the weekly
Standard
JANUARY 3/JANUARY 10, 2000 • $3.95

MAN OF THE CENTURY

Churchill's Greatness

DAVID FRUM • CHRISTOPHER MATTHEWS

This is a combined issue. The next issue of The Weekly Standard will appear in two weeks. Happy New Year.

Contents

January 3 / January 10, 2000 • Volume 5, Number 16

2 Scrapbook . . . . . *Gore's grades, Sullivan's outings, and more.*

4 Casual. . . . . *Claudia Winkler, Wink's mom.*

6 Correspondence . . . . . *On Hillary, Natural Law, etc.*

9 Editorial . . . . . *Churchill's Greatness*

Articles

10 The Politics of Bradley Destruction *Gore's new strategy is attack, attack, attack.* . . . . . **by Tucker Carlson**

12 John McCain, Winging It *He's loosey goosey on domestic policy, but reporters are going easy—for now.* . . **by Fred Barnes**

15 Three Cheers for Russian Democracy *Parliamentary elections went well, not that Americans noticed.* . . . . **by Leon Aron**

20 A Surprisingly Good Health Care Plan *Bradley's proposal is expensive but interesting.* . . . . **by Robert M. Goldberg**

Cover: UPI/Corbis-Bettmann

Features

23 What Makes a Man of the Century

More than any other, Winston Churchill was both great and indispensable. . . . . . **by David Frum**

27 The Very Model of a Democratic Statesman

At the heart of Churchill's politics was dedication to the people he led. . . **by Christopher Matthews**

Books & Arts

31 The End of History and the First Lady *The passage of Hillary Clinton.* . . . . . **by Noemie Emery**

34 His Finest Hour *John Lukacs on the week Winston Churchill saved civilization.* . . . . . **by John C. Chalberg**

37 Slow-Moving Pictures *It turns out viewers' attention-span isn't as short as Hollywood thought.* . . . **by John Podhoretz**

40 Parody . . . . . *George W. Bush's firewall.*

the weekly Standard

The Weekly Standard (ISSN 1083-3013) is published weekly (except the second week in April, the second week in July, the last week in August, and the first week in January) by News America Incorporated, 1211 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10036. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 96127, Washington, DC 20077-7767. For subscription customer service in the United States, call 1-800-274-7293. For new subscription orders, please call 1-800-283-2014. Subscribers: Please send new subscription orders to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 96153, Washington, DC 20090-6153; changes of address to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 96127, Washington, DC 20077-7767. Please include your latest magazine mailing label. Allow 3 to 5 weeks for arrival of first copy and address changes. Yearly subscriptions, $78.00. Canadian/foreign orders require additional postage and must be paid in full prior to commencement of service. Canadian/foreign subscribers may call 1-303-776-3605 for subscription inquiries. Visa/MasterCard payment accepted. Cover price, $3.95. Back issues, $3.95 (includes postage and handling). 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 1-202-293-4900. Advertising Production: Call Ian Slatter 1-202-496-3354.

BPA INTERNATIONAL

www.weeklystandard.com

Free Al Gore's Law School Transcript!

Back in early November, when George W. Bush was stumbling over the names of South Asian political leaders, and the *New Yorker* had just published Bush's Yale grades and SAT scores, the Gore campaign enjoyed a little snicker at Bush's expense: "I guess we know that 'C' at Yale was a gentleman's 'C,'" said Gore spokesman Chris Lehane.

This ticked off John B. Thompson, a Coral Gables lawyer and, more significant, former law school classmate of Gore's. Lehane was still laughing last week, but it sounded a bit forced, maybe because he had no ready response to the following letter, a copy of which was e-mailed by Thompson to THE SCRAPBOOK and a few dozen other media types:

December 23, 1999
The Honorable Albert Arnold Gore
Vice President of the United States
Gore 2000 Campaign Headquarters
Nashville, Tennessee

Re: Dropping Out of Vanderbilt Law School, Release of Your Transcript

Dear Mr. Vice President:

You may not remember that you and I were classmates at Vanderbilt Law School, Class of 1976. As you know, you dropped out before getting your juris doctor degree.

On November 28 of this year I wrote Vanderbilt Law School Dean Kent Syverud asking him to ask you to authorize release of your law school transcript to the public. On December 8 Dean Syverud wrote you doing precisely that. To date, you have refused.

I would not have made this request if you had not made such a big deal about Governor Bush's illegally leaked Yale transcript and the fun you made of what you called his "gentleman's C." You have foolishly made academic records a campaign issue, just as you have tried to tie some of Senator Bradley's staff to tobacco ads, while your own staffers have much closer ties to such ads.

Mr. Vice President, you and I both know what you are hiding by refusing to release your Vanderbilt Law School transcript. I would respectfully suggest that the best thing for you to do is to authorize its immediate release in order that the embarrassment which will follow will be well behind you before the crucial upcoming primaries. The longer you stonewall, the closer the ultimate release of the transcript comes to those primaries, thereby maximizing the harm to your Presidential hopes.

Mr. Vice President, you have brought this problem upon yourself by throwing stones at someone else's academic record, while your own Vanderbilt record sits there in a glass house. This speaks volumes about your character and your judgment, both of which most voters consider when choosing their President.

Truly, JBT

Copies: Iowa, New Hampshire, and national media; all GOP Presidential campaigns and Senator Bradley's campaign

Touché. Vanderbilt confirms that Thompson was in the same entering class as Gore. THE SCRAPBOOK has seen the Dec. 8 letter to the Gore campaign from Vanderbilt's Dean Syverud. No one, as yet, has seen Gore's transcript. Thompson won't say what it is he thinks the transcript will show. It's time for Gore to come clean! Meanwhile, THE SCRAPBOOK is sending propitiatory Christmas cards to all its old college classmates. ♦

Andrew Sullivan, "Authoritarian"

How THE SCRAPBOOK wishes it had never heard about the latest controversy involving Andrew Sullivan. But, alas, he made it impossible to ignore—starting the whole damn thing himself, after all. And right there in the *New York Times*.

Sullivan, of course, is the universally denominated "gay Tory Catholic intellectual" who has spent much of the 1990s unburdening himself on those public issues directly related to his identity. At least the gay part of it. In 1991, for example, he took an eloquent stance against a guerrilla tactic then popular among the fringiest of gay activists: the involuntary "outing" of other—but still closeted—homosexuals. The practice is "authoritarian," Sullivan wrote. It is an assault on "the ability to choose who one is and how one is presented, to control the moment of self-disclosure and its content." What's more, he argued, outing is cruel. Because the unwanted question "Are you gay?" is "terrifying." And must therefore not be asked.

That was then. Now, though, in the Dec. 12 magazine section of the Sunday *Times*, Sullivan has gone ahead and asked precisely that terrifying question of seven more-or-less prominent Americans whose "coyness" about their sexual orientation evidently annoys him no end. Gore campaign manager Donna Brazile, he writes, has made herself "ridiculous" by remaining mum about whether she's a lesbian. Ditto for Clinton cabinet secretaries Donna Shalala and Janet Reno, who "equivocate" on the subject, shrouding their sex lives "in deep ambiguity." Ditto, too, for former New York mayor Ed Koch and TV personality Rosie O'Donnell and teen-pop

schlockmeister Ricky Martin and—stand and be counted, damn you!—fitness-video goofball Richard Simmons.

Are they gay? Suddenly, to Andrew Sullivan, this is an "obvious and legitimate" (and, impliedly, no longer terrifying) question. And why is that? Sullivan offers two reasons. First, these people's "studied avoidance" of public discussion about whom they sleep with is "insulting to homosexuals, who know better." (Apparently, they can just *tell*, you see.) And, second, such circumspection about sex is "condescending to heterosexuals, who deserve better."

Thanks but no thanks, Andrew. THE SCRAPBOOK—which hereby outs itself as a magazine feature of the heterosexual persuasion—rejects the notion that it "deserves" to know what Richard Simmons does in bed. Truth is, THE SCRAPBOOK would rather *not* know. Some things are best kept private.

On Dec. 15, incidentally, Sullivan, responding to unrelated criticism in the online journal *Salon*, denied that his past support for a gay right to marriage was based on any moral preference for monogamy. He has always "defended the beauty and mystery and spirituality of . . . anonymous sex," he wrote. And "on a personal level, I have never been in a long-term romantic relationship, and am perfectly happy without one."

Oh, dear. THE SCRAPBOOK would rather have not known about that, either. ♦

Keystone Kops

Janet Reno told Congress that the Justice Department didn't approve FBI wiretaps of suspect nuclear scientist Wen Ho Lee because Lee by reputation was pro-Taiwan and anti-Communist: "How are you [a spy for China] if you are clearly working with the Taiwanese government on matters that apparently involve non-classified information?" Reno asked, in a transcript released last week. So the attorney general believes a spy for Beijing must advertise his pro-Beijing sentiments?

Further confirmation, it would seem, that counterintelligence problems begin as intelligence problems. ♦

Oops

The correction of the week is actually a Dec. 16 Editor's Note in the *New York Times*, which read in part:

"The Our Towns column on Dec. 5 . . . commented that Greenwich [Conn.] 'is not a community of Airstream trailers where people sit outside on cinder blocks whiling away the hours by taking aim with their BB guns at upturned Buicks.' The reference to Airstream, though jocular, was unwarranted. The brand is a luxury recreational trailer often referred to as a land yacht. It should not have been associated with shabby surroundings."

In other words, it's fine for *Times* reporters to sit on cinder blocks, metaphorically speaking, and take pot shots at the people who live in trailer parks. God forbid, however, that they should get their status cues wrong and mistakenly mock the upscale recreational vehicles that *Times* readers (or editors) vacation in. ♦

Casual

Wings and the Man

Flying down to Texas the other day, I sat beside a man who pilots helicopters for lumber operations in the West. He'd learned to fly in the Army, long ago, and had hundreds of combat missions in Vietnam under his belt. When I told him I was on my way to Kingsville to watch my son Tom graduate from aviation training for the Navy, he set to work to flatter a mother's pride, regaling me with stories of flyers' heroism and skill.

Once, he said, in his days as a commercial pilot, he worked with two guys who'd flown helicopters in Vietnam and had bonded forever when one of them saved the other's life. They'd been out on a joint mission when one helicopter took fire and went down in a rice paddy, turning over in the process. Some Viet Cong appeared and leaped onto the overturned chopper, shooting into the wreck. The second pilot instantly landed nearby and, with his buddies providing cover, dove under the downed copter, cut his friend out, and dragged him to safety.

Those military pilots, my companion said, they're something else. You see it in the way they live, and the way they party.

Graduation is party time. It crowns a long, rigorous course of learning. Each stage of training begins with weeks of ground school, in classrooms, followed by weeks of practice in simulators on the ground, then of practice in the air, first with an instructor, then solo, then in formation, then at night. The last hurdle is "going to the boat" and executing 10 carrier takeoffs and landings. Every flight is graded, whether in a plane or simulator. Each accomplishment brings the airman closer to securing what the Navy likes to call his coveted wings of gold.

Not all of them make it. A friend of Tom's faltered—only by a hair—on the carrier landings. He gets a second chance; he'll repeat a month's worth of land-based practice, then go to the boat again, though this time the cut-off score is higher. If he falls short, he's out of the Navy.

Understandably, those who make it enjoy a high exhilaration. The scene at Tom's apartment when I got there the night before his winging was mellow. Creedence was playing. Several family members, a college friend, and a particular blonde C-2 pilot named Stacey had come in from out of town and were getting acquainted. From time to time, handsome guys in shorts or flightsuits would wander in from the Texas night, stopping first on the patio to help themselves at the kegerator, a 1950s fridge painted red and fitted out to hold a keg of beer, with a spout through the fridge's side.

"Wink"

In the morning, Tom took us to the base to see some planes—mostly T-45s (the F-18 he'll fly next is based in California). And he let us experience a carrier landing in the simulator. For any aberrant reader as ignorant as I was until recently, a carrier is too small to act as a proper airport. Planes don't have enough runway length to take off and land. So instead of taking off the usual way, they are thrust into the air by a catapult; and they land by extending a "tailhook," which catches a cable stretched across the deck and drags them to a halt. Since the hook might fail to trap the cable on any given pass, planes have to speed up as they near the deck, ready to fly back out over the water. The simulator—a bit like an Omnimax movie—leaves you certain these things cannot be done.

The winging itself, at the Officers' Club, seemed almost anticlimactic—modest and friendly rather than solemn or imposing. There were four "wingees" in all, two Marines and two Naval officers, crisp in their dress uniforms, identified in the program by their call signs, "Skunk," "Skirt," "Wink," and "Stockboy." Skunk's grandfather, a retired distinguished admiral, made some fitting remarks. I got to pin on Tom's wings. Photos were snapped, cheeks kissed. Then the wingees were called to attention for "A Navy Pilot's Creed": "I am a United States Navy flyer. My countrymen built the best airplane in the world and entrusted it to me. They trained me to fly it. I will use it to the absolute limit of my power. . . . When the going is fast and rough, I will not falter. I will be uncompromising in every blow I strike. I will be humble in victory. . . . I ask the help of God in making that effort great enough."

We hugged some more, and repaired to the bar across the hall to toast the guys; then we ate, drank, and made merry at Tom's place, then over at Skirt's. A few of us peeled off around midnight, but the rest went back to the O Club for more serious carousing. I'm sorry I missed the belly-slides along the bar lubricated with dishwashing liquid, moves known as carrier landings. Apparently my son distinguished himself by his willingness to go flying off the end of the bar.

A wimp, I asked Tom who'd caught him. "Frankly, Mom," he said, practically purring with contentment, "I was too drunk to remember. My buddies, I guess."

Claudia Winkler

The Horror of Hillary

While I agree with much of what John Podhoretz says in his analysis of the upcoming Rudy Giuliani-Hillary Clinton New York Senate race, I must take issue with several of his points ("The Importance of Beating Hillary," Dec. 20). To state that a Giuliani-Clinton race "may represent the only clear-cut ideological battle we'll see in the next year in which stark differences between Republicans and Democrats will be aired in a far more open and direct way," ignores that there are no differences between Mayor Giuliani and Hillary Clinton on several battleground issues. They're both for abortion. Ditto for gun control. Several weeks ago, Clinton's spokesman said with a straight face that the campaign would be about issues, not personalities. Yeah, right.

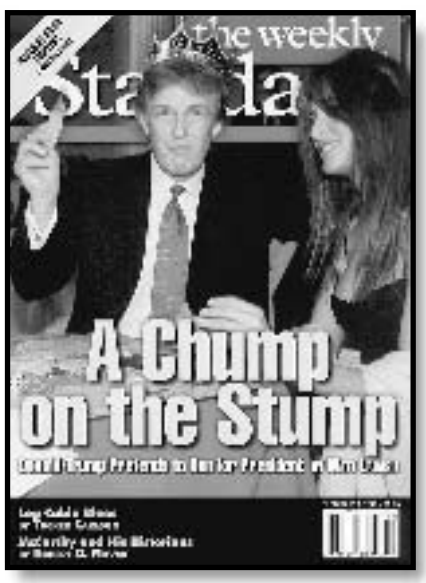
Further, to say that Giuliani has "some lingering problems in New York" is putting it mildly. The head of the Conservative party in New York has stated flat-out that under no condition will Giuliani get the Conservative party endorsement due to his position on abortion.

I agree that conservatives will rally around Rudy Giuliani in order to stop Hillary Clinton, but the last thing that this Senate campaign will be decided on are the true ideological differences between conservatives and liberals. Giuliani will win based on a combination of his record and some of the intractable problems that Hillary Clinton has created for herself.

Arthur M. Shatz
Bayside, NY

John Podhoretz's strong articulation of the importance of beating Hillary Clinton in the forthcoming New York Senate race is not strong enough. The Left—Leninists all, for whom any act or falsehood in pursuit of their political goals is justified—will stop at nothing to defeat Rudy Giuliani. This has nothing to do with his personality, the Brooklyn Museum controversy, the homeless, police shootings, or other such matters. It is instead ideological: Giuliani's tenure as mayor has shattered the leftist religion about the root causes of crime, the preservation of public disorder as a component of "liberty," collective rather than individual responsibility, ad infinitum. In short, the New York City turnaround has answered the basic ideological question of whether societies can flourish when the Left achieves its central goal of making people more rather than less dependent upon government. The Left must defeat Giuliani because a failure to do so will vindicate the clearest possible repudiation of its principles. And that is why Hillary Clinton must be defeated, regardless of such important but narrower issues as partial-birth abortion.

Benjamin Zycher
Agoura Hills, CA



Laying Down the Law

Reviewing my book *In Defense of Natural Law* ("Natural Born Lawyers," Dec. 20), J. Budziszewski claims that I hold certain truths to be self-evident "because they are built into the reasoning mind itself. Self-evidence lies not in the way the world is put together, but in the way the mind is put together." Not only do I not hold this view, I *explicitly reject it* on page 89 of the very book Budziszewski is reviewing.

Budziszewski's exposition of the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas on natural law is also flawed. It leaves completely out of account the great medieval theologian's understanding of moral reasoning as an irreducibly *practical* (as opposed to "theoretical" or "descriptive") enterprise.

For a presentation of Aquinas's thought that properly takes account of the role of practical principles in his natural law theory, readers should consult John Finnis's careful and comprehensive new study *Aquinas: Moral, Political, and Legal Theory*. Those who also trouble themselves to have a look at my own writings will find that, far from rejecting Aquinas's approach to favor an "Enlightenment" alternative, as Budziszewski imagines I do, my thought is fully in line with Aquinas's teachings about the basic precept of natural law.

Robert P. George
Princeton, NJ

Gore's "Homeless" Jesus

As David Brooks noted in your editorial, contributing to the "mindlessness about homelessness" was none other than a woman who has never owned a home herself, Hillary Rodham Clinton, who proclaimed Mary and Joseph to be a homeless couple ("Mindlessness About Homelessness," Dec. 20). But she wasn't the first. Vice President Al Gore has also shamelessly exploited and distorted the Christmas Gospel to foster a liberal political agenda.

On Dec. 22, 1997, while announcing new spending programs for the homeless and trying to drum up support for another big government solution, Gore made the following comment: "And speaking from my religious tradition in this Christmas season, 2,000 years ago a homeless woman gave birth to a homeless child in a manger because the inn was full." The truth is that not only were they not homeless, they were in fact on a journey in response to a government mandate to collect taxes, this woman and her gainfully employed husband leaving their home in Nazareth to travel to Bethlehem.

I quote from Luke, the controlling legal authority: "And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. And all went to be taxed, everyone into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; To be

taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child."

So what drove Joseph and Mary from their home was not a shortage of affordable housing, not mean-spirited budget cuts in the social safety net by Roman senators, but taxes mandated by the Roman equivalent of the Internal Revenue Service. Caesar Augustus apparently did not believe that the era of big government was over.

Of course, if Mary and Joseph had waited 2,000 years, Al and Hillary could have invited them to stay in the Lincoln Bedroom—for a small fee, of course. One wonders what the media reaction would have been had Dan Quayle or George W. Bush so politically exploited the birth of Jesus.

DANIEL JOHN SOBIESKI
Chicago, IL

LOG CABIN FEVER

IN A SEEMINGLY CANDID piece of reporting, Tucker Carlson neatly sidesteps the real problem created by public meetings between Republican party politicians and gay activist groups ("Log Cabin Blues," Dec. 20). The dirty little secret that everyone knows but prefers to avoid is that gay activists such as the Log Cabin Republicans are homosexuals first and everything else second. As such, their ostensible goal of a "place at the table" is merely a pit stop en route to their main objective: full societal acceptance of homosexuality as "normal."

For left-liberals, of course, this is just peachy keen, as it gives them the formidable advantage of gay political support, along with another opening to posture as morally superior to their evil, "gay bashing" opponents. This specious charge, to the smug delight of liberals, is almost never challenged, since any serious rebuttal would have to include an unpopular but unavoidable truth: A society's embrace of sodomy as a civil right, with full minority-group status for homosexuals, would be the glass of water that finally overflowed the bathtub, leading inevitably to that society's utter destruction. Such a regime in this country would soon make Amsterdam look like a religious retreat.

Republicans (and what passes in some circles these days for conservatives) know this, being marginally less in thrall to utopian ideology than their leftist counterparts. But political correctness makes cowards of us all. Thus, no American in a leadership position appears either ready or able to point out the obvious, common-sense distinction between the valid dignity and rights of homosexuals as individuals, and the pernicious absurdity of conferring undeserved respectability on homosexuality as a practice.

O.M. OSTLUND JR.
State College, PA

THE LITERARY KING

JONATHAN V. LAST devotes considerable time and effort to Stephen King, "the single most popular pulp writer of the twentieth century" ("King of the Hill," Dec. 20). As Last points out, King's early works are "good, juicy, satisfying pulp, but nothing more." Over the years, his "prose, never immortal, got good enough that you rarely noticed it." And by "elevating his pulp," he has created "successful middlebrow fiction."

Is it that obvious? Mary Shelley's monster story, *Frankenstein*, has spawned a cottage industry of taxpayer-funded academic criticism, so we can't disqualify King from the literary canon merely because of his subject manner. On the contrary, we can disqualify him only if canonical authors like Shelley perform acts of artistic magic that King can't match.

But what does Shelley accomplish in *Frankenstein* that King does not in *The Shining* (one of his early "pulp" novels)? Whatever the measure, the immensely gifted King far surpasses Shelley. Like them or not, we know King's characters completely; Shelley smothers us with clichés in portraying Frankenstein's family relationships. King's stories build tension from beginning to end, and they make sense within the world he imagines; Shelley's Dr. Frankenstein develops a case of stupidity so severe that he can't deduce the monster's flagrantly obvious plan to murder his wife. As for pretty language, King is no Keats, but neither is Shelley.

By any rational analysis, King is the superior writer. So why do we call *Frankenstein* literature and *The Shining* pulp? Last has taken the first step in acknowledging this reality by admitting that King is worthy of discussion. Now he should take the second and admit that, even as we speak, King is writing the literature of our age.

PHILLIP MINK
Newark, DE

• • •

THE WEEKLY STANDARD
welcomes letters to the editor.
Letters will be edited for length and clarity and must include the writer's name, address, and phone number.
All letters should be addressed:
Correspondence Editor
THE WEEKLY STANDARD
1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505
Washington, DC 20036.

You may also fax letters: (202) 293-4901
or e-mail: Editor@Weeklystandard.com.

the weekly Standard

Churchill's Greatness

The convention of selecting a man of the year, decade, or century is one of the more annoying features of the modern age. But one has to live in one's time. And in this case, we are happy to observe the convention, because it offers us the occasion to honor what deserves to be honored, and to recall what deserves to be recalled. Winston Churchill is the man of our century. The character of his greatness has never been more concisely limned than in these remarks by the political philosopher Leo Strauss to his class at the University of Chicago on January 25, 1965, the day after Churchill's death.

Sir Winston Churchill, London, 1943. UPI/Corbis-Bettmann

The death of Churchill is a healthy reminder to students of political science of their limitations, the limitations of their craft.

The tyrant stood at the pinnacle of his power. The contrast between the indomitable and magnanimous statesman and the insane tyrant—this spectacle in its clear simplicity was one of the greatest lessons which men can learn, at any time.

No less enlightening is the lesson conveyed by Churchill's failure, which is too great to be called tragedy. I mean the fact that Churchill's heroic action on behalf of human freedom against Hitler only contributed, through no fault of Churchill's, to increase the threat to freedom which is posed by Stalin or his successors. Churchill did the utmost that a man could do to counter that threat—publicly and most visibly in Greece and in Fulton, Missouri.

Not a whit less important than his deeds and speeches are his writings, above all his *Marlborough*—the greatest historical work written in our century, an inexhaustible mine of political wisdom and understanding, which should be required reading for every student of political science.

The death of Churchill reminds us of the limitations of our craft, and therewith of our duty. We have no higher duty, and no more pressing duty, than to remind ourselves and our students, of political greatness, human greatness, of the peaks of human excellence. For we are supposed to train ourselves and others in seeing things as they are, and this means above all in seeing their greatness and their misery, their excellence and their vileness, their nobility and their triumphs, and therefore never to mistake mediocrity, however brilliant, for true greatness.

—Leo Strauss, for the Editors

The Politics of Bradley Destruction

Here's the new strategy of the Gore campaign—attack, attack, attack. BY TUCKER CARLSON

HOW SEVERE IS THE HEALTH care crisis? I'll tell you, said Al Gore during a speech at a New Hampshire hospital recently. Thanks to the greed and unchecked power of the pharmaceutical industry, many Americans must leave the country in order to find affordable life-sustaining drugs. "Does anybody here go to Canada to buy prescriptions?" Gore asked the crowd. No one said a word. At last a woman near the back raised her hand. Actually, the woman explained, she personally had never bought medicine in Canada, but "my babysitter does." Or may have. The woman wasn't absolutely sure. Gore nodded. You could almost see him making a mental note never to ask the Canada question again. "Maybe you hear more about it in the news media than it actually happens," he conceded.

Gore shouldn't have to have exchanges like this. It should be easy for him to make the case that during the seven years he has been vice president the state of the nation has improved dramatically. The stock market is over 11,000. Unemployment has all but disappeared. Foreign threats, such as they are, barely register with the voting public. Gore ought to be able to run for president on a stay-the-course platform: Vote for me and keep a good thing going. Instead, here he is on a weekday morning trying to convince a roomful of polar fleece-clad yuppies that they are suffering terribly at the hands of Big Business. The high cost of prescription drugs may be a genuine burden for some people, but in Gore's hands the issue sounds comically small, like an Andy Rooney routine ("Prescription drugs—don't you just hate going to Canada to buy them?").

Not that it really mattered. Gore's real point was not that prescription drugs are too expensive to buy, but that his challenger for the Democratic nomination—Bill Bradley, resident of the pharmaceutical industry's home state, the Senator from Merck—would do nothing to make them more affordable. Gore spent perhaps a third of his speech attacking Bradley's health care proposal. Bradley's plan, he told the audience, is both recklessly profligate and heartlessly stingy. At a cost of at least $1 trillion, it is a wild-eyed spending scheme that would wipe out the budget surplus and imperil Medicare. At the same time, Gore said, Bradley's plan "would require seniors to spend $800 of their own money before getting one penny" for prescription drugs.

As Gore spoke, his aides canvassed the room distributing a handout, still warm from the copier, that accused Bradley of seeking to "put millions of America's most vulnerable at risk." A short time later, aides reappeared with a new sheet of talking points, this one hammering Bradley on campaign finance reform. In 1990, it said, a newspaper described Bradley's reelection effort as among the "year's most nauseating examples of campaign excess." In 1997 and 1998, the Gore campaign charged, "Bradley pocketed millions of dollars from special interest groups," mostly in fees for speeches.

Gore kept up his assaults on Bradley throughout the day. At one point he even attacked Bradley for resenting his attacks. "Some of his campaign workers think I shouldn't raise questions about his platform," Gore told one audience. "That's what democracy is all about."

Doesn't rhetoric like this diminish Gore? "There's an elite tendency to complain about it," says Bob Shrum, Gore's chief message consultant in Washington. Columnists and television commentators, Shrum says, "seem to think somehow this is about patty cake, or that we're supposed to have some kind of rarefied discussion in the sky."

Ordinary people, by contrast, appreciate it when Gore "draws issue comparisons. People don't think it's negative to talk about the difference between your health care policy and his health care policy, your education policy, his education policy. How the hell are voters supposed to make up their minds?" In any case, says Shrum, going after Bradley "has brought focus and definition to what was a pretty unfocused campaign."

It's hard to argue with the last point. Gore has been at his nastiest but also at his best since beginning to draw "issue comparisons" with Bradley. Almost everything about Gore's stump performances has improved dramatically. His answers seem much less robotic and rehearsed than they once did. He has mastered his impulse to shout for emphasis and for the most part delivers his responses in a calm, this-is-your-captain-speaking tone. He no longer opens his speeches with jokes about his own dorkiness. After months of dieting and weight lifting, he looks fit and

Illustration by Darren Gygi

Tucker Carlson is a staff writer for THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

vigorous. (Of course all improvement is relative, and it's still possible to see why Gore's demeanor has been the subject of so many Jay Leno monologues. At an event in Nashua the other day, the advance team turned on Gore's lavaliere mike too soon. As he worked the crowd, Gore's words were broadcast to an otherwise silent room through the P.A. system. "How are you? Good to see you," he repeated again and again with painful stiffness.)

Most significant, Bradley's challenge has forced the Gore campaign to target its efforts more precisely. Bradley draws much of his support from independents and affluent, well-educated male Democrats. Gore has responded by affecting a self-consciously down-market style. He wears cowboy boots. His southern accent has returned in force. He has added a long series of anecdotes to his stump speech designed to highlight his working class roots. ("My mother was born a poor girl in East Tennessee at a time when poor girls were not supposed to dream much," or "She worked in an all-night coffee shop as a waitress for 25 cent tips," etc.) And he has worked to shore up his support among Democratic constituencies: women, labor, the elderly, environmentalists, and black voters. The "African Americans for Gore" website brags of his friendship with former senator Carol Moseley-Braun.

In other words, Gore has been pandering like crazy. The new strategy may be working. This fall, Gore's internal polling showed him at least 10 points behind Bradley in New Hampshire. Gore went on the attack and the gap has since narrowed. Bradley, meanwhile, hasn't returned fire very effectively. In December, Bradley staffers in New Hampshire, infuriated by Gore's demagoguery, passed out fliers to elderly voters in pharmacies warning of "Goreitis," a disease whose chief symptom is "uncontrollable lying." The Gore campaign immediately complained. Bradley, for reasons that are still not clear, forced his staff to apologize.

It turned out to be a mistake. Gore rarely makes an appearance these days without mentioning Bradley's apology, holding it up as proof that Bradley is running a negative campaign. Periodically, Bradley has responded by accusing Gore of waging the "politics of destruction." Each time, Gore has been able to pause, smile, and bash Bradley over the head with his own apology.

Gore believes he is on a roll, and his strategists make a plausible case for how he will keep it going. The key, they argue, is Iowa. A Gore victory there could have a significant effect on what happens in New Hampshire eight days later, both because it would give Gore the usual media-propelled momentum, and for a more complicated reason: To succeed in New Hampshire (where he is now slightly ahead in the polls), Bradley must win a large percentage of the state's independent voters. But if he loses in Iowa, many independents may conclude that a vote for Bradley would be wasted, and switch their support to John McCain instead. (In New Hampshire, independents can vote for either party's candidates in the primary.) Once Bradley loses New Hampshire, Gore strategists believe the race essentially will be over. "If we win New Hampshire," says one, "we take a hard look at going after him in New York, maybe try to take him out in Massachusetts, really get aggressive."

Gore is likely to remain aggressive no matter what happens. He is betting that, whatever the columnists say, rough politics works. It is a lesson, says one of his senior strategists, that Democrats have learned the hard way: "George Bush ran a brutal campaign against us in 1988, and those of us who went through that resolved that we would *never* go through that again, be on the receiving end of that kind of damage. We would much rather be delivering it." And so they are. ♦

John McCain, Winging It

He's loosey goosey on domestic policy, but reporters are going easy . . . for now. BY FRED BARNES

IN THE REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL debate on December 13, George W. Bush asked John McCain why he hadn't proposed a tax cut for single moms with two kids making $40,000 a year. McCain responded that his plan to extend the 15 percent income tax bracket—all the way to $70,000—would "go a long way in that direction." After the debate, a reporter asked McCain for his appraisal of Bush's scheme for reducing the tax burden on single moms with kids. He reiterated that he, McCain, would help them by boosting the 15 percent bracket.

At this point, columnist Robert Novak stepped forward, noting that the single moms in question already paid at the 15 percent rate. Thus they wouldn't get a tax cut from McCain, but would from Bush's proposal to drop the rate to 10 percent. Well, McCain said, he'd ease their taxes by eliminating the marriage penalty. But we're talking about *single* moms, not married mothers, said Novak. Oh, McCain shot back, then I'd cut their taxes by broadening the earned income tax credit for the working poor. And he wound up by joking about paring taxes for old people.

McCain was playing fast and loose with tax policy. He had never called for extending the earned income tax credit, though aides later said he might do that in a speech on taxes and Social Security sometime in January. He sounded unserious. So how did the press handle McCain's trouble in explaining his position on tax cuts? Reporters and commentators didn't mention his stumbling at all. They gave McCain a free ride on taxes, as they have on virtually every substantive issue—including health care, defense policy, his knowledge of foreign and domestic leaders—since he announced his bid for the Republican presidential nomination last September.

Now, consider what the mainstream media would have done if Bush had been caught making up his tax policy on the fly. He'd have been pilloried by reporters and pundits for

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

Bill Nelson

not understanding the tax issue. His ability to function effectively at the national, rather than the state, level would have been questioned. Further doubts about his basic intelligence would have been aired. And he would have been likened to Dan Quayle, or at least to the press's caricature of the former vice president. In short, Bush would have been held to a far higher standard than McCain.

The point here is not only that the media's double standard is unfair to Bush, which it is. But in the long run, the press isn't doing McCain a favor either. It treats McCain as an attractive leader and strong challenger to Bush. By giving him a pass on issue after issue, however, the press fails to take him seriously on important policy matters. McCain is relieved of media pressure to get his act together on domestic policy. (He knows foreign policy cold.) The result is he doesn't have a credible health care policy or a set of tax cuts that have been well thought out or a defense plan that comes close to matching the goals of his foreign policy.

For sure, the media aren't the only cause of McCain's sloppy policymaking. But they are *a* cause, and a significant one. Normally the agenda of a major candidate like McCain would be subjected to sharp and relentless scrutiny. Bush and Democrats Al Gore and Bill Bradley face such scrutiny and wouldn't dream of freelancing on domestic policy, if only because the press would clobber them for even minor mistakes. This doesn't happen with McCain. But while reporters have failed to examine his positions adequately, the Democratic presidential nominee won't make this mistake. McCain has been left vulnerable, should he win the Republican nomination, to being picked apart by Gore or Bradley.

Look at several of McCain's low moments that the media all but ignored. In Charleston, S.C., on December 14, McCain unveiled his health care plan. He had difficulty answering questions about it, but that wasn't the biggest problem. His campaign aides handed out a paper entitled "McCain Health Care Plan Costs." It was supposed to spell out exactly what various parts of the plan would cost over time. But, for the fifth year anyway, almost all the numbers were wrong. They were corrected only after reporters expressed doubts about their accuracy. Still, this glitch was not cited in press reports about the plan, a favor Bush would never have been granted.

Nor have reporters or columnists raised questions about McCain's defense plans. In sketching his foreign policy on December 1, he insisted the United States must continue to be the preeminent power in the world. Yet in outlining his military plans days later, McCain made increasing the pay of uniformed personnel his top priority. He said readiness, weapons research, and other underfunded areas of the military could be improved with minimal increases in total defense spending. Outside estimates of how much spending needs to be raised range from $25 billion to $100 billion a year—far more than could be saved through McCain's proposed cuts in supposedly wasteful programs. But the press has never called on him to reconcile his very modest defense buildup with his aim of keeping America the dominant superpower.

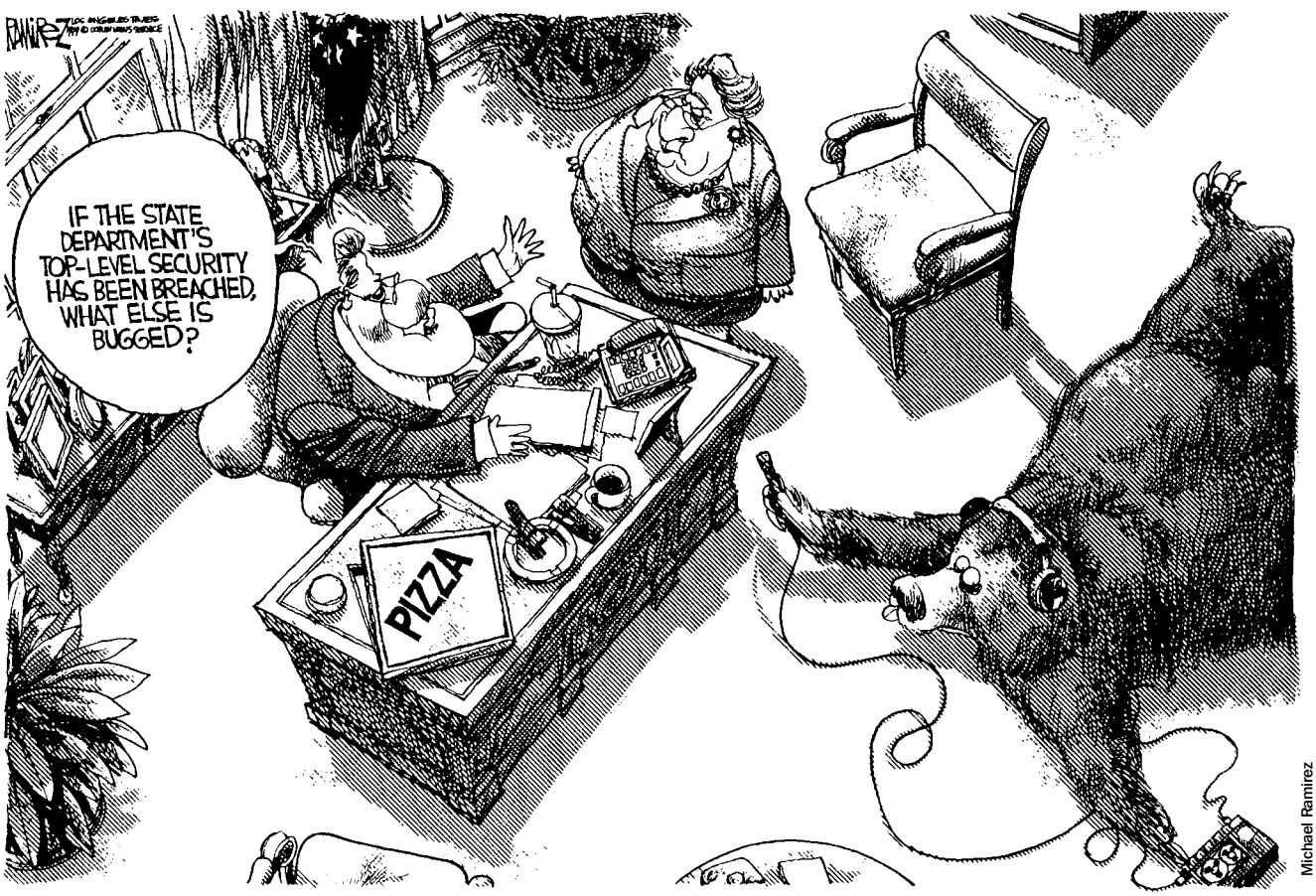
And remember the embarrassment Bush suffered when he could answer only one of a Boston TV reporter's questions about the names of foreign leaders? That moment in November was played up by the entire national press corps, sowing doubts about Bush's qualifications for the presiden-

cy. McCain suffered a similar embarrassment on December 19 in Vermont. He was asked to name the prime minister of Ireland and the governor of Vermont. He named every other Irish leader he could think of, but never got the prime minister (Bertie Ahern). And someone had to feed him the first name of Vermont's chief executive (Howard Dean). Only a single newspaper, the *New York Times*, reported McCain's struggle to answer, and its story was buried near the bottom of an inside page.

On taxes, McCain has followed the practice of endorsing practically every tax cut imaginable—except a reduction in the top marginal rate on individual income. He's for a flat tax, a tax credit for good teachers, elimination of the estate and gift taxes and of all taxes on saving and investing, an end to the marriage penalty, and, of course, that extension of the lowest income tax rate, 15 percent, to levels at which many taxpayers now pay 28 percent. All these proposed cuts would have to be paid for from a quarter of the budget surplus—the rest goes for Social Security and Medicare—and from slashing "pork barrel" spending. There's not a chance this would be enough to cover all the tax cuts. But, again, McCain hasn't been forced to justify his tax plan.

In fact, McCain now says he doesn't really have a "tax plan," though he's been using that phrase for months when citing the various tax cuts he proposes. After the discussion of taxes in the December 13 debate in Des Moines, Iowa, McCain's field director in New Hampshire, Dean Ouellette, declared that Bush's "gotcha" didn't work because "John McCain hasn't announced his proposal for tax reform yet." That same day, the "tax relief" section on the McCain 2000 website was changed. Added under the heading of "The McCain Plan" was this sentence: "John McCain will propose a tax relief plan in January." What he'd been talking up for months, it turns out, were only ideas he'd advocated "earlier this year." The media paid no attention to any of this chaos in the McCain camp.

McCain has run a brilliant campaign from the standpoint of strategy. He's attracted the best operatives in the business: strategist Mike Murphy, media consultant Greg Stevens, campaign manager Rick Davis, political director John Weaver, spokesmen Dan Schnur and Howard Opinsky. What he needs are policy advisers with the same talent and seriousness, and he needs to spend as much quality time with them as he does with reporters. So far, he's gotten by with a seat-of-the-pants policy operation because political writers adore him too much to mention his shortcomings. McCain may think reporters will always constitute a cheering section, but he's wrong. If he doesn't find this out now, it will be made painfully clear to him should he win the nomination and face a Democratic presidential nominee. ♦



Michael Ramirez

Three Cheers for Russian Democracy

The parliamentary elections went strikingly well, not that Americans noticed. **BY LEON ARON**

THE DECEMBER 19 Russian parliamentary elections marked a remarkable shift to the center-right—toward acceptance of capitalism and market reforms—across virtually the entire Russian political spectrum. It broke the Communists' controlling plurality in the Duma, brought forth a new generation of political leaders, and forged the first truly post-Soviet legislature. Russian democracy and Russian capitalism—whose death from popular "disillusionment" was so confidently diagnosed by U.S. editorialists, experts, and politicians only a few months ago—have been shown to have strong and vibrant roots.

The most startling result of the elections is the growth of pro-reform parties of the center-right. Their combined share of the party-list vote more than doubled, from 17 percent in 1995 to 37 percent (comprising 23 percent for Unity, 9 percent for the Union of Rightist Forces [SPS], and 6 percent for Yabloko). If Unity, SPS, and independent pro-reform deputies manage to unite, theirs will be the single largest bloc of votes.

The gap between the pro-reform majority in presidential elections and the go-slow majority in parliamentary elections has narrowed dramatically. With Grigory Yavlinsky's pro-market opposition party and swing votes from the center/center-left Fatherland-All Russia (OVR) bloc joining the new pro-reform plurality on some issues, a more or less reliable pro-reform majority in the Russian parliament almost one-third of the legislature's seats are going to new parties led by men and women in their thirties or forties.

The Russian voters' choice was an informed one. As in 1995, campaigning was unrestricted, producing innumerable leaflets, door-to-door canvasses, television ads, and political billboards. Each of the 26 parties that fielded candidates received 3 hours and 20 minutes of free air time on the three television networks and 2 hours and 30 minutes on four national radio stations. Such national newspapers as *Kommersant-Daily, Izvestia*, and *Vremya MN*, as well as the private NTV television channel, provided extensive (often exhaustive) and almost always objective coverage of parties' platforms and candidates.

Every week Russia's highest-rated television host, Yevgenyeny Kisilev of NTV, conducted debates between invited guests on his live, prime-time show, *People's Voice*. In addition to

teenagers in 1985, when Mikhail Gorbachev came to power, are now in their twenties and thirties. Ideology aside, they are drawn to the parties and candidates closest to them in age and experience—and their experience has been profoundly different from that of their parents and older brothers and sisters.

This generation first made its mark in the 1996 presidential election, when exit polls showed 71 percent of those between the ages of 18 and 29 voted for Boris Yeltsin and only 23 percent for the Communist candidate, Gennady Zyuganov. In the 30 to 44 age bracket, Yeltsin led Zyuganov 57 percent to 36 percent. This time,

Leon Aron is a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute. His Boris Yeltsin: A Revolutionary Life *will be published in February by St. Martin's Press.*

may very well emerge for the first time since March 1990, when the Duma's predecessor, the Congress of People's Deputies of Russia, was elected.

Although the Communists, with 25 percent of the party-list vote, remain the largest single party in the Duma, the leftist alliance they led has lost its plurality. A non-Communist speaker is almost certain to replace the former *Pravda* editor, Gennady Seleznyov (who prudently ran for governor of Moscow province). Also gone is the Communists' stranglehold on the legislature, which either killed key reforms outright (land privatization, foreign banks, the rights of foreign shareholders) or diluted them to the point of meaninglessness (housing subsidies, tax code, corporate governance, bankruptcy).

These changes in the composition of the legislature reflect momentous shifts below the surface of Russian politics. As one expert in the Carnegie Endowment's Moscow Center put it, there has occurred "a sharp turn to the right of all leading parties and blocs" since 1995. A colleague noted a "growing" and "striking" convergence of positions on economic policy, producing a consensus "on the necessity of a market economy." In the economic programs of all major parties and blocs including the Communists, tight budgets and low inflation have replaced socialist-populist calls for printing money to meet the demands of an ever-expanding state. Mutatis mutandis, everyone is now for tax cuts and a shift of the tax burden from the producer and employer to the consumer. Gone as well are the calls for protectionist import tariffs and high customs walls.

Even the Communists no longer insist on state control of the economy. Indeed, they have abandoned their core demand for a blanket renationalization of privatized industries, and now favor "guarantees" to the new owners and "defense" of shareholders' "rights." The only issue untouched so far by this remarkable center-right consensus is privatization of land, which the legislature has blocked since 1992.

AP/Wide World Photos

Cossacks voting in southern Russia

Another promising development is the end of the self-disenfranchisement of the center-right electorate. In 1995, 9.6 million votes—14 percent of the total—were cast for pro-reform and pro-government parties that failed to meet the 5 percent threshold for representation in the Duma. As a result, although the right as a whole received only 4 percent fewer votes than the Communist-led left, the latter ended up with 35 percent more deputies. This time, the center-right vote was largely consolidated in Unity (14.5 million votes) and SPS (5.5 million).

The latter—the unapologetic, true-blue, Hayekian free-marketeers, whose motto, in their previous incarnation as Russia's Choice, was "Liberty, Property, Law!"—doubled its share of the party-list vote. Its leaders are those who engineered and sustained the capitalist transition: former prime ministers Yegor Gaidar (43 years old) and Sergei Kirienko (37), former "privatization czar" and inflation-slayer Anatoly Chubais (44), and former deputy prime minister Boris Nemtsov (40). The SPS undoubtedly profited from the clear signs of economic revival: Industrial output grew almost 8 percent between January and November 1999 compared with the same period last year; GDP is showing its first significant growth in ten years; and 21 percent of Russians tell pollsters they are "getting along well."

In addition, the SPS benefited from the last-minute endorsement of its economic program by the popular prime minister, Vladimir Putin—and, even more, from a critical development in Russian politics: the coming of age of the perestroika generation. People who were children or young

AP/Wide World Photos

Election commission workers empty a ballot box at a polling station in St. Petersburg

questions from Kisilev and each other, the guests fielded queries from a live audience in the studio and calls from outside. Among the political leaders to appear on the show were Grigory Yavlinsky, Nikita Mikhalkov (NDR), Sergei Kirienko, Irina Khakamada (SPS), and Anatoly Chubais. Communist chairman Zyuganov and the leaders of the Fatherland-All Russia bloc, Yevgeny Primakov and Yuri Luzhkov, were repeatedly invited to participate but declined. The voters, however, hardly needed a Chubais-Zyuganov (or Yavlinsky-Primakov) debate to figure out the difference between the Union of Rightist Forces and the Communists.

In addition to the few more or less objective media outlets, there were hundreds of brutally partisan ones. Russian voters were daily exposed to every imaginable angle on the campaign. The media war was conducted in the spirit of East European, Italian, Israeli, or 19th-century American politics. Around 470 Communist and Communist-influenced national and local newspapers reached a daily readership of well over 10 million, and the nationally televised *Parliamentary Hour* provided another outlet for the Communist party's views.

At the same time, the Yeltsin administration and its allies like Unity were being raked over the coals daily by the Luzhkov media group, with its brash muckraking tabloid *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, the popular evening daily *Vechernya Moskva*, and the national channel *TV tzentr-Moskva*, known as Luzhkov's TV. That last was created explicitly to campaign for OVR and against its opponents. It is in these media that Luzhkov purveyed a seemingly inexhaustible stream of allegations of corruption and money-laundering by the president, his family, and friends. In the last eight months, one had to be blind and deaf in Russia to miss even the smallest detail of the credit card bills allegedly paid by the Swiss construction company Mabatex for Yeltsin and his daughter Tatyana Dyachenko.

Allied with Luzhkov against the Kremlin and Unity was Russia's largest media empire, the Most group, owned by the "oligarch" Vladimir Gusinsky. Among Most's holdings (which include the popular *Time*-like weekly *Itogi;* the generally nonpartisan NTV; and the radio station Echo of Moscow), the most aggressively anti-Yeltsin-administration outlet was the daily *Segodnya*. Although the Most properties portrayed Primakov in a very positive light, Gusinsky's favorite party was Yabloko, in support of which Most deployed its enormous resources. (Grigory Yavlinsky got most of his financial support from another "oligarch," Mikhail Khodorkovsky.)

Arrayed on the president's side were media owned by the mogul Boris Berezovsky. With his newspapers no match for Luzhkov's or Gusinsky's in popularity or circulation, the vicious campaign against Luzhkov and his party was conducted mostly on the ORT television channel.

Paradoxically, though the war in Chechnya was going on full tilt during the campaign, it was hardly a factor in the elections, since all the major parties, and public opinion generally, supported it. Even in democracies, of course, there are such things as popular wars believed by the majority of people to be just; and in the short run, such wars greatly boost the leaders'

standing, as Grenada did for Reagan and the Falklands for Thatcher. And democracies can be quite ruthless in prosecuting wars on the periphery, especially "colonial" wars or wars against secessionist guerrillas, even while remaining democracies, as witness India in Punjab, Turkey in Kurdistan, France in Algeria, Israel in Southern Lebanon in 1982, and the United States in Vietnam.

If anything, the nationalist left, especially the Communists, who for years have bemoaned the dissolution of the Soviet Union and advocated recentralization of the Russian state, should have profited the most. To the extent that the war played any role at all, it did so indirectly, through Prime Minister Putin's rather understated eleventh-hour endorsement of Unity. Putin's astronomical approval rating—just over 70 percent—is tied to his prosecution of the Chechen war, deemed just by most Russians, no matter how appallingly brutal and deplorable it looks to us.

But the best news about the 1999 Russian parliamentary elections is hardly new: Nothing is ever lost permanently, so long as ordinary men and women have a choice and can exercise it freely. The 63 million Russians (61 percent of the registered electorate), old and young, who trudged through snow and sleet in the dark and cold of a Russian December, often pulling small children on sleds, to vote at 94,000 polling stations scattered across 11 time zones deserve a collective apology from the American editorial writers, columnists, newswriters, and congressmen responsible for the disgraceful hysteria over "Who Lost Russia?"—epitomized by Rep. Dick Armey's calling this struggling democracy "a looted and bankrupt zone of nuclearized anarchy."

There will be no apology, of course. But American journalists and politicians—many of the latter chosen by turnouts well under half the voting-age population—should notice these elections and begin to develop an informed, multidimensional vision of Russia that is not easily dislodged by the scandal of the hour. ♦

A Surprisingly Good Health Care Plan

Bill Bradley's health care reform *is* expensive, but it deserves a hearing. **BY ROBERT M. GOLDBERG**

BILL BRADLEY'S PROPOSAL for replacing Medicaid with tax credits for the private purchase of health insurance drew a furious attack from Al Gore, but it deserves a closer look. Tax credits have two substantial advantages as an approach to health coverage: They break the arbitrary link between employment and health insurance, and they free the individual to shop for an affordable health plan tailored to his needs. Republicans, and voters generally, should pay attention: Bradley's plan is in step with what more and more people and businesses are coming to see as the best response to their complaints about health insurance.

What ails the American health care system, at bottom, is third-party control. Even in an age when 43 percent of Americans own stock and most manage their own financial affairs, few Americans buy their own health insurance. The government (if they are poor or old) or their employer does this for them, and it does so with less cost-consciousness and less attention to their individual needs than they would exercise if they were shopping for themselves and paying with their own money. As for the problem of the uninsured, it is not a matter of poverty. Most people without health insurance are employed—as consultants, entrepreneurs, employees of small businesses, and low-wage workers. Most are in good health and use little health care. When they decide to forgo expensive insurance, they take a calculated risk .

Bill Bradley's proposal does not tackle third-party control head-on. He has not vowed to reform the employer-based system, which created the present mess. Neither he nor Gore has seized on the growing trend among businesses to give workers cash and let them buy their own health care. Xerox, for example, is moving as fast as it can toward a "defined dollar contribution" for health insurance. Patricia Nazemetz, vice president for human resources, explains that Xerox wants "to convert benefit dollars back to pay . . . so people can choose . . . and tailor their choices to their needs."

Still, Bradley's plan would move our health care system in the right direction. Tax credits belong to individuals regardless of their employment status. And, by promoting choice, tax credits would create competition likely to force down the cost of insurance and so entice some of the uninsured into the marketplace. By contrast, Gore's proposal to expand a government program called Kidcare as a catchall for the uninsured has none of these virtues. What's more, all but three states have opted to operate Kidcare as part of Medicaid, so the Gore plan amounts to shoving all the uninsured into Medicaid.

Second, while Bradley's plan is expensive—it would give a $5,000 tax credit to every adult with an income up to 200 percent of the poverty level and every child up to 300 percent of poverty—it would encourage cost-containment, since people who are paying for health insurance with a fixed amount of money are less likely to overconsume.

Finally, there are the matters of convenience and quality. Both Medicaid and Kidcare have failed miserably to attract millions of children who are eligible for benefits, despite aggressive enrollment efforts in the past three years. It is puzzling that Gore would use a program with such a record as the basis for universal coverage. Bradley takes as his model the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program, a popular and well-run program that offers 9 million federal

Drew Friedman

Bill Bradley

Robert M. Goldberg is a senior research fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center.

workers dozens of health plans to choose from.

The failure of Kidcare to attract subscribers is related to the quality of the product offered. The traditional Medicaid program, which Gore so devoutly defends, treats its "customers" with contempt. Studies show children in Medicaid are less likely to have a regular doctor, and more likely to visit an emergency room and have unmet medical needs, than children with private insurance. Asthmatic children on Medicaid, in particular, are less likely to receive care from a specialist. Bradley offers Americans an escape from Medicaid, while Gore would lead families on a forced march into the program.

Bradley is on the right track, and so are those Republicans who are pushing incentives for the private purchase of individual insurance. According to a report released by the consulting and accounting firm KPMG, most employees and nearly half of employers would favor a health insurance system in which workers received a fixed amount of money to spend on health care. The tax credit idea has bipartisan support—including, word has it, the tacit approval of George W. Bush.

The next step is to articulate policies that encourage businesses to give the employee a defined sum earmarked for health insurance and allow him to buy his own coverage. Reforms should facilitate flexible-spending-account rollovers and, as John McCain and Steve Forbes have urged, should strip away the excessive regulation that has discouraged the creation of medical savings accounts (regulations that cap the total number of accounts that can be created, for example, and stipulate the size of companies that may offer such plans).

Finally, Republican candidates should promote "health marts"—private, community-based versions of the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program, or, as some describe them, medical mutual funds, helping individuals select from among many plans tailored to different needs in a network of insurers and providers. Great ideas all.

What ails the American health care system, at bottom, is third-party control. Even in an age when 43 percent of Americans own stock and most manage their own financial affairs, few Americans buy health insurance or choose their own plan.

The first step toward such broad-based reform is a Bradley-style tax credit or voucher that moves people away from employer-based insurance and out of government programs like Medicaid. Republicans should give Bill Bradley's plan the hearing it deserves. ♦

What Makes a Man of the Century

There were lots of important individuals, but one stands out: Winston Churchill was both great and indispensable.

By David Frum

"He understood that reality is more than the facts before you; it's also how you feel about them, how you react to them, what your attitude is." That was one of President Clinton's reasons for choosing Franklin Roosevelt as his "man of the century," and a mighty revealing reason it is, too. After all, if the ability to disregard facts is the sign of a great president, then Clinton ranks somewhere ahead of Lincoln.

If Clinton's explanation of his selection raised eyebrows, however, his actual answer was the ultimate Rhodes-scholarship-interview safe choice. He was hardly going to say V.I. Lenin, was he? But maybe he should have.

The world has just lived through a century of almost unmeasurable violence and destruction. Since 1914, some 200 million people have died violently or as a result of politically induced famine. That's 50 percent more people than lived in FDR's United States. It's about as many as the total population of the whole world at the close of the first millennium.

A morally alert assessment of the men of our century has to take the terrible events of our century into account. And measured against those events, FDR has to be found wanting. Of the three great killers of this century, one (Mao) was aided by Communist sympathizers within the Roosevelt administration, who tilted American policy in his favor in 1944-45. Another (Stalin) benefited from Roosevelt's almost willful naiveté about the Soviet Union. Roosevelt apparently believed that if only he granted Stalin enough concessions—from control of Poland to the repatriation of Soviet prisoners of war—he could somehow avert a postwar confrontation. Instead Roosevelt's concessions cost millions of lives and sullied the history of the United States—and the confrontation came anyway.

Roosevelt's record even on the third killer, Hitler, is spotty. Roosevelt understood Hitler's danger early, but he hesitated to jeopardize his hopes for an unprecedented third term by riling isolationist opinion, which was at least as strong within his own party as it was in the Republican opposition. Roosevelt had substantial Democratic majorities in both houses of Congress when France fell in June 1940, but he solemnly denied that he would ever send Americans to fight Hitler and waited until his reelection was in the bag to propose his Lend-Lease plan.

Roosevelt's accomplishments as president were enormous. He transformed the political culture of the United States—arguably for the worse, but still no small task. If his economic policies prolonged and exacerbated the Depression (as many economists now think), his new federal welfare programs at least averted social strife. If he postponed America's entry into World War II for a costly 18 months, his maneuverings did ensure that when war was at last declared, it was declared almost unanimously. Nevertheless, although Roosevelt rightly ranks first in importance among American presidents of this century, it is hard to see how world history would have proceeded very differently if, say, he'd lost the 1940 election to Wendell Willkie. The United States would still have entered the war and, once the United States was in, the defeat of Japan and Germany was well-nigh inevitable.

The true candidates for man of the century are the men without whom history would have taken a radically different turn, either for better or worse. This might seem a philistine criterion. After all, if one were putting together a list of candidates for the 19th century, one would look at names like Austen, Beethoven, Goethe, Faraday, Darwin, Marx, Verdi, Monet, Nietzsche, and Rockefeller. Why not Edison, Freud, Puccini, Picasso, Chaplin, Einstein, Keynes, Hayek, Solzhenitsyn, or Gates to represent ours?

David Frum is a contributing editor to The Weekly Standard. *His history of the 1970s,* How We Got Here, *will be published next month by Basic Books.*

But then, that's the kind of century it's been. With any luck, the next one will belong to the artists, thinkers, and businessmen once more.

So, the runners-up, please:

1. Kaiser Wilhelm II's grandfather, Wilhelm I, lived to be 91. Had Wilhelm II's father enjoyed the same longevity, instead of dying of throat cancer at age 57, the crisis of 1914 would have landed on the desk of a peace-loving Frederick III instead of the bellicose and mentally unstable Wilhelm. It seems highly unlikely that Frederick would have told his Austrian allies to do as they pleased and then vanished on a month-long holiday cruise. In law, the blame for an accident attaches to the person with the last clear chance to prevent it from happening. If the same rule held for history, then Wilhelm II was the author of World War I.

2. In the spring of 1917, the repeatedly defeated French army mutinied. Under very similar circumstances 23 years later, the French capitulated. Had they done so in April 1917, the First World War would have ended with a German victory before a single American soldier had entered the field, and Europe from Paris to Warsaw would have been ruled by a radicalized German autocracy. That the French stayed in the war was very largely the work of one fierce man: the newspaper editor, then prime minister, Georges Clemenceau.

3. Walter Rathenau was the great German-Jewish industrialist who mobilized the German economy for total war after 1915 and along the way created the first functioning command economy. Not only did Rathenau prolong the First World War, but his methods inspired Lenin and became the basis for Soviet economic planning.

4. What we call the Russian Revolution was really V. I. Lenin's coup d'état. In the chaos and defeat of 1917, it was Lenin alone among the Russian radicals who saw an opportunity to seize power. If he had been hit by a tram in Zurich, Trotsky and company would have dithered the revolutionary moment away, and some reactionary but harmless general would have seized power. Instead, one fanatical man created the world's first totalitarian dictatorship and the first state at war with its own people and bequeathed it to his disciple, Joseph Stalin.

5. A joint nomination: Helmuth von Moltke and Giulio Douhet. One of the great achievements of European civilization in the 18th and 19th centuries was the broad acceptance of laws of war. War was to begin with a formal declaration, civilians were not to be targeted, soldiers who surrendered were to have their lives spared, and so on. And one of the great relapses into savagery of our century is that these rules have by and large vanished. A tip of the hat, then, to the German general who ordered the shooting of Belgian civilians in August 1914 and to the Italian military theorist who as far back as 1921 envisioned winning wars by the aerial bombing of cities.

6. Suppose the Bavarian cops had shot a little more accurately on November 9, 1923, when a mustache-wearing ex-corporal from Linz staged his ludicrous putsch. Would not everything in our century have been different had Adolf Hitler died on a Munich sidewalk?

7. A mediocre man and in many ways a second-rate president, Harry Truman drew a much harder job than his great predecessor. Roosevelt took the country into war; it was Truman's job to create and enforce an enduring peace. It was Truman who pulled and cajoled a reluctant country into paying the bills to reconstruct Europe. It was he too who halted the demobilization of 1945-46, and called the country to 45 wearisome years of confrontation with communism.

8. Of the 100 million victims of communism counted by the authors of *The Black Book of Communism*, Mao Zedong. was guilty of the deaths of more than half. Pol Pot killed a greater percentage of his own countrymen. Hitler killed more violently and more quickly. Stalin was more personally cruel. But some recognition must go to the most blood-stained human being in world history.

9. Richard Nixon. What?! No Ronald Reagan? Republican loyalists may well wonder. But Ronald Reagan only became electable in the first place because Richard Nixon had inadvertently smashed to pieces the statist economic consensus that governed the democratic world from 1930 until 1975. Ronald Reagan may have told us that price controls, uncontrolled government spending, and loose monetary policy were a formula for misery. It was Richard Nixon who proved it.

10. You don't have to be a great man to have a great impact. If our terrible century has had a reasonably happy ending, it occurred very largely because of a colossal miscalculation by the last of the Soviet general secretaries, Mikhail Gorbachev. He believed that if he liberalized his rule, he could strengthen his regime without overthrowing it. He believed that if he relaxed his hostility to the West, he could collect aid for the modernization of his empire. And he believed that if he pushed the hard-line rulers of his satellite regimes to one side, they would be replaced by reformist Communists much like himself. But precisely because he got it all so wrong, communism collapsed in Eastern Europe with hardly a fatality. Imagine what might have happened if Russia had been ruled in 1989 by a man with the acuity to perceive how ferociously he, his system, and his country were hated by those they ruled.

One possible criticism of this list of runners-up is that it's rather heavy with Germans. But then, how could it not be? Fritz Stern, the German-Jewish émigré historian, wistfully recalls in one of his books a day "in April 1979 in West Berlin. Raymond Aron and I were walking to an

Illustration by Earl Keleny

exhibit commemorating the centenary of the births of Einstein, Max von Laue, Otto Hahn, and Lisa Meitner. We were passing bombed-out squares and half-decrepit mansions, when Aron suddenly stopped at a crossing, turned to me, and said, 'It should have been Germany's century.'"

Instead it became America's. If the rules of the man-of-the-century parlor game permitted collective winners, the best entry might well be that proposed by the editors of *Newsweek* magazine: the American soldier and taxpayer. Again and again over the past hundred years, people with evil ambitions have spun their plans on the assumption that the American republic was too chaotic, too pacifist, or too weak-willed to stop them. From the kaiser to the Kremlin, they got the surprise of their lives. But rules are rules. The man of the century has to be an individual, not 200 million people.

Which man? Actually, this is one parlor game that isn't too hard. Because the story is ending happily, he should have been a force for good—which rules out Hitler and Lenin. He should have been great in his personal attributes as well as his accomplishments—which rules out Truman. And he must have been indispensable: a man but for whom all that came after would have been radically different—which rules out Gorbachev and John Paul II as well as FDR.

So who? Who else but Winston L. S. Churchill? If he'd been killed by that car that struck him on Fifth Avenue in 1931, Britain would almost certainly have cut a deal with Hitler in May 1940, as John Lukacs compellingly argues in his excellent new book, *Five Days in London*. Even Patrick Buchanan might have been chilled by the result.

President Clinton explained his choice of Roosevelt by noting that as a patriot he had to choose an American. Churchill was not only the son of an American mother, but one of only five honorary citizens of the United States. There must be something else that disqualified him in Clinton's eyes, and after reading Lukacs one can almost guess what it must have been. The crucial moment in Churchill's life was the moment when he prevailed upon a terrified British cabinet to fight on under seemingly hopeless circumstances. Can it possibly be that Clinton has the self-knowledge to understand that if by some freak of fate he'd been sitting around that cabinet table, he'd have been one of those who wanted to cut a deal? ♦

The Very Model of a Democratic Statesman

At the heart of Churchill's politics was a deeply felt dedication to and confidence in the people he led.

By Christopher Matthews

On a cold, drizzly night in November 1989, rumors flew in East Berlin that the Brandenburg Gate might be opened. People started to gather, hoping to be among the first to cross over to the West. Wading into the crowd, I tried to find out, with my limited German, what freedom meant to them. I asked, "*Was ist Freiheit?*"

"This is *Freiheit*," said a young man wearing an old army surplus jacket. "This standing in a public place arguing openly about such things as democracy, capitalism, and socialism." "Four weeks ago," broke in a woman nearby who said she was a nurse, "we couldn't have done this."

A few years later, in Capetown, I stared in awe at a line of voters that stretched across a wide plain from horizon to horizon. For the first time in history, South Africans of every color could cast ballots. Said one bright-eyed woman, "This is the day I've waited for my whole life."

Such are the triumphs at this century's end. A world threatened by Nazism and communism was saved twice. People long silenced now can speak. Countries once democratic in name only now experience the real thing. And of all this, one man is the emblem. As Britain's prime minister, he saved his country and perhaps the world from Adolf Hitler. But what he did out of office—alerting an indifferent world to the Nazis' rise in the 1930s; giving the Iron Curtain its name in 1946—deserves an equal place in the history of our times.

For Winston Churchill—a man of words, an orator and author—freedom was the word that made speech and writing both possible and noble. Declaring him an honorary citizen of the United States, John F. Kennedy said Churchill sent the English language "into battle." With the Czechs, the Poles, the Belgians, the Dutch, the Danes, and the French beaten and the continent of Europe overrun in June 1940, his was the voice that said Britain would "never surrender!"

It was the same voice that spoke —again, while others were silent—of the postwar peril from Moscow. At Yalta in February 1945, Churchill alone pushed for free elections in Poland. Sick, wearied by the war, and tragically unwary of the new global menace from the left, Franklin Roosevelt felt he could rely on the old charm; he could "handle" Stalin. In his view, free elections in Poland were a "distant" concern for the United States, since Polish-Americans were mostly of the second generation. But to Churchill, democracy was primary. When Stalin broke his promise to hold elections in Poland, Churchill saw the writing on the wall. A year later, he alerted the world at Fulton, Missouri.

What gave Churchill majesty was not just his horror of the century's twin scourges, against which he spearheaded the fight. It was his dedication to the democratic creed. No one in this century so personified the democratic ideal. When the British people made him their leader, he excelled at the task. When they rejected him, he gave truer leadership in opposition than the government in power. Winston Churchill needed no badge of office to see, to think, to speak, to lead.

In this, he was a different sort of leader. A son of the British upper classes, he had the public persona of a man who earned his way by his pen and his tongue. He saved Britain not by protecting it but by rousing his countrymen to brace themselves for what he assured them would be their "finest hour." He could do this because the sentiments to which he gave such fine expression were his own.

That is the heart of it. The sentiments, about England

Christopher Matthews, host of Hardball *on MSNBC and CNBC, is a nationally syndicated columnist with the San Francisco Examiner. His book* Hardball *was recently updated by Simon & Schuster.*

and about the cause of freedom, that he championed on the world stage were Churchill's personal convictions, and he brought to them the courage of a fighter. John Lukacs's new book, *Five Days in London: May 1940* (reviewed on page 34), lays it out in detail: At the crucial moment, Churchill's understanding of Hitler, of Britain's danger, of politics, and of his countrymen allowed him to face down the appeasers and make the case decisively for all-out war.

"You ask, what is our policy?" he told the House of Commons in his first speech as prime minister on May 13, 1940.

> I will say: It is to wage war: by sea, land and air, with all our might and with all the strength that God can give us; to wage war against a monstrous tyranny, never surpassed in the dark and lamentable catalogue of human crime. That is our policy. You ask, What is our aim? I can answer in one word: Victory—victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror, victory however long and hard the road may be; for without victory there is no survival.

Churchill's bold words rested on a hard foundation. An undistinguished student, he spent his youth and young adulthood proving himself as a military man. Upon graduating from the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst, he went to India, and the result was his first book, *The Story of the Malakand Field Force*. If writing about warfare after a single campaign seemed precocious, Churchill quickly outdid himself. He joined Kitchener's campaign to regain Khartoum from the disciples of the mahdi, who had vanquished and beheaded the great Charles "Chinese" Gordon. Churchill wrote of Kitchener's exploits in *The River War*—and criticized him for desecrating the mahdi's tomb.

In South Africa, where he went as a war correspondent, Churchill's capture and daring escape from the Boers late in 1899 won him celebrity. He was narrowly elected to parliament in the "khaki election" of 1900. Though he campaigned as a proponent of Britain's effort in the Boer War, he also expressed high regard for his recent enemy.

At Westminster, Churchill quickly proved independent on matters of policy. His maiden address challenged the defense budget as excessive (the very indictment that had cost his father, then chancellor of the exchequer, his political career). In 1904, he showed that his allegiance to principle overrode even party loyalty. When the Tories adopted a tough protectionist stance, the free-trader Churchill crossed the floor to the Liberals.

In World War I, he rose to first lord of the admiralty, a position where his audacity would carry a catastrophic price. Hating trench warfare, he pushed for a combined land and sea invasion of the Dardanelles, the gateway to Constantinople. His aim was to take Turkey out of the war and encourage rebellion in the Balkans against Germany and Austria. His mistake was in backing a half-hearted campaign that relied exclusively on sea power. He learned never again to take responsibility for a military effort without the requisite authority. Churchill would bear the blame for the casualties at Gallipoli.

Incredibly, he survived. Following the Liberals' post-war defeat, he began to reassert his independence from the party. In 1924, twenty years after quitting the Conservatives, he rejoined them. "It's one thing to rat," he said, "it's another to re-rat."

In 1929, Churchill made what looked to be a final break with the Conservative leadership, this time over dominion status for India, which he opposed. Yet his rebellion carried a bonus for human history. During the decade when it would count for most, Winston Churchill would be out of the government and free to speak his mind.

No one knew the vagaries of democratic life better than Churchill. Named to the cabinet in 1908, he was required by precedent to stand for reelection. He lost. Shaking off the embarrassment, he ran in a district more favorable to his party and won.

Following World War I, he was defeated along with the rest of the Liberal government. The loss coincided with some emergency surgery, and he found himself, as he put it, "without a seat, without an office, without a Party, and even without an appendix." Seeking to return to parliament in 1923, Churchill was rejected again. Undeterred, he tried, again without success, for a seat in a February 1924 by-election. Finally, in that year's general election, he won.

Even his heroic role as Britain's wartime leader did not shield him from defeat. In July 1945, he returned from the Potsdam conference with Stalin and the new American president, Harry Truman, to learn of the Conservatives' loss to Clement Attlee's Labourites. In 1950, Churchill and the Tories lost again to the socialists, if by a much-diminished margin. But in 1951, thanks to some vigorous street campaigning, the man who had led Britain to its finest hour was back as premier.

A scarred veteran of democracy, Churchill scorned those who loved the word but rejected free elections. "Democracy is not some harlot," he said in condemning the Greek Communists in the closing weeks of World War II, "in the street to be picked up by some man with a Tommy gun. Democracy is based on reason, a sense of fair play, and freedom and a respect for the rights of other people."

To William Manchester we owe the most vivid portrait of Churchill the writer, working into the wee hours on some speech or article, long after his dinner guests had left or gone to bed. His daughter Mary recalled a family that lived "literally from book to book, and from one article to the next." Every time he suffered a political defeat, Churchill produced another daunting work of history.

After World War I, it was *The World Crisis*. "I am immersed in Winston's brilliant autobiography," a colleague wrote, "disguised as a history of the universe." In the 1930s, he produced some 400 magazine articles in addition to his books. After his defeat in 1945, he wrote a history of World War II that won the Nobel Prize.

Churchill's writing, speaking, and governing all derived their strength from his honesty. What made his "Dunkirk speech" in early June 1940 his greatest was the understatement of its message. With the British expeditionary force, sent to save France, successfully evacuated to England, he used the upbeat occasion to lay out the possible cost of what remained to be done. "Wars are not won by evacuations," he told his hearers bluntly. A great fight lay ahead, from which Britain would not flinch. "We shall go on to the end," Churchill said:

> Even though large tracts of Europe and many old and famous states have fallen or may fall into the grip of the Gestapo and all the odious apparatus of Nazi rule, we shall not flag or fail . . . and even if, which I do not for a moment believe, this island, or a large part of it, were subjugated and starving, then our empire beyond the seas . . . would carry on the struggle, until, in God's good time, the New World, with all its power and might, steps forth to the rescue and liberation of the old.

Always, he tried to avoid overpromising. "Long, dark nights of trials and tribulations lie before us," he warned in an especially bleak radio address. "Not only great dangers, but many more misfortunes, many shortcomings, many mistakes, many disappointments will surely be our lot. Death and sorrow will be companions of our journey, constancy and valor our only shield. We must be united, we must be undaunted. We must be inflexible."

One man who recognized the strategy behind Churchill's dismal honesty was the top Nazi propagandist, Joseph Goebbels. "His slogan of 'blood, sweat and tears' has entrenched him in a position that makes him totally immune from attack," Goebbels barked. "He's like the doctor who prophesies that his patient will die and who, every time his patient's condition worsens, smugly explains that he prophesied it." By preparing the public for bad news, Churchill denied the Nazis the full PR value of their victories. They could not kill British morale if the British had already heard the worst from their own leaders.

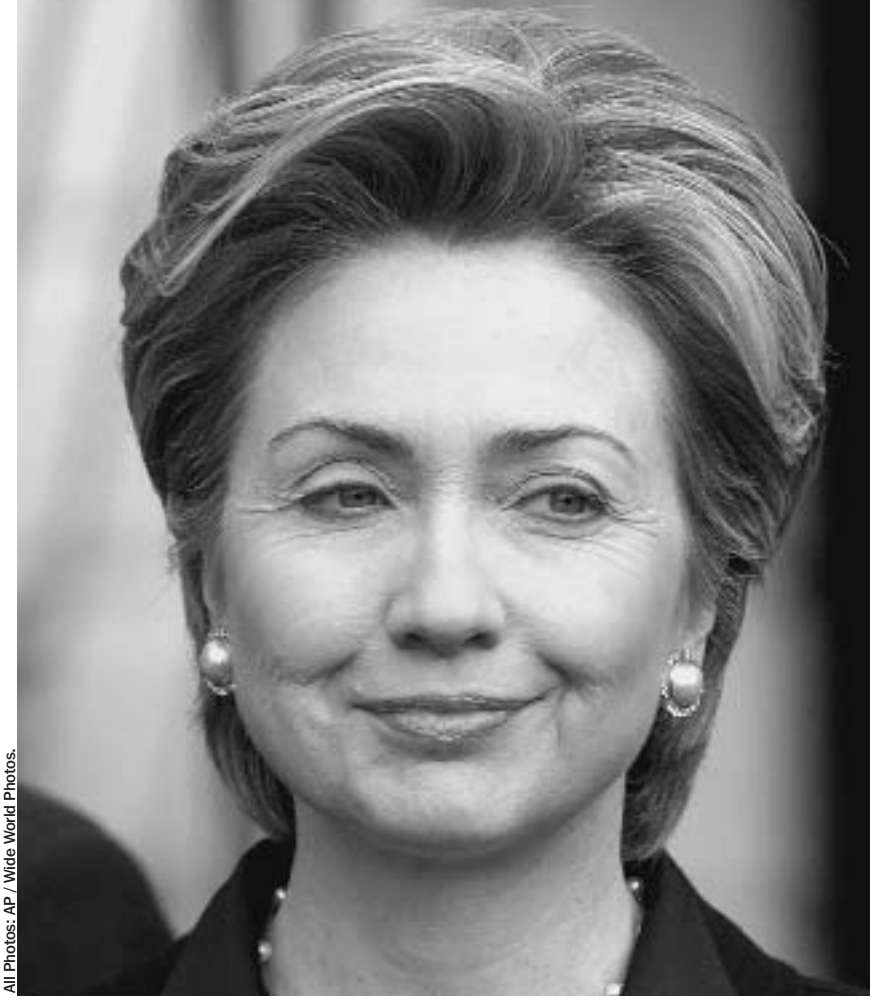
But there was more going on here than spin. Churchill wielded power through close contact with the truth. His years as a soldier and war correspondent, his battles with party leaders, his cabinet position in World War I, his stubborn independence, all had helped to prepare him for his historic role. By the early 1930s, he had the vision, the resolve to tell his country what it needed to know. A decade later, like Charles de Gaulle, he saw that the battle of France was more than that: It was part of a global conflict in which Adolf Hitler would ultimately be outnumbered. He saw, where the appeaser Lord Halifax could not, that to meet with Hitler was suicide, for the man in Berlin would conclude no deal that left Britain on its feet.

For all these reasons, Churchill is the democratic hero of our age. From his first electoral defeat in 1899 to his cruelest defeat at the very hour of military victory in 1945, he lived out that defining fact of democracy: You win some, you lose some. The politician who sticks to his principles will know defeat as well as victory. As Anthony Eden pointed out, "Courage for some sudden act, maybe in the heat of battle, we all respect; but there is that still rarer courage which can sustain repeated disappointment, unexpected failure, and shattering defeat. Churchill had that too, and had need of it, not for a day, but for weeks and months and years."

No leader was so clear-eyed about the century's villains. An instinctive anti-Communist, he understood nevertheless that Hitler posed the more present danger. "We have but one aim, and one single irrevocable purpose," he said after Hitler's invasion of Russia in 1941. "We are resolved to destroy Hitler and every vestige of the Nazi regime. From this nothing will turn us, nothing. We will never parlay, we will never negotiate with Hitler or any of his gang. Any man or state who fights against Nazidom will have our aid. Any man or state who marches with Hitler is our foe."

He said the same in private. "If Hitler invaded hell," he told his secretary John Colville, "I would make at least a favorable reference to the Devil in the House of Commons." In fighting Nazism, Churchill fought alongside the Soviets in a military sense, but very much against them in ideological purpose. The goal of World War II, he said, was "to revive the status of man." He wanted to raise up the individual beyond the reach of the Hitlers and Stalins of this world.

Churchill accomplished that end, and not just in his leadership against Nazism and communism. Simply by being the courageous, independent, self-reliant man he was, he was a tribute to the species. His life is a guide to what a free man can be. ♦



All Photos: AP / Wide World Photos.

The End of History and the First Lady

The Passage of Hillary Clinton

By Noemie Emery

Who is Hillary, and what is she? In a pair of recent volumes about our first lady, the viewpoints differ, but points of consensus emerge.

Barbara Olson is a conservative lawyer who got to know Mrs. Clinton at second hand while serving as counsel to the House committee investigating the FBI and the Travelgate scandals. Gail Sheehy is a professional writer, the prophet of numerous works of pop psychology such as the classic 1976 *Passages*, and a liberal who warms to the Clinton agenda, if not to the Clintons.

In *Hell to Pay*, Olson gives us a Mrs. Clinton who is a monster of ego, a tough gutter-fighter, a certified liar—and a Marxist who wants to seize power to foist her theories on the world and the country. In *Hillary's Choice*, on the other hand, Sheehy gives us a Hillary Clinton who is instead a monster of ego, a tough gutter-fighter, a certified liar—and *not* a Marxist, though she wants to seize power anyhow, partly because she is in her menopausal Flaming Fifties and it is (as *Passages* put it) her time of life.

Both books agree that her finances stank; that she lied about the cattle trades, which were really a payoff; that she caused the billing records to vanish, then surface; that she ordered the firing of the staff of the travel office, and then lied about it; that she recruited Jack Palladino to track down, blackmail, and threaten old girlfriends of Mr. Clinton (and paid him out of federal campaign funds, collected from taxpayers); and orchestrated the war room attacks that brutally slandered the people who got in her way. Both books agree that she is one very tough cookie, a terrific defense attorney on her own behalf, and her husband's, which was her main role in his career and his administration. Both also prove her a bad politician, responsible for most of the couple's legal and policy setbacks.

Hillary's Choice
by Gail Sheehy
Random House, 389 pp., $23.95

Hell to Pay
The Unfolding Story of Hillary Rodham Clinton
by Barbara Olson
Regnery, 344 pp., $27.95

But where Olson has written a terse, coherent, factual brief against Mrs. Clinton, Gail Sheehy has written two books, awkwardly cobbled together: The first is a reporter's book, a compilation of stories and quotations painting the Clintons as borderline psychopaths, while the second is an extension of Sheehy's *Passages* oeuvre, an empathetic account of a first couple beset by life's crises. Where Olson sees an autocrat, hellbent on power, Sheehy gives us a couple of middle-aged yuppies, molded by damage incurred via childhood trauma, battling the silent artillery of time: lost hopes and dreams, lost parents and friends, and, worst of all, lost hormones and muscle tone.

As a reporter, Sheehy has a keen eye for the killer anecdote. But as the

A frequent contributor to The Weekly Standard, *Noemie Emery is a writer in Alexandria, Virginia.*

author of sloppy, soupy, sappy books of advanced psychodrivel, she is given to quoting her theories as if they mean something. Her view of the Clintons frequently shifts between the two: They are examples of the vaguely criminal oddballs thrown up now and then by electoral politics, and they are also stand-ins for us all, working their hard way through life's many changes, searching for meaning, and love.

Olson largely bypasses the topic of Mr. Clinton. But Sheehy has assembled an array of quotations that paint a credible picture of the president as a certified nut case, a liar, a lecher, a sadist, and someone afflicted with multiple personality disorder. "It appears there is more than one person in him," she quotes a "mental health professional" too high-placed to identify. "When he's caught and lies, it's as if a third person did it. Because when he's in that altered state, he may feel like a different person." As Sheehy explains, "*It's not him!*" An astonishing number of statements, from ex-friends and co-workers, attests that he is passive in crisis (when his wife tends to take over), sullen and inert without crowd stimulation. He has no concern for anything beyond himself. "His attention is focused on himself a lot." "He can also be very caring—as long as it doesn't cost him very much." "He is emotionally unavailable. He lives on campaign junk love and casual sex."

Sheehy doesn't care much about the fact of impeachment—or the implications of a commander in chief who obstructs justice and lies, under oath, to the country—but she does care about why it all happened: It was another of those pesky midlife crises, brought on by age-related stress. No boy any longer, Clinton was "hurtling toward fifty" (he has since hurtled past it), his sight going, his hearing going, his hair turning "wintry gray." His mother had died a year and a half before he first set his eyes on the garrulous intern. His daughter Chelsea was also about to leave home. "Who now would love him unconditionally?" Sheehy inquires. "Who would play hearts with him in the wee hours, when insomnia would not let go its grip on his unquiet mind?" Who, indeed? Then, worst of all, he fell down and hurt himself, and was put in a wheelchair. "Overnight, he was hobbled like an old man . . . [with] all the accouterments of decay and dependence. . . . Was his own flesh suddenly a grave?" "Sex is a way of countering this death fear he has from his father," intones yet another mental health expert. And so Bill split off, yet another midlife crisis, encountered in an altered state.

Sheehy sees both Clintons as having been traumatized: Hillary by her father, who "undermined her sexuality"; Bill by his mother, who, among other failings, did not undermine his quite enough. As such, they made, as Sheehy describes, the weirdest public marriage since the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, another sick tale of an eternal child taken in hand by a stern disciplinarian. Hillary's defining choice, as explained by Sheehy, was the decision she made in 1975, when she left the East Coast for Arkansas, trading the career she could have had for the greater scope as the wife of a successful big-time politician. Throughout their marriage, she made the same choice time and time again to stay with her husband (and excuse, and defend, him).

"She is angry. Not all of the time, but most of the time," were Sheehy's first notes on meeting Hillary in the 1992 campaign. And angry at whom? She "has never held Bill accountable," a source told Sheehy. "She is in a perpetual state of suspended anger because of all that she has absorbed." Always, she would channel her rage from her husband's transgressions to those who stood to profit from them, becoming his primary champion. In an odd way, she may have come to welcome his failings, since she stood to gain from them twice: When she saved him, he gave her both political power and attention. "Why does Hillary often look her most glowing when her husband has shamed her?" asks Sheehy, who answers her question: "Every time he gets caught, Clinton concentrates his sexual magnetism on his wife, for a change."

On the other hand, when he has power, her hold becomes weak. When he won a four-year term as governor in 1986, "his reward to himself was to kick over the traces." Said Dick Morris, "he told both Hillary and Betsey [Wright, his other female keeper] in effect, 'get lost.'" Again, after the 1992 triumph, he let himself go, meeting a female friend in his basement office in Little Rock at five in the morning three or four times before moving to Washington.

In the soap-operatic Hillary's Choice, *Sheehy presents political lives without politics, the presidency as* Days of Our Lives.

In the soap-operatic *Hillary's Choice*, Sheehy presents political lives without politics, the presidency as *Days of Our Lives*. Hillary's management of Bill's political life after his loss of office in 1980 is ascribed in part to that passage in everyone's life when "Some inner aspect that has been left out is likely to insist on being recognized." Bill let her take charge, because his "reality as a child was completely defined by a woman," his hell-raising mother. Hillary blames it all on the "abuse excuse"—"that he was scarred by the abuse he suffered" as his mother and grandmother fought over him when he was a child of four.

Bill was scarred again in 1987, when Hillary "desperately" wanted him to run for president, and tough Mama Betsey said no. But he ran four years later, and all went more smoothly: "Gore was smart enough to adopt the role of the Better Brother. He began building a bond with Bill Clinton that seemed to caulk some of the great emp-

Mrs. Clinton sits beside her husband at the Eleanor Roosevelt Human Rights Award ceremony, December 6, 1999.

ty spaces inside the fatherless man." Well, not quite all of them. The Troopergate scandal blew up the first year. "Hillary gave him hell for months. . . . He couldn't get near her. So he didn't do anything to advance health care. . . . That was one of the key reasons the health care project died."

The Republican takeover of Congress in 1994 threw the Clintons off balance. Normal people may lose their looks and their waistlines but losing Congress along with them is a midlife crisis of exceptional consequence.

Understandably, this rattled the Clintons, who responded in prime boomer fashion: "Inspirational New Age authors were invited . . . to Camp David to help them." Among them was Jean Houston, a psychic and mystic, who told Hillary she was "burdened with five thousand years of . . . women's subservience," and urged her to talk more with the deceased Eleanor Roosevelt. Marianne Williamson, "a Jewish charismatic spiritualist . . . who presided over one of Liz Taylor's weddings," came to visit. So did Tony Robbins, the televised hawker of empowerment videos.

But Hillary had to "undergo a 'little death' of the inappropriate identity she assumed was hers for the asking, and begin to search anew," transcending the costs of her failed former choices and unhealthy attachment to Bill. Thus, according to Sheehy, Mrs. Clinton's planned run for the Senate has been empowered by two different life changes: the "zest" she now feels through the menopause passage, and the "crossover" passage itself. Sheehy even explains the choice of New York as a venue: "Hillary's father had refused to give her permission to go to rotten Gotham" when she was a girl. And now her marriage can get even better, as Bill can turn into her nurturing partner.

How many choices did Hillary have? As legend would say, she had legion: lawyer, advocate, activist, Supreme Court justice, senator, even commander in chief. "Hillary could—and should—be our first woman president," Sheehy was told by an Arkansas journalist, who rehashed an old theory. "I had images in my mind that she could be our first woman president," said Betsey Wright, who met Hillary in the 1972 campaign for McGovern, and was let down when she married our Bill. Talk about making her attorney general after the 1992 election did not impress Hillary's brother. "Attorney general is only local lawmaking," he told Sheehy dismissively. "There's treaty negotiations she could do. There's labor stuff. There's secretary of state."

Hillary herself considered running for governor in 1989, when the marriage was more than usually troubled, and Bill appeared ready to drop out of politics. She was crushed to discover that voters still viewed her, not as a dynamic political leader, but simply as Bill Clinton's wife. It was after this, sources say, that they repaired their marriage, and the run in 1992 was decided on. Even then, Hillary seemed to see it as the prelude to the truly great happening. "Eight years of Bill, eight years of Hill, that was the dream," says Sheehy. Bill himself said Hillary could have been senator.

But events in New York and elsewhere since Sheehy and Olson finished their books have led to a new kind of Hillary question: What if she can't do it? In February 1999, as the impeachment affair ground to its conclusion, Hillary Clinton's approval ratings nationwide soared, granting her a substantial lead in polls over Rudy Giuliani, her putative rival in the Senate race in New York. Since then, as she has struck out on her own, her approval ratings have sunk to their lowest point since the 1996 election, and she lags four to twelve points behind Giuliani. In one of the most pro-Clinton states in the country, with her backlog of sympathy, with Air Force One, with the White House attack-spin machine, with the power to go abroad on foreign junkets, with the power to control events, she seems to

be losing: Giuliani may manage to lose this election, but it looks like one Mrs. Clinton won't win. If she can't win there, when can she? And what becomes of her myth?

Hillary Clinton came to the White House as the first careerist first lady with an advanced degree in a field touching on politics. There is no doubt she could have had an impressive career as a lawyer or a lesser career as an activist-advocate, like Marian Wright Edelman, her earliest patron. Her gifts as a lawyer are open and obvious. But it has since become clear that her political instincts are terrible, and that, while she can light fires among true believers, she has trouble convincing those not already on her side. It is not that Hillary lacks brains and talents; her problem is that the kind of brains and talent she has do not lead to the kind of career that she covets. Good lawyers get rich, but are not often famous outside their profession. Mrs. Edelman has steady work, but is a minor player, and does not get to ride on Air Force One.

For the career that she wanted, Hillary had no choice at all but to hitch herself to a vote-getting machine named Bill, and then get him into her debt. Since she left the House Watergate panel, her public career has come entirely from her husband. Her sole contributions to history concern saving her husband's candidacy in January 1992, losing the House and Senate for the Democrats in 1994, and saving her husband's presidency in 1998. A Hillary backer told Sheehy, "How frustrating it must be to have your career diminished because your man—your bumblin', head-in-his-zipper husband—was literally screwing things up." But this wishful thinking misstates things completely. Her husband *is* her career in public, her only achievement and monument.

Near the end of *Hillary's Choice*, Sheehy describes a day in the life of Hillary Clinton—March 3, 1999—in which she lunched at midday at a New York fund-raiser where she received wild cheers from an assembly of well-to-do women who had paid $10,000 each to bask in the glow of her presence. That night, she went to a dinner at the East Side home of Roger Altman, at which everyone present avoided all mention of what everyone else in the country was talking about: the interview that very hour, in which Monica Lewinsky told all on television.

Sheehy treats this as an ironic contradiction. She does not understand that these events are interconnected: The Monica scandal brought on the emotional cheers. Hillary Clinton, who reached fame and power in 1992 as Bill Clinton's wife—as first lady, as health care czarina—reached superstardom in 1998 and 1999 as the abused wife of Bill Clinton. Not as a policy maker, but as a dramatic soap-opera figure, the Sue Ellen Ewing of national politics. She was interesting, not for her ideas or herself, but for her predicament. And when it receded, so did her charms.

In 1989, Hillary Clinton, who wanted to emerge as her own public woman, found herself defined as the wife of Bill Clinton. Now, ten years later, she is trying again, and she is *still* defined as the wife of Bill Clinton, a designation commensurate with her achievements, and one that she never will shake. For years, the feminist line—repeated by Sheehy—is that Hillary Rodham had a choice between two paths to power: the marriage path through Bill Clinton, and the one she could have taken herself. Now at last the myth is exploded.

To get to the White House, to lead the network news when she chose to, to play god in the Third World (and to feminist audiences), she had to choose Clinton and then put up with whatever he handed her. There was no autonomous, feminist road to power. Given her limits, her greed, and her hunger, Hillary Clinton had no choice at all. ♦

His Finest Hour

John Lukacs on the week that Winston Churchill saved civilization. **BY JOHN C. CHALBERG**

For a quarter of a century, historian John Lukacs has treated World War II like a photographer with a zoom lens, bringing his subject into progressively closer focus. His 1976 work *The Last European War* told the story of the European theater from Hitler's September 1939 thrust into Poland until Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. His 1991 book *The Duel* reconstructed the contest of wits, rhetoric, and arms between Adolf Hitler and Winston Churchill from the time of Churchill's elevation to the prime ministership on May 10, 1940, to Hitler's secret decision to invade Russia. Now with *Five Days in London: May 1940*, Lukacs dwells on a duel of a different sort that took place near the beginning of the war, when "the danger, not only to Britain but to the world, was greater and deeper than most people still think."

Five Days in London
May 1940
by John Lukacs
Yale Univ. Press, 288 pp., $19.95

This duel was waged within the British War Cabinet from May 24 to May 28. Perhaps to the reader's surprise (and certainly to Churchill's relief), the combatants were not the suddenly unleashed lion (Churchill) and the stubbornly unrepentant appeaser who preceded him as prime

John C. Chalberg teaches history at Normandale Community College in Bloomington, Minnesota.

minister (Neville Chamberlain). Rather, the duel of Lukacs's story pits Churchill (and a repentant Chamberlain) against the third Conservative of the five-member War Cabinet: Lord Halifax, foreign secretary under both Chamberlain and Churchill.

In Lukacs's view, the "great conflicts" in British politics through much of the 1930s were not between Right and Left, but between "two Rights." Such was still the case when Churchill, the "reactionary," was forced to confront Halifax, the conservative aristocrat. Barely two weeks into his prime ministership, Churchill had yet to solidify his control over the government, much less to establish his leadership of the country. He did have the tacit support of Chamberlain, who had changed his mind about both Germany and Hitler. But, as Lukacs so precisely and damningly puts it—Chamberlain "could not change his character." He was not a war leader and he knew it.

To Chamberlain's everlasting credit, he remained in the War Cabinet at a time when conservative support for Churchill was anything but firm. To many conservatives, Halifax perhaps foremost among them, Churchill was a hopeless reactionary. As foreign secretary, Halifax might well have succeeded Chamberlain at 10 Downing Street instead of Churchill. The king preferred Halifax; so did key members of his party. But say this much for Halifax: He, too, knew himself very well. A patriot first and a politician a distant second, he was right to spurn the prime ministership, even as he was wrong to persist in thinking Hitler could be appeased.

Halifax at bottom lacked resolve when it came to the impending clash with Hitler. He failed to understand, as Lukacs puts it, that Hitler "would have been contemptuous of the kind of Britain that would inquire for terms." Nonetheless, Halifax was "not a defeatist, nor was he an intriguer." He was simply wrong on the only issue that mattered at the moment.

Why Halifax was so wrong about Hitler bears some consideration. Lukacs's Hitler was not a madman. Certainly he behaved nothing like a madman in the spring of 1940, when Germany came perilously close to winning the western phase of the last European war. Lukacs's position, which he elaborated in *The Hitler of History* (1997), is that Hitler in late May 1940 was still a highly popular national leader, a wily diplomat, and most important, a military strategist who was *not* bound to fail in his effort to control all of Europe. He was also a revolutionary. As a mobilizer of the masses, he was unparalleled. Moreover, and more to the point, as a populist and a nationalist he represented a potential wave of the future far more than Stalin did.

All photos: UPI / Corbis-Bettmann.

Winston Churchill and Lord Halifax in 1938.

In late May 1940, that wave was poised to engulf all of Europe. Churchill understood as much at the time. This is the Churchill who draws Lukacs's praise, a man who never underestimated his enemy. Now Lukacs, as it happens, thinks Churchill was premature in advocating war with Germany two years earlier, at the time of Chamberlain's Munich settlement: "He may have been right, morally speaking; practically, he was wrong." But Churchill was decidedly not wrong in late May 1940. How he brought the War Cabinet to heel is the tale told in *Five Days in London*, a skillful weaving together of great power diplomacy, intra-War Cabinet debates, and pulse-takings of British blokes-in-the-street. It is a book with many virtues, the most surprising of which may be its timeliness, for it comes just as Reform party presidential candidate Patrick Buchanan has managed the unlikely feat of reopening debate over the American decision to participate in the transformation of the last European war into the Second World War.

Earlier this year, Buchanan's *A Republic, Not an Empire* resurrected the

long-discredited A.J.P. Taylor thesis, which holds that Hitler was bent solely on acquiring *Lebensraum* to the east. Buchanan would have preferred that Hitler and Stalin destroy one another in the name of preserving an independent foreign policy for the American republic. Buchanan, in short, thinks that Halifax had the better argument, and that Hitler might have been bought off.

To borrow from Lukacs (and to be fair to Buchanan), there is "some but not enough" truth in the Buchananite version of interwar history. Franklin Roosevelt did follow an isolationist path through much of the 1930s. The United States was woefully slow to rearm in the late 1930s. Roosevelt did applaud Chamberlain's appeasement of Hitler at Munich. Hitler would have preferred not to go to war with Great Britain and the United States. Roosevelt was less than candid with the American people between 1939 and 1941. And there were tragic consequences to World War II, not the least of which was the Soviet occupation of Central Europe (as Hungarian-born John Lukacs well knows).

Despite this terrible result, Lukacs is willing to thank God, Churchill, Roosevelt, and, yes, even Stalin for ridding the world of Hitler. Churchill's performance as a statesman was critical. The history of the world would have been very different if only Churchill had not stood in Hitler's path in 1940. And some "if onlys" are more illuminating than others. Put simply, Buchanan is dreaming if he thinks that Great Britain—or even the United States—could have survived intact and prosperous, unaffected and unwashed by any Hitlerian wave of the future, *if only* Chamberlain had persisted in his policy of appeasement.

As Lukacs notes, even Halifax, as Chamberlain's foreign secretary, understood the necessity of the British guarantee to Poland. However, this did not prevent Halifax as Churchill's foreign secretary from returning to an accommodationist line fifteen months later, proposing a last ditch overture to Mussolini in the wake of the Nazi blitzkrieg and in the name of giving Hitler pause before trying to cut a deal with him. The moment of truth within the War Cabinet arrived on Monday, May 27, 1940, when Churchill confronted Halifax. In doing so, he accomplished two objectives at once: He persuaded the War Cabinet not to attempt the Halifax strategy, and he convinced Halifax not to resign. At

Churchill and Chamberlain in 1939.

this point the British evacuation from Dunkirk had yet to be attempted, and there was no good evidence it would succeed. But Churchill had drawn his line on the beach. Better drowned than brown. Or, as Churchill put it to his fellow cabinet members, "even if we were beaten, we should be no worse off than we should be if we were now to abandon the struggle."

The English people knew very little of all this in late May 1940—of the desperate predicament of their troops on the continent, of Churchill's tenacity in persuading the War Cabinet to fight on. As Lukacs points out, the gravity of the situation on the ground was kept within the cabinet and out of the newspapers. Nonetheless, Lukacs cannot resist concluding nearly each chapter with assessments of what were called "Mass-Observation" reports, on-the-spot plumbings of British public opinion.

Despite their ignorance of the gravity of the situation, the "better off" folks were instinctively defeatist and highly suspicious of Churchill, while ordinary blokes simply could not conceive that Britain might lose the war and intuited that they had a leader on their hands who may not be one of them, but who was well worth following. Churchill, then, was proceeding as though he was winning the debate at the top and the bottom of English society.

Churchill and Great Britain could not have won the war without America and Soviet Russia. But in late May 1940 Churchill could easily have lost it. Nonetheless, he was not prepared to go on bended knee to the Roosevelt administration. Better to make a bold stand and win the American president's respect than to surrender hastily to Berlin—or to grovel in Washington.

And Stalin? Permit Lukacs, who fled the dictator's rule in 1946, nearly the last word: "If the price of survival of British independence and British democracy was the eventual transference of much of the imperial burden to the Americans, so be it; and if the price of winning the war was the tacit acceptance of Russian overlordship of much of Eastern Europe, that was unavoidable, too."

Such is the magnanimous conclusion of a long-ago refugee from Soviet-occupied Hungary. Hitler, the "greatest revolutionary of the twentieth century," was a barbarian. At the end of the twentieth century Lukacs worries about the "rise of new kinds of barbarism" that "may darken the lives of our children and grandchildren." Whether one shares this grim vision or not, it is easy to share his admiration for the man whose tenacity during those five crucial days in May 1940 led to the defeat of Hitler and a reprieve for the West. ♦

The Best Years of Our Lives, 1946. UPI / Corbis-Bettmann.

Slow-Moving Pictures

It turns out that viewers' attention-span isn't as short as Hollywood thought. **BY JOHN PODHORETZ**

In the forgotten 1979 film *Natural Enemies*, the narrator informs the audience, "My life stretched out before me like a bad movie"—to which the critic Renata Adler responded, "It is precisely the sort of line no author should attempt." Frank Darabont, the writer and director of *The Green Mile*, should have heeded Adler before he concluded his movie with the words: "Sometimes the green mile is *so long*." Darabont wants his viewers to think about the inexorable journey toward the grave, but it's equally likely, after three hours and eight minutes of moviegoing, that they are thinking instead about the inexorable journey to the restroom.

The Green Mile is an example of a burgeoning film genre, the Very Long Movie. The Very Long Movie—the VLM, for short—is loosely defined as any film that runs longer than two and a half hours, though a full-blown VLM has to reach the critical three-hour mark.

In theaters now, aside from *The Green Mile*, there's an epic about San Fernando anomie called *Magnolia* that clocks in one minute shy of three hours. *The Insider*—a movie that asks its audience to decide which it hates more, a tobacco company or the CBS television network—is three hours long. So is an unusual costume drama about Gilbert and Sullivan called *Topsy-Turvy*. *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, about a charming psychopath, takes two hours and thirty-nine minutes of your time, only twenty-three minutes fewer than *The English Patient*, the previous VLM from writer-director Anthony Minghella. Oliver Stone's hysterical football film *Any Given Sunday* body-slams you for over two and a half hours, as does the screen version of Shakespeare's bloodiest play, *Titus Andronicus* (billed as simply *Titus*, perhaps to give viewers the illusion that it's shorter).

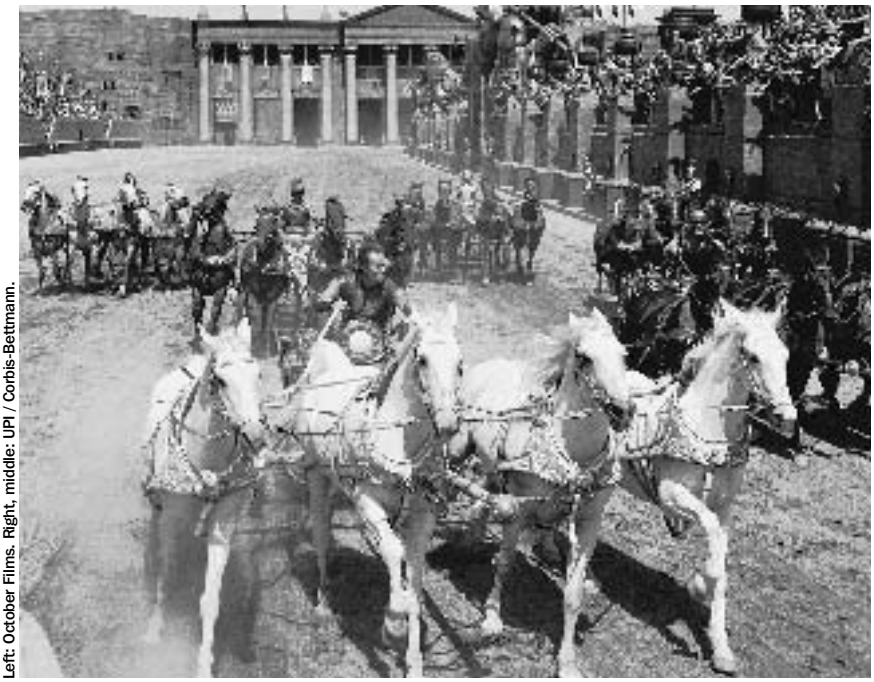
Six of the last twelve movies to win the Academy Award for best picture are VLMs: *Schindler's List*, *Braveheart*, *The English Patient*, *Dances With Wolves*, *The Last Emperor*, and *Titanic*. But the desire for Oscars is not the only reason for the increasing number of VLMs. Before the success of *Titanic*, at three hours and twelve minutes, the conventional wisdom was that short was good and long was bad. A long film can't be shown as many times in a day, and since Hollywood determines whether a movie is a hit almost exclusively on the basis of the box-office receipts from its first weekend, a film that screens four times a day instead of six is risky. Theater owners, too, want many different people passing through their multiplexes—not so much because they want the ticket sales, which they have to split with the studios, but because they want to sell popcorn and soda at the gouging prices with which they make their profit.

But *Titanic* changed all that. The Hollywood producers and the theater owners learned anew that if you make a movie memorable enough, people will watch it over and over again. It doesn't matter how long a movie is if a single customer is willing to buy three tickets instead of one over the space of a few weeks—that's a captive audience, the most desirable in the world of retail.

In a world of cable television, Pay-Per-View, and the Internet, the motion-picture industry has been feeling in recent years the same kind of threat as it did in the early 1950s, when television invaded American homes. Producers needed to offer audiences something they could not get at home. And since television was a little box that sat in the living room while movie screens back then were twenty feet high and forty feet wide, Hollywood decided to fill those screens. Movies moved off the backlot and into the open air. Posters promised never-before-seen spectacles with thousands of extras in movies about the battles of Alexander the Great or the fall of Rome. New technologies were invented that took advantage of the horizontal sweep of the movie screen: VistaVision and CinemaScope and Todd A-O.

And movies got longer. The classic Hollywood studio film of the 1930s and 1940s ran ninety minutes. There were occasional exceptions, such as the nearly four-hour *Gone with the Wind* or the

John Podhoretz is a contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD *and a columnist for the* New York Post.



Left: October Films. Right, middle: UPI / Corbis-Bettmann.

Charlton Heston races his chariot in Ben Hur*, 1958. Marlon Brando and Robert Duvall conduct family business in* The Godfather*, 1972.*

three-hour *Best Years of Our Lives*, but when you consider that Hollywood was cranking out six hundred movies a year in those days, you can see just how rare it was for a studio chief to allow a movie to go on at length. But in the 1950s and 1960s, while television programs typically ran thirty minutes or an hour, movies became the home of the epic. Cecil B. de Mille liberated the Jews from Egyptian slavery in three hours and forty minutes in *The Ten Commandments*. Four years later, in *Exodus*, Otto Preminger told the story of the founding of the modern state of Israel in about the same amount of time. (At a pre-opening screening, the comedian Mort Sahl stood up in the third hour and hollered, "Otto, let my people go!")

So leaden did these Hollywood epics become that an entire European film scene arose in ideological opposition to them. The directors of the French "New Wave," most famously François Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard, believed in making movies with short, punchy scenes in everyday settings without all the grandiose folderol. They, in turn, influenced the new generation of young American directors who learned their trade in the 1960s while Hollywood was turning out overlong epic (*In Harm's Way*) after overlong musical (*Doctor Doolittle*) after overlong comedy (*It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad, World*).

The young director most powerfully influenced by the French new wave was Francis Ford Coppola, who made a couple of unwatchable little movies where people either gamboled about tiresomely in the stacks of the New York Public Library (*You're a Big Boy Now*) or visited stark Midwestern towns in the company of brain-damaged football players (*The Rain People*). Somehow, Coppola got hired to direct one of those overlong musicals, *Finian's Rainbow*, which was every bit as bad as every other overlong musical—but it put him on the map when Paramount Pictures went looking for an Italian-American to direct *The Godfather*.

Rule number one, whether a movie lasts for five minutes or twelve hours: It's got to have a plot. Frogs are optional.

The Godfather, at almost three hours, was the first of the new VLMs—though new-wavey Coppola was so concerned about its potential stodginess that his first cut was forty-five minutes shorter than the final release. It was the Hollywood producer, Robert Evans, who insisted that he let the movie take its time. By the time Coppola made the sequel two years later, he had got the idea: *The Godfather, Part II* is three hours and twenty minutes long.

The Godfather is the movie every Hollywood director today thinks about when he says he wants to make a three-hour movie. Sure, you can make a classic that runs only ninety minutes. You can even make a great movie that runs sixty-four minutes, the length of *Dumbo*. But directors think differently when they're working on a three-hour canvas. They're not just telling a story; they're attempting to put something definitive on film—something with scope and heft that will engage the audience's deepest emotions. Three hours allow for character development and the unfolding of subplots that begin to suggest something of the experience of reading a novel.

Part of the magisterial quality of *The Godfather* is its length. There's not a single major plot point revealed in the first twenty minutes, which depict the wedding of Don Corleone's daughter. The sequence gives Coppola the space and time to introduce fifteen different

Allan Corduner and Jim Broadbent as Gilbert and Sullivan watch rehersals in Topsy-Turvy, *2000.*

characters, fix them firmly in our minds, and give us a sense of the world we're in. The languor of its camera movements, the care and detail with which even the most minor of characters is introduced—these qualities instill an odd confidence in a moviegoer that a director knows exactly what he's doing and won't confuse us or trip us up on the way there.

Take, for example, *Topsy-Turvy*, which opens across the country in January. Written and directed by Mike Leigh, the movie is about how W.S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan came to write their most distinctive operetta, *The Mikado*. But the movie doesn't even get to *The Mikado* until more than an hour has passed. Instead, we find ourselves in a meticulously recreated 1880s London, getting to know these two very different characters and the theater they inhabit.

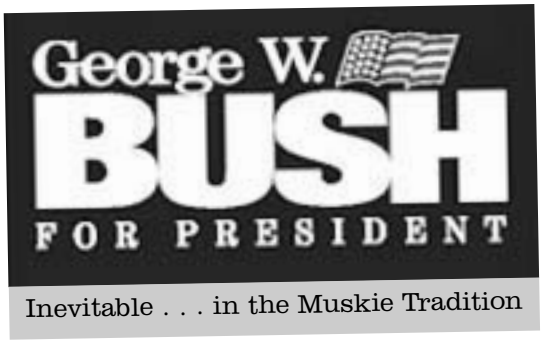
Sullivan, an affable libertine with an American mistress and a taste for French bordellos, believes he should be writing more serious music and recognizes that the operetta format he and Gilbert have mined so successfully is beginning to wane. Gilbert, one of the wittiest men who ever lived, is irascible and melancholy, with a doting wife he cannot bring himself to touch and a ghastly ancient father whose only mode of conversation is invective.

We see the premiere of *Princess Ida*, which nobody really likes—"Really, Gilbert, another magic potion?" Sullivan says in exasperation. We meet the cast of the D'Oyly Carte company and get to know them. And then, one afternoon, Gilbert and his wife take in an exhibition intended to show Londoners what life in a Japanese village is like. The Muse takes hold, and for the next hour and a half we watch as this popular classic is written and staged—how the two men work together harmoniously, how the seemingly petulant Gilbert directs the show with deep care and concern for the feelings of the actors, even how this incredibly stubborn man makes a disastrous decision on the night before the opening but is able to reverse it when the entire company politely but firmly challenges him to do so.

It's a gorgeous movie and might have profited from being even longer. That's also true of a new movie that isn't a VLM but ought to be—*Ride with the Devil*, a fascinating and complicated story of Civil War guerrilla fighting in Kansas, which feels as though it had cut out of it the thirty minutes it needed to make it more balanced and comprehensible. Instead, *Ride with the Devil* is weirdly lopsided, with a long setup, a short burst of action scenes in which you can barely make out who's who, and then a long denouement.

But there is one current VLM that doesn't justify its length. It could have been cut in half and would remain as insubstantial and pointless as it is at 188 minutes. That's *Magnolia*, which purports to tell the story of a day in the life of a bunch of people all connected in some way to a game show called *What Do Kids Know?* Like any VLM, the movie builds to a huge climax it keeps signaling with posters and billboards throughout the film reading "Exodus 8:2"—and, sure enough, at the end of the day a whole mess of frogs starts raining down on the San Fernando Valley.

They make an unholy mess, these amphibians, but when the frog storm is over none of the movie's twenty-five speaking characters seems all that struck with surprise. Why should they? Writer-director Paul Thomas Anderson never makes clear just what these people did to deserve this biblical wrath except that they aren't very nice to one another. Anderson's previous picture, *Boogie Nights*, heralded a major talent, and New Line Cinema gave him carte blanche to make his major statement on the human condition in a three-hour VLM. Guess what? It turns out he had nothing to say and no story to tell. Rule number one, whether a movie lasts for five minutes or twelve hours: It's got to have a plot. Frogs are optional. ♦



DEC. 23, 1999

MEMORANDUM

TO: GOV. BUSH

FROM: KARL ROVE

RE: OPERATION FIREWALL

Fantastic trip to New Hampshire, Sir. The office of dissension informs me that there will be no more troublemaking quotes in the New York Times from the locals. Clearly our "compassionate discipline" has done the trick with any bellyachers up there.

As you know, we've been having discussions throughout our organization over just where we should choose to stop McCain. The only remaining question is where the "Firewall" should be erected. After we conferred at length with your supporters from Sen. Judd Gregg's machine in New Hampshire, whose primary is February 1, they selflessly insisted that the honor of being the Firewall State should be moved to South Carolina, which holds its primary on February 19. How about that for good old Yankee humility! Further meetings in South Carolina with Gov. Caroll Campbell's machine, however, indicate that the South Carolinians are likewise too modest and self-effacing to accept the flashy honor of being the Bush Firewall State. They humbly suggest that the honor go to Michigan, which holds its primary on February 22, and Gov. Engler's juggernaut.

Gov. Engler, while greatly gratified to be offered the honor, suggests that the distinction of being the true Firewall should actually go to Virginia, which holds its primary on February 29. He makes the selfless argument that as one of the original colonies and the birthplace of so many great presidents (though amazingly not William McKinley), Virginia has a much stronger claim to being the Firewall State than humble Michigan. I'll be traveling to Richmond next week to give Gov. Gilmore the good news.

In conclusion, I am pleased to report that we are running a powerful 50-state campaign, very similar to President McKinley who ran a powerful 45-state campaign. Even as the slanted media continue their futile attempt to shove Sen. McCain down the throats of a Republican party that has clearly ALREADY MADE UP ITS MIND, we are getting strong support from paid GOP staffers, business lobbyists, and of course, EXTREMELY POWERFUL GOP GOVERNORS across the nation. McCain may roll up a few victories in the first 7 or even 10 primaries, but those states are odd, unrepresentative parts of the country that will have no influence on the eventual nomination, WHICH WE HAVE LOCKED UP.