LaRouche's 1991 Call for Middle East Development

In January, 1991, the first Iraq War began, with U.S. bombing raids against that nation. In April 1991, Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., through his Presidential campaign committee, Democrats for Economic Recovery, LaRouche in '92, issued a mass-circulation pamphlet: "Demand Development in the Middle East! Stop Bush's Genocidal New World Order." LaRouche's statement in the pamphlet warned of a new Thirty Years War in the Mideast, and called instead for "A Peace Plan in the True Interest of Arabs and Israelis," in which he said to look broadly "at the tactics of economic geography." Build up the resource base with high-technology intervention, to involve all peoples in a productive, growing economy, and create an economic platform of hope and growth for the future. LaRouche presented his Oasis Plan, for nuclear-powered, high-tech creation of water resources, and agro-industrial capacity.

LaRouche capped off his proposal by stressing, "The essential underlying principle is the relationship of man to nature. Man is unlike any other creature, in that man's relationship to nature is defined by the potential for creative reason in man."

The 30-page document ended with the section, excerpted below, by Marcia Merry Baker, reviewing the economic-geographic projects urgently required in the greater Southwest Asian region at that time. These projects were all blocked over the past two decades, in line with the outlook made explicit at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, that water scarcity is inevitable, and can only be managed. This is, in effect, an outlook associated with strife, as has been promoted by British geo-strategists in the Mideast, in particular since the Sykes-Picot Treaty that divided up the area among imperial powers after World War I. Allowing this to continue today, puts us on the edge of World War III.

This 1991 report embodies the radical shift in outlook we must force through today, which can be done with the LaRouchePAC NAWAPA XXI action plan. The particulars of the Mideast situation have only become more extreme since this survey was written. There are more people, but less water, less hope, and more suffering and desperation.

Development, Not War, In the Mideast; Build Rivers And Lakes in the Desert

The central development issue in the Mideast is water. The Persian Gulf region is situated in the center of the vast expanse of desert stretching from leeward of the Atlas Mountains in west Africa, all the way across the Sahara and the Arabian Deserts to arid west India. The land area of the Mideast—taken to comprise Libya and Egypt, through to Iran, and including Turkey—amounts to 3.5 million square miles, or more than the 3.0 million miles square of the lower 48 states of the U.S.A. There are 246 millions of people in the Mideast, comparable to the 250 millions in the United States.

However, precipitation is almost non-existent in most of the Mideast. Even if the crazed Anglo-American leaders had not begun their genocidal warfare, the lack of sufficient water per capita in the Mideast was leading to crisis conditions. The cause of the problem has not been the desert itself, but years of obstruction of infrastructure projects by the same evil forces now making war....

There are three sources of increasing fresh water to the Mideast: 1) Moving surplus water southward from the Anatolian highlands in Turkey, and better utilizing the run-off from the Iranian slopes; and moving surplus water northward from the upper Nile in the Sudan, and from the Congo and Lake Chad basins; 2) utilizing underground water and aquifers; 3) desalinating sea water and building a Dead Sea Canal and similar channels, utilizing modern nuclear power and desalinating technologies.

By these high-technology means of geographic engineering, you could picture new man-made "Great Lakes" in northern Africa, and corridors of green in the desert—all of which approaches LaRouche describes as the "Oasis Program." Water volumes equivalent to a New Euphrates River could be created. For comparison, the Euphrates is about the same length as the Danube River (1,700 km). The average discharge at the mouth of the combined Euphrates-Tigris and Karun Rivers—called the Shatt-al Arab—is equivalent to the Po River of Italy.

Though the costs are relatively high to provide water in the desert, compared to the cost-free rainfall in many other regions, there is the offsetting benefit here of growing three or four crops a year. The climate is similar to southern California, and farm potential is analagous to the fabulous output of the Imperial Valley and Arizona "garden" agriculture. Much of what is considered hopeless desert void, is really potentially soil with the provision of water, nutrients, and humus.

The map [**Figure 1**] summarizes the major types of geographic engineering needed to expand water in the region.

Moving Water from Surplus to Deficit Regions

I. Congo-Lake Chad Basins Project. The Congo River carries millions of gallons of fresh water out to the Atlantic Ocean, lost to man. The Congo is second only to the mighty Amazon in volume of water. A canal, or link tunnel, could be constructed to divert water from the Ubangi River—a tributary of the Congo—into the Lake Chad drainage basin to the north. This would expand and stabilize Lake Chad, from which canal and irrigation systems could be constructed to water the drylands of the five nations on its shores.

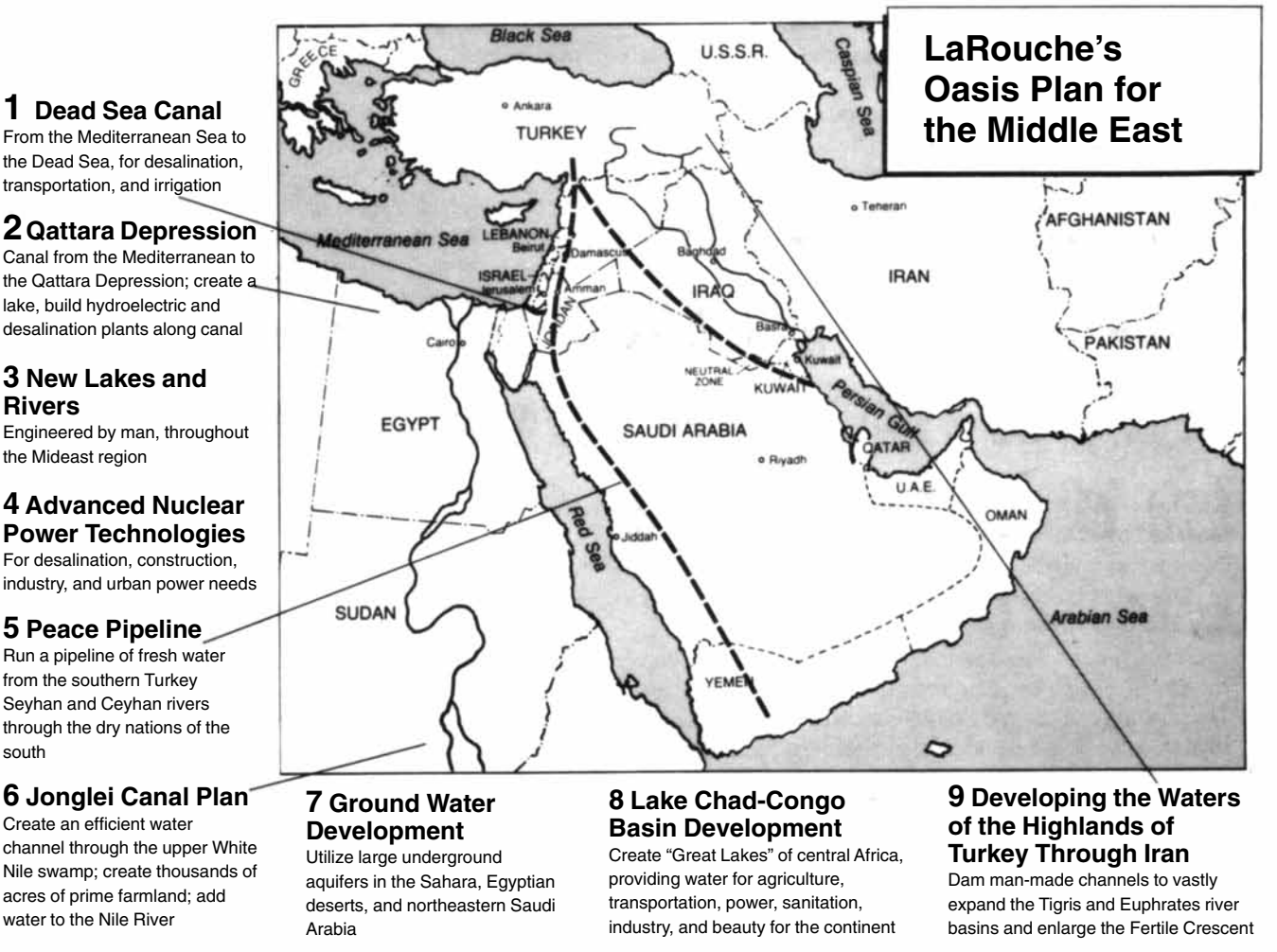
II. The Jonglei Canal plan. A canal to create a straight channel for the upper White Nile, which meets the Blue Nile at Khartoum, the capital of Sudan, and creates the Nile, would capture millions more gallons of water for the benefit of the 25 million Sudanese and 60 million Egyptians downstream. As it is, the upper White Nile is a swamp in southern Sudan—the breeding grounds for malaria and parasites, and a barrier to travel and communications. Called the Sudd (which means barrier or swamp in Arabic), this marshland loses millions of gallons of water to evaporation. The waters of the Nile could be increased by 5 percent by capturing more of this water. Construction on the Jonglei Canal—named for the locale, began in 1978....

However, in 1983, all work on the canal ceased because of rebel action, and opposition from the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Wildlife Fund. Excavation has been completed on 240 kilometers out of 360 total, but now all work has stopped.

III. Developing the Waters of the Highlands of Turkey Through Iran. The famed Euphrates and Tigris Rivers rise in the mountains of Turkey, and flow into the Persian Gulf through Iraq. In ancient times, the runoff from the slopes arcing through Lebanon, southern Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran formed a belt of lush agriculture known as the Fertile Crescent. With today's technology, dams, man-made channels and storage lakes could be created all along the watersheds to vastly expand the fertile agricultural zone in this region, and also serve industrial processing....

IV. Utilizing Groundwater. Eleven distinct basins of underground rivers and lakes have been charted

FIGURE 1



LaRouche in '92 (published in 1991)

under the deserts of northern Africa, and also aquifers under the northeastern Arabian Peninsula, and points west into India's Deccan Plateau.

Limited utilization of these has shown the fabulous results that are possible. Saudi Arabia has over 2 million acres of wheat cultivation watered from aquifers under the desert, making it self-sufficient in wheat. Pilot projects in Egypt have created new "oasis towns" in the East Egypt Desert....

Washington and London officials have intervened to prevent development of underground water, issuing all variety of rationalizations, including the imperial assertion that "fossil water" (the name for old water trapped underground) simply should not be used, because it is old.

V. Dead Sea Canal, Qattara Depression Lake. A canal could be run from the Mediterranean to the Dead Sea, to serve as a development pathway for the region. This Dead Sea Canal could be lined with new agroindustrial centers, each drawing power from a nuclear plant. One of the main industries would be desalination—producing fresh water from sea water, using power from the nuclear plant. The water course thus becomes a corridor for urban growth and a location for industries and farming in the adjacent region. There have been many proposed routes. The idea of Prof. Haim Ben-Shara, former president of Tel Aviv Unviersity, was to stress power generation rather than water, based on creating a series of waterfalls going into the Dead Sea in its southern end. Originally, there were protocols envisaged to involve Jordan in the development benefits. These intentions have all been dashed in the sequence of wars and crises of the past 20 years.

Development of the Jordan River basin for the

mutual benefit of Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan and the Palestinians has likewise been obstructed. In the mid-1950s, the men who had successfully established the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) worked up a plan for the Jordan Valley Authority which they presented to the nations of the region and the UN. During the 1930s and 40s, the TVA built 20 dams,improved channels and did other work in the Tennessee River Basin, and the Jordan project involved many dams on feeder rivers and other plans that were never acted upon. Now water usage has reached the maximum in the Jordan basin.

In northern Egypt, only 35 miles south of the Mediterranean Sea, is a huge, dank sinkwell, 185 miles long, called the Qattara Depression. A water channel could be cut to within a few miles of this depression, then water could be transported to the steep escarpments, creating man-made waterfalls with great hydro-power potential. A German engineering plan estimated that 2.7 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity a year could be realized. The Qattara Depression is only 140 miles west of Cairo, making the transmission of electricity easy. In addition, hydroelectricity could be used to desalinate the sea, and create a huge, expanding oasis.

New Desalination Technologies

About 60 percent of all the world's desalination plants are located in the Mideast. Turning salt water into drinking water requires reducing the parts per million (ppm) of dissolved solids (80 percent of which is sodium chloride or salt) from 35,000 ppm to less than 500 ppm, a reduction of 70 to 1. There are three methods of desalination: 1) distillation (evaporation using steam heat), 2) the reverse osmosis membrane system, and 3) electrolysis. Today, most of the plants utilize some form of the first method, using multi-stage, vapor-compression systems. The efficiency of most of the Mideast plants is low, which has been acceptable only because of the low cost of local energy, for example, flare gas from the oil fields, which would otherwise be wasted.

However, with the provision of nuclear power to the region, and also the development of more intensive, efficient desalination methods, vastly more water can be made available per capita. The route for R&D on desalination should include optical biophysics to study how water "behaves" differently in retaining salts in living organisms than in the surrounding medium.