
Interview: John Ascher

Colombians told of political persecution of LaRouche



John Ascher is a leader of the political movement of Lyndon LaRouche in Baltimore, Maryland. His wife, Rochelle (Shelley) Ascher, is a political prisoner in Virginia, sentenced to 10 years in prison as part of the witchhunt against the LaRouche movement. The following interview was conducted on May 12 by Marianna Wertz.

EIR: You recently traveled to Colombia to discuss your wife's imprisonment and the human rights issues connected with the LaRouche cases. What was your impression?

Ascher: I traveled to Colombia for approximately a week. I found within that country tremendous concern about the human rights issues in the United States, and I found that there is an intense debate in Colombia right now concerning basic issues of law in the context of a new constitution that has been recently adopted. I believe that Colombia as a nation is looking very seriously at human rights issues in the United States. I believe my trip there was very effective in showing people something which they had no idea existed within the United States.

EIR: Can you tell our readers something about your wife's case?

Ascher: As I stressed when I was in Colombia, in my wife's case, and in the other cases of associates of Mr. LaRouche, what we've seen in the U.S. legal system is the application of the Thornburgh Doctrine to the United States internally. In other words, the philosophy that might makes right, the philosophy that law is based on achieving political objectives, is what has been applied in the legal cases involving my wife, Mr. LaRouche, Michael Billington, and everyone else.

Shelley was charged specifically with violations of the Virginia securities statutes, both with failure to register as a securities broker and with intent to defraud individuals who were supporters of our organizations, making loans to these organizations in political support of our goals.

In my wife's case and the 15 others charged in the state of Virginia, they indeed were not even charged, in the sense that the "crime" did not exist until *after* they were arrested. This was the application of a law intended for an entirely different purpose—for stock brokers and securities brokers. If this law were applied to every politician nationally, many of them would be in prison. Of course, in this case, as we've

seen in other legal applications against our movement, new laws, new applications were created in order to serve a political pretext.

EIR: Can you be more specific as to what the response was to your presentation of the human rights violations in these cases?

Ascher: People were generally stunned. There's not that much familiarity with U.S. legal procedures, and the idea that you can have such corruption amongst the government, the prosecutors, and the judges within the United States was shocking to the people I spoke with in Colombia.

EIR: Isn't it true that they look to the United States as a model justice system?

Ascher: They do, but on the other hand, many people in Colombia, for example in the Congress—I spoke with congressmen who were very angry with the United States in general about the application of force against Colombia. One senator I spoke to, for example, specifically said that he considered the violence in Colombia to be not only internally created, but that one element of the violence within Colombia comes directly from the United States. He felt the government of Colombia and the Congress of Colombia are under tremendous pressure from the United States.

Others that I spoke with, patriotic people, are very angry at the attacks against the military institutions throughout Ibero-America, and of course, in Colombia, in particular, coming from so-called non-governmental organizations [NGOs]. The people in Colombia often have a hard time distinguishing the non-governmental organizations from the United States government itself.

EIR: Not for no reason!

Ascher: Yes, exactly. And there's a big question also about what the new administration is going to do. Is the Clinton administration going to continue with these policies which people in Colombia detest, or is there going to be a change? And to be blunt about it, I think at this point, people see very little change coming from the new administration. What I explained to people there is that we believe the new administration has not entirely developed their policy, and that one important element in their effort to stop the human rights violations in our cases is the demand from Ibero-America,

Rochelle Ascher to 'Friends in Colombia'

This message was sent by Rochelle Ascher to Colombia, to be read at a conference on "The Fraud of the U.S. Model of Justice" keynoted by John Ascher on May 6.

I am honored that my husband has been invited by those in your country who place such a high value on freedom to discuss the barbaric jailing of Mr. LaRouche and his associates. . . .

My husband will be able to give you the details of this atrocious travesty of justice. My ostensible crime was "conspiracy with intent to commit securities fraud." The law characterizing the raising of political loans as the sale of unregistered securities was not passed until several weeks *after* we were indicted for this so-called crime.

But of course, our jailing had nothing to do with so-called securities fraud. As my husband will document for you, Mr. LaRouche was railroaded to jail as part of a deal demanded by [Mikhail] Gorbachov, to which George Bush fully agreed. This is the price Mr. LaRouche has paid as the leading economist committed to Christian economics in the world. This is the price he has paid as the leading opponent of the malthusian genocide of the International Monetary Fund.

I know that many courageous people in your country have been similarly persecuted and even killed for standing up for these same principles. History is made by those who are willing, like Lyndon LaRouche, to risk everything, even their mortal lives, for the sovereign rights of nations and the sanctity of man made in the image of God. . . .

from Colombia, that there has to be a change in the administration's policies.

EIR: I understand that you spoke publicly before associations of attorneys. Could you say something about that?

Ascher: I addressed the two primary legal organizations in the country, one of which is essentially the bar association, which is called the National Confederation of Attorneys (Conalbos), and the other is called the National Association of Trial Lawyers (ANDAL). We were able to get support from both these organizations. Some officials of Conalbos had already supported our appeal to President Clinton to free

Lyndon LaRouche, my wife, and the others.

I spoke at a meeting at which they were discussing the impact of the new constitution on the legal profession, and they were very concerned about how the United States was now more of a model for Colombia, and the dangers inherent in that, given the difficulties within the U.S. legal system. So when I addressed them concerning our cases, people were very shocked, and quite a number of the people at this meeting endorsed the petition to President Clinton.

EIR: Did you gain any other notable endorsements?

Ascher: In total, we were able to organize 20 new signatures, and others are considering signing. This included elected members of Colombia's Senate, attorneys, and others.

EIR: How would you evaluate the benefit of the trip vis-à-vis gaining freedom for Shelley and the others?

Ascher: I think that in Colombia, as we've seen in other nations of Ibero-America and around the world, there is a growing, aggressive mood of acting to insist that the United States change policies which people in these countries identify as being dangerous to the world. This specifically includes policies of infringement upon national sovereignty. I think that, under these circumstances, many people see the LaRouche case as very critical to changing what are wrong policies.

Also, we have many friends in Colombia who pretty much understand the urgent necessity of LaRouche being free, because his policies are critical. I had many discussions about Mr. LaRouche's policies attacking neo-liberalism, for example, with people in the Catholic Church, who understand very well that Mr. LaRouche's ideas play a critical role in going after certain neo-liberal tendencies which are taking over the economic policy planning and thinking throughout Ibero-America.

So, the view of many people who understand the LaRouche case is not only that there are human rights abuses, but that LaRouche and his freedom, and freedom for his associates, is critical in terms of dealing with the crisis in the world at this juncture. And I think that my trip there helped galvanize support for LaRouche's freedom and gave people who may not be so familiar with the LaRouche cases a first-hand sense of what is going on there, and the urgent need for Mr. LaRouche to be free.

EIR: I understand that Shelley sent a message to be read by you to a conference while you were in Colombia (see box). Did she have anything further to say on your return?

Ascher: My wife is very happy that I'm able to represent her and our political movement, and to be able to travel and get this kind of support. She's confident, as I am, that under the current political circumstances, if we continue, and given the very open political situation that I've seen, we can do something to change both the legal attacks and also to get our policies implemented.