

# Mideast lobbyists collide

One of the nastier by-products of the Gulf crisis is the mud-slinging going on between leading American conservatives.

This fracas is being fought with increasing ferocity on TV talk shows and in newspaper columns.

On one side are former White House speechwriter Pat Buchanan, former national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski and columnists Novak and Evans. They maintain that the U.S. has no vital interests in the Gulf worth fighting over. The solution to Iraq's takeover of Kuwait must be diplomatic. America has no business getting sucked into the Mideast's chronic quarrels.

Violently opposing such views are luminaries like *New York Times* columnists A.M. Rosenthal and William Safire, Norman Podhoretz and Henry Kissinger. All happen to be Jewish and ardent supporters of Israel. They are demanding that the U.S. immediately eliminate Saddam Hussein and destroy Iraq's potential for making war.

Safire, the most bellicose, has called for a "World War 2½" against Iraq.

The tart-tongued Buchanan blazed back that "there are only two groups that are beating the drums for war in the Middle East — the Israeli defence ministry and its amen corner in the U.S."

In response to his opponent's protests that Iraq cannot be allowed to occupy Kuwait, Buchanan quipped that Capitol Hill — i.e., the U.S. Congress — has become "Israeli-occupied territory." He meant that the pro-Israel lobby, Washington's most potent special interest group, has virtually taken over Congress on matters dealing with the Mideast.

Rosenthal fired back, accusing Buchanan of "blood libel" and anti-Semitism. Other Jewish conservatives claim their anti-interventionist opponents are "neo-isolationists" or Israel-haters.

Buchanan's recent claims that the trial in Israel of accused Nazi death camp guard John Demjanjuk was a "kangaroo court" and a fraud have

## Punch



"May I join you? You look unconcerned about the Gulf."

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earned him deep enmity in the Jewish community.

Off the record, some non-Jewish conservatives are saying that Israel's far right government is using its American lobby, which gives more money to Congress than any other group, to push the U.S. into war with Iraq. Israel, figuring that war with Iraq will one day be inevitable, obviously would prefer to see the U.S. demolish its enemy rather than having to do so itself.

"Sure," replies one conservative, "Israel and its U.S. lobby are ready to fight to the last American GI."

People who hold such views, say American Jews, are repeating the pro-Nazi sentiments of Charles Lindbergh and those who opposed getting involved in the war against Hitler.

This ugly business involves much more than polemics between literati. It could be an evil portent of things to come if the U.S., in spite of the recent flurry of hints about negotiations, goes to war against Iraq. Pentagon estimates reportedly put U.S. casualties in a battle to oust the Iraqi Army from Kuwait at some 25,000. When American bodies start coming home in bags, it's possible that the U.S. Jewish community will be accused of having been responsible for a bloody war.

That the Pentagon and military-industrial complex have also been pressing for military action will likely be forgotten. Once again, the Jews will be blamed for national misfortune.

All this puts the American Jewish community in a terrible dilemma. It fears that if Saddam and his military machine are not destroyed now, Iraq will champion the Palestinian struggle for statehood and soon get involved in a war with Israel.

Saddam's bombast about unleashing chemical weapons against Israel in the event of an Israeli attack on Iraq has horrified Jews everywhere, conjuring up visions of Nazi gas chambers.

And what will happen if Iraq gets nuclear weapons? The fact that Israel could instantly vaporize Iraq with its own large nuclear arsenal is not easing Jewish fears.

Almost equally worrisome to many right-wing Israelis is the threat that Saddam Hussein may agree to pull out of Kuwait in return for a western commitment to pressure Israel out of the Arab lands it has occupied in the West Bank, Gaza, Golan and southern Lebanon. Here, obviously, is Saddam's face-saving way out of the mess he's now in. But Israel is determined not to let this happen. Israel might even provoke a war with Iraq to abort such a development.

For the U.S. Jewish community, urging military action against Iraq poses grave risks. A war would certainly take pressure off Israel and make the world forget the Palestinian intifada. But if a U.S. invasion of Kuwait turned into a bloody quagmire, it could endanger America's Jewish community.

Clearly, this is a time for great caution.