

Cheney Treading In Quicksand

by Michele Steinberg

The Bush Administration is “a dying regime,” stated U.S. political leader Lyndon LaRouche to an international audience at an *EIR* seminar in Berlin on Dec. 6. And the only thing that can really save the Bush Presidency, is for Vice President Dick Cheney to be ousted.

“The President is breaking up,” LaRouche said. “He’s not capable intellectually of understanding what he’s doing.” In contrast, he said, “Cheney is a criminal. He’s a murderer.” At the same time, LaRouche noted that Cheney is no superman—and that he can be defeated.

Indeed, in the aftermath of the strategic move on Nov. 17 by Rep. John Murtha (D-Pa.), a retired Marine Colonel and 37-year veteran of the U.S. military, to introduce a resolution to redeploy U.S. troops out of Iraq “at the earliest practicable date,” Cheney has been weakened, to the point that he could be ousted, preferably by resignation, but by impeachment if necessary. And the record of Cheney’s crimes is being reviewed—carefully—by Democratic members of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence.

“We’re moving to take the government back” in Washington, said LaRouche, and with Cheney out, it would be possible to “handle” Bush.

Ironically, as LaRouche was speaking in Berlin, all hell was breaking loose around Cheney because of the visit of U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, to the newly elected Chancellor Angela Merkel. As the issue of the Cheney-Rumsfeld-Bush policy of secret prisons, “renditions” of abducted prisoners, and the use of torture grabbed the headlines of major German and other European newspapers reporting on Rice’s trip, the same strategic battle in which LaRouche plays a major role in Washington, had come to Berlin.

Meanwhile, an even larger battle was unfolding in Washington, where Congress had just returned from a recess—with Cheney’s support for torture, and his record of lies about Iraq

at the top of the agenda.

Since Oct. 5, Cheney has been on a crusade to *stop* the Congress from outlawing torture by any U.S. official: military, CIA, or any other U.S. intelligence agency. The ban on torture was passed as an amendment to the Defense Appropriations Bill, sponsored by Republican Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), a former prisoner-of-war in Vietnam, by a landslide vote of 90-9. The Senate was defying a threat to veto the bill, delivered by Dick Cheney to the Senate in July. After this vote, Cheney’s first line of offense was to pressure Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) to change the amendment; and the second line of offense has been to prevent the bill, with the amendment, from going to the floor of the House of Representatives.

Then, on Dec. 8, Cheney’s dirty tricks, threats, and pressure on behalf of torture, came to the fore, when Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) revealed that the Republicans were trying to undercut the House rules governing the passage of appropriations bills, to do Cheney’s dirty work. At issue is the fact that Rep. Jack Murtha has prepared a “Motion to Instruct” the House members who will confer with the Senators on the appropriations bill, to adopt the exact anti-torture provisions that the Senate passed. To become law, the identical bill must be adopted by both houses. So, Cheney’s twofold strategy is to postpone the appointment of conferees in the House, while trying to “break” McCain and the Senate support for the ban on torture *before* the bill goes to the conference committee. The informal vote counts taken by both Republicans and Democrats indicate that the anti-torture bill will pass by a landslide in the House.

Condi Takes Heat for ‘Torquemada’ Dick

The torture issue is what could finish Cheney off, and it could be soon. On Dec. 8, the acting House Majority Leader, Rep. Roy Blunt (R-Mo.), said that the defense appropriations

bill will be on the House schedule for the week of Dec. 12. It could be the chance to end Dick Cheney's political reign, given the growing revolt against America's "Torquemada." And it is the disastrous European trip by Rice that may be the trigger.

Everywhere she went, Condi was hounded by questions about the U.S. torture of prisoners, and secret CIA prisons and transport flights of prisoners by the CIA in Europe. Her repetition of Bush's silly words that the U.S. doesn't "condone" torture—when everyone has seen the photos and videos of Abu Ghraib—was ridiculed everywhere.

Why should anyone believe Rice, columnist Maureen Dowd asked in the *New York Times*, on Dec. 7, "with Torquemada Cheney slouching around Capitol Hill trying to circumvent John McCain and legalize torture at the CIA's secret prisons?"

On Dec. 6, the torture issue blew up in Rice's face, when Chancellor Merkel announced at the press conference after her private meeting with Rice, that the case of the U.S. abduction of Khaled El-Masri, a German national of Lebanese descent, "was accepted as a mistake by the U.S. government." Both Washington and Rice's travelling delegation flipped over the use of the word "mistake," a term that is not permitted in the Bush-Cheney White House. A barrage of U.S. denials and other pressures were thrown against Merkel. But the German government stood firm. "The statement by the Chancellor, as she said it yesterday, was valid," said a spokesman for the German government, "and . . . I do not need to interpret it any further."

What Condi found is that Germany and other European countries are under great pressure from their parliaments, and population, for playing *any* role—in condoning by silence, or in allowing secret U.S. prisons in their countries, or allowing CIA clandestine prisoner flights to land on their soil.

For Germany, it is an especially hot issue, because the victim, Khaled El-Masri, had just filed a lawsuit against former CIA Director George Tenet, for the months-long ordeal, which began when he was abducted in December 2003, and secretly flown to Afghanistan, where he was tortured and abused in an attempt to squeeze information out of him. It turned out that El-Masri was the wrong man.

To make matters worse, when El-Masri, who was cleared of all charges and released by the CIA, tried to get into the United States to attend the Dec. 6 filing of his lawsuit, he was prevented from entering by the Department of Homeland Security. The suit was filed anyway, with his attorney, Anthony Romero, telling reporters, "Kidnapping a foreign national for the purpose of detaining and interrogating him outside the law is contrary to American values. Our government has acted as if it is above the law." Speaking to the press via video hook-up, El-Masri said, "I am asking the American government to admit its mistakes and to apologize for my treatment. Throughout my time in the prison, I asked to be brought before a court, but was refused. Now I am hoping that



Stuart Lewis/EIRNS

Sinking fast.

an American court will say very clearly that what happened to me was illegal and cannot be done to others."

After being repeatedly slammed, Rice, on Dec. 7, cited the 1994 U.N. Convention Against Torture—which the U.S. has signed—saying that the use of cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment is prohibited under this treaty and that policy is extended to "U.S. personnel wherever they are, whether they are in the United States or outside of the United States." According to the *New York Times*, Rice herself had instructed her staff to solicit a reporter to ask her about torture, so that she could make this explicit statement. But whether it is sophistry, or a change in policy, away from the Cheney-Addington-Gonzales legal permitting of torture, will be shown by what happens next in Dick Cheney's career, including the upcoming House vote on the anti-torture amendment.

Cheney Sinking Fast

In an insightful commentary published Dec. 9, Ray McGovern, who was an analyst for 27 years with the CIA, and who founded Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS), said that the European reaction to Rice's statements to torture could be summed by what appeared in the Dec. 7 issue of *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, a widely respected German newspaper.

McGovern writes: "Under the title 'Justice à la Rice,' the editor 'translated' her message into these words: 'The end justifies the means and terrorism can be fought with borderline methods on the outer edges of legality. . . . Rice came to Germany to begin a new era . . . [and] resoundingly failed to do so. Injustice remains injustice. . . . On this basis you cannot re-launch the trans-Atlantic relationship.'"

Ironically, it is not Rice, but Cheney, against whom the "erstwhile friends in Europe," were reacting, says McGovern. But, "while the vice president hides behind her skirts," Cheney himself may be held accountable soon. Cheney, writes McGovern, "whose unbridled chutzpah has led him to take public as well as private credit for being the intellectual author of U.S. policy on torture, has become such a glaring liability that his tenure may be short-lived. *There is a growing possibil-*

ity that the vice president will resign at the turn of the year for 'reasons of health,' [emphasis added] and that his partner-in-crime—in what Colin Powell's former chief of staff at the State Department, Col. Lawrence Wilkerson, has labelled the 'Cheney-Rumsfeld cabal'—will choose to retire to his home in Taos early next year."

Indeed, Cheney is sinking fast. But, it must be noted that most people make the mistake in reading history that because it deals with events that have already happened, the outcome was predetermined. Despite all the indicators, and good reasons for Cheney to go, as the LaRouche movement has been insisting since *before* the 2004 elections, it will not happen without a political fight—with no compromises by Republicans like McCain, or by Democrats.

A Record of Crimes

A battle map is required for those who are engaged in this political fight; these events show just how vulnerable Dick Cheney and his neo-con cabal are:

- On Nov. 29, in an interview with BBC, Col. Lawrence Wilkerson, the chief of staff to former U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell from 2001-2005, virtually accused Cheney of war crimes. Asked "Is Dick Cheney then guilty of a war crime?" for allowing torture and the terrorizing of prisoners, Wilkerson answered: "Well, that's an interesting question—it was certainly a domestic crime to advocate terror and I would suspect that it is—for whatever it's worth—an international crime as well."

In the same interview, Wilkerson indicated he could spill the beans on how Cheney's office cooked up false intelligence on Iraq for the disastrous Feb. 5, 2003 speech given by Powell at the UN. He calls that speech the "lowest point" of his life.

- Also Nov. 29, Marine Gen. Peter Pace, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, shocked Washington when he boldly contradicted Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld on the issue of torture, at a Pentagon briefing.

- On Dec. 3, the forged Niger yellowcake documents returned to haunt Cheney and his neo-conservative liars, with press coverage that the FBI had *reopened* the investigation of *who* forged the documents. This time, reported the *Washington Post*, the investigation would look into American citizens as the source of the forgery, and whether the Iraqi National Congress's Ahmed Chalabi was involved. That is *exactly* the direction for the investigation that *EIR* author Jeffrey Steinberg specified in his Nov. 4, 2005 *EIR* article, on Michael Ledeen, White House terrorism "consultant" and leading neo-con.

- On Dec. 5, an article surfaced in the Italian paper *La Repubblica*, quoting a former French counterespionage official, Alain Chouet, who said that his agency had twice investigated the claims that Iraq was buying uranium from Niger, and both times concluded that there was no truth to the report. One report, claims Chouet, occurred before former U.S. Ambassador Joe Wilson made a similar inquiry for the CIA in

February 2002, and one after. Both times, the French told the CIA that the information was bogus.

Several days later, Italian authorities in Rome announced that they are reopening their investigation into the Niger forgeries.

- On Dec. 7, Special Counsel Patrick Fitzgerald, the U.S. Attorney who indicted Cheney's right-hand man, Scooter Libby, for perjury and obstruction of the grand jury, made his first appearance before a new grand jury. Fitzgerald indicted Libby in the probe of who in the White House leaked to the press the identity of Valerie Plame Wilson, a covert CIA agent married to Ambassador Joe Wilson. The most exposed person in the Libby indictment is Cheney, who first revealed Plame's name.

Mama to the Rescue?

In response to this, Cheney has turned to his closest ally: Dr. Lynne Cheney, the "brains" in the family, the Ph.d., author of 8 books, and scholar at the neo-conservative temple, the American Enterprise Institute. But if Dick is a liar, Dr. Lynne Cheney is utterly nuts, with lies so blatant that she may have sunk her husband for good.

On Nov. 30, Mrs. Lynne Cheney took to airwaves of the Diane Rehm Show on National Public Radio to defend Dick against mounting criticism. But she lost her cool when asked by callers about Wilkerson's accusations of her husband's war crimes. Lynne Cheney hissed that the question "doesn't deserve a response." Still determined to defend her man, she resorted to a bold lie—denying that Dick Cheney had ever said there was a connection between Saddam Hussein, al-Qaeda, and the 9/11 attacks! "Dick never said there was a connection, *because there isn't*," she exclaimed.

EIRNS immediately recovered six major instances where Cheney had *insisted* on a connection of the 9/11 hijackers to Iraq—even after the CIA and the DIA had debunked the information. For example, Dick Cheney said the following:

- On March 24, 2002, to NBC: "We discovered . . . the allegation that one of the lead hijackers, Mohamed Atta, had, in fact, met with Iraqi intelligence in Prague."

- On Sept. 14, 2003, to "Meet the Press": "We learned more and more that there was a relationship between Iraq and al-Qaeda that stretched back through most of the decade of the '90s, that it involved training, for example on BW and CW [biological and chemical warfare], that al-Qaeda sent personnel to Baghdad to get trained on the systems that are involved."

Even as late as January 2004, Cheney was citing the Al Qaeda/9-11 connection. Now, these lies are the first things on the agenda of leading members of the Senate Intelligence Committee. Last month, the DIA declassified one document showing that in February 2002, they already knew the information about al-Qaeda training in Iraq was false. Now, Sen. Carl Levin (D-Mich.) has requested the declassification of four more DIA documents on the same subject.