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Bibliography


LAROUCHE, Lyndon Hermyle (1922– )

American maverick ex-Trotskyist, founder of the National Democratic Policy Committee, considered by many to be on the extreme right and by Congressman Fazio of California to be 'a threat to our democratic institutions'.

LaRouche was born in Rochester, NH, on 8 September 1922 into a Quaker family. He attended Northeastern University in Boston from 1940 but did not fare well academically and although he returned in 1946 he emerged without a degree. He served in the army between 1944 and 1946 and was briefly close to the Communist Party of the United States before joining the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party in January 1949. At this time and well into the early 1970s he seems to have been a sincere and ideologically pure Marxist. He was expelled from the SWP in 1966 and began to court the Students for a Democratic Society, a significant New Left organization whose extreme wing, the Maoist Progressive Labor party, LaRouche was particularly anxious to influence. LaRouche gained control of the SDS Labor Committee, an elitist hard core which eventually, in the wake of the SDS split, became known as the National Caucus of Labor Committees. His campaigns at this time were still distinctively left-wing with attacks in the Mid-West on international bankers but this combined with his increasingly fierce anti-communism and his belief that the Rockefellers were engineering a nuclear apocalypse tipped over into pure conspiracy theory. In 1973, as Dennis King has aptly described, he 'launched his followers on the most extraordinary odyssey in the history of American extremism: a journey to the farthest limits of the left and from thence, by circuitous paths, to the outermost reaches of the right'. A study of fascism had convinced him of the need for a more populist ideology and in the same year he began 'Operation Mop Up' designed to supplant the Communist Party on the extreme left by naked strong-arm tactics.

In his professional life he abandoned the L.H. LaRouche Research management consultancy in 1966, and in 1975 launched and edited the Executive Intelligence Review. This was the basis of what has been described as 'one of the best private intelligence services in the world'. As a militant anti-communist he stood as the presidential candidate for the NCLC-controlled US Labor Party in 1976. In 1979 the LaRouchians entered the Democratic Party and in 1980 he stood in the Democratic presidential primary election in New Hampshire, a year in which he also founded his National Democratic Policy Committee. In 1984 he stood for the presidency as an Independent Democrat with negligible success. His strategy has been to try to take over the Democratic Party by a policy of entryism designed to gain access to the system. His methods have been called Leninist involving a small elite inner cadre of dedicated activists attempting to manipulate a mass population. On 18 March 1986 the LaRouchians won a double victory in the Illinois Democratic primary elections when two of their nominees were selected as candidates for Lieutenant Governor and Secretary of State. LaRouche, who considers himself a conservative Democrat and employs an aggressive and belligerent oratorical style, set himself the task of replacing candidates for office in the Democratic Party with his own candidates, starting at the bottom with school boards and city councils, a level at which he had a certain success in the mid-1980s.

LaRouche has been the latest well-known representative of what Richard Hofstadter called the 'paranoid style in American politics'. 'History is nothing
but conspiracies', he has declared, and he has postulated the most bizarre and elaborate conspiracy in American history, one involving Henry Kissinger, 'an agent of the British'; Walter Mondale, a 'Soviet agent of influence'; Queen Elizabeth, who directs an international system of drug trafficking from Buckingham Palace; the Jews (B'nai B'rith is the 'special political-intelligence arm of London-centered financial interests commonly linked to the Montefiores and the Rothschilds'); and the hated British (Hitler was apparently 'a creation of the right-wing of British Intelligence'). Resurrecting a historic, populist Mid-West tradition of anti-British feeling (compare Mayor William Hale Thompson (1867-1944) of Chicago), he has argued that Britain runs Israel as a 'zombie state'. His foreign policy is built on the twin pillars of anti-Zionism and anti-communism. He has called for a return to the gold standard, supports the American nuclear industry, advocates low interest rates, and, as the cornerstone of his defence policy, invokes the need for MX missiles and a 'Star Wars' strategy. He became notorious in the late 1980s for his call to have victims of the AIDS virus quarantined, and for his advocacy of a military-style war on the international drug trade. In 1983 LaRouche moved into a heavily-guarded headquarters in Leesburg, Virginia, worth $1.3 million. From there he has been the instigator and the victim alike of copious litigation. In 1984 he brought a law suit for libel against NBC but was ordered to pay $3 million (later reduced to $200,000) damages in a counter-claim that he had interfered in legitimate news gathering. In 1986 the preliminary findings of a grand jury investigation suggested 'an extensive nationwide pattern' of credit-card fraud by LaRouche supporters, and LaRouche himself was sentenced on 7 January 1989 in Alexandria to 15 years imprisonment for conspiracy to commit mail fraud and eleven counts of actual mail fraud involving $294,000 in defaulted loans from his supporters. His conviction was still being challenged in October 1989.

LaRouche is exceptionally difficult to categorize and has been called everything from an 'American Whig' to an exemplar of 'American crankism and cultism' (Howe). Terry Michael, a Democrat Party official said of him: 'he isn't ultra right or ultra left. He's ultra crazy'. The conservative publisher, John Rees, believes that he has never really changed in his political orientation and has referred to a 'roast-beef Nazi: brown on the outside, red on the inside'. Dennis King, on the other hand, believes that his move from the extreme left to the extreme right is a genuine move towards fascism.

Bibliography


LEDESMA RAMOS, Ramiro (1905-36)

Spanish founder of the Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalistas and later a leading Falangist. Born in Alfaras (Zamora) on 23 May 1905, the son of a village school master, Ledesma worked in Madrid before graduating in 1926 from the Central University with a degree in philosophy and letters and in physical sciences. A philosophical disciple of Ortega y Gasset from whom he learnt his classicism, he later transferred his enthusiasm to Hegel and his organic view of the state and to the metaphysical existentialism of Martin Heidegger (q.v.). Employed in various temporary posts and finally as a postal clerk, he wrote for journals like Ortega's Revista de Occidente and Gimenez Caballero's (q.v.) La Gaceta Literaria. Among a whole gallery of literary and political influences were Nietzsche, Unamuno and later Sorel (q.v.). According to Southworth, Ledesma was the genius of the Spanish fascist movement who invented its most powerful slogans.

His first public profession of fascism was, perhaps, at the Gaceta Literaria banquet at the Café Rombo on 8 January 1930 when he coined the slogan 'Arriba los valores hispanicos' (Long live Hispanic values). Believing that communism was the enemy of both hierarchy and national revolution and foreseeing a political space for a new movement which would reject the outmoded dogmas of nineteenth-century thought, he launched in 1931 the first Spanish fascist movement around the journal La Conquista del Estado. On 3 October he was joined by Onesimo's (q.v.) group to form the Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista.

Appealing to few (with the notable exception of the Madrid taxi-drivers), the new movement opposed communism, lauded state power, affirmed Spanish values and culture, called for the expropriation of large estates, embraced social justice tempered with discipline and declared itself for imperial expansion and a syndicalist economy. Cold and reserved, Ledesma, who combed his hair in a deliberate imitation of the German National Socialist leader, was not

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