
Profile: Leo Strauss

Fascist Godfather Of the Neo-Cons

by Jeffrey Steinberg

In a June 17, 1996 article by Richard Lacayo, *Time* magazine named the late University of Chicago philosopher Leo Strauss (1899-1973) as one of the most influential and powerful figures in Washington, D.C.—the man most responsible for the Newt Gingrich “Conservative Revolution” on Capitol Hill, and the intellectual godfather of Newtzi’s “Contract on America” blueprint for vicious fascist austerity.

If Strauss’ influence on politics in the capital of the most powerful nation on Earth was awesome in 1996, it is even more so today. The leading “Straussian” in the Bush Administration is Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, who was trained by Strauss’ alter-ego and fellow University of Chicago professor Allan Bloom. Wolfowitz leads the “war party” within the civilian bureaucracy at the Pentagon, and his own protégé, I. Lewis “Scooter” Libby, is Vice President Dick Cheney’s chief of staff and chief national security aide, directing a super-hawkish “shadow national security council” out of the Old Executive Office Building, adjacent to the White House. According to Bloom biographer Saul Bellow, the day that President George H.W. Bush rejected Wolfowitz and Cheney’s demand that U.S. troops continue on to Baghdad, during Operation Desert Storm in 1991, Wolfowitz called Bloom on his private phone line to bitterly complain. It seems that “Bush 41” was not enough of a Nietzschean “superman” for Wolfowitz’s taste.

However, Strauss’ name may also prove to be a liability, particularly for those neo-conservative ideologues who are now attempting to steer President Bush into a no-win war in the Persian Gulf, in pursuit of an illusory world empire, and who are finding themselves under growing public attack.

On March 3, in a widely circulated radio interview on the Jack Stockwell Show in Salt Lake City (see *EIR*, March 14), Lyndon LaRouche had singled out Strauss as one of the leading intellectual figures, along with Bertrand Russell and H.G. Wells, steering the United States into a disastrous replay of the Peloponnesian War, which led to the collapse of Athens and the ascent of the Roman Empire. Within days of the LaRouche interview, Leo Strauss was the subject of a series of public attacks, in the German, French and American media (see *Documentation*), for his role in producing the current generation of neo-conservatives.

Indeed, author Shadia B. Drury, in her 1997 book, *Leo*

Strauss and the American Right, named the following prominent Washington players as among Strauss’ protégés: Paul Wolfowitz; Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas; Judge Robert Bork; neo-con propagandist and former Dan Quayle chief of staff, William Kristol; former Secretary of Education William Bennett; the *National Review* publisher William F. Buckley; former Reagan Administration official Alan Keyes; current White House bio-ethics advisor Francis Fukuyama; Attorney General John Ashcroft; and William Galston, former Clinton Administration domestic policy advisor, and co-author, with Elaine Kamark, of the Joe Lieberman-led Democratic Leadership Council’s policy blueprint.

Earlier Strauss allies and protégés in launching the post-World War II neo-conservative movement were Irving Kristol, Norman Podhoretz, Samuel Huntington, Seymour Martin Lipset, Daniel Bell, Jeane Kirkpatrick, and James Q. Wilson.

Nobody Here But Us Fascists

A review of Leo Strauss’ career reveals why the label “Straussian” carries some very filthy implications. Although a Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany, Strauss was an unabashed proponent of the three most notorious shapers of the Nazi philosophy: Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, and jurist Carl Schmitt. Recent biographies have revealed the depth of Heidegger’s enthusiasm for Hitler and Nazism, while he served as the Chancellor of Freiburg University, throughout the epoch of National Socialism, and was the leader of a Nietzschean revival. Carl Schmitt, the leading Nazi philosopher of law, was personally responsible, in 1934, for arranging a Rockefeller Foundation scholarship for Strauss, which enabled him to leave Germany, to study in England and France, before coming to the United States to teach at the New School for Social Research, and then, the University of Chicago. Strauss, in his long academic career, never abandoned his fealty to Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Schmitt.

The hallmark of Strauss’ approach to philosophy was his hatred of the modern world, his belief in a totalitarian system, run by “philosophers,” who rejected all universal principles of natural law, but saw their mission as absolute rulers, who lied and deceived a foolish “populist” mass, and used both religion and politics as a means of disseminating myths that kept the general population in clueless servitude. For Strauss and all of his protégés (Strauss personally had 100 PhD students, and the “Straussians” now dominate most university political science and philosophy departments), the greatest object of hatred was the United States itself, which they viewed as nothing better than a weak, pathetic replay of “liberal democratic” Weimar Germany.

Among the current lot of neo-cons, Michael Ledeen stands out as the one person who openly flaunts his “universal fascism.” For Wolfowitz, Kristol, and the rest, their association with Strauss could be a large contributing factor in their looming downfall—and none too soon.