

## Editorial

### *A real development plan is needed*

On Oct. 29, the Middle East and North African Economic Conference opened, with 2,000 people participating from 63 nations. The topic on the table was development for the area.

One of the major agenda items was to bring into existence a Bank for Economic Cooperation and Development for the Middle East and North Africa. Associated with this, is the formation of the Middle East-Mediterranean Travel and Tourism Associates and a business council for the region. This was supported by American and Jordanian spokesmen, who emphasized that it would involve a regional partnership among Israel, Jordan, Egypt, and Palestine, with support from the United States, Canada, Japan, Italy, and the Netherlands.

Certainly such a collaborative project, including former enemies, is a good harbinger for the peace process; but German Economics Minister Günter Rexrodt made a cogent criticism, when he stated that Germany wanted to invest "right away," in infrastructure, water development, other technologies, and vocational education. While it is true that the bank will invest in infrastructure projects that will have regional benefits, this is planned to be done as a support to private industry. State-owned enterprises, under the present plan, would need to be in the process of privatization to qualify for such funds.

On Nov. 2, in the weekly radio show "EIR Talks," Lyndon LaRouche remarked that it is too early to evaluate this new development perspective for the area. "It is not a standalone," he said, but its success depends upon what happens in other sectors of the world. "The effort, in general, of course, is a noble one," he said, but "there are many mistakes and many compromises which could prove fatal to the whole business."

His point was that the whole project can be destroyed by compromise with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank on the question of austerity conditionalities. Moreover, he warned, "if the World Bank proposals and the IMF proposals for the region are accepted, there is no possibility for maintaining peace in the Middle East."

He also criticized the attempt to put up what he called, "soft" options, like tourism and industries involving cheap labor, in place of the needed large-scale infrastructure development projects. For example, he said, "there is not enough water from so-called natural sources in the Middle East to allow for peaceful cohabitation of the region, by its existing population. Without the input of new water, which must be synthesized and for which there must be the delivery infrastructure and supply, along with sanitation measures," there is no possibility of peace in the Middle East.

LaRouche has advocated just this sort of development since 1975, as the only road to peace in the region. "If we win," he said, referring to acceptance of his proposals, rather than those supported by the IMF and World Bank, "then there will be peace," not otherwise.

In our Jan. 1 issue of this year, LaRouche's Oasis Plan for the Middle East was presented. The Oasis Plan includes a proposal for high-speed rail lines connecting Africa and Asia to Europe; water projects, along with nuclear desalination; the building of four modular nuclear power units for desalinating seawater, which would use a safe thorium cycle; and also the introduction of the General Atomics-designed modular high-temperature gas-cooled reactor.

Specifically, the 25-mile-long and 5-mile-wide Gaza Strip, which has 800,000 residents, must receive massive development assistance. One exciting such proposal which originated from the Israeli government in 1994, called for port developments and transportation links to the West Bank, along with a fuel pipeline, and the Mediterranean Sea-Dead Sea Canal project. This report, which designated the region as the "Western Region Development Center," also called for building basic utility projects, including 26 water treatment plants.

It was this kind of vision which may have been lacking in the Middle East and North African Economic Conference. The possibilities for peace through development still exist, but such a window of opportunity will not remain open for long, unless such plans are implemented.