



ABU

SIMBEL

Addresses delivered at the
ceremony to mark the completion of the operations
for saving the two temples

Abu Simbel, 22 September 1968

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Frontispiece. The Abu Simbel site at the beginning of 1964, before the salvage operations.
Photo: Unesco/Laurenza.

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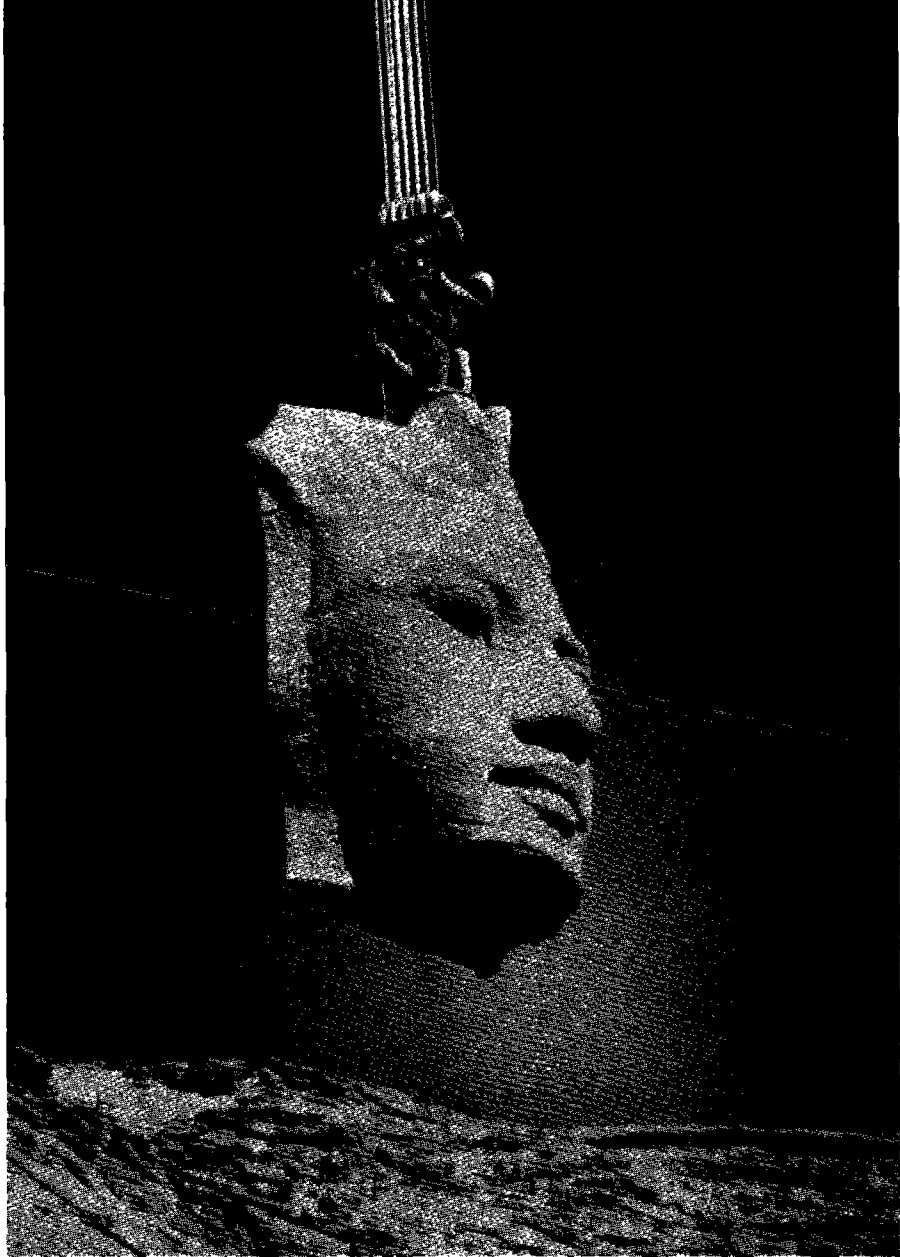
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H.E. Dr. Sarwat Okasha



Work at Abu Simbel, October 1965. Photo: Unesco/Nenadovic.
'We have followed an ideal, and in our loving concern we have saved something more than thousands of tons of stone.' Sarwat Okasha.

Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to Abu Simbel!

It is indeed with grateful pride that I and the Government and people of Egypt welcome you and see you assembled here today. Your presence at this ceremony, your willingness to come so far in order that we may celebrate together the completion of a task that is unique in man's history—these prove yet once again how closely and harmoniously we have been united at all stages in its fulfilment.

I am sure that we all feel the deepest regret that President Gamal Abdel Nasser is not here with us today. He had very much hoped to be present, but he is so continuously engaged on work demanding his whole attention that it proved to be impossible. The President has shown an unflinching interest and a steady faith in the ultimate success of our common venture. I personally shall never forget the constant encouragement that he has given us all, even when the hour seemed darkest. He sends to you his warmest greetings and welcomes you to Egypt. He thanks you all for an achievement that would have been impossible without your help.

As you well know, the need for saving the monuments of Nubia, both in Egypt and Sudan, arose as a direct result of the decision to build the High Dam. No civilized government can fail to give first priority to the welfare of its people, and it cannot hesitate to act when it sees before it the possibility of changing the economic destinies of an entire people. The High Dam had to be built, no matter what the effects might be in other fields. Among those effects was the threat of complete destruction to the monuments of Nubia. The whole chapter of man's history seemed about to be wiped out. We could not but remember that man does not live by bread alone. Both the eye and the mind of man have an inescapable need for that special stimulus and nourishment that they derive from contemplation of the immortal works of his creative genius.

The Government of the United Arab Republic presented its first official request to Unesco on 6 April 1959. That Organization at once gave of its best. But when, in March 1960, the Director-General of Unesco issued the international appeal asking all men of imagination and good will to join us in saving the monuments of Nubia, no one could then have foreseen the result. No precedent existed to guide us. Never before had the peoples of the world been asked to work together on so grand a scale for a purely cultural purpose. But their response was as immediate as it was generous and heart-warming. Aid—material, financial and scholarly—was given with full hands. And, perhaps yet more important from the human point of view, there was the noble spirit of co-operation that revealed itself in every field. In no previous project had East and West, men of widely different races, creeds and political persuasions, co-operated from the beginning in such a task and followed it through to a successful end.

It is with a very special warmth of feeling that I should like to render thanks to their excellencies the Ministers and heads of the delegations of Member States who have given us all the pleasure of their participation in our solemn celebration on this day.

We owe so much to so many that it is almost unfair to single out any special names for mention. Yet to some whom we are so very glad to see here today, our debt is of such a nature that I am sure you will bear with me for a moment if I say a few personal words. First let me speak of our esteemed guests, Mr. René Maheu and his predecessor in his high office, Dr. Vittorino Veronese.

Mr. Maheu became Director-General of Unesco in 1962, but his devotion to Nubia dates back to the beginning of 1959 when he was Deputy

Director-General. I then asked him, when he called to see me at my office, about the possibility of Unesco's helping us to safeguard the monuments of Nubia in their entirety. He was no whit dismayed. His enthusiasm was spontaneous. The very next day Dr. Veronese and he gave me their personal assurances that the resources of their splendid Organization were at our disposal. I shall never forget how deeply impressed I was.

Dr. Veronese, then and since, has maintained the greatest enthusiasm for this project. It is difficult to see how it could ever have started without his help and that of his Organization. Only Unesco had the standing and authority to make the kind of international appeal that was required. Words are inadequate to express what we owe to its two distinguished Directors-General.

When Mr. Maheu took full charge of Unesco he continued his untiring work. We remember especially his influence at the General Conference of Unesco in 1962, 1964 and 1966, when he was notably instrumental in keeping the cause of Nubia alive and in carrying through urgent measures. It has been possible for the whole team, so many in number, which was engaged in executing this great project to observe his complete devotion to it. Mr. Maheu brought to it all the means that would guarantee its success. All the difficulties that it had to surmount, he overcame. He did it all with a will that knew no hesitation because of his profound faith in the noble cause that he was serving. He did this despite the many tasks of the first importance that urgently called for his time and full attention. His eminent humanistic qualities left the deepest effect on all. Here—today—he has every right to be proud of the successful accomplishment of a great design.

Present with us also today is the chairman of the General Conference, Professor Bedrettin Tuncel, whose patience and high qualities contributed much to our venture. And I should be grateful if he would convey my warmest gratitude to the General Conference.

This is a suitable moment to mention the contribution made by the Executive Board of Unesco, of which I have the honour to be a member. Its chairman, Don Attilio Dell'Oro Maini, is fortunately with us, and through him I should like to convey our thanks for that body's enthusiastic patronage. Without Don Attilio's tact and energy the work would have lacked much.

Two other names I cannot avoid mentioning. We have here His Excellency Professor Paulo de Berrêdo Carneiro, who has brought all his remarkable energy and diplomatic expertise to so ably presiding over the Executive Committee for the Preservation of the Nubian Monuments. In this and in other capacities his contribution to our work has been beyond praise. It is a real pleasure to be able to render our homage to him today in person.

We also have with us His Highness Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan. From the beginning he has displayed the utmost keenness in promoting our cause. His benevolent activity, and the influence he can bring to bear in many lands were of outstanding assistance in initiating this great project.

Names come crowding to mind, but I can do no more than render in general terms the thanks that are rightly due from us all. Not less vital in achieving this splendid project has been the work of the various organs of Unesco's Secretariat, of technical committees and expert missions in great variety, of governments, universities and learned societies. All

hastened to do their utmost, fully realizing that the need was great. Just a word of tribute, however, to Mr. Ali Vrioni, who, early in the project, became head of Unesco's Special Service for Nubia. His time and energy, then and in his later higher offices, have constantly been given to that cause. I ask him to convey our thanks to his assistants in the Secretariat.

There have been many bodies composed of men and women who are at the top of their various professions and who have freely given us of their time and ability. We should thank the Consultative Committee for the Preservation of the Nubian Monuments which was presided over by Dr. Fritz Gysin, as well as its bureau which had as its chairman Professor Walter B. Emery, the Executive Committee for the International Campaign to Save the Monuments of Nubia, the Board of Consultants for the Project of Abu Simbel, presided over by Dr. Hassan Zaki, the distinguished engineer, the Group of Archaeologists and Landscaping Architects presided over by Professor Kasimirz Mikhailowski. Not to mention the many national committees for the preservation of the Nubian monuments. Lastly, within the Ministry of Culture, there is the Organization for Safeguarding the Nubian Monuments which has been so wisely guided by the intelligence and care of Mr. Abdel-Moneim El-Sawi, Under-Secretary of State, and his assistant, Dr. Shehata Adam. Mr. Anwar Shukry, who remained in Nubia throughout the long years of archaeological work and engineering, has constantly shown patient devotion and selfless service to his duty on this site.

On the actual site recognition is due to VBB, the Swedish firm of consulting engineers, who have worked in accordance with the highest standards of technical efficiency. With them has worked the Joint

Venture, composed of five contractors from France, Italy, the Federal Republic of Germany and the United Arab Republic. We thank them for carrying out their work so promptly and in keeping with our specifications.

Tribute should be also be paid to the United Arab Republic Department of Antiquities and the Documentation Centre for the quiet ability with which they carried out their important share of the work in Nubia.

Certain people have that very special gift of vision and that boundless energy which together combine to form the true scholar: such a person is Mrs. Christiane Desroches-Noblecourt. Both in the Documentation Centre in Cairo and in the wider field of the Campaign for the Safeguarding of the Monuments of Nubia, she has always shown a very high standard of scholarship and a true devotion to egyptology.

Acknowledgement is also due to all who work in the mass media of communication, in the press, radio and television. Our debt to their aid is incalculable. It is through their means that men and women, even children of all ages, have been made aware of what Nubia means, of what had to be done and of what was in fact being done to save it. These masters of words and of the visual impact helped to inspire the world to a new vision and, what is more to inspire it to act in pursuit of that vision.

I have said that it would be unfair not to mention a few names of exceptional merit. It would be even more unfair to say nothing of the many Egyptians who have toiled with selfless fervour from the time when this project was in its earliest stages up to now. The Government of the United Arab Republic and the Ministry of Culture have naturally done all in their power to assist them. They have borne a large part of the burden. They include the workers themselves who have toiled day

and night in what have often been the toughest of conditions. With them have been the archaeologists, architects, technicians, restorers and administrative staff. Today they can look back with pleasure and pride on having served so well the cause of their own country and of their fellow men. They fully deserve their due share of acclaim.

Unlikely as it might seem, the project did get under way. Time was short. The work that had to be done was manifold. A whole country had to be expertly surveyed. Monuments and inscriptions of many kinds had to be thoroughly recorded before they could be moved. Seventeen temples had to be safeguarded. Missions from Europe, Asia, America and Egypt itself excavated sites of widely various periods, prehistoric, pharaonic, Graeco-Roman, Christian and Islamic. In the process they brought to view a new panorama of history and art.

It is only right that at this point we should remember that the work to be done was not in the United Arab Republic alone. It was also in the Sudan. The waters of the High Dam stretch far back beyond the Second Cataract, covering an area that is wonderfully rich in ancient Sudanese, Egyptian, Christian and Islamic monuments. We should pay proper tribute to the tremendous efforts that have been made by the Sudanese Government.

It is with deep satisfaction that we place it on record that the work in Nubia is a mission accomplished. Much of it—valuable, difficult and costly though it might be—has received little enough publicity. It lacked drama. Nevertheless, the story was an inspiring one. It involved the endlessly painstaking skill of men and women of many nations as they slowly unfolded a hitherto unknown past.

For drama we have to turn above all, here, to Abu Simbel. It has

been a tremendous enterprise. This once quiet spot, deep in Africa, was changed overnight. Our modern world of machines and technicians invaded, en masse, the world of Rameses II. To north and south there was now no other sound but that of an occasional bird. The ancient inhabitants had had to depart to new homes elsewhere. For hundreds of miles no light or movement was to be seen. But here, day and night, work never ceased. By day it had all the activity of a major industrial undertaking: by night it shone like a beacon, visible for many miles through the darkness.

A beacon it truly is. It is the beacon which has guided us all here today. It is also a beacon which gives us faith in the future endeavours of our race. We have followed an ideal, and in our loving concern we have saved something more than thousands of tons of stone. Stones are what we make of them, in our minds and with our hands. A dead block once lay in the quarries of Carrara, yet that block was touched with the miracle of ageless life when it became Michelangelo's David. Abu Simbel is aeons away from that radiant figure of youth, but they are alike in being not just a mass of stone. They are transcendent products of men's creative imagination. No value in gold can be set upon them. Their destruction is unthinkable. We are all of one mind in holding that none of the great creations of man that mark his path through history should be allowed to perish because of indifference.

It is not too much to claim that nowhere else in the world can the evidence of great achievement, over so long a perspective of time, be more plainly seen than in Egypt. The pharaohs, the Hellenists, the Christians and the Moslems—all have left an indelible mark—and Egypt has left an indelible mark upon them. For Egypt has an identity. Egypt became

Egypt when Menes came from the south to unite Upper and Lower Egypt over five thousand years ago. Since then, it has remained a country and a nation with an insistently individual character.

Moreover, Egypt has a magic name. That also it has possessed for thousands of years. An air of the fabulous gathered round it very early, and a most casual glance into any good bookshop shows that Egypt has it still. We see it already in antiquity, it had become explicit with the Greeks. To them Egypt was an almost mythical land of wisdom, of high endeavour and of astounding technical accomplishment. Its memory and the wonders of this extraordinary valley were an abiding inspiration of what man might achieve. Wisdom and power were in the Sphinx and the Pyramids. Power, magic and mystery were in the great temples, in their arcane gods and in their mystic ceremonies, in the enigma of the hieroglyphics that adorned their walls.

These temples now lie in ruin. What is of immediate interest is that the one temple of pharaonic age that has come down to us practically complete, from before the Ptolemies, is the Great Temple here at Abu Simbel. Moreover, not even the pharaohs had previously conceived a work such as this. For Rameses the Second's sublime conception was to carve a whole temple out of the rock-mountain. The façade is the pylon, the colossi being the statues that elsewhere stood in majesty before it. The first hall is the open colonnaded court with Rameses as Osiris, lord of the dead. This is followed by the hypostyle hall, the antechamber and the sanctuary—a slow ascent, a slow progression towards the divine. In the sanctuary he himself, the god-king, lord of the living, sits enthroned beside the supreme gods of Thebes, of Memphis and of Heliopolis, an equal among equals.

Rameses the Second's dearest wish was to ensure his immortality. He has it, but it is after our own fashion that we have bestowed it upon him. Today his temples stand once more for eternity. Their massive splendour has been superbly safeguarded. As you have seen at Aswan, other temples too have been most handsomely rebuilt, and others will in due course accompany them. Only one lovely group of monuments remains to receive our care—the temples of Philae between the Aswan and the High Dams. This beautiful island was once the jewel of Egypt. With your help we hope that it may become so again.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our esteemed guest, the Director-General of Unesco, will speak to you on this subject. I shall only say that, having worked together so fruitfully and in such concord, we ought not now to fail to crown the labours to which we have for so long devoted ourselves.

We all of us here today represent peoples, governments, institutions and individual groups who have given themselves wholeheartedly to saving some of the treasures of our common past. Some fifty governments promised material support. They rose splendidly to the occasion. For its own part, the Government of the United Arab Republic bore a good third of the total expenditure.

The treasures with which they were concerned happen to be in Egypt, but in saving this heritage we may all justly take an equal pride. Abu Simbel, by virtue of the tremendous scale of the work of removing and rebuilding these magnificent temples, as well as because of the historic, romantic and aesthetic appeal which beyond question they possess, has become the supreme symbol, not only of our work in Nubia,

but also of the international collaboration that has made that work possible.

Some of you have seen the temples already: others are about to do so. In seeing them, you will, I am confident, be convinced that our labours have been worth while. I also profoundly trust that you will be convinced, equally with me, that these temples, now rebuilt, are incarnate with the power of the spirit, true to its sense of human values, to triumphs over the greatest odds. I have no more to say. I leave the temples to speak for themselves.

The Chairman of the Executive Committee
of the International Campaign
to save the Monuments of Nubia

H.E. Professor Paulo E. de Berrêdo Carneiro

Member of the Executive Board of Unesco



The Great Temple, September 1968. Photo: Unesco/Dominique Roger.
'It is a tribute to science and to modern technology that these marvellous temples have been cut out and reconstructed without suffering even the slightest damage.' Paulo E. de Berrêdo Carneiro.

Mr. Minister,
Mr. President of the General Conference,
Mr. Chairman of the Executive Board,
Your Eminence, Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Held back by the High Dam at Aswan, the Nile no longer winds its way through the valley of Nubia. The highway taken by gods and men of old has disappeared. The golden sands on the banks of the sacred river have vanished for ever.

Because of Egypt's mounting need of food and power, the Government decided that the immense lake with a capacity of 157,000 million cubic metres of water that now stretches out before us, as far as the eye can see, should be dammed back as quickly as possible. It seems as if the finest monuments of the various Nubian civilizations were doomed to disappear, submerged by the rising waters between the First and Second Cataracts.

However, the Egyptian Government, archaeologists, art historians and landscaping artists everywhere in the world were deeply concerned that an artistic and cultural heritage of such exceptional beauty and significance should perish. A first request was therefore made to Unesco by the Egyptian authorities, with the object of setting up in Cairo a Documentation Centre to survey and record all the pharaonic antiquities in Nubia. At that time the only object was to list and survey these monuments. The General Conference, in 1954, when informed of this request, immediately approved it. On 13 January 1955, the Director-General of Unesco, Mr. Luther Evans, went in person to Abu Simbel. A basic agreement was at once signed with the Government of the United Arab Republic in order to speed up the work. Unesco was exceptionally well equipped to carry out this task because of the experience of such matters acquired by its Monuments and Museums Division, under Ian van der Haagen, and by its International Committee on Monuments, Artistic and Historical Sites and Archaeological Excavations, set up in 1951

following a proposal made by Shafik Ghorbal Bey and myself at the General Conference in Beirut in 1948. As a former chairman of that committee, I am glad to recall the part it played in the first measures taken by Unesco to save the Nubian monuments.

From its earliest days, the Documentation Centre in Cairo was a very active centre of international co-operation. Among its specialists were egyptologists, epigraphists, architects, photographers, draughtsmen, photogrammetrists and moulders, of Egyptian, French, Italian, Belgian, English, American, German and Swiss nationality. One of the most highly qualified experts at the centre, Mr. Louis A. Christophe, played a leading part in its work and later wrote one of the most scholarly books yet published on Abu Simbel.

The documentary studies made of the monuments of Nubia, especially those concerning the temples of Rameses II, were originally undertaken in order to preserve for posterity the memory and image of a lost treasure. By a happy turn of events they were to serve as a basis for the work of cutting out, transporting and safeguarding these wonderful monuments.

The enthusiasm aroused everywhere by this documentation work, the success of the excavations undertaken by the numerous archaeological missions, the increasing interest of historians, sociologists and educationists in these irreplaceable witnesses to a past that has not yet yielded up all it has to teach us, the feeling that we have a responsibility towards those who will come after us—all this gradually made us aware of our moral obligation to save the monuments of Nubia.

Encouraged by the favourable climate of opinion for the great project he had in mind, and wishing to discharge the responsibility of saving this splendid heritage, not only for his own country but also for the

world at large, H.E. Dr. Sarwat Okasha, Minister of Culture and National Guidance, wrote to Unesco on 6 April 1959 asking it to help the United Arab Republic to 'obtain large-scale financial, scientific and technical assistance with a view to the preservation of all the artistic and historical treasures threatened by disappearance as a result of the construction of the Aswan High Dam'.

In his letter, Dr. Sarwat Okasha mentioned the various forms of aid that he hoped Unesco would provide—the co-ordination of research in Nubia, the extension of the work of surveying monuments and the co-ordination of all the documentation, the transfer of temples which could be set up on other sites, and the preservation, in their original setting, of the rock temples which it would be impossible to move.

This memorable letter was to transform the destiny of the pharaonic masterpieces as if by magic. It was at once brought to the attention of the Executive Board of Unesco, which authorized the Director-General to inform the Government of the United Arab Republic of Unesco's agreement in principle to the proposals submitted to it.

On 8 March of the following year, the Director-General of Unesco, Dr. Vittorino Veronese, launched a solemn appeal initiating the International Campaign to save the Monuments of Nubia.

The distinguished Director-General, faithfully following out the implications of the Organization's Constitution, entrusted to its Member States the high task of collaborating in the protection of their common cultural heritage.

The Executive Board undertook to submit to the General Conference in 1960 the measures it considered necessary for the success of the work, whose execution was a matter of great urgency.

The General Conference set up a working party to examine the situation, of which I had the honour of being chairman. It was composed of delegates from twenty-four countries. The draft resolutions which it adopted embodied the directives which have since then guided the International Campaign.

Immediately after his election as Director-General of Unesco in November 1962, Mr. René Maheu proposed to the General Conference that an Executive Committee should be set up to raise funds and supervise the work that had to be started at once in the Nubian Valley.

Fifteen States were invited to take part in its work—Brazil, Ecuador, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, India, Italy, Lebanon, The Netherlands, Pakistan, Spain, Sweden, Sudan, the United Arab Republic, the United States of America and Yugoslavia.

The committee is responsible to the General Conference and has the specific task of laying down guidelines for the campaign. Its main aim is to support the Director-General and his colleagues in their tasks and to encourage the Organization's Member States to co-operate in the unique undertaking launched by Unesco.

In the many meetings that the committee held in Paris, Cairo, The Hague, Madrid and Abu Simbel, it followed each stage of the work done in the field, gave its opinion on all the questions submitted to it by the Director-General, supervised the use to which contributions were put, and advised the Governments of the United Arab Republic and the Sudan on the best ways of dealing with the problems arising in connexion with excavations, the transfer of temples and the landscaping of the new sites on which the temples were to be placed.

This is not the moment to go back over the actions and reactions to

which the International Campaign has given rise nor to describe the technical operations carried out with rare skill in extremely difficult conditions by specialists from all over the world, nor yet to allocate the credit among those concerned for the final outcome of this extraordinary venture, as a result of which the temples of Rameses II at Abu Simbel have been miraculously saved from the waters.

But it is my duty, on this historic site and on this festive occasion to pay tribute and to express our gratitude to H.E. Dr. Sarwat Okasha. His is the great merit of having first aroused the interest of the world in the preservation of these monuments. He devoted himself wholeheartedly to this glorious task, with a constant, an almost religious zeal. I must express our lively admiration for his untiring efforts; history will not forget them. I should also like to recall the names of some of our other most illustrious helpers: H.E. Mr. Hassan Zaki, Mr. Abdel-Moneim El-Sawi, Mr. Anwar Shukry and Mr. Shehata Adam. Posterity will remember with gratitude that, for almost fifteen years now, they have devoted their lives to the service of the God-King. Our gratitude is also due to these admirable Nubian craftsmen who, three thousand years later, repeated, with the same love and the same skill, the gestures of their ancestors in cutting and assembling the blocks of stone.

We may well ask what would have happened if Unesco had not responded to the appeal addressed to it. Who else in the short time available could have enlisted the support of the fifty nations which furnished the Governments of the United Arab Republic and the Sudan with the twenty-five million dollars that they needed to save Abu Simbel and some twenty other monuments? Who would have had the necessary authority to call upon scores of institutes and universities to survey and excavate

sites along almost 500 kilometres on both banks of the Nile at their own expense and within an extremely short space of time?

Unesco as a whole—the General Conference, the Executive Board and the Secretariat—threw all it had into the inspiring task of giving new life to the three-thousand-year-old message of the pharaonic theocracy. But it is to you above all, Mr. Maheu, that future generations will attribute the success of the Nubian Campaign. They will have every reason to do so, for nothing but your unshakable will to succeed could have surmounted all the material and psychological obstacles we so constantly encountered. You pioneered this campaign, taking it in hand from the outset with exemplary clear-sightedness and enthusiasm. In a task in which dreams and action are constantly intermingled, your faith created in your co-workers the inventive spirit that you demanded from them. None has displayed this spirit more signally than Mr. Ali Vrioni, to whom the Executive Committee for Nubia wishes to take this opportunity of offering the warmest and most cordial tribute.

I should also like to express our deep gratitude to Mrs. Christiane Desroches-Noblecourt, Chief Curator of National Museums in the Egyptian Antiquities Department of the Louvre, for her enthusiastic and tireless work at the Egyptological Documentation Centre and the services she has rendered to the Nubian Campaign.

It is not for me to commend the committee that the General Conference entrusted with the task of laying down guidelines for the International Campaign to save the Monuments of Nubia. The General Conference itself must assess the value of its work. Nevertheless, I can speak for the enthusiasm and devotion with which each of its members has discharged his duty. We know what a decisive part was played by Mr. Hank

Reinink, the representative of The Netherlands, to whom we are largely indebted for the success of the conferences of donor States of which he was chairman, first in Paris and later in Cairo. I think it only right too that we should recall, on this occasion, the invaluable collaboration of Mr. Robert Wade, whose constant efforts won for us the generous contribution of the American Government and very considerable assistance from private sources. More than half of all the voluntary gifts received by Unesco for the monuments of Nubia have come from the United States of America.

The architects and scribes of Rameses II could return to Abu Simbel without fear. They would find there the temples dedicated to the glory of their master and of his favourite wife, standing just as they built them. Now, as of old, the rays of the rising sun twice yearly will suffuse with light the statue of the god-king in the depths of his sanctuary.

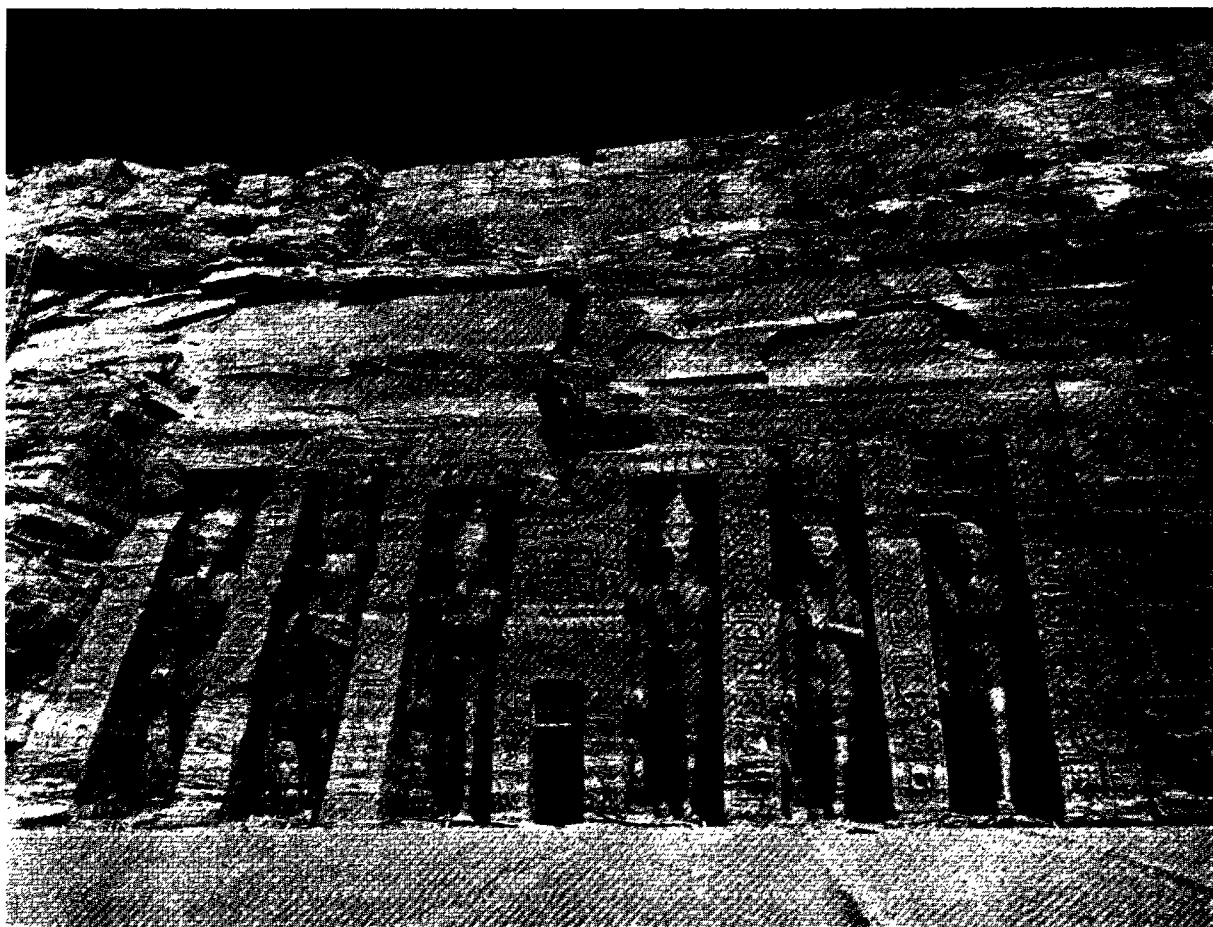
Those who came here early in the nineteenth century—Burckhardt, Belzoni, Champollion—and discovered them buried in the sands would now see nothing that was not already there in their plans and drawings.

It is a tribute to science and to modern technology that these marvellous temples have been cut out and reconstructed without suffering even the slightest damage.

Dedicated in ancient Egypt to the worship of its gods, may they inspire generations to come with the love of mankind and the desire for wisdom!

The Director-General
of the United Nations Educational,
Scientific and Cultural Organization

Mr. René Maheu



The Small Temple, September 1968. Photo: Unesco/Dominique Roger.
'We cut away the mountain, hewed in pieces the statues, pillars and walls hidden beneath the earth, and then rebuilt in the light what you had hollowed out of the darkness.' René Maheu.

Mr. Minister,
Mr. President of the General Conference,
Mr. Chairman of the Executive Board,
Your Eminence, Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a signal pleasure and honour for me to take part in this solemn ceremony marking the culmination of an unparalleled undertaking, in which over fifty countries, in response to the appeal launched by Unesco at the request of the United Arab Republic, have combined their efforts to save the artistic and historical treasures of the temples of Abu Simbel.

As we contemplate the amazing spectacle before us, we marvel first of all at the extraordinary feat accomplished by the engineers of the Joint Venture—so appropriately named—with the help of archaeologists and landscaping architects, in reconstructing Rameses the Second's sanctuaries so perfectly, in their original condition, arrangement and setting, after raising them, block by block, sixty metres above their first position.

But what we cannot see, what is perhaps still more miraculous, is the extent to which the success of an operation of such magnitude and complexity is due to the generosity and spirit of brotherhood shown by people all over the world.

For, as was pointed out just now by Mr. de Berrêdo Carneiro, the chairman of the Executive Committee of the Campaign to save the Monuments of Nubia—to whose tireless devotion I must pay grateful tribute—voluntary contributions in the form of money, expert services and equipment have been received from every part of the globe.

It is not, of course, the first time that a noble cause has called forth a surge of generosity, for men are always ready to take part in exploits which meet their need for an ideal and give them an opportunity to excel themselves. But this is the first time that we have seen international co-operation in action on such a scale in the sphere of culture, bearing witness to the fact that public opinion and governments, as well as learned

institutions, now realize and admit that some monuments of exceptional importance belong to mankind at large, no matter where they stand or to what history they belong.

This idea of a universal cultural heritage which it is man's duty to preserve in the interest of the international community is one of the key concepts that it is Unesco's mission to promote. And not only because of the intrinsic value of these precious witnesses to the past, but also, and even more so, because of the positive awareness it arouses of that intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind which the Constitution of the Organization sees as the foundation of true peace among peoples. By taking upon itself responsibility for the preservation of these relics, whose message is forever becoming more broadly and deeply diffused, as the duty of conserving common property, mankind recognizes its own oneness through time and space, through the centuries and the nations, and proclaims the unity of its destiny. This is the essential lesson which emerges from the success of the International Campaign to save the Monuments of Nubia.

That success is striking enough in itself to warrant our celebrating it. I must say, however, that it will not be complete until we have also saved the temples of Philae, which have with justice been called 'The pearl of Egypt'. Today, as we celebrate the completion of the work at Abu Simbel, it behoves us to give a thought to that final task, for which a special appeal should shortly be launched.

Unesco takes pride in having supplied the framework and the instrument for an undertaking, which will, I am sure, mark a stage in the development of a world conscience. But it is to the Member States which responded to its appeal, thereby confirming the reason for its existence

and strengthening its authority, that are really due the thanks so generously addressed to us by His Excellency the Minister of Culture of the United Arab Republic and I hope that the ministers and ambassadors representing them here will accept them on their behalf.

In fact, it is to the United Arab Republic that we are principally indebted for these privileged moments, for it was its leaders and those of the Republic of Sudan who, by laying their wager on international co-operation, made it possible for us to live through this great adventure together. And I know that I am expressing the feelings of you all when I pay to President Gamal Abdel Nasser the tribute which is justly due to him for having laid and won this wager on Man. I would ask him to share our congratulations on the successful completion of the work with Dr. Sarwat Okasha, who has been the life and soul of the undertaking, with Dr. Hassan Zaki, who has been like the spirit of the Nile, and with all the Egyptian authorities and executants, engineers and workers, archaeologists and craftsmen—worthy maintainers of scientific, technical and artistic traditions going back to the dawn of history—who have contributed to the accomplishment of this grandiose project.

‘The King of Upper and Lower Egypt’ we read carved upon the stone, ‘has made a temple, hollowed out of the rock, labouring for eternity in the land of Nubia.’

We have come, O King, to add our labours to yours in order that your quest for eternity may be preserved.

Using means unimaginable to you, but ever mindful of your intentions and your rites, we cut away the mountain, hewed in pieces the statues, pillars and walls hidden beneath the earth, and then rebuilt in the light

what you had hollowed out of the darkness and raised over it the strongest protecting dome ever built by the hand of man. This dome we covered with the very rocks in which you had buried your mysteries, and finally we piously reared up your gigantic majesty and restored the grace and beauty of your Queen with the hieratic train of tutelary deities. Your priests, your architects, your masons, your sculptors, scribes and slaves took no greater pains to divinize your glory than we, O King, have done to preserve your presence on earth. Thanks to all our efforts you are here, safe and sound, ready to resume, on Ammon's bark, your journey through the centuries towards the rising sun of every morrow.

Yet know, O King, that we have been led to you from the many quarters of the earth, not by the memory of your power, nor by fidelity to your purpose or respect for your cults. Since the days of your victories, long buried in the remote past, history has been such a succession of empty triumphs that we no longer believe in empires, we abhor the thought of war. Your certainties concerning life and death are no longer ours.

What has brought us here, O King, is the sense of our common frailty.

In this enchanted place, we have marvelled less at your appearance in the guise of god than we have adored the anonymous miracle of art which has shown us the beloved Royal Spouse in all her grace of mortal flesh and elegance of diaphanous veils. And the desert sands which hid you for a thousand years, the acacias which have put forth their leaves beside your terraces, and the humble seasonal fields of the flooded bank, make a richer setting for your survival in the heart of modern man than could your vanished pomp.

Above all, the meaning of life, as we have found it here, is very different from what you understood by it. The truth, for you, lay in worship of the elemental forces of nature, and we have faithfully preserved for your delight the perfect spectacle of the interplay—ever constant yet ever new—of the divine sun, the fertilizing waters and Mother Earth, in their sacred rhythms and relationships. Yet the very fact that we have had to come with our machinery to save you is proof that eternity is no more to be sought in the rock or in the river than in weapons or in dogmas. In this place we have learnt to measure the transcience of all these.

On the other hand, in the depths of your sanctuaries thus laid bare we have discovered a truth that you never suspected, yet for which we are indebted to you since it was in serving you that we discovered it, and for which it is right, O King, that we should thank you before we leave this place. This is the truth that there is nothing lasting in the works of man except that which has meaning and value for all men. Only work done in the spirit of brotherhood can be called labour for eternity.

It is this truth, demonstrated by our presence here, that we now commit to your august keeping, O Lord of Upper and Lower Egypt, so that those who come after us to dream at your feet may meditate upon it. Tell these men, whom we shall not see, yet for whom in truth we have laboured, how Man, appearing for a moment in his universal aspect, came to this place when the waters threatened to submerge you, and how, cleaving the mountain asunder, he seized your colossi and bore them to the summit of the cliff, replacing everything as you desired, so that you, the son of Ra, once the incarnation of power, its pride and its vanity, may henceforth be a symbol of brotherhood, its generosity and its splendour.

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