

# The Mideast peace plan Britain wants to abort

by H. Graham Lowry

"If Israel remains an island of prosperity in a sea of poverty, it will continue to live in a desert of hatred and war," Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres declared on Oct. 3 in an address in Philadelphia. He had just concluded discussions in Washington with President Clinton and Jordan's foreign minister, Crown Prince Hassan, which emphasized that regional cooperation for economic development was the only route to a lasting Middle East peace.

Peres returned to that theme again and again during his visit to the United States, with particular emphasis on such infrastructural projects as water, desalination, and energy development "to transform the landscape," as he put it. With the personal support of President Clinton, that policy approach could bring an end to more than a century of poverty and bloodshed enforced by the British royal family and its unholy offspring throughout the Middle East. It should come as no surprise that the opportunity for peace through development afforded by Clinton's overtures has been given so little public attention—or that the latest round of British-instigated efforts to create turmoil in the region intersected critical negotiations which were under way.

In a background briefing following Clinton's discussions with Hassan and Peres, a senior U.S. official emphasized the issue of economic cooperation. "We spent a lot of time focusing on how you could begin to develop the Jordan Rift Valley, which is the area south of the Dead Sea, down to the Red Sea. Foreign Minister Peres referred to that as a desert, and this is an area that we now have an agreement between the parties on very extensive terms of reference for the development of this area, which means a whole array of projects, involving transportation, water, desalination, energy, exploitation of minerals."

Those proposals are set to be presented to a conference in Casablanca at the end of October, where all the other Arab nations except Syria and Lebanon are expected. The Casablanca conference will also discuss private capital investment in the Jordan Rift and similar development projects in the region.

## Defeating Britain's 'fundamentalist' game

During the background report on the meetings in Washington, another senior administration official emphasized that the strategy of "regional economic development" discussed with Clinton "is the answer that they and we see to the threat of Islamic extremism that manifests itself in various



Shimon Peres at the State Department last February. "We must build a new standard of living throughout the region."

parts of the region." That weapon of political control—the longtime favorite of the British Foreign Office's Middle East Bureau—drew special attention from Peres. In his Oct. 3 address to Philadelphia's Wharton School of International Business and Finance, Peres declared that "fundamentalism is not a new religion. It is a protest, against want and discrimination and need, and we have to take it seriously.

"If we don't change, and the land becomes more desert, and the desert produces poverty, and poverty produces fundamentalists, the fundamentalists will equip themselves not with stones but with highly sophisticated weapons. Then what will we do? It will be too late. We have to defuse the situation before it becomes too late."

Speaking at the University of California at Los Angeles on Oct. 6, Peres reviewed the economic development projects required to build a moral foundation for peace in the Middle East. "We must build a new standard of living throughout the region," he declared. "The Jewish people in history have never dominated another. Those who have dominated us have disappeared. . . . Why should we follow? We must, therefore, stop dominating the Palestinians." The issue is "how to provide water for the land," not how to divide the land, he said. "All of us were created in the image of the Lord, and now is the time to certify it."

In the context of real economic development, even the thorny issue of Israel's long occupation of Syria's Golan Heights has come within negotiable resolution. Following a meeting with President Clinton and top administration officials on Oct. 7, Syria's Foreign Minister Farouk Al-Shara insisted on the return of the Golan Heights "and the other occupied territories to the Arab side, in order to pave the way for sure, to a just and comprehensive peace and real peace in the region, where the Israelis would benefit perhaps more

than the Arabs in the era of peace.”

Syria’s foreign minister also spoke of possibilities which only have meaning if the United States determines it will no longer be the enforcer for British subjugation of the Middle East. Syria hopes, Al-Shara said, “not only to achieve peace, but to take care about the fruits of peace, and this is not only an interest of the Arab side, or the Israeli side. It is in the interest of the whole world at large. Our priority is to develop the region in a way where the whole people of the region would benefit, would get more education, a better standard of living, to see our region more prosperous and to see our region contributing as we did in the past, in the ancient history, to the advancement of technology, not only in being a recipient of high-technology.

“We have many scientists, many engineers of great quality; but [in] the environment in the Middle East at the moment, because of lack of peace, you cannot achieve the bright future that we are seeking or looking forward to seeing. We are optimistic for the future.”

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Interview: M. Z. Nashashibi

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## The Middle East needs clean nuclear energy

*Mr. Muhammed Nashashibi is the finance minister of the Palestinian National Authority. He was interviewed by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach during the international conference of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in Madrid on Oct. 5.*

**EIR:** What are the obstacles to implementing infrastructure projects in Gaza and Jericho?

**Nashashibi:** From our side there are no obstacles; we have built our institutions, we have established our accounting system, which proves that it is transparent and accountable, so we are ready to start in cooperation with the World Bank as the representative of the donors, to start implementing infrastructure projects. Especially, we have elected and decided on the managing consultant, which was requested by the World Bank to supervise the procedure for implementing projects.

**EIR:** If there are no obstacles on your side, where are the obstacles?

**Nashashibi:** They are in the bureaucracy of the World Bank and maybe there are undeclared reasons linked with early empowerment and things of the sort.

**EIR:** What do you think is the single most important economic problem to be solved?

**Nashashibi:** The most important economic problem that we face is to implement projects that create jobs, raise the standard of living of people, and meet the essential needs in housing, education, health, transport, and telecommunications.

**EIR:** In terms of economic development of the region, what is the primary factor?

**Nashashibi:** The water problem. This should be solved first by regaining our share of the natural sources of water that are available right now, which are being looted—or I could use the term, “confiscated”—by the Israelis. And we, Syria, and Jordan should regain our right to the water resources, namely, the Jordan River, the Yarmouk River, and the underground water in the West Bank and in Gaza. Then we can talk about desalination projects.

Only God can create rivers, but we can create other sources, and desalination, although it may appear at present to be a bit expensive, is necessary. One day will come when you have to choose between life and water, and at that stage, it is not important how much it costs, because at that moment it becomes a question of life or death. I am sure that with advanced technology, the cost of desalination of water will go down, especially if we use nuclear energy as a source—by that I mean clean nuclear energy, as a source of energy for desalination of water and production of electricity.

**EIR:** Have you talked to people from countries that produce these technologies? Have you proposed it to them?

**Nashashibi:** I have discussed it in more than one country. I don’t want to mention names, but it is known that such projects are functioning in at least four countries, and I think that is proof enough to world public opinion that this type of energy is a clean source of energy which could be the sustainable source of energy in the future.

**EIR:** Have these producer countries shown interest in transferring this technology, to Gaza, for example?

**Nashashibi:** I must say that I am grateful for the deep understanding on the part of these countries of the issue of desalination of water and the role of clean nuclear energy, whether for generating electric energy or for desalinating water, or both at the same time. This is something for the projects of the future, when other sources of energy will come to an end.

The programs of technical assistance presented to us from international organizations do not constitute a genuine transfer of technology, which is what we need the most. They promise very ordinary training courses, for technical assistance, at a time when we need to absorb, if I may use this word, modern and sophisticated technology. This is the main road to achieve genuine economic development: through science and technology.