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LEBANON

#### LITANI SAID TO BE GOAL OF ISRAELI INVASION

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[Text] In a conversation between David Ben Gurion and Yigal Alon in February 1964, which was published in a Tel Aviv newspaper, the former said: "The boundaries of the Jewish state might have been farther north if Moshe Dayan had been chief of staff in the 1948 war." Alon, a commander for Northern Palestine in the Zionist movement, answered: "If Ben Gurion had not ordered a cease-fire, our forces would have been able to occupy the Litani River in the north and Sinai in the south."

It is clear then that seizure of the Litani River was (only) a question of time. The armistice and 1948 cease-fire played a role whose execution was (merely) postponed. It was actually a question of time...There's no doubt of that at all...We understand completely and more than at any time in the past that the operation of diverting and pumping the waters of the Litani to Northern Israel and Lake Tiberias and finally the Negeb will not be far distant after today, for all the evidence and all the indications point in this direction.

Since Israel withdrew from Sinai and returned it to Egypt, awareness of such an operation has created anxiety, fear, and confusion not only at the official Lebanese level but among the people in general, particularly in the South. The talk about Israel venturing to divert the waters of the Litani was virtually confirmed. This in fact goes back not only to its intentions and historic ambitions that we know about, but to its existing and open preparations in the region of the border strip recently and for some time. That is why it began not long ago to renew digging operations south of the Khardali bridge to install pumps on the Litani River to force the water into the occupied territories.

The Israeli plan, as has been constantly repeated, requires the installation of water pipes over the pumping pipes in the Syrian Golan Heights where the water will be diverted to the place prepared to receive it within Israel. We do not think these Israeli preparations or the steps taken to carry them out have introduced anything new into the picture. On the contrary, we confess, not without bitterness, that the preparations were added to what was done before along with the actions that followed what had been carried out in previous years. We do not remember, or some of us at least remember, what Levi

Eshkol told the French newspaper LE MONDE on the eve of the June war (Israel's thirst does not permit it to stand idle and watch the waters of the Litani River flow uselessly to the sea...And he confirmed that the canals in Israel are ready to receive the waters of this river). What leads us to take seriously what Israeli is doing is that the country will in fact experience, or at least thinks it will experience, a water crisis in the future. Israel has constantly demonstrated to the world, and not only to the Arabs, that it will not spare any effort or shrink from resorting to any means to obtain what it needs. Just imagine what this can mean when these needs are of the very essence of its strategy, involve its very survival, and constitute a basic factor in its expansion.

What impels us to take Israeli intentions very seriously is that Israel after existing for many years as a state on the land of Palestine has expended effort during this time that helped it achieve complete control of its water resources. It succeeded in exploiting more than 95 percent of its varied water resources except that up to 1978 it was unable to obtain more than 1728 million cubic meters of water, about 141 million cubic meters of it saline. Hence, we do not think it unlikely that Israel will seize the source of the Wazzani (one of the more important tributaries of the Litani) in 1980 which it wanted as a precautionary measure, especially since in 1978-1979 it faced one of the most dangerous droughts. Had it continued the following year, an economic disaster unparalleled in the history of Israel would have resulted. This led the newspaper DAVAR to say at that time that the solution to the problem is to draw water from the Litani or Nile. Moreover, it is worth noting, some studies estimate an Israeli water budget deficit of 415 to 510 million cubic meters will occur in 1985. The Israeli expert Yair Cutler admitted in an article in MA'ARIV through the water commissioner in Israel that Israel's need for water until the end of this century, i.e., until the year 2000, will require an increase of 700 million cubic meters over what it consumes at present. Furthermore, he did not expect he would be able to guarantee more than just 500 million cubic meters of this amount.

It is therefore clear to us that the water problem that Israel experiences from time to time is likely in the future to escalate to crisis proportions with increasing disparity between the quantities available and the quantities required to meet the multiple needs. An Arab engineer concluded in this connection that a rough comparison of the population growth rate in Israel with the growth of the water resources utilized there leads to an estimated annual average rate of individual water consumption of almost 500 m<sup>3</sup>. This means that every million increase in the number of Israeli inhabitants will need an increase in water resources of about 500 million m<sup>3</sup> of water, whereas Israeli estimates of the average annual rise in water consumption are 46.92 million m<sup>3</sup> a year, i.e., an average of 3 percent.

Moreover, for a long time Israel has persisted in inviting more Jewish immigrants to Palestine, for a long time it continued to increase the number of settlements, and its need for more agricultural land and manpower became apparent. Consequently, there has been a steadily increasing need for an abundance of water for domestic, agricultural, and industrial needs. According to the Israeli statistical bulletin for 1978, even in that year

agricultural production consumed most of the water available in Israel, i.e., at a rate of between 75 and 80 percent of the total consumption while domestic use varied from 15 to 18 percent and industrial production from only 4 to 6 percent of the total consumption. It is likewise clear to us that the increase in the quantities of water allocated for agricultural use was limited during the last 20 years to a little over 28 percent while the rate of increase in industrial consumption was 100 percent and in domestic consumption 85 percent. Since the Israelis were completely aware of these facts and took them into consideration from the beginning of the Zionist movement, the Lebanese Litani River was not far from their desires (even) for a day, from the time of Chaim Weizmann until today. Thomas Stauffer recently commented in the CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR: "The water which can be diverted to Israel from the Litani is set at 400 million cubic meters a year and more than 700 million cubic meters in case the Qar'awn dam is destroyed. And by drawing water from the Litani some 25 to 40 percent more will be added to Israeli water sources. It is a well-known fact that this river for which Israel yearns and desires to add to its resources is important because it is one of the major resources of Lebanon, for it is 160 km long and its basin covers an area of 2178 km<sup>2</sup>. The amount of water in the river basin is estimated to be about 700 million cubic meters. The basin also embraces extensive areas of the floodplains plus cultivated and arable lands. It plays a major role in the irrigation of agricultural land in the Bika' valley, although most of the main irrigation projects in Lebanon, as some sources point out, are linked to the utilization of the Litani River waters, on the one hand, and to the reclamation of potentially arable land, on the other. Since this river is of economic importance, it surely means that it is relied on as a water source that Zionist expansionist strategy takes into account along with other Arab water sources. Otherwise, there would be no possibility of realizing the ambitions of the early leaders of the Zionist movement for bringing together the widely scattered Jews in Palestine and expanding their authority over its lands and exploiting them without sufficient quantities of water to irrigate them and exercise total control over the sources."

To learn more about the historic Zionist desire for this river, we go back to the contents of a letter sent by Chaim Weizmann in 1919 to Lloyd George, the British prime minister at that time. He set forth in the letter the demands of the Zionist movement regarding the northern boundaries of Jewish Palestine when he said: "The future of Palestine depends on its water resources for irrigation and for electric power. The water resources are to be obtained mainly from the slopes of Mt. Hermon and sources of the Jordan and Litani rivers."

Weizmann added: "For these reasons we believe that the northern boundary of Palestine must include the Litani valley up to an area of 25 miles above the southern slopes of Mt. Hermon to guarantee control over the sources of the Jordan River." He learned that if it weren't for the struggle that broke out during the peace conference at that time between Britain and France in their capacity as colonialists, nothing would have prevented the Litani valley from being included within the borders of Israel. However, the Israelis did not despair and they continued their efforts quietly and through projects which they submitted directly or through intermediaries who voiced their intentions in their behalf, e.g., Lowdermilk, Hayek, and Cotton.

However, the latter's plan, which was proposed in 1954, provided a special indication that confirms Israel's imperialist expansionist intentions. He included the Litani River in the plan. He also demanded that the waters of the upper Jordan and its tributaries be brought down to irrigate the Negeb. The author of the plan believed Arabs and Jews would jointly benefit from the regional use of the waters of the Jordan and Litani. The Colton plan specified the areas to be irrigated as follows: Israel - 1,790,000 dunams, Lebanon - 350,000 dunams, Syria - 30,000 dunams, and Jordan - 430,000 dunams.

When the Israelis found their attempts and the attempts of their intermediaries to be futile, they adopted a new policy aimed at frustrating the Lebanese government when it tried in the 1950's to start projects for reclaiming and irrigating Lebanese lands by using the abundant water resources that God bestowed on Lebanon and setting up the Litani Authority with responsibility for the Litani project. This is the project the execution of whose various stages Israel tried from the beginning to block and apply pressure to delay the signing of the loan agreement between the Litani Authority and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Israel concentrated on limiting the funding only to the western Biqa' irrigation project without irrigation of the South. At that time Moshe Dayan regarded the execution of the project by the Lebanese government as a declaration of war on Israel. Israel kept charging that Lebanon is not like Israel in having great need for such a large quantity of water and that Israel is prepared to pay financial compensation or provide Lebanon with electric power produced by the waters of the Litani if it agreed to the diversion of some of the waters to the Jordan basin. The fact is Lebanon was unable to obtain the necessary funding for the project, rather it did not dare to do so in all its stages, especially that concerning irrigation of the South, except for a single irrigation project, i.e., the Qasimiyah irrigation canal which serves an area of only about 10,000 dunams. Israel undertook to destroy this canal last summer by aerial bombardment because of its economic value not its military significance, according to a statement by the head of the Administrative Council of the Lebanese Authority.

We can ascertain from this the extent of the dangers confronting the river and the vicious ambitions and hostile intentions of the scheming Israelis toward all Arab water sources and Arab land. Israel's tendency to create more settlements in the West Bank and Golan Heights following its withdrawal from Sinai will increase its need for water. It will therefore find itself drawing and diverting whatever water it needs, without regard for international law or regional sovereignty in addition to maintaining direct and indirect control over the sources of this water in order to assure its continued influx. If abundant water means for Israel more guarantees of growth, expansion, and power in addition to economic relief in the face of this evident reality which unmask Israeli intentions, we say Israel has begun to carry out the Litani Operation No 2. This is most likely so since it is no longer anything but a question of the appropriate time. Israel has already used up all justifications for starting to carry out the operation, to say nothing of the justifications it used up in past years for taking away what it regards as its share of the Litani waters. Let us be fully aware and understand that as far as Israeli is concerned, nothing is equal to yesterday's Sinai oil except more Arab water today...Litani River water.