

## Bush pardons 'political' targets—but not LaRouche

by Jeffrey Steinberg

On Christmas Eve, President George Bush issued a statement which read in part: "The prosecutions of the individuals I am pardoning represent what I believe is a profoundly troubling development in the political and legal climate of our country: the criminalization of policy differences. These differences should be addressed in the political arena without the Damocles sword of criminality hanging over the heads of some of the combatants. . . .

"In recent years, the use of criminal processes in policy disputes has become all too common. It is my hope that the action I am taking today will begin to restore these disputes to the battleground where they properly belong."

The statement accompanied the announcement that President Bush was issuing "executive clemency" to 26 individuals.

Were Bush an honorable man and did his words have real meaning, Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr. would have headed the list of those granted presidential pardons. No other case in recent memory more clearly reflects the "criminalization of policy differences" than that of LaRouche, who has been unjustly sitting in federal prison since the week of Bush's 1989 inauguration. For four years, Bush personally sat on crucial national security files that would have proven LaRouche's innocence. Those same files would place the onus of criminal activity on senior officials of the Reagan and Bush administrations, including top officials of the White House and the Department of Justice, as well as such private parties as Henry Kissinger and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.

Instead, Bush issued pardons to four of the leading Iran-Contra defendants who were part of the very apparatus that joined in the railroading of LaRouche and his associates. These individuals were former State Department official Elliott Abrams, an avowed LaRouche hater, and former CIA

officers Clair George, Dewey Claridge, and Alan Fiers. Lt. Col. Oliver North and Adm. John Poindexter, two other principals in the push for the LaRouche railroad, were not included on the pardon list because their convictions have been overturned by appeals courts.

Although the White House claimed that the pardons were not issued to Gen. Richard Secord, Albert Hakim, and Thomas Clines, who were convicted in the Iran-Contra affair, because they "profiteered" from their secret parallel government activities, sources have told *EIR* that this trio worked behind-the-scenes for the Clinton-Gore campaign and that this was the real reason they were left off Bush's pardon list. Hakim has been known to be an Israeli Mossad agent since his first involvement with Secord in Iran in the mid-1970s.

### The Weinberger case

Establishment news coverage of the Bush pardons largely focused on the case of former Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, who was indicated only recently by Iran-Contra Independent Counsel Lawrence Walsh. Weinberger's trial had been scheduled to begin on Jan. 5, 1993.

Weinberger's indictment was one of the most controversial of the Walsh actions of his six year investigation of the Iran-Contra affair. There is no question that evidence shows that Weinberger was consistently opposed to the policy of swapping arms for hostages with the Ayatollah in Iran, and was hardly an enthusiast of the Contra aid program. According to Weinberger associates, he remained in his post at the Pentagon despite those disagreements with White House policy because he believed there were "bigger fish to fry" than the Sandinista regime or freeing the American hostages in Lebanon. Although initially skeptical, Weinberger became a champion of the Reagan administration's Strategic Defense Initiative and focused his efforts as secretary on the

primary strategic conflict with the Soviet Union.

In fact, observers of the Walsh probe believe that Weinberger's indictment was only handed down after all other avenues of inquiry leading to the role of Bush in the Iran-Contra scandal were shut off due to White House and related cover-ups. Bush was scheduled to be called as a witness in the Weinberger trial, and this would have been the first questioning of Bush about his role in the Iran-Contra fiasco. The Weinberger pardon was in effect a "self-pardon" by Bush, enabling him to once again side-step any questioning about his role. Following Bush's pardons, rumors began circulating around Washington that Bush might resign early in order to allow his "successor," Dan Quayle, to grant him a formal pardon.

In fact, the pardon decision came only after Walsh's office had been informed on Dec. 11 that there were numerous typed transcripts of Bush's personal observations about the Iran-Contra scandal between November 1986 and the 1988 presidential election that had not been turned over to the special prosecutor. Walsh's office received a telephone call from an unnamed White House staff attorney on Dec. 11 alerting them to the existence of the Bush notes. Asked by the *Washington Post* why the White House staffer had come forward with the damaging new information, Walsh could only speculate: "You have a disintegrating staff. Some people may be more willing than others to cover."

(Washington sources have told *EIR* that some of those notes had been turned over to Walsh's office but that a "mole" in the special prosecutor's office had buried them. The Dec. 11 call, according to this version of the events, alerted Walsh and Weinberger prosecutor James Brosnahan to their existence.)

### **Did Walsh 'get his man' after all?**

The decision to pardon Weinberger and the Iran-Contra players gained momentum after Walsh became aware of the Bush memos on Dec. 11. According to a Dec. 30 Evans and Novak column in the *Washington Post*, Bush chaired a series of Oval Office meetings beginning on Dec. 18 to discuss the pardon. Reportedly, Vice President Quayle, his chief of staff William Kristol (a leading pro-Israel neo-conservative), and White House General Counsel C. Boyden Gray all argued for the pardon. Sen. Daniel Moynihan (D-N.Y.) phoned Bush to say that he would support a pardon, so long as it included his former aide Elliott Abrams. Other congressional Democrats, including House Speaker Tom Foley (D-Wash.) and House Armed Services Committee Chairman Les Aspin (D-Wisc.), were reportedly among them. According to the *New York Times*, these Democrats realize that the Congress badly botched the 1987 Iran-Contra probe and wish to prevent a rehash of "an investigation the Democrats bungled the first time."

Long-time Weinberger associate and former Reagan National Security Adviser William Clark had been pushing for

months for a Weinberger pardon. In fact, Clark and a group of California and East Coast "Reaganauts" had broken with Bush on the eve of the presidential elections. While they had many reasons for opposing Bush's reelection, the Weinberger indictment represented the last straw, according to one well-placed Republican. Weinberger allies report that the White House knew at least two months in advance that Walsh was considering an indictment of the former defense secretary. Despite furtive pleas, the President made no effort to prevent that move, as he was widely believed to have done in the case of his own former national security aide Donald Gregg.

The Weinberger indictment not only sealed Bush's fate in the eyes of a powerful wing of the GOP. Walsh's election eve reindictment of Weinberger, complete with damning new documents showing Bush's role in pushing through secret arms shipments to the Iranians, was an important factor in Bush's electoral defeat. The momentum that the Bush campaign had built up in the 10-day period leading up to the Oct. 30 reindictment—when pollsters were declaring the election "too close to call"—was completely lost when the President was forced to appear on nationwide TV sheepishly defending his Irangate actions.

If, as some Iran-Contra watchers insist, Walsh was really after Bush's scalp, he succeeded in helping to stymie the President's reelection comeback. And that may have been far more of an accomplishment than an indictment.

### **Bush a 'subject' of Walsh probe**

"Executive clemency" is a presidential prerogative that cannot be reversed. However, it now appears that with the Dec. 11 revelations about the President's 1986-88 notes, soon-to-be "citizen Bush" is not off the hook. Walsh, in a hail of angry press statements following the Christmas Eve pardons, announced that Bush is once again a "subject" of his investigation.

It is also likely that several congressional panels will take up the Bush role in Iran-Contra and will also scrutinize the performance of the Walsh team.

There are a vast number of skeletons in both the Democratic and Republican closets when it comes to the foreign policy fiascos of the Reagan-Bush era. Nobody, for example, has seriously probed the guns-for-drugs program at the heart of the Contra supply operation. Were that Pandora's box to be opened, some of the beneficiaries of the Christmas Eve pardon, along with North and Bush, might wind up in federal prison for drug trafficking.

Perhaps the biggest injustice of all is that LaRouche is still sitting in jail. Bush definitely had a point when he decried the "criminalization of policy disputes." In the three weeks remaining in his presidency, he could still redress some of the wrongs by granting "executive clemency" to LaRouche. It would not "decriminalize" the Iran-Contra affair, but it would free an honest man.