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1-3-2001

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Taki Le Maitre

Year-End Notes

A few random thoughts as the year 2000 grounds to a more or less happy end. (At least for those of us who don't believe in recounting votes until the end justifies the cheating.)

George W. Bush's spokesman, Ari Fleischer, is in terrible trouble. "President Clinton said that he would neither seek nor accept a pardon, and President-Elect Bush takes him at his word," announced Ari just the other day, which in my not-so-humble opinion means either Fleischer is naive or George W. is a very accomplished practical joker. Taking Bill Clinton at his word is something only a fool would do, and George W. is no fool. When independent counsel Robert Ray makes his final decision about whether to press charges that include perjury and obstruction of justice, we will see the real Clinton. If Ray decides to prosecute, Clinton will go to his media lackeys first, then to his Hollywood pals and, finally, he will appeal to a "sense of justice and the decency of the





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President of the United States..." or words to that effect.

I have bet an ABC man dinner for 10 people at Elaine's that all charges will be dropped and that the Draft Dodger will once again get away with it. Mind you, my forecasts rival those of MUGGER. The only one I got right was Hillary's Senate victory, whereas I was wrong about Bush as well as the Republicans holding onto Congress. Oh well, it's better to be pleasantly surprised than the other way around.

And speaking of pleasant surprises, one day Maureen Dowd will wake up and realize that she's making a terrible fool of herself with all that "spoiled fratboy wants to play in his dad's old office" stuff. George W. has never lost. He got into Yale, got his master's at Harvard—unlike Gore—was a very successful businessman, an owner of a popular baseball team, and as good a governor as Texas has had in a hell of a long time. So where does the Irish cop's daughter get off calling him dumb and spoiled? Does she think that just because he was born on the right side of the tracks he has to be thick and a brat? On the contrary, it shows how limited the cop's little girl is, and how she must have dated the wrong types belonging to the wrong frats. Or those who never made it into one. Class envy is a given at the *Times*—just look at Adam Clymer (on second thought, don't)—but la Dowd should know better. The class envy game against WASPs is a loser...

One of the pleasures of my life is to arrive in the country Papa Hemingway referred to as more upside down than sideways, namely Switzerland. Upon landing in Geneva one is struck by how clean and uncrowded everything is. The airport is a marvel of efficiency, yet it doesn't look that modern. There are no lines, no rude female customs officers a la Noo Yawk, no waiting for taxis. The air is clean, the people



mind their own business and the country is—Austria aside—among the most beautiful on Earth.

It is also marvelously run by a central government as unobtrusive as it's possible to be and still be called a government.

Switzerland has been at peace for half a millennium because of what it calls "armed neutrality." In their infinite wisdom, the Swiss were among the last to grant women the right to vote, back in 1971. The canton of Appenzell held out until 1991, but then Bern stepped in and some old-timers think it's been downhill ever since. Still, I love the place...

When the media mogul Rupert Murdoch offered a \$4.5 million advance to then House Speaker Newt Gingrich for a book in 1994, there was a huge outcry. The Clinton White House put the word out that it was unacceptable. Press Secretary Dee Dee Myers banged on about the size and timing of the advance.

Now our very own Hillary has negotiated an \$8 million book deal, but not a peep has been heard from the White House. Perhaps they've been too busy with the nation's business to notice. After all, Bill Clinton's favorite mantra was always that we should move on and that he should be allowed to get on with what the American people send him to Washington to do (play golf, get blowjobs and spread vicious stories about his political enemies).

Simon & Schuster, the generous publisher, is a subsidiary of Viacom Inc., which among many other things owns CBS, MTV, Paramount and Showtime. To my unsophisticated Greek mind, that sounds like a bribe. Viacom has lotsa business coming in front of the Congress in which Hillary will be serving. If this is not a conflict of interest, I'm Monica Lewinsky, but I'm

sure now that I've pointed this out, the media will have a field day and force her—like Newt—to renounce the advance.

And if you believe that, dear readers, you believe in Santa Claus. Happy New Year to all of you anyway.

Charles Glass The London Desk

Holiday Cheer

December staggers into London, a drink in one hand and the promise of forgetting in the other. The last, dark month banishes the ills of the first 11, placing us all in his debt.

How lamentable those months were. Would that we could forget that inglorious dawn of the millennium, when Britain's faltering regime presided over a faux ceremony to bid farewell to the \$1.5 billion it dispensed to its friends and benefactors for building, furnishing and publicizing an empty monument to its vacuous rule that it dubbed the Millennium Dome. The soon-to-be demolished tent that almost no one visited is an emblem for all that happened in 2000: the once-great railways collapsed; violent crime escalated; the population in prison outstripped the growth of the rest of the society; the government slammed shut its doors to refugees escaping tyranny and terror; a pornographer bought two (admittedly third-rate) national newspapers; Britain slavishly joined America's assaults on Iraq and Yugoslavia; the Foreign Office approved sales to Indonesia and Israel, among others, of arms used on civilian demonstrators with lethal effect; and the use of drugs escalated to keep pace with the harsher punishments judges are forced to hand out to

drug-users. Tony Blair's enthusiastic bombast dueled with his Conservative opponent's racist demagoguery to deprive the country of meaningful political debate on Britain's future in Europe, in NATO and in its relations with the Great Superpower. It was bad, brother, until December, in his jolly tweed coat, came along.

This is London's drunken month, in a city where drinking is a year-round sport for the young, middle-aged and ancient alike. Parties rock round clocks, many sponsored by corporations, their chance to give back a little of what they've been helping themselves to all year. Of course, as things are going, a few of these well-fed companies may not be around next December, so they might as well see the year out in a drunken haze to steady executive hands to accept big payouts for firing their workforces and reneging on their debts. You may have noticed that corporations' lives are as truncated as the Thousand Year Reich's, and fugitive managers survive like Gestapo agents reincarnated in the service of the CIA, MI-6 and KGB. Enough, enough. I've been drinking their whisky all month, and I'm grateful. Soooo grateful.

It takes stamina to be a hack in this town when every department of every newspaper and magazine gathers its staff, friends, contributors, advertisers and gate-crashers together to, well, get drunk. And occasionally laid. "Are you going to the *Evening Standard* party?" I asked a newspaperman friend. His answer: "Which one? Features? Sports? Diary? The Editor's Very Own Bash at Brooks' Club?" Well, I guess I meant all of them. And, yes, he was at all of them. So, too, I think, was I. Also all the sections of the *Daily Mail*: Books, Features, Sports, the Proprietor's Very Own at the Savoy. Not to mention the *Guardian*, *Financial Times*, *Daily* and *Sunday Telegraphs*, BBC, *Tatler*, *Erotic Review*, etc.

The other night, I managed to begin the evening in a lap-dancing club in Soho, where the *Erotic Review's* staff wore corsets (luckily, they're all women), move on to the *London Review of Books* party at their offices near the British Museum, then wander down to the *Evening Standard's* Features drinkfest in a building on the Thames. In Soho, I flirted with the lesbian sister of the *Erotic Review's* editor, a girl I adore and had previously taken to *The Observer's* party. (She picked up more women than I did, by far.) At the *London Review*, I managed to have serious conversations with the deputy editor, Jeremy Harding, and with my old friends Robin Blackburn, publisher of Verso books, and Tariq Ali, once Britain's leading left-wing firebrand and now novelist and playwright. By the time I got to the *Standard*, I was lowering the tone sufficiently to kiss several of the prettier hackettes. And all of this took place, mind you, before dinner.

Then I met old pals at San Lorenzo, drank Brunello di Montalcino, ate penne arrabiata and fell in love with the most beautiful Italian girl I have ever seen. She gave me her telephone number, but she also, alas, seemed to give it to my friend Sebastian Taylor. (I called her the next day. No answer. I suspect Sebastian got there first.)

We went on to Tramp, the underground Jermyn Street nightclub that the legendary proprietor Johnny Gold has sold to some businessmen, who refurbished the place. Johnny was still there, at his table, although the beautiful receptionist, Lorraine Palmer, has gone. Guido, Golfredo and the rest of the old staff were there, and it was fun.

Christmas cheer swept us up to Notting Hill and Woody's nightclub, a more bohemian setting. It was there, in the early hours when I was chatting up a blonde whom Sebastian and I had

picked up hitchhiking at Marble Arch, that a father's worst fear came to pass. Downing another glass of Jameson's Irish Whiskey, leaning toward the blonde, I felt a hand touch my shoulder. I turned around and heard the words, "Hi, Dad." It was my older son George, who seemed to be engaged in rather similar activities to mine. It was time for one of us to go home. Luckily, I did not have long to walk.

Melik Kaylan

The Spy

Whose Genocide?

Here's a topic I'm loath to write about: the Armenian genocide. I did so for the first time ever in a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed some weeks ago. Result: An incendiary rain of ad hominem abuse and threats mailed to me at addresses I'd forgotten I had. But now my colleague Charles Glass, whom I admire enormously for his solitary courage on matters Middle Eastern, has forced the issue in these very pages.

He took the position that both Clinton and Blair acted in cowardice by spurning support for Armenian genocide legislation in their respective countries. (The European Union, in the meantime, passed its version.) Such bills typically ask that the massacre and violent expulsion of Armenians in Eastern Turkey some 90 years ago be recognized today as official genocide.

Anyone who reads the source material on the original events in 1915-'16 needs a cool head and a strong stomach. There's no question that the vicious so-called "Young Turk" regime of the time visited horrors on the indigenous Armenian community. Turkish authorities today still

suppress all discussion of the topic. And I've never been a fan of theirs.

Yet Charlie Glass of all people should know to tread warily around Western views of the Muslim world. He knows about the demonizing and the "orientalist" bias. His good friend Prof. Edward Said literally wrote the book on it. Strangely, in Said's *Orientalism*, Turks are almost never mentioned. We hear exhaustively about the West's systematic, semantic and literary caricaturing of Arabs, Jews and Orientals of all stripes—yet almost never Turks, against whom the invective was chiefly directed for the last 500 years. The Ottoman Turks, after all, embodied the anti-West principle until the Red Scare took over.

For Said and Glass, apparently, the Turks remain unredeemable, a common sentiment in the West. If you doubt its virulence, think of how the Serbs reified the Bosnians with the epithet "Turk," invoking it as self-incitement to more slaughter throughout their own recent mini-genocide. Indeed, I could tell you deeply unpleasant personal stories of growing up as a Turk in the West. But I won't. I've been in rooms where blacks, Jews and Arabs have fought over which group has suffered worse genocide over the years, and which should be more commemorated.

I deplore this morbid "victimissimo" desire to be counted among the most wronged races of history. Not because, being Turkish-born, I carry a hardwired propensity to kill Armenians and Kurds and eat their babies. Though you'd be surprised how many people think so. Proponents of the victim sweepstakes will argue that official commemoration of their own suffering protects them and others, indeed the world, from further such incidents. Unfortunately, the historical record indicates the precise opposite, that the cycle of violence is

instead perpetuated ad infinitum. Think of the Serbs and their self-justifying grievances dating back some 600 years to Kosovo. Think of Israel and the Palestinians, of Hutu ferocity against their Tutsi antagonists who ruled them a century or more. Finally, consider the Armenian purge of their neighbors, the Turkic Azerbaijanis, in the Nagorno-Karabagh wars of the early 1990s.

Charles Glass, I notice, doesn't mention this at all in his polemic. I have video footage from that particular slaughterfest. Whole Azeri villages were obliterated, including old women and children, and their livestock. Often the children were scalped. Many had their hands tied back to their ankles first. Old men with toes and toenails yanked off were left to walk over the mountain passes. Russian arms and special forces supported Armenian revanchistes in that conflict, as they have for several centuries. Naturally, neither the West nor Charlie Glass is anxious to counter-commemorate this turn in the cycle.

And there's the rub, because in such scenarios historical complexity is the first victim, and all the others follow from that. It's easier to view Turks in stark profile as the great predatory Antichrist, the definitive barbarous Asiatic, before purging their allies, cousins and coreligionists in the name of humanity. This is exactly what the broad Christian supremacist alliance under the Czar did before the Young Turk regime took it out on the Armenians. With the Cossacks at the vanguard, a crusading tide of Armenians, Georgians, Russians and the like pogromed into the Caucasus and Central Asia, slaughtering as they went—an experience the Jews remember well. The Turks and Armenians had lived together in relative peace for centuries until then. Armenians had prospered mightily under the terrible Turk. They built the lushest Ottoman sultans' palaces in the 19th century. Yet when the Russians occupied Turkish

Armenia as "protectors of Eastern Christendom," the local Armenians helped them massacre more Turks.

Where are the monuments to the Turks and Muslims murdered during that century of endless genocide, one that continues today with the decimation of Chechnya? Is there a Charlie Glass out there standing up bravely for their memory? Nobody in the "civilized" world has heard that side of the story, nobody cares to and nobody's willing to tell it for fear of courting public abuse.

Genocide is a black and white concept. Once acknowledged, it brooks no shades of gray. Nobody likes to remember that it was the local Kurds who mostly carried out the actual physical slaughter of Armenians and took their land. The Kurds, victims du jour, are too oppressed for that, though their current Marxist insurrection against their allies, the Turks, is also Russian-sponsored from the north. The Kurds themselves forget that the Soviets simply "disappeared" 100,000 of their number when they recolonized and kept the briefly independent southern Caucasus in the 1920s and 1940s.

It's all so irritatingly complicated. Which is why Charlie should know better.

Scott McConnell
The Conformist

Color Codes

The telling element of federal district court Judge Patrick Duggan's ruling in the University of Michigan racial preferences case was his stress on how preferences improved the

characters of white students.

The case, a battleground in the Thirty Years Affirmative Action Wars and likely to end up before the Supreme Court, had been brought by white applicants Jennifer Gratz and Patrick Hamacher. They charged the university's racially calibrated admissions policies unlawfully discriminated against them. (A parallel suit against the U of M law school is before a different judge.)

The admissions guidelines, long guarded as secret by Michigan, have now been aired in court. Applicants are rated on a 150-point scale: 12 points for perfect SAT scores, five for community leadership or exemplary social service activities, four for an alumni connection, etc. And this: 20 points for belonging to an underrepresented minority group—black, Hispanic or Native American.

The arguments for and against this kind of thing are by now tired. The most recent major pro-preferences contribution, made by retired Ivy League presidents Derek Bok and William Bowen in their much-celebrated *The Shape of the River*, substantiates the unsurprising claim that blacks admitted because of preferences do well in later life if not in the college classroom, usually completing their degrees and achieving professional success. Given America's racial disparities—whatever their cause—no better argument for limited racial set-asides may be needed.

But in ruling against Gratz and Hamacher, Duggan hardly mentioned this reasoning. Instead he turned to claims—some put forth in various "studies" conducted by U of M faculty—that racial preferences and the resulting "diversity" were "good for all students," correlated highly with "growth in intellectual engagement and motivation," reduced student

inclination to "mindlessly conform" and so forth. Racial double standards benefit everyone, he said, but whites need them most for a complete education.

Put in this way, Duggan's ruling reinforces the most pernicious aspect of contemporary campus life: the coercive effort to mold the political consciousness of students. For many college administrators, it is not enough that students learn to delve into the best of their own or other cultures, or master the skills to enable them, one day, to manage a business or cure a patient. The real goal is to mold multicultural citizens, ready to become, as the judge put it, "active participants in our pluralistic, democratic society once they leave."

While such phrases sound benign and even platitudinous, they are the very ones university administrators use to justify programs properly described as reeducation measures. These are carried on by what the University of Pennsylvania's Alan Kors and attorney Harvey Silverglate have labeled, in their book by that title, *The Shadow University*, their term for the web of speech codes, politicized required courses, the funding of various minority student centers, enforced double disciplinary standards and psychologically invasive orientation programs.

College administrators have concluded that the admission of a certain number of black (and now Hispanic) students who would not qualify by regular standards, providing them with remedial and advisory help, and otherwise making available to them all the college offers does not go far enough. The next step is remake the campus into a model of liberal multicultural America, and for that remaking the white student is required.

Speech codes—designed to rein in students and

faculty tempted to violate liberal rhetorical norms—were an early step: a student can face the full weight of university discipline for yelling out the window (as in one famous case), "Shut up, you water buffalo"; the reprobate conservative editors of the *Dartmouth Review* are regularly on the dock for one or another editorial infraction. After all, as one college dean noted, "the First Amendment was written by white male slaveowners." But the give-no-offense rules are not equitably enforced. When a Latino student paper gloats over the killing of a Border Patrol agent, adding, "It's a shame more migra pigs didn't die with him," university administrators turn into staunch free speech advocates. As Kors notes, on today's campuses there is no limit to the verbal abuse that may be directed at conservative Christians.

More malignant are the orientation programs, mandatory for incoming freshman, designed to break down the students' resistance to the indoctrination that will ensue. At many colleges, incoming students are subjected to *Blue Eyed*—a filmed workshop in which whites are abused, ridiculed, made to fail, all so they can identify with "people of color." In *Skin Deep*, another widely shown diversity education film, a white student is hectorred by other students, until, as in Maoist China, he denounces his parents. On the third day of a diversity "workshop" he confesses to his family's racism, admitting before all the world: "it's a tough choice, choosing what's right or choosing your own family."

The assumptions behind such exercises are clear: that whites are presumed guilty and need formal training to overcome their backgrounds; that all problems encountered by students of color are due to institutionalized racism; that diversity training should override traditional notions of privacy and individualism; that the university should be an agent of social change.

This is the view of the purpose of affirmative action that Judge Duggan (a Ronald Reagan appointee) has managed to embrace. What is scary is not that color-blind, merit-based admission procedures should be bent so 7 or 10 percent of the student body can be black. It is that the remaking of the psyches of white students has become the main rationale for the enterprise.

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