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# Near East/North Africa Report

(FOUO 5/81)

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## NEAR EAST/NORTH AFRICA REPORT

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INTER-ARAB AFFAIRS

TENSIONS BETWEEN NATIONALISM, RELIGION IN NORTH AFRICA PROBED

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 14-20 Nov 80 pp 27-29

[Article: "Questions Raised in the Maghreb in Light of Iraqi-Persian War: Is There a Contradiction Between Nationalism and Islam?"]

[Text] In the last report on his tour of the Maghreb (see AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI issues 190 and 191) our reporter focuses on the general view of Arab nationalism in the Maghreb and the attitude of Maghreb intellectuals and thinkers toward the "contradiction" between Arabism and Islam which is being actively contrived in the Mashreq--the Arab east. It may be useful to make the discussion of this extremely important, sensitive and complex issue the basis of a dialogue on the pages of AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in which Maghreb intellectuals would participate, in the light of the issues raised by this magazine's reporter who was assigned to tour that dear part of the vast Arab homeland.

Rabat--In the Maghreb, one feels a deep attachment to the Mashreq--the Levant--coupled with a sweeping desire to know the political, intellectual and social events which take place there and a stubborn attempt to understand and interpret the positions of rulers, politicians, systems, parties and thinkers.

This interest basically derives from an inherent feeling among sons of the Maghreb--which may not have been intellectually articulated yet--that the Maghreb and the Mashreq (the Arab west and the Arab east) are limbs of one and the same body, that the one has to discover the other, now that life has returned to that body after a political and intellectual breach imposed by protracted conditions of partition and factors of decline, backwardness, collapse and colonialism. Perhaps one of the "enigmas" which puzzle the Maghrebans is the "contradiction" between nationalism and religion--in this case between Arabism and Islam--which is being fabricated in the Mashreq.

Right from the first instance, you feel that Maghreb is in general --Algerians, Moroccans and Tunisians--find it extremely confusing and difficult to understand the nationalist call or cause in the Mashreq. This misconception--and I apologize for that term--also applies to the Libyans, if we are to consider them geographically related to the western flank of the Arab homeland.

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A journalist from the Mashreq is shocked to discover that there is a wide-spread belief in the Maghreb, especially among the intelligentsia, that there is in fact a real contradiction between Arab nationalism and Islam. The most painful thing about that sense of shock is that the Maghrebans are prejudiced, one way or another, against the concept of nationalism, as a result of that belief. President al-Qadhdhafi, for example, aroused the ire of 10 million Christian Arabs when he invited them to "convert to Islam" as a final solution of the problem of religious minorities in the Arab world. A prominent Maghreban thinker like 'Abdullah al-'Urwi, in my conversation with him, described the thinkers and theoreticians of Arab nationalism as "minority writers," on the basis that some or most of them belong to the "Christian minority" in the Mashreq.

## Causes of Misconception

When one looks for the reasons of that "misconception"--and I again apologize for using this term--among the Maghrebis in general, with regard to the question of nationalism and religion, one finds more than one cause or justification. In the Maghreb, to begin with, there is a massive homogeneous religious bloc. That is to say that there are only Moslems there. The only Christians are those Europeans who had settled in the various countries of the Maghreb but who have mostly gone when colonialism came to an end. It is difficult for that large religious mass to accept or imagine that there can be in an Islamic society "religious minorities" that also belong to the same ethnic group which constitutes that society.

One can see the surprise on the face of an Algerian or a Moroccan when he finds out that there are Arabs who are not Moslems, that they are Christians and have been Christians before the advent of Islam, that many of these Christians are proud of their Arab identity and heritage, that they have their independent Arab churches that are spread out in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon.

Another deep cause of this misconception is that the long-drawn struggle between the Maghreb and Europe was primarily a religious one. That was the nature of the struggle between the Andalucian Arabs and the Spaniards, between Morocco and Spain and Algeria and France. This explains the powerful adherence to religion among the Maghrebis and their rejection of the "Arabism" of Christians or the "Christianity" of Arabs.

There is also the confusion or inability to understand the concept or reality of Arab nationalism--a confusion bred by the horridness of some of the intellectual and racial underpinnings of nationalist movements in Europe, such as Fascism, Nazism and other racist movements, which were linked to colonialist onslaughts that caused great suffering and anguish in the various countries of the Arab Maghreb.

For example, the Maghrebans, including most of their intellectuals and politicians, do not know that the mainstream of Arab nationalism has been most careful to separate itself entirely from the racism or chauvinism of European nationalism. The

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Ba'th party, for example, represented by its foremost theorist, Michael 'Aflaq, has spared no opportunity over more than 40 years to emphasize the humane nature of Arab nationalism and its civilizational openness and to reject the theory of the purity of the race of blood as a criterion and basis of the nationalism of a nation or a people.

Still another reason for the Maghrebi "misconception" of the nationalist idea is the presence of a large percentage of Berbers in the fiber of the society, especially in Morocco and Algeria. It is an active and vital percentage which exercises a large social and political impact. As a result of deliberate attempts by the European "civilizing" centers to stir "nationalist" impulses among this huge minority, it was inevitable that the Berbers would develop sensitiveness toward any movement that advocated building the Maghreban societies on an Arab nationalist basis.

On their part, the Maghrebis Arabs fear that by overemphasizing their Arab nationalist character they might give rise to a racial problem in their countries that they have been able to avoid with stunning success since the advent of Islam. In Morocco, for example, the king is historically the head of the political and religious powers. In other words, he represents the national unity of the two ethnic groups of the people--the Arabs and the Berbers. In his latest news conference, King Hassan shrewdly expressed this reality when he said that Morocco is an Arab-Islamic-African country, that it had sent forces to fight Israel in 1973 without separating between its Arab and Islamic feelings.

Yet the king himself rejects the call for what may be called "the Islamic nation." He says that "Islam is like a broad belt which surrounds the world, embracing all kinds of people--black, yellow and white--and many tongues and civilizations so that an Arab country such as Jordan or Iraq cannot be expected to have the same concerns and problems of Indonesia or the Seychelles."

Islam's Role in the Arab Maghreb

Islam, as a creed and belief divorced from racial discrimination, was able to bring Arabs and Berbers together for centuries on end to make its magnanimous principles a catalyst of cohesion and unity. As a result, it is significantly difficult today to separate between Arabs and Berbers in Maghreban communities, for coexistence and cohesion are almost total in the major urban centers.

Maghrebi political thinking on the whole is simple and uncomplex. It has not submerged yet in the philosophies and theories which have swamped political thinking in the Mashreq and reflected negatively on political and party action to the extent that they were among the major causes of the tragic dissension among national movements, regimes, thinkers, parties and organizations. As a result of the simple nature of Maghrebi thinking, and may be as a result too of insufficient knowledge, Maghrebi intellectuals cannot follow or fathom in depth the quickening basic changes which have occurred in political and partisan thought in the Mashreq. Accordingly, they have great difficulty differentiating between nationalist thought and Marxist thought in the Mashreq. I hope that I am wrong about that, but one

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feels that Maghreban intellectuals cannot differentiate, for example, between the present Marxist political and intellectual positions of the remnants of the "Arab Nationalists' Movement" and its previous nationalist positions, or differentiate between the positions of the Communist parties in general and nationalist parties.

This then is another cause of Maghrebi reservations about the nationalist thought. Maghrebis have virtually equated nationalist thought with Marxist thought which rejects religion. Perhaps the Arab nationalist parties are required more than anyone else to establish contact with the Maghreban intellectuals and thinkers to explain the nationalist cause to them and expound its theoretical and political positions on various issues, primarily the position of Arab nationalism on religion--in particular, Islam--and the problems of ethnic and religious minorities.

We must emphasize here the importance which Arab nationalist thought gives to religion. Nationalist Arab thinkers, such as Michael 'Afiq, Salah al-Bitar and Sati' al-Husari, have understood the role of religion in building the modern Arab society, in contrast to the Arab Marxist thought which has clung to Marxism's fundamental rejection of religion.

'Aflaq and Religion

Back in the 1940's and 1950's, 'Aflaq became aware of the attempts to draw a wedge between nationalism and religion. After alerting Arab youth to that "crucial development" in the life of the Arab nation, namely, "the emergence of Islam," he says: "Religion, therefore, is an integral part of the Arab cause and the Arab citizen whom we are trying to mold. We do not want the Arab citizen to have an incomplete or false development, as we do not want to conceal part or half of the truth from him and give him an idea which may serve him for some time then become obsolete. Because if we did that we will be driving ourselves to Communism and its philosophy."

'Aflaq goes on to say: "We do not accept or encourage atheism and consider it a false and harmful position, because life means faith and belief....That means that the atheist is a contradictory person who claims something and acts against it at the same time."

'Aflaq said that in 1956, that is a quarter of a century before the fabrication of the present "contradiction" between Arab nationalism and religion.

Our Maghreban brethren should also know that the position of the nationalist vanguard in Mashreq on religion was not a lip service to Islam and faith. Daily life was a practical expression of adherence to social Arab customs and traditions, which are fundamentally true Islamic traditions and norms. Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir, the most prominent Arab politicians and leaders in the 1950's and 1960's, was an Arab nationalist, but his nationalist belief was strongly enmeshed with his religious belief to the extent that it could not have been possible to separate between 'Abd al-Nasir the Arab and 'Abd al-Nasir the Moslem.



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Why the Insistence on Nationalism?

But why does nationalist thought insist on nationalism and consider it to be the foundation of and springboard toward the development of a new Arab society, instead of recognizing religion as the basis of revolution and the path to change?

This question is perhaps at the heart of the things that puzzle Maghreban intellectuals, primarily the religious intellectuals.

Actually, the decision of the educated vanguard in the Mashreq to build the new Arab society on a nationalist foundation has many, overlapping historical, religious and political reasons which can be summed up in the words that Islamic thought had grown stagnant after a burst of brilliance in the first few centuries of its life. That intellectual stagnation was accompanied by a loss of Arab political authority and power in the Islamic state or caliphate to various Moslem, but non-Arab, races which sought by various means to batter nationalist Arab sentiment so as to protect their interests and domination. One of the means which they used was to brandish the slogans of Islam and religion, as in the case of the Ottoman Empire which for five centuries suppressed the Arabs within the confines of its petrified arsenal while Europe was setting down the foundations of its modern renaissance and intellectual revolution.

Stripped of all its concepts and revolutionary dynamics, religion was then used to keep the Arabs subjugated in the Islamic states or kingdoms. That forcible absence of the Arabs was not only a cause of political decline but also a cause of the intellectual stagnation which marked Islamic thought for several centuries and ultimately turned Islam into merely a tool used by the Islamic or foreign political power to exercise suppression and impose its own kind of social and economic injustice.

When the Arabs, at the turn of the century, were awakened by the educated Arab vanguard, then later, when the Arab nationalist thinkers emerged in the second and third quarters of the century to crystallize and articulate the nationalist Arab philosophy and purify it of the sentimental impurities which had vitiated the thought and behavior of the first generation of nationalist theorists, they carefully avoided discussion of religion's "sacred theoretical fundamentals" because they recognized the inherent danger in discussing the theoretical dynamics and foundations of Islam. They figured that such a discussion would leave negative effects on simple, basically religious, societies.

It was determined, therefore, to base revolution on the premise of nationalism and not religion in order to avoid ruffling the religious sentiments of the broader Arab masses as well as to avoid delving into philosophical labyrinths and theoretical dialectics that the stagnant religious centers of thought might exploit to attack Arab thought and deprive it of its grassroots. But this has never prevented the nationalist Arab thinkers from constantly alerting the Arab masses to the crucial difference between "the outward appearance of Islam" and "the essence of Islam." In so doing, the nationalist thinkers confined themselves, however, to the political aspects, since Arab nationalism was leading the political struggle of the Arab nation to get rid of foreign colonialism and social and class oppres-

sion. The stagnant political thought and its institutions were important tools which were used by colonialism and despotic national rulers to maintain backward conditions.

The fact of the matter is that religious thought is still in need of a deep-rooted revolution that would go hand in hand with the nationalist revolution, so that Islam may regain its brilliance and splendor, achieve progress again within a modern framework that is in tune with the spirit of the age and the requirements of social and political change and acquire a renewable rational platform that is devoid of fanaticism and bigotry and that embraces the substance and not the superficialities and rituals of Islam.

#### Contradiction Between Arabs and Persians

Nationalist thought sustained a strong shock when the religious revolution broke out in Iran then tried to cross the borders and impose itself on the Arab Mashreq without recognition of the circumstances of that area. As a principle, nationalist thought does not oppose the endeavor of an Islamic revolution to champion and lead the movement for change in a Moslem country. Indeed, the religious revolution in Iran was accepted as a political-religious revolution against oppressive conditions in a backward country, such as Iran.

Nevertheless, a collision between the Persian religious revolution and Arab nationalism became inevitable when that revolution tried to expand into the bastions of Arab nationalism. That collision has culminated in the Iraqi-Iranian war.

It is necessary at this point to present the position of the Maghrebis public opinion over this conflict, as I understand it to be. I hope that I am presenting it truly.

At first, the Khomeini revolution was welcomed by the peoples of Maghreb. The spontaneous deep-seated faith of the Maghrebis made them sympathize with its religious points of departure. But as the revolution began to get out of control and assume extremist dimensions, Maghrebis began to feel concerned. When the Iraqi-Persian dispute erupted and assumed its present form, spontaneous questions were raised about the cause of this "inter-fighting between Moslems." At the same time, one senses a clear siding with Iraq among the people, press, intellectuals, opposition, systems and governments of the Maghreb, by virtue of the inherent "nationalist bond which remains nebulous and which has not been articulated in the Maghreb as it has been in the Mashreq.

Yet, beneath that support, the question marks remain, taking an Arab from the Mashreq by surprise. Why, he is asked, sometimes gently, sometimes sharply--why are "Moslems fighting Moslems?"

I believe that the Mashreq Arabs, and the nationalist thought in particular, must make efforts to explain the reasons of the conflict in question, by means of contacts, meetings, dialogues and seminars in which Maghrebi intellectuals, students and young men should participate.

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I doubt that I am able or that space permits me to explain the reasons of that "inter-fighting." Suffice it to say that I told some of the people who asked me about it that there is no "inter-fighting between Moslems" but there is an Arab-Persian confrontation which is being portrayed in religious terms.

Arab Rejection of the Expansion of Persian Revolution

The Arab rejection of the expansion of the Persian revolution across the borders has several justifications. Basically, that expansion is motivated by Persian racism and by the historical belief among the Persians that they are better and more civilized than the Arabs. Suffice it to say, for example, that the clandestine movement in Iraq against the Arab nationalist regime there, which was financed by the Khomegni revolution, assumed the name of "Al-Da'wah." This is patterned after the Persian clandestine movement of old which was the main tool used to undermine the Islamic Arab authority in the early period of Islam, represented by the Omayyad state or caliphate.

The racial aspect of the expansion of the contemporary Persian revolution is not the only reason for the Arab rejection of that revolution. There is another equally important reason, namely, that the Iranian revolution was a political revolution against the regime of the shah, but that it has not been able so far to present itself as a virtuous religious revolution that can restore the splendor and progress of Islam in a modern form. This is due to the fact that the Iranian religious establishment, by virtue of its positions, is alien to the spirit of the age, both in its religious and political philosophy. That philosophy is a regurgitation of the stagnant religious thought which remains immobilized under the heap of centuries.

Moreover, the contemporary Persian revolution's inroads into Arab lands were not based on Islam as a belief and dogma but on Islam as sects and denominations. This is clearly visible in the endeavors by Khomeini and members of his ruling religious establishment to address themselves to the sectarian minorities in the Arab world as well as in their lack of interest in defending Islam in contrast to their interest in undermining the Arab regimes simply because they are Arab, regardless of their social identity, or because they adhere to their Arab identity.

Preventive Wars

Therefore, collision became inevitable when all Arab attempts to persuade the Iranian revolution to stay within its borders and not export its wares to the Arab east, failed. In view of that, the Iraqi-Iranian war is firstly and foremostly a preventive defense of the Arab spirit, identity, heritage and humane traditions as well as the Nationalist Arab perception of Islam as a sublime religion that unites and does not divide. The war was also an expression of the refusal of the Arabs to allow themselves again to be ruled by an alien element after a millennium of suffering in which they lost their political independence and nationalist bond as a nation worthy of unification and of playing a role in the world within the context of a single homeland. It is tragically painful that that predicament was wreaked on them under religious slogans raised by the successive racial groups which ruled them.

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Once again, I believe that the nationalist thought in the Mashreq is called upon to open up to the educated vanguard in the countries of the Maghreb, regardless of whether that vanguard was committed to atavistic Arab or religious traditions or closely associated with European culture and thought. The nationalist thought in the Mashreq is called upon to explain and clarify its nationalistic, political and social positions and ideological premises to the educated Maghreban sectors, to explain to them the reasons of the immense political and ideological fragmentation in the Arab Mashreq and to invite them to actively participate in establishing bridges of intellectual and political contacts between the Mashreq and the Maghreb.

#### Mashreqan Remissness Towards the Maghreb

A Mashreqan political observer visiting the Maghreb will clearly detect how the Mashreqan Arabs have been remiss in building bridges to the Maghreb. This remissness especially applies to the nationalist vanguard--political thinkers, parties, professors and regimes. Nevertheless, two basic facts must be kept in mind:

- 1) Building bridges should not necessarily involve the exploitation of Mashreqan political and ideological fragmentations and divisions to the Maghreb. Nationalist solicitude requires us to spare the Maghreb those labyrinths, abstractions, philosophies and slogans which have flooded the political movements in the Mashreq and trapped them in their mire, thereby becoming an obstacle in the way of realizing the true goals and slogans.
- 2) Attention must be paid to the structure and makeup of Maghreb societies. That structure is basically the result of the mixture and assimilation of two principal races which are equal in number, strength, vitality and effectiveness. I mean, of course, the Arabs and the Berbers. Any invitation to the Maghreb to abide by the tenets of Arabism should be preceded by long meetings and discussions and by a strong affirmation that Arab nationalism is not a racist movement, that it does not imply the predominance of the Arab race over the minority races in the Arab world, that it would not deprive those races of their heritage, thought, language, identity or personality.

I believe that the Berbers are prepared to continue to assimilate and coalesce under the slogans of Arabism and Islam, especially since they have, with matchless sincerity and fidelity, accepted the Arabs--religiously, linguistically and civilizationally.

Arab nationalism, as expressed by the modern Arab thought, is a vast receptacle in which all those who live in and interact with the Arab land, have participated in shaping its civilization and defending its heritage and independence and are now participating in building its future, coexist and mingle. This applies to all minorities--perhaps led by such minorities as the Kurds and the Berbers--and the Christian minorities of all denominations.

Finally, at the end of my tour of the Maghreb, I had to broach that subject with a great deal of candor and simplification. For it involves an ideological aspect of great importance and sensitivity. If I have misunderstood some of the symptoms

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and question marks, I did that without intention and with the sincere desire to try to understand and learn as well as to make a modest effort toward calling the attention of the Mashreq and the Maghreb to the need to rebuild the political, intellectual and cultural bridges between them. Such an effort should be firmly based on a keep understanding of all the contradictions, factors and influences which play a positive or negative role in the reshaping of the Arab nation.

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BRIEFS

ARAB MEETING PROPOSED--King Khalid of Saudi Arabia proposed to King Husayn of Jordan, and the major Arab Emirs, a reunion concerning Qadhdhafi. Its objective would be to ostracize the head of the Libyan state in the Arab world. [Text]  
[Paris PARIS MATCH in French 16 Jan 81 p 43]

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AFGHANISTAN

REPORTER VISITS FIGHTERS OF 'FORGOTTEN WAR'

Paris L'EXPRESS in French 29 Nov 80 pp 150-151, 153, 155

[Article by Jacques Potherat]

[Text] The General Assembly of the United Nations can call anew for the withdrawal of all "foreign" troops from Afghanistan, as it did on Thursday 20 November, but the fighting continues. For a month, our special correspondent Jacques Potherat was out in the mountains of the eastern part of the country, between Kalat and Zaboul, on the battlefields of this forgotten war. Jean-Christophe Victor, a representative of International Action Against Hunger, traversed other areas. Can the Moudjahidin trouble the Red Army? Turbaned "sans-culotte" or victorious guerrilla, the resistance, from one valley to another, wears many faces.

In the midst of a knot of feverish Moudjahidin, Aramat works feverishly away with a large flint on the box before him. The lid yields, uncovering a Chinese mortar and a half-dozen shells packed like chocolates in a candy box. It is a way of welcoming me, as elsewhere one might open a bottle of champagne. A way, also of showing that the Afghans have something besides rifles to wield against the arsenal of the Chouravis, the Russians. An equivocal demonstration. The mortar will remain in camp until some time when perhaps someone will come to teach the guerrillas how to use the strange device.

Dressed like a stage Moudjahidin, the turban continually falling down over my nose, it will take me nearly a week to get from valley to valley to this bit of rock somewhere in the Taira-Joz region, midway between Urgoun and Zaboul. Hours and hours piled up in the bottom of a truck or climbing in the mountains to get to within a 3-hour march of a Russian camp whose guns can be heard in the distance.

The double of Raimu in "The Baker's Wife," with his Pachtoun costume and his white cap, Aramat, the "malek" (chief), rules paternally over a small group of 20 combatants. There is also the old teacher, the "malim." On the watch for helicopters, he kills time by solving arithmetical problems in the sand with a stick.

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Squatting at the lip of caves or shelters dug into the mountain, Malek Sahib and his Moudjahidin endure in quiet moments the lot of all soldiers everywhere when there is no fighting: they wait, they daydream. So, tirelessly, they handle their weapons, take aim on imaginary enemies, and babble around their teapot like old Englishmen. The words "Moudjahidin" and "Chouravis" constantly recur in the palaver of these new "Thousand and One Nights." The battles are always big. The least tale of a skirmish turns into an epic: "Fourteen hundred Russian tanks opened fire on such-and-such a village," or "a courageous Moudjahidin stole an airplane and bombed Kandahar Airport, the corpses were burning for a month." There is sometimes a factual basis. The village in question does wear the scars of a bombing; the peasants exhibit rusty cartridges and brandish the unexploded rockets. In the columns of the KHYBER NEW TIMES, published in Peshawar (in Pakistan), one will read that two Russian planes burned up in Kandahar.

The setting of the Afghan resistance recalls both "The Desert of the Tartars" and "100 Years of Solitude" transposed to the age of Gaul under the Romans. The Moudjahidin are fighting their war poor, hard, and, despite the wounded and the dead, they readily parade the truculence of Asterix. They are afraid the sky will fall on their head. And for good reason, as they know from experience that the MIG's and helicopters are anything but myths.

"One day," Malek recalls, "a rocket exploded in our midst. The men ran so far it took me a ridiculous amount of time to get them back together."

I myself saw them fly off in all directions shouting "Ara! Ara!" (airplane) at the passage of an innocuous Boeing 747 airliner. Against their rifles, their small number of automatic weapons, the enemy has tanks and helicopters. These disbolic machines pass the understanding of people for whom the oil lamp, light firearms, and trucks represent the cutting edge of technology. This fear of technology limits the offensive tactics of the Afghan guerrillas, and at the same time makes them practically invulnerable. Utilization of the terrain for protecting themselves, no risky operations: they only strike when they are sure of success.

With some poor-quality plastic binoculars, I can very clearly distinguish the Russians, naked to the waist in their entrenched encampment which is used for artillery. For months, the Moudjahidin of the region have encircled this camp which dominates Urgoun. It can only be provisioned by helicopter. Lying in wait behind a rock, or perched in the trees, the rebels never come within 500 meters of the barbed wire. Almost everywhere, scattered groups [illegible] in turn vilify the Russians: "If you are Muslims, come with us. If not, come a little closer to our rifles."

The tatterdemalions of the Afghan resistance economize on their firepower and are continually astonished at the meager results obtained by the boyars facing off against them with capitalistic-level armament. Every rocket that explodes without hitting anyone provokes pleasantries. Playing on the nervousness of the Russians, the Moydjahidins engage in actions day and night. And a little further, in the rear, the ridges are covered with turbaned heads watching the spectacle like a fireworks display, before running relay. The resistance is not trying to take the attack camp. It manifests its presence, and that is quite enough.



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Several days later, when I wanted to get back to the underground hospital built by World Doctors in the Zaboul region (see L'EXPRESS of 6 September 1980), the chiefs took on embarrassed airs and tried by evasions to dissuade me. And then, they had to admit that the Russians had totally destroyed it, thus they had to recognize that the "rebels" are not strong enough to hold a position before a serious offensive. Conversely, my companions are very much aware that the Soviet's primarily undertake localized, spot operations, being unable to occupy the terrain. Only the helicopters can strike hard and quickly, but they are often spotted above the valleys or high plateaus. A very effective network of spotters anticipates every incursion. Thus, when the enemy arrives, the villages are almost always empty, the peasants and the "rebels" have fled. When the Russians have left, the Moudjahidin return.

Baffled by this elusive resistance, the Soviets are irked. Not because the Moudjahidin are everywhere, but because there are so few places where they can be sure the Moudjahidin are not. Thus one must "re-open" every day the Kandahar-Kabul road and dispatch important convoys under escort.

"When the resistance needs something, it takes it," says Tattak, the "captain" of a guerrilla band in the Zaboul region, laughing in his beard. "I have seen a "rezzou" go up and then come back a little later perched with his men on a "government" truck full of sugar." Anything moving on the roads is suspected of collaboration, and thus fair game. Strikes in the city, mines, little ambushes: these are the thousand and one little victories of the Moudjahidin. Sheltered behind the border, the headquarters in Peshawar still issues triumphant war communiques which sometimes even reached us in the mountains. They hardly embrace the "Robin Hood" image that has become attached to the Afghan resistance in the West. But, in the field, one can see the gap that separates the head from the feet. Without real command, without coordination, without resources, this invertebrate resistance fights from one day to the next its Hundred Years War.

Mornings, when ammunition is distributed, Malek could only give 15 cartridges to each man. A dollar each: the price of a chicken, a small fortune. So most often the Moudjahidin only use up the cartridges in their automatic weapons one by one. But Malek's group is one of the better armed groups of any I encountered: 12 rifles, two Chinese pistols, and even a mortar. A piece of brand-new ordnance carried on a man's back via the Pamir, to which must be added the old Lee-Enfield rifles dating back to the British Empire, and several folkloric weapons such as the Saint-Etienne "model 1896-lot 1899," displayed rather than used by a veteran of the wars against the United Kingdom. In the other guerrilla groups, apart from the obsolete English materiel, I saw only Soviet arms "taken from the enemy" [ostensibly], but more likely supplied by Iran and Egypt.

Almost forgotten on their rocky peak, these uncommissioned soldiers of the resistance live in complete destitution. "I asked in Peshawar for coats and shoes for the winter. But nothing has come," says Malek bitterly. "My Moudjahidin have only the clothes on their backs and a skimpy blanket." They subsist on a cake of unleavened bread, nibble on amandes be pignons [translation unknown]. Tea is their only luxury. For their supplies they depend completely on the generosity of some peasants who still cling to their village.

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A few patches of greenery here and there show that people are still living in Daska, the village where we came down to look for flour. The dry earth walls are slowly returning to the dust from whence they came. Out of 90 families, no more than 45 remain. The exodus began in the spring, following a helicopter raid. And then, at the beginning of summer, some tanks came up the valley. Each time, some of the families fled. "You will excuse us," says the village patriarch, Abdel Bari, handing me a cake, "it is not salted...." The convoys of "collaborationist" trucks do not haul around a complete line of groceries. There have been no matches and no salt for 6 months, but Abdel is adjusted to the situation. Flee? To go where? At age 60, he has chosen to remain on his farm with his family. The refugee camps are far away. The old man is still more afraid of the unknown than of the Russians.

Since "the war" started, life is harder in Daska, "but after all this is the way it used to be." The sole merchant who had piled up in his little shop made of boughs a confused heap of basic necessities has closed his doors. On one of the walls of the room where Abdel Bari receives us, a child's drawing is displayed; an anachronistic testimonial to the time when the school was open. The teacher left. The government was no longer sending his pay. The old mullah has reopened the Koranic school. He teaches reading, a little. But not writing. The mosque's Koran is the only book in the village.

There are no more health inspections, either. In any case, the inspectors on their one-day visits contented themselves by making a few notes and handing out aspirin. The bus from Khalat-I-Ghilzai does not come any more; there is no postman; but nobody was writing to anyone.... What is more irksome is that without transport one can no longer get to market. One could of course form a caravan like "before the motor-car," when going and coming back took 2 weeks. But, with the new government, one risks borrowing trouble. "I tried once, with my brother-in-law," says Abdel Bari. "There were too many control points. We were asked too many questions." But then, now that the road is cut, it's not entirely a bad thing. The road was also a welcome mat for troubles. Now, there are no more taxes, no more conscriptions. In order to live undisturbed among good Muslims, one could well find it worth while to sacrifice a bit of one's harvest for the benefit of the Moudjahidin.

Close to a year and the coming of the second winter had to come before the Afghan resistance has begun to take cognizance of the strangulation which threatens it more assuredly than the Red Army. Few soldiers feel cut out to be ploughman soldiers. For these men, the Holy War is a full-time calling, and the rifle is a more honorable than the plough or the shepherd's crook. As for the women, well they have nothing to say. Besides, except for a few grandmothers, I will practically never see any.

"How long can the civilian population hold on?" is the question beginning to be whispered in the headquarters at Peshawar. The people in the towns--even the Indians in the Bazaar--still give out goods and money. But a day will come when there will be no one left in the mountains to sell or give away anything to the Moudjahidin, for the exodus continues.

On the way back from a brief engagement with the Soviets, we ran into a group of peasants and their flock hidden back in the mountains. They asked us one question: "Did the Russians burn down our houses?" No. But two tanks joining up with their tank-carrier after the skirmish fired a couple of shells over the village. To no effect. I saw them. The next day, several villagers took flight, pushing their livestock and their heavily-laden donkeys before them. "We are leaving to look for an abandoned farm. Further on." In a country where the land belongs to whoever cultivates it, one decamps to pick up one's life elsewhere with the same resignation as when a stream has definitively dried up.... And the Russians cleverly exploit the fear by sending MiG's to overfly the valleys at tree-top level. The valley can be emptied without firing a shot.

The winter is going to further augment the flood of refugees to Pakistan. So for several months the Moudjahidin will be reunited with their families in the big camps outside Peshawar.

As for the Pakistanis, they are beginning to criticize the Afghan refugees for upsetting the jobs market, which was already in enough trouble. The refugees weigh heavily on the budget of the state, and one begins to hear the refrain: "If you are not happy, go back home." Given that kind of insecurity, the parties comfortably established in Peshawar are playing it every man for himself.

Peshawar, the capital of the Afghan resistance, with its old Victorian vestiges, is a London still waiting for its De Gaulle. The "traitors of Kabul," farsighted for once, see in it a new Coblenz. Incapable of uniting, the main factions there engage in terminable quarreling.

All the factions are opposing each other. And when the Afghans speak of nationalism, one must understand it in terms of their tribe, their village, or at most their region.

Apart from the tribal chiefs and mullahs, the Afghan resistance has practically no more cadres. Everyone who had an exportable skill has gone abroad. And in Peshawar one meets young Afghans in blue-jeans, nostalgic for the "little joints," for the defonce [translation unknown] with the Rolling Stones, for the Kabul of the tourists of the "pre-war" period. Scarcely eager to brave the mountains, they hope against hope for a visa to the West. No matter where, as long as it is far from the Russians. And from the Third World.

Light-years from Peshawar, a bearded mullah fills a machine-gun belt and says: "Our struggle is not only Afghan, but against the "Kafirs," the infidels!"--"You are wrong, my brother," answers Malek, continuing to hand him cartridges one by one. "Look at the world, from the United States to the USSR, you will see too many kafirs. We will never get rid of all of them...."

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ALGERIA

ALGERIAN DIPLOMATIC, AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS SURVEYED

Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 19 Dec 80 pp 3450-3451

[Text] Algeria's foreign relations, always very active, have revealed a certain number of new characteristics in recent weeks, particularly as a result of the increasingly close contacts developed with the United States. Algeria noted with gratitude the promptness and the quality of the assistance supplied by the United States during the Al Asnam catastrophe, in particular the speedy delivery of 5,000 group tents. Political circles, on the other hand, had particularly warm feelings about the message of congratulations received from the American President on the occasion of the 1 November anniversary. Jimmy Carter, after stressing the homage merited by the liberation battle, expressed the appreciation of his country for the "constructive role played by Algeria in international affairs," and said that the United States "counted on pursuing cooperation with a view to the search for peace in the world."

But it was an entirely special circumstance which led to a sudden increase in diplomatic contacts between America and Algeria. In fact, Iran, whose Prime Minister Ali Radjai had visited Algiers in the middle of October, asked Algeria to play the role of intermediary with the United States for the dealings involving the American hostages being held in Teheran.

Mr Redha Malek, the Algerian ambassador in Washington, then transmitted to the State Department, on 3 November, the propositions formulated by the Iranian Government. The response was brought to Algiers on 10 November by Mr Warren Christopher, assistant secretary of state, who was accompanied by Mr Harold Saunders, undersecretary of state for South Asia and Africa, and a number of experts. The members of the American delegation wanted moreover to have the advice of Algerian diplomats on the final wording of the message. Mr Christopher was welcomed by the Algerian minister, Mr Mohammed Benyahia, and it was agreed that the Algerian emissaries would undertake to explain and to comment on the United States point of view in Teheran.

A new Iranian message was sent to the State Department by Messrs Redha Malek and Abdelkerim Bhorayeb, the ambassadors to Washington and Teheran, respectively, who were accompanied by Mr Mohammed Seghir Mostefai, governor of the Central Bank of Algeria. The second American response reached Algiers on 2 December, carried by Mr Warren Christopher, accompanied not only by Mr Harold Saunders, but also by Messrs Robert Carswell and Robert Owen, assistant treasury secretary and State Department legal adviser, respectively, and a number of other high officials and experts.

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While Messrs Christopher and Saunders met again with Mr Benyahia, two American diplomats, Mr Edmund Hoal, attached to the Maghreb section of the State Department, and Mr Christopher Ross, minister-counselor at the U.S. Embassy in Algiers, went to Tindouf, where they spent 48 hours visiting Saharan refugee camps. They were welcomed by various leading Saharan personalities and, in particular, by Mr Mohammed Abdelaziz, secretary general of the POLISARIO Front. In the eyes of the leaders in Algiers, this move was an indication that the State Department has taken the information which had incidentally been supplied to its emissaries into account, and that it had stopped forming its views on the basis of Moroccan reports alone. The idea that Washington might intervene in Rabat to achieve a compromise solution on the Sahara is beginning to spread in Algiers.

The participation of financial leaders in the second American delegation did not surprise Algiers, in view of the Iranian demands pertaining to the Shah's assets and Iranian funds in the United States, but there was doubt as to what role Algeria could play in handling these particular aspects of the negotiations.

#### Various Aspects of Algerian Diplomacy

Naturally, the new upsurge in relations with the United States is not preventing Algerian diplomats from continuing their efforts in a number of directions. Special mention could be made of the state visit of Mr Samora Machel, president of the People's Republic of Mozambique, who arrived in Algiers on 8 December. On this occasion, Algerian reports noted the similarity of the two revolutions.

Algerian-Soviet relations remain close as in the past. On 12 November, a Soviet military delegation arrived in Algiers, headed by Gen Energal Yakuchin, chief of the general staff of the Soviet land army. Several days later the Permanent Algerian-Soviet Inter-Governmental Commission met in Algiers to study the development of cooperation in the realms of agriculture, water resources, industry, cadre training and vocational training, and to draft the new protocol of agreement scheduled to be signed early in 1981 in Moscow. The Soviet delegation was headed by Mr Suvonov Nazar, vice president of the Council of Ministers of the Turkmen Republic, who accompanied the president of the Union of Turkmen Writers. Once again, the Soviet Union has turned to the leaders of its Moslem peoples the better to maintain relations with the Moslem states. Finally, a protocol of agreement calling for the training of "qualified athletic technicians" was signed on 6 December by Minister of Youth and Sports Djemal Houhou and Mr Sergey Pavlov, president of the USSR Sports Committee.

Cuban Minister of Foreign Relations Isidoro Malmierca arrived in Algiers on 8 December from Baghdad. This new visit by the head of the Cuban diplomatic service was related, according to his own statement, to the search for a "peaceful, just and honorable political solution to the conflict between Iran and Iraq."

Among the other major diplomatic contacts in November and December we might note the following official visits: that of Minister of Planning and National Development Abdelhamid Brahimi to Great Britain, that of Minister of Hydraulics Brahim Brahimi to Rumania and Bulgaria, and that of Minister of Information and Culture Boualem Bessayeh to Kuwait. Cooperation agreements were signed almost simultaneously with Jordan (aerial communications) and Syria (trade exchange).

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One of the characteristic features of Algeria's foreign relations involves the direct contact made with foreign political parties, most often by the FLN or by a national organization. The following were particularly notable in recent weeks:

The visit paid to Algiers by Mr Felipe Gonzales, secretary general of the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE), who was welcomed by President Bendjedid; the PSOE and the FLN reaffirmed their total support of the POLISARIO Front, "the sole and authentic representative of the Saharan people";

The contacts made in France, at the invitation of the PCF [French Communist Party], by an FLN delegation (early November), and in Algeria, at the invitation of the FLN, by an RPR [Rally for the Republic] delegation headed by Mr Jean Charbonnel (early December);

The trip made to Rome and Belgrade by an FLN delegation, led by Mr Sliman Hoffmann, president of its foreign relations commission;

The visit paid to Algiers by Lebanese Mourabitoun delegations, at the invitation of the FLN, and of students and youth of the Lebanese National Movement, at the invitation of the National Union of Algerian Youth, and shortly thereafter, the trip made to Lebanon by an FLN delegation headed by Mr Djelloul Melaika, vice president of the assembly, at the invitation of leaders of the National Lebanese Movement and the Palestinian Revolution; Mr Melaika was welcomed by President Sarkis;

The stay of Mr Sadik al Mahdi, president of the Sudanese Oumma party, currently without legal status, in Algeria, at the invitation of the FLN; and

The interviews held in Algiers between representatives of the Syrian and Algerian national youth unions.

#### Diversified Agricultural Efforts

The ninth anniversary of the proclamation of the agrarian union was celebrated on 8 November with a certain restraint. Indeed it was confirmed that the agrarian revolution remains a primary task, which there is no question of neglecting, and which demands an intensive struggle for the future of the Algerian people. But it is above all the concrete tasks of implementation which demand attention, experience having already revealed a number of obstacles with which principle and theory come in conflict.

From 15 to 17 November, the session of the National Union of Algerian Peasants (UNPA) was held. Mr Mohammed Cherif Messadia, permanent secretary of the Central Committee of the FLN, spoke at the inaugural session, denouncing the detractors of the agrarian revolution as enemies of progress and social justice. He said that it is necessary to encourage collective work, to wage a battle against individualist tendencies and against discouragement of the peasantry. The secretary general of the UNPA, Mr Aissa Nedjem, complained that, despite the recommendations of the Central Committee, the UNPA has not been involved in the distribution of credit allocated to the peasantry.

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Contrary to his previous custom, the president of the republic did not attend the meetings of the UNPA, but instead the congress delegates, at the conclusion of the session, went to the office of the presidency. Mr Bendjedid said to them in particular: "It is important to be clear: the agrarian revolution is one of the irreversible gains of the revolution. Reviewing inadequate implementation and taking steps to put an end to bureaucratic practices comes within the framework of a review we should undertake for the enrichment of the agrarian revolution, the protection of the farm producers and the strengthening of the purchasing power of the consumer."

In the course of the council sessions, Minister of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform Selim Saadi made a point of specifying that the measures liberalizing trade were designed to make the offices and cooperatives more dynamic, but they were only an experiment and not a definitive solution. He also said that the effort to develop farm villages will be continued, but with priority to self-construction carried out by "rural settlement islands" located around the farm village as the "vital center."

Meanwhile, in the field it can be seen that to combat discouragement among the beneficiaries of the agrarian revolution, there is a tendency to assign them "individual lots" as an incentive to their initiative.

As to the "split village" plan, that is to say the "support center" where the main framework is provided by the state, and which is surrounded by "satellites" built by the self-construction method, there are various views of it. Some fear that this method may excessively favor the beneficiaries of the agrarian revolution who receive aid for construction, in comparison to private peasants or farmers grouped in self-managing centers. Mightn't the difference in the way of life between the "classic" socialist villages and the new "split villages" lead to jealousies and disagreements? Won't the "split villages" lead to a weakening of the collective spirit?

On 23 November, the Council of Ministers approved a program of action inspired by the decisions of the Central Committee on the subject of the farm sector. The self-managing sectors will be reorganized, and the self-construction system will be introduced therein. The small private farmers will receive substantial aid: farm credit, government-sponsored technical familiarization courses, physical equipment, advantageous marketing procedures. Finally, the "support and supply structures" will be improved through the organization of the offices and the creation of a specialized financial institution.

The agrarian revolution continues, but the national effort will encompass all of the farm categories.

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ALGERIA

LARGEST ALGERIAN POWER PLANT PLANNED FOR RAS-DJINET

Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 12 Dec 80 p 3396

[Text] The Algerian National Electricity and Gas Company (SONELGAZ) recently commissioned an Austrian-German consortium, made up of the West German affiliate of Siemens, the Kraftwerk Union AG (KWU), as leading contractor, and the Simmering Gaz Pauker AG company of Vienna and Siemens of Austria to build the largest electric power plant in Algerian national territory. It will be built, more specifically, at Ras-Djinet, in the Bordj Menaiel district, governorate of Tizi-Ouzou, some 200 kilometers to the west of Algiers.

The power plant, of the steam turbine type, will be operated by natural gas and will comprise 4 electrical generator groups with a power output per unit of 168 megawatts, and thus a total capacity of 670 megawatts. The first generator group at this power plant will go into service in 1985. The completion of construction of the plant, i.e. the commissioning of all four groups, is scheduled for 1986.

As with the preceding power plants, the SONELGAZ has entrusted the civil engineering and the iron and steel structural work to Algerian companies: the ECOTEC [National Office for Economic and Technical Studies] and the National Metal Construction Company (SN Metal). In addition, as with the contracts for the Marsat Al-Hadjadj power plant (under construction), a large part of the installation of the Ras-Djinet power plant will be done by the SONELGAZ and national companies, under the supervision and responsibility of the builder.

The contract between the SONELGAZ and the Austrian-German consortium will be financed to the extent of 85 percent of the part payable in foreign exchange by two credit allocations covered by an agreement between the Algerian national company and the Kreditanstalt, Bankverein, Oesterreichische Landerbank AG establishments.

Major training provisions were included, under the terms of which the consortium undertakes among other things: to train 40 Algerian technical engineers in its workshops, to assume responsibility for 105 technicians and skilled workers for short-course training in Algeria, to make available 4 specialized engineers for 2 years, beginning with the initial operation of the power plant. A number of operational apprenticeships will also be organized for the maintenance and operations staff.

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This new undertaking will provide 220 new jobs.

With the completion of this power plant in Ras-Djinet, the building, now in progress, of the M'Sila power plant (500 megawatts) and that in Marsat El-Hadjadj (600 megawatts), Algeria will see an increase in its production capacity from 1,780 megawatts in 1980 to 3,494 megawatts in 1986, thus producing a volume of energy which will increase from 6.37 billion kilowatt hours in 1980 to 12.5 billion kilowatt hours in 1986, i.e. almost doubling the electrical production of the country.

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ALGERIA

BRIEFS

USSR LUMBER CONTRACT--A contract calling for the delivery to Algeria by the USSR of nearly 300,000 cubic meters of lumber has just been signed in Moscow between the Algerian National Wood and Wood Products Marketing Company (SONACOB) and the Soviet firm EXPORTLES. This transaction, involving an amount of about \$65 million, will be implemented in 1981. It represents an important part of Algerian lumber imports, the Algeria Press Service adds, adding that interesting prospects for the signing of contracts covering several years and guaranteeing the supply of lumber from the USSR for the Algerian market were established by the officials of the two enterprises. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 12 Dec 80 p 3389] 5157

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ISRAEL

PELED URGES DIALOGUE WITH PLO

Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 10 Dec 80 pp 44-45

[Interview with Gen Mattityahu Peled by Hamid Barrada]

[Text] A general militating for peace is a rare enough thing to attract attention. Moreover, if this general is Israeli, it is not just a curiosity but a political phenomenon. Finally, if the general in question is considered a hero of the 6-Day War, it must be acknowledged that the conversion of Menachem Begin's fellow citizens to peace is perhaps not wishful thinking.

The name of this thunderbolt of peace is Mattityahu Peled. He was born in Haifa 57 years ago into a family of four children. When asked why he left the army in 1969, he answered: "To complete my studies and to teach in a university." Two years later, he actually became a professor of Arabic literature at Tel Aviv University. With men such as journalist Uri Avnery and Arie "Lova" Eliav (former general secretary of the Labor Party), in 1975 he founded the Israeli-Palestine Committee, which he chairs. He is not satisfied with preaching peace: in 1976, he established contacts with some of Yasser Arafat's associates, such as Dr Issam Sartou. On the eve of the 1977 elections, he took another step forward by establishing the Shelli party with former communists and former Black Panther militants. This party has only symbolic representation (two representatives) in the Knesset, but its ideas are in the process of becoming a "material" force.

It was in Paris that we met Gen Mattityahu Peled during a meeting organized by Identite et Dialogue [Identity and Dialogue], a movement of Moroccan Jews, which has been working for peace in the Near East for several years.

JEUNE AFRIQUE: What do you think of Begin's remarks about the attack on the Paris synagogue, in which he likens any criticism of Israel to anti-Semitism?

MATTITYAHU PELED: Such confused thinking is common in Israel. About a year ago, there was a lawsuit on this issue, which created quite a stir. Two British writers had published a book that was sharply critical of Israeli policy, a book which was described by a local newspaper as anti-Semitic. The authors of the book took legal action. But the court dismissed their suit, judging that their book, since it was anti-Israeli, was therefore anti-Semitic! I myself have not escaped such accusations. In reality, it is Begin's unacceptable policy which isolates Israel in the world and encourages anti-Semitism.

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JEUNE AFRIQUE: Begin's stubbornness reflects the country's deep-seated feelings ...

MATTITYAHU PELED: No, not really. Following the Venice conference in June 1980, when the prime minister maintained that European governments could not criticize Israel because they were responsible for the Jewish holocaust, most of the newspapers took issue with that statement. They considered that kind of confused thinking to be a political mistake. Begin is the leader of a minority party and all members of the government coalition do not accept his ideology.

JEUNE AFRIQUE: What is the resulting change for the Palestinians?

MATTITYAHU PELED: None! But the ideological differences between the parties could allow another coalition to attain power.

JEUNE AFRIQUE: We have the impression that your party, the Shelli, confines itself to a moral position whose effectiveness is not apparent ...

MATTITYAHU PELED: Several substantial considerations give meaning to our plan of action. Before coming to power, Begin pledged that he would not give up an inch of the Sinai. And then he did. Public opinion was confused and we had to reiterate what we had been saying for years, specifically that the Sinai did not constitute a strategic requirement for the country's security. Suddenly we were heard. The same phenomenon could occur again in the case of the other occupied territories. I might add that, abroad, everyone seeking an alternative policy for Israel approaches us. Don't forget that we are the first to have established relations with Arab countries and the Palestinians. As a result, the Israelis have a fairer idea of a peaceful settlement.

Nevertheless, you are right, our position is a moral one.

JEUNE AFRIQUE: Don't you believe that settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict depends more on international pressure than on an uncertain development of public opinion in your country?

MATTITYAHU PELED: It depends on both at the same time, as evidenced by the Egyptian example. Sadat's visit to Jerusalem changed Israeli public opinion and made foreign pressure possible. If you want percentages, I would say that international influence accounted for 50 percent and Sadat's action for 30 percent, with the remainder having to be attributed to movements such as Shelli, Peace Now, etc.

JEUNE AFRIQUE: How do you think the Arab-Israeli conflict can be resolved?

MATTITYAHU PELED: The West Bank of the Jordan, with Gaza and East Jerusalem, should constitute the territorial basis of a Palestinian state. With regard to everything else, the Palestinians have constructive ideas concerning the problems of two nations which are destined to exist side by side.

JEUNE AFRIQUE: Have you met Arafat?

MATTITYAHU PELED: No, unfortunately.

JEUNE AFRIQUE: He doesn't want to meet you?

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MATTITYAHU PELED: He thinks that a meeting with an individual who does not conceal his Zionist convictions raises problems. But I have learned that he openly considered me someone with whom he would possibly speak.

JEUNE AFRIQUE: Do you approve? What would you have done in his place?

MATTITYAHU PELED: I would not take the liberty of giving him advice. I will say only that if he were bolder in this respect, he would strengthen our position in Israel. His meeting with four Israelis (including two Knesset members) in Sofia in early October has made our job easier.

JEUNE AFRIQUE: What is Sadat's image today in Israel?

MATTITYAHU PELED: The government is trying hard to make him look inflexible, as on the issue of Palestinian autonomy, to weaken his popularity. But without success. Sadat is still definitely a symbol of peace. Israelis realize that their government is creating artificial obstacles.

JEUNE AFRIQUE: How long could Israel retain its military superiority?

MATTITYAHU PELED: Probably for a long time. What the Iraqi Army has been doing since the outbreak of hostilities with Iran does not dispute that fact. However, Israel has become more dependent on the United States for arms and as a professional soldier, I think that it was unnecessary to reach that point. Yielding to an excessive cult of quantity, we have developed our army without considering our needs. After the peace treaty with Egypt was signed, our neighbors reduced their military budgets, whereas we tripled ours!

JEUNE AFRIQUE: Those formidable resources could be used against Syria, for example.

MATTITYAHU PELED: I would not rule it out. Some of Begin's statements make that a possibility. What is happening today in the Persian Gulf, with the resulting sensitivity of the great powers, reduces that risk, however.

JEUNE AFRIQUE: What is your opinion of the way in which Iraq has conducted the war?

MATTITYAHU PELED: The Iraqi Army has not used its resources well. It has engaged only one-third of its troop strength. I have also been struck by the absence of a concentration of armored vehicles, which are forced to operate individually. This is a fundamental error in military art. It seems to me that there is an explanation: if Saddam Hussein has not engaged all his forces, it is because he must retain one portion of them to watch his Kurds, another portion to watch the border with Syria and a third portion in Baghdad. He has no doubt been poorly informed concerning the actual status of the ratio of forces.

JEUNE AFRIQUE: Has your familiarity with Arabic literature favored your development?

MATTITYAHU PELED: Considering orientalists in Israel and elsewhere, I unfortunately note that their knowledge does not have a bearing on their positions. These are orientalists who provide arguments drawn from the Koran and Arabic literature to demonstrate that peace is impossible.

JEUNE AFRIQUE: But you, personally ...

MATTITYAHU PELED: The fact that I read Arabic has enabled me to learn that the experts who advise the government are very selective about their reading: they take from texts what nurtures their prejudices. I had the opportunity to compile, with a colleague, an anthology of political thought in Egypt. The anthology included an interview with Nagib Mahfoud, in which he stated that he would make territorial concessions for the sake of peace. We gave these texts to our students to translate and one of them, an Arab, clearly left out that sentence, which he must not have liked! Similar phenomena can be observed among Israelis. And I have been able to realize this only because I read Arabic. In this sense, knowing Arabic has helped me to see clearly.

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MAURITANIA

PRO-POLISARIO PRESSURE ON HADILLA REPORTED

Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 26 Nov 80 p 34

[Article by A.D.: "There Must Be Proof In Order To Hand Down a Conviction"]

[Text] Former President Ould Daddah is threatened with a legal action at the time of the National Holiday on 28 November. Although preparations have been carefully kept secret, they seem to be well along in Nouakchott. Beginning on 22 September, the Special Military Court has drawn up a summons, without an address, to appear on 10 October for "high treason", in the name of Mokhtar Ould Daddah (presently in France).

After having sought in vain for 2 years for the slightest proof that the architect of independence had made money or, at least, had some sort of personal fortune, consideration was given to invoking "moral laxity Mauritanian society". Why then, a military court? Because several judges, including the president of the Supreme Court, have expressed their disapproval, or even their refusal.

As for the Special Court of Justice, it has had, since 10 November, a new president by the name of Lt Col Cheikh Ould Boide. Already in February, following a trial behind closed doors, the Court had condemned to death one Colonel Kader, a leader of the Alliance for a Democratic Mauritania. He had not been given the benefit of a lawyer.

There are other disquieting indicators. During the month of October, some ministers and other officials holding government positions before the coup d'etat of 10 July 1978 were interrogated. Among them were Sidi Cheikh Ould Abdallahi, former minister of Plans and Economy, and Ahmed Ould Daddah, former governor of the Central Bank (established in 1973).

The strangest indicator, in appearance, is that the Court has been bent on uncovering weaknesses in the credit system during the years 1973 and 1978, when the director general of credits was none other than Oula Zein, the present minister of finances and economy.

It is decidedly less strange if it is realized that Mr Ould Zein has been accused of a "lack of revolutionary conviction" by the most radical wing of the Military Committee of National Safety. It is because of this pressure from this pro-POLISARIO faction that President Khouna Ould Haidalla has hardened his attitude in face of internal difficulties that are on the rise.

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WESTERN SAHARA

POLISARIO'S FUTURE DESCRIBED AS UNCERTAIN

Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 26 Nov 80 pp 28-29

[Article: "What Is the POLISARIO's Future?"]

[Text] In November 1975, at the time of the Green March and the Madrid Agreement, who would have believed that a handful of Saharans were going to hold in check a powerful Morocco. Who would then have imagined November 1980 that the war in the Sahara would be entering its sixth year with no end in sight. And who would have predicted that the POLISARIO Front, recognized by some 40 countries, would be within an ace of splitting the OAU in July 1980, and would obtain overwhelming majorities in the United Nations in September 1979 and October 1980.

The struggle led by the Front for the past 5 years is an enormous event. And the POLISARIO is a case in point. But in order to attain such results, the Saharans had to pay a high price. First, they had to stop being a guerrilla movement (see Francois Soudan's article). Today, Morocco is facing an impressive force equipped with Sam 6 and 9 missiles and in possession of a powerful artillery. This force has (almost) become a conventional army.

The two adversaries are fighting each other with (almost) identical means. That is where the shoe pinches. Because, in the beginning as well as today, the Royal Armed Forces are supported by close to 20,000,000 inhabitants and a big country. Whereas the POLISARIO has been relying--and still relies--on a bare few tens of thousands of people, on camps in the Tindouf region, and on mobile bases in the desert. That is not sufficient to play equal stakes with Morocco! Unless--short of selling their soul to the devil--they stop relying on their own forces.

The Saharans have taken the plunge. Here is a movement termed independent, but which, like no other up to this time has been, as dependent. They have had to rely upon their friends: Algeria who offers assistance but does not interfere (until when?); Libya who gives them weapons without counting how many (for how long?). That is dangerous. It would take so little, an argument, a change of policy in one or the other of these countries, for the POLISARIO to revert to what it was in November 1975.

Let us admit that Libya and Algeria will continue to play the game. The war will be prolonged, for years perhaps. But as the following report of our special correspondent, Abdelaziz Dahmani, shows, Morocco has become a seasoned adversary, is better armed, is better adapted, and is no longer in danger of being taken by surprise. Even if the POLISARIO Front redoubles its efforts, it cannot hope to win the war.

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The situation is even worse. If the conflict is prolonged, the POLISARIO, which can draw upon 15,000 fighting men, at most, will reach its human limits. The Front can only make a partial appeal for friendly "recruits" (as it appears already to be doing). And that will probably be the beginning of the end.

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WESTERN SAHARA

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT GIVES ACCOUNT OF POLISARIO ATTACK

Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 26 Nov 80 pp 29-32

[Article by Abdelaziz Dahmani: "A Phony War"]

[Text] During the evening of the 1 November, I was listening to Radio-Alger in Tangiers. In a communique from the POLISARIO, there was talk of a large attack on Zag, the Moroccan garrison town closest to Tindouf. On 4 November, I was again in Agadir in a Moroccan command post, among the highest ranking officers of the Royal Armed Forces (FAR). I mentioned the POLISARIO communique. Maj Col Abrouk and Col Abdelaziz Bannani, who were coordinating the military operations, burst out laughing: "Hey, be up early tomorrow morning and we will take you to Zag."

On the 5th, in the morning, a Puma aircraft was standing ready. My companion for the trip would be Colonel Haik, who had taken over from Gen Ahmed Dlimi as head of the Ohoud group. We flew over the fertile Agadir region that was irrigated with water from the Massa Dam. Then the ground became more and more inhospitable with a few oasisses clinging to the sides of the Anti-Atlas mountains. Then it became the Ouarkziz, the second mountain chain that borders the Qued Draa in a long arc extending from the Algerian border to the shores of the Atlantic.

Our Puma passed over the Ouarkziz above Touizgui-Remz so as to fly over Zag before landing. It was a small mauve-colored town with one white spot--the mosque--and a seething area--a water source--where several tank trucks were parked. It is the largest water source in the region. The garrison appeared almost to be asleep. The officers and men did not really seem to be in shock from the recent attack. It must be added that, seen from above, Zag appeared impregnable behind several protective walls circling the town. There were some 10 kilometers of walls 2 meters in height. I recognized Maj Oualit Houcine, among the officers, a former member of the Royal Cabinet. He had just finished his daily jog.

For lunch we had fresh fish brought from Agadir by refrigerator truck and corn-fed chicken raised in Zag. During dessert, we were talking about Reagan's election, when our table began to tremble and the officers' mess shook with the sound of far-off muffled explosions. It was 8 minutes to 1 o'clock. Colonel Haik went out for 10 minutes. When he came back in, he again picked up his bunch of grapes, saying: "The POLISARIO has just fired a salvo of eight shells from a rocket launcher from the direction of Ain El Halfa, about 25 kilometers from here. Our troops responded with 155's. Vigilance requires it!" Vigilance was the rule that day, all along the Algerian border for about 32 kilometers.

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Could it have been these far-off firings that made it possible for the POLISARIO to issue a communique in the evening that Zag had undergone a new attack on the 5th, that the garrison had a large number of victims, that two storage depots had been burned, and several military installations had been destroyed.

I was there in Zag on 5 November. I spent the entire day there. I stayed until nightfall, except for a few hours I spent near the Tindouf plateau. In order to prove to me that Zag had not been under attack, Colonel Haik took me in his radio-jeep to the Tindouf airstrip; my heavens, how stony it was. I saw by the odometer that we had gone about 20 kilometers. We had passed through several security points, where I noticed an exceptional firepower capability, particularly self-propelled 155's. We reached the last sand enclosure, a wall extending out of sight to the left and right. The region was desolate. With a bit of daring, we climbed this wall to walk for a while on the plateau that looked like a billard table. Without knowing it, I was in the military no man's land between Algeria and Morocco, dating from 1963, the time of the "first war of the sands".

Colonel Haik pointed out Tindouf to me, which could be seen in the distance, with its protective enclosures, radar installations, tanks, guns, and refugee camps. He had recently returned from the Mauritanian border where as leader of the Ohoud unit he had sealed off the POLISARIO's passages into Algeria. He appeared to have the situation well in hand.

Three months ago, all fighting had taken place around Abatteh. It extended to the area around Ras Al Khanfra, 30 kilometers farther south where the POLISARIO had taken some news correspondents in early October. Now, the new stakes are called Khreibichet, Haouza, 60 to 80 kilometers south of Abatteh.

During the morning of 6 November, the fifth anniversary of the Green March, I was again in Laayoune, the former capital of the Spanish Sahara. Within 5 years, the population had doubled to a little more than 50,000 inhabitants. Because the construction of housing had not kept pace, several shantytowns had sprung up in the areas of Al Porco, Moulay Rachid, Souk Al Mkaa, Souk El Jimal, and Hai El Askari. These people, primarily Saharans, came to Laayoune for two reasons: Security and their children's schooling. Today, there are 7,300 pupils going to school in Laayoune, 10 times more than during the time the country was a Spanish colony.

Laayoune is like a huge construction site. A big lycee will be opened in the next few days. There will also be a courthouse, a mosque, and an arts center. There are 1,200 housing units being built and on this 6th of November, the governor of the region, Slimane Haddad, distributed 1,054 building lots.

The ceremonies on 6 November were disturbed during the early afternoon by the noise of several Mirage aircraft taking off from the air base. We learned shortly afterwards that the POLISARIO had launched an attack some 26 kilometers to the south of Ras Al Khanfra.

The miracle of logistics allowed me to be present, less than 2 hours later, in the wings of an apparently blind combat. There was no actual confrontation, but there was an exceptionally intensive heavy artillery fire. I saw a quantity of 122 shells exploding not far from the Moroccan positions. The noise was deafening and the shells made a 40 to 50 centimeter hole in the crumbly earth. Failing to reach a target, the shells twisted in a spiral. There was a possibility that the shells

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might fall directly onto the hundreds of guns, tanks, and Land Rovers scattered in a half-circle or hidden behind walls of sand which had been quickly thrown up by huge excavators. Artillery fire and firing from Moroccan planes were guided by radio from a C130 observation plane that, at more than 6,000 meters altitude, signaled POLISARIO positions spread around the village of Al Khreibichet. The POLISARIO launched a quantity of Sam 6's and 9's against the C130 and the Mirage planes, but the ceiling for these missiles is 5,000 meters. This technical handicap was offset on the ground by a terrible weapon, a new 128 gun of Yugoslav origin. It had been introduced a month ago. This weapon caused the greatest number of wounded among the Moroccans by the multiple bursts it released upon striking the ground. I saw some of the FAR soldiers who were being evacuated on stretchers to the rear area.

By the end of the afternoon, the firing slacked off and during the night, each side reckoned up its losses. Morocco announced POLISARIO losses to be 2 hundred killed, 74 vehicles destroyed four of which were missile launchers, while deploring Moroccan losses of seven killed, 26 wounded, and 7 vehicles damaged, one of which was destroyed. The POLISARIO, for its part, located the battle in Ras Al Khanfra itself, therefore, 26 kilometers farther north and noted the death of 95 Moroccan soldiers and the destruction of a great number of armored vehicles, Land Rovers, guns, and machine guns.

By mid-day on 7 November, I had returned to the scene. The Moroccans had gnawed a few kilometers. I saw another new protective wall go up. It was whitish. By scraping the ground, the excavators had exposed a layer just below the ground's surface, which we wondered whether it might be talc, gypsum, or phosphate!

I met Lt Col Abid Tria, deputy commander of the Arak group, who had commanded the operations of the day before. He was in high spirits and invited me to help in recovering one of the POLISARIO's tanks. We realized later that it was an AML 90. That day, the Moroccans and the POLISARIO had taken many risks and, for the first time, I saw them at 5 or 6 kilometers from each other, maneuvering their vehicles so as not to become too easy a target. Contrary to the previous day's activities, there was little firing.

We approached within about 2 kilometers of the immobilized tank. Four Land Rovers lay around. We were far from the 70 destroyed vehicles reported the day before. Lieutenant Colonel Tria corrected the report by saying: "We are only concerned here with losses sustained by the most advanced front of the POLISARIO forces. Aircraft observations drew our attention to greater losses in their rear areas. And then there are the POLISARIO's own admissions."

A few minutes later, I listened to the recordings of the broadcasts made by the POLISARIO on 6 and 7 November, as well as to those communications from the battle of 30 October in which the POLISARIO acknowledged that 50 men were out of action, and five of them were dead.

The caller at the central telephone exchange (in Tindouf) was calling Halima. She spoke excellent English with five of those with whom she was speaking. They expressed themselves in the language of Shakespeare. On the other hand, I heard no word of Spanish or Hassaniya, the local language of the Saharans. Halima acted as the relay point between the staff and the radios under the Front's controls in the Al Khreibichet region. The staff was concerned about Lieutenant Nasser's health. It was announced in excellent Arabic, with a Middle Eastern accent, that he had been wounded and that his vehicle, a 420, had been burned. "And Lieutenant Nejib?" "No news."

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During broadcasts on 6 November, the POLISARIO gave a long list of damaged vehicles and of survivors, those who were "safe and sound" (Nahnou Selimine [?]): Two out of 8 for the 724 [th]; 5 out of 8 for the 736[th]; 2 out of 6 for the 711[th]; 3 out of 8, 4 out of 8, .... Total: 71 disabled of whom 29 had been killed. We also learned of the loss of two "Cosmos" (as the POLISARIO calls "Stalin's organ" or rocket launcher) and a FOX tank. There was great concern for the occupants of the "Yellow Vehicle No 876". There was an argument between the radio operators of vehicles nos 413 and 430, who did not agree on what type of planes were flying overhead: Reconnaissance planes or bombers. There was then a sharp order in French from the General Staff: "Radio operators, cease transmissions; rejoin your command post, and wait for further orders!"

While I was listening, the Moroccan soldiers had set up the last piece of equipment and last unit to recover the POLISARIO "tank". Several hundreds of vehicles started out, supported by a few RIM (mobile infantry regiments). A C130 was flying at a high altitude. At 1330 hours, the "tank" was in hand and began to move out. On the way back, we flew over Ras Al Khanfra, Abatteh, and, at Tan-Tan, we rejoined Col Hamou Arzaz who was in control of operations for the whole region.

"For 5 years now," he stated, "we have been getting the best weapons in the world thrown in our face, everything that you might see during a parade on Red Square, except for large tanks and missiles. Yet, never has our army been stronger, or well broken-in. It knows the ground better than ever." In a way of saying good-bye, he was not the only one to tell me "Come Back in a few weeks; we'll take you to Haulza and into the last strongholds held by the POLISARIO."

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WESTERN SAHARA

ASSETS, LIABILITIES OF POLISARIO NOTED

Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 26 Nov 80 pp 30-31

[Article by Francois Soudan: "One Guerrilla Among Other"]

According to the law of cycles or the fate of history, the fifth year of the struggle is almost always, for guerrilla movements, the time to reconsider the situation, to take a second breath, or it is a debacle. "The first years are the easiest," the Vietnamese Giap said one day, "but the fifth year is a test. If the party or the military arm has not succeeded in giving itself a coherent structure or consistent strategy, then it is the end."

Five years after the beginning of the war in the Sahara, the POLISARIO Front is also confronted by the "time for an obligatory self-critique" (Amilcar Cobral). Five years ago, it was a stumbling movement. Today, it is almost a conventional army. How did this transformation come about? Is the POLISARIO getting close to its objectives? What will the next stage be?

The POLISARIO has gone through two fairly distinct periods; the third period is building up. The first period that Moroccan military strategists call the "Vietnamese period" went from the end of 1975 to the beginning of 1979. It was a typical guerrilla movement. The POLISARIO clung to the idea of a "liberated territory" where it might set up a rudimentary administration and fly the flag. But a territory was being liberated for what reason? In Mauritania and in the Mauritanian section of the former Sahara, this "strategy of symbols" (Cabral) realized successes that were more spectacular than they were effective, of attacks against Zouerate, Nouakchott, and La Guera, and raids to the south. The Front benefitted from the complicities and sympathies of the urban inhabitants. This sort of harassment led Mauritania to back off.

Faced by the Moroccan Army, the POLISARIO's first strategy ended in a defeat. The Moroccan administration had emptied the towns in the Sahara of a portion of their civilian population and closely controlled the remainder. The POLISARIO having been cut-off, became the opposite of a fish in water; the water had been drained off.

Henceforth the Saharans were not going to be stubborn; they were going to take advantage of the weaknesses in the Moroccan response, e.g., the Royal Armed Forces have to concentrate troops in the cities and have no interest in the stony areas of the desert.

By the end of 1978, the POLISARIO had received a large number of weapons from Libya (heavy artillery, Sam 7's and 9's, portable ground-to-air weapons, Katiouchkas [?], communications equipment) and had standardized its organization (Katibas units of

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100 to 500 men in formations which might include up to 3,000 men). The POLISARIO then began to surround some of the Moroccan strong points. The guerrillas were becoming a fighting army.

This "Cuban" stage, as it was called in Rabat, was the time (from June to October 1979) of massive attacks by close interval waves. Losses were high, too high for a movement for which the reservoir of human replacements was not inexhaustible. It is true that it was no longer a question of liberating an area or fighting the Moroccan Army. It was now a matter of forcing Rabat to negotiate, by affecting international opinion.

Shaken by events, the royal armed forces reacted. In October 1979, the Ohoud, Zellaka, and Arak "counterformations" were created. Their objective was to sweep clean the Sahara and southern Morocco by a systematic search for contact with the POLISARIO. It was costly but worthwhile. (J.A. No. 1029)

Facing an adversary using the same tactics as it was using, the POLISARIO seemed, for a few months, to have again modified its organization. It wanted to strike farther north within the "Morocco of 1956" in order to force the FAR to extend their lines of defense, by using lighter formations, therefore, more mobile, but with fewer spectacular results.

This new strategy was not without its risks. By attacking the adversary's undisputed territory, it would aggravate the people's hostility. In addition, the main access routes through the Ouarkziz into Moroccan territory are today under FAR's close control. (See above.)

The POLISARIO now holds three trump cards. Its armament is remarkable. It has been provided by Algeria and especially Libya (Toyota "Land Cruisers" from Tripoli are beginning to replace the Land Rover) and is well adapted to the area. The POLISARIO has taken on the luxury of a "navy" of Zodiac Mark V inflatable rubber boats, manufactured by a French firm. These boats were provided by Libya and are transportable. They are also equipped with twin-barrel rocket-launchers.

The POLISARIO also had access to a rear base, in Algeria, which was inviolate, even inviolable, because of a military power equal at least to Moroccan military power. It is a "first" in the history of guerrilla warfare. Until now, countries giving shelter on their own territory to a movement called a liberation movement were weaker than their neighbors and were subjected to the latter's raids, bombings, and constant "rights of pursuit".

Finally, the POLISARIO has mastered the art of propaganda. The two-pronged attack, put out by the movement, tends to inspire a mixture of pity (the human aspect, refugees) and of fear (military operations). The act of taking foreign correspondents on a "joy-ride" into the center of the enemy means nothing from a military point of view. It is, however, a sign of good health. Only strong movements can do that, e.g., PAIGC [African Independence Party of Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde] and the Vietnamese FLN [National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam].

These three trump cards, however, have a reverse side. International opinion is inconstant, the rear base in Algeria and the purveyor of arms (Libya) keeps the POLISARIO under an unlimited surveillance. And particularly, the human potential available to the Front is limited. Officially, the Tindouf camps hold 10,000 people, which means an army of 15,000 to 20,000 men, at the most.

In the long run, the POLISARIO runs the risk of collapsing because of a lack of replacements. "They have the weapons, but we have the number," read a Vietnamese banner in Hanoi in the beginning of the 70's. The POLISARIO has the weapons (for how long?) but not the number [of replacements].

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