

# Patrick J. Buchanan and the Jews

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ONE definition of anti-Semitism, Patrick J. Buchanan observed in his syndicated column this past September, is “an embedded hatred of Jewish people, manifest in writing and conduct, . . . a grave sin, a disease of the heart, a variant of racism.” But he also gave a second definition: “a word . . . used to frighten, intimidate, censor, and silence; to cut off debate; to . . . smear men’s reputations.”

Buchanan complained that his name was being associated with the first meaning of the term when it ought to be associated with the second. Nevertheless he, for one, would not be intimidated: “The late Arthur Koestler, a Jew, wrote that ‘one should either write ruthlessly what one believes to be the truth, or shut up.’ A good motto.”

The impetus for all this bravado was a column in the *New York Times* by A.M. Rosenthal accusing Buchanan of anti-Semitism and even “blood libel.” Rosenthal reeled off without detail a list of particulars that had previously left him “silently contemptuous” of Buchanan. But he was moved to break his silence, he explained, by Buchanan’s recent charge on the *McLaughlin Group* television show that “There are only two groups that are beating the drums . . . for war in the Middle East—the Israeli Defense Ministry and its amen corner in the United States.” This, said Rosenthal, should be read: “The Jews are trying to drag us into war.”

Rosenthal’s accusation and Buchanan’s reply stirred up a great deal of discussion. The strongest support for Rosenthal came in an unsigned piece on the editorial page of the *New York Post*, widely attributed to the editor of that page, Eric Breindel, which rebutted Buchanan’s reply even as the reply itself ran on the *Post*’s op-ed page. Another *Post* editorialist, Scott McConnell, added a signed column lamenting the “dark and medieval . . . rage” behind Buchanan’s words. An editorial in the *New Republic* also endorsed Rosenthal’s accusation, and the *Washington Post* columnist Richard Cohen, after watching Buchanan excoriate his detractors on a subsequent television show, protested his “casual, sloppy, and conspiratorial” use of the

word “they”—by which, Cohen said, he seemed to mean “the Jews.”

Cohen thought that Rosenthal’s was the “worst” construction of Buchanan’s words; the best was that Buchanan was “insensitive.” William F. Buckley, Jr., in his syndicated column, also chastised Buchanan for being insensitive, while at the same time declaring that Rosenthal had “gone ballistic” in his original attack. Jacob Weisberg, in an article in the *New Republic*, went beyond the anti-Semitism issue to argue that “Buchanan’s entire world view is deeply disturbing . . . in a distinct sense, fascistic.”

Another group of commentators planted themselves more firmly in the middle. As Tony Snow of the *Washington Times* saw it, “Both men have done things they shouldn’t have done and said things they shouldn’t have said”; he called on them to “grow up, boys.” Michael Kinsley, Buchanan’s partner on the TV show *Crossfire*, waffled that Buchanan’s words “raise questions” but “don’t provide answers.” Morton Kondracke accused Buchanan (his colleague on the *McLaughlin* show) of having “a venomous attitude toward Israel and all of its supporters,” but he later added that the charge of anti-Semitism requires “lots of proof, and Abe Rosenthal does not have the proof.”

Given the fact that Buchanan is a man of the hard Right, it is ironic that his defenders tended to come mainly from the Left. On the far end was the *Nation*, which carried an article by Eric Alterman whose conclusions echoed Buchanan’s own argument: “If the Rosenthal-Buchanan episode contains any lesson . . . it is that journalists need to be just as vigilant in addressing the smear of anti-Semitism as they are in seeking to expose the disease itself.” Also in the *Nation*, Christopher Hitchens chimed in that “Rosenthal, Breindel, and the rest of the neocons . . . call him a Nazi because he doesn’t care for the influence of Yitzhak Shamir.”

On the more moderate Left, the syndicated columnist Martin Schram took issue with Buchanan’s position on the gulf crisis but saw “no need to create a diversionary smoke screen, a cry of ‘Racism!’ in the form of ‘anti-Semitism!’” And on the *McLaughlin* show itself, Buchanan’s strongest defenders were two liberal journalists, Jack Ger-

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mond and Eleanor Clift. Germond declaimed: "There's not a scintilla of evidence in all I've known about Pat that he is anti-Semitic. . . . This is an attempt to say that if you disagree with Israel on a matter of policy you can be called-anti-Semitic." And Clift even denied that Buchanan was anti-Israel: "You don't have to be anti-Israeli to be opposed to war in the Middle East. I think Pat is an isolationist."

Ironically, too, the TV colleague whose comments most undermined the defense of Buchanan was the host of the show, John McLaughlin, who is not only ideologically close to Buchanan and a former co-worker in the Nixon White House, but whose views on the Middle East in particular are often similar to Buchanan's. Even so, when Buchanan first made his controversial remark, McLaughlin at once contradicted him by pointing out that Saudi Arabia and Egypt both wanted war against Iraq, and he repeated this on a later show when the issue was rehashed.

McLaughlin's point was hardly news: it was surely familiar to all his fellow panelists and probably to many of their viewers, for it had been reported several times. But this only highlighted the odd nature of Buchanan's charge: it was manifestly false and he must have known that it was. Israel—which had absorbed nearly unanimous international condemnation for its 1981 airstrike that aborted Iraq's nuclear-weapons program, and which Saddam Hussein had recently threatened with weapons of mass destruction—no doubt was hoping that this time the U.S. would do the job. But Israel had been maintaining a low profile, as indeed it had been urged to do by the United States in the interest of keeping the majority of Arab states aligned against Iraq. Far from beating the drums, Israel was at most merely humming along. And even to the extent that Israel and its friends were quietly hoping for war, they were, as McLaughlin reminded Buchanan, hardly the "only" ones.

**I**N HIS autobiography, *Right from the Beginning*, Buchanan, recounting the numerous fistfights he had in his youth, tells us that "We loved to party and drink and fight guys we didn't know and didn't like." Then the pain of getting hit was less than the pleasure of hitting someone; now the same calculus seemed to be at work, although this time the blows were verbal. By trimming back his attack to lessen its blatant exaggeration, Buchanan would have reduced his own vulnerability, but evidently he so relished the assault he was launching against Israel and its "amen corner" that he disdained his own safety. "I don't retract a single word," he told *Time*. "The reaction was simply hysterical and is localized to New York." He could scarcely have been unaware that, used in this context, "New York" would be taken as a euphemism for "the Jews," any more than he could have been unaware earlier that the

same construction would be put on the reference in his original salvo to the "amen corner."

Some commentators, however, contended that the latter phrase could be read to mean merely "Israel's supporters." But this more benign interpretation was undermined by some of Buchanan's own columns. In one, written within days of the "amen corner" remark, Buchanan named four of those he had in mind: A.M. Rosenthal; former Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Perle; the columnist Charles Krauthammer; and former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. The Jewishness of these names contrasted with those of the American soldiers, who, in a subsequent piece, Buchanan said would do the fighting if war came to the gulf: "Kids with names like McAllister, Murphy, Gonzales, and Leroy Brown."

What was most peculiar about the four men Buchanan held forth as exemplifying the "amen corner" was that there was nothing inconsistent or out of character about their hawkish stance toward Iraq's aggression. Perle and Krauthammer were both dyed-in-the-wool hardliners on U.S. foreign policy. Rosenthal, though widely thought of as a liberal during his reign as executive editor of the *Times*, had marked himself as a hardliner ever since retiring from that post and becoming a columnist. He had, to cite but one litmus test, called it "ironic madness" that perceived opinion in the West seemed to prefer Mikhail Gorbachev over Ronald Reagan. And Kissinger, though the architect of détente while in office, had since then reclaimed his place as a leading and outspoken hawk. For these four to come down hard on Saddam Hussein required not the least consideration of Israel's interests. In an analogous situation in any other part of the world, say Latin America or East Asia, one would expect them to take a similar stand (as in fact they all had). What would demand explanation would be if any of them suddenly turned dovish.

And that precisely is the case with Buchanan himself. If a Soviet-armed, anti-American, "socialist" dictator were wiping a small, conservative, pro-American country off the map in any other part of the world, would Buchanan counsel acquiescence? Yet he, a self-proclaimed believer in "my country right or wrong," now took up the cudgels for pacifism and appeasement. In one column he lamented that "it is now almost impossible for Mr. Bush to accept a Kuwait that is either a possession, or vassal, of Iraq." In another he echoed the chant of the Vietnam-era war-resisters: "Hell no, we won't go." And he also warned that America's tough line and its military presence stood to alienate the Arab masses. Yet he himself had denounced President Jimmy Carter for "pander[ing] to [the] Organization of African Unity" by taking measures against South Africa and Rhodesia; and he had said that "America's stated goal in Central America should be the triumph of the Monroe Doctrine," an approach

that even hawkish Latin Americanists acknowledge would touch a raw nerve in the hemisphere. What was it about Arab mass opinion that made it so much more important to Buchanan than that of Africa or Latin America? Surely the real question was not whether Perle and the others were hawks on the gulf crisis just because of their attachment to Israel, but whether Buchanan was a dove on the gulf crisis just because of his animus against Israel.

**I**N HIS reply to Rosenthal, Buchanan allowed that "yes, a change has taken place" in his attitude toward Israel as compared with the time "from June of '67 . . . until I went back in the White House in 1985 [when] I was an uncritical apologist for Israel." This bit of personal history does not stand up to scrutiny. It is true that in earlier years Buchanan had produced columns friendly to Israel, but he was certainly never "an uncritical apologist."

Thus, in 1976, when the Ford administration proposed for the first time in decades to sell arms to Egypt, which had not yet made peace with Israel, and many of Israel's supporters protested, Buchanan urged Congress not to "harken . . . to the counsel of the Jewish lobby and its Washington representative, Henry Jackson." Later that year, when the disgraced former Vice President Spiro Agnew published a novel widely denounced for portraying Congress as beholden to a Zionist cabal, Buchanan commented that the Jewish community had "overreacted—badly . . . to be anti-Israeli . . . is [not] to be anti-Semitic." In 1977, when President Carter endorsed legislation against the Arab boycott of Israel, Buchanan objected and moreover warned that Americans who lost their jobs as a result would blame Israel.

Today, Buchanan claims that he was "a Begin man all the way, defending everything from the attack on the Iraqi reactor to the invasion of Lebanon." But in 1979 he asserted that Begin's "prickly personality," among other things, had "raised in the minds of many Americans the question of whether continued unconditional support of Israel serves the national interest of the United States." And he went on to quote Senator Jesse Helms: "So that Mr. Begin can continue his settlement program . . . the American economy is suffering damage, the American motorist is standing in gas lines, the world is running the risk of major war, and the world financial structure and millions of jobs are in jeopardy." Senator Helms, Buchanan declared, "did not speak for himself alone."\*

Three months later Buchanan declared that to Middle America

Sadat appears to be the man of peace and compromise, while Begin seems the intransigent bent upon settling and seizing forever the West Bank. Others, disenchanted with the re-

sults of foreign assistance, ask how long taxpayers must subsidize Israel with annual billions in economic and military assistance. Others ask why the United States is siding with three million Israelis—instead of 100 million Arabs who have oil.

Still later in 1979, John Connally, then a presidential aspirant, unveiled a Middle East peace plan calling for Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank, Gaza, and the Golan without negotiation, and for the creation of a Palestinian state which would share sovereignty over Jerusalem with Israel. This plan positioned Connally as the least sympathetic to Israel of all the 1980 presidential candidates and was denounced by Israel's supporters. But Buchanan published a column taking Jewish groups to task for rebuffing "Connally's efforts to sit down and talk turkey with Israel and Israel's friends on those legitimate questions."

Finally, in 1982, when Lebanese Christian forces slaughtered several hundred Palestinians in Beirut's Sabra and Shatila refugee camps, Buchanan dubbed this the "Rosh Hashanah massacre" and said that "the Israeli army is looking toward a blackening of its name to rival what happened to the French army in the Dreyfus Affair."

Perhaps none of these stands warrants the appellation "anti-Israel," but still less do they show Buchanan to have been "a Begin man all the way," let alone an "uncritical apologist for Israel." In any event, by his own account, Buchanan has in recent years grown still less uncritical: "When Israel was created . . . one great wrong was righted; but another great wrong was done—to the Palestinian people. The bill has come due." He seems to forget that when Israel was created a Palestinian state was created, too, and that it was aborted not by the creation of Israel but by the refusal of the Arabs to go along with the two-state solution—a refusal that took the form of their unsuccessful 1948 war to destroy Israel. In that war many Arabs fled Palestine. The reason, according to Buchanan, was Deir Yassin, the site of a wartime atrocity by Jewish extremists much publicized by Arab spokesmen, but in accounts of less biased historians an incident that ranks fairly low on the list of reasons for the flight.

**B**UCHANAN has also embraced the Palestinian *intifada* which "will be recorded in [the] history [of a coming Palestinian state] like the 'Boston Massacre' of 1770. . . . This time, the Palestinians did it right. . . ." He has chided Congress for not addressing Israeli human-rights abuses in suppressing the *intifada*, a complaint that comports oddly with his vociferous defense in the past of the regimes of Pinochet, Franco, and Vorster. He declares that the Palestinians have a "God-given right to a homeland"

\* Since those days, Jesse Helms has become a strong supporter of Israel.

and that "If America stands for anything in this world, it is the right of peoples everywhere to determine their own destiny." Yet when it comes to South Africa, he rebuts those who believe that "White rule of a Black majority is inherently wrong":

But where did we get that idea? The Founding Fathers did not believe this. They did not give the Indians . . . the right to vote us out of North America. When they created the republic, they restricted the franchise to property-owning males, believing that not every man was qualified to rule, nor every people prepared for self-government.

If the past thirty years taught us nothing else, it has surely taught us that.

To elevate "majority rule" to the level of divine revelation is a heresy of the American idea.

The political philosophy of the African National Congress (ANC) makes Buchanan doubly afraid of majority rule in South Africa, but he seems to have overcome similar qualms about the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). "Yasir Arafat," Buchanan has announced, "has decided, at this stage of his life, that he wants to be the David Ben-Gurion of an independent Palestine; he wants to be the first president of the Palestinian state . . . [he] wants history to say of him that he was father to the revolution, and father to the nation." Accordingly, when the PLO attempted to land five speedboats on Israeli beaches last spring in order to massacre Jewish bathers, Buchanan was moved to sympathy with Arafat's dilemma: "Should he denounce it, only days after Israel brutally crushed a resurgent *intifada*, Mr. Arafat would appear both an appeaser and a weak leader."

As with his stand on Iraq, Buchanan's positions on the PLO and the *intifada* are totally out of character. After all, the PLO's closest comrades are such groups as the ANC and the Sandinistas, who have no fiercer enemy in America than Buchanan. Apparently, however, his animus against Israel is great enough even to outweigh his hatred of Communist-style "national-liberation" movements.

Back in 1979, Buchanan wrote a column that aptly summarized the central dilemma of the Arab-Israel conflict:

Like every other people, the Palestinians want their own nation. . . . But if the Palestinians do achieve nationhood . . . will they not, as the first national priority, set about to rectify what they believe is the historic injustice of bringing into the Middle East a million European Jews . . . to occupy land that belonged to Palestinians for a thousand years?

At that time Buchanan had no answer to this question. Today, he recognizes that the dilemma remains, but now he is nevertheless ready to push Israel into accepting a Palestinian state. Will the

Palestinians be willing to live in peace within their own new mini-state, he asks, or will they say: "This time we settle for something, in order that tomorrow we come back and get everything"? To which he replies airily: "History has determined that we are going to find out." Elsewhere he adds: "The Palestinian-Jewish conflict . . . is an historic tragedy yet to unfold." Though Buchanan is far from being Israel's most vituperative American critic, this detached indifference to the acknowledged prospect of Israel's destruction is in a way more chilling than the fulminations of radical screwballs who honestly believe that the PLO is devoted to peace, democracy, and secularism.

IN THE meantime, Buchanan pounds away at the alleged conflict between Israel's interests and America's. He denounces the Democratic party as the "diapered poodle of . . . the Israeli lobby," he calls for an "American lobby," and he quips that Capitol Hill is "Israeli-occupied territory." When Abraham Foxman of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) protests, Buchanan responds, "C'mon, Abe, lighten up." In this response he seemed to be seconding those of his defenders who claim that Buchanan is easily misinterpreted because of his penchant for rhetorical drama and excess. That may be, but he has another rhetorical penchant, and that is for tweaking Jews or invoking them in arguments or situations to which they have no apparent relevance.

For example, in addition to the swipe about Capitol Hill, Buchanan said of the Sabra and Shatila massacres and of the trial of the accused (and convicted) Nazi war criminal John Demjanjuk that each was "another Dreyfus case," although the parallels are hard to see. Calling those Beirut killings the "Rosh Hashanah massacre" was a play on the "Yom Kippur War" and it insinuated a central Israeli role in vicious acts in which Israel was only an unwitting accomplice. Writing of the Vietnamese "boat people," he exclaimed: "Can one imagine what a cauldron of boiling rage the Senate would be if—instead of Vietnamese—there were Jews in those boats . . . ?" (Is it not strange to write such a sentence without so much as mentioning that only thirty years earlier there were Jews in boats and the Senate was even more indifferent?) Protesting the blasphemous film, *The Last Temptation of Christ*, Buchanan demanded: "Would [Jack] Valenti employ his eloquence to defend a film portraying Anne Frank as an oversexed teenager fantasizing at Auschwitz on romancing some SS guards?" Then a few weeks later, lambasting the New York *Times* for not criticizing the same film strongly enough, he sneered: "We have a 'newspaper of record' that can sniff out anti-Semitism in some guy turning down a kosher hot dog at the ballpark." He got on the *Times* once more when a group of homosexuals and advocates of abortion

rights disrupted a mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York. The *Times* denounced the demonstrators in an editorial but again the words were not strong enough, and Buchanan taunted: "Had a synagogue been so desecrated, would the *Times* have been so restrained?"

Buchanan has revisited this incident in his denunciation of Congress for passing legislation in 1990 that directs the federal government to keep statistics on "hate crimes." In promoting his newsletter, *Patrick J. Buchanan . . . From the Right* (and, some say, planning a run for President in 1992), Buchanan is now promising to "set forth a new agenda of compelling issues." Second on his list, just below abortion and above national defense, is this:

"Hate Crimes." Why is painting swastikas on a temple considered a hate crime, while the desecration of the host at St. Patrick's cathedral by a rabid group of sodomites is not?

But the implication here that laws against hate crimes favor Jews over Catholics is false. The laws refer to all ethnic and religious groups: painting anti-Catholic slogans on a church would qualify just as much as painting swastikas on a synagogue. In fact, in recent years, some such crimes aimed at mosques have been duly recorded. On the other hand, disrupting religious services for purposes of protest, although obnoxious, falls on the borderline of the definition of hate crime and the police must decide how to classify it. This is equally true whether the worship disrupted is Jewish, Christian, Muslim, or anything else.

Taken cumulatively, Buchanan's rhetoric about Jews pretty clearly betrays an underlying sense of grievance or irritation. This irritation rose to a fever in the controversy over the protests by a number of Jewish organizations against the placement of a Carmelite convent at Auschwitz. The *New York Post's* Scott McConnell spoke for many when he wrote:

I admit to a lack of certainty over where the Carmelite nuns should actually end up. But . . . the convent question seemed in good hands—that is, the hands of leaders from both faiths who took as a given the desirability of harmonious relations between Catholics and Jews. . . . I would have favored *whatever* agreement they arrived at.

Alas, it was not only good hands that touched this issue—on both sides. Cardinal Glemp, the primate of Poland, delivered himself of some remarks about Jewish control of the international news media that it would be hard not to characterize as anti-Semitic, and Rabbi Avraham Weiss led a small band of followers from New York to the convent for a noisome demonstration. But the one who seemed most to welcome intercommunal warfare was Buchanan. "The slumbering giant of Catholicism may be about to awaken," he intoned. "When Cardinal John O'Connor . . . declares this

'is not a fight between Catholics and Jews,' he speaks for himself. Be not afraid, your eminence; just step aside, there are bishops and priests ready to assume the role of defender of the faith."

**B**UCHANAN'S irritation with the Jewish community also was evident during the dispute that arose (when he was working in the White House) over President Reagan's visit to the cemetery at Bitburg after it was revealed that members of the SS were buried there. According to *U.S. News & World Report*, "Fellow White House aides blanched when Communications Director Patrick Buchanan bluntly urged Jewish leaders visiting the White House to 'be good Americans' and stop protesting Reagan's cemetery stop." And according to the *Washington Post*, Buchanan was "credited . . . with the President's characterization of World War II German soldiers and SS troops as 'victims' of the Nazis 'just as surely as the victims in concentration camps.'"

This is far from the only item of German history on which Buchanan holds distinctive views. In his autobiography, he cites approvingly his father's opinion that "lying British propaganda about the 'bayoneting of Belgian babies' had gotten tens of thousands of American boys killed in a war with the Kaiser's Germany we had no business fighting." In recent columns, he returns to that theme. In one, he derides "the Wilsonian gobbledygook we followed into the trenches of World War I—when, all the time, the hidden agenda was to pull Britain's chestnuts out of the fire." This is a jaundiced interpretation for someone who presents himself as an ardent patriot, and it is made odder still by the notion—developed in another column—that Britain was the aggressor in World War I:

In 1914, [the British] empire, at its peak of power and prestige, was challenged by Germany in the ruthless but peaceful competition of industry and trade. Since Bismarck's victory over Napoleon III in 1871, Berlin had become dominant on the continent; its margin of power was growing. Hence, Britain sought a way to cut it down.

It came in 1914, when gunmen in a Serbian conspiracy—in which Belgrade was complicit—murdered the heir to Austria's throne. . . . Seeking a *casus belli*, Britain found it in an 1839 treaty whereby she had guaranteed Belgium's neutrality.

But Germany's challenge to Britain was not merely a matter of "peaceful competition." It included a naval-armaments race that threatened the maritime supremacy which was Britain's answer to Germany's land forces; an increasingly assertive claim for a larger share of colonial holdings; and a growing propensity to resort to the threat of arms in inter-European rivalries. Still, Britain had no intention of attacking Germany. Its policy, as always, was to counterbalance Ger-

many by means of alliance and diplomacy, as well as by accelerated production of warships. The mainstream view of historians is that to the extent Britain contributed to the onset of hostilities, it was not by seeking war, but through an aversion to war, which tempted the Germans to act more belligerently than they might otherwise have done. In the end, Germany's invasion of Belgium brought an abrupt end to British vacillation. For far from the obscurity that Buchanan attributes to it, the 1839 treaty was a vital matter of honor and legal obligation for Britain and the emblem of its balance-of-power policy toward the continent.

The revisionist history of World War I on which Buchanan draws here enjoyed a vogue in America and England between the wars. After World War II it went into eclipse because the policies of isolationism and appeasement it had fed and encouraged had proved so calamitous, and because it was now harder to view Germany in a benign light. A few of the old revisionists, however, stuck to their guns and even went on to offer revisionist accounts of World War II. Buchanan sometimes seems to head in this direction, too. Thus, in 1977 he wrote:

Those of us in childhood during the war years were introduced to Hitler only as caricature. . . . Though Hitler was indeed racist and anti-Semitic to the core, a man who without compunction could commit murder and genocide, he was also an individual of great courage, a soldier's soldier in the Great War, a political organizer of the first rank, a leader steeped in the history of Europe, who possessed oratorical powers that could awe even those who despised him.

Buchanan echoed this disturbingly respectful tone in a recent column ridiculing comparisons of Saddam Hussein to Hitler.

LIKE the World War II revisionists as well, Buchanan decries those who ascribe to the German people any guilt whatsoever for Hitler. He points out that several other nations have fallen prey to totalitarianism and invokes an essay by the political scientist Kurt Glaser arguing that "Totalitarianism is an endemic disease of modern society, the germs of which are present in every country and . . . become virulent in times of national crisis." But this argument skips over Hitler's manifest prewar popularity and the fact that, although he had not won a majority, he, unlike any other totalitarian ruler, acceded to power through the unimpeded constitutional mechanisms of a democratic republic.

It is interesting that Buchanan should invoke Glaser on this issue. For President Reagan's description of the SS members buried at Bitburg as victims recalled Glaser's formula that "The German people as a whole . . . was the first victim

of National Socialism." But while Buchanan cites Glaser approvingly and at length, he does not divulge whether he accepts the main thesis of Glaser's essay, which is that

Both sides [in World War II] offended against freedom and the dignity of man; both sides forgot the strategy of prudence and let themselves be swept to disaster by the passions of war. . . . It is absurd to maintain that Germany has a particular obligation, not shared by the other nations of Europe, to make special sacrifices in the liquidation of World War II.

We cannot assume from his silence that Buchanan concurs with Glaser. Still, most writers when invoking the authority of an essay whose main point they reject usually include some kind of qualifier in their citation. Moreover, Buchanan has dropped several hints that he does believe something along the lines of Glaser's thesis. He has debunked the Nuremberg war-crimes trials, and he charges falsely that "terror bombing had a British patrimony. . . . When Goering turned his bombers loose on London in September 1940, the British had been terror-bombing since May 11." (In fact, although the allies eventually bombed out whole cities, RAF bombing in this early phase aimed at industrial targets—with little effect.) He has also written that "the greatest enemy of the Russian peoples was never in Berlin, but in Moscow." And he devoted still another column early in 1990 to publicizing *Other Losses*, a book by one James Bacque, published in Canada, which alleges that one million German POW's died in Americans camps at the end of the war, deliberately and vindictively denied food, shelter, and water—all because of General Dwight D. Eisenhower's supposedly fanatical hatred of Germans. Buchanan even went so far as to quote someone saying that "the U.S. camps reminded him of Dachau and Buchenwald."

*Other Losses* was so shoddy that it found no American publisher, and the normally circumspect U.S. Army Office of Military History commented that it "belongs in the *National Enquirer*, not on a reputable history book list." For his part, Buchanan tried to bolster the book by quoting Eisenhower's biographer, Stephen E. Ambrose, who "calls the revelations [in *Other Losses*] a 'major historical discovery.'" But what Ambrose actually said was this:

[Bacque] has made an important discovery—there is an untold story about the suffering of German prisoners after the war ended. [But] he has completely misunderstood Ike's policies, problems, and performance . . . . Everyone except Allied troops suffered horribly in Europe in the aftermath of the war. Ike did not cause these conditions—he was trying to correct them.

As for the number of deaths, Ambrose estimated that they totaled not a million but "more like 200,000, perhaps even less." Yet even this appal-

ling figure did not support the Bacque-Buchanan imputation of an American atrocity. Suddenly at war's end, the Americans found themselves with 5.2 million German POW's—many of them over-aged conscripts, many sick or wounded, many physically drained from the trek to reach American, rather than Russian, lines. In addition, there were some 10 million German civilian refugees from the East and 4-5 million other displaced persons. During the last months of fighting and the initial months after the surrender, these numbers—not to mention the priority rightly given to the civilian victims of German policy over the remnants of the German army—simply overwhelmed the available supplies of food, shelter, and medicine.

The reunification of Germany provoked anxiety in many capitals, leading to demands that Germany formally accept its postwar borders. Once again Buchanan's pro-German sympathies were aroused, and he applauded Chancellor Helmut Kohl as a "patriot" for his "reluctance to sign away all rights to the lost German territories." He also urged that U.S. policy "permit the German people a worldwide hearing for their case" for redrawing their Eastern border.

Because of his name, Buchanan is often taken for Irish. He is, however, more German than anything else. His father, he tells us in his autobiography, is half Irish and half Scotch-Irish; his mother's lineage is German on both sides. There is, then, something of the pot calling the kettle black in his insinuations that American Jews put Israel's interests first, when, in order to cast Germany in a more sympathetic light, he so freely accuses Dwight D. Eisenhower of crimes against German prisoners and impugns Woodrow Wilson's motives.

**B**UT the most egregious feature of Buchanan's penchant for revisionism has been his defense of Nazi war criminals. Challenging the rationale for the Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations (OSI), which pursues war criminals, he once asked: "You've got a great atrocity that occurred 35, 45 years ago. . . . Why . . . put millions of dollars [into] investigating that?" When word of Kurt Waldheim's complicity in wartime atrocities came out, Buchanan complained that "the ostracism of President Waldheim [has] an aspect of moral bullying and the singular stench of selective indignation." (Evidently it took these revelations to make Buchanan sympathetic to Waldheim, since as UN Secretary General, Waldheim had been a whipping boy of Buchanan's.)

Worse yet, when the American government apologized to France for sheltering Klaus Barbie, the "butcher of Lyons," Buchanan protested: "To what end, all this wallowing in the atrocities of a dead regime when there is scarcely a peep of protest over . . . the concentration camps operating

now in China and Siberia, in Cuba, and South Vietnam." Moreover, while serving in the Reagan White House, Buchanan appealed to Attorney General Meese to block the deportation of Karl Linnas to the Soviet Union where he faced death for his war crimes. There is of course no justice in Soviet justice, but neither was there any doubt about Linnas's guilt or the nature of his crimes. In upholding Linnas's deportation, the United States Court of Appeals ruled:

The evidence presented at Linnas's denaturalization trial . . . was overwhelming and largely uncontroverted. The government presented eyewitness testimony that Linnas was chief of the Nazi concentration camp in Tartu, Estonia. . . .

Eyewitnesses testified that Linnas supervised the transportation of prisoners from his camp to a nearby antitank ditch. On such occasions innocent Jewish women and children were tied by their hands and brought in their underwear to the edge of the ditch where they were forced to kneel. The guards then opened fire. . . .

There was also eyewitness testimony that Linnas on at least one occasion announced his victims' death sentence . . . and gave the order to fire. Linnas was also said to have then personally approached the edge of the ditch, and fired into it. . . .

The foundation of Linnas's due-process argument is an appeal to the court's sense of decency and compassion. Noble words such as "decency" and "compassion" ring hollow when spoken by a man who ordered the extermination of innocent men, women, and children kneeling at the edge of a mass grave. Karl Linnas's appeal to humanity . . . truly offends this court's sense of decency.

After the courts had thus turned this man away in disgust, Buchanan made himself his defender.

Another case that Buchanan has championed is that of Arthur Rudolph, who supervised the production of Hitler's V-2 rockets and then, finding refuge in the United States after the war, contributed to America's space program. The Mittelwerk rocket factory directed by Rudolph operated with slave labor from the Buchenwald and Nordhausen concentration camps. Albert Speer recorded in his diary that, after a visit to the plant, "Some of the men were so affected that they had to be forcibly sent off on vacations to restore their nerves." There were frequent hangings (using a specially drawn-out method) of the slave laborers for suspected sabotage, and the workforce was compelled to watch. There is evidence that Rudolph shared responsibility for the atrocious conditions and that he was present at some of the hangings. There is also some evidence that Rudolph may have been the one to finger suspected saboteurs. And there is even one document which seems to show that the very idea of using slave labor for the V-2 workforce originated with Rudolph.

Confronted with the evidence against him, especially his own admissions in sworn interrogations, Rudolph voluntarily signed an agreement with the Justice Department acknowledging some culpability and relinquishing his citizenship. Buchanan argues that Rudolph's admission was a "lie" which he agreed to tell only to prevent OSI from going after his wife and daughter. But OSI denies this, pointing out that it has never taken action against the family members of any of its targets. Buchanan also claims that prosecutors in West Germany, where Rudolph now resides, "found OSI's case to be a cruel joke." But they found only that the evidence was not sufficient to sustain the one charge on which their statute of limitations had not expired: murder with a "base motive."

Buchanan acknowledges that Rudolph was "a nominal member of the Nazi party, and of the SA until 1934," and likens him to Andrei Sakharov on the ground that slave labor was used in the Soviet nuclear-weapons program on which Sakharov worked. But Rudolph joined the Nazi party years before Hitler took power, a *prima facie* demarcation line between true believers and careerists. And the SA (which he also joined before Hitler's accession) were the stormtroopers who bludgeoned Hitler's opponents. What can it mean to have been a "nominal member"?

THE case on which Buchanan has lavished his most sustained and passionate attention is that of John Demjanjuk. Buchanan has devoted at least seven columns to Demjanjuk's defense, asserting with increasing assurance that he is not the notorious Ivan the Terrible of the Treblinka death camp and declaring that "We [meaning the United States and Israel] are the Salem judges of our own time." Buchanan has flatly declared the testimony against Demjanjuk to be "perjured" and a vital piece of evidence to be "a palpably forged identification card produced by the KGB." It is, to be sure, easy to believe the KGB guilty of forgery, but the card has been examined by experts for both the American and Israeli governments who deem it authentic. Buchanan, meanwhile, makes his bold assertion having seen only a photostat.

The issues that Buchanan lays out in his columns have been presented in court both in America and in Israel and none as yet has been found to have merit. Indeed, because of the complexities of denaturalization and extradition, the case has been before fourteen different tribunals in America and none has bought Demjanjuk's (and Buchanan's) claim that a miscarriage of justice has occurred.

Buchanan began his defense of Demjanjuk in 1983 by arguing that it was a case of mistaken identity, and that the accused was not Ivan. By 1987 Buchanan reported that he had read various original sources about Treblinka and "No one

even mentions an Ivan the Terrible," leading him to conclude that "Ivan" was probably not a real person, but "a composite" of several. By 1990, he went a fateful step further, declaring that diesel engines, the exhaust from which was used in the Treblinka gas chambers, "do not emit enough carbon monoxide to kill anybody. . . . Demjanjuk's weapon of mass murder cannot kill."

Buchanan's evidence for this technical point is a 1988 incident that occurred in an Amtrak train in Washington which stalled in a tunnel, exposing the occupants to the exhaust from its diesel engine. None died. But the conditions were not comparable to a gas chamber: the engines ran for only a few minutes and the tunnel allowed some ventilation. Knowledgeable authorities laugh at the idea that diesel exhaust could not be lethal in a sealed chamber. Those packed inside could have died either from poisoning or just from asphyxiation as the exhaust drove out the oxygen.

There are other, even darker, implications in this strange point of Buchanan's. In his crusade to defend Demjanjuk, Buchanan has lent his own imprimatur to a preposterous theory that came out of the school of "Holocaust revisionists," a tiny but organized movement which constitutes one channel of the fever swamps of the neo-Nazi/white-supremacist camp. Nor is this the only time Buchanan has borrowed from such sources. He has also delivered himself of the following words:

Since the war, 1,600 medical papers have been written on "The Psychological and Medical Effects of the Concentration Camps on Holocaust Survivors." This so-called "Holocaust Survivor Syndrome" involves "group fantasies of martyrdom and heroics."

What can Buchanan possibly be talking about here? Can he furnish a bibliography of, say, the first hundred of these "1,600 medical papers"? And do quotation marks diminish the sewer-level bigotry of the reference to "fantasies of martyrdom"?

Taken together, Buchanan's forays into the subject of diesel exhaust and "Holocaust Survivor Syndrome" carry him perilously close to the Holocaust revisionists. Diesel exhaust fumes were used not only at Treblinka but also at Chelmno, Sobibor, and Belzec, and were moreover employed extensively by the Nazi killing squads (*Einsatzgruppen*) inside the USSR. If such fumes cannot kill, then a good part of what has generally been accepted as having happened to the Jews at the hands of the Nazis cannot have happened. And if the testimony of survivors is inherently unreliable because of a "syndrome" that manifests itself in "fantasies," then much that we think we know may not be true. At a minimum, the implication is that the toll of the Holocaust may be vastly exaggerated. Perhaps the real number of those who perished is not that much greater than the

number of German POW's that Buchanan seems to believe were exterminated by Eisenhower.

WHEN I first spotted one or two of Buchanan's pointed comments about Jews, I imagined that, given his staunchly conservative views, this was just an expression of annoyance at the heavy representation of Jews in liberal causes and the predominant liberalism of the Jewish community. After all, Buchanan had complained (just as I myself had done) about liberals who seemed more willing to fund Israel's defense needs than America's.

But this explanation will not suffice. What conservative rationale can there be for defending Nazis or flirting with the worst elements of the radical Right? And now, in his fight with the Jews, Buchanan has not even hesitated to embrace the radical Left as well. Thus, not only did he quote the *Nation* in blackening A.M. Rosenthal's name, but he also declared that "decent and honorable men, Left as well as Right, [have] had careers damaged and reputations smeared" by the accusation of anti-Semitism. Buchanan has not replied to my letters asking whom on the Left he had in mind, but in recent times public charges of anti-Semitism have been made in a sustained way against only two figures on the Left, Jesse Jackson and Gore Vidal. What can move Buchanan to such tenderness toward the likes of these two who, the Jewish question aside, represent everything he despises?

In one of the McLaughlin programs that rehashed the controversy, Buchanan tried to argue that his litany of those seeking war in the gulf consisted of Jewish names merely because his debate was with the "neoconservatives," many of

whom are Jewish. But why is Buchanan spoiling for a fight with the neoconservatives? The alliance between them and traditional conservatives like him has been based largely on foreign policy, which he himself says is the most important of all issues. And although the collapse of Soviet power heralds a new era in foreign policy, Buchanan remains at one with many neoconservatives in believing that Communism—their common foe—is not yet finished. Is Buchanan attacking Jews, then, because they happen to be neoconservatives, or is he attacking neoconservatives because they happen to be Jews?

Both the New York *Post* editorialist and Jacob Weisberg in his article in the *New Republic* said that they did not want to get into a "semantic" squabble over "anti-Semitism," and indeed there may be no authoritative definition of the term. But when a man falsely maintains that he is the victim of a "preplanned orchestrated smear campaign" by the Anti-Defamation League; when he is hostile to Israel; when he embraces the PLO despite being at adamant odds with its political philosophy; when he implies that Jews are trying to drag America into war for the sake of Israel; when he sprinkles his columns with taunting remarks about things Jewish; when he stirs the pot of intercommunal hostility; when he rallies to the defense of Nazi war criminals, not only those who protest their innocence but also those who confess their guilt; when he implies that the generally accepted interpretation of the Holocaust might be a serious exaggeration—when a man does all these things, surely it is reasonable to conclude that his actions make a fairly good match for the first, not the second, of Patrick J. Buchanan's two definitions of anti-Semitism.