

A Nation of Losers

Pat Buchanan's threnody on *The Death of the West* has upset Mr. Buchanan's conservative enemies, who cannot forgive him for violating the GOP's famous 11th Commandment—not "Thou shalt not speak ill of other Republicans," but "Thou shalt not bite the hand that feeds us." No one can actually dispute Buchanan's main thesis: that European America is disappearing before our very eyes. Our people, both the old WASPs and the more recent European immigrant stock, are not reproducing, and to replace the children we are killing or not bearing, we are importing tens of millions of highly fertile immigrants, who, upon arrival, are entitled to benefits and privileges that we are denied. To finish the job, the entire educational system from preschool to graduate school has as its principal goal the elimination of the last shreds and tatters of our civilization. Whether you regard this development as a good thing or a bad thing depends on your point of view, but no honest man can deny that it is happening.

Then why all the fuss from the conservatives? If they regard the prospect of Americans vanishing from the face of the earth as something to cheer about or, at least, as nothing to lament—as most of them do—why not simply say so? But to profess such an opinion openly would be as good as to admit they are leftists, albeit capitalist leftists like Armand Hammer and Ted Turner, and that might be bad for fundraising. Or, they might say that Buchanan is right on the facts but insist that their President is hard at work solving the problems. Even the American people, however, are not so drugged and deluded that they would swallow a lie that gross. Instead, conservative pundits must pretend that things are not what they seem, trotting out their skim-milk arguments and offering them as cream.

The conservatives' weapon of choice in the war of words is the liberal platitude that, as Third World peoples begin to earn middle-class wages, they will begin to adopt middle-class values. If there were a responsible American middle class, this argument—even as wishful thinking—might have some force, but the American middle classes are living

like white-trash hedonists without a particle of the self-denying discipline that characterized the Northern European bourgeoisie. Corporate executives and congressmen display about the same level of moral restraint as the gentlemen lurking outside the check-cashing store, offering to sell you some "hubba-rock."

But even if Enron executives were upholding the values of Max Weber's Protestant work ethic, it would not change the reality. Latino immigrants, as Virginia Abernethy has shown conclusively, actually have more children when they come to the United States than they would have had if they had stayed home, and by the time they get around to murdering their children at the same rate as European-Americans do, the Old America will be long gone.

The conservatives cannot admit this, because the truth would disrupt the GOP's long-range strategy for becoming the new Rainbow Coalition, disturb their foreign paymaster Rupert Murdoch, and outrage the editors of *Commentary*, the *Washington Post*, and the *New Republic*, who tell conservatives what it is safe to think. As wise as the three Chinese monkeys, as patriotic as Alger Hiss, and as brave as a lady cop busting a drunken cripple for speeding in his wheelchair, American conservatives want to wave the flag with one hand, while taking bribes from foreign interests with the other. The trouble is, the right hand *does* know what the left hand is doing. These conservative leftists do not have the excuse of a Quisling or Petain—patriotic men who misguidedly thought they could save their people by betraying their nations. For these people, there is no nation, no America that cannot be summed up in the tinny phrases of the Gettysburg Address or the drivel lyrics of the Irving Berlin tune that has displaced "The Star-Spangled Banner." The two Americas are not the reds and the blues who split over the choice between Bush and Gore. The real chasm opens between those who still prefer Francis Scott Key's dignified tribute to courage and the great masses of Americans of all races, creeds, and ideologies who get goosebumps just thinking about Sir Elton John crooning "God Bless

America."

By the late 1970's, the handwriting was on the wall. I remember having dinner with Palmer Stacy back about 1981, when he was working for Sen. John East, and after talking for an hour or so about immigration, the conversation switched to other subjects. Palmer excused himself politely and explained that there was no other American subject worth discussing, because if we did not solve the immigration crisis, there would be no country left to discuss. That was over 20 years ago, and events have proved him right. There is very little recognizably American left in the United States.

If some Americans refuse to have babies and others kill them—to the applause of all right-thinking women and the men who respect their right to choose—then we clearly deserve to be taken over. Speaking personally, I like most of the immigrants—Latinos, Arabs, Thais, Eastern Europeans. They are opening up good, cheap restaurants, and they display a joy in living that is something quite distinct from the behavior of American students who think *joie de vivre* means chugging three quarts of Milwaukee's Best. My wife sometimes speculates that we ought to move to Mexico, like the rabbits in the children's story who decide to spend every night in the fox's den (while the fox is out hunting rabbits or swimming the Rio Grande). It is better to be a stranger in a strange land than in your own.

Every year, the problem of unassimilated immigrants becomes more severe, and yet there is no political will in the electorate to do anything about it. Yes, in opinion polls, a majority of Americans say they want to halt the flow of illegal immigrants, but the emergency is not so grave that they would find the time to call their congressman or refuse to vote for an open-borders candidate.

Only one Western country has displayed the slightest intention to stem the tide, and that is Italy, where President Silvio Berlusconi campaigned on a platform that included a promise to stop the flood of *clandestini* (illegal immigrants). Many smart American observers thought Berlusconi's pledge to stitch the gaping

wound in Italian national sovereignty was only a political ploy—something like George W. Bush's pro-life stance—to be ignored after the election. But the Italians—and Berlusconi—are serious, and over the past few months something like 2,000 *clandestini* have been deported. Not content with trying to enforce existing laws, Berlusconi has proposed new legislation on immigration that virtually eliminates the principle of “family unification” (which enables a legalized immigrant to bring in his sisters and his cousins and his aunts) and includes the use of navy ships to intercept the flotillas of leaking boats weighted down to the waterline with Albanians, Tunisians, and Kurds.

If there is hope for any Western country, there is hope for Italy, which has survived wave after wave of barbarian invasions, from the Goths in the fifth century to the Lombards in the sixth; the French, Spanish, and Germans in the Renaissance; and the annual convoys of tour-busing Americans, Japanese, Brits, and Germans. The Italians have survived disunity and unification, fascism and—most recently—the rule of the renamed Communist Party; but, even in Italy, proponents of immigration restriction make exceptions for the needs of the labor market.

Italians are not having babies, either. Italy's birth and fertility rates are the second lowest in the world: Italian women are bearing, on average, 1.19 children in a lifetime, and the Italian birthrate is 9.05 per thousand of population. This is only a little lower than most of the rest of the developed world (e.g., Germany, Japan, Russia, Hungary, Portugal) and in stark contrast with the more exuberant rates of Third World countries like Uganda (with a fertility rate of 2.93 and 47.52 live births per thousand), Venezuela (2.46 and 20.65), and India (3.04 and 24.28).

The Italian population question is complicated by immigration. In addition to the roughly nine live births per thousand, there are nearly two documented immigrants. This means that roughly 16 percent of Italy's gross population increase (not subtracting deaths) is the result of arriving immigrants. I think of this as the “National Suicide Quotient” (NSQ). In the United States, where women have 2.06 babies and there are 14.2 live births per thousand (these figures are substantially elevated by the high fertility of immigrants and their daughters), our numbers are increased by the

arrival of 3.5 immigrants per thousand annually, which gives us an NSQ of almost 20 percent.

These numbers are probably of limited value: They all come from the CIA. They do not include a fair estimation of illegal immigrants, and there is no breakdown of live births between native-born Italian and American women and immigrants. The overall pattern, however, is not in dispute. Neither immigration *per se* nor demographic transformation is the problem, but the spineless refusal of Western nations to live life to the fullest and face the future bravely. If Americans (and Italians and Germans) will not have their own babies, someone else will do it for them. And if they insist on ruining the lives of their poorest citizens by subsidizing poverty and shiftlessness, then they will have to import aliens to mow their lawns, clean their streets, and mind their 1.19 to 2.06 babies.

Men and women are not statistical abstractions. Which women are having babies obviously makes a difference to us as Americans. Are they our own people or aliens who share few of our traditions? Are they able to take care of the children they bear? Some couples are capable of rearing 12 children, but there are mothers who cannot handle five or even two.

The simple fact is that white-bread Americans are not having babies because they do not know how to live, because the joy that real human beings take in the facts of life is quickly ebbing away, leaving us stranded on a beach littered with our ATVs, digital cameras, and millions of soft-porn DVDs for family hour. We watch pornography because we no longer know what sex is for; young mothers go out bar-hopping until 2:00 A.M., not knowing what is happening to their children. Our crisis is moral, not in the comparatively banal sense that we do bad things—in every age of the world, people have done bad things—but in the sense that our weak and distracted characters render us incapable of enjoying the gift of life.

There is no one pattern of life, no cultural and social system that guarantees human happiness. There are exuberant peasant cultures and exuberant aristocracies. People have sometimes lived good lives under dictatorships and, all too often, bad lives under a republican government where they had the power, at least in theory, to change things. Like individual people, cultures can turn bad. That is what has happened to us, or—to be more

precise—that is what we have done to ourselves: Our beer is not just flat; it is skunked.

We could reverse the demographic revolution by a draconian system of halting immigration, repatriating noncitizens, and sterilizing people on welfare. We might even set up a national program for increasing the native-born American population. We could start by eliminating all the trouble of bearing and rearing children that seems to offend our virtuous middle class and provide them *in vitro* fertilization, surrogate mothers, bounties for adoption, and institutional “families” to take the children off their hands. Any leftist, conservative or not, could figure out the technicalities, but none of these measures would address the moral fact that, by the standards of nature's God or nature's Darwin, we are not good enough to live.

If these conclusions have a cynical ring, perhaps it is because I am recovering from a flu, and since it is Lent and I have made an absurd pledge, I cannot employ my usual method of staying well, which is to drink and party my way to good health. I call it “joy therapy,” and I intend to begin it when I set foot on Italian soil exactly four days from now. (I exempted Italy from my Lenten pledges in advance.)

Good wine and good food—things that Americans buy books on, to read while they are heating up dinner in the microwave—are only a small part of human joy; but it is a symptom of something foul that, if Americans want to eat well, they have to go out or take a cooking class or watch *Fameril* on TV. A thing is not real if we do not pay for it. We are a nation of voyeurs and “johns,” while the immigrants, at least for the time being, eat well. They may not be Christian or even religious in a traditional sense, but they do keep the feasts and bear children, even if they do not support them properly or rear them as we might like. I am not happy about losing my country, and if I could stop this process, I would. But the immigrants, though they may someday repent of their decision to come to this land of easy living (as opposed to good living), are the winners. We, on the other hand, are a nation of losers.

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Vale Colonel H.J. Hunt

July 9th 1984

Peter Hunt

Today we bore our father to his grave.
In air as soft as whispers from the past
We carried him whose strength had lifted four
Of us, whose independence frowned and pushed
Aside a hand proffered to help across
A busy street at seventy-six; so glad
I did not see his face so paper-thin
His eagle-glance subdued to childhood need
At eighty-four. Recovered briefly, he
Had uttered thoughts that trembled through the mist
That made the present into past, and with
The migrant urge or summoning of gypsy-blood
That drove him south those years ago, he said:
"Let's head North," as though their time stood still,
And restless joy of wandering with her
Ever dwelt in splendid realms of light
That saw no dusk or age, but kept the childhood
Ecstasy alive in each unfolding scene.

Some Celtic blood or discontented youth
Had mingled with his English call to arms
And drove him into battlefields a boy
Had dimly seen; his early star of Mountie
Lore eclipsed by European war
That drank its blood and mixed its mud with death
And dysentery. And so a veteran
At seventeen, scarce out of Cameron Highland
Uniform, he ran into a sergeant
Running too, who knocked him down and with a laugh
Helped him to his feet, and in a trice
Had him frontier-bound, and Kipling-carved.
How those Indian days burnt through the years,
Days of rabid dogs and trains, and raids
Of Afghan tribes among the sullen hills.

His songs and stories, anecdotes remain,
The wartime novel left unpublished,
And tales of North-West Mounted Police,
Bandolero, Cornish Floral dance, Katmandu,
Some poems, pictures too, mere fragments of
The life within. Gone are the gesture and the voice
That told of Queensland crimson, blue and palm-tree

Green, and made the oleander glow in dreams.
A man who rode a horse and aimed a rifle
True as vows that bound him through the
Diamond years and blessed him to the end.

Edwardian man, driven across the world,
Your London days enshrouded by the lure
And doom of war, your father's wandering son,
You left your home, its scripted, Baptist zeal
And older yeoman images of Somerset
To find yourself, and found a Faith that sang
Its truth until the last in harmony
With her whose Antrim cross in curfew days
Had sent upon a voyage that brought you home.

It's hard to take it in, that you have reached
Your journey's end; a new life just begun
Where endless light restores the youth that fades,
And joys of ancient wedding-bells are notes
That bring the music of your love into
Eternal realms that vibrate with a life
That never ends: your Father's house at last.
No brooding there, no loss of light, or age
Or shattered strength, but only grace and peace.

I still can hear the voice that boomed across
Parade-grounds; see the smile that was a prelude
To a yarn; recall the rising laugh and wait
To hear the joke, feel the joy of life
Still smitten with the stars of dreaming youth;
Regret so little said in years apart,
Except confounded politics, even
In those meetings rare and brief, always
Wishing closer sonship felt at last

In Brisbane light the choir sang, "Amazing Grace"
As we farewelled your artist's-soldier's soul
And nerved the arms that bore you to your rest.