

Understanding the U.S. 'Cheneygate' Climate

EIR's Jeffrey Steinberg spoke on Dec. 6, 2005. He was introduced by Frank Hahn of the Civil Rights Movement Solidarity (BüSo), who asked him to "tell us the details from the inside, what is going on in Washington right now, and what has been the process of this revolt during the last days and weeks."



EIRNS/Wolfgang Lillge

Jeffrey Steinberg

I must say that for the last couple of hours I've been thinking about the question that you posed right at the very beginning of this session; namely, how it is, in the face of some of these very dramatic developments in the United States, that there still is a certain underlying tone of pessimism even here in the audience, about the prospects of these kinds of changes actually happening in the U.S., and I've been thinking about what the answer to that question actually is. A good part of it, I think, was at least made clear to me by Helga's remarks, in terms of the actual political and cultural situation in Europe; namely, I would say that a certain amount of the difficulty in seeing what's going on in the United States clearly, is a certain undercurrent of pessimism, both born of aspects of the current political and economic situation, but as LaRouche has been emphasizing, to a great effect, pessimism is the national pastime of the Baby Boomer generation. So there's a long psychological history to that.

But I think, in a sense, that only gives half the answer. There is this factor of pessimism, there is the factor of a long-standing, largely British-instigated campaign of anti-Americanism that permeates the media, and the political institutions in Europe and other parts of the world. But the other aspect of it, is that the view of the United States that's generally available, here in Europe and in other parts of the world—with the exception of people who are in continuous contact with the LaRouche movement here—is at best the shadows on the wall of the cave. Events appear almost miraculously in spurts, in the European media, with very little explanation in depth of the actual process by which those things took place.

LaRouche's Intervention

And to be perfectly frank, if you don't understand the dynamics of the political situation in Washington, from the standpoint of knowing the impact of LaRouche's intervention and the persistent activity, particularly of the youth movement in Washington, D.C., then there's a certain justification for seeing this whole process as being somewhat mysterious, and not all that intelligible.

Now, LaRouche has talked about the intervention going back to the period within days after the 2000 Presidential elections, at which point he institutionalized these international webcasts from Washington. There was a series of three or four of those webcasts that spanned the period when it wasn't even clear who would be the President of the United States inaugurated in January 2001. And once it was clear it was going to be Bush, LaRouche laid out, in no uncertain terms, what kind of fascist threat that represented. And many people in Washington still to this day, remember the testimony in January 2001, in opposition to Ashcroft's nomination as Attorney General, in which LaRouche warned about a Reichstag Fire.

We didn't have an inside track on al-Qaeda, or whoever else was actually behind the 9/11 attacks, but it was the characteristic of the Administration that LaRouche identified.

Now, particularly in the aftermath of the 2004 elections, these frequent webcasts, taking place virtually in every four-to-six-week period, have become a principal source of dialogue between LaRouche and leading political institutions, government institutions, in Washington. In the immediate aftermath of the November election results, the Democratic Party was in a shambles, and LaRouche defined a series of critical political initiatives, that had to be taken: no second thoughts, no alternative.

First, on the issue of challenging the legitimacy of the election itself, by demonstrating that Bush did not legitimately win the votes in Ohio that determined the outcome of the election. And then, immediately after that, launching into a major campaign to defeat the Bush Administration on the issue of the theft of the entire Social Security system. It would have been a \$20 to 30 trillion ripoff, had it been allowed to happen.

And at that point, one of the most significant moments in this whole process of shifting the situation in the United States, was when members of both the Democratic and Republican parties in Congress went back to their districts to stage duelling town meetings, and the Democrats got a sense that there was massive public opposition to what the Bush Administration was trying to do on the issue of privatization of Social Security.

Now, since the beginning of 2005, the actual circulation of *Executive Intelligence Review* magazine has tripled, and that's just referring to the print copies of the magazine that circulate every week. I don't even have accurate figures in terms of the number of people who subscribe to, or who ac-



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Jeff Steinberg (center with microphone) talking with LaRouche Youth Movement members in Berlin. He told the Berlin seminar that in Washington, D.C., “there’s somewhere in the range of 30 to 35 youth deploying full time, saturating Capitol Hill, building up extensive networks among key staff people in the Congress” and 3,000-5,000 copies of EIR circulate in government circles.

cess, key articles, all of LaRouche’s writings, other key articles, on the various websites.

But, for example, since the Summer of this year, when we expanded the size of the LaRouche Youth Movement operations in Washington, D.C., to where, on a consistent basis, there’s somewhere in the range of 30 to 35 youth deploying full time, saturating Capitol Hill, building up extensive networks among key staff people in the Congress, every week, between 3,000 to 5,000 copies of *EIR* are circulated within the government circles in Washington, D.C.

Now, there are 435 members of the House of Representatives, and 100 members of the U.S. Senate. So, you’ve got about a 10 to 1 ratio of those members to the number of *EIRs* that are being distributed. And I can tell you from firsthand experience, that people are reading and studying this material. Members of Congress, members of the Senate, key staff people: This has become the lifeblood of what they think about when they’re not bogged down in the hideous, ridiculous details of the day-to-day legislative agenda, which is a complete swamp—and in fact, there is not a single piece of significant legislation that is likely to come out of the Congress this year. They can’t even get a Defense Authorization bill passed, to provide the money for the U.S. military, because any such bill would have the McCain rider, which is in opposition to Cheney’s torture policy. The White House won’t let the Defense Authorization bill even come out for debate in Conference, and vote in the Congress, because they know that they would be overwhelmingly defeated on the torture issue.

So, we’re probably going to be conducting a war on the basis of a continuing resolution. This is the height of absur-

dity. It’s a demonstration that on one level, the functioning of the government in Washington has come to a grinding halt.

Debate over the Agenda for the Future

But on the other level, the agenda for the future is actually being debated out, and is coming to the surface.

Now, on Oct. 28, a very dramatic event occurred. Special Counsel Patrick Fitzgerald indicted Vice President Dick Cheney’s Chief of Staff Lewis Libby on five counts of obstruction of justice, of lying to a grand jury, perjury, a whole series of things. Now, one of the diseases in Washington that complicates the whole process of governing, is the fact that there are too damn many lawyers in Washington. But in this case, it happens that every lawyer in Washington carefully read the indictment of Lewis Libby, meticulously, and to make sure it was easily available, Fitzgerald opened up a website about a week before the indictment was posted, so that it was very easy for anybody who wanted to get their hands on a copy of it and read it. And when people read the indictment, including top lawyers at the White House, and all over Capitol Hill, what everybody realized is that it was actually, in fact, an indictment of Dick Cheney.

Now, had Fitzgerald decided at that moment to not merely indict Libby on the issues of obstruction of justice, and perjury, and interference with the grand jury, and had indicted him on the evidence that he had in hand, that Libby violated the underlying law against leaking the names of secret U.S. government agents, he would have been faced with the awesome responsibility of either having to indict Cheney, or list Cheney as an unindicted co-conspirator. Because what the

indictment says, in four different locations, in unambiguous black and white terms, is that Cheney told Libby that Valerie Plame Wilson, the wife of Ambassador Joe Wilson, was an undercover agent for the CIA. There was no ambiguity that she may have been working just as an analyst, or a clerk-typist, or something like that. Cheney knew, and Libby knew, that she worked in one of the most sensitive undercover assignments in the CIA, and they leaked her name anyway.

So, when people read that indictment, regardless of the fact that up until this point, at least, Cheney and Libby have not been accused of this underlying crime of leaking the identity of this CIA secret operative, it made it very clear that Cheney's political days were numbered. Because this indictment could have very easily been completely swept under the rug. And the reason that Fitzgerald was able to do what he did, is because there was a political climate that had already been established. There was a revolt already under way against the policies that Cheney represented. It took the form of a certain revolt in the Congress, on the torture issue, and on other things. It took the form that we talked about last time I was here in Berlin, of the defeat of Cheney's so-called nuclear option, to essentially destroy the institution of the U.S. Senate. So, you had a bipartisan move shortly before our Berlin conference in June, to defeat Cheney fundamentally on that issue.

But, it's very fair to say that this whole Cheneygate climate, and the fact that we're here today discussing new political opportunities in the post-Cheney world, is the result of the fact that we've been on Cheney's case since the very beginning of the Administration. The first time that LaRouche called for Cheney's removal from office, for impeachable crimes, was in September 2002. And it was in response to the new national security doctrine, that was pure Cheney, that called for preventive war. And Cheney, at that point, was at the peak of his lies about the Iraq nuclear weapons threat, that would lead, five, six months later, to the invasion.

So, people in Washington, in positions of political power, Republicans, Democrats alike, at this point freely acknowledge that the leadership of the fight against Cheney, and what he represents in Washington, is headed up by LaRouche. It's unambiguous. We argued with people in 2002, in 2003, and they encouraged us to go after lesser targets, and we said: "That won't work. That won't do the trick. It won't shift the political geometry sufficiently."

Behind the Democratic Party Shift

Another very important thing is taking place now. LaRouche emphasized in his opening presentation this morning, the significance of the speech given by Representative Nancy Pelosi at Harvard University last Friday [Dec. 2]. And again, I'll let you in on the story of essentially why and how this has happened.

Last February, as the result of a relatively insignificant article in one of the German financial dailies—I don't remem-

ber if it was the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* or the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* business section—talking about some very near-term bond obligations that General Motors would have to meet this year, LaRouche put out a warning that General Motors, and therefore the entire U.S. machine-tool, auto sector, was on the chopping block, and ready to go. And in the Spring of this year, LaRouche wrote a series of memos, principally for the leadership of the U.S. Senate. They were circulated very widely, they were studied, and all sorts of people came out—people, for example, like Felix Rohatyn—saying that LaRouche was wrong, and that his analysis of the situation was too radical, that General Motors was sitting on \$14 billion in cash, there was no threat of bankruptcy. Yes, there were problems, mismanagement, but that there would be no fundamental threat to the entire auto sector.

And so, there was a very intensive fight on this issue, that played out through the Spring and through the Summer of this year. And in the context of that fight, LaRouche was proven absolutely right, and all of his critics were proven absolutely wrong. And therefore, the Democratic Party no longer had the luxury of cherry-picking those things that LaRouche was talking about that they thought that they could get away with. Even going after Cheney seemed to be relatively easy, compared to the idea of launching a fundamental policy revolution, back to the FDR paradigm on economics, the original American System ideas.

But this situation in the last several months, reached an absolute critical mass. With the announcement by General Motors of 30,000 layoffs, which translates into shutting down a number of major auto plants in the Midwest region of the United States, the auto belt, it suddenly became clear that in terms of real impact on the economy, the economy that people *live* in, and now die in, that LaRouche was absolutely right.

Now, if you want to actually look carefully at the speech given by Nancy Pelosi, the response to President Bush the next day by Congressman George Miller, and other speeches that I'm sure we're going to be seeing delivered over the immediate days and weeks ahead, if you want to understand the origin of that, go back and look at the ongoing dialogue that has become more and more precise, and more and more rich, that's taken place between LaRouche, and leading members of the U.S. Senate, the House of Representatives, the Democratic Party as an institution, and the military institutions, in these various webcasts that have been taking place frequently. The next one will be on Jan. 11.

And by the way, the webcasts now take place in the context of intensive weeks of political organizing, in which not only the 30 to 35 LaRouche Youth Movement members permanently in Washington participate, but everyone comes in from New England, from the Midwest, and a smattering of people from the West Coast and Texas. On Nov. 17, the day after LaRouche's last webcast, we had about 100 members of the LaRouche Youth Movement, who were joined by 150 current and retired United Auto Workers (UAW) union mem-

bers from Ohio, who drove through the night to come in, to participate in a joint lobbying day with the youth movement.

There were members of Congress who were being called by their chiefs of staff and legislative directors off the floor of the House and Senate, to come to meet with these delegations, when they suddenly realized what this political combination was. They recognized leaders from the UAW, from the machinist unions, people who represented some of the most powerful political forces within the Democratic Party in their home districts. And as the result of that, they realized that they couldn't ignore the fact that we're at the center of a major mobilization, of precisely this highly skilled machine-tool sector of what's left of the American workforce.

We don't even know what's going to come into town on the week of Jan. 11, when the next webcast takes place in Washington, but this is a political revolution, and just last week, the leading people in the Democratic Party, in Congress, were responding to a series of new memos that LaRouche wrote, about how to deal with the imminent complete destruction of the auto sector in the United States, asking a series of specific questions about what to do. And LaRouche's answer to them, which I expect to see carried out, is: "You've got to do what you did back in February. You've got to take this issue directly back to the people. You've got to outflank Washington, by going back to your constituents, having town hall meetings, having field hearings, whatever venue you want to use, but you've got to activate the American people, and use them as the big leverage to make revolutionary changes in politics in Washington."

So, we're on the verge of seeing the actual frog-marching of Dick Cheney out of the White House, whether it's in shackles and handcuffs, because of indictments in the Libby case, or whether it's simply a groundswell among Republicans desperate at the fact that they're going to be clobbered in the elections, which are coming up in less than a year from now, in the United States, demanding that he be eliminated.

Bear in mind that, as President Bush's poll numbers plummet, Dick Cheney is 10 percentage points ahead of him in the crash. If Bush has 35% support, which is a stretch, Cheney's got perhaps 25%. So, this political process is moving forward. We are in a post-Cheney era, and you can expect to see some far more dramatic changes coming out of the United States, between now and when we convene our next meeting here in Berlin, sometime presumably in the first half of next year.

But the point I just want to emphasize in closing, is that unless you understand this factor, the factor of LaRouche's personal role as a political figure shaping this opposition to everything that the Cheney Administration stands for, and unless you also understand the pivotal role played by the youth movement, because the youth movement represents the optimism of the future, and the antidote to this Baby Boomer problem, then events in Washington will remain mysterious, and it will continue to be an excuse for maintaining a certain needless degree of pessimism. Thank you.