

Arab World Needs 'New Politics' in U.S.

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

The author visited Cairo March 7-11, 2007.

The Arab League summit, scheduled to open in Riyadh on March 28, will be faced with the daunting task of dealing with several life-or-death issues, from Palestine to Lebanon, Iraq, and the danger of a military attack on Iran. Although viable solutions are on the drawing board for all these urgent issues, international as well as internal pressures on the 22 member countries threaten to sabotage productive efforts.

I will focus here on Egypt, which finds itself in a vise, between pressures coming from the Bush-Cheney war faction and moves by regional forces, especially Saudi Arabia and Iran, in the direction of defusing crises. For this reason, there is tremendous interest throughout Egyptian intellectual and political circles in understanding better what the dynamic in Washington really is. This author was invited by Prof. Mohammad El-Sayed Selim, of Cairo University, and Dr. Hoda Metkees, director of the Center for Asian Studies at the Faculty of Economics and Political Science, to deliver a lecture March 8, on " 'The New Politics' in the United States and Implications for the Middle East."

The presentation gathered teachers and students from the Center for Asian Studies, the Institute for Malaysian Studies, and the Institute for Arab Studies and Research, which is an organization of the Arab League. Among the 120 attending were students, teachers, diplomats, and press.

The presentation focussed on the "New Politics" emerging from the Nov. 7 U.S. elections, and the implications for shifting foreign policy, as shown in the Baker-Hamilton report. The role of the youth vote was explained, especially the role of the LaRouche Youth Movement (LYM) in key borderline states, including the exposé of the Lynne Cheney university campus networks in the American Council of Trustees and Alumni. The significance of this new layer of voters was explained from the standpoint of a different economic/social policy orientation, away from globalization and for a revival of industrial policy.

The vote for a Democratic majority was presented as a vote of no confidence in the Bush-Cheney regime, a vote against its permanent war policy, and its economic madness. The issuance of the Baker-Hamilton report, defining a shift in foreign policy, was seen as an institutional intervention, followed by the activity of the new Congress and Senate, with hearings, resolutions, and so on. Reference was made during

the lecture to Lyndon LaRouche's webcast the evening before, where he hammered away at the need for the Democratic majority to move decisively and to impeach Cheney, as time is running out. Finally, reference was made to other moves by political forces internationally (Russia, China), and regionally (Iran, Saudi Arabia), in the context of the shift in the United States.

Intense Interest in U.S. Politics

In the discussion period, the questions reflected an intense interest with the U.S. political scene. One woman wanted to know how to deal with the "rave" culture among youth, how to get them interested in politics. She was fascinated, as were the students, to hear about the LYM organizing method, with the emphasis on mastering scientific method.

Other questions included: "What should Egypt's role in the region be?" "What made Bush change his mind about talks with Syria and Iran after Nov. 7, considering that last Summer, they were excluded from the Rome conference?" "What were the real reasons for the war against Iraq? Do the American people know, or do they accept Bush's lies?" "How do you see the emergence of an Asian 'pole' (China, India, Russia) in the strategic situation?" "What about the Japanese?" "Is it true that American youth don't know about history?" "What is the future for America and this generation?" "Since Egypt and the Saudis have refused to replace U.S. troops in Iraq, what are the alternatives for the United States there?" "How do U.S.-Russia relations affect U.S.-Mideast relations?" "Is the expansion of the Christian fundies in the United States, and al-Qaeda here, an indication of the growing rule of organizations with spiritual values in politics?" (Here, the background to both tendencies was presented, also to show they have nothing to do with Christianity or Islam.)

Still more questions: "How do you see the future of the U.S. government, with the new younger generation emerging?" "How can they change strategy?" "Where will America end up in the long run?" "How do you see the American-Arab dialogue?" "After the developments with North Korea, what perspective is there for the United States to remain a superpower?" "What are the implications of the North Korean case for Iran?" "What is U.S. foreign policy *vis-à-vis* China?"

Most noteworthy was the attention to international issues, not just local ones. This also reflects the fact that many students, and especially those in the Arab League institute, come from Arab countries outside Egypt. The interest of all in the United States is overwhelming, and the general mood is: We would like to see America return to play a role for the Good in the world, as at the time of Eisenhower, for example—which all Arabs are familiar with. The views expressed by this group of students and teachers reflect most accurately the views of the political intelligentsia not only in Egypt, but the entire Arab world, and beyond. Their demand is for a traditionally "American" policy from Washington.