



Syrian President Hafez Assad and Andrei Kirilenko (right) watch the damming of the Euphrates.

TASS photo

SYRIA CELEBRATES

The long-awaited damming of the Euphrates took place in a festive atmosphere in Syria on July 5. Ten-ton concrete blocks hurtling into the river marked the completion of the first stage of the hydropower project built with Soviet assistance. For Syrians, this also means the first step in the realization of their long-cherished dream of harnessing the Euphrates and using its waters for their good.

Delegations from many countries, including the Soviet Union, arrived in Syria at the invitation of its government and the Arab Socialist Renaissance (Baath) Party to celebrate this momentous event. The Soviet Party and government delegation, headed by Andrei Kirilenko, Political Bureau Member and Secretary of the Communist Party's Central Committee, visited the town of hydropower workers, Tabqa, renamed Al-Thawrah (revolution), to take a look at the construction project. "The friendship of our people with the peoples of the Soviet Union has been consolidated by the relations of sincere co-operation," President Hafez Assad said at the meeting dedicated to the damming, stressing that the Euphrates dam will be an eternal symbol of Arab-Soviet friendship.

The damming of the Euphrates is a big success for the Syrians, who are carrying out important progressive measures, successfully fulfilling the 1971-75 plan of socio-economic development. The main objective of the plan is to build large-scale industry. A great deal has already been done towards

this goal. Modern mills and factories have been put into operation, oil extraction has been started by national companies, and railways are being built—all this with the aid of the Soviet Union and other socialist states. However, it is the hydropower complex now under construction that will become the "backbone of development," as Syrian journalists have described this giant undertaking of tremendous importance for their country's economy.

An Arab legend says that very long ago a Turkish sultan and his suite were crossing the Euphrates after collecting tribute near the place where the dam is now being erected. But the hastily built bridge collapsed and the spoils sank. Remembering this legend the Syrians are going to extract from the river far greater "wealth" and use it in national interest.

The damming of the Euphrates will create a reservoir enough to irrigate about 640,000 hectares, while an 800,000-kw hydropower station will supply electricity to all parts of the country and the new factories, including a large industrial complex at Homs.

Also important is the socio-political aspect of the hydropower project. "The construction of the Euphrates complex," the newspaper *Al-Thawrah* notes, "means not only the growth of industrial production, but also the moulding of a new man and social progress."

The labour victory of the Syrian people is all the more significant be-

cause it has been achieved in conditions of continuing imperialist aggression by Israel and incessant cover attempts by enemies of Arab freedom and independence to push Syria off the road of progress and undermine Soviet Arab friendship. The Euphrates damming ceremony again showed the futility of such attempts, demonstrating once more that the Syrian people are determined to build a new life in co-operation with socialist countries.

The experience of development in the Arab states confirms that the Soviet Union, loyal to its policy of supporting the national liberation movements, has always been on the side of the Arab in their just cause and rendered them every assistance in eliminating the consequences of Israeli aggression and achieving progress. The consistency of Soviet policy was stressed in Damascus by Andrei Kirilenko, who noted in particular that in their relations with Syria and the other Arab progressive countries the Communist Party and the Soviet government have always been guided by the principles of Leninist internationalism. "In the Soviet Union, Party and our people," he said, "we have and will have dependable and loyal friends. We shall continue to promote Soviet-Syrian friendship and co-operation." At a meeting with leaders of the Syrian Communist Party, affiliated, jointly with Baath, to the Progressive National Front, Andrei Kirilenko wished the Syrian Communists success in consolidating their country's independence and in rebuffing Israeli aggression.

The celebrations in Syria are yet another contribution to Soviet-Arab co-operation.

V. SHMARCO

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