Chapter 5

The Travels of Lyndon LaRouche

Once we have begun the permanent colonization of Mars on a sound basis, as we might approximately forty years from now, the philosophical standpoint . . . reflected here, would be hegemonic for humanity.
—Lyndon LaRouche

The Early Days

One morning in late March 1946 Don Morrill was chipping paint off one of the forward hatches of the SS General Bradley. It was the last troop ship but one to leave India for the United States. Three young soldiers approached him. One of the men introduced himself as Lyndon LaRouche, from Lynn, Massachusetts, Morrill’s hometown. The four immediately fell into a political discussion. Morrill explained that he had been a supporter of Leon Trotsky prior to the war.

Morrill remembers LaRouche as a brilliant fellow who spoke French and German fluently. His parents, Morrill discovered, were prominent Quakers. He was an excellent chess player, taking on four tables simultaneously and winning. Morrill and LaRouche soon became close friends, spending their time talking politics. It was a heady time. Fascism had been defeated and millions around the globe had hopes of a new and better world emerging from the carnage of war. Morrill and LaRouche had witnessed the revolutionary turbulence of the peoples of the Indian subcontinent who were in the throes of casting off their imperial masters. They were not the only soldiers considering socialist ideas. By the time the boat reached the American shore, LaRouche was a Trotskyist.

Sometime in 1947 LaRouche joined the Lynn branch of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), the main American Trotskyist group, taking on the party name Lyn Marcus. The branch was composed primarily of workers
from the nearby General Electric plant. Morrill was an active union militant. LaRouche, however, displayed little interest in union affairs and divided his time with the nearby, larger Boston branch. By 1952 LaRouche had moved to New York City, where he found employment as a business consultant.\(^1\) Morrill lost touch with him.

Little is known of LaRouche’s activities between 1952 and 1961. This is probably because he preoccupied himself with his career, playing little role in the internal life of the SWP. By 1961 he was almost totally inactive in the party, was earning his living as an economic consultant for the shoe industry, and lived in a large apartment on Central Park West.\(^2\)

LaRouche was very much of a loner in those days, already immersed in his own intellectual pursuits, isolated in a party with strong working-class pretensions, which had little use for intellectuals of any kind and none for him. LaRouche looked then about the same as he does now; he was slightly thinner in the face, but already his hairline was receding and he wore glasses. He was in his early forties.

**Building the Fifth International**

In the summer of 1965, LaRouche launched a political struggle inside the SWP against the leadership. He was supported only by Carol Larrabee (who also used the names Schnitzer and White), with whom he was then living. He had already developed many of the basic ideas that flowered in his prosperous days as an independent leftist—ideas that he has adapted to his rightist politics.

In this period LaRouche lived with Larrabee in a small apartment crammed with books and documents in the West Village. LaRouche struck those who met him as extremely brilliant and exuded self-confidence. He was convinced he could master any subject and had thoroughly studied Marx’s *Capital*, Rosa Luxemburg’s *The Accumulation of Capital*, and Hegel’s *Logic*.

He drew an elitist view of the world from Lenin, particularly from his famous pamphlet *What Is to Be Done?* This he interpreted to mean that an intellectual layer, the “professional revolutionary,” had the key role to play in the process of social transformation of society. The task of this revolutionary cadre was to gain hegemony over the intellectually backward masses.

He borrowed from Gramsci his view of “hegemony.”\(^3\) He saw this as a twofold process: a struggle of competing intellectuals on the left for dominance, while the left seeks working-class leadership by defeating the “bourgeoisie’s” hegemony over the minds of workers. However, he did not accept Gramsci’s more equalitarian notion that the working class would develop its own leaders, “organic intellectuals.”
He was also influenced by Georg Lukács’ concept of “class consciousness,” particularly his emphasis on the active role of thought and therefore thinkers in the revolutionary process. Of course, he saw himself as the revolutionary thinker with a critical role to play in the hegemonic struggle to lead the masses to power.

Another element of his thinking was a deep belief in conspiracy theories. He believed that Nelson Rockefeller and associated liberal, internationalist-oriented capitalists were conspiring to corrupt black revolutionaries through antipoverty programs, while saving capitalism internationally through various aid schemes.

LaRouche left the SWP that year and joined a small Trotskyist group associated with Gerry Healy (see chapter 10), then called the American Committee for the Fourth International (ACFI). This brought him into contact with Healy when he came to Canada to meet with his American supporters. Healy was not impressed. Gurus generally find other gurus intolerable.

LaRouche stayed with ACFI for only six months and then moved on to another minute Trotskyist group, the Spartacist League. Unable to win this group over to “LaRouchism,” LaRouche and Larrabee left after a few months. He sent out a letter pompously announcing that all factions and sections of the Trotskyist Fourth International were dead and that he and Larrabee were going to build the Fifth International. In a way, this is what he has done.

LaRouche and SDS

The year was 1968 and the student strike at Columbia had been broken a few months earlier. There were around thirty students in the room, sitting on the floor. They surrounded a tall, stoop-shouldered man sporting a shaggy beard. It was Lyndon H. LaRouche Jr., and he was lecturing his followers, members of the National Caucus of Labor Committees (NCLC). At the time the group was an affiliate of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). LaRouche had gathered these students around him when he played a very active role in the recent student strike at Columbia.

The meeting started at three P.M. and went on for seven hours. It was difficult to tell where discussions of tactics left off and an educational presentation had begun. LaRouche encouraged the students and gave them esoteric assignments. One was assigned to search through the writings of George Sorel to discover the anarchistic origins of Mark Rudd, the future leader of the Weathermen. Another volunteered to study Rosa Luxemburg’s The Accumulation of Capital. Since SDS was strong on spirit and action but rather bereft of theory, LaRouche definitely filled a void.

We can see here the embryo of a social-political grouping which would,
in time, evolve into a political cult. The group was based upon this single intellectual leader. LaRouche had become a kind of intellectual and political guru and was training these students as his disciples. Yet the rational still dominated his thinking and that of the group, its structure was informal and its discipline minimal, and it was not without influence among broader New Left intellectual strata.

LaRouche trained his disciples to view themselves as a gifted elite, the only people on earth who fully grasped the nature of the epoch and who had the program that could solve all of society’s ills. “One must start with the recruitment and education of a revolutionary intelligentsia,” LaRouche wrote in 1970. “By necessity, rather than choice, the source of such cadres is mainly a minority of young intellectuals, such as student radicals, rather than working class, black militant layers, etc., themselves.” He expected these student recruits “to commit themselves to a total re-education and life of the most intensive study as well as activism.”

These members were trained to view themselves as an elite and to have a very low opinion of the “swinish” workers they had been self-appointed to lead.

Lyndon LaRouche developed a Marxist worldview in his early leftist NCLC days, which has stayed with him as he evolved into a rightist. LaRouche, basing himself on Marx, believed that the capitalist system needed to continuously expand in order to survive. Once capitalism reached its limits and could no longer grow, it would go into crisis and collapse. LaRouche also shared a modernist outlook with Marx. He believed progress in the form of the growth of the world’s productive forces was the central purpose of human activity.

Marx viewed capitalism as a passing phase in societal evolution. Thus capitalist crisis created the conditions for working-class revolution, which in turn would produce a socialist society. Under socialism the productive forces, no longer constricted by capitalist relations, would continue to develop. LaRouche developed a series of proposals aimed at what he viewed as the contradictions of capitalism.

He called this approach the “Theory of Reindustrialization.” Capitalism, he claimed, had entered a “third stage of imperialism” and desperately needed new opportunities for capital investment. The Vietnam War was being waged by the United States because it needed the country as a rice bowl to feed India. India, in turn, would be the next area of rapid capital accumulation. This led him to predict the imminent collapse of the system unless his advice was followed. Present leaders of capitalist nations stood as impediments to progress, while only LaRouche, and those who followed him, could prevent catastrophe.
He sent six members to her apartment, near Columbia University. She was held captive and forced to listen to Beethoven at high volume. LaRouche had a high regard for the composer (he was German, after all) and believed his music could deprogram “Manchurian candidates.” Weitzman was able to toss a note out her window. A passerby picked it up and alerted the cops. She was rescued but refused to press charges against her captors. The incident cannot help but bring to mind Irene Gorst’s experience in Gerry Healy’s Red House just two years later (see chapter 10).

The significance of the 1973–1974 period in the evolution of Lyndon LaRouche’s NCLC is not to be underestimated. Only his most unquestioning and devoted followers could possibly have survived the madness of their leader. Those capable of independent judgment and thought were effectively weeded out. The remaining members traveled with LaRouche from the extreme left to the extreme right without even being aware of the political distance involved. The membership of the NCLC had been transformed into cultists.

**Life in the LaRouche Cult**

Linda Ray, a former member of the LaRouche group, described a group lifestyle that parallels closely the lifestyles of religious cults:

Leaders exploited normal family tensions to separate LaRouche members from their parents, lovers and spouses. Two members of LaRouche’s elite convinced me that my father was laundering money for the drug trade. ... The LaRouche organization tried to control all aspects of my life. I was told which apartment to live in, when to buy a car, when to quit my job, what to read, what movies not to see, which music was o.k., how to ask my parents for $2,000 for dental work when I needed money to pay the rent, and when to split up with my boyfriend.

From 1974 on, the group became increasingly right wing. It abandoned recruitment efforts on the left and substituted Moonie and Hare Krishna-style solicitation at airports and bus terminals. Remarkably, the political transition was so gradual that most members did not even notice what was happening. Linda Ray herself, a 1960s radical who joined in 1974, hung on until 1981. The red, white, and blue replaced the red. Members were told that “Hamilton’s economic policies represented the same ideals of progress and industrialization in this country that Marx represented in Europe,” while Plato and Dante replaced the Marxist reading list. In 1980 members were instructed to vote for Reagan.

Members no longer had time to read, think, or even sleep. They were
working twelve-hour shifts and living on stipends of $100 or $125 a week, which were not always paid. “It seemed that we were constantly in a state of mobilization, our bodies filled with adrenaline, ready for fight or flight.” In 1981 some 300 to 600 people left the organization, including many, but not all, of the old leftists. Those that remained were committed cult members, completely under LaRouche’s control.  

The New American Fascism

LaRouche’s politics became extremely right wing though still populist. Consistent with his views on reindustrialization, he became a strong advocate of nuclear power as well as of Stars Wars technology. This permitted him to raise considerable funds from the industries devoted to those technologies. He became a bitter enemy of “entropists” such as environmentalists. Preaching imminent doom unless his policies were followed, he claimed that only he could save the nation.

Dennis King has documented in detail Lyndon LaRouche’s fascist and neo-Nazi connections. “In the early and middle 1980s LaRouche utilized SDI [the Strategic Defense Initiative, also called Star Wars] and beam weapons to draw together the scattered forces of European and American neofascism to defend Nazi war criminals and promote revanchism.” Berlet and Bellman have shown LaRouche’s connections with the Aryan Nations, while McLemee documented his relations with the extreme right anti-Semitic and proto-fascist Liberty Lobby.

He laced his program with a combination of anti-Semitism and conspiracy theories. For example, much of LaRouche’s venom has been directed against the British. The Rothschilds, according to this view, ran Great Britain, creating “the Zionist-British organism.” He is a Holocaust denier, and the New York State Supreme Court ruled it is “fair comment” to call LaRouche an anti-Semite. Rockefeller remained high up in LaRouche’s enemies list, while special hatred was directed against Rockefeller associate Henry Kissinger (who is Jewish). LaRoucheites sought out Kissinger and hounded him. Richard Lobenthal of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) characterized LaRouche’s NCLC as the “closest thing to an American fascist party that we’ve got.”

The power of LaRouche’s cultist hold on his followers is illustrated in the case of Ed and Nancy Spannaus, as well as Tony Papert, all three well-known young New Left activists in the 1960s, who have remained in the LaRouche group as his chief lieutenants. Just as impressive has been LaRouche’s ability to hold on to his Jewish followers, including his former companion Carol Larrabee, despite his blatant anti-Semitism.
LaRouche operated through a series of interlocking front organizations. For example, he organized the Fusion Energy Foundation, which received support from people in and around the nuclear energy and aerospace industry. He put out a journal called *Executive Intelligence Review*, claiming to operate a private intelligence service directed against terrorists and drug cartels.

The federal government under Ronald Reagan was hoodwinked. Top officials of the National Security Council (NSC) and the Central Intelligence Agency met with LaRouche in 1982 and 1983. He even had White House access.29

LaRouche entered the Democratic Party primary in New Hampshire in 1980. Jonathan Prestage, a reporter for the Manchester *Union-Leader*, asked LaRouche about his organization’s intelligence-gathering network. He was threatened by NCLC supporters. He wrote the article anyway. “Prestage said the day after the story ran, he awoke in his large old house in rural Barrington to find one of his cats dead on his back doorstep. In all, three cats were left dead on the doorstep over three days.”30

He infiltrated the Democratic Party again in 1986, setting up the National Democratic Policy Committee. His people actually won the primary slots in Illinois for lieutenant governor and secretary of state forcing the party’s candidate for governor, Adlai Stevenson III, to disassociate himself from them and contributing to the party’s losing the election.31 He has been a perennial candidate for president, using the United States Labor Party mantle. Other front groups include the Club of Life (which is antichoice on abortion), the Lafayette Foundation for the Arts and Sciences (which promotes LaRouche’s cultural tastes), and the Schiller Institute (which publishes LaRouche’s writings.) This method of operation closely parallels the methods used by New Alliance Party (chapter 7) and by Gino Perente’s NATLFED (chapter 12).

In the 1980s LaRouche launched the Proposition 64 initiative in California, which would have established restrictive public health policies regarding acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS). Proposition 64 was opposed by virtually all public health experts and public officials. It was rejected by a three to one margin by the voters. However, the measure did a lot of damage by causing a good deal of unnecessary fear among the population. In 1987 LaRouche wrote “that unless repeated mass screening and isolation of AIDS victims are undertaken, ‘other ways of reducing the number of carriers will become increasingly popular.’ Lynch-mobs, he says, ‘might be seen by later generations’ historians as the only political force which acted to save the human species from extinction. . . . [T]he only solution is either public health measures including isolation as necessary, or ‘accelerated deaths’ of carriers.”32
LaRouche quickly learned how to recruit the disoriented children of the wealthy and to separate them from their money. LaRouche’s most famous recruit is Lewis duPont Smith, a duPont heir to an estate worth millions. He gave $212,000 to LaRouche and moved to rural Virginia to be near the master. However, his family went to court; had him declared mentally ill; and put him on a $5,000 a month stipend, protecting the rest of his $10 million fortune.\footnote{Other large donations included $2 million from Charles Zimmerman, a retired Bethlehem Steel executive, and more than $1 million from Elizabeth Rose, another retiree. The \textit{Wall Street Journal} estimated in 1986 that LaRouche’s various groups were spending about $25 to $30 million a year.} LaRouche developed quite an empire, centered on a 172-acre estate in Leesburg, Virginia, which he purchased for $2 million. In 1986 between 250 and 500 people lived and worked at the complex, which included phone banks, offices, and a printing plant. The facility was guarded by armed men with walkie talkies twenty-four-hours a day.\footnote{The LaRouche empire reached its high point in 1986. However, LaRouche’s hunger for publicity brought him to the attention of the public and federal officials, while his phone bank operators, working to meet increasingly high quotas for funds, began making unauthorized withdrawals on credit card accounts.}

Outside the Boston federal courthouse, a photographer discreetly snaps pictures of certain persons entering the building. In the echoing halls, private security guards whisper into tiny two-way radios. Those entering the second-floor courtroom pass through the gleaming arch of an electronic metal detector. When the main defendant leaves the courtroom, husky bodyguards surround him as he is hustled into a car waiting in the basement parking garage.

So went opening day of the 1987 trial of LaRouche on credit card fraud and conspiracy to obstruct justice. While that proceeding ended in a mistrial, a later criminal trial in Virginia convicted him on charges of illegally soliciting unsecured loans, mail fraud, and tax code violations.\footnote{LaRouche entered a Federal penitentiary in 1989. After being paroled in 1994, he returned to Leesburg.}

The Colonization of Mars

In order to occupy himself while in Federal prison for defrauding old ladies, LaRouche wrote a short book, \textit{In Defense of Common Sense}. It is a rather strange book, typical of his current writings, that combines obscure geometric illustrations, a defense of Platonism, a eulogy to the seventeenth-century
astronomer Johannes Kepler, and denunciations of Kant and most philosophers since Plato with an essential restatement of LaRouche's modernist, Marx-derived worldview. "Scientific and technological progress," LaRouche stated, "reflects a quality of the human individual which sets mankind apart from, and above all other living creatures." Our very nature leads to "potential population-density."

LaRouche was totally opposed to any kind of "entropic" view which might suggest a limit upon the constant expansion of human technology and population. He coined the word "negentropic" for his advocacy of continued industrial and population growth. However, what do we do with all the technology, pollution, and people? No problem! "Once we have begun the permanent colonization of Mars on a sound basis, as we might approximately forty years from now, the philosophical standpoint in statecraft, which has been reflected here, would be hegemonic for humanity."38

While their leader was thinking deep thoughts in prison, his minions were far from inactive. In addition to the usual phone bank solicitations and airport tabling, the NCLC took what looked on the surface like a lurch to the left. They joined with other antiwar demonstrators to oppose the Gulf War in 1990 and 1991. The NCLC was by no means a lone voice from the right among the left-wing demonstrators. Pat Buchanan, the Populist Party, the Liberty Lobby, and related ultra-rightists and neofascists also joined in. Ultra-nationalism and neo-isolationism brought elements of the right into a "united front" with elements of the left.39

An Offer to President Clinton

Lyndon LaRouche has made a career out of predicting the collapse of the global economic system. Understandably he felt vindicated by the world economic troubles which occurred during 1998. He, of course, has felt no need to explain to his followers how this system has survived, and in fact prospered, over the past forty years despite ignoring LaRouchian nostrums. He simply raised the volume on his rhetoric. "The world is now in a crisis which is best compared to a world war," he stated. We are threatened with a "New Dark Age" and "headed toward Hell."40 "There is no economic catastrophe in all modern history," LaRouche wrote, "which compares with the global disaster which, unless prevented, will strike world-wide, within a period more likely countable in weeks, rather than months."41 There is only one solution: "We appeal to you, President Clinton, to appoint Lyndon LaRouche immediately as economic advisor to your administration."42

LaRouche's reasoning is of interest. He has developed a theoretical framework for contemporary fascism. LaRouche drew from Marx his modernist
We may never know with certainty what caused LaRouche’s transformation from a committed leftist for two-and-half decades into a virtual fascist or how he rationalized it. Our guess is—and it is only a guess—that he felt a deep bitterness toward the left because of its lack of appreciation of his brilliance. Convinced he deserved to be worshipped, he had to find a new group of parishioners.

LaRouche’s political evolution permits us to bring into focus those aspects of leftist ideology that lend themselves to rightist interpretation. Catastrophism is one such element. The extreme left and the extreme right share a common belief that the world economic and political system is on the verge of collapse. More significant is elitism. LaRouche was by no means alone in drawing from Lenin the concept of an intellectually elite professional cadre of revolutionaries, with an understanding of the world that is superior to that held by ordinary folk. This elite layer is destined for a special leadership mission in the revolutionary process. Inherent in this view is disdain for the majority of the population and therefore for the democratic process itself. The masses are to be manipulated and mobilized for their own good. LaRouche did not need to change anything in this outlook as he traveled from left to right.

Gathering an elite praetorian guard led to cultic practices that parallel the most extreme religious thought control groups. The LaRouche organization practiced ideological totalism, regimented its followers, had an authoritarian structure, and certainly believed that its members alone possessed the truth. LaRouche perfected methods for breaking the will of members, altering their sense of self. Paranoia clearly delineated the group’s boundary with the outside world. Adherents were separated from their families, driven to work extreme hours with little sleep, and maintained on little money. LaRouche’s core membership is rather small, perhaps no more than a thousand these days, yet he has been able to have influence far greater than this membership figure would suggest.

LaRouche’s millennialist vision, which inspires his members to conduct feverish activity and binds them to him, has political roots quite distinct from religious cults. Even in its current fascist form, the group’s beliefs have more in common with “Marxist-Leninism” than with the Bible. Yet the concept of a small cadre group that possesses the critical knowledge needed to save a world threatened with imminent collapse can drive political cult members as powerfully as a dream of a messiah descending from heaven.