

CHRONICLES INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENT

Attack of the Jacobins

by Justin Raimondo

Trent Lott—to the guillotine! The cry has gone up, the mob is implacable, and the once-powerful and seemingly unassailable Senate majority leader has gotten the message loud and clear: Confess your sins, bare your neck, and prepare to lose your head! And for what?

What sin did this former muckamuck of the GOP commit that led “conservatives” in his party to come after him and Tom Daschle to defend him? Did he question the desirability of a tax cut? Did he imply that Al Gore really won the 2000 election? No, his great crime, for which there is apparently no forgiveness, was saying, in a tribute to Strom Thurmond on his 100th birthday, that Mississippi had voted for Thurmond in 1948, when he ran against Truman, Dewey, and Henry Wallace for the White House, and that “We’re proud of it.” Following the applause, Lott continued, “And if the rest of the country had followed our lead, we wouldn’t have had all these problems over all these years, either.”

The orchestrated storm over these remarks embodies everything that is wrong with the conservative movement, the Republican Party, and the country. Historical ignorance and hysterical self-righteousness married to a barking dogmatism have given birth to a race of inquisitors who, in this instance, come not from the left but from the ostensible right. As the *Washington Post* noted on December 14, 2002:

The major hurdle facing Trent Lott’s struggle to remain Senate majority leader is not the Democratic Party and its liberal allies, but a powerful faction within the conservative wing of the GOP—an array of columnists, southern newspapers and opinion leaders—demanding that Lott resign from his leadership position.

Their demand was met: To avoid being voted down by Senate Republicans, Lott resigned his leadership post on December 12, 2002.

The source of the fury, however, originated on the left, on the website of one Joshua Micah Marshall, a writer for the *American Prospect* and a “blogger”: one of legions who maintain their own personal websites and percolate their opinions through what is called the “blogosphere.” Before the story had gained any traction, Marshall emitted the “meme” or idea that percolated up to the mainstream media, putting the story in a certain context: “Of course,” he wrote, “Thurmond ran as the presidential candidate on the ‘States-Rights Democrat’ or ‘Dixiecrat’ ticket—a candidacy that was based exclusively and explicitly

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upon the preservation of legalized segregation and opposition to voting rights and civil rights for blacks.”

To say that Mr. Marshall is a liar is to imply that he knows anything about the actual history and ideology of the States’ Rights Democrats. That ideology, as plainly stated in their national platform (adopted in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1948), was an expression of decentralism and radical opposition to the growth of the federal Leviathan. The platform starts out not with a paean to racial segregation but by noting that the first Democratic Party platform had resolved that “Congress has no power under the Constitution to interfere with or control the domestic institutions of the several states,” and it goes on to provide examples of federal encroachments:

The Executive Department, with the aid of the Supreme Court, has asserted national dominion and control of submerged oil-bearing lands in California, schools in Oklahoma and Missouri, primary elections in Texas, South Carolina and Louisiana, restrictive covenants in New York and the District of Columbia, and other jurisdictions, as well as religious instruction in Illinois.

This is a movement “based exclusively and explicitly” on an appeal to racism? While it is true that the catalyst for the Democratic split was the passage of civil-rights planks in the Democratic platform, the States’ Rights Democrats’ critique of the national Democrats was based on the fear of the extent to which such statutes would be enforced—and by whom—once they became law. The Dixiecrats’ indictment of a supercentralized federal police force was echoed years later by civil-libertarian critics of J. Edgar Hoover’s FBI run amok: “This infamous and iniquitous program calls for” the establishment of a civil-rights unit in the Department of Justice, complete with “a special unit of investigators.” The result could only be “a police state in a totalitarian, centralized, bureaucratic government.”

In a dig that the neoconservative Lott-haters will wince at, the States’ Rights Democrats’ convention averred that the national Democratic convention “hypocritically denounced totalitarianism abroad but unblushingly proposed and approved it at home.” But the real reasons for the split are, perhaps, explained in this embittered polemic:

The convention that insulted the South in the party platform advocated giving the Virgin Islands and other dependencies of the United States “the maximum degree of local self-government.” When an effort was made to amend this part of the platform so as to make it read that the party favored giving the Virgin Islands and the several states the maximum degree of local self-government, the amendment adding the words “the several states” was stricken out.

The South was to be denied the rights guaranteed even to colonies. It was the final straw, a mortal insult that drove the proud Southerners out of the Democratic fold and eventually led to the break-up of the old New Deal coalition, paving the way for a realignment in favor of the Republicans.

The States' Rights campaign of 1948 was a regionalist, constitutionalist, and radical decentralist insurgency against the growing power of the federal government, the last resistance inside the Democratic Party to the idea that big government is the savior of us all. There are exactly two references to racial segregation in the States' Rights platform, one of which simply reiterates the effects of the national party's civil-rights plank, while the other affirms:

We stand for the segregation of the races and the racial integrity of each race; the constitutional right to choose one's associates; to accept private employment without governmental interference, and to earn one's living in any lawful way. We oppose the elimination of segregation [in] employment by Federal bureaucrats called for by the misnamed civil rights program. We favor home rule, local self-government and a minimum interference with individual rights.

Well beyond 1948, the States' Rights Democrats were hardly alone in their view of the proper relations between the races. *National Review*, which demanded that Lott resign, opposed the 1964 Civil Rights Act and hailed Barry Goldwater when he voted against it. Richard M. Weaver, in the July 13, 1957, issue of NR, wrote:

"Integration" and "Communization" are, after all, pretty closely synonymous. In light of what is happening today, the first may be little more than a euphemism for the second. It does not take many steps to get from the "integrating" of facilities to the "communizing" of facilities, if the impulse is there.

The States' Rights platform reflects an identical theme: not fear of blacks but fear of the methods that a federal campaign to eliminate segregation would require. The argument against the civil-rights planks is not that blacks represent a mortal threat but that the federal government does. In retrospect—as the Justice Department targets private companies for not filling victim-group quotas, as sexual exotics cry "discrimination" when their "right" to violate both property rights and social propriety is denied, and as a special category of "hate crimes" is created to punish those who think criminal thoughts—the Dixiecrats' fear of a "totalitarian police state" looks prophetic.

The States' Rights Democrats would agree with Weaver, who characterized the civil-rights advocates with stunning accuracy: "In a free society, associations for educational, cultural, social, and business purposes have a right to protect their integrity against political fanaticism. The alternative to this is the destruction of free society and the replacement of its functions by government, which is the Marxist dream."

"Fanaticism" certainly describes the spirit of the Jacobin mob that bayed for Senator Lott's blood; that these *sans-culottes* call themselves "conservatives" is an intellectual crime for which there cannot be punishment enough. An entirely new and lower level of Hades will have to be created for David Frum, the neoconservative political commissar who, in effect,

added Lott to the "Axis of Evil"—a phrase Frum coined while serving as the President's speechwriter. While averring that "I for one do not believe Trent Lott is a racist or a segregationist," Frum sentenced him to political Siberia because what Lott intended as "a greasy squirt of flattery" became, inexplicably, "the most emphatic repudiation of desegregation to be heard from a national political figure since George Wallace's first presidential campaign." Frum's verdict is a stern one:

Lott's words suggest that one of the three most powerful and visible Republicans in the nation privately thinks that desegregation, civil rights, and equal voting rights were all a big mistake. These would be disgraceful thoughts to think, if Lott thought them. If Lott thought them, any Republican who accepted his leadership would share in the disgrace. So Lott needs to make it clear that he does not in fact think them.

Lott is guilty of committing a thoughtcrime, and a mere confession is not enough: He must be "cleansed," as several commentators put it, along with the GOP, of any hint that he might, deep down, believe in property rights instead of civil rights. This is the neoconservative style, a relentless hectoring imported to the right by ex-leftists who seem inspired by the example of the Moscow Trials.

Trent Lott is not on trial here, however; nor is Strom Thurmond, who continues to defy his critics by threatening to outlive them. The two senators are just stand-ins, for the goal of the pretentious little commissars of the neoconservative movement is to delegitimize the very idea of resistance to the Leviathan and to install the post-New Deal Welfare-Warfare State as the "conservative" ideal. Frum and his fellow despoilers of a proud tradition want to unseat not just Senator Lott but the principle of subsidiarity that is central to the Old Right of Weaver, Russell Kirk, and Frank S. Meyer. In the brave new imperial America that the neocons are building for us—fully mobilized for war and centralized out of military necessity—states' rights have no place, the concept of local self-government is inherently subversive, and idiosyncratic regionalism is close to treason.

Lott was seven years old when Thurmond carried the banner of States' Rights, and he is hardly an Old Right stalwart. He crawled on his belly, begging for forgiveness—a tactic that only emboldened the circling sharks who smelled blood in the water and wanted more than a taste; moreover, his understanding of what the States' Rights Democrats were defending apart from segregation is exactly nil, as the following excerpt from an interview with Larry King makes all too clear:

LOTT: But I do still think that there are issues that Senator Thurmond has advocated that are in the best interests of his state and people of all backgrounds. So . . .

KING: But you don't think he'd of [sic] been a better president, say, than Harry Truman who defeated him that year?

LOTT: You know, I'd have to go back and look at the election of that year. Harry Truman obviously did a lot of great things for our country, and, you know, I was trying to remember who the Republican nominee was . . .

KING: Dewey. Tom Dewey.

LOTT: Yes, it was Dewey. I don't—you know, I couldn't tell you one thing about what Dewey's policies were at the time.

That Lott could not even remember Dewey's name, let alone what he stood for, is hardly surprising. What ought to stun conservatives is that a Republican majority leader, challenged to come out for Truman lest he prove himself guilty of a hate crime, stumbles over his own words. But this hardly comes as a shock to those of us who long ago observed that the conservative movement has been taken over by "former" Hubert Humphrey—"Scoop" Jackson Democrats, for whom Truman is a demigod (with FDR and Lincoln being their two principal deities).

In his semi-autobiographical polemic against the neoconservative invasion of the conservative movement, *The Betrayal of the American Right*, the late libertarian theorist Murray N. Rothbard depicted the 1948 triumph of the Deweyites as "another severe blow to the Old Right cause in the Republican party," along with the defection of former anti-interventionist Sen. Arthur Vandenberg to the liberal-interventionist camp: "Dewey now [is] a representative of the Eastern, Wall Street internationalist, statist, 'leftish' Establishment. Dewey refused to defend the conservative record of the 80th Congress against Harry Truman's sneers at being 'do-nothings.' (Actually, they had done far too much.)"

As a young stalwart of the Old Right, then a graduate student at Columbia University, Rothbard was faced with a choice between Dewey—the New Deal-lite version of Harry Truman—and the outright red revolutionism of Henry Wallace and the communist-controlled Progressive Party. What was the right-winger of 1948 to do, aside from staying at home that year? "I could not support Dewey for President," Rothbard recalled, "and was the only northerner at Columbia to join the short-lived Students for Thurmond club, basing my support on Thurmond's decentralist, states' rights program."

Cast adrift by the Republicans, the conservatives of 1948 were in search of a political vehicle, and there were various and sundry third-party movements on the right in those days, none of which went anywhere. Rothbard was eager to see the growth of some sort of organized effort, and after Thurmond polled 1,169,021 popular votes and 39 electoral votes, Rothbard wrote to the States' Rights Democrats' national headquarters, describing his participation in Students for Thurmond but noting:

My support, however, was not extremely enthusiastic, because, although I agreed wholeheartedly with the platform and Thurmond's campaign speeches, I felt that it was keyed too much to purely Southern interests. Sure, the Civil Tyranny program must be combated, but what about the myriad invasions of states' rights in other fields by the power-hungry Washington bureaucracy? In other words, while you always claimed that yours was a national movement, by talking only of the Civil Tyranny program you threw away any attraction to Northern and Western voters.

Rothbard went on to urge the States' Rights movement to organize nationally and to build a party "consisting of Southern Democrats and real Republicans (omitting the me-too Republicans) to launch a dynamic offensive against National Socialism in this country before it is too late. I am greatly elated over

your new platform because I believe it points in that direction."

This new coalition against an aggressively expansive power centered in Washington *did* take place, though not in the States' Rights movement, which quickly dissipated, but in the Republican Party. The Dixiecrat split led to the breakdown of the New Deal coalition and the eventual defection of the South to the GOP column. As the writers of the States' Rights platform had bitterly noted, the "solid South" had regularly supplied 50 percent of the presidential electors required to put a Democrat in the White House. For that, the party had demoted the South to a status lower than a colony. The implicit threat that such loyalty could not long endure was carried out.

Rothbard's missive prefigures the process that led to the Reagan Revolution, creating a broad front of conservatives, libertarians, and a rising class of new entrepreneurs who dreamed of rolling back the Leviathan once the Cold War had ended. What the Torquemadas of the new Inquisition are demanding is a reversal of that process, the undoing of the grand coalition in a gigantic purge that surely will not end with Senator Lott. In a weirdly inverted version of McCarthyism, every political figure of any stature will now be vetted for political correctness on the issue of "civil rights" for every victim group. The worship of Lincoln, required of all good neocons, will become the *sharia* of the conservative movement, where the Stars and Bars are now about as welcome as a crucifix in Mecca. Conservative scholars and activists who fail to appreciate the new dispensation are slated to meet the fate that the mullahs envisioned for Salman Rushdie.

In seeking to repeal the legacy of the Old Right and to replace it with the politics of Harry Truman, the neocons are displaying the fanatically antiracist and politically correct attitudes of the other third party in the presidential election of 1948—Henry Wallace's Progressives, controlled top to bottom by the American followers of Stalin. Thus, that we are now reenacting the political purges of the 1930's ought to surprise nobody.

But good news is on the horizon: A backlash will not be long in coming. The Republican base does not swallow the idea of Martin Luther King, Jr., as a conservative icon, and the peculiar concept that Sherman's March through Georgia was the incarnation of "national greatness" is an idea that only a Marxist or a neocon could love. The editors of *National Review* seem to understand the danger of mass defections and seek to stanch the flow by making Lott the issue:

Many conservatives will be tempted to defend Lott because of the nature of some of the attacks on him. It's an understandable impulse. But it is possible for someone simultaneously to suffer unfair attacks, handle himself and his predicament poorly, and be an underwhelming political figure. Trent Lott has managed a trifecta. For NR to rally to his side now would amount to defending him because he is being accused of racism.

It does not matter whether the accusations of racism are unfair. Life is unfair, and you had better get used to it. This is the cynical message that the alleged leaders of the conservative movement are sending their followers, effectively putting them on notice that all Republican politicians will now be subject to the same sort of scrutiny. It is a demoralizing message, one that can only lead to defeat, because the only question that remains is: Who is next?

Politics and Power

by Derek Turner

“A bastard kind of Christianity, but a living kind; with a heart-life in it; not dead, chopping barren logic merely.”

—Thomas Carlyle

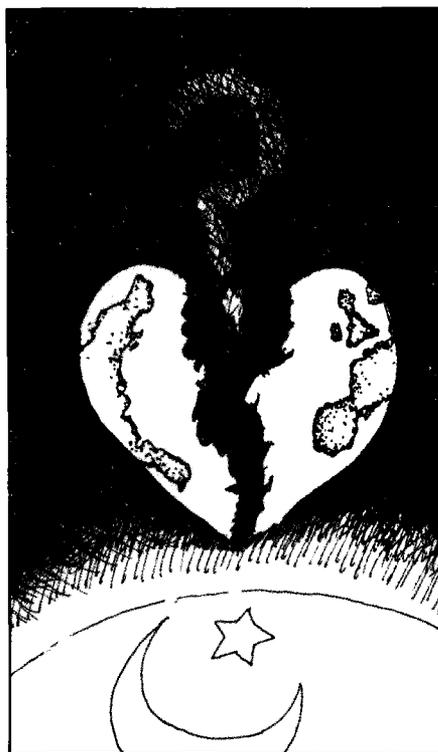
The West and the Rest: Globalization and the Terrorist Threat

by Roger Scruton
Wilmington, DE: ISI Books;
187 pp., \$19.95

Since September 11, 2001, there have been many articles and several books purporting to explain what led up to the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Intelligence and military analyses, many of them useful, vie for attention with political tracts, many of them rather less useful—and most, bizarrely enough, tend to conclude that war against Saddam Hussein (a secular Arab nationalist, loathed by radical Muslims, who has never been linked to the September 11 attacks) is the only way to bring radical Muslims to heel. Such sage statesmanship has proved its utility before—notably in Vietnam.

Although the author, probably Britain's best-known conservative intellectual, was clearly impelled to write by the events of that ghastly September morning, *The West and the Rest* is both better written and more ambitious than other works “inspired” by that day. Despite the book's disconcertingly dismissive title and its modest length, this is a richly rewarding work, filled with profundity and felicitous phraseology, with occasional dips into near-poetry—“a landscape that had worn its Biblical aspect for centuries, with star-spangled nights above stone-built villages and historic cities.”

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H. Ward Sterett

Scruton's aim is to explain not just why the terrorists think and behave as they do but what it is about the West that differentiates it from “the rest”—notably Islam. And why does the West arouse such hatred in so many non-Western hearts? (We might also ask why the West arouses such indifference in so many Western hearts—a question Scruton has been considering for many years.)

Scruton handles these complex questions, and many others, with his customary intellectual rigor and occasional flashes of that dry wit that always lifts his work above the merely elegiac. At a recent dinner to mark the 20th anniversary of the *Salisbury Review*, the high Tory magazine he edited from its inception until last year, he commented memorably on the vagaries that had turned him “from a despised member of the lower orders to a despised spokesman for the upper class”—thus humorously encapsulating both his

own life and the wider changes within society. One example of serene insight from *The West and the Rest* will suffice: “One may reasonably wonder at the miraculous correspondence between the ‘just society’ as it emerges from [John] Rawls's thought-experiment and the received ideas of liberal New York.”

What makes *The West and the Rest* so distinctive is its essential evenhandedness. Maybe only an ultratraditionalist observer could have been so objective or so sympathetic. Scruton writes more in sorrow than in anger—sorrow at the way in which two great human achievements have suffered at the hands of the wreckers. Many of the developments he deplores in the Middle East, he also deplores at home.

Scruton always tries to see things from an Islamic perspective—but also from ours. An unabashed Western patriot, he is clearly an admirer of Islamic civilization and maybe even slightly envious of Muslim certainty. Why blame Islam for rejecting Western ways, he asks in his preface,

when they, in their turn, involve a rejection of the idea on which Islam is founded—the idea of God's immutable will, revealed once and for all to his Prophet, in the form of an unbreachable and unchangeable code of law?

Anyone who can write of the Meccan *suras* that “They are the great dawn-vision of an impassioned monotheist, from whose soul oppressive shadows are being chased away” is no narrow dogmatist. And Scruton clearly differentiates Islam as a pious way of life from the “armed