

NEW URBANISM, CLASSIC CONSERVATISM ■ McCLELLAN'S BURDEN

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# The American Conservative

## Lieberman's Revenge



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## RETURNING FIRE

Capt. Dave Livingston unloaded on you because no one “in your shop had ever borne a rifle on one of America’s battlefields” and it takes “gall” for you “to moan about the activities of men committed to a battlefield in the defense of this nation” (June 2).

But no opponent of the Iraq misadventure is criticizing the brave soldiers stationed there. I bemoan only the poor judgment of Bush, Cheney, Wolfowitz, Feith et al. in putting those soldiers in harm’s way for no good reason related to our national interest. Surely Captain Livingston is aware that none of those worthies ever sniffed cordite or heard an angry shot crackle past.

I did as a rifle platoon leader and staff officer in Vietnam. I hold a Combat Infantry Badge and have buddies on that black wall in Washington, D.C. That war, too, was folly. Exploiting our natural solidarity with our troops to avoid having to admit a mistake is an ancient ploy, and the dimwits we keep electing are just smart enough to keep conning the public with it.

Captain Livingston, and other brave soldiers like him, can perform another service to their country by refusing any longer to be duped and by giving their minds and hearts over to a sounder grasp of the nation’s best interests. In that regard, with or without battlefield experience, *The American Conservative* has been shooting straight since its first issue.

FRANK CREEL  
Arlington, Va.

## JUDGMENT CALL OUT

As a subscriber to your magazine, I’m concerned about your direction and nauseated by your judgment after reading John Lukacs’s review of Patrick Buchanan’s new book (June 2). Notwithstanding my disagreements with Lukacs’s objections, his dozen or so paragraphs lack the intellectual sub-

stance that a serious review requires. Buchanan is entitled to more than this hack job.

The first sin, naturally, is the David Irving comparison. As soon as your editors saw this name in the review, the whole thing should have been garbage-canned. And I nearly dozed off reading Lukacs’s objections. He asks what would have happened if Hitler had been allowed to conquer Poland. Indeed, a profound question. We already know what happened when Britain declared war. Buchanan makes the point that it probably couldn’t get too much worse than what eventually did happen, with the 50 or so million dead and destruction of the cradle of Western man. What says Lukacs to this essential question? Not much. He gives an after-the-fact rationalization about half of Europe dominated by Russia or the whole by Germany. That’s elementary-school analysis.

False, weak, and cheap sums up this review. If you print more garbage like this, that’s how I’ll describe *TAC*.

BRANDON RASK  
*Clearwater, Fla.*

## UNIQUE EVIL

I agree with John Lukacs that America had to fight Hitler (call it blowback from meddling in World War I), but his review is troublesome.

First, it is to be expected that there would have been more suicides at the end of the Nazi regime than after the fall of Soviet Communism. Germany had suffered total military defeat and faced occupation by its enraged enemies—who knew what vengeance they might take? Communism fell in Russia because it had become obvious to most Russians that the system didn’t work; the nation remained independent and in Russian hands.

The more significant problem comes in Lukacs’s conclusion. Though I agree that Hitler was evil and we had to fight

him, the fact that a regime is a monstrous dictatorship does not in and of itself automatically lead to a logical conclusion that the U.S. must undertake military action against it. In a world full of nasty tyrants, that is a formula for endless warfare.

The case against the Iraq War and occupation, to use the most obvious example, does not rest on arguing that Saddam Hussein wasn’t such a bad guy after all. The real problem with World War II revisionists such as Buchanan is that, like the neocons, they fail to recognize or acknowledge that Hitler was an exceptional case. The Nazi regime wasn’t just a monstrous dictatorship with an ideology committed to genocide and world domination—it had also seized control of one of the most powerful, efficient industrial economies in the world and one of the most talented and competent militaries in history. This was not the case even with the Soviet Union, which was constrained by an ideological commitment to defying the laws of economics, as well as by a culture arguably less hospitable than that of the Germans to organizational efficiency and technological innovation.

Neo-imperialists like to claim that every Third World dictatorship and guerrilla movement that stands in the way of their pipe dreams is a potential Nazi Germany. We won’t win the political battles against them by pretending that Hitler was no more a threat than the petty tyrants of today but by pointing out the ridiculousness of the comparison.

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