

A year-long mobilization to free Lyndon LaRouche

by Patricia Salisbury

On Jan. 27, 1989, Lyndon LaRouche, who is viewed by many in Europe and the developing sector as the figure on the American political scene who represents the best traditions of the United States, was given a draconian 15-year prison sentence. The response was an immediate outpouring of incredulity and anger, which as the months have passed, has grown into a huge political movement that views the demand for freedom for LaRouche and six associates convicted along with him as the key issue of today's world politics.

This movement began to build with a Washington, D.C. demonstration sponsored by the Schiller Institute on Jan. 16, the day which commemorates the birthday and leadership of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. More than 4,000 people from 25 states of the U.S.A., as well as from Ibero-America, Western Europe, and the Captive Nations of Eastern Europe and China, marched through the nation's capital as it prepared for the inauguration of President George Bush. Arriving in buses, caravans, and tractorcades, they marched to demand economic and political justice, and justice for LaRouche and his associates.

In the call issued for the march, veteran civil rights leader Amelia Robinson, an associate of Dr. King, noted that although much has been gained since the first civil rights march held in Washington, D.C. in 1963, in the LaRouche case, "justice has been set aside, and these people's rights have been taken away from them." John McGee of New Jersey, one of the organizers who helped make Dr. King's birthday a national holiday, told the marchers, "Dr. Martin L. King is happy today. How do I know? I marched with him long before we came here, in 1963. Dr. King was one of God's messengers. Now, the Schiller Institute is the only organization keeping the dream alive, the only organization dealing with justice. We tell the President of the United States, grant this man LaRouche a pardon. Here is a man who, since 1978, has been telling us how to save our farms, telling us that we need to build rivers in Africa. Can you imagine what that would mean—transforming a desert into an oasis!"

Petitions demanding that President Reagan pardon LaRouche before leaving office, signed by more than 15,000 Americans, were presented to the White House on Jan. 18. March organizers pledged that if Reagan failed to grant the

pardon, the campaign for justice for LaRouche would continue under President Bush. The organizers made their intentions to continue the fight known by placing large ads in the *Washington Post* and the *Washington Times*.

This promise was kept throughout the year in actions by individuals, in meetings around the world, and in rallies and demonstrations.

International outrage

On Jan. 19, the International Martin Luther King Tribunal on Crimes Against Humanity held its first conference in Rome, Italy. The meeting, which was introduced by Helga Zepp-LaRouche, founder of the Schiller Institutes, gathered together persons from politics, religion, and the world of culture and education, to lay out in detail the nature of crimes—and the names of the criminals responsible for them—being committed across the globe. The work of the Rome conference was directed at placing on trial those criminals who have sought to eliminate LaRouche politically and physically from the political arena.

A few days after the Tribunal meeting in Rome, on Jan. 31, Andreas Ranke, the grandson of West Germany's first postwar President Gustav Heinemann and nephew of Poland's Cardinal Glemp, demonstrated the power of the individual to appeal to the conscience of the world. Ranke chained himself to a church entrance in Münster Square in downtown Bonn, the West German capital, in protest against LaRouche's imprisonment. Ranke told the press, "No one who believes in justice and the rule of law can tolerate this. Especially the history of Germany and the personal experience of my family, make it my duty not to remain silent, when a person whom I hold in esteem and know to be innocent, is a victim of political persecution."

Also among the first to speak out dramatically was Friedrich-August von der Heydte, a well-known German professor of constitutional and international law, who issued a statement pointing to the remarkable parallels between the political persecution of LaRouche and the infamous "Dreyfus Affair" in the 1890s in France, when for reasons of political expediency a Jewish captain in the French Army was framed up in an espionage case. Von der Heydte termed the circum-

stances of the trial of LaRouche “another painful reminder that the exploitation of the judicial system for the achievement of political ends, is unfortunately a method used repeatedly today in the West as well as in the East.”

On Jan. 27, members of the Ibero-American section of the Martin Luther King Tribunal took the fight for LaRouche’s release to South America, holding a rally at the residence of the U.S. ambassador to Peru, to demand “Justice for LaRouche.” They had marched earlier to the offices of the Papal Nuncio in Lima, to present him with a petition seeking intervention in the LaRouche case by Pope John Paul II. The day before, Peruvian Sen. Josmell Muñoz Córdova presided over the founding of the Peruvian chapter of the Martin Luther King Tribunal on Crimes Against Humanity, which has taken up a defense of LaRouche’s rights as part of its campaign to root out the institutions of genocide globally. Muñoz held a press conference in the Senate Jan. 27 to denounce the sentences against the LaRouche Seven as an “unprecedented violation of human rights in the United States.”

Ibero-American protest against the treatment of LaRouche was to be among the most powerful worldwide. By May, 100 members of the Brazilian Congress had signed an open letter to U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice William Rehnquist, requesting a fair trial for LaRouche. The letter was widely publicized in a series of full-page ads in major newspapers in Washington, D.C., and resulted in a vicious counterattack in the form of a nasty letter from the press attaché of the U.S. embassy, demanding that the congressmen withdraw their protest. Despite this, the Brazilian legislators stood firm, with one of their number, Virgildasio de Senna of the Social Democratic Party, taking the issue to a May 8 meeting of the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies.

Attempt to kill LaRouche in prison

World concern on the LaRouche case reached a new level when on Sept. 16, Warren Hamerman, the head of the National Democratic Policy Committee—the political action committee of the LaRouche wing of the Democratic party—issued a bulletin on the life-threatening mistreatment of LaRouche at the Rochester, Minnesota prison where he is incarcerated. The bulletin profiled a chronology of the events of Sept. 11-15, which placed LaRouche’s life in jeopardy during a surgical procedure. LaRouche, 67, was forced to work at heavy labor, on only a liquid diet, immediately before surgery, and was forced to return to a grueling work shift in the prison kitchen immediately after surgery. A fact sheet on the mistreatment, entitled “President Bush Shall Be Held Personally Responsible,” was placed as an ad in major East Coast newspapers and distributed nationally as a 1 million-run leaflet.

There was an immediate response from around the world. On Sept. 19, the newspaper *Crítica* of Panama ran a major story headlined, “In Prison, They Are Trying to Murder LaRouche.” The story was also covered by the Italian press

agency Anipe, *Siam Rath* in Thailand, the Paris weekly *La Presse*, the Peruvian weekly *Si*, and the London-based Arabic weekly *Ad Dastour*. Prominent international figures spoke out on what they saw as a threat to the life of LaRouche, directing statements of protest to President Bush.

So profound was the perception of injustice in the treatment of LaRouche that an unprecedented movement was mounted in the legal community internationally to join an *amicus curiae* brief which sought to overturn the LaRouche conviction. The brief was signed by over 800 U.S. attorneys and 45 Europeans, many of whom also lent their names to full-page ads in the major East Coast newspapers. Several international legal experts submitted *amicus* briefs of their own. Ramsey Clark, the former Attorney General of the United States, argued in federal appeals court in Richmond, Virginia on Oct. 6 for a reversal of the conviction of LaRouche and six associates, before a three-judge panel of the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals. “What was done in this trial,” he said, “was the heart of travesty.” At the conclusion of the slightly more than hour-long hearing, Clark said: “This case asks whether the American judicial system is capable of giving a fair trial in an extremely controversial situation. That’s always the test.” This concern was reflected by a large attendance from lawyers and law schools at the oral argument of the appeal, including eight international observers.

In the months following the appeal, the demand that LaRouche be freed has been taken up by larger and larger numbers. Many are those, like Chinese student leaders and those linked to the revolt against communist tyranny in Eastern Europe, who have looked to the United States for inspiration. Scores of these leaders came together with 700 participants at the third international conference of the Food for Peace organization in Chicago Nov. 4-5. One of the keynote speakers at the conference, Heng Cheng, who served as President of Cambodia from 1970-72, had sent a telegram of concern on the treatment of LaRouche to President Bush.

The sentiments of many of the participants at the conference were expressed by speaker George Vaughn, Democratic Majority Whip of the Oklahoma state legislature, who said that LaRouche was blessed by God with special talents of statecraft and is being denied the opportunity to use them to save the nation, because the government fears him.

With the coming of the Christmas season, supporters of LaRouche in the United States initiated a series of candlelight vigils to express their support for the revolutionary upsurges now ongoing around the world, and to demand justice and freedom for LaRouche and his associates. Beginning with a handful of vigils on Monday nights in late November, the weekly vigils have grown to number over 100, and are held in cities and communities in 24 states. The vigil organizers are inspired by the example of the handful who first gathered in Leipzig, East Germany to protest injustice of the communist regime, and which grew in a few short weeks into the marches of hundreds of thousands who toppled the Berlin Wall.