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JPRS L/9137

11 June 1980

Near East/North Africa Report

(FOUO 21/80)



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NEAR EAST/NORTH AFRICA REPORT

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INTER-ARAB AFFAIRS

DETAILS OF ARAB PEOPLE'S CONFERENCE OUTLINED

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 11-17 Apr 80 pp 18-21

[Article by George al-Rasi: "Saddam Husayn Honors al-Bitar and al-Hurani; Baghdad Has Turned into a Home for the Arab Nation and Has Given a New Dimension to the Effectiveness of People's Conferences"]

[Text] It is not usual for 1,000 Arabs from 20 Arab countries to meet together in one large room outside the framework of official meetings and summit conferences.

The fact that 1,000 Arabs should meet around a discussion table to talk freely and in a democratic way about basic questions that deal with the future of the nation is quite rare.

Nevertheless, such a meeting was made possible in Baghdad during the final week of the last month. For 4 days a Mauritanian spoke with a Yemeni, a Moroccan with a Kuwaiti and a Somali with an Egyptian. They all said what they wanted to say and raised any subjects they wanted to raise to the point that those who presided over the People's Pan-Arab Conference were compelled to interfere and use their mandate continuously, bearing thereby all the consequences of gathering the Arab nation in one auditorium.

But these consequences are acceptable and reassuring. The mere fact that a meeting of such a large number of representatives of parties and political, professional and popular organizations throughout the greater homeland took place is in itself a positive factor that leaves deep impressions on people.

In this sense at least we must recognize that Baghdad has become open to all the citizens of the Arab nation. Arabs go into [Iraq] without a visa, and they may work there in any sector just like any other Iraqis.

These are some of the feelings that one has when one sees this spontaneous meeting between hundreds of people from the Arab Maghreb and hundreds of Arabs from the eastern part of the homeland who had never before met each other, become acquainted with each other or talked with each other.

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One asks oneself: how many of our brothers who live in the eastern part of the homeland and who are present here know exactly what Muhammad al-Basri, 'Abd-al-Rahman al-Yusufi or Yusuf al-Ruwisi represent? How many of them had in the past come into contact with Ahmed Ben Salah or with Bachir Boumaaza (the only Algerian attending the conference) and tried to understand at close range the experience of each one of them in his own country?

One asks oneself: how many of our brothers who live in the Arab Maghreb know the real role that Akram al-Hurani or Salah al-Din al-Bitar played in Syria's contemporary history? How many of them tried to approach the rich experiences of strife that the countries of the eastern part of the Arab homeland experienced early this century?

It may be said in this sense that the old and the new colonialism had achieved considerable success in making the capitals of the West "centers" for the Arab parties. They thus created a big gap between the parts which make up this nation. The recent fall of Cairo was tantamount to the icing on the cake in this conspiratorial course that is deep-rooted in history.

For all these reasons the People's Pan-Arab Conference became the first step on the road to rectify the rift and repair the flaw. What did each delegation contribute to the achievement of this goal? What manifest and hidden signs can be deduced from the historic Baghdad meeting?

The Iraqi Delegation: the Smallest and the Least Talkative

Contrary to what usually happens in such conferences, and especially if they are people's conferences, the delegation of the country which convened the conference--and we are not saying the host country because the Iraqis do not consider the rest of the Arabs their guests, as was indicated by President Saddam Husayn in his address to the conferees. The Iraqi delegation was the smallest delegation and the one that spoke the least. In most cases the delegation consisted of four or five members. They were Messrs Tariq 'Aziz, Na'im Haddad, Sa'd Qasim Hammudi, Shafiq al-Kamali and Nasif 'Awwad.

This delegation's participation in the conference was confined to making a few quick comments, while the "guests" monopolized almost all the time that was set aside for discussion. We must, nevertheless, commend the two unknown soldiers who made a major effort [to ensure] the success of the conference. They are Na'im Haddad and Sa'd Qasim Hammudi. The first welcomed the 1,000 guests at the airport and shook each one's hand and then spent two and a half hours delivering the document that had been prepared by the Socialist Arab Ba'th Party. He had attached it to President Saddam Husayn's Pan-Arab Proclamation. This led the chairman of the opening session, al-Shaykh 'Abd-al-Hamid al-Sa'ih to congratulate Na'im Haddad for his youth and his vigor. Sa'd Qasim Hammudi, however, stayed with the conference every step of the way from the first preparations that were made for it until the last statement that was issued. He had stayed up for a whole night with his colleagues in the Drafting Committee so as to finish the conference's final statement on schedule and to take into consideration all the remarks that were made by the thousand conferees.

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There are hundreds of thousands of Egyptians in Iraq today. They went to the land of the Tigris and the Euphrates voluntarily to take part in building modern Iraq. They entered Iraq without visas, and they live there in peace and security. They are not under the observation of the police, and there are no indications of racism. They send their savings to their families in Egypt, and they do so freely and with peace of mind.

Today, Egyptians in Iraq live in entire villages which are located all along the road between Baghdad and Mosul. Some of them are even scattered in the governorates of the north. Many of them can be found in the services sector--in hotels, construction and cafes--and in the agricultural sector.

If we know that in addition to all those Egyptians there are about 50,000 citizens of the Arab Maghreb, most of whom are from Tunisia, we can then imagine the new demographic map of the land of the Tigris and the Euphrates, and we can see it as a miniature model of the future demographic map of the united Arab nation.

With much work and few words Baghdad is offering a live model of the future. This is one of the results with which all those who attended the People's Pan-Arab Conference left.

Egyptian Discussions

If Egyptian Arabs can be found in such large numbers in Iraq, their national question, along with the question of Palestine, was one of the principal questions around which the debate was focused. Such a conference would not have been convened in the first place had it not been for the new circumstances [that emerged] on the Arab scene following the signing of the Camp David Accords.

The Egyptian problem--if it can be called that--is divided today into two parts. The first one deals with the persistent struggle which the opposition inside the country is waging to unify its ranks and to contain on all levels all the effects of the normalization [of relations]. The other part pertains to the attempts to divide the opposition abroad, which, were it to be re-united, would undoubtedly be capable of playing a prominent leadership and media role. It cannot, however, be a substitute for the internal struggle.

The delegation of the Egyptian National Movement that came from Cairo and was headed by Mr 'Abd-al-Mun'im al-Ghazali defended its cause with enthusiasm and elected a reporter for the conference. But the strong opposition front that had been formed a few weeks earlier under the name, the Egyptian National Coalition, and included different forces including the legal opposition which is led by Ibrahim Shukri, was represented by Dr 'Isamat Sayf al-Dawlah and Sabri al-Mubdi.

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As far as the opposition abroad is concerned, it appeared evident today that it had two centers. The first was proclaimed in Damascus by Lt Gen Sa'd al-Din al-Shadhli while the Baghdad Conference was in session, and the second group rallied around Mr 'Abd-al-Majid Farid.

In connection with the Baghdad meeting, meetings between the Egyptian opposition inside the country and the opposition abroad, on the one hand, and between the parties to the latter opposition, on the other, continued without interruption [for the duration of the conference]. Naturally, the point of view of the domestic opposition--and it is to a certain extent accurate--was that the real opposition was that which could be found on the principal, domestic scene. It was waging its struggle against all the manifestations of Zionism on the land and soil of Egypt and enduring at the same time the government's pressure and oppression.

In connection with the ongoing efforts to control and organize the Egyptian opposition inside Egypt and abroad, the Baghdad Conference provided ample opportunity for discussion among the members of the Egyptian delegation.

Safinaz Kazim, for example, who lives in Baghdad, is an instructor at the al-Mustansariyah University. She came to the conference dressed in black, perhaps because she was mourning Arab conditions. In one of her heated interjections she did not even spare Jamal 'Abd-al-Nasir when she said, "The seeds of thorns yield nothing but thorns!" She made that statement in the course of her discussion of al-Sadat's treason.

But soon fervor and zeal gained the better of some members of the delegation coming from Cairo. Mr Mujahid Muhammad Mujahid from the Nasirist Popular Organization in Egypt stood up to respond to Safinaz Kazim, reminding her of the esteem with which the late president was held. He said that no one was permitted to deal with Nasir's prestige in a provocative and impassioned manner.

Engineer 'Abd-al-Muhsin Hammudah, member of the Egyptian delegation defended democracy and said, "Gentlemen, the democratic factor and the fact that it has been ignored in the Arab homeland for the last 25 or 30 years is what made [our] national independence frail. I am saying that we were among 'Abd-al-Nasir's opponents, but we are now among those who grieve for him the most and who approve of his accomplishments even though they may not be frail.

"Democracy is non-existent because it was not established on a democratic foundation. Where are the socialist gains which were achieved by 'Abd-al-Nasir and were copied by some Arab countries?"

In order for us to do a better job of recreating the atmosphere of reproof and "soul searching" in which the members of the Egyptian delegation indulged themselves, let us listen to some of what was stated by the patriotic writer 'Ismat Sayf al-Dawlah:

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"If the primary perpetrator of the crime is in Cairo, he has many partners [to the crime] outside Egypt. Many of the forces who are shedding many passionate tears for Egypt, just as heirs weep for their benefactor while they calculate their share of the estate, did prepare for this horrible crime."

It seems that Sa'd Zaghlul Fu'ad misunderstood the intentions of his colleague 'Isamat Sayf al-Dawlah. He jumped up passionately afterwards and asked the chairman of the session to give him the floor so he could say that al-Sadat alone was responsible [for the crime].

This matter notwithstanding, the vitality which characterized the Egyptian delegation is a sign of health. It undoubtedly suggests that the process of clarification and examination which is presently taking place will undoubtedly strengthen the unified action struggle on the Egyptian scene inside and outside Egypt.

The Syrian Delegation and the Historic Meeting

Like the Iraqi delegation the Syrian delegation had little to say. But this spontaneous meeting itself which took place between old companies did say a great deal.

Akram al-Hurani and Salah al-Din al-Bitar sat in one row. They were surrounded by Hamud al-Shufi, Amin al-Hafiz and Ahmad Mahfal. Akram al-Hurani did not say a single word, but he continued to attend all the sessions. He applauded with enthusiasm, and he embraced all his old friends. He was exhausted by the smoke in the auditorium, by the heat and by the length of some of the sessions, but, as usual, he attended all the sessions.

Hamud al-Shufi spoke, repeating some of what he had said in the statement he had made in New York when he resigned as Syria's permanent ambassador to the United Nations, Ahmad Mahfal, the representative of the Syrian Communist Party also spoke along the same lines.

Salah al-Din al-Bitar's statement was a defense of democracy and of the human rights of Arabs. After he explained his understanding of present international relations, he alerted the conferees who were present to the necessity of giving major importance to the matter of regaining Egypt. He told [his audience] that in less than a year Egypt will have been returned to the Arab community. He concluded his address by saying, "How can we overcome the partitioning of the Arab homeland with the unity of the Arab people? We cannot overcome this unless peaceful borders are established between the Arab countries. This means that the borders must be open to people; they must be open to opinions; and they must be open to the press so that the opinions of the people of one nation may interact with those of the other. A reconciliation between regimes cannot be achieved on a national basis unless the borders between the Arab countries are opened. Opening the borders is tied to the condition that one Arab country will not conspire against another.

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"It is my opinion that this cannot be achieved unless democratic freedom is made available in every Arab country. There is one thing called freedom and one thing called democracy. We have not had either during the last 20 years, and we have been incapable [of taking action]. This thing that has been absent must be restored to us. Today, the question of unity, the question of liberating Palestine, the question of socialism and the question of non-alliance are called democracy in activist terms. It is for this reason that I go back and repeat that everything that I said today will remain mere ink on paper if we do not achieve democracy. Let me repeat that for emphasis, everything that I said today will remain ink on paper if we do not achieve democracy."

There is no doubt about the implications of the wave of applause with which Mr Salah al-Din al-Bitar's speech was received.

Saddam Husayn Honors al-Hurani and al-Bitar

The implication of President Saddam Husayn's honorable initiative was also clearer. When he addressed the conference he praised the "great teachers" who had furthered "our national and human awareness" and who had been attending the conference. He mentioned specifically Akram al-Hurani and Salah al-Din al-Bitar. At the dinner banquet which the Iraqi president hosted for the conferees, the guests noticed with delight and pleasure that the president had invited Mr al-Hurani to sit at his right and Mr al-Bitar to sit at his left. It were as though he were extending an invitation to all fighters to join forces, to reunite their ranks, to unite the nation and to dress the wounds so that a new course can be begun.

The Lebanese delegation was chaired by Dr Usamah Fakhuri who read a statement that had been prepared in advance by the National Movement. The statement defined the movement's position on the major questions which are pending on the Arab scene.

Perhaps the best statement that was delivered in the name of Lebanon was that which was delivered by Mrs Ikram Shararah, the representative of the Lebanese Feminist Community. She was one of few women who represented Arab women in the People's Pan-Arab Conference. Mrs Shararah called upon the Palestinian Resistance in Lebanon to take into consideration the sacrifices that were made by the Lebanese in the last few years and to re-evaluate some of their positions on the Lebanese scene. The Lebanese had done their utmost for the Palestinian question.

Speaking about Lebanon brings us to speaking about Palestine which was represented by a sphinx-like figure from the Fatah leadership--Hayil 'Abd-al-Hamid. The sphinx-like figure himself read the letter of thanks which the conference sent to President Saddam Husayn and to the Iraqi leadership for convening the conference. This occurred during the popular celebration that took place in the municipal auditorium at the conclusion of the conference.

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During the same celebration Mr 'Abd-al-Majid Farid read the resolutions that were issued by the conference. These were in the form of a final statement that all participating parties were to abide by.

In addition to the sphinx-like figure the Palestinians were also represented by al-Shaykh 'Abd-al-Hamid al-Sa'ih, the good son of Jerusalem. His charming manner and good management of the opening session aroused [everybody's] admiration.

Moroccan Attendance Was Strong

Almost all the parties were represented in the delegations that came from the Arab Maghreb: al-Istiqlal [Independence] Party; the Socialist Union of People's Forces [USFP] (Bouabid's group); 'Abdallah Ibrahim's group, the Tunisian General Union of Labor [UGTT]; and the Revolutionary Choice Group [led by] Muhammad al-Basri. Naturally, this strong attendance from the Maghreb (about 100 participants) had a positive effect on the atmosphere at the conference, even though there were some sharp exchanges with the Mauritanian delegation. Perhaps Algeria's absence prevented the usual sharp discussion on the Sahara question.

It is noteworthy here that the largest number of Maghreb students who are studying in any Arab country can be found in Baghdad. There are about 200 university students from the Maghreb in Baghdad, and there isn't a single one in Cairo, for example. Students from the Arab Maghreb who are in the Iraqi capital rally around a student banner which has its political, athletic and cultural activities. While the conference was in session, the students organized a lecture by Maghreb leader Mr Muhammad al-Basri who attended the meeting. For 3 hours they talked with him about conditions in Maghreb and about Arab questions.

Tunisia was represented basically by the People's Unity Movement [MUP] which is headed by Mr Ahmad Ben Salah. Ben Salah delivered a speech to the conference that agreed with what Salah al-Din al-Bitar had said.

Mas'ud al-Shabi also came from Tunisia. Among other national figures who came was Yusuf al-Ruwisi who received special honors because of his pioneering role in spreading the idea of Arab nationalism in the countries of the Arab Maghreb. Al-Ruwisi is one of those who visit the eastern part of the Arab homeland at least once every year. He considers this annual pilgrimage to the capitals of the eastern countries of the Arab world, and especially to Baghdad, to be something whose interruption he cannot accept.

How can we not mention the delegations of Somalia, Djibouti, Yemen and Sudan which came to affirm their positions of solidarity with the Arab question.

We must also mention that the conference rejected a South Yemeni proposal to replace the word, "foreign," which is mentioned in the Pan-Arab Declaration, with the word, "imperialist," because the principal purpose behind convening the conference was to check foreign intervention on Arab land in particular regardless of the identity of this foreigner and whether we consider him a friendly foreigner or a hostile one.

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And finally how can we not mention the delegations of Arab expatriates who came from Australia, Mexico, Venezuela and Brazil? How can we not mention in particular the delegate from Brazil who aroused the zeal of those present when he told them that Brazil was larger than the Arab homeland, that it was more densely populated and that it included innumerable ethnic groups, religious sects and linguistic differences?! It was, nevertheless, one country and all the people came together when the matter pertained to the country's higher interest. Why can't the Arabs have the same level of unity and awareness of their interests? The brother, of course, is coming from Brazil and has not yet "adjusted" to Arab disputes.

At any rate the People's Pan-Arab Conference has opened broad prospects for greater solidarity between nationalist forces throughout the Arab homeland. It has done more to pave the way for a deeper, a more realistic and a more democratic treatment of matters than any other popular conference did.

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AFGHANISTAN

OPERATIONS AGAINST GUERRILLAS DISCUSSED

Paris AL-WATAN AL-ARABI in Arabic 14-20 Mar 80 pp 38-39

[Interview with Defense Minister Muhamed Rafi by correspondent Badr El-Haj]

[Text] "Dar al Aman" Palace which was built by king Amanullah 58 years ago, became the Headquarters of the Afghan Defense Ministry. The huge three story palace, surrounded by gardens and watch towers, is located at the Southern part of the Afghan capital.

Before I entered the palace, I saw traces of tank shelling of the third floor. I also noticed the effects of heavy shelling on one of the military buildings near the palace. The workers were busy with the removal of traces of the shelling and with repair work.

After I was searched thoroughly by the guards, a civilian official escorted me to the third floor, where I met with Defense Minister Muhammad Rafi'. He is a young man in his early thirties, one of the military partisans (Parcham wing) who played a major role in the coup d'etat of April 1978, which ousted Muhammad Daud, and brought the People's Democratic Party (Khalq) to power.

The minister apologized for being late because of an important military meeting. He welcomed me, and expressed his readiness to answer all questions I might have. The minister spoke in Persian, and a translator from the Party translated his answers into English.

[Question] I have been told that you came out of prison recently, and that President Hafizullah Amin had sentenced you to 13 years.

[Answer] I held the position of Chief of Staff of the Tank Corps in Kabul before the April revolution. At the same time, I held the position of Deputy Commander of the Tank Corps. After the success of the April 1978 revolution, I was appointed minister of public health. Later on, as a result of differences of opinion resulting from the actions of Hafizullah Amin and his gang, I was sent to jail along with a number of our comrades. I was set free on 29 December last year, after the revolution entered a new phase.

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Afghanistan Is Under Our Control

[Question] Western newspapers' reports state that several parts of Afghanistan are not under the control of the Kabul government, and that the rebels are increasing their military attacks. What is the true situation in the regions which are not under government control?

[Answer] The truth of the matter is that this is a media campaign launched against us by American imperialism, Peking and some Arab countries.

Our armed forces succeeded in ending the Royal rule. And today, our revolution enters a new phase. This also is due to our victorious armed forces which play an important role in protecting the independence of Afghanistan, and striking at the agents of American imperialism in our country.

Naturally, their plotting takes the form of misleading information, claiming that there are parts of Afghanistan under the control of the rebels. But I would like to declare that all Afghan territories are under the control of the government. It is absolutely untrue that some Afghan regions are controlled by the rebels.

The truth of the matter is that there are only gangs of murderers, terrorists and highway robbers outside the borders, especially near the Eastern and North Eastern borders. They are armed and trained by imperialist forces, and then sent across the borders with the purpose of destruction, theft, and murder. Therefore, the Afghan armed forces are at work in this area to teach these gangs a lesson they will never forget.

[Question] There are those who say that complete military units joined the opposition after Amin was overthrown, and there are those who say that Amin enjoyed a strong support within the Afghan army.

[Answer] Being the Defense Minister, I can say that the Hafizullah Amin gang in the army was very small. This gang used to practice methods of terrorism inside the army by arresting and torturing democratic and patriotic fighters, and liquidating them physically.

It is absolutely untrue that Amin enjoyed the support of the armed forces. His power was very limited, and the claim that units of the armed forces joined the rebels is propaganda casted by imperialist sources.

There is also poisonous propaganda about a disarming of our armed forces. I already answered these unfounded claims, when I said that the situation in the armed forces is normal and regular. If our armed forces were disarmed, how could they fight the reactionary gangs which are trained and armed outside Afghanistan?

I can assure you that since I became defense minister I did not receive any reports indicating that a unit of our armed forces is fighting against us or for Hafizullah Amin.

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Operations Against Rebels Across Border

[Question] From the military point of view, how can the armed resistance which prepares for a long war be faced? Is there an intention to attack training bases in Pakistan to prevent infiltration through mountainous areas into Afghanistan?

[Answer] With regard to the first part of the question, it is clear that the arming and training of the guerrillas increased after the Afghan revolution entered its new phase. Terrorists are being trained on the other side of the borders. We have information which indicate that 50 training camps exist through coordination with Pakistan and direct supervision of the Chinese and Americans. With reference to the second part of the question concerning destroying these bases, all I can tell you is that we have undertaken successful steps and operations against these targets. I am sorry, I cannot offer more details or explanations due to security considerations, but I can say that successful operations took place and gave good results.

[Question] You said that the Americans and Chinese offer assistance to the rebels. Do you have any evidence?

[Answer] Yes, we confiscated various types of weapons and ammunitions made in China and the United States. These weapons are in hand, and you may see them at the Information Center of the Ministry of Guidance. You can also take pictures of these weapons and ammunitions.

Soviet Mission is to Confront External Intervention

[Question] News reports mentioned that there are Soviet military concentrations on the Iranian borders, and that the Soviet military existence in Afghanistan is a step on the road to the Gulf oil fields. What is your opinion as a military man?

[Answer] In reply to this question, especially with regard to the fraternal Soviet assistance, I repeat what comrade Babrak Karmal, the secretary general, said before. The assistance from our friends came as a result of an official request of the Afghan government to confront attacks launched against us from outside. This limited military assistance is in accordance with article 51 of the United Nations Charter.

But the imperialist forces are trying to characterize that assistance according to their desires and interests. Facing the external aggression is the only purpose of the Soviet military force in Afghanistan.

I mentioned to you before that our armed forces are strong enough to deter internal plots. But the limited Soviet force will handle external attacks on our country. I repeat, the misleading campaigns which say that the purpose of the limited Soviet force in Afghanistan is to draw close to the oil sources and warm waters is an invention of western sources.

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[Question] Are the armed forces sufficient to face the internal revolution?

[Answer] We had previously established party militia in all the provinces. But the erroneous practices and directions of Hafizullah Amin and his gang hindered positive results. Today we are studying this subject with great care, and we will try to benefit from the experience of the revolutions in other countries. We will establish people's militia to stand side by side with our armed forces ready to defend the independence and sovereignty of our country.

As he saw me off at the end of the interview, the young minister wished the Arabs victory over zionism and imperialism. He reiterated that the Afghan revolution stands in the same bunker with the Palestinian revolution against the zionist and imperialists.

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AFGHANISTAN

CORRESPONDENT RELATES DETAILS OF ASSASSINATION OF TARAKI

Paris AL-WATAN AL-ARABI in Arabic 14-20 Mar 80 pp 40-42

[Article by Kabul Correspondent: "The Distressful End of the Former Afghan President; Amin's Officers Strangled Taraki With a Pillow; 'We Bought a Shroud for Taraki, Dug a Grave for Him, and Cried After We Buried Him'"]

[Text] In the absence of freedom and democracy, the power struggle becomes a barbaric one governed by the law of the jungle which does not recognize ethics, conscience, or mercy. It also does not pay attention to friendship or comradeship. AL-WATAN AL-ARABI's correspondent in Kabul presents the fine details of the assassination of Nur Mohammad Taraki, the former Afghan president, quoting the minutes of the official investigation of those who ordered Taraki's liquidation.

Since Mohammad Daud overthrew his cousin King Mohammad Zahir Shah in 1972, Afghanistan is still drowning in a sea of liquidations. Mohammad Daud's residence in the Royal palace, which became the People's Palace, did not exceed 5 years when the tanks destroyed the palace ending the reign of Mohammad Daud.

The shadow of terror continued to hover over Afghanistan. Since the coup d'etat of April 1978, the Islamic and the Maoist forces opposing the regime started an armed struggle against the government in Kabul. Afghan citizens paid a death tax for this struggle which is still going on.

The struggle was not limited to the government and the opposition. It also started within the ruling party (Zhalq) 2 months after the party rose to power, through a campaign of physical liquidation of all elements of the Parcham (the Flag) Wing of the party.

In addition to the fighting against opposition forces, the discord flared up again within Khalq. It took the form of conflict between Secretary General of Afghan People's Democratic Party and Prime Minister Nur Mohammad Taraki, and his deputy Hafizullah Amin who held several political and military positions in addition to his membership of the central committee and the politbureau of the party.

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When the shooting started in the People's Palace between Mohammad Taraki supporters and supporters of Hafizullah Amin on a certain day last September, Amin announced over the radio and television that evening that Taraki was alive and well, but that due to his illness, Taraki had resigned from all his positions. Therefore, Amin assumed these positions.

A few days later, Amin announced that Mohammad Nur Taraki died from hysteria.

Did Taraki actually die from hysteria? The story of the military people accused of liquidating him differs completely from that.

Lieutenant Muhammad Abdal-Qayyum Iqbal, who was one of the People's Palace guards, says that former Afghan President Hafizullah Amin entrusted him and two other comrades with liquidating the detained Afghan President Mohammad Nur Taraki.

Iqbal says that when he was getting ready to go home on the 8th of October, the telephone rang. When he picked up the telephone, the caller was Lieutenant Habazad, commander of the guard of the Peoples Palace, who asked Iqbal to go immediately to his office for an important matter.

Iqbal continues: "When I entered the office, I apologized for wearing civilian clothes, but he said that this was not a problem. At this point, Lieutenant Wadud came in on a similar request from Lieutenant Habazad. Lieutenant Ruzi, the officer in charge of the political police also entered the office. As to Wadud, he was officer in charge of communications.

"After a short while, the commander said in a staid voice: 'You should expect things like this. They are natural in the march of the revolution.' We thought that he meant that a decision had been made to convert us into a commando unit, and that we would be sent to one of the provinces. But he interrupted our thinking, and said: 'A decision has been issued by the Secretary General of the Afghan People's Democratic Party and by the Politbureau to liquidate comrade Nur Mohammad Taraki.' He ordered us to carry out the decision as we are party comrades who obey party orders issued by our higher commandes.

"I requested to see the text of the decision, but he said that 'Trust is the basis of our dealings,' and scolded me for my behavior. He added: 'Taraki became an ordinary person after he was relieved of all his positions. The decision to liquidate him was issued by the party, and we have to carry it out.'"

Iqbal continues his exciting story, saying: "We asked him if the news will be announced over the radio. He replied: 'Everything is arranged. Have no fears. We will announce the matter over the radio our own way.' He ordered us to keep party secrets as disciplined party members. Before he ended his conversation, he demanded that Lieutenant Ruzi go see the chief of staff to receive certain instructions.

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"We all left the office of the commander, and as soon as I reached my office, he called me again and asked me to see him. When I went to his office, he handed me 500 Afghan rupees, and asked me to go buy a shroud and return immediately. Thereupon, I bought a shroud, which was a piece of white cloth, and returned. The chief of police put it in his desk drawer. Lieutenant Ruzi then came in, and said that the instructions of the chief of staff are to bury Taraki next to his brother who died a year ago. He added that Lieutenant Habazad knows where the grave is.

"At this point Habazad asked Lieutenant Ruzi to tell the chief of staff that he did not accompany those who buried Taraki's brother, and that the chief of staff himself was among those who went to the grave. Ruzi evaded the mission, and excused himself. He said that he had to go to attend a ceremony for the distribution of Party ID cards to the troops, and that he had to be there, because he was the political officer."

Iqbal adds: "Habazad here asked me to inform the chief of staff that he does not know exactly the location of the grave. When I informed the chief of staff of that, he told me that the grave was near a big tree next to old graves. I was ordered to tell Lieutenant Habazad to go and search for the grave of Taraki's brother in Kol-i Abashkan [phonetic] Cemetery. When I returned to the commander's office, Habazad was there waiting for me. My commander told me that he was going with Habazad to attend the ID cards ceremony. I had no choice but to go and look for the grave myself.

"When I arrived at the cemetery, I asked two old people who were sitting by the grave. One of them showed me the grave. When I told the commander the story, he asked me if anyone knew about the matter. I told him no, except those two old people. He said: 'There are many members of the intelligence service who work in that area. If they should learn about the matter, you will stand martial trial.' I returned to my office.

"Once again, Habazad called me into his office at 8:30 pm. There, I found Lieutenant Ruzi. The guard commander told us: 'Since Lieutenant Wadud is on duty now, you have to carry out his orders.' We left the office, and Lieutenant Ruzi drove us in a jeep. We left the barracks toward Jisr Mahmoud Khan. I asked Lieutenant Ruzi about our destination. He said that the commander asked him to go to Tallat al-Shuhada [Martyrs' Hill] to pick up some troops, who would dig the grave. The jeep stopped in the area, and Ruzi entered one of the buildings, while I waited for him in the jeep. Half an hour later, an officer I did not know came out. The officer, accompanied by two soldiers, got into the jeep. Ruzi talked to the officer privately. Later on, I learned that the officer was a member of a special unit of the guards, and that he and Ruzi had waited for a telephone call inside the building.

"Ruzi, the officer, and I proceeded to Tallat al-Shuhada, and entered the guard barracks. The officer selected four of his men who brought picks and shovels with them. He said that since he could not get a stretcher at this hour, we had to obtain one quickly from one of the depots. But Lieutenant Ruzi

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said that he would personally solve the problem, and that he would use steel plates which we had brought to the military workshop to write slogans on.

"Ruzi went to the workshop, took two plates and put them in the jeep with the help of two soldiers. He asked me to accompany him to the grave to mark it, so that the soldiers could start digging. Then, we returned to the palace where we found the guards commander alone in his office reading some reports. He asked us how things were going. Ruzi said the grave was being dug, and that everything was fine. The commander then said: 'Lieutenant Wadud left already, and you should catch up with him.'

"Ruzi and I left the office. Up to this point, I did not know where President Taraki was being detained. I asked Ruzi who told me that Taraki was at Kuthi Pasha Jail. When we reached the jail entrance, we saw Lieutenant Wadud waiting for us at the stairs of the Western entrance. Ruzi immediately asked Wadud: 'Where is he?' Wadud nodded his head toward the inside and said: 'He is in the room.'"

Strangling of Taraki

Officer Iqbal continues his exciting story, saying: "The three of us, Ruzi, Wadud and I, entered the building. Ruzi was carrying keys in his pocket. He used one of them to open a door. We climbed the stairs, and entered the hall upstairs. Ruzi knocked on a door but no one answered. Thereupon, we entered a side door and went to the room where Taraki was detained.

"When we entered the room we found Taraki sitting with his clothes on. Ruzi told him that he should accompany us to another place. Taraki agreed, and asked us to help him carry his cases. Ruzi answered. 'Do not worry about the cases. You should come with us first. We will take care of the cases later.'"

Iqbal says: "It seems that President Taraki realized that the end was close. He picked up a small wallet, opened it, and picked up some money. Taraki said: 'These are 45,000 Afghan rupees, and here are some other personal things. Please give them to my wife, if she is still alive.' Ruzi told him: 'Leave the case here, and we will take care of the matter later on.'

"Taraki walked, and Ruzi followed him. Wadud carried the white shroud. All of us went down to the ground floor. Lieutenant Ruzi asked Taraki to enter one of the rooms. Up to this point, only Ruzi knew how the execution was to take place. In the lower room, Taraki gave his wrist watch to Lieutenant Ruzi saying: 'This is Hafizullah Amin's gift, return it to him.' Ruzi took the watch and put it aside on the table. Then Taraki took his party ID card, and gave it to Ruzi, telling him: 'This is for Hafizullah Amin too.' Ruzi put it next to the watch."

Iqbal says: "Ruzi was the one who gave us orders. He ordered me to tie up Taraki's hands, and I did. Then he ordered Taraki to stretch on the table. Taraki did. Ruzi went to lock the outside door.

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"At this time Taraki asked Wadud for a glass of water. Wadud asked me to go out, and get a glass. When I started filling the glass, Ruzi saw me and yelled at me, saying: 'I believe that you are late, return to your place.' I returned to the room. Wadud asked me why I did not bring the water. I said that Ruzi had prevented me. When Wadud tried, Ruzi prevented him also. I do remember that I asked Lieutenant Ruzi the following day, 'Why did you not permit us to give Taraki water? It was his last demand.' He smiled, and said: 'I did not want to disturb him after drinking the water.'

"Ruzi suddenly fell on Taraki, closed his mouth firmly with his palm, ordered Wadud to hold Taraki's legs, and ordered me to hold his knees tightly. Then he covered Taraki's face with a pillow, and pressed hard. The body of the old president quivered for a few minutes. Then the motion died gradually. When the body calmed down, we took off our hands while cold sweat dripped off our foreheads. Ruzi lifted the pillow, and we looked at the face of the man who was alive a few minutes ago. His eyes were closed as if he were asleep. His face was pale, with a tint of blue. President Nur Mohammad Taraki (62 years) was finished.

"We wrapped the body in the shroud, put it in the jeep outside, and left the jail. We were followed by another car belonging to the tourism office and occupied by a number of guards. When we reached Kol-i Abashkan Cemetery, we transferred the body to the grave, put the steel plates on top of it, shoveled in the dirt, and put a stone on the grave. When we finished the mission, Ruzi informed the guard commander by radio that the mission was over. The commander ordered us back. When we arrived, he was furious with Ruzi, and asked him: 'Why did you contact me over the radio? You should not have done so at all.'

"After a short period of silence Habazad called somebody I did not know. Later on, I learned that Habazad had called Ali Salih, the Police Chief. Habazad asked him to send a few of his men to guard the grave, lest somebody should steal the body, although the area is under tight surveillance by the intelligence service (Kamm).

"When the guard commander finished his telephone conversation, we all burst into tears. He angrily said: 'You should not be emotional. You carried out the decision of the party, the Politbureau, and the Revolutionary Council.' He asked us to have dinner with him, but we excused ourselves and everyone went to his office."

Habazad's Confessions

This was the story of Lieutenant Iqbal, extracted from the official investigation. But what is the story of Lieutenant Habazad, the Guard Commander who issued the orders to strangle Taraki on orders from his boss Amin? Habazad says: "After my return from Havana, where I accompanied President Taraki, he called me in, and informed me that he sensed that chaos had developed within the ranks of the party during his absence. Since I was Commander of the People's Palace Guards, he asked me to tighten security for his

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personal protection. I thanked the president and left. I immediately informed the the officers of the need to give instructions to the guards to be more alert, especially with regard to the security of the president. I also ordered the officers to cancel soldiers leaves until further notice.

"Later on, I learned that President Taraki called the Chief of Staff Mohammad Yacoub, the Air Force Commander, and the Air Defense Commander for the same reason. On the same day I informed the officers under my command of the new orders, Hafizullah Amin, the defense minister called me into his office. He told me that he had learned that President Taraki had called me into his office. Amin asked me: 'What did the president want from you? And what did you two talk about?' I told him that the president wanted me to tighten security measures related to his personal protection. Amin also asked me whether Taraki asked me about him. My reply was negative. Amin then asked his assistant to call in Yacoub, the Chief of Staff. Amin ordered me to leave.

"When I returned to my office, I realized that there was conflict between the two men. I was at a loss, what could I do? It was impossible to mediate between the two men who are at the highest level in the land. Therefore, I informed one of the President's assistants of the matter, but he told me that these are secondary matters, and I should not pay attention to them.

"When Hafizullah Amin assumed power he transferred Taraki and his family members to their house, and nobody was hurt. But when the Politbureau decided to assassinate Taraki, Amin ordered Ruzi the political officer of the guard, to transfer Taraki to another place. The following day, Hafizullah Amin and the Chief of Staff called me in, and told me that all matters related to Taraki from now on are the responsibility of Lieutenant Ruzi. The following day, some officers who support Hafizullah Amin, such as Shah Jihan, Muhamed Nur and Fattah, were appointed to guard Taraki and his family.

"Anyone who wanted to see Taraki had to obtain permission from Hafizullah Amin, Assadullah Amin or the Chief of Staff. However, Assadullah Amin and the Chief of Staff were not in a position to give such permission without the approval of Hafizullah Amin.

"After 2 days, all Taraki's belongings were taken from the Palace to another place in a truck. Taraki was transferred to Kuthi Pasha jail and remained there until he was executed.

"With regard to Taraki's execution, the Chief of Staff told us that the Soviets suggested that they were not ready to receive Taraki in case Amin ousted him from the party on the basis of clear charges."

This was Habazad's story. But what will history say?

What will history say about the comrades who liquidated each other, using methods that human, ethical or party principles cannot approve of?

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IRAQ

DETERIORATING RELATIONS WITH IRAN ANALYZED

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 11-17 Apr 80 pp 32-33

[Article: "As Relations Between Baghdad and Tehran Deteriorate, Iran Will Be the Loser in Any Military Confrontation with Iraq"]

[Text] The situation between Iraq and Iran is tense and extremely serious. If Tehran is enduring the consequences of escalating the tension in the last few weeks, it will face worse consequences if it chooses the road of military confrontation with Iraq.

Relations between Iraq and Iran have deteriorated to their lowest point since the outbreak of the Iranian Revolution more than a year ago.

In the past few days both sides have recalled their diplomats. It has been said that both sides had rushed some of their armed forces to the borders in the aftermath of two criminal incidents that took place in Baghdad last week. A public celebration was interrupted by a bomb that was thrown [in the crowd]. It killed one Iraqi young man and two young women. Some people were wounded, and among them was a senior Iraqi official, Mr Tariq 'Aziz, deputy prime minister and member of the Iraqi Revolutionary Leadership Council.

During the popular funeral procession that was held for the young man and the young woman, the mourners were subjected to another criminal act when a similar bomb was thrown in their midst. Students and young people surrounded an Iranian school and a number of homes where Iranians live in the area of al-Waziriyah after they became suspicious that the bomb had been thrown from one of the corners of the school.

The two incidents left a deep impression on citizens. From the first instant people accused the agents of the Iranian regime which has not ceased to show its positions that are hostile to Iraq and its existing regime.

One of the citizens who was most affected by what had taken place was the Iraqi president himself, Saddam Husayn. He visited the wounded in the hospital to reassure himself about their condition, and, in a wave of passion, he pledged and swore to God that the blood of the dead and the wounded would not be wasted. He said, "I swear to God and I swear by every grain in Iraqi soil that the pure blood which was shed in al-Mustansariyah will not have been shed in vain!"

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It seems that the president was referring in particular to Mr Tariq 'Aziz since he is one of the prominent leaders of the Iraqi revolution and regime. Furthermore, he also enjoys the confidence and the affection of President Saddam Husayn, of the party leaders and of the party's popular bases.

Tehran Escalates Its Provocations

The two criminal incidents were preceded by [actions from] Tehran to escalate the tension in official and unofficial relations with the Arab countries, and especially with its neighboring countries on the Gulf and chiefly Iraq.

This escalation manifested itself in provocative statements that were issued by senior officials in the Iranian regime. These statements revealed a spirit of hostility towards Arab regimes and Arab citizens for no other reason than that the Arabs had not yet copied the accomplishments of the Iranian Revolution and had had a lukewarm reaction to the sacking of the U.S. embassy in Tehran and the detention of its diplomats by a mob. This detention is unacceptable by diplomatic standards or by [standards of] humane treatment. The operation itself did provide an opportunity for the western propaganda, media and the forces of Zionism to defame Islam, Islamic ideals and Islamic principles.

The fact is that relations between Baghdad and Tehran have not been good since the establishment of Khomeyni's regime in Iran. The head of that regime and its ayatollahs have adopted a hostile position towards Iraq. They may have been moved to do so because the Iraqi regime has been intent on affirming its own Arab identity and affiliation. These two matters arouse in the Persian Iranians feelings that go back, as Saddam Husayn said, to past historical epochs which began when the Persian Empire fell to the Moslem Arabs who began their strong victory with the famous battle of al-Qadisiyah.

Tehran's Failure to Agitate Shi'ite Iraqis

It seems that the Iranian regime imagined that it was capable of turning sectors of Shi'ite Iraqis against the regime in Baghdad. But the conditions of 2 million Shi'ite Arabs who live in Ahvaz under Khomeyni's regime were not better than the conditions they had in the shadow of Khomeyni's family [sic?].

The Shi'ite Iraqis saw that their Arab brothers in Ahvaz were being subjected to maltreatment, and they were being denied their request to maintain their Arab personality and their Arab heritage. This maltreatment reached the point of having the militia of the regime (the revolutionary guard) kill young Arab men openly in the streets or execute them after superficial trials. Their religious leader, Ayatollah Khaqani, was exiled to Qom where he was detained in a residence near that of Khomeyni.

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The regime of the ayatollahs was in fact taken by surprise when the popular movement did occur, not in South Iraq, but rather in the Arab area of Ahvaz. This is the Arab area that is rich in oil fields; it is the area which the oppressors of Iran subjugated by force.

Perhaps the other reason why the revolutionary appeals that were made from Tehran were received with little enthusiasm by the Arabs is the fact that the Iranian Revolution was not able to present itself, either through its men, its conduct or its "accomplishments," as a model of a genuine revolution, or rather, an Islamic Revolution that can be followed.

What heightened this feeling is the fact that the ayatollahs deprived the Palestinian Revolution of an historic opportunity when they ignored the mediation [efforts] of Palestinian leaders for the release of the hostages. The success of such a mediation effort--had it been carried out--would have constituted a strong moral and diplomatic support for the Palestinians at a time when they had the most need for this support amidst the hustle and bustle of diplomatic initiatives on the international scene. This may have had a strong effect on Washington and in American circles which are still resisting recognition of the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

As the activities of the Arabs in Ahvaz increased, the Tehran regime became suspicious that Iraq was supporting these activities and was sympathizing with the Arabs there.

More than one attempt was made to restore relations between the two countries to their normal state. But the centers of power in Tehran, in the absence of a responsible government and given the weakness of the figurehead elected president Abol Hasan Bani-Sadr, were returning to their former course of making contradictory, provocative statements against the Arabs and against Iraq.

It was self-evident that after Bani-Sadr made statements affirming Iran's refusal to withdraw its troops from the three islands it has been occupying near the Straits of Hormuz that Iraq sent a message to Dr Waldheim, the secretary general of the United Nations reminding him that Iran was occupying the aforementioned islands; that these islands were Arab islands; and that Iran must withdraw from them.

The Military Superiority of the Iraqis

Observers here think that Iran would be selecting a road that is fraught with danger if it resorts to a style of terrorism or if it brandishes its armed force to solve its problems with its neighbor, Iraq.

In this regard observers in Iraq refer to the major difference between the two countries in military preparedness and in political stability in spite of the fact that Iran's population is three times that of Iraq.

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It is estimated that there are about 222,000 soldiers in the Iraqi forces. They are provided with advanced modern weapons in their armored division, in their air force and their air defense. They have gained considerable knowledge and expertise through their participation in a principal way on the Syrian front in the fighting against Israel during the October War.

The Iranian forces, however, which were estimated to be at 415,000 soldiers during the administration of the Shah, have been seriously impaired during the administration of Khomeyni. Most [military] leaders have been executed, and [army] officers have fled. Sixty percent of the soldiers have relieved themselves of their duty to serve or to abide by the discipline. Iran also lacks maintenance services for the weapons it owns, and it also lacks spare parts.

From Arab Ahvaz: the Separatist Oil

News from Tehran indicates that the oil refining process in the two refineries at Abadan and Karamanshah has come to a standstill early this week as a result of the fact that the pumps have been blown out.

There is increasing worry in the Iranian capital over the possibility that the oil sector will be affected by all the political disturbances that the country is experiencing.

The National Oil Company oversees all of Iran's production of this material, and daily revenues for this company amount to 80 million dollars.

Although the National Iranian Oil Company is the only company that was not affected by the local disturbances, it is at the present time subject to numerous problems. One of the first indications of such problems is the 30 percent decline in oil production.

The Iranian Oil Company is headed by Mr Ali Akbar Moinfar (50 years), the enthusiastic Iranian minister of oil. But those who are informed about affairs in the Iranian capital believe that Moinfar's future itself is in jeopardy and that it is unstable especially following the strong rumors that he may be replaced by Ali Rida Nubari (32 years), the president of Iran's Central Bank and one of the persons who are close to Abol Hasan Bani-Sadr, the president of the republic.

Moinfar's problems began when he visited the workers at the Abadan Refinery and listened to their complaints. The workers were angry when they received him.

It is expected that the current month will be a difficult period with regard to the nature of work relations. Negotiations are underway to sign the contract for wages for the next 3 years. This will be especially difficult after the labor union organizations that operated during the Shah's administration were destroyed and replaced by three new labor organizations.

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It seems that the Iranian company is facing problems from the separatist Arab workers in the province of Ahvaz (Arabistan) which is considered one of the largest areas of oil production in Iran. Although the company is prepared to repair all the ordinary damages that occur in the oil pipeline and can do so even without the help of foreign experts, these problems must also be taken into consideration. Those Arabs make up a high percentage of the oil workers there.

A simple review of the daily Iranian newspapers will show that a bomb explodes every week. One time, for example, such an explosion led to the destruction of six pipes and to a fire that firefighters had to make a tremendous effort to bring under control.

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SAUDI ARABIA

ROYAL FAMILY, RELIGIOUS ESTABLISHMENT PONDER FUTURE CHANGES

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 28 Mar-3 Apr pp 19-22

[Article: "What Is Royal Family's Role in Dialogue Being Witnessed by Saudi Society; No Backing Down on Development and no Slowdown in Development Plans; 300 Billion Dollars for Five-Year Plan But 2 Million Arab and Foreign Workers Are Social Problem"]

[Text] The Saudi society is witnessing a vital and calm dialogue in which various social, professional and religious organizations and groups are taking part. The goal is to find the ideal way for development and change at the social, economic and political levels. But what is the role of the royal family, the religious establishment, the technocratic groups and the youth generations in this dialogue?

The political editor has written:

Saudi Arabia is not an ordinary state in the Arab chain. Since the mid-1960's, Saudi Arabia has had special Arab, Islamic and international importance.

Under the leadership of King Faysal and after the departure of King Sa'ud from the throne, Saudi Arabia emerged as a leader of the conservative direction which was fighting the broad radical current led by the departed Egyptian President Jamal 'Abd-al-Nasir.

Saudi Arabia underlined its Arab role and influence with the evacuation of the Egyptian forces from Yemen and with the sudden departure of 'Abd-al-Nasir in the early 1970's. The silent Saudi diplomacy still maintains its activity throughout the Arab homeland, despite King Faysal's sudden departure in 1975.

Rather, the Saudi diplomacy has become more flexible and more capable of movement. It can now embark on dialogue without the complexes of radical countries such as Algeria and Libya. What has helped Saudi Arabia in this regard is its breaking away at the right time from the policy of al-Sadat which has completely isolated him from the Arab body.

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The Islamic role stems primarily from the fact that the land in which Islam rose is an integral part of the kingdom's territories and the fact that the sacred monuments of Islam are still present with all their beauty, glory and majesty on this land which is the pilgrimage site of hundreds of thousands of Muslims every year.

This role is bolstered by the fact that the Islamic system relies essentially on a puritanic Islamic movement that emerged in the 18th century and wanted to restore to Islam its original purity and essence. Thus, the kingdom considers itself an Islamic state primarily and it is through this consideration that it extends its strong bridges with the Islamic countries.

As for the international role with the ever-rising importance, it is due, as is well known, to the vast oil wealth with which God has blessed this part of the Arab homeland. Oil is not only a source of energy supplying the industrial world with the means of life. The increase in oil revenues has given Saudi Arabia an influential financial and economic role. Saudi investments are made in the U. S. and European financial channels. The transfer of a part of these investments from one channel to another or from one currency to another is enough to send shivers in the financial circles and tremors in the political circles.

Moreover, the immense Saudi spending on the economic development plans attracts big competition and rivalry among the industrial firms of the world to win the implementation contracts. This spending in itself has come to constitute a source of national income in more than one western and Asian country.

The world's interest in this Arab country has been intensified by the country's strategic location which overlooks several seas in which the oil shipping lanes run. In these seas, at their entrances and outside them, a race is currently in progress between the two super powers to amass their fleets and to gain naval and air bases and facilities.

Effect of External and Domestic Events

The political and military developments experienced by the area surrounding the Arabian Peninsula and extending from the Horn of Africa to Central Asia, including South Yemen and Iran, have cast their shadows and reflections on the Arab area, including Saudi Arabia.

Ignoring these events and the domestic incidents that have accompanied them, foremost of which was the storming of the mosque of Mecca at the end of last year, is a kind of obstinacy that neither the observer nor those with the power of making the political decision can afford when they evaluate the entire situation or determine the course or the policy that may be followed in the future.

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But there are in fact a number of domestic Saudi circumstances that impose themselves in a manner that forms in itself reasons for social and political transformation that surpass by far the external reasons or such a transient incident as the Mecca incident.

Development, especially the industrial programs, has carried Saudi Arabia in one leap from a simple bedouin society into a modern society. But this enormous leap, realized by the allocation of the larger part of the oil revenues for spending on development, has been accompanied by and has generated numerous social problems and concerns.

The fact is that these problems are a normal thing faced by any developing society that adopts the means of economic development. The Saudi regime itself speaks, despite its customary information conservatism, with a kind of frankness and even through its top officials.

The regime seems determined to meet the needs of economic development in a manner that allows this development to be accompanied by parallel social and political development.

But what are the social problems emanating from the rapid economic development? How is the dialogue and the discussion seeking to find solutions for these problems proceeding? And what are these problems?

Dialogue on Development Plans

Saudi Arabia has witnessed in recent months an argument at the top political and administrative levels on whether it should proceed in the ambitious development plans or whether it should slow down until the problems created by the rapid development are absorbed.

However, this argument has not prevented preparation of the third five-year plan which will be announced in the coming month of May. The unofficial figures declared make this the biggest special development plan in the entire world with allocations ranging from 275 billion to 310 billion dollars.

Most of the spending will be channelled toward relatively new spheres. Considering that industrialization and the construction of airports and ports consumed most of the expenditures in the second (1975-80) five-year plan, agriculture and the rural areas will be developed, city conditions will be improved, national manpower will be trained, and public services (roads, electricity and water) and social services will be expanded, in addition to spending on hydrocarbon projects and developing the mining industries.

The mere announcement about the date for presenting this development plan indicates that the dialogue has been settled in favor of continuing the rapid economic development and accepting all its social results, including the negative aspects generated by this development.

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This announcement also constitutes a rejection of all the arguments to slow down implementation of the growth and development projects, considering that Islam is qualified, in the view of the majority, to meet the requirements of change and modernization without losing its genuine character, its tolerant principles and its deep roots in the souls of the Saudis.

The officials have found that there can be no backing down on continued growth and development even if there were a desire for such backing down because implementation of the development programs has reached an advanced stage, because the programs are interconnected and integrated, because a long time has been spent studying them and because tens of billions of dollars have been spent on them.

Development has become a principle, a faith and a daily concern of the Saudi technocrats who received their higher studies and their technical training in the industrial world and who are eager to see economic and social development in their country rivalling and keeping up pace with similar development in the advanced societies.

One of the motives for speeding up the development and for (turning on the boilers) is the issue of meeting the requirements of the post-oil era. The Saudis want to diversify the sources of their revenues and to build a huge industrial base fit to replace with its production and revenues the oil revenues in the future so that they may preserve the high standard of living that they have realized.

However, the issue of oil with its two main branches, namely production and prices, has also been the subject of an extensive exchange of opinion recently at the level of the political and administrative leaderships. It is no secret that there have been varying opinions on whether Saudi Arabia should persist in its current average daily production (9.5 million barrels) or whether it should go back to the previous average existing before the Iranian revolution (8 million barrels).

It is also no secret that there are those who have urged reducing production even further (6 million barrels) and called for a large increase in prices as long as the United States has not fulfilled its promises to find a way for a just and honorable solution for the Middle East issue.

However, it can be said that oil production will continue at its present level in the foreseeable future and until the delicate studies on the issues of production and prices are completed in light of the requirements of financing the ambitious development plan.

Two Million Arabs and Foreigners

Now, what are the prominent social problems faced by Saudi Arabia and resulting from implementation of the development and growth projects?

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Perhaps the most prominent of these issues is the issue of Arab and foreign labor. There are nearly 2 million Arab and foreign workers in a country whose population does not exceed 10 million. There are one million Arabs, half of them from Yemen and the rest are Egyptians, Palestinians, Lebanese, Syrians, Jordanians and Algerians. The foreigners have been attracted by the oil investments and have come from Pakistan, India, the Philippines, Afghanistan and South Korea.

This immense influx has created tension in the social relations as a result of the different customs and traditions. It has also demanded urgent requirements, such as providing housing, food and the means of transportation.

Measures were taken recently to curtail intensification of the negative aspects of the foreign labor problem. There is a tendency at present to train Saudi cadres to replace a part of the foreign cadres. In any case, any social, and perhaps political, measures must take into consideration the problem of the Arab and foreign workers.

There is also the problem of the nomadic tribes. The government has been able to resettle the larger part of the members of these tribes whose numbers are estimated, unofficially, at more than one-half a million people. However, the sudden change from a nomadic society to an urban society has created psychological and social problems. Despite this, these citizens are displaying a great ability to overcome the problem and to adapt to their new and settled situation.

Education, along with industrialization, constitutes the other prominent feature of growth and development in the modern Saudi society. One-half the Saudi population is of youth age. There are 1.5 million male and female students in the elementary and secondary schools, 50,000 students distributed over six modern universities and 15,000 students studying at U. S. and European universities. There are also thousands of graduates who now occupy important positions in the government administrations and agencies after having returned from abroad with high diplomas and university degrees.

The Saudi technocrats are very enthusiastic for the development and growth projects adopted by their government. They participate in these projects with their experience and knowledge and they believe that these projects must be accompanied by social development so that a socio-economic balance may be established and may make it possible to avoid the political side effects of development.

Like any economy that is open to the world economy and that imports from it and exports to it at a large scale, some of the negative aspects of the capitalist economy have been reflected in the Saudi economy, led by the aspect of inflation (high prices).

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Currency liquidity is available to the Saudis but the currency's purchasing power is deteriorating as a result of inflation. This is where the need has risen for a more fair distribution of the wealth. The Saudi officials say in this regard that they follow King Faysal's steps in defining the goal of the development plans. The ultimate social goal of the development plan is to realize this distribution without undermining the principle of the free economy and of free investment.

Royal Family Maintains Balance

But where does the Saudi royal family stand in the middle of this economic and social thrust created by the industrialization and development and in the middle of the mutual calls and dialogues?

The royal family is not a small family. It includes, as Crown Prince Fahd says, 4,000 members. It is, therefore, closer to a tribe.

This family--like any royal family with such numbers and with such a position as the one that the Saudi family occupies in the political system and with the influential administrative, economic and social positions it holds--has mutual [mutabadalah] opinions and viewpoints.

Perhaps the observer is astonished by the Saudi royal family's ability to reconcile these opinions and viewpoints within the framework of dialogue inside the family--a dialogue conducted in the "family democracy" way, if we may use the phrase, which permits the multiplicity of opinions that ultimately end up in a unified position expressed by the head of the regime who is also the head of the family, i.e. the king himself.

The fact is that the Saudi family performs at present the role of a balancing factor between the Saudi circles participating in the country's economic and social dialogue. This family is the side that reaches the political decision through this dialogue and then puts it in its legal and executive form.

Under the new circumstances and changes, this family has been able to bolster its solidarity, its cohesion and its support for King Khalid. In the past few months, King Khalid toured the various parts of the vast kingdom to establish direct dialogue with the various sectors of the citizens, administrators, governors and province amirs.

As for Prince Fahd, the crown prince and the first deputy prime minister, he is, in addition to his main task of participating directly in making the political decision, in charge of managing the daily affairs of government.

There is no doubt that the royal family's role as an effective factor in maintaining the balance between the supporters of rapid economic and social change and the supporters of a slow change taking the religious

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traditions into consideration is an extremely important role, especially since the effective decision depends on this role when the viewpoints clash.

Perhaps the most significant task undertaken by the king and the group of princes assisting him is, in addition to making the political decision, to encourage the incentives of change and development within the sound Islamic framework and in accordance with the tolerant principles of the Shari'a.

This is an extremely difficult and delicate task. But King Khalid and Prince Fahd have proven throughout the past 5 years since the departure of King Faysal that they are capable of adopting the decision and of taking the right initiatives with the necessary speed and flexibility.

In the wake of the incident at the venerable mosque of Mecca, there was greater stress and stronger determination to respond to the religious establishment's demands for confronting any aspects that this establishment does not view as compatible with its interpretation of the religious principles.

The religious establishment holds a venerable position in the eyes of both the regime and of the citizens. It has broad powers. For example, regaining the venerable mosque of Mecca [from the hands of its captors] had to wait for an interpretation [fatwa] from the Council of Ulema.

At the same time and while stressing the importance of safeguarding and entrenching the principles of the orthodox faith, there has been a clear tendency to develop the system of government so that a stronger and more organized connection may be established between the political decision makers heading the system and the forces distributed among society's various sectors, beginning with the religious establishment and ending with the generations of youth and including the tribal chiefs, the technocrats and the administrators.

Moving Force Behind Development

A quick review of Prince Fahd's views on reform, development and change embodies a model of the thinking of the middle-aged generation of the ruling Saudi family and, consequently, reflects what is in the mind and heart of the Saudi decision maker at the top levels.

The crown prince displays enthusiasm for proceeding with the growth and development plans with all their momentum and thrust. He is also enthusiastic for "gradual" political development, as he has said in his recent statements.

He even has ideas concerning Islam's social and political responsibilities in the modern age but admits that he is reluctant to present them. Perhaps

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he is waiting for a major conference of Muslim ulema to present these ideas. He concludes from the opinions of the men of religion what he deems suitable to adopt at the level of government, administration and legislation in a country like Saudi Arabia which is strongly attached to the religious principles and to the venerable Sunna.

Prince Fahd reflects the extent of the Saudi regime's willingness to listen to the various opinions and points out that fanatic strictness in applying the faith produces the opposite of the desired result. He even goes to an extreme degree of frankness when he says that there are those who demand that we apply the rules of the faith more strictly whereas others accuse us of failure.

However, it seems that King Khalid, Prince Fahd and the group of princes in the decision-making circle have made up their mind to introduce political changes compatible with the economic change and responding in one way or another to the social development requirements--all this without swerving from the principles laid down by Islam that are still applied in this Islamic Arab country.

A quick review of the statements and decisions made so far on developing the system of government indicates that the first goal is to "codify" the institutions or, to put it in other words, to issue firm legislations, rules and regulations through which the executive, legislative and administrative authorities emerge more clearly defined.

The steps declared so far may not mean a long stride in the western sense of democracy. But they are, in the Saudi calculations, a major first step toward giving the Saudi state a more modern and developed from responding more strongly to the needs of the modern society that has arisen in the kingdom.

The royal announcement issued last week defines three main tasks for the committee formed under the chairmanship of Prince Nayif ibn 'Abd-al-'Aziz, the minister of interior:

Drawing up a basic law of government [constitution].

Drawing up a law for the consultative council.

Drawing up a districts law.

To make the picture clearer to the non-Saudi Arab reader, it can be said that the "basic law of government" means a constitution and, that the consultative council means a parliament. However, the use of these two words has been avoided because the constitution in an Islamic state is, in fact, the Koran.

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Regardless of the difference in verbal names, Saudi Arabia will shortly have a constitution that emanates from the principles of Islam as stated in the venerable Koran. The fact is that formulation of the basic law has made long strides. The committee formed has to study this draft and put it in its final form.

No significant information has been available yet on the contents of the law--constitution. All that can be said about it at this early stage is that it will be a faithful "legal translation" of the reality of the regime and of the Islamic principles on which it is founded.

As for the consultative council, or the parliament, it is expected that it will include between 50 and 70 members representing the influential Saudi factions and sectors, including the royal family, the religious establishment, the technocrats, the intellectuals and the young generations.

However, the percentage allocated for every faction in the new "parliament" is not definite and is subject to the opinion and decision of King Khalid and of his top advisers and aides among the princes and the officials--a decision which will be made on the basis of the study to be presented by the formed committee.

It is most likely that the members of the consultative council will be chosen by selection and not election. Perhaps the wisdom of relying on appointment by selection is due to the eagerness to have the council representing all the forces [fa'aliyat] in the Saudi society, especially since the municipal elections experiment has not been encouraging because, according to the words of Prince Fahd, it brought those who have the money to the membership of the municipal councils.

Perhaps it is axiomatic that the consultative council members will be appointed rather than elected, especially since Saudi Arabia has not yet known partisanship and political and unionist forces in their clear and definite sense.

But how far will the powers and responsibilities of the consultative council go?

Here also no accurate information is available. It is certain that the council will undertake a definite task of participating in legislation. Perhaps it is unlikely that its powers will include giving a vote of confidence to the cabinet or dismissing it.

In any case, Saudi Arabia seems to be today on the threshold of important constitutional and legislative steps which will see the light in the few coming months. It is natural that gradual steps do not please some people who are in a hurry and who aspire for quicker steps in building the institutions of government. However, the importance of these steps lies in the

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fact that they have put Saudi Arabia on the right path that leads to giving this Islamic Arab country a more modern structure that responds to the needs and requirements of the modern society without losing its genuine character and its absolute abidance by the principles of the faith and by its tolerant Shari'a.

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SAUDI ARABIA

PLANNED GOVERNMENTAL, ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES DETAILED

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 28 Mar-3 Apr 80 pp 18-19

[Article: "For First Time in Saudi Arabia's History: Basic Law (Constitution), Consultative Council (Parliament) and System for Administrative Districts; 'They Shall Consult on Their Affairs;' Islam Remains as System of Government and of Society and as Source of Legislation"]

[Text] Riyadh--What does drawing up a constitution for government in Saudi Arabia mean? What is the role and what are the powers of the new consultative council? Moreover, what are the causes and motives that have urged Saudi Arabia to develop its political and administrative system? How far will the new development go in both form and content? What is the religious establishment's position toward the dialogue being witnessed by the Saudi society these days and in which various groups of technocrats, intellectuals and students are taking part? What is the role played by the royal family in this dialogue and then in taking the proper political decision?

The editorial staff of AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI has found in the royal decree ordering the formation of the Basic Law [Constitution] Committee and the Consultative Council Committee an occasion to review the conditions and the changes that have required this important step. The magazine's goal is to present as general, complete and honest a picture as possible to the Arab public opinion so that it may know what is happening in this Muslim Arab country that occupies an important position at the various Arab, Islamic, international and strategic levels.

On the 10th of last January, the international wire services carried important press statements by Prince Fahd ibn 'Abd-al-'Aziz, the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, in which he said that a basic law of government was being drawn up for the kingdom and that it contains nearly 200 articles, all derived from the Islamic law. The prince added that the new law will be accompanied by another law on the creation of a consultative council to share the responsibilities of government with the Council of Ministers.

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On the 18th of this month of March, King Khalid ibn 'Abd-al-'Aziz issued a royal decree forming a special committee under the chairmanship of Prince Nayif ibn 'Abd-al-'Aziz, the minister of interior, with the task of completing formulation of the final form of the basic law for government and the consultative council law, as well as a third law to which Prince Fahd had not referred in his press statements, namely the [administrative] districts law for the kingdom which is geographically the biggest Arab country after Sudan.

It seems that the issuance of the royal decree forming this committee has come to confirm the promise made by Prince Fahd in the aforementioned statements.

The nature of the committee structure and the selection of its members from among people with scientific, religious and administrative specializations seem to confirm another promise made by Prince Fahd in his statements, namely that a change in government will take place and that this change will not be just in persons but also in the systems and mentality of government.

Islamic System Dealing With Spirit of Age

But this does not mean under any circumstances the likelihood that the systems of government in the forthcoming phase--after completion of the basic law and of the consultative council law--will deviate from the spirit of Islam or from the text of the Islamic legislation. The new systems and the new mentality must inevitably emanate from a religious spiritual premise based on the Koranic law and the venerable Sunna. But at the same time, the new systems and the new mentality must take maximum advantage of the spirit of the age with a flexible futuristic visualization to deal with the given facts of the modern sciences and changes that are carried into the life of the contemporary Saudi man so as to preserve this man's genuine social Arab and Islamic traditions and to also meet his human aspirations for development and progress in order that he may keep up pace with the march of the others around him.

This means by necessity that the formulation of the basic law for government will impose the will for change in persons and in the systems and mentality of government to which Prince Fahd has referred.

By necessity also, the change that applies to the system of government will also apply to the new consultative council in accordance with its law, founded mainly on the Islamic law. This council must inevitably respond to the aspirations for development by taking advantage from what is best in the international parliamentary systems within a framework governed by the principles of the Islamic law and by the traditions and conventions of the cultural heritage of the people of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

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The new consultative council will be new in the sense of the quality of the people who will represent in it the religious, economic, political, administrative and planning capabilities, especially since the kingdom has now large assets of these religious, scientific and academic capabilities. There are 1,500 Saudis who have doctorates in various specializations, in addition to many times this number of people who have their M.A.'s and various parallel educational degrees.

It is well-known that the consultative system of government is a purely Islamic system which started with the beginning of the foundation of the first Islamic state in the era of Prophet Muhammad, may God's prayers and peace be upon him. This system reflects a Koranic principle--"they shall consult on their affairs." The prophet used to consult with his companions on the affairs of the newborn state, on the people's affairs and on the affairs of the new society.

They Shall Consult on Their Affairs

As an Islamic state founded in the land of the divine message, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has had to abide by this principle in the form and essence of the system of government.

When the late King 'Abd-al-'Aziz gained control 49 years ago and when the provinces of the kingdom were united, the king made sure to surround himself with a group of prominent ulema, wise men and thinkers to consult them on government, state and the people's affairs. He used to resort to the consultative council which consisted of such men whenever he had any problems so that the council may help him and so that he may clear his conscience of the responsibility of individualistic decisions.

Thus, the founder of the kingdom laid down the fundamental principle which the required consultative council must observe. The founder wanted this council to be a real and effective council, to be comprised of men capable of working for the public interest and to be independent in its work, without anybody having any authority over it.

It seems that when Prince Fahd announced the drawing up of a basic law for government and a consultative council law, he wanted to underline abidance by the rule which his father had laid down in this regard. Then came the royal decree to confirm all this.

It is also difficult to isolate the royal decree for drawing up a law for the provinces of the vast kingdom from the royal decree for drawing up the two other laws for government and for consultation. The day after the issuance of this decree, another decree was issued appointing four new amirs for the provinces of the venerable Mecca, al-Quasim, Tabuk and Ha'il.

It is to be noted that the kingdom is divided into provinces, each governed by an amir with the powers of an administrative governor. But the amir is

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under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Interior which has a special department for provincial affairs.

It seems that the projection of a new law for the provinces indicates a new development in the powers of the province amirs. They are expected to enjoy greater powers, perhaps political and financial, to keep up pace with the expected development in the systems and mentality of government--powers that give the province amirs greater freedom of movement in their provinces within the framework of the general policy of the regime and of the state.

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SAUDI ARABIA

OFFICIAL DISCUSSES SOCIAL PROBLEMS CONFRONTING YOUTH

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 28 Mar-3 Apr 80 pp 72-73

[Interview With Prince Faysal ibn 'Abd-al-'Aziz, General Director of Youth Welfare; "General Director of Youth Welfare in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: This Is How We Prepare New Generation to Face Future Challenges"]

[Text] Prince Faysal ibn 'Abd-al-'Aziz, the general director of Youth Welfare in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, sheds light in this comprehensive interview on the Saudi youth issues and on the means to tackle them, asserting that the immunity of Islam is the best weapon to confront the conflict of ideologies and currents in this important phase of our history.

[Question] In your capacity as the official in charge of building the future of the kingdom's youth, what are the plans that have been adopted [words indistinct] in this phase in which the conflict of ideologies is intensifying the world over?

[Answer] To start with, I would like to point out a fact that we have felt and experienced for a long time and whose viability was proven recently. Stressing this fact is, in my view, tantamount to reflecting its continued soundness which has been proven by the experiences. Insofar as the Saudi youth are concerned, they enjoy the greatest immunity in history, namely the immunity of Islam.

There isn't the least doubt that the truth of the conflicting ideologies in the world, both those that are nearby and those that are remote, has been exposed. Whoever views matters realistically finds that these ideologies have realized nothing tangible for the world as a whole. Moreover, the old, new, recently innovated and consumed ideologies are still crawling and faltering in their cradle.

On this premise, we find that our youth, immunized by Islam, are moving forward resolutely and that they have stood fast in the face of these currents. As for the future, our faith in God, may he be praised, is strong and firm and cannot change under any circumstances.

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Today's youth are a natural extension of the past generation of parents and the future youth will, God willing, be an extension of today's youth.

Concerning the point brought up at the outset regarding our youth being immune with Islam, the truth of this point was proven in what happened recently. I mean by this abominable crime that took place in the venerable Mecca, the holiest of Muslim places, when a group of outlaws stormed and occupied the mosque with the force of arms. People from all walks of life rallied around the leadership naturally and instinctively. This rally has proven to the entire world that this state forms, God be thanked, a firm, cohesive and comprehensive national unity.

As for the role of youth, I have presented to his majesty the king and to his highness the crown prince thousands of cables that I had received from various youth groups asking me to permit them to take part in the operation to purge the mosque from the outlaws or be martyred serving God. These thousands of cables, in addition to the tens of delegations which came to visit me here, show that all our youth believe completely in their faith, thanks be to God, and believe that this country has no life without this faith.

My view of the future of our youth is a view of complete reassurance, as long as we march on the straight path which is the path of the Koran and of the prophet's Sunna.

[Question] The talk on what happened in the venerable mosque of Mecca leads us to bring up the question of what happened afterwards. Has the Youth Welfare chairmanship called for symposiums and meetings to discuss what happened?

[Answer] In fact, before the Youth Welfare could take any initiative, the youth circles and the athletic clubs held public rallies to collect donations for the families of the martyrs of the venerable mosque of Mecca. At the same time, the Youth Welfare has carried out its duties and has directed its agencies to discuss this issue.

In fact, this issue has been discussed generally. It is expected that we will draw up shortly a comprehensive plan to discuss the issue in detail and in a focused and concentrated manner with the various youth organizations. Our esteemed ulema, thinkers and men of letters will take part in these discussions.

Naturally, the barbaric and insane incident that has taken place in the holy mosque of Mecca is the third incident of its kind in the history of Islam. This is why this issue deserves to be studied and discussed and those who are best equipped to discuss it are the youth.

As I have already told you, we will hold a detailed discussion and conduct a comprehensive analysis in the youth circles. We will ask these circles to make their comments on what has happened. In fact, the youth have already taken the initiative, both in the press and in the various information media,

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and their poems and their prose compositions have reflected their position toward the despicable crime.

Naturally, these discussions will begin after announcement of the outcome of the investigations so that we may have full information and so that the youth may realize what has happened exactly. Insanity, abnormal thinking and deviation lead people to this degree of rabid violence that is based on no religion, principle, faith or conscience whatsoever.

I would like to stress again that this spontaneous enthusiasm by thousands upon thousands of youth has not been just a transient sweeping emotion but has come as a result of the deep faith with which our youth have grown up.

Numerous Plans

[Question] The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is in constant need of cadres in the various sectors. In your capacity as the official in charge of the youth and their future, is there in your program a plan to prepare the cadres to take charge of the future tasks in the various sectors?

[Answer] The fact is that there is not just one plan but several plans that are under implementation. The first of these plans calls for providing youth with guidance from a certain age, namely the age of 7 years approximately, and to create for them the natural climate to receive their education under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. As for the second plan, the Ministry of Education is in charge of implementing it through its curricula. At the same time, we provide the youth with guidance when they are not in school through the various youth clubs and associations present in all parts of the kingdom. The Youth Welfare Agency also focuses on the cadres that must work in its apparatus through specializations. Insofar as the other cadres are concerned, the Saudi universities play a major and effective role in developing the talents and capabilities of our youth.

Preparing State Cadres

To put it briefly, all the plans seek one goal, namely to develop the state's civil servant cadres with educated Saudi youth who know perfectly well that their country needs every atom of their thinking and every minute of their time. God be thanked, we have realized important steps on this path through coordination among the various authorities.

There is another important point that I want to underline, namely the presence of a Higher Youth Council headed by His Royal Highness Prince Fahd, the crown prince. All the authorities that I have mentioned, namely the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education, the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Information are represented in this council. Work is currently proceeding in accordance with an organized and coordinated five-year plan. This helps us in the process of providing the required cadres.

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We Conceal Nothing

[Question] In your meetings with the youth committees in the kingdom, does the discussion touch on the political line adopted by the kingdom and is there a dialogue with the youth insofar as their thoughts and interpretations are concerned?

[Answer] First, my meetings with the youths are ceaseless and continue during the work hours, at home and in the various clubs and associations. The kingdom's political course has been well-known since the days of the departed King 'Abd-al-'Aziz. We continued to follow this course during the reign of King Sa'ud and King Faysal, may God have mercy upon their souls.

Today we are still following the same policy whose foundations were laid down by King 'Abd-al-'Aziz and which is supported by King Khalid, may God preserve him. As for our discussions with the youth, it is always a discussion of brothers among whom formality is discarded. At the same time, I personally try with all my power to keep the discussion frank, clear and direct, meaning that we are ready to answer all questions and that we have nothing to conceal. We are proud of this.

These meetings have been very beneficial because they have helped to make the youth problems much better understood. Meetings and on-the-spot visits are a lot better than sending delegations or receiving memoranda. There are absolutely no taboos on which questions cannot be asked insofar as we are concerned and such a thing has never happened in the history of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. On the contrary, what is wanted is that queries and questions be raised so that both of us [we and the youths] may be fully aware of our country's policy. I would like to point out that the meetings that take place are not confined to the political issues alone but surpass them to the social, cultural, literary and artistic issues. I am proud to say that the discussions with the youths have increased constantly in the recent period and that they have taken the quality of continuity.

The fact is that these meetings take place between the youth and the top state officials without any difficulty. Insofar as his majesty the king and his highness the crown prince are concerned, their homes and their offices are always open to all citizens, including the youth. Moreover, his majesty the king honors the Youth Welfare with his royal patronage every year by attending its final ceremonies where he and his highness the crown prince meet with the excelling teams and with the outstanding university students. Their highnesses Prince Sultan, Prince 'Abdallah, Prince Nayif and Prince Salman also attend these ceremonies.

We in the Youth Welfare consider Prince Salman our big brother. I am not talking here about Prince Salman in his capacity as my uncle but in his official capacity. He holds numerous and constant meetings with the youth. Prince Salman has honored me by having me as his friend. Through our

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meetings with the officials, we discern the great interest in the youth. Moreover, his majesty the king always urges me to devote attention to all the youth affairs. Decisions and recommendations were taken recently in the Council of Ministers stressing the importance and need for serious work among the youth.

There is constant coordination on the youth problems between the Youth Welfare and His Highness Prince Salman.

Within this framework, I would like to point out that Prince Salman exerts utmost efforts to solve any problem facing any youth. This, God be thanked, is a tradition of which we in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are proud. Any youth can meet the top officials, beginning with his majesty and ending with the most junior state official, without any obstacles whatsoever.

Naturally, the excelling and outstanding youth get special appreciation and moral and material rewards.

[Question] In view of the vast geographic area of the kingdom and of the inability of all the youth to come to Riyadh, the administrative and political center, do you make periodic tours and inspection visits to the youth centers in the provinces?

[Answer] This is done periodically and regularly. We now have nearly 27 projects in the various provinces of the kingdom. Beginning next month, I will pay field visits to inaugurate these projects and, at the same time, to meet with the youth and get acquainted with their problems.

Saudi Woman and Marriage Question

[Question] At the outset of our interview, we talked about youth problems and the family structure. What are your instructions and opinions on this issue?

[Answer] First, I want to focus on an important point, namely that the Saudi woman is more entitled than others to a Saudi youth. On this basis, there has been an official decree barring Saudis from marrying foreigners [women] except on a special permit from the Ministry of Interior and for logical and acceptable reasons. You must know that marriage in our country takes place at an early age, even before the young man finishes his university education. Naturally, problems emerge as a result of young age, adolescence and so on.

This is why the Youth Welfare, in cooperation with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Information, has played an effective guidance role through offering advice, holding symposiums and publishing special books dealing with the issue of marriage.

I repeat again that [barring] the Saudi youth from marrying non-Saudi women does not at all mean any kind of fanaticism or bias. It only means one fact

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that we have felt, namely that 90 percent of the marriages to foreign women have been failure whereas the contrary happens in the marriages to Saudi women.

The problem faced by the Saudi youth insofar as marriage is concerned is the problem of inflation and of dowry. This is why instructions were recently issued by His Highness Prince Fahd, the crown prince, for the formation of a committee from the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Interior, in addition to the Call, Interpretation and Guidance Council and the Youth Welfare, to discuss this issue and to lay down the foundations to limit the value of the dowry to make it reasonable and compatible with the conditions.

Here is where the major role entrusted to the Youth Welfare emerges. There are many youth who give wedding parties in special houses that are rented for a single night for a large sum of money. To deal with this issue, we will begin as of next month to rent special houses in all parts of the kingdom for the youth wedding parties. Instead of paying 10,000 or 15,000 riyals for a single night, the youth will pay a symbolic sum of 100 riyals, provided that he has not been married before. This project is important because it will solve the problems of thousands of youths.

The other problem is connected with the marriage of our youth at a young age. This problem may be considered serious by some people but in our situation in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, we want the population to grow because of the kingdom's vast area. We encourage this natural phenomenon in our country and we hope that it will continue. At the same time, there is no reason to prevent a Saudi youth from marrying a Saudi woman, regardless of whether the young man studies at home or abroad. Our universities graduate hundreds of women every year. If a young man wants to get married to an educated girl, there are tens of them.

I would also like to note another point connected with housing. I believe that you have noticed the enormous projects being implemented by the Ministry of Housing to provide proper modern housing to the citizens. The issue of housing preoccupies the mind of many youths with limited income.

This is why the Real Estate Bank offers facilities that amount to hundreds of thousands of riyals within this framework. On the instructions of his majesty the king and his highness the crown prince, the municipalities have also distributed lands to people with limited income. This will solve one of our major problems.

Family life in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is characterized by the complete and absolute bond existing within the same family.

Therefore, there is absolutely no place, God be thanked, for intellectual sectarian or political conflict. When such a conflict occurs, it can destroy the entire family, as we see in various countries of the world. We are proud that we are marching along a straight path and we hope to overcome all the small obstacles facing our path.

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[Question] How did the Saudis who went to study abroad face the various intellectual currents and how strongly is their study abroad reflected in their intellectual and religious tendencies?

[Answer] This question is, in fact, very important. Here I will point out that the main goal of the youth going abroad is to study and get the required degrees and, at the same time, to see what is happening in the world. We have vast numbers of students who are studying in all parts of the world--the United States, England, Germany, Spain, Italy, Pakistan and a number of Arab countries.

All those who graduate from universities abroad return home. Only a very small number has deviated from this rule. There are exceptions in every society and no society can, under any circumstances, be judged by its exceptions. There are people without will or people with a weak will who have not been able to face the western life. But ultimately, the western life changes them for only a short time after which they return to their country where they are embraced again without any questions at all. Some of these people have returned home and they are now taking part in numerous responsibilities in the state.

I feel very reassured in this regard and my reassurance is due to one thing, namely the firm base on which our youth rely, i.e., the Islamic faith.

State and Kind Father

[Question] But in case these youths return home and take up responsible positions in their country, is a dialogue opened with them and are their ideas and interpretations discussed?

[Answer] Undoubtedly, this happens continuously. I liken the state to a kind father. When a father finds that a son who had rebelled against him and gone astray with his thinking has then come back to him repentantly, the father embraces this son immediately. I imagine that a sensible father would not bring up past affairs with his son. The past is the property of the past and we work for the future.

[Question] Now, can we know the political thinking of Prince Faysal and, consequently can he offer us a complete visualization of the policy of the new generation in the kingdom and of the political line of this generation?

[Answer] There are two questions here. The first is connected with me personally and the second is connected with the youth. I have already answered the question pertaining to the youth at the outset of the interview. However, I would like to repeat the answer, myself being one of the youth. Since becoming aware of the world, I have been dazzled, fascinated and full of admiration for my grandfather, His Majesty King 'Abd-al-'Aziz. Believe me when I tell you that the image of King 'Abd-al-'Aziz, that ambitious youth who marched alone with the slogan of "there is no god but God and Muhammad is the prophet of God" and who proceeded along a single political

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line from which he never swerved throughout his life, is never absent from my memory for a single day. This line is clear and well-known. If I have a supreme ideal in this life, then it is King 'Abd-al-'Aziz.

I am honored to say that my political line is the line that King 'Abd-al-'Aziz mapped out. Naturally, the kingdom's policy is well-known and clear and is not affected by whimsical tensions and fluctuations but by reason, wisdom and planning. On this premise, we find that our policy is proceeding, God be thanked, in a firm and well-studied manner. This is clear to all.

As an individual in this society, I believe that my government's policy is a sound policy that has achieved security, welfare and prosperity at home and, at the same time, rapprochement, love and strength abroad. I mean by strength the strength of the rapprochement in the Arab ranks. This is an extension of the policy of His Majesty King 'Abd-al-'Aziz. I believe that history abounds with his accomplishments to strengthen the bond among the Arab brothers.

Naturally, I read a lot and I like political and history books and biographies. I find it enjoyable to read about the policy of the others so that we may understand this policy and discuss it objectively and then compare it with our country's policy.

Hope and Pain

[Question] What is your view of the political situation prevalent in the Arab area?

[Answer] I want to talk of hope and pain, the hope that Arab solidarity will be regained strongly and in an organized manner that will prevent the emergence of any gaps in the future.

As for the pain, it usually comes from the rifts that we find existing among some Arab countries. This is, of course, something that pains every Arab. We hope sincerely that the rifts will be eliminated and that Arab solidarity will be restored, especially in view of these conditions under which we live and under which the major powers are in agreement on certain things for the Arab world. At the same time, I find--in the wake of the Camp David accords and the comprehensive change in the Middle East policy--nothing but the need to abide by the resolutions and recommendations adopted by the Arabs at the Baghdad summit or in the latest summit held in Tunis. I personally hope that abidance by these resolutions will be complete and comprehensive so that the hope may be realized and the pain eliminated.

[Question] Are there any special instructions for the Arab youth in this phase?

[Answer] First, I would like to thank AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI for giving me this opportunity to address the Arab youth generally and to say things that need not be repeated, namely that the youth are the foundation and the future. If they truly realize this, then it is up to them to decide how the future will be.

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Reason, a sense of balance and organization prevail among the overwhelming majority of the Arab youth. I believe that the future will be prosperous because all resources are made available to the youth to lead their countries toward prosperity, abundance and impregnability.

At the same time, I say that the Saudi youth are an indivisible part of the Arab youth, respond to all calls and never fail to take part in any Arab occasion.

On this premise, we experience the concerns of the Arab youth every day. I would like to tell this youth that the fundamental focus must be primarily on the interest of the homeland which comes before any other ideology. Otherwise the Arab youth will become a toy in the hands of the major powers that have secret hands which they manipulate in this area.

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SAUDI ARABIA

INCENTIVES OFFERED FOR JOINT PETROCHEMICAL ENTERPRISES

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 14-20 Mar 80 p 46

[Article: "Saudi Arabia: Incentives for Oil Companies to Enter into Petrochemical Projects"]

[Text] Riyadh--The agreement concluded between Petromin and Mobil Company to build a joint refinery for the exportation of oil derivatives from the Saudi port of Yanbu' (on the Red Sea) embodies the new tendency based on offering incentives to the major oil companies to enter into joint projects with Saudi Arabia in the field of oil and petrochemicals.

The agreement stipulates that the shares be owned equally, instead of 51 percent for Petromin and 49 for the foreign side.

The proposed capacity of the refinery amounts to 250,000 barrels of oil daily. The oil will be carried from the Eastern Province to the Red Sea coast by a new pipeline extending 750 miles across the Saudi deserts to terminate in Yanbu'.

It is well-known that the Mobil Company has a contract with Petromin to assist in managing the work to lay down the pipeline and then in the work to operate it.

One of the incentives that have aroused interest is the incentive that gives Mobil the right to take 50 percent of the proposed refinery's production in kind, keeping in mind that the production will include naphta [al-naft], benzine, jet aircraft fuel, diesel oil, heating oil and heavy fuel oil.

AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI has also learned that the estimated costs of the project exceed one billion dollar, a sum which will be paid equally by the two sides. However, the burden to Mobil will be reduced, considering that it will collect wages for its technical and administrative services for the project.

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It is understood that this project is an inlet to another project in which Mobil will be an equal partner. This is a project for the construction of an enormous petrochemicals complex in Yanbu' as part of the new Saudi five-year plan.

Implementation of the two projects will strengthen the position of the new port of Yanbu', where work is still in progress, as a major port for the exportation of Saudi oil, heavy [oil] products and petrochemicals through the Red Sea.

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SAUDI ARABIA

DEVELOPMENT PLAN GIVES PRIORITY TO AGRICULTURE, SERVICES, PETROCHEMICALS

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 4-10 Apr 80 p 48

[Article: "Saudi Development Plan No 3: Attention to Agriculture and Services, in Addition to Petrochemicals"]

[Text] Riyadh--Even though the third five-year plan will not be announced officially before next May--see previous issue of AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI--what has been leaked about it will turn the Saudi theater into an arena of fierce international competition, especially between the U. S. and European companies, to win [the contracts] for the implementation of the plan projects whose estimated allocations amount to 290 billion dollars which may rise by 100 more billion dollars, depending on the circumstances, to meet the rise in prices and costs and to meet the expenses of some subsidiary projects.

The third five-year plan has special importance because of its enormous size and because it seeks to create an alternative base to the oil resources so that oil may not continue to be the main source of revenues.

Consequently, the plan contains huge allocations to develop agriculture and the rural areas and to set up two gigantic heavy industry complexes, in addition to two petrochemical complexes, two steel and iron plants and three immense complexes for light consumer industries.

This is all accompanied by a design within the plan to modernize the educational apparatus, with stress on vocational education and training through the use of incentives so as to provide Saudi technical cadres for the various projects. Therefore, enhancement of the growth resources will be accompanied by the development and enhancement of the natural resources.

The plan policy seeks to create incentives to tempt the specialized international firms to enter into equal partnership with Saudi sides to implement the agricultural development projects. These incentives include providing loans for a symbolic interest and providing 50 percent of the value of machinery imported for the agricultural projects, in addition to numerous tax exemptions.

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One of the consulting establishments reviewing one of the plan's agricultural development projects has said that this project, which costs 7 million dollars, is capable of yielding 5 million dollars in annual profits after the first year of its implementation.

Petrochemical Projects

However, the immense petrochemical projects, especially in al-Jubayl and Yanbu', are the projects attracting the main international attention because the availability of natural gas as a cheap fuel for these projects is likely to make the projects profitable.

On the basis of this premise, Saudi investments in the field of petrochemicals may amount to 6 billion dollars, in addition to 16 billion dollars for the pipeline network to gather the gas from the oil fields and carry it to the sites of its consumption, liquidation, exportation and use in the petrochemical industries.

To attract foreign investments in these Saudi projects, the incentive selected has been that of giving the foreign firm a commitment which secures for it 1,000 barrels of oil for every million dollars it invests in its Saudi partnerships.

In this regard, Saudi Arabia insists that the participating firms offer marketing services for the Saudi share of the products of the petrochemical projects.

The Saudi Basic Industries Authority is in charge of the major industrial projects. This authority has decided to participate with 80 percent of the capital of the steel plant in al-Jubayl--a plant with an annual capacity of 850,000 tons--in partnership with the German (Korf Stahl) Firm and to participate by the same percentage in the Jiddah steel plant which will have an annual capacity of 120,000 tons.

It is understood from the reports leaked about the plan that medium and light industry projects will spread on the peripheries of the major projects in al-Jubayl and of the industrial complexes in Tabuk, Medina and Khamis Mushayt so that industrial development may not be restricted to Jiddah, Riyadh and al-Dammam.

It is understood that the allocations for these industrial complexes amount to 2 billion dollars. This is in addition to the enormous government aid for the Saudi companies establishing industrial projects. For example, the ceramic Industries Company in Riyadh has been given 30,000 square meters of state-owned lands for an annual rent of just 2,000 dollars.

Meanwhile, the development, modernization and expansion of the education apparatus will be accompanied by agricultural and industrial development activities. The program to expand and modernize the Riyadh University alone will cost nearly 2 billion dollars.

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The educational development policy seeks to establish participation ties with international educational institutes, including the U. S. Duke and Colorado universities, to expand the sphere of vocational education and training in particular.

Besides all this, the Joint Saudi-U. S. Economic Cooperation Committee had entrusted 35 U. S. experts with the task of setting up 10 vocational training centers in various parts of the kingdom extending from al-Qasim in the northeastern part of the country to Abha in the southwestern mountainous area.

Thus, the projects of the 1980-85 five-year plan will turn Saudi Arabia into a main theater of fierce competition between the international firms. In this regard, the U. S. firms complain that the U. S. tax policies that include the profits of Americans abroad weaken the ability of these firms to compete with the French, German, British, Japanese and South Korean firms that can offer financial and technical facilities which the U. S. firms can offer only at the expense of their profits.

This is why the U. S. telephone and radio communication firms have given up any hope of competing with the Canadian Bell Firm or the Swedish (Ericson) Firm which are given important incentives by their governments that offer them soft-term loans and credit and borrowing facilities.

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SULTANATE OF OMAN

SULTAN INTERVIEWED ON FOREIGN POLICY

LD091135 London THE TIMES in English 9 May 80 P (Roman)

[Interview with Qabus ibn Sa'id, Sultan of Oman, by Michael Frenchman in Salalah; date not given]

[Text] During the past 10 years Sultan Qabus, or "Super Q" as the 5,000 British expatriates call him, has dragged his country into the 20th century without encountering many of the difficulties suffered by some of his neighbours. Until a decade ago there were many tribesmen living in the Jibal or mountains who had never set eyes on a white man and who lived a stone age existence. Sultan Qabus has achieved a remarkable degree of swift progress for his country.

But he is no dreamer and Oman is no dreamland. When the British helped to remove his aging father, Sultan Said Ibn Taimur, on July 23, 1970, in a bloodless coup the country was immediately plunged further into a violent war with rebel tribesmen in the south backed by the full weight of a Soviet-dominated People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY). The old sultan, who had kept his Sandhurst-educated son a near prisoner in the south, had refused to come to terms with the 20th century, which enabled South Yemen to make much political capital.

The war took a heavy toll of both men and money as Oman was not one of the new get-rich-quick oil states. However, with the end of the war in 1975, its diminishing oil resources are being augmented by new discoveries which will place the economy on a firmer base and enable the new five-year development plan which calls for a budget of about \$3,000M to go ahead with confidence.

Today, however, it is international politics and not so much the path towards domestic progress, now assured, that occupies the sultan's mind. Speaking in his comfortable refurbished seaside palace in Salalah, capital of the southern province of Dohfar, he discussed a wide range of topics, quietly and frankly. He speaks fluent English with ease and has a spiritual calmness that adds weight to many of his arguments.

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He feels strongly that the Western nations have failed to realize the dangers of the Soviet grand design for the expansion of communism in the Middle East and Africa, and in particular the vulnerability of the Strait of Hormuz at the entrance of the Gulf.

"We have recognized the seriousness of the Soviet threat for the past 5 years; we warned the West what would happen in Africa. Now Afghanistan has made us all aware of the situation." He believes that the Soviet Union has a new expansionist policy and if necessary would interfere in any country outside the Warsaw Pact. He added: "The free world should really wake up to the fact and not allow the Russians to go on doing what they have been doing."

The sultan, in common with his ministers and advisers, is preoccupied with the possibility of a full-scale attack through South Yemen. "We have fought and fought for our independence, and won; but if there were to be a massive attack supported by combined Russian, Cuban or East German assistance, the result might be different." The chief threat, he thought, was "still from the south, with the Russians taking advantage and supporting a spurious and orchestrated subversive element within our country."

The one encouraging factor in the south was reports of serious discontent among the South Yemenis. Many of them were disillusioned about the Marxist message as a result of the dire economic problems facing the country. This was why many refugees were said to be coming across the border into Oman.

The sultan is a deeply religious man and an authority on Islam. Discussing the relative merits of Marxism and Islam, he said he would like to believe that the ideologies had nothing in common. But there was one meeting point, he said after a pause for thought; "Islam is based on collective thinking--the people must be together as in all great religions. Otherwise, there is no similarity whatsoever with communism."

He went on: "Communism will never succeed in any country which has a strong tradition or belief in a religion. It might perhaps be attractive to a few individuals in an Islamic country, but never on a large scale. No Arab, or truly Islamic people, will ever be sympathetic to Leninist or Marxist theories."

He dwelt on the subject for several more minutes, then stopped for a moment to gaze out of the open window across the Gulf of Oman to the north. Referring once again to the question of individuals who might be susceptible to the attractions of communism, particularly those in countries with large populations spread throughout the land, he said it might be possible for a few individuals to try to sow the communist seed and gain some influence over sections of the people.

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But, in the long term, he believes that communism would never get a real grip on an Islamic country and certainly not in Iran. This was his only reference to that state, with which Oman had enjoyed very friendly relationships under the shah's regime.

Returning to the military threat, he said he was concerned at the bad relations between Iran and Iraq and the reported amassing of Soviet troops on Iran's northern border. Logically, he considered that this could lead to renewed activity in South Yemen. If the situation were to worsen in the north and south, Oman would be caught between the Soviet pincers.

"There would then be a direct military threat to the Strait of Hormuz, but our real concern there now is the threat of terrorist activity, and in particular mines dropped into the strait in the Gulf," the sultan said.

He has been much criticized privately and to a limited extent publicly, mainly overseas, for his style and method of government, which he feels outsiders do not understand. "We are ruled by the Koran and that allows us to say exactly what we think when speaking of government. We base our system on the Islamic tradition. We will not import the form of democracy that you are familiar with. The people will be represented in government when they have learned to understand what that really means. After all, you in Britain took hundreds of years to evolve your system."

His next remarks, which were not intended as a comment on the Westminster style of government, but on many of the imitations by developing countries, were particularly outspoken as he added: "Here, we do not do anything for show in our rule. It must be genuine, it must be right, it must not be hollow. Every country must eventually form its own kind of democracy."

The sultan, as well as being head of state, is prime minister and chairman of the Executive Authority, the Council of Ministers. He refuted allegations that he was ignorant of his people's feelings and wishes. He makes regular tours of his country for several weeks at a time visiting all the towns and remote villages in the mountains and deserts. These are great caravans of 100 or more vehicles. At each stop the tents are set up, the rugs spread out on the ground, and the king meets his people.

"I have these tours," he explained. "I sit with my people. I listen to them, to their grievances, their complaints, their comments. Every one seems genuinely happy at this kind of system. They all speak their minds. This is our custom, it is my job."

It is traditional in Arab countries for the ruler to hold this kind of open court in his palace where everyone can come and meet him. Known as a majlis it is now becoming more and more of a ceremonial occasion in some Arab countries but not so in Oman. It would appear to be time-consuming because the sultan could be dealing with apparently trifling matters which in practice ought to be dealt with by the local village head man or mayor, the wahli. In the old days well rights and boundary

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disputes were main topics. But today, with development of the country, better water supplies and expanding irrigation, matters such as these are retreating into the background.

The sultan realizes that change will come in due course. With more and more Omanis just returning from education abroad, they will eventually feel they would like a greater role and more participation in the society they are developing.

The sultan commented: "Our ultimate hope is that when the time comes they will have their say; they already have to a certain extent, but perhaps not in the way you would see it." As well as the Council of Ministers he has now established a council of nongovernment employees to look at the economy and expansion of development. Other councils are also being formed. The council meets every week and the sultan receives detailed reports.

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SYRIA

ECONOMIC PROBLEMS THREATEN POLITICAL STABILITY

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 11-17 Apr 80 pp 46-47

[Article: "Arab Subsidy to Make Up for Most of the Deficit; Economic Disturbances in Syria Paved the Way to Political Disturbances"]

[Text] Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad can add to the long list of his opponents, whom he holds responsible for the disturbances in Syria, [the name of] a secret opponent. He may not have taken the power of this opponent into account when he came to power in 1970.

Very simply this opponent is the economic factor which has always played a basic role in strengthening the political and social stability [of a country] or shaking the foundations upon which regimes in the whole world are built. There is no difference here between the capitalist world, the communist world, the advanced world or the backward world; they are all equally affected.

A visitor may note all the aspects of civilized life in Damascus--a city that is so overcrowded that people walk shoulder to shoulder on the sidewalks; cars crowd the streets; and over the city hangs a cloud of engine and factory exhaust. The city has the most modern cars that are manufactured by U.S. and German factories, and it has the most recent electronic equipment and tools that are produced by Japanese factories as well as the latest in men's and women's clothing made by French and Italian designers. In addition, huge tourist hotels are being erected, and commercial office buildings are springing up in the heart of the city.

But all of these phenomena cannot hide from the economic and social investigator the chaos from which the economy is suffering. This chaos was reflected in the last few months and weeks in negative results that were perceived by the average lay people of Syria. These negative results were utilized by opponents of the regime to create difficulties and unrest.

Perhaps the one thought with which Syrian planners and economic experts are preoccupied these days is determining whether they should proceed ahead with the development plans or stop to review the past and focus on correcting the mistakes that were made in projects that have been implemented or in those that are being implemented.

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Those experts are inclined to favor the second choice so as to curb spending [whose growth] has been reflected in an annual inflation rate that is estimated to be at least between 15 and 30 percent.

The Bourgeoisie of the State

Syrian experts attribute the reasons for the economic crisis to the state's control of the economy. The state is an employer, an owner of the means of production, an economic guide, a merchant, a partner and collector of taxes and fees.

This enlargement of the state's economic role, along with its political control, may have been a beneficial factor had the state had the ability to make good plans and to manage [its affairs] efficiently. In spite of its huge political and economic role the state is suffering from several sharp and serious handicaps.

There is first the bureaucracy which is getting worse as a result of the large numbers of non-productive civil servants and employees. There are also incompatibilities among the mandates of agencies, and there are excesses which laws have not been able to curb.

Along with bureaucracy corruption inched its way into the system. It weighed heavily on the projects and the programs that have been implemented. This was manifested in the destructive role that was played by middlemen, brokers and functionaries who receive huge commissions. There are people in Syria now whose names may be considered in the category of billionaires or, if one is extremely modest, millionaires.

The imbalance in economic planning is due basically to the lack of a general economic policy and to the absence of accurate statistics. Recently, concerned departments had to review their statistics for the seventies so that they would have figures that would approach accuracy and can build upon them their plans in the future.

Oil is almost the only industry that is managed efficiently in the country in spite of the fact that funds invested in the conversion industries amount to between 5 and 6 billion Syrian pounds annually.

Official statistics indicate that the rate of growth in the industrial sector amounts to 5 percent per year. The food industries and the textile industries meanwhile showed a noticeable decline because of the aforementioned chaos.

Cultivation of Cotton Falls Off

Some parts of the agricultural sector experienced progress and others lagged behind. The cultivation of cotton, which along with oil, constitutes Syria's own basic source of hard currency because they are two commodities for export, fell off noticeably in recent years. Production fell and the area of land cultivated decreased even though cotton prices have doubled in world markets.

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One is taken by surprise regarding this decline, but Syrian experts are saying that part of the land that was cultivated with cotton was converted to the cultivation of wheat and beets to meet basic food needs and especially after construction of the sugar production units were completed.

Farmers' conditions have improved slightly, but misery, unemployment and the backward status of women are still characteristics of the Syrian countryside. Agrarian reform did not affect large sectors of destitute peasants since vast agricultural land is leased to functionaries who in turn lease the land to the peasants.

As a result of this extensive imbalance in the principal sectors of production, the value of national production has been affected and there was a deficit in the balance of payments and in the general budget. The deficit in last year's budget amounted to approximately 8.1 billion Syrian pounds (or 2 billion dollars).

The small surplus that Syria had in its balance of payments in 1976 and 1977 turned to a 200 million dollar deficit in 1978.

The monetary inflation that has been caused by the state's indebtedness to the Central Bank has weakened the purchasing power of the Syrian pound. This weakness affected wages, which rose before the recent increase, 100 percent between 1970 and 1977. Prices, meanwhile, rose 300 percent [in the same period].

Arab and Foreign Aid

To cover this deficit the state has depended in a special way on Arab support. It is estimated that the aid which Syria receives annually in accordance with the resolutions of the Baghdad Summit of late 1978 is 1.85 billion dollars. It is believed that this is a substitute for the allocations of the 1974 Rabat Summit which are estimated to be 1.3 billion dollars per year.

This aid has affected defense allocations which have been increased. Last year defense allocations amounted to 8.2 billion pounds; they were increased this year by about 159 million dollars.

It is expected that Arab and foreign aid this year, including direct aid from the Baghdad Summit, will amount to 2.48 billion dollars (9,920 billion Syrian pounds).

During the seventies the Arabs took the position that the Soviet Union had in the sixties with regard to the amount of foreign aid Syria was receiving. It is believed that the Soviet Union and the socialist countries are offering Syria aid worth about 100 million dollars annually. Meanwhile, since 1975 the Americans have been offering aid in an amount that is almost comparable, but last year they stopped this aid. Aid and loans from the World Bank since 1972 amounted to 450 million dollars.

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The state has been encouraging the private sector and foreign investments, but the private sector is still refraining from contributing to long-range development projects. It has devoted itself entirely to the commercial sector, to the housing sector and to real estate.

According to 1977 statistics and in spite of the growing role of the public sector, the private sector--despite successive expropriations--still controls 97 percent of the light industries, 95 percent of agriculture, 95 percent of the construction industry, most of domestic trade and 81 percent of the transportation sector.

Guarantees and incentives meanwhile have failed to attract Arab capital except for the interest in purchasing real estate and land. Several Arab corporations did withdraw from the Syrian market after encountering administrative and bureaucratic obstacles.

The Syrian economy does nevertheless encompass all the capabilities of a successful economy if use of balanced economic planning is guaranteed and all the obstacles from which the economy is now suffering are eliminated.

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TUNISIA

NEW POLITICAL TREND SEEN IN MZALI APPOINTMENT

Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 9 May 80 pp 1074-1075

[Text] With the naming of the Mohamed Mzali Cabinet on 23 and 26 April 1980, a phase in the political history of Tunisia comes to a close. That phase began on 20 December 1977, with the resignation of ministers and secretaries of state opposed to a hardening of the government position on trade unions. Since that time, all those who resigned returned to their high official posts, the first to resume public activity being Habib Chatti, who became secretary general of the Islamic Conference, and the last being Mongi-Kooli, now minister delegate to the Office of Prime Minister and director of the Destourian Socialist Party (PSD).

One of these "re-entries" into Tunisian public life no longer hesitates to state, privately, that at the time of his resignation, he had sent a letter to President Bourguiba containing warnings that the subsequent course of events confirmed: He predicted social disturbances and serious incidents provoked by outsiders and he believes that the trade union riots of 26 January 1978 in Tunis and the abortive attack on Gafsa on 27 January 1980 validated his predictions. The new team believes that any repetition of such unfortunate events must be prevented.

One can do nothing but praise the devotion, energy and courage demonstrated for so long by Hedi Nouira before he was felled by a malady that could have proved fatal and that stemmed from overwork. One must also recognize that he was able to improve the standard of living of all the Tunisian people, restore the balance of payments, improve production, attenuate social contrasts within an emerging "average society," and create a good image for his country. History will record his name as that of one of the builders of independent Tunisia.

However, Hedi Nouira governed in such a personal manner, monopolized the dialog with the chief of state so completely, and so clearly reduced the ministers to the rank of office heads only in charge of carrying out orders that his sudden disappearance for reasons of serious health problems made the president realize the scope of the political vacuum that had gradually been created. Instead of confining himself to arbitrating quarrels of the

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different factions, as he had at the last congress of the Neo-Destourian Party, he suddenly had to meet political realities head on and fully exercise the role actually shared by the head of the Executive Branch so short a time before.

The naming of Mohamed Mzali as "coordinator" on 1 March and prime minister on 23 April, while Hedi Nouira returned to Tunisia for a long convalescence, demonstrated President Bourguiba's determination to restore a normal situation at the pinnacle of power. The readmission to the Destourian Socialist Party of some of the opposition "liberals" constituted a sign of a cautious march toward pluralism. The return to power of those who resigned in December 1977 points to a political shift. It is not a radical shift, nor will it be a very rapid one, but it is clear that the style of Tunisian political life is going to change, and not under the prompting of Congress, whose latest session scarcely rose above the level of clan struggles, but at the urging of a president who finds the secret of a new youth in initiative and struggle.

Indispensable Harshness

With a very acute sense of balance and a determination to deprive the clan struggle of all sustenance, President Bourguiba is compensating for Hedi Nouira's physical retirement by a considerable reduction in the duties of Mohamed Sayah. The latter is losing the roles of both party director and minister delegate to the Office of Prime Minister, but he is not removed from the Cabinet. He receives the portfolio of Equipment.

Circumstances have enabled the president to take two-fold action about which he had undoubtedly thought, while deeming it to be impossible without risk of serious reactions in the leadership class: removing back to back, so to speak, the two major figures who had polarized political life. Most assuredly, the action was not taken without sadness. In Mohamed Sayah, President Bourguiba cherishes the historian, the popularizer of the national epic, the educator of the new Destourian classes, the keeper of the original Destourian flame. In Hedi Nouira, he found the eternal loyal confident, the safekeeper of a certain social order and a well-thought-out economic progress, the unshakable artisan of healthy balances, the precise and comforting calculator of intermediate solutions that could reassure the people and their leader.

Partially imposed, partially chosen, the sacrifice is a heavy one for the old historical fighter, who would willingly have continued to reduce his active role. But there are in Habib Bourguiba inexhaustible resources of energy that age has not eroded in the slightest. He still shows that he is capable of being very hard with regard to himself, and this undoubtedly helps to explain why, going against many, he is also very harsh toward others.

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President Bourguiba knew that if he failed to exercise his right to grant clemency in favor of any of the "condemned of Gafsa," he would shock a large share of world opinion and disappoint his country's best foreign friends. But none of those completely familiar with the career of the Tunisian chief of state expected, under the current circumstances, any such measures of clemency. Although two of those sentenced to death were not clearly convinced that they themselves killed anyone, the president was convinced, for his own part, that justice had been indulgent. Going beyond the courts would have seemed weakness, endangering the nation's very security, as had previously been the case in similar circumstances. The execution seemed to him to be an indispensable measure for the public good. Naturally, one is permitted to think that clemency would have made him a larger historical figure and perhaps that idea crossed his mind also. Perhaps he did so with regret, but as he has always done, he took a hard position.

Future Laden With Problems

The decisions that President Bourguiba has made in recent weeks do not only settle the most urgent current problems; they also involve the future.

It is not that the ministerial team put in office entails any substantial change in high-ranking political personnel; rather, it ratifies a return to seasoned politicians out of favor for a time. The only major innovation consists in the new and more complex articulation of the economic ministries, with the establishment of a Ministry of Planning and Finance entrusted to Mansour Moalla, who was the first Tunisian student at the French ENA [National School of Administration] and who long before had left administration for banking.

However, the new prime minister, Mohamed Mzali, who is considerably younger than his predecessor, being only 55, is designated, by virtue of his appointment, to be the provisional successor of the chief of state in case of the death of the latter. Without doubting his qualities, it is sometimes noted in Tunis that they consist of proportion and moderation rather than visible energy and decisive inspiration. He is essentially a teacher and it should be emphasized that he has contributed a great deal to appeasement in the university, but it is also pointed out that he has scarcely 10 years of participation in the Political Bureau.

At the same time, the ministerial team includes at least two outstanding political figures who are very gifted for government: Driss Guiga, minister of interior, and Mohamed Sayah, former director of the party who became, as we noted, minister of equipment.

However, while all those who resigned in December 1977 did return in good graces, two are abroad: the former minister of foreign affairs, Habib Chatti, who would normally still hold the quite eminent post of secretary general of the Islamic Conference for many years to come, and the former

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minister of interior, Tahar Belkhodja, who succeeded Driss Guiga as ambassador to Bonn, a post decidedly not on a par with his political abilities or, undoubtedly, with his ambitions.

Some persons already believe that Tahar Belkhodja's return to the ministry, prefacing a reappearance of Ahmed Mestiri and other "liberals" on the government scene, would constitute the logical followup to the measures taken in recent weeks. One would then be at only the beginning of a decisive evolution for the future of Tunisia. But no one can state that this would be the design of the "Supreme Combatant," who has again taken the reins with lucidity and energy and who does not intend to be carried away by events. He has certainly thought a great deal about the important problems that will assuredly not be long in arising, while already preparing the first outlines of a solution.

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