

Nazi Jurist Taught Leo Strauss, Neo-Con Mentor

by Barbara Boyd

In the March 21 *EIR*, Lyndon LaRouche and Jeffrey Steinberg documented how the neo-conservative apparatus controlling President George Bush, defines the world through the philosophy of Leo Strauss. Strauss (1899-1973) was a German émigré political science professor whose ideas gained cult-like influence in U.S. and German political circles during his tenure as a professor at the University of Chicago, and through his student Allan Bloom at Harvard. Strauss never abandoned his fealty to Nazi philosophers Carl Schmitt, Martin Heidegger, and Friedrich Nietzsche, arguing for a totalitarian regime run by “philosopher kings” who sustain their power by deception and myths promulgated to a clueless population.

Strauss protégés Paul Wolfowitz, William Kristol, Michael Ledeen, Samuel Huntington, and others have led the drive for a Clash of Civilizations war with Iraq and beyond. At the same time, another Strauss protégé from the University of Chicago, Attorney General John Ashcroft, has prepared “emergency” legislation, the so-called Patriot II Act, which awaits a pretext for implementation to transform the United States into a virtual police state.

In a broadside circulated nationally the week of March 17, Democratic Presidential pre-candidate LaRouche cites these Straussian chicken-hawks as an “immediate new Hitler threat,” given the ongoing economic collapse and the complete failure to respond to it, from the President on down. Then as now, there was an alternative set of measures—those proposed by FDR, and LaRouche—both in the United States and in Germany. The rejection of these measures by the German elites allowed Hitler’s triumph.

Schmitt, Strauss, and the Third Reich

To those unfamiliar with them, a background sketch of the ideas of Leo Strauss and his Nazi teacher and collaborator Carl Schmitt has become essential. This article reports on the modern neo-conservative reworking of Schmitt’s fascist theory, to conform to “Christian fundamentalist” belief structures, a development which is ominous in light of the profile of the present U.S. Administration. Heinrich Meier, the German professor responsible for this synthesis, states that it is attributable to Strauss’ 1930s collaboration with Schmitt, on Schmitt’s theory of the perfected totalitarian state.

Carl Schmitt was dubbed “Crown Jurist of the Third Reich” by the Nazis, because he successfully engineered the subversion of the German Weimar Republic’s Constitution beginning in 1919. As an influential professor and as legal

advisor to the successive Brüning, Von Papen, and Hitler governments, Schmitt lambasted the constitutional system, based upon the ideals of political liberalism and individual rights, as impotent and corrupt, incapable of the decisive action required in the profound economic collapse facing Germany. He proposed emergency rule by decree and a temporary presidential commissarial dictatorship to “save” the Constitution.

Schmitt’s subversive campaign was seen as an antidote to the “impossibility” of democratic rule for the German governments of Brüning and Von Papen, who responded to economic collapse with brutal austerity measures against the population and tax cuts for business. Schmitt greatly admired Mussolini, with whom he exchanged views on Roman law, and who, he argued, had founded a perfect system based on an authoritarian state, the Church, a free enterprise economy, and a guiding mythos to arouse and intrigue the popular will.

When the Nazis staged the Reichstag Fire on Feb. 27, 1933 resulting in Hitler’s suspension of rights and imposition of dictatorship, Schmitt provided the legal theory for these actions. Rule by the Führer was democratic, Schmitt said, because his orders could be voted upon directly in referenda or plebiscites by the people, rather than being stalled by endless impotent discussion and votes by Parliament. Schmitt’s collaboration with Göring and Hans Frank conformed all German law to Nazi theory; his collaboration with Heidegger purged German universities of Jews and other “undesirable” elements. When Hitler invaded Poland, Schmitt asserted preemptive war’s legality on the grounds that German national security required a *Grossraum*, a sphere of influence to protect the Reich from invading Bolshevik hordes.

Schmitt’s fascist legal brew was based on a reworking of Roman law, Donoso Cortes, G.W.F. Hegel, and most significantly, Thomas Hobbes, who declared universal truths to be an illusion and reduced all of human existence to the war of each against all. According to Schmitt and Hobbes, man is not inherently good, but “fallen,” and therefore evil and dangerous. Schmitt famously remarked, if “man were not evil, my ideas would be evil.” Leo Strauss, as a student of Schmitt and subsequently as an emigré, collaborated on Schmitt’s reworking of Hobbes for Nazi ideology. So impressed was Schmitt with Strauss, that he obtained a Rockefeller scholarship for Strauss to move to Britain to study Hobbes. The 1932-33 Strauss-Schmitt correspondence led to Schmitt’s significant revisions of his own seminal work, *The Concept of the Political*.

Religious War and Emergency Rule

Heinrich Meier, a professor associated with the Siemens Foundation in Germany, has written two works on Schmitt and Strauss, which have become the hegemonic interpretations of their core philosophies among right-wing Straussians in Germany and the United States. Meier is himself a protégé of Armin Mohler, the Schmitt student who played a key role in rehabilitating and reviving Schmitt in Germany and the

United States, as well as the “Conservative Revolution” in both countries. According to critics of Meier, prior to “coming to Schmitt as a scholarly preoccupation,” Meier was “apparently working on ‘Biosozialismus,’ a form of racist social Darwinism on the thesis of ‘natural’ human inequality.”

Meier documents that the Strauss/Schmitt collaboration put Schmitt’s ideas into a theological context suitable to Christian “revelation” and a Clash of Civilizations imperialism, which engages in religious warfare to keep God a living presence in human culture.

Schmitt initially defined politics as the sphere of human activity solely determined by the relationship between the friend and the foe. As opposed to the search for peace and consensus at any price which is liberal democracy, he wrote, a people or state only find their identity and vitality by identifying an enemy and mobilizing against it. The only legitimate sovereign, Schmitt adds, is he who defines the exceptional situation and the foe in that situation. The Weimar Republic, Schmitt argued, lacked “charismatic leadership,” without which a state is a directionless “bureaucratic regime.” Schmitt thus transformed Hobbes’ individual “war of each against all,” into wars of groups or states against other states. He claimed, as Henry Kissinger has since 9/11, that the “Westphalian” order of Europe, with its sovereign nation-states, had been completely broken by World War I. Now, Schmitt emphasized, how the state acts in the face of “concrete danger”—not any moral purpose—determines its legitimacy.

According to Meier, however, the hidden driving force of Schmitt’s friend/foe dichotomy is faith—the leader’s obedience to God’s revelation in making the concrete decision as to who the enemy is at a given historical moment. Strauss’ suggestion to Schmitt that he openly “acknowledge” this driving force resulted in the creation of Strauss’ synthetic political ideology. Strauss urged Schmitt to make the “political” not one among other spheres of human activity as liberals do, but rather the primary human activity, while imbuing it with a powerful religious heresy.

In Schmitt reworked by Strauss, faith in God provides a foundation for the friend/enemy distinction that preserves the supremacy of the political over other spheres of society. Faith teaches the opposition of God and the Anti-Christ, “but leaves to man complete latitude of action in deciding where and in what guise the Anti-Christ appears and how effectively to oppose him.”

Through the liberal politics of modernity, taught Strauss, the Anti-Christ has begun to establish his dominion by convincing men that “they no longer need to decide between Christ and the Anti-Christ.” Thus the Anti-Christ is a liberal who seeks to have men abandon the opposition between friend and enemy which is the lifeblood of politics and religions.

The Straussian version of Schmitt legitimizes all religious wars. Once this definition of the political is understood as the primary identity of any society, then relations within the state can also be defined by the fundamental notion of enmity, the “internal enemy” who is against “whatsoever is of God.”