

But, instead of this, the new government has the illusion that a continuity in the prevailing monetary, financial, and fiscal policies, will give it the economic and international political space to govern, and afterward, it will attempt a change in policy. As part of this plan to buy time, the government launched a social program which promises to end the scourge of hunger, but without going to the roots of what is producing hunger and misery in Brazil. Symptomatic of this situation, is the announcement by Finance Minister Palocci that he will continue the IMF's policy of fiscal austerity, allegedly in order to finance the government's "Zero Hunger" program.

The international financial oligarchy, aware of the nature of the crossroads facing the Lula government, has opted not to force an immediate financial confrontation, as it has done with Argentina. The first quarter of 2003 will be a period of tremendous political pressure, but the conditions will be created for Brazil to be able to continue refinancing its debt. But by April and May, vast payments on the debt will be coming due, which could very likely lead to an explosion such as that which occurred in Argentina a year ago.

The Institutions of Government

Outside the political dynamic imposed by the world of globalization, within the Lula government there are institutional sectors that represent the defense of the legitimate national interests in the areas of agriculture and industry, and in foreign and military policy. With regard to these, the Lula government has opted to give institutional continuity to the South American integration initiative, begun in September 2000 after the total failure of the so-called Millennium Round trade negotiations in Seattle, Washington. It is clear that Foreign Minister Celso Amorin, along with the Foreign Ministry's General Secretary Samuel Pinheiro Guimarães, are representatives of an independent foreign policy, with clear reservations about the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). This group seeks to strengthen the political alliance with Argentina and the Mercosur group of nations, as the motor of South American integration, and to open relations with the strategic Eurasian triangle—Russia, China, and India—as well as with South Africa.

Brazil's diplomatic initiative toward Venezuela, seeking to break the scenario of conflict between the demented radicalism of President Hugo Chávez, and the intransigence of opposition leaders backed by Washington, reflects this intention to maintain an independent foreign policy.

This same approach was taken in the choice of Ambassador José Viegas Filho as Defense Minister, a choice which, despite some pockets of resistance, has thus far avoided a politicization of defense policies. Lula took care to choose the commanders of the three military forces with strict respect for rank, with the purpose of avoiding any friction with the Armed Forces.

Military policy will be one of the key areas in which the true nature of the government will be determined, because President Lula will have to define what his policy will be toward narco-terrorism, the sovereignty of the Amazon region (especially in the face of foreign interventions from the complex of environmentalist and indigenist NGOs), and the Armed Forces' programs for developing the most advanced technologies.

It is important to note that the new government is considering continuing to use the Armed Forces in various social and economic programs, in which the Armed Forces have always participated. For example, the idea has been presented that the Army's engineering battalions could lead an effort to rebuild infrastructure and transportation logistics throughout the national territory, which could mean the modernization and expansion of the already traditional engineering corps. But this cannot mean doing away with the Armed Forces' fundamental role of defending the country's full sovereignty, as has been the intention of both currents of the globalization lobby—neo-liberal and leftist.

Despite the enormous expectations and vast popular hopes created by Lula's election, for the moment, this is where the matter presently stands.

'Noösphere in Action' In Egypt's Desert

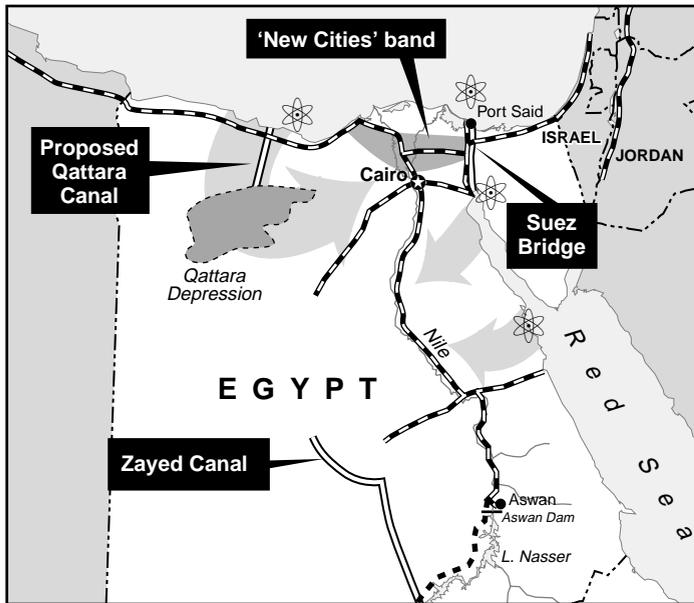
by Hussein Askary

A move of human civilization from the Nile Valley to Egypt's western desert was begun, when President Hosni Mubarak on Jan. 12 inaugurated the biggest water-pumping station in the Middle East—and probably the world. Mubarak put into operation the first stage of the Toshka Project, and the beginning of comprehensive development in the southern valley, now called the New Valley.

This project, in the works for years, consists of moving large amounts of Nile River water in Lake Nasser behind the Aswan Dam, into the desert west of the lake, and up northward parallel to the Nile River Valley, to build new agro-industrial centers and cities. In ten years, the population of this new region is estimated to reach 3 million. According to one Egyptian television commentator, "This is the first time in known history, that Egyptian civilization has made a major move outside of the Nile Valley." Almost 70 million Egyptians live in a narrow strip along the Nile and in its northern Delta.

The first two units of the giant Mubarak pumping station at Toshka will pump water from Lake Nasser into the Sheikh

Egypt's New Desert Canal



Like the canal which created California's Imperial Valley, Egypt's new Zayed Canal, which is to create a New Valley of agriculture, settlement, and manufacture, is now filling with water pumped from Lake Nasser. Here this project is shown with other national transport and water projects.

Zayed Canal to irrigate 10,000 feddans (4,046 hectares, or about 150 square miles) of desert. The area will be increased sixfold later this year, as part of the first phase of a project that eventually calls for cultivation of about 600,000 feddans (roughly 9,000 square miles). The huge pumping station at Toshka has been designed to withstand earthquakes and all weather conditions, and cost about 1.5 billion Egyptian pounds (\$450 million) to build. With a capacity of 25 million cubic meters daily, the station could take water from Lake Nasser even in a 10-year drought, because it can draw water from a depth of 147 meters (water behind the dam can reach 182 meters).

Looking to Future Generations

The Toshka Project was launched to encourage people to get out of the narrow Nile Valley—a mere 5% of Egypt's land-area—to secure the future for coming generations. The two units opened by President Mubarak will pump water into branches 1 and 2 of the Sheikh Zayed Canal and irrigate 220,000 feddans. Construction of the 50-kilometer canal was financed mostly with financial gifts and grants from the United Arab Emirates. The first branch serves 100,000 feddans that belong to the agricultural development project owned by Saudi Prince Walid bin Talal, whose holding company has invested hundreds of millions of dollars in these

projects. The second branch, serving 120,000 feddans, is devoted to Egyptian companies.

The Mubarak station has 21 pumps in all—designed in Japan—and is scheduled for full operation in July. Dr. Mahmoud Abu Zeid, Minister of Irrigation and Water Resources, said that about \$1 billion has been spent so far on the Toshka Project, which is 70-90% complete.

Some 60,000 feddans of the newly reclaimed lands will be distributed to youth and junior beneficiaries; the investment companies will provide working opportunities for youth. Most of the new agricultural projects will be operated by young university and technical institute graduates, reflecting a focus on highly advanced production methods. Eighteen new cities are to be established on 800,000 feddans in Toshka. Agriculture will be combined with mining and metal-working industries, because the region is rich with minerals and other natural resources. Electricity is already available from the Aswan Dam. Transport infrastructure, such as modern roads, already exists. North of this project, a group of oases, such as Al-Kharga Oasis, is already a major mining and steel production site, with a railway connection to the Nile Valley and Port Safaga on the Red Sea.

President Mubarak inspected an experimental farm whose vegetables and fruits will be exported to world markets. This and other farms have already been in operation for two years, using well water while awaiting the water to run in the Zayed Canal. Mubarak also visited a water research center. Dr. Hassan Younis, the Minister of Electricity, said that electric feeding of the Toshka Project includes setting up transformer stations with capacities of 50 to 250 megawatts.

Prime Minister Dr. Atef Ebeid said the project aims at developing Egypt's agricultural self-sufficiency and increasing its exports. He forecast that fish farms around Toshka would produce more than 5,000 tons of fish annually. Floodwaters from the dam reservoir have already been diverted to the Toshka Depression for a number of years now, creating a big lake south of the agro-industrial area.

This project is a first step for transforming the seemingly lifeless desert sands into a lively center for human habitation and productivity; as Vladimir Vernadsky expressed it, the Noösphere transforming the Biosphere.

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