



The War Over America's Past

by **Patrick J. Buchanan** ([more by this author](#))

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"Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past."

That was the slogan of the Ministry of Truth in George Orwell's "1984," where Winston Smith worked ceaselessly revising the past to conform to the latest party line of Big Brother.

And so we come to the battle over history books in the schools of Texas. Liberals are enraged that a Republican-dominated Board of Education is rewriting the texts. But is the rewrite being done to falsify history, or to undo a liberal bias embedded for decades?

Consider a few of the issues.

The new texts will emphasize that the separation of church and state was never written into the Constitution.

Is that not right? The First Amendment prohibits Congress from establishing a national religion. But, in 1776, nine of the 13 colonies had state religions established in their constitutions.

Thomas Jefferson's words about a "separation of church and state" were not written until 1802, when he responded to a letter from the Danbury Baptist Association. Not until after World War II did the Supreme Court begin the systematic purge of Christianity from American public life.

Barack Obama may have declared, "We do not consider ourselves a Christian nation." But Woodrow Wilson said, "America was born a Christian nation," and Harry Truman wrote Pius XII to affirm, "This is a Christian nation."

The Texas school board wants the U.S. economic system called "free enterprise" rather than the term Karl Marx used, "capitalism."

Anything wrong with that?

The Christian Science Monitor cites one professor Phillip VanFossen as appalled the new history texts will put a "more positive spin on Sen. Joe McCarthy's communist witch hunt."

Witch hunt?

The FDR and Truman administrations were shot through with treason. Alger Hiss, who was with FDR at Yalta and Truman in San Francisco when the U.N. was founded, was a Stalinist spy, exposed by Whittaker Chambers and Rep. Richard Nixon.

Harry Dexter White, Treasury's No. 2, who pushed the infamous Morgenthau Plan to turn Germany into a pastureland, was a Soviet agent, as was White House aide Laughlin Currie and State's Laurence Duggan, whose treason was confirmed by the VENONA decrypts of Soviet cables in 1995.

William Remington at Commerce was convicted of perjury for denying his ties to a spy ring. Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were executed for their role in betraying the secrets of the atom bomb.

The VENONA transcripts contained the names of scores of U.S. citizens assisting known Soviet agents during and after World War II.

By 1952, Truman, having been repudiated by his own party in New Hampshire, was down to 23 percent, and was the most unpopular president ever to leave office.

But Joe McCarthy's approval, four years into this crusade in January 1954, stood at 50 percent, with only 29 percent disapproving.

And was that really a time of anti-communist hysteria?

Why, then, does not a single Gallup poll from 1950 to 1954 show even 1 percent of Americans giving anti-communist extremism or witch hunts or Joe McCarthy as an issue of concern?

Not only did Joe Kennedy Sr. admire and support Joe McCarthy, Jack Kennedy befriended him, Bobby worked for him, Teddy played touch football with him at Hyannis Port and the Kennedy girls dated him.

When, at a Harvard reunion, Jack heard a speaker say he was proud the college never produced an Alger Hiss or Joe McCarthy, JFK roared, "How dare you couple the name of a great patriot with that of a traitor?" and stormed out.

That 1954 was a year of disaster for Joe, with the Army-McCarthy hearings and censure by the Senate, is undeniable. But Joe is hated today not for what he got wrong, but for what he got right.

What is the purpose of teaching America's children the history of their country? Few said it better than Ronald Reagan in his farewell address: "An informed patriotism is what we want. ...

"So, we've got to teach history based not on what's in fashion but what's important. ... You know, four years ago, on the 40th anniversary of D-Day, I read a letter from a young woman writing of her late father, who'd fought on Omaha Beach. Her name was Lisa Zanatta Henn, and she said, 'We will always remember, we will never forget what the boys of Normandy did.' Well, let's help her keep her word.

"If we forget what we did, we won't know who we are. I'm warning of an eradication of the American memory that could result, ultimately, in an erosion of the American spirit."

Teaching American history to America's children is done so that they will come to know and love their country. And while all nations have sins of scarlet, none has a greater, more glorious past than ours.

And if teaching that is what the Texas Board of Education is all about, ensuring that the children of Texas know both sides of every great American quarrel and come away loving their country all the more, then God bless 'em.

Mr. Buchanan is a nationally syndicated columnist and author of [Churchill, Hitler, and "The Unnecessary War": How Britain Lost Its Empire and the West Lost the World](#), ["The Death of the West,"](#) ["The Great Betrayal,"](#) ["A Republic, Not an Empire"](#) and ["Where the Right Went Wrong."](#)

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