the weekly
Standard

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The Issue That Won't Go Away

Fred Barnes • William Kristol • The Editors

ABORTION

Khatami Dearest
EDWARD G. SHIRLEY

Warming Up to Cold Mountain
J. BOTTUM

the weekly Standard

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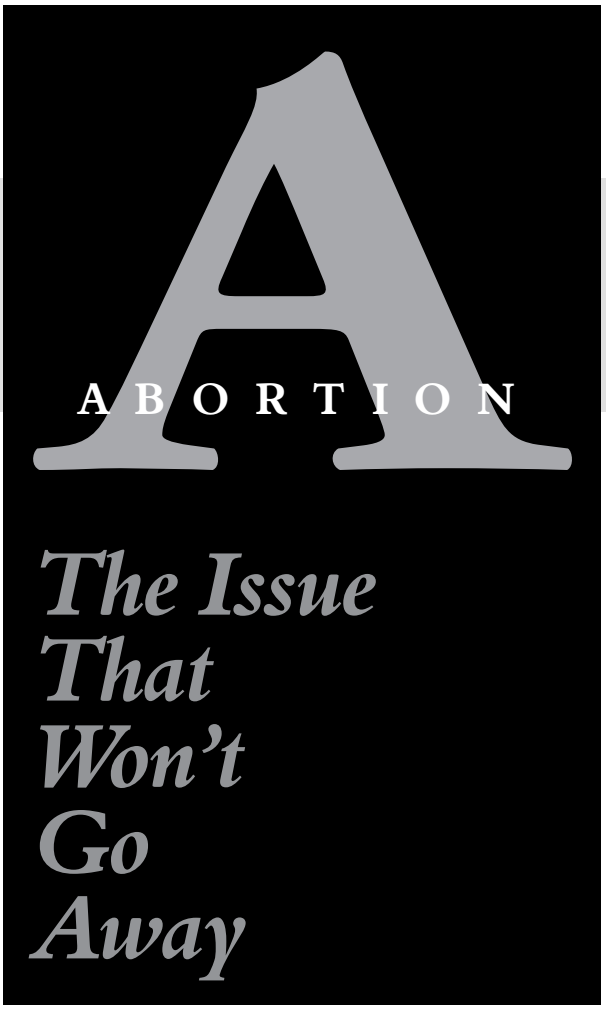

Books & Arts

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Darkness at the Renaissance

Proof that the quota-obsessed never let their guard down: Hillary Rodham Clinton was upset at the Renaissance Weekend in Hilton Head, S.C., because one of the panel discussions there suffered a gender imbalance.

As the *New York Post*'s Page Six reported, the first lady "scowled" when she walked into the ballroom where her husband's legacy was being discussed. The panel's "17 members included only one woman—White House communications director Ann Lewis, a tireless defender of the administration."

Now, a participant assures THE SCRAPBOOK that the hundreds of Renaissance Weekend panels—as befits a wonkfest made famous by the Clintons and their friends—are almost laughably diverse, replete with female rabbis, male nurses, and even several token conservatives. But almost isn't good enough for rigorous diversifiers like the first lady. "She publicly addressed the issue during the New Year's Eve festivities," according to Page Six. And the president, "who hadn't attended the panel discussion, took up Hillary's refrain, noting that the omission was especially glaring because women were so important to his victory." The organizers were suitably contrite and in best Maoist fashion confessed immediately and abjectly. A spokesman said, "We screwed up. We made a terrible mistake."

Nothing like a nice weekend at the resort to relax and get away from it all.

A Pop Quiz on the Budget

QUESTION: When is a balanced budget "reckless" and "irresponsible," and when does it become "fiscally responsible"?

ANSWER: If you are senior White House adviser Rahm Emanuel, a man talented at turning pirouettes, a balanced budget can be all of these things in the space of a week.

Emanuel appeared on *Meet the Press* on Dec. 28, not long after House speaker Newt Gingrich had urged the president to submit a balanced budget. No chance of that, sneered Emanuel. The White House is "not going to do anything reckless or anything irresponsible." On Jan. 5, however, Bill Clinton said that he *would* submit a balanced budget this year, though he made no mention that his aides had been zinging Gingrich for urging this course. Without missing a beat, Emanuel spun on his toes and told the *New York Times* that Clinton's balanced budget showed "Washington can in fact be fiscally responsible."

Clinton economic aide Gene Sperling also executed a very smart backward march on the issue. When Gingrich floated the idea, Sperling sanctimoniously intoned: "The best way for us to reach a balanced budget sooner than expected is to maintain the fiscal discipline of the last five years, not to spend money we don't have yet." Then along came Clinton's "balanced" budget, which includes $21 billion in new child-care spending and depends on revenues from the tobacco settlement that Congress hasn't even taken up, much less approved. Not to worry, Sperling said, "You'll see surpluses as far as the eye can see."

Clearly, an incapacity for embarrassment takes you far in the Clinton administration—all the way to the top, even.

The Founders in Rome

Corinne "Lindy" Boggs presented her credentials to Pope John Paul II shortly before Christmas as the new U.S. ambassador to the Vatican. Mrs. Boggs, who served nine terms as congresswoman from Louisiana, is in many ways the last of a breed of politician we used to have a lot of before radical feminism became dogma in the Democratic party. She is a pro-life Democrat, but that didn't prevent the pope from taking the unusual step of using her presentation as an occasion for a lecture on the meaning of her own country's history. His words are worth quoting:

"The Founding Fathers of the United States asserted their claim to freedom and independence on the basis of certain 'self-evident' truths about the human person: truths which could be discerned in human nature, built into it by 'nature's God.' Thus they meant to bring into being, not just an independent territory, but a great experiment in what George Washington called 'ordered liberty.' . . . Reading the founding documents of the United States, one has to be impressed

Scrapbook

by the concept of freedom they enshrine: a freedom designed to enable people to fulfill their duties and responsibilities towards the family and towards the common good of the community. Their authors clearly understood that there could be no true freedom without moral responsibility and accountability, and no happiness without respect and support for the natural units or groupings through which people exist, develop, and seek the higher purposes of life in concert with others. . . .

"No expression of society's commitment to liberty and justice for all can be more basic than the protection afforded to those in society who are most vulnerable. . . . The moral history of your country is the story of your people's efforts to widen the circle of inclusion in society, so that all Americans might enjoy the protection of law, participate in the responsibilities of citizenship, and have the opportunity to make a contribution to the common good. Whenever a certain category of people—the unborn or the sick and old—are excluded from that protection, a deadly anarchy subverts the original understanding of justice. The credibility of the United States will depend more and more on its promotion of a genuine culture of life, and on a renewed commitment to building a world in which the weakest and most vulnerable are welcomed and protected."

In the annals of diplomatic history, a lecture on the meaning of America's democratic founding from the papal throne must rank as one of the stranger chapters. But it is even stranger that Americans should need it.

The Founders in Tehran

Okay, okay. So CNN's Christiane Amanpour got a big scoop with her world-exclusive interview of Iranian president Mohammad Khatami (see Edward G. Shirley's article on page 20 of this issue). But has it really become de rigueur in such situations—in the name of buttering up the interviewee—to commit howlers like this? Quoth Amanpour: "Let me ask you first about the hostage crisis, which is emblazoned in every American's mind. As you know, in all revolutions—the Communist revolution in Russia, the French revolution, perhaps even the American revolution—the early years contain many excesses."

Yes, we all remember those bloody days on the Jeffersonian barricades, when the last Federalist was strangled with the entrails of . . .

Vouchers in D.C.

Several months ago, The Scrapbook reported on a charity in the nation's capital called the Washington Scholarship Fund, which currently grants 450 private-school scholarships (chosen by lottery) to D.C. children who would otherwise remain victims of what may be the country's worst public-school system.

Exactly how bad are things? Thanks to a donation to the fund by Ted Forstmann and John Walton of $2 million a year, WSF will be able to award 1,000 scholarships next year. They announced this three months ago and have already received 5,500 applications—13 percent of all eligible schoolchildren in Washington, D.C. And the deadline for filing the applications is still three weeks away.

Casual

I'm U.K., You're U.K.

A colleague and I were in my office a few days ago when we decided to say hi to an old mutual friend who last year moved to London. I put the call on speakerphone. We were disappointed when we got his answering machine.

But not for long. There was our friend's voice—well, sort of our friend's voice. It was him, all right, but he sounded like something off an *Avengers* rerun. "Double" this and "naught" that, and "give us a bell" and "nip down the pub," with a "ta" and a "cheers" thrown in for good measure.

"He's taken the lorry to the lift to the loo," said my robustly American colleague.

I was about to pile on with a few aperçus on American self-loathing. But then I remembered that speaking normally over there is not without its challenges. When I lived in England for a couple years, preserving my accent was a priority—not just for the petty, selfish reason of sparing myself ridicule, but also for the petty, selfish reason of getting invited back to dinner parties. The English national pastime being amusement at others' expense, pass-the-butter-please Yanks are far less popular than their gimme-da-budda compatriots.

So I took to saying things I'd never said before, like "golly" and "buddy" and "holy cow." My preferred greeting was a goofy, "Hey! How you guys doin'?," always delivered with a broad (American, I thought) smile, which made me look and sound like some demented Little League coach.

This glad-handing persona got me into lots of trouble. There was obvious anti-Americanism, of course. A deranged Irish guy, who always sat alone in the coffee shop I frequented, had it in for me. "Hey, Yank!" he'd yell. "Do you know who me hero is? Karl Marx! *Karl! Marx!*" As if I were supposed to shout back, "Them's *fightin'* words!" But for everyone who took me for a running dog of McCarthyism, two received me with open arms as the ambassador of Woodstock Nation. Hitchhiking, I met an accountant—an accountant!—who told me, "Man, the spirit needs to be set free in order to grow." A street musician I knew asked me, apropos of nothing, "So! How's the heroin in the States?"

One weekend I arrived in Stranraer, Scotland, two hours early for a ferry. I had 30p in my pocket. I figured that if I went into a pub, there was a 1-in-4 chance I could win enough from a slot machine to buy myself a half-pint of beer.

There were four people there: the barman, two violent-looking guys my age standing over beers, and a 50-ish fellow slumped on the bar.

"Hey," I said. "How you guys doin'?"

Slump straightened up and said, "Och! A Yank! Have a whiskey with me, Yank!"

I didn't want to take advantage. I looked at the two guys my age, and they both gave a single downward nod, which meant, go ahead.

"I am the richest man in this town, Yank," Slump said as I sat down. "I am the only one who has been to America!" Slump *loved* America. But he turned out to be not that great a guy. He described how he'd been to New York, to Las Vegas, how he liked our American women (". . . if ye ken wha' I mean, lad"), the bars he'd wrecked, and the various people he'd either ripped off or punched out. He offered me a second drink, and as I took it, he said, ". . . and I will visit you, lad! I promise!" He whipped out a pen and asked for my address. It was clear to me that he meant it. So I wrote:

Wojciech Przedpelniecki
72890 Mulligan Crossways
Hootenanny, New Jersey

This seemed to infuriate him. "Wodge— . . . Woadge—"

The two younger fellows came over and looked at "my" name, quizzically. I had thought it would amuse them, but they didn't seem to like it much either.

Now Slump felt he was being had. "What kind of name is that!" he bellowed.

What could I do? I pulled my bottom lip over my top one into a Bill Clinton frown, feigned deep emotional hurt, and said, "It's . . . it's . . . an *American* name, sir!"

After that, I must have grown a little less vigilant. A few days after I got back to the States, I was driving through Lynn, Mass., the city I was born in, when I got a flat tire. It was right in front of a gas station. I pulled in. I walked into the attached grocery store while they changed the tire, and bought a pack of Kool-Aid and a bottle of spring water from the cashier. But when I asked for a cup, the teenage girl at the counter told me I'd have to pay for it.

"Golly," I said. "Holy cow! Five cents for a little cup!"

"There's no such thing as a free lunch, sir . . ." she said. I smiled as I pushed the door to leave, but she wasn't quite through.

". . . here in America," she finished cheerily.

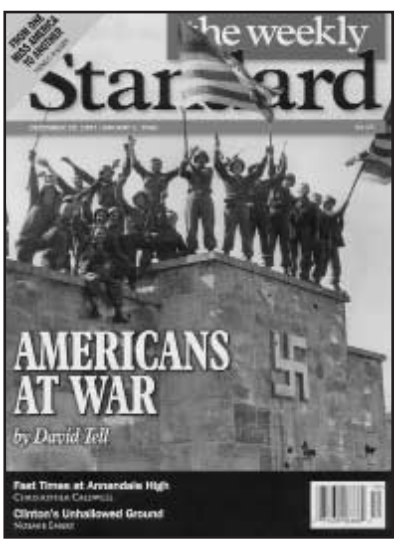
Christopher Caldwell

FROM RUSSIA, WITH LOVE

Let me limit myself to just a few of Anders Åslund's controversial points ("Why the Doomsayers Are Wrong About Russia," Dec. 29/Jan. 5). He claims, strangely, that "few voices are raised" in the West in defense of Russian reformers like Anatoly Chubais and Yegor Gaidar. Yet they have hardly ever been criticized by mainstream Western opinion and have almost invariably been supported by, among many others, the *Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Economist*, the U.S.-Russia Business Council, and most Western governments, notably those of Bill Clinton and Helmut Kohl.

Åslund claims that in light of "the falling crime rate," the law and order picture "is improving" in Russia. First, he ignores the strong evidence that the official statistics, e.g., on homicide, are being cooked—as Konstantin Zavoisky recently showed for Moscow in the democratic weekly *Ekspress-Khronika* (Nov. 28, 1997). Second, he fails to note some of the most disturbing aspects of the crime picture. For example: Opinion polls show the public still to be deeply worried by the crime situation; almost all Russian businesses—except for the biggest, which employ heavily armed private armies—routinely pay extortion money to the mafia or the police, having lost faith in the justice system's ability to defend them; the police and mafia are, according to government reports and the media, increasingly cooperating with each other and "growing together." Most disturbing of all, the corruption of the very core of the post-Soviet order that this "growing together" epitomizes is not being seriously tackled. This is because the whole system is too corrupt to do the job, and, as a Russian friend who occasionally sees Yeltsin told me, the president fatalistically accepts this to be the case. Significantly, not a single one of the thousands of highly placed politicians and businessmen on whom the police have lengthy dossiers has yet—after six years of largely phony drives against organized crime and corruption—been convicted and jailed.

Referring to the mayor of Moscow and an article I wrote about Chubais in the *Washington Post* (Aug. 24, 1997), Åslund ridicules me because I "cite approvingly Luzhkov's propaganda sheet, *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, calling Chubais 'a much bigger communist than Zyuganov' and one who uses 'authoritarian, purely Stalinist methods.'" I cited these words because they reflect certain sides of Chubais—for example his tendency, under pressure, to tough things out with the most brazen lies (significantly, Åslund does not try to explain these away). The cited words reflect, too, Chubais's equally Bolshevik and well-documented habit (also passed over by Åslund) of ordering the media, on pain of drastic reprisals, to suppress information that discredits him. Here the evidence comes from



Chubais's allies as well as his enemies.

Oleg Poptsov, for instance, a democrat of integrity and a political ally of Chubais who long headed the State Television and Radio Company, spoke at a recent forum on the press. Commenting on the previous speaker—an editor who had quoted Chubais as telling a closed meeting of top press people that "bones would be broken" if they disobeyed the government—Poptsov said: "Chubais is a bright, clever, talented person, but with his own new-Communist style. That's a fact. The way he's conducted meetings with editors should not be a surprise to anyone. The government is now ours, but it behaves like the previous [Soviet] one. There's no difference in the way such meetings are conducted. The Party Central Committee used to summon a larger group [of editors], whereas now a narrower group is called in. But the methods are the same" (*Novaya gazeta*, Nov. 24, 1997).

Åslund also claims that "Reddaway sides with Luzhkov." He refers to Luzhkov's view (summarized by me) that "Chubais's conduct of privatization was so dubious that it required criminal investigation" and suggests that I support Luzhkov's approach to privatization. This is simply untrue. I have never expressed any approval of this approach. I quoted Luzhkov only because he was one of many people who believed that criminal conduct was involved in the privatization programs presided over by Chubais. Among these people were the officials of Russia's independent, government-financed Accounting Office, which is no ally of Luzhkov and which, after investigating privatization in depth, found it permeated with massive fraud. I referred to this report, as well as to Luzhkov.

Also, Åslund hints that because one of the Russian papers that translated my article is controlled by the shady magnate Boris Berezovsky, I supported him in his battles against Chubais. This is not true. I have always shared Åslund's view of Berezovsky, and recently expressed it in an interview in *Ekspress-Khronika* (Oct. 18, 1997).

To conclude, Chubais organized Yeltsin's reelection skillfully (if with ill-concealed contempt for the law), and he has played a key role in reducing Russia's rate of inflation. He is also an authoritarian and a liar who is widely hated in Russia and who stimulates anti-Americanism. Many of his policies have helped create the crony capitalism and the acute, chronic problems with tax collection, wage arrears, and the black economy that plague Russia today. At best, in my view, Russia faces a future of restricted markets and minimal democracy. By contrast, Åslund believes that Chubais's and Gaidar's policies "will go far to guarantee the survival of Russia's political and economic freedoms." Time will tell which of us is nearer the mark.

PETER REDDAWAY
WASHINGTON, DC

Although I cannot speak for others attacked in Anders Åslund's article, I must point out that the views

Correspondence

attributed to me by Åslund are entirely without foundation.

Remarkably for one who insists that "journalists and Russia-watchers need to do a much better job of evaluating their sources," Åslund is quite willing to quote the work of others entirely out of context, as he did in writing that I "strongly support" the Russian tycoon Boris Berezovsky. Had Åslund represented my November 13, 1997, letter in the *Wall Street Journal* fairly, the reader would have seen that I in fact argued not that Berezovsky is a model reformer but that his behavior is not so different from the conduct of first deputy prime minister Anatoly Chubais, and that Americans need to stop pretending that there are only white hats and black hats in Moscow with nothing in between.

It is also somewhat disingenuous on Åslund's part to write a three-page defense of Chubais's economic policies while identifying himself solely as senior associate of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, when another of his affiliations—his past long-term service as a close adviser to Chubais—is much more relevant to his article. Interestingly, Åslund's own evaluations of the progress of political and economic reform in Russia in recent years have tracked Chubais's presence in or absence from the Russian government quite closely. For example, he wrote in the *New York Times* on February 13, 1996—after Chubais had been dismissed from his previous government service—that even Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov would make a better president than Boris Yeltsin. "Russia needs a change of government," Åslund wrote, and "unfortunately, the Communists are the only alternative."

Now that Chubais is back in the cabinet, however, "the doomsayers are wrong about Russia." Åslund is even prepared to defend Chubais's acceptance of a $90,000 book advance from a publishing house affiliated with one of the major beneficiaries of his management of privatization on the basis that "the relatively modest sum involved suggests a concern for propriety" and that others in government have gotten more. And he quietly sidesteps the question of whether the $90,000 advance is all that Chubais has received.

Åslund is definitely right, however, about the chronic "lack of perspective" in American discussions of developments in Russia. Perhaps a little distance from his friends in Moscow would help him to gain some perspective of his own.

PAUL J. SAUNDERS
WASHINGTON, DC

ANDERS ÅSLUND RESPONDS: ***The key dispute in Russia today is whether a small number of tycoons should enjoy special benefits in politics, taxation, and privatization, or not. Chubais and Nemtsov publicly attack such privileges, while Berezovsky openly favors them, and his two TV channels and newspapers savage Chubais and Nemtsov every day.***

According to* Forbes *magazine, Berezovsky has made a fortune of $3 billion largely through sweetheart deals. To stand up to such characters, you need to be a great deal tougher than a saint. Yet, if Chubais had done anything worse than the book deal, which he himself considers a big mistake, Berezovsky's muck-raking journalists would presumably have found it out.

It of course helps knowing these people as I do to understand the situation, but the debate is very public, though one must figure out who speaks for whom. I appreciate much of Peter Reddaway's response, but "Russia's independent, government-financed Accounting Office" is alas controlled by the Communist-dominated parliament.

Economic reforms are mostly spearheaded by a few leaders—in Russia by Yegor Gaidar, Anatoly Chubais, Boris Fedorov, and Boris Nemtsov. In 1996, when none of these men was in government, no reform whatsoever was undertaken, underscoring their importance. (I resigned as a government adviser in early 1994.)

In his letter to the* Wall Street Journal, *Saunders stated: "The real political battle is not between reformers and tycoons like Mr. Berezovsky, but between one group of tycoons . . . and another. . . ." That is also Berezovsky's view, but I disagree.

Miss America

Kudos to Venus Ramey for recognizing that common sense and wisdom do not come from a pretty face and a good figure, but from the less visible part of the body our looks-obsessed culture ignores—the brain ("Dear Miss America," Dec. 29/Jan. 5). But let's spread Ramey's message to the Hollywood elite who believe that simply because one can recite lines in front of a camera or sing, one becomes an authority capable of lecturing the American people on values and politics.

MICHAEL COHEN
BROOKLYN, NY

Duty and War

David Tell tries valiantly to understand something that cannot be understood except by those who were there ("Americans at War," Dec. 29/Jan. 5). The simple fact is that the war was different for every front-line soldier, even if two shared the same foxhole. No generalizations are possible.

The closest I ever came to getting it right was when a younger man asked me how it was that infantrymen could climb out of a foxhole and move forward in an attack toward other men who were trying to kill us. I answered that we had an obligation to do so. He asked, "You mean you were ordered to do so?" "No," I said, "we had an obligation to do so." He did not understand, but most infantrymen do.

EDWIN T. HAEFELE
ALLIANCE, NE

Correction

Last week's editorial transposed the name of the lead plaintiff in a 1993-94 lawsuit against the Clinton administration's health-care-reform task force. That organization's correct name is the Association of American Physicians and Surgeons.

THE WEEKLY STANDARD
welcomes letters to the editor. Letters will be edited for length and clarity and must include the writer's name, address, and phone number. All letters should be addressed:
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the weekly Standard

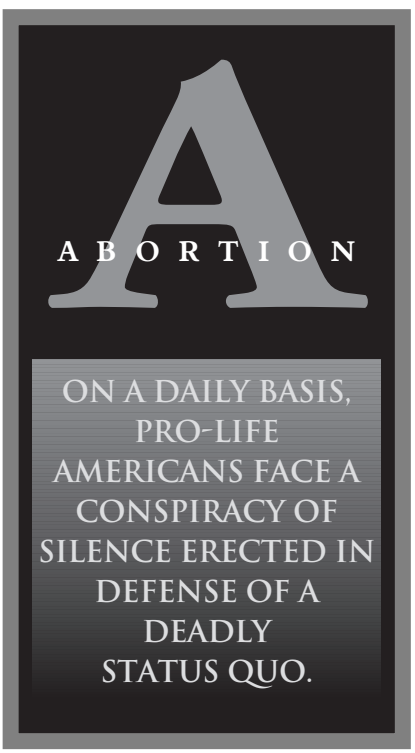
The Issue They Want to Go Away

American debate about abortion remains unhealthy. Abortion's place in political advertising is a case in point.

During the 1992 congressional primaries, pro-life candidates in a series of states bought prime television time for "dead fetus ads." These commercials contained horrifying imagery of surgical abortion, and they brought a shower of criticism down on the stations that carried them.

The ads did not "work," for the most part; few candidates who aired them wound up winning. But a handful did win their primaries and were likely to rerun the ads in their fall campaigns. So a nationwide coalition of broadcasters sought protection against this prospect from the Federal Communications Commission.

We are pinned between conflicting federal laws, these television and radio stations complained. The Communications Act of 1934 gives qualified candidates for federal office "reasonable" access to the airwaves. The act also forbids stations to censor candidate-produced commercials in content or design. This law, the broadcasters observed, appeared to require that they carry the shocking abortion ads.



At the same time, however, a separate federal statute imposes criminal penalties for the televised communication of "indecent" material anywhere outside a late-night "safe harbor" period. The FCC defines indecency as any "patently offensive" depiction of "sexual or excretory activities or organs." The broadcasters' lawyer argued that "by this definition," the abortion commercials were indecent "because they show a byproduct of an excretory activity: a fetus from a uterus."

This argument was so grotesque that even the federal government was unwilling to accept it completely. In August 1992, the FCC's Mass Media Bureau concluded, with amazing understatement, that "neither the expulsion of fetal tissue nor fetuses themselves constitute 'excrement.'" But the broadcasters appealed, and the FCC eventually allowed stations to shunt or "channel" graphic abortion ads to their late-night programming schedules.

This compromise remained in force until a federal appeals court struck it down in September 1996. "Content-based channeling of non-indecent political advertisements," even ads that include pictures of mutilated fetuses, are a violation of the Communications Act, the court decided.

As it happens, the FCC has never taken action against non-sexual indecency, and there was never any serious risk that the commission would penalize a television station for airing a qualified candidate's pro-life spot, no matter how extreme in presentation. The entire legal controversy was bogus, in other words, and the broadcasters' indecency claim was a fancied-up dodge disguising a much simpler truth: They did not like the 1992 abortion ads and were attempting to escape a clear requirement to run them.

As it happens, too, this particular question has now been mooted—not so much by the appeals-court ruling as by the conventions of campaigning. For all intents and purposes, the "dead fetus" ad is history. Most pro-life political candidates have long

since concluded that purely visceral appeals are counterproductive, and so they no longer produce them. As a matter of fact, the fear of public backlash is so widespread that most candidates no longer advertise their pro-life views at all, even in modulated, non-graphic form. This no doubt makes the nation's television stations very happy. But it is a troubling development for mainstream discourse on the subject of abortion, which was already highly constricted and is now reserved almost exclusively to occasional debates, on the margin, in Congress.

How can the American mind be turned against our abortion-on-demand regime if American politicians decline to discuss that regime during elections, the very time when they most command public attention? Perhaps private citizens can pick up the slack and produce independent political commercials that advocate the election of pro-life legislators. Perhaps, if such commercials are constructed around non-sensational fact and argument, broadcasters might eagerly accept them.

Perhaps O.J. Simpson was innocent. California's 22nd congressional district holds a special election this week to fill a seat left vacant by the late Walter Capps, a Democrat. There are two leading Republicans in the race. One is Brooks Firestone, heir to the tire fortune and hand-picked candidate of Newt Gingrich and the national GOP. Firestone is pro-choice. He voted against a ban on partial-birth abortion in the California Assembly.

Firestone is also richly funded. His first campaign commercials ran in early December. Since then, he has been off the air only briefly, the week of Christmas and New Year's. During this "dark" week, coincidentally, there appeared on local stations more than $50,000 worth of 30-second ads touting Firestone's record—paid for by a non-profit "issue advocacy" organization, the Foundation for Responsible Government. FRG is led by pro-choice Republicans and works to advance their agenda.

The other principal Republican in the race is Tom Bordonaro. He is pro-life, and voted for the partial-birth ban in the California Assembly. But he has no money. Bordonaro's first TV spots have gone up only in the campaign's final week, and he has managed to buy only 23 of them, for a total of $4,485.

So the Campaign for Working Families, an organization led by the religious conservative activist Gary Bauer, has attempted to intercede. Unlike FRG, the Campaign is a registered federal PAC. Unlike FRG, it raises contributions in legally limited increments and fully discloses both its donors and expenditures. Unlike FRG, the Bauer group has produced television advertising for the Bordonaro-Firestone race that honestly announces its purpose: "Vote Bordonaro for Congress." And unlike FRG, the Campaign for Working Families has been unable to get its advertising on the air in the preferred, original form.

Why? Because the commercial message in question is about abortion. The 30-second version of Bauer's ad features a picture of a living, newborn baby. The voiceover briefly describes partial-birth abortion as follows: "This procedure starts with the entire body being delivered except for the head. An incision is then made into the skull and the brain removed." The 60-second version of Bauer's ad features a nearly identical account of the partial-birth procedure, this time voiced by a woman in conversation with some of her friends.

In early December, the Campaign for Working Families asked three Santa Barbara-area network affiliates if they would sell the group significant air time for political commercials in the Bordonaro-Firestone race, and each of the affiliates agreed. But in late December, after the actual spots had been produced and submitted, all three stations refused to air them. The descriptive language about partial-birth abortion contained in both ads, Bauer's representatives were informed, was "offensive," and unless that language were deleted, the ads would not be allowed to run. Last week, rather than do nothing at all for its favored candidate, the Campaign for Working Families did delete that descriptive language from its scripts, and the spots finally began to air.

There are a couple of things to say about the editorial judgment of these television stations. First of all, there wasn't the remotest question of "indecency" in the original Bauer ads. There were no dead fetuses here, only an indisputably accurate, even clinical, account of a particular, *legal* surgery. In fact, each of the stations refusing to air the unexpurgated ads had already broadcast much the same information about partial-birth abortion, almost word for word, in the network news programs they carry. What's "offensive" about those ads, in short, seems not to be *what* they said, but who was saying it and with what aim. These commercials were sponsored by pro-life private citizens explicitly hoping to achieve a real-world, pro-life political result. The Santa Barbara stations apparently regarded this as unacceptable.

The anti-Bauer ban also raises an interesting issue of law. Having accepted and broadcast an advertisement produced by supporters of Brooks Firestone, the network affiliates may have triggered what's known as the FCC's "Zapple Doctrine," which holds that air time for proponents of one candidate in an election guarantees air time for proponents of the other. Even unauthorized, independent

groups like the Campaign for Working Families are covered by Zapple. And once on the air, no such group's ads may be censored, as we have already seen.

The Bauer group has asked the FCC to confirm this understanding of the Communications Act and remind the Santa Barbara stations of their corresponding responsibilities. But the exact circumstances of this controversy are without judicial or administrative precedent, and how the commission will rule is anyone's guess. If the FCC refuses to help out—as a general matter, only federal candidates, not their supporters, have an affirmative right to the airwaves—the entire controversy will underscore yet another ghastly truth about abortion in modern America. In its most pointedly effective forum, all that our public debate is yet prepared to admit about abortion is that "neither fetal tissue nor fetuses themselves constitute 'excrement.'"

That's not enough, to say the least. On a daily basis, pro-life Americans face a conspiracy of silence erected in defense of a deadly status quo. And their side of this argument, if that's the right word for it, is routinely shushed or muzzled—as Gary Bauer's experience makes plain. Opponents of abortion must speak, and the gatekeepers of American debate—like those Santa Barbara stations—must let them do it. Twenty-five years after *Roe* v. *Wade*, that small justice, at least, shouldn't be too much to ask.

—David Tell, for the Editors

Partial Birth Politics

by Fred Barnes

The Republican party's hierarchy is apoplectic, but Tim Lambert has actually done the GOP a favor by proposing to block party funding for candidates who oppose a ban on partial-birth abortions. True, the resolution by the Republican committeeman from Texas will prompt a noisy debate—and then probably lose—when the 165 members of the GOP national committee take it up Friday in Palm Springs, Calif. But to thwart Lambert, party leaders have already been forced to revitalize their commitment to outlaw partial-birth abortions, a cause supported by roughly three out of four Americans. Also, the squabble is bound to attract lavish, new attention to the gruesome partial-birth procedure itself. One possible result: Republican candidates may get over their squeamishness about making partial birth a major campaign theme. If used intelligently in TV ads, it has the potential to improve dramatically the prospects for both challengers and embattled incumbents like Sen. Al D'Amato in New York. The issue, after all, divides Democratic voters.

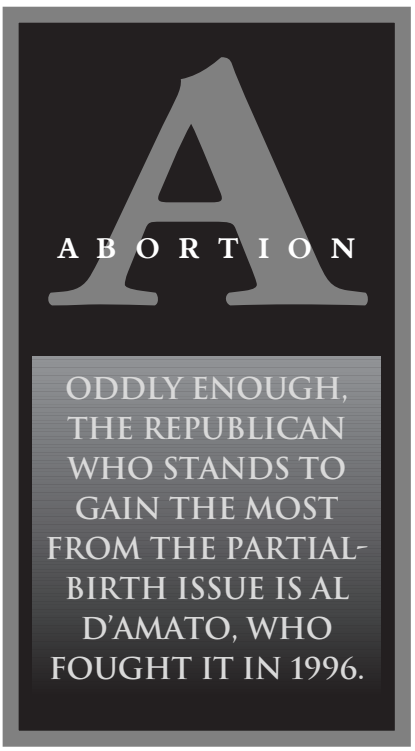
The biggest beneficiary of the fight, however, may be Jim Nicholson, the Republican national chairman. Elected a year ago, he has yet to emerge as a forceful national figure, suffering in comparison with his self-assured predecessor, Haley Barbour. In fact, while quietly opposed to barring Republican National Committee funds for candidates who approve of partial-birth abortions, Nicholson had no plans to fight the Lambert resolution openly—until it looked as if it might win. Then on January 6, he issued a strong statement opposing Lambert. More important, he began organizing a full-blown effort to defeat the proposal. Wisely, he not only recruited former GOP chairmen such as Barbour and Frank Fahrenkopf, but he also got prominent pro-lifers like former GOP representative Vin Weber and Michigan state chairwoman Betsy DeVos to back him. Now, Nicholson may wind up strengthened as party leader and better known nationally.

Of course, he has to win—and do so without causing a rupture between Republican regulars and social and religious conservatives who have sided with Lambert. This is tricky. The compromise Nicholson favors, which simply reaffirms the party's opposition to partial birth, has been rejected by Lambert. Conservatives like him believe the party apparatus merely pays lip service to the pro-life cause. "The rank and file are discouraged because we say we're committed to oppose partial-birth abortion," says Lambert, who also heads the Texas Home Schooling Coalition. "Yet we turn around and spend tremendous amounts of money to support candidates who back President Clinton on this." Most notably, the national party pumped $1.5 million into New Jersey last year, a portion of which aided the reelection of Gov. Christie Whitman. The governor vetoed a state ban on partial birth, but the Republican legislature overrode her.

Support for Whitman isn't the only grievance of pro-lifers. They point to the paucity of pro-life speakers at the Republican national convention in 1996. And in Republican direct mail, the abortion issue is rarely, if ever, mentioned. Plus, the party has frequently discouraged candidates from invoking the pro-life

issue in campaigns. "The party is operationally pro-choice," says consultant Jeffrey Bell. "Anything that elevates the issue rhetorically, they're against." Lambert makes another point: Republicans have withheld funds from candidates before, so why not this time? "I didn't hear any screams of 'litmus test,' 'big tent,' or 'slippery slope' when the RNC denounced David Duke." The former Klansman won the GOP nomination for governor of Louisiana in 1991.

Nicholson and his allies have no answer for this double standard. And the chairman, though a longtime foe of abortion himself, made a mistake when he criticized Lambert's proposal as a "litmus test." Pro-lifers regard this as a code phrase of pro-choice Republicans. Reminded of this, Nicholson now refers to a "formula" for withholding party funds, or a "blanket prohibition." In announcing his opposition to Lambert, Nicholson was said in the *New York Times* to have embraced the "big tent" strategy of Lee Atwater, who served as Republican chairman under George Bush. Nicholson denied having used that phrase, which to social conservatives is an excuse for diluting the party's official pro-life position.



But overall, Nicholson has made few flubs in fighting the Lambert proposal. He's been helped by the arrival of a new chief of staff, Mitch Bainwol, one of the GOP's smartest young operatives. Together, they quickly lined up their team of visible pro-lifers. One, DeVos, says she will lead the effort to kill the resolution. "I am not only opposed to partial-birth abortion, but to basically all abortions, except when the mother's life is in danger," she says. "I don't think this resolution does anything to move our ball down the field." Another, Weber, who was a founder of the House pro-life caucus, says there's fear among pro-lifers that "they'll lose what they have, which is control of the party." But instead, he argues, the resolution might drive away big GOP donors, who tend to be pro-choice. For his part, Barbour, now an RNC committeeman from Mississippi, sent a letter to fellow RNC members insisting voters, not the national party, should decide on candidates. He likened Lambert to liberal elitists "in their distrust of the people's choices."

Oddly enough, the Republican who stands to gain the most from heightened visibility of the partial-birth issue is one who opposed using it in 1996. At the time, Al D'Amato was chairman of the Senate Republican campaign committee. He leaned on Al Salvi in Illinois and Ronna Romney in Michigan not to run TV spots on partial birth. Now, running for reelection in New York, D'Amato will face a Democratic foe—Geraldine Ferraro, Chuck Schumer, or Mark Green—who wants partial-birth abortions to remain legal. The conventional wisdom has been that any of the three will use the broader abortion issue against D'Amato, who is pro-life. But he has an opportunity to flip the issue by stressing partial-birth abortion, which the other New York senator, Democrat Daniel Patrick Moynihan, has labeled infanticide. D'Amato would be crazy not to. Should he win, he will have the likes of Tim Lambert to thank.

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

ROE MUST GO

by William Kristol

WITH THE APPROACH of the millennium, everyone who's anyone wants to indulge in vague and vaporous thoughts about the challenges ahead. But in the midst of all this big talk, one issue, concrete and real, refuses to go away: abortion. The hard fact is that we have now in America a morally problematic and constitutionally unsound regime of abortion on demand. This fact is becoming increasingly difficult to shove under the rug. Indeed, abortion is likely to emerge as the central issue in the presidential campaign of 2000.

Or, more precisely, the status of *Roe* v. *Wade* is likely to emerge as the central issue. The reason is simple:

The next president should have at least three Supreme Court appointments—enough to swing the balance of power on *Roe* (and on many other issues). This means that prospective appointments to the Supreme Court and other federal courts will be more of a campaign issue than usual. And abortion—*Roe* in particular—will be at the heart of it.

In recent decades, the federal judiciary has played a major role in many policy areas. But about abortion, the Court has tried to be thoroughly dispositive. Here, the Court has attempted entirely to foreclose a political struggle. Here, the Court has expressed animosity even to continued political debate. Here, the Court has granted victory almost completely to one side, precluding any hope of significant progress by the other. In no other major area of public debate—not affirmative action, not term limits, not gay rights—has the Court put its thumb so squarely and forcefully on one side of the scales.

Obviously, the overturning of *Roe* would merely send the abortion fight back to the states, and to Congress—which would by no means guarantee triumph for the pro-life cause. Equally obviously, the future of the abortion debate is dependent on many developments—cultural, political, sociological—outside the purview of the Court. But the status of *Roe* is key. If *Roe* is overturned, everything about the abortion debate—and much about many related debates—changes.

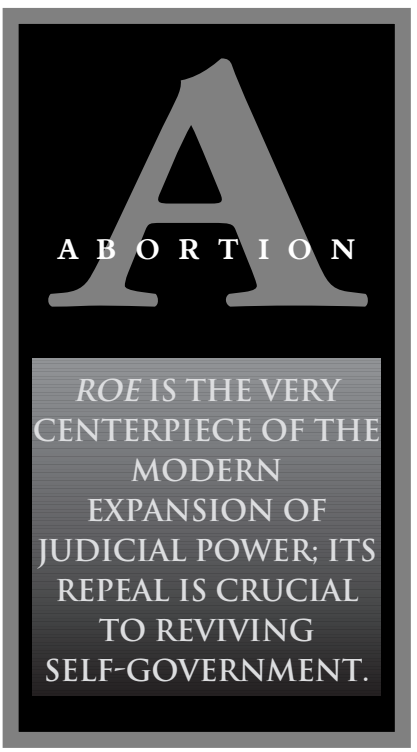
There are now three votes on the Court to overturn *Roe*. Two other justices, John Paul Stevens and Sandra Day O'Connor, are likely to step down soon after 2000, along with Chief Justice William Rehnquist. These three appointments will be fundamentally important. Pro-lifers know it. So do pro-choicers. And by 2000, voters in general will know it too, making it harder for candidates to get away with dodging and weaving on the issue.

The Democratic party, for its part, has abandoned any pretense of maintaining a big tent on abortion. When 2000 arrives, the Clinton-Gore administration will have clung for eight years to the most extreme, uncompromising abortion position imaginable. As a candidate in 1992, Bill Clinton pledged to nominate to the Supreme Court only those who supported *Roe*, and, true to his word, he made it a litmus test in his appointments of Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Stephen Breyer. Even Democrats like Dick Gephardt who support a ban on partial-birth abortions are fully committed to upholding *Roe* v. *Wade*. It is inconceivable, then, that the Democratic nominee in 2000 will retreat from his party's pledge of allegiance to *Roe* v. *Wade* as the law of the land.

And what of the Republicans? As candidates, Ronald Reagan, George Bush, and Bob Dole were somewhat guarded in their commitments. They said they would nominate to the Court only strict constructionists, and they vouched for their own belief in the sanctity of human life. But given the performance of Justices O'Connor and Anthony Kennedy (appointed by Reagan), and particularly that of Justice David Souter (appointed by Bush), Republican voters are going to insist on much more explicit and concrete assurances from their presidential candidates. Those

candidates will need to show that they understand *Roe* to be bad constitutional law, and they will need to say that they will nominate to the Court only those who clearly would vote to overturn *Roe*.

The truth is that abortion is an issue of profound moral, political, and constitutional importance. The theory underlying *Roe* and its progeny (especially 1992's *Casey* decision) has major implications for a host of other important issues: assisted suicide, gay rights, cloning, the legal status of the family. And because *Roe* is the very centerpiece of the modern expansion of judicial power, its repeal is crucial to reviving republican self-government. Conversely, defending *Roe* is critical for modern liberalism, with its project of individual liberationism and moral relativism. For both sides, 2000 will be a moment of truth.



Will Republicans rise to this moment? Many will not, but surely one or two will. The successful candidate will need to articulate the injustice of our current abortion regime and the constitutional fallacy of *Roe*. He will also need to build a political majority behind a coherent plan that puts abortion in the course of ultimate extinction. This agenda—Lincolnian in character, principled but incremental, appealing to the better angels of our nature—will have to be at once politically credible and morally convincing. On these two criteria, most pro-life politicians currently fall short. Some declare that they are pro-life, but cannot explain why, or why others should be. Others speak passionately against abortion, but their stridency alienates the uncertain; more important, they often fail to chart a practical course to a pro-life future.

At first, of course, the centrality of *Roe* will make GOP politicians nervous. But, in fact, it's a Republican opportunity. The survey data—presented in a useful new booklet by Everett Carll Ladd and Karlyn H. Bowman, *Public Opinion About Abortion*—are clear: About a third of Americans are pro-choice, believing that abortion should be "generally available to those who want it." These voters could possibly be persuaded that *Roe* was wrongly decided and that the issue should be fought out in the political arena, but in general they will be unreceptive to a pro-life message. But almost 45 percent of Americans seem to be basically pro-life: About 10 percent believe that abortion should not be permitted at all, and about 34 percent would outlaw it except in cases of rape, incest, and the life of the mother. This group should be relatively easy to mobilize in support of overturning *Roe*.

That leaves about 20 percent of the American people who believe that "abortion should be available but under stricter limits than it is now." These voters tend not to know how radical the current abortion regime is, or that it precludes the stricter limits they favor. They should be open to the argument that overturning *Roe* and returning the issue to the political process would allow for change in the direction they prefer. These swing voters would listen to a "*Roe* must go" message in 2000 if the case were made powerfully and intelligently. In the next election, neither the embarrassed inarticulateness of a Bob Dole nor the abolitionist thunder of an Alan Keyes will work.

But this year, too, is an election year. It was in 1858 that Lincoln and Douglas debated, laying the groundwork for Lincoln's presidential candidacy two years later. We cannot expect Lincolnian eloquence or perceptiveness from today's crop of Republicans, but we surely can hope for more than we have seen so far. Next week marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of *Roe* v. *Wade*. What will leading Republicans have to say? Anything? And how well will they say it? How much commitment and understanding will they show when pressed, as they will be sooner or later, on abortion?

Republicans talk a lot about being a majority party, about becoming a governing party, about shaping a conservative future. *Roe* and abortion are the test. For if Republicans are incapable of grappling with this moral and political challenge; if they cannot earn a mandate to overturn *Roe* and move towards a post-abortion America, then, in truth, there will be no conservative future. Other issues are important, to be sure, and a governing party will have to show leadership on those issues as well. But *Roe* is central, because the regime of *Roe* stands in the way of what conservatives most want to bring about—a politics of republican self-government, constitutional norms, and moral decency.

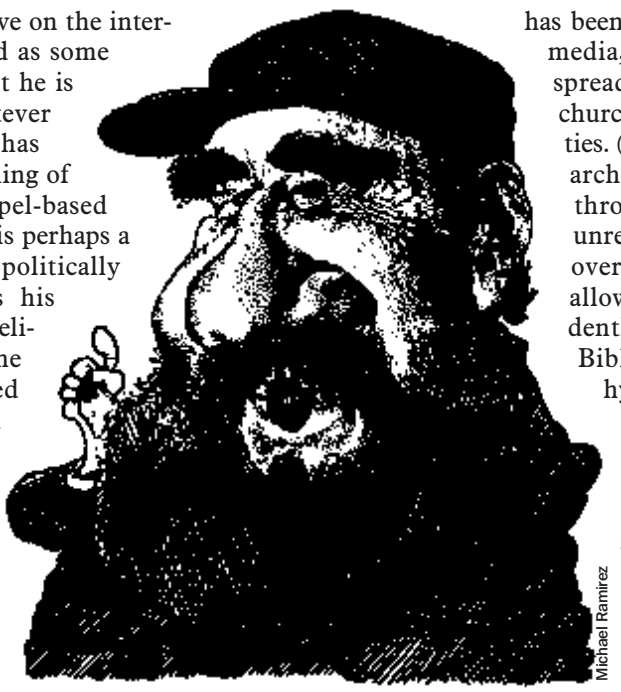
***William Kristol is editor of* THE WEEKLY STANDARD.**

Il Papa Meets *El Presidente*

by George Weigel

It is tempting to think of John Paul II's impending visit to Cuba as a reprise of his epic journey to Poland in 1979. But we should resist the temptation. The Catholic church in Cuba is not thinking that way, and neither is the pope.

For John Paul, this visit, like the 80 others he has undertaken over the past two decades, is first and foremost a pilgrimage. His goal, quite simply, is to strengthen the church in Cuba for whatever future it faces. The pope's impact on world affairs has been such that his every move on the international stage is interpreted as some kind of political gambit. But he is the first to insist that whatever influence he has enjoyed has been the result of his preaching of the Gospel and his Gospel-based defense of human rights. It is perhaps a curiosity that this most politically potent of popes conceives his ministry in explicitly evangelical terms; but that is how he has thought and acted throughout his papacy, and Cuba will be no different.



Michael Ramirez

Neither does the Cuban church of 1998 imagine itself the Polish church of 1979. The church is in a minority position in Cuba, banned from presenting itself publicly to Cuban society for more than 30 years. (One recent report had it that a Cuban gentleman was very excited that the pope was coming: "But who is the pope?" he asked.) Catholicism is not the historic custodian of national identity in Cuba, a role fulfilled by the church in Poland for centuries.

So what do the Vatican and the Cuban church want from this visit? First, the church would like the assistance of Latin American priests as it expands its activities. The Cuban government has, until quite recently, regularly denied (or terminally stalled) requests for visas from Latin American clergy. In pre-visit negotiations with the government, the Vatican raised the issue of visas, arguing that the church needed priests to help prepare for the pope's visit. Soon, the government changed its policy and issued a significant number of visas. The church would like to see the visa process routinized, so that it has clergy sufficient to maintain a vigorous public ministry.

Then there is the question of the church as a charitable institution. Recent Cuban policy has allowed the church to receive humanitarian assistance from abroad (primarily foodstuffs and medicines), but not to distribute it—a role the government has reserved for itself. A change in this policy, allowing the church to distribute independently the aid it receives, would be a major improvement.

Another issue is media access. Ever since the Communists seized power, the church has been denied access to the mass media, a major factor in widespread public ignorance of the church and its leading personalities. (Cardinal Jaime Ortega, the archbishop of Havana, walks through the streets of his city unrecognized by many.) Moreover, the church has not been allowed to publish independently; religious materials—Bibles, catechisms, missals, hymnals—must be imported (under government control, of course). But there has been some easing of these restrictions in advance of the pope's visit, and the church hopes that the trend will continue, and even expand, after the pope leaves.

And last, there is the persistent matter of political prisoners. Church sources indicate that some 900 remain in jail. The church wants them released, and it wants the government to permit them and their families to emigrate, if they so choose.

The immediate run-up to the papal visit has seen the kind of scuffling between the Vatican and a repressive regime that planners of John Paul's travels have come to expect. The pope will make four major public appearances in Cuba, at strategic locations throughout the island. (The agreement to four venues was itself a concession from the government, which originally proposed confining the pope to Havana.)

But will the people of those locales be given time off from work to attend the pope's public masses? The matter remained under discussion a few months

ago, but now it appears that time off will be granted (to mark the visit of a foreign head of state, as the government sees it, not a religious holiday).

There has also been disagreement about how Cuban television will treat the papal visit, and Vatican officials hope that this issue, too, will be resolved satisfactorily, if at the very last minute. In addition, the Vatican has pointed out to the relevant authorities that any attempt to replicate the Sandinista manipulation of the pope's 1983 mass in Managua—at which the regime stacked the crowd directly in front of the altar with its most vociferous supporters, while keeping the Catholic faithful on the margins—would make the Cuban government look bad (an argument that Daniel Ortega might ruefully concede).

About social and economic matters, John Paul will undoubtedly have something to say, but those hoping that he will thunder against capitalist exploitation and the marginalization of the Latin American "periphery" by the North American "core" will likely be frustrated. The pope spent too many years living under a Communist dictatorship to buy the notion that Cuba's economic crisis is primarily the result of the U.S. embargo. That the pope believes the embargo should be reconsidered is no secret. But he also understands that Cuban poverty is the result of yet another failed Communist experiment.

The tempting analogy to Poland, 1979, works in one respect: There, the sheer experience of being part of a self-organized, self-disciplined, non-governmental mass meeting had a marked impact on the psychology of a people who had been told for 40 years that they were incapable of running their own affairs. Something like that—the beginnings of a revival of civil society—could happen in Cuba.

Something else could happen as well—to Fidel Castro. John Paul II is, above all, a pastor and a fisher of souls. If it is difficult to predict the short-term political effects of the pope's visit, it is even more difficult to calculate the impact that John Paul himself will have on the 70-year-old *comandante* who grew up in Catholic schools. But almost 20 years' experience should have taught us that this pope, who really does believe that God is in charge of history and who acts according to that bedrock conviction, is a man who confounds the conventional wisdom regularly. Cuba will not be Poland redux. But something dramatic may be in store, sooner or later.

George Weigel, a senior fellow of the Ethics and Public Policy Center, is at work on a biography of John Paul II.

The Truth About the Chair

by David Frum

The co-perpetrator of the worst terrorist attack in American history; a woman convicted of pick-axing two sleeping people to death; a cold-blooded mail-bomber on trial for two murders and two maimings: These are some of the people who have convinced sympathetic listeners that they ought to escape the maximum legal punishment for their crimes. The death penalty is unequivocally constitutional. It is supported by a crushing majority of the American people. Moralists from the authors of the Bible to John Stuart Mill have regarded it as just. And yet somehow Americans encounter the most enormous difficulty persuading their justice system to put it into effect.

Every year at about this time, the newspapers run stories about the rapid rise in criminal executions in the United States. Spread over half a dozen columns, illustrated with charts that show death sentences rocketing upward like the Dow Jones industrial average, they present an image of a country grimly bent on snuffing out as many lives as possible. The *Washington Post* offered a fine example of the genre on December 15, in a story observing that the number of executions nationally hit a four-decade high in 1997 and that Virginia executed more people than it had in any year since 1909. "I think the death machinery has kicked into high gear," the *Post* quoted the director of the American Civil Liberties Union's Capital Punishment Project as saying.

You'd think that the whole United States was crackling with the sound of the electric chair. But as so often, the newspaper stories are misleading. No, they're not literally dishonest. It is indeed true that in 1997 the United States executed twice as many criminals as in 1994, that it executed twice as many in 1994 as it had in 1989, and three times as many in 1989 as in 1983. That's one way to tell the story. But here's another: At no point in the 20 years since the Supreme Court reauthorized the death penalty has the number of murderers executed in this country exceeded the number of Americans killed by lightning.

In 1997, 74 killers were put to death, bringing the

total number of executions in the United States since capital punishment resumed to 432. Over the same two decades, nearly 500,000 Americans were murdered. Assuming that most killers kill only once, the average murderer has faced a less than one in 1,000 chance of suffering the maximum theoretical legal punishment for the taking of innocent life. Let's put it this way: Committing a murder in the United States today is almost nine times safer than being drafted during the Vietnam War; the 11 million men inducted between 1965 and 1973 faced a one in 130 chance of dying in Indochina. You often hear it said that the death penalty doesn't deter. If not, it may be because, from the point of view of a killer, execution is a contingency as remote and hypothetical as going to hell. Rather more remote and hypothetical, actually.

Americans are now congratulating themselves on the spectacular fall in crime over the past three or four years. It is genuinely impressive. But it's worth remembering that today's crime rates have fallen back only to the levels that prevailed in the late 1970s (or, in the case of star pupil New York City, the late 1960s)—levels that were at the time viewed as shocking and outrageous. By world standards, by the standards of America's own history, this country remains a terrifyingly dangerous place. Perhaps one reason that the country used not to be so dangerous was the greater willingness of courts in those days to sentence the most heinous offenders to the ultimate punishment. In the 1930s, when Harlemites could sleep on their fire escapes, the country executed between 150 and 200 criminals *per year*.

> IT IS OFTEN SAID THAT THE DEATH PENALTY IS RARE BECAUSE JURIES ARE RELUCTANT TO IMPOSE IT. THAT'S UNTRUE. JURIES HAVE CONDEMNED MORE THAN 5,500 MURDERERS TO DEATH SINCE 1977.

It is often said that the death penalty is rare because juries are reluctant to impose it: Seeing a human being in the dock, they cannot bring themselves to condemn him to death. That's untrue. From the beginning of 1977 through the end of 1996, American state and federal juries condemned more than 5,500 murderers to death. At trial, jurors are required to look the defendant in the eye, while the crime can be conjured up only by immaterial words and sorry little scraps of admissible evidence. But even so, when they encounter an atrocious crime, jurors are generally willing to enforce the law. No, it's not juries that have made the death penalty an arbitrary, freak occurrence; it's the determination of a small band of activist lawyers to thwart the commands of the law, and the even more troubling willingness of the courts to let the law be thwarted.

Nor—despite the rise in the aggregate number of executions—has this unwillingness to apply the law abated in recent years. The length of time it takes to carry out a death sentence has steadily risen since 1976: The criminals executed in 1985 had spent an average of six years on death row; the criminals executed in 1990 had spent an average of eight and a quarter years; the criminals executed in 1996 had spent an average of ten and a half years.

Death-penalty opponents like to posit a choice: in the words of an August 1997 Gallup poll, "the death penalty or life in prison with absolutely no possibility of parole." In fact, no such choice exists. The people who administer the American justice system are not only reluctant to carry out death sentences, they cannot bring themselves to carry out life sentences either.

Despite the half-million slayings since 1976, there are—as criminologist John DiIulio points out—only about 100,000 killers in prison today. In other words, some 70 percent of the men and women who have killed a spouse, child, friend, or neighbor over the past two decades have either been released from prison or never went in the first place. The average killer, by DiIulio's estimate, spends just eight and a half years in jail.

Nobody can deny that there is something capricious about the way the death penalty is applied in America today. There are states, like New York, with death penalties on the books that have been cunningly written to ensure that nobody will ever actually receive a capital sentence. There are states, like Pennsylvania, where criminals are frequently sentenced to death, but where the sentences somehow are never put into effect. Even the apparent rise in executions this year turns out to be a fluke. Remove one state, Texas, from the total, and the number of executions in the other 49 actually dropped below that in 1996. All together, 94 percent of the killers sentenced to death since 1976 have thus far evaded the punishment meted out to them by judge and jury.

The right way to deal with that capriciousness, however, is to ensure that the death sentence, when lawfully imposed, is promptly carried out, and not—as death-penalty critics argue—to abandon it in the hope that if we do, the justice system will suddenly start enforcing genuine life sentences. The zeal of death-penalty opponents for life imprisonment without parole will last exactly as long as the death

penalty remains legal. It remains true that any attempt to punish crime severely—whether by execution or by life imprisonment—generates intense opposition. The death penalty excites that opposition more fiercely than anything else right now, but if the death penalty were done away with, the locus of opposition to punishment would shift to the alleged inhumanity of "throwing away the key." Substantial numbers of people with the power to disrupt the operation of the criminal-justice system still believe that crime is a symptom of social injustice and that criminals should be cured rather than punished. The death penalty may be the top item on their agenda, but it is not the last.

David Frum is a contributing editor of* The Weekly Standard. *His history of the United States in the 1970s will be published by Basic Books in 1999.

Congress Versus Iraq

by John R. Bolton

During the holiday season, Iraq all but slipped from public view—doubtless to quiet prayers of thanks from the Clinton administration. Since Saddam Hussein effectively barred United Nations weapons inspectors from carrying out their responsibilities in late October, the administration's strategy has been to strike a macho pose for domestic consumption but do next to nothing diplomatically, and as little as possible militarily, to end Iraq's evasion of the Security Council's post-Gulf War constraints.

Surprisingly, the president has escaped damaging criticism, not only for five years of waning attention to the Iraq problem, but even for his sloppy handling of the last three months. By now, the administration's Middle East policy has dwindled to sheer political image-making; characteristically, the president has invited Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu and PLO leader Yasser Arafat to the White House for photo opportunities next week. The "peace process" is nearly in ruins, Saddam is daily gaining confidence and resources, and the administration remains passive and unconnected to reality.

Thus, on November 20, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said with assurance, "The Iraqis are prepared to have the inspectors return unconditionally." Today, only the defiantly ignorant could agree. Sure enough, Defense Department spokesman Kenneth Bacon stepped up to say last week that ". . . the U.N. is still working for complete access. I think the situation has changed dramatically." What has changed dramatically is that Saddam Hussein's answer to the question, Are you better off today than you were three months ago?, is unequivocally yes.

This transformation is due largely to the administration's unwillingness to confront Saddam, either unilaterally or through a reassembled international coalition, with or without Security Council approval. Richard Butler, chairman of the U.N.'s special commission on Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, said last month that Saddam's agents told him the commission will "never" be able to inspect the "presidential sites," as the U.N. sanctions require. This is not a subtle disagreement, a "nuance," as they like to say at the State Department. It is flat defiance, which awaits an American response.

One reason for the administration's passivity (although not the only one) is that Congress has been in recess throughout the present crisis. Some members have been available for media interviews, but the lengthy congressional absence from Washington has precluded the formation of a critical mass of opposition that might have stiffened the president's spine, or at least heightened his interest in the opinion polls. The palpable absence of hearings, floor debates, congressional resolutions, press conferences, and the attendant flood of press releases and sound bites has left the administration without discernible opposition to its limp-wristed policy.

Ironically, in August 1990, after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Congress was also absent from Washington. That recess gave the Bush administration breathing room to launch the diplomatic and political initiative that culminated in Operation Desert Storm—and to do so free from the carping of members of Congress unwilling to use force.

By contrast, President Clinton has used his free hand to do what he does best: talk issues into obscurity. Alexander Hamilton wrote in *The Federalist*, "Energy in the executive is a leading character in the definition of good government. It is essential to the protection of the community against foreign attacks. . . ." But the administration exemplifies Hamilton's alternative case: "A feeble executive implies a feeble execution of the government."

The reconvening of Congress this month offers one last chance to convince the administration that its

flaccid Iraq policy only encourages defiance by Saddam, equivocation and retreat by America's former Gulf coalition partners, and disrespect for Washington from rogue regimes. To seize the opportunity, however, Senate and House leaders must assert their authority in concert. Although Congress was never intended to initiate foreign policy, it is eminently capable of shaming a president into doing so.

Congress should act before the State of the Union message on January 27. During the week of January 19, while the president is smiling for the cameras with Netanyahu and Arafat, the four key committees in the House and Senate responsible for foreign policy and national security should schedule back-to-back hearings. Secretary Albright and Pentagon chief William Cohen should be summoned before their respective authorizing committees to testify. The intelligence committees and the key appropriations subcommittees might also schedule hearings during the same week.

The purpose would be not political one-upmanship (which the administration has already carried to excess) but two relatively simple tasks. First, the committees should lay out clearly for the press and the public the decline and fall of America's Iraq policy in the five years since Clinton took office. The public deserves to know, for example, how successfully Saddam Hussein was evading the constraints imposed by the U.N. even before his October defiance. Second, members of Congress should spell out for the administration, in both political and military terms, what "a real president" (in Bob Dole's phrase) would do with Saddam Hussein.

History will record the progressive collapse of the Gulf War coalition in Clinton's first term, caused largely by his administration's inattention to Iraq. And the record will show, in the last year, the accelerating decline of U.S. influence in the Gulf and the increasing likelihood that Saddam Hussein will break out of the ring so laboriously built around his regime. In default of executive leadership, Congress must detail the steps necessary either to bring Saddam's regime back under control or to make it pay the full price of its transgressions.

Congress's failure to seize this opportunity will leave President Clinton unembarrassed by his weak and ineffectual stewardship. The only way to instill energy in such an executive is to threaten domestic political consequences for inaction. As the president prepares the State of the Union with his legacy in mind, Congress must keep the citizenry's attention on a true threat to our national security—and our president's alarming lack of response.

John R. Bolton is senior vice president of the American Enterprise Institute. He was assistant secretary of state for international organizations in the Bush administration.

EPA Dust in GOP Eyes

by Dave Juday

Unless the Republican Congress rouses itself and finds its nerve, the Environmental Protection Agency will issue absurd and indefensible new regulations next month. These regulations, devised under the Clean Air Act, will impose stringent new requirements on potential sources of ozone and "fine particulate matter"—in other words, haze and dust. The regulations will thus gather under tight federal control a number of activities that produce, or could produce, the targeted emissions, from industrial manufacturing all the way to simple lawnmowing and backyard barbecues. Even in the annals of environmental overreach, the EPA's new thrust is extraordinary.

The new rules are set to supplant the Clean Air Act amendments passed by Congress in 1990. Since then, the nation's progress in air quality has been strong. Cities have seen a 50 percent drop in the number of days on which pollution levels exceed safe-air standards, and not one city has experienced an increase in pollution. So why the new, Draconian measures?

The EPA's answer of choice is "asthma." The agency claims that its stricter standards will reduce the incidence of this illness, which is rising. This, of course, turns logic on its head: If asthma cases are increasing while air pollution is decreasing, how would a further decrease in air pollution slow the spread of asthma? As a report from the Centers for Disease Control notes, "No evidence exists that supports the role of outdoor pollution levels as the primary factor" in asthma. Instead—and embarrassingly for environmental activists—the real enemy of asthma sufferers is indoor air pollution, the unintended side-effect of one of our previous national campaigns, for energy efficiency. Americans now work in buildings that are shut up tight, in which opening a window is often impossible, making a host of allergens all the more troublesome.

The most generous thing that can be said for the

EPA's health claims is that they are an errant leap of faith. Ronald Gots, director of the International Center for Toxicology and Medicine near Washington, sums it up this way: No regulations have "ever been based on fewer data than these"; indeed, the data "border on non-existent." President Clinton's own budget for last year called for research funding to "reduce the great uncertainty about health effects [as they relate to particulate matters]." And even the EPA's Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee acknowledges that a "diversity of opinion reflects many unanswered questions and uncertainties associated with establishing" the new regulations.

Then there is the question of cost: How great a hit will the economy take? The EPA has pegged total compliance costs at $6.5-8.5 billion a year, a laughably low number. According to the Air Quality Standards Coalition in Washington, an alliance of business, labor, and local governments, the agency arrived at that figure by calculating, not the regulations' true costs, but political palatability. The EPA simply stopped tallying potential costs beyond the $8.5 billion mark, noting in fine print that some areas of the country would fail to meet the new standards even after that already-considerable expenditure of money. One private research firm estimates that the new regulations will cost as much as $7 billion a year in Chicago alone.

Another question: Which activities, exactly, and which sectors of the economy will be subject to the rules? About this, the EPA is similarly slippery. In response to inquiries from farm-state legislators, concerned about the status of dust stirred up in the course of run-of-the-mill agricultural activities, like plowing and planting fields, combining wheat, and filling grain bins with corn, EPA administrator Carol Browner promised that the rules "will not require a farmer to change the way he or she does her job" (a prime example of Clinton-speak). Industrial firms, she said, not farms, are her targets. But as Browner must know, the new standards were not written to apply merely to smokestacks, or to smokestack soot. Rather, as the American Farm Bureau Federation has complained, they will result in additional regulation at virtually every stage of food production and processing.

Rep. Bob Smith, the chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, remarked in a recent hearing that the EPA's own data indicate that most of the "fine particulate matter" it wishes to regulate comes from agricultural sources. Indeed, one of the agency's stated goals is to make "reasonable progress" in reducing haze over 156 parks and wilderness areas across the country. Such areas—especially in the West—are much likelier to be surrounded by farms than by factories, which is why the chief researcher in the National Park Service's Air Quality Division freely admits that he considers agriculture a principal source of haze.

The larger issue is, Why does the EPA administrator believe she can confer on herself the authority to target certain sectors for enforcement while granting indulgences for others? If for this reason alone, Congress should challenge the regulations, or at least Administrator Browner. She cannot keep her word to farmers even if she would like to: It will be state agencies, not the EPA, that will decide how to meet the new federal standards. The EPA will hold the states accountable only for aggregate standards, without regard to discrete sectors.

Browner, though, is confident that Congress will not call her bluff. She recognizes that Republicans run notoriously scared on environmental issues, particularly in election years.

In 1996, for example, the administration championed a book called *Our Stolen Future*, written by a trio of environmental activists. The book, which boasted a foreword by Vice President Al Gore, asserted that pesticides cause "endocrine disruption," leading to aberrant sexual development, behavioral problems, and other ills. The EPA praised the work for "drawing public attention to an environmental problem which has long concerned the Clinton Administration."

Yet the endocrine-disruption theory is purely conjectural, at best. Even the book's authors concede that they cannot prove what they allege, and that they may never be able to do so. Moreover, evidence suggests that food naturally contains as much as 40 million times the endocrine-disruption potential as synthetic pesticide residue.

Even so, the Republican Congress went all wobbly over the issue, ramming through pesticide legislation based on nothing more than a fringe theory. In so doing, it handed the EPA a powerful new tool for mischief: The agency can now keep any and all pesticides off the market by subjecting them to endless and pointless testing.

This year, with its clean-air regulations, the EPA is poised to do much the same, using the same playbook: phony health claims and fictitious science aimed at winning more regulatory power for the EPA. This time, though, Congress should see it coming and mount a defense. The new regulations, according to some estimates, could cost the country as much as $150 billion, with no discernible improvement in air quality or public health whatever. Fool Congress once, shame on the EPA; fool Congress twice, shame on Congress. Excuses will not suffice. Republicans should buckle their chin straps.

Dave Juday is an exporter of agricultural products and an adjunct fellow of the Hudson Institute's Center for Global Food Issues.

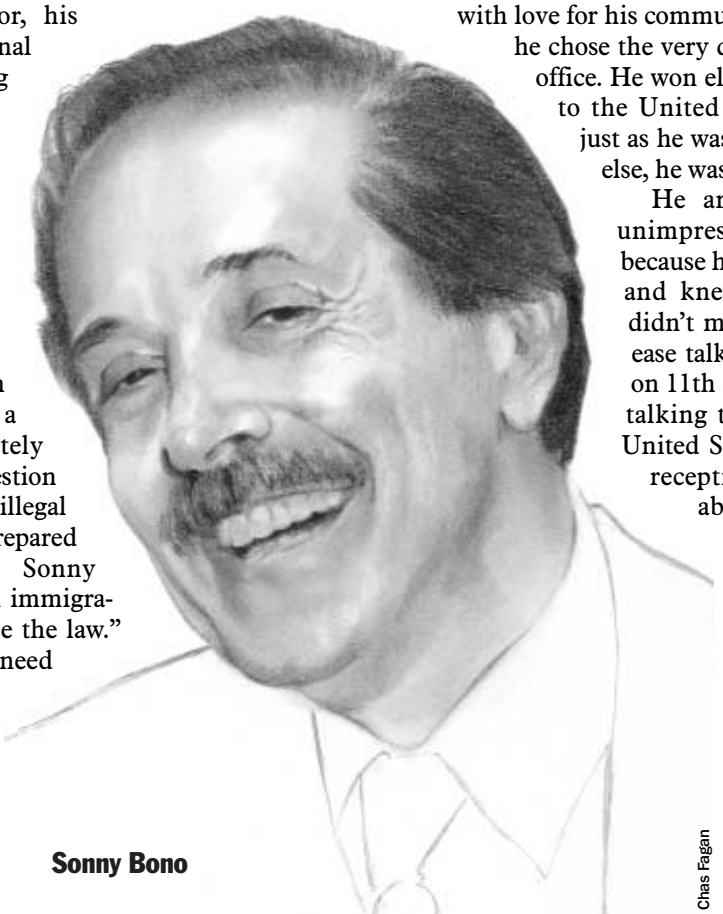
Sonny Bono, RIP

by Bruce Herschensohn

In early 1935, God must have been in a very good and joyous mood, creating the mold for Sonny Bono. My only complaint is that He used that mold just once, in a very limited edition.

Sonny reminded me of no one I had ever met before. And after knowing him, no one I ever met reminded me of Sonny. His wonder-filled eyes, his smile, his compassion, his talents, his self-effacing humor, his decency, made an original mix that sparkled. Being in a bad mood around Sonny was impermissible.

I met Sonny for the first time in 1992 when we both were candidates for the Republican Senate nomination in California. I shook hands with him, as we prepared for a debate, and I immediately liked him. The first question in the debate was about illegal immigration. I gave a prepared three-minute answer. Sonny simply said, "It's illegal immigration. It's illegal. Enforce the law." That was it. He didn't need to use his three minutes. He had it exactly right. On the night of the general election, when the networks predicted my defeat by Barbara Boxer, Sonny came up, took off his watch, and handed it to me. "Every senator should have a gold watch," he said. He was trying to bolster my spirits. He did.



Sonny Bono

Chas Fagan

Later, after Sonny was elected to Congress, he was invited to speak at Harvard University. I was nervous for him. He wasn't nervous at all. There was no reason to be. The students loved Sonny! Last year, I urged him to run for the Senate. But he knew running statewide would keep him away from Mary and his kids. And he was engrossed in what he was doing in the House.

Sonny studied issues in depth: He didn't just listen to others about Bosnia before stating his opinion—he went there. He didn't just listen to others about Russia before stating his opinion—he went there. And he came back from one trip after another with insights unlike those of others. Such insights will be sorely missed by those fortunate enough to have heard them.

Those were not things he was obligated to do. After all he accomplished in earlier life in so many arts and professions, he could have chosen nothing but recreation and fun in Palm Springs. But instead, with love for his community and for his nation, he chose the very difficult path of elective office. He won elective office all the way to the United States Congress—and just as he was unusual in everything else, he was an unusual victor.

He arrived in Washington unimpressed with celebrities because he had already been one, and knew what it meant and didn't mean. He was equally at ease talking to a homeless man on 11th and K Streets as he was talking to the president of the United States at a White House reception. And he talked about what he learned from both with equal enthusiasm.

Because he had worked his way up from driving a meat truck, he was unimpressed with wealth or power. Because he was so humble, he rejected those who reek of self-importance.

Small in physical stature, he had a soul large enough to fill Palm Springs and Capitol Hill. And those in the future who seek political office will be more fortunate than those who sought it in the past—because, if they choose, and they should, they will be able to stand on the shoulders of this large-souled man, and from that height, be able to see public service in a new and brilliant light.

Bruce Herschensohn was the campaign chairman for Sonny Bono's successful 1994 congressional race. This is adapted from his eulogy at Rep. Bono's January 9 funeral.

Good Mullah, Bad Mullah

Revolutionary Iran and the "Great Satan"

By Edward G. Shirley

Persian mutability was both the bane and the pleasure of my work as an Iranian-targets officer in the CIA's clandestine service. An Iranian could appear one day as a hirsute, pro-Khomeini revolutionary, the next as a clean-shaven, pro-Western democrat who never really believed those chest-thumping, anti-American chants. Finding the truth behind such changes of heart is difficult, especially for Americans, who like their enemies constant. There are good reasons why many Persians are philosophically flexible, but that historical insight won't help U.S. policymakers wrestling with contradictory signals from Tehran.

Mercifully, the Islamic Republic isn't as opaque as the former Soviet Union: We don't have to scrutinize the mullahs lining up for Friday prayers to analyze the indices of power. What Iranians lack in consistency, they make up in volubility. Persian journalists, editors, and intellectuals—whose differences often reflect those among the ruling clergy—love to spit at one another in print. Iranian presidents, dissident clerics, even intelligence ministers sometimes write illuminating pamphlets and books. Parliamentary debates are regularly raucous. Though the clergy is a tight-knit club rarely penetrated by even the most dedicated lay Islamic revolutionaries, reliable mullah gossip gets around.

Amid all the usual anti-American clerical chatter, an interesting signal came on December 14, when Iranian president Mohammad Khatami expressed his wish for a "dialogue" between Iran and the "great American people" and raised hopes in Washington and Tehran that the U.S.–Iranian confrontation might finally be ending. Then on January 7, in an interview with CNN's Christiane Amanpour, Khatami repeated his wish for a friendly unofficial dialogue between the Iranian and American peoples. Though other clerics—notably Iran's revolutionary leader, Ali Khameneh'i—unceasingly refer to the United States as "the Great Satan," Khatami often uses kinder descriptions. The Iranian president's recent appeals lead one to wonder: Will the real Iran please stand up? What is the American government to make of a clerical regime that oscillates between calls for an Islamic alliance against the United States and appeals to comity among nations? Specifically, what should Washington do to help those inside Iran who want to reestablish civil, if not diplomatic, relations?

Khatami's election to the presidency on May 23, 1997, convulsed the ruling clerical establishment. Khatami took an astonishing 69 percent of the vote. Though the clergy in general was well aware that the Iranian people weren't happy, Khameneh'i hadn't realized the depth of popular resentment and anger against his regime. Instead, confident of victory, he had held a free election, to the surprise of many inside Iran and out. The regime's preferred candidate, Ali Akbar Nateq-Nuri, the speaker of the parliament, was trounced in every major city, including both Qom and Mashhad, Iran's most important clerical seats of learning.

Khatami himself was shocked by his election. A former minister of cultural guidance (1982–92), he was little known around the country, though he'd developed a following in literary circles for his efforts to advance freedom of expression. The preferred candidate of the intelligentsia, the author of thoughtful little books about the cultural collision between Islam and the West, Khatami didn't seem to burn with a desire to be president. Nor did the regime fear him: The cleric-controlled candidate-review board, which vets would-be presidential candidates and eliminates most of them, cleared him to run. Among his friends,

Edward G. Shirley is the pseudonym of a former Iranian-targets officer in the CIA's clandestine service. He is the author of Know Thine Enemy, A Spy's Journey into Revolutionary Iran *(Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1997).*

Khatami was known for neither boldness nor courage. When hard-core revolutionary forces attacked him in 1992 for allowing the production of controversial films and books, Khatami put up a fairly feeble fight before resigning. A considerate family man with an unassuming presence, he never displayed the talent for realpolitik that catapulted so many mullahs into power.

The very lack of that quality, however, aided him in the presidential campaign. Though a member of the clerical elite, Khatami was seen by the Iranian people as a political outsider, a mullah who wasn't *unha*, one of "them," the clerical nomenklatura.

To the dismay of Khameneh'i's crowd, a cult of Khatami developed among university students, junior clerics, women, and the poor. It is essential to realize that the vast majority of those who supported him voted not *for* Khatami but *against* Khameneh'i's regime. Khatami's vague but sincere campaign promise to build a more democratic nation of laws, where the young toughs in the Morals Police would no longer harass people for insufficient "Islamic" rectitude, struck a chord throughout the nation. Persians, a fun-loving, witty, somewhat naughty people, were tired of being bored out of their minds. They were tired of the Islamic Republic's dreary economy. Many Iranian women, even those from poor traditional homes, wanted a regime that treated them with greater equity and kindness. The revolution had made war on the softer, poetry-loving side of the Iranian character, and now Iranians were voting in record numbers for a soft-spoken mullah who distanced himself from an intolerant and corrupt regime.

Khatami unquestionably has the people behind him; Khameneh'i has everything else. The Revolutionary Guard Corps, the mullahs' praetorians; the Basij, the Ministry of Interior's security force; the army, the courts, and the state prosecutors all are under Khameneh'i's command. Equally important, the mullahs' money men, the new-age *bazaaris* who run the semi-public foundations and nationalized industries, give their allegiance to Khameneh'i or former president Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, still an immensely powerful and wealthy man. With the coercive powers of the state arrayed against him, Khatami is at best "a knife without a handle"—journalist Oriana Fallaci's description of Mehdi Bazargan, the Republic's first popularly elected leader, overthrown in 1979 by the revolution's hard core.

Yet the ruling mullahs cannot ignore the popular will—at least not so early in President Khatami's term. Although the Islamic Republic is a theocracy, where Muslim divines hold ultimate authority, it is also a democracy, however illiberal and truncated in form. Since the Ayatollah Khomeini died in 1989, the vox populi has been gaining ground.

This places the lackluster Khameneh'i at a disadvantage. Even his most ardent supporters don't claim Khomeini's successor shares the imam's charisma. The mullahs know that their power depends, instead, on the young men who make up the security forces and is therefore fundamentally unstable. The average Iranian male is 20 years old. He doesn't remember the revolution. He experienced neither the intoxicating magic of Khomeini nor the brutal comradeship of the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War. Unlike his father, he views the clergy with little regard and less interest. He knows only the ennui of the last 10 years. At all costs, Khameneh'i and the revolutionary hard core want to avoid a head-on collision with Khatami that might test the loyalty of the forces on whom the regime depends.

WHAT ARE WE TO MAKE OF A CLERICAL REGIME THAT OSCILLATES BETWEEN ANTI-AMERICANISM AND APPEALS TO COMITY AMONG NATIONS?

So the mullahs, feeling caged, attack instead the president's friends and supporters. The mayor of Tehran, Gholamhosein Karbaschi, a powerful and popular ally of Khatami, is accused of corruption. Ibrahim Yazdi, the revolution's first foreign minister and one of the country's most dogged liberal dissidents, is jailed. Anti-Khameneh'i intellectuals and student leaders are pummeled. Commonly referred to as *Sayyed-e Mazlum*, "Mr. Oppressed," Khatami is already seen as the victim of a Khameneh'i-led conspiracy.

Again, however, the regime has misplayed its hand. Khameneh'i's multi-pronged offensive against Khatemi's winning coalition has largely immunized the president politically. The revolutionary leader, not the president, will probably take most of the blame for the current government's failure to right the economy. Confronted with a worldwide oil glut likely to last several years, Iran, which is dependent on oil for its well-being, is in serious trouble. If the Saudis continue to force down the price of oil to gain market share, the Iranians will have to follow suit even though they lack the extra capacity needed to maintain their revenues (hence, the urgent importance of new oil and gas deals with foreign firms). A significant drop in

state expenditures could provoke widespread social unrest.

Khatami is in a difficult position. He is no clerical counterrevolutionary, but to maintain his popularity, he must continue to define himself in opposition to Khameneh'i—without undermining the legitimacy of the Islamic Republic. Under the Republic's constitution, any attack on Khameneh'i's authority is treasonous. Only recently, Khameneh'i accused Ayatollah Ali Montazeri, Iran's preeminent dissident cleric, of treason for declaring that neither Khameneh'i nor his office is sacrosanct.

Montazeri's attacks on the revolutionary leader may be more personal than philosophical: Montazeri was Khomeini's first chosen successor and loathes those who dethroned him. But the dissident's opinion of the ruling elite is common among clerics, who traditionally have preferred to see their kind maintain a certain distance from politics. And Montazeri has always had the common touch, a gift for knowing and voicing the poor man's thoughts. Disenchanted revolutionary mullahs, conservative clerics, student leaders at the University of Tehran, intellectuals, and the man in the street are all now expressing with ever greater clarity their distaste for Khameneh'i's authoritarian rule. President Khatami's statements about the need for a more open Islamic society and a "dialogue" with the United States reinforce—though probably not intentionally—Khameneh'i's mounting anxiety about his legitimacy.

Is Khatami, then, Iran's Gorbachev, a mullah who will overturn the revolution even as he tries to save it? He is unquestionably a reformer and, in the clerical context, a modernist. An intellectually honest man, Khatami recognizes that the West is, and will be, the dominant civilization in the world, and that Iran must borrow the West's ideas as well as its technology if the regime is to survive. Unusually for a mullah, he doesn't deny that the West has done a better job than Islam of protecting certain human rights. That Khatami even comes close to defining human rights as we do is a significant step away from both traditional and revolutionary Islam, where "obligations" to God and His Holy Law define the social contract. Khatami believes that a *properly* paternalistic Islamic government is the best guarantor of human dignity, social justice, and religion, but he doesn't claim that Islam has all the answers, as Muslim militants usually do.

How substantially Khatami would alter the Islamic Republic if he could is hard to say. The president insists he wants to wage a "cultural revolution," to forge some sort of clericalism with a human face. He wants—above all else—to prove that Islam can successfully compete against the West. But with only the power of the pulpit and the threat of resignation behind him, Khatami can effect bureaucratic changes slowly, if at all. He may speak out for a more open society, but Khameneh'i can unleash the Morals Police against "improperly" attired women or dissident intellectuals whenever he believes the president has gone too far.

In fact, it is Khatami's lack of power that makes him unlikely to become Iran's Gorbachev. He simply doesn't have the means to gut his own system. More important, the primary impetus for reform in Iran isn't Khatami or the growing ranks of dissident clergy. It's the people. The clerical regime is lucky Khatami won the election. His victory—like the recent triumph of Iran's World Cup-bound soccer team, which provoked jubilant, distinctly un-Islamic celebrations—provided an outlet for frustrations that in the past have led to riots. However long the reign of the ayatollahs lasts—a few months, or many years—Khatami has probably added a little to its lifespan.

The 1997 elections let the evil genie of democracy out of the bottle. With Khomeini's charisma buried, no other force is likely again to deflect Iran from evolving into a more democratic society. Khameneh'i and the other politicized clerics, who've grown accustomed to their privileged position as intermediaries between God and man, will try mightily to break the advance of democracy and its detestable partner, a laical society where church and state aren't one. But the odds are against them.

As Khatami knows well, Western ideas have poured into Iran for over a century. They have penetrated into every clerical school, university, urban peasant slum, and village. Through books, newspapers and magazines, foreign radio and television, and now the Internet (in the Middle East, only Israel and Turkey may have more Internet addicts than Iran), democratic ideas have reached millions. After two revolutions, four shahs, one imam, and other lesser mortals, Iranians have pondered and tested the democratic idea as no other Middle Eastern people has save the Turks. They haven't got it right yet, but they *are* trying.

As President Khatami's CNN interview revealed, he is probably too much a mullah, and too timid, to advance a foreign policy that would please the United States. Nonetheless, Washington should wish the president well. He is that rarity in a land whose religions have so clearly delineated Good and Evil in the-

ory and so muddled them in practice: a moderate cleric, the very thing the Reagan administration searched for but couldn't find. In contemplating what it might do to support Khatami, the Clinton administration should remember Bazargan and Brzezinski in Algiers in 1979. Though the first and last liberal prime minister of the Islamic Republic eventually would have fallen to the revolution's hard core, his meeting with President Carter's national security adviser hastened the date. Khatami may believe that the Islamic Republic could survive a rapprochement with the United States, but it's doubtful Khameneh'i does. Clerical Iran stands essentially on two pillars: anti-Americanism and the chador. Remove either one and the regime will probably collapse.

A simple way of understanding this truth is to imagine Khameneh'i shaking the hand of an unveiled Madeleine Albright and offering his salutations to the American president and people. Even in a country as duplicitous as the Islamic Republic, where family ties, human decency, and greed often make mincemeat of revolutionary ideals, there are limits. Khameneh'i is unlikely to risk more normal relations with the United States unless a correlation of forces inside the country demands it. If it does, the ruling clergy might try to co-opt improving relations with America as a means of rebuilding its support among the people.

For the time being, Khatami and Khameneh'i are probably operating more or less in tandem, playing good mullah-bad mullah for the crowd. Painfully, the revolutionary leader is adjusting to the people's rejection of his presidential candidate. It helps that Khatami and Khameneh'i have been fairly close, cooperative, and mutually respectful for years. Both men passionately believe in the Islamic revolution and a vanguard role for the clergy. Khameneh'i probably gave his blessing to the president's recent appeal for "cultural dialogue" with Americans in hopes of exploiting the resulting goodwill and optimism at home and abroad. If Khatami, with his considerable international prestige, can diminish the U.S.-led opposition to the Islamic Republic, then Khameneh'i will play along. If Khatami is successful, then Khameneh'i and the entire clerical ruling class can avoid what they fear most: being forced by Iran's economic and social troubles to risk a direct dialogue with the United States.

Americans should remember that Khomeini called this country "the Great Satan" for cause. America, like the satanic Tempter in the Qur'an, is ever whispering into the believer's ear, tempting him with worldly pleasures. The allure of America today in Iran is strong thanks to the revolution's failure, but the Islamic hard core sees an end to anti-Americanism as poison.

Khomeini once had to swallow poison, when he allowed Rafsanjani and Khameneh'i to sue for peace in the Iran-Iraq War. Khameneh'i may decide that he too must take a little drink to save the revolution. If he does, and Khatami sends a messenger to America, Washington should of course respectfully respond. But Khatami—for his own sake—should be the one

to take the lead. Though well intended, American approaches via the Swiss aren't going to open up Iran. If we offer the clerics concessions—for example, agreeing to the construction of pipelines across Iran from Central Asia to the Persian Gulf—they will of course accept them, and say thank you, and ask for more.

In any future engagement, we should be wary of counsel encouraging Washington to use a series of "confidence-building measures" to smooth the way toward better U.S.-Iranian relations. It isn't a lack of trust that separates Washington and Tehran, nor is it Israel and the Jewish lobby, as Brent Scowcroft, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Richard Murphy, and James Schlesinger suggest. It is ideas. Islamic militancy and the Western tradition are like fire and water. Though there are certainly unexplored ways for the United States and Iran to pursue common interests (for example, reviving opposition to Saddam Hussein in northern Iraq), we shouldn't confuse mutual profit with moderation. When need be, clerical Iran has always been willing to deal with the devil (witness Bud McFarlane and Oliver North).

If Tehran says it wants to change the status quo, Washington should not counter with a list of conditions. It should make only one stipulation: Before a dialogue can begin, the U.S. embassy in Tehran must reopen. For as soon as U.S.-Iranian relations are restored, the Islamic revolution, if not the Islamic Republic, is over. The Nixon Center's Peter Rodman makes a good argument that radical anti-Western ideologies aren't necessarily undermined by diplomatic relations with Western powers—the Soviets lasted decades—but in the case of Iran, he's wrong.

In 1979, Khomeini's "students" took U.S. diplomats hostage to prevent Bazargan and the revolution's moderate forces from normalizing relations. Ever since, that seizure—the triumph of Good over Evil—has remained pivotal to the revolutionary identity. But as Iran's hard-core rulers know well, the yearly celebrations of that "victory" have drawn ever-smaller crowds.

If our embassy reopens, power will effectively pass to Bazargan's spiritual heirs. Once it does, the other difficult U.S.-Iranian issues—Iran's frozen assets, terrorism, the Arab-Israeli peace process, nuclear weapons, ballistic missiles, Salman Rushdie, etc.—can be dealt with one by one. (And in negotiations over particular issues, the Iranians may do better than they think. Though Washington's charges against Iran are true, they aren't always convincing. Tehran definitely wants to acquire nuclear weapons. You would, too, if you lived next to Saddam Hussein and had lost nearly one million men to his aggression.)

If Khatami and Khameneh'i really believe that the Islamic revolution is an undeniable, permanent fact reflecting the will of the Iranian people—and Khatami emphatically said he did in the CNN interview—then they have nothing to fear from restoring official relations with Washington. The United States should challenge them to do precisely that. *Salaam*, the most progressive of Iran's revolutionary newspapers, has suggested that a national referendum should determine whether to restore diplomatic relations with the United States. We should encourage Khatami and Khameneh'i to prove their faith in the great Iranian people.

If Tehran refuses the offer, Washington should hold firm. Though the "dual containment" of Iraq and Iran hasn't been a resounding success—the Clinton administration has replaced the Roman rule of "divide and conquer" with "unite and avoid"—the policy hasn't yet proved a failure. The clerical regime and Paris constantly rail against it—a sign we're doing something right.

In the case of Iran, the primary weakness of containment is the discrepancy between U.S. rhetoric and will. French, Russian, and Malaysian energy companies sign a $2 billion deal to develop Iranian natural gas that ought to trigger U.S. sanctions against them, and Washington does little to show its displeasure. There are few things in life more debilitating than to make a threat, then fail to follow through. Particularly in the Middle East, where awe is the sine qua non of politics, being seen as "wobbly" is fatal. The United States would be better off with no sanctions policy than one ignored.

Fortunately, Iran's oil and gas industry remains heavily dependent on U.S. and British parts (the United Kingdom, though wobbly, hasn't left our side). Refurbishing or replacing Iran's decades-old piping, pumping, and drilling equipment to match European specs will be an extremely expensive undertaking. Iran's overtaxed electrical grids are mostly of old American and third-rate East European manufacture.

Foreign governments and businessmen who want to make money in Iran are still wary of a resurgence of U.S. resolve. That caution will evaporate, however, if the Clinton administration doesn't demonstrate soon that opposing our foreign policy is costly. Nor should the administration and Congress take the easy route in expressing their dissatisfaction. Sanctioning Russia and Malaysia will accomplish little. Punishing France, however—the French government, that is, not just the "privatized" oil company Total, which has

been preemptively selling off its American assets—will send a clear signal to the European oil and gas companies, which have the financial and technical resources to enlarge significantly Iran's oil and gas production. If we effectively harass an ally that has crossed us, then Tehran will know we are deadly serious.

Khatami's December 14 and January 7 appeals for dialogue should have reinvigorated the administration's containment policy. Though the Iranian president is a decent man as clerics go, he didn't reach out to "the great American people" from kindness or pity. Certain former U.S. officials and American journalists may not see the correlation of forces working against Iran. Khatami does. He knows that the Islamic Republic cannot prosper, or perhaps even survive, if "the Great Satan" continues to isolate his country. His salutations were unquestionably a confession of weakness, not strength.

The mullahs are at war with their own history and culture. If Khatami saves the Islamic Republic from the hard core—or, more likely, popular pressures buckle the regime—the Middle East will never be the same.

The historian Bernard Lewis has remarked that the Middle East is in a battle between Kemalism and Khomeinism. Turkish fundamentalists are shaking the foundations of the secular state erected by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk after World War I. Islamic militants may yet overturn Atatürk's legacy, which has given Turkey more democracy, popular legitimacy, and rule of law than any other Muslim country has enjoyed. However, if the Turkish secularists hold firm, and the Islamic Republic of Iran gives way, millions of Muslims in the Middle East threatened by, or advocating, Islamic militancy will see that radical Islam's triumph is not inevitable. Secular government, the bedrock of Western civil society, could then gain ground. Iran would likely become again what few policymakers in Washington and clerics in Tehran expect: a powerful American ally in the Muslim world. And this time around, Iranian-American friendship would be built on something far firmer than the glory of the peacock throne. ♦

Billy Tauzin, Earl Long of the GOP

By Tucker Carlson

The first time Frank Luntz met Rep. Billy Tauzin, the Louisiana congressman was drinking beer with his friends in a box at an Orioles game. It was the fall of 1995, and Tauzin had just joined the Republican party after eight terms in the House as a Democrat. Luntz, who makes his living giving advice to Republican politicians, smelled a business opportunity and offered Tauzin a lift home. "I have never seen someone go from good old boy to precise and philosophical so quickly," Luntz remembers excitedly. "The entire car ride we talked about deregulation, federal vs. state policies. The guy was brilliant, an intellectual. An hour before, I had thought of him as a beer-drinking southerner. Then I realized that he's both."

Luntz is legendary for flattering his clients, both current and potential, but when he talks about Tauzin, the praise sounds almost genuine. "He's absolutely one of the best communicators the Republicans have," Luntz says. "The more he is out front, the better the Republican party will do." Luntz pauses for a moment, reflecting. "One of my dreams," he says, "is to see Billy on TV most weekends."

Tauzin isn't yet a fixture on the Sunday shows, but he is becoming one of the Republican party's most conspicuous spokesmen. Last fall, Newt Gingrich asked Tauzin to appear with majority leader Dick Armey at a series of forums around the country where the two could debate their respective tax plans—Armey touting his flat-tax proposal, Tauzin pushing a retail-sales tax. Though it seemed to some within the party leadership an unusually high-profile assignment for such a new Republican, Gingrich was confident that Tauzin would succeed. Converts, Gingrich rea-

Tucker Carlson is a staff writer for The Weekly Standard.

soned, often make the best apostles. Plus, he was sure Tauzin would be popular with audiences.

Gingrich turned out to be right on both counts. But Tauzin's greatest skills are those he deploys inside Washington. An ideological conservative with the style of an old-time southern Democrat, Tauzin is effective in Congress precisely because he is many things other Republican leaders should be but aren't: crafty, tough, witty, deft at compromise, charming. Tauzin isn't the sort of person who would have led the Republican realignment, but he's one of the few in his adopted party who are adept at managing it.

Wilbert "Billy" Tauzin grew up in a Cajun household in south Louisiana, the son of an electrician. After graduation from Nicholls State University, he worked as a pipe fitter, then took a job as personal secretary to a state senator named Harvey Peltier Jr., a member of one of the region's best-known families. Peltier wasn't interested in what Tauzin calls "all the technicalities of being a state senator," so for four years Tauzin stood in for him, drafting Peltier's bills, handling them in committee, even voting the senator's machine most of the time. For a budding politician, it was the perfect apprenticeship. In 1971, after earning a law degree from Louisiana State University, Tauzin ran for a seat himself. Though young and relatively unknown, he was a credible candidate, thanks to his affiliation with Peltier. "It was like getting a *Washington Post* endorsement," says James Carville, who grew up in the area and worked on Tauzin's first campaign for Congress.

Tauzin won with 62 percent of the vote and went on to serve nine years in the Louisiana House. His mentor during those years was Rep. Risley C. "Pappy" Triche, a onetime segregationist who in the 1970s renounced his unsavory past and became the chief floor leader for then-governor Edwin Edwards. Tauzin describes Triche as "the most brilliant political mind I have ever encountered, a master politician." Few who saw Triche in action disagree. Jack Wardlaw, a political reporter for the New Orleans *Times-Picayune* who has covered the Louisiana legislature since 1972, says that Triche could convince virtually anyone of virtually anything. On one occasion, says Wardlaw, "he even switched gears in mid-speech. He was speaking against a bill and someone came up and slipped him a note saying the governor wanted it passed. So Pappy switched right there. He said, 'Now that I've told you what's wrong with the bill, let me tell you what's right with it.' And it worked. The bill passed."

Triche was a compelling role model, and Tauzin paid close attention, making friends and learning to persuade. Having overcome a profound speech impediment in his youth, Tauzin evolved into a skilled orator. His mentor was impressed by Tauzin's ability. "I told him early on," says Triche, now retired from politics, "'Don't stay in the Louisiana legislature too long, son, you got too much talent.'" Tauzin took the advice and in 1980, in a special election, won a congressional seat on his first try.

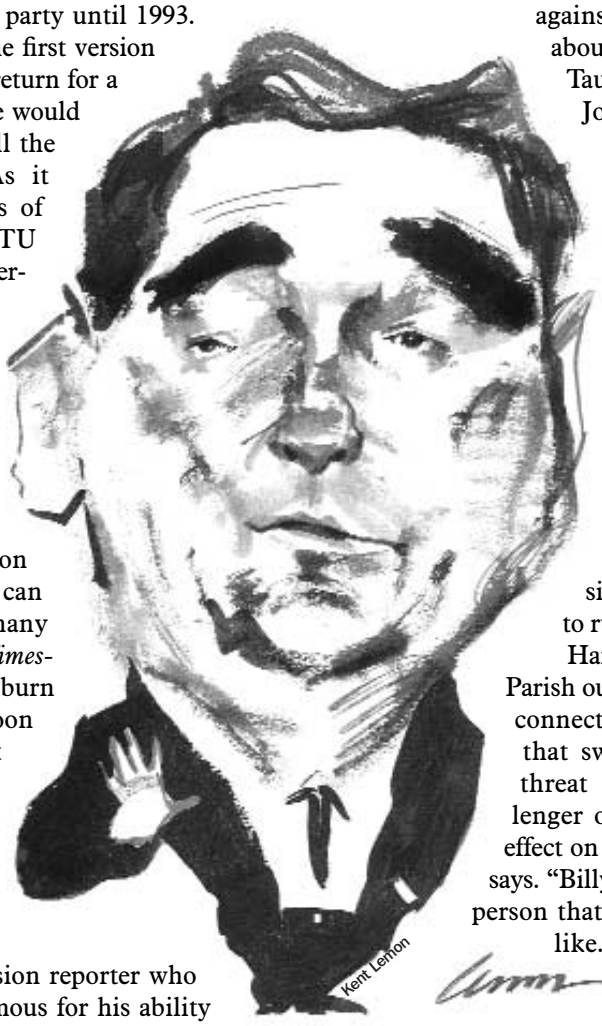
Louisiana has a long tradition of faithfully returning its incumbents to office, but Tauzin wasn't taking chances. He maintained close contact with his constituents back in the state, following the example of his political hero, former governor Earl Long. "Earl would go into a country store and there would be a row of hats hanging from a string on the ceiling," explains Tauzin. "He'd buy every one, then he'd put them in his trunk and go for a drive. He'd pass by a farmer riding his tractor in a field. The governor would stop the car, put on one of the hats, and walk up to the farmer. He'd say, 'You look hot. Why don't you put this on?' And the farmer would remember that for the rest of his life: 'Earl Long gave me the hat off his head.' Then Earl would drive on and find another farmer." In place of hats, Tauzin sent out stacks of personal letters to his constituents, showed up at countless events back in the district. Tauzin also built an effective state fund-raising organization, known as The Billy Club.

EVEN WHEN THE BOUNDARIES OF HIS DISTRICT CHANGED, TAUZIN WON EASILY. "I WAS THERE WHEN THEY WERE REDRAWN," HE EXPLAINS.

Before long, there was little need for the money he had raised. In five of his nine subsequent elections, Tauzin faced no opponent at all, and some of his campaigns cost under $20,000. Challengers, when they existed, tended to be weak. (One was a man Tauzin had successfully defended in a murder case years before. The man, a tavern owner, had shot an unarmed patron. During the campaign, Tauzin agreed to debate the challenger "any time, any place, except in a barroom.") Even when the boundaries of his congressional district shifted dramatically, as they have five times since 1980, Tauzin easily kept his seat. "I was there when they were redrawn," he explains, grinning. "Nobody has more friends in the Louisiana state legislature than I do."

Tauzin spent 15 years in Congress as a Democrat, all of them in the party's conservative wing. He was one of only two Democrats in the House to support every item in the Contract With America (Ralph Hall of Texas being the other). He voted for Ronald Reagan. On topics like gun control and abortion, Tauzin found himself to the right of many Republicans.

Conservative as he was, Tauzin didn't begin to break with the Democratic party until 1993. In that year, he voted for the first version of Clinton's tax package in return for a pledge from Clinton that he would get credit for helping to kill the BTU tax it contained. As it turned out, however, news of Tauzin's opposition to the BTU tax never filtered back to energy-industry lobbyists in Louisiana. By the time the Senate finally removed the tax from the bill, Tauzin had been subjected to intense criticism from his constituents. He emerged from the experience convinced Bill Clinton had betrayed him. "You can only burn people so many times," he told the *Times-Picayune*. "In my case, you burn me once and that's it." Soon after, Tauzin began to chart his exit from the party. One of the first things he did was hire a new press secretary, Ken Johnson, a lifelong Republican.



Billy Tauzin

Johnson, a flamboyant former New Orleans television reporter who favors black clothing, is famous for his ability to get press attention. (The speaker of the Louisiana House recently sent several members of his staff to talk to Johnson to discover how he gets his boss's name in the newspaper so often.) Tauzin promptly made Johnson not only his communications director, but also his campaign manager and chief political adviser. Together, the two devised a strategy for Tauzin's party switch: Tauzin picked fights with prominent Democrats over policy questions; Johnson made certain the conflicts were well covered in the Louisiana press. His battles with the Democratic leadership helped Tauzin's constituents understand his ideological differences with the party. More important, they allowed Tauzin to join the newly elected Republican majority without being perceived as a political opportunist. In August 1995, he made the switch.

Although more than 70 percent of the voters in Tauzin's home district are registered Democrats, few seemed to mind his conversion. Indeed, only a single prominent Democrat, Sam Jones, the mayor of the town of Franklin, even made noises about running against Tauzin. When they learned about the possible challenge, both Tauzin and Ken Johnson called Jones, Tauzin from a cellular phone during proceedings on the House floor. Congressional races are tougher than you think, Tauzin warned. Plus, he said, your family would hate Washington. Jones, whose 12-year-old daughter had locked herself in a closet when he told his family he might run for Congress, quickly buckled. Tauzin was reelected in 1996 with no opposition, becoming the first congressional party-switcher in history to run again unchallenged.

Harry Lee, the sheriff of Jefferson Parish outside New Orleans and a well-connected Louisiana Democrat, says that switching parties was never a threat to Tauzin back home, challenger or not. "It had absolutely no effect on his ability to get elected," Lee says. "Billy is still Billy. He's the kind of person that people in the Third District like. He's a fun-loving guy. He's got an outgoing personality."

That's for sure. Tauzin enjoys politics because it gives him an excuse to talk to strangers. From the moment he gets up till the time he goes to bed 20 hours later, Tauzin never stops moving, grinning, laughing, squeezing arms, snapping rubber bands, plotting, dispensing advice. He tells jokes constantly, usually crude ones about a fictional Cajun character named Boudreaux whose wife is forever cheating on him. As a Democrat or a Republican, Tauzin must surely be among the least boring members of Congress.

During an hour-long car trip between appointments in Texas not long ago, Tauzin launched into an

almost stream-of-consciousness string of vignettes and stories, beginning with the time he and a couple friends went frog hunting in a bayou after dark. Around midnight, their boat hit a submerged tree and sank. The three spent the night floating around the swamp with a case of beer worrying about alligators. "A helicopter picked us up at 9:00 a.m., and by noon I was giving a speech in New Orleans," Tauzin says. Before he can explain what the speech was about, Ken Johnson interrupts and the two fall into a debate about the best way to kill an alligator. Reel him in with a dead chicken on a meat hook, argues Johnson. Not necessary, says Tauzin, just shoot him lots of times in the head with a .22.

AROUND MIDNIGHT, THEIR BOAT HIT A SUBMERGED TREE AND SANK. THE THREE SPENT THE NIGHT FLOATING IN THE SWAMP WITH A CASE OF BEER.

From there the conversation turns to literature. Tauzin recites from memory some of the earthier scenes from *The World According to Garp*, then switches enthusiastically to the novel he has been working on since college. The book, Tauzin says, concerns the adventures of a boy named Ferd, an orphan who lives in New Orleans with his aunt, a one-legged stripper. The aunt has been maimed in a streetcar accident, but is unwilling to let the loss of a limb destroy her career. Instead, she incorporates the handicap into her act, which culminates with her throwing her prosthetic leg into the audience—leaving her, as Tauzin puts it, "the most naked stripper in New Orleans." "The problem is, some drunk always tries to steal the leg. So that's Ferd's job, to get it back. The novel opens with Ferd and a drunk wrestling with the leg on the sidewalk downtown. . . ."

And so it goes, all the way to the *Dallas Morning News*, where Tauzin has come to explain the retail-sales tax to the newspaper's editorial board. He gets off the elevator at the publisher's floor singing verses from "American Pie" and theorizing about the Kennedy assassination. Tauzin is in a buoyant mood, but the sales tax turns out to be a tough sell.

He begins by explaining that a sales tax is the fairest, most straightforward possible way to raise revenue: Everything sold in America, Tauzin says, will be subject to a 15 percent tax at the point of purchase, no exceptions. Sounds fine, reply the editorialists, but what, precisely, constitutes a "purchase"? Ways and Means chairman Bill Archer has already suggested that under a retail-sales tax, buying a home would be considered an "investment" and therefore not subject to the tax. Nor is it clear whether the tax would apply to goods and services sold by government. What about unemployed poor people? asks the board. How will government keep them from becoming even poorer once their basic expenses rise by 15 percent? And how will law enforcement respond to the enormous black market a sales tax will inevitably produce? And what about the 50 new tax-collection agencies in the states that, under the sales-tax plan, will assume the duties of the IRS? Why will they be any less frustrating and bureaucratic than the agency they are replacing?

There are few satisfactory answers to these questions, with the retail-sales tax still in the production stage, not fully evolved. Tauzin does an impressive job, considering. Sure, the tax sounds regressive, he explains, but it's important to notice the money that a sales tax would save. When manufacturers no longer have to pay accountants and lawyers to navigate the tax code, the cost of most goods will drop by at least 15 percent. The sales tax, in other words, will practically be a wash. And anyway, says Tauzin, the very premise of the current tax system—that government should use taxes to reward or discourage varieties of behavior—is immoral. Almost anything would be an improvement over the current code, which imposes a penalty on honest labor. "The power to tax," he says gravely, "is the power to destroy."

The editorial writers still aren't sold, but they're starting to look more sympathetic. "He had a sophisticated grasp," says one of them later. "And he was eloquent. He made me think, I'll say that." Under the circumstances, it is the best anyone could have done, and Tauzin does it almost entirely by force of personality.

Most of the time, Tauzin has stronger issues to work with, and he usually knows what he is talking about. He is chairman of the Telecommunications Committee and is seen as someone with a thorough understanding of the broadcasting industry. When the facts aren't enough, however, Tauzin is not above theatrics. "Anyone who thinks that the power of ideas is the only thing that's important in Washington has never been to Washington," he says.

To prove it, he recounts the hearing he recently held on the need for product-liability laws to protect the medical-device industry. Tauzin wanted to make the point that because of lawsuits, many hospitals face a shortage of biomedical materials. His star witness, he says, was "a young ballerina who would have lost her leg were it not for a titanium joint that is going to have to be replaced as she grows up. She came and testified very emotionally about how she dreaded the thought

that they might have to take her leg, and how she wouldn't be able to run and jump and play with the other children if this titanium material wasn't available to her because the manufacturer had been sued too many times. Before the hearing was over, every member of the committee, Democrat and Republican, was calling for a separate bill to deal with biomedical liability issues."

Cancer-stricken ballerinas? Isn't this the kind of cheap demagoguery that Democrats have been notorious for since the New Deal? Exactly, says Tauzin. And it works. In fact, "it's a model that the Republican party needs to build on. It's one thing to beat down the barricades and take over the town. It takes an entirely separate skill to run the town once you've taken it. If you don't know how to finesse the politics, how to communicate ideas effectively, you're not going to succeed."

In the ballroom of the Hotel Intercontinental in Dallas, Tauzin and Dick Armey are showing an audience of about 1,000 tax activists how modern Republicans succeed. The forum has been organized by Citizens for a Sound Economy, and it is one stop on the "Scrap the Code" tour Tauzin and Armey have been leading across the country. The congressmen sit opposite each other in chairs on what looks like a talk-show set. Both wear lavaliere mikes. They take turns walking the stage rebutting one another's tax proposals.

That's the way the event is billed, anyway. In practice, both Tauzin and Armey spend most of their time assailing the current tax code. At one point, Tauzin tells a story about a man who was so harassed by the IRS that he shot himself in despair. "You are being stiffed by the IRS right now but you don't even know it," he yells to the audience in a Louisiana accent that has become noticeably thicker. Standing in the middle of the stage, his coat buttoned, shoulders thrown back, feet apart, jabbing the air with a pen for emphasis, Tauzin suddenly looks a lot like a trimmer Earl Long. The crowd loves it. Ken Johnson looks on approvingly. "You should have seen what it was like in Atlanta," he says. "It reminded me of a Jimmy Swaggart revival meeting. I thought, 'We've got to pass the plate when this thing is over.'"

Two hours later, the event is still going on. By 9:30 workmen are taking down the lights and disassembling the podium, and Dick Armey has long since gone home. But no such thought seems to have occurred to Tauzin. Though he has been talking about the tax code almost without a break since 6:30 in the morning, he appears happy to keep talking. Sitting on the stage surrounded by people asking questions and seeking autographs, Tauzin looks like he could spend the rest of the night here. He definitely could, says Johnson, who seems eager to wrap things up and head for the bar. "The hardest thing in the world," he says, "is to get Billy out of a crowd."

Where does Tauzin go from here? By all accounts, he is happy in the House. Last year, he gave up a relatively sure shot at a Senate seat for the chance to take control of the Telecommunications Committee. But as much as he likes his new job, Tauzin claims he is capable of leaving elected office someday. "I'm not going to grow old in the House," he says. Six years ago, Tauzin says he was approached by a Washington lobbying firm with an offer that paid $1 million a year. "That would be $6 million by now," he says, slightly wistful. "Maybe when I come to my senses, I'll take a job like that."

In the meantime, rumors have circulated that Tauzin, who has been an energetic fund-raiser for Republican candidates around the country, is in line for a position in the House leadership, perhaps as majority leader when Dick Armey steps down or retires. "Billy has got an outside chance to be the next speaker," says columnist Bob Novak, who floated the idea recently. "I think he'd be excellent. I think he'd be more of a traditional speaker, rather than a hands-on, dealing-with-every-single-bill kind of speaker."

Both Tauzin and Johnson blush at the suggestion. Becoming speaker of the House "isn't likely," Tauzin says, and he is right. Tauzin swears he has traveled the country on his vacation time speaking to audiences about the sales tax, not out of personal ambition, but as a favor to Gingrich, and because he believes the Republicans, as a party, could use the good publicity. If anything, says Johnson, Tauzin has his eyes on the chairmanship of the Commerce Committee, which he is in line to inherit. "It's got jurisdiction over the entire American economy," says Johnson. "It's a cool committee."

CANCER-STRICKEN BALLERINAS? ISN'T THIS THE KIND OF CHEAP DEMAGOGUERY DEMOCRATS HAVE BEEN NOTORIOUS FOR SINCE THE NEW DEAL?

Still, there are signs of larger desires. Johnson recently suggested that the Tauzin-Armey tax show, after hitting Fresno, Atlanta, and Dallas, take a spin through Iowa. Nothing political, of course, it's just that Iowa seems as good a place as any to talk about taxes. After that, Johnson says, "we want to go to New Hampshire, too. That's our goal." ♦

Warming up to *Cold Mountain*

In Defense of the Middlebrow

By J. Bottum

There just aren't a whole lot of stories around for a storyteller to tell. There's the one that begins, *A girl met a boy*—there's the one that begins, *A stranger came to town*—and then there's the one that begins, *There was a man, a long, long way from home*. Out in the deep end of the pool, the first shows up as *Anna Karenina*, the second as *Oedipus Rex*, and the third as the *Odyssey*. And splashing happily in the shallows of literature, the first turns out to be Erich Segal's 1970 *Love Story*, the second Robert James Waller's 1992 *The Bridges of Madison County*, and the third America's current bestseller, Charles Frazier's *Cold Mountain*.

It would be hard to avoid having heard about the phenomenon of *Cold Mountain*. The book has sold at least a million copies in hard cover, clung to the *New York Times* bestseller list for twenty-six weeks, been snatched up by Hollywood for $1.25 million, and received a surprising National Book Award (beating out Don DeLillo's heavily favored *Underworld*). Over twelve hundred pieces about Frazier's novel have appeared in American newspapers and magazines, and reviewers are at last reduced to telling more about the story *of* the book than about the story *in* the book.

But there is of course a story in the book, a story that has been around since Homer and hasn't gotten stale. It's a Civil War tale of a soldier named Inman—a long, long way from his western North Carolina home—who wakes up one 1864 morning in a field hospital of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia and reckons that since the war is pretty much lost, he'd best get on back to Miss Ada, the good woman waiting for him on a highland farm way up in the mountains.

Along his road home, Inman spends considerable time recollecting his childhood—especially the teachings he received from the last of the Cherokees—and he has his full quota of adventures: rescuing imperiled women and children, travelling beside a lapsed preacher, dodging the Home Guard rounding up "outliers" for the last futile war effort, and narrowly escaping three alluring harpies looking either to kill him or marry him, or maybe both.

And meanwhile, in alternate chapters, Miss Ada is having her own share of adventures. The daughter of an Emerson-and-water, social-gospel sort of Protestant minister come from an upper-class Charleston family to preach in the wilds of the Blue Ridge mountains, Ada is hard-pressed to keep the family farm going after her father's death. What she'd like most to do is wander the fields in spring, sketching the flowers, reading George Eliot, and remembering the snubs she gave all the young men besides Inman who came to court and spark. Only she's starving to death doing it—Frazier is convincing at the details of the inflationary Confederate economy toward the end of the war—and it's not till a ragamuffin farm girl named Ruby shows up to help that the long wait for Inman becomes bearable.

Ruby is the daughter of an itinerant fiddler who reappears occasionally to make life difficult (although one time he brings along, so everyone can pair off nicely at the novel's end, a young deserter just right for a hard-headed woman like Ruby to transform from no-account white trash into a man of substance). Between them, the two manless women manfully improve the farm, flourish in the small towns' barter markets, and braid one another's womanly hair by firelight.

From its opening among the dying and the sightless in an army hospital,

J. Bottum is Books & Arts editor for The Weekly Standard.

however, the novel has promised a tragic ending. Even as Inman nears Ada and home, the lawless Home Guard has drawn closer and closer. He manages to kill all the worst ones, but at last they shoot him down and he dies—though not before he has one night of passion with Ada. *Cold Mountain* ends with a picture, a few years down the road, of Ruby and her shaped-up husband still living on the farm. And Miss Ada? She watches at play the daughter of her night with her returned Odysseus and muses with a sad smile how (in one last salvo from the novel's barrage of classical reference) she and Inman just never had a chance to grow old together and turn into trees like Baucis and Philemon.

In the acknowledgements at the back of the book, where he explains that he drew his story from the genuine adventures of a Confederate ancestor, Frazier gives his hero's name as W. P. Inman. In the novel itself, however, the character is just plain "Inman," suggesting—well, suggesting for Frazier all sorts of much too easy things: that Inman is the complete-in-himself man, for instance, who is inside of all kinds of secrets that most folks just wrap themselves around the outside of. His lack of a Christian name gives him a superficial whiff of the mysterious (Remember how, in Jack Schaefer's classic 1949 a-stranger-came-to-town tale, Shane had just that one name, and nobody could figure out whether it was his first or his last?), while simultaneously hinting in a facile way that though Inman may like to tell a story or two from time to time, the reader is not to forget that he's really the strong, silent type whose rich inner life is shielded from the prying and prattle of flashy outer men.

This style of close literary criticism, however, is in fact unfair to *Cold Mountain*, the result of shining much too bright a light on the book. Charles Frazier has his pretensions, no doubt: the kind, for instance, that causes him to describe himself as a horse-breeder, leaving off his author biographies the fact that he used to teach literature. Pretending (even while producing a book that owes plenty to unreflective literary convention) that he has no literary pretensions, Frazier studs his book with allusions to the Greek classics not merely to make sure *nobody* misses that he's retelling the *Odyssey* but also to tell us—in a sad little way—that he secretly thinks we should think he ranks up there with Homer. All that's no reason we should share the author's pretensions, however, and in its own league, *Cold Mountain* is actually very, very good.

Charles Frazier
Cold Mountain
Atlantic Monthly, 368 pp., $24

Nonetheless, a critical backlash has set in against the book in recent weeks. At its first publication in June, Frazier's novel received the generally mild reviews typically accorded publishers' mid-list books and found the small regional success in the South that Atlantic Monthly Press doubtless had as its highest aspiration. *Cold Mountain*, however, never quite made its expected drift off to the remainder bins. One reader kept telling another to read it, George Will used his widely syndicated political column on September 1 to applaud it, and a national fever for the novel took hold.

As long as bestsellers are pure pulp in the class of Harold Robbins and *The Valley of the Dolls*, reviewers usually ignore them or write only about the decadent pleasures of slumming in them. And as long as semi-literary historical novels don't top the sales charts, reviewers usually praise them faintly (as Alfred Kazin nodded at *Cold Mountain* in the *New York Review of Books*). But superbestsellerdom, when combined with enough bookishness to make average readers imagine that they've just read a piece of serious literature, seems to bring out the sternest instincts of critics: highbrow is fine, and lowbrow is fun, but the successful middlebrow must be swatted down.

So *National Review* (in a generally sympathetic essay) recently derided Frazier for sounding "the way novelists sound when they sound like novelists." The *Washington Times* (in an utterly dismissive column) snorted that Inman is "not your average Confederate soldier, you see. He's an Indian medicine man with all the latest Indian styles from Haight-Ashbury." The *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Los Angeles Times* all left the book off their year-end round-ups of 1997's best fiction. Noticing its lack of quotation marks, thinned-down prose, and backwoods setting, *Kirkus Reviews* called *Cold Mountain* "refried Cormac McCarthy" (which is fair enough, so long as one remembers that McCarthy—tired of selling only thirty-eight copies of books that critics compared to William Faulkner's—had already refried himself to produce his 1992 bestseller, *All the Pretty Horses*).

Like an advanced-engineering expert brought in to mock a home-repair project, any well-trained critic who examines the book too closely is bound to find flaws in *Cold Mountain*: bumpy joins, rickety framing, exposed wiring, maybe even that Frazier built a second-story to his novel and forgot to build a stairway to it.

Writing for the on-line journal *Slate*, the *New Republic*'s fiction critic James Wood was exactly right to notice the novel's "writing-school style," "literary approximation of an already literary idea of reality," and creaky alternation of Odysseus/Penelope chapters about Inman and Ada: "She waits; he travels." But Wood was exactly wrong to conclude that *Cold Mountain* "is like a cemetery with no bodies in it. All the records of life are there, the facts and figures and pocket histories, pointing up out of the ground, but

what's buried there was never alive." Who breaks a butterfly upon a wheel?

In fact, hardly anyone has gotten *Cold Mountain* quite right. The simple truth is that Frazier has produced a perfectly enjoyable piece of sentimental fiction, straight from those golden days of the 1950s when there flourished in America such guardians of middlebrow taste as Clifton Fadiman, *Reader's Digest* Condensed Books, and the Book-of-the-Month Club. In the careful design of its almost blueprinted sentimentality, *Cold Mountain* betrays some serious cold-bloodedness. But then *Love Story* betrayed even more—as did, for that matter, such middlebrow classics as *Shane* and Edwin O'Connor's 1956 *The Last Hurrah*. (It may be the most devastating criticism of *The Bridges of Madison County* to suggest that its author *wasn't* being cold-blooded, but actually meant it.)

Of course, for all his 1950s-style middlebrow success, Frazier puts in his novel plenty of uniquely 1990s asides. At one point, *Cold Mountain* makes a smug little gesture at female masturbation, and the book is capable of the historical knowingness of describing "dipped Baptists" on one page and the historical unknowingness of calling Christ's Resurrection "his culture's central narrative" on the page before.

The novelist is good when his characters describe war, but he is terrible when they theorize about it: dismissing as equally "despots" the northern soldiers and the southern slaveholders, and accusing Robert E. Lee—of all people—of thinking that military might makes moral right. With his brave deserter, Frazier gets to have it both ways: Inman fleeing defeat is somehow the same as Odysseus returning from victory. The Civil War is almost over anyway, and Inman has merely decided in his ahistorical way to make a separate peace—and just in case anyone might think him a coward, the author has him kill three Yankee raiders who must deserve killing because they've threatened a sickly little baby and brave little woman he met along the road.

And yet, even if Frazier is untrustworthy on women, religion, and war—even if he is willing to violate his novel's historical accuracy for the sake of saying today's socially correct thing about them—the question remains: So what? What novelist nowadays *is* entirely trustworthy on women, religion, and war?

If there's a clue in the way he keeps stepping on his retelling of the *Odyssey*—hiding it behind long descriptions of made-up Cherokee spirituality and woodsman's lore—then Frazier probably doesn't particularly care about his own classic, mythopoetic story. What he probably intends readers to take away from his book is his two heroines' spunky proto-feminism and all his New-Agey nonsense about the hundred-year-old Indian goat woman and his hero's will to fight no more forever.

What authors intend for their books, however, is not what matters. Arthur Conan Doyle hated his creation, Sherlock Holmes—first trying to kill him off and then transmuting him (from a man who, in the early stories, didn't even know that the earth moves around the sun) into a seamless opsimath who knows everything from medieval music to the inner lives of bees. None of it managed to destroy his character. Doyle's Sherlock Holmes does not belong in the same class as Shakespeare's Hamlet or even Charles Dickens's Mr. Pickwick, of course, any more than Frazier's Inman ranges anywhere near Homer's Odysseus. But he manages nonetheless to live, and that is the definition of the mythopoetic.

And besides, great middlebrow fiction isn't about such asides. It's about a storyteller telling over again, in a way contemporary readers will accept, one of that small handful of real stories—like *A girl met a boy*, or *A stranger came to town*, or, best of all, *There was a man, a long, long way from home*. ♦

The Keys to the Papacy

The Rocky History of St. Peter's Heirs

By Michael Novak

Histories of the papacy are not your everyday sort of histories, if only because the office of the pope is so much older than any other institution with which it has temporarily overlapped. Empires, anarchies, kingdoms, republics, and dictatorships have come and gone—but whether it fought with them or compromised with them or embraced them or transformed them, the papacy has outlasted them all.

Given this almost sempiternal perseverance over two thousand years, one wonders why publishers in the one year of 1997 felt compelled to present American readers with three new papal histories. This sudden gusher increases the number of "Lives of the Popes" during the last century by about 20 percent.

The answer, I think, lies in the extraordinary importance of Pope John Paul II as the end of the millennium approaches. Even ignoring his discussions with non-Catholic Christians, his improvement of relations with Jews, and his great spiritual importance for Catholics (through his encyclicals, his personal appearances around the world, and his promotion of a new catechism), this Polish priest's influence on the Cold War alone places the papacy at the center of contemporary history: Beginning in 1978, at the depths of the Cold War, John Paul II's pontificate had as one of its express aims the breaking of communism, which it achieved, astonishingly, within its first dozen years. Is there anyone—Catholic or non-Catholic or even anti-Catholic—who does not admit that the papacy is an institution very much to be reckoned with? It's been a long time since anyone repeated Stalin's mocking question about how many army divisions a pope possesses.

These three new books take three very different approaches to the immensity of their historical task.

P. G. Maxwell-Stuart
Chronicle of the Popes
Thames & Hudson, 240 pp., $22.95

Eamon Duffy
Saints & Sinners
A History of the Popes
Yale University Press, 256 pp., $35

Richard P. McBrien
Lives of the Popes
HarperSanFrancisco, 448 pp., $29.50

There have been 262 popes, and to give even a page or two to each would itself fill a book. That is essentially the path chosen by P. G. Maxwell-Stuart in *Chronicle of the Popes* and Richard McBrien in *Lives of the Popes*. In the third history, *Saints & Sinners: A History of the Popes*, Eamon Duffy describes groups of popes in their historical contexts.

The volume by Maxwell-Stuart, a research fellow at the University of Aberdeen, is succinct in its biographical accounts. A Protestant writing in large part for Protestants, he nonetheless seems able to present the papacy in the ways both Catholics and Protestants see it, without lingering over those points at which they diverge. His aim—like Duffy's and unlike McBrien's—is history rather than theology, and his technique is to mention almost in passing how Protestants have reacted to this or that historical moment in the papacy, without asking the reader to argue the underlying theological issues.

Maxwell-Stuart turns out to be particularly good at conveying the historical fascination of the papacy: There can scarcely be a place on earth, he observes, that has not at some time been changed, for better or worse, by a pope's words or actions. And he manages to convey as well the sheer fun of studying papal history:

> Seventy-eight [popes] have been declared saints as well as, oddly enough, two antipopes; eight have been pronounced "Blessed." There have been seventy-seven Roman popes, one hundred Italian, fourteen French, eleven Greek, six German, six Syrian, three Sicilian, two Sardinian, two Spanish, two African, one English, one Dutch, one Portuguese, and one Polish. Fifteen have been monks, four friars, two laymen, and one a hermit. Four have abdicated, five have been imprisoned, four murdered, one openly assassinated, one deposed, and one subjected to a public flogging. One died of wounds he received in the midst of battle, and another after a ceiling collapsed and fell on him. The sheer variety of the ways they began and ended is riveting in itself.

With his charts, maps, timelines, and illustrations, he finds highly imaginative ways to compress immense amounts of information for the reader. Decorating his pages with quotations from difficult-to-find sources, as well as with fascinating catalogs of popes arranged by nationality, background, and length of pontificate—Maxwell-Stuart has produced what is in many ways (particularly for beginners and for classroom use) the most successful of the three new papal histories.

Nonetheless, for readers able to purchase only one of these books, the best, hands-down, is the work of Eamon Duffy. It is an astonishingly beautiful volume, the color, workmanship, and paper stock of unusually

Michael Novak holds the George Jewett Chair in religion and public policy at the American Enterprise Institute.

high quality. But the main triumph comes in Duffy's six masterful long essays about the papacy—each conveying an overriding sense of the author's historical competence and his uncanny knack for telling detail.

So, for instance, Duffy brings together a wealth of historical detail to show how self-conscious Rome was even in the first century about its special place in the universal church. And so, for another instance, he manages to sketch convincingly Pius X (1903-1914): conveying the man's personal holiness, even while showing how—as a self-conscious peasant and man-of-the-people—he did much damage to Catholic intellectual life. (I regret to point out, however, that Duffy begins his book with a whopping typo: "Nearly 90 million human beings, the largest single collective of people the world has ever known, look to the Pope as their spiritual leader." He no doubt meant 900 million, although other sources now place the number at over one billion.)

A reader in church history and fellow at Cambridge (and author of the highly acclaimed history of the Reformation in England, *The Stripping of the Altars*), Duffy knows how to take advantage of the best scholarship, and his notes and bibliographies give the reader considerable confidence in his judgments. Regarding the most recent four or five popes, to be sure, he relies too much at critical points—at least twice for suspiciously clever lines—on the axe-grinding journalist Peter Hebblethwaite, whose highly colored reporting was for many years Britain's main source for Vatican news. Yet Duffy himself warns the reader against assigning his last chapter the same weight as his earlier ones, noting how close to its events we are and how partial our access to sources.

After P. G. Maxwell-Stuart's quite good book and Eamon Duffy's outstanding one, the new history by Richard McBrien seems painfully bad. A theologian at Notre Dame and a widely published author on Catholic topics in America, McBrien manages to come across in his latest work as unpleasantly didactic and superior, continually warning his readers against "naive views" few of them are likely ever to have held.

So, for example, we are warned at least four times that not until Pope Pius I around the year 144 did there emerge a "monoepiscopal" form of church government. Duffy, thinking about much the same point, proposes—in explanation for the slow emergence of a single leader in Rome—that, for some time, Christians came disproportionately from the Jewish community and organized themselves along the lines of local synagogues. But McBrien offers neither explanation nor evidence for his assertion, and seems in fact not to grasp the notion of the continuing office of an apostle that the Book of Acts tells us was present even in the first generation of Christians (with, for example, the election of Matthias to fill the office of Judas).

"AT THE HEART OF CHRISTIANITY IS THE SINNER," AS CHARLES PÉGUY USED TO SAY. AND EVEN SINNERS CAN BE INSTRUMENTS OF GOD'S PURPOSES.

McBrien's main passion in *Lives of the Popes* is to debunk, as constantly revealed in his officious announcements of what the papacy is not: "Before the beginning of the second millennium and of the pontificate of Gregory VII in particular (1073-85), popes . . . did not claim for themselves the title of 'Vicar of Christ.' They did not appoint bishops. They did not govern the universal church through the Roman curia. They did not impose or enforce clerical celibacy. They did not write encyclicals or authorize catechisms for the whole church. They did not retain for themselves alone the power of canonization," etc. Indeed, McBrien's last lines before his epilogue are: "Few, if any, traditions associated with the papacy have anything at all to do with the Apostle Peter, or with the Lord himself for that matter. If nothing else is clear from this lengthy review of more than 260 popes, at least that should be clear."

But at various points McBrien reveals as well his second passion: to undo the work of the present pope and return to the wildest days that followed the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s. The author would have to shout to make any plainer his devout hope that the next pope will be the opposite of John Paul II, and he dedicates his book to the pope who initiated Vatican II, John XXIII (1958-1963), "the most beloved pope in history." In fact, "Good Pope John" was much loved. But he was also very limited, and he knew it. He was often quite conservative (which McBrien ignores), and his posthumous *Journal of a Soul* proved mediocre in its piety and quite traditional in its sentiments.

The problem with McBrien's passions is that they force him to read church history ahistorically—everything seen backward through the lens of the Second Vatican Council (as he chooses to interpret that Council). Passionately engaged in the politics of the papacy, he gives disproportionate attention to how many ballots there were in papal elections, and who may have said what to sway which votes. McBrien's church is divided politically between those white hats whose theology is "progressive" and those black hats who are "conservative," "ultraconservative," "reactionary," or—even worse in his lexicon—"restorationist." He may add "Let the arguments begin!" after writing "Those, for example, who regard Boniface VIII as one of the church's best popes rather than

one of its worst, as this book claims, are evidently working out of a different ecclesiology from those who agree with this book's judgment that Pope John XXIII is the most outstanding pope in all of history." But self-declared tendentiousness hardly makes for a recommendable guide to the history of the papacy.

One serious lacuna weakens all three of these new papal histories, for all three are so focused on personalities that they have little space to discuss the significance of the very institution of the papacy. The reader would scarcely learn, for example, that scholars have begun in recent years to explore the importance of ultimate Roman jurisdiction for the development of European economics, philosophy, and international law. The universality of canon law, these scholars note, was vital in resolving disputes among abbots, bishops, aristocrats, kings, and emperors—and more than that, in creating the abstract sense that there is such a thing as law. Just as the thousands of celibate men and women in religious communities often played vital economic roles (in the wool trade in England, for instance, and the iron industry in France), so the great monasteries—which were under the direct protection of the pope, not the local bishops—helped produced new technologies for water power, sea travel, clocks, harnessing horses, mining, and smelting, not to mention the brewing of beers and liqueurs. Not merely in the arts but in technology and science, the papacy played a key institutional role.

Being for two thousand years a primary mover in the economic and social development of Europe may have been a consequence of the papacy; but it was, of course, hardly its primary purpose. The papacy existed fundamentally for the sake of protecting the integrity of the chain of evidence concerning Jesus Christ and his church. From the beginning, various brilliant and highly trained preachers (as, for example, the eloquent impostors Marcion, Valentinus, and Tatian in the second century) tampered with that evidence, often to great popular acclaim. Possibly more than any other factor, the acute need to prevent such perversions of the gospel led the early church of Rome to issue public condemnations—and thus gradually to assume its premier place among Christian churches.

This was a matter of moral seriousness and fidelity to truth, and it may have been as well a matter of survival, since spies of the emperor were collecting all sorts of rumors, scandals, and whisperings against Christians as reasons for torture and killings. The early Christians were prepared to die for what they held as true, but not for false substitutes.

And yet, however it came about, this concern with doctrine—with preserving the teaching of Jesus—is what most distinguishes the papacy. For more than two generations, the infant church lacked a complete Bible, and throughout the Roman Empire it lived under constant threat of persecution. Yet, slowly, the Christian community proved capable of keeping its identity intact at a very high level, recruiting to its cause highly trained minds in love with the pursuit of truth and willing to die in that pursuit. The existence of a bishopric in Rome that stood for doctrinal authenticity allowed this geographically dispersed community to become a "catholic" church—not merely a local Roman or Ephesian or Colossian branch of Judaism.

All three authors of the 1997 papal histories are unsparing of the scoundrel popes during the two especially bad stretches (one in the early middle ages, the other in the late). One hates to suggest it, for fear Hollywood might take it up, but some occupants of the papal throne make modern soap-opera characters seem innocent children. That popes may (under certain strict conditions) speak infallibly has never prevented them from gargantuan sins. It does not even prevent them from making theological mistakes and needing correction by later popes. Duffy calls his book *Sinners & Saints*, and it must be said that the sinners sometimes seem more colorful, even when smelling of sulfur. But the fact remains that "At the heart of Christianity is the sinner," as the French poet Charles Péguy used to say. And even sinners are capable of being instruments of God's purposes—to say nothing of doing things of considerable human beauty and importance: building great libraries, for instance, and sponsoring the beginnings of a dozen new sciences, and commissioning breathtaking works of art.

All three of last year's authors tend to see the history of the papacy in three stages: an early, chiefly spiritual office becoming ever more heavily burdened with worldly concerns; moving through opposition and conflict to surrender, usually reluctantly and suspiciously, worldly power; and thence back toward its beginnings, this time self-conscious about its necessary liberties and rights. Perhaps not so oddly, after the loss of the papal states and the reduction of the Vatican to a few acres, the office of the papacy may be more universally influential today than it has ever been before.

When papal leadership is poor, as often enough it has been, Catholics look elsewhere for spiritual leadership (to such holy persons as St. Catherine of Siena, for example, at the time of the Avignon captivity of the papacy). But they do still maintain the pope, even then, as the reference point for their unity and the guarantor of the integrity of their faith—a faith already given, not invented by anyone holding the office of pope in the Holy, Roman, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. That office, solely by the grace of God, is guaranteed against the furies of the gates of Hell. Or so Catholics have believed, without regret, for almost two thousand years. ♦

The Rebel in the Gray Flannel Suit

From Eisenhower to Flower Power

By Brian Murray

Advertising came of age in the 1960s, the decade of Marshall McLuhan, psychedelia, Woodstock, Haight-Ashbury, flower power—and color TV. Surveys at mid-decade showed the typical American exposed to nearly sixteen hundred ads a day.

Of course, more ads meant more clutter. And other surveys at the time revealed that most commercial messages—perhaps 80 percent—were scarcely noticed, prompting Bill Bernbach, one of the leading admen of his generation, to remark: "It's not that we're loved; we're not even hated. They ignore us."

In fact, throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the advertising business was scrutinized to a degree unmatched before or since. Authors, politicians, comedians, *Mad* magazine: Everybody took shots at Madison Avenue. Its harshest critics saw advertising as a poisonous force promoting what Arthur Schlesinger Jr., writing for *Esquire*, called a "contemporary orgy of consumer goods," more "gadgets and gimmicks to overwhelm our bodies and distract our minds." The most famous attack came from the late Vance Packard. His 1957 bestseller *The Hidden Persuaders* argued that while most advertisers were still "straightforward" and "vital" for economic prosperity, there were nefarious others in the field who were turning to "subterranean operations": sinister forays into mass brainwashing that exploited inner fears and "subconscious needs."

Brian Murray teaches at Loyola College in Baltimore.

And yet, as Thomas Frank points out in *The Conquest of Cool*, his new study of the culture of advertising, Packard's book was part of a wider "mass society critique" that included the 1955 novel *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* by Sloan Wilson and the 1956 bestseller *The Organization Man* by *Fortune* magazine's William Whyte. In varying ways, these and other popular books argued that bigness, bureaucratization, mass regimentation, and what Whyte called "group-thought" were threatening the traditions of individualism and innovation long prized in America.

Thomas Frank
The Conquest of Cool
University of Chicago Press, 287 pp., $22.95

Thomas Frank and Matt Weiland, eds.
Commodify Your Dissent
***The Business of Culture in the New Gilded Age, Salvos from the* Baffler**
Norton, 288 pp., $15

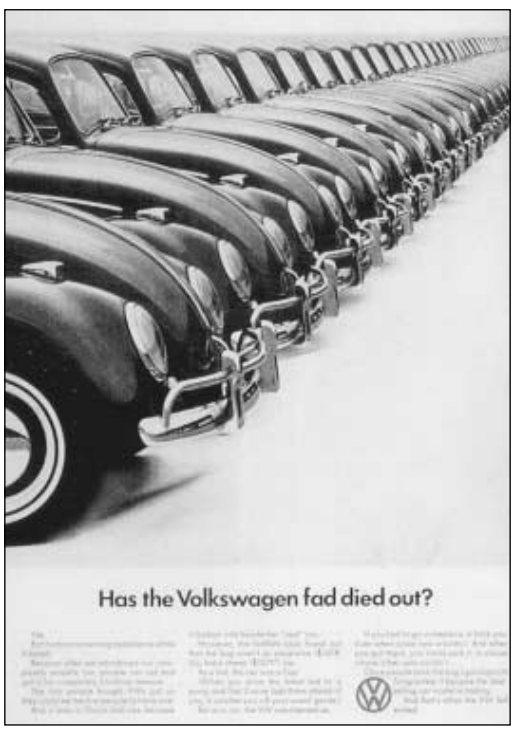
The era's liveliest debates about advertising's methods and aims took place within the industry itself. On one side stood Rosser Reeves, head of the Ted Bates agency, and author of the 1960 *Reality in Advertising*. For Reeves, advertising wasn't art—and art critics like Bernard Berenson weren't typical consumers. The best ads, following certain "immutable rules," were simple, repetitive, and hard to forget. The adman's sole, unglamorous role was to "get a message into the heads of as many people as possible at the lowest possible cost."

Bill Bernbach believed otherwise. Modern consumers, barraged with ads, were fed up with thumping slogans and blunt claims. Wary now of advertising's motives and stratagems, they warmed to memorable displays of ingenuity and wit. Bernbach's free-spirited firm, Doyle Dane Bernbach, got Avis to concede "We're Only No. 2" and reminded New Yorkers "You don't have to be Jewish to love Levy's real Jewish Rye."

Even more famous was DDB's long-running Volkswagen campaign. The firm didn't puff the Beetle as a sporty, sexy status symbol, but chose instead a "minimalist" approach that wryly touted the car's homely practicality while subtly flattering its buyers. Bug owners were clever spenders, the ads implied, bound to save a bundle on repair bills and fuel. But they were also hip, protesting through their purchase of a VW the "mass society" by rejecting Detroit's gaudy tailfins and flashy claims.

As the sixties progressed, Bernbach's "Creative Revolution" won the day. Ad shops everywhere mimicked the prize-winning "Bernbach look," and—as Frank documents so well—turned increasingly to "countercultural language and imagery." Ads for all sorts of products now routinely extolled protest, rebellion, and youth—or, more precisely, Frank writes, "what admen felt was the young's most important characteristic as consumers," their "desire for immediate gratification, their craving for the new." Thus Pepsi urged its drinkers to "Think Young" and to "Come Alive!" while 7-Up, in turn, became "Wet and Wild," and the "Uncola" as well—no mere mixer but *the* beverage for those defying "established cola tastes." Booth's Gin, meanwhile, ran one print campaign headed "I hate conformity because . . ." and facetiously urged readers to "tell us your beef against society in twenty-five words or less."

According to Frank, the trend was



Advertisements from The Conquest of Cool. *Above: the 1965 Dodge Rebellion and 1966 VW anti-mass-society ad. Opposite page: Booth's 1965 nonconformist gin and Love Cosmetics' 1969 try for the youth culture.*

especially clear among makers of menswear. One shirt company hoped that its current offerings would "destroy our image"; a knitwear firm was simply "Revolutionizing It!" as its print ads proclaimed. But car companies also got cool in a big way. Oldsmobiles became, of course, "Youngmobiles." American Motors now sold "The Rebel," and Dodge—promoting "The Dodge Rebellion"—added models called "Challenger" and "Swinger 340" to its line. Frank notes that one Challenger ad showed its hip driver harassed by "an overweight policeman with a stage-Southern accent," a "stock buffoon borrowed from *Easy Rider* and bent on repressing the very brand of car being advertised."

Meanwhile, product spokesmen changed. In the sixties, "besuited men of order" gave way to "rule breakers" and "deviants instead of conformists." "Ubiquitous" ads for Foster Grant sunglasses, for example, "encouraged consumers to imagine themselves as all manner of stylish lawbreakers." Even the "Frito Bandito" turned up, pilfering bags of corn chips "from their rightful owners."

Frank contends that these trends bloomed first because men like Bernbach felt stifled by stale and predictable strategies. Others in the industry—at least on the "creative end"—saw themselves as artists at heart, frustrated bohemians intuitively drawn to the celebration of unconventional behavior and nonconformity. Big advertising's big clients embraced such self-consciously hip themes because they were aimed largely, although by no means exclusively, at "the giant youth market." But Frank also argues that a popularized ideology built largely on the notion of constant and radical change—of "liberation and continual transgression"—is crucial "in that continual cycling of new stuff you need for a consumer society."

Frank is the editor of the *Baffler*, an enjoyably cranky journal started in 1988 (an anthology of its essays appeared last year, entitled *Commodify Your Dissent*). Thus, though he clearly admires the professional skills of Bernbach and others in the field, Frank also clearly, writing from the left, scorns mass advertising for abetting the "domination" of American life by "business." In Frank's view, manufacturers and merchandisers have simply "co-opted" this "language and imagery" of dissent for their own profit-making ends.

As a result, too many Americans now appear too willing to believe that deep human needs can be satisfied through the constant accumulation of new-but-disposable goods: cars, computers, soft drinks, sports shoes—everything from razor blades to pork rinds—that are perpetually pitched as daring, vaguely dangerous, *cool*. For Frank, the worst fears of Schlesinger and Packard have come true—and, in the weirdest possible way, somehow precisely because of their critique. Consumption is king, and high-tech advertising is craftier and more intrusive than ever before. There's a direct line of descent from Bernbach's Volkswagen ads to, say, *Details* magazine, which in Frank's view is one long advertisement for "hip consumerism" and "revolution

through style." *Details*, he has observed elsewhere, "presents nonconformity as a consumer posture." It "goes out of its way to imply that buying certain products is an act of true subversiveness."

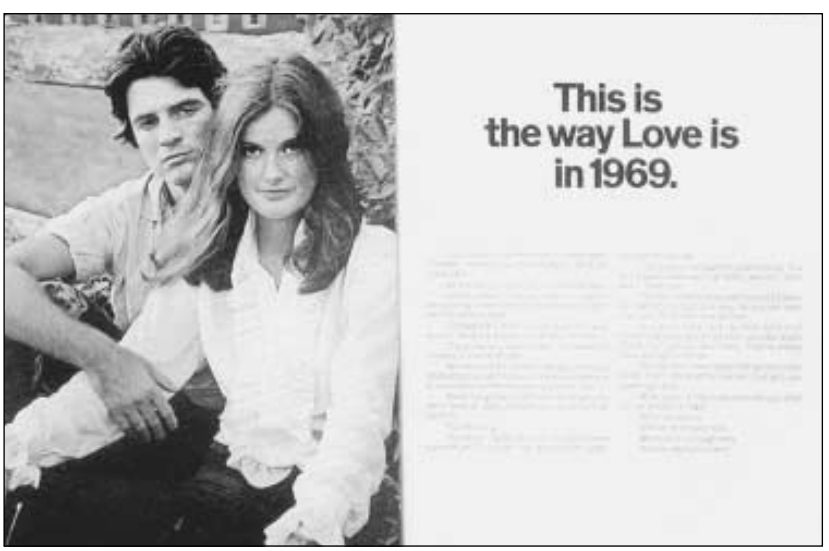
The Conquest of Cool is marked by a certain dogged repetitiveness—an almost exhaustive marshaling of proof—that is perhaps owed to its start as a Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Chicago. At times, Frank overstates his case, leaving the impression that virtually everything sold in the sixties was first plugged as some hip artifact, and that big firms pumped the bulk of their ad budgets into huge countercultural-theme campaigns that extolled youth. But of course huge companies with diverse product lines have long sought connection with varying constituencies. Chrysler, for example, manufactured lots of boxy Dodge Darts during that turbulent decade, and, one assumes, didn't use some hip leitmotif to sing the car's dull but durable virtues. And even while pressing drivers to join "the Dodge Rebellion," Chrysler continued to sponsor Bob Hope's television shows, linking itself with a mainstream performer hardly at odds with "the silent majority."

Still, Frank has produced a refreshingly spirited book and some useful social history. He is right to note that much of what we have been taught to think of as "the sixties" in fact started in the fifties, its mental atmosphere glimpsed in the best-sellers by Packard, Wilson, and Whyte. He is also right to accept the premise that American culture is now Pop Culture—or even Pulp Culture—and that both free speech and a free market did much to democratize values and attitudes that previous generations would have largely dismissed as pernicious or infantile. And he is probably very close to the mark when he declares that "the counterculture," broadly defined, has become "a more or less permanent part of the American scene, a symbolic and musical language for the endless cycles of rebellion and transgression that make up so much of our mass culture."

Thus in films, advertisements, and elsewhere, one still routinely sees "the figure of the cultural rebel, the defiant individualist," whether he is "an athlete decked out in mohawk and multiple-pierced ears, a policeman who plays by his own rules," or "a soldier of fortune with explosive bow and arrow, a long-haired alienated cowboy gunning down square cowboys, or a rock star in leather jacket and sunglasses." This figure not only "rules supreme" in advertising, but has become "the paramount cliché of our popular entertainment, the preeminent symbol of the system he is supposed to be subverting."

One also recognizes the "central-casting prudes and squares"—the schoolteachers, old folks, evangelical preachers, and pompous do-gooders—"against whom contemporary advertising, rock stars, and artists routinely cast themselves." It is absurd, of course, the endless parade of these stereotypical sitting ducks. But, as Frank writes, such clichés thrive "on some cultural logic of their own: Rebellion is both the high- and mass-cultural motif of the age; order is its great bogeyman."

And after reading *The Conquest of Cool*, it's hard not to conclude that the folks who brought you Mr. Clean and the Marlboro Man helped bring the Cultural Revolution too. ♦



Face to face with Paula Corbin Jones, President Clinton is scheduled to give his first sworn testimony in Jones's lawsuit in the White House Map Room on Jan. 17. A former Arkansas state employee, Jones alleges that then-governor Clinton pressed her for sexual favors in a Little Rock hotel room.

—News item

Parody

CONFIDENTIAL

WILLIAMS AND CONNOLLY
ATTORNEYS AT LAW
Doing whatever it takes since 1955

FOR THE PRESIDENT

BRIEFING MEMO RE: YOUR DEPOSITION

FROM THE HON. ROBERT BENNETT, ESQ., J.D., L.L.D., B.S.

Sources are telling us what we already guessed — that Corbin Jones will do everything in her very considerable powers to provoke you at Saturday's deposition. And I do mean provoke, Mr. President. You don't recall ever meeting her, of course. But expect the worst. Be prepared for the way the hair falls down her back, like the moonlit cascades of a mountain waterfall. The sultry look of her hooded eyes. The miniskirt up to here — the slope of her calves. The red lipstick, as though she had sucked dry the wounds of Hell itself. Dear God. You don't have to own a double-wide to sense this woman's allure. She can make a man's knees knock.

Therefore, your own personal deportment will be of paramount importance. Remember that you are being videotaped. Avoid eye contact with Corbin Jones. Direct all your responses to counsel. Don't overdo the chin thing. In case you do glance at Corbin Jones, keep a manila folder in your lap at all times. If you feel the need to "go on the offensive," note the confidential IRS audit of Corbin Jones attached. The "boys" have been very helpful. For example:

> Question: Mr. President, did you ever tell Ms. Corbin Jones, "You look like a smart girl, let's keep this between ourselves"?
>
> Answer: I don't recall, but unlike some people, I'm smart enough not to take a tax deduction for non-reimbursable 401K contributions, a violation punishable by up to three years in jail!

Above all, smile. Relax. Remember: You may be the first president to be deposed in a civil proceeding that involves accusations of grotesque sexual behavior and raises the most fundamental questions about your character, but the image you want to convey is, hey, this chief executive is havin' fun.

See you Saturday.

Billable hours in preparation of this memo: 659 @ $450 an hour.
Total due: $296,550

** PROTECTED BY ATTORNEY-CLIENT PRIVILEGE **

cc: Hillary Rodham Clinton
White House Counsel
Department of Justice

bcc: Tim Russert
Al Hunt
Wolf Blitzer