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Near East/North Africa Report

(FOUO 45/79)



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NEAR EAST/NORTH AFRICA REPORT

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INTER-ARAB AFFAIRS

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OFFICIAL DISCUSSES VARIOUS ARAB FINANCIAL MATTERS

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 4-10 Oct 79 p 48

[Interview with Dr Burhan al-Dajani, secretary general of the federation of Arab chambers of commerce: Moscow Welcomes Creation of an Arab-Soviet Bank. Arab Chambers of Commerce Assisted Expansion of Trade with Various Nations and Rules of Israeli Boycott]

[Text] Can Arab financial investments find a market in the Soviet Union and the socialist nations similar to areas of activity and investment in the capitalist market? This is one of a group of questions answered by Dr Burhan al-Dajani, secretary general of the federation of Arab chambers of commerce, before he left London en route to Tunis, after having had consultations in the British capital pertaining to development and expansion of British-Arab economic relations.

Dr Burhan al-Dajani, secretary general of the federation of Arab chambers of commerce, hardly ever stays in one place these days. His only escape from Beirut and the problems of running the secretariat general is to pursue projects which take him to various world capitals.

AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI met with him at London's Grosvenor Hotel, along with the secretary general of the Anglo-Arab chamber of commerce, 'Abd al-Karim al-Mudarris. He [al-Dajani] had come from the last stop on his still unfinished journey, which this time was Moscow, where he held a conference of the federation of Arab chambers of commerce at the invitation of the Soviet-Arab chamber of commerce in Moscow. This was the first conference of its type, and it bore a special stamp, not with respect to the growth of economic and trade relations between the Arab world and the Soviet Union, but rather with regard to projects being presented by the secretary general for consideration, and the economic and monetary considerations pertaining to these projects. AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI asked him about the most important of these projects.

[Answer] The most important project which we reviewed with the Soviet side was to organize means of transporting technology between the Soviet Union and the Arab nations. We proposed to the Soviet side the establishment of a joint center whose mission would be to get to know the Soviet technology

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required by the Arab nations. They, of course, will study this proposal and will inform us of their decision.

Arab-Soviet Bank

[Question] It has been said that apart from that, you studied the matter of establishing a bank in Moscow?

[Answer] The fact is that in this meeting we reviewed Arab-Soviet relations in general, and then we turned to problems which a joint Soviet-Arab bank would encounter, since existing Arab funds abroad would play a role in world financial market activity, and not be limited to specified countries.

We felt that the Soviet Union and the socialist nations are prepared and indeed want to enter banking operations for commercial financing in various long, medium, and short-term [ventures]. The Soviets had mentioned previously that they would welcome this idea and were prepared for the first time to enter into such an experiment as this. There is still work [to be done] to prepare a suitable atmosphere on the Arab level to achieve a project like this.

[Question] What is the position of the chambers' federation toward Egypt, in the event it violates the Israeli boycott regulations, for instance?

[Answer] In the event Egypt violates the Israeli boycott laws, it would be dealt with the same as the rest of the countries to whom these regulations apply. I want to say here that trade between Egypt and the Arab nations is not worth mentioning, and so the dangers of boycotting it are not great. I will give you an example of that. Egypt tried, before the Camp David agreement, to reach an agreement with the Arab-boycotted Ford company. But the company, after making a study of the market, stated that it would be unable to market its products. The result was that the company was transformed into a "workshop" for the repair of automobiles.

[Question] This brings us to a question which we must raise regarding this topic. What is the role of joint Arab chambers of commerce in foreign countries?

[Answer] There is no doubt that these chambers are able to assist in creating a suitable climate for mutual economic and commercial exchange, in a somewhat broad sense, between the Arab nations and the partner nations in these chambers of commerce. They are also able, at appropriate times, whenever the Arab nations have exportable products, to assist in promoting these exports.

I want to clarify here that none of these chambers of commerce is content with commercial and economic roles, but their activity also extends to cultural matters which help in the growth of friendship and the improvement of the Arab image, as well as protection of Arab interests such as occurred in their opposing laws aimed against the Arab boycott of Israel.

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Arab-British Chamber of Commerce Activity

[Question] Could you cite an example in this regard--about chamber of commerce activity which countered such a sensitive issue as this ?

[Answer] Of course. There is the Arab-British chamber of commerce. It opposed Zionist attempts to pressure for the enactment in the British Parliament of a boycott law similar to that passed in the United States. The chamber of commerce, which worked to coordinate a campaign opposing this Zionist attempt, was able to defeat Israel's efforts in this regard-- a matter of considerable importance.

In the United States, despite passage of the law, the Arab-American chamber of commerce was nevertheless able to tone the law down, since many loopholes were retained in it benefiting both American businessmen and the boycott.

[Question] Could you mention some of the accomplishments of the Arab-British chamber of commerce, as a model for the other chambers in this field?

[Answer] It should be said first that the chamber has offered to groups of important economic forces in its country to join in a framework which would cause interaction between them and the Arab side, benefiting the two countries, and acting as the authority for all aspects of relations between the two.

In addition to that, there is the matter of its participation with several of the other chambers of commerce in protecting Arab interests, concentrating economic forces because they have interests with the Arab world, and creating a climate and finding a framework for these institutions. It is an active embassy for the Arab world, but it is not tied down by diplomatic and protocol considerations, and so is able to make contact with many broad-based quarters.

[Question] But are there specific services which it has offered to the Arab world?

[Answer] Naturally. It has offered many services--for example, a forum in 1977, in which financiers and experts from Britain participated, on development of the Arab financial market.

There is a project to offer scholarships to the Arab world. It will also invite representatives from Arab chambers of commerce to a program in which they will become acquainted with organizational aspects of British chambers of commerce which will be reflected back to these chambers.

[Question] There are those who say that Arab chambers of commerce have not been resolute regarding Egypt's position; [what is] the extent of that connection with the Camp David agreements?

[Answer] The chambers have done more than what was asked of us. As an example, Egypt's membership in the federation of chambers of commerce was

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suspended, whereas the federation was not mentioned among the institutions called upon by the Baghdad conference to boycott it. Thus we were not asked to suspend Egypt's membership, but we did so on our own initiative.

[Question] You mentioned that there was a project for an Arab market along the lines of the European Common Market. What is the status of this project?

[Answer] The Arab market project which the Arab states have endorsed is a project that we have basically promoted. Regrettably, however, it is still on paper. I would like to say here that the practical application is not commensurate with the decisions or with the importance of this project. We believe that an Arab financial market is the most important step which could be taken toward creating the future world about which the Arabs dream.

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INTER-ARAB AFFAIRS

BRIEFS

STEEL COMPLEX PLANNED--The Arab nations, meeting secretly in Algiers, have just decided to build a steel manufacturing complex with a production capacity of 20 million tons [per year, presumably]. Saudi Arabia will finance the venture which is to be ready to produce in 5 years. [Text] [Paris PARIS MATCH in French 2 Nov 79 p 72]

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ALGERIA

MALADIES AFFLICTING ALGERIAN SOCIETY EXAMINED

Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 17 Oct 79 pp 56-59

[Article by Hamza Kaidi: "To Live in Algiers"]

[Text] Seen from a jet preparing to land at Dar el-Beida Airport, Algiers has lost none of its legendary whiteness. Added to the blue of a bay that is considered one of the most beautiful in the world, this brilliance gives a feeling of pride to the emigrant returning to the country for vacation. Alas, the airport offers the spectacle of an eternal building site. Never mind! The work will come to an end one day and the air terminal will only be more beautiful. This is the feeling expressed by Arezki N., who is a worker at Renault, near Paris, who has come to spend a month's leave after four years away.

Things were already not going very well the last time he came, in 1975. The news received since then has hardly been reassuring. "Housing crisis, unemployment, inflation, shortage of products of primary necessity have only grown worse," affirmed the visitors who managed to go to France despite the Draconian restriction on exit permits. But in April 1979 hope was born. Exit restrictions were lifted, supplies improved, housing construction made some progress. And, when a sojourn in France is becoming increasingly problematical for Algerian workers, returning emigrants, it was stated, would have priority for allocation of housing. Like the others, Arezki is counting on taking advantage of the vacation to prepare for his return to the fold.

But enthusiasm dwindles before the distressing spectacle offered by the streets of Algiers. The sidewalks and stairwells are strewn with filth and refuse; the cellars are occupied by rats; a number of buildings are dilapidated. What can be said about the elevators, which have not worked for ages, or the pipes that leak everywhere? It is enough to discourage the most fervent candidate for homecoming! It is true that since Arezki has been away this facade has begun to change. Early in September, in fact, a vast rehabilitation operation was launched; it has now been extended to the whole country. As EL MOUDJAHID said, "Day and night, an army of painters is covering the facades of the buildings, which yesterday were pitted with dirt...The sidewalks are swept, the garbage picked up, and the rats have had to seek refuge

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in spaces less exposed for the moment to the demands of this cleanup campaign."

The fact remains that Algiers "is exploding;" in 17 years the population has almost quadrupled, going from 600,000 souls in 1962 to more than 2,000,000 today. The occupation rate of housing is one of the world's highest. In many quarters three to eight persons on the average share one room. Families with seven, eight, or even ten children, to which are added the inevitable cousins, uncles and other more or less close relatives, are not unusual. Since the launching of the rehabilitation operation, automobile and pedestrian traffic has been controlled, thanks to the strong-arm vigilance of the police. But in some corners the crowd density is comparable to that in Asiatic cities.

Badly housed, the Algerois do not lack other concerns. Provisioning, to begin with. When they do not lack semolina or butter, they lack eggs, potatoes or tomatoes. As soon as these products reappear in the Monoprix or in the state stores, the shelves are taken by storm.

Openly and publicly practised, the black market is flourishing. Everything is found there. Even so-called luxury items. Very partial to imported products, especially when they carry the Made in France label, Algerians buy cigarettes, razor blades, clothing, perfume, etc. on the black market. Jeans that are worth about 150 French francs (7,500 CFA francs) in Europe, cost 350 dinars (over 20,000 CFA francs) here. High grade whiskey sells for 350 dinars a bottle and American cigarettes for 12 dinars (almost 750 CFA francs).

Another Algiers scandal is urban transportation. The poor maintenance of the vehicles and the overloading have reduced a large part of the state-owned transportation company's rolling stock to the condition of wrecks. Buses go by less and less often. At the stations, formerly crowded only during rush hours, one sees veritable human tides at any hour of the day. Would one rather take a taxi? The undertaking is scarcely made easy. There is no jostling, but the wait is a long one. Sometimes an occupied taxi stops and agrees to take one or two additional passengers. There is no question of setting an itinerary for it. It is the driver who imposes the destination in advance. No wonder! Because each passenger will have to pay the total bill for the course.

Several years ago, however, there was no lack of taxis in Algiers. Whole lines of them could be found at any hour at the principal stations. The rarity of the vehicles, the lack of spare parts have caused many cab-drivers to give up practising their profession. The slightest breakdown may bring with it immobilization of their vehicles for several months. It is necessary to move heaven and earth to get a set of points or brake pads. The SONACOME [National Mechanical Engineering Company] stores, which has the monopoly on imports, remain hopelessly empty.

The last resort is the means of private transportation, for those who can have it. But to acquire an automobile it is necessary to be entered on the

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SONACOME lists, to wait--four years, five years, or longer, and to accept whatever make and model is imposed.

However, the delays can be shortened. A little "string-pulling" suffices. Thanks to their connections, some people have been able to get several cars, which they have resold several weeks later, realizing on each one a profit of 10,000 to 20,000 dinars (between 600,000 and 1,200,000 CFA francs). Others have been able to clear through customs cars brought home from abroad, by paying a very heavy tax (100 percent on a vehicle of under 7 horsepower). But this is an excellent investment, because an old Peugeot 504, worth 6,000 francs (300,000 CFA francs) in Europe can be sold for over 500,000 dinars (60,000 French francs, or 3,000,000 CFA francs).

However, is there not something more serious--the breathtaking rise in prices? Shrimps, formerly offered in bars as Kemia (appetizers) or sold for between 6 and 8 dinars a kilo (360 to 480 CFA francs) are currently worth 50 to 80 dinars (3,000 to 4,800 CFA francs). You get four on a plate for 30 dinars (1,800 CFA francs). The sardine, the poor people's dish, has followed the same curve, going from 1.50 dinars (90 CFA francs) a kilo to 12, even 15 dinars (720, 900 CFA francs). This rise is due, it seems, to granting a monopoly on the exporting of fish products to a highly-placed person. So that only a small quantity of fish and shellfish is sold on the local market.

In some markets methods worthy of the wildest capitalism are practised. Thus this scene, which I witnessed: shellfish resembling shrimps had been offered without much success for 35 dinars (2,100 CFA francs) a kilo. Usually, unsold stock is sold off at reduced prices when the markets' closing time approaches. This was not the case that day. The original prices were maintained until the end. At closing time the unsold fish were thrown into the garbage. The next day the new arrivals were offered at the same price.

Going back up to Port Said Square, one overlooks the immense port of Algiers, where an intense activity apparently reigns. Beyond the wharves about 50 boats may be seen, anchored in the bay. Some have been there for weeks. Such a wait must cost the country the tidy sum of 30,000,000 dinars. The port is suffocating. The number of ships entering the port has certainly increased, but that is not the only reason it is saturated. The warehouses and even the wharves are cluttered with merchandise that has not been taken away. Subject to long and complicated formalities, imported products sometimes remain there for many months. It even happens that perishable foods exposed to bad weather spoil before they are taken away. According to the daily EL MOUDJAHID, that was the case several years ago with a cargo of potatoes, which was discreetly unloaded in western El-Harrach. A stock of butter that moulded before clearing customs would be sold to a soap factory.

They have certainly tried to unblock the port by transporting a good part of the stock to places in the old Algiers Fair that have been transformed into warehouses. But that is not where the evil itself lies. No one has trimmed the bureaucracy, or punished those responsible for serious acts of negligence.

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The evil goes beyond the precincts of the port. It is to be found nearly everywhere. And a certain nonchalance has cropped up, even a disinterest on the part of a number of functionaries and those in charge. Administrations and nationalized companies very often present a picture of somnolence and emptiness. At the end of August EL MOUDJAHID imputed the situation to the ramadan. In fact, absenteeism has reached worrisome proportions months ago. The "corner cafes" are experiencing a very great affluence during business hours.

This generalized work stoppage goes back to the period of the long agony of President Boumedienne, which saw the country deprived of leadership for long months. But that scarcely explains the disenchantment of the professionals, civil servants and workers. The lowering of purchasing power, the pathetic results of the austerity policy in relation to the effort put in, are better explanations for the attitude of these salaried workers. The fact that it was learned that austerity had not been applied to all, and that the socialist regime engendered occasionally-flagrant inequities, did not help matters. Influence peddling, nepotism, sometimes corruption, allowed some people to provide themselves with great material advantages, or even to gain real fortunes. The names of high-level leaders are often mentioned.

Exhausted by its great effort at industrialization, Algeria found itself shortly after the Second Quadrennial Plan (1974-1977) faced with almost-insoluble problems. They built plants in great numbers at the cost of heavy sacrifices. But they failed to create the infrastructures that should accompany them. Agriculture received only a very small portion of investments. Production declined appreciably. From 20,000,000 quintals on the average in the early 1960's (when Algeria had only 9,000,000 to 10,000,000 inhabitants), cereal production fell to 11,000,000 quintals in 1976-1977, at a time when the population was reaching 18,000,000. Seventeen years after independence the country, which used to be a wheat exporter, has to import two thirds of its cereal consumption, which costs it over two thirds of its oil income.

Sixteen years after the promulgation of the March 1963 decrees establishing self management, more than one worker in the self-managed sector continues to behave like a salaried worker, not much concerned with the profitability or prosperity of his field. The Agrarian Revolution sector* does not stir up much enthusiasm. Many beneficiaries have abandoned their land to go and look for jobs in industry or the tertiary sector.

A massive administration was put in place to market the production of the Agrarian Revolution sector: regional cooperatives (CAPRA) [Agricultural Production Cooperative of the Agrarian Revolution]; communals (CAPCS) [Communal Multi-Service Agriculture Cooperative]; and locals (COFEL) [Fruit and Vegetable Cooperative]. It carries out its mission badly. The prices offered the producer do not often allow him to recoup the committed expenses. Conversely, the selling prices of these very products in the city are disproportionate in relation to the original price. Having much lower expenses, sales agents

* Algerian agriculture is divided into three sectors:

1. The socialist sector (or self-managed sector) benefiting from better land (land recovered after the European colonists departed).
2. The Agrarian Revolution sector, including small fellahs [farmers] beneficiaries of land taken from the big national landowners after

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and middlemen, who should be officially abolished, continue to offer more advantageous prices to the producer. Many of those who receive Agrarian Revolution allotments secretly deliver part of their harvests to these agents.

The industry which was to provide relief for oil (the reserves of black gold are expected to last 15 years at the current rate of production) has hardly met the hopes based on it. Few jobs have been created and plants are far from operating at full speed. In many cases, production has hardly exceeded 15 to 25 percent of capacity. In spite of having recourse to the latest technologies, the quality of the products leaves something to be desired. "They talk to us about the latest technologies when we aren't even capable of making cans correctly," says a top executive. Of course there is a little exaggeration there. But many production units set up in nationalized companies are continuing--years after they were launched--to have significant current accounts deficits. This is in spite of the monopolies, exemptions and other privileges of which they are the beneficiaries.

The private sector, which is more dynamic, reports better results. But its development is in danger of aggravating social inequities. Moreover, dependent for their supplies of raw materials or equipment on the nationalized companies, which hold the import monopolies, the private sector sees its production capability often limited.

It is a very heavy heritage that Mr Chadli Bendjedid had to assume! The third president of the Algerian republic has been trying to redress the situation since his election in February 1979. Algiers' rehabilitation operation thus made unauthorized street peddlers and vendors vanish in a few days. Petty crime was on the decline. The police acted ruthlessly, sometimes displaying excessive zeal. Several hundred persons, the majority of them young, were presented before the courts for people caught in the act of committing a crime. Some of them will go to serve their sentences on work sites, or by gathering Esparto [grass] on the high plateaus.

Although most Algerians have reacted favorably, one remains skeptical about the operation's efficiency. "They are attacking the consequences of the evil rather than its origins," is heard here and there. The black market will not be abolished by imprisoning a few little vendors. Would it not have been preferable to attack the big speculators, the ones who pull the strings?

EL MOUDJAHID stated in an editorial, "that the police cannot and must not make themselves the Master Jacques of our society." Mohamed Salah Yahiaoui, Party coordinator and co-director of the rehabilitation campaign, assured that it was neither improvised nor provisional, and should result in educating the citizen. It would put an end "to all forms of crime, whatever their source and whatever the level of the perpetrators in the hierarchy of responsibilities."

Is that "the announcement of purges that might go very high up in the Party or state apparatus," as our Parisian colleague LE MONDE thinks? Probably. Eradication of parasitism must begin with eliminating the fat leeches, such

* 1971.

3. The private sector.

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as the Algerian "Khashoggi," businessmen-brokers who deal with the state markets.

To combat juvenile delinquency, should not the professional training centers be increased? Many young people excluded from the school system are condemned to inactivity, whereas the country lacks plumbers, mechanics, bricklayers, carpenters, etc., who could be trained in a few months. Forced labor camps will not solve anything, for after their sentences are served the "delinquents" arrested during the present campaign will find themselves in the street again.

To put an end to cyclical shortages and the proliferation of the black market, distribution systems are to be completely revised. Above all, the heavy bureaucracy that is paralyzing them is to be trimmed. Some distribution or importing monopolies are to be abolished. Many nationalized companies are conducting themselves in a despotic fashion. President Chadli is being begged to put a stop to this "tyranny of the monopolies." Instructions have been given to the ministries concerned to authorize private industry to directly import the raw materials it needs. The chief of state also intended to reorient the development policy. The "industrializing industries" will have to give way agriculture, hydraulics, housing, education and training. "The main lines of the next development plan (1980-1984) will be oriented toward satisfying primary needs," says Mr Brahimi, minister of Planning.

The next extraordinary congress of the FLN (National Liberation Front, the single party), the date for which has not yet been set, will decide upon those orientations. But it seems to be already established that those priorities will be confirmed. Nevertheless, this will not mean the end of the industrialization policy, but "the implantation of small and medium-sized businesses directed toward the immediate needs of the citizens" will be encouraged. For those industries it will not be a question of the latest technologies, but one of "efficient technologies."

Rather more than a simple rehabilitation operation, it is a long and exacting task that awaits the team in power. President Chadli seems firmly committed to it. But he will not be able to improve the situation without putting to the question again certain established facts--which are not at all revolutionary. The road is strewn with pitfalls. By agreeing to look certain realities in the face and acknowledge the errors of the past, he is making a good beginning. A problem correctly raised, they say, is half solved.

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ALGERIA

POLITICAL EVENTS IN ALGERIA MAY HERALD INCREASED OPENNESS

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 18-24 Oct 79 p 16

[Article: "Surgical Operation on Bouteflika's Sole Kidney"]

[Text] The step taken by the Algerian presidency last Sunday to terminate the services of Hydraulics Minister Ahmed Ghozali was the subject of attention among political and diplomatic circles here.

Ahmed Ghozali's name carried weight in the context of the country's basic economic blessings, especially in the field of energy. He holds an engineering degree from Paris, and in the past held the post of director of energy and fuels at the Industry Ministry. Then he succeeded Abdessalem Belaid to the presidency of the National Oil Company (Sonatrach), before succeeding him as Minister of Energy and Petrochemical Industries in the last cabinet change made by Late President Boumediene a few months before his death.

Some people here are asking whether this dismissal is the preface to other changes in sensitive positions, or whether it is just an isolated measure subject to special considerations.

It is worth mentioning that for the last few weeks Algeria has been witnessing an extensive campaign to limit excesses of whatever kind, be they as slight as non-compliance with traffic regulations or as extensive as bribery, hoarding foodstuffs, or creating bottlenecks in daily economic life.

In another context, it has been observed that Abdelaziz Bouteflika and his colleagues Draia and Tayebi Larbi attended the recent meeting of the political bureau, after the former foreign minister's absence from the political scene for more than 6 months.

Some observers tried to explain this attendance as a return by Bouteflika's group to the political arena, whereas in reality such a return would be difficult under the present circumstances. In fact, Bouteflika himself lost no time in leaving the country after the meeting, going to Switzerland for another operation on his sole remaining kidney, the first kidney having been removed during an earlier surgical operation.

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The third story which is nowadays occupying political circles in Algeria is the regime's trend towards lightening the restrictions on some former opposition members. After the semi-confirmed news about Former President Ahmed Ben Bella's imminent return to pursue his complete freedom, it was learned that Secretary General of the Defense Ministry Col Qasidi Murbah received two veteran Algerian leaders, Farhat 'Abbas and Youssef Ben Kedda, who were formerly presidents of the provisional government after Algeria's independence.

The purpose behind this meeting was to restore to them the pharmacies which they owned before their confiscation by President Boumediene in 1976, in response to an opposition statement addressed to the authorities which was distributed in Algiers at that time and which was signed by the above-mentioned politicians among others.

The question raised in this context is: will Algeria, during coming weeks, witness increased internal democratic openness towards the various forces and groups which took part in earlier stages of Algeria's struggle?

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ALGERIA

MAGAZINE REFUTES CHARGES THAT IT DID NOT INTERVIEW ALGERIAN PRESIDENT

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 18-24 Oct 79 p 26

[Article: "This Is the Complete Story About the Interview With Chadli Bendjedid"]

[Text] This week the editorial staff of AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI seeks its readers' permission to publish an article addressed to them first and last, perhaps the first of its kind, pertaining to its methods of operation and its goal in its pursuit of journalistic service.

We are addressing, and gladly asking consideration from, no one but our reader, who has shown us his trust. Through his warm, continual embrace of AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI, the magazine has achieved a broad circulation and strength of corroboration.

Perhaps the immediate reason for today's article is the widespread reaction to the magazine's press scoop in publishing the first interview with Algerian President Chadli Bendjedid.

The interview attracted attention far surpassing all the expectations of the Arab world's political, diplomatic and popular circles, and the world's news agencies and other information media wanted to report its details.

Furthermore, AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI received and is still receiving letters, telegrams and phone calls about the interview with President Chadli, whether from supporters or opponents of Algerian policy, commenting and seeking explanations. The common denominator of them all is that the interview, in its form and substance and aspiration, was an excellent journalistic achievement coming at the right time.

That is, the interview came after the celebrations of the 25th anniversary of the million-martyr revolution, which carries historical weight in the Arab world and the Third World.

In the interview, President Chadli surprised everyone with his vision, attitudes, frankness and modesty, which were completely different from all the press images, analyses and expectations surrounding him since he took over the

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presidency. He answered clearly and unambiguously a number of the major questions which had continued to hang like cryptographs around Algeria's true situation and its future after the departure of Late President Boumediene.

A number of our colleagues throughout the world, of all tendencies, had preceded us in attacking the question marks. Their correspondents came and continued to insistently knock on Algeria's door to get answers. But President Chadli always made an excuse for not receiving any Arab or foreign journalists, on the pretext that he preferred that "the facts, not he personally, answer any questions," and that it was only a matter of time until the facts became obvious and open to view.

But the editorial staff of AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI continued to hold the view that it would try to convince President Chadli to talk and answer himself some of the questions and explain his program and his method for operationally carrying out this policy, in his capacity as head of the new political, social and national leadership of Algeria.

And since AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI had joined its colleagues in despairing of knocking on the president's door in the traditional manner, it had to find an unconventional way.

Special Permission to Publish

Because of its nationalist line, AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI has many friends and enjoys deep, good relations with various political forces and factors. When it learned that one of these friendly political personalities had an appointment with the Algerian president, it lost no time in asking him to carry to Chadli Bendjedid its urgent request that he grant it a comprehensive interview. The friend promised to try.

The matter was actually proposed to the president, who agreed, after discussing the magazine's identity and tendencies, to answer its questions. No sooner had the Arab political personality finished his private talk with the president, than the latter graciously set aside about an hour and a half to talk with AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI, and gave permission to publish the interview.

For us, the interview was a mark of esteem from the Algerian president, and we were very proud. For our readers, it was an intense light cast on Algeria of today, in its domestic, Arab and international contexts.

As for some of our professional colleagues, it was a shock, or more properly a "scoop" which they had wanted to achieve. We at AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI respect and understand these feelings very well and we respect everything they arouse, for they play the part of fuel in the journalistic competition to provide greater service to the reader and to the truth.

But we did not expect the echoes of the shock to take on all these dimensions, and for the Arab press to encroach on the foreign press and perhaps even on a limited number of Algerians who still deal with information in a traditional

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manner, who saw in AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI's gaining the first interview with the president a sort of disregard for all they hold sacred.

Therefore, we were surprised to read in an issue of the French paper LE MONDE, published on Saturday 13 October 1979, a piece of news strange in its form and content, in the shape of an anonymous article printed on the fifth page, under the single word heading "correction," which said, "The publication, by the Arabic-language magazine AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI published in Paris, of an interview with Algerian President Chadli has stirred up reactions in Algeria. Circles close to the presidency are quoted as saying that the president had not authorized any interview with a foreign paper, and that the interview published in AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI was in fact private discussions between President Chadli and an Arab political personage, and that this personage had given the contents of these private discussions, in an approximate form, to the magazine."

Here ends the news item, which has no precedent in the history of journalism in general and that of the paper LE MONDE in particular. The signature to the article was even stranger, since between parentheses was the word "letter," a direct expression used by the newspaper's secretariat to disavow responsibility for the news on the one hand, and an indirect suggestion that its publication of an anonymous letter was in fact a courtesy to a certain party or personality on the other hand. This is what we understood from our contacts with the administration of LE MONDE, for which we have every respect.

AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI has continued to receive inquiries from all over about this strange news item, which was unable to disprove the interview but which on the contrary confirmed the truth of the president's issuance of it, and which gave it another, deeper dimension of corroboration by describing it as "private talks" between the president and the Arab political personality. It is known, according to the principles and standards of the profession, that "private talk" is more truthful than "public press interview," because it is characterized by a spontaneity which was not squeamish about choosing the term for publication reasons.

AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI sent a correction to its French colleague in which it said, "You have published words to the effect that the interview which President Chadli gave especially to AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI appears to be a summary of a talk conducted by the president with an Arab politician, who subsequently gave the contents of his talk with Chadli to AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI.

"The fact is that your paper avoided defining the source of the news, contenting itself with referring to "circles close to the presidency," without asking AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI.

"AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI stresses that President Chadli met with its correspondent for three hours, that the interview covered seven entire pages of its magazine, and that the presidency has not issued any denial in this respect."

During their contacts with the magazine, some analysts have tended to think that this "strange news" reflects some kind of struggle in Algeria, but we

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don't agree with this view. We believe that this strange piece of news was basically intended to either reveal the name of the "Arab political personality" who for some unknown reason and for some incomprehensible motive embarked on such an irresponsible and ignoble course of behavior, or else to defend in an unconvincing manner some journalist colleagues, Arabs and foreigners, who did not succeed in gaining an interview with President Chadli since he took over the presidential responsibility.

AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI wants only to thank the anonymous author of the letter which brought the strange news to LE MONDE, since he unintentionally substantiated what AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI had printed.

Although the matter of finding out the identity of the "anonymous letter-writer" and his motives is up to Algeria, that doesn't prevent us from clearly restating that Algerian President Chadli Bendjedid granted us a press interview with his personal permission, which had perhaps not come to the knowledge of the "anonymous letter-writer."

Who Is Responsible?

Above all, we must observe that in his strange news item, the "anonymous letter-writer" permitted himself to make use of the phrase "circles close to the presidency." Who exactly are these circles? Can the republican presidency of any country make observations or corrections to an interview published in any newspaper without a clear official statement to that effect being issued by the republican presidency or any other responsible party?

According to our information, the parties responsible for this matter in Algeria can be defined as three: (1) the office of the republican presidency, for which its Secretary General Abdelmalek Banhabyles is responsible; (2) the Ministry of Information and Culture, for which its Minister Abdelhamid Mehri is responsible; and (3) the press and information bureau of the republican presidency, for which its Director Mahieddine Amimour is responsible.

Also, according to our information, none of these parties have issued, in the name of their responsibility, any official statement containing any reference to the "strange news" fabricated by the "anonymous letter-writer."

AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI promises its readers that it will continue carrying out its mission, committed to a full desire to substantiate its news and information, as well as to generously open its pages to opinions and other opinions within the context of commitment to the nationalist line in all its political, social and economic dimensions.

Here's to a new journalistic scoop.

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IRAQ

FIRST DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER DISCUSSES DEMOCRACY, RELATIONS WITH COMMUNISTS

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 13-19 Sep 79 pp 19-21

[Interview With Taha Yasin Ramadan, Iraqi First Deputy Prime Minister, by Kamal Hasan Bakhit; "Democracy, Elections and Dispute With Communists in Dialogue with Iraqi First Deputy Prime Minister; Why Didn't We Implement Parliamentary Formula 11 Years Ago Is Question Asked and Answered by Taha Yasin Ramadan; There Will Be Central People's Assembly (Parliament) and Provincial People's Assemblies to Entrench Decentralization; Continued Presence of Communist Party in National Front Is Necessary, But on Basis of Abidance by Its Principles; Nomination Open for All Within Rules Set by Law; We will not Liquidate Communists, Will Not Prevent Them from Leaving Country and We Are Ready to Hold Dialogue With Them to Reach New Formulas"]

[Text] How will democracy in the Iraqi experiment be and what are its constitutional institutions? Where will the position of the released political detainees be in society? Will they be given a new chance to begin a new life? Has the relationship with the communist party reached the end of a cul-de-sac or is the bridge still passable for establishing sincere and frank dialogue and cooperation with the Ba'th Party through the Progressive National Front?

All this is answered by a prominent official of the Iraqi leadership, namely Taha Yasin Ramadan, the Revolution Command Council member who has recently assumed the post of the first deputy prime minister within the framework of the new work plan of the Council of Ministers.

In the new work plan, the Iraqi Council of Ministers has been given a bigger role as a harmonious and cooperative work team. This has been done through the deputy prime ministers who will take charge of coordination between the various sectors, each deputy prime minister in his field of specialization. The position of first deputy prime minister has been introduced so that the holder may assist the prime minister, who is also the president of the republic, in directing and supervising the work of the executive administration.

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The new position has been entrusted to Taha Yasin Ramadan, a prominent party official who is a member of the Revolution Command Council and commander of the popular army. On the occasion, AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI has addressed to Ramadan a number of questions dealing with the task of the Iraqi Council of Ministers in the light of its new structure.

The discussion on the Council of Ministers' work provided an opportunity to deal with domestic issues of concern to the Iraqis and the Arabs, such as the issue of democracy which preoccupies currently an important part of the Iraqi leadership's thought and planning. In the interview, Ramadan discloses new details that have not been announced yet concerning the conditions for nomination to the Central People's Assembly (Parliament) and underlines the call for the election of provincial people's assemblies in the governorates, including the self-rule area, in order to entrench decentralization.

He also deals with the issue of the communists and of the release of political detainees, pointing out the leadership's decision to secure work for all those released so that they may begin a new honorable life and so that they may be given another chance to prove their readiness to serve their country because this is their right and duty.

As for the communists, the prominent Iraqi official has stressed the leadership's willingness to hold dialogue with them as a party, pointing out that their presence in the Progressive National Front is necessary, but on the basis of the practical implementation of the front's principles and goals.

Kamal Hasan Bakhit, AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI correspondent in Baghdad, paints a picture of Taha Yasin Ramadan through the man's official daily work and through the impressions of the citizens and of those working with Ramadan. Bakhit says that "he is a dynamic and decisive man who makes his decisions after long deliberation. He has gained extensive experience through the positions that he has held during the revolution's life. He is an excellent and highly capable administrator who combines in his work flexibility in approach with firmness in implementation."

[Question] Why was the formula of forming the Council of Ministers projected in this phase?

[Answer] The idea of forming the council was not absent from our minds even within the framework of the presidential system stipulated in the constitution which provides for a council of ministers with the president of the republic as its chairman.

There are definite powers for the Council of Ministers. But we have found in this phase that this formula has to be implemented precisely and practically to enable the executive institution to carry out its serious role. This is a first step on the path of creating the other institutions, such

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as the Central People's Assembly and the provincial people's assemblies. This means the expanded emergence of the structures of the country's democratic administration, both at the level of the mass and popular action and the level of the administrative action in the agencies of the democratic state. These agencies must have a clear mechanism for administrative work and for work among the masses and among the popular organizations, in the sense that neither type of work should do away with the other and that there should be integration and cohesion.

In the past period, we benefited greatly from the actions similar to those of a people's assembly through discussions in public symposiums. We used these symposiums as formulas and initiatives for the democratic administration within the state departments.

After this experience, we got to be in a position that enabled us to study the experience and to conclude from it clear and constant formulas that can be legislated by law for implementation, committing all of us to their observance and enforcement.

Foremost of these formulas is the Council of Ministers with its executive work and its management of the country's affairs in this regard. This formula will be followed, as is well known, by the other formulas, such as the Central People's Assembly and the provincial people's assemblies, as I have already said, as well as other detailed formulas for a democratic administration of the mechanics of the state agencies. A part of these detailed formulas has been issued in some ministries. However, a general central formula will be issued. All of these are currently the subject of final study and discussion.

We have started by implementing the formula of the Council of Ministers which constitutes a serious step on the path of facilitating the course of the other steps. This is why, practically, we will not change the constitution except through the formula of introducing the position of first deputy prime minister, considering that the president of the republic is the prime minister, so that the Council of Ministers may assume its practical character more strongly and deeply. This is in addition to the positions of the deputy prime ministers that are considered normal and that are present in similar formulas.

[Question] But do you consider the introduction of more than one deputy prime minister as the adoption of a well-known tradition in other countries and systems or as something emanating from an Iraqi experience or a partisan experience particular to the Ba'th Party?

[Answer] This is definitely connected with the party's experience. The experience of the party's authority in Iraq for more than 11 years has made us realize the need for these [deputy prime minister] positions so that there may be some kind of actual followup and serious action in the period between two meetings of the Council of Ministers.

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This experience has resulted in the creation of sectors, each supervised by a deputy prime minister, through which contacts are directly made, problems solved and implementation of the decisions of the Council of Ministers followed up through a formula which is definitely influenced by the party's organizational theory--which is a theory of constant and uninterrupted motion and the innovation of intrinsic formulas for the followup of daily work.

From the subject of the Council of Ministers, we moved to the subject of the political detainees.

Opportunity Open for All

[Question] What does the release of the political detainees in Iraq in this manner mean? Is this considered a reply to what some of the western information media have alleged about the absence of security and stability or has it come for considerations dictated by the current phase?

[Answer] The truth is that we do not proceed with our actions and measures under the influence of reactions to foreign propaganda. It has become generally clear to all that the eastern and western media are against the Socialist Arab Ba'th Party and against its revolution. Naturally, there is a difference and a variance of degree in this hostility. But generally, there is semi-agreement, an unintentional agreement or an indirect agreement to distort this procession. We don't know in whose interest is this distortion, except the interest of imperialism, Zionism and the Camp David parties. What is important is that we always stress that it is an independent procession emanating from the reality of this nation and that this procession is proving, at the same time, that it is a movement of the Arab revolution.

We stress that our experience is always subject to development and integration through our actions in the field and through the participation of the citizens, each in his position. It is definite that an experience of this kind is more appealing to every citizen who feels that he is contributing to some details of this movement. This experience is not a rigid formula like the other theories whose implementation is dictated.

This is my opinion. The truth is that in all our measures, such as the release of prisoners, the arrest of some people or the issuance of some sentences, we do not at all proceed on the basis of reactions. We look where the interest lies so as to open a broader path for the procession of the party and of the revolution, for the realization of the masses aspirations and for the principle that we follow and that has been accepted by all the honorable sons of Iraq--the principle that this liberated part of the Arab homeland should be a base [muntalaq] for all the Arab revolutionaries and, consequently, that the requirements of this liberated base should be secured so that all the party's and Arab revolution's strugglers may be enabled to work vigorously and with high morale.

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This is why when we find a need, for example, to execute people by the dozen--as it is said--we know in advance what the lackey, imperialist and Zionist media and the other [Soviet] media, whether deliberately or unintentionally, will say, even if those executed are plotters seeking to assassinate the revolution and its leaders. We know what the western and hostile media will say under the pretext of their claim of human purity, from which they are as remote as can be.

We carry out such action without any consideration for this or that. When we find that the interest calls for giving a chance to citizens whom we believe can be yet reformed, we take such action without hesitation and without apprehension because we feel the people's confidence and support for the revolution. Consequently, we do not think of the nature of the negative returns from those we have released and who had been sentenced only weeks or months earlier.

We feel that the revolution is not protected by individuals or a leadership but by all the masses. We feel that the revolution is rising considerably and enjoying big popular support in this phase.

I don't believe that there is another similar country enjoying such a blessing, i.e. the strength of the people's support for their leadership and their revolution. Therefore, this is the best atmosphere in which to release all the political or ordinary detainees, benefiting from this positive climate and this popular atmosphere. We have great hope that the overwhelming majority, not to say all, of those we have released will make use of this chance and will become a good part of this good people. We are in the direst need of every sincere and honorable individual to work because the arena of work is broad and the Arab revolution, with its arena, needs the efforts of many. We must not deny any citizen who possesses even the minimum degree of willingness to participate in this big work the chance to do so. In the revolutionary concept, this is simultaneously a right and a duty of all.

On this basis, a general amnesty decree was issued, excluding nobody except for 34 traitors involved in the latest plot.

It is well known that we have released the communist political detainees. It is definite that if the request had come from their party, we would not have responded to such a request. But we treated the communists as ordinary Iraqi citizens like the other citizens and with no privileges over anybody else. We have done this to give them a chance, hoping that each of them will feel that he is a part of this homeland and will work to serve it without any foreign will, custodianship or instructions imposed on him from abroad.

The release decision has not been lame but has been tied to guarantees for the future of those released, namely the guarantee of providing all of them, without exclusion, with work in the state agencies immediately upon their release. The truth is that this measure is intended to block

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the path in the face of the enemies and to prevent them from entering through any gap to exploit some people. At the same time, we are fully clear and completely confident of ourselves when we say that if any of these people resumes his erroneous activity, we will not hesitate for a single moment to bring him to account and make him pay what he deserves to pay because we have not failed him and have not denied him the equal opportunity that each Iraqi citizen must get.

Insofar as the released detainees scheduled to return to their jobs are concerned, it is well-known that it has been decided that they will begin collecting their wages as of 16 August 1978, i.e. as of the day of their release, even though they have not yet reported for their work officially.

Nomination Open to All...But

[Question] Deputy Prime Minister Tariq 'Aziz has announced in a press conference that the leadership is currently studying the question of establishing the national council through direct elections. What are the phases covered by the leadership in this regard and what are the formulas in accordance with which the nomination and election operations will take place?

[Answer] The initial phases have been completed and we are now in the legislative phases of this issue. Nomination is open to all the honorable sons of the Iraqi people who work with inspiration from their conscience to enhance their country because they believe in the revolution's socialist direction.

The qualifications that must be possessed by a nominee will be announced in time. These will not take a long time and will be announced shortly, God willing.

We are now in the process of preparing the requirements of this step. We can say that the step of the emergence of the Council of Ministers is a beginning that facilitates the way for the following step, namely the emergence of the national council. We are still at the beginning of our work in the Council of Ministers and we do not need a long time before the council assumes its dimensions as an executive experiment within the formula which will prepare for the election of the Central People's Assembly that will be tantamount to a parliament or a national council. There will also be an assembly in each governorate, called [provincial] people's assembly. The members of this assembly will be elected by certain ratios and with certain qualifications to serve in the local government so as to entrench decentralism.

All this emanates from the party's theory. The two formulas will be implemented spontaneously, meaning the Central People's Assembly which will have the representatives of all the people, including of course the Kurdish area, and the people's assemblies in every governorate. The

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number of members in the latter will vary according to percentage [presumably of each governorate's population to the total population] and these assemblies will have specific powers in accordance with a special law.

We will begin at the start of next year building special buildings for these assemblies. However, the start of the assemblies' work will have nothing to do with the completion of these buildings. Their meetings will be held in temporary premises.

[Question] After these explanations on the measures that have already been taken, can Mr Taha Yasin Ramadan define for us the general directions of the Iraqi leadership?

[Answer] The current procession is a continuation and an extension of the previous procession in which there has been no change or alteration. But this continuity must form an upward curve in terms of both action and implementation. This is, of course, necessary even though there has been no stagnation and no decline because stagnation and decline must not exist in a revolutionary party and in the revolutionary movement generally, including our party.

Whenever we get better opportunities, we act to take advantage of them immediately, including implementation of the Central People's Assembly formula which is not a principled formula and not a formula in which our party believes. But in its detail, our formula is definitely different from the liberal formulas to which we are opposed, even though we fully believe in them as a general principle [sentence as published]. So why didn't we implement this formula 11 years ago? Naturally, there are reasons and justifications. When the opportunity became available, we worked to implement it. The same applies to all the other formulas and actions that emanate from the heart of the party's thinking but whose implementation has been delayed or have been implemented incompletely. However, the party is on its way to achieve and implement these formulas.

Story of Dispute and Dialogue With Communists

[Question] The statement issued by the communist party's leadership abroad has called for dialogue with the party and revolution leadership in Iraq. What is your opinion of this call and has anything of the sort taken place in the wake of the dispute between you and the communists? If it hasn't, could it take place in light of the recent release of the communists?

[Answer] Let us be as clear as usual. Several months ago, before the dismissal of the communist ministers from the cabinet to be exact, the communists asked that one of them represent them and meet with one of the high-ranking officials. The meeting did actually take place. The communists asked the official to tell them the party's (Ba'th Party's) view of the communist party. Did the Ba'th Party seek to oust the communist party from the front? Did it decide to fight the communists finally and

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to end their presence in the country? Naturally, the answer was to the contrary. The official assured them that we in the Socialist Arab Ba'th Party still consider the continued presence of the front on the one hand and their presence as a communist party in the front on the other hand as something necessary and natural, but on the basis of observance and actual implementation of the front's principles and goals as approved with the full agreement of all the parties concerned.

We are not at all imposing this formula [front formula] on the communist party. Moreover, our party is the party that launched the revolution and that called for creating the front because the communist party was in no position to do so and in no position to compel the Ba'th Party morally to include the communist party in the front. On the contrary, neither the communist party's conduct nor its history and actions before or after the revolution qualified it to be included in the front.

But our party, with its practical and serious theory and its eagerness to block the path in the face of any attempt at casting doubts, projected the idea of the front to give the good people an opportunity. It presented the front's charter for popular debate and then we held bilateral discussions with the communist party which lasted 2 years before the front's charter was signed.

The first to contravene and violate the front's charter was the communist party with its organization in the armed forces. This violation took place more than once and we adopted the measures serving the public interest. This is something that is perfectly known to the communist party.

What we told their representative is that we had not at all decided to expel the communist party from the front and that our position vis-a-vis the front was a strategic position. We also told the representative: It is also not our intention to liquidate you. The proof of this is our conduct, which is our judge. All the communists who left Iraq have left it with Iraqi passports, with the knowledge of our agencies, in a very normal way and aboard Iraqi and non-Iraqi planes. The real leaders are the ones who have left. If we had any intention to liquidate the communists, we would not have let their leaders leave Iraq.

When one wants to carry out acts of liquidation, there are numerous means to do so, and giving them the chance to move freely and to travel as they wish are not among these means. The practical aspect conforms the soundness of our position and our intention toward them. The revolution's procession and the front's principles, goals and charter are the path and the guarantee.

But the front will not at all protect any communist who acts in a manner that undermines the country's security because one of the most important principles of the front is faith in the procession of this country's revolution and not acting and plotting against it. We have said that despite

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the action committed by the communist party, and by its leadership in particular--an action embodied in the [communist party's] hostile movement abroad and in instigating all the political movements and all the world and international organizations against the Socialist Arab Ba'th Party, and this in itself constitutes a plot against the Iraqi revolution--we have no objection to having their responsible leaders come to Iraq so that we may discuss with them why these incidents and those violations have taken place and so that we may establish the controls for the relationship between our party, the Ba'th Party, and the communist party to prevent any misinterpretation by the communist party of some provisions of the front's charter that may be interpreted by the this party in one way and that we understand in a different way, to clear all ambiguous and vague points and to lay down new formulas capable of preventing any violations or incidents similar to those that have happened recently. This should be done without any shackles or preconditions. So let them come. Nothing of the sort you mentioned at the outset of your question has happened. Now you find them [communists] seeking the arbitration of the right at one time and of the left at another and sending us messages asking that the meeting take place outside Iraq. Why outside Iraq? If they are honorable Iraqis, then this is their country and if they are afraid, then I believe that we could have prevented them from leaving Iraq. We have high morals. So, let them come and let us hold the dialogue. If we do not reach agreement, then we will tell them: God be with you. If you like to live in Iraq, then this is your country and if you don't, we will not stand in your way because we do not stand in the way of an Iraqi citizen who does not wish to live in his country. Moreover, we do not wish to have such a citizen staying among us with such a spirit.

The true struggler always prefers to stay in his country, even if subjected to coercion, rather than live in the European capitals and declare his positions from there. Ultimately, the matter is in their hands and our invitation to them is still open.

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IRAQ

BRIEFS

PETROLEUM CONTRACT RENEWAL--The CFP (French Petroleum Company) has high hopes of being able to renew its long-term supply contracts with Iraq. Nothing has as yet been settled but Iraq's leaders have let it be known that they are well disposed in this respect. [Text] [Paris LA LETTRE DE L'EXPANSION in French 29 Oct 79 p 5]

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LEBANON

SSNP LEADER DISCUSSES SHIFT IN PARTY'S POSITIONS

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 20-26 Sep 79 pp 22-24

[Interview with Dr 'Abdallah Sa'adah, chairman of Syrian Social Nationalist Party; "Dr 'Abdallah Sa'adah: We Still Abide by Our Opinion That There Are Four Distinctive Arab Nations; Party's Socialism Does Not Emanate From Class Struggle and Seeks to Distribute Wealth Not Poverty; Party's Natural Position Is in Left, Even in Extreme Left, In Sense of Changing Society's Environment; Political Conditions Dictate Meeting Not Fighting Among Ba'thists, Nasirists, Communists and Syrian Nationalists"]

[Text] The party which fought with Camille Sham'un in the national revolution in Lebanon in 1958 and whose history has been linked with tragic events and catastrophes in Syria, Lebanon and Jordan is standing nowadays in the same line of the parties of the leftist Lebanese National Movement and has fought with these parties, with the national revolution and with the Palestinian resistance against all the forces with which it found itself allied 20 years ago.

How and why did this big transformation occur? Where is the party's position at present? What change has developed in its political line and its thought vis-a-vis important issues, such as the issue of Arabism, unity, socialism and Palestine?

A colleague in AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI office in Beirut carried all these questions and presented them to Dr 'Abdallah Sa'adah, the party chairman and one of the prominent leaders who have accompanied the party's long procession.

We Have Gone Beyond Fertile Crescent Environment

[Question] It is noticed that the SSNP [Syrian Social Nationalist Party] has participated in recent years in Arab partisan and popular conferences and activities. Is this participation the result of a new change in the party's understanding of Arabism and Arab nationalism?

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[Answer] There is no doubt that the central Arab issue is the Palestinian issue and the dangers of the creation of the alien and cancerous Zionist entity in the body of our nation. There is also no doubt that this cancerous entity has been directly tied with the escalating imperialist-colonialist onslaught against the Arab area from the ocean to the Gulf.

This serious challenge has played its major role in crystallizing the Arab approach and the need to translate Arabism into integration, solidarity and partnership to confront and repel this challenge. This approach [ta'ati] is gaining in cohesion and interaction day after day and is accompanied by the enemy's efforts to fragment this cohesion, interaction and solidarity.

By volunteering completely to confront the Zionist enemy and imperialism and their plots, our party has responded vigilantly and responsibly to the requirements and dangers of the stage. Thus, the party's interests and activities have gone beyond the fertile Syrian crescent environment to concern with and participation in the progress and liberation movement in the entire Arab area because of this movement's strategic and fateful connection with confronting this big danger.

[Question] What I want to ask is: Does this mean a transformation in your national concept. In other words, does it mean abandoning the belief in the unity of the natural Syria (Syria, Iraq, Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Cyprus and Sinai, according to the party's concept) for the belief in the concept of Arab nationalism in its comprehensive sense?

[Answer] There is no doubt that the general Arab participation further strengthens the Arab bonds and ties the entire Arab world together more firmly. Moreover, the bond of the Arab liberation and progress movements is getting constantly stronger through this approach. The Arab liberation and progress movements are the party to which hopes are attached to develop the Arab relations in the direction of escalating unity.

Therefore, this approach and the escalating progressive and liberationist struggle has led to a clearer understanding of the value of the unity of the Syrian environment and to realizing, through progressive and scientific analyses, that this unity flows in the general Arab unionist direction. So we and others in the Arab world have dropped our previous reservations concerning the unity of the natural Syria and this unity has become a strategic demand to face and confront the enemy.

Four Arab Environments

[Question] In clearer words, I would like you to tell me whether you still believe in the presence of four Arab nations or peoples?

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[Answer] The distinctive four Arab environments are a social reality. Changing this reality cannot be done on the basis of desire and interest. However, this distinction does not preclude the integration, solidarity, cohesion and unity required by the Arab bonds (Arabism) and dictated by the needs of the phase of confronting the imperialist-Zionist enemy.

It is also obvious that the unionist line is strengthened, not weakened, by achieving the natural unities. This is why we have escalated our demand for uniting the Arabian Peninsula and for uniting the greater Arab Maghreb. This is also why our insistence on the need to achieve the unity of the fertile Syrian crescent has intensified.

[Question] Then, what specifically is your concept of Arab nationalism and Arab unity?

[Answer] A distinction must be made between nationality and unity. Nationality in our opinion, which is based on sociology and on the laws of social life, is the people's awareness of an objective reality--the reality of their union in a single socio-economic life cycle that produces a united social-cultural-psychological texture, a united view of values and life and an awareness of this distinct social entity.

Because our scientific social analysis of the Arab reality shows that there are four natural environments, each of which shares a distinct social-economic-psychological life cycle, we have said that there are four Arab nations in the greater Arab Maghreb, in the Nile Valley, in the Arabian Peninsula and in the fertile Syrian crescent. All of them are bound by Arabism, which means sharing the same language, history and spiritual values that pull the four nations toward common solidarity and integration.

Unity is another thing. It means translating this common factor, namely Arabism, into actual solidarity, integration and cooperation. The Arab people's aspirations for unity intensified whenever they felt the need to confront the colonialist and imperialist, and recently, the cancerous Zionist challenges. We are eager for and exert persistent efforts to develop these aspirations so that they may find their way toward realization.

[Question] Do you still underline the presence of this "distinction" between the "Syrian nation" and the Arab nation?

[Answer] I have stated in my preceding answers that a nation is a social reality and we have defined this social reality as the common sharing of a natural cycle of the economic-social-psychological life. Therefore we cannot but, on the basis of this scientific definition, stress that the Arab reality is a reality of four distinctive social environments bound together and polarized by the comprehensive Arabism toward unity, regardless of the formula required and dictated by the phase and by its objective conditions.

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Unionist Formula Open

[Question] Antun Sa'adah, the party founder, says: "We do not call for the Arab nation but we work for it." What does he mean by this statement?

[Answer] Antun Sa'adah proceeded with this slogan on the basis that the Syrian nation is an Arab nation and on the basis of the fact that the Arab reality is a reality of common interests and common destiny. This is why he included, as of 1933, in the goal of the SSNP the "creation of an Arab front to constitute a strong barrier in the face of the foreign colonialist ambitions and a power with a big weight in deciding the major political issues." He also says: "We will not abandon our position in the Arab world or our message toward it. But Syria must be strong with its social nationalist renaissance so that it may be able to perform its main mission" and I underline the words "main mission."

As for the unionist formula, [Antun] Sa'adah left it open and did not restrict it to the political aspect. He also stressed the social, economic, cultural and military aspects, leaving the door open for achieving them under possible and realistic formulas.

[Question] It is said that the SSNP's reconsideration of its concepts and positions has moved the party in a big leap from the far right to the far left. For example, the party is now an active member of the Lebanese National Movement.

[Answer] The SSNP was not to the right that it may be said that it has moved to the left. The party continued to have its permanent [mustamirrah] leadership after the failure of the 1961 coup. Those who went to jail that year and who had formed the party leadership before cannot be considered the permanent party leadership. The party has principles and rules governing the formation of its leadership and the emergence of this leadership in and from its higher institutions.

As for the party's establishment of its political relations in the 1970's with the leftist forces, including the Nasirists, socialists, Ba'thists and communists, whereas hostility toward many of these forces had been the quality characterizing the party's policy before the 1970's--this is due primarily to the fact that the natural position of the party, in its capacity as a party for change, is in the left, even in the far left, in the sense of changing society's political, social and moral structure fundamentally.

Moreover, the nature of the imperialist-Zionist-reactionary onslaught and of the successive catastrophes that have afflicted our people have stirred the pan-Arab, national and progressive forces deeply and have motivated the sincere factions among them to seek to achieve popular solidarity in the face of the intensifying imperialist-Zionist danger. These forces have pursued the elements of unification and rapprochement among them and have discovered that what unites them at the political, social and struggle levels surpasses by far all the elements of ideological disagreement among them, despite the importance of these latter elements.

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Thus, through a re-examination which has not been confined to the SSNP solely, the leftist forces have discovered the ties that unite them and have exerted efforts to nurture and strengthen these ties whereas the past approach of these forces emanated from the basis of discovering the separating elements and of rushing to adopt all the causes of dispute and of interfighting, thus doing reaction and its forces the greatest service.

We Don't Believe in Class Struggle

[Question] The party is now positioned to the left, even to the far left, as you say. Does this mean that the SSNP is a socialist party? If so, what are the limits and dimensions of its socialism?

[Answer] The SSNP's socialism emanates from its social nationalist creed which emanates from the concept that existence and production are a social existence and a shared common production. The shared common production is the property of society and not of individuals and the production process itself is a shared and common process.

The western capitalist system is the product of the individualistic theory of understanding existence and production. It is a theory conflicting with the reality and cannot, therefore, but produce an inhuman and classist system based on exploitation and oppression.

This fundamental ideological view which has produced the nationalist theory and social theory in the Syrian social nationalist thought bears within itself the definition of its socialism--a definition that is distinct from those of the other socialist schools.

Its socialism is contained in and emanating from its socialness [mujtama'iyah]. It is not, therefore, a socialism that emanates from class struggle but from the reality of the unity of the material-spiritual nationalist existence and from the requirements of unity of life, resources and production which provides man with the psychological, spiritual and social nationalist incentives that make him give his society all his talents, capabilities and virtues so that public wealth and common production may grow and the distribution of wealth, not of poverty, may be realized.

[Question] Concerning the Palestinian issue and the presence of 3 million Jews in the occupied land in the form of a usurping state, there are those who call for the creation of a secular state in Palestine including the Arabs and the Jews after eliminating the racial and sectarian quality of the Zionist state. What is the party's opinion in this regard, considering that Palestine is a part of Syria and the fertile crescent?

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[Answer] The attention and interest of our thought are focused on the social-cultural interaction in the nationalist environment. Society is a mixture of races, extractions and sects that are given by the social environment the need and the inevitability of the interaction that molds a single human society out of them.

Any observer of the Jewish issue cannot deny that in all the societies in which the Jews have lived, the Jews have inherited a fanatic rebellion against the laws of social interaction because of their overpowering racism, of the complex of superiority and of the chosen people and of the complex of the inferiority of other peoples that must be exploited to serve the Jewish superiority.

In the light of this fact and in the light of the fact that the Zionist call has been mobilizing the world Jewry to settle in Palestine, the SSNP has since its foundation in 1932 urged the need to repel and prevent this Jewish immigration with all means. The party has also held the belief that this racism people cannot fuse in the social nationalist life and that they constitute an alien cancerous body that threatens our life and our survival with the gravest dangers.

Here we are today suffering from the consequences of disregarding what Sa'adah had warned of and drawn attention to. Even the United Nations has branded Zionism as a form of racism, but only after the chain of crimes, aggressions, eviction and settlement.

We wonder, do those who believe in the unity of the Arab and Jewish origins think that their opinion will break the Jewish isolationism and racism? Through the way it deals with the sons of our people in the occupied land and through its annihilative aggressions against the Palestinians, Israel is giving us the answer.

[Question] It is noticed that the party has been recently devoting special attention to the labor and social issues. Is this attention the outcome of an intrinsic partisan interaction with these issues or does it come as part of the interest of the Lebanese National Movement as a whole in these issues?

[Answer] The focus on the social issues connected with organizing the labor and production relations is a part of the character of the comprehensive social nationalist revolution and of both its social and nationalist beginnings.

Even though the recent period has highlighted a stress on the social aspect of our revolution by a degree not noticed before, the party has never neglected the social aspect of its revolution at any time. But the current phases of political struggle are what made the stress a social nationalist need to which the party has responded by virtue of its principles and its awareness of the nature and requirements of the stage.

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[Question] This openness to the labor and social issues is also paralleled by the party's openness to the communist countries through visits and meetings. Does this mean that historical enmity between you and communism and the communists has dropped?

[Answer] It is right to say that the socialist countries were the ones closed to us. This was not strange when the separating elements and the differences molded the political conduct of the pan-Arab, nationalist and leftist forces toward each other and pushed them toward sharp conflicts, as was the case between us and the communists. There is no doubt that the stage of openness which is evident in the friendship between us and the socialist and the communist countries and in the official visits that we have started to pay to some of them--there is no doubt that this stage constitutes a new turning point and a new structure in our foreign relations, especially with the communist countries.

The socialist camp, with its progressive policy that is seeking to help the peoples with their liberationist and social revolutions and with its distinctive position toward our fateful national struggle against Israel, has required the nationalist forces committed to their peoples' causes, such as our party, to consider bolstering their relations of friendship with this camp a firm base of the social nationalist policy and a strategic relationship in opposing colonialism and imperialism and in eliminating international exploitation, as well as in eliminating the policy of man's exploitation of fellowman.

Even though there are differences and distinctions between the Syrian social nationalist creed and the communist ideology, the common interest we have in breaking world imperialism and its Zionist instrument and in establishing the new progressive human system which is built on liberating man from social exploitation and oppression and on respecting the freedom of peoples to mold their lives on the basis of their heritage and their distinctive human reality push us toward growing agreement and cooperation that make us optimistic and full of hope for the good of our people and of the world.

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LEBANON

SYRIAN NATIONALIST PARTY HISTORY, POSITIONS TRACED

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 20-26 Sep 79 pp 24-25

[Article: "Syrian Nationalist Party"]

[Text] None of the Arab East parties has experienced transformations, turning points and changes in its political and intellectual line like those experienced by the SSNP [Syrian Social Nationalist Party].

The party was born in the mid-1930's on the hands of Antun Sa'adah, a university professor and an educated Lebanese youth from the Orthodox sect in Duhur al-Shuwayr town in Mount Lebanon.

The party's call was strange and new compared to the nationalist calls at the time. Its non-Arab projection was in conflict with the Arab sentimental and nationalist inclinations prevailing among the popular and educated circles in the Arab East.

In its simple form, the call was founded on the concept that there is a single "Syrian nation" living in the fertile crescent and its star, Cyprus. Sa'adah meant by the fertile crescent the historical and geographic definition of this crescent which includes that bow which begins with Shatt al-'Arab basin where the Tigris and Euphrates rivers meet, ascends through the Aleppo plains, falls west in a southerly direction along the mountain ranges and plains in Latakia and Lebanon, proceeds through Palestine and ends in the Sinai, with Cyprus forming its star.

This projection was rejected, especially since the "Syrian nation" itself to which Sa'adah clings cannot abandon its Arabism and desert its nearer, richer and more vital history to cling to dead and faded origins with lesser contribution to the cultural and human history.

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Opponent's Opinion

The party opponents used to censure Sa'adah for his anti-Arabism [al-shu'ubiyah] which rejected the Arabism of Syria, the throbbing heart of the Arab nation at the time. They also censured him for adopting the fascist political structures and organizations prevailing in Europe at the time. The "storm," which is the party's emblem, is in the opinion of those opponents as close as can be to the Nazi swastika and the party salute, with the arm stretched out rigidly and with the heels clicked against one another, were as close as could be to the salutes of Fuhrer Hitler and of il Duce Mussolini, the masters of Europe in the 1930's.

Despite this and despite the confrontation with the French mandate authorities at the time, the party was able to spread among students and among some circles in the two countries [Syria and Lebanon] which found in Sa'adah's call a refuge and an escape from the predominant Arabism and its sweeping tide.

But the party leader met a tragic end in 1949. A local conflict developed between the Syrian Nationalists and the Phalanges Party (which was at the time a small party) in (Christian) eastern Beirut and the Lebanese authorities exploited this conflict to pursue the Syrian Nationalist Party whose spread and para-military organization these authorities viewed as a danger to themselves.

Antun Sa'adah took refuge in Syria where the party had a similar and strong organization. Sa'adah established such strong relations with Field Marshal Husni al-Za'im, the military dictator who was in power then, that the latter gave Sa'adah his personal pistol as a gift. But the political fluctuations and the ever-rising and declining relations between the twin sisters of Syria and Lebanon caused the fickle al-Za'im to arrest Sa'adah and hand him over to the Lebanese authorities which quickly formed a military court that sentenced Sa'adah to death and the sentence was carried out immediately.

But the tragic death was an incentive for greater partisan activity and popular sympathy, especially since the Syrian Nationalists were known for their discipline and their good conduct among the citizens. The party attained the peak of its activity under the rule of dictator Abid al-Shishakli who ruled Syria in the early 1950's and who is said to have been a member of the party in his youth.

Despite the good reputation which the Syrian Nationalists enjoyed at the popular level, they had their strong opponents who ranged from the far right (Muslim Brotherhood) to the far left (Ba'thists, Arab Nationalists and communists).

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Grave Political Mistakes

Moreover, the party committed grave political mistakes, such as assassinating Riyad al-Sulh, a former Lebanese prime minister, during his visit to Jordan as the guest of King 'Abdallah (King Husayn's grandfather). Al-Sulh was prime minister in the Lebanese government in whose term Sa'adah was executed.

The party then got involved in the assassination of Col 'Adnan al-Maliki, the Syrian chief of staff, in 1955. The ugliness of the operation which was carried out under the eyes of tens of thousands of spectators in a sports stadium in Damascus constituted the beginning of a fearful pursuit to which the party was exposed. The party leaders and bases and the members of the party's military organization fell an easy prey in the hands of the Syrian authorities because the party was holding at the time a secret congress in the Syrian capital.

The only one to escape arrest was George 'Abd-al-Masih (Lebanese), the party chairman, who fled to Lebanon leaving the party to ceaseless reprisals, revenge and pursuit that lasted for years. The Syrian authorities were able to present to the court which tried the assassins and the party leaders evidence proving that the partisan leadership wing which planned the assassination had been in contact in one way or another with the U.S. administration.

Col al-Maliki was considered a supporter of al-Ba'th and had been subjected to torture in al-Shishakli's jails. After al-Shishakli's fall, al-Maliki was foremost among the army commanders and officers who opposed the principle of military alliances projected strongly by Washington at the time.

Syrian Nationalists Fought With Sham'un

The Syrian Nationalists fought on the side of Lebanese ex-President Camille Sham'un when a raging popular revolution erupted in Lebanon in 1958 and they continued to guard his presidential palace in al-Qantari area of the Muslim western Beirut until the end of his rule.

But the party's boat once again hit the authority's rock when the Syrian Nationalists surprised the late President Fu'ad Shihab, who succeeded Sham'un, with a military-civilian coup on the 1960-61 new year's eve. But the coup failed and the party was again subjected to an official pursuit in the 1960's similar to the one to which it was subjected in Syria.

The motive for the coup was, in addition to the disagreement with President Shihab, the party's awareness of the approaching collapse of the Egyptian-Syrian unity. This is perhaps why the party believed that seizing power in Lebanon would then make it easier for it to move to Syria.

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Dr 'Abdallah Sa'adah, the party chairman, and the party leaders were arrested and its supporters were pursued. Death sentences were passed against the leaders but were not carried out. A general amnesty followed under the reign of ex-President Charles Hilu.

It seems that the incarceration period constituted a time of re-examining the party's principles and policy. The writings of the party leaders in that period demonstrate the degree of change that developed in the party's political thought.

The party resumed full activity at the beginning of the 1970's. The openness of the party's thought to the prevalent political thinking had its impact on creating a stir within the party that was reflected in numerous divisions and splits. While George 'Abd-al-Masih, with his radical Syrian nationalist thoughts and his few partisans, were ousted, Asad al-Ashqar moved toward the left in an attempt to inject the party with the Marxist principles, exactly as the Arab Nationalists Movement did. At the same time, al-Ashqar has been trying to imbue his leadership with a special Lebanese characteristic derived from his being a Maronite.

In'am Ra'd's Writings and Thought

Through his writings, books and partisan activity, In'am Ra'd followed a more flexible line, opening up to the left without submitting to all the Marxist theories. Moreover, the idea of Arabism has become, as a result of the party's experience and actions, more acceptable and the unity of the "Syrian nation" has become a prelude for the comprehensive Arab unity.

Dr 'Abdallah Sa'adah perhaps agrees to a large degree with In'am Ra'd's line. Moreover, the party bases consider Dr Sa'adah a clean leader who has devoted himself and his money to serve his cause, has suffered a lot because of this and has endured imprisonment with rare courage. Even though Sa'adah headed the party when the abortive coup attempt took place against Major General Shihab, the party sanctioned his actions and policy and did not consider his decisions faulty, contrary to what happened to 'Abd-al-Masih who was dismissed by a partisan court in the wake of Col 'Adnan al-Maliki's assassination.

This openness has qualified the party to rebuild its Lebanese and Arab relations more clearly and definitively. The party is now a member of the Lebanese National Movement which includes the main leftist Lebanese parties that waged the civil war, including the communist party, the "historical" enemy of the Syrian nationalist movement.

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The party has also rebuilt its Arab bridges with more than one Arab country, especially with Syria, Iraq and Jordan. To indicate the degree of the party's Arab openness, it is enough to point out that Dr Sa'adah delivered the Lebanese National Movement's address at the ceremony to eulogize the late Zuhayr Muhsin, the leader of al-Sa'iqah Organization, which was held in Damascus recently.

The Syrian nationalists can boast that they were foremost among the National Movement's factions in discipline and organization during the war and that they offered a large number of martyrs, including one of the sons of Dr Sa'adah who cut off his engineering studies in the United States to join the party organization and who was killed on al-Shiyah-'Ayn al-Rummanah front in 1976.

This is perhaps the most eloquent proof of the big change in the positions of the party that had one day fought alongside ex-President Camille Sham'un, the symbol of the Maronite right with his sectarian policies, in the national revolution [of 1958].

The Syrian Nationalist Party has been able to overcome the splits that swept it as a result of the big transformation in its positions. Dr Sa'adah has been reelected party chairman in place of In'am Ra'd. Only a small radical rightist faction, led by 'Abd-al-Masih who has advanced in years and who is no longer capable of engaging in his usual activity, remains outside the party.

Even the party's internal structure has undergone a big change. Despite maintaining its strict organization, the party has abandoned many of the outwardly appearances for which its enemies and opponents censured it and which they used to accuse the party of "fascism" in the past. The dialogue between the party's leaderships and bases--a dialogue which has never stopped--has become more flexible, lively and open. What is more, the party surprised all observers when it reunited its ranks at a time when other organizations and parties born tens of years after it split and disintegrated. The party instrument has become more democratic and is moving on the political stage with composure and in freedom from the rashness that characterized its past movement which led the party to setbacks, shocks and tragedies that would have been enough, were it not for this party's steadfastness and obstinacy, to destroy more than a similar party.

What else about the Syrian Nationalist Party?

One of the principles which the party adopts, on which it has not shown any flexibility and from which it has not budged by a hair's width is its absolute rejection of the Zionist entity on the Palestinian soil because the Zionist Jews cannot merge in the environment and society in which they live. The Syrian Nationalists offer in this regard historical proofs and evidence of the soundness of their analysis to the Zionist presence on the "Arab Syrian land."

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Perhaps this unshakable faith is what motivated Antun Sa'adah, the party's departed leader, to ask the Syrian and Lebanese governments to supply him with the weapons and ammunition necessary to equip 5,000 of the party's militarily-trained youths who were ready to wage the 1948 war when the party was at the peak of its strength.

It must also be pointed out in this regard that the party was the first to call for unifying the eastern front (Jordan and Syria) by virtue of its being the "Syrian nationalist front" which will be entrusted before all others with liberating the usurped "Syrian" land, considering that it is the front with the basic interest.

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MAURITANIA

RELEASE OF FORMER PRESIDENT FROM MAURITANIA TO FRANCE DETAILED

Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 17 Oct 79 pp 18-20, 21

[Article by Abdelaziz Dahmani: "Where Is Mokhtar Ould Daddah?"]

[Text] Is Mokhtar Ould Daddah free? No! Is he in France? The military leaders of Mauritania "are not au courant," but France's official answer is: Yes. Yet no one has seen him. It would seem that he is in confinement. Is he so seriously ill that he cannot receive visitors? Or only exhausted by his 14 months of detention and isolation? Fortunately the JEUNE AFRIQUE investigation conducted by Abdelaziz Dahmani and the large amount of accurate evidence collected in Mauritania itself allow us to home in on at least part of the truth.

It was a very emaciated Mokhtar Ould Daddah, his drawn features set in the encircling iron-gray beard, his garb a blue boubou and sandals, with nothing but a radio for baggage, who stepped out of a Mauritanian military Defender aircraft at nightfall onto the runway of the Nouakchott airport.

The same man would emplane an hour and a half later in a French Mystere-20. He would no doubt deplane at dawn in some French military airport and in the same clothing--all the more remarkable in that the air was cool that autumn night in France. But it was the air of freedom, albeit a conditional freedom.

The former Mauritanian head of state had on him neither papers nor passport nor money nor a change of clothing. For those appointed to welcome him at this early morning hour, was it still to be "Mr President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania" whom a coup d'etat had removed from power on 10 July 1978? One might have thought that an official French limousine would be awaiting him at the foot of the stairs leading from the Mystere-20, and that it would soon "lose itself" in the maze of roads leading toward the capital, to take Mokhtar Ould Daddah discreetly to some military hospital in the Ile de France where he would be cared for.

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But since that day, the secret has been well guarded, in accordance with the promise made to the Mauritanian military authorities. The journalists learned nothing from the sealed lips at the Elysee, the Quai d'Orsay or the French Ministry of Cooperation.

The friends of the former president, assailed with requests for information that came in from the entire world by telephone or telex, could only reply: "We do not know where he is."

This complete and utter discretion might, of course, be explained by a concern for security, for the patient's need for rest and rehabilitation, and even by reasons of general health. But one week later, it was beginning to become oppressive. Did Ould Daddah leave his confinement in Oualata only to disappear through a trapdoor? Was his transfer to France a "medical evacuation" or a kind of cheap, undercover freedom with strings attached? For the services he has rendered to his country, to Africa and to the entire Arab world, for his courage and integrity, the person of Mokhtar Ould Daddah deserves better treatment than that.

The news of his liberation which was ultimately no liberation at all, was greeted with warmth just about everywhere. In the words of the large Parisian daily, LE MONDE: "This liberation brings to an end the ordeal of one of Africa's most respected and upright leaders. The former head of state who was, thanks to his talents as a mediator, one of the best presidents of the Organization of African Unity, has always enjoyed the respect of his adversaries, moreover, although they deplored his "obstinacy" in the Sahara affair. The founder of the Mauritanian nation and passionately attached to its independence, he had acquired a great prestige in international circles for his affability, his serenity and his complete disinterest as far as personal gains were concerned." LE MONDE also recalled in this article, entitled "An Example for Africa," that as early as 1957, Mokhtar Ould Daddah spoke of the Spanish Sahara as making up "an integral part of Mauritania," that is, even before he himself acceded to power and before Mauritania became independent in 1960. But the machinery of war makes no loans to the poor.

Several African newspapers also hailed the event, such as LE SOLEIL of Dakar: "This liberation will have a positive impact." It proves that the leaders in Nouakchott are looking for "a real internal peace" and "have thus just taken a decisive step toward this national harmony." But things are not quite so clear or so simple. Some say that Mokhtar Ould Daddah is still a prisoner released on his own recognizance, and that he is to come back to his place of detention as soon as his health has improved!

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In view of the blackout which hangs heavily over this stay in France, let us return to Mauritania to see how the renowned prisoner was "liberated." A sudden decision, all the less expected in that it happened at a moment of great internal tension, accompanied by police raids, an increased surveillance of radio broadcasting and Government buildings and the extension of a curfew that had been in force since 10 July 1978; certain former ministers of Mokhtar Ould Daddah, such as Hamdi Ould Mouknass (Foreign Affairs), Ahmed Mohamed Salah and such figures as Ismail Ould Amar, the former director general of SNIM [National Industrial and Mining Company], saw their homes, already under surveillance, changed to conditions of house-arrest.

It was under such circumstances that a Land-Rover was seen on Tuesday 2 October in the middle of the morning leaving the military fort of Oualata with Mokhtar Ould Daddah inside, dressed in the traditional blue boubou. The departures of the prisoner of Oualata are so rare that the latter did not pass unnoticed. Nor did his arrival go unnoticed, in early afternoon at Nema (100 km distant) where, accompanied by soldiers, he was taken by small army prop plane of the Defender class to Nouakchott, more than 1,000 km to the north.

The only object that Mokhtar Ould Daddah had the time to take along --according to the evidence given by those who saw him--was his accurate and very powerful radio set, which, according to his family, had been his only means of contact with the outside world during the past 14 months, when the only visitor he had was one of his brothers-in-law.

The confinement at Oualata, which Ould Daddah had broken only two times, to go to Kiffa for treatment, was harder on the prisoner than might have been imagined. According to his one visitor, he had suffered a great deal from the heat (for it reached more than 45 degrees centigrade over a period of at least three consecutive months). In spite of everything, according to the same source, he had never been subjected to any indignities; quite the contrary, he had become the object of respect and veneration on the part of his guards, the young military men who were constantly being rotated. It was through prayer (he is extremely pious), through his strength of character and his good humor that he was best able to struggle against this adversity.

Perhaps the semi-liberation of Ahmed Ben Bella was an influence in arranging this discharge of Mokhtar Ould Daddah. Since June 1965 the Algerians had tried to break the will of Ahmed Ben Bella by keeping him in total isolation. Not even 14 years had sufficed. For Mokhtar Ould Daddah, the Mauritanian military personnel interrupted the experiment at the end of 14 months.

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In Nema at Midday on Tuesday 2 October, a small Defender aircraft was therefore waiting for the Land-Rover, which was on its way from Oualata. Mokhtar Ould Daddah and his two pilots set out straight for Nouakchott, with a short stop at Aioun El-Atrouss to refuel. It took them more than five hours to cover the 1,000 km between Nema and Nouakchott, a flight over desolate country, slightly greener because of recent rains. The trip must have awakened a great many souvenirs for the former president. In June 1978 over this same route, he had begun construction of a new road, a daring venture which would bring to an end the isolation of an entire region. The Nouakchott-Kiffa section of this road is a reality today: more than 600 km of asphalted highway. Kiffa is the very village to which Colonel Moustafa Ould Saleck, the principal designer of the coup d'etat of 10 July 1978 and the president of the Republic--until 6 April 1979, the date on which he in turn fell victim to a coup d'etat--withdrew, sick and disenchanted. Ah, how the mesh of history is woven!

About 1900 hours on Tuesday 2 October, other witnesses saw the Defender land at Nouakchott. It was night, but this landing did not pass unnoticed in a city where the people are endowed with an infallible flair for detecting events. Already the departure from Oualata had been communicated by the grapevine. These rumors were being fed, moreover, by the fact that a French Mystere-20 belonging to GLAM [Groupement de Liaisons Aeriennes Ministerielles; Ministerial Air Liaison Pool] had arrived in Nouakchott the day before, Monday 1 October, and had been left parked for the whole day at a point off to one side of the runway. Observers were all the more intrigued because no passengers had emerged from the plane, and those who had approached it were able to notice that it was equipped to receive a sick person of considerable rank.

On this same 2 October, however, three members of the French Ministry of Cooperation, led by Mr Viney, had deplaned at Nouakchott to begin working with Mauritanian leaders on a study of the ways and means to reestablish the economy and finances of the country. This trip was a follow-up to the official Paris visit in mid-September, of Lieutenant Colonel Khouna Ould Haidalla, the prime minister. And, still on 2 October, came the announcement in Nouakchott of the confirmation of the appointment of a new ambassador to Algeria, Mr Djelloul Bakhti, a surprise happening after the diplomatic rupture of April 1976. Something to attenuate the effects of the new flirtation with France.

The final details of the departure of Mokhtar Ould Daddah for France must have been arranged on that day, 2 October, during the course of the morning, by the prime minister, who spoke at some length with Mr Maurice Courage, the French ambassador who had returned not long before to this country whose birth he had practically witnessed when he was a young civil servant--in the days

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when Mokhtar Ould Daddah was in the process of building the capital and establishing the embryonic administration of a modern nation.

As soon as the Defender from Nema had landed, a limousine could be seen approaching it, that of Lieutenant Colonel Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, chief of staff of the army, who since the death of Colonel Bousseif had become the new "strong man" of the Mauritanian Military--as of 27 May off the coast of Dakar. The vehicle, in which a second military man had taken a seat, remained parked for more than an hour at the end of the runway, awaiting the arrival of the French pilots in their Mystere-20.

Observers also saw a French colonel arrive, a staff official, and witnessed other goings and comings to and from the town. But it is most likely that Mokhtar Ould Daddah spent this layover time in the limousine of the head of staff and in his company. In any case, it was about 2030 hours when the witnesses whom we questioned saw the emplaning from a distance. To these witnesses, and in the available light at the airport, Mokhtar Ould Daddah, seeming to float in his overly large boubou, appeared very emaciated, almost unrecognizable and quite exhausted. The Mystere-20 set out for France. According to our inquiry, it made no stops, either in Algeria or in Morocco.

Did the Mauritanian and French authorities hope to keep this departure a secret? Whatever were their intentions, the rumor of the liberation, at first cautious, then more and more confident, began to run about Mauritania beginning the next morning, Wednesday 3 October--to become a certainty by Thursday evening 4 October, when a flash from the Agence France-Presse, received on foreign radios, made it public. On Friday 5 October, the day of prayer, more people than usual went to the mosques. People prayed fervently that God would preserve the health of Mokhtar. The Ivorian head of state, Felix Houphouet-Boigny, was even included by some in these prayers, because many Mauritanians--once again among the greatest adepts in the world in the art of gathering information--already knew about the affection in which he had held Mokhtar for a long while, and the role, as efficacious as it was discreet, which he had no doubt played, with the direct collaboration of France, in Mokhtar's delivery.

Thus the rumor kept spreading. But, although the AFP dispatch was not officially broadcast in Mauritania, on Saturday 6 October the Mauritanian Press Agency, acting on Government orders, published a denial without commentary: "A dispatch from the Agence France-Presse has taken note of the liberation of former president Mokhtar Ould Daddah. This information is devoid of all truth." In the eyes of the Mauritanian authorities, therefore, it was being considered a forced and temporary departure for reasons of health, and not a liberation!

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As for reasons of health, they are there aplenty! The first alert came from the Mauritanian military doctors who were caring for the prisoner. It was in the little hospital at Kiffa, very poorly equipped, where he had been taken on two separate occasions, suffering particularly from intestinal troubles. The Mauritanian doctors, together with their Chinese colleagues working in the Kiffa area, had noted that the former president had lost more than 15 kg in a few months, and they did not have the technological instruments to make a positive diagnosis of his symptoms.

Over and above the insistence of the alarmed doctors, who made the request that their patient be allowed to undergo analyses and receive the care of specialists in a better equipped hospital, there was the discreet but ever increasing pressure from a large number of African and Arab heads of state, and from people all over the world. They confirmed their inability to understand why Mokhtar was being held secretly, under the most wretched conditions, without being accused of anything really definite, and since Mauritania had disengaged itself--on 5 August in Algiers--from the "Saharan War," expressing the desire, moreover, to be on good terms with everyone in the region, in order to consecrate itself to the national reform measures and avoid any regional or tribal ruptures.

Among the heads of state, the most insistent were those of Senegal, Leopold Sedar Senghor--from the very first day; Ivory Coast, Felix Houphouet-Boigny, up to the last day; Cameroon, Ahmadou Ahidjo; Tunisia, Habib Bourguiba; Sudan, Ja'far Numayri; King Khalid of Arabia; Sheikh Zayid, the president of the United Arab Emirates and many others.

As for the private individuals, Mr Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, director-general of UNESCO, often interceded, especially with certain Mauritanian officials currently in power, who were his students when he taught in Mauritania during the fifties. Mr Leon Boissier-Palun, a famous lawyer who was formerly the president of the Great Council of Western Africa, and as such the former "boss" of Mokhtar Ould Daddah while the latter was a legal apprentice in Dakar, also intervened discreetly and at various levels of government.

Committees of support finally came to life in several European countries, especially in the FRG, where a diplomat and former ambassador to Mauritania, Dr Walter Reichhold, did not cease to alert public opinion to the need to "save one of the most upright and honest men on the African Continent."

Most of these efforts involved France and reached the attention of President Valery Giscard d'Estaing--who was well disposed himself and held the best trump cards as far as the Mauritanian leaders

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were concerned. It was probably the Bokassa affair that precipitated the French commitment, inasmuch as the character of Mokhtar Ould Daddah, his respectability and integrity, is well calculated to temper the negative effects of the tragicomedy of Bokassa's fall and subsequent exile to the Ivory Coast.

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MAURITANIA

BRIEFS

FRENCH HYDROCARBON, URANIUM EXPLORATION--French companies are going to undertake, between now and the end of the year, prospecting to determine the possibilities for the exploitation of hydrocarbons and uranium in Mauritania, stated Mr Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, the Mauritanian minister of foreign affairs in Nouakchott on 22 September. The minister declared to AFP that the group Elf-Aquitaine would begin oil exploration in the eastern part of the country and offshore near Nouakchott. Uranium exploration will be concentrated in the northeast of Mauritania between Bir Moghreïn and Ain Ben Tilli. This exploration will be carried out in association with Cogema, Ugine-Kulhmann and a Japanese company. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 28 Sep 79 p 2632] 8956

REQUEST FOR FRENCH MILITARY AID--The request was made by the Mauritanian prime minister, Lt Col Khouna Ould Haidalla, during his official visit to France on 18, 19 September. The French did not say no. On condition that Mauritania guarantee that the "Saudi pump" will still be working when the bills come due. [Text] [Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 3 Oct 79 p 52] 8956

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SYRIA

CORRESPONDENT SAYS SYRIA FACES URGENT NEED FOR CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 4-10 Oct 79 p 26

[Article by a Correspondent of AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI: "Apropos of the National Progressive Front's Statement: The Regime in Syria Practices Self-criticism"]

[Text] The Syrian National Front has put its finger on the problem and has diagnosed its causes in a candid statement which is tantamount to a daring act of self-criticism. What remains now is the problem of taking action to alleviate and avoid those causes. This is a problem that has become more pressing and urgent than anytime before.

Damascus--The Progressive National Front in Syria has now been in existence for nearly 8 years. Its establishment was one of the major goals of President Hafiz al-Asad's regime following his 1970 corrective movement within the party and the government. Although this political grouping led by the ruling party has been in existence for all that time, the front has failed to demonstrate its effectiveness and vitality in contrast with the activities of the ruling party, although all the parties involved in the front are represented in the government.

In fact, President al-Asad has made it common practice to meet with the central command of the front, which consists of the leaders of the parties recognized by the regime, to discuss with them the country's affairs and to brief them on the outcome of his talks with foreign leaders either at home or abroad.

And so while the front has been operative at the top of the hierarchy, it has been unable to establish grassroots or to create a broad popular base for itself. With the exception of election time, when the parties represented in the front enter the electoral battle with a common platform and divide the constituencies among themselves according to certain proportions, the Syrian citizen is not fully aware of the front's existence.

Parties of the National Front

In addition to the ruling party, the front includes the Communist Party,

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which is one of the oldest communist parties in the Arab world. The "historical" leader of the Syrian CP, Khalid Bakdash, is still quite energetic and active despite his advanced age and various illnesses. It seems that the internal divisions with the CP have prevented it from exercising its role as the "formal opposition" within the framework of the National Front--a role designed to point out errors and transgressions by the government. The party simply treats such errors and infractions with kid gloves in its party newspaper which remains unlicensed and has a very limited circulation.

The National Front also includes Nasirite and socialist parties which have also been prey to divisions and which have also failed to play their role as a constructive critic of the regime within the framework of the National Front, so that they have ultimately tended to appear as an appendage of the ruling party or the authority in power.

It does appear, however, that President al-Asad intends to revitalize and reactivate the Progressive National Front. Therefore, he has chosen to act through the front's central committee to issue the first statement which probably represents the first round in the movement of changes which he plans to carry out in order to avoid the causes of the "shortcomings" cited by the front's statement. In other words, the Syrian president is determined to broaden the popular base of his regime by activating the various organizations which constitute the National Front and by energizing them so that they may be able to play a more effective role on the popular mass level. That is to say that he does not intend to restrict himself to his ruling party.

This is why there have recently been references to the possibility of establishing centers for the National Front in the countryside. It is not unlikely that the front will be allowed to publish its own papers in accordance with the front's charter. It is noted, however, that the daily papers in the country belong to the ruling party or are directed by the regime.

Implementation of Recommendations a Pressing Need

The most urgent task in Syria today is to implement the resolutions adopted by the National Front, since the front is more of a consultative body that does not have executive powers. Therefore, the responsibility of implementing those recommendations lies with the ruling party. It is an especially difficult responsibility since the machinery which is suffering from shortcomings is the one required to undertake the implementation of the resolutions in questions.

The recommendations cited in the statement by the Progressive National Front embrace the various problems which the front believes that Syria urgently needs to tackle and solve. These are problems which cannot find quick solutions, but if the strong will and sincere desire for action are there, then it will be possible to get rid of many of the problems which have become a source of complaint by citizens, as officials themselves have recognized in their constructive and candid act of self-criticism.

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Finally, it needs to be said that the armed violence mounted by certain radical religious groups may help to speed up the required reform. This is the only effect armed violence is likely to have, since it is ridiculous to believe that the violent actions carried out by the radical right can shake the regime of President al-Asad, regardless of the administrative shortcomings and errors.

Ultimately, armed violence remains an expression of despair by those who carry out violence surreptitiously--despair of being accepted by the broad sectors of the people.

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SYRIA

PAPER CORRESPONDENT TAKES ANALYTICAL LOOK AT INTERNAL SCENE IN SYRIA

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 27 Sep-3 Oct 79 pp 30-31

[Article: "An Attempt to Read the Political Palm of Damascus; Syria--Will Al-Asad Lead a New 'Corrective Movement'?]

[Text] What is going on in Syria nowadays? What are the primary concerns of the Syrians: al-Sadat and Camp David? Or is it the task of their forces in Lebanon? Or are they principally concerned about internal developments or living conditions at home? A correspondent of AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI went to Damascus last week to try to find answers to these questions. In the following report, he reflects the views and positions of political and official circles in Syria and tries to draw a general picture of the political and official activity going on in that Arab country in the light of internal events and developments there. He also speculates about possible changes which may be made to cope with the requirements of the present phase, especially the need to deal with the syndrome of armed violence, on levels which are not necessarily confined to security measures.

Damascus--Syria today is the scene of extensive political and official activity the like of which has not been experienced since a long time ago. Informed circles here expect President Hafiz al-Asad to undertake wide-scale political and administrative changes which would respond to the requirements of the present situation in the country. The forthcoming regional congress of the ruling Ba'th party may be the opening gambit in these changes which are expected to be both dramatic and radical. AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI was the first publication to report the possibility of convening such a congress after President al-Asad's return from the Havana summit. Observers predict that the regional congress will be held either in October or November. It was originally scheduled for last April.

Accordingly, it can be said that a new Syrian government will emerge after the congress. It has been customary to carry out political and executive changes after such congresses.

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A Cabinet Headed by Al-Asad

Informed circles here have been circulating the names of possible candidates to head the new cabinet. Some circles do not exclude the possibility that the cabinet will be led by President al-Asad himself, because of the exigencies of the present phase and the heavy burdens which will be laid on the new cabinet. Should this be the case, it can be said that the al-Asad cabinet would undertake what may be tantamount to a corrective movement reminiscent of the one carried out by President al-Asad within the government and the party in 1970.

One of the names frequently mentioned is that of Maj Gen 'Abd al-Rahman Khulayfawi, a retired senior Ba'thist officer born in Damascus who is now in his forties. He is known for his integrity and sternness and has headed several governments during al-Asad's presidency.

Among other candidates for the premiership is Mahmud al-Ayyubi, a Damascus--born Ba'this leader who has also served as a premier during al-Asad's presidency.

A name that has often been in the limelight recently is that of Dr 'Abd al-Ra'uf al-Kasim, the governor of Damascus and a former dean of the college of fine arts.

The question, however, is not so much who should head the new cabinet but whether such a person will be able to discharge his task at this particular time. In other words, the prospective premier should have the powers and prerogatives which would enable him to carry out his duties and overcome the obstacles which had hamstrung previous prime ministers and forced them to abandon their efforts, with the result that obstacles had increased and transgressions became rife with no solution in sight. This situation has touched off complaints both within the government and among the people. It has also provided certain citizens with a pretext to exploit it by means of using violence and with an argument that only negative actions can turn things around.

It seems that the formation of a new cabinet will be accompanied by amendments and changes in the structure and makeup of the Progressive National Front which includes the Ba'th Party and other parties and organizations allied with it, including the Communist Party. The tendency now is to give the front and its various organizations a greater role after re-energizing and revitalizing it, so that it may become a popular base for the ruling party.

A Phase of Overall Review

Informed party sources say that President al-Asad is now in the process of conducting an overall review of his regime in the light of reports prepared by various advisers and specialists as well as official and party committees.

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The reports deal with the status and conditions of various agencies and institutions.

The consensus is that it is not too late yet to undertake quick initiatives to introduce sweeping and deep-driving reforms and changes and to forestall and thwart the efforts of the elements of violence. Observers concede, however, that such initiatives should be preceded by stern party and government measures against perpetrators of transgressions and infractions so as to bring about a rapid end to those excesses, regardless of their source, and that it is necessary at times to deal with things firmly and decisively regardless of any considerations.

It can be said that Syria, which is bearing the brunt of its Arab responsibilities in Lebanon and military responsibilities on the frontline, feels that it should also put its own house in order as soon as possible, and that inasmuch as attention should be paid to pressing pan-Arab and national problems, attention should equally be paid to the day-to-day affairs and social problems at home, so that solutions can be devised for the bread and transportation crises, the exodus from the countryside to the cities and the problems of housing and inflation.

Dealing with the Phenomenon of Violence

As to the phenomenon of violence, various circles are fully convinced that dealing with this problem should not be left solely to the security agencies, which have been known to adopt certain methods that have proved after all to be inadequate and insufficient in dealing with the perpetrators of violence. On the contrary, official violence might intensify the armed violence exercised by certain militant religious groups. Therefore, broad sectors within the party and among political circles believe that the most appropriate method to deal with this situation is to face it squarely and to address the problems directly as well as to call things by their real names and to exercise candor. They also believe that there should be the largest possible degree of political liberalization on various levels and a broadening of the base of popular debate and dialogue as well as fulfillment of the everyday needs of the citizens. One proof of the premise that it is not enough to leave the task of dealing with the acts of violence to the security agencies alone is the fact that the recent executions and the hanging of the corpses of the executed persons in public squares have not deterred members of the groups and organizations responsible for the recent wave of violence. In fact, several incidents have occurred after those executions, with the result that a number of innocent persons have been victimized. It is likely that the political authorities are aware of this now and that they are determined to deal with the situation from a different angle, using methods that differ completely from repressive measures.

It is fair to say that the vast majority of the ordinary citizens do not share the views/or sympathize with the motives of the groups responsible for the cycle of violence and that they consider what is going on in Syria now a

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serious and abnormal phenomenon in the Syrian society. Therefore, the armed groups are operating within a very narrow scope of extreme secrecy. It is also fair to say that the citizens demand urgent solutions for a number of problems, in order to forestall the efforts of the violence mongers and to prevent them from further exploiting those problems.

An International Conference to Discuss the Middle East Crisis

We have talked thus far about the internal situation, but what about the external situation and Syria's position vis-a-vis the Middle East crisis? I was told here that Syria no longer favors the idea of taking the problem to the United Nations but prefers as an alternative the holding of a new international conference under the auspices of the United Nations to discuss the Middle East problem in the light of the Egyptian-Israeli rapprochement, on the grounds that al-Sadat's Egypt has been satisfied with the return of Sinai and has, therefore, ceased pressing for Palestinian and other Arab rights. In advancing such a premise, the Syrian state believes that the al-Sadat regime will be forced at such an international conference to discuss the Palestinian issue in terms that would coincide with the Arab position, because that regime would no longer be able to foresake some Palestinian claims in order to win the fulfillment of more Egyptian national claims. As the Syrians see it, the al-Sadat regime's main concern now is to secure implementation of Israel's commitment to withdraw from another segment of Sinai. They believe that Egypt is ready in return to speed up the normalization of relations with Israel. This was the message clearly conveyed by Egyptian leaders to American envoy Robert Strauss in the autonomy talks, when they asked him during his latest visit to Egypt not to embarrass them with Begin lest he carry out his threat to reconsider everything. In fact, the Egyptian Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Butrus Ghali has told Strauss that "what concerns Egypt at the present phase is Sinai first, second and last."

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WESTERN SAHARA

PLO CHIEF'S MEDIATION EFFORTS SEEM TO HAVE HAD SOME RESULTS

Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 26 Sep 79 p 19

[Text] Will Mr Yasir 'Arafat be the man who will calm spirits in the Western Sahara affair? In any case, the mediation efforts the president of the PLO undertook, at the end of the month of August, between Algiers and Rabat, seem to have yielded results. The Palestinian leader was able to get Qadhdhafi to agree not to bring up the subject in his speech of 1 September (JEUNE AFRIQUE 975). He also succeeded in having canceled the participation of a POLISARIO column in the military parade from Benghazi on the tenth anniversary of Libyan independence: "Nothing must be done which would interfere with a peace in the Sahraoui affair," Yasir 'Arafat stated to the international press the day after 1 September.

The steps taken by the president of the PLO extend to all the parties tied directly or indirectly to the conflict. On Friday 31 August, in Tripoli, he met with the secretary general of the POLISARIO, Mr Mohamed Abdelaziz, as well as the Libyan and Algerian presidents. At the time of his trip to Madrid, he talked on Thursday 13 September with the Spanish prime minister, Mr Adolfo Suarez and the Sahara affair was one of the main subjects of discussion. From Madrid, Yasir 'Arafat went directly to Algiers for talks with President Chadli. Finally, on Sunday 16 September, he was in Ifrane, where he was received by the Moroccan king, Hassan II. If he has denied, probably out of discretion, having been responsible for these efforts at mediation, it is believed that Yasir 'Arafat is trying to organize a mini summit, which would bring together all the interested parties. Nevertheless, that has not stilled the fighting in the desert. On Sunday 16 September, the governments of Rabat and of Algiers each published their own account of an attack by the POLISARIO against the town of Lemsied, located in an uncontested part of Morocco. "Several hundred Moroccan soldiers were killed and several hundred captured," according to Algiers. "Ninety of the enemy forces were killed and 55 of their vehicles destroyed," according to Rabat.

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WESTERN SAHARA

BRIEFS

ALGERIA TO BE MORE CONCILIATORY--Authorities in Algiers are trying to separate themselves from Libya (which supports the POLISARIO), since it is concerned over the plans for an Islamic United States of the Sahel and over the Berber movement, both of which are supported by Qadhdhafi. (JEUNE AFRIQUE 975) [Text] [Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 26 Sep 79 p 35] 8956

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END

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