

1998), Bertman, a professor of Language, Literatures and Cultures at the University of Windsor in Canada, makes the account especially interesting by classical references and relevant background information. He begins and ends the book by telling of Homer's Ulysses, whose memories of his experiences during the ten years following the Trojan War, and his longing for return to his home and family in Ithaca, were recounted in *The Odyssey*. Bertman also spices the discussion of cultural amnesia with a detailed review of how memory works within the human brain, telling of the brain's physiology and about the various forms of amnesia. Perhaps most relevant is his account of how civilization establishes memory through oral traditions, language, writing, books, libraries, ruins, statues, and the like. He finds disturbing the rapid loss of monuments around the world because of pollution, and the deterioration of films.

The fact that Bertman seems unaware of the ideological "culture war" could be reason to discount his writing, but it would make better sense to listen to what he has to tell us about the forces that he does see at work. They are themselves of sufficient weight to make problematic the entire continuity of culture, not just of American culture but of any culture that is subject to the same forces (as all are, to one degree or another, today). We are "as the flies of summer."

Dwight D. Murphey

A Republic, Not an Empire

Patrick J. Buchanan

Regnery Publishing, Inc. 1999

Patrick Buchanan was a senior White House adviser to Presidents Nixon, Ford and Reagan; has long been a political commentator, syndicated columnist and television panelist; is the author of four books; and is in 2000 making his third run for the presidency, for which he recently moved to the Reform Party.

A Republic, Not an Empire devotes several chapters to a review of American foreign policy going back to Washington's first administration. Its scholarship, grasp of essential facts, and easy readability make it an ideal primer on a central feature of American

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history. A strength over most other works is that Buchanan, as an independent thinker, sees many things that orthodox histories omit. (An example is his simple observation that the British-American blockade of Germany was continued for many months after the armistice in November 1918, causing hundreds of thousands to die of starvation. The importance of such a fact, which others usually don't mention even in a footnote, is that it, in combination with a number of other things, set the stage for Hitler in Germany).

More than anything, however, the book is valuable both for its broad themes and its specific ideas. Its leading theme is that the United States, while certainly not "isolationist" in any true sense, managed to eschew interventionism in the affairs of other countries from the founding of the country in 1789 until finally the country embraced imperialism in 1898. Even though the public soon became disenchanted with imperialism itself, the impulse toward interventionist overreach was a major feature of America's relations with other countries in the twentieth century. Often this impulse has come from a globalist idealism that has sought to set the world straight along the lines of democracy, free trade and of pressure toward world government. Other times, it has stemmed from a unilateralist sense of America's hegemonic power and influence, whereby American superpower status would itself work wonders. Buchanan sees the interventionism as fraught with danger, and calls instead for an "enlightened nationalism" that will assess what is truly in America's "vital interest" (things people are willing to die for) and intervene only with regard to them, quite deliberately staying out of everything else. Among many other grounds for objection to rampant interventionism, he mentions that in an age of growing potential for nuclear, biological and chemical terrorism it invites national tragedy to make oneself feared and despised by the upholders of other nations and cultures all over the world. The United States, he argues, can cut down on that fear by minding its own business, and satisfying itself with being an example to the world of how a free society works.

A second theme has to do with maintaining American sovereignty as against the continuing pressure to subordinate sovereignty to the institutions of an incipient world government. Buchanan's realism does not allow him to think the world is constituted in such a way that American lives, fortunes and liberties can safely be subordinated

to externally-made decisions.

His two main themes, accordingly, run counter to received opinion today; i.e., to the opinion held by America's and the "world community's" dominant opinion-forming elite. That would be enough to cause a pointing with alarm. An added feature of the book, though, is that it contains many specific insights that are as provocative as the main themes. Buchanan is relentlessly honest, although there is no tone of having a chip on his shoulder.

He builds a strong case for not intervening around the world on humanitarian grounds. This is supported by important prudential reasons, and also by any number of historic precedents. When Stalin deliberately starved millions during the winter of 1932-3 to force the collectivization of agriculture and to repress nationalist movements, the world hardly took notice (and continues not to notice, except in a book like Buchanan's). Mao's mass murder (an estimated 30 million in the Great Leap Forward alone) hardly blemished Mao's reputation, much less elicited intervention. There was no intervention, either, to stop Pol Pot's genocide in Cambodia; and Buchanan's list goes on. That such things are even mentioned is extraordinary and valuable.

What has drawn Buchanan the most criticism has been his willingness to fly in the face of the virtually ubiquitous American conviction since Pearl Harbor that the entry of the United States into World War II against Hitler was a noble and necessary crusade. Buchanan sides with the overwhelming consensus held by Americans before Pearl Harbor. Despite all the criticism he has taken, it is worth reflecting that Buchanan's position is entirely rational – hardly the rantings of a vicious man, as is so often suggested. He observes that when Britain and France gave their guarantee to Poland, they were guaranteeing something they had no conceivable power to enforce; and that it would have been much better for them if they had refrained from war with Hitler and had spent several years building their own military strength while Hitler exhausted his against the Soviet Union. He also observes that after the "Battle of Britain" had been won to frustrate Hitler's ambition to invade across the Channel and Hitler had become absorbed in a vast war on the Eastern Front leading to his defeat at Stalingrad, it was especially untimely for the United States to enter the war against Hitler (and in alliance with Stalin) rather than, again, to build up its own strength

militarily and economically. Only blindness to the blood on Stalin's hands (of his own people and of Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and the eastern half of Poland) can allow Americans to feel that there was a moral imperative to intervene and that the war was all about "the forces of good against the forces of evil."

There is much more mentioned in *A Republic, Not an Empire*. A reader who brings thought, not prejudice, to the book will be rewarded not just by these, but by many other, reflections.

There are a few things, perhaps, to criticize. Buchanan, for example, has apparently not found occasion to question the claims made about the "interning of 110,000 Japanese-Americans." No doubt he will speak the truth about that as forcefully when he does find time to investigate it independently as he does about so many other subjects. This reviewer finds it odd, too, that he doesn't mention the great strategic question in Europe during World War II, which was whether the Western Allies were going to let the Red Army reach eastern Europe and Germany before they did. This is a major omission from his discussion of that war. Buchanan would have been hard pressed, though, to include in a book of readable length a discussion of everything that arguably should be included.

Buchanan has perhaps not exhausted his subject, but he has written a book that raises issues of critical importance to the survival and future well-being of the United States.

Dwight D. Murphey

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By James H. Hughes

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