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ZELL MILLER, BUSH DEMOCRAT
FRED BARNES

"A LONG, HARD SLOG"

Donald Rumsfeld, Oct. 16, 2003

Under Fire in Baghdad
BY STEPHEN F. HAYES

PLUS

Iraq's Silent Majority
BY JEFFREY GEDMIN

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BY REUEL MARC GERECHT

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Future Recalls Require Further Reform

Bill Whalen is a research fellow at the Hoover Institution.

California is the first state in more than eighty years to recall a sitting governor. Is this landmark event a fluke or part of a larger anti-incumbent strain? Would those states without a recall mechanism be wise to follow California's lead?

The Golden State's voter rebellion fits into a national nonpartisan pattern. Democratic governor Gray Davis was recalled a month after Alabama voters rejected a $1.2 billion tax hike crafted by their Republican governor. Recall movements are afoot in Nevada and Wisconsin against both Republican and Democratic lawmakers who either raised taxes or refused to support a property-tax freeze.

At present, eighteen states have recall laws: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Georgia, Idaho, Kansas, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New Jersey, North Dakota, Oregon, Rhode Island, Washington, and Wisconsin. Political activists may attempt to add such provisions to more state constitutions as a means of reining in incumbents—in the same vein as the term-limit laws of a decade ago.

If recall does go national, it should reflect populist sentiment, not partisan desires. States should improve on the California model with the following reforms in mind:

More-Specific Grounds. California law says recall is appropriate as "the public good may require." Other states are more detailed. Montana limits its recall grounds to physical or mental lack of fitness, incompetence, violation of the oath of office, or failure to perform duties prescribed by law.

Quicker Process. In California, opponents have 160 days to collect recall petition signatures. Nevada allows only sixty days, which seems more sensible, as a quicker timeline makes for less of a distraction to lawmakers.

Higher Threshold. California law requires signatures from only 12 percent of the voters who cast ballots in the last gubernatorial election. Most recall states have a threshold of 25 percent (in Kansas, it's 40 percent). Given the sophistication of professional signature gatherers, a threshold higher than California's is appropriate.

Limited Ballot. California law requires a $3,500 deposit for gubernatorial replacement candidates. Not surprisingly, 135 candidates cluttered the ballot. In Nevada, replacement candidates have to collect the same number of signatures (128,000) as those required to force a recall vote. This safeguard weeds out nonserious candidates and instills public confidence in the process.

Minimize Politics. Critics said that California's recall was a partisan ploy by Republicans to reverse the results of the last election. New Jersey law avoids this by putting only the governor's name on the ballot—no replacement candidates—with the job going to the state Senate leader should the incumbent lose. One wonders what effect this would have had on California's outcome, had the only alternative to the Democratic governor been a fellow Democrat.

Despite its flaws, California's recall was a resounding success. Voter turnout increased, as did the media's interest. In this regard, the recall had a therapeutic effect on a dispirited California electorate. Other states may be as fortunate if they experiment with direct democracy—but only if they improve on what California has started.

—Bill Whalen

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

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the weekly Standard

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

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The Wellstone Memorial, Revisited

The memorial service for Minnesota senator Paul Wellstone on October 29, 2002, is generally viewed in Washington—by both Democrats and Republicans—as the turning point in the last midterm elections. If there was any one moment that cost Democrats their Senate majority and prevented them from regaining the House, that was it.

Just four days after Wellstone was killed with his wife and several staffers in a plane crash on the campaign trail, Democratic activists gathered in the University of Minnesota's Williams Arena to pay their respects. The service was (very) long and (somewhat) varied. In the course of it, those assembled booed the non-Democratic politicians who came to pay their respects. Republicans were harangued from the stage to drop their partisan affiliation and rally behind Wellstone's program. Wellstone was treated less as an admirable man to be missed and mourned than as a convenient vehicle for advancing a partisan program. A significant portion of Americans found the spectacle repugnant.

In recent months, certain Democratic ideologues—perhaps chastened by their own role in their party's 2002 defeat—have urged a revisionist view of the Wellstone memorial. In this, they resemble the Buchananite Republicans of 1992 who spent years disputing the proposition that Pat Buchanan's "religious and cultural war" speech at the Houston convention cost the GOP at the polls that year. But the Wellstone revisionists go a step further. They seek to convince the American public that it didn't see what it saw. According to them, Trent Lott was never booed by the crowd, ideology was a small part of the service, and the evening turned into a liability for Democrats only because the "right-wingers" who "control the media" distorted the facts for partisan gain.

Our own sense that this ghoulish leave-taking created problems for Democrats was formed more by talking to Democrats than by talking to Republicans. Certainly the media picked up the excesses in a way that caused problems for Democrats. But no rational Democrat believes those excesses were a Republican fabrication. It is thus gratifying to see in Tom Daschle's newly published memoir *Like No Other Time* (Crown Books, 304 pages, $25) that the Democrats closest to the spectacle at the time agree with us on the facts of the matter.

Reuters / Andy King

Wellstone's sons embrace mourner Rick Kahn

Take, for instance, the booing of Trent Lott. Moments after Lott told Daschle, "I'm here because Paul would have done the same for me," Lott went into the arena and was, in Daschle's words, "showered with boos and catcalls from the crowd. I felt very bad for Trent and Tricia. I think Paul Wellstone would have felt bad, too. He would not have abided the people responding that way—his people or anyone else's."

Daschle found similar sentiments among his fellow Democratic senators, returning to Washington on a private plane:

> At one point, Chris [Dodd], [North Dakota Democrat] Byron [Dorgan] and I were sitting together, talking about how anyone who knew Paul or his politics would understand and appreciate how his spirit was reflected in that evening's enthusiasm. But we knew how many people did not know Paul and did not share his politics, and we agreed that among those people—millions of them across America—we were going to pay a price for what had just happened.
>
> "We may just have lost the Minnesota Senate race," Chris said.
>
> "That may not be all," Byron replied.

And Daschle heard the same from former vice president Walter Mondale, who replaced Wellstone as senatorial candidate:

> I remember talking to Fritz Mondale in the afternoon the following day. He, too, was shocked at the rapid turn of events. He had already personally experienced the vitriol among many Minnesotans that morning.

And from Democratic pollsters and activists across the country:

> Not only did Walter Mondale slip overnight from eight points up to ten points down. . . . In South Dakota, where [incumbent Democratic senator] Tim Johnson's people were going door-to-door all over the state, reports were coming back that more than a few South Dakotans were saying, "I am so outraged at what happened in Minnesota that I was going to vote for Tim, but now I'm going to vote Republican."

This was the Democrats' assessment of the Wellstone memorial before the "right wing" media had had a chance to "distort" it. ♦

Call Him Wiggles

In a story in last week's *Newsweek* online about Iraqi reconstruction, there was a glancing mention of an important grassroots effort to reach out to Iraqi children. The article talks about safety improvements in parts of Baghdad: "There are motor pools, and Internet cafes, cafeterias and video lounges." And in an almost dismissive manner, it continues: "There's even a blog from inside the Green Zone, put out by someone who says he's a military intelligence soldier using the pseudonym Chief Wiggles (*http://chiefwiggles.blogcity.com*). Lately the boosterish Chief Wiggles has been using his blog to find donors to give him bicycles so soldiers can pedal around the zone giving out toys to children."

Boosterish? We understand the writer probably bears no malice towards the chief, but this operation is no ordinary "toys for tots" program. Wiggles's efforts to make life a little easier for the children of Iraq is on a scale with Gail Halvorsen, the celebrated "candy bomber" who dropped chocolates down to German children during the 1948 Berlin airlift. And despite doubts expressed in the *Newsweek* piece about Wiggles's identity ("someone who says he's a military intelligence soldier"), the man is authentic. The Chief (whose real name is classified for security reasons) serves in Utah's 141st military intelligence battalion (National Guard) and is currently working as an interrogator and debriefer at a palace in Baghdad. But on one occasion, he witnessed a poor girl crying and was so moved he wanted to gather up some toys for her. He then made mention of this idea of giving even more toys to more children on his blog, and thousands of people from around the world responded, all wanting to know how they could help.

To date, the Chief's "Operation Give," a newly set-up nonprofit organization, and "Share Joys Through Toys" effort has yielded more than 800 packages from overseas. Even Federal Express has gotten involved by shipping some of the packages from the United States free of charge.

Hundreds of toys have been distributed to a children's hospital in Baghdad, among other venues. "As we went down each hall and ward of the hospital, our following grew behind us as the word of our arrival spread like wild fire," writes Wiggles. "Unfortunately, due to the sheer number of people, we were unable to deliver toys to every employee or family member who desired something. We were there to make sure each and every sick child got a toy. The kids were great. Yes, there were many very sad situations causing me to cry inside for the kids, but there were smiles indicating their happiness to see us with the toys."

Wiggles humbly describes himself as "one individual trying to make a difference" and believes that "one person's seemingly insignificant positive actions can exponentially initiate a rippling of positive energy." Call him benevolent, noble, or selfless. Just don't call him boosterish. ♦

Casual

Man Manqué

Try as I might, there's no getting around it: I'm all man. I make this statement of faith not because I checked myself out in the shower before writing this article. Nor because I possess all your typical man-like properties—though I do: I can eat two hamburgers in one sitting, I hate spooning, I can operate even the most obscure buttons on a television remote without looking down.

Sometimes we manly types must manfully take stock of our manliness by digging deeper. Some do this by pushing their outer limits—by getting a risqué tattoo or competing in triathlons. I do this by taking personal inventory with the help of Muddy Waters's timeless classic "Mannish Boy." The Testosterone Index is self-administered by taking Muddy's shameless boasts and applying them to your life in question form. Am I, like Muddy, a "full grown man"? Check. Am I a "natural born lover's man"? Check. Am I a "rolling stone"? Affirmative. Am I a "hoochie coochie man"? Without question.

Still, despite my kinship with the Delta bluesman, I sometimes can't help but feel I'm overcompensating. For though it takes a man to admit vulnerability, I've always felt something less than a man when it came to mechanical aptitude. I could not fix a thumb-wrestling match if it were between my own right and left hands. I hate Tim Allen. I would rather be force-fed the collected works of Anna Quindlen than spend an afternoon in Home Depot.

From the time I was a wee child, when I gashed a six-inch hole in my hand with my dad's boxcutter, my parents reinforced this shortcoming. Mom conveyed it gently, suggesting I was mechanically uninclined by assuring me, "language is your tool." Dad, with his gift for economy, made it a little clearer. "Son," he once said, "you're a tools 'tard."

He hit the nail on the head, to use one of the few tool metaphors I can actually comprehend. His own father, who hailed from the steel-driving town of Pittsburgh, could give John Henry a run with a hammer. Over his lifetime, my grandfather accumulated so many thousands of tools that he had to construct accordion-style fold-out cabinets to contain them all. Each tool was neatly placed in a painstakingly tailored, hand-carved groove. When he died some years ago, the big-ticket items—the circular saws, the hydraulic lifts—were given to people who could use them. All I got was a rusty toolbox, a tack hammer, and some long, flat thingee that's really sharp on one end. Like my grandfather's memory, I've always cherished it. But I have no idea what it's for.

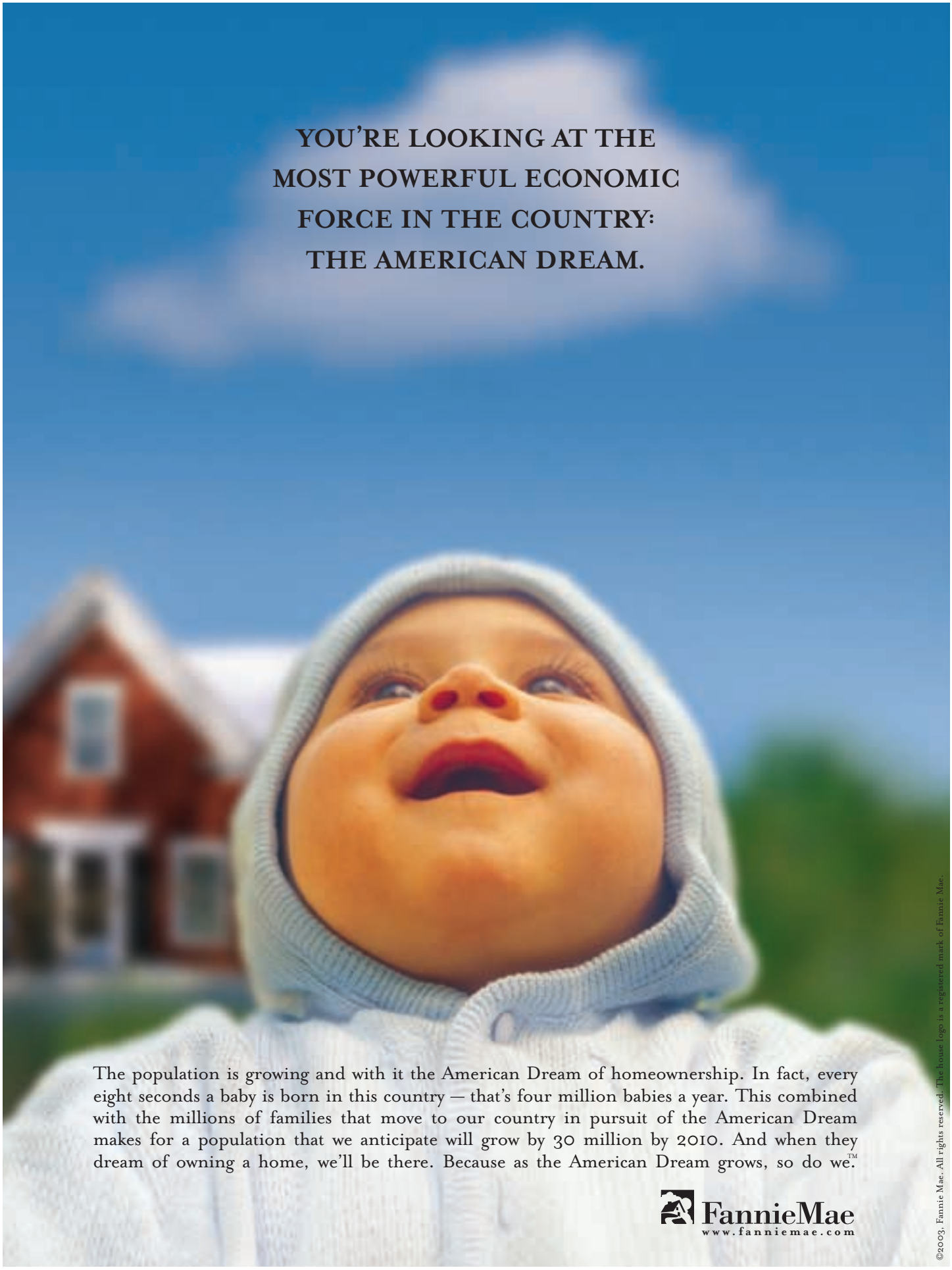
For most of my life, my ignorance didn't seem to be a problem. If I had cared about working with my hands, I'd have learned a trade and gotten a real job. Whenever I found myself in the company of discount Bob Vilas, discussing their broken cars or furnaces or yard equipment, I'd just nod and spit occasionally, trying to look manly while throwing out a knowing, "Maybe it's a bad gasket." I don't know what a gasket does, I've just heard they go bad a lot.

But then I got married, had kids, and am now saddled with the burdens of being Harry Homeowner. I try to sound in-charge, but I'm living a lie. The other day, I explained how electricity works to my 4-year-old: "You flip this switch, then that bulb comes on." He called for his mom. She mocks me mercilessly. When she gave me a drill set one Christmas, hoping that I'd hang pictures and curtain rods, her face fell when I asked, "What do you expect me to do with this?" She took it from me, disgusted. A delicate flower not given to salty language, she spent the rest of Christmas day on a stepladder, forcing me to hand her drill bits while deriding me as "The Carpenter's Bitch."

Most of our domestic life, mechanically-speaking, has consisted of humiliation piled on embarrassment. When I got a new wood-burning stove, I asked a friend if I was best off starting a fire with fatwood or by pouring gasoline in there, then lighting it. "That's not a stove, that's a bomb," he cautioned. When I solicited a relative's help to bang out the deck of my riding mower after the fifth time I hit the septic cleanout (or was it our water pump?), I stepped in front of his hammer and caught a shot right in the forehead. "It happens," he said, stifling laughter in case the internal hemorrhaging wouldn't stop.

My wife, for her part, has tired of the expensive mistakes, the debilitating injuries, and me cursing God, inanimate objects, and our small children. "Just don't," she now says, when something falls into disrepair. I've complied with her wishes. She seems pretty worked up about it, and if she blows a gasket, I haven't a clue how to fix it.

Matt Labash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Pledge Week

It may be gilding the lily to add to James Piereson's wonderful and wise essay "Under God" (Oct. 27). He correctly traces the origin of the phrase to Lincoln's Gettysburg Address and then to George Washington. But there is a source behind Washington: Lincoln's favorite dramatist, Shakespeare. In *Henry IV, Part 2*, Prince John accuses the Archbishop of having "ta'en up, / Under the counterfeited zeal of God, / The subjects of his substitute, my father . . ." In the course of his eponymous play, King John declares that "we, under God, are supreme head . . ." Finally, Coriolanus defends his Senate against the people, "You cry against the noble Senate, who / (Under the gods) keep you in awe . . ." In Western civilization the claim to authority—that is, legitimate rule—has ever been "under God."

Ken Masugi
Claremont, CA

As a Faithful Navigator of the Knights of Columbus, I read James Piereson's excellent article "Under God" with particular interest. One thing Piereson fails to mention, however, is the fact that the Knights of Columbus was the driving force for inserting the phrase into the Pledge of Allegiance. In August 1954, the Illinois American Legion Convention adopted a resolution recognizing the Knights of Columbus for having initiated, sponsored, and brought about the amendment to the Pledge. If the Supreme Court rules next year to remove the phrase, it would be an insult to the millions of past and present members of the Knights of Columbus.

Richard Contrastano
Newington, CT

After reading James Piereson's "Under God," an old saying of my father's regarding old age came to mind. It went like this: "The first thing to go is memory, and I cannot recall the second." I received an education in U.S. history, back when it was still taught, and I could not recall all the history of where "Under God" came from. This historical knowledge should be a prerequisite for entering high school. While we are at it, we should send a copy of "Under God" to each of the nine Supreme Court justices.

H. Glenn Irvine
Streeter, ND

James Piereson could be correct in his analysis of a 1984 opinion by Justice Sandra Day O'Connor that labors to imply that a "recognition of God" is the same thing as an "endorsement" of religion in general, and that is almost the same thing as an "establishment" of religion as prohibited by the First Amendment. This is the befuddled legacy of a number of wrongly decided cases stretching back at least to the 1962 New York Board of Regents school-prayer decision.

But if she still follows that reasoning today, O'Connor will be just as intellectually obtuse as she was in the University of Michigan affirmative action case.

The plain meaning of the authors of the Constitution of 1789 was to prohibit Congress from granting official status to one specific national denomination over any others. Some states had their own officially endorsed denominations as late as 1857. So the idea that the authors had a problem with states' recognizing the existence of God is preposterous on its face.

But apparently no one cares what the authors intended or what the plain text says either. We now place all power in a judiciary where nonelected judges legislate by decree. Some judges might still cloak their legislation in the guise that their policies are found somewhere in the "penumbra" of the old written Constitution, but others have dropped even that pretense.

The words "so help me God" do not appear in the text of the presidential oath of office in the Constitution. Yet every president since George Washington has chosen to follow that formulaic invocation to underscore his fealty to the oath.

President John F. Kennedy said in 1961 that "our rights come not from the generosity of the state but from the hand of God." Kennedy was right on that point and the Ninth Circuit is wrong.

Mark Q. Rhoads
Falls Church, VA

James Piereson traces the phrase "under God" back to orders given by

General George Washington as he rallied troops for battle against the British on July 2, 1776. Actually, the phrase is even more ancient. On January 4, 1649, after dethroning King Charles I, the Rump Parliament assembled in the House of Commons and passed a resolution declaring: "The Commons of England, in Parliament assembled, do declare, that the people are, under God, the original of all just power."

The Rump Parliament was a revolutionary body without legal authority to exercise state power. Supplication to an authority higher than the king—whose royal prerogative was claimed to have been derived from God—was therefore needed for legitimacy. Similarly, in 1776, the American Founders, who were subjects under King George III, called upon "their creator" in the Declaration of Independence to legitimate their split from the throne. A pragmatic explanation for the omission of divine reference in the Constitution (apart from "in the year of our Lord") may therefore be that by 1787, with independence won, such an appeal was no longer necessary.

MATTHEW W. CLOUD
Washington, DC

JAMES PIERESON'S concern is that removing "under God" from the pledge of allegiance would strike "at the very foundations of our national existence." This raises the even more fundamental question of the proper relation between church and state. America sought to avoid the European practice of cooperation between religion and the state. There is then an issue as to where precisely government may impose belief. Today, the most threatening imposition occurs when government implements the beliefs of social democracy and liberalism. Consequently, Piereson's concern for requiring public recognition of God needs to be supplemented by denying the imposition of humanist beliefs by government.

ALLEN WEINGARTEN
Morristown, NJ

IT'S A GAS

WILLIAM PEDERSEN ("Inside the Bush Greenhouse," Oct. 27) claims that the Bush administration "could convert global warming policy from a drain on its political strength and credibility into an asset" by endorsing "modest mandatory measures" to control greenhouse emissions. He also contends that President Bush could adopt "moderate greenhouse limits" without compromising either his "conservative principles" or his opposition to the Kyoto Protocol.

Pedersen might as well say it is possible to be a little bit pregnant. Bush could not propose to regulate carbon dioxide—the inescapable byproduct of the carbon-based fuels that supply 86 percent of all the energy Americans use—without legitimizing the Kyoto

agenda of climate alarmism and energy rationing.

Pedersen ascribes Bush's global warming travails to "the self-contradiction of a policy that admits the need for action, yet rejects even modest mandatory measures." But the alleged contradiction disappears once it is understood that there is no regulatory solution to the potential problem of global warming. According to pro-Kyoto scientists, full implementation of the treaty by all industrial nations would avert only 7/100ths of a degree Celsius of global warming by 2050! Real "action" on climate change, should it be needed, will depend on technological breakthroughs in energy production and/or carbon capture. Bush's emphasis on technological research and development is correct.

Pedersen opposes Kyoto not only because it costs too much, but also because "We do not know enough at present to establish a planetary limit." He proposes "reductions not in carbon emissions directly, but in the 'carbon intensity' of an economy—the ratio of carbon emissions to gross national product."

But if we do not know enough to establish a "planetary limit" on emissions, we do not know enough to establish carbon intensity targets either. Absent real knowledge of the level at which carbon dioxide concentrations must be stabilized, there is no scientific basis for setting either emission limits or intensity targets.

Mandating carbon intensity reductions would embolden rather than appease pro-Kyoto alarmists, who would see the scheme for what it is—the crossing of a legal and policy Rubicon. From then on, debate would not be over whether to suppress carbon-based energy, but over how much to suppress it.

Many in the first Bush administration believed their acid rain program would persuade environmentalists to vote Republican. It never happened. Embracing the Kyoto agenda would not improve George W. Bush's reelection prospects, either. On the contrary, energy taxes or their regulatory equivalent are anti-growth—and a poorly performing economy in 2004 would be Bush's biggest political liability.

MARLO LEWIS
Competitive Enterprise Institute
Washington, DC

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the weekly Standard

Another Phony Scandal

Who shall doubt "the secret hid
Under Cheops' pyramid"
Was that the contractor did
Cheops out of several millions? . . .
(Rudyard Kipling, "Departmental Ditties")

The assaults on the Bush administration's Iraq policy grow more cartoonish with each passing day. Last week the Center for Public Integrity and its journalistic and Democratic party echo chamber insinuated that the White House harbors a nest of war profiteers. "More than 70 American companies and individuals have won up to $8 billion in contracts for work in postwar Iraq and Afghanistan over the last two years," read the breathless press release announcing the center's new study, *Windfalls of War*. "Those companies donated more money to the presidential campaigns of George W. Bush—a little over $500,000—than to any other politician over the last dozen years, the Center found."

The Associated Press soon chimed in with a barely rewritten version of that press release, headlined "Report Links Iraq Deals to Bush Donations." Citing the center's study, the AP reported that "most of the 10 largest contracts went to companies that employed former high-ranking government officials, or executives with close ties to members of Congress and even the agencies awarding their contracts."

Then, faster than you can say coordinated attack, came the press releases from the Democratic campaigns: "Clark Questions War-Related Windfall for Bush Backers; Calls for More Transparency" read a typical one, citing, again, the "more than $500,000" donated to Bush by the contractors.

Excuse us while we suppress a yawn and go back to our Kipling:

Thus, the artless songs I sing
Do not deal with anything
New or never said before.
As it was in the beginning
Is to-day official sinning,
And shall be for evermore!

Yes, yes: Some people are going to make handsome profits from the reconstruction of Iraq, and we should pay close attention that they earn those profits honestly. And, yes, the usual arcane and cumbersome system of competitive bidding for federal contracts has been suspended in the interests of urgency. Shouldn't it be? Is the reconstruction of Iraq not urgent business? Is there evidence that, say, Halliburton, the conglomerate once run by the vice president, *shouldn't* be the largest contractor in Iraq, where it is helping get the oil industry back on its feet? This is, after all, Halliburton's line of work. Is Halliburton in some way not up to the task? Is some better qualified company sitting on the sidelines? Would it have been advisable to tell the Iraqis to chill while we issued requests for proposals and then took competitive bids for the work? Who knows? Maybe Saddam Hussein's French and Russian collaborators, arguably more familiar with Iraq's infrastructure than American firms, would have underbid Halliburton and saved taxpayers a few million.

When it comes to malpractice in Iraq, we are not incapable of being outraged. But ritual incantations of the words Halliburton and cronyism don't do it for us. Neither does huffing and puffing about a very old and unsurprising story—that government contractors routinely employ former government officials, and that individuals at such companies habitually make donations to political candidates of both parties. What's missing from this elaborate insult to the Bush administration (which you can read for yourself at *www.publicintegrity.org/wow/default.aspx*) is any sense that the critics give a damn about the future of Iraq. If they did, they might have shined useful light on issues like the proper balance between American and Iraqi firms in reconstruction, and the degree to which military functions should be devolved onto private contractors.

Oh, and one other thing got left out of these stories. Those profiteering contractors are dying alongside American soldiers. As the AP reported the day before the *Windfalls of War* was released, "A contractor near the Iraqi city of Fallujah died and an American engineer was wounded when their vehicles came under attack Monday—possibly by U.S. soldiers, said the British-based company, European Landmine Solutions. . . . The chief military contractor in Iraq, Kellogg, Brown & Root [a Halliburton subsidiary], has had three workers killed in Iraq, two of whom died in ambushes. Another top U.S. military contractor, DynCorp, saw three of its workers killed in an ambush by Palestinians in the Gaza Strip this month." Some windfall.

—Richard Starr, for the Editors

Louisiana's Rising Star

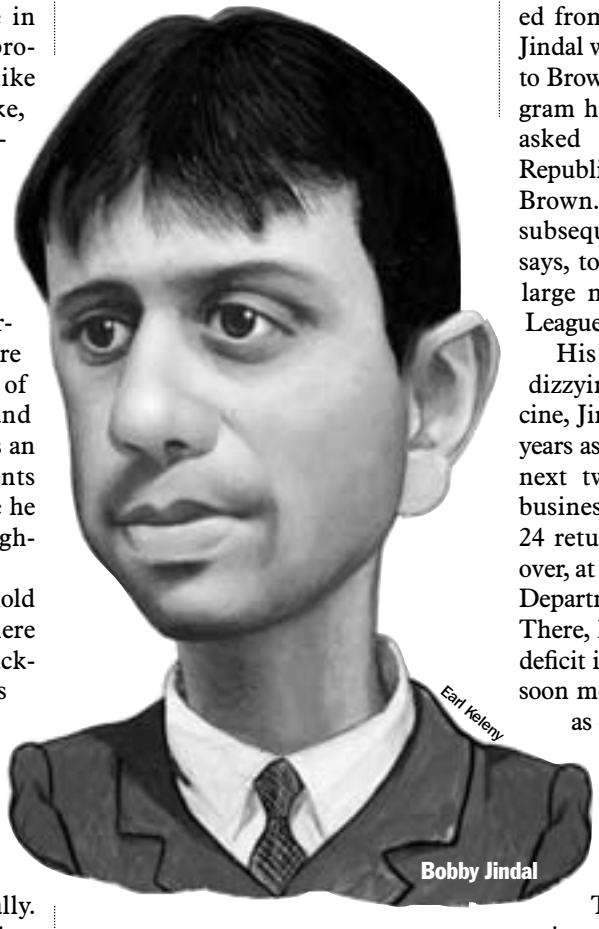
Do the Republicans have another hot governor in their future? BY FRED BARNES

New Orleans

THE LOUISIANA governor's race is interesting and nationally important for one reason: Bobby Jindal. He's the Republican candidate in the November 15 election and is probably the most unconventional major party candidate in the country. Louisiana often produces exotic political creatures like Edwin Edwards and David Duke, both now in jail, or even the current Republican governor Mike Foster, best known for his political incorrectness. But Jindal is as different from them as one could get. Rather than a good old boy or a scoundrel, he's a 32-year-old policy wonk who's never before run for office. He's a graduate of Brown University in Rhode Island and an expert on health care. He's an Indian American whose parents moved to Baton Rouge just before he was born. And Jindal is a thoroughgoing conservative.

It's a stretch to liken him to Arnold Schwarzenegger, but let's go there anyway. Both have immigrant backgrounds. Both are Republicans who don't quite fit the party mold. Both are reformers. Both decided to run not in response to a groundswell, but because they wanted to. Both promise to turn around states in decline, economically and demographically. Schwarzenegger is now governor-elect of California. Jindal has at least a 50-50 chance of winning the Louisiana governorship. If he does, Jindal will join Schwarzenegger as a new Republican star whose emergence reflects an increasingly diverse party.

Yes, there are differences. Schwarzenegger was blessed with an unpopular governor, Democrat Gray Davis, to challenge in a recall election. Not so Jindal. After two terms (which is the limit in this state), Foster remains popular and indeed is Jindal's most prominent supporter. On his radio show last week, Foster zinged the Democratic candidate, Lieutenant Governor Kathleen Blanco, by suggesting her husband will be the power behind the throne if she's elected. Jindal was embarrassed by this and renewed his plea for Foster to keep quiet about the campaign. Blanco tried to drum up a sympathy vote by complaining she now has two opponents to run against, Jindal and Foster.



Schwarzenegger had celebrity, but Jindal has an extraordinary life story. His given first name is Piyush, but at age 4 he decided to change it to Bobby. In high school, he abandoned his parents' Hindu faith and converted to Catholicism. (His father is an engineer, his mother an assistant secretary in the Louisiana state labor department.) By the time he graduated from Baton Rouge High School, Jindal was a Republican. When he got to Brown—an eight-year medical program had attracted him—he naively asked about joining the College Republicans. There was no chapter at Brown. The Republican club Jindal subsequently helped found grew, he says, to 300 members, a surprisingly large membership for a liberal Ivy League school.

His post-Brown career has been dizzying. Instead of pursuing medicine, Jindal studied at Oxford for two years as a Rhodes Scholar, worked the next two years for McKinsey, the business consulting firm, and at age 24 returned to Baton Rouge to take over, at Foster's urging, the mammoth Department of Health and Hospitals. There, he transformed a $400 million deficit into a $220 million surplus. He soon moved to Washington for a year as executive director of the federal commission on reforming Medicare. One of his bosses was Democratic senator John Breaux of Louisiana, who has endorsed Blanco. Then he took over the University of Louisiana system of colleges for two years before joining the Bush administration in 2001 to draft a Medicare reform plan.

Last February, Jindal was back in Louisiana again, this time announcing for governor. The first poll showed him at a lowly 6 percent but

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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still ahead of two Republicans, Hunt Downer and Jay Blossman. They'd been deemed to have a better chance of coming in first or second in the all-party Louisiana primary on October 4 and making it into the runoff. But Jindal came in first with 33 percent. Blanco finished second with 18 percent.

At first blush, the primary suggested Blanco was favored to be the next governor, if only because Democratic candidates got 57 percent of the vote. But 9 percent went to Randy Ewing, a very conservative Democrat who has since refused to endorse Blanco. And soon Jindal was running neck and neck with her. In two Republican polls last week, Jindal was 5 points ahead. This was partly because of a slightly larger than usual black vote for Jindal. He has captured the endorsement of two black political clubs in New Orleans and a leading black preacher in Shreveport. Jindal's hope is to get 15 percent of the black vote, enough to all but guarantee victory.

Unlike Schwarzenegger, Jindal has been specific about his plans. He's pledged not to raise taxes and to eliminate a franchise tax and part of the sales tax. His aim, he says, is to rejuvenate the economy, fix schools, and improve health care, all "with the dollars we're already spending." He's issued lengthy position papers on health care, ethics, economic opportunity, the environment, schools, and religious faith. These were packaged together last week in a glossy 24-page booklet entitled "The Jindal Blueprint for Louisiana—A Bold New Vision." Most notable is the section on "defending the role of faith and values in our state." In it, he tells how a friend led him to Christian faith. "Today, my faith in Jesus Christ is central to who I am, and I pray regularly for God's wisdom in all the parts of my life," he says.

Jindal says he became a Republican as a teenager for two reasons. In Louisiana, with its history of political corruption, Republicans are the reform party. Also, they're the champions of opportunity. "I'd seen what great opportunity my father had [in America] as an engineer," he said in an interview. His mother has succeeded in state government, he said, and "I'm running for governor. This is an amazing country."

Jindal has two problems. He's a glib technocrat who's campaigning on the tepid theme of being a "problem solver." And Blanco is a likable conservative Democrat who has offended no one in her eight years as lieutenant governor. Like Jindal, she's pro-life, pro-gun, and anti-tax hike. But she has her own problems. She's dull and uninspiring, and instead of proposing fresh policies, she promises to convene summits on health care, education, and economic issues after she's elected. Blanco is worried about low voter turnout, especially among blacks (she got only 18 percent of the black vote in the primary). After a dreary rally on the steps of the capitol in Baton Rouge last week, she said "getting out the vote is our mission right now."

Blanco represents the status quo in Louisiana. She's the safe vote, but that's not necessarily an advantage. Louisiana is the only Southern state with more people leaving than coming in. "Kids I went to high school with don't live here anymore," says Jindal. "I want my daughter to grow up in Louisiana." The state suffers from wounded pride. Louisiana can send a message to the nation, wrote the publisher of the *Baton Rouge Business Report*, Rolfe McCollister Jr: "We will no longer tolerate being the butt of jokes, we are tired of being last on every list, we will not stand by as our best and brightest leave the state, and we are ready to move in a new direction, leaving our sordid past behind. We can send that message loud and clear by electing a 21st-century leader, Bobby Jindal."

There's a final similarity between Jindal and Schwarzenegger. President Bush didn't make an appearance in California on Schwarzenegger's behalf in the recall campaign, and he's not likely to come to Louisiana either. Bush is popular here and should win the state easily next year. But his aggressive campaigning last fall against Democratic senator Mary Landrieu left a bad feeling in the state. She won despite Bush's presence. Jindal may win without it. ♦

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The Democrats' Foreign Policy

Is there one? Actually, there are several.

BY MATTHEW CONTINETTI

IT'S HALF PAST NOON on a dreary Tuesday, and John Podesta, one-time chief of staff under President Clinton, is welcoming a crowd of several hundred Democrats gathered at a Marriott hotel ballroom in Washington, D.C. The occasion is "New American Strategies for Security and Peace," a two-day conference coinciding with the launch of the Center for American Progress, a liberal think tank founded by Podesta, who will also serve as president and CEO. The center, he announces, is a "nonpartisan" institution.

Podesta says this with a straight face, even though the crowd consists predominantly of former Clinton officials. Even though the conference, which is also sponsored by the paleo-liberal *American Prospect* magazine and the Century Foundation, a progressive think tank, bills itself as an opportunity to fashion the Democratic alternative to Bush administration foreign policy. And even though the keynote speaker, retired Gen. Wesley K. Clark, is a Democratic candidate for president. (Podesta later explains that Clark was booked to speak at the conference before he announced his candidacy.)

From a certain point of view, however, "New American Strategies for Security and Peace" is a nonpartisan, even bipartisan, gathering. General Clark registered as a Democrat only a few weeks ago. One of the conference's most hyped speeches is delivered by Republican senator Chuck Hagel of Nebraska. And the individual who figures most prominently at the conference is also a Republican—George W. Bush.

The Democratic foreign policy types at Tuesday's conference appear unified in their opposition to a single enemy, and that enemy is the current president of the United States. Podesta never mentions the president by name in his opening remarks, but he does go after the current attorney general, a reliable proxy for Bush. "I am not one who subscribes to the John Ashcroft theory of political dialogue," Podesta says. "I do not question the patriotism of administration officials, nor their commitment to protecting the American people."

Others have different theories about the nature of the enemy. Robert Kuttner, co-editor of the *American Prospect*, says that "a radical fringe has taken control of American foreign policy." Ambassador Joseph Wilson, these days perhaps the most famous former National Security Council official, says a "neoconservative juggernaut" is responsible for today's foreign policy. Sandy Berger, President Clinton's national security adviser, says Bush engineered "a radical shift in the nature of American foreign policy."

"The root of the problem," intones Gen. Clark, "lives at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue."

Yet what's striking about the foreign policy vision at the conference is how similar it is to the president's. No one disputes that it was right to topple the Taliban after 9/11. Few argue that it was necessary to end Saddam Hussein's tyranny. And some, like Senator Hillary Clinton, even credit aspects of the administration's positions on controversial multilateral agreements like the Kyoto accords. "The fact is [Bush officials] have some good arguments," Clinton tells the crowd, before adding that the administration's stance on Kyoto was nevertheless a "petulant exercise of ideology."

Most of the criticism, in fact, doesn't counter Bush's foreign policy goals at all. Instead, these Democrats focus on process. Susan Rice, assistant secretary of state for African affairs under Clinton, says the administration leads "in a poor and selfish way." A common refrain is that the president "squandered" opportunities to bolster the goodwill of our allies after the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. "American unilateralism undermines our good intentions," says Clyde Prestowitz, the author of *Rogue Nation*, in which the rogue nation is—you guessed it—the United States.

When Senator Clinton takes the stage Wednesday morning, she sounds like many other Democrats in Congress, especially when they're voting on some aspect of Bush's foreign policy. They talk big—Clinton criticized Bush's "radical" agenda—but then they side with the president. And that's pretty much what Clinton and others do at the conference. At a media roundtable, for example, Berger said his "greatest fear" was that the administration might pull out of Iraq too quickly—an argument more commonly associated with the neoconservative right.

It wasn't much of a surprise, then, that by the end of "New American Strategies for Security and Peace," the question that the conference was meant to address hadn't been answered. Namely: Do the Democrats *have* a foreign policy?

"The Democratic party speaks with a cacophony of voices at this point" on foreign policy, says Democratic senator Evan Bayh of Indiana, an advocate of the Iraq war who did not attend the Center for American Progress's conference. "What we're seeing here is that when you're out of power, there is less coherence to your party's message."

Matthew Continetti is an editorial assistant at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

Still, Bayh added his own voice to the cacophony last Thursday as he announced the release of "Progressive Internationalism: A Democratic National Security Strategy." Signed by 15 Democratic intellectuals, including the Brookings Institution's Kenneth Pollack and the Hoover Institution's Larry Diamond, this document stakes out unusual ground in the fight over the future of Democratic foreign policy. "Unusual" because the document attacks Bush's policies from the right: "While some complain that the Bush administration has been too radical in recasting America's national security strategy, we believe it has not been ambitious or imaginative enough."

The authors of "Progressive Internationalism" call for increased attention to threats posed by Iran and North Korea. They advocate "the bold exercise of American power." They support lessening American dependence on Mideast oil and expanding free trade. They embrace the American military as an instrument for advancing our national interests. "Too many on the left," they write, "seem incapable of taking America's side in international disputes, reflexively oppose the use of force, and begrudge the resources required to keep our military strong."

Will Marshall, president of the Progressive Policy Institute, a think tank associated with the centrist New Democrats, and one of the authors of "Progressive Internationalism," argues that an anti-Bush tide on the left has undermined Democrats' judgment on Bush's foreign policy. Says Marshall: "The question of Iraq got caught up in this deep antipathy among liberal activists to George Bush. And the desire to be opposed to Bush led to opposition on Iraq."

"Democrats currently have a credibility problem on national security," says Bayh. "But the Democratic party has a long and honorable tradition of defending American interests. We should harken back to that tradition."

The vision put forth in "Progressive Internationalism" is one of three competing foreign policies in today's Democratic party. Another is that which you find at events like the Center for American Progress's "New American Strategies" conference.

The third and most worrisome is the one you find at events like the recent "End the Occupation" march in Washington, organized by the International ANSWER coalition, which opposed the wars in both Afghanistan and Iraq. This is exactly the foreign policy vision the authors of "Progressive Internationalism" wish to defeat. It is equally suspicious

ANSWER protestors

Getty Images / Jeff Fusco

of American power and the Bush administration. Its chief advocates, Democratic presidential candidates Dennis Kucinich and Rev. Al Sharpton, have called for immediate withdrawal from Iraq. As one young marcher from West Virginia told *Salon* magazine's Michelle Goldberg, "I wasn't for [the war] in the first place, so I don't feel I have a responsibility" for what would happen if America were to suddenly renege on its foreign commitments. A good name for this vision is "regressive isolationism."

Regressive isolationists don't make up a majority of Democrats. But their outlook often bleeds into Democratic policy debates, not least because of Kucinich and Sharpton's presence in the presidential race. The antiwar energies tapped by the regressive isolationists have also played a part in Howard Dean's ascendancy.

What are the chances of the regressive isolationists capturing the party in next year's primaries? Senator Bayh likes to point out that twice in the last eight presidential elections—in 1984 and 1972—his party lost 49 states. "You have to be out of touch for that to happen," he says.

Are today's Democrats similarly out of touch? Bayh says it's "too soon to tell."

Maybe not. A recent poll by Democratic strategists Stan Greenberg, James Carville, and Bob Shrum spoke volumes about where the party is on foreign policy. As Byron York reported in the *Hill* newspaper, when pollsters read aloud a dozen topics to Democratic primary voters—things like the environment, education, fighting terrorism, and homeland security—and asked which worried them the most, the results were staggering. Among New Hampshire primary voters, fighting terrorism and homeland security tied for last place at 2 percent. The results were the same in South Carolina. In Iowa, only 1 percent said they were that worried about fighting terrorism.

Pollsters also asked respondents which of the following two statements they agreed with: "America's security depends on building strong ties with other nations," or "Bottom line, America's security depends on its own military strength." In New Hampshire, 77 percent agreed with the first statement. A mere 17 percent agreed with the second. In South Carolina, 56 percent agreed that American security depends on good relations with its allies, and 33 percent believed that military power was the most important aspect of American security. In Iowa, 76 percent agreed with the first statement. Only 18 percent agreed with the second.

So maybe the question the Democratic foreign policy establishment should be asking isn't whether they have a foreign policy vision. It's what they should do about the far-left vision already embraced by the Democratic base. ♦

The Long, Hard Slog

We've made military strides against al Qaeda. Next step: Iraqi democracy. BY REUEL MARC GERECHT

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE Donald Rumsfeld's memo on the "Global War on Terrorism" has elicited derision and glee from many in the press and the Democratic party. The publicly upbeat, brusque secretary appears in the in-house memorandum far more pensive and tentative in his judgments about America's—specifically the Pentagon's—success in its battle against Islamic holy-warriorism.

"We are having mixed results with [Osama bin Laden's] al Qaeda," Rumsfeld confesses. "Today, we lack metrics to know if we are winning or losing the global war on terror. . . . Are we capturing, killing or deterring and dissuading more terrorists every day than the madrassas and the radical clerics are recruiting, training, and deploying against us? . . . Does DoD need to think through new ways to organize, train, equip, and focus to deal with the global war on terror?"

Though it is always difficult to tell whether the "private" queries of a senior official are intended to reveal serious intellectual agitation and curiosity, or rhetorical self-aggrandizement, or both, it isn't *that* difficult to answer Rumsfeld's principal questions about al Qaeda and its jihad against America. The Bush administration—specifically the Pentagon—has been enormously successful in its efforts to gut Osama bin Laden's organization. It is, of course, possible that al Qaeda, a transnational union of suicidal believers, will be able to regroup with time and again strike the United States with the same lethality as it did on 9/11. The dream of al Qaeda—the conviction that Muslims armed with a violent faith can restore the glory, pride, and power of Islam—obviously remains a potent elixir for many young men who live on a diet of Saudi-financed Wahhabism.

Nonetheless, the Bush administration has shattered al Qaeda's structure and, possibly, its triumphalist ideology built on bombing successes through the Clinton years. Al Qaeda was founded on the premise that a worldwide cadre of Muslim holy warriors could be recruited, indoctrinated, and militarily trained.

Look at its early operational bible, *The Encyclopedia of the Afghan Jihad*, which was a multi-volume guide to paramilitary and terrorist activity compiled by the Maktab al-Khadamat, the Pakistan-based jihadist organization from which al Qaeda evolved. The *Encyclopedia* and its many derivatives clearly aim to democratize terrorism, to make it possible for small holy-warrior cells to sustain themselves in the West far from a Middle Eastern home-base. In other words, to create a viable equivalent of the Communist International without having Moscow at its center to provide aid, encouragement, and training in the black arts.

It was never clear that al Qaeda's geographical aspirations could be realized. The group could not have been born without state sponsorship—first in Pakistan, during the Soviet-Afghan war, and then later in fundamentalist Sudan and Afghanistan. Virtually all of al Qaeda's frontline holy warriors, particularly its lieutenants, required training time in Afghanistan. Young militant Muslim men may be found the world over. But the fine-tuning required to turn these men into effective death-wish believers demanded a pipeline back to Afghanistan, a secure domain where bin Laden and company could intellectually and operationally work through their ever-evolving, ever-more complex terrorist conspiracy.

The destruction of the Taliban state in Afghanistan has put to the test the foundation myth of al Qaeda, that a transnational body of Muslim militants can effectively wage holy war against the United States without having a Muslim state grant it safe harbor. It is certainly possible that al Qaeda will be able to think its way through its current stateless conundrum. It may be able to marry with other Muslim militant/terrorist organizations that can protect it, giving it a home where it can have sufficient leisure to plot, plan, and train. Kashmir, the Gaza Strip, the islands of Indonesia, the feudal lands of Yemen are all possibilities. But they are far from ideal. Secretary Rumsfeld's Pentagon can strike ruthlessly anywhere. Assuming the Bush administration retains the will to let loose hell against any land or group that gives comfort to al Qaeda, the odds of its being able to congeal as effectively as it once did are poor.

And al Qaeda is, by definition, westward oriented. The organization exists to strike the United States. It is now a victim of its own success. For al Qaeda to fulfill that mission post 9/11, it must locate, recruit, and train young Muslim men who have access to Western passports, or Middle Eastern men who can reliably obtain European or, ideally, American visas. The consular service of the State Department and the Department of Homeland Security are now making life enormously difficult and frustrating for thousands of innocent Middle Eastern Muslim men who would like to visit or study in the United States. The same is no doubt true for those who aren't innocent. And the cells of

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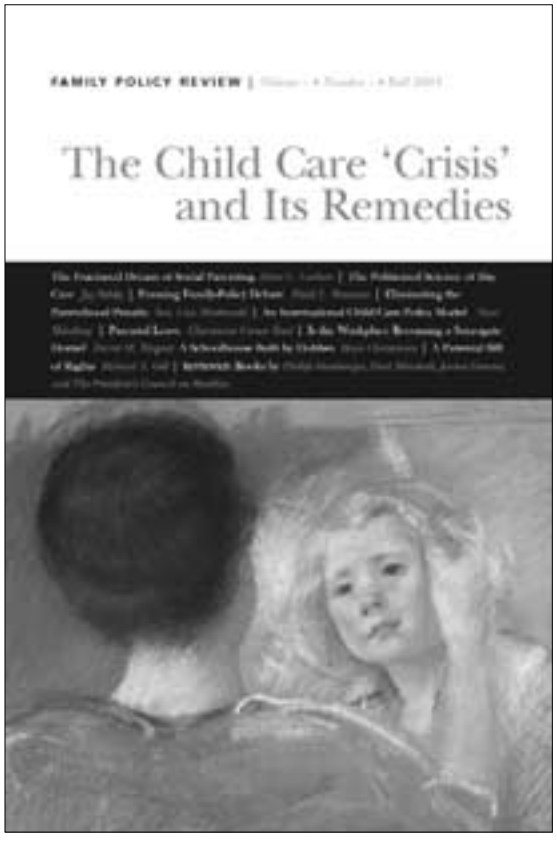

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al Qaeda and its allied militant organizations in the West have come under significant pressure since 9/11.

It is certainly true that the Arab Muslim communities in Europe have for two decades been producing violent young men who have embraced holy war. Europe's imperfectly integrated Muslims have developed an enormous pool of ill-will toward their non-Muslim European brethren. To a lesser, probably much lesser, extent, the same can be said of some young Muslim males in the United States.

Indeed, if al Qaeda has a future as a transnational holy-warrior society, it will probably be found in the militant, highly Westernized and highly Wahhabized Muslim communities in the United States and especially Western Europe. (The two tradition-pulverizing forces of Westernization and Wahhabi Islam actually complement each other.)

In the past, Egypt and Saudi Arabia were the great intellectual engines of anti-Americanism, anti-Semitism, and bin Ladenism in the Muslim world. Though the religious and lay intellectuals of both countries remain by and large virulently anti-American, it is likely that the militant Muslims of Europe will give them stiff competition in spreading hatred of the United States. The marriage of hardcore European leftism and Islamic radicalism is already far advanced in Western Europe. The process, of course, started decades ago in the Middle East—the "red" mullahs of Tehran were aptly named—but the virulent convergence of the two ideologies in many Muslims in the West is frightening.

Whether al Qaeda and its allied holy-warrior groups will be able to continue to harvest the morally dysfunctional young men of Western Europe is a different matter, however. These would-be jihadists need to be spotted, assessed, developed, recruited, and most important, trained. These things take time, much more time if done furtively and nervously.

Western European security and intelligence services are well aware of the home-grown Muslim problems within their borders, even if many European politicians would prefer to blame the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation and the Bush administration's Axis of Evil doctrine for the radicalization of their Muslim denizens. For al Qaeda, finding sanctuary to breed its young in a post-9/11 Europe will be very difficult.

It is also something that Rumsfeld, as secretary of defense, really need not worry about. The transnationalism of al Qaeda is more often than not simply beyond the range of the Pentagon, which won't be bombing France or Pakistani madrassas. (Secretary of State Colin Powell and director of central intelligence George Tenet should, of course, be more concerned.) Indeed, the recurring Democratic charge—presidential candidate General Wesley Clark seems most fond of this criticism—that the Bush administration's war against Saddam Hussein has detracted from its efforts against al Qaeda is belied by the very nature of Osama bin Laden's organization.


Ali Sistani

Operationally, the war against al Qaeda does not now require much military or paramilitary manpower. Indeed, it's very likely that the Central Intelligence Agency and the Pentagon have created al Qaeda-focused internal bureaucracies that are too large for their own good. The American bureaucratic ethic is rarely a nimble one, and the White House and Congress have poured money into the fight against Islamic terrorism. From the Homeland Security Department to the Counterterrorism Center at Langley, the truer critique of the Bush administration's post-9/11 efforts would underscore excessive bureaucratic zeal, not a lack thereof.

The Democrats could, of course, more fairly charge the Bush administration with failing to appreciate the evolving nature of Middle Eastern terrorism. They could even criticize it for timidity in executing central tenets of the Bush counterterrorist doctrine. And as the Clinton administration demonstrated repeatedly, timidity in dealing with terrorism is a red flag for the acolytes of Osama bin Laden and other practitioners of power politics in the Middle East.

Crucial point: The war in Iraq and the possible spread of democracy in the region have put state sponsorship back into Middle Eastern terrorism. To whatever extent al Qaeda is operating inside post-Saddam Iraq, be it through Ansar al Islam or other jihadists crossing the Syrian and Iranian borders, it has become functionally indistinguishable from other terrorists, be they holy warriors or secularists, who are also crossing the Syrian and Iranian borders. Both Syria and Iran are police states that can, when they choose, make unauthorized border crossings very challenging. If the Iranians and Syrians were on our side, we should be hear-

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The war that is being waged against the United States and its allies in Iraq isn't primarily a jihad fought by Holy War, Inc., which is the leitmotif of al Qaeda. What we are seeing in Iraq now is operationally what we saw in Lebanon in the early 1980s. Then, Iran and Syria aided and abetted others in hammering us. The terrorism worked and set in motion, among moderate and radical Sunnis and Shiites alike, the belief that the United States couldn't hold its ground against determined men of faith.

There is no new CIA finding—to borrow from Secretary Rumsfeld's memorandum—that can grant us and the Iraqis relief from this kind of violence. You can't beat state-sponsored terrorism with "better intelligence on the ground." Armies defeat states; good intelligence lends a helping hand.

The Bush administration can certainly hope that a faster Iraqification of security and internal politics in Iraq will diminish the effectiveness and zeal of the bombers from abroad. Terrorist networks are, however, usually close-knit enterprises, especially if operating on terrain where the terrorists don't believe the local population is reliably on their side (which is probably the case in the dangerous areas of the Sunni triangle). An Iraqi security and intelligence force no doubt could penetrate the Sunni triangle more effectively than non-Arabic-speaking Americans who don't yet know the terrain. But as the Egyptians learned in the 1980s, well-organized extremist groups can long hold their ground even when a vast majority of the local population loses sympathy with their tactics and objectives.

It is possible that politics could alter this equation. Iraq's Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani has called for national elections to determine the composition of a constitutional assembly. If such elections were held, and the body politic expressed itself in great numbers, there would probably be a beneficial effect on the Middle East's amorphous public opinion. Iran and Syria's rulers might even feel forced to refrain from abetting terrorism against the United States and the Iraqi people.

Such elections would certainly energize Iraqi society. The officially sanctioned constitutional exploratory committee has been traveling the country discussing the idea of a new basic law, and it has been drawing large crowds even in small towns. If the Arab Sunni Iraqis participate en masse in elections, this could conceivably galvanize popular support for the unpleasant, Sunni-versus-Sunni security tasks that are essential for successful Iraqification.

The administration would certainly be wise to play the card by embracing the grand ayatollah's call. In all probability, accelerating political development offers a better chance of thwarting the terrorism and guerrilla activity than the counterinsurgency scenarios the Pentagon has so far deployed. The possibility of a political trump over the security situation is certainly the least painful and least costly exit strategy for the United States in Iraq.

But, again, we shouldn't get our hopes up. The Baathist regime in Damascus and the clerical regime in Tehran are mortally threatened by the growth of democracy in Iraq. National elections surely will accentuate their discomfort and probably increase their aid to terrorists crossing their borders. One can fully understand the administration's desire not to confront militarily any more Middle Eastern states. Handling Iraq alone is a consuming task. The French and the Germans, on whom many Democrats and Republicans appear to believe America's international credibility depends, might fall into paroxysms of righteous indignation with an attack on Syria or Iran.

And it is certainly possible that the U.S. military, after a decade of decline, does not have the manpower to overthrow one Middle Eastern dictatorship and then intimidate the dictatorships next door. Air power, the favorite tool of Rumsfeld's transformed military, probably isn't enough to convince Damascus and Tehran that terrorism no longer pays. The United States must be prepared to threaten a land invasion—what the Turks did to the Syrians in 1998 to force the ejection from Syria of Abdullah Ocalan, the head of the terrorist Kurdish Workers' party. It is most unlikely, of course, that the Bush administration is politically or militarily prepared now to expand the conflict even if doing so would enormously increase the odds of success in Iraq.

In destroying Saddam Hussein's regime, the Bush administration has loosed the democratic genie into the Middle East. Contrary to what one often hears on the Arab satellite TV service al Jazeera, there is widespread foreboding and hope in the Muslim world that the United States is actually serious about midwifing Iraqi democracy.

The enemies of the United States in the region know—even if few domestic critics of the Bush administration do—that the Muslim Middle East is in spiritual meltdown, where regimes in place rule but do not legitimately govern. Bin Ladenism is one byproduct of this political and moral collapse.

The region's rogue regimes, the dictators whom we've often called friends, and the holy warriors all share an imperative to see us fail. The Bush administration will be lucky if the forces of darkness in and around Iraq don't markedly ratchet up the violence before November 2004.

To better its odds, the administration should recognize that Ali Sistani may know something about the soul of his country. If the grand ayatollah is right, Iraqi ballots, not U.S. footsoldiers, will be the engine of change throughout the Middle East—and in due course Donald Rumsfeld will be able to go back to transforming his forces to meet the military challenges of the 21st century. ♦

Demoralized China

Radio Free Asia's "Listener Hotline" gets an earful. BY JENNIFER CHOU

BEIJING'S CRITICS and supporters agree that something is wrong with the moral fabric of China. Visiting journalists and resident foreign businessmen comment on falling ethical standards. When an orgy involving 380 Japanese tourists and 500 Chinese prostitutes in a luxury hotel in Zhuhai came to light in mid-September, Chinese Internet chat rooms were inundated with angry postings. Some called for a boycott of Japanese goods; others lamented the deteriorating values of Chinese society, warning that as people become more concerned with materialistic pursuits, they become less concerned with the consequences of their actions.

But are things really so bad? To explore that question, the Mandarin service of Radio Free Asia expanded its daily open-phones "Listener Hotline" from one hour to two on October 9 and 10 and invited comments on the state of ethics in China. Callers were allowed up to five minutes each. Joining the program's regular host, William Zhang, was Perry Link, a professor of Chinese literature at Princeton who is interested in the subject. Their exchanges with some 40 callers from across China, ranging in age from 18 to 75, suggest that in a generally gloomy picture, not all is dark.

With few exceptions, the callers voiced outrage over what one of them, a Liaoning man in his fifties, called "the unprecedented and total disintegration of moral principles." Nearly all argued that China lacks any moral foundation.

Some faulted the godlessness of communism for the spiritual vacuum. Others said moral decline is a result of the breakdown of Confucian values. A few attributed the slump to the widespread rejection of Marxism-Leninism, an ideological system that prescribes moral absolutes and that once had an almost religious fascination for many Chinese. Numerous callers held the one-party political system accountable for all sorts of ills that plague China—from garbage-strewn waterways, to the reemergence of prostitution, to rampant official corruption.

For a Kunming resident in his forties who phoned the hotline, the defining value in China today is cheating. And a Fujian retiree warned that the younger generation, obsessed with money but lacking ethical beliefs, could sink even deeper into an abyss where words such as loyalty, trust, and civility have no meaning.

One striking feature of these calls was the palpable indignation they expressed. Hardly representative of a people in moral free fall, the callers exhibited strong moral sentiments. They were far from resigned to the amorality around them.

The hosts made a point of drawing callers out on the sources of their own values and principles. A few professed to be Christians or followers of the Falun Gong movement, but most said they adhered to no organized religion; they were not influenced by any concept of a Last Judgment in their daily moral choices. Instead, they said they rely on an ingrained sense of right and wrong—often instilled by their parents. Several factory workers said their "natural conscience" guides them in making value judgments.

The quality they valued above all seemed to be honesty. One Shanghai man in his fifties defined honesty as "being the same on the outside as on the inside." A 30-year-old self-employed worker said that "since time immemorial, social mores have never been this bad" because nowadays honest people are treated as "doormats." A lawyer from Yunnan confessed to wondering whether he should continue to teach his child to be honest since "honest people sometimes end up getting hurt." And a Shanghai retiree proudly announced that one night he'd found a wallet containing several hundred yuan but had returned it to its owner the very next morning.

Civility also ranked high on the list of most-desired qualities. A cab driver from Henan told the hosts that he does not charge passengers who ask to be taken to church because "they are nice people who treat others with kindness." A Changchun man expressed admiration for people with religious beliefs because "they never swear" and "never bawl people out." A college student from Guangdong labeled people who practice tolerance but are atheists "cultural Christians."

Self-sacrifice and compassion for the disadvantaged are other virtues to which the Radio Free Asia callers aspire. Several voiced reverence for the ideal of living for a cause greater than oneself. Recalling Comrade Lei Feng, the heroic model of self-sacrifice and rectitude built up in Maoist propaganda, one Jiangsu man in his fifties said he would volunteer to be a guinea pig in a medical experiment if it might lead to the discovery of a means of exterminating mosquitoes. He said, "It's more meaningful to live for ten people than for myself." And a factory worker from Shandong recounted how people in his impoverished hometown once donated quilts and food to a homeless old woman, while others, equally poor, offered to take her in and care for her in their homes.

Caller after caller voiced similar sentiments—yet many reported loneliness and a sense of swimming against the tide. But if the special "Listener Hotline" proved anything, it's that these Chinese are *not* alone. A great many of their fellow citizens clearly share a passionate interest in the spiritual well-being of their nation. While the moral fabric of China is apparently in tatters, these people's concern suggests it is not beyond repair. ♦

Jennifer Chou is director of Radio Free Asia's Mandarin Service.

The Islamic Terrorism Club

And other jihad-recruitment websites.

BY STEPHEN SCHWARTZ

WHEN AQILA AL-HASHIMI was murdered on her way to work at the end of September, some people cheered. A modern Iraqi Shia woman who wore no headscarf, al-Hashimi was also a former mid-level diplomat for the Baathist regime and as such earned the fury of Iraqi extremists when she joined the post-Saddam transitional body, the Iraqi National Council. "Praise God, The Death of the Traitor Aqila al-Hashimi is Confirmed," screamed the website *www.alerhap.com*. The posting continued:

> The media have confirmed the death of the criminal Aqila al-Hashimi, who accepted a cheap sellout of her country and nation to the American enemies. The rest of the traitors are in line for the same treatment, especially the head criminal, Ahmed Chalabi. It is well known that the Governing Council has no other aim than to legitimize the American and Zionist invasion of Iraq. That is why the American aggressors had their medical teams work hard to save the life of the criminal Aqila al-Hashimi.

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The web, of course, is full of nasty sites and inflammatory postings. Such things are bound to crop up in a widely accessible medium that is uncensored. What makes *alerhap*—an al Qaeda website—interesting is that it offers an example of hate-mongering tolerated in a virtual environment that is actively censored: that of Saudi Arabia.

Sure enough, the same Riyadh regime that continually promises to curb incitement by its state-supported Wahhabi clerics and media—the same regime that successfully blocks websites airing enlightened attitudes toward women, Islam, pluralism, freedom, and democracy—leaves unimpeded inflammatory websites that recruit for violent jihad.

One Saudi writer who has complained about the government's policy on websites is Nahed Bashath. Her essay "Banning Sites or Banning Minds" was allowed to appear in the major daily *al-Riyadh* on August 17, in keeping with the regime's present unpredictable pattern of feints toward openness and promises of reform. Bashath reported that the authorities had just blocked access to a website on violence against women run by the Arab Regional Resource Center at *www.amanjordan.org*.

Not only that, but Bashath cited a study carried out by Jonathan Zittrain and Benjamin Edelman, both at Harvard Law School, which funded the project, in cooperation with the Saudi government's Internet Services Unit. Titled "Documentation of Internet Filtering in Saudi Arabia," the survey found that the Saudis were blocking such sources of subversion as websites run by the Anne Frank House and Amnesty International, as well as sites relating to Shia Islam, Christianity, the Baha'i faith, and tolerance and interfaith dialogue generally. The Harvard study is available online, at least to Westerners, at *cyber.law.harvard.edu/filtering/saudiarabia*.

Its executive summary is worth quoting at length:

Ansar Islam

Abstract: The authors connected to the Internet through proxy servers in Saudi Arabia and attempted to access approximately 60,000 Web pages as a means of empirically determining the scope and pervasiveness of Internet filtering there. Saudi-installed filtering systems prevented access to certain requested Web pages; the authors tracked 2,038 blocked pages. Such pages contained information about religion, health, education, reference, humor, and entertainment. The authors conclude (1) that the Saudi government maintains an active interest in filtering non-sexually explicit Web content for users within the Kingdom; (2) that substantial amounts of non-sexually explicit Web content is in fact effectively inaccessible to most Saudi Arabians; and (3) that much of this content consists of sites that are popular elsewhere in the world.

The Saudis' explanation for blocking sites is predictable: "preserv[ing] our Islamic values, filtering Internet content to prevent materials that contradict our beliefs or may influence our culture." According to the Harvard researchers, the Saudis further explained that they block sites "related to drugs, bombs, alcohol, gambling, and pages insulting the Islamic religion or the Saudi laws and regulations."

Naturally, the censored sites include the democratic opposition forum directed by the Washington-based dissident Ali al-Ahmed at *www.saudiinstitute.org* and his news service at *www.arabianews.org*. Similarly, as soon as the Saudi opposition forum *www.tuwaa.com* became popular in the kingdom, it too was jammed, though its contents run not to flashy propaganda but to civil, well-reasoned arguments for liberal reform. (In recent days, the site has been intermittently available. As the jammers attempt to suppress sites, site operators change their locations to get around blocking. Thus, what is available may shift from day to day.)

Noting all this, Bashath asked a crucial question: Why are such sites blocked when others, which spew recruitment propaganda for the global Wahhabi terror campaign, are not?

The illustrations on these pages are taken from websites accessible to Saudis in mid-October, when we downloaded them. On the page opposite, the headline at the top, in red letters dripping with blood, reads "Islamic Terrorism Clubs."

The two pictures in the middle of the page, of a suicide bomber and of Osama bin Laden superimposed on a gathering of jihad fighters, are stills from a flash video found at *www.dawah.ws/flash/jehad.swf*. The flash is entitled "Come to Jihad" and has a soundtrack of extremist songs. The first sequence shows video-game-style images of tormented Muslims seen through windows. First, two presumably Israeli soldiers drag a woman along, with the word "Palestine" scrawled in blood on the wall beside the window. Next, a soldier with an automatic weapon targets a woman in a headscarf accompanied by two children; this time the bloody word on the wall is "Chechnya." The following two scenes show a man confronting an American soldier, titled "Afghanistan," and a tank, labeled "Iraq." Soon the heading "Lions for Monotheism"

appears, "monotheism" being a euphemism for Wahhabi Islam. The cityscape appears, then the image of bin Laden, then the crowd he is exhorting to jihad. A Saudi flag is shown, followed by a burning American flag. The flash ends with the masked suicide bomber, whose black headband bears the legend from the Saudi flag, "There is no God but God."

At the top of the second page is a flaming heading from a site promoting Ansar al Islam (Volunteers for Islam), the Wahhabi group operating in Iraqi Kurdistan. The heading at the bottom of the page is from another leading Wahhabi site and shows guns, a Koran, the world, the fiery word "mujahedeen" (holy warriors), a mountain scene from Afghanistan, and Osama bin Laden with his confederate Ayman Zawahiri.

In the middle of the page, the still with the cross comes from a flash containing many images of dead and wounded people at *www.muslm.net/muslm3/mojahd/flash/al9leeb.swf.* The words under the blood red cross are "The Cross Came." The song in the background says the crusaders came with their armies, and Muslim blood is flowing like a river. Why should jihad be a sin if singing and dancing are acceptable? If Jews and Christians can fight, why not Muslims? Our enemies kill children and the innocent, says the song, but Islam will prevail. Jihad against the West is the only virtuous path for Muslims.

The image below it, a photocomposite of a man on top of the World Trade Center as a plane is about to hit, comes from an al Qaeda website, *www.alsonna.jeeran.com/index.htm*, that glorifies the heroic hijackers of 9/11.

Less visually interesting but no less pernicious are the many text sites available to Saudi citizens solemnly promoting the views of Wahhabi clerics—that Shia Muslims are infidels, that Western culture is dangerous, and that what the rest of the world calls terrorism is legitimate resistance crowned with martyrdom. ♦

Iraq's Silent Majority

Are they with us, or with the terrorists?

BY JEFFREY GEDMIN

Baghdad

THE Coalition Provisional Authority had just reopened a bridge and lifted the curfew, while coalition forces were steeping themselves in cultural sensitivity training in preparation for Ramadan. Then over the next few days, a Black Hawk helicopter was forced down north of the capital, a deputy mayor was assassinated, and four police stations and the International Red Cross were blown up. Outside of Baghdad, another car bomb by another police station exploded in Fallujah, an Abrams tank was attacked near Balad (45 minutes north of Baghdad), and a multinational force patrolling central Iraq was ambushed. This chain of murderous events had begun with a half dozen rockets slamming into the al Rashid hotel in Baghdad, where Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz was staying, at 6 A.M. on Sunday, October 26. The rockets struck a few hours before I was to check into the hotel, accompanied by a team of editors and scholars that my outfit, the Aspen Institute Berlin, had organized. By week's end, the barrage of attacks had left 50 dead and more than 200 injured.

If you have read the commentary about Iraq over the last few months, you might wonder to what extent analysis is shaped by the pro- and antiwar leanings of various authors. Read the hawks and you'll learn that 150 newspapers have been established, that Nike is donating soccer balls for Iraqi kids, and that reconstruction of the country's dilapidated infrastructure is underway. Three Arab companies have just won contracts to build the country's cell phone system.

On the other hand, read the antiwar crowd and you'll get a heavy dose of *schadenfreude*, talk of the administration's having underestimated the "complexity" of it all, and anxiety about the spreading "chaos." Already, after the most recent violence, a new round of positioning and punditry has begun. The president says the thugs are desperate, and the mission is still on track. The critics say it's America's new Vietnam. Which version is true?

In fact, there continues to be substantial progress in Iraq. If you like quantifying things, you can easily measure it in numbers. Ten thousand schools have reopened, for instance, and enrollment is up 25 percent. Iraq's 23 universities have begun to develop new social science and humanities curricula. It seems Saddam never had much use for philosophy or literature. The lights in Iraq are on again, with generators pumping at prewar levels—4,500 megawatts since August. Meanwhile, coalition forces have already recovered more than $1 billion in cash from the bad guys, aka "former regime loyalists."

Sit with Gen. Raymond Odierno, commander of the army's 4th division based out of Kirkuk, and you'll have more numbers to work with. Odierno will tell you his troops now disarm more than 60 percent of the "improvised explosive devices" they encounter. IEDs, as they are called, are currently the weapon of choice

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among terrorists, who will leave these unpredictable contraptions lying in or near the road, sometimes barely concealing them, to detonate under trucks, humvees, and buses. The general says he has met 728 times with Iraqi civic, religious, and political leaders. In Kirkuk, in Northern Iraq, 80 percent of the predominately Kurdish population is pro-coalition, says Odierno, 15 percent is ambivalent, and 2 to 3 percent are actively involved in anti-coalition violence. It sounds plausible. At any rate, as we are whisked around in the bubble of our militarily chauffeured SUVs—where there's hardly a chance to scratch the surface—every kid on the street who can catch your eye is waving and smiling ear to ear. Saddam's henchmen had butchered some 180,000 Kurds, and here in Kirkuk, the mayor tells us, the Americans have finally done the right thing.

When local militants sought recently to shut the hospital down, ostensibly because of the corrupting influence of the non-Muslims in charge, Hybaskova ginned up enough support to force the militants to back off.

There are hopeful signs elsewhere that Iraq's silent majority is beginning to find its voice, albeit with a little help from their friends. Jana Hybaskova, the Czech ambassador to Kuwait (she's the first female ambassador ever to that country), explained to our group how she managed to rally ordinary citizens in Basra to stand up to a small group of local radicals. We met her for dinner at the not-very-indigenous Blue Elephant, a Thai restaurant on the beach at the Kuwaiti Hilton. Hybaskova travels frequently to Basra to support a local hospital the Czechs are now running. When local militants sought recently to shut the hospital down, ostensibly because of the corrupting influence of the non-Muslims in charge, Hybaskova ran around town talking to people and ginned up enough support to force the militants to back off. Stories like these are surely good news, but they frequently don't play that way. When Ambassador Hybaskova asked a Prague television journalist who covered the hospital stand-off why the failed radical leader got most of the attention, she was told "this was the story."

Right now in Western and Arab media alike, violence in Iraq is the story. True enough, parts of Iraq have become violent and dangerous places. The terrorists cannot defeat coalition forces militarily, but they can seek to drive America out by eroding public support in the United States. And they can continue killing Iraqis to scare off those who wish to work with us. The terrorists have a strategy. That's why we need a convincing counterinsurgency strategy. Iraq is not Vietnam, but it could become Israel if the new nation remains plagued by terrorism and perpetual insecurity.

As our team prepared to leave Baghdad, coalition forces were ready to expand the "green zone" in the capital, the most stable part of the city to date. By moving directly in to clean up some of the toughest neighborhoods, the idea is to take the enemy head on. "Fireworks are sure to begin," says a coalition official. In other words, if we do this right, things will get bloodier before they get better.

On our way out, an Iraqi businessman told us, if we solve the security problem, all Iraqis "will kiss the Americans." On our first day inside the country, a convoy for our group hit an explosive, damaging two Humvees. On the last day as we flew out, our C-130 was forced to evade a shoulder-launched missile. More security in Iraq? It's high time. ♦

Under Fire in Baghdad

Distinguishing foe from foe

By Stephen F. Hayes

Baghdad

It was 6:03 A.M. on my Timex Expedition watch, which I always keep four minutes fast. The phone in our room at the al Rashid Hotel rang and my roommate, James Kitfield of *National Journal*, thanked the person for the wake-up. Bleary-eyed, we exchanged incoherent small talk. *When did you get back last night? Sleep well? Hear about the Black Hawk downed in Tikrit?*

We spent a little extra time on that last one. We had both been in Tikrit the day before. I learned about the helicopter at the filing center for journalists set up near our Baghdad hotel. Jim had already gone back to the room and saw the news on CNN. The Black Hawk hadn't actually been shot down, as CNN initially reported, but had taken fire from a rocket-propelled grenade after landing. One soldier had been wounded. We joked a bit about how this wouldn't help us convince loved ones back home not to be worried as we zipped around Iraq for three days with Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz.

Because he'd gotten a couple more hours of sleep than I did, Kitfield volunteered to shower first. But I couldn't sleep. I stood in front of the picture window in Room 1136 of the al Rashid, looking at the small courtyard below and the vast public park beyond the concrete wall that enclosed the hotel grounds. In the distance on my left, I could see Saddam Hussein's old parade grounds. I've long been fascinated by the monuments that mark the beginning and end of the parade route—identical sets of arms holding two swords that cross over the street. The blades form arches, maybe 10 stories high. Processions of soldiers used to pass underneath these arches in celebrations that were not infrequent in the late 1980s, when Iraq was a military power.

More than almost anything else in Iraq, this display—the giant arms are said to be exact replicas of the former Iraqi dictator's, down to the hair follicles—captures the egomania and megalomania of the old regime. The ground beneath the arches is paved with the helmets of dead Iranian soldiers. I hadn't yet seen it up close, and I began to think through how I might propose a brief visit to one of Wolfowitz's top aides, Kevin Kellems.

As my eyes wandered, my gaze passed over a bright blue trailer just on the other side of a wall near the al Rashid. It was parked at the end of a cul-de-sac off a newly opened road just outside of the heavily fortified "green zone," maybe 200 yards from the hotel. That it was out of place—a small patch of color in a landscape that was otherwise desert brown to the horizon—seemed curious but not threatening.

A moment later, I watched as the first rocket left the trailer and whizzed over the wall toward the hotel. Then came another, and another, and another, and another, and another—flares of orange on a straight-line trajectory into the lower floors of the hotel. I suppose I expected them to stop, figuring whoever was shooting would have to pause and reload. So for probably 15 or 20 seconds, I stood at the window and watched. I looked in vain for the people firing at us. And the rockets just kept coming.

It finally occurred to me that standing in front of a window was not a good place to be, so I turned and ran out of the room. In the time it took for me to get from the window to the door—maybe two seconds—one of the rockets hit our floor. The hallway was filled with smoke, so, taking my cues from two soldiers crawling on their knees and elbows, I dropped to the floor. The door to my room shut behind me. Remembering that Kitfield was still in the shower, I pounded on the door to get his attention, but he was already on his way out. He joined me in the hallway and we waited until the concussive blasts had ended.

The hallway had already begun flooding. Six rooms down from ours, an internal wall had been blown into the hall by the rocket. The smoke seemed to be getting

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Al Rashid Hotel

Photos: Reuters / Chris Helgren

thicker, and there were shouted warnings of a "big fire," though I never saw one. I stopped in the room next door to ours, where NBC News cameraman Jim Long and veteran Pentagon correspondent Jim Miklaszewski were standing in front of the window. Long was shooting video of the smoke near the blue trailer.

I walked down the hall to survey the damage. It was restricted to one room, but extensive. Water on the 11th floor was more than ankle-deep. The man staying in the room that was hit, Lt. Col. Charles Buehring, was a top adviser to L. Paul Bremer, the civilian administrator of Iraq. Buehring, described to me by several of his colleagues as a "true American hero," did not survive his injuries. In all, 16 al Rashid guests were injured.

As I walked down the 11 flights of stairs to the lobby, I noticed a small drop of blood near the fourth-floor landing. By the time I reached the ground floor, the white tiles were mostly covered with red footprints—some showing the treads of shoes, others the imprints of bare feet.

The attack could have been far worse. The blue trailer held 40 anti-tank rockets—20 Russian and 20 French. Just 29 of the 40 rockets fired. Seventeen of those 29 hit the building. And only six of the 17 rockets that hit the building exploded. Six out of 40 did what they were supposed to do.

The French rockets, according to three U.S. Army ordnance experts who examined them, were of recent vintage and were almost certainly produced after their export to Iraq was prohibited by the cease-fire that followed the 1991 Gulf War.

"They were the newer version," said one soldier who inspected the rockets. "So they were sold after the embargo was in place."

Weapons from a variety of countries are available on the black market in Iraq, including American-made "Stinger" surface-to-air missiles. The Bush administration has been careful to avoid speculating about French and Russian commercial interests contributing to their opposition to the Iraq War. But military officials here say they have found dozens of examples of French armaments, many of which were manufactured after the embargo and some of which have dates as recent as 2002.

Wolfowitz, who appeared concerned but composed throughout the morning, issued a strongly worded statement about the attacks. "This terrorist act will not deter us from completing our mission—which is to help the Iraqi people free themselves from the type of criminals who did this and to protect the American people from this kind of terrorism," he said. "There are a few who

refuse to accept the reality of a new and free Iraq. We will be unrelenting in our pursuit of them."

I went to Iraq hoping to return with answers to two questions. (1) Who, exactly, is attacking American soldiers and Iraqi civilians? and (2) Can we be more effective in stopping them?

The answer to the first question is unsettling: We don't know. In talking to military officials—high-ranking officers as well as grunts—I heard a wide variety of guesses, sometimes in the same discussion.

The Pentagon last week put the number of foreign fighters at 3,000 and suggested it was growing. General Norton Schwartz, in a briefing on October 23, didn't get into numbers but called the al Qaeda-affiliated Ansar al Islam the "principal organized terrorist adversary in Iraq right now."

But the day after Schwartz's briefing, the press traveling with Wolfowitz arrived in Baghdad and received a briefing from a senior military intelligence officer. His answer was different. "The foreign fighter piece of this is very small," he said. "We're talking hundreds. That number is pretty small."

In central Iraq, site of Saddam Hussein's hometown of Tikrit, Gen. Ray Odierno, commander of the 4th Armored Division, seemed to concur. He reported that his troops spend most of their time fighting FRL—former regime loyalists—and "have not seen any al Qaeda yet." But minutes later, he said it's religious extremists who pose the "most enduring threat to the coalition."

Last Monday, after the attacks on the al Rashid and the car-bombing of the Red Cross in Baghdad, Odierno was asked directly "what percentage of the forces opposing you are foreign born, Baathist, and criminals?"

His response: "I would say that 95 percent are former regime loyalists. . . . There's a mixture of some people in it for criminal activity, but a lot of them are conducting criminal activity in order to pay for their operations against coalition forces, so I kind of wrap them together. And really it's a very, very small percentage of foreign fighters—2, 3, 4, 5 percent. We've really only picked up a few of those, a couple from Syria, some Wahhabists from other countries. But that's really been it. We have not seen a large influx of foreign fighters thus far."

Military officials near the Syrian border disagree with that second point. Jihadists are "streaming in," they say, and the strict rules of engagement imposed on American soldiers are making it difficult to stop the foreign fighters. (Soldiers on the border don't like the fact that they have to quickly remove and bury the terrorists they do kill, saying they would prefer to leave the bodies where they fall as a warning to other would-be fighters.)

It's hard to overstate the difficulty in collecting intelligence on the nature of the threat. But the answers above, while not necessarily contradictory, do suggest deep confusion about the answer to the most important question of postwar Iraq: Who are we fighting?

If military officials can't agree on the number of foreign fighters, there is no disputing that they have become increasingly effective. The four simultaneous bombings in Baghdad on October 27—the headquarters of the International Red Cross and three police stations—had classic al Qaeda characteristics. The attackers used 1,000 lbs. of plastic explosives and sent decoy vehicles ahead of the trucks carrying the bombs. The terrorists who bombed a housing complex in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on May 12, 2003, employed similar tactics.

The attack on the al Rashid, however, is believed to have been the work of former regime loyalists. So, too, are most of the attacks on coalition troops. Shortly after the war, the military recorded attacks at a rate of about 12 per day. That number has tripled—now averaging 36 per day.

In Tikrit, the heart of the so-called Sunni Triangle where most of these attacks take place, Odierno briefed the delegation on the nature of the threat. In that region, 20 to 30 percent of the Iraqi population is actively cooperating with coalition forces—meaning that they work for security forces or otherwise provide intelligence about who is resisting. Another 10 percent, says Odierno, actively oppose the coalition. And only a small fraction of those actually conduct the attacks. "The vast majority is indifferent," he says, though some "60 percent hate the old regime."

Those numbers tell only part of the story. President Bush was roundly mocked last week for claiming that the increased attacks are a sign of progress. If that argument seems counterintuitive, it's similar to one you hear from soldiers here all the time. "The resistance," they say, "targets our successes." But at some point, of course, for the successes to continue the attacks must decrease.

If the more-attacks-equals-success logic doesn't quite work, there are reasons to be optimistic about the changing nature of the incidents. First, the targets chosen are increasingly "soft," or easy to attack. The International Red Cross, with little more than sandbags as security precautions, was one of the softest targets in Baghdad. (The attack on the al Rashid, a harder target inside a secured zone, was an exception to this trend.) Second, the insurgents are increasingly targeting Iraqi civilians. "Half of the violence now is not directed at us," says one officer in the Sunni Triangle. "It's been redirected at the population. This is a big change." As Iraqis themselves

become victims of terrorism, the ambivalent majority in the Sunni Triangle is beginning to take sides against the terror.

Third, the anti-American forces are having to pay their mercenaries more. Shortly after the war, Iraqis could earn $200-$500 for each attack on coalition forces. Today, those same attacks are costing the terrorists $5,000. And the insurgents aren't paying just for attacks. The military has intelligence indicating the three largest anti-American factions—FRLs, foreign fighters, and Iraqis affiliated with radical Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr—all have to part with significant sums of cash just to stage a protest. Participants in anti-American rallies earn $50. Such tactics may work while half of the Iraqi populace is unemployed. But as electricity comes back on line and jobs become more plentiful, fewer and fewer Iraqis will be wooed by such financial incentives.

AFP / Getty / Patrick Baz

The trailer with rocket launchers outside the al Rashid hotel

At breakfast early Saturday morning, I ran Odierno's breakdown by three young soldiers inhaling eggs, bacon, and French toast. Televisions in the background were tuned to ESPN. It was halftime of the Los Angeles Lakers game. As these young men prepared for another day of manning a checkpoint near an opulent palace, their friends back in the United States were probably swilling beers at a bar.

Two of the soldiers had been in Iraq since April and seemed relaxed as they related their experiences. The third had arrived a week earlier. Although we were well inside a heavily fortified perimeter, he was wearing his flak jacket as he ate his cereal. No one else was. He didn't appear scared, really, just wide-eyed and new.

The three soldiers largely agreed with Odierno's analysis of the population in their area of responsibility. I asked them if they felt threatened on a daily basis. Not really.

"But it can be tough sometimes," one of the soldiers volunteered before excitedly launching into a story of an attack that had taken place two nights earlier. "We were manning the checkpoint and heard gunfire nearby. We weren't sure whether it's coming at us or if it's us shooting at them. Then, all of a sudden, we see a civilian [an Iraqi] come running at us out of the darkness. Hang on—"

His commanding officer stopped and whispered something in the soldier's ear. He gave me a chastened look and, after his superior left, ran his finger across his neck. "That's it," he said. "Sorry."

After breakfast, we visited a training session of the Iraqi Civilian Defense Corps (ICDC). The group, more than police but not quite an Iraqi Army, is helping coalition troops go after insurgents. There were 20 of them gathered on a dusty field next to their makeshift classroom. Those in training were dressed in bright green, one-piece jumpsuits, which they wore with evident pride. As Wolfowitz and his entourage strolled past, the Iraqis stuck out their chins and stiffened their backs. They stood at attention—no doubt coached by their American trainers—afraid to twitch lest they stand out to the visiting dignitary. When instructed, they belted out their initials with deafening enthusiasm. "I-C-D-C!"

An American trainer began to put two ICDC recruits through the paces of a confrontation with the enemy. If done correctly, once the Iraqis face the enemy, they are to stagger their approach. One soldier will run forward, drop to the ground and provide cover to his partner, who once his partner is in position, runs forward, drops to the ground, and returns the favor.

Two Iraqis in green suits walked forward slowly, with a seriousness about them that suggested they might actually confront an enemy on the premises. Suddenly,

Wolfowitz with two Sunni clerics in Baghdad

the instructor shouted out a warning. "Enemy!" But rather than execute the plan laid out for them in English, through a translator, the two ICDC recruits jogged forward together and begin making the staccato "bup, bup, bup, bup, bup" noise that indicates they're shooting. The frustrated American trainer rushed forward and pushed one of the Iraqis to the ground. The other Iraqi, surprised to learn that they hadn't successfully executed the drill, looked bewildered but kept up his pretend shooting. "Bup, bup, bup, bup," he said more slowly, at this point not even looking in the direction he was "firing."

The American soldier quickly ended the botched drill. The Iraqis, through a translator, were told what they had done wrong and looked embarrassed. After a brief review of the proper tactics, they were given a second chance. This time, it was perfect and they were brought to Wolfowitz for a chat.

He asked one of the soldiers about the training. "The training is good. The only thing we want to change is the uniform," he said, pointing to the tan one-piece suit worn by an Iraqi who had completed training. "This is the uniform of the old regime."

Captain Jason Deel, in charge of this ICDC training program, says that a near riot broke out when the recruits were told that they would have to wear the uniforms worn by the old Iraqi Army. "They are not happy about it," he says.

Wolfowitz asked the Iraqi soldier if there is anything else he needed. "Maybe a pistol for when we go home" each night.

The ICDC is one small part of the rapidly expanding Iraqi security forces. Since June 1, according to Wolfowitz, some 86,000 Iraqis have begun working with the coalition on one aspect or another of the security situation. Intense training of new recruits continues throughout the country.

Deel has trained 62 ICDC soldiers thus far. They have begun to operate in and around Tikrit, yielding what the Americans here have characterized as "a windfall of intelligence." Lt. Col. Steve Russell explains: "They can go into homes of average Iraqis and talk and we cannot. They can go into mosques, places we do not go. They can communicate instantly. That's something we cannot do—translating takes time. They gather information from friends and peers. Iraqis feel confident about cooperating with them."

Deel says placing ICDC soldiers at checkpoints has already proved fruitful. "They can see a truck coming down the road and say, 'Stop that truck. It's stolen,' and sure enough, we'll stop it and the driver will have no ID. We'll investigate and find out later that [it] *was* stolen."

Coalition officials say this kind of intelligence will be the key to improving security in Iraq. Late last week, coalition officials said they had learned through several tips that a former top-ranking official of Saddam Hussein's regime was coordinating the attacks with Islamic fundamentalists. Former vice president Izzat Ibrahim al-Duri, No. 6 on the most wanted list, is believed to be running large parts of the insurgency.

That's a curious development. Most of the contacts between the former regime and Ansar al Islam and al Qaeda had been handled by another of Saddam's vice presidents, Taha Yasin Ramadan. Administration officials are unsure if Ibrahim is building on that relationship or starting anew.

Either way, if the new intelligence is accurate, it may help explain why so many coalition officials in Iraq have described in recent weeks an increase in the coordination and effective execution of the attacks. And most important, the revelation may begin to provide an answer to the crucial question that has vexed the coalition since the fall of Baghdad on April 9, 2003.

Who, exactly, are we fighting? ♦

The (Russian) Empire Strikes Back

The lessons of the Yukos affair

By Leon Aron

Suddenly Yukos, Russia's largest private oil company, is in the eye of the worst political storm of Vladimir Putin's presidency. The firm's CEO and largest shareholder is sitting in a Moscow prison, charged with assorted offenses from tax evasion to fraud, its company archive and computers raided by masked policemen. The Russian stock market is in turmoil, and civil liberties and the rule of law have been dealt a heavy blow.

On one thing, both the Russian public and expert observers agree: Yukos was not singled out because its crimes were particularly heinous. *All* successful businesses in Russia broke laws in the 1990s, when the crimes with which Khodorkovsky is charged allegedly took place. They had to, in the face of confiscatory tax rates, if they were to survive and pay salaries, much less invest. Instead, what stuck in the craw of the senior bureaucrats—largely Soviet-era holdovers—who went after Yukos had nothing to do with criminality and everything to do with the rapid development of capitalism in the past ten years, as it struggles to break free of traditions that have bound the Russian state and economy together for the past four centuries.

For the fact is, Yukos, far from being the worst offender on the Russian business scene, is actually in the vanguard of liberal capitalism: It has traveled further than any other post-Soviet industrial giant from the mores and practices of the troubled 1990s.

Rising from near bankruptcy in 1996, Yukos in 2000 became the first Russian oil company to pay dividends to its nearly 60,000 shareholders. It paid out the equivalent of $300 million in 2000, $500 million in 2001, and $700 million in 2002—and has announced it will deliver over $3 billion in 2003. The company's oil output grew 17 percent in 2002 and is expected to increase another 20 percent this year.

Even as it grew, Yukos was bringing to Russia crucial modern business practices. In 2001, it became the first Russian oil company to report its quarterly financial statements in accordance with U.S. Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP). The company has several dozen Western accountants on staff. Its 2002 Annual Report was audited by PricewaterhouseCoopers. Independent directors make up a majority of its board. Today, Yukos is considered the most transparent of Russia's largest industrial corporations.

This hasn't happened by accident. Yukos CEO Mikhail Khodorkovsky—who last year led *Fortune*'s "Global 40 Richest Under 40" list, with an estimated net worth of $7.2 billion—wanted to be the first to make a Russian corporation a global player. At the time of his arrest, on October 25, he had just completed the purchase of another private Russian oil major, Sibneft, forging the world's fourth largest oil producer. Today YukosSibneft pumps 2.3 million barrels a day and commands reserves of 19.4 billion barrels. At the time of Khodorkovsky's arrest, ExxonMobil was reported to be interested in acquiring between 40 and 50 percent of YukosSibneft for an estimated $25 billion—the largest direct foreign investment in Russian history.

It was an abrupt fall from grace. Only last year, Yukos garnered awards for "Best Manager" (Khodorkovsky), "Best Investor Relations," "Best Website," and "Best Annual Report" from the Association for the Protection of Investors' Rights, which includes 27 of the largest Russian and foreign institutional investors in the Russian market. Also last year, the Russian government named Yukos the "Best Company for Compensation and Social Payments Programs," as well as for the "Implementation of Social Programs at Enterprises and Organizations."

That last citation must have been particularly gratifying to Khodorkovsky, who likes to describe himself as three generations of Rockefellers rolled into one. If he means that he's gone from robber baron to respectable

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industrialist to leading philanthropist (possibly with political aspirations) in the span of ten years, he isn't far from the truth.

At the fall of the Soviet Union, there were no private charities in Russia. Today, there are 70,000, through which some 2.5 million Russians help 30 million fellow citizens. Even so, Yukos and Khodorkovsky are in a class by themselves for the scope of their charitable giving. Yukos gave about $45 million to charity in 2002, and is projected to give $50 million this year. In addition, according to company sources, leading shareholders will donate up to $150 million of their personal fortunes in 2003.

What's more, Khodorkovsky has been imaginative and farsighted in his public-service spending. Some of Yukos's projects promote culture in Russia and abroad. Its $10 million grant to the Open Russia Foundation, for example, will support the first permanent exhibition outside Russia of art from St. Petersburg's Hermitage Museum, to be installed at Somerset House in London. When billionaire George Soros last year ended a decade of charitable giving in Russia, Yukos stepped in with a $1.15 million contribution to the Eurasia Foundation, an American nonprofit, for the support of "small business and community development."

Yukos also looks to the welfare of its employees, providing a home mortgage program that is projected to spend up to $15 million this year to subsidize below-market loans by participating banks. The company buys drugs and state-of-the art diagnostic equipment for hospitals in "company towns" like Nefteyugansk, Khanty-Mansiysk, Angarsk, Achinsk, and Tomsk, and runs so-called "social cafes" where anyone can get a free hot meal.

But it is Khodorkovsky's investments in education that point to a larger strategy. Khodorkovsky is convinced that the export of raw materials (still Russia's major source of foreign earnings and tax revenue) cannot make Russia a world-class economic power or secure a high standard of living for its people. For that, Russia must become a post-industrial society—which in turn requires nurturing a progressive, home-grown scientific, managerial, and technological elite, what Khodorkovsky calls the "creative minority."

In that spirit, Yukos provides stipends to the children of its employees who are enrolled in college and receive straight A's two semesters in a row. It also awards stipends to A-students majoring in oil engineering in colleges and universities. In 1996, the company launched a program called "New Civilization" to educate high school students in the principles of democracy, market economics, and civic responsibility. Classes participate in a role-playing activity in which they invent their own country, determining its political system, electing its government, introducing a currency, even opening a stock exchange. They compete for the best-governed state, and the winners represent their school at a district competition. According to the program's website, each school is "transformed into an independent 'children's republic.'" By the end of 2003, over 200,000 Russian teenagers will have participated, mainly in the oil-producing regions. Another Yukos-sponsored program promotes Internet access and training for teachers and students across Russia.

Given this record, it made no sense to scapegoat Yukos for the excesses of post-Soviet capitalism. The company has clearly advanced Russia's long-term interest in discouraging corruption, increasing transparency, promoting civic responsibility on the part of big business, and inviting foreign investment. As Russia's leading political philosopher, Igor Kliamkin, put it, "If the war on the oligarchs begins with one of the most successful, effective, and transparent companies, then success, effectiveness, and transparency are no longer the priorities of the state."

Instead, those who engineered the assault on Yukos must have other priorities, and these seem to be largely political.

In the short run, they hope to bolster the chances of the pro-government centrist party, United Russia, in the December 7 parliamentary elections. At the moment, United Russia is in trouble, running even with or slightly behind the Communists in the polls.

The attack on Yukos was expected to help United Russia in two ways. First, it would scare top entrepreneurs into contributing more to United Russia and less to opposition parties. Khodorkovsky has expressed concern about the possibility that pro-government parties might capture a "constitutional majority" in the Duma—the two-thirds majority required to alter Russia's economic or political system under the 1993 Constitution. The reforms Khodorkovsky seems to fear are renationalization, extension of the president's tenure to three four-year terms, and the imposition of a "development fee" or "rent" for the use of natural resources.

To prevent any faction from gaining control of the Duma, Yukos's CEO gave generously this year to the major opposition parties: the Communists on the left and the liberals of the Union of Rightist forces and Yabloko on the right. In exchange, Yukos was able to name more than a dozen people to these parties' national candidate lists. Meanwhile, Khodorkovsky repeatedly refused the Kremlin's "requests" to finance United Russia.


Khodorkovsky


The Moscow prison where he's being held


Putin

AFP / Denis Sinyakov (left), Yuri Kadovnov (center), Alexey Panov (right)

The second way the Yukos crackdown was expected to help United Russia was by showing the government to be tough on a prominent "oligarch." A selective reading of public opinion polls lent credence to the idea that this would be popular.

In Russia, hostility to big business—present to some degree in all capitalist countries—is reinforced by the legacy of almost three-quarters of a century of socialist autarky and anticapitalist propaganda, followed by the stresses of rapid privatization and the often unsavory spectacle, reported daily in the press, of the new rich getting richer.

Little wonder, then, that in July 2003, 77 percent of Russians viewed "big capitalists" somewhat or completely negatively. In a country where for almost four generations private wealth (apart from the carefully hidden possessions of the party nomenklatura) could be acquired only by breaking the law, 88 percent of respondents believed that large fortunes had been acquired "mostly" or "totally dishonestly." The prosecution of "big capitalists" in connection with privatization drew unconditional support from 57 percent of those polled, while 31 percent supported criminal charges in "exceptional cases."

Of course, Russians, like everyone else, are perfectly capable of holding contradictory opinions. When asked last year whether free-market reforms ever should have been undertaken, the yeas had it overwhelmingly, 62 percent to 22 percent. In 2002, 84 percent of those polled said they wanted to work for a private employer, up from 19 percent in 1990. This past summer, 53 percent of those surveyed felt that their country should "create favorable conditions" for the development of big business, and only 22 percent thought it should not.

As for whether private businessmen are good for Russia, the public is almost evenly divided: 45 percent consider them "useful," 40 percent "harmful." (Commenting on these numbers, the dean of Russian sociologists and pollsters, Yuri Levada, said: "Forty-five percent is not at all bad, not at all. With our poverty and our [Soviet] upbringing, the number could have been much lower.")

A failure to appreciate these inconsistencies may explain not only the eagerness of those who plotted to bring Yukos down but also Putin's silence: For almost three months after the first arrest of a top Yukos executive, Platon Lebedev, in early July, the Russian president said nothing to domestic audiences about the matter—and such responses as he gave to questions from foreign reporters were omitted from transcripts on government websites and television. When Putin finally spoke, two days after Khodorkovsky's arrest, he warned against "hysteria and speculation" and expressed confidence that the prosecutor had had "good reasons" to act.

Putin's reluctance to interfere probably stems from his reading of another set of polls—those showing voter preferences in the March 2004 presidential elections. While all the polls show Putin comfortably ahead, his popularity slipped just below 50 percent last spring for the first time since his election in 2000—and a showing under 50 percent in the election would force him into a runoff. For a man accustomed to approval ratings in excess of 70 percent and addicted to popular adulation, the possibility of carrying less than half the electorate is an affront. Reportedly near-obsessive about his daily poll numbers and often hesitant and indecisive to the point of paralysis, Putin may hope that the attack on Yukos will shore up his popularity just enough to spare him the humiliation of a runoff.

The prevailing conjecture among top analysts in Moscow is that Putin, as is his wont, approved the "investigation" of Yukos with a wink and a nod, not with his explicit blessing or, heaven forbid, written approval. But this time he may be denied the luxury of ambiguity. The matter has gone too far—with Russian and international public opinion keenly aroused and his own chief of staff, Alexander Voloshin, resigning in protest—for Putin to avoid making a clear, hard choice.

There is, of course, much more at stake in the Yukos affair than short-term political advantage. In the end, the fight is over competing visions of

Russia's future. For the fact is that more than a decade after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the institutional and normative void it left has not been filled, and both elites and society at large remain sharply divided about what to fill it with. Still contested are the relationship between the state and the private economy (where over 70 percent of the country's GDP is now produced), competing claims on the enormous wealth the privatized economy generates, and the role of "big capital" in politics and society.

Russia's economic revolution in the 1990s was the largest denationalization of property in history. When the Soviet state fell, foreign investors stayed out of Russia for fear of a Communist comeback, and no Western Marshall Plan ever materialized. The only source of capital available to the new economy was the privatization of state assets.

Even as it emerged from the decay of Soviet socialism, Russian capitalism remained tied to the state by a thousand outdated regulations and nefarious links between businessmen and corrupt officials. Yet it was inevitable that sooner or later the most advanced, export-oriented, cosmopolitan Russian business leaders would come to resent the status quo and would claim greater independence and a role in civil society and politics unmediated by the state. That is what Khodorkovsky did.

But before such pioneers—never mind Russian business as a whole—can achieve anything resembling independence, huge obstacles must be overcome. Most difficult of all is finally separating power from property.

This is not a uniquely Russian problem. Perhaps more than anything else, the union of political authority and ownership sets the "poor democracies" of Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa apart from more mature capitalist nations. In the West, after the Middle Ages, the union of power and property steadily eroded, until the king ceased to be the owner of his country. In the poor democracies, most of which came into being in the last twenty years of the 20th century, political power still tends to translate into ownership, or at least control, by the elder, the factory director, the tribal chief, the mayor, or the governor. The difficulty of severing power from ownership is the source of some of poor democracies' most recalcitrant problems (corruption foremost among them).

In Russia, this difficulty is aggravated by an unusually strong legacy of patrimonialism, a political system in which rulers are "both sovereigns of the realm and its proprietors," as Richard Pipes explains in *Russia Under the Old Regime*, and "political authority is exercised as an extension of the rights of ownership." Between the 15th and mid-17th centuries, Russia was a full-fledged patrimonial state. The motto of successive Russian bureaucracies was: "That which I manage, I feed on." Indeed, *kormlenie*, or "feeding," was the official designation of the means by which the tsar's district prefects were expected to support themselves and their families during their time in office.

Patrimonialism receded in the second half of the 18th century under Catherine the Great: Noblemen were no longer automatically commissioned as military officers at birth, and the crown began to surrender its monopoly on land by giving nobles title to their estates. The state's grip on the economy weakened gradually, particularly after the liberal reforms of Tsar Alexander II in 1861-65, and in the first decade and a half of the 20th century, Russia had one of the world's fastest-growing capitalist economies.

But after that brief respite, patrimonialism returned with a vengeance under communism. For sixty years, from 1929 to 1989, the Soviet state owned everything and employed everyone. Anyone who lived or traveled in the Soviet Union will instantly recognize this description of the fear surrounding private possessions and economic activity in Russia. It was written by Giles Fletcher, an Englishman who visited Russia in the 16th century:

> And if [the Russian people] have any thing, they conceale it all they can, sometimes conveying it to Monasteries, sometimes hiding it under the ground, and in woods, as men are woont to doo where they are in feare of forreine invasion. In so much that many times you shall see them afraid to be knowen to any [Boyar] or Gentleman of such commodities as they have to sell. I have seen them sometimes when they have layed open their commodities for [sale] (as their principall furres & such like) to looke still behind them, and towards every doore: as men in some fear, that looked to be set upon, & surprised by some enimie. Whereof asking the cause, I found it to be this, that they [feared lest] some Nobleman or [Boyars] of the Emperour had been [present], & so [come back with their retinue] to prey upon their commodities perforce. This maketh the people (though otherwise hardened to beare any toile) to give themselves much to Idlenes and drinking; as passing for no more, then from hand to mouth.

The boyar and the nobleman have been replaced by the bureaucrat, and robbery has yielded to graft, but the idea that private business ultimately depends on the state's good graces persists.

In the past few years, Yukos grew increasingly unwilling to play this game. It broke the rules when it opted for transparency and showed a newfound respect for Russian and international law. International accounting standards and audits by top Western firms left no slush funds for bribery. Yukos was attacked, many Russian analysts believe, because it was beginning to set an example of big business moving out of the "shadows." "Our bureaucracy cannot stand clean and legal business," observed three leading Russian political experts (Boris Makarenko, Mark

Urnov, and Lilya Shevtsova) in a long newspaper commentary on the Yukos affair. "They are interested in keeping businesses in the shadows, . . . in pushing them into illegal, criminal space. Because an 'oligarch' who is the subject of a thick dossier in the prosecutor's office is much easier to command and to use as a moneybags."

When a country's most successful, civic-minded, and progressive entrepreneurs are subject to arbitrary arrest, the rights of no one are secure. On Russia's long road to dignity and prosperity, the Yukos affair seems at best a very costly detour. It demonstrates once again the tenacity of traditional Soviet and Russian ways of doing business and adjudicating disputes between citizens and the state.

Yet the history of Yukos also proves that Russian capitalism can evolve. Those who predicted that the Russian private sector would never develop beyond "bandit capitalism," forever stuck in corrupt symbiosis with the state, stripping public assets, funneling capital abroad, and showing not an iota of civic responsibility, must concede that the causes of the Yukos affair lie precisely in the firm's astonishingly rapid progress toward civilized capitalism and responsible corporate citizenship.

EPA Photos / Igor Kharitonov

"Freedom for Khodorkovsky"

Because of Khodorkovsky's leadership, Yukos was the firm that set the pace. But there are hundreds of other large, medium, and small businesses that are following a similar course and in the process working, against great odds, to build a liberal economy and civil society, pushing Russia forward. ♦

Dear Mr. President,

You're truly the gift that keeps on giving.

Faced with a record deficit and $87 billion more for Iraq, another president might think of raising taxes on corporations.

Not you.

You and Rep. Bill Thomas are actually working on a plan to give us more than $135 billion in new tax breaks. A special thanks is in order from our friends at companies like Bank of America, Pfizer and Hewlett-Packard. They already dodge taxes by setting up shop in the Cayman Islands and Bermuda, yet still stand to benefit from this latest loophole lollapalooza.

We'll never forget that you're the president who slashed our taxes by 40% in just three years. No president has ever managed such a feat.

Quite honestly, though, we want more. So we've spent a million bucks to lobby for the Thomas bill, and that doesn't count the tens of millions we're giving to your reelection campaign.

By the way, we think it's ingenious that you call this new windfall the American Jobs Creation Act. Sure, it'll create jobs for Americans. If they move to Malaysia.

Thank you, Mr. President. We love you.

Visit www.TomPaine.com. Other good sources of information include Citizen Works, Citizens for Tax Justice and Taxpayers for Common Sense.

TomPaine.common sense
A Public Interest Journal

Music, American Style

Why bluegrass has never died

By Bill Croke

Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs

Bettmann / CORBIS

You don't have to be from West Virginia to notice that America is having a bluegrass renaissance. Call it rural renewal. It's made bluegrass pioneer Ralph Stanley, at age seventy-six, a bona fide superstar, thanks to the overwhelming success of *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* and its bestselling, Grammy-award-winning soundtrack. Major country-western artists such as Ricky Skaggs, Travis Tritt, and Dolly Parton have abandoned the slick, commercial Nashville sound for what used to be called hillbilly music. Established bluegrass acts are thriving—including Alison Krauss & Union Station, the Del McCoury Band, and the Nashville Bluegrass Band.

Rare is the college town nowadays—especially in the West and the South—where you can't find live bluegrass on a Saturday night. Regional bluegrass festivals have multiplied to become a summertime staple. And while America's urban airwaves may suffer the yoke of Clear Channel tyranny, with its bland, digitally perfected pop, regional public radio serves up generous mounds of dirty acoustic music.

Bluegrass derived its sound from the Celtic-based "Old Time" string music of the southern Appalachians and the black gospel tradition in the South, both dating from the eighteenth century. It's possible, however, to be more precise and say bluegrass was born in rural Kentucky, around 1920 or so, as the brothers Bill and Charlie Monroe learned fiddle tunes from their Uncle Pen Vandiver (with Bill on the mandolin, Charlie on the guitar). On Sundays, the boys were hustled off to the local Baptist church by a pious mother who insisted they participate in singing hymns. These dueling influences led the brothers to discover bluegrass's original formula of gospel singing plus acoustic picking. The combination reflected the deep influence of the church in the everyday life of Appalachia and, of course, proved enduring. For this contribution, Bill and Charlie Monroe—especially Bill—are honored as the first true proponents of bluegrass. Although other early figures—in particular the brothers Ralph and Carter Stanley, contemporaries of the Monroes—deserve honorable mention, the conventional wisdom is correct in designating Bill Monroe the inventor of bluegrass. He towers above all other figures who have contributed to the form, as dominant as Louis Armstrong, Woody Guthrie, Hank Williams, Robert Johnson, and Elvis Presley were in their genres.

The Monroes started up their first band, the Blue Grass Boys, in Hammond, Indiana, in 1932, and were soon touring the Midwest and South, making bluegrass's foundational recordings and playing live on local radio shows (a promotional tool used by many Depression-era musicians). The sibling relationship, however, became strained, and the brothers parted professional company in 1938. On his own, brother Bill thrived, using constant experimentation and personnel changes to develop his new music. By 1940, the Blue Grass Boys were Nashville radio stalwarts, had recorded such classics as "Muleskinner Blues" and "John Henry," and were regulars at the Grand Ole Opry.

While individual hits marked the band's progress, the progress of bluegrass could be marked by the band's changing roster of musicians. Earl Scruggs was not the Blue Grass Boys' first banjoist, but he certainly became its

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The Flying Burrito Brothers

CORBIS / Henry Diltz

most famous. Monroe had worked with a number of banjo sidemen in the late thirties and early forties, the talented David "Stringbean" Akeman among them. But Scruggs was in a class by himself. His virtuoso three-finger picking demanded that Monroe feature the banjo for solos rather than just for rhythmic backup, as he had previously done. Before Scruggs, the five-string banjo was played primarily in the Appalachian "claw hammer" style by strumming and picking with two fingers.

Hailing from a large North Carolina family where everybody played an instrument or sang, Scruggs easily mastered claw hammer techniques while still a teenager. He honed his influential, rolling three-finger style (using a plastic thumbpick and steel picks on the index and middle fingers), while playing barn dances and church socials in local bands. In 1945, he arrived in Nashville and auditioned for the famously dismissive Monroe, who, after hearing Scruggs play a couple of tunes, immediately put him to work on tour dates and soon hired him as a full band member.

The Blue Grass Boys of 1945-48 are considered by musical scholars to be the finest ensemble in the history of the genre. Monroe's mandolin prowess derived, oddly enough, from his Uncle Pen's fiddle techniques. This, along with the fast and fluid sound of Robert "Chubby" Wise's fiddle, Lester Flatt's strong rhythm guitar-playing, Cedric Rainwater's thudding standup bass, and Scruggs's speed-of-light banjo-picking, made for a sublime collective virtuosity. Flatt also brought extraordinary singing ability to the band, and this, combined with Monroe's own "high lonesome" tenor voice, allowed the latter to experiment with complex harmonies. The importance of good singing to a bluegrass band is hard to overstate. Like good pitching in baseball, no other element, however strong, can compensate for its absence. During this period, the Blue Grass Boys recorded twenty-eight popular singles for Columbia Records, including such gems as "Footprints in the Snow," "Blue Moon of Kentucky," "Blue Grass Breakdown," and "Molly and Tenbrooks"—songs that might be thought of as the core curriculum of the bluegrass canon. Add to this nineteen separate shows performed at the Grand Ole Opry that are legendary in the annals of recorded live bluegrass.

Like many geniuses, Bill Monroe wasn't the easiest guy to work for. An impoverished youth left him tightfisted, and he paid paltry salaries. Relentless touring dictated they share driving duties, and many a night found them traveling the backroads of the South and sleeping on their small bus, christened "The Blue Grass Special." Monroe would play anywhere people would pay to listen, and one famous story has the Blue Grass Boys performing in a church basement for an audience of three.

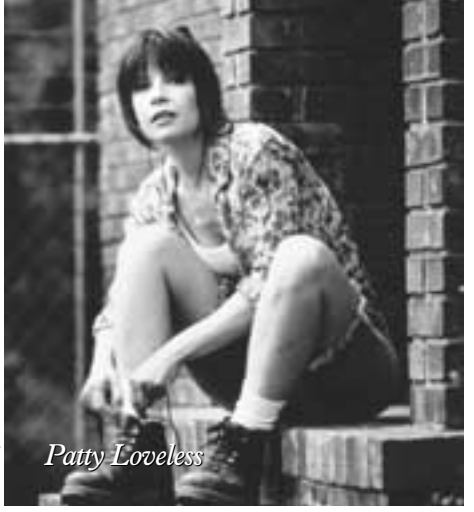
Flatt and Scruggs eventually tired of Monroe's autocratic ways and quit the Blue Grass Boys. Like the master's break with his brother Charlie, it was probably acrimonious. The two men set out on their own with a new band, the Foggy Mountain Boys. Their eponymous theme song, "Foggy Mountain Breakdown" (1949), became famous the world over, even among people with no particular knowledge of bluegrass.

The 1950s, however, saw an eclipse of the genre's popularity. A more commercial Nashville sound was developing, and rock 'n' roll had arrived. Yet the late 1950s ushered in a small revival for bluegrass as the music became trendy with northeastern college kids. Both Pete Seeger (then in the Weavers) and the Kingston Trio discovered the folk possibilities of the banjo. While the fastidious Bill Monroe avoided the folkies, put off by their leftist politics, the apolitical and pragmatic Flatt and Scruggs had no such misgivings. The Foggy Mountain Boys performed at the 1960 Newport Folk Festival.

Bluegrass had been driven into the arms of the folk scene after increasingly cool relations with Nashville record company executives, who tended to slight the genre as crude backwoods music. The suits of country music were also unimpressed by the music's jazzy, improvisational side. The famous musical scholar Alan Lomax once called bluegrass "folk music in overdrive." Yet another point of contention was that Nashville tended to the view that bluegrass hits had to be novelty songs. Monroe seems to have been responsible for this perception, as his early bands had vaudevillian interludes of jokes and comic skits between tunes.

Flatt and Scruggs, however, weren't ready to donate their instruments to the Smithsonian. Hollywood beckoned. They scored a big break when they were commissioned by CBS to write and record "The Ballad of Jed Clampett," the theme song to *The Beverly Hillbillies*, the network's hugely popular sitcom, which ran for nine years starting in 1962. Coinciding with the show's debut, the song hit No. 1 on the country-western charts. Thumbing their noses at Nashville, Flatt and Scruggs became household names, with their Foggy Mountain Boys gaining lucrative concert and nightclub bookings.

Flatt and Scruggs's CBS contract also called for yearly appearances on the show. The two musicians would enter starry-eyed, visiting the mansion to see their old friends, the Clampetts. Dressed like classic Blue Grass Boys in natty dark suits, string ties, and white Stetsons, Lester and Earl would come looking for some of Granny's homecooking,



CORBIS / Neal Preston

Patty Loveless

but have to pick and sing for their supper. This would occasion a few minutes of Flatt's honey-voiced singing, accompanied by Scruggs picking so fast as to make waves in the cee-ment pond, as Jed Clampett might say.

Not to be outdone, the writers of *The Andy Griffith Show* came up with a family of comic hicks named the Darlings, who—led by a crusty patriarch played by Denver Pyle—periodically showed up in Mayberry with the idea of marrying off their lovesick sister Charlene to Sheriff Andy Taylor. But the Darlings weren't just your average yokels, they could pick up a storm. In real life, the Darlings were the Dillards, Missouri musicians transplanted to Los Angeles, where they had become a popular part of the early 1960s folk scene.

Flatt and Scruggs's success continued when their "Foggy Mountain Breakdown" appeared three times on the soundtrack of *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967). And bluegrass music made other prominent appearances in Hollywood fare, famously on the soundtrack of *Deliverance* (1972).

But there was more to the bond between bluegrass and California. A new scene was being born, and this obscure folk form originating in the least fashionable region of America had begun to enter the mainstream as something far greater than mere sitcom kitsch.

One place to examine the love affair between California and bluegrass is in the life of Jerry Garcia. As a teenager in San Fransisco, the future frontman and songwriter of the folk-influenced Grateful Dead acquired a pawnshop five-string banjo and some Flatt and Scruggs records. He would adjust his HiFi phonograph down to 16 speed, so he could better learn the rudiments of Scruggs's blistering solos. Garcia was never more than a journeyman banjo player, though he remained attached to the music and played with various bluegrass bands, including Old and in the Way. The young Garcia once attended a bluegrass festival with the idea of seeking an audition with Bill Monroe, but a case of cold feet kept him from approaching his idol. Garcia always envied his fellow Old and in the Way compatriots Peter Rowan and Vassar Clements because they were former Blue Grass Boys.

The Los Angeles music scene of the late 1960s was much influenced by bluegrass. Chris Hillman, a charter member of the Byrds, played mandolin in bluegrass bands while growing up in San Diego early in the decade. A later Byrd and cofounder with Hillman of the Flying Burrito Brothers was Gram Parsons, who almost singlehandedly introduced the country-western component to rock 'n' roll. Parsons, a Georgia native who died at twenty-six of a drug overdose, was the primary force behind "Sweetheart of the Rodeo," the Byrds' groundbreaking country-rock album, recorded in Nashville in 1968 with the help of bluegrass guru John Hartford and Clarence White. While recording these sessions, the Byrds became the first rock band to play onstage at the Grand Ole Opry. White, an influential flatpicking guitarist and veteran of the Kentucky Colonels, was with the Byrds when he was killed by a drunk driver in a nightclub parking lot. Jimi Hendrix once said that Clarence White was his favorite contemporary guitarist. The Byrds offshoot, the Flying Burrito Brothers, did an acoustic bluegrass set as part of their stage show, and this showcased fiddler Byron Berline, yet another Blue Grass Boys alumnus.

In the 1970s bluegrass underwent a significant change as the result of many musical styles feeding back on it, especially rock and folk. Critics called this melding of styles "newgrass." Even bands' physical appearances changed as a more hippie look emerged, though many traditional bluegrass fans rejected

Walt Disney / Everett Collection

Singing that ol' timey music in the film O Brother Where Art Thou?

the longhairs. At festivals, the lines were also drawn between the drinkers and the dope-smokers, and the culture clash often resulted in physical violence. Bill Monroe addressed the problem at his summer gatherings at Bean Blossom, Indiana, by barring any band whose members might—in Monroe's opinion—need a haircut.

One banned group was the New Grass Revival, featuring Sam Bush, a mandolinist whose playing is second only to Bill Monroe's. Another prominent longhair bluegrass act was John Hartford and Norman Blake, a mainstay on college campuses as they opened for rock acts. Out of San Francisco came the David Grisman Quintet, associated with Garcia and Old and in the Way. Flatt and Scruggs broke up in 1969, and Scruggs inaugurated the Earl Scruggs Revue with his sons Randy and Gary, among others. This ensemble reflected the elder Scruggs's always progressive musical ideas and his sons' interest in the new country rock. Together they covered Bob Dylan songs and sounded more like the Byrds and the Flying Burrito Brothers than the old Blue Grass Boys of Earl Scruggs's youth.

At the same time, Washington, D.C.—of all places—had a lively bluegrass scene. Bands such as the Country Gentlemen, the Seldom Scene, and Ralph Stanley and the Clinch Mountain Boys rejected the California country-rock influences and stuck to the familiar sound that had originated in the nearby Appalachians. Many of these groups played at the Shamrock, the capital's best-known bluegrass nightspot. The American Folklife Center at the Smithsonian Institution was known for scholarly study of American roots music and as a venue for its performance. On a typical 1970s summer weekend, a bluegrass festival could be found within a couple of hours' drive of the Washington-Baltimore area.

These bluegrass festivals recalled the country music parks popular in the Depression-era South and the postwar folk festivals. Conditions were often primitive. For instance, it didn't occur to Bill Monroe that the hundreds who attended his first Bean Blossom gathering in 1967 might need sanitary facilities. People slept in cars and tents in all weather. And like their rock-'n'-roll counterparts, the festivals had their moments of rowdiness, but they had their grace notes as well, like improvisational jamming in the parking lot.

Not only a musical genius, Bill Monroe possessed a talent for promotion. His Bean Blossom festivals drew huge crowds and kept the flame burning, too indulgently perhaps, with a stage feature called "The Story," a Monroe-centric historical pageant about bluegrass. In an interview, he once boasted: "I never wanted to copy any man. I was determined to carve out a music of my own. Bluegrass is wonderful. I'm glad I originated it." And yet, the history of the Blue Grass Boys did comprise the central storyline of Bluegrass history. At his and other festivals, Monroe would host Blue Grass Boys reunions and present his alumni in chronological order, while signature tunes associated with each particular grouping played behind them.

These spectacles, sadly, tended to be crass and selective in their history. As Monroe introduced the musicians, he'd imply their careers would have gone nowhere without him, and most of them played along in fawning tribute. Monroe never invited—or mentioned—Flatt and Scruggs, though their contribution to the bluegrass repertoire was enormous, and they had been members of Monroe's most famous aggregation. In fact, Monroe used his considerable influence in Nashville to keep them off the stage of the Grand Ole Opry for years (Flatt and Scruggs would both reconcile with the Master long before his passing). Still, these reenactments gave festival-goers a good idea of Monroe's domineering contribution to the music. And they proved that bluegrass was not made up of fans, but—as Mitchell Jayne of the Dillards once put it—"believers."

Monroe could be faulted for his unchecked egocentrism, but for six decades until his death in 1996, at eighty-five, the Blue Grass Boys in their various guises were the equivalent of an Ivy League education in bluegrass. To learn at the feet of Monroe was to pay one's dues. The alumni list includes the very finest in the field, many of whom are still active.

Today, the music continues to change and expand. Ricky Skaggs, Ralph Stanley, and Alison Krauss & Union Station recently completed their popular Down from the Mountain tour. The "Jam Band" scene—an infectious mix of bluegrass and jazz reminiscent of Grateful Dead-style improvisation, featuring such bands as the String Cheese Incident, Leftover Salmon, and the Jazz Mandolin Project—has taken the tradition in a new direction and to new audiences.

Recently I saw Earl Scruggs and Bela Fleck performing together on television. As they played, Fleck, America's most talented young banjo player, gazed upon Scruggs with beatific admiration, while the venerable Scruggs stared straight ahead, never missing an intricate note. Scruggs was in excellent form, playing like it was 1946, on a hot night in a Tennessee roadhouse, and he was backing up Bill Monroe. It was that good, and just another wonderful night among the believers. ♦

Miller's Tale

A Georgia Democrat on the woes of his party.

BY FRED BARNES

Roll Call Photos / Tom Williams

Zell Miller

It's become a talking point for many Democrats—an indisputable fact, in their minds—that Senator Max Cleland of Georgia, a Vietnam war veteran and triple amputee, lost his bid for reelection in 2002 because Republican Saxby Chambliss questioned his patriotism. Chambliss did so in a television advertisement that attacked Cleland for voting repeatedly against President Bush's plan for a Department of Homeland Security. The advertisement, which showed pictures of Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden, was harshly negative and a bit over the top.

A National Party No More
The Conscience of a Conservative Democrat
by Zell Miller
Stroud & Hall, 256 pp., $26

But now in *A National Party No More: The Conscience of a Conservative Democrat*, his new book about the woes of the Democratic party, Senator Zell Miller, Cleland's Democratic colleague from Georgia and his friend for thirty years, tells a different story. The general problem for Democrats is their party's fealty to liberal special-interest groups. In this particular case, Cleland had his reelection hopes ruined by the insistence of Senate Democratic leaders that he vote eleven times against the Bush homeland security plan—simply because federal workers' unions didn't like it. Their complaint was that Bush wanted the right to waive civil-service rules and move workers to new jobs in a crisis, a right routinely granted other presidents. "A few union jobs were put above the security of a nation in wrangling over homeland security," Miller writes.

Chambliss exploited the eleven votes effectively against Cleland, not only in the television spot but in speeches and debates. Sure, the advertisement was tough, Miller told me in an interview, but "politics is tough." What infuriated Miller more was that Senate Democrats acquiesced on homeland security after the election without "saying the first word about protectionism for union and federal employees, which weeks before they had dwelled on." Democrats had merely been pandering to pressure groups before the election, Miller says. "Then and there, I decided I would never attend another Democratic caucus lunch."

For Miller, the Cleland episode epitomizes what has happened to the Democratic party. It has lurched to the left, grown reliant on liberal groups for campaign funds and policy direction, and sacrificed winning elections, notably in the South. That, indeed, is the theme of *A National Party No More*, which is partly an autobiography but mostly a fervent attack on the author's own party. Miller, who has rejected many Republican invitations to switch parties, says he was "born a Democrat, married a Democrat, elected a Democrat, governed as a Democrat, but *not* this kind of Democrat"—*not* a Washington-style uncompromising liberal. Last week, he announced he wouldn't "entrust" the country to any of the Democratic presidential candidates and instead will back President Bush for reelection in 2004.

Miller's critique of his party is far more sweeping and angry than the tepid reproaches of centrist groups like the Democratic Leadership Council. Written in a folksy style, studded with rural witticisms and country humor, the book is highly readable. It's not a heavy policy tome, but brims with political advice, particularly about the South. "Democrats have never seen a snail darter they didn't want to protect, but sometimes I think the one endangered species they don't want to save is the Southern conservative Democrat," Miller writes. "The modern South and rural America are as foreign to our Democratic leaders as some place in Asia or Africa. In fact, they are more so." Which is why, Miller says, they foolishly forced Cleland to wear his homeland-security votes "around his neck," like the albatross worn by "the ancient mariner in the Coleridge poem."

After nearly fifty years in politics, Miller is an old bull, but he's not from the old school of Southern Democrats. He's from the mountainous north of Georgia, never a slave-holding region. And Miller was never a segregationist, although he opposed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 during an unsuccessful race for Congress that year. He's ashamed of that now. "I only hope that the totality of my forty-year record since then is proof that they were the words of someone who at that time was a political weakling, but not a racist." Miller notes wryly: "When I was a young state senator arguing that race should not matter, I was considered a liberal. Now, forty years later, when I am an old U.S. senator and argue that race should not matter, I'm considered a conservative."

Miller says Republicans have pressure groups, too, but handle them more intelligently. The Democratic groups "are very high maintenance and they want everyone to know they are the tail that wags the dog," he writes. "The Republican special interest groups, to

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

the contrary, are content to operate under the radar. . . . With them, it's about winning, not ego or who gets credit." What matters, Miller says, is "being a mature national party, not a hodgepodge of special interest groups, which undeniably is what the national Democratic Party has become."

The most touching passage in *A National Party No More* is Miller's account of how he became a full-throated opponent of legalized abortion. "There was a time, when the question of abortion came up, I automatically answered that a woman should make that decision about her body. . . . But over time I came to realize this is a much more complicated issue than that." It was the arrival of four great-grandchildren that prompted Miller to change his mind. One Christmas he had an epiphany. "Even though their young parents struggle tremendously to take care of them, I know how richly blessed we are that they were not four of the forty-two million who have been aborted over the past thirty years, that they are alive, a fifth generation to celebrate Christmas" at his home in Georgia. For Miller, the "most poignant sight" at the annual pro-life march in Washington last winter was "the large number of women holding signs saying they regretted their abortions."

Miller has no expectation Democrats will heed his advice. And he is deeply pessimistic about the party's future. Some of the Democratic presidential candidates are "treading on dangerous ground" by condemning Bush on Iraq. "They are exacerbating the difficulties of a nation at war. . . . They should stop this, or at least modify it into a more civil discourse." Frontrunner Howard Dean, Miller says, belongs to the "whining wing of the Democratic party."

Democrats, like the Whig party in the 1850s, have "become dangerously fragmented, and considering the present leadership it can only get worse," Miller says.

Satisfying interest groups is more important to Democrats than the party itself. It is neither a rational nor a national party today. "So, bang the drum slowly and play the fife lowly, for the sun is setting over a waiting grave." ♦

Columbine at the Movies

How Hollywood glorifies teenage murderers and forgets their victims. **BY GABY WENIG**

In Gus Van Sant's recent film *Elephant*—at the point where a student enters the school library, dressed in camouflage gear, machine gun at the ready—another student lifts his camera and focuses. It's a chilling moment, with both poised to shoot.

Of course, what's chilling about it is that a murder is imminent and the photographer doesn't seem to care as long as he gets his shot. We might construct a metaphor out of this for all the filmmakers who have decided that the topic of school shootings offers a great opportunity to exercise their cameras. In the past few months, Michael Moore's fatuous documentary *Bowling for Columbine* was released on video and DVD. Paul Ryan's *Home Room*, Ben Coccio's *Zero Day*, and *Elephant* made it to the big screen. Other films are in the works: Michael Engel's *Entering Out*, about a student with psychic abilities who predicts a massacre at this school, and Mark Brown's *State's Evidence*, about a group of high-school kids who form a suicide pact—with one student so emboldened by the freedom the impending suicide gives him that he goes on a shooting rampage at the school.

Many of these films have won prestigious awards. Last year, *Bowling For Columbine* (in which Moore tries to draw a parallel between local violence in America and American foreign policy) won the Grand Jury Prize at the Cannes Film Festival and the Oscar for best documentary. *Elephant* won the Palme d'Or at Cannes this year, as well as the best director prize for Van Sant. *Zero Day* had a less exalted release, but still managed to take home awards at the Atlanta, Florida, and Slamdunk festivals, and the Audience Award at the Rhode Island Film Festival.

These films are, by and large, solely about the killers, inviting us into their world, letting us be privy to their thoughts, and welcoming empathy for their actions. Most of the filmmakers seem to assess the killings as part of a hazing ritual that America needs: a cruel rite of passage necessary for initiation into the understanding of the underdog. America has to lose its innocence—its sense that schools in middle-class neighborhoods are safe and wholesome places where students go to learn—so that the nation can purge the menace that fosters the killers.

Of course, that makes the killers endlessly fascinating individuals who were corrupted not from within, but without. After the actual shootings at Columbine, journalists studied the killers' websites, diaries, and home videos with a Talmudic intensity to find some cause for it all. The killers must have watched too many violent movies, or played too many gory video games, or listened to too many pernicious rap songs, or had access to too many guns, or taken too much Prozac. They lived in homes where the parents and God were absent, and they went to schools where bullies ruled the hallways. The killers, in other words, could be *understood*, their actions *made sense of*.

But now, in the recent flurry of school shoot-'em-up films, the thought has been taken a step further. What these films argue is what we might call the *no-reason* reason: All the background factors merely facilitate the killings, and the killers kill for no real purpose—with the result that society itself is finally somehow to blame.

There are some comic uses of violent students all the way back in Washing-

Gaby Wenig is a writer in Los Angeles.

ton Irving's tale of the headless horseman and Edward Eggleston's *Hoosier Schoolmaster*, while the movie *If . . .*, Lindsay Anderson's 1968 attack on British boys' schools, ends with the fantasy of Malcolm McDowell shooting all the teachers, unpleasant students, and visiting parents. But mass murder at celluloid high schools really begins with the 1976 *Carrie*, in which Sissy Spacek used her telekinetic powers to unleash horror at the school prom to take revenge on those who mocked her.

In the 1989 *Heathers*, Winona Ryder and Christian Slater decide they have had enough of the outrageously snobby girls at their high school—a group of popular queen bees all named "Heather"—and they start killing them. Ingeniously, they make the murders look like suicide, and suddenly suicide becomes a popular activity at the school. In 1995, *The Basketball Diaries* ends with Leonardo DiCaprio as Jim Carroll, dressed in *Matrix* black, having a drug-induced dream of entering his school with a machine gun in his hand.

Films of high-school killing lost their comedy when real students started killing people. (After the shootings in Colorado and Kentucky, families of victims sued the makers of *The Basketball Diaries*, charging their product influenced the killers. Both cases were dismissed, but that didn't stop MGM from recalling copies of the film and removing that scene from them.) Directors started making documentaries and neo-realist movies about the shootings, to impel the notion that what was happening on screen was not outlandish, but *authentic*.

So, for instance, Gus Van Sant filmed *Elephant* as a series of interconnected stories that depict a day in the life of a middle-America high school. Van Sant cast his film with "real people," many of whom have the same first name as their character, and he encouraged them to integrate their experiences into the film. John is late for school because his father is drunk, but he doesn't tell the principal the reason for his tardiness. Elias walks through the grounds with his camera and asks a couple to pose for him. Michelle's gym teacher asks her why she can't wear shorts like the other girls, and then Michelle goes to her job at the library. Jordan, Nicole, and Brittany go to the school cafeteria and discuss the number of fat grams in salad dressing, and then to the bathroom where they each enter into separate stalls and throw up. Nathan walks across the field to meet his girlfriend Carrie. Humdrum and void of drama and tension hardly begins to describe all this.

HBO Films / Fine Line Features

A scene from Gus Van Sant's Elephant.

The camera focuses on the murderers, Eric and Alex, just enough to construct the skeletons of their identity. Alex, a classical pianist, is a sensitive boy; he walks through school weary and withdrawn, fatigued by the classroom battlefield where his classmates pelt him with spitballs and tired of his teachers' indifference. Eric is Alex's bovine disciple, and because they are both pariahs at school, they form a viscid bond. Their relationship is charged (they kiss while taking a shower together before the massacres) and exclusive. Nobody else needs to exist in their universe, which is why they don't mind killing those who do. Even Alex's mother, who begrudgingly feeds them breakfast before the murders, is shown only from the neck down; her face is irrelevant.

At home, the boys watch Hitler documentaries, order guns over the Internet (somehow the guns arrive on the same day), and practice virtual shooting on a computer game and actual shooting on a pile of wood. They also plot the murders together, studying layouts of the school and devising battle strategies. The aim of the massacre, as Alex tells Eric, is to "have fun," but the killings themselves, planned with military precision and deployed with a sniper's obdurate concentration, are sullen exercises, which bullishly ram through the fear that floats in the hallways like a fog, as students scurry to try and find safe passage.

All this is mildly frightening and disturbing, but in the end, *Elephant* is disturbing mostly in its inability to make judgments about the whole, and in the way that it distances itself from censure. For a film where narrative and story are not paramount, there is too much focus on the killers and their nonchalant evil, and not enough on the people they killed.

Released in September, Ben Coccio's *Zero Day* is another film that takes its cues from Columbine, aping the massacres so closely that the end result is a film distressing to watch. Also an exercise in neo-realism, *Zero Day* is about a self-proclaimed "Army of Two," Andre Kriegman and Cal Gabriel, who videotape themselves as they plan to shoot up their school.

Like the Columbine killers' videos, these are both confessional and observational. They show the boys having genuine fun with their families, acting as "normal" teenagers do. The boys also speak to the camera, using it to record their experiments with weaponry, their strategies and purposes for killing, and the evidence of their aggrandized egos. Both boys are

bloated with a loathsome arrogance and a nauseating self-righteousness.

The boys present their impending crime as motiveless. They even burn their *Mortal Kombat* CDs and copies of *Lord of the Flies* to make the point that they acted free of influence. "There are no reasons, and you are all going to be looking for them, but you aren't going to find them," says Andre. But the statement is contradicted by the next one. "This isn't our fault. I mean, you made us, made me, what I am. . . . Make no mistake, we have been insulted. Now it is time for the duel."

The duel plays out like a battle between cripples and supermen. During *Zero Day*'s massacre scenes, the school becomes the claustrophobic deadly prison that Columbine was when those trapped inside were waiting for the police to act. These scenes are made to look as if they were filmed on security cameras, but there is palpable terror in the grainy images. Students run through the school like rats in a maze as they try to escape the killers, who stalk them and shoot them at point blank range. All the while, a metallic-voiced phone operator narrates and says inanities as "Andre, we can work this out, can you just pick up the line."

Avatar Films / Everett Collection

The boys from Zero Day *in the light of their videos.*

Zero Day is a terrifying film, but the violence is not what shocks so much as the boys' attitude toward it. Theirs is an oh-lets-shoot-up-a-few-people-when-we-are-done-with-our-homework approach. The boys find amusement in practical weaponry ("Welcome to today's episode of home-gun-show review," says Andre, before giving instructions in the assembly of pipe bombs and shrapnel), and can talk about killing people and out of tune guitars in the same breath. They are nonchalant about their foolproof plan to get publicity and cocksure that the media will lavish attention on them and "scrutinize everything we did under the biggest microscope in the world."

Perhaps one of the reasons that *Zero Day* is so vile—watching it makes you feel contaminated—is because it seems to be paying homage to the legacy of the Columbine killers. It gives them the Hollywood treatment they yearned for. (Although the Columbine boys actually wanted such higher-profile directors as Spielberg and Tarantino to tell their story.) It affords screen time for their nihilism and arrogance, and it broadcasts their blasé attitude toward murder, all the while generating some audience empathy for their personalities.

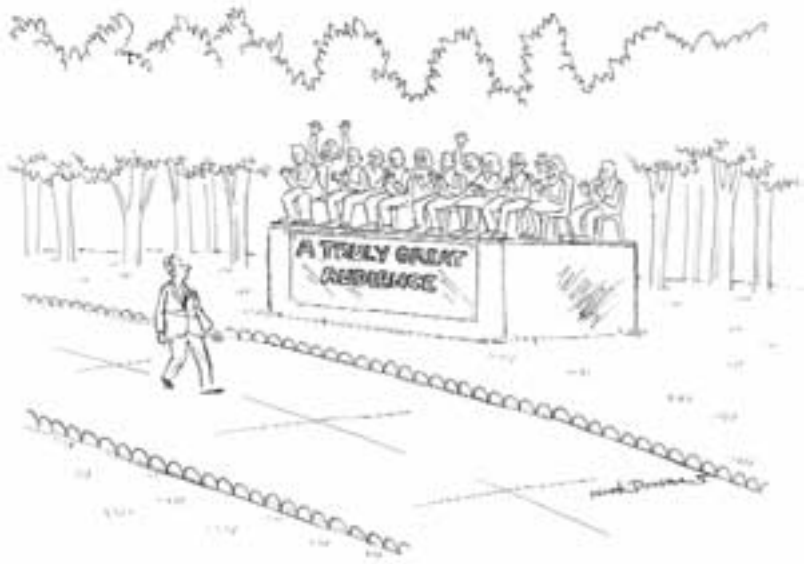
In much of the literature written about school violence and shootings, the killers were portrayed as lost boys corrupted by an unfair system, who performed the callous murders only because they would not be heard any other way. Since a number of these teenage murderers committed suicide before they could be put on trial, the media deflected its censorious scrutiny elsewhere. Thus, among other things, the media reproached Columbine High School, with its scores of grieving survivors, because it supposedly fostered a culture where students bullied others; the National Rifle Association for lax handgun laws; and drug companies for the psychotropic drugs the killers took.

What is troubling is not the criticism—who could be against curtailing bullying, guns, and drugs in high schools?—but that in our listening to the killers and their tales of woe, we made them retrospective victims. Society ends up masturbating with their memories and paying obeisance to their cause. And in the end, though dead, the killers get what they want; fame, understanding, and now Hollywood glory.

That is why we should welcome a film like *Home Room*, and some of the novels that have come out about the killings, especially Douglas Coupland's *Hey Nostradamus!* and Lionel Shriver's *We Need to Talk About Kevin*. *Home Room* is a ponderous movie, but most of the action takes place after the murders, when two survivors—Deanna, the pretty class brain, and Alicia, the goth freak—form a shaky friendship. In *Home Room*, the killer is not given a name or a face, and his screen time is minimal. He and his motives are not important, but the survivors are.

Hey Nostradamus! is also about the aftermath of a school shooting, tracking the misery and anguish that leeches onto the survivors and doesn't ever leave them. *We Need to Talk About Kevin*, a magnificently written thriller, is told from the perspective of Kevin's mother, in the form of letters to her estranged husband. Kevin, who committed mass murder at his high school, was not corrupted as much as evil from the get-go, a horrendous child who did what he could to sabotage his mother's maternity. In these works, fingers are pointed and blame is ascribed to those who deserve it.

There is something pathological about an empathy that ends up incapable of condemning murder. Audiences might remember the killers, and how they wore trench coats, but unless they are reminded, they will forget the victims—who are far more deserving of attention than the psychotics who killed them. Maybe at some point filmmakers will stop trying to "wake people up" with neo-realist dramas like *Zero Day* and start thinking about how films can honor those victims. ♦



Books in Brief

The Great Unraveling: Losing Our Way in the New Century **by Paul Krugman (W.W. Norton, 320 pp., $25.95).** Don't bother reading the newspaper columns Paul Krugman has gathered to make this volume; his preface and introduction show clearly that would be a plentiful waste of time. It's there in the opening pages that Krugman explains *all* his columns are written against a background belief that George Bush and his associates are engaged in a radical takeover of America. The radical-right administration and its allies do not "accept the idea that legitimacy flows from the democratic process"; they "possibly" aim for "a country . . . in which elections are only a formality"; "will make whatever argument advances [their] goal"; and "have no compunction about misrepresenting their goals."

And just what are these goals? First, "a country that basically has no social safety net at home." Never mind that Bush is about to launch a prescription-drug program that will be the largest addition to that safety net since Franklin Roosevelt first wove it. Second, a country "that relies mainly on military force to enforce its will abroad." Never mind the restraint shown by the administration in dealing with the threats posed by North Korea and Iran, and with Syrian and Saudi support of terrorism. And third, a country "in which schools don't teach evolution but do teach religion." Proof for the latter is Tom DeLay's statement that his purpose is to promote a "biblical worldview"—from which, says Krugman, "you can surmise that 'faith-based' initiatives aren't mainly about delivering social services more effectively."

These goals are to be pursued simultaneously with the creation of a tax system in which poor people pay a higher portion of their income in taxes than rich people, and—if conservatives have their way—"where rich people actually pay less than poor people." Never mind that the Bush tax cuts mean that a family of four with an income of $40,000 or less will, after child tax credits, pay no income tax, and that the portion of total income taxes paid by "the rich" has risen during the Bush administration.

This radical-right revolution might succeed because "moderates have followed a strategy of appeasement," and—get this—"Fox News, the *Washington Times*, and the *New York Post*" won't follow up on stories of scandals in the administration: "instead they'll harass other media outlets if they try to make it an issue." This, from a columnist who boasts that he took the job with the *New York Times* because of the delicious prospect of having his words dropped on over one million doorsteps twice every week. And one who must know that the influence of the dreaded *Washington Times* and *New York Post* pales in comparison with that of the liberal *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, and that the Fox News channel has nothing like the reach of the three, liberal-leaning, over-the-air networks.

There is more, but you get the idea. The columns reprinted in *The Great Unraveling* are more the rant of a paranoid journalist than the calm policy analysis of which Krugman once was capable. A right-wing coup is under way. Elections are to be a formality. Moderates are supine and running in fear of being "demonized," with "their careers destroyed." The press is cowed by two relatively tiny newspapers and a cable channel. Given all of that, one can understand Krugman's hysteria, especially since Americans who would oppose the right's programs if they knew what is going on have become blinded by the right's success in "obscuring its aims, and wrapping itself in the flag."

And hysteria it is. I saw Krugman after a joint television appearance on the BBC, and I asked him if he would consider the possibility that some of those who disagree with him have honest differences and are not merely liars. "I'm too radicalized for that," he said and swept from the room, accompanied by his publicist.

—Irwin M. Stelzer

Parody

"Six months after he spoke on the deck of an aircraft carrier under a banner proclaiming 'Mission Accomplished,' President Bush disavowed any connection with the war message. Later, the White House changed its story and said there was a link."

—Associated Press, October 28, 2003