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TRANSLATIONS ON NEAR EAST AND NORTH AFRICA
(FOUO 2/79)



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NORTH AFRICAN AFFAIRS

POLISARIO CLAIMS MOROCCO CAUSED SPANISH FISHERMEN'S DEATH

Madrid CAMBIO 16 in Spanish 31 Dec 78 pp 37-38

/Text/ It was already getting late on the afternoon of Tuesday 28 November when one of the lookouts on the deck of the Cruz del Mar shouted the warning; "Here come the Moors!" Taking no special precautions, the Canary Island fishermen helped to moor the foreigners' Zodiac launch and in a few minutes, a dozen men dressed as frogmen and armed with rifles boarded the fishing boat anchored off the Saharan coast.

During the long dinner hour together, no one suspected that tragedy was near. Suddenly changing their demeanor, the invaders rounded up the 10 crewmen on deck and began firing at them. But three fishermen survived, and this is where the ambiguities and contradictions begin.

Rescued by the Chico Grande, the three survivors--Miguel Angel Rodriguez, Manuel Hernandez and Eusebio Garcia Rodriguez--reached the Canary Islands. "We couldn't recognize anyone," maintains Eusebio. "Everyone looked alike to us," was the first thing he said.

A week later, the Canary Island press claimed the attack was doubtless the work of the Polisario Front. Furthermore, a Madrid morning daily published photos of two Saharans who are said to have been identified by the survivors. Confided Eusebio to two Spanish reporters, "Out of hundreds of photographs, they kept insisting on the one of Mohammed Salem."

According to sources from the Canary Islands, Mohammed Salem and Mohammed Embarec had taken part in the massacre. But after the hasty accusation, new data began to arise. Mohammed Salem, a member of the Polisario Front's Foreign Relations Committee, lived on the Canary Islands for several years until his expulsion in February of 1978. On 18 November he left Madrid, where he had

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come a few days earlier to take part in the World Conference on Solidarity with Chile, and, on 14 November, in ceremonies organized on the occasion of the third anniversary of the Madrid Tripartite Accord.

The night of the attack, Mohammed Salem was dining in Algiers. Maria Agullo Canto--who showed her National Identity Card, Document No. 21,294,390 to CAMBIO 16 as proof of her seriousness, categorically states that the alleged participant in the massacre had dinner with her and her family in the Algerian capital. For their part, two Spanish reporters, Joaquin Fortillo of Spanish National Radio and Alberto Miguez, a special envoy from the dailies INFORMACIONES and LA VANGUARDIA, claim that a couple of days after the massacre, Mohammed Salem was participating in a press conference in Algiers.

Moroccan Silence

The other person accused by the morning paper--Mohammed Embarec according to the testimony of Ahmed Bouhari, the Polisario Front's representative in Madrid--has been living in Havana, Cuba, where he is doing university studies.

While theories were being formulated from different press media about the possible author of the massacre, Transport Minister Sanchez Teran asserted a few hours after the attack that the Spanish authorities already possessed sufficient data to clarify the act. Three weeks later, however, the official silence continued.

Of necessity, the hypotheses pointed to two probable suspects: Morocco or the Polisario Front. CAMBIO 16 tried by all possible means to obtain a response from the Moroccan embassy in Madrid. The attempts were fruitless. Neither did the Moroccan authorities reply to the Spanish government's notes.

From the moment news of the Cruz del Mar massacre was received, the Polisario Front discounted its participation, accusing Morocco of wanting to obstruct relations between the Saharan peoples' representatives and the Spanish government.

On Thursday 14 December, DIARIO 16 made the accusation without doubt; "Morocco implicated in the Cruz del Mar massacre." The report, confirmed by inhabitants of the area, points out the participation of a Moroccan convoy that left the coastal area of Cabeza de Playa the day before the crime and headed south.

Reconnaissance Flights

That information--CAMBIO 16 was told by sources close to the

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Democratic Center Union--is considered highly reliable. Ahmed Bouhari told this magazine that they also had those data from Saharans who live in areas occupied by Morocco. Morocco still did not reply.

All reports received by CAMBIO 16 coincide regarding the existence of the above-mentioned convoy, composed of six Land Rovers and two AML 60's. At the same time, a Zodiac launch--like the one that participated in the boarding--was setting sail and a small Moroccan plane was making reconnaissance flights over the area in which the Cruz del Mar was attacked.

"According to what the inhabitants of the region have told us," said Bouhari, "the members of the patrol did not return to their point of departure after the attack on the Spanish fishing boat. The Zodiac launch was transferred to Field number 1, BIR

The sources from UCD consulted by this magazine said that they were surprised about the doubts that have arisen about the massacre: "Besides analyzing the facts--which, on the other hand, show that it is not the way the Polisario Front usually acts-- it is necessary to make a political evaluation and ask ourselves who would benefit from this action."

The answer is offered by Bouhari, who emphasized that "The first result of the action would be a possible confrontation of the government, the political parties, and the Spanish public with the perpetrator. The Saharan representative also stressed that all of the Polisario Front's diplomatic activity toward Spain--even in the most difficult moments--is directed toward improving relations. In this sense, Bouhari recalled the joint communique signed by UCD and the FP [Polisario Front] last 14 October, "when we showed, once more, our willingness to have a dialogue by freeing the crew of Las Palomas."

The Saharan representative stated that interest existed in certain Spanish sectors in blaming them for the massacre. "Otherwise, how do you explain that not only the interpretations, but also the facts are being falsified?" The news reports published by the Canary Island press claimed that the boarding happened in the Cape Cabino area, near Cape Bojador. "The crew of the Mencey (which knows the area)," said Bouhari, "assures us that heavy waves in that area and the presence of Moroccan ships make the presence of an FP command unthinkable. The attack, he asserted, actually occurred some 20 miles south of El Aaiun, in a place that was well controlled by the Moroccans. Besides, the Moroccan army can only withdraw to a few kilometers from El Aaiun."

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Previous actions committed by the FP--the capture of fishing boats--occurred in the area of Cape Leven, far from El Aaiun, and many miles south of where the boarding of the Cruz del Mar occurred.

The ECO DE CANARIAS also got the confidential stories of the crew of the Chico Grande, which rescued the survivors from the Cruz del Mar. They claimed that they had been prevented from making any statement about the acts. Two of the survivors were invited to the television program "Fantastico" a week later. Upon their return to the Canary Islands, they stated that they had been prevented from freely telling what had happened.

Against Peace

"We assert that it was Morocco," insisted Bouhari, "and there are several facts that prove it. In the first place, Morocco remains alone and is trying by every possible means to blockade the dynamic of peace initiated by us."

These attempts would be translated into different actions with regard to different fronts. With respect to Mauritania--with which the Polisario Front has been holding talks since the month of July--after calling a cease fire, a Moroccan patrol last week attempted to attack the train from Xuerat, to blame the Saharans, but it was caught in the act by Mauritanian soldiers.

"Regarding Spain," reasons Bouhari, "every time there are indications of a change in the Spanish position, Morocco responds with threats."

A few days after the signing of the UCD-FP joint communiques, Morocco reiterated its claim to Ceuta and Melilla.

"The government and the Moroccan political parties," explained the FP representative, "launched a serious attack against the UCD to annul that communique, which failed. The attack on the Cruz del Mar occurred just as representatives of the Democratic Saharan Arab Republic were praising the Spanish government's attitude before the UN General Assembly, and when 90 UN countries were voting to support the self determination of the Saharan people."

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ALGERIA

POLITICAL SITUATION, POSSIBLE SUCCESSION TO BOUMEDIENE ANALYZED

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 4-10 Jan 79 pp 16-21

[Article: "Who Is Coming After Boumediene?"]

[Text] Snaps:

Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad was the first Arab president to arrive in Algiers to attend President Boumediene's funeral. He was accompanied on the plane by Yasir 'Arafat.

The last head of state to arrive was Col Mu'ammarr al-Qadhafi, who was accompanied by Dr 'Ali al-Turayki.

The brother of the departed was in deep mourning at the grave of the departed. He was wearing simple clothing, like all Algerian country people. He lives in (Ghalma) where his mother still lives.

There is disagreement as to Boumediene's actual age. The civil status records which were under French administration show that he was born on 23 August 1932. But many of Boumediene's relatives and acquaintances say that he was born in 1925. Consequently, he was 53 when he died. In any case, the physicians who have been treating him are inclined to believe that he was older than his official age.

There was a record number of faintings among the crowds that accompanied the funeral. A large number of the citizens pinned pictures of the departed president on their chests.

The Algerian Revolution Command Council was advised by a number of Arab circles to adopt the National Liberation Front [FLN] as a reference and a fundamental base for its actions.

A wave of grief that swept through Algeria and turned the funeral of departed President Houari Boumediene into what observers have described as "the wedding of tears," has receded.

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Everybody has truly wept for the departed president, beginning with Rabah Bitat, the chairman of the People's National Assembly, who has assumed the interim presidency for a period of 40 days, and ending with Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who delivered the final obituary in the name of the Revolution Command Council, to the man in the street who expressed his buried grief with acclamation and tears, and who tried to show what he could not express through the gatherings of young men and women who tried to break through the security barricades and to join the funeral.

Thus, Boumediene's procession was not so much a funeral as it was a wedding of tears. The wedding of tears began when it was announced on Wednesday morning that Boumediene had died at 0355 and continued until he was buried in the High Cemetery to the right of Prince 'Abd-al-Qadir al-Jaza'iri, the prince of strugglers.

The Algerian authorities made a great effort to prevent what happened in 'Abd-al-Nasir's funeral from recurring. Large forces of the army blocked the entrances to the route of the funeral procession from the People's Palace to the great mosque and then to the High Cemetery. Meanwhile, instructions were issued to the government and party officials in the villages and the cities to hold popular meetings with the aim of preventing a human march on Algiers. However, this did not do much good, and crowds marched from everywhere. The human barriers set up by the police and the gendarmerie had great difficulty in repelling the waves of human masses and in preventing the crowds from mingling with the official funeral procession.

The phenomenon that has drawn attention is the fact that the youth element was predominant in those crowds. This is not surprising, because official statistics indicate that people below 20 years of age comprise 65 percent of Algeria's population, and they reflect the Algerian aspiration to cope with the facts and problems of daily life.

A Man for All Keys

The legacy left by the departed Algerian president is heavy, because the logic of things presupposes divergence of views in interpreting his way of running many of the vital affairs. He held in his hands the keys to most foreign and domestic political affairs, and he alone handled many vital issues:

1. Foreign relations with the two camps.
2. The Algerian role in the Arab world.
3. The Algerian role in Africa.
4. The oil policy.
5. Algeria's policy in the Third World.

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6. The economic and social policy.
7. The military policy.
8. The relations with Morocco and Mauritania through the special relationship with the Polisario.

With his unique, dynamic character, Boumediene was able to meet the requirements of these policies, which are overpowering tasks. The final decision was in his hand. The others, especially Abdelaziz Bouteflika, tried to understand him and to act accordingly. Boumediene was always the ruler and the umpire. This is why a fearfully serious vacuum was left when he became disabled by sickness.

There is no doubt that the Arab policies of the departed president have implanted Algeria in the heart of the Arab homeland as an Arab country participating in the confrontation against Israel and against the imperialist-Zionist plans.

It is no surprise that the Israeli comments have reflected some kind of rude gloating. Israel cannot forget Boumediene's role in the 1967 and 1973 wars and in the developments that followed.

There is also no doubt that his African policies have implanted Algeria in the heart of Africa as an African state supporting those struggling for liquidation of the colonialist and racist rule.

It is also indubitable that his economic policies have succeeded in building the base for an Algerian industrial edifice despite the conditions of extreme austerity that they have imposed on the Algerian people.

But these policies, the keys to which Boumediene held solely in his hands, are imposing on his successors, or successor, a heavy legacy and troublesome priorities.

In the list of priorities facing the new Algerian era, the problem of the relations with Morocco in light of the ramifications of the Algerian policy toward the Western Sahara issue features prominently.

This problem forms the base for relations in the Greater Arab Maghreb. For example, Algerian relations with Tunisia are still cool because at the outset Tunisia adopted the Moroccan and Mauritanian viewpoint. These relations are suffering from a constant, but latent, crisis--namely the crisis of mapping out the southern borders between Tunisia and Algeria. This crisis took the form of quarrels between Algeria and Tunisia when Algeria received the Tunisian opposition leaders and when Tunisia countered by giving the right of political asylum to Col Taher Zbiri. Algeria then retaliated by receiving Ahmed Ben Saleh on his escape from his Tunisian prison.

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Problem of Relations With Morocco

The fact is that the problem of relations with Morocco, resulting from the Algerian policy toward the Western Sahara problem, forms an important base that plays a decisive role in channeling the Algerian developments after Boumediene and, consequently, in determining the quality of Moroccan-Algerian relations in the new era.

Because of its domestic ramifications, this is the main problem facing the successors.

Obviously, after Boumediene's death the latent disagreement over this problem among the Revolution Command Council members was brought out into the open--a disagreement which first led to dividing the Council into four axes [factions] and then into two axes:

An axis that calls for continuing the previously declared policy, because it will lead to giving Algeria an outlet on the Atlantic Ocean.

An axis that says that this policy causes economic attrition of the Algerian economy, embroils Algeria in a conflict with Morocco--a conflict incompatible in goals and nature with the Greater Arab Maghreb plan--and involves Algeria in endless bloody disputes with Morocco.

This axis finds support, according to Bouteflika, in the development in Boumediene's thinking in his later days--development that made Boumediene inclined toward an understanding with the Moroccan monarch and toward accepting Saudi, French and African mediation on this issue.

By the way, the Algerian monarch has disclosed to Edouard Sabilier, a French colleague, that a secret meeting was scheduled to be held between him and President Boumediene on the 26th of the current month of January in Brussels to find a settlement for the Western Sahara problem.

Thus, perhaps it is no exaggeration to say that agreement on a successor to President Boumediene will come through the agreement on the policy to be followed toward Morocco and toward the Western Sahara problem by virtue of its being the more urgent problem and the problem with greater impact on Algerian developments.

Within 15 days of the death of the late President Boumediene, Rabah Bitat, the constitutional interim president, is required to hold, in cooperation with the Revolution Command Council, a general FLN congress so that he, along with the People's National Assembly, may present the name of the sole candidate for succession for a public referendum. The Algerian presidential elections will be a race in which a single horse will run in accordance with a planned program.

Even though many observers view what has happened in Algeria since the announcement of Boumediene's sickness as something planned to serve the

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interest of the candidate that will be produced by the silent struggle within the Revolution Command Council, many other observers believe that everything is proceeding at present, and until further notice, in favor of Colonel Yahiaoui. However, these observers do not exclude a surprise. Everything is possible at any moment, and there is nothing to prevent the rise of a new de facto situation despite all the public solidarity among the Revolution Command Council members, which is intended as a declaration of the continued pursuance of the existing conditions.

Even though the Algerian medical authorities have denied decisively that the announcement of President Boumediene's death (0355 on the morning of Wednesday, December 1978) was planned, and even though all the indications support their denial, especially since Anisah, the departed president's wife, did not leave the hospital until Wednesday night, i.e., until a few hours before the death, everything indicates that Yahiaoui's march to the presidency is proceeding in accordance with a programmed plan that has coordinated the work between the army agencies and the FLN bases.

The hand of the army agencies has appeared strongly since the present situation set in and since the Revolution Command Council realized that there was no recovery for the late president, that the constitutional vacuum has become a reality and that it had to act as the highest authority in the country until a constitutional declaration is made announcing the presidency vacant either as a result of death or of medical disability.

With the beginning of the late president's coma, the observers expected a race for the presidency between the Revolution Command Council members. The reverberations of their predictions which were circulated in the outside world has begun to be heard at the various levels in Algeria.

Yahiaoui and Dual Strength

But there has been since the beginning some sort of agreement that the stronger man is Colonel Yahiaoui, due to his dual influence in the army and in the FLN Party. Boumediene had entrusted him with reorganizing the party, in addition to his military duties.

There has also been agreement that the rival to the "front runner" is none other than Abdelaziz Bouteflika, the minister of foreign affairs and the man most strongly connected with the departed president.

In view of the fact that Colonel Yahiaoui does not have exclusive control over the army, and as a result of the traditional influence of Col Chadli Bendjedid, Yahiaoui's colleague in the Revolution Command Council, in the army, it was natural for Yahiaoui to demand that the Revolution Command Council's work be placed under the supervision and control of the party agencies.

Bouteflika spearheaded those opposed to this demand on the pretext that the party's final agencies and structures have not been completed yet, and

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will not be completed before convocation of the general congress at the beginning of 1979, and that, consequently, the Revolution Command Council should continue to be the legitimate representative until then.

It seems that Bouteflika's opinion triumphed at the time, and the Revolution Command Council issued the 3 December statement announcing continuation of Boumediene's course and declaring that the socialist system has gone beyond the point of no return.

But this did not constitute a defeat for Colonel Yahiaoui. Those who know him have found the statement's language to be clear, and have also found that Yahiaoui was the one who wrote the statement in this clear Arabic (this is no surprise, because Yahiaoui received his higher education in Arabic literature at (al-Zaytunah) Mosque University in Tunisia). Yahiaoui sounded even clearer in the statement in which the Council announced the death of the departed president, stressing that he died reassured that the revolution would continue its march under the leadership of the FLN.

This came as another indication that Yahiaoui has won the race for the presidency initially and that the issue has become merely a routine to be settled by Rabah Bitat, the interim constitutional president, the People's National Assembly, and the FLN general congress, within 45 days to appoint the sole candidate, who will be elected in a general popular election.

This public indication supports semi-secret indications represented in the activities of the military intelligence agencies, in coordination with the security agencies, under the leadership of Col Ahmed Draia, the current minister of transport, Revolution Command Council member and ally of Yahiaoui, who has also guaranteed the support of his colleague Col Abdellah Belhouchet, the commander of the military Wilaya I (military commander of the capital).

The party agencies collaborated with the military intelligence agencies under the command of Capt Slimana Hoffman in imposing comprehensive surveillance on everything. This surveillance covered, in particular, according to rumors, Abdelaziz Bouteflika and his wing, especially in the few days preceding the president's death.

Informed sources say that Capt Slimana Hoffman, commander of military intelligence, has played a major role in backing and supporting Colonel Yahiaoui, who has come to depend more and more on his support.

Bouteflika's Axis

The other axis, which is led by Abdelaziz Bouteflika, is presumed to include:

Col Chadli Bendjedid, the commander of the military border area of Oran.

Col Hohamed Ben Ahmed (known by the name of Abdelghani), the minister of interior.

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Col Ahmed Ben Cherif, the minister of environmental protection, who was previously commander of the gendarmerie. It has been said that he recently faced the Revolution Command Council with the de facto situation, and practically resumed command of the gendarmerie on agreement with Colonel Cheloufi, the gendarmerie commander who succeeded Ben Cherif in 1977.

Col Tayebi Larabi has remained outside both these axes. He is always a candidate to be the sacrificial lamb for the failure of the agricultural revolution and of agrarian reform.

The informed sources add that Colonel Yahiaoui has perhaps found in the plane incident something to support his planned march toward the presidency. The sources find a strong link between the transient tension that emerged 3 weeks ago in the relations between Algeria and Morocco and the plane incident. This is the incident in which the Algerian sources accused the Moroccan authorities of sending a Hercules aircraft loaded with weapons to some rebellious elements in the tribal area led by Sadek Ben Yahia.

The Algerian authorities announced at the time that they caught those taking part in the incident redhanded and while they were using torch lights to guide the plane. They then showed the defendants on television to admit their connection with Morocco.

However, there are unclear circumstances surrounding the issue, especially in regard to the role of Sadek Ben Yahia. The official statements have portrayed a dark picture of Ben Sadek and of his past by stressing that one of the Algerian FLN courts had sentenced him to death during the revolution for his participation in the deception campaign carried out by the French army intelligence in Wilaya III to instigate the veteran revolutionaries against the new volunteers in the revolution on the pretext that they were "agents." This led to bloody liquidations which claimed the lives of tens of new strugglers before the truth was discovered.

These circumstances have materialized in questions that have highlighted some perplexing facts, including the fact that despite his loaded past, Ben Yahia occupied several important administrative positions. He was a supporter of the late Ahmed Medeghri, the former minister of interior who was said to have committed suicide 3 years ago after his disagreement with President Boumediene. Ben Yahia was also appointed governor of the city of Setif and later of the city of El-Asnam after independence.

Moreover, everybody knows that Ben Yahia benefitted from official loans and financial aid when he entered the field of commerce and free business after Medeghri's death.

Results of Plane Incident

Even though these contradictions make the plane incident a perplexing puzzle that requires further clarification, and even though circles of the

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secret opposition suspect Col Slimane Hoffman of being behind the incident, what is obvious is that the consequences resulting from the incident have served Colonel Yahiaoui's political interests by creating tension in the relations with Morocco and by portraying the incident as an external threat to domestic security. These consequences have led to the following, initially:

1. Enabling Yahiaoui to consolidate his control over the party and over the popular unions by mobilizing the masses against external dangers.
2. Containing any hostile movement that may be carried out by some leaderships of the Kabyle by exploiting the circumstances of the political vacuum created by the absence of President Boumediene from the political life. This vacuum has given all the opposition forces the opportunity to participate in determining the political and social identity of the Algerian Government after President Boumediene's death.

In any case, observers remember previous incidents of tension in relations with Morocco that enabled Ben Bella's government in its last days to persuade the Kabylia to abandon its rebellion under the leadership of Hocine Ait Ahmed (one of the nine historic leaders of the Algerian revolution) in 1963.

The truth is that this aspect of the issue brings up not only the importance of the developments in Algerian-Moroccan relations as a decisive factor in charting the course of events, but also projects on the sidelines of the complications of the plane incident the problem of the special demands of the Kabylia--a problem that will be one of the hardest facing the new regime and testing its ability to preserve the features and foundations of the domestic unity.

Demands of Kabylia

It is well known that the Kabylia includes a majority of the berber tribes, which have preserved most of their regional characteristics and their special traditions and values throughout history, and that they started to demand that their special characteristics be taken into consideration and that they be given a fair share of the development and reconstruction programs. Hocine Ait Ahmed moved away from Ben Bella and led a rebellion that failed as a movement, but his demands have continued.

Ben Bella then reached a settlement with the Kabyles on 17 June 1965, i.e., 2 days before Boumediene's coup against him. Consequently, this settlement--based on increasing tribal representation in the regime and its agencies and on releasing the detainees and increasing the development allocations in the area--was not destined to survive.

Informed sources say that the way to solve the Kabyles problem and the issue of their participation in government was one of the most important points of

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disagreement between Boumediene and Ben Bella. After the 19 June 1965 coup, Ait Ahmed left the country, choosing to live in France, whereas Mohamed Ould el-Hadj continued to be a member of the Revolution Command Council until December 1967, when he was ousted. Thus, there is no representative for the Kabyles in the Revolution Command Council. Their main representative in the government has continued to be Belaid Abdesselam, the former minister of energy, whose influence was curtailed by the 1977 cabinet reshuffle when he was appointed minister of light industry--a ministry that was previously one of the directorates of the Ministry of Energy.

Thus, the problem remained until attention was drawn to it by the complications of the plane incident--complications which stressed the decisive importance of the element of the Algerian-Moroccan relations in influencing the course of events. This element has played its role in the emergence of the two main axes in the Revolution Command Council:

1. Yahiaoui's axis, which calls for continuing President Boumediene's policy of adopting the Polisario and, consequently, for exploiting the tension in the relations with Morocco for local government goals.
2. The Bouteflika-Chadli axis, which advocates the need for achieving detente with Morocco and for ending the causes of tension, along with military and domestic relaxation and international relaxation through improving relations with France. Bouteflika had convinced President Boumediene in his last days of the latter part of this inclination (improving relations with France).

Coup in Gendarmerie Command

Informed sources say that the Bouteflika-Chadli axis, which is supported by Col Ahmed Ben Cherif, the minister of environmental protection, does not think that it has lost the first round. The influence of Col Slimane Hoffman has been countered through a lightning-fast bloodless coup aimed at gaining control of the gendarmerie forces in the interest of the Bouteflika-Chadli axis.

The sources have disclosed that Col Ben Cherif, the minister of environmental protection, proceeded to the gendarmerie forces headquarters on one of the hills of the capital, Algiers, on the evening of Saturday, the 23rd of last month, met with the gendarmerie forces commanders and agreed with them to resume his former position as gendarmerie commander. He carried out this "bloodless coup" in a matter of minutes, relying on the historical weight that he carries in this agency. He stayed at the headquarters to carry out his new duties, and then informed the Revolution Command Council of what had happened and told it that he had decided to abandon his post in the Ministry of Environmental Protection.

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It is known that Ahmed Ben Cherif was removed from the gendarmerie command in April 1977 in the wake of the cabinet reshuffle, even though he is the actual founder of this agency, which comprises 20,000 elements equipped with the latest weapons and is run by an independent command. Informed sources have also revealed that Col Ben Cherif made it a condition when Boumediene asked him to leave the gendarmerie command and take over one of the ministries, that his position be filled by Captain Cheloufi. Boumediene accepted Ben Cherif's condition, and Cheloufi was appointed gendarmerie commander while Ben Cherif was appointed minister of environmental protection. With his "bloodless coup" Ben Cherif has returned to the gendarmerie command on agreement with Major [sic] Cheloufi.

Chadli Bendjedid's Influence

Thus, the military weight of the Bouteflika axis, which relies fundamentally on the influence of Chadli Bendjedid, has increased. It is said that Chadli was opposed to involving the Algerian Army in supporting the Polisario operations in the Western Sahara, and that he constantly tried to apply the brakes to such support in his military area, which extends along an important sector of the Algerian-Moroccan borders.

It is said that this opposition created a constant source of apprehension for President Boumediene, who tried with every means to remove Chadli from the command of the Oran border area where Chadli has established an enormous base for his personal influence.

It has been said in this regard that Chadli strengthened his position after the famous Amghala operation during which the Moroccan Army was able to detain [sic] an entire Algerian battalion. The outcome of the battle was a strong argument in support of Chadli's viewpoint on the need to keep the army clear of participation in the Polisario operations.

Well-informed sources have said that the departed President Houari Boumediene tried another time to transfer Chadli from his position as commander of the Oran area during the 1977 cabinet reshuffle. But Chadli refused any participation in the new government in return for abandoning his position as commander of the Oran command position. It was said at the time that Chadli told President Boumediene: "If you want to issue a decision to change my position on the tacit pretext that new blood must be brought in, then I can say: If I go, then let us go together."

Boumediene Strengthens Hoffman's Position

That disagreement in opinion was the start of an inclination in President Boumediene to strengthen the position of Capt Slimane Hoffmann, commander of military intelligence, who enjoys major special powers and resources through which he has been able to overcome Chadli's opposition.

Hoffman was close to Boumediene from the time he was minister of defense during Ben Bella's rule. In his capacity as an officer of the armored

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corps, Hoffman played a prominent role in President Boumediene's coup against President Ben Bella in 1965. Hoffman was appointed adviser to President Boumediene immediately after the coup. He was then given the task of establishing the International Studies Bureau, which constitutes the foreign wing of military intelligence. He was also entrusted with the responsibility of concluding numerous weapons deals. He also became the main liaison officer with the Polisario and the official entrusted with coordinating aid, training and armament [for the Polisario].

Thus, Hoffman is considered one of those who are enthusiastic for "Boumedienism" whose continuation is represented by Yahiaoui.

Two Points of Disagreement

The differences between the two axes are confined, according to the informed sources, to two basic points:

Polisario Issue

Even though it is premature to assess the ramifications resulting from the Polisario leadership from the disagreement between the two axes over the issue of the relationship with the Polisario, and through it, the issue of the difference over the essence of the relationship with Morocco and the essence of dealing with the Sahara problem, it is obvious, according to some observers, that the recent operations carried out by the Polisario during the sickness that disabled the departed president were not remote from the disagreement between the two axes. The operations were meant to exploit this disagreement in the interest of the Polisario, and to strengthen Yahiaoui's axis for fear that Bouteflika's axis might triumph--a triumph which would inevitably lead to reconsidering the nature of the presence of the Polisario forces in the Algerian border areas, especially in (Tendouf) base, and, what is more important, to reconsidering the Algerian policy toward the Western Sahara issue.

As a result, observers believe that the inclinations that will materialize from the Algerian developments concerning the selection of a successor to Boumediene will determine to a large degree the future of Algerian-Moroccan relations and, consequently, the future of stability and security all along the Moroccan-Algerian borders.

This is why the Moroccan circles are following the Algerian developments with interest, characterized by extreme caution, for fear that the differences between the Revolution Command Council may be reflected in measures that will increase tension on the borders and may open the door to the possibility of a war that Morocco is trying hard to avoid.

Even though the Algerian authorities' refusal to receive the Moroccan condolences delegation has aroused many fears, Rabat prefers to resort to self-restraint and to overlooking the incident as a transient and subsidiary

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incident, because what is important is to give the Algerians the chance to arrange the affairs of their house calmly and through being familiar with the facts.

Meanwhile, the question concerning the degree of the Algerian opposition's impact on the present and future developments continues to be asked. But it is obvious that contacts are taking place, especially between emissaries of the Revolution Command Council and opposition leaders living in Europe and Morocco.

The problem of the Algerian opposition lies in the fact that it is not in agreement on a unified and detailed program even though it is in agreement on general goals, especially the goal of a transformation toward the democratic system based on public liberties, the multiplicity of parties and on staying within a reasonable and open socialism.

Information available to AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI indicates that the leaders of the external opposition held a 2-day secret conference in a Paris suburb to draw up a joint action charter and to present to Rabah Bitat, the interim president, a list of their demands, which will be later announced in the form of an appeal to the Algerian people.

[Box on Page 21] Yahiaoui in a Few Lines

Col Mohamed Salah Yahiaoui:

Born in 1933 near the Aures, in Setif Subdistrict.

Joined the Algerian revolution in 1956.

Entrusted in 1962 with several political and military tasks in the second area of Wilaya I.

In 1965, appointed governor of the third military area.

Appointed in charge of the Joint Military Academy in Cherchel area in 1969, where he carried out his duties in training several batches of officers. He continued to hold this position for 8 years.

On 30 October 1977, he was appointed executive official in charge of the party agencies. Since then, he has concentrated on organizing the general congresses of the Algerian FLN.

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IRAN

SHAH'S DOWNFALL LAID TO CORRUPTION OF OFFICIALS

Hamburg STERN in German 17 Dec 78 pp 288-293

[Article by lutz Bindernagel: "Baksheesh Even for the Mailman"]

[Text] Nothing has caused more damage to the Shah of Iran than the corruptibility of his officials--and the millions taken in by his own clique in this connection.

An icy wind coming in from the snow-covered mountains whips through the narrow alleys between the sun-dried brick huts of Darvezeh Ghar in the poor southern section of Tehran. It whirls up dense clouds of yellowish-gray dust on a broad area of wasteland.

In an area where some little boys now play soccer, formerly there stood the same kind of clay huts as those in evidence all around it. The city administration had them torn down because a building contractor with good connections with the authorities wanted to build blocks of residential housing units on this tract of land. But to this day, years later, no ground has been broken there, nor have the expelled former residents received a single rial of the compensation promised them.

The people who are living in the small houses in this area are continuously and unanimously demanding that "an end must now be put to this corruption." One individual complains that "even the police are collecting bribes and threatening to put us in the clink if we don't come across. But now we have had enough of this."

Corruption is one of the main causes of the popular uprising which has for months now been shaking up Iran. Dr Bakhtiar, one of the leaders of the opposition "National Front," is of the opinion that "probably none of the dictatorship practices and tortures have in the eyes of the people done as much damage as this corruption."

To be sure, the custom of giving baksheesh has existed in Persia long before Mohammad Reza Pahlavi ascended the throne there. But when the oil-price boom channeled a stream of billions of dollars into the Iranian tills,

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corruption became a way of life in all areas of public life. Everybody wanted to get his slice of the big pie. There is not a mailman in Tehran who does not expect to get his obolus of about 50 pfennigs per delivery. If he does not get it, the next letter frequently ends up on some garbage heap. The garbage, in turn, is as a rule taken away by the Tehran garbage collectors only from the homes of those homeowners from whom they get a tip of approximately 3 marks.

Bribing is a totally indispensable practice for those who are in a hurry. If one does not want to wait 4 days for an exit visa, one can get it within 2 hours by giving the pertinent passport official a 100-mark bill. And those who think that 3 to 4 years is too long to wait for a telephone line can get a line put in immediately by having it done "under the counter" for an extra 6,000 marks. A German shipping company recently even had to pay a total of 50,000 marks to customs officials, drivers, and local agents to get a certain freight shipment to Tehran on the agreed-upon date.

The family of the Shah did some collecting of its own. Particularly the shah's brother, Gholam Reza, and his nephew Shahram, the son of the shah's sister Ashraf, received millions for procurement of licenses, or building sites, for eliminating administrative hurdles, or simply as partners. Thus, for instance, more than 100 firms, among them the national Paykan automobile plants and the Kurosh department chain, are paying commissions or dividends to the imperial clan. Grumman, the U.S. aircraft corporation which is reported to have paid a 24-million-dollar bribe in connection with its sale of jet fighters to Iran, had turned to Princess Ashraf and her son Shahram for help.

Hardly any significant business deal was concluded in the profits of which the shah's clique had not participated. Siamak Zand, the former protocol official at the imperial court who had fled from Tehran, reported in London to STERN about the Black Sea island of Kish, which has been developed into a luxurious vacation paradise, as follows: "The project is reported to have cost 400 million dollars, but the actual price amounted to only one-tenth of this sum. All the rest was bribe money. Assadollah 'Alam, who at the time was a minister of the court, had secured the contract for his friend Mahmud Monsef. The latter sent a Jaguar-Pantera, a luxury sports car, from London to Tehran on an airplane of the imperial air force--a small token of appreciation for the crown prince. Firms for financing the project were then founded in Paris, London, and San Francisco, where the shah's friends received lucrative salaries for doing nothing. Even today, 52 percent of the Kish shares still belong to the daughters of the former court minister."

But it was not only blood relatives of the shah who profited. General Nemattollah Nassiri, one of his most powerful collaborators over a period of many years who was dismissed last spring, is accused of having had businessmen tortured when they refused to give him his tribute. He is reported to have forced the Minister of Agriculture to transfer to him state-owned land

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which Nassiri then sold for 1.4 million marks. For his own needs, Nassiri simply confiscated a 10,000 square meter plot of land on the Caspian Sea.

Similarly, other high officials tried to profit from their official positions. One Austrian firm complained that a former Iranian ambassador had demanded from it about 1 million marks if it desired to win out in a bid for an Iranian contract. A delegate in parliament accused former Information Minister Manuchehr Azmun of having squandered away to friends and relatives land belonging to an official component whose chief Azmun used to be at a price of 5 pfennigs per square meter, and of having transferred 1.5 million marks to his private account in Switzerland. The former chief of the state-controlled meat import agency, Mahmud 'Olumi, feathered his nest in the United States of America: Having arrived destitute in Tehran 20 years ago, and having become a millionaire via his job as state secretary, he recently took off for his own villa in California. According to reports from the Tehran central bank, 144 persons close to the regime have transferred 2.4 million dollars out of the country.

Within a few years, unscrupulous wheeler-dealers, thanks to such corruptive practices, had succeeded not only in amassing fortunes but also in manipulating the supply and price situation, which was even worse for the population. For instance, one merchant alone acquired control of the entire banana imports to Iran. And since he had bribed the proper people in the price control commissions as well as in the chamber of commerce, the "banana sultan" was in a position to fix his prices in any way he wished.

Using similar methods, a cartel of the most important textile manufacturers was able to weave a certain kind of material in a width only half of what it was before, but to sell it at its old, full price, to buy up a competing firm which charged lower prices, and to bring about an embargo on lining material imports. As soon as the imports had been stopped, they increased the price for their local lining materials by 65 percent. Their additional profits are estimated at 700 million marks. And when the Ministry of Trade permitted imports of 30 million meters of textiles, one of the most prominent domestic manufacturers also seized this business for himself.

This was the same man who was feared as the "glas boss" throughout the country: parliament delegate Yassini. He had started out as a simple apprentice glass worker and had opened up a small business which gave him an entry to the powerful and the influential. In 1975, when the construction boom in Iran approached its peak, Yassini had arrived at the point where the entire glass production of the country passed through his hands, and he was in a position to dictate the price of glass with the approbation of the authorities.

Steep careers such as these are not isolated cases in Tehran's climate of corruption. Through connections, the illiterate and former sheep raiser Hojabr Yazdani was aided in getting a monopoly for making deliveries to the Tehran slaughterhouse, then in getting possession of national land worth approximately 50 million marks and, finally, in getting control of the

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Sadcrat bank. It is said that, thanks to his friendship with former Savak chief Nassiri, this banker has managed to get for himself credits amounting to 700 million dollars.

The incessant rise of the newly rich embittered the bazaaris, the traditional merchants of the Persian bazaars. To be sure, they too had profited from their country's upswing, and some 5,000 of the approximately 60,000 Tehran bazaaris are affluent people, and some of them are multimillionaires. However, whereas only one generation ago they had controlled trade in Iran to a far-reaching extent, they have since then been losing their influence steadily. The new capitalists who were matted together with the new regime and the state itself are taking over ever more expanding business spheres such as banks, industries and even grain imports--the former domain of the bazaars.

The bazaaris, on the other hand, have in recent years frequently viewed themselves as the main target of government campaigns against inflation. Housewives, students, and employees of ministries were called up to expose price manipulations and to recommend the punishment to be meted out for them.

More than 250,000 bazaaris in all of Iran were punished within barely one year, respected merchants were put in jail, and 23,000 store owners were banished to remote areas. Of course, many of these sentences were reduced, and 150,000 pending cases were discontinued since the disturbances in Iran broke out.

But it was already too late. The bazaaris looked for their salvation to those forces who are by tradition tied closely to them: the religious leaders of their country. One qualified connoisseur of this situation, the journalist Amir Taheri, makes the following judgment: "From a political point of view, it is the bazaar which influences the Shiite priests, and not the other way around." At the least, the bazaaris can offer to the Mullahs the best functioning organization for mobilizing the masses.

In Tehran alone, the merchants can put to work approximately 5,000 so-called "procession leaders" and contact people who normally organize meetings and festivities. Also, the thousands of leaders of pilgrim contingents going to the sacred places of Islam are working closely with the bazaars. Traders in Tehran who stem from the provinces maintain contact with the bazaars of their home localities. At least twice in recent months the bazaaris, who finance the Shiite clergy at a rate of up to 80 percent, have shown that they can get out several hundreds of thousands of demonstrators in Tehran.

Moharrum, the now beginning month of mourning on the occasion of which Shiite leader Khomeini has called for new demonstrations, could bring the decision. The "King of Kings" therefore follows the advice of the person who currently is his closest adviser: his wife, Farah Diba. The empress recommends flexibility and readiness to negotiate. She herself had taken up contact with ex-Premier 'Ali Amini, who had for years been at odds with the shah, and had

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via him sought contact with the politicians of the opposition. The shahbanu recently made a demonstrative pilgrimage to the city of Najafi in Iraq, which is sacred to the Shiites and which is the place where, until a few months ago, Ayatollah Khomeyni, the bitter enemy of her husband, had been living in exile.

And Farah's cousin and former television chief Reza Ghotbi is said to have drafted for the shah a speech for which, until recently, any other Persian would have been seized by the savak. "I can only support the revolution of the Iranian people," the occupant of the peacock throne, against whom this revolution is aimed, has now been heard to say.

He had 120 corrupt former ministers, senators, and industrial bosses arrested and has now made the following pledge to his subjects: "I am at your side in your revolution against colonialism, suppression, and corruption."

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KING'S ACTIONS ON SAHARAN ISSUE DENOUNCED

Paris AFRIQUE-ASIE in French 25 Dec 78-7 Jan 79 pp 14-16

[Article by Hassen Zenati: "Hassan's Foul Deeds"]

[Text] The following analysis by Hassen Zenati, our diplomatic correspondent in Algiers, is revealing in many respects. The man whose hands are stained with the blood of thousands of Moroccan militants--martyrs to a policy of tyranny, torture, and murder--is trying once again to stab in the back a nation in the throes of one of the most distressing moments in its history, to destabilize a people's regime symbolic of human dignity and the unceasing struggle of people to obtain freedom, preserve their independence, and safeguard their revolutionary gains. But Hassan II, the assassin of Mehdi Ben Barka and his brothers in arms, will not succeed in his foul schemes. Let him not delude himself. Neither the clandestine airdrop of weapons into Kabylia, nor the training of mercenary commandos in his camps, nor the despicable warmongering campaign of deception waged against Algeria--a country that has given his decadent monarchy so many examples of Arab and African heroism and patriotism--will ever succeed in shaking the foundation of a revolution that expresses the profound aspirations of 20 million Algerian men and women determined to continue along the road they chose for themselves back on 1 November 1954, the road to socialism.

Last-minute postponement of visits scheduled long in advance by King Hassan II to this or that world capital is now, of course, part and parcel of the well-known--and displeasing--tradition of Sharifian protocol.

The king well remembers the attack on the Boeing airliner in which he nearly lost his life a little more than 5 years ago. This memory undoubtedly explains his obsession with making sudden changes in his schedule, an idiosyncrasy he inflicts upon his entourage and hosts. We know, for example,

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that he still continues, even today, to have his secret service prepare several different itineraries for his trips inside his own country. He alone makes the last-minute choice of the actual route he and his retinue will take. In the past 2 years, he cancelled a trip to Washington five or six times before finally going there just recently, only to be given a polite "brush-off" by Jimmy Carter who was somewhat annoyed with Hassan's pretentious attempt to lecture him on geopolitics in the interests of Morocco's cause. And now we learn Hassan has postponed, again at the last moment, a 9 December "private" visit--previously twice deferred--to Paris where he was scheduled to have lunch with Giscard d'Estaing, as well as talks just as "private" as the visit itself.

Because he cannot carry too far the sovereign contempt he harbors for all those commoners his position obliges him to meet in the best interest of his affairs, the king does, of course, have to give some reason for such postponements. In fact, he has no shortage of reasons--some good and some poor--in his knapsack. Sometimes these are "urgent" problems that have arisen in his country, problems demanding his personal attention. This excuse has the advantage of being both plausible and occasionally disquieting. Sometimes they are reasons of health. The latter is the reason he officially advanced for delaying his Paris visit.

Observers were still speculating about the real grounds for this postponement when on the afternoon of 16 December they learned that during the night of 10 December a Hercules C-130 transport of the Royal Armed Forces had airdropped, in the Bejaia area not far from Cape Sigli, a load of 191 Mat-49 submachine guns, 100 Pal rifles, three FM 24-29's [1924 model of the M-29 automatic rifle], with ammunition and explosives. These were immediately recovered by Algerian security forces who had been informed of the airdrop by residents of that small fishing port.

This time the king was caught in the act and so could not elude his responsibilities as chief of state.

In a public statement released in Algiers during the night of 16 December, the Council of the Revolution and the government, meeting together with the president of the National People's Assembly, concluded that the gravity of the act made it an operation seriously infringing upon national security. The statement said: "The circumstances under which this operation was conducted--at a time when Algeria is going through a distressful period because of President Boumediene's illness--shows that Rabat is alert to all types of adventure and does not shrink from any attempt to carry out the destabilization designs it has on our country. This operation is a provocation. The Algerian people are prepared to accept the challenge. If it was meant as a test, the operation's failure highlights the state of vigilance maintained by our people throughout the national territory. Adventurers of every stripe, agents of imperialism and reaction, may launch into all sorts of speculative ventures, but they will not succeed in either forcing a change in the Algerian revolution's principles and goals, or even less in

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undermining the unity of our people or infringing upon their sovereignty and the inviolability of their national territory."

Hence this was but another dastardly act by King Hassan II who has, these past few weeks, definitely stepped up his intrigues in all directions for a purpose that is only too obvious, namely destabilization. He is an expert in such matters. He has already demonstrated his talent as imperialism's compliant enforcer in Benin, Zaire, and currently in Angola where his instructors are training UNITA [National Union for the Total Independence of Angola] troops. In addition, he very recently instigated the slaughter on board the Spanish trawler "Cruz del Mar"--for which the Moroccan press too quickly blamed the POLISARIO--in an effort to discredit the POLISARIO not only in the eyes of Spain but also of the international community which at the time happened to be discussing the Saharan issue in the United Nations.

This diversionary action--immediately denounced by the POLISARIO as an act of piracy--was most probably designed to check the course of events in the United Nations and upset the debate which appeared to be progressing very auspiciously for the Saharans. Madrid was not fooled, however. It requested an official explanation, not from the POLISARIO leadership--with whom it has maintained close relations since last September--but directly from the Moroccan diplomatic service. "EL MOUDJAHID [Algerian daily] commented as follows on the trawler incident: "It would have been a perfect crime had it not been for the Saharan denial and the clairvoyance of the Spanish Government which lost no time in approaching the right party." In any case, the incident did not produce the desired effect in the United Nations. The Decolonization Commission did not allow itself to be tricked by Morocco's diplomatic maneuvers. Nor did the General Assembly.

Moreover, the euphoric relationship between the French chief of state and Hassan II has faded a bit since 1975, the year of the famous "my pal Giscard." After having supplied Morocco and Mauritania with a great deal of weapons, ammunition, and money for use against the POLISARIO, France apparently took time to reappraise its policy following the overthrow of Moktar Ould Daddah. This has produced a slight chill in the, still cordial, relations between Hassan II and Giscard. Especially now that the king realizes Paris is promoting--for strictly French motives--the "dynamic of peace" between the POLISARIO and Nouakchott.

Contrary to its custom, France even abstained from voting in the UN General Assembly against a resolution, adopted by 90 countries to 2, reaffirming the "Saharan people's inalienable right to self-determination and independence." This same resolution was the first UN document to ever mention the POLISARIO specifically by name. It also commended the POLISARIO for having unilaterally ceased fire in Mauritania since 12 July and confirmed the international organization's responsibility in matters relative to decolonization in the Western Sahara.

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Hassan II characterized France's abstention as a "neutrality vote" by which that country cast doubt--even though it was only for the duration of one ballot--on the sacrosanct "sovereignty of Morocco over the Western Sahara." Yet could he possibly have officially viewed it in any other way?

No doubt there are some who think the postponement of the king's visit to Paris was not altogether unrelated to these "erring ways" of French diplomacy.

Ten Accomplices

The 10 countries voting against the UN resolution were: Central African Empire, Egypt, Gabon, Guatemala, Indonesia, Israel, Mauritania, Morocco, Nicaragua, and Zaire.

It is not immaterial to note that two of these countries have territorial claims: Indonesia on Timor, Guatemala on Belize. Egypt, Gabon, Israel, and Zaire all follow the same imperialist strategy in Africa and the Arab world. As for Somoza, the dictator of Nicaragua, and Bokassa, the emperor of the Central African Empire, their attitude needs no comment.

Mauritanian Inconsistencies

The UN General Assembly resolution also clarifies, at a diplomatic level, a situation that was getting muddled and bogged down in an endless procedural debate imposed by Rabat. At the same time, this resolution confirms the failure of the manifold behind-the-scenes maneuvers by Moroccan diplomats, and paradoxically, by Mauritanian diplomats, in an effort to have the international organization relinquish its consideration of the Saharan issue on the (fallacious) grounds that it is within the exclusive purview of the OAU.

Late this summer [1978], the current president of the Organization of African Unity, the Sudanese Ja'far Numayri, had even officially asked the African group in the United Nations to defer the Decolonization Commission's scheduled debate until the OAU rendered its verdict. Considering the well-known fact that the OAU, paralyzed by Moroccan obstructionism, was even unable to convene the special summit meeting initially approved at Port Louis and confirmed at Libreville, Numayri's request meant purely and simply putting off the issue indefinitely. But neither Algeria's "express reservations" nor the POLISARIO's protestations prevented the Sudanese president from convening the ad hoc committee formed at the latest [annual OAU] summit meeting in Khartoum, and from reportedly granting it full powers to investigate, negotiate, and even arbitrate between the different opposing parties in the Western Sahara, whereas his function was supposed to be limited to making necessary technical preparations for submitting the Saharan issue to the highly-publicized special summit meeting.

In anticipation of a possible investigation, Moroccans began transferring people from southern Morocco into the Sahara, an operation already denounced by the POLISARIO.

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This is a strange procedure for a chief of state who, because of his present duties as head of the OAU, ought to maintain a greater reserve when examining an issue threatening the peace and security of Northwest Africa.

No less strange is Mauritania's behavior in the United Nations. Nouakchott did, in effect, vote against the resolution commending a cease-fire of which it is the principal beneficiary, a cease-fire which has set in motion that "dynamic of peace" Mauritanian leaders unhesitatingly and regularly panegyricize with a few sibylline remarks. Aren't these Mauritanian inconsistencies likely to increase the Saharan leadership's already extreme mistrust?

Fuzzy Image

In fact, on 5 December contacts maintained since last summer between Saharans and Mauritians were nearly broken off when the Mauritanian emissaries "forgot"--without notice and without explanation--to appear for a scheduled meeting they had jointly agreed upon. A few days later, after the POLISARIO had taken cognizance of this unilateral break in the Saharan-Mauritanian talks, Nouakchott had second thoughts, confirmed its "policy of dialog" and marked it with a gesture, one of minor significance considering the attendant circumstances. It released some 50 Saharan prisoners, but has since placed them under house arrest.

Basically, therefore, nothing has changed. Mauritania seems to be complacently projecting a fuzzy image. The dialog is making no headway. The Mauritanian emissaries are beating around the bush. Is this an endurance test or a tactical move they have been tricked into making so as to gain a few more weeks or months? But time does not always work the way one expects.

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REPORT ON STORMY THIRD USFP CONGRESS

Paris AFRIQUE-ASIE in French 25 Dec 78-7 Jan 79 pp 16-17

[Article by Mousleh Ali: "The USFP's Closed Door Meeting"]

[Text] For Abderahim Bouabid, first secretary of the USFP [Socialist Union of People's Forces], his organization's third congress on 8-10 December was even more trying than its earlier regional congresses had led him to anticipate, even though the latter had been marked by frequently sharp clashes.

Throughout the debates and wrangling in committees, in plenary meetings, or behind the scenes, the most heatedly disputed issue was clearly the role and status of the party's first secretary. So much so that on at least two occasions the latter finally lost the quiet self-confidence, often highly affected, that had enabled him to enhance to his advantage the distinguished image he had projected throughout a long political career. Nevertheless, although the congress was thus punctuated by a few scenes and quarrels, this important meeting's main interest lies in the high standard of political debate maintained by the more seasoned delegates.

No matter how reluctant we may be to excessively personalize political life, we are forced, however, to state that Abderahim Bouabid--whose personal initiatives and decisions, as much as the nature of his relations with the palace, have decisively marked the party's return to legal existence--is currently causing a rank-and-file revolt in many sections of the party, a revolt which the clashes during this third congress only served to exacerbate. On the eve of the congress, there had indeed been reports--and we discussed them in these columns--to the effect that Abderahman Youssefi was returning and thus would take over as first secretary while Abderahim Bouabid would be moved up to a more honorary than effective chairman's position. Under this plan, an adroit process of change seemingly could have been initiated, a process capable of restraining protestors and dissidents.

But Abderahman Youssefi cautiously preferred to further delay for some time his possible return from exile. He did, however, accept membership in the political bureau. His decision to remain in exile put an end to all theorizing and speculation about Bouabid's gradual retirement.

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Delegates to the Third USFP Congress arrived in Casablanca knowing full well that the first secretary would safely seek reelection to a new term as the party's principal leader. The congress was held in the communal fair buildings located, as one delegate remarked, in a junctional area where the sumptuous villas and swimming pools in Corniche contrast violently with the working-class districts of Bourgogne and the old Medina. Organizers had, moreover, spared no effort or expense to make this congress a vast international forum.

The manager of this "caravansary" was Moulay Mehdi Alaoui, a newly-elected member of the political bureau and one of the USFP's former representatives in France who had returned to Morocco after several years in exile. The whole show was designed to hoodwink more than to gain for the USFP pledges of support that neither Soviet or Italian communists, nor French socialists-- with a large representation marked by the unexpected arrival of Michel Rocard--, nor Mediterranean or African Arab progressive and anti-imperialist parties or movements could give because they are all publicly committed to support the POLISARIO Front.

The USFP leadership did, of course, flaunt its highly intransigent views on the Saharan issue. When coupled with the recent intensification of acts of provocation against Algeria, these views appear alarming.

For instance, the congress challenged the government and asked it "to put an end to the war of attrition inflicted upon the southern part of the country, by ordering the Royal Armed Forces to check any unwarranted attack against Morocco." This request's thinly veiled warmongering is especially objectionable in that no reference is made therein to the methods employed by the Moroccan expeditionary corps in the Saharan territories.

Political bureau supporters clashed with the party's radical wing over the issue of relations with the royal court and the monarchical regime, and in the debate on revising the forms, methods, and conditions of the organization's mass interventions. There is no denying that the radical wing is sympathetic to Mohamed Basri, nicknamed the "P'quih," a prestigious leader of the patriotic movement. Basri had even sent an open letter to the delegates. Evidence of the support for Basri is the fact that part of the delegates chanted "Al-ikhtiyar ikhtiyaruna, al-Basri za'imuna" (The option is definitely ours and Basri is our leader). The option in question is actually Mehdi Ben Barka's revolutionary "Option." It is also the symbol of the movement led by Mohamed Basri's supporters abroad.

It would be dangerous, however, to echo the allegations made by the USFP leadership prior to the congress, but particularly during and immediately after its deliberations, allegations naming delegates accused of being Basri supporters and summoning them to explain why they engaged in splinter tactics outside the organization's legal framework. In the USFP there are not simply Basri supporters on one side and all other USFP members on the other.

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Rather there are disappointed and bitter radical militants alined against men of the party apparatus who are committed to the dialog with the palace.

likewise it is irresponsible, to say the least, for anyone to continue to cast aspersions--as certain highly coddled guests did--about Mohamed Basri's conspiratorial activity, aspersions that grossly reduce his political thinking to subversive obsessional impulses. A reading of his open letter to the congress is sufficient in itself to totally discredit this malicious and perfidious criticism.

There is nothing surprising in the fact that Mohamed Basri's demand for a sovereign constituent assembly evokes a genuinely favorable response among rank-and-file members. This demand was also put forth by the UNFP [National Union of People's Forces] and then by the USFP. Nor is it any surprise that the issue of political prisoners, those from the UNFP as well as from the extreme left, plus the problem of the disappearance and assassination of El-Abdi, Manouzi, El-Malki, Omar Benjelloun, Zeroual, and many other victims of the king's and Colonel Dlimi's hired assassins or provocateurs are being raised in desperation by militants more and more convinced that they were duped into accepting the agreement concluded in their name.

And lastly, the fact that the matter of the class nature of the regime is now openly and explicitly at issue is consistent with the process of radicalization initiated at the prompting of Mehdi Ben Barka, a process further strengthened by the ordeals of the repressive episodes of 1963, 1965, 1971, and 1972.

In preparing for the congress, the USFP leadership found itself unable to stem the flood of vehement challenges and questions from all sides. Yet it hoped that the solemnity of the congress proper, reinforced by the Areopagus of distinguished guests, would still the ardor of the more seasoned members. Not to mention that the skillfully raised specter of possible police action in the event of any indiscreet remarks was indeed likely to intimidate a certain number of speakers. Consequently the leadership was caught unawares by the demand for a secret session which was approved against the political bureau's objections. Yet it was certainly behind the closed doors of this secret session that the debate was able to really develop in candid and vigorous fashion. Bouabid and his principal associates were put on the defensive by questions raised about such issues as the dispatching of the Moroccan Army to Zaire, Sadat's visit to Jerusalem and Egyptian-Moroccan collusion on Machrek and Palestine, and the Shah's request that Rabat serve as mediator (Khomeyni eventually declined Hassan II's offer to mediate). Put back within the context of an effective strategy of liberation, the question of Ceuta, Mellila, the Shafarin Islands, and Gibraltar was, of course, discussed.

The discussions on the need to democratize institutions and public life should be viewed against this background. In these discussions, the USFP leadership was most sharply attacked on such essential points as political

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prisoners, procedures for investigating political murders and kidnappings, but above all, on the nature of the regime.

The congress did, in effect, call for transformation of "the present Makhzanite monarchy"--and not the "presidentialist" monarchy as reported by some newspapers--"that protects the exploitative classes, into a constitutional, parliamentary, and democratic monarchy...in which the king would exercise arbitrational authority."

Obviously this is a compromise resolution in which the republican ideal is expressed in an altogether new fashion, even though the monarchy (reformed however) continues to be placed outside the field of class warfare. In addition to the resolution's general tone, it was undoubtedly their explicit reference to the Makhzan's oligarchic class, reviled for its corrupt practices, that roused the king's anger.

Government Greatly Concerned

The palace's reaction was not long in coming. The party's main newspaper, AL-MUHARRIR, was seized twice for having published the final political statement. That beats all! It was allowed to resume publication only after making the concession--fraught with consequence--not to publish the second part of the condemned text. The leadership's involved commentary expressing deep regret that this initiative had possibly "tarnished Moroccan democracy in the eyes of our guests" further stirred the membership's legitimate anger.

There is no ruling out the possibility that the king may not limit his reaction solely to this warning shot. Another crackdown is not impossible. The fact is that the government is greatly concerned about an organization which, despite its leadership's compromises and concessions, and notwithstanding some mistaken views on the Saharan question, does include among its 10,000 members the most radicalized sectors of patriotic Moroccan youth. This secret session of the USFP congress was not the one-man show the leadership expected, as amply indicated by the urgent appeal made by a large number of delegates for a return to Mehdi Ben Barka's Maghreb and Arab ideals, and also by the formation of an administrative committee which includes some 10 young party leaders well-known for their dynamism and rigorist views.

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MOROCCO

AUSTERITY MEASURES MEAN DIFFICULT TWO YEARS AHEAD

London THE MIDDLE EAST in English Jan 79 pp 123, 124

[Text]

Morocco's rapid capital-intensive industrial development programme is being fundamentally revised. The new development thinking in Morocco can be summed up in the catch-phrase "small is beautiful".

The rationale behind this total reversal is both economic and social. No one now denies the failure of earlier economic policies. In fact the current austerity measures are designed, in the words of the Secretary of State for the Economy Ministry, Osman Slimani, to "correct the fundamental disequilibrium created during 1973-77 by the over-ambitious five-year plan."

At the same time, Moroccan officials are concerned that, unless urgent steps are taken to redress glaring social inequalities, the country might suffer a social explosion along the lines of that in Iran, where the outburst against the Shah has given food for thought about the advisability of continuing to emulate the Iranian-cum-Brazilian model for economic growth.

Observers believe that, although corrective steps are being applied "about 18 months too late", they may still do the trick.

Since June last year a concerted series of economic measures have been undertaken. These include an austerity package outlined by King Hassan in June, when he spoke of the need to reduce the "intolerable" dependence on foreign countries and the concomitant need to slow economic expansion.

That package included a 20% curb on imports and the alignment of the dirham with the French franc, to encourage Moroccan workers in France to send still more of their hard-currency earnings home. The King also announced a scaled-down, transitional three-year programme to replace the original five-year development plan. Shortly afterwards restrictions were introduced for imports, prohibiting the entry of certain items, requiring licensing for others and obliging firms to make a pre-shipment deposit worth 25% of the value of imported goods.

In October these steps were

followed by the presentation to Parliament of the three-year plan (making it in effect a two-year plan), designed to reinforce the cuts. This programme, featuring a 30% drop in investment levels, gives priority to export-generating sectors such as steel, uranium, phosphoric acid and phosphates. Late in November the 1979 draft budget outlined to Parliament placed similar emphasis on restraint and further taxation.

The question now is how far these measures will bite. There were at least four factors which forced Morocco into recession in the first place and not all of them can be tackled by internal legislation.

The most important element in the downturn was the fall in phosphate revenue, which accounts for around 40% of export earnings. Not only did Morocco's planners miscalculate the phosphate market, but they made matters worse by increasing foreign borrowing to the extent that the country's indebtedness more than doubled between 1975 and 1977, from

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\$1.5bn to \$3.6bn. Outstanding debts reached an estimated \$5bn last year. The debt servicing ratio meanwhile rose to around 22% in 1978 and will reach an estimated 27% this year.

In addition the economy was hit by a series of bad harvests, necessitating food imports and placing a severe burden on the balance of trade.

Another factor was the heavy military commitment, largely the result of the Saharan war, which led to the tripling of defence expenditure to \$722mn last year. Finally the economy was affected by the worldwide recession, which further cut into hoped-for export income.

These parallel problems caused growth in GNP to decline from a record 8.5% in 1976 to a mere 1.3% in 1977. The preliminary figure for 1978 is 2.4% growth, compared with a population growth rate of 2.9% a year.

The new year starts on an optimistic note, however, as there are already some signs of improvement. The 1978 trade deficit is expected to have improved from the alarming \$1.9bn gap registered the previous year, since first-half exports rose by 1% over the corresponding period of 1977 and imports declined by 8% as the import restrictions began to make an impact.

Likewise the 1977-78 harvest is up by around 36% on the previous season, and cost-of-living increases are falling.

The Government is nevertheless still worried about inflation. The Minister of Finance, Abdel-Latif Ghissassi, outlining the draft budget to Parliament, said that prices "probably" rose by only 10% in 1978, as opposed to 12.5% in 1977. This he linked with the increase in money supply, which had been restricted to 13% in

1978 compared with 19% the year before. But, even so, the war against inflation must go on.

What is not yet clear is how far, if at all, the burdens inflicted by the austerity package will be distributed as equitably among the population as the Government promises. Some observers believe that necessary reforms in some basic social sectors may be postponed and that unemployment (unofficially estimated at around 30%) may increase.

Moroccan officials, for their part, insist that, on the contrary, more emphasis will be placed on social goals. In fact the series of strikes last year seems to have brought home to the Government the need for social peace.

Slimani told *The Middle East* about the plans to encourage labour-intensive industries to mop up employment and stem the rural exodus. And there is reason to believe that these efforts will be sustained since the Union Socialiste des Forces Populaires, representing the most serious opposition to the Government, has gained much ground in the shanty-towns, where the rural unemployed tend to end up.

Further evidence that Moroccans are making a genuine effort to tackle neglected social areas comes from the new 1979 budget. Family allowances are increased to MD36 (\$9) a child from MD24, at an overall cost of MD140mn, and allocations for hospitals, schools, roads, agriculture and dams are increased.

At the same time defence spending will also continue to command priority. Indeed the most striking aspect of the new

budget is that it shows a deficit more than three times as big as that for 1978. Expenditure is projected at MD26.5bn, which is 0.7% up on earlier predictions.

Receipts on the other hand are estimated at only MD24.11bn, representing a drop of nearly MD13mn on last year, despite higher taxes on profits and high salaries. The deficit will thus rise to MD2.3bn.

Despite the attempt at economic recovery, therefore, Morocco can expect a difficult

two years ahead with the new restraint lasting at least into 1980. Much now will depend on the extent of foreign borrowing, since (in the absence of a dramatic improvement in phosphate revenues) implementation of even the scaled-down "three-year" plan and the financing of this year's budget deficit will require heavy borrowing abroad, perhaps to the tune of \$500-800mn a year.

Susan Morgan in Rabat

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TUNISIA

PERIOD OF SOME UNCERTAINTY FORESEEN FOR TUNISIA

London THE MIDDLE EAST in English Jan 79 pp 45, 46

[Text] **After interviews in Tunis in October with Prime Minister Nouria, party head Sayah and opposition leader Mestiri, Mark Bruzonsky was in Washington in late November for the Prime Minister's visit. The Americans, Bruzonsky concludes, have decided to back Nouria, hoping to help him to consolidate his hold when Bourguiba is gone. Still, our correspondent foresees a period of some uncertainty for Tunisia.**

Tunisian Prime Minister Hedi Nouria's visit to Washington some weeks ago was but one act in the presuccession struggle already haunting Tunis.

That struggle broke out in earnest last January when Habib Achour, head of the General Union of Tunisian Workers and one of the inner circle in Tunisian politics, called the first general strike in the history of independent Tunisia.

In the disorders that followed at least a hundred people were shot dead in the streets, and there were charges that the country's single political party, the *Parti Socialiste Destourien* headed by Muhammad Sayah, had instigated the rioting to discredit both the union and Achour.

With Achour imprisoned through the charade of a special state security court, Nouria and Sayah are both preparing, partly against each other, for what will be a bitter internal struggle once the ailing President Bourguiba succumbs.

One Nouria insider confided that the Prime Minister may attempt to purge Sayah after he consolidates himself in the presidency. He recalled Bourguiba's 1969 sacking of the "economic overlord" Ahmad

Ben-Salah only a month after he had publicly insisted that any criticism of Ben-Salah was criticism of the President himself. "The same could happen to Sayah," he hinted. But Sayah comes over as a tough, resourceful figure who cannot easily be pushed aside.

An American diplomat was far more candid. "Sayah wants to be prime minister," he said, "but his head will roll if Nouria steps into power after Bourguiba's death." Such speculations are widespread throughout Tunisia in this time of pretransition.

Surprisingly, another Nouria confidant suggests that "Ahmad Mestiri is a possible prime minister under Nouria". Mestiri is a former minister of the interior who was purged from the party in 1972 and who now champions evolution towards a multi-party democracy. "Mestiri is now speaking the language of an alternative prime minister," it was pointed out. "Mestiri and Nouria aren't that far apart" the confidant noted, the implication being otherwise about Sayah.

With Achour, Sayah, and Mestiri all vying for political position in anticipation of

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the unstable period sure to follow Nouira's takeover, the "crown prince's" decision to "prematurely act presidential by visiting Jimmy Carter's White House," as one analyst in Washington put it, seems a sound gambit. Nouira knows only too well how difficult a time he will have juggling political forces and personalities, especially in the early months of the transition. He came to Washington seeking Carter's blessing.

An admired technocrat, Nouira lacks any semblance of charisma - the main reason for the widespread uncertainty whether he can hold the fracturing political scene together for long. "Nouira is not liked, and after Bourguiba only force will rule Tunisia," one pro-Achour young professional prophesied.

Still, Nouira is supported by a variety of established interests. And the American Government apparently decided to boost Nouira's image through his recent Washington debut. "He's the only ameliorating force" against the repressive tendencies represented by Sayah, one US official noted.

Though the Americans continue to toy with the idea of encouraging Mestiri - enticed by his promotion of democratic freedoms and human rights - Mestiri's lack of any popular base seriously weakens his appeal. Only Achour really has a substantial following. But his downfall was partly the result of his having believed the Carter Administration's early human rights slogans. "The union had much confidence in America because they were acting legally," one young banker reflected. "They were only demanding their worker rights and never thought America would let them be arrested."

Achour had attempted to get US backing last year for establishing a labour party. But Washington's indifference was an important factor causing Achour to choose the alternative tactic of a general strike to push for his economic and political reforms. An American diplomat, embittered by Washington's inattentiveness, now concludes that "history would have been different if only Achour had declared a new party instead of a general strike".

Serious tensions between the union, the party and the Government will undoubtedly continue and an eruption like last January's could occur. Unemployment, rising expectations and growing alienation from government and party institutions are all destabilising forces.

Under Achour, the union's popular base was half a million - nearly 60 per cent of Tunisia's total labour force. Furthermore, the union attracted new vitality from the educated young and provided a forum for progressive ideas which the decrepit party could not handle. But now even this outlet is gone as the union has been remade to suit the Government. "In effect," Mestiri charges, "the union is no more."

The party, largely representing the nationalist bourgeoisie, is, according to one Tunis diplomat, "in the advanced stages of rigor mortis" - though Sayah insisted that a majority of the claimed 670,000 party members "are young people very supportive of our system".

Interviews with Nouira, Sayah and Mestiri highlighted how the internal political struggle is now being publicly manifested through the debate over the benefits and dangers of evolution toward a multi-party democracy.

The single-party regime "is now falling" in Mestiri's view: "We want a multi-party system here. We want a Tunisian democratic system. We consider the single-party regime no longer adaptable to the conditions of Tunisia".

Though investment-seeking advertisements in US newspapers at the time of Nouira's visit touted Tunisia's "Western style", both Nouira and Sayah keep insisting that their capitalistic version of "single-party democracy" is best.

Sayah condemned "the plurality of parties as an evil in itself" and spent a full 15 minutes reading a 1971 Mestiri speech praising the virtues of the single-party system. "Mestiri is only playing to international public opinion," Sayah insisted. "Our objective in Tunisia," he added, "is a democratic community - a goal higher than a multi-party system".

Nouira, in an unmistakable reference to Mestiri, suggested that "multi-party pluralism is a dubious policy of some people claiming to be attached to democracy in order to gain power".

An aide confided, however, that "Mestiri's conversion to democracy may be real; and even if his conversion isn't honest, people around him are".

Nouira's replies in Washington to those who questioned him regarding democratic freedoms were similar to his comments in Tunis in October. "I'll tell you our concept

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of democracy," he said. "All of the Government's policies - whether economic, social or educational - are done in consultation with what we call the social partners. These are trade unions, employers' organisations, farmers' organisations and also the consumer representatives and the party. And within the party itself we have many tendencies, many trends. The people speak freely and openly within the party even in the presence of the highest officials. Real democracy is the true representation of all these interests and trends. . . . What is done in the US or in Europe is not necessarily valid for developing countries such as Tunisia."

Fearing the inconclusiveness of the approach, Nouria added something of an excuse for restraining free political expression in Tunisia: "Can you imagine this small country being divided up into tendencies and presenting itself to the world in small bits whereas we have neighbours with very solid monolithic regimes?"

During Nouria's visit Tunisian newspaper advertisements in the US proclaimed: "Tunisia's political soundness and Western-style economic philosophy" provide investors with "a businessman's dream . . . the way to bigger profits in Europe and the Middle East".

But an American scholar offered a somewhat more restrained vision when the Middle East Institute in Washington held its annual conference a few months ago. Professor Clement Moore of the University of Michigan summed things up this way: "Tunisia is no longer a single-bullet regime. Bourguiba has not been running the country for many years. In a sense Tunisia has already been weathering its succession crisis, but there is a potential for the Nicaraguanisation of Tunisia. The image of a cohesive country has been tarnished. Even the term fascism has been used, and in a technical sense it can apply. Tunisia is not a simple authoritarian regime; it is a regime building on the fears of the middle class against the masses".

And in Tunis one middle-class moderate, sensitive to the aspirations of the masses, warns: "No one expected the army to attack last January. Next time the workers go out on the street they may have their own weapons." □

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TUNISIA

EXPORT OUTLETS, SOCIAL STABILITY CLOSELY LINKED

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[Text] Tunisians discussing their economic performance over 1977-1978, the first 2 years of the five-year development plan, tend to attribute difficulties not to social instability but to the loss of export outlets in the West. However, because of Tunisia's acute unemployment problem, those export outlets and internal social stability are closely linked. Naomi Sakr spoke to ministers, bankers and private investors in Tunis and wrote this report.

26 January 1979 marks the first anniversary of Tunisia's Black Thursday, a day of rioting, violence, deaths and arrests on a scale which shocked onlookers abroad into a rapid reappraisal of what they had considered Tunisia's traditional stability.

Today in the wake of the sentencing of Habib Achour, Secretary-General of the Union Generale de Travailleurs Tunisiens (UGTT), for his part in the January turmoil, those events are being written off by Tunisian officials as the outcome of small-scale political plotting and Achour's personal ambitions.

But the strikes and tensions which culminated in Black Thursday clearly also coincided

with a period of considerable economic difficulty for Tunisia, and the exact nature of that coincidence is a question that continues to exercise Tunisia's potential private foreign investors and financiers. Given the added economic strains created for the country by Western protectionism and the consequent threat to Tunisian jobs, a clearer recognition of the relationship between Tunisian political and economic stability could be beneficial for both sides.

On the whole, Tunisia's economic performance in 1978 is a subject which seems to evoke a fair amount of complacency on the part of spokesmen for such institutions as the Planning

Ministry, the Tunisian Economic Development Bank (BDET) and the employers' organisation, the Union Tunisienne de l'Industrie, du Commerce et de l'Artisanat (UTICA).

After the initial drop in production during the first two months of the year, the epidemic of unofficial strikes (which totalled 196 in 1977, according to UTICA figures) seems to have died down. Officials stress that most of the strikes were in the public sector anyway, in the mines and on the railways, where their first victim was the Tunisian taxpayer and not the small-scale private factory owner.

The only strikes that have hit

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the private investor in recent weeks have been those in French ports, which have prevented raw materials and parts from reaching assembly plants in Tunisia. The French manager of one electronics firm, hit by the French strikes and waiting to re-stock, smiled wanly when *The Middle East* asked him how much he worried about the likelihood of local strikes.

"Where in Europe," he asked, "would factory workers telephone their firm during a general strike to apologise for their absence, due to lack of transport?" Yet this is what happened to his operation in Tunisia last January.

With hindsight, Planning Minister Mustafa Zannouni even goes so far as to say that Black Thursday "cleared the air." In its 20-odd years of independence, Zannouni said, Tunisia had periodically been subject to disruptions caused by ambitious men. But without such disruptions it could be dismissed either as "dead" or as a "dictatorship."

The events of January, seen from Zannouni's point of view, were like a "mild cold". Such a description might dismay the relatives of those who died in the turmoil but it may be reasonably appropriate in the context of the investment climate. For, according to Zannouni, the strikes did not stop foreign investment flowing in, they did not hold back growth rates nor did they represent the undoing of the "social pact", the five-year prices and incomes agreement reached with the unions in 1976.

"No one", Zannouni argued, has denounced the pact. On the contrary, workers and management met as usual last April

and agreed on an 11% increase in minimum wages in response to price increases. This, he said, had a calming effect and proved the Government's sincerity.

Investment Figures

Unfortunately, however, the latest statistics on investment and growth rates in the industrial sector do not necessarily support these assertions. Some rather ambiguous figures on private investment funds were published recently by the Agence de Promotion des Investissements (API), the national investment promotion agency and sole co-ordinator of all investment in industries set up for export or the local market under the investment incentive laws of 1972 and 1974.

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These figures show that 552 projects, worth TD98 mn (\$245 mn) and representing 15,694 new job opportunities, were approved during the first half of 1978. This compares with 5,639 projects, representing TD1,153 mn worth of investment and 184,000 jobs, approved during API's first 5 years (ending in March 1978) and thus falls not far below the 6-monthly average for those 5 years.

In comparison with 1977, however, when 1,310 projects worth TD312 mn and creating 41,000 jobs were approved, the 1978 figures appear rather less encouraging. Whether the lagging investment effort signalled a "mild cold" or a prolonged attack of flu is not yet clear.

The figures presented in the draft budget document for 1979 are similarly open to more than one interpretation. That document, surveying economic performance over the first two years of the 1977-81 development plan, reveals results which are worse than the plan projection but are nonetheless better than preceding years.

Growth in non-agricultural sectors in the 1977-78 period reached a rate of 8.3% a year, which is less than the 9.6% expected but a marked improvement on the annual 7.6% recorded between 1973 and 1976. If agriculture is taken into consideration, reflecting harvests badly hit by irregular and insufficient rainfall, the overall average growth in gross domestic product for the two years falls to an estimated 5.7%. Significantly, however, this average comprises growth of only 4.1% in 1977 but an impressive 8.9% last year.

The satisfaction with these results expressed in the budget presentation is echoed by the Director-General of the HDET, Mokhtar Fakhfakh. The 1977-81 plan was undoubtedly "ambitious", Fakhfakh said, because it was conceived in the euphoria that followed the increases in olive oil and phosphate prices in 1974 - both of which had immediate repercussions for Tunisia since it exports both oil and phosphates

and stands to benefit from petrodollar aid.

The world recession since then had dashed these initial hopes, Fakhfakh explained, but since there was no obligation to achieve the plan targets "there was no need to amend the plan".

In general Tunisian officials concur in ascribing shortcomings in the country's economic performance over the past two years not to social unrest but to world recession or what they call "the international economic situation". The problem, however, is that, for Tunisia, social stability and the international economic situation are closely linked. So much of Tunisia's development is geared to supposedly expanding export markets that the "international situation" cannot be dismissed off hand.

Tunisia with its population of 6mn represents a restricted market for industrial production. Income per head of the population is a relatively healthy \$850, but since the dollar's slide the purchasing power of that \$850 is not as great as it would have been two years ago.

The country's investment incentive laws of 1972 and 1974 are geared respectively to export-oriented industries and those serving the domestic market, but the advantage of the export industries is that they tend to be labour-intensive, providing not only foreign exchange but badly needed jobs as well.

Thus when the doors slam on export outlets, as they did on textile sales to Europe in mid-1977, Tunisia is left wondering where to turn.

Sogitex, the state textile company with a staff of 4,500, is still nursing the bruises from the 1977 EEC rebuff and will continue to nurse them throughout the year - keeping its staff and paying them for a full three shifts even though, as a result of the EEC import quotas, they are at most working only two. Sogitex President Bechir Saidane reluctantly admits, however, that if by December 1979 there is no improvement in the export picture he will have to start laying people off.

The Sogitex story epitomises the problems facing the Tunisian textile industry, which employs about 35,000 people. Sogitex had just launched an export programme when the EEC quotas were introduced. These quotas were calculated on the basis of sales achieved before the programme started and were consequently well below the levels Sogitex had planned.

Worse still they were introduced suddenly, with complete disregard for the fact that the ceiling fixed for some goods had already been reached. The machines stopped, leaving Sogitex management to find fresh customers overnight. But, with one possible alternative, Iran, in total disarray and with others flooded with Eastern European and South-east Asian

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goods, the Tunisian company was forced to appeal to the EEC in Brussels for further talks.

The quotas will remain in force at least until 1981, however, and, short of cancelling contracts with the Belgian, French and West German firms which provide Tunisia with textile equipment in the first place, there is not much Tunisia can do.

There is not much chance either of finding new outlets for

other Tunisian products such as phosphates and olive oil. Partly because of the slump in the international phosphate market and partly because of problems encountered in applying new mining methods and getting treatment facilities on stream, Tunisia's phosphate output for 1978 was only 3% up on the previous year, reaching 3.76mn tons compared with a target of 4.1mn tons.

Production this year is projected at 4.3 mn tons, but as raw phosphate production capacity increases so will capacity of local processing plants, enabling Tunisia to resist international market pressures by consuming more of its phosphate at home.

As for olive oil, the problem of European import restrictions will not be felt acutely this year, but only because Tunisian production will be much less than in previous years. Because of the productivity cycle of the trees, only 400,000 tons of olives are expected in 1979, representing a drop of 36 percent on last year. This is all the more significant since, according to the latest statistics, olive oil exports for the first 7 months of 1978 earned TD18.5 mn, making them Tunisia's third most important source of export revenue.

The budget document, discussing the outlook for exports, echoes officials at all levels in stressing the vicissitudes of 'la conjoncture internationale.' The options open to Tunisia to fight the international system, however, are relatively few.

As Zannouni explained to *The Middle East*, it would make sense to promote co-operation among developing countries, thereby gradually excluding the industrialised West, or at least causing it to "think twice". But Tunisia has to be able to sell in Europe to be able to buy from Europe; the option of selling wood pulp to Egypt, for example, is attractive but it cannot for the moment be applied.

With these limitations in mind, Tunisian ministers are making a concerted call for European countries to think

again on import tariffs - not because Tunisian jobs and social stability are at stake (although they are) but because, they say, the furtherance of Tunisian economic development, like Third World development as a whole, is in Europe's interests.

Rashid Sfar, the Minister of Industry, Energy & Mines, supports that theory most forcefully with quotations from the Bertelot report drawn up by French Government officials last year. That report came to the conclusion that industrial development in the Third World

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had helped to create a net total of 100,000 new jobs in the industrialised countries.

European countries have to give up their "small grocer mentality", Sfar said. They have to start reasoning scientifically about development in Tunisia and put an end to protectionism. They have to realise that every time Britain, for example, forbids the entry of a pair of Tunisian-manufactured trousers it is perpetrating a crime.

That "scientific thinking", in the Tunisian view, revolves essentially around Tunisian purchasing power. At the moment Tunisia imports far more (even in textiles) than it exports. If Tunisians are fully employed their purchasing power will remain high and Tunisian export demand will be sustained.

For Tunisians to stay employed foreign investment is required, which in turn needs foreign confidence in export potential. The country's planners are emphasising that the investment machinery is there in the API and in the laws of 1972 and 1974. The ideal investment climate, however - for inter-related internal and external reasons - is not. Resumption of free trade would be a step towards improving that climate, and the power to do that is invested in Tunisia's trading partners in the West. □

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UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

SHAYKH OF SHARJAH COMMENTS ON ARAB PROBLEMS

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 7-13 Dec 78 pp 26-28

[Interview with Shaykh Sultan ibn Muhammad al-Qasimi, the ruler of Sharjah, by Amin al-Siba'i: "On Occasion of Convocation of UAE National Assembly, Shaykh Sultan ibn Muhammad al-Qasimi Says: There Are Problems and Difficulties But We Will Overcome Them with Wisdom and Deliberation; New Constitution Will Fill Gaps from Which Division Penetrates; We Are Full of Hope al-Sadat Will Stop Pursuing His Line Because Rights of Peoples Are Not Given Over Tables"]

[Text] On the eve of the commencement of the new session of the UAE National Assembly, the UAE capital turned into a beehive of multi-level activity.

Perhaps the most active person was Shaykh Sultan ibn Muhammad al-Qasimi, the Supreme Council member and the ruler of Sharjah, who turned his suite at the Hilton Hotel into an assembly room for a series of meetings with some of the UAE ministers and with high-ranking officials. The aim of the meetings was to discuss the aspects of the plan to form a higher economic and social planning council with powers covering all the state services as a new unification step to bolster the union's entity.

AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI conducted this interview with Shaykh Sultan after he had gone through a long meeting with Sa'id al-Ghabbash, the minister of planning, and then with Ahmad ibn Hamid, the minister of information, and 'Abdallah Nuways, the undersecretary of the Ministry of Information, to discuss the various aspects of the planning council plan which Shaykh al-Qasimi has described as the state's main concern at present.

Shaykh Sultan spoke frankly and clearly to AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in this interview which proceeded as follows:

[Question] In light of the experience of the years passing since the establishment of the UAE, what is your evaluation of the experience at the political, economic and social levels?

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[Answer] There is no doubt that as an experiment, the UAE is a unique step in the Arab homeland--a step taken on the basis of understanding and cooperation among the emirates. The union concept is a positive concept and is an Arab gain on the path to the desired unity.

We proceeded from the zero point in creating and establishing the union. We had no establishments and no firm experience at the political level. When we say that the experiment has been a unique step, it is because it did not only proceed from the zero point but also amidst a sea of conflicts inherited from the colonialist era.

When we examine the phases through which the union has passed since its creation, we can notice the vast difference between the starting point and the point that we have reached politically, economically and socially.

Politically, each emirate had the power to take independent positions in the domain of foreign affairs and we have now been able to confine the adoption of decisions and the holding of official contacts at the foreign level to the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs solely. This in itself constitutes an important gain that bolsters the mainstays of unity.

At the level of unifying the establishments, there wasn't a single establishment reflecting the unionist inclination among the emirates, except for the Ministry of Education whose programs relied on partially unionist foundations. This ministry was centered in Abu Dhabi. In the other emirates, there were only education bureaus. We proceeded to unify those bureaus and to merge them in the Ministry of Education. The same was done in the areas of health, domestic security and in the other establishments.

Socially, the UAE has followed a line that insures full social security for all groups with the aim of raising the standard of living. In this regard, the state has increased wages more than once to improve the conditions of civil servants and it has insured the opportunities of work for the young generation.

Far-Sighted Policy

(He added) However, we do not disregard the presence of numerous critical difficulties that must be handled and dealt with. But persistent efforts to eliminate these difficulties and to deal with them with all the means available to the official leaderships and cadres enables the realization of this goal under the wise policy formulated by Shaykh Zayid ibn Sultan Al Nuhayyan, the chief of state. This is a policy of deliberation, of a wise outlook and of fraternal settlements to deal with the traces of the colonialist legacy that had planted the seeds of division between one emirate and another, one tribe and another and among the members of the single family on the basis of "divide and rule."

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The truth is that we have experienced and continue to experience from the difficulties produced by these methods and we have had to overcome these difficulties to bolster the foundations of the union.

There is no doubt that most of these difficulties are, (for example), the problems of common borders between the emirates. However, in our opinion strengthening the foundations of the union can eliminate the causes of the explosion of these problems and prevent them from turning into time-bombs.

Fusion in Single Crucible

(He further added) We notice that the general representation of all the groups and sectors of the emirates is in the interest of the state as a unified constitutional institution. The emirates are fused in the crucible of the single united state which is aware of the requirements of local government to run affairs on the basis of the instructions of the state [UAE] ministries. We hope that this will be applied in all the emirates of the union because we notice that there are some emirates that have neglected the duties they shoulder toward the union.

I would like to underline here the prominent role that is performed by the Ministry of Information through the radio, television and the press to strengthen the union's procession, to keep away the dangers of division from the minds of the citizens and to fight the seeds of regionalism and of petty conflicts. Information in the UAE is, as I have noticed, of an advanced level. We hope that the other state ministries are up to the level of the task entrusted to each of them so that the procession may continue successfully.

Our Word Is Sincere

[Question] With the national celebrations, there arises the question of the practical results achieved at all the domestic and foreign levels. What are the most outstanding results?

[Answer] There are numerous problems and obstacles, as I have already said. But the picture becomes clearer when the possibilities of a comparison between the past and the present are taken into account. In the past, the tribal rule was predominant. There were no laws, no bonds and no unified policy. But the creation of the union defined the rights and duties of every citizen. The common will for unity had to be translated into laws and into constitutional articles defining the rules of government and of application and also defining the rights and the duties.

The difficulties emerged on application, whether at the level of the constitutional articles or of the provisions of the law. This in itself was a considerable problem.

At the political level, the emirates enjoy good relations at both the Arab and international levels and their asset is the sincere word and wise positions. Do not forget that the emirates are new to politics and that we

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do not know the trickery of politics but say the word of truth, regardless of how they object to true words.

Moreover, the UAE is a generous state, not only at the level of supporting the developing Arab countries but also at the level of development aid to the third world countries in Asia and Africa.

Blessed Step

[Question] What is your opinion regarding the chances of the success of the unification resolutions that is to be reportedly issued shortly, especially the resolution to unify broadcasting?

[Answer] I have already referred to the good efforts that are being exerted by the Ministry of Information in the sphere of enlightenment on unification and to the ministry's successful use of the radio and television facilities that have proven their effectiveness and their impact on guidance.

As for the chances of the success of the unification resolutions, everybody knows that every unification step faces numerous obstacles and gaps that have to be filled up with time. Therefore, it is natural in this case to seek to unite the broadcasting stations operating in the state and to merge them in a single station that speaks in the name of the UAE and reflects the views and positions of its citizens. Therefore, we have decided to unite the Sharjah broadcasting station with that of Abu Dhabi out of our belief in our responsibility before God and before the Arab people from the Gulf to the ocean and out of our faith in the need to rise above all forms of regional jingoism. All we hope for is that everybody will follow our example so that we may achieve the goals that we all aspire for.

Toward New Constitution

[Question] What is your evaluation of the phases of the UAE's progress in light of the system of rule followed by Shaykh Zayid ibn Sultan Al Nuhayyan, the chief of the state

[Answer] The UAE was founded on the basis of a provisional constitution. The text of this constitution was drawn up at a time when we were all subject to violent currents of conflicts and problems created in the face of the union. The constitution came to take those conflicts into consideration in preparation for eliminating them and then for pleasing many of the parties concerned. In this regard and in many other provisions, the word "may" was used to satisfy some people, to bypass the fields of danger and to exclude the incentives for isolation.

Even though this word [may] was the door through which some circles penetrated to adopt private decisions, we noticed after a while that the continuation of this situation would further complicate matters, that powers had to be divided, that responsibilities had to be defined and that the

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decision must lie in one hand so that the account for both right and wrong may be restricted to those in positions of responsibility. The state thus started to proceed toward a new and permanent constitution. We hope that this constitution will be approved shortly because it is unreasonable for the provisions of the provisional constitution to continue to be a means for division and for weakening the UAE for which we care and which we tend with our hearts and minds.

In this respect, Shaykh Zayid was foremost among those who believe in the union and in the importance of the unity of the emirates, even before he became the number one official in the union. Then came the responsibility to reflect this faith in the union in serious steps and courses toward completing the march of unity.

We have also focused all attention on the security situation and we have defined the ways to safeguard the area from the hands of tamperers.

Sluggishness Is Healthy Phenomenon

[Question] Sharjah had lived under the canopy of noticeable economic prosperity. It has been said that the economy then became sluggish. How has this problem been dealt with?

[Answer] When we speak about the emirates or about one emirate, we always speak about the union as a whole. First I am responsible for the UAE and then comes my responsibility for Sharjah. These are the sound foundations of federal rule.

Concerning the reply to the basic question, I will say that the sluggishness to which you refer affected the entire Gulf area in the preceding period. This was due to inflation and to the rapid growth undergone by the area. It was an unbalanced and unnatural growth. Consequently, it spread fear and caution among the officials regarding the consequences of the weakness of the economic entity's absorption capacity.

I believe that the sluggishness that set in afterwards was the best cure for the unhealthy situation prevailing at the time because it led to formulating the controls and the means to deal with and to correct the procession at the level of development and growth.

Imagine that in the past we dealt with establishments that had no bases and no financial capital. To a large degree this led to confusion. But it also opened our eyes to the reality and led to definite calculations and to a comprehensive evaluation and correction regarding the future. There are means of approach and proposals intended to achieve a well-studied and comprehensive boost that will affect the entire area.

[Question] It has been reiterated that new oil wells with commercial quantities of oil were recently discovered in Sharjah. What are the details of this issue?

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[Answer] Nothing of the sort has happened and we hope that what you are talking about will happen.

[Question] Having been familiarized with the outcome of the Baghdad Arab summit conference, what is your view of these results?

[Answer] Before the Baghdad conference, I was afraid of the dangers of the crack that afflicted the Arab line and that threatened the fraternal solidarity and cooperation at the national level. Even during the Baghdad conference, we had our hands on our hearts for fear of the radicalism in some ideas. But God be thanked, reason, understanding and wisdom prevailed on the situation.

In my opinion, the problem lies in driving Egypt away from the Arab group. Ousting Egypt is not in the interest of the Arab citizen [sic] and a solution must be found for the Palestinian problem through the Arab countries on the frontline with the enemy and with the support of all the Arab countries.

Acceptance of resolution 242, for example, does not mean squandering, relinquishment or capitulation. All these are rejected and are out of the question. What is actually in the picture is to put the Palestinian Arab people's interest at the top of the Arab interests and to shoulder the common responsibility in order to attain the full Arab right through participation and cooperation among all the Arab countries, including the fraternal Egypt. The unity of the Arab ranks is what will achieve the common national goals.

[Question] What have been the reverberations of the Arab Action Charter which was recently concluded between Syria and Iraq and how do you view the impact of this charter on the Arab arena?

[Answer] We in the UAE are crystallizing a fundamental and significant experiment, namely the experiment of unity and we support with all our strength any concurrence and rapprochement among the Arab brothers. We hope that the scope of the experiment will expand to include the entire Arab homeland.

Rapprochement between Iraq and Syria is natural. What is unnatural is conflict and estrangement. I noticed in a television program the joy on the faces of those who crossed the land borders between Iraq and Syria after years of estrangement. My joy was a part of theirs. I hope that what has been done between Iraq and Syria will include the states of the Arab Maghreb and of the Arabian Peninsula.

Impact of Iranian Events

[Question] The Iranian events have given rise to numerous questions regarding their impact on the security conditions in the Gulf. What are the limits of this impact and how is it faced?

[Answer] Iran is a major country in the area. We as neighbors are naturally affected by what happens to our neighbors. We hope that Iran will cross

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from the framework of the crisis to the framework of stability and that its conditions will return to normal.

As for the impact of the Iranian events on the area and on how to face this impact locally and regionally, I believe that the issue must be viewed objectively and realistically and that the bridges of cooperation must be extended to us, avoiding independent actions and positions. In this way, it is possible to devote the efforts for filling the gaps in the face of outsiders coveting the area.

Advice to al-Sadat

[Question] What are your expectations concerning the Arab future should a separate peace be concluded between Egypt and Israel?

[Answer] I hope, rather I am full of hope, that al-Sadat will stop from proceeding along this line even while he is holding the pen to sign. My hope emanates from my concern for the unity of the Arab ranks and for the cause itself. The path to salvation and liberation cannot but pass through sacrifices and what has been taken with force cannot be regained without force. The rights of peoples are not given over tables. The Arab homeland needs a revolution against the self and not the revolution of arms and coups. Revolution against the self is what built the great nations. The most immediate example is India. In India, there are various traditions, customs, religions and languages. Yet, the Indian people, represented in Mahatma Gandhi, were able to transform India into a single cultural entity and people.

Oil Prices

[Question] After the recent drop in the value of the dollar, the eyes have turned toward the UAE and the other members of the OPEC, waiting for their decision. What is your position toward the oil prices?

[Answer] We notice that the drop in the price of the dollar, or rather the drop in the purchasing power of the oil revenues, has inflicted a big material loss on many of the oil producing countries. Within this framework, the UAE minister of oil has toured a number of the oil producing countries for consultation and coordination before adoption of the final decision concerning the issue of raising the [oil] prices. We support any opinion agreed upon by the majority of the oil countries.

[Question] There are complaints as a result of the lack of the elements of firm and clear organization and planning for the entire UAE economy.

[Answer] The thinking is inclined currently toward the creation of a high-level planning council for the state. The idea has been presented for discussion and examination. We hope to implement it if it meets the welcome and approval of the brother members of the Supreme Council.

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WESTERN SAHARA

POLISARIO SECRETARY GENERAL NOTES SAHARAN PEACE PROSPECTS

London THE MIDDLE EAST in English Jan 79 pp 39-40, 41

[Text] **What are the prospects for a solution of the Sahara problem after the negotiations between Polisario and Mauritania? How has Polisario managed to organise a people of nomads into a homogeneous force? What is life like in the Sahrawi refugee camps three years after King Hassan of Morocco launched his "Green March"? Howard Schissel toured the area and spoke to Polisario Secretary-General Mohammad Abdel-Aziz.**

The Middle East: Has the illness of Algerian President Houari Boumedienne and the doubts it casts on the political future of his country, which is your principal ally, affected the search for a peaceful solution of the conflict in the Western Sahara?

Mohammad Abdel-Aziz: Boumedienne is a great statesman who has played an important role in the Arab world and on the international scene. The Algerian State maintains a clear line based on the National Charter. Algeria has solid political institutions and its voice counts in international politics. The Algerian people have passed through the experience of a long war of national liberation. The Sahrawi people are now engaged in the same process. Our relations with Algeria are very close and built on a solid foundation. Certain milieus in Europe and in the Arab world have taken advantage of President Boumedienne's illness to launch a campaign of unfounded rumours and attacks against Algeria. As all know, Algerian foreign policy is based on the fervent support of all people who are struggling for their national independence. President Boumedienne has always stressed the fact that Algerian policy in this domain would not be altered by a change in the

country's leadership. We are thoroughly convinced of the sincerity of Algeria's support for our cause.

□ During the fourth congress of the Polisario Front you demanded that the new Mauritanian regime of Lt-Col. Ould Salek should recognise the Democratic Sahrawi Arab Republic (RASD), return the sector of the Sahara it now occupies to the Polisario authorities, and withdraw its troops to within its pre-war boundaries. How long are you willing to maintain the temporary ceasefire in Mauritanian territory if the Mauritanian Government does not respond in a favourable manner to your conditions for a return to peace?

○ First of all, the Congress of the Polisario Front has the power to decide all important questions of a political and strategic nature. The congress considered the ceasefire as a conjectural question. Until the present the ceasefire has remained in force. Concerning the recognition of the RASD by Mauritania, it is a logical move for the new regime in Nouakchott to recognise it. The RASD wants to maintain good relations based on mutual respect and co-operation between the Mauritanian and Sahrawi people. However, the fourth congress did not ask for the recognition of the RASD by Mauritania.

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In the framework of conditions put forward to constitute the basis for peace, the fourth congress asked the Mauritians to recognise the sovereignty of the RASD on all the territory of the ex-Spanish Sahara and ceding the part of this territory which it administers to the RASD.

□ In 1975 the first secretary-general of Polisario, Mustapha el-Ouali, spoke of the possibility of establishing a federation with Mauritania once the Western Sahara became independent under Polisario's rule. Is such a project still a possibility or have three years of bitter desert war rendered it unlikely?

○ In this context it is important to understand that Ouali did not talk of a federation with Mauritania in the strict sense of the word. Instead he spoke of unity with the Mauritanian people and other Arab countries in the framework of pan-Arab unity. Given the situation prevailing in the region, the question of unity with Mauritania is not one of immediacy. When the Sahrawi people recovers its sovereignty over the Western Sahara in its totality it will be possible to rethink this question. We cannot speak of unity or federation with a country which still occupies part of our national territory.

□ What was the result of the negotiations between representatives of Polisario and Mauritanian diplomats which recently took place in Bamako? Were negotiations opened with the Moroccans in the Malian capital?

○ It is a fact that negotiations have been going on between the RASD and the new Mauritanian regime. The most recent round of talks took place in Bamako. Until now these negotiations have not produced any positive results, mainly because the Mauritanian delegation has not advanced significantly on the road to finding a peaceful solution to the Saharan issue. Concerning Morocco, I can assure you that there were no negotiations or even discussions with them at Bamako. The King of Morocco sent a high-ranking delegation. This delegation did meet a member of Polisario but he was only a simple militant of our organisation. We did this out of respect for Malian President Moussa Traore because he requested us to meet the Moroccans. Even though the head of the Moroccan delegation considered the meeting as a positive move in the sense that it opened up a new era in the search for peace, King Hassan made a declaration after the meeting which indicated that he has not abandoned Morocco's traditional position on the Saharan question. Unfor-

tunately we feel that the continuation of the armed struggle by the Sahrawi people is the only response possible to Morocco's intransigent position.

□ France and certain African states have reportedly put forward a peace plan which foresees the creation of a Saharan mini-state under Polisario control in the portion of the Sahara now under Mauritanian control. Are you willing to accept such a plan?

○ I can assure you that we have not been officially contacted by France or any other African country concerning the possibility of accepting such a plan. We have learned about so-called solutions through certain

Western publications. You must, however, keep in mind the fact that the countries who are supposedly behind such a plan are those who previously described the Sahara and its people as not constituting the base for a viable state, that is to say a territory and a sufficiently large population. Therefore we can now pose the question of how they can present a pseudo-solution which attempts to resolve the problem through the creation of a mini-mini-state. However, the only acceptable solution for the Sahrawi people is the establishment and recognition of the RASD on the entire territory of what once was the Spanish Sahara.

□ At the present time 17 states have recognised the RASD. Besides Algeria, only South Yemen in the Arab world is among these countries. Why has the Polisario cause such limited diplomatic success in the Arab world?

○ As you have said, RASD is recognised by 17 states including two from the Arab world. However, this should not be interpreted as meaning that the RASD does not have the support of people in the Arab world and on the other continents. If other Arab countries have not formally recognised the RASD this does not stop them from aiding us in different ways. For example, Libya gives us crucial support and so does Syria. We are certain that as the struggle of the Sahrawi people progresses other states in the Arab world will accord diplomatic recognition to the RASD.

□ Do you maintain relations with the PLO?

○ We support the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and we consider that any solution to the Palestinian question must necessarily have the support and participation of the PLO.

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Q After France's armed intervention over the past year in the Saharan conflict, what role do you now see for President Giscard d'Estaing's Government in the search for peace in the region?

O France is a permanent member of the UN Security Council which is responsible for peace and security in the world. France is also a nuclear power and has considerable weight in world affairs. We believe that the French Government should not use its force and influence to impose its temporary interests. France should use its position to support the rights of peoples and the principles of international justice. This is not the case in the Western Sahara as France used its military might to support the aggressors against the Sahrawi people. We sincerely hope that France will reconsider its position.

Q Following the participation of a member of Spain's ruling party, the UCD, at the fourth Polisario congress, do you expect the Spanish government to denounce the tripartite Madrid agreement which is the legal basis for the Moroccan and Mauritanian partition of the Western Sahara?

O The participation of the UCD representative at the last Polisario congress was followed by the publication of a joint communique in which Spain's ruling party recognised Polisario as the sole representative of the Sahrawi people. What is more, Spain has also agreed to respect the right of the Sahrawi people to liberty, self-determination and independence. Also, they have recognised the fact that peace will not return to the region without respect for the Sahrawi people's rights. We consider this as a positive, even significant, step forward towards the re-establishing of relations between the RASD and Spain. Spain is the former colonial power and there are many common interests between our two countries. We feel that the stage could now be set for Spain to denounce the odious Madrid agreement.

Q King Hassan of Morocco has recently paid a state visit to the United States. How do you view American policy in the region? Do you have contacts with the Carter Administration?

O Hassan attempted to count on certain international events to win support for his in-supportable position in the Western Sahara. In reality, Hassan's regime tried to impose on several Western countries the *fait accompli* in the Sahara and engage them in

a dangerous process of an escalating conflict in the region. Now Hassan wants to impose his policies on the US at a time when certain belligerents are striving to reach a peaceful solution. We are satisfied with the neutrality of the US in the Saharan conflict, especially the decision not to deliver arms to Rabat which would be used against Polisario forces and the Sahrawi people. We hope that the US will continue this policy. We have had contacts with American diplomats, including the US representative at the UN, Andrew Young.

Q The Soviet Union has recognised the right of the Sahrawi people to self-determination and independence. Yet at the same time it has signed important commercial deals with Morocco, including a fishing agreement which certain observers believe includes the offshore waters. Do you judge Soviet policy ambiguous in this regional conflict?

O It is normal for the Soviet Union to recognise the basic rights of the Sahrawi people. In this respect the Soviet position is similar to that of the International Court of Justice. Concerning the fishing agreement, it does not include the territorial waters of the RASD, only the Moroccan waters. I would like to add that the struggle of the Sahrawi people does not aim at overthrowing the Government of Morocco. Our struggle is one of national liberation. We therefore cannot interfere in the rights of other states to sign commercial agreements with either Morocco or Mauritania.

Q At the last OAU summit conference in Khartoum the creation of a committee of wise men was decided on in order to present a report to the acting president with a view to convening an extraordinary summit conference to discuss the Saharan question. In your opinion was this a positive move?

O The Khartoum decision was positive and constitutes a significant victory for the cause of the Sahrawi people. The Khartoum decision took into consideration the UN report presented by a special mission in 1975 which recognised that the Sahrawi people

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wanted its independence and that Polisario was the only liberation movement representing the Sahrawi people. It also considered that the question remains one of decolonisation. The dossier thus remains open for international organisations such as the OAU and the UN. The Khartoum decision also took into consideration the opinion of the International Court of Justice which stated that there existed no previous ties of sovereignty between the Western Sahara and Morocco or Mauritania. I would like to add that lately both Nouakchott and Rabat have manoeuvred in an attempt to oppose the OAU and the UN. They have tried to prevent the issue from being discussed at the UN. The mission of the committee is to prepare for the extraordinary summit conference to discuss the Saharan question. We consider that it is the responsibility of the organisation's acting president, Jaafar al-Nimairi, to convene the conference. His responsibility in this matter is great. □

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WESTERN SAHARA

POLISARIO OFFICIAL SAYS ONLY MOROCCO WANTS SAHARAN WAR

Madrid CAMBIO 16 in Spanish 10 Dec 78 p 56

[Text] After almost 1 year of diplomatic exchanges, the POLISARIO FRONT is returning to Spain to cultivate its recently inaugurated relations with the UCD [Democratic Center Union], which promise a not very distant solution to the Saharan War.

On 19 February something more than the cold and rain surprised Ahmed Bouhari at the foot of the plane which brought him back from Mexico. The Barajas airport authorities had advised the POLISARIO FRONT representative that he was not permitted to enter Spain.

Now, 9 months after that incident and again in Madrid, Bouhari hobnobbed without problems with leaders of all Spanish political forces 3 years after the signing of the Madrid Tripartite Accord by which the Spanish Government gave up its sovereignty over its Saharan colony in Morocco and Mauritania.

"There is a new system and therefore a new analysis," the Western Saharan official states in explaining the about-face made by the Spanish leaders in recent months. "The tripartite accord offers Spain only difficulties, worries and political tensions, leading to the conclusion, in public or in private, that the solution offered by the accord is dangerous and does not safeguard Spanish interests in that area."

Disadvantages, Thousands

The youthful POLISARIO FRONT leader lists the disadvantages which, in his opinion, brought on the 14 November 1975 Accord. "First of all, the Bu-Craa phosphate did not reach Spain, because it belongs to a people--the Western Saharan--from whom it was necessary to steal on behalf of that accord.

"Nor was the Spanish fishing fleet benefited," Bouhari states. "It is possible to fish in the waters of a rough river but not in a sea in which war is being waged." Avoiding an admonishing tone, Bouhari continues, "In like manner, from a moral standpoint we cannot continue to close our eyes to the genocide which certain factions are attempting to perpetrate a few miles from the Spanish coast." Bouharu emphasized the importance of 15 June 1977,

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"the date on which the Spanish democratic process began." Respect for peoples' right to self-determination, according to him, is an essential criterion of democracy. "The democratization process in Spain," he was pleased to say, "opened new perspectives, somewhat limited in the beginning, to restore what the 14 November 1975 Accord wanted to destroy forever.

"As far as the Western Saharan people are concerned," Bouhari stated, "suffering and war began with the tripartite accord. But it is no less certain that this accord died on the field of battle; the reality is something different, and it is on that basis that we must jointly write a new page for that area which will guarantee peace, harmony and cooperative relations based on mutual respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each of our peoples." An essential condition for achieving this solution would be Spanish participation.

"Those responsible for Spain's foreign policy," Bouhari recognizes, "began, jointly with us, to compose a few lines of hope on 14 October 1978." On that day, in the midst of the desert, the POLISARIO FRONT and the UCD, represented by Javier Ruperez, signed a joint communique on the occasion of the release of the eight Canary Island fishermen whom the POLISARIO FRONT had seized in Western Saharn waters.

"Three principal elements," Bouhari explained, "contributed to that happy ending: the support of the Spanish democratic forces, particularly the PSOE [Spanish Socialist Workers Party], is said to have played an important role; the struggle of our people, directed by the POLISARIO FRONT; and the urgent need to put out this lake of fire, which is the Saharan War."

Morocco Remains Alone

"Morocco is no longer interested in anything but war," Bouhari states in explaining that Hassan II periodically resorts to the recourse of keeping the old expansionist desires of the Allaouite Regime alive in accordance with the waverings of the Moroccan situation.

"Morocco remains alone in its war of expansion. This policy now has few friends, who at times are victims of blackmail and of the big-stick policy to get them to follow," he emphasizes in a veiled allusion to the claims which Hassan II is determined to bring to light from time to time in regard to Ceuta and Melilla.

Dispensing with hyperboles, Bouhari states categorically: "The current war in the Sahara is a problem of decolonization whose solution is no dilemma." He does not fail to admit immediately that something has changed, emphasizing in this connection the great understanding shown by the Spanish Government and the role played both by "influential persons within the UCD" as well as by the PSOE and the PCE [Spanish Communist Party]. "The solution," he summarizes, "is genuine respect for the Western Saharan people's right to self-determination."

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Morocco is again the target of his attacks, "the only country which wants war" and which is even attempting to revive a "colonial accord which would like to impose a colonial peace." He concludes enthusiastically: "The new vision which exists in Spain, together with the cease-fire decreed with Mauritania by the POLISARIO FRONT, are the beginning of a new phase, a peace effort which we must support and encourage in order to guarantee a definite and just solution to the problem."

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WESTERN SAHARA

ORGANIZATION OF POLISARIO CAMPS

London THE MIDDLE EAST in English Jan 79 p 41

[Text]

Three years after King Hassan launched the Green March as a prelude to the partition of the Western Sahara with Mauritania, the 130,000 Sahrawi refugees living in the Polisario camps located near the southern Algerian town of Tindouf are showing a national consciousness that could lead to the establishment of a successful modern state. Since the partition the Sahrawi people have carried out an unceasing struggle to gain control of the whole territory and win international recognition of the Democratic Sahrawi Arab Republic (RASD).

Once nomads who wandered for centuries over the territory of the Western Sahara as well as Southern Morocco and Algeria and Mauritania, the Sahrawis have now been concentrated into one people for the first time under conditions of enforced exile. Under the political leadership of the Polisario Liberation Front the refugees have been implanted in three *wilayas* (provinces) which bear the names of the Western Sahara's principal towns: El Aioun, Smara and Dakla. These camps are separated by several hundred kilometres in order to facilitate organisation, improve hygienic conditions and avoid offering a compact target for Moroccan air raids.

Each province is divided into *diaras*, which are the basic administrative units. The inhabitants come from different regions

of the Western Sahara. This is a conscious effort to end tribal divisions.

The organisation in the camps is remarkable, considering that traditional Saharan society was fiercely individualistic and independent. Now every adult is a member of an 11-strong cell. Each member is responsible for one aspect of daily life, such as hygiene, education, medical care, food supply and so on, for the other cell members and their families. Each cell elects one member to the camp's popular council, which in turn sends representatives to the National Council. Everyone has some kind of responsibility and in this way popular support is guaranteed for Polisario's policies.

The people are now cleanly dressed and well fed, and receive medical care. The tents are kept clean and are set out in orderly fashion. Moreover, social services function efficiently and provide the people with their daily needs. The epidemics which ravaged the ragged refugees in 1975 and 1976 are now just a bad memory.

Each *diara* now has its own rudimentary medical clinic. Each *wilaya* has its own schools. A highschool for several thousand students is nearing completion and a remarkably well-equipped hospital has been functioning for the past year. As in all the institutions of the RASD the personnel learned their jobs on the spot and received makeshift training from the few Sahrawis who had received medical training under the colonial regime.

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An outstanding feature of life in the camps is the role played by women in this traditionally male-dominated society. With most of the men away fighting at the front, the women have become the driving force behind political and social organisation in the camps. In one *diara* I visited the five-member Popular Council was entirely composed of women. During our discussions under a low-pitched Saharan tent (*haima*), they pointed out the immense progress they have made since the days of enforced exodus at the end of 1975. Not only have most women learnt to read and write; they have also undergone basic military training. The Fourth Polisario congress at the end of September consecrated their role by electing a member of the women's organisation to the executive council.

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BRIEFS

SPANISH FISHING BOAT ATTACKED--"We took cover with our hands held high and they shot pointblank," Miguel Rodriguez related; he was one of the three survivors of the fishing boat, "Cruz del Mar," whose crew was machine-gunned by unknown parties Tuesday night, 28 November, while fishing in Western Saharan waters. Eight other companions were less fortunate: they have died or disappeared. The official version is that the fishing boat was approached by a raft of the "Zodiac" type, maroon in color, with 20 men on board who were wearing diving suits and carrying machine guns. Some of the attackers boarded the fishing boat, placed a bomb on it and threw 11 crew members overboard to machine-gun them. The bomb soon exploded and the boat sank. The Spanish authorities suspect that it was an attack by the POLISARIO FRONT, but the Western Saharans accuse Morocco of having perpetrated this assassination in order to place the blame on them and disturb their friendly, though incipient relations with the Spanish Government. [Text] [Madrid CAMBIO 16 in Spanish 10 Dec 78 p 56] 8568

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END

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