The study presents a study of group behavior in France, Italy, and in the char-

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dissent

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Our First Serious Fascist?

Lyndon LaRouche, whatever one thinks of his politics, has at least brought a modicum of excitement to the political scene. John Anderson, who recently gained such wide support, is only new as a candidate for the presidency; his opinions, except for the fact of being held by a Republican, are in no sense unusual. Now LaRouche is something else again. In a few television appearances (as a candidate for the presidency in 1976, and once again this year, in the New Hampshire Democratic primary), he has been able to startle, disconcert, and at times even frighten liberal audiences in a way that recalls the effect Malcolm X had during the '60s. Part of Malcolm's appeal came, of course, from his electric rhetoric of aggression, and he was helped, too, during his flights of invective, by the guilt feelings toward blacks of those who heard him. LaRouche has nothing of this sort going for him. And he is not striking in appearance on the television screen as Malcolm was, with his reddish hair, and cream of brown complexion. LaRouche, with strong features, is all the same reassuringly plain; he is not exceptionally handsome, not intriguingly homely. Yet, like Malcolm's, his effect on audiences has been little short of sensational. Speaking clearly, rapidly, and ever so grammatically, Mr. LaRouche at first gave the impression of an academic, in politics on a sabbatical, but after one had heard him out, one saw that he is a firebrand. What he has to say is often as startling as the dramatic posturings and mannerisms of Malcolm X.

I shall come to his opinions in a moment. But let me first add just one further touch to the picture I have been composing of him. LaRouche is at ease in handling ideas and is clearly a master of the concepts he has chosen to discuss. But behind his often measured words one senses something further, a will to dominate, of the kind one felt behind Malcolm X's wildest bursts of rhetoric. Lyndon LaRouche has, and I would suggest to a very high degree, a quality that was also in Malcolm X, it is the very quality Machiavelli thought most essential for political success, i.e., virtu, that toughness of spirit without which dedication to the role of political leadership must, with the passage of time, become unreal. No doubt it is this quality in the man that has attracted many of his followers. If I am right about this, if LaRouche does indeed possess virtu, and to the extent I suggest, then it would be unwise for us to underestimate him.

Many of LaRouche's followers are young, and not a few of them are academics, some well trained in the sciences. They all seem somewhat odd, and odd in ways that are similar, and it might be, in fact it is no doubt the case, that LaRouche has charisma for oddballs of a certain kind. All the same, this is not sufficient to explain his appeal for those in his group who cannot be so characterized. (Let me note here that the women he has attracted to him do not seem to be as odd as the men, but this perhaps tells as much about me as about his followers.) Here is the question though I would like to be able to answer: What is LaRouche's appeal to the young academics in his group who could pursue careers in economics, chemistry, political science, art history, or physics? No doubt it lies in the fact that he is himself highly intellectual and can talk to them in the difficult language games they have been trained to play. If one looks into his recent book, *Basic Economics for Conservative Democrats*, one finds there quite brilliant formulations about "capital formation" and "energy density" and, on the question of nuclear energy, for example, he advances arguments disposing of the claims made by Barry Commoner and Ralph Nader, which show in the clearest way what is self-serving and fallacious in their positions. Certainly no other candidate for president—and I include John Anderson—would be capable of analyzing intellectual-political problems with that much assurance and verve.

All the same, there is still much to be explained, for LaRouche does not have a general theory founding the political activity he instigates, and one would expect intellectually trained people, especially since Marxism was taken up by the
intellectuals—and this happened a good many years ago—to insist on a founding theory of some kind. And LaRouche, as far as I can see, has none. Though he comes from the Trotskyist movement, which he left in 1960, LaRouche does not base himself on a Marxist analysis of capitalism, or of its present stage, or even on those reformulations of Marxism we find in Critical Theory, or in the humanist versions of Marxism that have come from Eastern Europe. LaRouche has no theory, but he does have ideas, and he makes judgments of a violence that would, in fact, only be justified if based upon some theory. These violent judgments do seem to stimulate his disciples.

Once again, Why do people follow him? Here, I think, we have to take a look at recent history. The New Left, which so dominated our political scene during the Vietnam War years, left as its legacy the notion that in the struggle against the villains of our time—the New Left's villains were, first of all, Johnson and Humphrey, and afterward Nixon and Kissinger—no theory was necessary. (If these men were indeed villains, then the reasons for fighting them were perfectly clear, and where was the need for a justifying theory?) And the rather talented Regis Debray told us, too, that theory was quite unnecessary; he pointed to Castro in the Sierra Maestra, reduced to some twelve followers and with no theory to explain his failure at that point. And still without a theory, Fidel went on to success in Havana. Now LaRouche and his followers are in their own way guerrillas. But I think of them as guerrillas in quite a special sense of the term. I think they believe that by uncorrelated, but highly aggressive, verbal attacks on whoever is politically conspicuous at the moment—it might be Jane Fonda or Ted Kennedy, Begin or President Carter—they can increase the number of their followers and add to their political clout.

Once again about their appeal to the young: membership in the LaRouche group affords the young intellectuals a chance to show their mental superiority to representatives of the regular parties. In the various local elections held throughout the country, the LaRouche group put up candidates for mayor, senator, governor, and the positions open on the various school boards. And generally speaking the LaRouche candidates for these positions exhibit over the television screens, which are thus available to them, a superiority to the candidates of the established parties similar to the superiority LaRouche himself has shown over the Democratic and Republican candidates for the presidency. There is great cunning in this use of the young and talented by Mr. LaRouche, and it has served to staff his ranks with ingenious, intellectually lively, and well-informed partisans of his strange positions.
Trotskyists. How could people with that background have come all the way around to what has been called by Mr. Dennis King in Our Town a "neo-Nazi" outlook? Here I am struck by a historical analogy. In the middle of the 18th century, Jacob Frank brought his Eastern European (mainly Polish) Jewish followers into the Catholic Church and, what is more, persuaded them to offer testimony in support of the atrocious blood libel against Jews that the Jewish communities of the period found so threatening. Now Gershom Scholem explains Jacob Frank as a mixture of messianic yearnings and the will to power. Both of these elements, to be sure, are evident in La Rouche. But there is something else to support the comparison. The crisis in Jewish life that made a leader like Jacob Frank possible in the 18th century came from the torment of the Diaspora, the long exile, rendered especially acute by the expulsion in 1492 of the Jews from Spain. Now there are many today who feel themselves part of a new Diaspora, a Diaspora from the idea of socialism, if not from the ideals it was supposed to realize, and members of this Diaspora very well may find something attractive in the positions of La Rouche. In a situation of crisis, people want a leader who can (1) enlighten them and (2) is ready to do so. I separate the two traits, for some of our prominent political figures, perhaps the best of them, have the second capability but seem to be lacking in the first. For instance John Anderson, who has attracted the youth and the intellectuals—he is the first Republican to do so in my memory—has caught the fancy of so many people, I think, because of the fact that he so clearly has the second trait I spoke of. He really wants to explain things to us, the economy and how we are to again attain some control of it, and he is precise and careful in all his statements about it. And in this carefulness and precision he makes people feel that he does really want to bring some clarity into the discussion of the issues, something no one can feel about Senator Kennedy, who polemizes every issue that he deals with, and in any case seems incapable of explaining simple matters, let alone complicated ones. As for President Carter, no one would ever accuse him of having the passion to explain anything. By now we have all come to suspect, or ought to suspect, that even if he did come to understand some problem, and were able to clarify us on it, he would only do so if there were some political advantage to be gained by this, and a momentary advantage at that. Mr. John Anderson we believe would explain any problem he clearly understood, no matter what the political consequences, and this has made many people love him. But there are definite limits to John Anderson's understanding, especially in foreign affairs. He has not convinced this observer, at least, that he has understood what has happened in Iran, why the Soviet armies are in Afghanistan, the extent of Soviet penetration into Africa and Asia, the Soviet use of a vassal like Fidel Castro, and any number of pertinent problems affecting our relations with the rest of the world. If John Anderson did understand these matters, I am sure he would be glad to enlighten us about them; but he seems to have an insensitiveness to problems that arise beyond our nation's borders.

La Rouche has no such intellectual limitedness. He is alert to political and economic developments in all parts of the globe, and he knows Asian as well as European history. I think he is excellently equipped to clarify a great many matters of concern to all of us, and his ability to do this I take to be one reason for his standing as a leader. But the second trait essential to a political leader—at least in a democratic society—the desire to explain and clarify, I find him completely lacking in. He gives no explanation whatever for his most extravagant assertions, and his clear rhetoric never really resolves any question. He intriguies us, stimulates us, but always ends with judgments at times beyond our comprehension, and for which he gives no evidence. For example, How might we end inflation? By going back to the gold standard, La Rouche tells us. Others have advocated this course, and indicated that it could be of benefit to the economy, but no one has made the claims for going back on the gold standard that Mr. La Rouche makes. He tells us that once we're on the gold standard, inflation will disappear, unemployment cease, the prime rate of interest come down, and the whole economy of the country revert to the state it enjoyed during the Eisenhower regime. How could all this result from our going back on the gold standard?

L et us take another matter. One of Mr. La Rouche's favorite whipping boys is Henry Kissinger, whom he accuses of being an agent of the British. Now why should Mr. Kissinger have become an agent of the British? To what end, other than to enable Mr. La Rouche to call him that? If Henry Kissinger is indeed an agent of British policy in the United States, there would have to be some reason for this, a sufficient reason, as Leibnitz put it—Leibnitz is one of the heroes of the La Roucheists, who have even referred to him as the last fully potent intellectual—but on this point Mr. La Rouche is altogether insufficient. He gives no
reason for the policy of subservience to Britain, which he claims Mr. Kissinger took up and still perseveres in. LaRouche claims also that Menahem Begin, the prime minister of Israel, is an agent of the British. What is more, the PLO terrorists, who have attacked women and children in Israel, are also, LaRouche claims, agents of the British. And to cap all these monstrous and undocumented assertions, he asserts as well that the Ayatollah Khomeini, who seems so full of hatred for Israel and for the West, worked with Israeli intelligence agents to overthrow the Shah.

I think it can be said fairly that while Mr. LaRouche wants to show us his own lucidity, he has no wish to contribute to ours. Why should he want us to be lucid? When we examine what he has to say on important matters, we find him to be an unconscionable distorter of fact. Such distortion is regularly relied on by the group. For LaRouche seems to have borrowed the Nazi method of falsification, together with the Nazi attack on the activities of the Jews. "The B'nai B'rith," he writes, "... was established in the United States in 1843 as a principal arm of British Secret Intelligence, then working to destroy the United States from within, as part of the operation culminating in the U.S. Civil War of the 1860's." Thus Jewish political activity in this country is related by him to efforts to destroy us in the interests of the British. LaRouche goes on:

All of the so-called Zionist organizations in the United States and Canada are offshoots of the B'nai B'rith, which has been continuously, since its founding, a special political-intelligence arm of London-centered financial interests linked commonly to the Montefiores and the Rothchilds. It was the American Jesuits and the B'nai B'rith which founded the racist, terrorist organization, the Ku Klux Klan, in 1867; it is the B'nai B'rith which has been repeatedly discovered to exert top-down control within Klan organizations to the present date.

Having noted that the Klan is racist and terrorist, LaRouche totally obscures the fact that it was, and is, anti-Semitic and anti-Catholic. Why should Jews and Jesuits have been interested in creating an organization that used violence against them? What reason would have been sufficient to persuade them that anything like that was in their interest? On this point, Mr. LaRouche, the admirer of Leibnitz, is discreetly silent.

A scholar of my acquaintance once pointed out in conversation the different methods employed by Spengler and Toynbee in dealing with facts that did not fit their theories. Spengler, he said, goose-stepped over them; Toynbee squeezed them gently but firmly, until they fitted his hypotheses. In addition to his outright lying, both these methods are employed by LaRouche. Evidently he has a great distaste for the British—he even goes so far as to call the physics of Newton and Maxwell "incompetent" (which is not so unlike the Nazi rejection of Einstein's physics as "Jewish").

Yet, LaRouche is not unready to follow the empiricist Toynbee's way of dealing with recalcitrant facts. But first let us watch LaRouche striding across facts à la Spengler. Hitler, he tells us, "... was originally a creation of the right wing of British intelligence. ..." Having established (to his satisfaction) the British responsibility for Hitler, he then says: "Beginning in 1939, certain problems intruded in the relationship between the Hitler regime and its British patrons. ..." What problems? we may ask. The problems, to be sure, occasioned by Hitler's pact with Stalin, whose responsibility for the War in 1939, LaRouche, aiming at British responsibility, wants to ignore: and here is Mr. LaRouche, like Toynbee, gently but firmly putting pressure on the facts. That Khomeini, he tells us, like his father before him, "... is an agent of the British SIS, does not, of course, signify that [he] ... considers himself in his own mind 'merely' a tool of the British SIS." Here LaRouche concedes that Khomeini may actually not consider himself to be a tool of British policy. He may even imagine himself to have thought up his own goals! To be sure, there is not a scrap of evidence to indicate that Khomeini was a creation of the British. There was not even a rumor to this effect. There is a rumor, though, that in the '50s he worked for the KGB. In any case, while Mr. LaRouche concedes a certain independence to Hitler and to Khomeini, he makes no such concession to the Jews. They are commonly seen by him to be agents of British policy, even though it was the Jews in Palestine who put an end to Britain's role of empire there.

Sometimes LaRouche writes as if the agents of British policy in the United States—generally Jewish intellectuals like Walter Lippmann or Henry Kissinger—were actually recruited by the British for this purpose. But there are times when he suggests that they became agents of the British in a different sense, i.e., they adopted a way of thinking that is peculiar to the British. What is this way of thinking? Possibly he means empiricism. And this can be called British, though as Professor MacIntyre has pointed out, it cannot be called English, for Berkeley, who was Irish, and Hume, who was a Scot, made the greatest contributions to this mode of thought. Against the British way of thinking, LaRouche counterposes what he calls neo-Platonism, from which, according to him,
comes all that is acceptable in Marx and Lenin. Probably he means here the readiness to accept intellectual constructions without any evidence for them, constructions of a kind Anglo-American thinkers find objectionable. In any case, LaRouche sometimes writes as if the British had managed to suborn American Jewish intellectuals into serving their purposes, and sometimes as if the British way of thinking, like the God of Malebranche’s occasionalism, managed to enter creatively into the thoughts of persons who were not British, but determined by British thought, worked for British purposes. Believe it or not, this is what he thinks went into the formation of the Ku Klux Klan.

LaRouche and his followers want power. The question is: How do they propose to get it? The LaRouche group is not, and does not plan to be, the elite center of a mass movement, as were other authoritarian political tendencies of the right and the left of this century. Nor do they propose to get power by the vote, even though they put up candidates in local and national elections. Moreover, LaRouche himself is scornful of democracy and of democratic processes. He does not want to be too explicit on this point, for he was a candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination. Yet these are his opinions of “democracy” and “democrats” as expressed in his recent book, *Will the Soviets Rule During the 1980’s?*

... “democracy” alienates the individual from efficient consciousness of those policies and policy issues which bear directly on the well-being of society as a whole. The “democrat” is concerned only with his slice of the total pie, not whether the pie is increasing or shrinking. The “democrat” is an anti-social, destructive person in principle. ... He is obsessively blind to the fact that what affects society as a whole in an adverse way must ultimately be destructive to his own true interests.

No totalitarian to my knowledge has better expressed what is after all the standard totalitarian attack on the weakness of democratic politics. LaRouche has, of course, the right to associate Lenin with his own antidemocratic concepts. Whether he has the right to do this with Marx, too, is much less certain, but in any case here is his judgment of Marx and of Marx’s “scientific socialism”: “Marx established the practice—which he termed ‘scientific socialism’—through which socialism was saved, in large part, from the fascist-like gutter-life of a ‘democratic,’ neo-Jacobin rabble.” That a man who could write in this vein could also be a candidate for president on the Democratic party ticket tells us something about the inconsequence and oddness of political rules today. If some Democratic party leaders think that because LaRouche uses the word fascist pejoratively at times, he cannot be pursuing purposes of a fascist sort, I suggest they look into Ignazio Silone’s *The School for Dictators*, in which the Italian socialist, as far back as 1938, predicted that fascism could come to power in America in the form of antifascism.

My question remains, if not by setting the masses in motion, and if not by gaining a victory at the polls, on what does LaRouche count to arrive at power? I take it from his book, *Will the Soviets Rule During the 1980’s?*, that he looks forward in the next few years to a violent confrontation of the United States with the U.S.S.R. bringing with it the threat of thermonuclear war. In this situation, LaRouche and his followers are prepared to come forward with proposals to end the crisis, and arrange a durable truce with the Soviet government. To be entrusted with any such proposals by the monied interests of the United States and those who manage its fortunes, LaRouche and his followers would have to have shown they believe in an identity of interest between the economy administered by the rulers of Russia and that of American capitalism. Now the very expensive monthly, *Executive Intelligence Review* (priced at $10 per copy) gotten out by the LaRouchists and distributed to the top executive offices of our financiers and industrialists, is directed precisely to convincing our leading capitalists that capitalism, as LaRouche understands it, is still historically progressive, that Marx and Lenin were mistaken insofar as they thought capitalism was necessarily a brake on productivity, and finally, that there was a line in Lenin’s thinking with which American capitalists could solidarize themselves, seeing that according to this line of thought, war between the United States and the Soviets is not inevitable, nor is victory of one system over the other required by either.

LaRouche has a model for his proposed U.S.-Soviet agreement in the interest of peace between the two powers: the Soviet-German Treaty of Rapallo, signed by Chicherin and Rathenau in 1922. This treaty provided the Germans with the opportunity to experiment with prototypes of new military weapons on Russian soil, something prohibited on German soil by the Versailles treaty. In return for this, the Red Army received from the Wehrmacht the weapons it tried out: these remained in Russian hands. Let us ask now how this Rapallo agreement could apply to American-Soviet relations during the ‘80s.
Note first of all that Germany signed the Rapallo agreement with the Soviet Union in order to escape from the constraints of the Treaty of Versailles, which finalized the military defeat of the German empire in the First World War. Now the United States was, with the Soviet Union, one of the victors in the Second World War, and there is no Versailles Treaty limiting us economically or militarily. What need would we have for a new arrangement with the Soviets modeled on the Rapallo treaty?

Here we must take another look backward. At the outset of the cold war, Beuve-Méry, a founder and editor of the famous French daily Le Monde, published a front-page article that has been decisive for American and French opinion ever since. He called in his piece for a planned political retreat by the Western powers, noting that the political attacks by the West on communism had not served the West well. Neither the Cordon Sainitare of the French Third Republic nor the Drang nach Osten of Hitler had been profitable to the West. Both had resulted in the continued advance of communism.

The new doctrine of planned retreat became the official doctrine of all Western states, including the United States, that is, except for periods of recalcitrance—as in the Cuban missile crisis, which alienated European opinion, and in the Vietnam War, during which we alienated world opinion. But the doctrine of planned retreat, supported by Walter Lippman in 1950, has become American majority opinion. It was the basis of Kissinger’s diplomatic operations, and has by now even convinced George Kennan, who today argues against his own prior held doctrine of containment.

I want to make just one point against this officially held doctrine. Since the term retreat is based on military theorizing, I think it not unfair to note that retreat, according to the best military thought, is the most difficult operation to bring off successfully. Orderly retreat requires the greatest discipline of an army so engaged and, if disorderly, can very easily become a rout. We saw such a rout develop in Vietnam when the armies of General Thieu, which had done fairly well up to that point, tried to retreat from advanced positions, and in the disorder that followed were demolished. Can we apply this notion politically? Can we say that the political retreat of the United States before the advance of Communist power is now threatening to become a rout?

It is on the expectation that some such rout is imminent that LaRouche believes he can attain political importance. A politically defeated United States might sign a new agreement with the Soviet Union, perhaps modeled on the treaty of Rapallo; we would guarantee the Russians, for instance, the computers and the grain they want and also American neutrality in the event of a Soviet attack on China; in return for these concessions, we might avoid war.

Note that the foreign-policy positions held by LaRouche tally point for point with Soviet views. Both the LaRouchists and the Russians are pro-Arab, anti-Chinese, and anti-Zionist to the point of anti-Semitism. Now I will not say that the Soviet Union is especially anti-British, and LaRouche is, but the historical model for close relations between an American leader and a Russian Communist party chief may have been set at Teheran and Yalta, where we saw the Democratic party leader, President Roosevelt, joining with Stalin in attacks against Winston Churchill, whom Roosevelt charged with “imperialism.” So there is a historical basis for LaRouche’s attack on the British, though the manner in which he has carried out that attack is irrational in the extreme.

Assuming I am right about their expectations, what are the chances of success for LaRouche and his followers? Their hopes are based on this prediction: American policies are certain to fail. So now we must ask: What are the chances of failure for this country during the ’80s? Here, while not wanting to be pessimistic, it is difficult not to be. Look at the facts. We are paying out some $90 billion a year to the Arab countries for petroleum, and we shall pay out much more than that during the next five years. No rational energy policies have yet been presented to the American people. The proposed policy of conservation, which would cut our consumption of oil, involves, first of all, a major change in the American way of life, something immensely difficult to achieve without the use of force; and it would decrease American productivity. This at a time when the people are demanding more services and jobs. Militarily, our defenses are down. We are being outspent—and outmatched—by the Russians, in conventional forces, and also in nuclear weapons. We no longer have a civilian army, and no political figure on the horizon seems able to get the young men of this country to make ready to defend it. We cannot have both guns and butter, as President Johnson once said we could, and those who insist that what we most need is more butter are conceding to the Russians the greater number of guns. Our so-called allies have not stood with us in the Iranian and Afghanistan crises. Of the 150-odd nations that make up the United Nations organization, only some 17, according to Andrew Young, can be
counted on now to support American policies. I will not say that our retreat before the Communist push has yet become a rout. It is threatening, though, to become one.

So LaRouche and his followers have some prospects. And the lack of any foundation for LaRouche's politics in some theory of political economy is not, I think, a real obstacle to the development of his movement. And one other thing LaRouche has going for him. He is sensitive to the atmosphere of this epoch, to all in it that we probably cannot deal with rationally. This is a time, not of assassins—though there are plenty of such around—but of grim scandals, of odd forms of violence (violence is losing its capacity to thrill us, and now has to be accompanied by oddness to affect us). Not only do murders multiply, we hear also of forced famines, deportations, beheadings, flagellated corpses. And in the moral depression that these accumulated horrors cannot fail to occasion, the oddball accusations and violent rhetoric of LaRouche and his followers will seem to many entirely appropriate. How many of LaRouche's people really think Kissinger an agent of the British (mind you, at one time, of the British Labour party), that David Hume was a creature of the British Intelligence service, Ernest Nagel a tool of the CIA, that the Reverend Jesse Jackson is a "poverty pimp"? These accusations are, of course, not believed. They are not really disbelieved either; they are enjoyed. And that is their value to LaRouche. They are enjoyed, like the pornography that surrounds us, and to which the notions of the true and the false do not apply either, for it is intended to take us into an atmosphere where notions of that sort are just irrelevant.

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