

Whither Pakistan in the new world?

Muriel Mirak-Weissbach reports on a Schiller Institute trip to Pakistan, where she spoke on the third anniversary of LaRouche's political imprisonment.

The author was in Lahore, Punjab, political center of Pakistan, during the week of Jan. 27. As part of the worldwide mobilization to protest the third anniversary of the unjust imprisonment of American statesman Lyndon LaRouche, she addressed clubs, Bar Association groups, delegates from the National Civil Liberties Union, and a group of approximately 30 journalists at the National Press Club, who gathered on only two hours' notice and plied her with serious questions for several hours. She also held numerous private meetings.

She was able to give extensive briefings on the "2255" motion filed in January by Lyndon LaRouche, his attorneys, and two co-defendants, demanding a new trial on the basis of new evidence (details about this history-making legal initiative, supported by massive volumes of previously suppressed evidence, were supplied in our Jan. 31 issue).

Among those in attendance at her Lahore press conference, which was held on Feb. 1, was a retired military officer who became a national hero due to his activities in defense of Iraq. He had campaigned vigorously against Pakistan's participation in the anti-Iraq coalition last year, and through weekly demonstrations, built up a mass movement, which took to the streets in January 1991 in the tens of thousands. The mass ferment had led then-chief of staff Gen. Aslam Beg to denounce the government's pro-American stance. Although he was briefly jailed at the time, and General Beg was "retired," the officer has now been named Pakistan's Man of the Year, in recognition of his courageous stand.

Muriel Mirak-Weissbach is a founding member and spokesman of the Schiller Institute, the think-tank for republican policy founded in Germany and the United States in 1984 under the inspiration of Lyndon LaRouche's wife, Helga Zepp-LaRouche; it has since been established in many other countries. Mrs. Weissbach has also been an active organizer in a humanitarian initiative which the Schiller Institute helped to launch in the wake of Desert Storm: the Committee to Save the Children in Iraq. She has personally traveled to Baghdad, and played a key role in the efforts to supply food relief, as well as to fly injured children from Iraq to Germany for medical treatment no longer obtainable in Iraq under the current sanctions regime.

She is the author of a 1990 book published in Germany,

Das gerechte Krieg: das Rauschgiftkartell besiegen, which means: "The Just War: Victory over the Illegal Drug Cartel," which targets the financial interests "above suspicion" who profit from this evil commerce.

Initially it seemed ironic to many of my interlocutors, that I, an American, could have traveled to Pakistan to talk about human rights violations in my own country. Most Pakistanis believe that violations of this sort are more typical of their own country. Yet, once they had heard the details of the LaRouche case, the legal experts, political personalities, military, and press I talked to not only acknowledged that the violations equaled or even rivaled those they complain of in their own country; they also realized that the LaRouche case made it possible to provide answers for a slew of formerly unsettled questions regarding the workings of international politics.

Most Pakistanis, regardless of their political leanings, feel that they have been given a bum deal by the United States. When it was a matter of opening up the door to China in the early 1970s or fighting the Soviets in Afghanistan through the Mujahideen, Washington seemed more than ready to use its Pakistani connections. Yet now, its job done, Pakistan has been told that it constitutes a threat to world peace due to its alleged possession of nuclear weapons capability. The statements to this effect by Sen. Larry Pressler (D-S.D.), who warned of an "Islamic bomb," were taken in Pakistan to be a bad omen of things to come. Some moot openly the possibility that Pakistan will become the next Iraq. Thus the question often put to me was: "Why does the United States have such a double standard, treating countries of the Third World in one way, those of the West, or even Israel, differently?"

The point stressed in dealing with such questions was straightforward: Since at least 1974, as National Security Council documents penned by Henry Kissinger show, the U.S. government has been committed to a policy of depopulation for the developing sector, through denial of advanced technologies and radical malthusian economic programs. Thus Pakistan, which heads the list of the NSC's top 13 culprit countries, was denied nuclear technology, when Zul-

fikar Ali Bhutto as prime minister tried to introduce it, together with land reform. Kissinger swore he would "make an example" of Bhutto; Bhutto was hanged in 1979. The issue of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, to provide electricity to a country of 110 million souls, has been hotly debated ever since. The consequences of the denial of nuclear power plants make themselves felt sensuously to every Pakistani and visitor, several times a day, as power blackouts occur. These scheduled half-hour interruptions, repeatedly advertised on television, are known as "load sharing."

Counterpole to Kissinger

Once my interlocutors heard that LaRouche had been the main political opponent of Kissinger's policies for the last 20 years, and had campaigned for nuclear power-vectored industrialization of the Third World, things fell into place. Similarly, regarding population policy per se: If Kissinger's view, shared by every administration in Washington since, has been to cut populations to service the debt, LaRouche's has been to sacrifice the debt to develop real social wealth, which is productive labor power. Why LaRouche was in prison suddenly became clear. (It should be added that in Pakistan, where dramatic changes in power elites have convulsed the country's recent history, the notion that an opposition figure would be jailed as a political prisoner corresponds to a concrete reality.)

None of the issues discussed in the context of the LaRouche case was academic, since Pakistan, in the wake of the tumultuous developments of the last three years sweeping Europe and Asia, has found itself, as it were, like a piece of a jigsaw puzzle map that has suddenly been loosened from its earlier position. Members of the country's political and economic elite are therefore animatedly debating all these relevant policy issues, and seeking to define the role that Pakistan should assume in the region, whose political contours have so dramatically changed.

Most obvious is the fact that Pakistan can play a mediating role in developing the economic potential of the five newly freed Central Asian republics of the former U.S.S.R., with which it shares a religious and in some cases cultural heritage. Pakistani press commentary has placed enormous stress on this, pointing out correctly that these five CIS [Community of Independent States] republics, combined with Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan, would represent enormous potential for development.

Yet, the financial and investment policies being proffered by those agencies ostensibly interested in such a perspective, tell another tale. The Damal Maal Al-Islami, a financial institution officially dedicated to Islamic lands' development, told Pakistan it would bankroll such a regional package, but on condition that industry be privatized. This approach is exactly the same taken by international bankers at the recent Davos, Switzerland meeting, where they courted Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. Unfortunately, Sharif has

proven only too willing to acquiesce, and has privatized everything, from airlines and other transportation industries, to power generation and distribution, to telecommunications and banking. However, at the same time that he is implementing Jeffrey Sachs-style shock therapy policies to a weak, underdeveloped economy, Sharif is promising to "Islamicize" the economy. If the ruling handed down by the highest Islamic court, Shariat, is any indication, that would mean ruling out payment of interest on loans—a step that the international banks would surely reject.

Economic problems are immense

Pakistan's economic problems are immense, demanding radically different solutions. The startling social inequality that strikes one immediately, between the very rich few and the very poor multitudes, derives from the simple fact that most of the land is owned by about 22 families, the clans that have ruled as feudal lords traditionally. Those who, under their sway, work the lands for a pittance, have neither education nor social benefits to alleviate their suffering. At the financial top of this pyramid are the drug barons who control one of the world's most productive drug plantations, in the Northwest Frontier Province; they exert total control over their minions, many of them youth kidnaped from urban streets and pressed into slave labor camps. Recently, the government, in a demagogic pitch for "citizens to place resources at the country's disposal," gave the signal to the drug lords that they could bring their narcodollars into the banking system, no questions asked.

People are extremely poor. Though not starving, since the labor-intensive feudal agriculture production does make the country self-sufficient, the vast majority of the population lives in misery. Estimates of literacy range from 20% downward. Some say only 12% of the population can read or write, and only 5% are really educated. Basic infrastructure, whether energy, transportation, or clean water, is pitifully backward.

Thus the responsibility falling on the shoulders of the tiny minority, the country's educated elite, is enormous. As one analyst in the English-language daily *Dawn* commented on the economic debate, "There is nothing that ordinary Pakistanis can do about it except to reject the whole of these policies, lock, stock, and barrel. But before that can happen, others have to provide an alternative set of policies, or call it a new development model. This is not available. That is indicative of the poverty of ideas in Pakistan." The country is indeed ripe for radical social change, and its elite is wide open to bold new alternatives, a fact which explains the warm response given to the Schiller Institute's perspective by numerous Pakistanis. There could not have been a more propitious moment to bring the news to Pakistan, that there is an American, Lyndon LaRouche, unlike those in power, who has been fighting for the right of Third World countries like Pakistan to develop, and who has gone to prison to defend that commitment to development.