

## The battle for the presidency is on

by Jeffrey Steinberg

With the conclusion of the Republican National Convention in New Orleans on Aug. 18, the 1988 United States presidential campaign has entered its final and decisive phase.

Vice President George Bush's Thursday, Aug. 18 speech accepting the Republican presidential nomination had been touted as the critical test of whether Bush could step out from behind the shadow of Ronald Reagan, and carve out a clear image as a strong leader capable of fulfilling the requirements of the presidency during a period of grave crisis and severe challenge.

But it was, in fact, a series of actions by Vice President Bush and President Reagan during the weeks leading into New Orleans that set the direction of the remaining 82 days of Campaign '88.

### The SDI issue

- On Aug. 2, speaking before the Mid-America Committee convention in Chicago, in what was billed as a major policy speech, Bush delivered his strongest and most unequivocal endorsement to date of President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative, a policy associated internationally with Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr.

Vowing to press ahead with the SDI and to achieve as early a deployment as the technologies permit, Bush sent the first serious public signal of his commitment to carry forward the program that was the high mark of the Reagan presidency.

- The very next day, President Reagan vetoed the Defense Appropriations Bill—principally because it imposed life-threatening cuts in the SDI budget. For the first time since the disastrous INF treaty ratification and President Reagan's Moscow summit lovefest with Gorbachov, the White House showed signs that it was once again awake to the ongoing threat posed by Moscow's growing military supremacy.

According to high-level Pentagon sources, the renewed commitment to SDI was fueled in part by a series of recent military intelligence reports presented to the President that showed that, over the past 12 months of *glasnost*, the Soviet Union had experienced its greatest surge in military production and military R&D in decades.

Another contributing factor, according to the sources, was a series of briefings that the President received from his old friend Dr. Edward Teller, indicating new breakthroughs in SDI research that proved the overall feasibility of the strategic defense program.

In fact, Dr. Teller's report to the President reportedly demonstrated that, had the SDI program proceeded as originally envisioned in Reagan's March 23, 1983 speech, the United States and her European and Asian allies might have already deployed a first generation system.

At an Aug. 4 White House press conference convened to elaborate on his reasons for the defense bill veto, President Reagan called upon *EIR* correspondent Nicholas Benton, and made his now famous quip calling Democratic presidential nominee Michael Dukakis an "invalid." Within moments, Dukakis's still secret medical records and the published reports of his two bouts with clinical depression grabbed worldwide headlines.

In a matter of days, Dukakis's imposing 17% lead over the still-to-be-nominated Bush fell by 10 points. By the time the mental breakdown flap had died down and the GOP convention opened, the pollsters were pronouncing the race too close to call.

- On the eve of the Republican nominating convention, Bush named Treasury Secretary James Baker III to replace Lee Atwater as his campaign chairman. Even more significantly, Bush announced that Paul Laxalt, the former senator

from Nevada, one of President Reagan's longstanding and intimate political allies, would be his campaign co-chairman.

At that point, President Reagan himself announced a personal drive to secure the election of his two-time running mate to the nation's highest office.

It was in the context of these events that Vice President Bush announced his choice of Indiana Sen. Dan Quayle as his running mate upon his arrival at the New Orleans convention on Aug. 16. A Reaganite conservative who had been one of the strongest voices for the SDI on the Senate Armed Services Committee, and who had been one of the last hold-outs opposing the INF treaty, the 41-year-old Quayle symbolized Bush's determination to place himself squarely within the conservative wing of the party, while at the same time asserting his intention to take charge of the ticket—rather than forge what would have been interpreted as a coalition slate, had he selected a more prominent or powerful conservative running mate.

### 'Competence is a narrow ideal'

The Bush strategy, to cut as wide a philosophical and policy gap between himself and Michael Dukakis as possible, carried right through to the Vice President's acceptance speech on the evening of Aug. 18, before over 100,000 Republican Party activists at the Superdome.

"The stakes are high this year," Bush told the crowd, "and the choice is crucial, for the differences between the two candidates are as deep and wide as they have ever been in our long history. . . .

"And what it all comes down to is this: My opponent's view of the world sees a long slow decline for our country, an inevitable fall mandated by impersonal historical forces. . . .

"He sees America as another pleasant country on the U.N. roll call, somewhere between Albania and Zimbabwe. And I see America as a unique nation with a special role in the world.

"And this has been called the American Century because it is, we were the dominant force for good in the world. We saved Europe, cured polio, went to the Moon, and lit the world with our culture. And now we're on the verge of a new century, and what country's name will it bear? I say it will be another American Century."

Echoing warnings about Michael Dukakis's Mussolini-corporatist outlook, which were previously only uttered by LaRouche, Bush told the crowd:

"But this election isn't only about competence, for competence is a narrow ideal. Competence makes the trains run on time, but doesn't know where they are going. Competence is the creed of the technocrat who makes sure the gears mesh, but doesn't for a second understand the magic of the machine."

Briefly touching on the theme he struck in Chicago on Aug. 2, Bush said,

"In foreign affairs, I'll continue our policy of peace

through strength. I'll move toward further cuts in the strategic and conventional arsenals of both the United States and the Soviet Union, the Eastern bloc and NATO. I'll modernize and preserve our technological edge, and that includes strategic defense."

### The fascism of Michael Dukakis

Coming out of New Orleans, George Bush has initially succeeded in establishing a clear line of demarcation between himself and Michael Dukakis on principally one issue: the Strategic Defense Initiative.

According to a wide range of people interviewed by *EIR* in recent days, Bush's recognition that he cannot defeat Michael Dukakis without the strong backing of both Ronald Reagan and the military-industrial establishment, which strongly embraces the SDI, has locked the Vice President into a policy direction that he would be very hard pressed to abandon after November, if he is elected President.

Former Democratic presidential candidate Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr. (who is now running as an independent for President in a number of states) reported in a widely circulating *EIR* special supplement, "Dukakis's mental health: an objective assessment," that the Democratic convention's nominee poses a grave threat to the future of the Western alliance.

"If elected the next President, Michael Dukakis in Washington would be the figurehead he has been in Boston. His leftist background taken into account, Dukakis has been owned his entire political life by an international financial interest represented in New England by the reinsurance cartel by whom Dukakis's late father was adopted. The immediate financial interest associated with both of his governorships is a Harvard-pivoted Boston financial organization called The Vault, and the Boston law firm of Hill and Barlow. Dukakis, a fanatically ambitious office seeker, has served simply as the political hod-carrier for these interests."

Concretely, LaRouche charged, Dukakis has been designated to deliver the United States over to what British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher has dubbed an "airy fairy" utopian scheme to impose a world federalist version of universal fascism—in partnership with Moscow.

"In the strictest sense of the term, Michael Dukakis is a fascist. His social policy, to which his campaign speeches attach the name of 'community,' is to eliminate traditional private entrepreneurship in the way Benito Mussolini did in Italy," LaRouche wrote.

Correcting wild misrepresentations by the international liberal media as to exactly what he had said about Dukakis's mental health during the Atlanta Democratic nominating convention in July, LaRouche concluded:

"The man has the makings of a new Nero or Caligula, a man already compared by some to the Biblical Nebuchadnezzar. I am obliged to emphasize again, contrary to internationally featured news-media accounts, I have never claimed that Dukakis was cured of a mental-health disorder."