the weekly Standard

FROM ONE MISS AMERICA TO ANOTHER
VENUS RAMEY

DECEMBER 29, 1997 / JANUARY 5, 1998 $2.95

AMERICANS AT WAR

by David Tell

Fast Times at Annandale High
CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL

Clinton's Unhallowed Ground
NOEMIE EMERY

This is a combined issue. The next **WEEKLY STANDARD** *will appear in two weeks. Happy New Year.*

the weekly Standard

VOLUME 3, NUMBER 16 • DEC. 29, 1997 / JAN. 5, 1998

COVER PHOTO: May 1945: Men of the U.S. 7th Army on the dais in Nuremberg from which Hitler once harangued his vast audience. UPI/Corbis-Bettmann

THE WEEKLY STANDARD (ISSN 1083-3013) is published weekly, except for the first week of January and the first week of September, by News America Publishing Incorporated, 1211 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY, 10036. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Send subscription orders to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, P.O. Box 96153, Washington, DC 20090-6153. Yearly subscriptions, $78.00; Canadian, $98.00; foreign postage extra. Cover price, $2.95 ($3.50 Canadian). Back issues, $3.50 (includes postage and handling). Subscribers: Please send all remittances, address changes, and subscription inquiries to: THE WEEKLY STANDARD, Customer Service, P.O. Box 710, Radnor, PA 19088-0710. If possible include your latest magazine mailing label. Allow 3 to 5 weeks for arrival of first copy and address changes. For subscription customer service, call 1-800-983-7600. Send manuscripts and letters to the editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, 1150 17th Street, N.W., Suite 505, Washington, DC 20036-4617. Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. The Weekly Standard Advertising Sales Office in Washington, DC, is (202) 293-4900. Advertising Production: call Natalie Harwood, (610) 293-8540. Postmaster: Send address changes to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, P.O. Box 930, Radnor, PA 19088-0930.

Curiouser and Curiouser

It's not news that conspiracy theories about the Clinton administration are getting a friendly hearing in certain precincts of the Right these days. What's interesting, though, is that the devotion to political conspiracies has started to create new ideological alliances. Don't be shocked if Oliver Stone's *The Murder of Vince Foster* shows up in your neighborhood multiplex in a few years.

Christopher Ruddy, the reporter who doggedly sought to spin a conspiracy out of the Foster suicide, has now moved on to bigger game: the murder of commerce secretary Ron Brown. What murder, you ask? Perhaps you thought it was a tragic plane crash over Croatia that killed Brown and every member of his entourage and the Air Force flight crew a year and a half ago? That just shows how gullible you are. Ruddy, you see, has found retired Army officers who saw the body and attest to a mysterious "circular" hole in Brown's head. The conclusion is obvious: Maybe he was shot! The Scrapbook, alas, is not kidding.

Aside from raising questions about just who the Army promotes to lieutenant colonel these days, the Ruddy stories are pretty good science fiction. Though, for that matter, why not argue that space aliens beamed aboard the Brown plane and sucked the life out of all the passengers before sending them to a fiery crash that would cover up the evidence of the foul deed?

In any event, besides the usual cheerleading from his soulmate Reed Irvine of "Accuracy in Media" and assorted right-wing radio jocks, Ruddy has now managed with the Ron Brown story to enchant the conspiracy-theory Left as well as influential black leaders. Rep. Maxine Waters from South-Central L.A. has called for a Justice Department investigation of Brown's death. Former GOP presidential candidate Alan Keyes has called for a congressional investigation. Louis Farrakhan's *Final Call* and the Harlem-based *Amsterdam News* have trumpeted the story. And even the venerable NAACP has fired off a letter to attorney general Janet Reno asking that the allegations be explored. Conspiracy theorists, it turns out, are united by the content of their character.

A postscript: The last time this magazine was critical of Reed Irvine, he ginned up a mass mailing to the offices of The Weekly Standard. There's nothing like receiving 900 identical postcards to convince us that sweet reason does not always avail. As far as The Scrapbook is concerned, the sooner the Millennium is here and gone, the better.

Lock and Lodestar

You've got to hand it to those North Korean Communists: They are on the losing side of history; they are facing defections at the highest levels; and they are burdened with a starving population; but they can still churn out propaganda with the best of them.

Last week, they paid for a full-page ad in the *New York Times*, in which they hailed Kim Jong Il, the bouffant-haired son of the late founding monster Kim Il Sung, as the "Lodestar for Sailing the 21st Century." You will be interested to know that Kim has been "elected" general secretary of the Workers' party "by the Unanimous Will and Desire of the Korean People!" What kind of man is he? One of "great leadership, remarkable wisdom and noble virtues," always "sharing the ups and down of life" with the "popular masses." (The "ups" of Kim's life include the pleasures of imported Scandinavian prostitutes, not shared, presumably, with the "popular masses.") "Indeed," the ad continued, "he is equipped with all the qualities a great leader needs." Says Kim in his "Credo," "Statesmen without love and trust are not qualified to be statesmen."

You will be further pleased to know that the ad listed nearly 20 of Kim's "major works," including "Essays on the Cinema" (look out, Pauline Kael!), "For Further Development of Education" (Chester E. Finn Jr., call your office), and "Let Us Carry Out the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung's Instructions for National Reunification" (not a bad idea, stating your thesis in your title).

The ad concluded by directing readers to the home pages for the government and its adjunct, the Korean Central News Agency, which bills itself, strangely, as "the only and one state-run agency of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea." In a Dec. 17 article titled "Western style cannot be criterion of everything," the press service said, "The imperialists, who describe the western style as the yardstick for international life, put a yellow label on those nations that go against it and reduce them to the victims of their sanction and pressure."

With communism in its dying days, many of us are worried: Will our children never thrill to the dulcet tones of Com-speak? When North Korea, Cuba, and Communist China knuckle under, a National Endowment for the Humanities grant may be justified to preserve this remarkable idiom for future generations.

Scrapbook

Al Gore's New Phone Tax

Your phone bill is about to go up stealthily, thanks to Al Gore's conviction that we need federally subsidized Internet access for every classroom and public library in America. This sounded uplifting to Congress, which was willing to play along as long as paying for it would be politically painless. The idea: to hide the cost, $10 billion or so over the next four years, in your long-distance bill and to do so by bureaucratic fiat from the Federal Communications Commission.

Indeed, last week the FCC issued an order, without the usual public notice or comment, to implement this new tax. Why the hurry? The new Clinton-appointed FCC, headed by chairman William Kennard, is apparently desperate to have the Internet entitlement for schools and libraries in place by Jan. 1.

And the large long-distance carriers—AT&T, MCI, and Sprint—which were going to list the new tax as a line-item on phone bills, succumbed to heavy political pressure and arm-twisting from the vice president's office and the Senate. They now plan not to notify consumers of the new Internet tax. In return, the FCC has agreed to phase it in more slowly. Do the taxpayers ever get a say in this?

Bilingual Blues

The ballot initiative that would end California's failed bilingual-education program looks headed for success next June. The most recent portent: Besides commanding huge support in polls of registered voters, "English for the Children" almost won the endorsement of the United Teachers of Los Angeles, the largest teachers' union in the state. Against the wishes of the union leadership, which has a vested interest in preserving the bilingual boondoggle, 48 percent of the members of the union voted to endorse the initiative.

The union leadership was chastened by the results. The president of the union, in a letter to members, acknowledged that had the leadership not "advertised its opposition to the referendum," the upstart members might have carried the day.

Good Enough for Burton?

Sen. Fred Thompson's committee will soon be releasing its report on fund-raising abuses in the 1996 presidential campaign. So what will all those high-paid committee staffers be doing once the report's released?

We're told the committee's $120,000-a-year senior counsel, Harold Damelin, is pining for a job with Rep. Dan Burton's House committee investigating fund-raising malfeasance. This is noteworthy because Damelin was viewed by many Republican insiders as contributing to the Thompson committee's ineffectiveness.

Damelin's most notable blunder came in October, when he presented Thompson with information that President Clinton had met with three people implicated in a scheme to divert union funds to the reelection campaign of Teamsters president Ron Carey. Thompson then repeated this information during a hearing. It was one of the high points. Only one problem: The information wasn't accurate, and Thompson was forced to issue an embarrassing apology. Making matters worse was that Damelin tried to blame the error on another committee staff member.

Some cynically say Damelin will fit right in on the Burton committee. Others hope Burton isn't hiring.

Casual

Another Child's Christmas

Every year it's a different carol that catches me and hauls me in. The first Christmas song always steals into town right after Thanksgiving, like the first gentle plink that signals a cloudburst, and within days the deluge is inescapable: the office elevators and the street corners and the stores awash in holiday music. From a first unwelcome reminder of just how fast Christmas is coming, the ceaseless tintinnabulation of those anthems quickly turns unbearable.

I've never known a world without recorded Christmas carols. While I was young my sisters and I would dig out once a year our scratchy discs of Joan Baez trilling away at "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" and Burl Ives growling out "The Friendly Beasts" and Peter, Paul, and Mary harmonizing a song whose title I can't remember, but it was about a shivering little boy who offers to share his only piece of bread with a gray-haired lady on Christmas Eve, and we would sob as we played it over and over on the Magnavox in the basement.

But nowadays, as I grow old, it feels as though there are just too many recordings playing far too much. Ever since Enrico Caruso was first pressed on a one-sided 78, nearly every performer in America has felt compelled to issue a Christmas album, and the sheer bulk of that music has added up to more than anyone could listen to in a thousand holidays.

The big three of the season—Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra, and Nat King Cole—remain perennial best-sellers, while Elvis Presley's holiday collections and the Mormon Tabernacle Choir still hold their own. But the discount Christmas-record bins tumble together Mantovani with the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, Tony Bennett with the Vienna Boys Choir, "Paul Revere and the Raiders Sing the Season" with "The Amazing Zamfir Plays Carols on his Pan Pipes," and Christmas anthologies from Muzak, Motown, the Metropolitan Opera, and the Grand Ole Opry.

Most of the traditional carols are sturdy enough to stand up to almost anything the Yuletide pits against them: Herb Albert and the Tijuana Brass, a grade-school Christmas recital, my local parish choir. But these days for me the innumerable renditions blend into such indistinction that "Mele Kalikimaka is the thing to say / On a bright Hawaiian Christmas Day" can't be told from "Buon Natale in Italy / Means a Merry Christmas to you."

And yet, good or bad, distinct or indistinct, one carol or another snares me every year and tumbles me down—down into that Christmas world of time turned somehow less ephemeral: weightier, denser, and more real; a world where symbols are not symbols, anymore. One year it was a boy soprano singing "Once in Royal David's City"; another year, a melancholy country-western recording of "God Rest Ye Merry, Gentleman"; another year, an *a cappella* version of "Good King Wenceslas."

I can find no unity in the passing years' various triggers of Christmas, save perhaps that they come during the carols' less-familiar verses, at a line with some explicit Christian piety and heft. "Mild, he lays his glory by, / Born that man no more may die," I heard in "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing" on the car radio one year as I drove home, and home was newly bathed in that old, familiar light. "God is not dead nor doth He sleep," from Longfellow's "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day," the carolers sang another year outside my door, and it rose—and it rose—and it rose like a torrent.

All the best writers about Christmas have known that the larger thing, the real moment, is unsayable: its memory triggered not by speaking of it but by waves of incidental detail. There is a reason that the goose in the butcher's window is almost as big as the boy Scrooge sees when he throws open his window on Christmas morning in Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*—a reason Lillian Smith spends so many pages on precise description of pecan harvests in her marvelous *Memory of a Large Christmas*. "In goes my hand," Dylan Thomas writes in *A Child's Christmas in Wales*, "into that wool-white bell-tongued ball of holidays resting at the rim of the carol-singing sea—and out comes Mrs. Prothero and the firemen."

I cannot say why, but the details of my own Christmas memories are mostly music. Last night I took my little daughter in my arms and sang for her the old, old songs. There is a world where shepherds still keep watch over their flocks by night. There is a world where oxen still kneel at midnight in their straw. There is a world where Wenceslas still trudges through that winter's snow. There is a world, I whispered in her sleepy hair. There is a world where still.

J. Bottum

Ridicule without Reason

Matt Labash seems to agree with Rev. Moon's view that family, marriage, and chastity serve to promote world peace ("Meet Rev. Moon, Mass Marriage Maestro," Dec. 15). He also reports that Rev. Moon says he will establish the Kingdom of Heaven here on earth through promotion of true marriages, and that Rev. Moon is making every effort to accomplish this on a global scale.

It seems to me that if Labash were taking his own words seriously, he would thoughtfully examine what Rev. Moon is doing and allow the reader to do the same. In 1950, Rev. Moon arrived in Pusan, a penniless refugee who, through love for God and his fellow man, had survived three years in a North Korean Communist death camp. In 50 years he created a religious movement that gathered in Washington 28,000 couples of all races and nations to rededicate their marriages to God with the blessings of all religions. These 28,000 represented some 40 million couples worldwide.

If Rev. Moon is wrong or disingenuous in his claim for divine guidance in all this, fine; still, no one is harmed by the promotion of good marriages. But if he is right and truthful, what are the implications? Instead of pursuing this, Labash produced ridicule, a thoroughly offensive article that obfuscates the real questions. Publishing it was a profound disservice. We deserve equal time.

Tyler Hendricks
North American Family Church
New York, NY

Matt Labash's snide and irreverent article would have been mere tabloid journalism were it not for its blatant anti-religious and racist views. Sadly, it finds a more appropriate home in the cesspool of hate-mongering journalism so reminiscent of German anti-Semitic literature of the 1930s, anti-Catholic pieces at the turn of the century, and anti-Mormon tracts of the mid-19th century.

It belongs to this genre for several reasons. He points out early on in the article that Unificationists are pejoratively called "Moonies." And then he continues to use the word.

His slide down into the slimy depths continues when he refers to Rev. Moon as "a stumpy Korean." Actually, he is of average height for a Korean man. Perhaps we should be happy that Labash decided not to call him "slant-eyed." His predecessors knew well the value of such notorious adjectives as "hook-nosed" and "big-lipped."

The fact that he would find it distasteful that a house painter and security guard were grooms on the day of the blessing ceremony speaks volumes about his elitist, anti-blue-collar, inside-the-Beltway mentality.

And his failure to deal in any significant way with the religious teachings of Rev. Moon exposes him as one who would rather poke fun at "foreigners"

(as he calls them) than examine the religious impulse that would propel someone to attend this event.

How anyone can attend any type of wedding and not be moved by the purpose behind it—a man and a woman committing their lives to each other—is a bit beyond me.

Unificationists have some problems just like everyone else, and we don't mind criticism. We even laugh at ourselves sometimes. However, for Labash not to find one redeeming or uplifting feature in this worldwide religious event is beyond the pale.

Chris Corcoran
Holy Spirit Association
for the Unification
of World Christianity
New York, NY

You Could Have Asked

The next time you characterize my opinions on racial or other matters ("The Disgrace Commission," Dec. 8), I would appreciate your talking to me first.

I was not able to attend either the Maryland meeting or the Ohio town meeting. My comments about the "far right" last summer had nothing to do with the Republican party. Press accounts failed to mention that I also had words of criticism about the far left.

Had you attended the board's meeting in July, you would have learned that I urged our members to reach out to Republican officeholders and make a special effort to include many prominent conservatives of all races and backgrounds in our deliberations.

Thomas H. Kean
Madison, NJ

Place Your Bets

Please tell us that your suggestion that Congress should ban gambling and related advertising ("Wanna Bet?" Dec. 15) was a spoof, or was intended for the *New York Times*. Yes, children are killed because adults leave them unattended in casinos, and yes, the poor rather than the rich gamble. But more children die in auto accidents—and, as adults, from heart disease and poor eating—than from casino neglect. And both gasoline taxes and food spending are highly regressive. Does it follow that Congress should ban pleasure driving and car ads, fast food and McDonald's signs? Let's encourage individual responsibility and prosecute negligent gamblers without depriving others of relatively harmless enjoyment.

Diana Furchtgott-Roth
Washington, DC

Like it or not, gambling has always been a part of American culture. From colonial times, through riverboat gambling in the 19th century, to the creation of Las Vegas, it has been a part of the landscape. More to the point, certain vices are legal, whether in the whole of the country or just in part: cigarette smoking, alcohol consumption, and even in some places prostitution. It really is not a question of

Correspondence

whether these things are detrimental to society. We have decided, whether as a city, state, or nation, to allow these things to exist, with certain restrictions. We do not allow minors to smoke, drink, or gamble. We prohibit driving by those under the influence of alcohol. We limit advertising of smoking and alcohol, and the penalties for prostitution are well known. Yet none of these things is in danger of going away, because there is always a demand for them. What we sadly do not outlaw is stupidity. The three cases cited in your editorial are tearjerkers, but they are hardly representative of how society as a whole handles these vices. By and large, most people, when given the facts and the chance to make their own decisions, do not neglect their families for the lure of the tables.

Advertising can be restricted, but it is just dreaming to believe that such restriction will create a dent in the amount of gambling going on in America today. Frankly, we seem to have only two remedies available. Either criminalize these activities, as we do with drugs, in order to prevent at least some individuals from even starting, or prosecute those who break the law and sentence them to the maximum. And another thing: Talk to your children often and clearly, and give them a set of values. They are going to need it.

William Ofrichter
Allentown, PA

Child's Play

Whatever the merits of the other points made by Danielle Crittenden and David Frum ("America's True Child-care Crisis," Dec. 15), their argument that the child-care credit makes it beneficial for a woman to go out and work flunks the test of basic arithmetic. Their point is that, because the child-care credit is available only against the earned income of the lower-earning spouse, Mrs. Kowalski (of the fictional Kowalski family) would bring more home from her part-time job, after taxes, than would her husband if he took an extra job.

That's true, of course, but it overlooks one fairly basic point: To qualify for the child-care credit, Mrs. Kowalski must spend money on child-care. Since the federal credit never covers more than 30 percent of the money spent (and only 20 percent at the Kowalskis' income level), Mrs. Kowalski's part-time job would bring home less, after taxes and child-care, than Mr. Kowalski's moonlighting. (It might be different if the child-care credit were used to cover expenses the Kowalskis were having anyway, but if the kids were already being cared for away from home, the social significance of Mrs. Kowalski's decision to work would be greatly reduced.)

The child-care credit may reduce the inherent disadvantage of Mrs. Kowalski's working, but it can't convert it into an advantage. If the Kowalskis decide that Mrs. Kowalski should work instead of her husband moonlighting, it will be for non-economic reasons—including, of course, the possibility that Mr. Kowalski would like to spend more time with his children.

Douglas D. Aronin
Forest Hills, NY

Empty Black Boxes

The problem with both the National Defense Panel (NDP) and the earlier Quadrennial Defense Review ("Wishful Thinking on War," Dec. 15) is that Congress wanted an objective assessment of future threats and what it would take to meet them. Instead, both reports accepted the Clinton budget constraint, which guaranteed a large gap between ends and means.

As Frederick Kagan points out, the NDP's abandonment of the "two major regional conflicts" (2MRC) standard for force-sizing rested on extremely tortured reasoning. It not only assumed that problems with Iraq and North Korea will peacefully fade away, it had Iran drop off the map entirely after an initial mention. Yet, elsewhere in the report, the NDP argues the need for the United States to project its power far beyond its current commitments.

The 2MRC standard is the minimum needed to fight even one war because, as Kagan rightly states, the United States cannot afford to commit its entire strength on one front given its global obligations. In the aftermath of the Vietnam War, the United States proclaimed a "1 and 1/2 War" standard. The era that followed became known for its malaise in foreign policy. With available U.S. forces tied down to NATO, there was little chance we would act elsewhere. American credibility was questioned, which encouraged radicalism around the world. The U.S. military became demoralized, and readiness suffered. It took the Reagan buildup to set things right and "make America great again."

In place of existing forces, the NDP proposes a collection of empty black boxes. Though the NDP was purposely vague about the impending high-tech "transformation," the impression is primarily of missile launchers located far from the battlefield. Unmanned aircraft and satellites will direct the bombardment, while lightly armed, mobile troops roam virtually unopposed, mopping up and accepting surrenders. Very neat and tidy, but unrelated to how wars are won—or even to why they are fought. From "Rolling Thunder" in Vietnam to Clinton's futile fireworks display after Iraq overran the Kurds, the political ends of war have changed little since the Roman legions. An army must still take, hold, and administer territory. Push-button warfare is a fantasy that won't survive its first contact with a competent enemy.

After every conflict, the United States has tried to deny the harsh and bloody realities of war. If the much-heralded "revolution in military affairs" turns out to be nothing more than a rehash of Eisenhower's "massive retaliation" or the Nixon Doctrine, it will fail to meet the security needs of the United States, regardless of the amount of technology it embodies.

William R. Hawkins
Washington, DC

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1998: Year of Foreign Policy

In 1992, candidate Bill Clinton acted as if foreign policy were basically a non-issue. President Bush, astoundingly, seemed to agree. Since then, Americans and their elected officials in both parties have been listlessly basking in the afterglow of Ronald Reagan's victory in the Cold War. Attention to events in the world has been episodic. President Clinton, as everyone knows, is bored by the everyday issues of foreign policy—even the big ones. He has been roused out of his snooze only by impending crises, and only at the last minute. The Republican Congress, we're sorry to say, has been no better. A significant chunk of Republicans behave as if disdain for foreign-policy matters should be a source of pride. Internationalists like Newt Gingrich and Richard Lugar are a beleaguered minority.

Well, hang on to your hats, folks. In 1998, it's going to be all foreign policy, all the time. Consider just the *major* foreign-policy issues and problems that are certain to come up.

The biggest issue of 1998, and the one on which the most will be riding, will be Iraq. The Clinton administration, aided by a sleepy Washington press corps, has tried to make it look as if the situation is more or less under control. It isn't. In 1998, Saddam will either break out from the box he's been in since the Gulf War and destabilize the Middle East or be taken out by some combination of foreign and indigenous forces. The status quo, which the Clinton administration and the rest of the Washington establishment are betting on, is untenable.

Early in 1998, the Senate will vote on the enlargement of NATO to include Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. The votes are probably there for approval, but if the margin is too small or if senators appear too grudging, it will send an ambivalent message to Europe. Then there is the inconvenient question of whether the U.S. and its allies have the military wherewithal to make good on the new commitments. The answer? If the defense budget continues to drift down, we probably do not. So maybe we'll get a too-long-delayed serious debate about defense.

Meanwhile, on the heels of NATO expansion, and while defense issues begin to reemerge, there may come another battle, this one over the president's decision to keep U.S. troops in Bosnia past the June 1998 deadline. It's the right thing to do, and if Republicans want to be constructive, they should push the administration to prosecute the mission with less timidity and tentativeness. Instead of carping at Clinton for spreading our resources too thin, Republicans should use this as an opportunity to push for the defense budget we need to carry out our responsibilities in the world.

China will be a big issue all year. Sometime in late spring, President Clinton will go to Beijing for another summit to try to prove that his strategy of "engagement" is working. The last summit produced American concessions in return for a promise of Chinese cooperation on nuclear proliferation, a promise of dubious worth. Since the summit, the Chinese have released Wei Jingsheng, which turns out to have been a mixed blessing for both the Chinese government and the Clinton administration. The courageous and outspoken Wei has added a powerful voice to the demand for pressure on China for political reform. Clinton won't want to come back from Beijing next year empty-handed, but the Chinese are unlikely to make any meaningful concessions.

The real wildcard in Sino-American relations is likely to be Taiwan. A few weeks ago, the Taiwanese pro-independence party won big in local elections. National elections will be held at the end of 1998, and the pro-independence party may well have its best showing ever. The Chinese continue to warn that they will use force against any Taiwanese move toward independence. If you had to guess where the world's most dangerous military conflict is likely to occur next year, other than in the Persian Gulf, it would be in the Taiwan strait.

Meanwhile, the crisis on the Korean peninsula continues, and it may be exacerbated by the collapse of the South Korean economy. Who knows whether the starving North may be emboldened by the South's evi-

dent frailty? Then there is the more general question of the Asian financial crisis, which with every week seems to have more wide-ranging ramifications. The Suharto dictatorship in Indonesia may be tottering, and the effect of the crisis on China's government and its domestic and foreign policies is unpredictable.

Sound like a full plate? Well, that's not the end of it. For one thing, there will be a fight early on about money for the International Monetary Fund, accompanied by broader questions on how to handle the Asian economic crisis and international economic policy in general.

The president is also scheduled to submit in 1998 a revised ABM treaty to the Senate, as well as a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and possibly an agreement on biological weapons to accompany last year's Chemical Weapons Convention. The revised ABM treaty foolishly limits America's ability to develop and deploy the most promising anti-ballistic-missile technologies—a limitation that ought to be rejected by the Senate. The test-ban treaty would make it difficult for the United States to have confidence that its nuclear weapons can work when needed, and this at a time when American military strategy, thanks to cuts in conventional forces, is excessively reliant on nuclear weapons. As for a biological-weapons convention, we have as much confidence in its ability to solve the problem as we did in the chemical-weapons agreement—none. Meanwhile, at the same time that the Defense department announced a plan to vaccinate U.S. soldiers against anthrax, it was reported that Iraq had requested 1,300 vials of anthrax as part of the U.N. food-for-oil program.

Put it all together and it seems pretty clear that, despite the best efforts of Clinton and the Republicans to spend all their time arguing about education, the environment, health care, and taxes, the headlines are going to be filled with foreign policy. The Clinton administration will likely stumble along, sometimes in the right direction, sometimes in the wrong, but paying attention only sporadically and acting only half-heartedly. Republicans, in Congress and out, will have a chance to do the right thing for their party and their country by articulating a Reaganite foreign policy of military strength, strategic boldness, and moral confidence. Will they rise to the occasion? ♦

Michael Ramirez

Dear Miss America

An Open Letter from Venus Ramey, Miss America 1944

Editor's Note: Kate Shindle, Miss America 1998, has made the distribution of condoms to high-school students her special issue. When she was crowned in September, Shindle told reporters, "I understand that parents and administrators don't want students to talk about AIDS and sex because it isn't pleasant, but I think of it as similar to defensive driving." Venus Ramey, who represented Washington, D.C., in the 1944 pageant, lives in Eubank, Kentucky.

Dear Kate,

Now that you wear the crown of Miss America 1998, we have something in common. I wore that crown in 1944. So I hope you won't mind a few words to the wise, from an old bathing-suit bimbo to a young one.

As you well know, every September millions of viewers of the Miss America sideshow have their eyes glued to the TV during the winner's famous waving, tear-jerked, tiara-donned saunter down the runway. What you may not realize is that they secretly hope she will trip and fall flat on her face, if only to relieve the monotony. Well, one of the Miss Americas finally has fallen on her face, at least metaphorically.

AP/Wide World

Venus Ramey

It's true that the aura of purity that once surrounded Miss Americas has been fading of late. But your crusade to distribute condoms to students has knocked Miss America off her pedestal for good. "If kids need them they should have a place to get them." That's what you told the students who gathered to hear you earlier this month in the gymnasium at Arlington, Virginia's Yorktown High School. And if the press clips I read are true, you are advancing this lunacy in other locales across the country.

Perhaps I shouldn't just pick on you. All over the country, Miss Something-or-Others are using school podiums to enlighten our youth about the mysteries of sex. But the real mystery is why administrators lend prestige to these charades. By their invitation to lecture on school premises, the principals and teachers tacitly intimate to students that young bathing-suit bimbos are cognizant of life's intricacies. Does winning a college scholarship with the bod suddenly make one all-knowing? Atlantic City's Miss America contest has tried for years to sanctify its leg show by granting scholarships to the winners, but the nation's high schools don't have to play along with this disingenuous idea by inviting Miss America to speak. I mean, after all, who thinks with their legs?

Meanwhile, the corporate sponsors who foot the bill for the scholarships get to use this altruistic pursuit as a tax write-off. It's hardly fair to the bow-legged, knock-kneed, snaggle-toothed, cross-eyed chick who has to flip hamburgers to finance her own education.

AP/Wide World

Kate Shindle

Maybe I'm being too hard on you. But I think the honor of all Miss Americas is at stake. Of course, I come from a different era—an era when condoms were rubbers, marijuana smokes were reefers, no one had AIDS, and those things were not discussed, especially by a Miss America. As I recall, the illegitimate birth rate then was around five percent instead of today's thirty.

Yours sincerely,
Venus

P.S. I also come from an era when we had a name for girls who hand out condoms, and it wasn't Miss America.

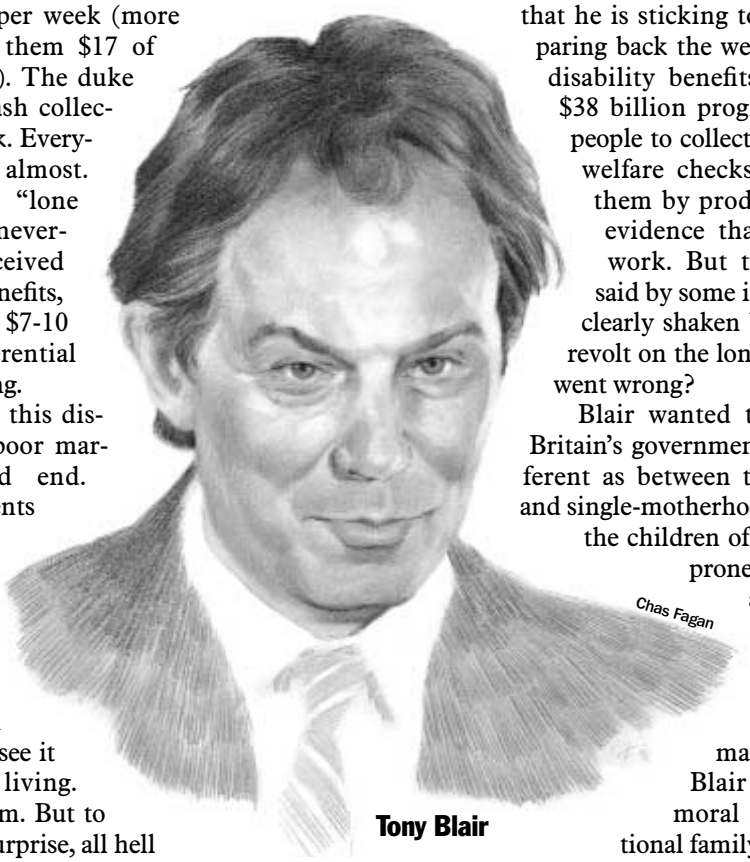
Blair Takes on Welfare

by Irwin M. Stelzer

SHORTLY AFTER HIS ELECTION, British prime minister Tony Blair proclaimed welfare reform his "big idea." He intended to recreate incentives to work, reestablish family values, and thereby free resources for the struggling health-care and educational systems. All this seemed unexceptionable in the broad; but it has proved terribly contentious in the particular.

In Britain, the state gives all parents about $17 per child per week (more precisely, returns to them $17 of their own tax money). The duke and the dustman (trash collector) get the same check. Everyone is equal. Well, almost. Until now, so-called "lone parents," primarily never-married mothers, received an extra helping of benefits, to the tune of about $7-10 per week, plus preferential access to public housing.

Blair decided that this discrimination against poor married couples should end. Henceforth, lone parents applying for benefits would no longer receive a premium. Those already receiving it would keep their extra payment, though they would no longer see it rise with the cost of living. Surely, a modest reform. But to the prime minister's surprise, all hell broke loose in his party.



Tony Blair

He had expected about a dozen on the hard left to oppose him. Not a bad thing, his savvy political advisers told him. It would further distance him from the crowd that had managed to keep Labour in the minority for 18 long years and show that he meant it when he said his New Labour party intended to reform welfare as Britain knows it. It might even provide him with an opportunity to read the dirty dozen out of the party, if he felt the timing right for such a purge. And it would lop more than $100 million per year from the burgeoning welfare bill.

That's not the way things worked out. With the support of the Tory opposition, and the grudging acquiescence of a majority of his own party, Blair pushed his bill through Parliament, with 457 ayes against 107 nays. Blair won the battle but may have lost the war: 61 members of his own party rebelled, 47 voting against him and another 14 abstaining in what the tabloid *Sun* headlined as "Single Mums Cash Fury." "It was not a price worth paying," concluded the generally conservative *Economist*.

Yet Blair is unrepentant, even though the rebels included a handful of former allies who resigned from his government in protest. Indeed, Blair says that he is sticking to his plan to continue paring back the welfare state by reducing disability benefits. That fraud-ridden, $38 billion program, allows 2 million people to collect more than their usual welfare checks, many thousands of them by producing the flimsiest of evidence that they are unable to work. But the prime minister is said by some insiders to be wavering, clearly shaken by the intensity of the revolt on the lone-parent benefit. What went wrong?

Blair wanted to send a signal that Britain's government should not be indifferent as between the two-parent family and single-motherhood. He well knows that the children of lone parents are more prone to criminal and other anti-social behavior, and to being sucked into permanent dependency on welfare. Besides, unlike many of his advisers, Blair has a religious and moral devotion to the traditional family.

The prime minister is also committed to the notion that work is ennobling and welfare degrading. In an attempt to recover lost ground after the storm broke around his reform proposals, Blair laid out what he considers to be the country's choices: "We either carry on . . . paying out more and more and more money on social security . . . or . . . we spend the money necessary . . . to get [people] off benefit and into work." His home secretary, Jack Straw, put it more succinctly: "Work has to be the centerpiece of the creation of a genuinely inclusive society."

But Blair wasn't willing to fight on the elevated ground of the traditional values of family and work,

lest he be accused of imposing his moral views on others. This, from a prime minister who is quite willing to ban cigarette advertising; who would prevent consumers from buying meat on the bone because of the very, very tiny probability (lower than that of being struck by lightning while at dinner, I am told) that it might result in disease; who wants restaurants to post signs warning of the potentially lethal effects of peanuts on those allergic to them; and who presides happily over a Parliament that, in Roger Scruton's phrase, consists of "suburban prudes" animated by "censorious passion."

So Blair was left to defend his action on the grounds of fiscal prudence, although the $100 million annual saving won't make a noticeable dent in the $480 billion that the government spends every year. This budgetary argument didn't prove to be much of a defense against MPs who charged that forcing unmarried mothers to work "at cleaning or shelf filling"—forget that the removal of an extra incentive not to work is different from compulsion to take a job—would put them at the mercy of employers who would not adapt to their special needs.

"Suppose there is a mother who is young, reckless, and feckless—is she going to be a better mother by making her go to work?" asked Labour MP Audrey Wise. "I feel ashamed of what we are doing," chimed in Labour's Ken Livingstone, a man proud of his "Red Ken" sobriquet. If this is the first step in forcing single mothers into work, added Alice Mahon, MP, "it would be a piece of social engineering that Stalin would be proud of."

Add to that the inevitable tales of widows struggling to raise their children, and divorced women with no work experience, and you have an assault that would—and did—melt many hearts. Against that, Blair chose to defend his "big idea" in terms of mere money. The Tories added to his discomfort by stationing their most right-wing member in the lobby of the House of Commons to congratulate all the Labour members who were voting in support of the benefit reductions.

> BLAIR HAS FORCED THE FIRST CUTS IN BRITAIN'S WELFARE BENEFITS IN MANY YEARS. IF HE STARTS DEFENDING THEM ON PRINCIPLE, HE MAY YET DUPLICATE THATCHER'S SUCCESS.

All is not lost for Blair, however. He has forced the first change in the benefits scheme in many years. And he showed the dissidents that they could not deter him from his chosen course. Many observers were reminded of the early days of Thatcher, who faced similar defections from her soft-left Tory colleagues and used those victories to consolidate her hold on the party and to marginalize those Tories who were not prepared to back her revolutionary policy of privatization and lower tax rates.

Blair is a not-so-covert admirer of Thatcher, a feeling that is known to be reciprocated by the Iron Lady. If he moves from arguments based on money to arguments based on principle, he may yet duplicate her successes and continue Britain's evolution from egalitarian welfarism to capitalism with a human face.

Irwin M. Stelzer is director of regulatory policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute.

A Hybrid Grows in St. Paul

by Barry Casselman

St. Paul, Minn.

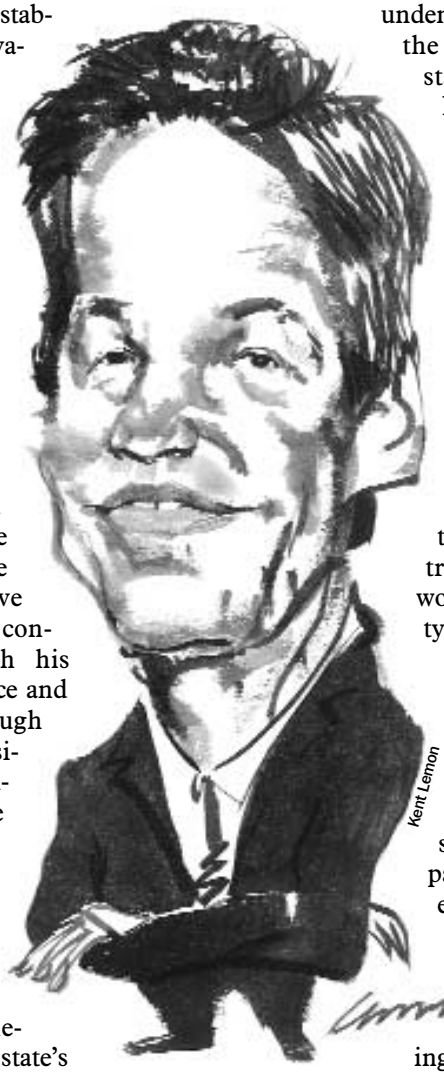
THE REELECTION OF NORM COLEMAN as mayor of St. Paul passed almost unnoticed in the national coverage of November's races. First elected as a Democrat in 1993, Coleman switched parties a year ago. Yet he never caught the eye of Beltway pundits. The national media paid attention to just two East Coast governors' races and a lone U.S. House contest—while out in Minnesota, people were beginning to say that Norm Coleman was the most charismatic politician since Hubert Humphrey and might be the state's next governor.

Coleman's success as a Republican—he took 59 percent of the vote—is a departure for St. Paul, long a stereotypical liberal Midwestern city. Its voters had elected few Republicans—none as mayor—for thirty years. The first time Coleman, then an assistant state attorney general, ran for the Democratic nomination for mayor, in 1989, he lost to a liberal city councilman whose base was the powerful neighborhood organizations. But St. Paul's fortunes were sagging—its population declining, its downtown crumbling, its businesses fleeing the city's high taxes and labor strife. Traditional liberal solutions had clearly failed. Increasingly conservative, Coleman upset the liberal-endorsed

candidate for the Democratic nomination in 1993. And this time, he won.

In his first term, Coleman took some effective steps to halt St. Paul's decline. Yet neither local nor state Democrats (their proper name in Minnesota is the Democratic-Farmer-Labor party, or DFL) were impressed. On many issues, Coleman was diverging from the party line.

Soon after taking office, he established himself as a fiscal conservative, writing off a $20 million debt of the city's housing agency, merging the city health departments, cutting property taxes, and subcontracting election-bureau work to the private sector. He put more policemen on the streets and became an advocate of light rail. In an early confrontation with AFSCME, the public-employees' union, he rejected city workers' pension demands. And when Coleman endorsed Republican governor Arne Carlson's controversial school-voucher proposal, the local teachers' unions were enraged. The more conservative unions supported him—the construction trades, pleased with his development program, and police and firefighters, who liked his tough stand on crime. His pro-life position was a serious political liability in the staunchly pro-choice DFL. (A Brooklyn-born Jew, Coleman had married into one of St. Paul's most conservative Irish Catholic families.) The DFL was becoming an uncomfortable home.



Norm Coleman

While still a Democrat, Coleman sought out Vin Weber, the state's most powerful behind-the-scenes Republican. Weber had been elected to Congress in 1980 and had soon become one of the leaders of the conservative Young Turks, along with Jack Kemp, Newt Gingrich, Dick Armey, Trent Lott, and Bob Walker. But Weber retired in 1992 and became a Washington consultant. He helped found Empower America and began reestablishing ties back in Minnesota.

In 1994, he teamed up with an old antagonist, Gov. Carlson, a moderate. He helped Carlson win the biggest landslide in state history since 1881, uniting Republicans (and some conservative Democrats) against an ultraliberal opponent. Weber built a house in the state, sought out old allies and staffers, and settled into a new life as a political kingmaker.

By this time, the shrewd and ambitious mayor of St. Paul knew he had no future in his own party. Pro-life Democrats held no statewide office. Ultraliberals controlled the party apparatus and the tortuous (and undemocratic) precinct-caucus system. In fact, the extremes in both parties had held the state's politics hostage for some time. Now, with Weber grafting his conservative rural "outstate" base to Carlson's moderate suburban base, it was plain that a politician like Coleman might find a place in the GOP.

Last year, Weber staged a colorful party-switching announcement in Coleman's living room. In attendance were Jack Kemp, Carlson, Rep. Jim Ramstad, pollster Frank Luntz, and the local and national press. At a St. Paul hotel reception afterward, the GOP masses ecstatically received the convert. Blocks away, at DFL headquarters, politicos began a campaign to portray Coleman as a "turncoat," though he would argue he was pushed out by the party's left-liberal organizational base.

Now the question is whether Coleman, 48, will run for governor. If so, he will be forced to start electioneering just months into his second term; the primary is in September 1998. Coleman's opponent in 1997, a liberal state senator, pressed this point in her campaign to unseat him. But her attack only emboldened the mayor to say in his public appearances that he thought most St. Paulites would be delighted to have him as governor—and Election Day interviews with voters leaving the polls conducted by the Twin Cities' largest radio station seemed to confirm this.

As he ponders his next move, Norm Coleman leads in most GOP voter polls for the gubernatorial race. Rural conservatives like his pro-life position and economic views, and suburban moderates appreciate the revival of St. Paul as well as his personal style.

His critics include some old-time Republicans who mistrust a Johnny-come-lately, as well as liberals who say he is an opportunist and too pro-business. Many Democrats suggest that his development projects are a house of cards. Coleman waves off these voices of gloom. "A mayor these days has to be an agent of

change," he says, "and my first job was to generate confidence and hope." Although a recent fiasco over a new baseball stadium has clouded the outlook for the Minnesota Twins, he remains optimistic that his high-profile effort to bring NHL hockey back to the state—in a St. Paul rink—will bear fruit. "People expect elected officials to solve problems," Coleman declares, "and that's why I'm working to bring businesses back, jobs back, and pro sports back to St. Paul."

Eric Mische, Coleman's adviser and political alter ego, insists that Coleman is a natural coalition-builder whose economic message appeals to Minnesota's new but sizable minority groups, such as Hispanics and Southeast Asians. Coleman's St. Paul, Mische says, "is an incubator for change, a laboratory for Republican ideas." Kemp calls him "an empowerment conservative," adding, "It's not natural for people in our inner cities to live in poverty and squalor. Norm Coleman is trying to come up with answers to problems. He's tenacious. I think he's destined for higher office."

Coleman himself is more tentative, for now at least. "I'd have to be away from my family for another year," he says. "Besides, I don't think I want to be in government forever. If I run for governor, or I finish out this term as mayor—that's it, then I want to go into the private sector." Whatever he does, Coleman has already shown the way to a new urban Republicanism in St. Paul.

The electorate here is in a volatile mood. Although threatened with the loss of their beloved baseball team, Minneapolis voters overwhelmingly backed severe limits on public expenditures for a new stadium. In spite of an enormous Democratic registration advantage, St. Paul voters handily reelected a Republican mayor. Even in Minneapolis, a controversial Republican candidate for mayor made a contest of it.

In the northern heartland, Minnesota's ultraliberal image seems to be fading. Liberal Republican Christine Todd Whitman of New Jersey probably couldn't be nominated and elected to any statewide office here. Norm Coleman has won twice in St. Paul, first as a maverick Democrat and now as a hybrid Republican. It's a phenomenon that merits watching.

Barry Casselman writes about congressional and presidential campaigns for the Preludium News Service.

The View from Argentina

by Michael Barone

"It happened around 1991: Everything changed." The speaker is a young Argentinian investment banker, talking over coffee at La Biela, a restaurant across the park from the Recoleta Cemetery where Eva Perón is buried, incongruously, amid the leading families of Buenos Aires. The words are almost identical to ones I heard in India two years ago: "You cannot overestimate how much everything changed with the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991." Once before, I was in Buenos Aires, a dozen years back. "You visited another country," the banker says.

What changed in both India and Argentina was less a matter of conditions on the ground than of ideas in people's heads. Abruptly, the articulate elites of these countries moved from believing in socialism to believing in free markets, from championing government ownership of business to celebrating privatization, from walling off their national economies to opening them up to foreign trade and investment, from blaming the United States for almost everything that went wrong to seeking closer cooperation with the United States and convertibility with the dollar.

"People change their minds," Daniel Patrick Moynihan quotes philosopher Michael Polanyi as saying. We do not move smoothly and gradually along a continuum of ideas, but lurch sharply from one idea to its opposite. Everything changed around December 1910, Virginia Woolf once said, with her gaggle of intellectual friends in mind; everything changed for very many more people around 1991, in countries large and small across the world.

Americans find it hard to appreciate the starkness of the change. Elite opinion shifts more slowly here. If the fulcrum on the continuum has been moving to the right, the Left has a stake in minimizing the change and forgetting where the fulcrum used to be: It's funny how all those people who used to go around attacking Cold Warriors now say the Cold War was uncontroversial. We lose sight of how many aspects of their cultures countries like Argentina are trying to change at once, how great the stakes are for them, how large are the potential benefits and risks, and how profoundly the United States can affect what happens, for better or worse.

The starkest change in Argentina is economic. A dozen years ago, you had to add four digits to your peso notes to keep up with inflation: A 10-peso bill was actually worth 100,000. Now the peso is tied to the

dollar by a convertibility board: Argentina's central banker is Alan Greenspan. This change was made by President Carlos Saúl Menem, in vivid defiance of the traditions of his Perónist party, and by the finance minister he appointed in 1991, Domingo Cavallo. They have cut the bloated public sector and are privatizing state firms; they have reduced inflation from 3,000 percent in 1989 to 2 percent in 1996; they have spurred growth from zero in 1990 to 6 to 9 percent in 1991-94. In early 1995, in the "Tequila crisis" after Mexico devalued its peso, Argentina resisted pressure to devalue as well and took a recession instead; even so, Menem was reelected that May. The changes seem to be enduring. Cavallo is out of office, and Menem's party lost its legislative majority in the October 1997 elections. But Menem has continued Cavallo's policies, and the opposition coalition has accepted them. As East Asian currencies have collapsed and the peso's tie with the dollar has been threatened, every Argentinian politician has supported maintaining the convertibility board.

There are signs as well that Argentina is changing not just its economic policy but its political culture. As Moynihan has written, "Politics can change a culture and save it from itself." Lawrence Harrison, citing Latin American scholars Carlos Rangel and Claudio Veliz, argues that Latin countries have been held back by "the traditional Ibero-Catholic system of values and attitudes." These have included lack of future orientation, lack of a perceived connection between effort and reward, and lack of a sense of communal obligation beyond the family. These were exacerbated in the year of Juan Perón and his successors by what Mark Falcoff, America's leading student of Argentina, calls "mismanagement, corruption, and political unwisdom."

But Argentina's free-market economic policies may be changing these attitudes and patterns of behavior. In this decade, Argentina's government has preserved the value of its currency—creating a clear connection between effort and reward. It has copied Chile's social security reforms, to give workers control over their long-term savings and pensions—nurturing a future orientation. The conquest of hyperinflation has made possible a home-mortgage market—providing a mechanism to accumulate wealth through homeowning and creating a long-term stake in protecting property.

How lasting are these changes? No one can know for sure. "Argentina's politics is improving a lot," says Falcoff. "They're discussing the right issues, and the public is demanding a higher level of probity, which hurt Menem's party in 1997 and may well defeat it in 1999." But the greatest threats to Argentina's new consensus no longer come from inside the country. Argentina's leaders were sorely disappointed when, thanks to his fecklessness and concern for domestic politics over international trade strategy, Bill Clinton failed to win "fast track" trade-negotiating power from Congress, and the dream of a Western Hemisphere Free Trade Agreement was postponed indefinitely. Argentina's response was to build higher barriers around Mercosur, the free-trade zone it created with Brazil and tiny Uruguay and Paraguay—a temporary measure to help Brazil withstand the challenge to its currency after the East Asian collapse. But temporary measures have a way of becoming permanent. The danger is that instead of one hemispheric free-trade area, we may end up with protectionist blocs, leaving Argentina in something like the inefficient isolation imposed by Juan Perón—all because Clinton couldn't be bothered to risk his political capital on renewing fast-track for three and a half years, until it was too late.

For the history of even so remote a nation as Argentina is evidence that no country can truly be isolated from the trends of world events and opinion. The economic upheavals caused by World War I and the years following helped pitch Argentina and other Latin countries from elite-run regimes, with limited electorates but considerable personal and economic freedom, into military-run and dictatorial regimes verging in some cases on totalitarianism: Argentina and Brazil were under authoritarian rule for most of the quarter century after 1930.

Moreover, as Moynihan says, ideas nurtured on the Left Bank in Paris reach the *confiterias* of Buenos Aires 20 years later. Latin America's violent revolutionaries of the 1970s, suppressed by violent and lawless military regimes, took their inspiration from Jean-Paul Sartre and his friends at the Deux Magots and the Café Flore in the 1950s. Happily, what is happening in Latin America now may be a similarly delayed reflection of French intellectuals' revulsion at communism in the wake of Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago* in the 1970s; it may reflect as well the democratic opening of Spain under King Juan Carlos after Franco's death in 1975.

The prospect for Argentina—and for so many other countries today—seems as sunny as the November spring looks from La Biela; yet there are no guarantees. Even happy revolutions in ideas are not irreversible. We in the United States—both policymakers and thinkers—have the capacity to make things very much better or very much worse for people all over the world. And we tend to do so without giving it much thought one way or the other.

***Michael Barone, a senior staff editor at* Reader's Digest, *is co-author of* The Almanac of American Politics.**

Bill Clinton's Unhallowed Ground

The Real Meaning of the Larry Lawrence Affair

By Noemie Emery

By dawn's early light on December 12, M. Larry Lawrence was extracted from Arlington National Cemetery, ending the quest of this particular donor for a resting place more permanent than the Lincoln Bedroom can offer. But Lawrence's exhumation raises a delicate question. Where, exactly, *is* a suitable burial ground for this man and similar heroes of the Clinton administration, those who gave their own full measure of devotion—in this case, their cold cash?

Clearly a new and different kind of national cemetery is called for. And what a project it would make! Call it Operation Hallowed Ground. A suitable site would be needed in the capital area: The Virginia estate of the late Pamela Harriman, the original Material Girl, would be perfect. And some fitting guidelines. "Diversity"—of gender, race, and sexual orientation—would of course be paramount. Tombstones would not have the cross or the Star of David engraved on them, only the dollar sign, truly a powerful interfaith symbol. The deceased would be borne to their rest by an honor guard of those who exemplify the status of the military during the Clinton years. It should include the young White House aide who mocked Gen. Barry R. McCaffrey; the Marine-despising assistant secretary of the army, Sara Lister; and, of course, the Air Force's most famous adulterer Kelly Flinn. Turnstiles would be placed at the entrance to the cemetery, with proceeds going to the Democratic National Committee.

In time, if Clintonism is our future, this will replace Arlington as *the* place to be buried: more open, more diverse, and much trendier. Who wants to be interred at Arlington, anyway, filled as it is with dead white men, many of them Marine extremists, others sexists like JFK? Not the members of this administration, who will now have a shrine made to their measure. Who still gives a fig for *pro patria mori*? Sweet and fitting it is, by contrast, to lay down your money for Bill.

THERE IS A GAPING CHASM BETWEEN THE ETHOS OF THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION AND THE ETHOS OF ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY.

This is the peculiar fascination of the Lawrence Affair—the case of the Tomb of the Too-Well-Known Donor. It knits together the key themes of the Clinton administration. Who is Larry Lawrence? The $300 million former envoy to Switzerland, who did not serve in this country's armed forces. Who is Bill Clinton? The commander in chief who once said he loathed the military (while not protesting too hard, lest he compromise his political viability). He is also the president who has brought fund-raising to new highs (or new lows), welcoming criminals into the White House. This is the president who has presided over the steady erosion of respect for his office, for the federal government, and the profession of politics in general. This is the president whose own ratings rise (and rise only) because expectations for his office are so low. This is the president who bankrupted his party to secure his own reelection; whose self-absorption is legend, even to friends. The scandal is not that one man, M. Larry Lawrence, lied to the government, or that these lies were not caught by the diplomatic service, or even that wealthy donors buy embassies. The scandal is that so many Americans could believe that Bill Clinton might think Larry Lawrence *should be* in Arlington—that having lived, or having died, for one's country may have been of less import than giving candidate Clinton large sums of money.

Noemie Emery is a writer living in Alexandria, Virginia.

How can people think this of their president? Because his greed, his self-interest, and his lack of sympathy with the armed forces seem so neatly to converge. The chasm between his ethos and that of Arlington National Cemetery is gaping. Clinton is feminized, evasive, emotive, and filled with vague, gaseous talk of the future. Arlington honors the eternal and absolute. It is filled almost entirely with men. The women in it tend to be family members of men already in it, like Jacqueline Kennedy. It is filled with heroes, while the Left prefers victims. It is filled with the brave, while Clinton confessed when subject to the draft that he wished to "protect myself from physical harm." Arlington is a monument to duty, where the Left likes to do its own thing. It is filled with men who died violently, often while doing things equally violent. The Left prefers violence in verbal form.

PHOTOlink

The policy of Bill Clinton's administration as regards the armed forces has been one of sustained assault on military mores. The administration's goal is to make the armed forces friendly to women, and to make its men rather less male than before. This is like making art studios friendly to colorblind people, or choirs friendly to those wholly tone-deaf. Clinton appointed a secretary of the Army, Togo West, whose main goal was to make the army welcoming to women. He chose to take counsel from a feminist academician, Madeleine Morris, who said the armed forces were too confrontational and should rather model themselves on the Quakers. He promoted (above 12 men more qualified) as senior intelligence officer one Claudia Kennedy, who thinks platoon leaders ought to be "sensitive" and banned boxing as macho and violent.

Bill Clinton is not the first president to shirk armed-forces duty; Grover Cleveland sent a substitute to the Civil War. But he is surely the first to risk actively damaging the armed forces' fighting potential to please his political base. He is surely the first commander in chief to be perceived, correctly, as hostile to the armed forces' interests, and dismissive of their core values. Party-giver Sally Quinn spoke for Clinton's culture when she said on *Nightline* that burial at Arlington was a "macho thing," a "boy" thing, something that sane people ought to grow out of. For an administration that thinks this, the ground at Arlington is not all that hallowed after all. And if it is not, why should it too not be raffled, along with the room named for our most revered president, or access to the White House in general? Especially if the party is in need?

And needy it is, and by Clinton's own doing. Which brings us to Clinton and greed. Obsessed as he is with his historical reputation, he does not realize that he has earned it already. His is the Yard Sale administration, government as open-air bazaar. What has he managed to do with his power? Some men win wars, set standards, free slaves. This one raises money. Lincoln was the Great Emancipator. Reagan was the Great Communicator. Clinton is the Great Fundraiser.

This is, after all, the administration that turned the White House bedroom named for this country's most sacred political leader into a roadhouse for donors, even for those who were "not yet friends." This is the administration that brought money-laundering to a new stage of refinement, sending its vice president to extract checks of $5,000 from Buddhist nuns; and the one that took checks for hundreds of thousands of dollars from gardeners making $18,000 a year. This is the administration that shook down destitute American Indians for more than $100,000 from their emergency food and fuel money, and then tried to shake them down further, to get fat contracts for Al Gore's lobbyist friends. This is the administration for which fund-raising took precedence over small matters like governing: Elizabeth Drew quotes a note from an aide to the chief of staff Leon Panetta saying that "to make time for the coffees, staff briefings of the president 'may be considerably truncated, or eliminated' completely." Clinton,

who once thought himself too important to fight, now thought himself too important to let government business interrupt his campaign for reelection. Which brings us to Clinton's narcissism.

In *The American Political Tradition*, an elegant series of essays on leadership, historian Richard Hofstadter dissects the paradoxes of political figures, from Thomas Jefferson, "The Aristocrat as Democrat," through Theodore Roosevelt, "The Conservative as Progressive," to FDR, "The Patrician as Opportunist." As the book came out in 1948, we are missing some latter-day entries, like John Kennedy, "The Classicist as Lecher," and Richard Nixon, "The Quaker as Crook," and Bill Clinton, "The Boomer as Narcissist," for that is what he surely is. He is not for big government or small government, just for *his* government. He is indifferent to the interests of friends, party, and principles. He is a party of one, whose platform is his own survival: a politician focused wholly on himself. "Their self-absorption is breathtaking," writes Drew of our first couple, in her recap of the 1996 elections, *Whatever It Takes*. Consistently, they have put themselves above friends, party, and country. How do they love themselves? Let us count the ways. Friends have been dropped, fast and forever, when they became liabilities. Loyal aides have been sent out, exposed, and socked with huge legal bills to safeguard the Clintons' political interest. Their country? Bill Clinton will glibly avoid, disguise, or misstate key national problems, lest somebody blame him for something. The coming boomer crunch on entitlement programs has been deferred to the future, when it will be the headache of somebody else. Their party? Clinton's two-term electoral triumph has been a disaster for Democrats, who have hemorrhaged seats at every level of government. When they took a bath in the 1994 midterms, he cast himself as their victim, and ran against them in the 1996 elections, triangulating himself to a personal victory. Let us not forget, either, that their current financial hard times are also his doing: The fund-raising orgy depleted their base and hit them with enormous legal fees.

CLINTON'S TWO-TERM ELECTORAL TRIUMPH HAS BEEN A DISASTER FOR DEMOCRATS, WHO HAVE HEMORRHAGED SEATS AT EVERY LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT.

Meanwhile, Bill Clinton is obsessed with his legacy, picking up (and dropping) themes as they catch his attention, not because they need doing, but because they look good. To other presidents, history was something they hoped one day to enter. To Clinton, history is something that will serve as his personal backdrop, something to show him off well. He spends a great deal of time fretting that he is not getting the praise he deserves. As the *Washington Post* noted recently, "in his recent string of fund-raising appearances, Clinton has expressed resentment that he has not received more credit for his accomplishments—and there is little he does not take credit for." Why this obsession with praise, and with credit? It is the hedge against public rejection, the one thing that Clinton most fears. To him, rejection by others seems tantamount to personal, total, extinction. Thus, the need to be the choice of more than one-half of the people. (He isn't.) Thus, the passion he puts into self-preservation. Thus, the frenzies that drive his campaigns.

The last administration to share this outlook was that of Richard M. Nixon, another self-obsessed president, who believed his identity rode on the coming election, and that survival dictated the most extreme measures. Nixon was brought low by obstruction of justice, which drove him from office. But the collateral charge was more profound and more subtle: He defaced and defiled his high office, with the wrong kind of people, and talk, and behavior. It is this charge—it is this truth—that now haunts Bill Clinton. As the late Ann Devroy saw in May 1994, Clinton "gives no hint that he thinks anything is too undignified. . . . He has wiped away the invisible barrier of awe and respect for the office."

The Lawrence Affair is about Clinton, and his way of holding the high office in which he serves. Clinton is legitimate as the lower-case president, the functionary, and employee of government. He is not legitimate as the upper-case President, emotional head of the American enterprise, whom others are eager to follow. His job-approval ratings express *job* approval, not respect or affection. Elected twice, he has now lost his own party on a signature issue, trade, on which he expended much effort. No one in Congress seems impressed by or afraid of his power (except, unaccountably, Republican leaders). No one in the country, in or out of the government, seems interested in what he has to say. The fact that the Lawrence Affair will soon, too, pass from memory is itself a perfect commentary on the Clinton years. Nothing about him will be of lasting significance, because—unlike those buried at Arlington—he sees nothing as of greater significance than himself. ♦

Fast Times at Annandale High

The President's Race Board Stages Another Show

By Christopher Caldwell

ATOMS, reads the sign on a smokestack rising out of the 'fifties glass-and-brick main building of Annandale High School in Fairfax County, Virginia. It commemorates the mighty football squad that has taken six state titles since the mid-sixties. But aside from its gridiron glories, Annandale High is a run-of-the-mill place. Boys shuffle about in those ten-sizes-too-large jail dungarees. Some girls take advantage of this same fashion, but most sport the navel-and-nose-ring look that has, alas, swept the nation. Not washing one's hair seems to be in this year. Still, politicians and journalists recently traveled across the country to see these kids, and not to see them play football. What has made Annandale noteworthy of late is a student body that boasts—and "boasts" is the word—students from 73 countries, speaking 43 languages, and an enrollment that is down to 44 percent white.

That's why the President's Advisory Board on Race came to visit for morning and afternoon roundtables last Wednesday, and brought the national media in its wake. The *New York Times* was there, along with the *Washington Post* and *Newsday*. Gene Randall of CNN interviewed participants in the back rows. CNBC's Chris Matthews sat forward in the press section. Matthews's wife, Kathleen, a local TV news anchor, chaired the morning panel. And C-SPAN was filming the whole thing, beneath migraine-inducing floodlights trained on a crowd of 300 that half-filled the school auditorium. Mindful of the pressure, and of complaints that the board had been less than provocative in its previous outings, Kathleen Matthews opened by saying, "Forget that the cameras are here. We want it to be candid. What we're trying to do today is not just skim the surface. . . . We're trying to peel back the skin of the onion."

That onion never got peeled. The panel of school representatives had been vetted as vigorously as Cuban agronomists sent for a chat with the Venceremos Brigades. There was middle-school teacher Chris Yi, whose preoccupation was Harvard psychologist Howard Gardner's theory of "multiple intelligences," a dubious construct that gets invoked whenever educators want to explain away disappointing SAT scores. Sharifa Alkhateeb, an "intercultural trainer" and host of a "Middle Eastern parenting" show on local-access television, expressed disappointment that Fairfax County was not *unanimous* in its embrace of multiculturalism, and blamed white parents in a burst of euphemism. ("The comfort level of parents who are not in minority groupings is different from the comfort level of people who are in minority groupings.") There were two students: an Afghani senior girl and a white sophomore boy.

The canned school spirit was deadening, the only comic relief the sign-language translator as she fluttered her way through such phrases as "teaching conflict mediation resources." The morning session was just winding down, with Matthews chirping about how the race commission put a "mechanism in place for discussing things, and I think that's the biggest plus," when a 50-ish white man with a shock of snowy hair appeared at the front of an aisle and asked, "Are there going to be any comments?"

"Not at this point," said the chairman, historian John Hope Franklin. "We've got to keep on schedule."

"So this is a *mono*logue, not a dialogue," bellowed the interloper, who introduced himself as Robert Hoy. "All those people up there who are white—they might be biologically white, but they're not politically white. This is a discussion on *race*. There should be sparks flying." A collective *uh-oh* spread through the audience, although no one yet knew quite what to make of this.

"We don't want to be a minority in our own homeland," Hoy continued. "Why is it that you people just assume that millions of white people want to be a minority in our own country?"

Now the audience knew where Hoy was coming

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from. Several people began to boo.

"Yeah, *'Boo! Boo!'*" Hoy scoffed. "Monologue! Monologue!"

As Hoy was hauled off, everyone laughed with relief. But reporters were already bolting to the swinging doors in the back of the auditorium, and cameramen with their camera dollies labored up the aisles behind them. You'd almost think they weren't afraid of missing anything inside.

Hoy was standing next to the policeman who'd dragged him out, chatting with two reporters. Between them and the front door stood a sturdy little 45-ish woman shouting at the top of her lungs. "I am a white parent at Annandale High School," she wailed. "Please do not make this the focus of these reports tonight! I beg you to keep the focus on the debate. *This is not representative of the whites*." Then she took on the rhythmic urgency of evacuation instructions conveyed by public-address system: "Do *not*—make *this*—the *focus*—of the reports *tonight*. . . . You as reporters have to recognize what your role is now. Are you going to cover a person who commandeered the audience? None of us were kept out of this debate. This was not a minority debate. You know, there were two students chosen. One of them was white. This was not a white/minority issue."

"I HAVE FEELINGS!" A MIDDLE EASTERN BOY WAS SHOUTING. "DO YOU JUST WANT THE WHITE RACE TO CONTROL EVERYTHING?" SAID A VIETNAMESE GIRL NEAR TEARS.

The woman identified herself as Eileen Kugler, former president of the PTA and—what do you know?—the mother of the lucky white sophomore who had been chosen for the roundtable. In that light, it sounded as if Mrs. Kugler wasn't defending the work of the race board so much as the selection process by which her boy got to appear on national television. Here it was, his moment in the sun, and all the cameras and journalists were out in the parking lot listening to some obstreperous kook.

A few black observers, by contrast, seemed positively delighted with the interruption. Ray Winbush, director of the Race Relations Institute at Fisk University, was one of them. It was hard to say whether his excitement stemmed from confirmation of suspicions about white attitudes or from the opening the incident gave to equally radical black-separatist notions. "The whole problem with the dialogue is that you have not had that kind of voice," Winbush said. "The dialogue is just too safe right now, much too safe. How can you have a racial dialogue in America without including someone like Louis Farrakhan? You can't."

"Everybody's ready to break out in a chorus of Kum-ba-yah," Winbush added. "I'm not saying we can't eventually get to Kum-ba-yah. But right now people aren't interested. I'd support this guy going back in and talking."

Hoy was explaining—or not explaining—himself to reporters, handing out press releases that described him as the "moderator and chairman" of "Southern Republicans." (What's that? I asked. "An organization," he replied.) If his name rings a bell, it's because Hoy was a prominent supporter of David Duke in his 1990 Louisiana Senate race; he received a bit of national press attention in 1992 when the Buchanan presidential campaign was attacked for failing to disavow his support.

He was swarmed by chattering students of all races, who had streamed out of the upper deck of the school auditorium to rise to his clumsily proffered bait. After a morning of bragging about the "dignity," "self-respect," and "confidence" inculcated at Annandale High, the multi-ethnic students were prostrating themselves with rage before the first racist clown they'd ever met.

"I have feelings!" a Middle Eastern boy was shouting.

"Do you just want the white race to control everything?" said a Vietnamese girl, near tears.

"I have feelings!"

"What do you want?" asked a friendly Palestinian girl. "Do you think one race should always be dominant?"

As we walked back into the school, my Palestinian friend said to her teacher, "Ma'am, you're Jewish, right? I don't know if you heard what he was saying . . . " Just then, I was talking to an Asian boy, who was saying, "I mean, you're white—you don't agree with him, do you?"

This was a typical Annandale High conversation: "I'm [ethnicity], so I . . . " No wonder Eileen Kugler had talked about whether racism is typical of "the whites," much as we talk about "the underclass" or "the IRA." No wonder the students had run out into the parking lot with such *Schadenfreude*. They disagreed with the guy ranting about a white "home-

land," but he was speaking the only language of race they understand.

The afternoon session was supposed to be the first showcase of a variety of viewpoints in the six months the Race Initiative has been up and running. The Clinton administration, taking to heart accusations that it was not listening to opponents of affirmative action, had invited two conservatives just days before: former education secretary William Bennett and Arizona public-schools head Lisa Graham Keegan. "A litany of speeches does not a dialogue make," Bennett began, and he tried to correct certain misimpressions. He parried the allegation that minority schools are starved of funds by noting that the higher the minority enrollment in American school systems, the higher the per-pupil expenditure. But very few people were listening. This was an outing for race hobbyists, and the same ones kept reemerging all afternoon. Eileen Kugler popped up at lunch in the school library, making an impassioned plea that you can't tell anything from average SAT scores. "We have an unfortunate number of parents who buy homes based on how high the average SAT score is," said Kugler. "But we don't care. Don't look at it like that."

She won applause in the afternoon session, too, when she said, "If we can get a message out to parents throughout the country, it is: Don't fear schools like this. . . . Don't go to the place where your kid looks like all the other kids." Then along came Sharifa, the intercultural counselor, again, this time warning that the Clinton administration's new standards of learning are anti-Muslim, and maybe even "deliberately devised to make a lot of the children drop out of the school system." No one chased *her* out into the parking lot to tell her she was out of her mind. Then a white man in a close-cropped beard stood up to say, "I'd like to see some kind of race-relations course be *mandated* in all schools." That is the kind of line that got resounding applause—along with slow nods and closed-mouth smiles—all afternoon.

The tone was set by the race-board brass, particularly its executive director, Judith Winston, who has a gift for being robustly, unambiguously anti-white. She complained, "Isn't part of the reason our schools are in the shape they're in because white people are moving away from the schools?" Such sentiments are meat on reactionary plates. Late in the afternoon, a Hoy sympathizer stood up to ask, "Several of the members have said that blacks in particular feel distrustful of the education establishment. More and more we are hearing from whites and Asians that they too are distrustful of the same establishment because of political correctness, affirmative action, and multiculturalism. Are there any plans to address their concerns?"

Winston looked at him with incredulity for a few seconds, rephrased his question, then asked with a smile, "In the context of white fear?" Then another panelist said, "I hope we can disabuse him of the impression that being white is a disadvantage in America." The audience burst into laughter.

"What harm can come of just talking about race?" one TV commentator asked the night of the Annandale conference.

A good deal, it would seem. For one, virtually all the people who spoke at the Annandale gathering are embodiments of the pseudo-Tocquevilleanism—as Bill Clinton and Dick Morris have redefined it—that purports to use community organizations to create a healthy, "triangulated" balance between government and individuals. What winds up happening is that these "voluntary organizations," whether Eileen Kugler's PTA or Sharifa Alkhateeb's intercultural-counseling service, become local satrapies that merely ratify the goals of the nanny state and make it more powerful and intrusive.

Because it works best by herding people into racial groupings, this type of initiative is at war with an older, more American vision: the universalist idea that we're equal under the law, or equal in the sight of God. The Annandale meeting is a worrisome indication that supplanting that vision may be the Clinton race board's goal. When interracial talks about race prove as sanctimonious, propagandistic, and barren as the Clinton forums have, it's immensely confusing to the tolerant mainstream that wants to leave race aside. When presidential advisers sneer at people who question affirmative action, dismiss the concerns of whites, and cheer on those who would mandate racial reeducation, it does more than give aid and comfort to those, black and white, who think the races shouldn't live together. It indoctrinates newcomers of all races in a divisive radicalism that ought to be hauled out of our national discussions and left to freeze in the school parking lot where it belongs. ♦

THE CLINTON FORUMS ON RACE ARE PROVING SANCTIMONIOUS, PROPAGANDISTIC, AND BARREN—AND CONFUSING TO ORDINARY, TOLERANT AMERIANS.

Why the Doomsayers Are Wrong about Russia

By Anders Åslund

On November 19, an editorial in the *New York Times* demanded the ouster of Anatoly Chubais, the leading free-market stalwart in the Russian government, for accepting a book advance of $90,000. Though politically foolish, the book deal was probably legal; indeed, the relatively modest sum involved suggests a concern for propriety. It also pales in comparison with the financial machinations of some other top Russian officials. Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin probably made a few billion dollars on the privatization of the state gas company, which he had managed back in Soviet days. Former first deputy prime minister Oleg Soskovets signed decrees relieving Trans World Metals, a company with which he had close ties, of hundreds of millions in taxes. Another former first deputy prime minister, Vladimir Potanin, president of Oneximbank, secured a tax break worth $1 billion for one of his businesses in exchange for joining the government.

But the *Times*, apparently, does not mind if Russian senior officials steal by the billion. To call for Chubais's ouster while ignoring self-dealing on a gargantuan scale is effectively to support the crony capitalists. Such remarkable lack of perspective is chronic in the treatment of Russia's transition in the U.S. media.

It is notable that post-Communist Russia attracts almost no rave reviews in the United States. Crime and economic decline dominate the news. Pundits predict difficulties ranging from popular uprisings, the break-up of the Russian Federation, domestic chaos, economic implosion, and starvation to military coups and expansion. There is the nagging fear that maybe Russia is not reformable.

Most Americans find President Boris Yeltsin incomprehensible. Although prominent figures in his successive governments, notably Chubais and Yegor Gaidar, stand for democracy and market economics, few voices are raised in their defense, either in Russia or the West. Foreign observers fail to appreciate that the reformers have never had free rein, but instead have operated within coalitions and faced massive resistance from an entrenched elite. Yet in spite of this, reform has made great headway. For all the drama of the last few years, Russia has actually proved surprisingly stable.

Nevertheless, a cottage industry of doom-prediction has sprung up, manned largely by Sovietologists whose intellectual capital fell with the Soviet Union. A telling example is Dimitri Simes, the widely quoted president of the Nixon Center for Peace and Freedom. He has persistently opposed the real reformers in favor of various "moderates" and "Russian patriots," such as the gray apparatchik Yuri Skokov, already forgotten, and General Alexander Lebed, who is without credible commitment to democracy. In 1996, Simes firmly predicted that President Yeltsin would steal the presidential election. He has condemned "Russia's experiment with democracy" as "a brief interlude born of confusion and weakness." He foresees Russian aggression sooner or later. "Russia's alienation from the West," he writes, "could easily contribute to its empire-building tendencies. It may not take too much time or effort to see Russian tanks on the Polish border again . . ." For all that he was born and raised a Russian, Simes makes pronouncements that cannot withstand scrutiny.

Another reason for the prevailing disparagement of Russia's progress is that few remember how bereft the country was in 1991. Its crisis was total. The Soviet government had printed money freely but kept prices low, so there was nothing to buy in the stores. Since people could do little with their money, many stopped working, and production plunged. Law and order were on the verge of breakdown, and the Soviet Union defaulted on its international payments.

Today, Russian society has come together in significant ways. Inflation and the national budget are under control. More than 70 percent of GDP is produced in the private sector. Prices are set by the market, and the economy probably started growing in 1997. Military expenditures have fallen from about one quarter of GDP in Soviet days to some 3 percent

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today, and the debacle in Chechnya shows that Russia cannot possibly pursue an expansionist war for many years to come. Two Communist-nationalist coup attempts have been foiled, and the Communists seem to have sunk in the polls for good. The social cost of the transition has been great, but the new Russia has a market economy based on private property and an elected, if imperfect, government.

Even on the crime front, progress is being made. Crime statistics—including secret Soviet statistics, now widely published—contradict the dire view that Russia is controlled by criminals and gripped by skyrocketing lawlessness. It is true that the Russian crime rate doubled—but it did so from 1988 to 1992, primarily in the final years of communism, when the powerful were grabbing what they could and repression no longer deterred. The crime rate was flat after 1993, then fell by 5 percent in 1996 and another 9 percent in the first nine months of 1997. With the sloppiness characteristic of so much writing about Russia, a recent report on organized crime published by the Center for Strategic and International Studies contains no crime statistics in its 90 pages, yet concludes that "the anticrime program of the Russian government has been a failure."

Strangely, many persist in believing that the Soviet Union was a law-abiding society. But Soviet ideology opposed the rule of law on principle, as constraining the discretionary power of the Communist party. Soviet statistics show that Russia has had a very high homicide rate for a long time. In 1985, it equaled the U.S. rate of 8 per 100,000. One reason this has passed largely unnoticed is that it was not a big-city phenomenon: The murder rate was twice the Russian average in Siberia and the Far East, where deported criminals were numerous. Now, many deportees have returned to the cities, and urban dwellers and foreigners are more aware of crime. While Russia's murder rate remains high, it dropped by 2 percent in 1995 and 7 percent last year.

As in the United States, the falling crime rate is a result of energetic government efforts. The Russian government spends ever more on law and order—about 2 percent of GDP, more than any Western country. The number of prison inmates is rising sharply, and an impressive 88 percent of reported murders are being solved. Thus, the picture is improving, contrary to most reporting, even if the contract killings associated with high-level corruption remain a very serious problem.

One of the most frequent complaints about Russia's reforms is that privatization has facilitated crime and the concentration of wealth. The CSIS report goes so far as to call the organized-crime syndicates "the principal beneficiaries of privatization." Those who managed the privatization process are accused of giving away the country's wealth to the managers of state enterprises, bankers, and criminals. But is this true?

Most privatization of large and medium-sized enterprises took place in 1993 and 1994 through a voucher process. By 1996, about 17,000 enterprises had been privatized this way. An extensive survey reported in *Kremlin Capitalism* by Joseph Blasi, Maya Kroumova, and Douglas Kruse shows that in 1996, enterprise managers owned 18 percent of the privatized capital. In April 1996, total market capitalization was $21 billion, so the voucher auctions awarded the managers of privatized enterprises capital worth barely $4 billion, or less than 1 percent of GDP. Contrary to popular belief, it is remarkable how little property former state-enterprise managers acquired through voucher privatization.

Much of the concern stems from the way a few unusual enterprises were privatized. Half the stock of the giant gas monopoly, Gazprom, was sold to insiders, including Chernomyrdin. And fifteen large companies were privatized in closed auctions at the end of 1995; in particular, big blocks of shares of the oil companies Sidanko, Yukos, and Sibneft were sold at low prices to new banks. Still, these privatizations were not the rule, and in several cases the stock was not sold at a discount. Chubais was forced to go along with these arrangements at a time when voucher privatization was no longer politically feasible. As a rule, Chubais fought to spread stock ownership as widely as possible and to limit the benefits flowing to insiders.

How, then, did some Russians get very rich as communism fell apart? The principal means was arbitrage: Buy something cheap at the controlled state price and resell it high on the free market. Arbitrage flourished in 1991 and 1992, when Russian raw materials could sometimes be bought for less than 1 percent of the world price. In 1992, about 30 percent of Russia's GDP was derived from export arbitrage in oil, natural gas, and metals.

Another source of wealth was import subsidies. In the winter of 1991-92, when starvation threatened, the Russian government lacked the clout to abolish import subsidies. Importers paid only 1 percent of the official exchange rate for the hard currency needed to import essential foods. No less than 15 percent of Russian GDP went to import subsidies in 1992. They were financed with Western commodity credits, which the Russian state would eventually have to repay.

A third source of enrichment was subsidized credits, which mushroomed in 1992 and 1993. The reform-

ers never succeeded in wresting control of the Central Bank from the Communist-dominated Supreme Soviet, and the bank fed the state enterprises' appetite for loans to such an extent that net credit expanded by 33 percent of GDP in 1992. Worse, most of these credits were heavily subsidized. Issued at interest rates of up to 25 percent a year at a time when inflation was 2,500 percent, they were virtual gifts from the state.

Incredibly, the gross benefits flowing to a well-connected few from these three sources alone amounted to some 75 percent of Russia's GDP in 1992. None of these subsidies can be defended as a social good. Furthermore, the division of spoils entailed a great deal of violence. The fortunes made in these ways vastly exceeded the total gains managers would reap from voucher privatization in the ensuing two years.

These findings match the general public's beliefs about who got rich in Russia's transition. New bankers made lots of money from commodity trading and inflationary practices like subsidized credit, but benefited little from voucher privatization. The managers of the state oil, gas, and metals companies sold their commodities to their own trading companies, a form of theft. Admittedly, those who prospered also bought stocks, but that isn't how they made their fortunes.

The period when communism was crumbling and a market economy was being born was an aberrant interlude, whose anomalies permitted the accumulation of great wealth. As the market developed, the early distortions were eliminated. Gaidar, Chubais, and another young reformer, Boris Fedorov, abolished subsidized credits in September 1993 and import subsidies by the end of that year. They dismantled export regulations piecemeal, effectively ending them in 1995. This year, Chubais and his fellow first deputy prime minister Boris Nemtsov finally halted a number of lucrative privileges enjoyed by "authorized banks." In every instance, the reformers had to overcome fierce resistance, not only from parliament but also from bankers, the energy lobby, commodity traders, and state-enterprise managers—all of them well represented in the halls of power. The decisive struggles occurred inside the government.

And, as we have seen, the reformers largely succeeded. They brought inflation down to about 13 percent in 1997 and saw the economy apparently edge into growth. While income differentials rose sharply in the early 1990s, they have been stable since 1995. Even worrisome health trends improved slightly after 1995. The conclusion seems obvious that Russia's chief social and economic problems sprang not from moving too rapidly to a market economy, but from eliminating too slowly distortions of the market rooted in the old socialist system.

Why then do so many blame the top reformers for the problems of the Russian transition? Understandably enough, members of the old Communist elite see Gaidar and Chubais as the enemies who dismantled their paradise. To Grigory Yavlinsky, leader of the liberal opposition party Yabloko, Gaidar and Chubais are rivals to be held accountable for every problem. Yavlinsky accuses Chubais of bringing crony capitalism to Russia, even though such capitalism flourished in 1991, before Chubais was a minister.

THE RUSSIAN PUBLIC DEBATE IS COLORFUL, AND FOREIGN OBSERVERS SOMETIMES MISTAKE OR MISREPRESENT ITS HUES.

In the run-up to the 1996 presidential elections, most anti-Communists apart from Yabloko—notably, the democratic Right and the new capitalists—joined forces to fight the Communists. But their coalition was short-lived. In the summer of 1997, several leading businessmen who had made money off the government came out against First Deputy Prime Ministers Chubais and Nemtsov for abolishing certain privileges for capitalists and conducting open privatization auctions.

In a recent interview, Nemtsov emphasized that the struggle in Russia is no longer between communism and capitalism but over what kind of capitalism will prevail. Moscow mayor Yuri Luzhkov stands for "nomenklatura-bureaucratic capitalism," said Nemtsov, under which "all power, all property and money shall belong to civil servants." Luzhkov keeps prices high in Moscow by limiting competition through the strict licensing of businesses. The second model is oligarchic crony capitalism, in which a privileged group of corporations and individuals controls most property and all power. Its main proponent is former deputy national security adviser Boris Berezovsky. The third model is the reformers' ordinary free-market system.

The Russian public debate is colorful, and foreign observers sometimes mistake or misrepresent its hues. Writing in the *Washington Post* on August 24, 1997, Peter Reddaway, a professor at George Washington University, quoted Mayor Luzhkov as claiming that "Chubais's conduct of privatization was so dubious that it required criminal investigation." But Luzhkov is actually opposed to most privatization; he wants his

city officials to hold onto their power and property. Reddaway goes on to cite approvingly Luzhkov's propaganda sheet, *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, calling Chubais "a much bigger Communist than Zyuganov" and one who uses "authoritarian, purely Stalinist methods." Needless to say, it can hardly be Communist to oppose what the Communists want or Stalinist to insist on democratic elections. Luzhkov is simply angry with Chubais because his free-enterprise program threatens Luzhkov's monopolistic regime. Reddaway sides with Luzhkov.

Equally astounding, Paul Saunders, director of the Nixon Center for Peace and Freedom, strongly supports Boris Berezovsky in a letter to the editor of the *Wall Street Journal* on November 13, 1997. Responding to a balanced news report of Berezovsky's ouster from the Security Council, Saunders argues that Berezovsky's "record of support for Yeltsin's reform efforts . . . is nearly perfect." In fact, Berezovsky is a shady character who made a lot of money on a car dealership that colluded with the management of Russia's biggest auto company to buy cars at rigged low prices. He went on to become king of one of the most mafia-infested sectors of the Russian economy. As deputy national security adviser, he tried to use the powers of office to facilitate the insider privatization of the oil company Rosneft (valued at up to $2 billion), to his own benefit. He made virtually none of his money in legitimate business and has been publicly accused of hideous crimes. Naturally enough, he strongly opposed Nemtsov and Chubais for trying to level the playing field, while he praises Western European social democracy, whose far-reaching regulation holds the potential for insider deals. One of Berezovsky's newspapers reprinted Reddaway's tirade against Chubais, as did a Communist newspaper.

Journalists and Russia-watchers need to do a much better job of evaluating their sources. Regrettably, the enemies of reform dominate the Russian media, and far too often, propaganda hostile to the reformers is reported as truth in the United States. Periodic reality checks help set matters straight.

At decisive moments, the Russian people have invariably opted for democracy and the market economy. Four times, in votes that amounted to referendums on the system, the forces of reform have carried the day, with majorities ranging from 54 percent to 58 percent. The electorate has been the great mainstay of Russia's democratic-capitalist revolution.

Another pillar of the new Russia is President Yeltsin. Though his skills are denigrated in the West, he has proven himself a visionary. He has succeeded in transcending his environment and reaching out to new worlds—even as he faced down two attempted coups. A formidable democratic politician, Yeltsin knows both how to lead and when to compromise.

Finally, the third pillar of reform comprises the committed young technocrats like Gaidar and Chubais. Thanks to them, the economy is predominantly in private hands—a giant accomplishment that will go far to guarantee the survival of Russia's political and economic freedom. ♦

A Recipe for Creating Disabilities

By Michael J. Reznicek

In March 1997, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission issued guidelines to help employers comply with the Americans With Disabilities Act as it relates to psychiatric disabilities. Intricate and often baffling, the guidelines do make one thing clear: There is no logical limit to the administrative, financial, and legal obligations of employers. Already, 13 percent of complaints filed under the ADA are for psychiatric disorders, second only to back problems. Given that a psychiatric diagnosis exists for almost any imaginable behavior, this percentage could easily grow.

For a glimpse of the ADA-protected workplace, then, consider this guidance from the EEOC:

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• An employer can be found in violation of the ADA for failing to adjust the work hours of an employee whose chronic tardiness results from depression.

• An employee whose "mind wanders frequently" because of an anxiety disorder may be protected under the ADA.

• An employee with "high levels of hostility" toward coworkers may be protected if the hostility is due to a personality disorder.

• An employer may not summarily refuse to hire an individual who has a history of on-the-job violence but instead must determine, from "medical knowledge and/or the best available objective evidence," whether the individual poses a "direct threat."

As these points suggest, the ADA, by placing psychiatric disabilities on the same plane as physical disabilities, has opened a Pandora's box. Unlike physical disorders, which are relatively static conditions independent of the demands of the surrounding environment, psychiatric disorders are dynamic and respond both to personal demands and to the pressures of the workplace. An exacting supervisor cannot affect a blind worker's blindness but very well might affect a depressed subordinate's punctuality.

To identify psychiatric disorders, the ADA relies on the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th edition, published by the American Psychiatric Association. The DSM-IV lists over 300 disorders. Fortunately, Congress had the foresight to exclude a few of them from coverage under the ADA, such as *current* use of illegal drugs, compulsive gambling, kleptomania, pyromania, and criminal sexual practices such as pedophilia, exhibitionism, and voyeurism. But it did not exclude, for example, personality disorders, acute stress disorder, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, intermittent explosive disorder (episodes of violent aggression), caffeine-induced sleep disorder, or nicotine withdrawal.

The DSM-IV's criteria for diagnosing personality disorders include an array of annoying and hostile behaviors: "persistently bears grudges," "shows emotional coldness," "suspiciousness," "deceitfulness," "reckless disregard for the safety of self or others," "consistent irresponsibility," "inappropriate, intense anger," and so on. Since the criteria are subjective (When are emotions "cold"?), personality disorders can easily be over-diagnosed.

But there is an even more fundamental problem. "Personality disorder" is a label applied to a pattern of behavior. There is no evidence that any underlying disorder provokes the behavior. In effect, then, a personality disorder *is* the behavior. Thus, the EEOC has essentially decreed that annoying behavior can be a protected disability.

The diagnosis of depression is similarly problematic. Although many believe depression to be a "chemical imbalance," there is no chemical test that helps with the diagnosis. In the end, the diagnosis turns out to be entirely subjective. If you think or feel that you are depressed, there is nothing to keep you from being so labeled.

This is the nub of what makes the EEOC guidelines so troublesome: Psychiatrists cannot reliably differentiate a psychiatric condition from a counterfeit—they cannot distinguish, for example, depression from laziness. With the EEOC's help, unmotivated employees will soon learn to protect their jobs by taking their health-insurance cards to the nearest mental-health clinic, where they will find psychiatrists with every incentive to make the diagnosis of depression. "Laziness" is not reimbursable, generates no return appointments, and will not be found in the DSM-IV.

To be sure, the EEOC does not automatically equate a psychiatric diagnosis with a psychiatric disability. To rise to the level of a disability under the ADA, a disorder must "substantially limit one or more major life activities." The major life activity, though, can be something as ordinary as learning, thinking, concentrating, speaking, sleeping, interacting with others, or caring for oneself. And "credible testimony from the individual with the disability and his/her family members, friends, or coworkers" may be sufficient to establish the limitation.

It hardly needs underlining, at this point, that these guidelines are an employer's nightmare. What may be less obvious is that they work against the very people they are intended to protect.

Not surprisingly, employers are finding creative ways to avoid hiring those with psychiatric diagnoses. And who can fault them? Hiring a person with a personality disorder could mean years of accommodating obnoxious behavior, followed by years of litigation if the employee is dismissed. Some employers are protecting themselves by expressing "concern" for the mental health of job applicants. An individual recently discharged from the military for depression showed me a rejection letter in which a prospective employer claimed that the stresses of the company's work environment were likely to worsen the applicant's mental well-being. In an unregulated job market, this indi-

vidual would have a better chance of getting hired because employers would incur no special risk by hiring him.

Another unintended consequence of these guidelines is that they can *enable* disability behavior. Some employees will become "ill" in order to extract accommodations, such as altered work hours or low-stress tasks. Others will remain "disabled" in order to keep accommodations. Of course, this pernicious outcome does not arise with everyone who carries a psychiatric diagnosis; most compensate for any temporary problems in performance during periods when they are symptom-free. Employers have always had a vested interest in accommodating this latter group and have never needed "help" from meddling government agencies.

An unregulated job market, however, is not in the interests of the mental-health industry, whose political influence, I believe, lies behind this latest intrusion of government into the workplace. The mental-health industry has successfully argued that human behavior follows a linear medical model. Aberrant behavior, such as poor work performance, is presumed to be due to an underlying biological or psychological disorder, which, given proper treatment, will correct itself. This paradigm minimizes the role of human agency and individual differences in ability.

> MOST FAILING EMPLOYEES EITHER ARE NOT QUALIFIED FOR THEIR JOBS OR HAVE CHARACTER PROBLEMS. NEITHER SITUATION SHOULD BE MEDICALIZED.

The medical model of behavior enjoys widespread support for a number of reasons. First, it appears to have tremendous explanatory power. There is no end to the number of unconscious dynamics and biological factors that can "cause" behavior. And the medical model, like the diagnoses it generates, is non-falsifiable. Who can prove that any given behavior is *not* caused by an underlying disorder? In this regard, modern psychiatry has not progressed far beyond Freud. If a century ago psychiatrists talked about "incestuous wishes," today they talk about "chemical imbalances," both of which are obscure and theoretical and end in behavioral determinism.

The medical model thrives, also, because society trusts the medical profession and is impressed by psychiatric jargon. Further, support for the medical model is mutually advantageous for the mental-health industry and government. If underlying disorders cause behavior problems, then society needs government to ensure that the "sick" receive treatment and are protected from employers. It should be no surprise that psychiatrists are the medical specialists most in favor of nationalized health care.

The problem with the medical model, of course, is that it does not explain human behavior. Most failing employees either are not qualified for the jobs they hold or have character problems, neither of which situations should be medicalized. The ADA has created a pipeline through which failing employees will pass, attracting diagnoses from the mental-health system and medical statements about work limitations and the need for accommodations, all of which will be purely speculative, though apt to gain the loyalty of the employees. Such arrangements provide little incentive for failing employees to put forth the rigorous effort that successful employment requires.

The EEOC, then, has effectively removed one of society's best "treatments" for workplace performance problems: relentless employer pressure to conform to high standards of productivity, efficiency, and congeniality. Whether clinically depressed or lazy, attention-deficit disordered or bored, personality disordered or misunderstood, everyone benefits from pressure to be productive, efficient, and kind. To paraphrase Samuel Johnson, when a man knows he is about to be fired, it concentrates his mind wonderfully.

An unregulated job market matches employees to jobs for which they are qualified. Under the ADA, employers will often be forced to accommodate unqualified employees whose difficulties are mistakenly diagnosed as mental disorders. There is no level of accommodation, though, that will turn unqualified employees into qualified ones. Sensing this, such employees are likely to experience ongoing stress problems "requiring" more mental-health care and further accommodations.

The EEOC guidelines are part of a larger and more ominous trend in the culture: People are not held responsible for their behavior. In medicalizing workplace performance problems, the EEOC relies on junk medical science and forces employers to assume responsibilities that properly belong to individuals. Should society ever shift responsibility back to individuals, then many with psychiatric "disabilities" will find themselves abruptly cured. ♦

Americans at War

Why They Fought World War II, and Why They Won

By David Tell

Today it is widely understood that, for front-line troops, the fundamental experience of warfare is fear—fear of an intensity that seems nearly beyond human endurance. And yet, as often as not, soldiers manage to endure it. So the obvious questions are how they do it, and why.

These have become central questions of combat only recently. Until the second half of the nineteenth century, Western military science taught that the leadership of generals and the collective discipline they imposed on entire armies were what determined combat effectiveness. It was Charles Ardant du Picq, a French infantry officer, who first seriously argued that armed engagement is inevitably sealed by an outbreak of existential panic among one side's privates—regardless of the training and direction they have received from above. Individuals in the rank and file are "the first weapon of battle," his 1871 treatise *Battle Studies* proclaimed. "Let us then study the soldier in battle, for it is he who brings reality to it."

But another seventy years went by before anyone thought to pursue such a study in systematic, eyewitness fashion. Throughout World War II, the American War Department, eager to discover how troops might overcome the terror of combat, sent Information and Historical Service teams into every theater of the war. The researchers collected mountains of paper evidence and conducted extensive oral interviews with the troops. Then, shortly after the war, they wrote a pioneering work of quantitative sociology, based on after-action questionnaires completed by the GIs themselves.

This study, *The American Soldier*, concluded that once the shooting starts, a man on the front line quickly restricts his mental energies to simple self-preservation. That soldier's sense of mission only rarely extends further than his foxhole buddies, who, he is convinced, represent his only available and dependable support. Larger war aims and patriotism matter little to him. Indeed, at the front there is "a taboo against any talk of a flag-waving variety."

Stephen E. Ambrose
Citizen Soldiers
Simon & Schuster, 480 pp., $27.50

Gerald F. Linderman
The World Within War
Free Press, 480 pp., $26

This view of combat attitudes and behavior was given most extreme expression by S. L. A. Marshall, the Army's highest-ranking historian during the war. Marshall's *Men Against Fire*, published in 1947, reported that their instinctive recoil from violence was so powerful that at least 75 percent of American GIs in Europe and Asia could not bring themselves to use their rifles even once. Those few who did shoot back, the book insisted, were motivated exclusively by feeling for the men in their immediate company: "I hold it to be one of the simplest truths of war that the thing which enables an infantry soldier to keep going with his weapon is the near presence or the presumed presence of a comrade."

Men Against Fire was profoundly influential. Its lesson about the primacy of small-group dynamics ("unit cohesion," in contemporary parlance) was quickly and permanently absorbed into the tactical doctrine of every Western military establishment. And its portrait of the American combat soldier—bonded by fright to his platoon; heedless, even scornful, of cause and flag—assumed an unshakable place in the scholarly literature on the Second World War.

All of which, of course, is wildly paradoxical. American fighting units in World War II could not have been particularly "cohesive": the turnover in their membership was too rapid. Thirty-seven U.S. divisions spent at least a hundred days in European combat, and more than half of them suffered losses, counting replacements, that exceeded their original strength. The 4th Infantry had a 252 percent casualty rate. The average lifespan of an American platoon leader in Europe, from the moment he took command, was thirty days. You can't cohere with a dead man.

If, just for the sake of argument, these units were somehow cohesive, and cohesion was so vital a battlefield motivation, how is it that only a small fraction of GIs could summon the will to fire their weapons? If, for that matter, the vast majority of GIs were routinely too paralyzed by dread to help out in combat, how did the Allies ultimately prevail? Either way, can it really be true that all these GIs

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served their time insensible to the fact that something even more important than their own lives was at stake—in this, the most fateful and least morally complicated of wars? And does not this last suggestion dishonor the dead, the survivors, and the country in which they were born?

Yes, it does. American historians have been ignoring or evading this problem for decades. They are ignoring and evading it still.

Stephen E. Ambrose, one of America's leading popular historians of World War II, has recently published *Citizen Soldiers*. His 1994 book, *D-Day*, was an account of the Normandy campaign's first twenty-four hours. This latest work, a sequel, pushes forward to V-E Day, eleven months later. Ambrose again relies upon memoirs, oral histories, and interviews with the junior officers and enlisted men who did the fighting. And he claims to be addressing the same issues raised in his earlier work: "Who they were, how they fought, why they fought, what they endured, how they triumphed."

But except where the soldiers' endurance is concerned, Ambrose doesn't really have much new to say. He is a storyteller, not an original analyst. And the story he tells—though in the voice of the grunts—is consistent with the general conclusion of previous histories that focused on officers in the rear: It was principally the American logistical achievement that defeated Germany in the Second World War, the overwhelming weaponry and manpower we were able to send across the ocean and into the enemy's lines.

Six weeks after D-Day, for example, the German front in northwest France was held by General Fritz Bayerlein's Panzer Lehr Division, spread along the N-800 highway between St.-Lô and Périers. On the morning of July 25, Panzer Lehr was attacked for twenty minutes by 550 American fighter bombers. Then it was attacked for an hour by eighteen hundred B-17s. Then it was attacked for another hour by a thousand U.S. ground guns while 350 P-47s dropped napalm and 396 Marauders did the mopping up. In all, sixteen thousand tons of explosives were released on a target twelve kilometers square. Panzer Lehr was obliterated. The next day, American troops began their unimpeded race east to the Seine.

By the end of the Normandy campaign, Germany had lost more than four-hundred-thousand men. It had recovered only twenty-four of the fifteen hundred tanks it had thrown into battle. Its fewer than six hundred remaining aircraft faced an Allied fleet of fourteen thousand. By the time the U.S. First Army captured the Ludendorff Bridge at Remagen in March 1945, and Americans began pouring into Germany, Allied pilots were flying eleven thousand sorties a day, and the Luftwaffe had ceased to function. The war ended two months later.

THE HISTORICAL RECORD IS DOTTED WITH EVIDENCE CONTRADICTING RECEIVED SOCIOLOGICAL WISDOM ABOUT "UNIT COHESION."

But between Normandy and the Rhine had come the winter of 1944-45, and it is in Ambrose's gripping coverage of these months that his book makes an invaluable contribution. War is hell, we know to say, but the hell we have in mind is usually a Gettysburg photograph by Matthew Brady or the mud and idiocy of the Somme in 1916. The suffering of American combat forces before their epochal triumph in World War II has assumed a casually stipulated—and consequently disrespectful—quality in our popular imagination. Already a bestseller, *Citizen Soldiers* cannot help but restore the grim record.

They did not fight at night during the Civil War and routinely spent weeks marching or camping unmolested. Months sometimes went by without incident in World War I, and even during fire, Allied battalions were removed from the front for rest on regular sixteen-day rotations. Soldiers during World War II, by contrast, fought at the front until they were wounded or killed. They fought round the clock, on maybe two hours sleep, for as long as sixty days at a time.

In the Hurtgen Forest and the Ardennes, there was winter light only eight hours each day. The weather was the coldest in fifty years, frequently well below zero. The GIs had neither warm clothes nor snow boots. Trenchfoot took mens' toes, frostbite took their fingers, and thousands of German "Bouncing Betties"—mines that sprang two and a half feet in the air, spraying a curtain of razor-sharp scrap metal—took their genitals. American foxholes and command posts, tenuously established in frozen mud, were subjected to continual artillery bombardments whose concussive force alone could break a soldier's bones and whose noise was enough to send blood streaming from his ears. When he was able to march on actual roads, his feet slipped on the slime of dead bodies crushed by tanks. GIs wet themselves or wailed for their mothers or vomited from fear. One-fourth of all U.S. battlefield evacuations in Europe were for cases of nervous collapse.

How, then, did they endure such stress and continue fighting? Was S. L. A. Marshall right or wrong? Ambrose circles around this question, awkwardly and quickly, in both his introduction and epilogue, and winds up answering it both ways. He reveres the GIs too much to accept the obviously insulting judgment that they operated without any consideration for national objectives and

UPI/Corbis-Bettman

American reinforcements land on the beaches of Normandy.

ideals. "At the core," Ambrose writes, our troops were patriots; it's just that they were modernists, too—uncomfortable with public displays of passion and "embarrassed by patriotic bombast" about the war from combat-ignorant home folks.

At the same time, Ambrose is clearly daunted by the ironclad historical consensus about his "citizen soldiers." "In general," he concludes, "in assessing the motivation of the GIs, there is agreement that patriotism or any other form of idealism had little if anything to do with it. The GIs fought because they had to. What held them together was not country and flag, but unit cohesion. It has been my experience, through four decades of interviewing ex-GIs, that such generalizations are true enough."

In other words: Our troops held together because they held together, not because they were patriotic. And they were patriotic. This is an explanation that doesn't explain.

If Ambrose's book is ultimately unsatisfying, however, Gerald F. Linderman's latest work is ultimately unacceptable. In *The World Within War*, Linderman, a history professor at the University of Michigan, announces the same purpose as Ambrose—wishing to "see World War II through the eyes of those American combat soldiers." But he has done it upside down and backwards. *World Within War* is a work of pure theory—viewing American combat soldiers through the eyes of an elaborate, pre-fabricated diagnosis of warfare's general psycho-social effect on the individual. The book watches American combat soldiers at such close quarters it winds up going blind.

The GIs enlisted, Linderman reports, eager to fight, confident of their prowess, and certain of their personal invulnerability. Once they had seen combat, however, they were first amazed that anyone might mean them harm, and later silent, tense, and narrowly obsessed with their own security.

Standing alone, these observations are commonplace enough, and unobjectionable. But Linderman is not finished. He describes battle-hardened vets as almost feral. Stories of eerily fulfilled foreboding—a soldier is overwhelmed by the objectively inexplicable notion that a bomb is about to drop *right there*, and then it does—are ubiquitous in the literature of warfare. But Linderman treats his World War II examples with alarming seriousness, as though some GIs might literally have become animals of instinct. Bomber pilot John Muirhead, Linderman recounts, once broke radio silence over Italy to say "Group Leader, I smell flak." "Yes, I smell it, too," came the reply. Then

flak actually appeared.

And the GIs' transformation into brutes, in Linderman's account, grew deeper still. They became fully inured to the presence of death. Frank Mathias, whom Linderman identifies as an "Army machine gunner," sat eating K-rations next to a Philippine-island ditch filled with Japanese corpses. "I absentmindedly watched bubbles of gas and liquid moving around under their tightly stretched skins as I munched my crackers," Linderman quotes from Mathias's memoir. "The June sunlight was bright and hot. They were in their world and I was in mine. I had to eat, didn't I?" One half suspects this story is a piece of supermacho apocrypha; Mathias's memoir, a buried footnote indicates, is called *GI Five: An Army Bandsman in World War II*. But it suits Linderman's purpose.

That purpose seems finally to be a denial that the Second World War contained *any* value or meaning for its soldiers. Even the legendary recourse to "unit cohesion" was at some point abandoned by these troops, Linderman says. After over a hundred days on Guadalcanal, a Marine corporal wrote his dad: "My best buddie . . . was caught in the face by a full blast of machine gun fire and when the hole we were laying in became swamped by flies gathering about him and [he] being already dead, I had to roll him out of the small hole on top of the open ground and the dirty SOBs kept shooting him full of holes. Well anyway God spared my life and I am thankful for it." From such ambiguous evidence Linderman concludes that long service left GIs "bereft of any broad emotional support that might have checked some of combat's denaturant effects." In combat, at bottom, American troops could find "nothing of sufficient worth to justify their presence."

This comes perilously close to a claim that America's overall presence in World War II was unjustified. Gerald Linderman deeply pities the American soldier's plight. But he does not much respect the work they did; indeed, he appears revolted by it. This is a sin. They were working to destroy Hitler.

And they were working pretty well. Trucks and planes and gasoline and explosive shells might have tipped the scale in World War II, but the conflict remained always one for territory, which ground troops alone could capture. The GIs on whom this mission fell were constantly frightened, of course. But they were never immobilized by this fear, not in any dangerous numbers. Marshall's famous statistical contention that 75 percent of American troops never fired their weapons was thoroughly debunked in 1989 when Roger Spiller of the Army's Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth went public with the results of his research among Marshall's private papers and official records. The old man had never conducted company-level "fire-ratio" interviews; he had made the whole thing up, as his wartime assistant later acknowledged.

Why it took forty years for someone to figure this out is a mystery. The historical record is quite clear: The GIs were excellent soldiers. During the Battle of the Bulge, two thousand of them from the 28th Division held off a ten-thousand-man Panzer force for an entire day before falling back a few miles to regroup. Fifteen German divisions attacked Bastogne during the same battle. The town was successfully defended by a single American division, the 101st Airborne, and parts of another.

Archive Photos/Popperfoto

An American GI shaves before the invasion of Europe.

More important, the historical record is dotted with intriguing pieces of evidence that contradict the other half of received sociological wisdom about the war—that circular business about "unit cohesion" which portrays the GIs as bored by or deaf to or even contemptuous of the great civilizational crisis whose vortex they occupied. True enough, American soldiers had little time for

fancy philosophical pronouncements. Their deeds, they surely felt, were sufficiently eloquent. At the war's conclusion, Dwight Eisenhower issued a one-sentence statement from headquarters: "The mission of this Allied force was fulfilled at 0241 local time, May 7, 1945."

But further down the line, the privates and corporals were sometimes more explicit about their overriding convictions and motivation. In the rivers of mail they sent back home to the States, full of unselfconscious tributes to America as "the best country on this Earth." In their mumbled reactions to the German slave-labor camps they liberated. In a thousand other places, most likely. Gerald Linderman cannot bring himself to believe in such transparent patriotism. Stephen Ambrose, who might be expected to seize upon it, hesitates instead, and looks no further.

Linderman tells the story of a woman on a Kentucky public bus who was making good money off the wartime economy and was overheard to say she hoped the fighting might continue at least until she'd paid off her refrigerator. An old man on the bus became enraged. "How dare you!" he bellowed, and began crowning her on the head with his umbrella. No other passenger intervened. Eventually, someone with a spirit like that old man's will write a history of the GIs in World War II. And then, finally, the citizen soldiers will get their due. ♦

Love at the Opera

True Romance in the Limelight

By Jay Nordlinger

The opera world is helpless against a love story, and it is now under the spell of a real one. On a spring day in 1996, Angela Gheorghiu, the dreamy Romanian soprano, and Roberto Alagna, the equally dreamy French-Italian tenor, skipped out of a rehearsal at the Metropolitan Opera in New York. They made their way to City Hall, where Mayor Rudolph Giuliani was delighted to pronounce them man and wife. They then hustled back to the Met for further rehearsal of *La Bohème*, one of the most romantic of operas.

At the next day's matinee, the newlyweds basked in the cheers of their enraptured fans, and that evening in a televised gala they sang a Mascagni duet cheek to cheek—the bride looking transported, the groom looking slightly distracted (and in worse voice, thanks to allergies). The sighs of an international audience were all but audible.

Since then, the couple's careers have been blazing. The musical press has described them as "opera's dream team," "opera's sweethearts," "opera's golden twosome," "opera's hottest duo," "opera's Fred and Ginger," "opera's ten-hanky heartthrobs." They are, as nearly everyone has remarked, all a publicist could wish for.

Music may be close to a meritocracy, but extra-musical charms are not irrelevant, particularly in opera (as Maria Callas discovered after shedding over sixty pounds). Gheorghiu is a jaw-dropping, traffic-stopping, ten-alarm beauty. Critics have not ignored her looks, and they should not. One writer from the *London Evening Standard* noted that Gheorghiu is "believable as a woman so sexy that men would kill for her, or die for her."

Alagna is no eyesore himself, possessing a scruffy, working-class magnetism. The son of a Sicilian bricklayer, he grew up in Paris, singing for tips in cabarets. For a time, as he was trying to break into opera, he supported himself as an electrician. With no formal musical training, he is a natural, instinctive singer, touted as "The Fourth Tenor" (after the Big Three of stadium-concert renown: Luciano Pavarotti, Plácido Domingo, and José Carreras).

Alagna says of his encounter with Gheorghiu, "It was love at first sight." That was in 1992, when they were both already married to others: he to a woman who died two years later, leaving him with a young daughter; she to a Bucharest plumber, whom she apparently discarded in order to join Alagna (a detail that the publicity materials omit). Now in their early thirties, the pair enjoy the status of pin-ups, which is fine with Alagna: "The problem today in classical music," he says, "is that it is seen as shameful to be visible, to make records, to be in the public eye. Why should pop or film stars get full-page articles and opera singers three lines?"

Just last month, the couple received one of the highest accolades music can bestow: "Album of the Year" from *Gramophone* magazine, the most important publication in the business. The award came for their recording of *La Rondine*, a seldom-performed opera of Puccini, which brims with influences from both his *Bohème* and Richard Strauss's waltzy wonder, *Der Rosenkavalier*. If the opera has been known for anything, it has been for the soprano aria "Chi il bel sogno," popularly called "Doretta's Song," which Leontyne Price has made her own for some fifty years now. Gheorghiu does not handle it especially well, failing

Jay Nordlinger, associate editor of The Weekly Standard, *writes regularly on classical music.*

to exploit the spine-tingling lilt of the piece and flatting on its glorious, sustained high *C*.

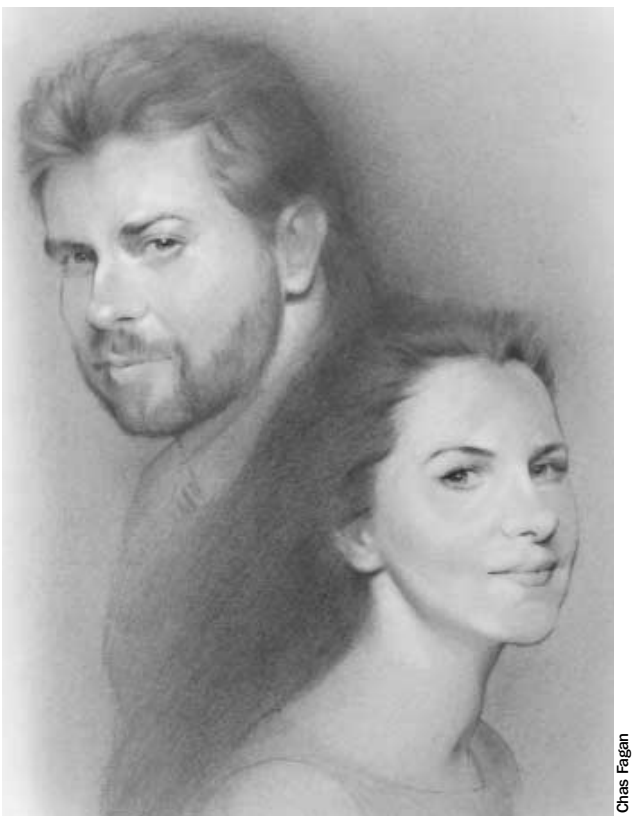
Elsewhere, though, she is superb, displaying a medium-sized, adaptable voice with a powerful top register and a dark, Callas-like lower one. In "Ore dolci e divine"—the opera's second-best-known portion—she is playful and affecting. Her vibrato is excitingly quick and her articulation crisp. Her musical judgments are occasionally odd, but they are usually interesting and defensible.

Alagna, for his part, is arresting: virile, warm, and sturdy. He has a nice sense of the musical line, and his vocal production is simple, direct, and unforced. Voices, like people, have personalities, and his is charismatic—something no one can learn but everyone desires.

Another briskly selling disc is Gheorghiu's collection of arias, released in 1996 as her debut album. She is particularly effective in the hit from Alfredo Catalani's opera *La Wally*, made famous in the 1980s New Wave film *Diva*. Gheorghiu's voice is lovely but, to her benefit, not sugary sweet; it has a bite to it, as though cut with vinegar. Her "Jewel Song" from Gounod's *Faust* is winsome, showing Gheorghiu to be a persuasive French singer, with ample technique. With "Quel guardo il cavaliere" from Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*, she establishes her *bel canto* credentials, exhibiting a refined sense of dynamics and weight.

Alagna, too, has made a recording of arias, whose accompanying booklet features perhaps more photographs than necessary. His timbre is similar to Pavarotti's—the older man is something of a model—and his intonation is secure. He treats Donizetti robustly, lending a heft to lightish music. Yet there is some evidence of strain on his upper notes, suggesting that he ought to seek an adjustment in technique to protect his longevity.

In the well-loved "Pourquoi me réveiller?" from Massenet's *Werther*, Alagna is sensitive—and it is refreshing to hear a tenor sing proper French for a change. His "E la solita storia" from Francesco Cilea's *Arlesiana* is rightly haunting, but in his softer singing, his voice loses body and substance. His "Donna è mobile" from Verdi's *Rigoletto* is both suave and exuberant, though it betrays his tendency to sing sharp (as he does here on his big, concluding *B*).



Chas Fagan

Married opera stars Roberto Alagna and Angela Gheorghiu.

Alagna's most recent album is *Serenades*, a bow to his southern Italian heritage. (Gheorghiu, too, plans to look homeward with a collection of Romanian folk songs.) In traditional favorites like *Maria Marì*, *Torna a Surriento*, and *O sole mio* (the Italian tenor's calling-card), Alagna is accompanied by his two guitar-playing brothers. Sometimes, family loyalty can go too far in music—as Mstislav Rostropovich demonstrated when he had his daughter accompany him in recital—but, for the most part, the Alagna brothers pick and strum inoffensively. Strangely, Alagna's singing in this recording lacks intimacy, though he has the songs in his bloodstream and performs with his family in the comfort of a small Venetian church. Pavarotti, to name only one, is far superior in this repertory.

Gheorghiu and Alagna's greatest commercial success, unsurprisingly, has come with their album of duets—the cover showing them reclining in each other's arms. Does it matter that the singers are married? They certainly think so. Alagna declares that "to sing love duets with the person you love is *magnifique*. We are natural together." Gheorghiu adds, "We seem to breathe as one. There's an extra energy and an extra charge to what we do. It's impossible to explain the feeling."

They are indeed convincing together, though perhaps mainly because of their musicianship. An appealing selection on their duets album is "Tonight" from Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story*—their performance showing that the piece deserves to be known as a genuine operatic duet, alongside those from *Faust*, *Don Pasquale*, and *La Bohème*. The couple's voices are not to everybody's liking: Hers can take on a pillowed, Joan Sutherland-like quality, and her breathing is now and then shallow; he can be pinched, nasal, and "covered." But they invariably command attention.

Lately, some critics have been wearying of their act, and a bit of backlash has set in. The two have been reproved for petulance, high-handedness, airs—in other words, for behaving like opera stars. Alagna complains that "Angela and I have been put to siege . . . because of our position." He has a point when he claims that they are the targets of envy and resentment: "People whisper, Will they live happily ever after? The critics are much harder on me now that I am so happy. I think they were kinder when I was this sad, poor guy going through a difficult time."

Still, the world is throwing garlands at the singers' feet, swooning over the obvious passion between them and hoping for the success of their marriage. (Opera's two most famous marriages—Leontyne Price and William Warfield, and Robert Merrill and Roberta Peters—both foundered quickly.) Annoying as the hype may be, they deserve their celebrity, their wealth, the screaming, adulatory throngs. Why not? They are first-rate musicians—who happen to sparkle with glamour, as well. ♦

Missing Heaven, Making Hell

Steven Spielberg Fails at Being Good, Woody Allen Succeeds at Being Bad

By John Podhoretz

Sunday, December 14. I got in to see *Deconstructing Harry* this afternoon, which may not sound like much to you, but given the fact it's opening weekend and I live in New York, that was an unexpected triumph. On Saturday night, I had walked over to the Village East theater at 7:15, only to find the 8:15 show already sold out—along with the 10:15 and the 12:15.

Why this mad enthusiasm for *Deconstructing Harry*? Because it's the new movie starring, written by, and directed by Woody Allen, and Woody Allen occupies a position in the cultural life of New York City comparable to Steven Spielberg's dominant position in the rest of America. If you want to understand just how sacrosanct Allen is, consider this: He has made thirty movies, and every one of them has received a favorable review in the *New York Times*. Every single one. Even *Alice*. Even *Another Woman*.

His status in his hometown is due less to the quality of his work than sheer parochialism. Before Mayor Giuliani cleaned up the place, Woody Allen was the only person in America who had a good word to say for New York. He lives on Fifth Avenue, almost all his movies have been set entirely in New York, and there's often a moment in an Allen movie in which he says something like, "I don't care what anybody says, this is a great city."

But more important, Allen is the representative figure of New York in our time—the perfect reflection of the cultural attitudes of the city's elite for whom intellectual name-dropping is a way of expressing their superiority to the bohunks who live beyond the Hudson.

There were entire scenes in Allen's *Manhattan* almost twenty years ago that featured nothing but characters declaiming the names of the famous and not-so-famous, from Isak Dinesen to Thomas Mann. In *Deconstructing Harry*, the character played by Woody Allen even drops the name of Sophocles in a conversation with a prostitute.

Allen is also an idea-dropper, a sixty-two-year-old man who left college before graduating and so never had a chance to grow out of the late-night bull sessions that seem so wonderful during those years (and the memory of which brings pain to all of us who can remember what fools we made of ourselves). His intellectual obsessions are sadly puerile for a man who will soon be able to buy a Seniors ticket at the local multiplex; for instance, he mentions, yet again, his fear of an expanding universe in *Deconstructing Harry*.

In this respect, too, he is the perfect stand-in for New Yorkers, who believe themselves wonderfully cosmopolitan but are utterly terrified to disagree with one another (or with a critic for the *Times*) and can easily go through life never meeting anybody who has a thought different from their own. In *Angels in America*, the epic "gay fantasia on national themes" that Frank Rich believes is the greatest play of our age, all the actors had to do to get a knowing, mocking laugh from the New York audience was merely speak the words "Ed Meese." New Yorkers knew nothing of Ed Meese except that you were supposed to hold him in contempt. The *Times* told them so. And so they did.

You might think Allen's standing would have suffered from the public spectacle a few years ago after he left his girlfriend Mia Farrow for her teenage daughter (she found out when she came across pornographic photographs he had taken of the girl and was so understandably horrified that she feared he was also sexually abusing the baby daughter they had adopted together). But nobody suffers as a result of public disgrace these days, and certainly not in New York.

Contributing editor John Podhoretz edits the editorial pages of the New York Post.

Matthew McConaughey, playing a lawyer, tries to save his clients from the slave ship Amistad.

Still, what's fascinating about *Deconstructing Harry* is that it's a movie about being a public disgrace—a real change from his last film, the awful musical jape *Everyone Says I Love You*. By acknowledging, even reveling in, his ill repute, Allen has liberated himself from the preposterous pose he had been affecting as a Good Man in a Bad Time.

The *New York Times* was always there to act as his press agent in this regard. A year before Mia Farrow came upon the pornographic photos, the *Times Magazine* ran a worshipful article about Allen and Farrow's living arrangements in which the author, Eric Lax, explained that even though they lived in separate apartments, he was closer to her kids than most live-in fathers. (That proved to be true, in a certain sense.)

Deconstructing Harry is a remarkable and shocking piece of work—the funniest Allen film in fifteen years, and unquestionably the most foul-mouthed and pornographically suggestive mainstream American movie yet made. Words are used routinely in the course of *Deconstructing Harry*—and by Allen, who has rarely uttered on-screen profanity before—that would get a drill sergeant at Aberdeen sentenced to life in prison without parole. What's more, two of America's sweethearts (Demi Moore and Julia Louis-Dreyfus of *Seinfeld*) perform oral sex before our weary eyes.

SPIELBERG SURELY MEANT TO CONVEY THE PLIGHT OF THE *AMISTAD* SLAVES, BUT HE SUCCEEDS ONLY IN MAKING THEM NOBLE SAVAGES.

"I'm the worst person in the world," cries Harry Block, Allen's novelist character, and he's right. "How about Hitler?" somebody says in response. "Okay, Hitler," Block acknowledges.

The movie cuts between Block's pill-popping, alcoholic, hooker-infested life and scenes from the antic fiction he writes—which include a journey he takes to Hell, where he discovers that he and the devil (a hilarious Billy Crystal) have both had their way with Sheila Pepkin and the Sherman twins. "They're here!" the devil tells Harry. "Want to see them?"

Allen surely is going to Hell, and many people would consider *Deconstructing Harry* Exhibit A in the case for the prosecution. But fair is fair. When the guy chooses to be funny, he is still capable of pulling off

moments more inspired than any in contemporary cinema.

Wednesday, December 17. If Woody Allen is going to Hell, Steven Spielberg is trying far too hard to get into Heaven—and deserves nothing more than purgatory. Though he is the most financially successful creative person in the history of the planet, Spielberg has proved time and again that he is a good storyteller only when he tries hard. He often doesn't. *Jurassic Park* may have been the highest-grossing movie of all time, but it was an utter mess, and its sequel, *The Lost World*, was even worse—a movie so shoddy in conception and execution that it displayed real contempt for his audience.

Now he has made the second film in what will clearly be a series: *Steven Spielberg Presents True Stories of Human Calamity*. The new *Amistad* follows the Holocaust epic *Schindler's List* in telling the story of men who degrade other men, this time by making slaves of them. The movie begins with the 1839 revolt on board the slave ship *Amistad*. The revolt's leader is Cinque, like his fellow unfortunates a West African kidnapped by slave traders operating illegally on British territory. The ship goes aground on Long Island and the slaves are arrested, whereupon the movie becomes a series of courtroom scenes in which their rights as men are argued.

Schindler's List really was extraordinary because, despite all the temptations, Spielberg did not surrender to piety. He made a movie about the Holocaust with a morally ambiguous figure at the center of it—a man who saved Jewish lives at first entirely for profit and then because he became compelled to beat the system. *Schindler's List* had a passionate urgency, a real freshness to it. Spielberg took decades of drippy reflections on the Holocaust, peeled them all back, and showed the catastrophe anew. If he never made another film, he would be remembered for it alone.

But *Amistad* is purely an act of piety with all the brio of a grade-school Thanksgiving pageant (and in the central role of Cinque's lawyer, the embarrassing Matthew McConaughey gives a performance a fourth-grader would be ashamed of). The movie is full of Historically-Charged-Moments of the sort that never happen when people are actually making history—but which allow pageant directors like Spielberg to sneak in the little historical factoids they've ginned up. When we first see John Quincy Adams (Anthony Hopkins), who eventually argues the case before the Supreme Court, he is being attacked in the House of Representatives for wanting to take the junk "from the attic of a Mr. John Smithson and turn it into a national museum."

No conversation goes on for more than two minutes without somebody bringing up the possibility of civil war—including Adams, who discusses it before the Supreme Court. But the real-life *Amistad* incident took place in 1839, and the South was winning every battle with the abolitionists; it was only when the North began to succeed in restricting slavery that the civil-war talk began in earnest. Apparently, when you're staging a pageant, you really want all the boys and girls to get the idea, no matter how vulgar you have to be.

The movie's worst failure has to do with its portrayal of the forty-four slaves themselves. We learn almost nothing about them except that they are slaves and are really buff. Spielberg leaves unsubtitled most of what they say to each other in their African languages. Though he surely meant to convey the difficulty of their plight and their inability to communicate, his strange decision turns the slaves into nothing more than noble savages.

There are even bizarre echoes of Spielberg's own ET, for just like that cute little alien, the *Amistad* slaves want only to go home.

Who could blame them? So did I. ♦

Vice President Al Gore claims he and Tipper were the models for the central characters in Erich Segal's novel, "Love Story."

—news item

Parody

Dallas Morning News

Clinton Was Portnoy, Gore Says

eather A5
ports B6
siness B12

DALLAS — Speaking before the American Association of Magazine Editors, Vice-President Al Gore revealed today that Philip Roth modeled the hero of his 1969 best-seller "Portnoy's Complaint" on the young Bill Clinton. "Novelists have always been drawn to vivid characters," the Vice President told the gathering, "and the Democratic Party has always been filled with them." Mr. Gore reported that Roth met the young Clinton at a small fun-

The St. Louis Evening Whirl

GORE LEADING BLACK CANDIDATE FOR 2000

MEMPHIS — Addressing a United Negro College Fund conference last Tuesday, Vice President Gore reaffirmed his commitment to opportunity in the inner city, citing personal experience as his strongest goad. "Anyone who doubts my commitment to black progress can read Richard Wright's 'Native Son,'" Mr. Gore noted, before stunning the audience with the claim that Wright based Bigger Thomas, the novel's protagonist, on Mr. Gore. Although the vice president does not appear to be black,

THE FORWARD

Sounds Crazy, No?
Gore was Aleichem Model

VICE PRESIDENT GORE, appearing before a dinnnertime crowd of 600 at the annual banquet of the United Jewish Appeal, announced that he was the model for Tevye the Dairyman in the movie, *Fiddler on the Roof*. Despite the stories' settings in the early twenti-