

of Mideast water resources, dating from 1976, was re-issued and published as the "Oasis Plan for the Middle East." This was widely circulated among diplomats in the United States, Europe, and in the Middle East.

The development bank, however, was a hard-sell in the U.S. Congress. Since Israel's Yitzhak Rabin government had accepted the Oslo Accord, the Likud party supporters of "Greater Israel" mobilized of their "amen corner" in Congress to sabotage the plans. Both the development bank and the water projects were quickly relegated to the sidelines. And the "free marketeers" in the Clinton White House, trying to placate the Congressional opposition, tried to transform the "development bank" into a merchant bank, operating on "market principles." The economic issues, more broadly, were downgraded into "secondary issues."

Discussions continued and an interim agreement was signed on Sept. 28, 1995, which provided for elections for the 88-seat Palestinian Assembly, the release of Israeli-held prisoners, and a phased withdrawal of Israeli troops from the West Bank cities. The IDF withdrew from the West Bank cities by the end of 1995, and the Palestinian Assembly was elected on Jan. 20, 1996, and sworn in on March 7, 1996. According to this Taba Agreement (Oslo II), the final status issues, including Jerusalem, refugees, water, and the settlements, were to be concluded by October 1999, by which time the occupation was to be over.

But then on Nov. 4, 1995, a Jewish extremist, Yigal Amir, shot and killed Yitzhak Rabin, as he was leaving an election rally sponsored by Peace Now in Tel Aviv. Amir had tried twice before to kill Rabin, and there was much suspicion that there was collusion by the Shin Beth, the internal Israeli security forces. Rabin's death effectively eliminated the Israeli "partner" to the Oslo agreements. In 1996, the Likud's Benjamin Netanyahu was elected as Prime Minister. Under Netanhayu, peace made no progress whatsoever. The Taba Accords were never carried out, and settlements continued unabated on the West Bank. Netanyahu, under pressure from the Clinton Administration, made another agreement at a summit at the Wye River Plantation in Maryland, which renegotiated the second IDF redeployment (from those areas under joint Israeli and Palestinian control) into two phases, only one of which was ever carried out.

The election of Labor Party candidate Ehud Barak in 1999 led to an added push by both Clinton and Barak to clinch a deal, with Arafat embracing all the issues, including Jerusalem, return of refugees, and the settlements; but the political time-tables of the two created serious problems. While Barak went into the agreement with significant concessions, they by no means resolved all the outstanding issues, including the most sensitive issue: the status of Jerusalem, which both parties viewed as their religious and political capital. For his own election purposes, Barak needed an agreement "locked in" by Arafat's acceptance of the entire package. Under those conditions, Arafat had to decline. In spite of a previous agreement between the parties that no one would be held to blame, if

a deal could not be made, President Clinton foolishly blamed Arafat publicly for failure of the talks, thereby beginning the "elimination" of Arafat from the process.

With the election of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in 2000, the peace process went into a tailspin, with acceleration of new settlements, increased violence, and a de facto re-occupation of most of those areas from which Israeli troops had withdrawn. On Nov. 10, 2000, President George W. Bush, in a speech to the United Nations, called for the first time for the establishment of a Palestinian state.

During the following months, the Sharon government intense lobbying helped to prevent any motion. Nevertheless, President Bush, in a Rose Garden speech on June 24, 2002, announced that he was committed to move forward on Mideast peace negotiations leading to a conclusion of final status issues within three years. With the strong criticism against the Iraq war in the Muslim world, President Bush also found it necessary to reiterate, on March 14, that he was preparing to issue the road map. At that point, he also made it clear that the "Palestinian leadership reform" he was calling for, meant the total "sidelining" of Palestinian President Yasser Arafat. Advisors to Vice President Dick Cheney had long been demanding that Arafat be taken out of the peace process. The Palestinian leadership had little choice: After turbulent negotiations, Abu Mazen was named Palestinian Prime Minister.

President Bush is going to have to lean hard on Sharon, if the peace process is to go anywhere. Further, the "Greater Israel" fanatics around U.S. Reps. Tom DeLay (R-Tex.) and Sam Brownback (R-Kan.) are already mobilizing their church groupies to stop all talk of a road map, and to blackmail Bush with the pull-out of Christian fundamentalist support for the 2004 elections. And the chicken-hawks over in Rummy's Pentagon policy shop will probably try to start a new war, to divert the whole process. Will President Bush, recently playing his tough-guy image to the hilt, be tough enough to take on this array of forces?

LaRouche's 25-Year 'Oasis Plan' Campaign

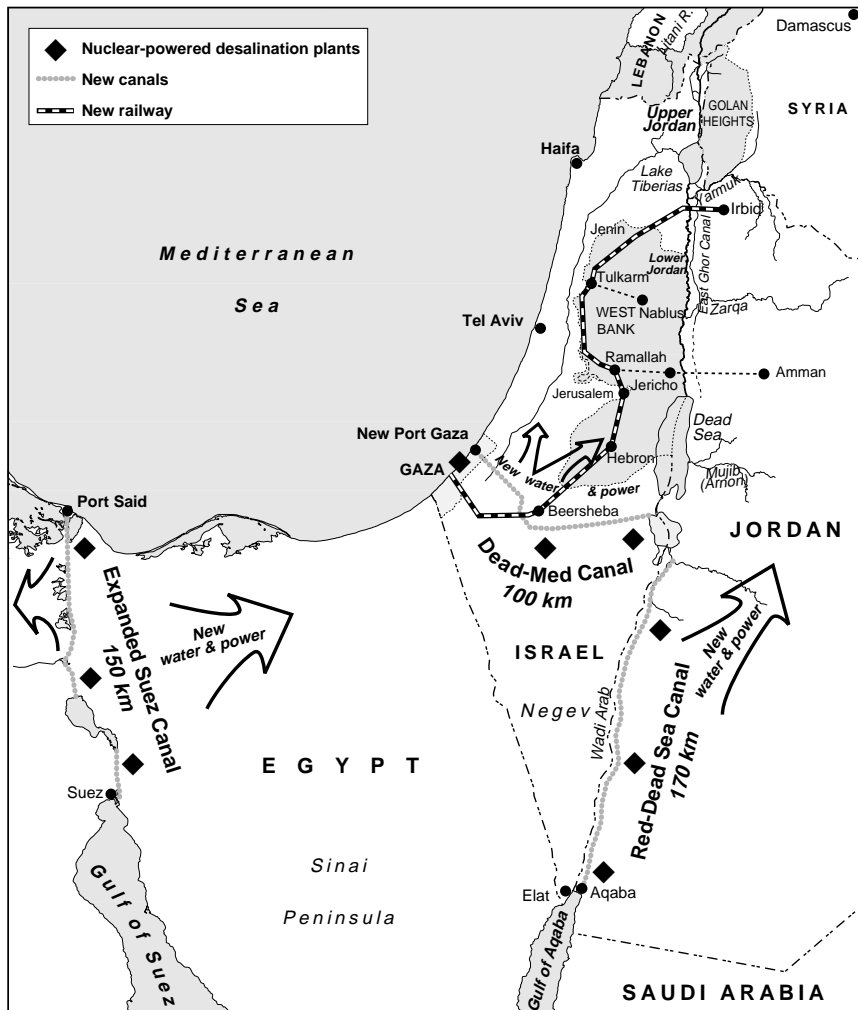
by Marcia Merry Baker

In 1975, Lyndon LaRouche issued a policy proposal in Berlin, for an International Development Bank (IDB) to back priority regional economic programs in the mutual interest of nations in key regions of the world. Foremost among these was the Middle East, which LaRouche had just visited. During the same period, he conferred in Europe with Israeli and Palestinian leaders.

The strategic elements of LaRouche's IDB involved providing, through high-technology means, ample water, power,

FIGURE 2

Features of the LaRouche ‘Oasis Plan’



and related infrastructure to meet the long-term needs of all in the region. Not simply a peace plan, LaRouche’s proposal was a response to the fast-diminishing water resource base in these arid lands, which, since then, has reached the crisis stage. Throughout the 1980s, he was in active dialogue with policymakers in the region.

In July 1990, LaRouche spoke specifically of an “Oasis Plan” approach. He stated on July 12, 1990, “To avoid a conflict which would be ruinous for all peoples and nations of the Middle East, an effective series of common interest proposals must be made in accord with the rights of all parties. Debate around such proposals is inherently healthy and confidence-building. Although to some, an Oasis Plan seems an unlikely proposition under the present circumstances, the price of failing to implement such a program will be staggering. Therefore, there is no obstacle so great,

nor so difficult, that we should not seek to overcome it in order to further economic cooperation.”

In September 1993, the signing of the historic Oslo Peace Accord, with its economic development protocols, including water provisions, seemed to provide the miracle opportunity—but the initiatives were thwarted.

In January 1997, elements of the kind of program LaRouche describes as the “Oasis Plan” were shown on a map—reproduced here, in an EIR Special Report, *The Eurasian Land-Bridge* (January 1997).

In July 2000, once again, an attempted peace summit was convened—with water included as a topic—between President Clinton, Palestinian Liberation Organization Chairman Arafat, and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, but it broke down. On Aug. 6, 2000, LaRouche wrote a policy document, “Water As a Strategic Flank: Wherein Clinton Failed,” on the necessity of a “desalination-based economic development program we first presented to relevant Arabs, Israelis, and others a quarter-century ago”—the “Oasis Plan.” He warned, “In most of the region, and especially for the largest portions of the area, there simply do not exist sources of supply of usable water sufficient to meet the elementary needs of the population. Hence, without large-scale desalination programs being put immediately into operation, there is no hope for durable peaceful relations

among the populations of this region.”

Again visiting the region, LaRouche gave a presentation on May 26, 2002, “The Middle East as A Strategic Crossroad,” at the Zayed Center in Dubai, stressing the scientific potential we have for geo-engineering to create new environments. “The characteristic of that portion of a predominantly Islamic civilization, which extends from Asia’s “roof of the world,” westward, through the Middle East, and across northern Africa, is the continuing struggle against the aridization which has continued during approximately the past 6-8,000 years. . . . The development of fresh-water production and management, which is interlinked with the role of petroleum, is the indispensable foundation for all other optimistic prospects for a peaceful and politically stable internal development of the Middle East region. . . . There will be no peace without adequate provision of water.”