

# European leaders call for quick action to build infrastructure in Middle East

by Helga Zepp-LaRouche and Jacques Cheminade

*The following statement, titled "Franco-German Cooperation Is Urgent for Realizing the Vision of Mideast Peace," was issued jointly on Sept. 15 by Mrs. Zepp-LaRouche and Mr. Cheminade, leaders of the Schiller Institute in Germany and France, respectively.*

The agreement signed by the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel on limited autonomy in the Gaza Strip and in Jericho, without a doubt represents a great historic opportunity. Indeed, it is not without reason that parallels are being drawn to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. That comparison, however, is appropriate not only in a positive sense, in that it represents an irreversible process; it must also serve as a dramatic warning to us all.

It is a warning, because what was so scandalously ignored after 1989—namely, a comprehensive economic development plan for the entire East—must now be realized immediately in the Middle East, if we are to prevent the outbreak of a catastrophe similar to what is now shaping up in eastern Europe and Russia. Concretely, this means that within the next two weeks—i.e., before the end of September—many infrastructure and development programs which have long been on the drawing boards, must now be actually started. The dirt must now be moved, construction work must begin, unemployed Palestinians must be employed in these projects—in short, it must be made evident to all, including those still opposed to the agreement, that this is a dramatic turn, and that living conditions are now going to be fully and qualitatively improved for all people living in the region.

The worst case would be if the west or the Persian Gulf states prove incapable of rising above moral pettiness, preferring instead to first hold dozens of international conferences in order to secure all sorts of treaty guarantees. With such a shopkeeper's attitude, we would surely lose all the momentum which now exists.

It is nice that the European Community commissioner for development emphasizes that economic development represents the sole guarantee for stability in the region; but the EC is promising a paltry \$85 million per year over the coming five years—and that, only provided that the EC member states agree to it.

It's time to wake up. In all probability we have only a few precious weeks to prove in the Middle East that it is

possible to turn around even such an apparently hopeless situation as this one, and in the course of joint economic development to establish the higher level of Reason which alone can make peace possible. From that standpoint, the future of the Middle East has much to do with developments in the Balkans and in the territory of the former Soviet Union.

We must also quickly learn the lessons of the botched historic opportunity of 1989. Let us recall people's hopes and rejoicing when the Berlin Wall fell and the borders which had so unnaturally divided Europe were opened. At that moment, it would have been possible, and indeed relatively easy, to establish completely new relations between East and West, and for the first time in this century to have economic cooperation develop on the Eurasian continent on the basis of the peaceful coexistence of all peoples and nations.

American economist Lyndon LaRouche, who at that time was already a political prisoner of the Bush administration, laid out a grand vision of how this would be put into effect: the "Paris-Berlin-Vienna Productive Triangle," as the centerpiece of an all-Eurasian infrastructure program, which could have become the locomotive for the entire world economy.

But that precious moment was lost. It is certainly "politically incorrect," but nevertheless true, to say that the Anglo-Americans, faced with the possibility that a reunified Germany could assist in the economic reconstruction of the East, immediately relapsed into their old geopolitical mind-set, which had already characterized their thinking during the years leading up to World War I. The assassination of Deutsche Bank chairman Alfred Herrhausen, the Persian Gulf war, and the Anglo-Americans' de facto support for the Serbian aggression in the Balkans—all these were crisis-management measures taken in order to hamstring Germany.

Instead of developing the East economically, the German government in Bonn left the formulation of economic policy entirely up to the representatives of Anglo-American geopolitics: International Monetary Fund conditionalities, shock therapy, the "Polish model," trade liberalization at any price—all these measures were never intended to develop the East, but rather were aimed at weakening the "Eurasian heartland" to the advantage of the "Atlantic rim countries."

As a direct consequence of this insanity, which has already brought us two world wars in this century, a new war

in the Balkans is now threatening to expand into missile warfare which could drag large parts of Europe in as well, while on the territory of the former Soviet Union, we see the threat of a much more terrible catastrophe than in Croatia and Bosnia. As the result of our inability to seize Europe's great opportunity of 1989, we are now threatened with horrors which are beyond the imagination of most people today.

If these unfortunate events of the past four years will have had any positive significance, then it will only be because people decided not to repeat those same mistakes in the

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Middle East. If this region is rapidly developed economically, and if living conditions are perceptibly improved, then not only can a century of agony be put behind us, but a new period of economic and cultural flourishing can now begin. If this improvement remains undone, however, it can start a new war.

Already back in 1976, Lyndon LaRouche proposed a comprehensive development Middle East program, which, because of the special importance of developing water resources, was dubbed the "Oasis Plan." At that time we were in discussions both with the Peres government and with representatives of the PLO, and later also with Nahum Goldmann [the late president of the World Jewish Congress], on the principles of this plan.

The watchword of LaRouche's concept was that there can be no lasting political solution, and thus no independent Palestinian state, in the absence of economic development, since this would simply continue the poverty and create new tensions and violence. On the other hand, from within the capitals of the former colonial powers—especially in the Arab Bureau of the British Foreign Office—the opposite thesis was promulgated, that a political solution must take priority, with the result that the region remained a playground for proxy wars conducted by these very same powers, while all the hard-fought U.N. resolutions were largely ignored.

The decisive breakthrough in the Israeli-PLO talks occurred because both sides finally realized that political and economic progress are completely interdependent, as Laila Shahid, the PLO's representative in Paris, emphasized later on. Only by recognizing that each side's respective interests actually coincided in this way, did it become possible to overcome the "anomaly" in the Madrid talks, in which political and economic questions were still being handled separately.

Peace in the Middle East can only come about if *all* parties realize that the maximum development of Arabs' labor productivity is in everyone's interest. It must be conceded that the Arabs, and the Palestinians among them, have a right to flourishing oases in the desert, and to industrial development with advanced technology.

But there is also the question of the relationship between the West and Islam—a relationship which has sustained enormous injury over the past two years. The revolting fact that for almost two years now, the West has looked on with almost complete passivity as the genocide has proceeded in Bosnia, has provided the Islamic world with gruesome evidence to bolster their conviction that the West is "the enemy."

But if the West now decisively proves by its actions that it is helping to lay the economic basis for peace in the Middle East, we may not be able to reverse the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people in Bosnia, but we certainly can prevent a "war of two civilizations."

It is therefore of the utmost urgency, that the Middle East peace plan is also elevated to the plane of an ecumenical dialogue between Jews, Christians, and Muslims. The present initiative will ultimately succeed only if it dedicates a central position to the inviolable sacredness of all individuals as they are in the image of God. Only when all efforts revolve around man in his inalienable human dignity, anchored in Natural Law, are there grounds for hope.

When after World War II there was a reconciliation between the Germans and the French—and after two world wars, their relations were no less antagonistic than those between Israelis and Arabs today—they started out with an agreement on steel and coal as the basis from which the European Community later grew. Today there are useful parallels to be drawn not only with the Franco-German reconciliation, but also, as Shimon Peres has correctly pointed out, with de Gaulle's policies in Algeria.

The prospects for development in the Middle East offer a very special opportunity for France and Germany. Whereas during recent times, the Franco-German relationship—so immensely important for maintaining peace in Europe—has degenerated into petty bickering over monetary questions, and has even drifted into dangerous waters over their opposite policies toward the Balkans, now there is the possibility of collaborating in a joint mission in the Middle East.

Germany and France should cooperate in developing infrastructure there. For example, they could immediately begin to extend the old Orient Express from Turkey via Damascus to Eilat. Now is the time to demonstrate even more convincingly that de Gaulle was right when he said that the French (and, we might add, the Germans) are not cows standing in the field chewing grass, but that France (and, once again, Germany) has a world mission, and must contribute to the world's development.

There is no time to lose. If we miss this second chance, Nemesis is on the way.