Pat Buchanan and the Menace of Anti-Anti-Semitism

by Murray N. Rothbard

I have it on good authority that Barbara Branden is spending a good portion of her time lately brooding about the "rising menace of anti-Semitism." Poor Barbara; like all Randians, she is perpetually out of sync. There is indeed a menace in this area, Barbara, but it is precisely the opposite: the cruel despotism of Organized Anti-Anti-Semitism. Wielding the fearsome brand of "Anti-Semite" as a powerful weapon, the professional Anti-Anti-Semite is able, in this day and age, to wound and destroy anyone he disagrees with by implanting this label indelibly in the public mind. How can one argue against this claim, always made with hysteria and insufferable self-righteousness? To reply "I am not an anti-Semite" is as feeble and unconvincing as Richard Nixon's famous declaration that "I am not a crook."

So far, Organized Anti-Anti-Semitism has been able to destroy, to drive out of public life, anyone who receives the "anti-Semitic" treatment. True, "anti-Semitic" expression is not yet illegal (though it is banned in many Western "democracies," as well as increasingly—as with other "hate speech"—serving as grounds for expulsion, or at the very least compulsory "reeducation," on college campuses). But the receiver of the brand is generally deprived of access to organs of influential opinion, and is marginalized out of the centers of public life. At best, the victim of the brand may be driven to abase himself before his persecutors, and, by suitable groveling, apologies, and—most important—the changing of positions of crucial interest to his enemies, he may work his way back into public life—at the expense, of course, of self-emasculation. Or if, by chance, the victim manages to survive the onslaught, he may be induced to exercise due caution and shut up about such issues in the future, which amounts to the same thing. In that way, Organized Anti-Anti-Semitism (OAAS) creates, for itself, a win-win situation.

The major fount of OAAS is the venerable Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith (ADL), the head of what the grand Old Rightist John T. Flynn referred to during World War II as the "Smear Bund." [Flynn was forced to during World War II as the "Smear Bund." [Flynn was forced to publish himself his expose of the orchestrated smear of George Pearson, billionaire Chuck Koch's long-time right-hand fist, has been shoved aside by a new power, Richie Fink. Richie, former head of Chuck's Center for the Study of Market Processes and Citizens for a Sound Economy, rose to glory as a Koch Oil lobbyist on Capitol Hill, for which occupation he seems to have a natural talent. Chuck is grateful that Richie handled the "Indian Oil Scandal." The Washington Post had printed allegations that the Koch Company was swiping crude oil from impoverished Indians. For a firm with a lot of federal contracts, that could have been a killer. George—lean, hungry, and dagger in hand—had long been in charge of the cash flowing to Chuck's ideological subsidiaries—CSMP, CSE, Cato, etc. Now Richie is BMOC. No wonder Ed "Sexual- (Cont. page 4, col. 1)
isolationists in his pamphlet, *The Smear Terror.* Since the end of World War II, the key strategy of the ADL has been to broaden its definition of anti-Semitism to include any robust criticisms of the State of Israel. Indeed, the ADL and the rest of the OAAS has formed itself into a mighty praetorian guard focusing on Israeli interests and Israeli security.

Ever since August 2, Israel and what Pat Buchanan has brilliantly called its extensive "amen corner" in the United States, has been beating the drums for immediate and total destruction of Iraq, for the toppling of Saddam Hussein, for destruction of Iraqi military capacity, and even for a "MacArthur Regency" to occupy Iraq quasi-permanently. Pat Buchanan has distinguished himself, from the beginning, as the most prominent and persistent critic of the war on Iraq, and as the spokesman for a return to Old Right isolationism now that the Cold War against the Soviet Union and international Communism has ended. Hence, it is no accident that the ADL picked the occasion of Buchanan's hard-hitting critiques of the war hawks to unleash its dossier, to issue and widely circulate a press release smearing Buchanan as anti-Semitic, which was then used as a fodder for an extraordinarily extensive press campaign against Buchanan.

The campaign was kicked off by one of OAAS's big guns, the powerful and well-connected Abe Rosenthal, former managing editor of the *New York Times,* who now writes a regular column of such tedium and downright terrible writing that it usually serves as a far better soporific than Sominex. If you can classify Rosenthal ideologically at all, it would probably be "left neo-conservative," one of my least favorite ideological groupings. Rosenthal rose from his usual torpor in his column of September 14 to deliver a hate-filled, hysterical, and vituperative assault on Buchanan, likening him to Auschwitz, no less, the Warsaw ghetto, and "blood libel." Rosenthal winds up with a blasphemous and fascinatingly self-revelatory twist on Jesus's words on the Cross: "Forgive them not, Father, for they know what they did." Compare the contrasting ethics offered to the world by Jesus Christ and by A.M. Rosenthal, and shudder.

Albert Hunt, defending Pat Buchanan on "The Capital Gang," sternly declared that Abe Rosenthal has "forgotten how to be a reporter." This is all the more true when we consider the curious point that what touched off Rosenthal's ire was a statement by Pat on the "McLaughlin Group," which Rosenthal oddly referred to as "The McLaughlin Report." (Whaddat?) The mystery clears when we note that the ADL's press release on Buchanan, issued shortly before the Rosenthal column, makes the self-same error, twice referring to Pat's appearance on the *McLaughlin Report* (sic). Pat's instincts were absolutely sound when, in the marvelous rebuttal in his syndicated column, he referred to Rosenthal's blast as a "contract hit" orchestrated by the ADL.

In a just society, Rosenthal's rabid tirade would have been laughed out of existence. Instead, it touched off a spate of editorials and columns throughout the country, almost all backing Rosenthal, accompanied by calls from ADL and the official Israeli lobby, AIPAC, to newspapers carrying Buchanan's column, urging them to cancel. (Probably the best single compendium of the anti-Buchanan smears and their various nuances is Howard Kurtz's front-page article in the Style Section of the *Washington Post,* Sept. 20, "Pat Buchanan and the Jewish Question.") Clearly, what we are seeing is neither a friendly nor even vigorous debate over issues crucial to the American Republic. What we are witnessing is nothing less than a venomous attempt to suppress dissent, to eliminate Buchanan's fearless and independent voice on the social and political scene.

Examine the attacks on Buchanan by Rosenthal and the others, we find a variant of the old shell game. On the one hand, even Rosenthal feebly concedes that it is theoretically possible to criticize Israel and not be an anti-Semite. Oh? And how does one tell the difference? For Rosenthal it is simple: "Every American ...
should be alert to smell the difference." So now we have to rely on Rosenthal's ineffable schnozzola! How are we supposed to distinguish one man's sense of smell from another? Some criterion! Interestingly enough, Rosenthal and the rest of the jackal pack carefully omit from their screeds the concession made even by the ADL: that Pat has often been a strong supporter of Israel! No facts, I suppose, can be allowed to get in the way of a successful smear. As a matter of fact, Pat explains the point in his rebuttal column: he confesses to having been an "uncritical apologist" of Israel until 1985; but an accumulation of facts since then, including the Pollard espionage case and the brutality against the Palestinians of the intifada, have led him to change his mind. Changing one's mind, if it is in the wrong direction, can obviously not be tolerated.

The shell game, then, is to say, first, that Pat is not necessarily anti-Semitic because he is critical of Israel, but that Rosenthal's proboscis tells him that Pat is an anti-Semite. Before writing his hate-Buchanan column, Rosenthal says that he consulted none other than Elie Wiesel, the professional Holocaust survivor, who pronounced the magic words: "Although I very rarely use the word 'antisemite'..."[Hah! That'll be the day!], opined Wisel, "I feel there is something in him that is opposed to my people." Well, that's it: Who can quarrel with Wiesel's ineffable "feelings"? Between Wiesel's inner oracle and Rosenthal's nose, no one has much of a chance.

But can Elie Wiesel's mystical insight really be relied upon? After all, this is the selfsame Wiesel who, in the early 1980s, pronounced his feelings to be favorable to none other than the monster Ceausescu. Why? Because of Ceausescu's pro-Israel foreign policy, naturally. Any man who confers his blessings upon one of the most savage butchers of the past half century, is scarcely qualified to hurl anathemas at anyone, much less a Pat Buchanan.

It is significant that all of the hostiles who know Buchanan personally concede that he is a great guy. Thus, take Mona Charen, who worked under Buchanan at the Reagan White House, and who provided the neat Et tu, Brute? touch by launching the anti-Semitic canard even before Rosenthal. Charen concedes that "Pat is the sweetest human being on a one-to-one level that you'd ever meet, an incredibly gentle, warm, sweet man." And yet, by launching the assault, the good deed that Pat performed by saving Mona Charen's job at the White House was not allowed to go unpunished.

The shell game on Buchanan is unwittingly illuminated by the neocon Fred Barnes, of the New Republic, and a colleague of Buchanan's on the "McLaughlin Group." Asked by Howard Kurtz whether Pat is anti-Semitic, Barnes replies, with seeming judiciousness, that it all depends on one's definition. [Yes, and cabbages can become kings by definition.] "If your definition is someone who is personally bigoted against Jews," says Barnes [but what else is anti-Semitism, Fred?], who "doesn't want them in the country club" [Note the way Barnes trivializes genuine anti-Semitism], "then I don't think Pat is that." By this time we are all trained to look for the explicit or implicit "but." But, adds Barnes, "If your definition is someone who thinks Israel and its supporters are playing a bad role in the world, Pat may qualify." Ah! So Pat is not anti-Semitic personally, is not a "country club anti-Semite," but he is critical of Israel, so he qualifies under that particular shell. In short, criticism of Israel, despite one's personally not being anti-Semitic, at last puts one into the dread category. The Zionist definition maximized! If you can't hook a guy as an anti-Semite under one shell, you get him under the other, as the definitions shift endlessly.

To paraphrase a wonderful comment that Joseph Schumpeter once wrote about left-wing intellectuals and their hatred of capitalism; the verdict of this loaded jury—that Pat is anti-Semitic—is a given, it has already been written in advance. The only thing a successful defense of the charge can accomplish is to change the nature of the indictment.

Putting his two-cents worth into this witches' brew is a pseudo-scholarly article by philosophy professor John K. Roth, apparently an expert on semantics and hate. [John K. Roth, "Sticks, Stones, and Words," L.A. Times, Sept. 20]. Amidst the usual invocations of Hitler and Auschwitz, the professor defines anti-Semitism as "the hostility aroused in irrational thinking about "Jews," and says it is part of the "same hate-filled family" as "racism" and "sexism" and of "irrational
thinking" about "blacks or Asians or women." Interesting categories; but why does the professor say not a word about "irrational thinking" and consequent hostility, toward whites, Christians, or men? Are the omissions an accident? Or does he think no such phenomenon exists? If the latter, he is invited to pick up the latest issue of his daily paper, or of the latest scholarly journal.

The only new element added by Professor Roth is ominous indeed. "One need not consciously intend anti-Semitism, racism or sexism to do or say things outside legitimate criticism." Roth then has the gall to quote the New Testament about "You shall know them by their fruits," in defense. Then comes the material about Hitler and Auschwitz. But whether he knows it or not, Professor Roth is really raising the spectre, not of the New Testament, but of the notorious Stalinist concept of "objective" crimes. When Trotsky and other Old Bolsheviks were accused of being "fascist agents," the Stalinists had a fascinating rebuttal to those who complained about the patent absurdity of the charge: that Trotsky and the others were "objectively pro-fascist" because they were undermining Stalin's rule. So—even though by any rational criterion Buchanan may not be anti-Semitic, he can be called "objectively anti-Semitic." Why? Obviously because he opposes many Israeli policies, and we're back again to the shell game.

There also runs through many of the criticisms of the anti-Buchanan pack a black thread of hatred of Christianity—a hatred, we have seen, that Professor Roth managed to omit from his litany. In Rosenthal's infamous article, one of the pieces of "evidence" for Buchanan's anti-Semitism was his frequent attacks on the "de-Christianization" of America, which Rosenthal apparently interprets as a code word for anti-Semitism.

Well, I have news for Mr. Rosenthal. Unlike Rosenthal, most Christians don't walk around thinking only about Jews. De-Christianization is not a code word for anything; it means what it says: the growing secularization of our society, our culture, and our school systems. Christians who oppose this are anti-secular, not anti-Jewish, and, in fact, most orthodox Jews join in much of this anti-secular and pro-religion position. Why is this a world where such elementary propositions have to be patiently pointed out?

Then there is Leon ("The Weasel") Wieseltier, the favorite theoretician of the New Republic. Pat Buchanan was upset when, two years ago, international Jewish groups led a campaign against the convent of Carmelite nuns at the site of Auschwitz. Apparently, they held it to be a desecration for Carmelites to pray for all those murdered at Auschwitz, Catholics as well as Jews. Wieseltier wrote a particularly odious article on the subject, denouncing Catholic defenders of the Carmelites as anti-Semitic, and Buchanan fired back, correctly pointing out that "anti-Catholicism is the anti-Semitism of the intellectual. Let's hope the nuns at Auschwitz are praying for him [Wiesenthal]. He needs it."

The Kurtz smear article now gives The Weasel the chance to get in the last word. "A hater's rhetoric," he opines. Wieseltier goes on to assert that there "can be in a religious Catholic a theological basis for anti-Semitic emotion....The roots of some of this man's feelings about the Jews may be theological."

Although Wieseltier covers his rear by hastening to add: "though I emphasize that not all religious Catholics are anti-semites." How gracious of The Weasel! I am sure that Catholics everywhere are grateful for his nihil obstat.

Meanwhile, the New Republic has, predictably, made itself the GHQ of the anti-Buchanan movement among the periodicals. An editorial accused Buchanan of anti-Semitism, because, in the few seconds he could originally deal with the problem on the McLaughlin Group, he mentioned only Jewish names among the pro-war leaders. The NR editorial then continues with what it thinks is the clincher: referring to the much smeared Charles Lindbergh, who, in his famous Des Moines speech in August 1941, was "anti-Semitic" because he mentioned Jews as one of three groups that were agitating for the U.S. to enter World War II: the other two being the British and the Roosevelt.
The culminating smears—so far—came in the next issue of the New Republic, in which Jacob Weisberg ties all the threads together, and adds a vile Freudo psycho-babble twist of his own. [Weisberg, "The Heresies of Pat Buchanan," the New Republic, Oct. 22, pp.22-27.] After dragging in 1930s irrelevancies such as Lindbergh and Father Coughlin (the Catholic motif!), Weisberg discusses Buchanan's personal history, as gleaned from his autobiography, Right From the Beginning, and concludes that Buchanan is a brute and a proto-fascist because he liked to get into fistfights as a kid. [So much for a large chunk of the male population!] The clincher on Buchanan as brute and proto-Nazi comes with Weisberg's suggested slogan for his abortive Presidential campaign in 1988: "Let the bloodbath begin."

Let us contemplate smear-artist Weisberg for a moment. Is he really that much of a boob that he thought that Buchanan's phrase was serious? Does he really not realize that Pat was delivering a jocular and satiric thrust, aimed precisely at such serious dunderheads as Weisberg? It is hard to know which is a sadder commentary on current American culture: whether Weisberg was cynically trying to use any smear tactic that came to hand; or whether he is really that much of a humorless Left Puritan blockhead.

Meanwhile, on the Left (or should I say, the Leftists), there is John B. Judis, the resident conservatologist for the Marxist weekly, In These Times, who has written a surprisingly favorable biography of Bill Buckley (or come to think of it, as we shall see, maybe not so surprising). Judis, too, admits that Buchanan is not personally anti-Semitic: "Indeed, from the few encounters I've had with Buchanan, he has always struck me as loyal, generous, personable without a trace of snobbery and willing to say what he believes—whatever the consequences." [John B. Judis, "Semitic Divisions En-Gulf Conservatives," In These Times, Oct.3-9.] Sounds admirable. But...then comes the knife-job, with vague references to the Old Right, and "Rothschild conspiracy" views with which Judis, in the venerable smear tradition, tars every isolationist of the 1930s [Sorry, John, Buchanan was not even alive in those days, much less sentient]. To Judis, Buchanan's position "represents a kind of Freudian return of the repressed." [Again!] So now we have an unholy combo of Marx and Freud on the attack! In his peroration, Judis commits a real whopper, somehow linking Buchanan to the "pre-Civil War anti-Catholic, anti-Jewish and anti-immigrant Know-Nothings." Since Judis has some pretensions to scholarship, one might guess he would stop and think before linking up this ardent Catholic with historic anti-Catholicism; but, I suppose that time's a-fleelin', and one reaches for whatever smear brush may be around. [Parenthetically, while the Know-Nothings were indeed one of the most odious groups in American history, I would be very surprised to find any anti-Semitic expressions by them. As Protestant pi-
culture "slides into priggishness" on ethnic comments, our ethnically diverse society requires "a fastidious sensitivity." [Mona Charen, "Accusations...," Washington Times, Sept. 27] But not long ago, America's diverse society was glorious precisely because people were unafraid to be candid, to speak their mind, to engage in ethnic humor. Besides, what happened to Harry Truman's well-known dictum that he who can't stand the political heat should get out of the kitchen? A free and diverse society requires candor and vigorous debate, which is what we had in the United States until Left Puritanism did its work, and we are all required to be silent and mouth the Party Line. Interestingly enough, former National Review publisher and long-time Buckley colleague Bill Rusher has a different, and far healthier, view. Although Rusher, like Buckley, takes the ultra war-hawk position on Iraq, Rusher, in his column, gently reproves Buckley's comment on Buchanan and sensitivity, and reminds us that "American politics is a robust game, and it is fair to ask how long commentators on it must continue to tiptoe past the Israeli Embassy." [William Rusher, "...and sensitivity," Washington Times, Sept. 27.] How long, indeed? In contrast to the standard bromides, what this country is suffering from is not "insensitivity" but hyper-sensitivity, what the shrinks in the Neanderthal days used to call "neurasthenia." It strikes me that the most effective cure for hyper-sensitivity, as for phobias in general, is the one proposed by the behavioral-shrinks: desensitization. Repeated exposure to the neurotic stimulus will gradually desensitize the patient so he no longer goes ballistic at the sight of a cat or....at reading articles by the likes of Pat Buchanan.

Anti-Semitism Defined
Organized anti-anti-Semites will get away with their odious calumnies until they are finally forced to define their terms, to set up some rational criteria for this serious charge. It is high time that they be called on this loathsome tactic. So all right, just what is anti-Semitism? if we can get beyond vague and ephemeral "feelings?"

It seems to me that there are only two supportable and defensible definitions of anti-Semitism: one, focusing on the subjective mental state of the person, and the other "objectively," on the actions he undertakes or the policies he advocates.

For the first, the best definition of anti-Semitism is simple and conclusive: a person who hates all Jews. But here Buchanan is clearly vindicated by everyone who has ever met him, since all agree he is not "personally" anti-Semitic, has many Jewish friends, saved the job of Mona Charen, etc. Here I also want to embellish a point: All my life, I have heard anti-anti-Sem-ites sneer at Gentiles who, defending themselves against the charge of anti-Semitism, protest that "some of my best friends are Jews." This phrase is always sneered at, as if easy ridicule is a refutation of the argument. But it seems to me that ridicule is habitually used here, precisely because the argument is conclusive. If some of Mr. X's best friends are indeed Jews, it is absurd and self-contradictory to claim that he is anti-Semitic. And that should be that. But perhaps it might be contended that X is at heart, down deep, anti-Semitic, and that he duplicitously acquires Jewish friends to cover his tracks. And how, unless we are someone's close friend, or shrink, can we know what lies in a person's heart? Perhaps then the focus should be, not on the subject's state of heart or mind, but on a proposition that can be checked by observers who don't know the man personally. In that case, we should focus on the objective rather than the subjective, that is the person's actions or advocacies. Well, in that case, the only rational definition of an anti-Semite is one who advocates political, legal, economic, or social disabilities to be levied against Jews (or, of course, has participated in imposing them).

Let us then consider Pat Buchanan. Never—and the
smear articles themselves are effective testimony to this fact—never has Pat Buchanan advocated any such policies, whether they be barring Jews from his country club or placing maximum quotas on Jews in various occupations (both of which have happened in the U.S. in our lifetime), let alone legal measures against Jews. So once again, it is absurd and a vicious calumny to call Pat anti-Semitic. If Pat passes any rational subjective or objective "litmus test" with flying colors, what else is there?

It is high time and past time that the anti-anti-Semitic Smear Bund shut up about Buchanan and, while they're at it, reconsider their other vilifications as well.

But am I not redefining anti-Semitism out of existence? Certainly not. On the subjective definition, by the very nature of the situation, I don't know any such people, and I doubt whether the Smear Bund does either. On the objective definition, where outsiders can have greater knowledge, and setting aside clear-cut anti-Semites of the past, there are in modern America authentic anti-Semites: groups such as the Christian Identity movement, or the Aryan Resistance, or the author of the novel Turner's Diaries. But these are marginal groups, you say, of no account and not worrying about? Yes, fella, and that is precisely the point.

Epilogue: A Buchanan Crusade?

Jacob Weisberg ends his egregious screed on a fascinating and possibly revealing note. What is the aim of the anti-Buchanan hysterics? At most, to get newspapers to cancel his column and to get him kicked off the air: to marginalize him out of public life. At the least, if he survives the onslaught, to exert a chilling effect on Pat's well-known honesty and candor. But there is perhaps another aim, for Weisberg ends his piece darkly by mentioning that Buchanan has held "powerful positions in the White House," that his columns and broadcasts "reach tens of millions of people," and that he almost ran for President in 1988. The final note of Weisberg is to register fear and horror at a possible future Buchanan run for the Presidency. He concludes that all the Good Guys in America, "all those who see American society as more inclusive and tolerant than the Catholic Church of Pat Buchanan's childhood," all these Good Guys "are right to tremble at the thought of the crusade he would lead, and the country he would create."

Well, it all depends on one's point of view. As a slogan, I am happy to offer Lew Rockwell's for any future Buchanan run for the Presidency. "Make Them Tremble, Pat!"

Stuck in the Sixties

by M.N.R.

I don't know how many people have noticed, but virtually the entire libertarian movement is, one or another, living in a time warp, stuck in the '60s, which for almost all of them was the defining moment of their lives.

The Modals are, of course, visibly stuck in the '60s, the days of their grubby adolescent liberation, the days when they could wallow in the sex, drugs, filth and lack of responsibility of the hippie counterculture. The legion of ex-Randians (and there is considerable overlap in the two categories) are still back in the glory days of the Randian movement, of the NBI tapes and the Objectivist, their lives set to the Randian star. Randian exegesis and memorabilia are the stuff of their being: if Edith Efron or Kay Nolte or any other of the top ex-Randians were willing to write fifty-part serials of "My Life with Ayn Rand" we all know that Liberty magazine would be eager to publish every jot and tittle. Ludwig von Mises once showed me, with a twinkle, a book in his library, published in East Germany, entitled Marx-Chronik, every day in the life of Karl Marx. [It is now available in English.] He commented on the hagiography of a movement that was willing to deify its founder to that absurd extent. Well, don't we know that if the Randians and ex-Randians only had the resources, a Rand-Chronik would be their daily breakfast reading?