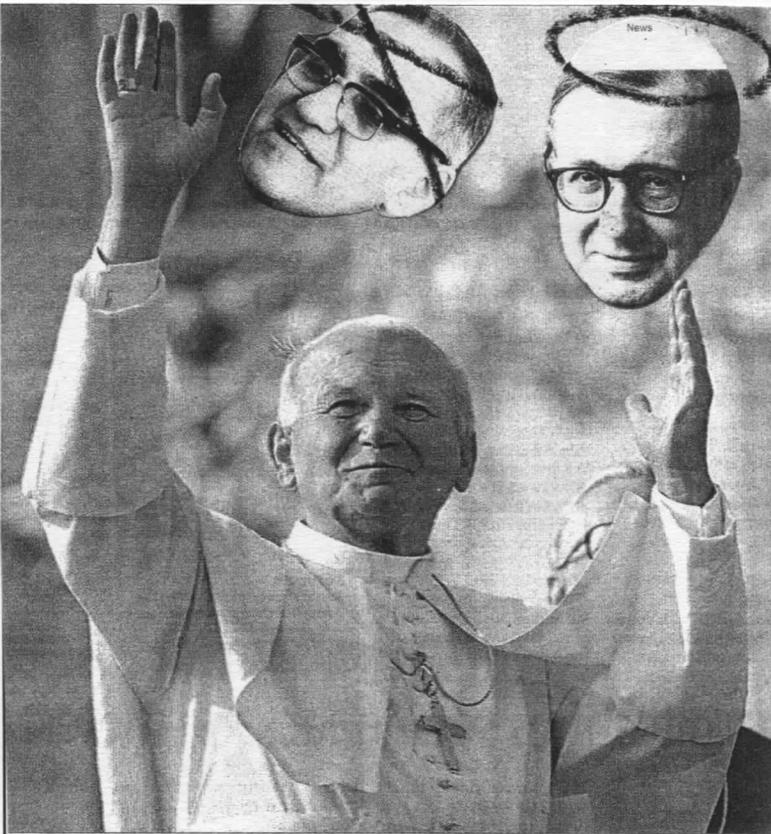
— Refreshments —

Should We Secede? From Vermont to a NE Atlantic Alliance

by Dave Lewit, *BCA Dispatch*, 12 April 2004

The Union has not been so threatened since the Civil War. Spontaneously, two of the 26 people present at BCA's 16 March meeting stated their willingness to die for the cause of independence from the corporatist state which the US is becoming. Overnight, history has advanced to camp in our backyard—there was talk of the Glorious Revolution overthrowing King James II of England in 1688, of colonies breaking off from Britain before our Revolution, of the Virginia and Kentucky resolutions which overcame President John Adams' Alien and Sedition Acts and enabled Jefferson, and of Vermont as #1 in ending slavery and abolishing the death penalty.

Today we are faced with a constitutional crisis. With all three branches of the government captured by one party, checks and balances supposedly prescribed in the US Constitution have failed. That party is about to change the rules and wipe out the senate filibuster, finally silencing its large minority. They have created a spy and covert action czar, and are about to bomb the United Nations with an incendiary ambassador. They have trivialized Rep. John Conyers and (Continued on Page 4 >>)



Pope John Paul II X's Oscar Romero and O's Josemaria Escriva
people's bishop founder of fascist cult

Pope John Paul II & Reagan Killing Vatican II, Liberation Theology, Etc.

by Barry Healy, *Green Left Weekly* (Australia), 6 April 2005

The pope opposed the Iraq war and unfettered capitalism as well as communism, and attended a synagogue and a mosque as conciliatory gestures. But when it came to how things get done, the pope was anti-democratic. He gave life-long support to Opus Dei, a fascist-friendly organization founded by Josemaria Escriva whom he sainted in 2002. And he shunned Oscar Romero, the bishop who cataloged for John Paul the Salvadoran government's war against the poor, and was assassinated for his efforts. In San Francisco CA, as everywhere, he quashed Catholic efforts to help struggling and disfranchised majorities. —Ed.

Karol Jozef Wojtya, known as John Paul II since assuming the office of pope in October 1978, will be remembered as one of the most significant, though certainly not the most progressive, figures in the history of the Roman Catholic Church.

Pope John XXIII, who preceded Wojtya as head of the Church by two papacies, is still revered by many Catholics for radically reorienting the church by convening the Vatican II Council, which directly fed the growth of what is known as "liberation theology". From Vatican II the democratic notion emerged that the whole church - laity and clergy - were united as the People of God.

John Paul II's pontificate was organised as a conscious counter-revolution against Vatican II - a winding back of the clock towards an archaic Catholicism politically aligned with violent terror against liberationists around the world.

Wojtya was born in Wadowice, (Continued on Page 2 >>)

John Paul II (Continued from Page 1)

a small city 50 kilometres from Cracow, Poland, on May 18, 1920. During the Nazi occupation he worked in a quarry while secretly studying for the priesthood in a clandestine seminary.

William Johnston, who teaches Modern Church History at Melbourne's Yarra Theological Union, thinks Wojtya felt "exiled" from the direction Europe took in the second half of his lifetime.

"Remember he grew up under, really, three dictatorships - first Pilsudski in Poland, then the Nazi occupation of Poland which was the worst anywhere. He grew up not many miles from Auschwitz, and then of course the Communists came in from 1945 on", Johnston told ABC Radio National's Religion Report in 2004. "So this is not a man who ever experienced democracy, and his hopes for a post-dictatorship Europe have not been fulfilled."

The closed world of Polish Catholicism under the heel of Cold War Stalinism was staunchly patriarchal and anti-communist but warmly supported by masses of Poles as the one institution through which they could organise free of the bureaucratic Stalinist regime.

After leaving Poland for the wider world and the peak leadership position within Catholicism, Wojtya never wavered in his Cold War mindset. His guiding beliefs were that communism is the greatest danger to Christianity, that only deferential obedience to the church hierarchy is the proper behaviour for the Catholic masses and that collaboration with the great power designs of brutal capitalist temporal forces was the way to advance the banner of the faith.

This, combined with aspects of medieval theology, directly conflicted with the waves of liberal thinking that swept the church following Vatican II. In Latin America, in particular, the freeing up of the Catholic structures combined with the example of the Cuban Revolution propelled masses of Catholic workers, peasants and lower-ranking priests into revolutionary formations such as Nicaragua's Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN). This broad trend was characterised as "liberation theology" and was typified by grassroots democracy, an anti-capitalist reading of the New Testament and egalitarian religious leadership.

In Europe and North America there were less radical but nonetheless democratic rumblings. In 1997, for example, 2.5 million German and Austrian Catholics petitioned the pope to admit women priests and married priests and abandon the church's hostility to homosexuality; the Vatican was unmoved.

John Paul II brought considerable energy and political acumen to his reactionary crusade. He made 104 pastoral visits outside of Italy, wrote five books, issued 14 encyclicals and was seen by literally millions of people.

He was also a great canoniser - canonising 482 saints, more than any previous pope. His thinking was that by providing each nation with its own saint the Catholic tradition of incense and obscurantism could be revived. Bizarrely, one of those saints was the last of the Hapsburg rulers of the Austro-Hungarian empire, Emperor Karl, who ruled during World War I.

John Paul II also appointed 231 new cardinals, which has stacked the college that will elect the new pope with archconservatives.

One of his great political alliances was with US President Ronald Reagan. In 1980 the gang that organised the Reagan for the presidency movement met in Santa Fe for a conference and issued a statement saying: "US foreign policy should begin to confront liberation theology (and not just react to it after the fact). Unfortunately Marxist-Leninist forces have used the church as a

political weapon against private ownership and the capitalism system of production, infiltrating the religious community with ideas that are more communist than Christian."

Reagan, as president, quickly moved to form a united front with John Paul II against liberation theology. The pope fought the theology while the Reagan administration and its Latin American allies murdered the liberationists.

Among the fallen was El Salvador's Archbishop Oscar Romero, murdered in 1980 by a right-wing death squad while saying mass. The Arena party, the death squads' legal face, sent a delegation to the Vatican weeks before the assassination protesting Romero's public statements in defence of the poor.

While the Salvadoran people regard Romero as a saint, John Paul II attempted to ban any discussion of Romero's beatification for 50 years. However, popular pressure from El Salvador later led the Vatican to put off the issue for only 25 years.

John Paul II's preferred saintly role model was the Spanish fascist Josemaria Escriva, founder of Opus Dei, one of the reactionary and weird Catholic secret societies that the pope has used as weapons against progressives.

After failing to discipline the Brazilian bishops, John Paul II simply started appointing Opus Dei members as bishops died. In this manner he undermined one of the strongest bases of liberation theology.*

Australia's most prominent liberationist parish, St Vincent's in Sydney inner-city suburb of Redfern, has been saddled with priests from another Catholic cult called the Neocatechumenate (visit for some illuminating stories of John Paul II's priests studiously avoiding contact with Redfern Aborigines).

Reagan and John Paul II found another area of common interest in Poland when the Solidarity trade union movement burst into prominence in 1980. Vast sums were funnelled through the church into the Polish movement.

The Vatican encouraged an activist priesthood in Poland that it moved heaven and earth to destroy in other areas of the world. According to Time magazine, a grateful Reagan agreed in 1984 to alter the US foreign-aid program to comply with the Catholic Church's teachings on birth control, specifically abortion and birth control.

The capitalist news media has created John Paul II personal popularity in Poland with the "collapse of communism" there in 1989. More than a decade after John Paul II's blessed the restoration of capitalism in Poland, a public opinion survey in 2002 by the Public Opinion Research Centre (CBOS) found that 56% of Poles said their lives were "better" under the 1970s Stalinist regime of Edward Gierk than they are today.

In 2000 John Paul II made a rhetorical flourish of calling for an end to Third World debt through his call for a "jubilee" the mechanism by which debts were wiped out once every 50 years in ancient Jewish society (it was the demand that Jesus raised and died for).

However, the Vatican never attempted to build a popular movement around its call. While criticising the excesses of capitalism, John Paul II feared communist revolution more. His real ideology was integralism - the medieval idea that the state will rule the people and the church will guide the state.

By assiduously aligning himself with the most reactionary elements of late 21st century power politics, John Paul II left a profound crisis in Catholicism in his wake. Latin America was

once overwhelmingly Catholic but the US rulers have used their Protestant fundamentalist sects as weapons against liberationist Catholics there. Now 10% of Brazilians are believed to be talking in tongues!

In the developed capitalist countries, Catholicism continues to bleed membership as believers tire of the ridiculous strictures on their sexuality and democratic rights within the church. As AIDS threatens millions in the crucified impoverished world and wars and indebtedness worsen, the Catholic Church's lame responses are simply making it irrelevant.

**Bolding ours.*

Bishop Oscar Romero — In Memoriam

Twenty-five years ago, Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero was killed by a single shot through the heart from the back of the hospital chapel where he was celebrating Mass. He was assassinated for his outspoken defense of the poor and oppressed in his native El Salvador. Citing Romero's spirituality as well as his efforts for justice and peace, Notre Dame Professor Robert Pelton, C.S.C., says Romero's life offers a "blueprint of a model bishop for the new millennium." Bishop Pedro Casaldáliga of Brazil calls the slain prelate "Saint Romero of the Americas."

Romero's assassin was never brought to trial, and a Roman Catholic human rights office has called on the Salvadoran government to reopen the investigations. The country's Truth Commission, created by the United Nations after the war to investigate violations of human rights, determined the assassination was ordered by Maj. Roberto D'Abuissou, now dead, who founded the Nationalist Republican Alliance party.

Last year, a U.S. federal judge found a retired Salvadoran air force captain living in the United States liable for Romero's killing and ordered him to pay \$10 million in damages. The decision was based on a lawsuit filed by Romero's relatives arguing that Alvaro Rafael Saravia conspired to commit the killing by providing the sniper with a gun, payment and transportation.

A Reflection

"We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work. Nothing we do is complete, which is another way of saying that the Kingdom always lies beyond us.

We cannot do everything and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest. We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between "master" builder and the worker. We are the workers, not the master builder, the ministers, not the Messiah. We are prophets of a future that is not our own."

—Archbishop Oscar Romero

Saint Josemaria Escriva Controversy over his Canonization

by Sylvia Poggioli, *National Public Radio*, 6 October 2002

Josemaria Escriva founded Opus Dei in 1928 to counter Spanish anti-clericalism. He believed Catholicism had to be defended through what he called holy intransigence and holy coercion.

Father John Walk is an American who teaches at the Opus Dei University in Rome. He says Escriva's basic idea was to sanctify ordinary life.

Fr. Walk: *Sanctity in a different kind of package, in a plain brown wrapper--it looks more or less like the life of anyone else, and yet, there's something, we hope, radically different, something heroic.*

Poggioli: One radical difference is the practice of some Opus Dei members to whip themselves with a lash or to wear a spiked chain around their legs known as a cilice [hair shirt]...

Alberto Monkada founded the first Opus Dei University in Peru, but he now criticizes Escriva the person. Monkada says Escriva blamed Pope John XXIII for the reforms of the Second Vatican Council.

At a press conference this week, Monsignor Flavio Cappucci, the man who promoted this cause for sainthood, recalled some other charges leveled against Escriva: that he had a bad temper, that he was cruel, that he was vain, that he was close to Spanish dictator Francisco Franco, that he was pro-Nazi and that he was so dismayed by the Second Vatican Council that he even traveled to Greece with the idea that he might convert to the Orthodox religion.

Monsignor Flavio Cappucci: (Through Translator) *The very fact that Josemaria Escriva has been canonized demonstrates that these insidious charges are totally unfounded.*

Poggioli: The Vatican has ascribed at least one miracle to Escriva: the cure of a cancer patient. Former Opus Dei member Alberto Monkada, however, says church officials were not interested in hearing criticism of Escriva. During the beatification process, Monkada was one of the few negative witnesses to be heard.

But Pope John Paul II has long had an affinity for Escriva. When he was a cardinal visiting Rome, he often prayed at Escriva's tomb.

John Allen, Vatican correspondent for the National Catholic Reporter, says it's no surprise the pope has favored a movement which is very conservative both politically and theologically.

Mr. John Allen (National Catholic Reporter): *They have taken it upon themselves to be his arms and legs on many projects and also in defending, strongly and effectively defending the teaching of this pontificate.*

Poggioli: Escriva today became the 468th saint proclaimed by John Paul since he became pope 24 years ago.

Artist "Banksy" Strikes Again Glues Anti-War Parody Art in NY Museums

Reuters, New York, 25 March 2005

Readers may recall guerilla artist Banksy's work from the September 2004 Dispatch. His was the satirical sculpture, placed prominently in a London park, of Lady Liberty with her skirts pulled apart, in the article entitled "US and UK Crotchology".

—Ed.

Many a visitor to New York's Museum of Modern Art has probably thought, "I could do that." A British graffiti artist who goes by the name "Banksy" went one step further, by smuggling in his own picture of a soup can and hanging it on a wall, where it stayed for more than three days earlier this month before anybody noticed.

A portrait by a British graffiti artist known as 'Banksy' is shown in this undated photo. The work hung on the wall at the Brooklyn Museum, after the artist surreptitiously hung his own works of art in four New York museums. The prank was part of a coordinated plan to infiltrate four of New York's top museums on a single day.

The largest piece, which he smuggled into the Brooklyn Museum, was a 2 foot by 1.5 foot (61cm by 46 cm) oil painting of a colonial-era admiral, to which the artist had added a can of spray paint in his hand and anti-war graffiti in the background.



The other two targets were the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the American Museum of Natural History, where he hung a glass-encased beetle with fighter jet wings and missiles attached

to its body -- another comment on war, Banksy told Reuters on Thursday. "It was just an outsider's view of the modern American bug, bristling with listening devices and military hardware," he said.

An art Web site called www.woostercollective.com has posted pictures of the artist -- wearing an Inspector Clouseau-style overcoat, a hat and a fake beard and nose -- hanging up his work at the four museums and describing how he did it.

Speaking by telephone from an undisclosed location in Britain, Banksy said he conducted all four operations on March 13, helped by accomplices who filmed him and provided distractions where necessary. "They staged a gay tiff (lovers' quarrel), shouting very loudly and obnoxiously," said the artist, declining to give his real name or any personal details beyond his occupation as a professional painter and decorator.

It is not the first time he has staged such stunts. Last year he smuggled work into the Louvre in Paris and London's Tate, attracting attention in the British media. "My sister inspired me to do it. She was throwing away loads of my pictures one day and I asked her why. She said 'It's not like they're going to be hanging in the Louvre.'" He took that as a challenge. "I thought why wait until I'm dead," he said.

His preferred creative outlet, graffiti on trains, was growing more difficult due to greater security so he decided to branch out into infiltrating museums. "I tend to gravitate to places with less sophisticated security systems," he said.

Officials at the Natural History Museum declined to comment on security. Museum of Modern Art officials said only that the offending picture was taken down on March 17.

It was unclear what gave the game away but Banksy's version of Andy Warhol's iconic images of Campbell's Soup Cans showed a can of Tesco value tomato soup, a discounted brand sold by a British supermarket chain. "Obviously they've got their eye a lot more on things leaving than things going in which works in my favor," Banksy said. "I imagine they'll be doing stricter bag checks now."

He said the painting in the Metropolitan Museum, a small portrait of a woman wearing a gas mask, had been discovered after one day, while the others stayed up for several days. The paintings were fixed to the wall with extra-strong glue.

Asked how he managed to escape notice while putting them up on a busy Sunday at the museums, he said: "They do get pretty full, but not if you put the pictures in the boring bits."

Should We Secede? (Continued from Page 1)

his subcommittee's overwhelming evidence that the 2004 election was stolen. Can this meltdown of democracy be reversed, or does the system have to be changed at its constitutional roots? Can it be done nationally, or only state by state? Do state lines matter or can communities and people combine into new and powerful regions? What will become of pro-democracy minorities in the South and the Great Plains?

We Gather

These are some of the questions raised and addressed at BCA's most recent gathering at Friends Meeting house in Cambridge. Our guests were **Jim Hogue**, an outright secessionist, and **Ben Scotch**, a reconstitucionalist, both of the Montpelier area in Vermont. For Jim, the GOP election fraud of 2000 and 2004 was the driving force, and the Democrat cave-in

the trigger, for his resolve to secede or die in the effort. At the congressional moments of truth regarding the 2004 fraud, truth-tellers Senator Barbara Boxer and Representatives John Conyers and Cynthia McKinney were left twisting in the wind by their fellow Democrats and even Vermont Independent Bernie Sanders. The instrument of autonomy and sovereignty must be a people's convention—immune from courts of the national government apparatus.

Jim discussed the flimsiness of US currency, which could buy only one-fifth as much now if you'd kept it under your mattress since 1970. Rather than a promise to pay in oil or gold, the dollar is valued by fiat [by decree; literally, "let it be done"] made credible by US military muscle abroad and exclusive use worldwide of the US dollar as payment for crude oil. That credibility is undermined by mounting trade deficits and national debt, creditors selling off their dollars, and imperial overreach and inflation. Solutions Jim offered were associated, though not exclusively, with independence—localized investment, energy conservation and conversion, increased citizen competence in repair, complementary currencies, and exposing corporate criminality at its roots.

Oddly, nobody asked, what are we getting back for every thousand dollars we pay the US in taxes and fees?—a fairness principle in federalism. Perhaps this was implicit in **Jesse Burkhardt** (Cambridge)'s suggestion that states "decouple" their taxes from federal taxes, structuring our taxes on our unique state (or regional?) systems and opposing federal budgets.

We Must Not Replace One Tyranny with Another

Ben Scotch is a lawyer with historical grounding and much political experience. Where Jim justifies a leap to independence, Ben works inductively, to build "a modern plan of governance" and modify it according to the promise of combined elements. He winds up with a serious reconsideration of the Articles of Confederation. [Readers might consult *The Federalist Papers* and Jerry Fresia's *Toward an American Revolution: Exposing the Constitution and other illusions*. —Ed.]

Ben values the US Supreme Court's deliberations on the Tenth Amendment, guaranteeing to the states "or to the people" what powers the Constitution does not grant explicitly to the federal government or prohibit to the states. In response to **John Terrell** (Lincoln), he dismisses impeachment as ponderous and misleading because it doesn't get at underlying realities. Ben stresses that we must establish the "standards of illegitimacy of the current ruling elite". We must be careful about the opinions of dissenters—in Blue and Red states alike. He asks how we will arrive at an agreed plan of governance—who will sit in deliberation?

Jonathan Simon (Arlington) points out that incumbent congress members as system beneficiaries will never yield to serious election reform, and so he advocates secession and reconstitution. Ben reminds us of our implicit Covenant of Mutual Support with other states—shall we run away from our responsibilities to our neighbors and from the good we get from them (and do for them)? [But couldn't those responsibilities be renegotiated?]

Ben also notes that Vermont, for one, is highly dependent on outside manufacturers for cars, for example, and for markets for its milk. [But so, to a lesser degree, is the USA.] So should it adhere to international conventions, good or bad? It won't be easy to get consensus about independence of a whole region. Informed by his Swiss wife, Ben dismisses the myth of Switzerland as a happy confederation of autonomous regions—since 1848 they have been increasingly centralized, armed to the teeth, yet vulnerable, with major pharmaceutical and banking industries.

At one point the Nazis were set to invade and conquer.

Various participants feared US violence and repression in the event of secession. Jonathan believes that the US doesn't have enough National Guard to stop secession in many areas. **Soesan Kae Clarke** (Jamaica Plain) worried that an independent state or region would be unable to defend itself in the event of a foreign attack using high-tech weaponry. Others felt that widespread support of the new nation or confederacy could preclude or blunt such attack. "The superpower era is coming to a close" within ten years, Ben assures us. Nukes will become irrelevant.

Instead of national/corporate globalization he sees a new people-to-people globalization of values. A new birth of "values based on the life of localities" will make secession unnecessary. Ben was largely responsible for the recent spate of Vermont town meeting resolutions demanding repatriation of our National Guard units being used in Iraq. Following up comments by **Adam Sacks** (Lexington) about actual laws (ordinances) passed by Pennsylvania townships against large corporations operating factory farms or any other business within their township limits, Ben cited such ordinances also passed in civil liberties contexts. He stressed "creative localism" contrary to federal law as "something irrepressible"—practical because federal authorities cannot deny our power. Adam promoted local constitutions. Jim held that that in Pennsylvania the new revolution has begun, and that even the South's religious Right will reject Bush's treason. [Readers might consult Gar Alperovitz's *America Beyond Capitalism* (2005), on the coming local/regional-based "pluralist commonwealth".]

How Shall We Achieve Our New Autonomy?

Jim Hogue has been invited to a link-up conference in Canada, and Jonathan Simon feels that it will be to our advantage to connect with nearby Canadian provinces, which have progressive features. Jim expects countries worldwide to support Vermont or regional independence, and sees tourism revenues tripling with independence. **Kevin Gilligan** (Billerica & Boston) foresees ecological doom in the near term if we don't end federally-sanctioned corporate rapaciousness now. **Cynthia Ritscher** (Lincoln) believes that we must transform ourselves in attitude and values away from the corporatocracy (John Perkins' *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man*).

To **Gesele Bisaccia** (Norwood) secession is a dream that most US Americans don't want—how would you reach out to them? **Lee Mintz** (Boston) stressed the role of media. Jonathan holds that most Americans are very reluctant to give up *anything* and, as with high-altitude bombing, don't want to experience conflict directly. Kevin advocates dialog with Native Americans, partly because of their involvement with nature, and that we "start over" in a new world. **Dave Lewit** (Boston) suggested that we establish one of many study circles on town ordinances and autonomy, but Adam warned that they won't work unless there is a threat. Well, isn't there a threat? Can we make that threat sufficiently apparent to enough people to make their efforts work? Perhaps we can, now that the opposite threat, 9/11, is wearing thin.

A fine 2-camera video was made of this event by Tom Hood of Honey Bear Video Services, Lowell MA. Special thanks to Kevin Gilligan. We will make this video available upon request, or produce an edited version (30 minutes?) if your group will use it. Contact Dave: dlewit@iqc.org or 617-266-8687.

Psychology of Voting for Bush Fear of Death, Seeing W's Charisma

by Lea Winerman, *Monitor on Psychology*, Jan 2005

Exit polls in November's election showed a variety of reasons why voters chose either George W. Bush or Democratic challenger John Kerry: moral values, the war in Iraq, terrorism and the economy, among others.

All of those reasons are valid, says Skidmore college psychology professor Sheldon Solomon, PhD. "Some people may have logically thought through the issues they care about and voted based on those," he says.

But exit polls don't tell the whole story, says Solomon. He and his colleagues believe that they have uncovered a subtle application of a psychological effect--terror management theory--that may have helped tip the election to Bush. According to the theory, Americans traumatized by the 9/11 terrorist attacks turned to Bush in part because, subconsciously, his clear and values-driven message helped assuage their fear of death.

In fact, years of research have demonstrated that people are often bad at understanding their own motivations. If pollsters ask voters to come up with an explanation for their vote, they will--but that explanation may not really reflect their primary motivation, says University of Virginia psychology professor Timothy Wilson, PhD, who studies people's knowledge of their motivations.

"There's fairly good evidence that people vote from the heart," Wilson says, "but if you ask them why they vote they'll come up with all sorts of logical reasons."

Terror-Management Theory

Solomon and two of his colleagues, Tom Pyszczynski, PhD, and Jeff Greenberg, PhD, first developed terror-management theory in the 1980s. According to the theory, based on the work of cultural anthropologist Ernest Becker, PhD, human beings deal with the knowledge that they will someday die by maintaining a strong belief in their cultural worldview. That faith provides meaning to their lives and a sense that their individual lives matter, as well as the promise of symbolic--or literal--immortality if they uphold their society's values.

One consequence of the theory, according to previous studies by the researchers, is that reminding people of their own mortality--by asking them to think about their own deaths, for example--makes them cling strongly to elements of their worldview like religious beliefs or national pride.

Now, two recent studies point to another consequence of terror-management theory--one that might well be able to influence a presidential election. People reminded of their own mortality tend to favor charismatic leaders with a grand vision of the future over more mundane leaders who focus on day-to-day tasks.

In a study in the December issue of *Psychological Science* (Vol. 15, No. 12), the researchers assigned 190 college student participants to two groups. Half of the participants responded to the two open-ended requests, "Please briefly describe the emotions that the thought of your own death arouses in you," and "Jot down, as specifically as you can, what you think will happen to you as you physically die and once you are physically dead."

The control group of participants answered the same two questions, but in regard to an important upcoming exam instead of their death. Both groups also filled out unrelated

questionnaires, one about neuroticism and one about romantic attachment, in order to hide the true purpose of the experiment. Then, the participants read an unrelated literary passage to provide a delay before the second part of the experiment, because previous research has shown that terror-management theory's effects are more clear when people are not thinking directly about death, but instead when they are more subtly aware of death around the edges of their conscious thoughts.

Next, the participants read statements written by three hypothetical politicians running for governor and cast their votes for one. The "charismatic, value-driven" politician talked about his overarching vision, the identity of the state as a whole, and his high expectations for its citizens. The "task-oriented" candidate talked about setting high yet achievable goals, and his detailed plans to achieve those goals. The "relationship-oriented" politician talked about how he would listen to and respect all of the state's citizens.

The results were striking: The charismatic leader received only four out of 95 votes from the control group, but received 31 out of 95 from participants who had been reminded of their own mortality.

A Case Study

The 2004 presidential election, says Solomon, provided an opportunity to test terror-management theory in the real world. President Bush is a classic value-driven leader, he says, with a clear message of defeating evil in the world.

"Psychologically terrorized people are attracted to clear vision of where evil lurks in the world and clear vision of how to obliterate it," Solomon says. And in our post-9/11 world, he continues, Americans are, in some ways, a psychologically terrorized people, with thoughts of death a hazy but ever-present reality.

In a series of studies completed before the election, the researchers first repeated the experiment above, dividing 97 participants into an experimental group who were reminded of their own mortality and a control group who were not. But this time, instead of judging hypothetical candidates, the participants read an excerpt of an essay that praised President Bush's response to 9/11 and the war in Iraq. The participants then rated their support of Bush and his policies. Those who had been asked to think of their own deaths rated Bush much more favorably (4.16 on a five-point scale) than those in the control group (2.09 on a five-point scale).

In three more experiments in the series, the researchers continued to tie terror-management theory to real-world events. They demonstrated that subliminal 9/11-related images stimulated nonconscious death-related thoughts, that reminders of 9/11 increased support for Bush, and finally, that reminders of mortality increased people's support for Bush and decreased their support for Kerry--regardless of whether the participants considered themselves liberal or conservative. The studies were published in the September issue of *Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin* (Vol. 30, No. 9).

Of course, Solomon acknowledges, many questions remain to be answered. First, it's unclear how much stimulating thoughts of death would benefit any sitting president, and how much of the benefit is due to Bush's particular personality. After all, leaders' approval ratings have almost always risen in times of war or similar national crisis.

Also, some critics have suggested that the researchers' findings could be explained by participants' rational thought

processes: People who are reminded of death, those critics say, might begin to rationally think about which candidate would better ensure their safety, and could come to the conclusion that President Bush would do so.

But Solomon says that the results of an upcoming study suggest that this is not the case. In this not-yet-published study, the researchers, working with a colleague in the Middle East, have found that for some citizens in an Islamic republic, reminders of death prompted more favorable evaluations of suicide bombers and greater interest in becoming one. This, Solomon says, shows that inducing thoughts of death does not make people think more rationally.

"We're not saying that there were no rational reasons to vote for President Bush, or that everyone who voted for Bush did it because of this effect," he says. "But a huge chunk of people in the middle may have been swayed by this."

FURTHER WAYS TO ARGUE LIKE A CONSERVATIVE

A SADLY ONGOING SERIES



Bush's MBA Prof Remembers Him Mindless, Rapacious, Like Today's Crop

by Yoshi Tsurumi, *Harvard Crimson*, 7 April 2005

Thirty years ago, President Bush was my student at Harvard Business School. In my class, he called former president Franklin D. Roosevelt, Class of 1904, a "socialist" and spoke against Social Security, unemployment insurance, the Securities and Exchange Commission, and other New Deal innovations. He refused to understand that capitalism becomes corrupt without democratic civic values and ethical restraints.

In those days, Bush belonged to a minority of MBA students who were seriously disconnected from taking the moral and social responsibility for their actions. Today, he would fit in comfortably with an overwhelming majority of business students and teachers whose role models are celebrated captains of piracy. Since the 1980s, as neo-conservatives have captured the Republican Party, America's business education has also increasingly become contaminated by the robber baron culture of the pre-Great Depression era.

Bush is the first president of the United States with a Master's of Business Administration (MBA). Yet, he epitomizes the worst aspects of America's business education. To privatize Social Security, he is peddling a colossal lie about its solvency. Furthermore, Bush, along with today's business aristocrats, shows no compassion for working Americans, robbing them to benefit big business and the very rich. Last year, due to Bush's tax cuts, over 80 of America's most profitable 200 corporations did not pay even a penny of their federal and state income taxes. Meanwhile, to pay for his additional tax cuts for the very rich, Bush is drastically cutting back several social services, such as federal lunch programs for poor children.

Business education has also produced former Enron CEO Jeff Skilling and other MBAs behind the malfeasances of Tyco,

HealthSouth, Haliburton, AIG, and WorldCom. Many executives of corporate America who hold MBAs have also been engaged in the unethical acts of raiding their corporate treasuries at the expense of employees and stockholders. Emulating President Bush's hubris, a multitude of CEOs in corporate America give themselves obscenely large bonuses that have little to do with their performance. In 1980, the CEOs of Fortune 500 large corporations received, on average, 70 times larger annual compensations than their average employees. Under the Bush Administration, comparable CEOs have come to give themselves 600 to 1,000 times larger annual compensations than their rank-and-file employees whose pay has stagnated. To pay for such self-dealt compensations, corporate aristocrats layoff their workers, cut ordinary employees' health benefits, and outsource jobs abroad. Under the Bush Administration, over five million Americans have lost their health benefits, and the U.S. has lost over 2.7 million quality manufacturing jobs. President Bush and his rapacious "captains of piracy" of corporate America are destroying America's democracy built up since Roosevelt's New Deal era.

Meanwhile, American economics study has increasingly become a pseudoscience of mathematical formula manipulation that is devoid of humanity. This economics has conquered America's business education and become fused with the robber baron culture of greed supremacy. American MBAs are taught to treat ordinary employees as disposable costs and to swallow uncritically the gospel that corporations exist only to reward abstract stockholders. MBAs are taught the pretend-science of manipulating accounting, finance, employees, customers, and stock prices. Financial games and hostile takeovers of competitors are taught to accomplish corporations' sole objective—to make money and manipulate stock prices. Such a mistaken view of corporations has caused the dismal decline of American auto manufacturers while Toyota and

Honda widen their market shares and profits in America, pursuing their goals of expanding employment and technological innovations.

To justify the robber baron culture, America's business educators and economists falsely cite their demigod of laissez-faire market economics, Adam Smith. Little do they know that Adam Smith in fact scathingly castigated Bush's type of government: business collusion and unfair taxes, Wal-Mart's exploitations of labor and communities, and robber barons' hubris. Nowhere in his 900-page book, *The Wealth of Nations*, does Smith even imply that those who knowingly harm others and society in their pursuit of personal greed also benefit their society. He rejects the notion that a corporation exists to make money without ethical constraints.

Yoshi Tsurumi is a professor of international business at Baruch College, CUNY. He earned his Doctor of Business Administration from Harvard in 1968, and he taught at Harvard Business School from 1972 to 1976.

Thanks to Nancy Lee Wood for posting this article.

CHAPTER AND ALLIANCE NEWS

Last month's provocative chapter meeting on Secession is reported on Page 1.

Searching for a Logo

At the very bottom of this page you will see the address of our new regional web site. Little is posted there at this time—*BCA Dispatch* for March and for April, a few announcements, some news from last month—it is still under construction, in the early stages. But if you scroll down you will see this sample image:



It's an old engraving of Paul Revere, submitted as a possible logo for the New England Alliance web site serving all Alliance chapters plus allied groups, individual members, and the curious public. Here's your chance to shine—**send us your design**. Anything goes from a silhouette of Revere to something very novel. Color will help. Let it speak for the Alliance—pro-democracy, anti-corporatist, mobilizing the people. Contact BCA editor.

Muslim Professor is OK

Economics Professor Shahid Alam of Northeastern University was under attack from right-wing talk-show hosts like Bill O'Reilly teamed up with right-radical Richard Pipes on Fox TV. In the February *Dispatch* we called for letters and phone calls to NU administrators to counter the expected flood of xenophobic demands that Prof. Alam be fired. Well the good guys won! We spoke with Prof. Alam who said that letters ran 10 to 1 in his favor.

THANKS! As our conversation developed, we discussed the possibility of organizing a conference of social scientists—economists, sociologists, social psychologists, geographers, and others—to promote socially responsible study of thinking and action in an age of global forces and propaganda, connecting remote as well as nearby "dots". Any takers?

Granny D Is Well

Following her operation, Dennis Burke reports that "Doris [Haddock] has a little button in her neck, but otherwise is about her old self. She is practicing a speech for a graduation at Hampshire College in a few weeks, and is feeling great."

New Publication

Alliance Alerts editor Jim Tarbell announces a major re-do of the quarterly national Alliance publication. With AfD council's approval, he calls it *Justice Rising: Grassroots solutions to corporate domination*. Each issue will be devoted to a single theme, the first being "Creating Honest Elections", followed by global governance, media, and so on. If you want to be a writer, artist, proofreader or copy editor, contact Jim at rtp@mcn.org or 707-964-0463 or -1611.

ACTION ALERTS

Thu, 28 April, 6-8pm, Boston. City Councilor Felix Arroyo will conduct a workshop on why and how elected officials file legislation and **how legislation moves** through the City Council and State Legislature. Be empowered, organize, meet community activists/leaders. 95 Berkeley St., South End (1st Floor). Info: Kyle Robidoux 617-635-3116 in Councilor Arroyo's office or Amy Helburn of Greater Boston Center for Healthy Communities (GBCHC) at 617-279-2265.

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. #2h, Boston, MA 02116.)

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