

MIDEAST Mirror

Excerpts for the October 4, 1991 conference on
"Peace-keeping, Water and Security in South Lebanon"
organized by the
Centre for Lebanese Studies
in cooperation with the
Norwegian Institute for International Affairs

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(former Ambassador to Israel)

□ **CONTRADICTIONS:** In other comment on the main story of the day, *al-Amal*, mouthpiece of the Christian Phalangist Party, expressed its satisfaction over abrogation of the Cairo Agreement, a move it likened to the "inhumation of a forgotten corpse."

The conservative *al-Anwar* detected two major contradictions in the circumstances surrounding annulment of the accord.

The first was that the Lebanese waged war against each other "because they disagreed on the modalities of Palestinian presence in their country," but now that they agree on them, they deeply differ over the future political system in Lebanon. So the war goes on.

The second was that the Lebanese authorities refrained from abrogating the accord "when the PLO was all but destroyed by the Israelis in 1982 and decided to complete this formality when the Palestinians regained a foothold in Lebanon and became capable of opposing the national will expressed through parliament's vote."

□ **FUNERAL:** All papers reported on their front pages Thursday's mass funeral of Hassan Abdallah Hamdan, a prominent Communist Party member shot dead in West Beirut earlier this week.

Moslem areas of Lebanon observed a one-day strike

called by leftist parties in protest against the murder. Though Hamdan was a Shiite, funeral prayers were held at a Sunni mosque in West Beirut and speakers again accused "obscurantist forces acting under the cover of religion" of responsibility for the murder and demanded the establishment of "a democratic and secular" system in Lebanon.

Hamdan was the 19th Communist militant killed over the past few months in what papers here have linked to the party's tug-of-war with Amal.

□ **HOSTAGES:** The hostage issue also figured prominently in the Beirut press Friday.

L'Orient-Le Jour published a full page message from the colleagues of kidnaped French journalist Jean-Paul Kaufmann on the occasion of the second anniversary of his abduction in West Beirut. In it, friends of Kaufmann reassured him of their friendship and support.

The papers published a statement by the clandestine Islamic Jihad for the Liberation of Palestine in which it said it would take "suitable action" once it had finished questioning the "spies" it is detaining -- one Indian and three American professors abducted in West Beirut last January. The message had been initially delivered to *an-Nahar*.

MIDEAST *Friday 6 July '90*

Saddam hits out at Turkey, urges Iraqis to economize on water

Lebanon asks UN to investigate Israeli 'theft' of Litani

President Saddam Hussein has called on the Iraqis to economize on water and bluntly criticized Turkey for failing to release the amount of Euphrates water Iraq is demanding.

Saddam's remarks, carried in Arabic newspapers Friday, came during a tour of southern provinces earlier this week, just a few days after a meeting of Turkish, Syrian and Iraqi ministers in Ankara failed to resolve the row over sharing the waters of the Euphrates River, which rises in Turkey.

Ankara blamed the deadlock on Iraq's insistence that Turkey increase the amount of Euphrates waters it releases over the Syrian border to 700 cubic meters per second.

Under a 1987 protocol, Turkey lets flow an average of 500 cubic meters per second. Syria has reached a bilateral agreement with Iraq to pass on 58 percent of the flow.

But Iraqi Agriculture Minister Abdelwahab Mahmoud, who took part in the Ankara talks, accused Turkey of "obstinacy" and "procrastination," saying it sought to block a tripartite agreement on water-sharing. He said Iraq wanted an agreement to be reached by the end of the year at the latest under which each of Turkey, Syria and Iraq would get a fair share of Euphrates water.

Both Syria and Iraq are unhappy with the flow rate as it stands and objected strongly when Turkey halted the water flow to the two downstream countries for a month last January to fill a new reservoir behind the giant Ataturk dam.

□ **ECONOMICAL:** Saddam, whose call for rationing water was repeatedly carried by Iraqi media, said that "from now on, we must know how to use the amount of water we get from the Euphrates in an economical manner."

Directing his remarks to Iraqi farmers, 1.5 million of whom live on the banks of the Euphrates, Saddam said they must henceforth ration the water used for irrigation.

The Iraqi people, he said, should consume water "not according to their wishes, but in accordance with Iraq's interests."

There will be shortages of water not only this year, but in following years too, and shortages will increase if negotiations with Ankara do not succeed, the Iraqi leader warned.

The amount of water which Turkey was letting flow did not take into account "acquired rights," and to that extent, Turkey was "not acting in accordance with international law," Saddam charged.

In statements last week, Agriculture Minister Mahmoud said Iraq considered the Euphrates "an international river in accordance with international laws and conventions."

"There is what we call an 'acquired right', i.e. the use of water for projects that are already underway and which must (continue to) receive their share," he explained.

According to the Agence France Presse (AFP) dispatch carried in Arabic papers, Saddam has asked the agriculture ministry to review its land reclamation plans in light of the expected water shortages. He said such plans, estimated to cost the state ID200 million (\$640 million approximately) were a waste in the absence of adequate water supplies.

The report noted that last May Iraq postponed concluding bilateral agreements with Turkey on security and industrial cooperation pending a solution of the water row.

Some observers believe Ankara is using the Euphrates issue as a lever to force Baghdad and Damascus to take action against separatist Kurdish guerillas it says are mounting cross-border raids into Turkey from bases in Syria and Iraq.

According to the AFP dispatch, observers in Baghdad believe that Saddam's call for economizing on water and Iraq's public criticism of Turkey indicate a settlement of the water problem is not at hand.

But these observers do not envisage Iraq using force to settle the issue. They note that Baghdad has so far opted for diplomacy in dealing with the decrease of the water level which is causing great damage to its agricultural projects.

Iraq may seek to canvass Arab support to influence Ankara. Last January, the Arab League expressed regret over Turkey's decision to temporarily halt the water flow and urged Ankara to reach an agreement with Syria and Iraq "based on the principles of international law and leading to the enhancement of brotherly relations between Turkey and all Arab countries."

[] CRISIS: The threat of a water crisis in the Middle

East was highlighted by three American scholars in testimony to a congressional subcommittee last week.

One of them, University of Pennsylvania Professor Thomas Naff, said that if the problems of the Jordan River basin were not solved, they would "result in a significant rise in the probability of an outbreak of warfare between Jordan and Israel, which would almost certainly involve other Arab states."

Earlier this week, Jordanian Prime Minister Mudar Badran warned that Israel's illegal use of water from the Occupied Territories and its attempts to seize water from Jordanian and Lebanese rivers could destroy all chances of peace in the region.

Badran said Israel had also managed to torpedo a World Bank loan sought by Jordan and Syria to finance their al-Wihda dam project along the Yarmouk River).

Jordan's Crown Prince Hassan took up the theme in a BBC interview Thursday, saying the danger of an Israeli-Arab armed conflict would mount over the next decade as demand for water grows.

Prince Hassan, currently on a visit to Britain, said the influx of Soviet Jews to Israel and the Occupied Territories would aggravate the problem as tens of thousands arrive to share limited water resources.

Israel has already reached high rates of consumption, a trend that will eventually dry up the region, he said. The crown prince expressed the hope that Turkey, Syria and Iraq will succeed in resolving their differences over the Euphrates.

[] LITANI: In his testimony, Professor Naff said that owing to serious water shortages, Israel was conducting a large-scale water-trucking operation from the Litani River, which lies entirely within sovereign Lebanese territory.

The Lebanese Ambassador to the UN, Khalil Mekkawi, was reported to have immediately taken up the issue with UN Undersecretary-General Marrack Goulding, demanding that UN forces deployed in South Lebanon investigate the matter.

A Beirut-dated dispatch by Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) carried in Arabic papers Friday quotes Lebanese diplomatic sources as confirming that the Lebanese government has officially requested the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) to carry out an investigation.

The report says that UNIFIL Commander Lt-Gen. Lars-Eric Wahlgren inspected the source of the Hasbani River in the first part of June at the request of the Lebanese government after Israeli experts toured the Litani and Hasbani areas and huge pumps were set up north of the Khardali bridge.

KUNA said Lebanon has accused Israel of installing huge pumps on hills in the Upper Galilee to collect water flowing from the Litani and direct it to Israeli farms or settlements.

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The diplomatic sources told *KUNA* that Lebanon would request an urgent session of the UN Security Council if it obtains confirmation that "Israel has started to steal water." The sources predicted that Israel would step up plans to divert Lebanese waters to cater to the needs of thousands of Soviet Jewish immigrants arriving in the country.

The sources said Israel had started to link the economy of the southern border strip -- or "security zone" -- it occupies to the Israeli economy as a first step toward "Judaizing" the area. A number of Soviet Jews were sent on an inspection tour of the "security zone" under the protection of some 150 Israeli soldiers, they added.