THE INTELLECTUAL'S FREEDOM

Jean-Paul Sartre, the great writer and outstanding thinker, this week concluded his month-long visit to Egypt with words that made it clear that he is not sensitive to every conflict in the world to the same degree, and that not in every case does he think that the true intellectual is the one who takes a stand.

In the Israeli-Arab dispute, for example, he sees a conflict in which he does not have to take a part. Here the intellectual and thinker can come, see and hear and finally decide: "Yes, but that is your affair. You, Jews and Arabs, must work for peace. I — do not. I will fulfill my obligation if I publish both the opinions I have met and stand aside."

The truth be told, even standing aside isn't being very neutral, even if it sounds that way. For by accepting the claims of both sides — Israel's demand for the recognition of her right to exist and the Arab demand to recognize the right of the refugees to return, he is actually accepting only the Arab position. The Jews do not demand anything but the recognition of the *status quo* — which he accepts. The Arabs demand that the *status quo* be changed — and he also agrees to that. By his second agreement he practically annuls the first.

He is prepared to admit that there is a certain contradiction between the two positions that he has accepted. However, the moment he has to solve the contradiction or take his choice he washes his hands of the whole affair.

That he considers to be a matter for politicians; he, to his joy, isn't a politician but an intellectual.

The same holds good for the Jewish-Arab conflict. In no public meeting did Sartre hear the Arabs threaten Israel's destruction; only "privately" and in the Gaza Strip was this aim mentioned. He therefore does not believe that there is such an Arab aim (he apparently doesn't value public speeches made not in his presence). And as for a shooting war between Jews and Arabs, he has heard only of shots being fired in one direction — from Israel to Egypt during the Sinai War. He apparently hasn't heard of what preceded that war; that before that there were long months of Arab terror against Jews and a continuous campaign of nightly murder and sabotage — that isn't worth wasting words on. It is clear to him that suddenly, just like that, the Jews got up and invaded Sinai and Gaza, without any prior provocation and, therefore, he assumes that "there is some justice" in what the Egyptians say — that the Israelis are imperialists.

There is no need to say that Sartre doesn't hear the shooting and explosions of the nights of 1967. They do not form any problem at all in his eyes. He believes that in Israel a new man has been born, particularly noteworthy for his many-sidedness. That that same many-sided man is also murdered at times during nights of terror and exploding mines, that is something to which an intellectual is definitely free from giving any attention.

After many vicissitudes the Syrian project of a dam to harness the Euphrates is nearing realization, though there are still some hurdles ahead.

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SYRIA'S DAM ON THE EUPHRATES

The contract to build the first stage of Syria's projected dam on the Euphrates was signed in Damascus at the end of December 1966, eight months after the conclusion of an agreement in Moscow by which the USSR undertook to supply Syria with the finances and technical assistance to implement it. Under the terms of that agreement recent weeks have seen the signature of a number of contracts between firms and organizations on both sides for the implementation of a number of primary and auxiliary projects.

During the course of the past forty years, and more dramatically since 1957, the Syrian Euphrates project has reappeared in constantly changing form — economically, technically and politically — almost parallel to the domestic and external changes that country itself has undergone from the French mandate through independence, the union with the UAR, and up to the present rule of the Ba'ath in its various factions.

The idea began to take form when the Department d'Etudes Hydrauliques set up by the French High Commissioner for the Levant suggested building a dam near the village of Yussif Pasha, to irrigate 100,000 hectares of land. After being pigeon-holed for 20 years, it was revived when independent Syria asked the English Sir Alexander Gibbs and Co. firm of consulting engineers to make a more thorough survey to study the possibilities of gravitational irrigation. Two years later the British firm tendered its report, and suggested building a small dam of a billion cubic meter capacity. This plan was not implemented since it did not provide any serious possibilities of agricultural development along the Euphrates. Some years later (in 1957), the Syrian authorities found that private enterpreneurs had energetically expanded intensive agriculture in the Euphrates valley, two-thirds of whose acreage — 120,000 hectares,

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were already being irrigated by pumps which they had installed by themselves. It was therefore inevitable that any projected government dam would have to irrigate the higher level areas above the valley.

The first important attempt in this direction was taken by Khaled El-Azm, the then Prime Minister who signed an agreement with the Soviet Union in November 1957 for extensive Russian economic aid ($ 170,000,000) for various infra-structural projects and primarily the vital Euphrates dam. After three years of surveys and research the USSR specialists tendered their recommendations to Syria — then part of the UAR; they recommended that the dam be built in the Tabqa region to a height of 75 meters (that is — 325 meters above sea level), with a storage capacity of 30 billion cubic meters of water, to irrigate an area of 850,000 hectares — including the area already under irrigation. The plan also envisaged the erection of an hydroelectric power station with an installed capacity of 800,000 KW. It was finally decided to carry out the Soviet plan in two stages:

First stage: The erection of a 30-meter-high dam to store 2.4 billion cubic meters of water; to irrigate 100,000 hectares; and obtain electricity from a unit with an installed capacity of 112,000 KW. This stage was to be completed within four years.

Second stage: The dam would be raised to a minimum of 41 and up to maximum of 75 meters, which would make it possible to store from 6.5 billion to 30 billion cubic meters of water, according to the eventual height of the dam. At the same time, the irrigated area would be extended and the power plant completed. This stage would take two years.

Negotiations with West Germany

However the political complications of the UAR in 1960 caused both the Soviet aid and the Euphrates dam to be dropped. The deep differences existing at that time between President Nasser and General Kassem, the first head of Republican Iraq, made it impossible to negotiate the division of the water of the Euphrates, shared by Iraq and Syria. The President of the UAR feared Kassem's competition for prestige as the head of a revolutionary military regime. Communist participation in the Baghdad regime was another cause for displeasure in Cairo, which supported Colonel Shawwaf's abortive bid for power in Iraq in March 1959. Cairo was also interested at that time in winning Western favor as the "rising power" in the Arab world and an opponent of Communism, a "favor" that was accompanied by the readiness to give Egypt extensive economic aid. The Euphrates dam was not included in the protocol signed in the fall of 1960 listing the projects to be erected with Soviet aid.

In July 1961 an agreement was concluded between the UAR and West Germany, according to which Bonn was to accord the UAR 1,050 million German marks in aid, 500 million of which were to go to finance the Euphrates dam and the rest were to go to Egypt to finance various other development projects.

After the breakup of the UAR Bonn wanted to escape its obligations concerning the Syrian project for fear of angering President Nasser and of disturbing the relations with Cairo that Bonn was intent on cultivating. However, after the stabilization of the independent Syrian regime on the international scene — towards both the East and West — West Germany agreed in January 1963 (about 17 months after the Syrian-Egyptian split), to lend Syria 350 million marks (instead of the 500 million promised in July 1961). The loan was to be given at an interest rate of 3.65 per cent (comparatively low for the West) and was to be repaid in twenty years, with payments to start after six years.

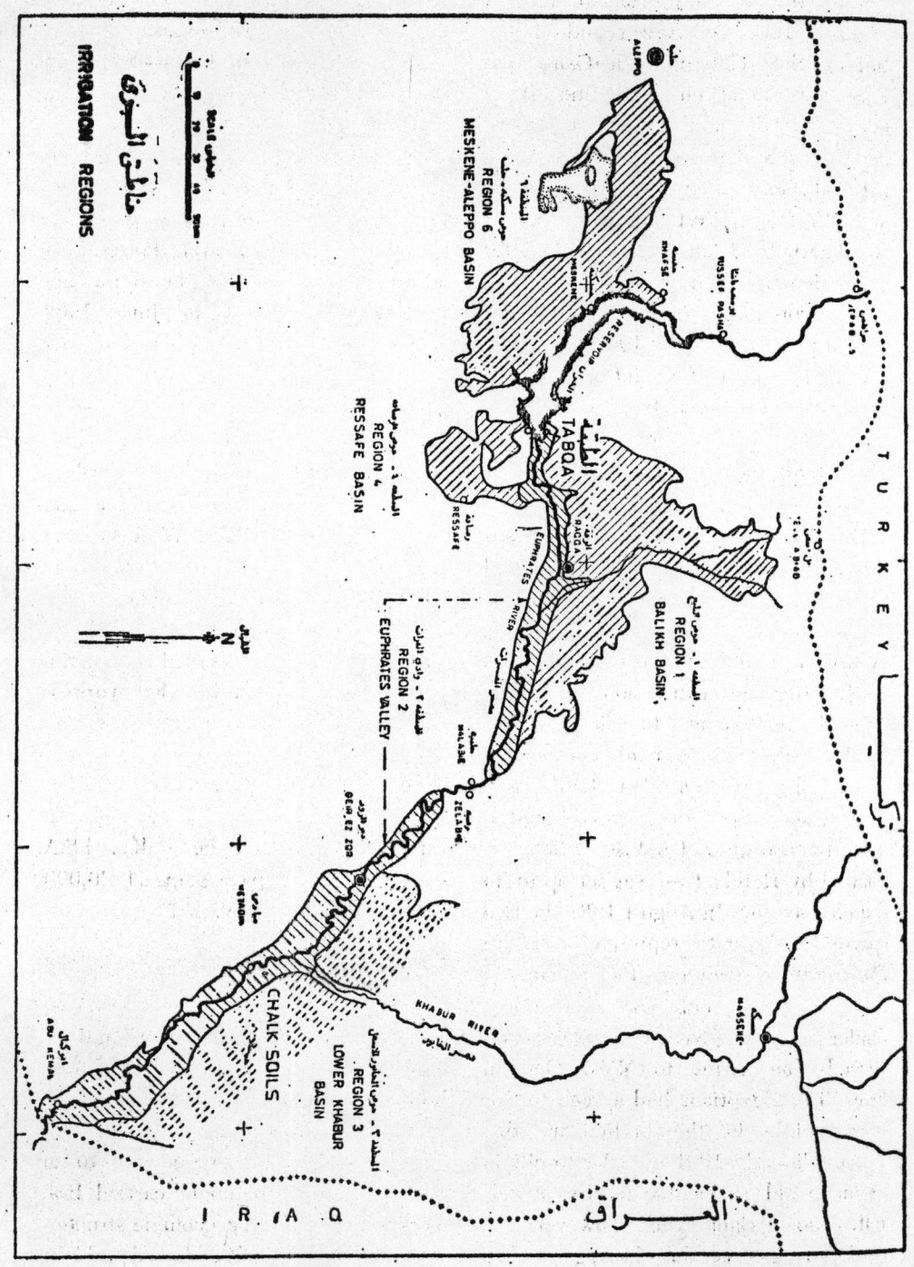
Despite this agreement, relations between Damascus and Bonn continued to be troubled by various disputes over the project's dimensions and financing, as well as political factors. As early as 1961, after the conclusion of Bonn's original agreement to finance the Euphrates project, a bank consortium, headed by the Dresden Bank, was formed to supply the finances, and a second consortium of industrial firms — headed by Hetchief — was set up to do the engineering. In August 1961 the two consortiums sent representatives to Damascus to convince the Syrians to forego putting out an international tender and to give the contracts on agreed-upon terms to West German firms. The Egyptians had agreed to this in principle in the preliminary discussions in July 1961 in order to obtain as much aid as possible for Egypt herself. The Syrians were, however, not ready to agree to this, fearing, as they stated before the split and afterwards, that they would have to pay too dearly for the German firms' services.

That same year the Bonn government nominated a committee of experts to study the economic profitability of the Syrian project, in addition to the technical aspects. This committee, composed mainly of professors from German universities (headed by Prof. Press) spent a number of months in Syria and presented its report in June 1962. Among the rest, the Germans also based themselves on the Soviet report of the end of 1960.

At the same time, the Damascus authorities appointed two consulting engineering firms to prepare the final plans. These were the West German Lahmeyer Company, to examine the details of the hydroelectric plans and the necessary equipment, and the Swedish V.B.B., to make the detailed engineering plans and to supervise the work in process. In addition, the Syrians gave the Dutch NEDCO a contract to make a survey of land amelioration in the Euphrates area and to establish an experimental farm. The Italian I.S.A. was asked to prepare maps (1/20,000) by aerial photography.

Differences and difficulties

The West German experts endorsed the Russian suggestion to build the dam at Tabqa. Their report concluded, however, that the dam should not be more than 310 meters above sea-level since it would otherwise lead to an accumulation of sediment carried from Turkey and since the geologic structure would lead to difficult technical problems if the dam were raised to an altitude of



Source: *Al-Jundi* (Damascus), 18.1.66.

325 meters. Because of the difference in level — 15 meters — it would not be possible to irrigate all the 850,000 hectares suggested by the Russians. Their suggestion to regulate the flow at 400-500 cu.m./sec. would also make it impossible to overcome the problem of floods completely, since it would be necessary to free water from the artificial reservoir in floodtime when the flow comes to 10,000 cu.m./sec. *

In contrast to the Germans, the Swedish experts from the V.B.B. company were of the opinion (like the Russians), that the dam should be built up to 325 meters above sea-level, and that the problem of sediment, though it exists, is not so serious since it would be washed away at the end of the flood season when the reservoir was almost full. **

The Swedish experts added that raising the dam to an altitude of 325 meters would bring many advantages in irrigation, the production of electrical energy and flood prevention — benefits that would be felt not only in Syria but in Iraq as well, which would no longer have to build dams to prevent floods and to regulate the river's flow in her territory. Dam construction is an expensive proposition in Iraq and because of the level nature of the land a great deal of water is lost by evaporation.

The Germans also differed with their Soviet colleagues on the size and nature of the area to be irrigated by the reservoir's water. While the Russians estimated the area for irrigation at 850,000 hectares, the West Germans believed that only 600,000 hectares were fit for irrigation. The main argument of the Bonn experts was that it didn't pay to invest in the irrigation of the chalk soils in the region of the Lower Khabur basin, especially since the relatively lower dam (to an altitude of 310 meters) would leave Syria a smaller quantity of water than envisaged in the Soviet plan. The Germans also suggested the construction of a hydroelectric power plant with an installed capacity of 700,000 KW to produce 2.2 billion* KWH annually instead of the three billion KWH suggested by the Russians.

Despite the great differences in all its stages between the Russian and West German versions of the project, with the Soviet plan much larger in scope, the benefits offered by the German version from the first stage of the plan were at least double those offered by the Russians — the irrigation of 200,000

* The average annual flow of the Euphrates is estimated at 26 billion cubic meters — that is, an average of 800 cu.m./sec. This flow is, however, not distributed evenly throughout the year, about half of the annual supply — 12 million cubic meters — flowing at floodtime, when the snows melt in the Turkish mountains in April and May, when it comes to 7,000-10,000 cu.m./sec. In the rainy season, from March to November — the flow comes to 500-600 cu.m./sec., while in the summer — from June to October — it barely reaches 150 cu.m./sec.

** The experts have calculated that the bed of the artificial reservoir would accumulate 72 million tons of sediment the first year, coming to 2,270 million tons in 25 years and to 9,700 million tons after one hundred years. In other words, a dam built to 300 meters above sea-level would start with an effective storage capacity of 7.4 billion cubic meters which would decrease to 3.6 billion cubic meters in one hundred years because of the accumulation of sediment. A dam to a level of 315 meters, with an effective capacity of 11.7 billion cubic meters, would decline to 6.5 billion cubic meters of water for irrigation after one hundred years.

hectares and a power plant with an installed capacity of 300,000 KW.

In the end, as a result of Bonn's unwillingness to increase the amount of its aid to Syria in order to permit the implementation of the larger and ultimately more profitable project, as well as of Damascus' lack of success in mobilizing other foreign aid to make up the lack, relations between the two countries deteriorated. The drawn-out discussions over financing, the bargaining over technical details and the mutual lack of faith led to Damascus dropping Bonn's aid completely.

The USSR returns

During the course of 1965 there were contacts between Damascus and Moscow to investigate the USSR's readiness to renew its previous agreement (which had actually been rejected by the Syrians in the UAR era) to finance and carry out the first stage of the Euphrates Dam project. These contacts were successful and on April 21, 1966 an agreement was concluded in Moscow in the course of a visit by a high-level Syrian delegation headed by Prime Minister Yussef Zuayyen. The Soviet Union undertook to give a loan of 120 million rubles ($ 132 million) at an annual interest rate of 2.5 per cent, to be repaid in 12 payments after the completion of the first stage. Moscow also promised to supply the necessary technical and engineering aid.

After this, Soviet technicians re-examined the West German plan as well as their old suggestion in an attempt to come out with a new plan more in keeping with Syrian desires.

In practice, the new Soviet plan for the Euphrates project in its entirety is a combination of various elements of the previous suggestions. Its main points are: the construction of a 75-meter-high dam (to an altitude of 325 meters above sea-level); the construction of a power plant with an installed capacity of 800,000 KW, and the irrigation of 600,000 hectares. *

So far, as we have seen, only the conclusion of the first stage has been agreed upon. This will include:

1. The construction of a 60-meter high dam that will create an artificial lake 80 kilometers long and 630 square kilometers in area, with a storage capacity of 11.7 billion cubic meters of water. Effective capacity, however, will only be 7.4 billion cubic meters. The dam itself will be 2.5 kilometers long and 200 meters wide at its base. 1500 engineers and technicians and more than 15,000 other workers will be employed in construction;

2. The construction of a three-unit power plant (100,000 KW each) supplying a total installed capacity of 300,000 KW;

3. The installation of an irrigation network over an area of 230,000 hectares on the left bank of the Euphrates and especially in the Balikh Basin and the region stretching from Tabqa to Talabie (see map). Construction of the irrigation network will begin in 1968;

4. A high-tension electric line will be constructed between Tabqa and the city of Aleppo (about 160 kilometers). At first it was thought to build a special power plant in the dam area to supply local needs for work and housing, but the construction of this line was eventually given precedence. At the beginning it will bring power to the construction site from Aleppo; afterwards it will carry the power generated at the dam.

The Russians have introduced a number of technical and engineering modifications in the first stage in order to speed up the work and save about 10 per cent of the estimated cost. These modifications included the decision to build the power plant on the left bank (and not on the right bank as the Germans had suggested). The eight tunnels that were to have been dug beneath the dam to carry water to the power plant were eliminated and instead the water will be carried to the plant in its new site in concrete pipes. Finally, the first stage will be completed in six years, a year less than contemplated in the German suggestion. The costs of carrying out the first stage of the new Soviet plan are estimated at about 1,100-1,200 million Syrian Pounds (£S 3.8 = $ 1). Forty per cent of this (the extent of the Soviet aid) will be in foreign currency.

When the project is completed in its entirety the Syrians expect it to bring them the following benefits: *

1. The irrigated area will be increased from the present 500,000 to 850,000 hectares;

2. The production of cheap electricity (1.3 piasters per KWH compared to the present 7.7 piasters per KWH for thermal units), and in much larger quantities (three billion KWH instead of the three-quarters billion consumed at present);

3. The settlement of 60,000 families (about 300,000 persons) who will engage in intensive agriculture, plus an additional quarter of a million persons who will gradually be absorbed by the end of the century in non-agricultural employments;

4. A £S 500 million increase in national income by 1980, by the development of the Euphrates region, over an estimated present national income of £S 4,400 to £S 4,900 million.

Problems with Syria's neighbors

The financial and main technical difficulties that prevented or held up the implementation of the Euphrates project have thus now been removed. On the other hand, however, the problem of dividing the water of this international river between Syria and her Iraqi and Turkish neighbors is still to be solved.

An agreement on the division of the Euphrates water between Damascus and Ankara depends first and foremost on Syria's acceptance of the Turkish demand for an inclusive agreement on the distribution of the water of all their common rivers. The Turks want Syria to agree on the distribution of the waters

* According to the Syrian Minister of Planning, Abd el-Hamid el-Hassan, in an interview to the Syrian News Agency on May 26, 1966, the area of the artificial lake itself was to be deducted, leaving only 540,000 hectares for irrigation. According to him, about 190,000 hectares are now being irrigated more or less satisfactorily by pumps, so that the completion of the Euphrates project would only increase the irrigated area by 350,000 hectares.

* They have not published details of the benefits of the first stage alone.

of the Orontes, flowing from Syria to Alexandretta, the region annexed to Turkey on the eve of World War II. All the Syrian regimes since the attainment of political independence have demanded the return of the "stolen part of the Syrian homeland". A *de jure* agreement on the Syrians' part for the division of the Orontes' water would mean official and explicit recognition of full Turkish sovereignty over Alexandretta, a step that would be very unpopular with the extremely nationalist-minded Syrian population. This is the main problem standing in the way of a Turkish-Syrian agreement on the utilization of the Euphrates. The problem of distribution would not in itself offer any difficulties since the Turkish Kiban project was mainly intended for the production of energy and does not actually affect the Syrians.

On the other hand, the distribution of the Euphrates water is a serious bone of contention between the Arab capitals of Damascus and Baghdad. Iraq demands 16 million cubic meters for herself (six billion for river navigation and the rest for irrigation), while the Syrians argue that nine billion would be enough to supply Iraq's needs. Negotiations at the beginning of 1967 in Iraq between Syrian and Iraqi representatives on this issue have meanwhile brought no results. Iraq is naturally alive to the problem, especially now when implementation of the Syrian project has begun. This is especially true since she is lower down the river and would be immediately affected by the creation of any Syrian *faits accomplis*, in violation of international neighborly practice as shown for example in the distribution of the waters of the Mekong and the Nile.

The author concludes the recent history of the Kurdish national struggle in Iraq which he began in the previous issue.

GERSHON SALOMON

SOME ASPECTS OF THE KURDISH REVOLT

The divisions in the Kurdish leadership which came to light at the end of 1965, to which we referred before,* in fact goes much further back; the first difference actually occurred at the beginning of 1964, and their immediate causes were primarily tactical, when Barzani decided to accept the government's plea for a ceasefire and the opening of peace talks. The leaders of the Kurdish Democratic Party — its Secretary General, Ibrahim Ahmed, and Jalal Talabani — were opposed to this and insisted that the fighting be kept up until the government gave in to Kurdish demands. However, Barzani then succeeded in healing the breach.[1] The second split in the Kurdish leadership, which broke out in October 1965, ran much deeper and its results were infinitely more far-reaching. It led to an actual split, with Jalal Talabani and Ibrahim Ahmed and a group of their supporters being obliged to break away from Barzani's camp and to move to Iran. Clashes between the two sides were reported, and attempts on the life of Barzani.[2] This time, too, the immediate background to the differences was different approaches to tactical problems and, even more, personal differences of opinion. While Barzani now favored the continuation of the armed struggle against the authorities up to the attainment of the national aims, the dissident group headed by Talabani maintained that other means must be explored and contacts made with the authorities.[3] Their arguments were based on the bad economic situation of the Kurdish districts, and on the great sufferings undergone by the civilian population, as a result of which the slogans of negotiations and a cease fire were liable to be favorably received by the population. Barzani rejected this approach in view of the fact that all past attempts at negotiations had failed.

A highly significant development for the unity of the Kurdish national movement occurred when the government intervened in these differences in an attempt to exploit them for its own benefit — not without success. The Baghdad government's reasoning on the issue was clear and understandable and it did everything in its power to encourage the split by lending its support to the Talabani group, hoping by dividing the Kurdish leadership to

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* "The Kurdish National Struggle in Iraq", *New Outlook*, March-April 1967.