

Ashcroft Fight Is Really About Fascist Path for U.S.

by Debra Hanania-Freeman

When Lyndon LaRouche warned a Washington, D.C. audience on Jan. 3, that unless put on a very short leash, the incoming Bush Administration would likely move quickly, under the guise of “crisis management,” to impose a brutal bureaucratic fascism on the United States, bearing striking similarities to the conditions under which Adolf Hitler seized power in Germany in 1933, at least some thought that LaRouche, who by then had declared that he would seek the Democratic Party Presidential nomination in 2004, might be exaggerating. However, Bush’s swift and relentless drive to ram through his crisis management team, no matter what it takes, has established LaRouche’s authority as uncontested.

In a move designed to cripple the drive of the Bush team toward a rule-by-decree dictatorship, LaRouche has thrown the full weight of his international movement behind a drive to defeat Bush’s choice for Attorney General, former Missouri Senator John Ashcroft, a man whose judicial philosophy and whose record, would clearly make him a leading and enthusiastic part of a team determined to suppress the general welfare, and preserve the power of the financial elite, through the imposition of Hitler-style emergency measures. As we go to press, that battle is still raging.

LaRouche’s drive has transformed the situation from one in which, on Jan. 12, the day that LaRouche’s testimony opposing Ashcroft was filed with the Senate Judiciary Committee, only one member of the Senate—Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.)—was prepared to vote against confirmation, to the current situation, in which 41 Democrats are reportedly prepared to vote against Ashcroft, and a filibuster is a very real possibility.

During three days of hearings before the Senate Judiciary Committee, witnesses, including two members of the Congressional Black Caucus—Reps. Sheila Jackson Lee (D-Tex.) and Maxine Waters (D-Calif.)—as well as Missouri Supreme Court Judge Ronnie White, an African American

judge who was denied a Federal judgeship as a direct result of Ashcroft’s intervention, have raised disturbing questions about Ashcroft’s record on issues such as school desegregation, the death penalty, and civil rights. Ashcroft has been pressed on his ardent defense of the Confederacy. But, thus far, although the hearings have been contentious at times, the central issue that defines the defeat of Ashcroft as a life-and-death issue has yet to be addressed there.

The Financial Collapse

LaRouche has made it clear that his opposition to Ashcroft is shaped by two considerations that go beyond the factors normally involved in considering a nominee for the nation’s top law enforcement post: the extraordinary, onrushing financial and monetary breakdown crisis that is likely to be the first and overriding order of business confronting the incoming Bush Administration; and second, specifically in this context, the role that the next Attorney General will play, as a leading member of the Executive Branch crisis team, in dealing with the consequent crises certain to arise in these extraordinary circumstances. LaRouche has noted that the next Attorney General will have responsibilities in this broader crisis-management team setting, that are likely to supersede his more immediate role within the Department of Justice and subsumed Federal law enforcement agencies.

Indeed, on the eve of the inauguration of George W. Bush, the conditions are overripe for the declaration of a full-blown emergency. California, the nation’s richest and largest state, is undergoing rolling blackouts, and defaults on hundreds of millions of dollars by California’s utilities are threatening to pull the plug on billions more, forboding a chain-reaction collapse in the banking sector both domestically and in Japan. Bush has made clear that he has absolutely no intention of taking steps, as President Franklin Roosevelt would have, to guarantee affordable power production and availability to



The LaRouche movement demonstrates against John Ashcroft (inset, at Senate confirmation hearing) to become Attorney General. Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) said at the hearings: "Our government tyrannical? If the Senator . . . doesn't know the difference between the British and insurrection, [and] the American Revolution, and this government that has been formed under James Madison and the Constitution, . . . I think this nominee owes an apology to the people of the United States."

California residents, but instead favors measures that would ensure debt payment to Wall Street. With this reality in mind, the Bush team is arguing that, in order to be able to act decisively and to avoid potential ensuing chaos, President George W. Bush requires that his cabinet be confirmed immediately. And, in an unprecedented action, the Senate Democratic leadership agreed to a 3 p.m. Senate session on Inauguration Day, just hours after Bush is scheduled to take the oath of office, presumably to give him what he is demanding.

Although simple arithmetic might seem to favor Ashcroft's confirmation, with Senate Republican Leader Trent Lott (Miss.) pledging that all 50 Republicans will vote to confirm him, and at least one Democrat, Zell Miller (Ga.), issuing a public statement that he will also vote yes, an early vote seems unlikely, as the LaRouche-initiated drive to defeat Ashcroft continues to intensify in both scope and depth.

Constituency groups ranging from organizers of the Million Mom March to the AFL-CIO called press conferences, and issued statements demanding that Ashcroft be denied confirmation. Andrew Cuomo, the son of New York's former Governor and the enormously popular outgoing Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, called on Bush to withdraw Ashcroft's nomination. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People head Kweisi Mfume pledged that his group will engage in civil disobedience actions, if that is what it takes to block confirmation.

A Filibuster Is Necessary

And, LaRouche's call for Democratic members of the Senate to engage in a filibuster to jam up the nomination

process emerged as a very live and credible option. The fact is that Lott may have enough votes for the simple majority that confirmation requires, but it does not appear that he has the 60 votes required to stop a filibuster. Although attention so far has centered on Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.), who raised the possibility of mounting a filibuster to block the nomination in remarks he made on Jan. 17, he is not the only Senator considering such a move. Again, though, LaRouche's leadership will be the key. Senate Democratic leader Tom Daschle (S.D.) pledged, as part of some pathetic "power-sharing" agreement he has made, that there would be no filibuster, and Lott threatened that "any attempts at procedural tricks, like a filibuster, would be swatted away like a fly on the windshield." But LaRouche supporters have continued to mobilize with total determination to define exactly what the stakes are, and to put especially Democratic members of the Senate on notice that capitulation on this point is not an acceptable option.

The message couldn't be clearer. Bush has assembled a team, with Ashcroft as a key player, that has shown an open predilection for suppressing dissent, and ignoring the Constitutional commitment to the general welfare. If the Ashcroft nomination is confirmed, Democrats may never have another chance to protest the dictatorship measures which are the stock in trade of the Wall Street crowd which put Bush in power in the first place. Jamming up the Ashcroft nomination is the first and crucial step in building a potent, new force, committed to fighting for the general welfare, rather than "negotiating" for crumbs from Wall Street. It is not too late for the American people to decide just what kind of government they want.