

The Nile as the River of Peace

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Since the entry into the new millennium, there has been a plethora of futuristic forecasts issued by think-tanks, outlining the nature of projected future conflicts around the globe. One such report, issued by the CIA, "Global Trends 2015," says that scarcity of water will be among the leading sources of conflict. "By 2015 nearly half of the world's population—more than 3 billion people—will live in countries that are 'water-stressed'—have less than 1,700 cubic meters of water per capita per year, mostly in Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, and northern China." It notes, "As countries press against the limits of available water between now and 2015, the possibility of conflict will increase."

How true it is, that water shortages breed conflict, can be seen in the history of the Middle East wars. And yet, peace can be secured through agreement on water utilization. It is this concept that animated discussion in a four-day seminar held in Sudan's capital, Khartoum, on Jan. 14-17. The seminar, organized jointly by the Center for Strategic Studies and the Ministry of Culture and Information, in Sudan, and *EIR* and the Schiller Institute, centered on the theme: "Peace Through Development along the Nile Valley in the Framework of a New, Just World Economic Order." We publish here the proceedings of the conference panel on "The Role of Continent-Wide Infrastructure in the Development of Africa."

The Nile River, is a case in point: One of the most important rivers in the world, it is shared by ten countries. Its resources are immense, but the potential for irrigation, transportation, fisheries, and hydropower development, have been barely tapped. The cited "Global Trends 2015" report, notes that "Egypt is proceeding with a major diversion of water from the Nile, which flows from Ethiopia and Sudan, both of which will want to draw more water from the Nile for their own development by 2015. Water-sharing arrangements," the report concludes, "are likely then to become more contentious."

What the report does not highlight, is the fact that signifi-

cant progress is being made toward cooperation among the riparian countries, which could lay the basis for durable peace. Indeed, at the conference, the Sudanese minister for irrigation and water resources presented a vision of cooperation, not only in water sharing, but also in *development* of the water potential, for agriculture, transportation, and energy. The contribution water development can make to increasing agricultural output, was illustrated by a former minister of agriculture from Sudan, who showed that through such a cooperative effort, the economies of the entire Nile basin can be revolutionized.

Parallel to water development, there needs to be a cooperative effort to develop transportation infrastructure, to allow Africa as a whole to move toward economic integration. One of the criminal legacies of the colonial era, is that almost all rail infrastructure that exists, was built to move raw materials from the source, to the nearest port, for export. There are almost no international rail connections; neighboring countries face the colonial heritage of different rail gauges.

The perspective presented at the conference, was for massive rail development, beginning with the extension of the Eurasian Land-Bridge. Proposals for this were presented by two Egyptian scholars, who have worked out how to bring the land-bridge into Africa, through Egypt. The general manager of the Sudan Railways Corp. outlined the country's plans for a national rail network, within the context of a continental vision.

To bring such great projects into being, requires facing the world economic breakdown crisis, and creating new structures to build an alternative economic arrangement. Guest speaker Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr. addressed this issue in his keynote on "The New Bretton Woods System as the Framework for a New, Just World Economic Order." As laid out in the concluding session of the conference, which was published in *EIR*, Feb. 9, 2001, peace can be achieved only through such "real development."