Mexico's PLHINO Project

The following is excerpted from "U.S. and Mexico: Cooperate on Great Water Projects," by Dennis Small, EIR*, Dec. 7, 2007.*

Mexico has too much water . . . and also too little. The Southeast is virtually floating on water, and the North and Center of the country are bone dry. That is an oversimplification, of course, but it makes the essential point. So the great challenge in Mexico has always been to take the water from where it is abundant, and transfer it to where it is not.

The PLHINO does just that.

The project was conceptualized in the mid-1960s, and systematized as a hydraulic plan in the early 1970s. Since that time, LaRouche and his associates in Mexico have consistently campaigned for its implementation.

At a Nov. 9, 2007 conference in the state of Sonora … a new, detailed design for the PLHINO was presented by the distinguished Mexican engineer Manuel Frías Alcaraz. In his design, approximately 75% of the runoff from five underutilized rivers on the central Pacific Coast of Mexico would be used to feed a canal running northwestward along the Pacific Coast, with a combined flow of 220 m^3/second of water (about 7 km^3/yr.). These five rivers (San Pedro, Acaponeta, Baluarte, Presidio, and Piaxtla) would each have new dams constructed upstream, and they would be connected by a series of four tunnels (ranging in length from 21 to 33 kilometers, with 7-meter-diameter tubing), which would gradually bring the water down by gravity from 570 meters above sea level at the first dam, to 370 meters above sea level at the last one.

From the Piaxtla reservoir at 370 meters above sea level, Frías then proposes to construct a series of canals, pumping stations, and smaller dams and tunnels that would transfer the accumlated 220 m^3/sec of water all the way to the Yaqui River in Sonora.

This would create an artificial river some 460 km in length, which is comparable to the 580-km-long Santiago River, the country's seventh largest. And what nature took a million years to do, we can accomplish in a decade, Frías emphasized. The total PLHINO project is estimated to take ten years to complete, with an annual investment of about $1 billion—"monetary resources equivalent to [Mexico's] purchase of food for only one year," according to Frías.

The 7 km^3 of transferred water, along with additional amounts gathered directly underground by the tunnel tubes, will allow for the irrigation of 330,000 hectares of new farmland in the state of Sinaloa, and another 470,000 hectares in Sonora—for a total of 800,000 hectares opened to farming by the PLHINO.