

LaRouche: Syria-Israel Peace Would Defeat British Chaos Plan

by Michele Steinberg

Diplomatic activity between the United States and *both* Iran and Syria is intensifying, exactly along the lines called for by Lyndon LaRouche beginning in 2004 with his “Strategy for Southwest Asia: The LaRouche Doctrine,” which was then picked up in the bipartisan Iraq Study Group in December 2006. Now, after the Annapolis meeting in November, which included Syria in the talks for the first time under the George W. Bush regime, and after the release of the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on Iran, these diplomatic channels are operating quietly, but at levels higher than ever, reported a well-informed Washington source.

However, nothing short of open talks, as described by Syria’s ambassador to the U.S., Imad Moustapha (see next page), will lead to a comprehensive and permanent peace.

On Dec. 24, speaking to a widely watched media network based in Southwest Asia, LaRouche summed up the events of 2007 in the region by focussing on the importance of Israeli-Syria peace. Such a settlement could defeat the British Empire’s plan to blow up the region in chaos—the most recent example being the assassination of former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.

Since mid-September 2007, LaRouche has given his full support for Israeli-Syrian talks, which would cause momentum toward the “doable,” after Israeli President Shimon Peres had told foreign journalists that “the nervousness in relations between ourselves and Syria is over. We are ready to negotiate directly.” Later, LaRouche insisted that the only way to ensure any progress at the Annapolis conference was to include Syria, which was finally decided by the administration only three days before the conference began.

As LaRouche forecast, the Israel-Syria track holds the most promise for immediate success, and since Christmas, mediated peace diplomacy went into high gear, according to reports from Israel.

On Dec. 27, key to this effort, was the arrival in the region of U.S. Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.). In Israel, he met Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, and he planned to travel to Damascus to meet with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad a day later. Olmert reportedly gave Specter a message to deliver to Assad.

According to the Israeli daily *Ha’aretz*, Olmert told Specter, “I am still examining the Syrian track and Damascus’ seriousness. I have not finished examining the issue, but I have

yet to receive a clear answer [from Syria] and am therefore still waiting.” *Ha’aretz* quotes “Jerusalem sources” saying that, “Despite the fact that Olmert did not explicitly request that the message be transferred to Assad, we assume that the issue will be raised in [Specter’s] talks in Damascus. It was obvious that this was his intention.”

In an interview with an Israeli TV station that was reported in the Dec. 28 *Jerusalem Post*, Specter “said that if Israel and Syria were to replace intermittent messages passed through third parties and the media with serious, direct negotiations, U.S. President George W. Bush was not unlikely to change his determination to ignore Syria on regional matters and would probably express support for peace talks between Jerusalem and Damascus.” Specter has also criticized the White House after Annapolis for not including Iran.

Meanwhile, in an interview in the *Financial Times Deutschland* Dec. 28, Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad, who attended the Annapolis talks, said that he hoped Bush would intervene in Syrian-Israeli talks, as “it would be very difficult to reactivate the peace process without the U.S.” Mekdad said he shared the view of President Bill Clinton, that 85% of all issues have been agreed upon, and the remaining issues could be solved in 35 minutes if the political will were there.

Hope for U.S.-Iran Relations

U.S. government sources report a significant renewed signal from Tehran of an interest in talks toward a “global agreement” with Washington, and the critical first step involves continuing the talks in Baghdad, led by Ambassador Ryan Crocker for the United States.

These talks are taking place, as members of Congress from both parties are pressing to stop Dick Cheney’s faction from starting an Iran war, and are working for fundamental change in U.S.-Iranian relations. On Dec. 22, the *Baltimore Sun* reported that Rep. Wayne Gilchrest (R-Md.) is organizing the Dialogue Caucus, a bipartisan group promoting direct talks with Tehran. According to the *Sun*, last Autumn, Gilchrest met privately with Iran’s United Nations envoy, Mohammad Javad Zarif. Since then, he has communicated by letter with the Speaker of the Iranian Parliament (Majlis), and, according to Congressional sources, in early December 2007, Gilchrest met with Iranian parliamentarians at a conference in Lisbon, Portugal.

Gilchrest, a Vietnam War Marine veteran, told the *Sun* that he prefers “sending old men to talk before we send young men to die.” The Congressman is redoubling his efforts in the wake of the NIE that revealed that Iran halted work on a nuclear bomb in 2003. “You get this kind of momentum, we will begin a dialogue with Iran,” he said. Former Rep. Lee Hamilton (D-Ind.), who co-chaired the Iraq Study Group, called Gilchrest’s efforts “exactly what is needed.” Gilchrest says he is keeping President Bush informed of his discussions with the Iranians.