

British Have Obama By the Short-Hairs

by Jeffrey Steinberg

The British Fabian press chose the occasion of Super Tuesday, Feb. 5, to make clear to the world what Lyndon LaRouche had been warning for weeks: Democratic Presidential hopeful Barack Obama can be politically destroyed by scandal on a moment's notice. Both the *Guardian* and the *Independent* published detailed stories on Obama's ties to jailed political fixer and slumlord Antoin "Tony" Rezko, one of the earliest political and financial backers of the Illinois Senator's meteoric rise to political prominence.

The *Guardian* headlined its account "Obama-Rezko Link May Be Scrutinized by Republicans." The *Independent* was more lurid: "The Chicago Street Where a Dangerous Secret From Barack Obama's Past Lurks."

On Jan. 28, U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald had Rezko's bail revoked, on the basis of a \$3.5 million wire transfer to Rezko bank accounts, from a London-based Iraqi-born billionaire, Nadhmi Auchi, a man who has been a target of British media scrutiny for years. Fitzgerald contended that Rezko was a flight risk, given his ties to Mideastern countries that do not have extradition treaties with the United States. Rezko was jailed pending his March 3, 2008 trial—a trial that will be occurring against the backdrop of major Democratic primaries.

The Fitzgerald filing stated, in part: "The government has learned there was an approximately \$3.5 million wire transfer in April 2007 of which a substantial portion immediately was directed to Rezko's relatives.... The originator of the wire transfer was identified as General Mediterranean Holdings, SA ('General Mediterranean'). The money was then transferred on April 4, 2007 to another bank account (the 'client funds account') at Northern Trust held by Freeborn. Based on recently obtained records, it appears clear that Rezko has used the approximately \$3.5 million for his benefit without alerting either the government, or, as far as the government knows, the Court."

The Fitzgerald filing explained, "General Mediterranean is owned by Nadhmi Auchi, who public source documents describe as a British-based Iraqi billionaire who was convicted several years ago in France on fraud charges. Auchi was sentenced to 15 months in prison and fined \$2 million euros, but the sentence was suspended as long as Auchi committed no new crimes. Thereafter, in November 2005, after Auchi was unable to enter the United States, Rezko directly appealed to the State Department to permit Auchi to enter the United States and, it appears, asked certain Illinois government officials to do the same."

More Trouble

The Feb. 10 *Chicago Sun-Times* featured a first-ever interview with one of the FBI's key witnesses against Rezko. The informant, Chicago real estate broker John Thomas, a close associate of Rezko, maintained records of Rezko's dealings with Obama and Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich, during 2004-05. According to the paper, "Sources said Thomas also logged frequent visits to Rezko from Gov. Blagojevich and U.S. Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.). Blagojevich and Obama were among the many politicians for whom Rezko raised campaign cash. Neither has been charged with any wrongdoing.... Sources said the government had him wear a hidden wire to record conversations with a Chicago alderman—but that he did not record Blagojevich or Obama."

The *Chicago Tribune* weighed in with a Feb. 10 story by John Kass, which warned that top Illinois Republicans were also in bed with Rezko. On Obama, Kass was deadly: "There are a few who don't consider Obama to be inevitable. They'll be paying close attention to the upcoming federal political corruption trial in Chicago of Obama's personal real estate fairy, indicted political fixer Tony Rezko. You'll be hearing a lot more about 'Operation Board Games,' but don't make the mistake of thinking that it's all about Democrats. It involves Republicans too. Rezko is a pal of the Democratic Gov. Rod 'The Unreformer' Blagojevich. Rezko became involved in the questionable purchase of Obama's home, while under federal investigation. Every politician in Illinois—except for Obama—figured Rezko to be leprous with federal subpoenas. By dancing with Rezko, Obama impeaches his own judgment, and raises questions as to whether he has the presidential stuff. Rezko stands accused of using his Illinois political connections to extort kickbacks and political money from investment firms seeking billions of dollars worth of state business in the investing of state pension funds."

Another exposé of the Obama-Rezko links appeared on Feb. 10 on www.firedoglake.com. It included the following report, originally published in the *Sun-Times*: "Obama is not named in the Dec. 21 court document. But a source familiar with the case confirmed that Obama is the unnamed 'political candidate' referred to in a section of the document that accuses Rezko of orchestrating a scheme in which a firm hired to handle state teacher pension investments first had to pay \$250,000 in 'sham' finder's fees. From that money, \$10,000 was donated to Obama's successful run for the Senate in the name of a Rezko business associate, according to the court filing and the sources.... Rezko, who was part of Obama's senatorial finance committee, also is accused of directing 'at least one other individual' to donate money to Obama and then reimbursing that individual—in possible violation of federal election law."

These revelations represent just the tip of the iceberg, according to U.S. intelligence sources, who confirm that the Rezko trial will be full of surprises.