

II. The Future Is Now

Kra Canal: ‘One of the Greatest Achievements of Modern History’

by Michael Billington

June 2—One of the truly great infrastructure projects for transforming the future of mankind, the Kra Canal, has recently been given a new and powerful impulse from several directions simultaneously. The Chinese call it the “golden waterway.” It has drawn serious study and support from nations across Asia and the

West. It was recently called “China’s Panama Canal” by one of America’s leading strategic scholars. Although it will be located in southern Thailand, it will immediately benefit all of the nations of South Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Asia, while also enhancing the economies of Europe, the Mideast, and the Americas.



Map showing proposed site of the Kra Canal, and how it would provide an alternative to the Malacca Strait shipping choke point. <http://kracanal-maritimesilkroad.com/en/>



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Lyndon LaRouche in dialogue with the audience after speaking at the EIR-sponsored Development of the Pacific and Indian Ocean Basins conference, 1983.

The concept of digging a canal across the Isthmus of Kra in southern Thailand, linking the Gulf of Thailand with the Andaman Sea, while also linking the entire Pacific and Indian Ocean basins, has been in men's minds since at least 1677, when Thai King Narai called on French engineers to do a survey and feasibility study. It reappeared several times in the Nineteenth Century, but ultimately the British crushed the idea in order to maintain control of the waterways in Asia through their colonial outpost in Singapore, keeping the Malacca Strait as a strategic choke point.

In the 1980s, the project was nearly successfully launched, through the effort of Thai political leaders who called upon Japan's visionary thinker, Masaki Nakajima, who headed the Mitsubishi Global Infrastructure Fund (GIF), and Lyndon LaRouche, who found in Nakajima a true partner in the idea that "Great Projects" linking nations and regions of the world, including emphatically the Kra Canal, were the necessary precondition for ending the British Empire once and for all, and introducing an era of "peace through development" based on the common good.

This collaboration, which resulted in two international conferences in Bangkok in 1983 and 1984, co-sponsored by the Thai government and LaRouche's *Executive Intelligence Review*, the magazine you are reading, could have succeeded, but for the onset of the

British-run "post-industrial society" fraud and financial warfare against especially the United States and Japan. Only now, as the world is experiencing the emergence of a new paradigm, centered in China, Russia, and India, to counter the bankrupt hulk of the British Empire's European and American satrapies, is the possibility of building the Kra Canal again presenting itself to mankind.

As LaRouche said upon learning of the new developments reported here, "the building of the Kra Canal is crucial for all waters and all nations in the region, linking India and South Asia to

China and the other East Asian nations. Were it to be done, it would be one of the greatest achievements of modern history."

He pointed to the importance of the fact that the near success of the project in the 1980s was the result of his close cooperation with leading forces in Japan, and that Japan is now taking steps to break away from the western war policy in favor of economic cooperation with Russia and China in the development of Asia and the world.

Two Crucial Interventions

Two events on the same day, May 30, mark the new impulse for the Kra Canal project—the leading Thai government advisory body and a leading U.S. China scholar both issued reports promoting the benefits of building the Kra Canal in southern Thailand.

Thailand's National Reform Steering Assembly (NRSA), the 200-strong advisory body on legal and developmental matters formed by Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha last year, has proposed to the Prime Minister, according to the *Bangkok Post*, a networking plan to build the canal.

General Harn Leenanond, former commander of the 4th Army Region and chief project adviser, said the proposal "aims to stimulate the economies in the southern provinces, and create jobs," with "spin-off effects



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Gen. Saiyud Kerdphol, former Supreme Commander of the Thai Armed Forces, shown here addressing the 1984 EIR Bangkok Conference. He is flanked by (left to right) Pakdee Tanapura of Thailand; Dr. Zainuddin Bahari of Malaysia's Institute for Strategic and Economic Studies; Dr. Norio Yamamoto of Japan; Dr. Svasti Srisukh, former Thai secretary general of the Office of Atomic Energy for Peace; K.L. Dalal, former Indian Ambassador to Thailand; and Dr. H. Roeslan Abdulgam, adviser to Indonesian President Suharto.

Prime Minister Prayuth rejected the immediate launching of the project on the grounds that the canal would “divide” Thailand and encourage the Muslim insurgents in the region to declare independence of the southernmost provinces. This issue had already been addressed at the 1983 conference as a failure of policy makers internationally—especially in the era of “post-industrial society” propaganda from the international financial institutions—to grasp the

concept presented by Pope Paul VI in his 1968 encyclical “Populorum Progressio,” that “Development is the new name for peace.” In fact, the New Silk Road Economic Belt and the New Maritime Silk Road launched by Xi Jinping in 2013, as well as the Chinese-initiated Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), are based on precisely that principle, which President Xi identifies as “win-win,” and which Helga Zepp-LaRouche refers to as the “common aims of mankind.”

for the national economy.” The *Post* added that the Thai-Chinese Culture and Economy Association (TCCEA), co-chaired by *EIR*’s associate in Thailand Pakdee Tanapura, together with private sector interests, have spent more than a year preparing a plan for launching the canal project, as seen on the TCCEA website, [The Kra Canal—New Gateway to Maritime Silk Road](#). The increasing Chinese interest in the canal as part of Xi Jinping’s New Maritime Silk Road has breathed new life into the concept.

In this case, the Kra Canal complex, as a major industrial growth-spot, would not divide the nation, but would function as an integrating and unifying factor, joining together the southern, central, and northern provinces in a large common endeavor capable of inspiring the entire nation, uplifting the economic condition of the more impoverished southern population, and thereby reducing the potential for dissatisfaction and dissension, while also uniting all the Pacific and Indian Ocean nations around a common development hub.

Prime Minister Prayuth, asked about the proposal, repeated his policy that it is not the right time, pointing to security issues in the region. Nonetheless, the public support from the NRSA, which has representation from government, military, and royalty, and academic and private sectors, demonstrates the increasing support for the concept within the country.

The 1983 *EIR*/Thai Government conference in Bangkok, titled “The Development of the Pacific and Indian Ocean Basins,” presented the Kra Canal, together with plans for construction of new deep-water ports at either end, and industrial zones in adjacent areas, as the central hub of an Asia-wide development approach, based on projects including the development of the Mekong River basin, major water control projects in China, and water and power projects in the Ganges-Brahmaputra region of India. The intention was to counter the already well-advanced collapse of the world economy into a “post industrial” junk heap and speculative bubble.

Gen. Harn, who, as mentioned, presented the NRSA proposal to launch the Canal to the Prime Minister on May 30, also spoke at the *EIR* conference in Bangkok in 1984. As Commander of the southern-based Thai Fourth Army, he was known for bringing peace to the South through a process of cooperation with the local population and the promotion of development. He insisted in his presentation in 1984 that the Kra Canal was precisely what was needed to unify the population of



EIA/U.S. Department of Energy

The major crude oil trade flows in the South China Sea (2011), shown in millions of barrels per day, that pass through the Strait of Malacca.

Thailand. The 1983 and 1984 conferences presented a highly developed scheme for the Canal. A feasibility study commissioned by K.Y. Chow of the Thai Oil Refining Company was completed in 1973 by the American engineering firms Tippetts-Abbett-McCarthy-Stratton (TAMS) and Robert R. Nathan Associates, in collaboration with the U.S. Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory.

Leading representatives of all the Southeast Asian nations—with the exception of Singapore—were in attendance at one or both of the two Bangkok Conferences of 1983 and 1984. Representatives of TAMS and Lawrence Livermore travelled to Thailand to speak, and leading political and business figures from Japan and India participated. Thai Minister of Communications Samak Sundaravej opened the Conference, saying that, “If the Kra Canal is possible, then we should dedicate it to the world.” A financial plan was presented by Bangkok Bank Vice President and Chief Economist Dr. Nimit Nontapunthawat.

Today, the AIIB, as well as China’s \$20 billion New Maritime Silk Road fund, are obvious potential sources of funding for the project. As for Japan, Dr. Norio Yamamoto who, as a deputy to Mr. Nakajima at the GIF, spoke

at the 1984 conference in Bangkok, is still with the GIF and is collaborating with Pakdee Tanapura, promoting the project both within Thailand and at a number of conferences in China. Also in Japan, Daisuke Kotegawa, a former Ministry of Finance official and Japanese representative to the IMF who is now at the Canon Institute, has shown that the Kra Canal, as a project of great benefit to both China and Japan, is the perfect project for the collaboration of those two nations to overcome strategic tensions by joining forces with Thailand to achieve their common win-win benefit.

U.S. Strategic Scholar Presents Reality

In the United States, Prof. Lyle Goldstein, a China scholar (and Russian scholar) at the China Maritime Studies Institute at the Naval War College, published an insightful analysis of the Kra Canal (a rarity in the United States), analyzing the increasing support for the Canal within China, under the title, “Will This Be China’s Panama Canal?” Noting the dramatic economic and cultural benefits of linking the Pacific and Indian Ocean basins through the Canal, Goldstein says the Canal could become the “main act” to the “side-show” being orchestrated by Obama in the South China Sea.

He points also to China’s concern over the “Malacca dilemma,” the overcrowding of traffic in the Strait of Malacca and the danger of the United States closing off the strait in a military move against China.

Goldstein takes note of the difficulties, especially the political restraints within Thailand. But he concludes, significantly: “Washington would do well to maintain an agnostic or even modestly supportive disposition toward projects that help knit Eurasian peoples and markets closer together. The Kra Canal is hardly a threat to U.S. national security and . . . is mainly an issue for the people of Thailand to decide upon.”