Life without LaRouche

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On January 28 political extremist Lyndon H. LaRouche Jr. was sentenced to 15 years in prison for mail fraud and tax evasion. Since 1983, LaRouche’s group had solicited millions in loans from private individuals (many of them the “elderly female retirees” of bilking lore) whom, it was shown in U.S. District Court in Alexandria, Va., LaRouche never intended to repay. LaRouche had not filed a tax return since the early ’70s, claiming he owed no taxes because he received no salary, only “expenses.” These were paid by companies LaRouche owned. Along with all of life’s necessities, they included extras such as a 200-acre Leesburg, Va., estate and (to those of us who pay $15 a pop, this one really rankles) LaRouche’s nifty, salon-style haircut.

It’s clear what all this means for LaRouche, who is now in Alexandria City Jail awaiting transfer to a federal prison. Bowl trims. And for a while at least, no more presidential
bids. But the question of note to all U.S. airport patrons is: Will those bug-eyed LaRouche people still be around, explaining how Kissinger, the Pope, the Queen of England, and the International Swiss Drug Cartel are using "attack mosquitos" to spread the AIDS epidemic worldwide? Probably. LaRouchians are a resilient bunch who thrive on societal disfavor. As John Mintz put it in a 1987 Washington Post article, "LaRouche’s followers denounce every critic—prosecutors, politicians, people at the airport who disagree with them—as cretins, communists, traitors or homosexuals... They think LaRouche is the planet’s only chance for survival—and people must be crazed not to accept him." At the Alexandria trial, former LaRuchian Charles Tate described how LaRouche’s fund-raising chief, William Wertz, would psyche up telephone solicitors with zesty readings of poems by Gen. George Patton.

IN SHORT, LaRouchians aren’t the kind of people to throw up their hands and say, “Fair enough, fed. You win.” On sentencing day in Alexandria, a lively support crew was on hand with signs explaining that LaRouche is being set up for assassination by the Justice Department. There was also a makeshift a cappella choir singing 19th-century Germanic songs, battle hymns and civil-rights anthems. When I called LaRouche spokeswoman Dana Scanlon, she promised a worldwide outburst of such protests. "It’s already started! I just got off the phone with someone in Germany. A man in Bonn has chained himself to the gates of the Münsterplatz. His name is Andreas... Ranke... Heinemann. He’s the grandson of..." This went on for a minute. Trying to bait her, I asked if the group expects lean fund-raising times now that its fihrer is a jailbird and the government is suing for some of the cash he stole from little old ladies.

With a sort of why-dwell-on-downers sigh, she said, "Hey, if I sat around worrying about things like that, I just wouldn’t get a whole lot done."

Fine, LaRouchians. I have just one request. As long as you’re not going away yet, please husband your resources carefully. If the pinch is felt, cut back on your publications (there are many overlapping LaRouche newspapers and magazines), and don’t underfund one of Washington’s great institutions: The LaRouchian “Human Rights Violations” press conferences. These, always conducted by LaRouche subalterns, usually deal (better make that dealt—chillingly, there hasn’t been one since LaRouche’s December 17 conviction) with the government’s “Human Rights Violations” of you-know-who. Scanlon says no such meetings are “scheduled at this time.” That’s too bad, because if these disappear it means the loss of one of journalism’s most savory experiences: a press conference, with all the trimmings, at which one is almost certain to be the only reporter present. Luckily, before it was too late, I attended the group’s December 14 event at the National Press Building.

It’s cheap to dwell on the contrast between LaRouchians as billed (in his autobiography, LaRouche describes them as “golden souls” destined to save the world for us “poor sheep”) and LaRouchians up close and personal. But they force my hand. As I waited for an elevator in the NPB lobby, that morning’s honchos marched glumly in, displaying all the unmistakable style clues: the fish-belly skin tone, the dark eye circles, and the sports jackets that hang as gently as formica sandwich boards. That I expected. What I didn’t expect was that two of the golden souls (tall, burly guys) would gang up on the third golden soul (a little, skinny guy) in a way usually seen only in junior high gym class.

You know the dynamic. The skinny guy was last to get on the elevator, so Hefty Guy 1 pushed the CLOSE DOOR button just in time to give him a "torso compactor," then said, "Oh! Sorry." As the elevator lurched into motion, Skinny regained his composure, hitched his pants, sniffed à la Barney Fife, and stepped over to a posting of upcoming National Press Club lunch speakers. "Welllll," he exhaled, "let’s see if they have anybody... of interest." The other two rolled their eyes. "Nnn-nope." The elevator stopped on floor 12. We were heading for 13, but Skinny erred and strode out resolutely. The Hefties (charitably, I must admit) called him back, but he waved them off, pretending to have "business" on the floor. The Hefties grinned steadily until we got out on 13, and the three of us walked in silence (in keeping with my sheep status, I was not acknowledged) to the designated conference room.

I TOOK ONE of many, many available seats. (For a while I was the entire audience, but a LaRouche photographer and another observer later showed up.) For the next five minutes the two now-all-business Hefties worried over water jugs and papers. Skinny returned from his hike and got a prompt knuckle rap. "Has this man signed the sign-up sheet? NO! Well get it!" He did, I signed in, Skinny took his seat and announced, "So! Without further ado I guess we should..." But the Hefties gunned him down ("We’ll wait for late arrivals") and five agonizing minutes of silence oozed by. Then the Hefties, addressing spaces over my head all the while, served the meat of the press conference: A Chicago convention of Food for Peace (this is a LaRouche farmer-recruitment organization that operates mainly in the Midwest) had issued a resolution the previous weekend to stop the KGB-Justice Department frame-up of LaRouche, “the third Socrates.” After this there was a discussion of Food for Peace’s policy, which sounded like a standard call for increased global food production until Hefty 1 summed up: "Once again, our position is this: There has to be a rapid increase in worldwide food production—and anybody who tells you otherwise is a liar and a murderer.”

After that I tuned out until the big moment at press conference’s end, when Hefty 1 cleared his throat, surveyed the room and said, “We are now prepared to take your questions.” I sportingly asked, “What documentation do you have to prove the KGB-slash-DOJ murder plot?” The convincing answer: "Oohh, ho ho! We’re sure all right.”

On my way out I discovered that a fourth LaRouche had arrived and set up a long table that was groaning under a load of LaRouche books and publications. Pointing at a
Among the anti-Semites in Japan.

DAVID AND GODZILLA

"THE JEWS own all the 'seven sisters.' They control agriculture in America and the international precious metals market. Both George Bush and Michael Du- kakis are related to Jews."

Those words were spoken last September by Masaaki Nakayama, then Japan’s Posts and Telecommunications minister and still, believe it or not, the best Japanese friend that Israel and the Jews have. Nakayama, one of the country’s most powerful political players, serves as secretary-general of the Japan-Israel Parliamentary Friendship Association. He explains: "I am trying to educate my fellow Japanese that even though there is only one Israel against 22 Arab nations, if you bash Israel, you are actually bashing 14.5 million Jews all over the world."

Most Japanese have never met a Jew (there are only 150 Jewish families in Japan), they don’t know what one is, and for the most part, they don’t care. But in recent Japanese books, many of them best sellers, Jews have been held responsible for the rising value of the yen, trade disputes, Japan-bashing, the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, even AIDS. Fundamentally, today’s Jewish-book boom has less to do with profound anti-Semitism than with a deep-seated Japanese xenophobia and Japan’s current financial ills. But it coincides with continuing support by most of Japanese officialsdom for the Arab economic boycott of Israel and with continuing avoidance of even the most cursory political connections to Israel. Most major Japanese companies still refuse outright to do business with Israel, a result of a perceived dependency on Arab oil and of threats from Arab nations that any company trading with Israel cannot also deal in the Arab market. Now that Jews in America and elsewhere have put two and two together, Japanese officials are doing what they always do when facing a crisis: staging an elaborate public relations program designed to tell their critics whatever they want to hear.

A look at the cyclical history of anti-Semitism in Japan attests to its weak hold on the national character. During the 1930s, amid a militaristic backlash against all things Western, a particularly vicious cycle of anti-Semitism saw the Jews blamed for diluting Japan’s spiritual ideals. But although one of the wartime Axis powers, Japan did not subscribe to Hitler’s anti-Jewish doctrines. In the summer of 1940, Senpo Sugihara, the Japanese consul in Kovno, Lithuania, issued at great personal risk more than 5,000 transit visas to Jews fleeing oncoming Nazi troops. Less altruistically, the Japanese also initiated a pre-war project called the Fugu plan to develop a Jewish community in Japanese-controlled Manchuria as a buffer against the Soviet Union. Although the plan fell through, 20,000 to 30,000 European Jews did manage to find safe haven in Japan and 99 percent of them survived the war.

The latest anti-Semitic wave to hit Japan broke in early 1986, when the Japanese economy was just beginning to reel under the impact of an appreciating yen. An obscure Japanese author and self-proclaimed Christian minister, Masami Uno, released the first of three best-selling books claiming that an international Jewish conspiracy was secretly plotting the destruction of the Japanese economy en route to the Jews’ stated goal of world domination. (These books—all ghostwritten for Uno by an equally obscure Tokyo editor, Teruo Takahashi—together have sold more than 1.5 million copies.) At the center of the conspiracy, Uno explained, were four great “Jewish” families—the Mellons, Rockefeller, Du Ponts and Morgans. He also blames other famous Jews, like former Saudi Arabian Oil Minister Sheikh Ahmed Zaki Yamani: Uno says he realizes that the Mellons, Rockefellers and the sheikh are not Jewish, but feels such misinformation is essential to convey a higher truth—the imminent danger facing his country. Lacking much first-hand information, the Japanese have read his books and believed them. Other writers have jumped on the bandwagon.

Cheaply bound and inexpensive by Japanese standards, more than 80 books about Jews are now available in Tokyo bookstores. Not all the books, of course, deal with Jewish conspiracy theories. But those that do typically characterize the Jews as being organized, shrewd, powerful, and able to manipulate international political and economic forces for their own gain. In effect, the Japanese have accused the Jews of beating them at their own game. For that reason, the Japanese do not see the books as inherently anti-Semitic, and among their most eager buyers have been middle- and high-ranking company employees. Den Fujita, the dynamic president of the McDonald’s hamburger chain in Japan, proudly calls himself the “Jew of Ginza.” In his book, Jewish Business Methods: Controlling the Economy of the World, Fujita explains how Japan “is being ravaged by a pack of Jews” and then concludes that his fellow Japanese should emulate Jewish business practices.

IN PART because of the influence of former Minister Nakayama and others of his ilk, and in part because of a series of visits by concerned Jewish leaders and politicians, Japan launched a public relations campaign about two years ago to curry goodwill with the American Jewish community. Japanese officials are worried that American Jewry will join hands with Capitol Hill’s Japan-bashers or, even worse, stop buying Japanese goods. A legion of Japanese diplomats, sporting Brooks Brothers suits and Ivy League degrees, has set out to convince American Jews that

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