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## Book Review

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# The Right Man, in the Right Fight

by Lawrence K. Freeman

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### **The Politics of Truth: Inside the Lies that Led to War and Betrayed My Wife's CIA Identity**

by Joseph Wilson

New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2004

544 pages, hardcover, \$27.50

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Ambassador Wilson's memoir is an interesting, and at times a witty story. Essentially, the first portion of the book tells of his life in the Foreign Service, which takes him from the deserts and poverty of Sub-Saharan Africa to the hotbed of Iraq, to the European Central Command of U.S. Armed Forces, to the National Security Council, before he retired from government service. But the second part depicts how he was brought directly into the fight against the "Beast-Man," Vice President Dick Cheney, and Cheney's Chief of Staff Lewis "Scooter" Libby, along with the whole Straussian neo-con cabal in the Pentagon. What ties the book together from the first to the last chapter, and what has put the former Ambassador in the spotlight, is the July 14, 2003 "outing" of his wife Valerie Plame as a CIA agent, in retaliation for Wilson's first-hand refutation of the charge that the poor African nation of Niger was involved in supplying uranium yellow cake for Saddam Hussein's nuclear weapons program; and his outspoken criticism of the drive to war in Iraq in general.

Wilson begins dramatically with a telephone call, about a week after his wife's "outing," from TV talk-show host Chris Matthews of "Hardball," who told Wilson that Karl Rove, President Bush's top political advisor just had told him, "Wilson's wife is fair game." Then Wilson recounts the now-infamous 16 words in President Bush's Jan. 28, 2003 State of the Union Address, in which the President had conveyed the lie, to his nation and the world, that "The British government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa." This blatantly false report was used to whip the spineless U.S. Congress and the gullible American population into supporting a war for which there never was any just cause. Any thoughtful person could have

known, if they were not afraid of popular opinion, that there was no validity at all in the claim that Saddam Hussein possessed so-called “weapons of mass destruction.”

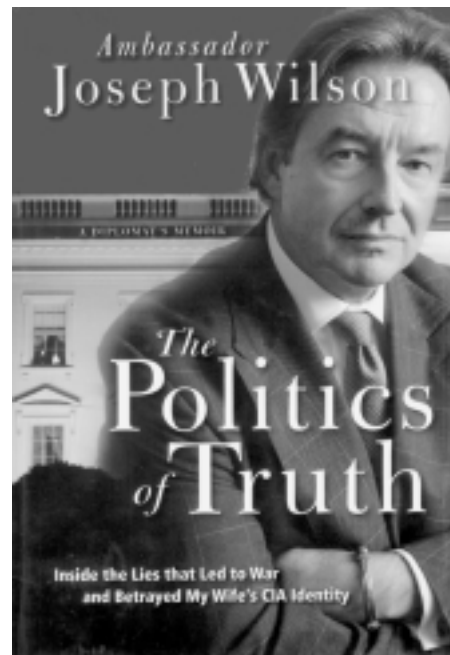
Democratic Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon LaRouche had, as early as September 2002, identified the purpose for the planned invasion of Iraq: that it was to be used to establish as policy the “preventive nuclear war” doctrine of Cheney et al., which they had been unsuccessful at accomplishing until Sept. 11, 2001. After International Atomic Energy Agency Director Mohammed ElBaradei told the world that the documents purporting to show Niger’s sale of uranium yellowcake to Iraq were forgeries, LaRouche stressed that this phony uranium story could be the “smoking gun” to force Cheney’s resignation. By June 2003, LaRouche was calling for Cheney’s impeachment, for intentionally lying about Saddam Hussein’s alleged nuclear weapons program, in order to get a war.

### The Smoking Gun

Ambassador Wilson also responded to the lies from Bush and Cheney. He provided the “smoking gun,” which through many twists and turns, has led to a grand jury that may soon be issuing indictments against key individuals in Cheney’s office for leaking the identity of Wilson’s wife. There had been rumors that an Ambassador had gone to Niger to check out the Niger yellowcake story, but no one knew who had gone, or what he or she had learned. As Wilson describes in his book, he tried to inform the White House and State Department that their records would show that Niger was not involved in supplying Iraq with such material. Finally, after 13 months of silence, he went public with the truth, which he revealed in an op-ed in the July 6 2003 *New York Times* entitled “What I Didn’t Find in Africa.” As he writes in *The Politics of Truth*: “It was not an act of courage—nor was it a partisan act, as critics have howled. It was a civic duty, pure and simple. . . . Our democracy required that the administration be called to account.”

With the published account of his trip, it was revealed, that in February 2002, at the request of Cheney, the CIA asked Wilson to go to Niger and find out if the uranium yellowcake allegations were true. Wilson was by then retired from government service, and had a good reputation as a former Ambassador to Gabon and São Tomé and Príncipe (1992-95), and as the General Service Officer in Niamey, Niger (1976-78). He had kept in contact with political and other personalities in Niger and had traveled there several times in recent years. Thus he seemed to be the right choice for such a mission.

Wilson conclusively determined after his eight-day fact-finding trip, that the alleged sale of 500 tons of uranium yellowcake to Iraq by Niger had never happened. Both U.S. Ambassador to Niger Barbro Owens-Kirkpatrick and Marine Gen. Carleton Fulford had also made reports of the “non-transaction.” Thus, Bush and Cheney ignored all three reports.



Wilson returned from Niger in March, and a CIA officer came out to his house to debrief him. Yet, one year later, this false claim was used to engage the United States in the worst military and foreign policy blunder in our history.

### Cheney Strikes Back

Eight days after Wilson’s op-ed appeared, syndicated columnist Robert Novak wrote that Wilson’s wife, Valerie Plame, was a CIA undercover agent working on weapons of mass destruction, and had suggested the assignment for her husband. Wilson vehemently denies there is any truth to this claim, while furious that his wife’s identity was revealed—a criminal act, as he and others have pointed out. Wilson never tires of quoting former President George H.W. Bush, for whose administration Wilson worked, running the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad Iraq just prior to Desert Storm: In 1999, speaking at the rededication of CIA headquarters, the elder Bush referred to those who expose clandestine officers as, “the most insidious of traitors.” Novak wrote in his column, that two senior administration officials had given him the information. Later, it was revealed that six journalists were leaked the story on Valerie Plame, but each is afraid to speak out; “he would end up in Guantanamo.” It was not until Sept. 29, 2003 that the Department of Justice finally asked the FBI to initiate an investigation of these leaks from the White House. Attorney General John Ashcroft recused himself from the investigation on Dec. 30. At last, on Jan. 21, 2004, a grand jury was convened. It is the indictments from this grand jury that have the potential to remove Beast-Man Cheney from the Vice Presidency, and topple the whole neo-con, chickenhawk cabal nested in the Defense and State Departments.

In Wilson's final chapter, he indicates that information from numerous sources points to a "get Wilson" meeting in the Vice President's office in March 2003, either chaired by the Vice President, or more likely by Libby; this is corroborated by *EIR*'s investigation. Not surprising to readers of this and other LaRouche publications, Wilson fingers Libby as one most likely responsible for leaking his wife's identity, even if he may not have actually done the dirty work himself. Elliott Abrams, of Iran-Contra fame, is another name that was frequently brought to Wilson's attention as a possible leaker. While Wilson does not go nearly far enough in identifying the Straussian fascist policy governing the behavior of Cheney et al., he shows more courage than most people in his position.

### An Unusual Diplomat

Recently Wilson was asked on "Meet The Press," about his calling the Vice President a lying SOB. Without missing a beat, Wilson calmly answered: "Well, with respect to the Vice President, that may be the gentlest and kindest thing I've had to say about him in recent months." That response gives you a good indication that Ambassador Wilson is not your typical diplomat, although he still accepts the Washington beltway 'rules of the game' in conducting policy debate.

Wilson's odyssey—how a West Coast hippie surfer, carpenter, and skier became a top diplomat and Presidential advisor on Africa—is an amusing tale, which occupies a good portion of the rest of Wilson's memoir. One bit of biographic material which rounds out the picture of what went into making Joe Wilson who he is, are his Republican military family roots. Wilson's maternal great-uncle was the mayor of San Francisco from 1912-32, later served as Governor of California, and was a delegate to two Republican Conventions. This, of course, was before Franklin Roosevelt transformed the Democratic Party into a party of the "forgotten man," moored to the Constitutional principle of the General Welfare. Both of Wilson's grandfathers served in World War I and World War II, and his father was a Marine pilot in World War II.

After being posted in several African embassies—Niger, Togo, South Africa, Burundi, and Congo Brazzaville—he ended up in a career-defining position as Deputy Chief of Mission in Baghdad from 1988-91. These chapters give one an enhanced view of the behavior of the Iraqi elite and Saddam Hussein, which is useful, but as with some of Wilson's views on Africa, it proceeds from commonly accepted flawed analysis. As "luck" would have it, the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, April Glaspie, went on vacation the day before Saddam Hussein launched his takeover of Kuwait, leaving Wilson as the senior official in charge to deal with freeing American hostages, and hundreds of others, until he and his six remaining colleagues finally left before the bombs started to drop on Baghdad.

There are some exciting tales, but one of the more humor-

ous moments in an otherwise dangerous situation, was the way Wilson dealt with then-Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz at the high point of the hostage crisis. It gives one a glimpse into Wilson's character and unorthodox methods of diplomacy, which one can still see today in his confrontation with the office of the Vice President.

According to Wilson, after Iraqi authorities threatened him and others with capital punishment, if they failed to comply with registering all foreign citizens in the care of the embassies—which could potentially have resulted in more Americans becoming hostages—Wilson appeared at his regular press conference wearing a hangman's noose in place of his tie. As Wilson reports it, the Iraqi leadership were furious at him and the Foreign Minister convened a meeting of the entire foreign diplomatic corps for the purpose of a showdown with Wilson.

Wilson writes: "With what I'd done now widely known, I wasn't going to back down, so I played my hand as aggressively as I could. We sat at opposite ends of a long table. Tariq lit a cigar. I did as well; Tariq said that the Iraqis had no intention of executing diplomats. I responded 'Then why did they refer to capital punishment in the note?' The meeting broke up inconclusively. Tariq had tried to embarrass me in front of my diplomatic colleagues, but I was having none of it." Wilson and his fellow U.S. Embassy personnel had adopted an "in your face" approach in dealing with Iraqis, in what they thought was the best way to survive during the crisis.

Wilson provides another anecdotal display of gallows humor when he describes, how, at the end of his regular morning press conference, a journalist asked him for his business card. "One day I asked a journalist why he needed yet another card, since his news organization must have at least ten in their offices. He replied without hesitation that the press betting was that I was not going to survive, and he thought the card might prove valuable someday. I handed him my card, after autographing it for him."

Despite the latest attacks on Wilson as partisan Democrat (actually, Libby called him an "asshole playboy"), his 22-year career in government shows strong bipartisanship. His close working relations with President Bush 41, James Baker III, and the former President's National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft—all of them Republicans—gives the lie to the present President Bush's and Cheney's attack-dog characterizations of Wilson. His outspoken criticisms of the war, and refusal to back down under heavy fire from the office of the Vice President, including the completely unethical attacks on his wife, make Ambassador Joe Wilson the right man for the right fight, at the right time.

While the book is enjoyable, it is also a valuable contribution to the effort to free our nation and the world of Cheney's evil, anti-republican bunch of vipers, who are trying to take control of our country's most vital institution: The Office of the Presidency.