

The Promise of Oslo, and Today, Lies in Economic Development

by EIR Staff

From 1976 forward, economist Lyndon LaRouche had argued that the only possible route to a lasting, or developing, peace between the Palestinians and the Israelis, would be through the adoption of an economic development plan that would demonstrate to both populations that the conditions of peace and cooperation were to the benefit of themselves and their posterity. Over time, LaRouche's proposal came to be known as the "Oasis Plan," especially because it revolved around the development of new water resources for the now water-starved region. This plan was the subject of intensive organizing activity with Israelis, Palestinians, and representatives of other nations as well.

The potential for its realization appeared most likely at the time of the announcement of the Oslo Accords, which were made public at the beginning of September 1993. For not only did those accords lay out provisions for political accommodation, but they included economic annexes (III and IV), which defined areas of cooperation in the fields of water, electricity, energy, and transportation, among others. The second annex also proposed cooperation on regional development programs.

Not surprisingly, these areas were precisely the ones which LaRouche had specified for years, and he threw himself, and his supporters, into an emergency mobilization to realize the opportunity. LaRouche, who was in prison at that time, responded to the news of Oslo by insisting that crucial projects had to begin—ground had to be broken for them—by the end of September, in order to create and preserve the momentum behind the Accords. In an interview Sept. 8, 1993, LaRouche said:

"The urgent thing here is that we must move with all speed to *immediately* get these economic development projects, such as the canal from Gaza to the Dead Sea, going, because *if we wait until we discuss this thing out, enemies of progress and enemies of the human race, such as Kissinger and his friends, will be successful, through people like Sharon's buddies, in intervening to drown this agreement in blood and chaos.*"

Israeli-Palestinian Agreement

There were leading factions on both the Israeli and Palestinian sides who agreed with LaRouche. Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, who crafted the agreement on the Israeli side along with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, had been cam-

paigned since 1985 for a Marshall Plan for the Middle East, on the order of magnitude of \$50 billion. In September 1993, he called for implementing the economic agreements, in order to "convert the bitter triangle of Jordanians, Palestinians, and the Israelis into a triangle of political triumph and economic prosperity. . . . Let us build a Middle East of hope, where today's food is produced and tomorrow's prosperity is guaranteed, a region with a common market, a Near East with a long-range agenda."

Peres's words were effectively seconded by PLO Executive Committee member Mahmoud Abbas, known by his *nom de guerre* Abu Mazen, who had been the chief negotiator for the accord on the Palestinian side: "Economic development is the principal challenge facing the Palestinian people after years of struggle, during which our national infrastructure and institutions were overburdened and drained. We are looking to the world for its support and encouragement in our struggle for growth and development which begins today."

Astute observers will note that this Abu Mazen is the very same individual who is at the head of the Palestinian Authority today, having participated, with Yasser Arafat, in the peace process for more than a decade. Such a continuity contrasts sharply with developments on the Israeli side, where Oslo architect Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated by an Israeli extremist in 1995.

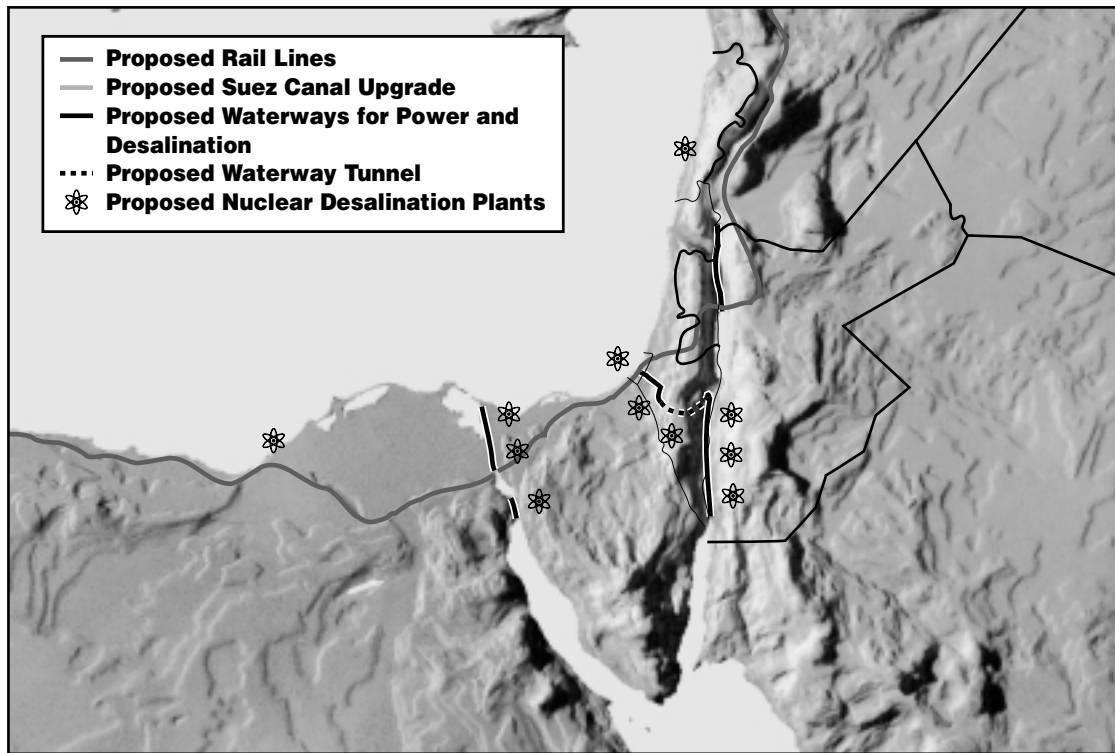
In fact, the definitive blow that was delivered against the rapid economic development plan envisioned in the Oslo Accords, came neither from the Israelis nor the Palestinians. It came from the international community, which not only refused to step forward with the necessary resources and credit, but also threw its support behind the plans of the World Bank. The World Bank, which held a conference on Sept. 20, 1993, refused outright to fund the heavy infrastructure projects, especially in the field of water and energy, which were absolutely required for progress to be made. As a result of the failure to implement an economic development plan, economic conditions have worsened in the region, "proving," particularly to the Palestinians, that peace does not pay.

The Oasis Plan

As LaRouche has argued consistently, there is no possibility of the peoples of the Israel-Palestine-Jordan-Syria area living in peace, unless there is development of *new* water resources. The Jordan River Valley, on which all these nations

FIGURE 1

LaRouche's 'Oasis Plan' for Development of Middle East Crossroads



depend, has a water flow that can support less than *half* of the people living the region, and it is getting more inadequate all the time.

Thus, the core of LaRouche's plan consists of water development and management programs, buttressed by projects for transportation, energy production, and industrial and agricultural growth. The supply of water must be drastically increased, through the creation of what LaRouche called new "man-made River Jordans." This, he argued, depends absolutely upon the use of nuclear energy, for both energy and desalination.

An overview of these projects is shown on the relief map included here, which comprises the broader region. You will notice two canals, one linking the Mediterranean with the Dead Sea, and another linking the Red Sea to the Dead Sea. These links require large-scale desalination through the use of fourth-generation meltdown-proof high-temperature nuclear reactors, which would simultaneously provide abundant electrical energy for the people of the region. The general locations for such nuclear-powered desalination facilities are marked on the map.

Such waterways would be vital for improvement of transport as well, and along the canals and reservoirs, LaRouche proposed building "nuplexes," complexes of nuclear power and industrial-agricultural production. Complementing them would be the construction of railroad lines, necessary for the

movement of people and freight.

LaRouche's Oasis Plan also included a "soft infrastructure" component, involving the provision of housing, health care, education, and all manner of social infrastructure. But such improvements in living standard would be absolutely impossible to sustain, without the agro-industrial base fed by *new* and adequate water resources. In turn, the provision of those resources absolutely depends upon the use of nuclear power.

Such plans for the region were not unique to LaRouche. Back in the 1950s, the men who successfully established the Tennessee Valley Authority in the United States, had worked up a plan for the Jordan Valley Authority, which they presented to the nations of the region and the UN. The political combination required to fund such projects, was never realized at that time, and in the later "post-industrial" period, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and international bankers exercised their veto.

Today, with the whole of the Southwest Asian region on the very edge of a new explosion—between the Israel-Palestine region and Iraq—there is a new urgency for putting the Oasis Plan on the table. A commitment from *outside* the region, to fund and otherwise support such projects is a *sine qua non* for reversing the pessimism of both the Palestinian and Israeli people, and building the basis for stability, which could grow into lasting peace and prosperity.