

JOHN WATERBURY
TESTIMONY BEFORE U.S.
HOUSE OF REPS. SUBCOMM.
ON EUR. & TAB M.B.
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MR. CHAIRMAN,

THERE ARE NINE SOVEREIGN NATIONS THAT LAY CLAIM TO SOME PORTION OF THE NILE BASIN¹. IN ANY EFFORTS TO BRING ABOUT BASIN-WIDE COORDINATION IN THE USE OF THE RIVER'S WATERS, ALL NINE WOULD RIGHTFULLY HAVE SOME SAY, AND CONCEIVABLY VETO POWER AS WELL.

HOWEVER, ONLY TWO COUNTRIES IN THE SYSTEM ARE DEPENDENT UPON ITS WATERS FOR THEIR LIVELIHOOD AND SURVIVAL. EGYPT, THE DOWNSTREAM STATE, IS UTTERLY DEPENDENT UPON THE NILE FOR LIFE ITSELF AND THE FOOD AND HYDROPOWER THAT SUSTAINS ITS ECONOMY. EGYPT DOES NOT ADD A SINGLE DROP TO THE NILE; IT CAN ONLY TAKE. THE SUDAN, WHICH, UNLIKE EGYPT, HAS SUBSTANTIAL RAINFED AGRICULTURE, IS LESS DEPENDENT UPON THE RIVER, BUT ITS BEST SOILS ALL LIE WITHIN THE CATCHMENTS OF THE BLUE AND WHITE NILES AND THEY ARE IDEALLY SUITED FOR IRRIGATED CULTIVATION.

THE SEVEN REMAINING COUNTRIES EITHER HAVE ABUNDANT RAINFALL OR OTHER SOURCES OF RIVER AND LAKE WATER. THEY ARE RELEVANT ONLY IN THAT THEY CAN, POTENTIALLY, AFFECT THE SIZE AND QUALITY OF OF THE DISCHARGE THAT ULTIMATELY REACHES SUDAN AND EGYPT. ALSO GIVEN THEIR LOCATION UPSTREAM OR AT THE HEADWATERS OF THE SOURCES OF THE BLUE AND WHITE NILES, THEY WOULD HAVE TO BE COAXED INTO ANY PLANS TO USE THEIR TERRITORIES FOR STORAGE PROJECTS THAT WOULD BENEFIT MAINLY EGYPT AND THE SUDAN.

¹ They are: Egypt, the Sudan, Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya, Zaire, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania.

OF THESE SEVEN COUNTRIES THREE ARE OF CRUCIAL IMPORTANCE BOTH FOR WHAT THEY COULD DO TO ALTER THE DISCHARGE OF THE RIVER--ALTHOUGH THAT IS THE MOST REMOTE OF ALL POSSIBILITIES--AND FOR WHAT THEY COULD DO TO FACILITATE WATER STORAGE ON THEIR TERRITORIES. THEY ARE ETHIOPIA, WHICH CONTROLS LAKE TANA AND THE HEADWATERS OF THE BLUE NILE AND THE ATBARA, TOGETHER PROVIDING ABOUT 60% OF THE TOTAL DISCHARGE OF THE NILE; AND UGANDA AND ZAIRE WHICH SHARE LAKE ALBERT, NOW KNOWN AS LAKE MOBUTU. THIS LAKE COULD ONE DAY BE A MAJOR STORAGE SITE FOR CONTROLLING THE DISCHARGE OF THE WHITE NILE.

AT PRESENT THERE IS ONLY ONE TREATY BINDING ANY OF THE RIPARIAN STATES IN THE USE OF THE NILE. IT IS THE 1959 AGREEMENT SIGNED BY EGYPT AND THE SUDAN PRIOR TO CONSTRUCTION OF THE ASWAN HIGH DAM.

THESE ARE THE BARE FACTS OF THE GEOPOLITICS OF THE BASIN. LET ME TURN TO THE DYNAMICS OF THE SITUATION. FIRST, THERE IS TODAY NO MAJOR PROBLEM FACING ANY COUNTRIES OF THE BASIN SO FAR AS WATER SUPPLY IS CONCERNED. BUT THAT SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN AS GOOD NEWS. THE ONLY REASON WHY THERE IS NOT A MAJOR PROBLEM IS BECAUSE MOST OF THE STATES IN THE BASIN HAVE BEEN IN CHRONIC POLITICAL DISARRAY AND HENCE INCAPABLE OF FINANCING AND IMPLEMENTING THE AGRICULTURAL PROJECTS THAT WOULD HAVE LAID NEW CLAIMS ON NILE WATER. UGANDA HAS SCARCELY HAD A STATE SINCE THE COLLAPSE OF IDI AMIN, AND ETHIOPIA AND THE SUDAN HAVE BEEN IN THE THROES OF CIVIL WAR FOR DECADES. ONLY EGYPT HAS MAINTAINED A STABLE POLITY, AND ONLY EGYPT IS USING THE WATER AVAILABLE TO IT TO THE MAXIMUM

WERE IT NOT FOR THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC COLLAPSE OF SOME OF THE KEY ACTORS, THE SUPPLY SITUATION COULD BE TRULY GRIM. WHILE IT IS ALWAYS HAZARDOUS TO MAKE PROJECTIONS OF CLIMATE AND RAINFALL, IT NONETHELESS APPEARS TO BE THE CASE THAT THERE IS A SECULAR DECLINE IN THE AMOUNT OF WATER ANNUALLY DISCHARGED IN THE NILE SYSTEM. THERE IS CONSIDERABLE VARIANCE AROUND THE MEAN, BUT THE MEAN DISCHARGE TREND IS DOWN. WE DON'T KNOW HOW LONG THAT MAY LAST, BUT IN THE COMING DECADES IT WOULD SEEM TO MAKE GOOD SENSE TO PLAN ON LESS WATER.

FOR EGYPT THAT HAS MEANT ELABORATING TWO STRATEGIES. ONE, THAT FAVORED BY MOST EGYPTIAN LEADERS UNTIL RECENTLY, HAS BEEN TO PURSUE COORDINATION WITH UPSTREAM NEIGHBORS IN THE WHITE NILE BASIN IN ORDER TO STORE WATER, REGULATE DISCHARGE, AND REDUCE SURFACE EVAPORATION IN THE SUDD SWAMPS OF THE SOUTHERN SUDAN. THIS STRATEGY LED TO THE PARTIAL CONSTRUCTION OF THE JONGLEI CANAL, A PROJECT THAT HAD TO BE ABANDONNED AFTER THE CIVIL WAR FLARED UP ONCE AGAIN IN THE SOUTHERN SUDAN AFTER 1983. IT IS STILL EGYPT'S HOPE THAT ONE DAY, USING LAKE MOBUTU FOR STORAGE, THERE WILL BE TWO CANALS THROUGH THE SUDD SWAMPS, ADDING A NET BENEFIT OF ABOUT 10% OF THE RIVER'S ANNUAL DISCHARGE.

FACED WITH THE UNENDING TURMOIL IN THE SUDAN AND UGANDA, AND SOME INDIFFERENCE IN ZAIRE, EGYPTIAN LEADERS HAVE BEGUN TO EMPHASIZE THE SECOND STRATEGY. THAT IS TO INCREASE THE EFFICIENCY WITH WHICH WATER IS USED IN EGYPT ITSELF. IN SOME WAYS THIS IS A FAR MORE DIFFICULT CHALLENGE. IT REQUIRES RETRAINING THE EGYPTIAN PEASANT IN THE WAYS IN WHICH HE OR SHE USES IRRIGATION WATER. IT

MEANS LINING THOUSANDS OF MILES OF CANALS IN ORDER TO REDUCE SEEPAGE. IT MEANS INTRODUCING COSTLY DRIP IRRIGATION SYSTEMS AND PURSUING EFFORTS TO USE DRAINAGE WATER FOR IRRIGATION. THE EFFORT WOULD ONLY MAKE SENSE WERE EGYPT TO SHIFT MOST OF ITS AGRICULTURAL BASE TO THE PRODUCTION OF HIGH VALUE CROPS DESTINED LARGELY FOR EXPORT. THERE IS REALLY NO ALTERNATIVE TODAY TO THE PURSUIT OF THIS STRATEGY, BUT IT IS NOT ONE THAT CAN BE IMPLEMENTED RAPIDLY.

LET ME CLOSE WITH A FEW OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING EHTIOPIA. MYTHOLOGY ABOUNDS AS TO EHTIOPIA'S CAPACITY TO "SHUT OFF" THE BLUE NILE.² THE ABSENCE OF STORAGE SITES THAT WOULD NOT BE SUBJECT TO RAPID SILTATION, THE PROHIBITIVE COST OF ANY POSSIBLE PROJECTS, AND THE FACT THAT EHTIOPIAN AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT HAS BEEN CONCENTRATED IN THE EASTERN WATERSHED OF THE HIGHLANDS AND IN THE SOUTH OF THE COUNTRY WOULD SEEM TO MAKE VERY REMOTE ANY KIND OF PROJECT THAT COULD SUBSTANTIALLY REDUCE THE FLOW OF THE BLUE NILE AND ATBARA BEFORE THEY ENTER THE SUDAN.

MR. CHAIRMAN, UNTIL THE KEY COUNTRIES OF THE BASIN ENJOY STABLE GOVERNMENT, THERE CAN BE LITTLE PROGRESS TOWARD NEGOTIATED UNDERSTANDINGS ON BASIN-WIDE COORDINATION IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THE NILE. BUT WERE SUCH GOVERNMENTS TO EMERGE, READY TO TAKE UP THE TASK OF DEVELOPING THEIR COUNTRIES, THEN THE PRESSURE ON WATER AVAILABLE IN THE NILE COULD BECOME ACUTE. UNLIKE THE

² SOME FUEL TO THE FIRE WAS ADDED BY A MULTI-VOLUME STUDY IN THE EARLY 1960s CARRIED OUT BY THE BUREAU OF RECLAMATION FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF HEILIE SELASSIE THAT ASSESSED ALL THE POTENTIAL STORAGE SITES IN THE BLUE NILE-ATBARA SYSTEM.

SITUATION IN THE JORDAN AND EUPHRATES, HOWEVER, THAT ^{development} ~~SITUATION~~ IS
NOT CLOSE AT HAND.