

that dogmatic personality, as described to us, are associated various think-tank activities, including "Future Studies," and "Egypt 2000" whose main object is "to think small." Using as pretext that Mafia-linked Osman Ahmed Osman's control of Arab contracting is the prime mover in the big projects in the desert, they are opposing all big projects because "they benefit the Mafia!" In turn, the left wing is advocating a "revitalization of the small village," childishly refusing to consider the ultimate consequences of such policies for a population of 44 million which now can inhabit to live only 4 percent of the nation's territory. It comes as no surprise to discover that such institutions around the planning institute are taking advice or orders from Britain's Sussex University or from the "Oxford Marxist" group via Warsaw's Central University of World Economics.

Nor is it a surprise to hear such people bluntly advocating an "Islamic way of development for Egypt"—though what is meant by that is quite another matter. As we repeatedly asked proponents of this policy for a more precise definition of that concept, little explanation was put forward. Instead, the formula was simply that "the Western model of development" had to be rejected, which means that this group may soon become the core of an anti-nuclear movement when Egypt begins to receive its first nuclear plants this year. Marxists advocating Islamic development are, after all, no more surprising than a leading economist and former minister, now in the opposition, telling us very seriously that as far as he was concerned Egypt's national number-one problem was Cairo's sewer system. A pipe had broken some days earlier in the Giza quarter, which had made the front page of the *New York Times*.

These elements have little capability to disturb Egypt's march toward progress. They talk about the need to satisfy the "masses," but their ultimate card is the passivity of the population. Nasser complained frequently about Egyptian passivity, the direct result of centuries of government in which the population could do little but follow while nothing changed. This has indeed created resistance to development and to a new way of life. Centuries of repression have inhibited the population's ability to aspire to the kind of future its leadership wants for the nation—and "intellectuals" have an easy game rationalizing it, unable or unwilling to see that by using that passivity as a means to undercut the government's present policies, they are playing with fire, as did many Iranian intellectuals, under similar ideological influence, did before them. The engineer in charge of the El Salhia project, more political than any such left-wing opposition, concluded his guided tour by stressing that what Egyptian youth really need is a real challenge, in response to which it would have to fight for the country's future in this most important war of all, the war against the desert! Mubarak's leadership is providing this challenge, and that is also a challenge to the opposition. Perhaps it has grown so used to functioning as impotent critics, the opposition does not know how to stop. Now is the time or never.

Interview

Maher Abaza, Egypt's Electricity Minister

The following is an interview with Maher Abaza, Egypt's Minister of Electricity, conducted in Cairo on Dec. 17, 1982 by EIR Editor-in-Chief Criton Zoakos and Middle East Editor Thierry Lalevée.

EIR: What percentage of energy goes to what sectors of the economy, and what percentage is produced by what sources?

Abaza: The production of energy is now 22 gigawatts—60 percent for industry; 35 percent for households, shops and offices; and 5 percent for agriculture. We will increase energy production by the end of the century up to 100 gigawatts, because we are increasing industrial consumption each year.

At the end of the century, hydro-power will be the source of 10 to 15 percent of energy, 10 to 15 percent will be gas-powered stations; 15 percent will be coal-powered stations and 15 percent will be diesel-powered stations. The rest, which is 40 percent, we expect to be nuclear power stations. We do not want to have all our eggs in one basket.

EIR: Do you include the Qattar Depression project in the future 15 percent of hydro-power?

Abaza: No. The Qattara project is now under study, and we are going to finish the report at the end of 1983. The Swedish are looking very hard at this study.

EIR: Didn't you have a German group studying the project? What was their conclusion?

Abaza: The conclusion was that the cost is very expensive if you are not going to make a tunnel using nuclear explosives.

EIR: You're not considering using nuclear explosives?

Abaza: No.

EIR: Nuclear explosives have been used in certain countries for this kind of thing.

Abaza: They were used in the United States and in the USSR for a very short period, and then they stopped using them.

EIR: What was the cost estimate that the Germans gave you?

Abaza: \$3 billion for the nuclear excavation, and about \$6 billion for the tunnel project.

EIR: But the point is that financing is not forthcoming from foreign sources.

Abaza: That is right.

EIR: We are exceptionally interested in the Qattara project because of its larger implications, not only for energy but also for the transformation of the climate and so forth.

Abaza: That is why we are waiting until the end of this year, because we have two committees now studying all the possible implications, applications, and implementations of this project and the effect it will have on its surroundings. The Ministers of Industry, of Petroleum, of Electricity, of Agriculture, of Tourism are all members of these committees.

EIR: You seem to have had success recently in concluding deals to acquire nuclear plants.

Abaza: We only have agreements, signed with different countries like the United States, Germany, and France. These are all political agreements only, no commissions to buy any kind of equipment.

EIR: What are the obstacles so far?

Abaza: No obstacles. We are now just starting with the French government, and we are proceeding with them.

EIR: Are there any problems in the financing of these nuclear plants?

Abaza: We have an agreement with the European Community that they are going to finance a special organization in Egypt for new energy.

EIR: Is Egypt itself maintaining its own nuclear research programs?

Abaza: We have no research programs, only very simple things concerning some vegetation, as it pertains to agriculture, medicine, but nothing sophisticated.

EIR: You have projected an increase in energy production from 22 gigawatts to 100 gigawatts. Will there be any obstacles to achieving this objective, in terms of financing?

Abaza: It's possible we will have some delay in financing, but I feel that we are going to have enough money for that.

EIR: I have a specific reason for asking about financing problems. There are numerous countries experiencing debt problems, such as Mexico, Brazil, and so forth. And the IMF and the World Bank are going in with certain demands. They impose conditionalities. That is, if these nations want their debts to be refinanced, they must cut existing programs, impose domestic austerity, etc. Since Egypt's foreign exchange needs, in terms of debt and so forth, might go up in the next year to \$15 billion, there might be, in my understanding, some attempt by the IMF to impose the reduction of certain programs.

Abaza: If that occurs, we will see to it at that time, but until now we have had no problems.

EIR: Have you signed a political agreement with the United States regarding nuclear energy?

Abaza: Yes. In June 1981, we signed an agreement with Mr. Haig, who was Secretary of State at the time, for cooperation around nuclear energy.

EIR: Will energy issues—specifically nuclear—be discussed when President Mubarak goes to the United States this month?

Abaza: No, I don't think so. That's not going to be the main topic. He's going to the United States mainly for political reasons. Generally, discussions will be about the situation in the Middle East.

EIR: When President Mubarak was in India three or four weeks ago, there were talks on developing some kind of Egyptian-Indian nuclear cooperation.

Abaza: We have had cooperation between India and Egypt for years. It's a very old relationship.

Egypt expects 40 percent of its energy to come from nuclear plants by the turn of the century. Hydro-power from the Quattara Depression project, now under study, would also be a major energy source. Western Europe is interested in financing Egypt's energy development, and since mid-1981 there has been a nuclear power cooperation agreement with the United States. Egypt has no nuclear research programs, but its engineers benefit from Indian training.

EIR: Since when, approximately?

Abaza: Going on 15 years. We send engineers there to train—technical engineers, electrical engineers, mechanical engineers, and power engineers. We have an agreement between the two Ministers of Energy. I personally have visited India twice. Also, we sometimes send people to train in the peaceful use of nuclear energy.