

Truth shakes rigged Virginia 'LaRouche' trial, as defendant Ascher takes stand

"We found out that Henry Kissinger had written to his friend William Webster demanding an investigation of the financing of our organization, claiming that we were funded by hostile forces." So stated LaRouche associate and fundraiser Rochelle Ascher to the Leesburg, Virginia courtroom on Monday, March 20, exposing the jury for the first time to the history of Kissinger-inspired financial warfare against the associates of Lyndon LaRouche. Mrs. Ascher is standing trial for alleged "conspiracy" and "securities fraud."

Mrs. Ascher's testimony was the dramatic highpoint in the nine-week trial, which is expected to begin jury deliberations the week of March 27. Despite the bold step of putting the defendant herself on the witness stand, the original elements of this rigged proceeding remain fully in place as the trial goes towards the determination of a verdict by a biased jury.

On March 23, Mrs. Ascher's defense counsel, John Flannery, demanded a mistrial due to judicial misconduct by Loudoun Circuit Judge Carleton Penn, who allowed Mrs. Ascher to be questioned directly by juror Brian Seeley in a most unusual and unprecedented fashion. Penn denied the motion for a mistrial, as he had done earlier when the same juror had lied that he had been approached by a relative of the defendant improperly in a local restaurant during a luncheon recess, and asked to look at an article in a LaRouche-affiliated local newspaper.

Beyond denying the mistrial, Penn also prevented the defendant from bringing into evidence critical documents such as the FBI document which showed the communication between Kissinger and William Webster concerning the "investigation" into LaRouche's finances. Other evidence, including computer-generated reports showing the growth of income and contributions to LaRouche-affiliated companies, were also denied submission into evidence. These had been offered by the defendant to show the basis for repayment of loans from supporters at the time these loans were made, loans which were not paid back because of the U.S. government-initiated bankruptcy proceedings in 1987.

Ascher walks through the wall of fire

On March 20, Mrs. Ascher surprised the prosecution when she took the stand, countering the parade of 30 witnesses and thousands of documents that had been presented

in the show trial proceedings against her.

With passion and enthusiasm, the defendant described to the attentive jury the tumultuous course of political events from 1980 through 1987, highlighting the most critical battles between the LaRouche political movement and its enemies.

The defendant accomplished this by detailing the discussions with Robert Ware, a Leesburg area resident who is named as an alleged "victim" in the indictment, and who testified at an earlier stage of the trial as a government witness. The political relationship between Ascher and Ware lasted from the early 1980s through 1986.

Mrs. Ascher began by describing the early fights of the LaRouche political movement in support of fusion energy, as well as the pre-1983 efforts in support of the development of a beam defense. After President Reagan's announcement of the Strategic Defense Initiative, according to the witness's testimony, Mr. Ware's support increased.

"Reagan has finally done what we've been fighting for for three years," she told Ware. ". . . This is the first time in 50 years that any American President has broken with the policies of Henry Kissinger. . . . LaRouche wrote this policy. Helga LaRouche and Lyndon LaRouche have been meeting with a lot of people in the United States government, generals in the United States military, both retired and active duty. . . . Their concern is that there's an immediate military threat to the NATO alliance and particularly to West Germany. . . . Helga is extremely concerned that . . . even the best patriots of the Reagan administration . . . don't understand how serious things are, . . . that there's the immediate threat of a Soviet attack on Germany. . . . There's a lot of people who want to pull U.S. troops out of NATO. Henry Kissinger is calling for pulling out troops . . . decoupling Europe from the United States."

She also described her briefings to Ware on AIDS, the banking crisis, the war against drugs, and other issues. AIDS, she said, "is the most serious disease the human race has ever faced and nobody is going to do anything about this. . . . Mr. LaRouche has proposed a crash program. . . . If we don't do this fast, millions are already dying in Africa. . . . Within one or two generations the majority of the U.S. population is not going to be alive."

Critical to the government's case in Virginia, is to prove

that political loans are considered “securities,” like stocks or bonds, and that the defendant misstated the “risks” involved in the alleged “investments.”

Ware, in his own testimony, had indicated that he believed he never had been defrauded, and had so informed the Virginia authorities when first contacted. His outstanding loans had been long forgiven by him, and his loans were given specifically to aid LaRouche-linked organizations in preventing phones from being shut off, and in surmounting other financial difficulties.

Mrs. Ascher’s briefings confirmed and further elaborated the knowledge Ware had of the political war he was supporting—as opposed to the “investment portfolio” the government fraudulently hopes to prove in the case. Ware was briefed about the Boston grand jury, formed after the 1984 U.S. presidential elections to run the political witchhunt against Mr. LaRouche and associates. He was briefed about various other federal investigations, bank seizures of the accounts of publishing companies, and other elements of financial warfare.

Mrs. Ascher stated, as Ware had earlier testified, that the supporter lent his money to support “an uphill battle” of a political movement whose agenda he believed in. No element of a “security transaction” was evident from this relationship.

Government insider impeached

One element of the “get LaRouche” effort both in the Alexandria trial and in the Leesburg case has been the use of former members of the organization who were turned into “Judases” by a combination of threats of prosecution and promises of “rewards” for cooperation.

Christian Curtis testified in both proceedings, and in the Ascher trial his testimony, according to courtroom observers, has now been thoroughly impeached, including by the defendant herself.

In the latest blow to Curtis’s lies, Mrs. Ascher on March 20 described a brief encounter she had with Curtis in the New York headquarters of the LaRouche presidential campaign in early 1984.

Curtis had lied that Mrs. Ascher recommended to other fundraisers that people use “urgency” as a technique, even by making up events when they did not happen. These fictitious events included LaRouche TV broadcasts, according to Curtis’s rendition, as well as threats to Mr. LaRouche, both of which he said Rochelle Ascher used as “bait” in fundraising.

Ascher put these lies to rest by describing the actual conditions when she was in New York. It was at that time, the defendant said, that the first LaRouche campaign TV broadcast was to occur, and that same week an official newspaper of Libya published a direct threat against Lyndon LaRouche.

Assistant Virginia Attorney General George Chabalewski conducted the cross-examination of Mrs. Ascher, during

which the defendant conducted herself confidently, never stepping into the carefully laid traps of the well-prepared inquiry.

The cross-examination, according to observers, undoubtedly written by a team of “LaRouche experts” involved in the “Get LaRouche” task force that operated in the Boston and Alexandria prosecutions, contained questions whose purpose was to make the defendant convict herself through her own testimony, if that were possible. The truth, however, proved stronger than the false constructs and clever sophistry employed by the prosecutor. Central to the cross-examination was the question: “Did you tell this lender that other lenders were not getting repaid?”

Mrs. Ascher, questioned in this fashion concerning loans from the period of 1983 through 1987, responded: “I told people much worse. I told them that the enemies of this organization intended to destroy the organization.”

When Chabalewski took quotes out of context of taped discussion between herself and Police Investigator Larry Burchette, the defendant demanded that the whole sentence be read. Finally, at one point, Mrs. Ascher acted as witness and attorney, as she objected to commenting on a hypothetical question, and the judge essentially upheld her objection to the phony question.

Chabalewski also asked a series of questions to imply that the organization always believed “it was always under attack,” and that therefore “the ends justified the means.” “In fact, you think this case is an attack on you, don’t you?” asked Chabalewski. The defendant responded to that question, repeated twice, “I am innocent of any wrongdoing.”

During the redirect examination, Flannery highlighted the federal government’s forced bankruptcy of companies associated with LaRouche, as the defendant said that no lender had caused the bankruptcy, and that the government alone had caused the bankruptcy.

The issue of venue

Even though Judge Penn has consistently upheld the railroad proceedings since the time of the initial empaneling of a biased jury, venue remains as a central legal issue in the trial. Rochelle Ascher, as a resident of Baltimore, Maryland, never made phone calls from Leesburg. Despite that, she stands charged with violations of the Virginia Code dealing with securities. On March 23, Flannery moved that the court strike numerous counts of the 12-count indictment, because Virginia does not have jurisdiction over the alleged offenses. Judge Penn ruled on March 24 to eliminate three of the counts.

This single legal issue, however, pales in comparison with the fundamental constitutional issues raised by the Ascher trial. The fact that this case is being handed to a jury, indicates that decisions on those issues have already been made, and that the Ascher trial marks a step into complete Soviet-style justice in the United States.