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EGYPT

EGYPT'S WATER RESOURCES INSUFFICIENT BEYOND THE YEAR 2000

Cairo ROSE AL-YUSUF in Arabic 21 Apr 80 pp 16-17

[Interview by 'Aydah al-'Izab Musa with Egyptian Irrigation Minister 'Abd al-Hadi Samahah: "The Irrigation Minister Warns: After 20 Years Only, We Will Have to Look for a Water Source Other Than the Nile"]

[Text] The Nile which has cut a course across the Egyptian desert for thousands--and perhaps hundreds of thousands--of years will for the next half a century attract the interest of scientists and fools. Twenty years from now, the fools will open their mouths and say: what happened? The Nile used to take care of our needs, but it no longer does. The scientists will reply: Yes, and these are our expectations... They would then advise the man of the 21st century to find a new source of water--under the ground, by tapping subterranean reservoirs; above the ground, by making use of passing clouds; or next to the ground, by resorting to sea water.

Why 20 years? Engineer 'Abd al-Hadi Samahah, the minister of irrigation, explains this with figures, then says: "...And so we have to cooperate, especially with the 9 countries through which the Nile runs and with whose representatives I have just met in Nairobi."

Water and Men

I went to see him with that conviction that lends seriousness to one's purpose. Talking about the Nile is not like talking about something else. Here we are dealing with a river that is the source of life for all Egyptians--indeed, the only source of life. Without it, there would be no life. "Egypt is the gift of the Nile," is a sentence which Egyptians have been and still are saying. They say it in earnest because it is a sentence which sums up the whole truth. Across history, Egyptians have fervently and firmly believed in that fact, for the Nile is the source of life and civilization. It is also the source of security and of fear.

One of the main factors in the process of building modern Egypt was the confidence that the Nile was there as well as constant coordination with those Nile partners stretching along its route from the lakes down to the

Mediterranean. And when Egypt decided to develop its agriculture, it built the Nile barrages. When we wanted to advance further and thus decided to turn the Nile waters into a system of perennial irrigation, we came to an agreement with our neighbors. In the 1950's, we fought stiff battles to build a high dam.

The Nile, however, is not just water. It is also men. Egypt is the gift of the Nile not only in the sense that it is the gift of the Nile waters, but also that it is the gift of those men who spend their lives and energies in regulating and distributing its waters to insure that enough water is provided to every part of Egypt. Those are the engineers, workers and technicians of the ministry of irrigation, which used to be known as the ministry of public works. It is one of the oldest Egyptian ministries, for it has been in existence for over 100 years. It used to supervise all engineering works in Egypt involving dams and bridges--even buildings, installations, facilities, etc. It has espoused and nurtured all the engineering skills in Egypt in the past. Throughout its long history, it was headed only by a specialized Egyptian. The first of those was 'Ali Pasha Mubarak who, in Egyptian modern history, stands out as the pioneer of Egyptian architecture--the architecture of buildings and minds.

The present minister of irrigation is Dr Muhammad 'Abd al-Hadi Samahah. I met with him recently and opened anew the file of the Nile waters. This time, however, we dealt with the issue on the regional, not the local, level, in the light of the conference which was held in Nairobi a few weeks ago by the 9 Nile states--Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia, Zaire, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, Kenya and Uganda. The conference was convened to discuss the future of the Nile waters at the level of the entire Nile basin. Egypt was represented by Dr Samahah.

Why was the conference held at this time, and is there reason to review the positions of some countries of the Nile basin--in other words, has the distribution of the Nile waters become a cause for reconsideration by or a source of dispute among the 9 states, especially since Egypt is the primary beneficiary of the Nile. The other states do not benefit directly from Nile flood waters. Tanzania, for example, draws its water from the (Kagera) river which is fed by Lake Victoria, while Kenya, Burundi and Rwanda depend primarily on rain water.

We raise all these questions because the question of the Nile waters has often been brandished against Egypt. Ethiopia, during the reign of its former emperor Haile Selassie, has often threatened to cut off flood waters from Egypt. In view of all this, I sought out Dr Samahah to talk about the Nairobi conference, the reasons for its convocation, its outcome, the future of relations among the Nile countries and the repercussions of those relations on Egypt's water supply.

The minister said at the outset: I would like to make it clear that any meeting among the Nile states is a plus for those states. For as long as

they share one international river, it is in their interest to consult among themselves with a view to developing the waters of that river, exploiting its waters in the manner that serves their peoples best and protecting the river course and waters from pollution and other effects that may impair the future of development in those states. The reason for the Nairobi conference was the celebration of the completion of the second stage of "hydrometeorological" studies on the basins of equatorial lakes. The 9 Nile states participate in this project (though Ethiopia participates only as an observer). The United Nations and the World Meteorological Organization share in the funding of the project. As to its results, the most prominent results are agreement to begin the third phase of the project, the call for the establishment of a regional technical organization embracing all the states of the basin and emphasizing the importance of the Nile states' dependence on their national experts. The Nile states have also emphasized the need to train their national experts on the latest technological methods in the development of water resources and the need for the officials of all 9 states to exchange expertise and consult with each other on all matters relating to the Nile. I believe that if we adhered to and implemented those results, this will make the river Nile a clean and vital artery and make the states of the Nile basin a considerable economic force.

[Question] You have talked about the project of studying the basins of equatorial lakes. Can you tell us more about that project and its future?

[Answer] In 1964, a proposal was made that the states of the Nile basin seek technical cooperation among them to find out the future potentialities of the river, the most ideal method of developing and utilizing its waters, and calculating the water loss as the water needs of the countries for agriculture, drinking and industry. Our negotiations with those states succeeded. In cooperation with the United Nations Development Program and the World Meteorological Organization, implementation of the project began in 1967. At the beginning, the participants consisted of Egypt, Sudan, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. These were joined later by Rwanda, Burundi and Zaire. A technical committee was set up for the project with its headquarters in Entebbe, Uganda. The first phase of the project was completed in 1974 when all the necessary statements and data on rains or surface waters were collected. Implementation of the second phase began in the same year. This involved the development of a mathematical model which can be used to predict the potentialities of the resources already available in the Nile basin, the various uses of each state and the possibilities of development of the Nile basin as a whole. The mathematical model phase was completed in March 1980, and the second phase as a whole will be completed this coming December. Therefore, one of the first recommendations of the Nairobi conference was to emphasize the importance of the third phase for the project—the phase of studying the water resources, the various invoices and the possibility of making the differences rebound to the interest of the Nile basin countries while taking into account the remaining Nile tributaries.

[Question] Speaking of the Nile tributaries, are there any new projects in the upper Nile?

[Answer] We have some projects which we have begun two years ago with the (Gongali) canal project. This would increase the water resources by 3.8 billion cubic meters annually which would be equally divided between Egypt and Sudan. We hope that the economic circumstances of the two countries would permit them to complete the rest of the projects so that the Nile waters may not be lost in the swamp regions.

[Question] What about the inclination to establish a technical body embracing the 9 basin countries?

[Answer] Actually, we have begun to establish that body within the framework of a joint action agreement with Sudan. Egypt and Sudan have submitted a joint report outlining their concept of what this body should be. The report was discussed with technical experts from the Nile countries at the Nairobi conference. The experts agreed to the establishment of that body in principle and asked that the report be conveyed to their governments through the normal channels. The Egyptian and Sudanese foreign ministries have already done so, and we are now awaiting the final approval of the Nile states. This might take some time since the governments will have to examine the project from the legal and technical points of view.

[Question] Is there anything new in Ethiopia's position on technical cooperation among the states of the Nile basin? And what would be the effect of any future projects involving the Nile headwaters on development in the various Nile countries?

[Answer] I would like to make it clear that Ethiopian technical experts have always participated in the meetings of the technical committees of the basin of the equatorial lakes to which I have previously referred. We have sent to them our own concept of the Nile basin body and we are awaiting their reply. As to projects which can be carried out in the upper Nile, I wish to affirm that we are not against the future of development which benefits our brethren in the Nile states. All that we hope for in this regard is that there be consultation and an exchange of views in pursuance of the rules of international law on common rivers. These rules stipulate that states located at the upper waters of a river should consult with the states at the lower reaches of the river on any project that would affect the waters of the river. We also adhere to the agreements and treaties which we have signed with the Nile countries, including the 1902, 1929 and 1959 agreements. I wish to affirm too that we seek to intensify technical cooperation with our brethren in the basin for the sake of our interests as a whole.

#### A New Law

[Question] Mr minister, in terms of the best possible utilization of water resources, are we utilizing our water resources in the best possible manner?

[Answer] This is an important question because it concerns the possibilities of future development in all the agricultural, industrial and other fields.

Our citizens unfortunately waste water. There is not any commitment to abide by rules and norms in agriculture, and we are about to amend the irrigation and drainage law so that it may be consistent with the desired development. I hope that citizens and the authorities that use water in rationalizing the use of our water resources so that we may preserve our national wealth as well as preserve the fertility of the soil and prevent its deterioration as a result of the misuse of water.

[Question] In the light of what you have said, do our present and future water resources meet the requirements of the proposed development?

Citing figures, the minister replied: Our share of the Nile waters at present stands at 55.5 billion cubic meters annually. This will increase to 57.4 billion cubic meters in 1985 when the (Gongali) canal waters become available. We hope to raise this to 64.5 billion following the implementation of upper Nile projects.

We have another water source, namely, subterranean waters in the Nile delta and lower Egypt. Initial estimates place the volume of these waters at 2 billion cubic meters in the delta area, of which 1.5 billion is being utilized, and 3 billion cubic meters in lower Egypt, of which only 1.3 billion cubic meters are being utilized.

As for drainage waters which can be used for irrigation after treatment, the amount which is being used is about 4.5 billion cubic meters. This is expected to increase to 7.5 billion. If we manage to use those resources properly and without waste, then we will be able to cope with the future until the year 2000. But for the period after that time, we must begin from now to think about looking for other sources of water.

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OIL PRODUCTION, CONSUMPTION, EXPORT DATA OUTLINED

Cairo AL-AHRAM in Arabic 19 Apr 80 p 9

[Article by 'Adil Ibrahim: "Where do Our Oil Products Go?"]

[Text] The production of crude oil, natural gas and petroleum by-products has increased. As a result, the importation of certain oil products has decreased while Egyptian oil exports have increased to the extent that the balance of payments this year will realize a surplus of about \$1,500 million.

While Egyptian exports of crude oil and petroleum by-products have gone up, there was an increase in the level of consumption of oil products which will this year amount to 13.8 million tons, although production of crude and processed oil 5 years ago amounted to 6 million tons.

The overall value of Egyptian oil production is \$17 million daily or \$6,200 million annually (computed on the basis of the average export price). This amount is not a net income for the Egyptian treasury because we use some of those products to meet 80 percent of our energy needs. The rest of the revenue is a net surplus for the treasury.

Oil experts expect the overall production of crude oil and natural gases this year to be 29,369,000 tons valued at \$273,950,000—estimated on the basis of real prices of exports and locally consumed quantities.

Egyptian refineries will this year process 13,848,000 tons of crude oil and natural gases into oil products which will meet local consumption needs to the tune of \$177,237,000. Plans are presently being carried out to develop and improve the specifications of oil products and complement the requirements of the processing needed for that purpose. This represents a vital objective required by the rules of international competitiveness and by the needs of the local market, so as to cut down the importation of such products as jet fuel, diesel and mazut of various kinds. The refinery at Al-'Amiriyyah will introduce processes designed to improve kerosene and diesel products.

The ministry of oil affairs has allocated 38,130,000 pounds—including 16 million pounds in foreign currency—for the development of projects of oil