

Senator Mike Gravel Returns to Washington, Joins With LaRouche

by Mike Billington

Nov. 1—The National Press Club in Washington, D.C., was the scene on Tuesday, Oct 27, of a forum sponsored by *Executive Intelligence Review* (EIR),—this magazine,—featuring Schiller Institute founder Helga Zepp-LaRouche and former U.S. Senator Mike Gravel. Its title was “[Ending Permanent Warfare and Financial Panic—Glass Steagall and the New Global Silk Road.](#)”

The collaboration of Sen. Gravel with Helga and Lyndon LaRouche, represents a significant step towards the absolutely necessary creation of a team of political and scientific leaders in the United States to end the immediate danger of thermonuclear war under the Presidency of the crazed killer Barack Obama. It must function as a “Presidential committee,” capable of formulating the required economic and strategic policies for the next U.S. President.

While Helga Zepp-LaRouche is well-known (and

her presentation at the Washington *EIR* Forum is transcribed in this issue of *EIR*), Sen. Mike Gravel, who served in the U.S. Senate from 1969-1981, representing the State of Alaska, is far less well known to Americans today. This is because his many acts of political courage won him the hatred of Wall Street and the leading political and media institutions under Wall Street’s domination. This report aims to correct that problem, and in the process shed light on crucial aspects of modern U.S. history which are of great importance today.

The Pentagon Papers

Sen. Gravel is best known and remembered,—despite the subsequent efforts of the press to make him a “non-person,”—as the U.S. Senator who read the “Pentagon Papers” into the *Congressional Record* in 1971. By thus circumventing President Nixon’s frantic efforts



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The EIR forum at the National Press Club October 27. From left to right: Mike Billington of EIR, Helga Zepp-LaRouche, and Senator Mike Gravel.

to cover up his crimes in Vietnam (and those of the Lyndon Johnson Administration before him), Sen. Gravel helped to force Nixon's later resignation. And by exposing the fact that the U.S. was losing, not winning, that war, Senator Gravel helped to end it.

It is a dramatic story, powerfully told in Sen. Gravel's autobiography, *A Political Odyssey: The Rise of American Militarism and One Man's Fight to Stop It*, by Sen. Gravel and Joe Lauria (Seven Stories Press, 2011).

Daniel Ellsberg was a former Defense Department analyst who was a member of a team at the RAND Corporation working on a "Top Secret-Sensitive" analysis on behalf of Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara (one of the criminals responsible for the mass murders of the Indochina Wars). Ellsberg decided in 1971 that he was morally required to leak the entire 7,100 page study, to expose and stop the crimes against the U.S. Constitution and against humanity being perpetrated in the U.S. war on Indochina.

The study covered the role of the United States, France, and others in Vietnam going back to the 1940s; the British sabotage of Franklin Roosevelt's effort to prevent the return of the colonial powers to their colonies after World War II; and President Truman's complicity with the British and other European imperial powers in re-establishing their colonies. It detailed what were unquestionably war crimes by the United States under Presidents Johnson and Nixon, while demonstrating that both administrations had massively lied to the American people in order to cover up those war crimes.

Ellsberg gave these so-called "Pentagon Papers" to the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and several other leading newspapers, which began publishing them in segments. But President Nixon imposed injunctions on the newspapers, halting publication. Ellsberg then went to several members of Congress, proposing that they make the document public by reading it into the *Congressional Record*. He told them they could rely on the "Speech or Debate" clause of the Constitution, which holds that a Member of Congress "shall not be questioned in any other place" on anything said in the confines of the Congress, excepting only "treason, felony or breach of the peace."

Several Congressmen who agreed with Ellsberg that the papers ought to be released, and also agreed that they were legally permitted to do so, nonetheless



U.S. Senate Historical Office

Senator Mike Gravel in 1973, soon after winning his Supreme Court case on his release of the Pentagon Papers in Congress.

refused. They placed their careers, or their fears of ostracism, ahead of their moral and patriotic responsibility. At just that moment, Sen. Mike Gravel was holding a one-man filibuster against the draft, which was sending young men to die in Vietnam for no higher purpose. He readily agreed to read the document into the *Congressional Record*.

In his *Foreword* to Sen. Gravel's book, Ellsberg wrote: "Mike Gravel lived up to my initial impression of him as perhaps the only member of the Senate who took his oath to the Constitution more seriously than his political standing in the club. He also had the guts to infuriate an administration by exposing its guilty secrets."

Sen. Gravel called a hearing of the subcommittee he headed, Buildings and Grounds, read aloud the opening pages of the Pentagon Papers, and then submitted the entire document into the record. He openly sobbed while reading the documents aloud, as the memory welled up in his mind of the maimed and battered U.S. soldiers that he had visited just days earlier at Walter Reed Army Hospital.

The 2008 Campaign

Years later, in 2007, the government had once again been firmly taken over by the war party through Bush and Cheney, while the leading Democratic candidates for President were equally committed to the “perpetual war” policy launched by Bush under the guise of the “war on terrorism.” Sen. Gravel determined that he had no choice but to run for President.

In a Democratic Presidential debate on July 23, 2007, with Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, and the other candidates on the stage, Sen. Gravel demanded that the United States simply get out of Iraq immediately. He said: “Our soldiers died in Vietnam in vain. You can go to Hanoi now and buy a Baskin-Robbins ice cream cone; we have given them most-favored-nation trade status. What did all these people die for? What are they dying for right now in Iraq, every single day? Let me tell you, there’s only one thing worse than a soldier dying in vain. It’s more soldiers dying in vain.”

The moderator immediately turned to candidate Barack Obama to ask him if he agreed that those soldiers were dying in vain. Obama said that the troops had done everything they had been asked to do,—which is to say “my country right or wrong,” a concept Sen. Gravel denounced in his Press Club speech this Oct. 27. “Well for me, that’s the most immoral statement you can make,” he said. “If you love your country, and you see it doing something wrong, you should do something to correct it. And that’s where I have charted my course in life.”

The 28 Pages

Sen. Gravel was taken to court by the Nixon Administration, which used a technicality to attempt an end-run around the “speech or debate” clause. Sen. Gravel won that case, right up to the Supreme Court. That 1972 decision, *Gravel v. U.S.*, carries momentous implications for one of the most pressing issues of our own day,—the “secret” classification by George W. Bush and Barack Obama of the chapter in the Joint Congressional Report on 9/11, which concerns the funding of the 9/11 hijackers.

When Obama ran for the Presidency, he promised the families of the 9/11 victims that he would release that 28-page chapter, which is well-known (despite being classified), to expose the role of the Saudi monarchy, and especially the then-Saudi Ambassador to the United States, Prince Bandar (a bosom buddy of the Bush family). The Saudis funnelled funds to the key hijackers, both through state “charities” and directly

from Bandar and his family. A huge fight to force release of those 28 pages is being waged by the 9/11 families, the LaRouche organization, several members of Congress, and others. There are court cases, there bills in both Houses of Congress, and groups are mobilizing the citizenry.

While visiting Washington for the *EIR* Forum, Sen. Gravel also met with several current and former Senators and their aides. He delivered a simple message: Any one of you, he said, if you had the courage, could do exactly what I did. Simply take the 28 pages to the floor of the Congress, and read them to the American people. What would be exposed would not simply be the true history of that evil event, but also the fact that ever since Sept. 11, 2001, the Presidents of the United States, both Bush and Obama, have been in collaboration with the very institutions still actively funding and arming the terrorists internationally,—the Wahhabi clerics and monarchs of Saudi Arabia.

A recent scholarly article prepared for publication in a law review and given to Sen. Gravel by its authors, argues persuasively that the Supreme Court decision in *Gravel v. U.S.* makes clear that, were a member of Congress, or a group of members, to read the 28 pages into the Congressional record, they would be totally immune from any legal actions against them. The article also notes that the Senate and the House would not be permitted to take action against that member or members either.

Since both houses have in fact called on the Executive Branch to release the 28 pages, to release them in this way would not contravene the will of the Congress. The article goes on to show that the Joint Congressional 9/11 Investigation is the property of the Congress, not the Executive branch, which therefore has no constitutional right to classify it. In fact, the Constitution *requires* the Congress to publicly disclose Congressional proceedings, whenever the Congress itself has not ruled that secrecy is needed.

The issue, then, is purely one of the courage by the members of Congress, to do what is both legal and morally compelling. Only fear is holding back immediate declassification of the 28 pages, with their implied criminal indictment of Obama.

It was George W. Bush who first classified the 28 pages, to cover up his perpetual war campaign and terrorist drone-assassinations. But as Sen. Gravel told his Washington, D.C. audience on Oct. 27, “The difference between Bush and Obama is zero.” He characterized the policy of both the Bush and Obama administrations

in the Middle East as that of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse,—Conquest, War, Famine and Death: “That’s our foreign policy! You can call it ‘Obama has the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, and he’s riding it like a chariot.’ When you really look at it in depth, it just breaks your heart. As Helga just outlined, it’s so easy to pursue the other course; it’s so much more humane to pursue the other course.”

In his 2007 Presidential campaign, Sen. Gravel grew tired of hearing Obama and Hillary Clinton (among others) claim to oppose Bush’s war on Iraq, while refusing to demand an immediate end to that war and other illegal wars. At the same time, they threatened that “all options are on the table” in dealing with Iran and other nations on the U.S. hit-list.

In the April 26, 2007 Democratic Presidential debate in Orangeburg, S.C., Sen. Gravel was asked, “Who are the three most important enemies of the United States?” He replied, “We have no important enemies. What we need to do is to begin to deal with the rest of the world as equals. And we don’t do that. We spend more as a nation on defense than all the rest of the world put together. Who are we afraid of? Iraq has never been a threat to us. We invaded them. I mean, it is unbelievable. The military-industrial complex not only controls our government, lock, stock and barrel, but they command our culture. . . . With respect to Iran, we’ve sanctioned them for 26 years. We scared the bejesus out of them when the President said ‘They are evil.’ . . . Who in the hell are we going to nuke? Tell me, Barack. Barack, who do you want to nuke?”

After the debate, Obama came over to him and said, “Who the Hell are you, Gravel, to question my morality?” Sen. Gravel notes: “I challenged his morality then, and I’ve been proven right today.”

The Alaska Pipeline

Sen. Gravel refers to himself as an “environmental growther.” By that he means that he understands that it is the scientific and technological advancement of the



creative commons/Criag Michaud

Mike Gravel in Manchester, New Hampshire, two days before the January 8, 2008 Democratic primary.

economies of all nations, which is the only guarantee of peace and prosperity for mankind,—and only such advancement allows us maintain the environment.

As Senator from Alaska, he fought for and won the fight to build the Alaska Pipeline,—a miracle of construction which has been of benefit for the nation as a whole. It was nearly defeated by the then-emerging “environmentalist” movement, with help from Sen. Scoop Jackson of the State of Washington, the father of the neo-cons. Jackson tried his best to subvert the project, but he was defeated by Sen. Gravel by one vote in the Senate. However, soon after that legislative victory, the anti-growth fanatics succeeded in locking up huge portions of Alaska from development, despite fierce resistance from Sen. Gravel.

In the Oct. 27 forum in Washington, D.C., he said, “I’ve been involved in many battles in this regard. There are two elements of environmentalists. There are the ‘preservationists.’ These are the people who want to put on a loin cloth and go back and live in a cave. The real environmentalists understand that we have localized problems, and that science and technology can help us get out of these problems. The answer is not to limit human growth, but to be sure that that growth is fair and proper and healthy for human beings.”

Stopping the U.S. Military Re-Colonization of the Philippines

Sen. Gravel’s character was on display this year when he learned that Obama was planning to militarily re-occupy the Philippines. In the 1990s, the Philippines had unceremoniously thrown the United States out of its military bases there, and added a new clause to their Constitution forbidding any foreign military bases on Philippine territory. To circumvent the Philippine Constitution, Obama and his subservient President of the Philippines, Noyonoy Aquino, connived to sign an “Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement” (EDCA) which invited the United States to establish facilities for their most advanced air, land, and sea weaponry and



Dept. of Defense/Capt. Josh Diddams, U.S. Marine Corps

U.S. Marines arrive at the Villamor Air Base, Philippines, on Nov. 10, 2013.

personnel within the Philippines, but all within Philippine military bases. EDCA pretends that these will not be “foreign bases” but only “guests” of the Philippines!

Of course, the over-riding real-world issue, is that the criminal Obama is trying to establish these Philippine military bases to prepare for war with China.

Now, EDCA is being contested in the Philippine Supreme Court, on the obvious legal grounds that it breaches the nation’s Constitution. On learning of the case, Sen. Gravel took it upon himself to prepare a Friend of the Court brief (called a “Petition for Intervention” in the Philippines), calling on the Supreme Court to reject the agreement on both legal and moral grounds.

Sen. Gravel’s brief quotes the former Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Martin Dempsey, who warned the U.S. government against the “Thucydides Trap,—where Athenian fear of a rising Sparta made the Peloponnesian War inevitable.” He argues that “China’s ascendancy is primarily economic in nature, and no evidence suggests that it seeks global military hegemony, even though its economic interests are global.” He calls on the Philippines to “safeguard its own sovereign interests, while avoiding military engagements and a possible war that no one wants.”

Sen. Gravel states that he is taking this action because “I love my country. However, I hold my love of mankind above that of my country. I hold the life of any

human equal to that of any American.”

He goes beyond the current crisis of the Obama war threats against Russia and China, tracing the history of America’s descent into a European-modeled colonial policy as beginning with the Spanish-American war. At that time, the United States “purchased” the Philippines from Spain, even after having defeated the Spanish there. Rather than establishing the independence of the nation thus freed from colonialism, the United States maintained its rule. It carried out a bloody suppression of the Philippine independence

forces (which had been fighting the Spanish before the Americans arrived), and established America’s first colony. Only in the 1930s, with the election of Franklin Roosevelt, was that atrocity partially overturned,—but not completely, due to Roosevelt’s early death.

Sen. Gravel warns that the return of U.S. military forces to the Philippines would make it a battleground for an American war on China. Once again it will be the “whorehouse for the U.S. military,” as it was during Vietnam. He points to China’s astonishing economic growth, lifting 600 million citizens out of poverty in a mere 30 years, and to the “New Maritime Silk Road” and the new international banking institutions created by China and their partners in the BRICS nations.

He writes in the brief: “Compare China’s vision for a successful, prosperous, economically unified world to what America offers by way of a militarized world that brooks no challenge to its hegemonic leadership. Compare the suffering of untold numbers of people in a plethora of nations around the world over the last 30 years, a suffering inflicted by the hubris of backroom American neocons punishing people with economic sanctions to bring about regime change, and their liberal interventionists wantonly invading sovereign nations that do not conform to their ideological standards.”

Sen. Gravel recognizes the difficulties caused by the conflicting claims over the islands of the South China Sea and the East China Sea, but offers a possible solu-

tion. Chinese President Xi Jinping, he says, should call on the UN to sponsor a meeting of the countries surrounding the South China Sea and the East China Sea,—and only those countries,—with the idea of addressing these seas as a “Commons.” That is, an area where sovereignty claims are temporarily put aside in favor of joint development of the region and the of natural resources under the Sea. In fact, China’s recent development of several artificial islands in the region is intended, according to their Foreign Ministry, for every nation’s use, not just for China.

Obama ordered a U.S. warship to breach the 12-mile territorial limit of one of China’s newly-created islands on the very day of the *EIR* forum in Washington, Oct. 27. Sen. Gravel describes the U.S. claim that they are militarily challenging China’s sovereignty in the South China Sea in order to defend the “freedom of navigation,” as “disingenuous,” especially in light of the U.S. refusal to ratify the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which Sen. Gravel fought for as a Senator.

He concludes his brief to the Philippine Supreme Court with two sub-sections, one titled “Save Yourself,” and the other “Save Us from Ourselves.”

Sen. Gravel and the LaRouche Movement

Although Sen. Gravel was in touch with the LaRouche movement several years ago, he was recently drawn to work more closely with LaRouche in response to the *EIR* report prepared in 2014, titled **The New Silk Road Becomes the World Land-Bridge**. (See www.worldlandbridge.com) Having represented Alaska, he was particularly drawn to the idea of Russian-U.S. co-operation in building a tunnel under the Bering Strait, an idea Lyndon LaRouche has long advocated, as has Russian President Vladimir Putin. The long-projected Bering Strait Tunnel project, linking the United States and Russia directly by rail, will further “war-avoidance”



An artist's sketch of the proposed Bering Strait Railway Tunnel between Alaska and Russia, commissioned by Cooper Consulting Co. for Alaska Governor Frank Murkowski.

2003 J. Craig Thorpe

through joint infrastructure policies which address the common interests of both nations and the world.

At a Schiller Institute forum in Manhattan on Sept. 12, 2015, Sen. Gravel said: “The Global Land-Bridge report offers a bold vision of how science, progress and infrastructure-led development initiatives are connecting the planet in new ways, and may prove to be an antidote to many of the retrograde ideologies and stalled political systems that have emerged in recent years. The report is also innovative in that it returns the focus of geopolitics to the Eurasian landmass, suggesting that new, rising powers may become more influential than commonly anticipated, including countries like India and Brazil. It is a valuable read for American strategists, who can take this report’s thesis as a reminder that engaging the world, especially in Africa and Central Asia, and contributing the best of America’s tradition of innovation, is a key way to keep America as a global leader.”

At the Oct. 27 *EIR* Forum in Washington, D.C., Gravel concluded his presentation: “So, let me rest on that, and just say that I’m delighted to be associated with the LaRouche organization and the wisdom they’ve brought forward in their leadership role. And here, I’m taking a page out of their book, suggesting that the leadership of China should take the initiative and bring the Silk Road to the commons of the South China Sea.”