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27 July 1981

# Near East/North Africa Report

(FOUO 25/81)



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## NEAR EAST/NORTH AFRICA REPORT

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INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

DEVELOPMENT OF ITALY'S RELATIONS WITH ARABS REVIEWED

Increased Contact

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic No 224, 29 May-4 Jun 81 pp 65, 66

[Article: "Historical and Geographic Facts in Italian-Arab Relations; European Italy Positively Inclined Toward Arabs"]

[Text] The recent years have witnessed considerable development in relations between Italy and the Arab world. This development has included the political, economic and cultural spheres. Until recent times, the 1950's and 1960's for example, the relationship binding these two sides was an unclear and incomprehensible foggy relationship or, let us say, a relationship with no clearcut dimensions and features. This despite the fact that Italy, next to Greece, is considered the closest European country to the Arab world and there is a rich history of the relations with this country which shares with the Arab countries its location in the Mediterranean Basin. Moreover, there is a strong similarity between many of the customs and traditions of the Italian people, especially the southern Italians, and the peoples of the Arab Mediterranean countries, i.e. the countries located on the Mediterranean coast. Despite all these common denominators, the relations tying Italy to the Arabs were not, as we have already pointed out, compatible with the facts, especially the political relations, considering that Italy has been one of the last European countries to show understanding toward the Arab-Zionist conflict. This may have been due to the strong relations established by the successive Italian governments with the United States, especially in the sphere of foreign policy where there was evident coordination between the Italian and U.S. governments on many of the positions taken by the two governments vis-a-vis international events, especially the Middle East issue.

Disengagement With America

However, this fact began to disappear in Italian foreign policy, in the late 1970's and with the onset of the 1980's specifically. The United States can no longer use Italy as a launching point for its activities against the Mideastern countries. One of the distinguishing marks indicating the extent of the transformation in the Italian policy and this policy's liberation from the shackles of the U.S. policy in the area is found in Italy's condemnation of the United States in the wake of the failure of the latter's attempt to free the U.S. hostages in Tehran [By military force]. It has also become evident in Italy now that there has been a more positive inclination in the interest of the Arab countries, especially when Francisco Cossiga

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was prime minister and Emilio Colombo minister of foreign affairs. There has been a large increase in the number of visits made by Italian officials to the various Arab countries in recent years and certainly the Italian politicians have begun to realize that Italy, with its geographic location and on the basis of historical and cultural reality, must interact to a greater extent and more positively with the hot political events and the influential economic developments that take place [in the Arab world]. Moreover, Italy is, by virtue of all of the above-mentioned, among the Western countries most strongly affected by the Middle East crisis. Italy relies on Arab oil to meet 68 percent of its energy needs. Local [oil] production is very meager and can be disregarded, considering that it doesn't exceed 1.5 million tons annually whereas the country needs more than 100 million tons a year.

## Look for Oil

In addition to the oil which represents an important factor in the consideration of Italian foreign policy, there is another factor which has influenced modifying the course of Italian policy vis-a-vis the Middle East generally and the Arab countries in particular. This inclination appeared in the first half of 1980 when it was Italy's turn to head the EEC Council in the first 6 months of 1980. Therefore, Rome took the leadership of managing the EEC affairs in an important period during which the EEC member states were finalizing their views and preparing themselves for a role in the Middle East--to be specific, for a role in settling the Arab-Zionist conflict generally. Consequently, Italy found itself interested, perhaps for the first time in this concerted manner, with whatever was happening in the Middle East politically, economically and culturally. We even notice that this interest did not end or terminate with the termination of Italy's chairmanship of the EEC Council in the second half of 1980. Therefore, this period witnessed numerous visits by Italian officials to the Arab countries and the conclusion of bilateral agreements between Italy and many of the Arab countries. However, the impact of this positive turn in Italian policy diminished quickly. An official of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs attributes this change to the eruption of the Iraqi-Iranian war and the resignation of Cossiga's cabinet at the end of September 1980. Cossiga was the man who headed the EEC meeting which was held in Vienna on 13 June 1980 and in which the nine EEC member states issued their joint declaration on peace in the Middle East. In this declaration, these states expressed their readiness to participate in the efforts to bring about a comprehensive settlement acknowledging the Palestinian people's legitimate rights to their land and their right to self-determination. While recognizing Israel's right to survival and security, the EEC member states condemned the Israeli settlement policy in the occupied territories. They also declared their rejection of the Israeli attempts to change the status of Jerusalem unilaterally. For the first time, the EEC member states also stressed that the PLO should have a part in any peaceful settlement.

This may not include all that the majority of the Arab countries want from Europe. However, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs considered this declaration by the EEC member states to be considerable progress, the credit for which goes to Italian diplomacy which played an effective role in changing the political direction concerning the Middle East in the Netherlands and Denmark both of which had been known for their positions of full support for Israel. For the first time ever, we saw the West European countries not [only] binding themselves to the declaration issued but [also] laying down the foundations for an active diplomacy embodied in the mission which toured the Arab countries and Israel to familiarize itself with the points of agreement and disagreement between the parties to the conflict. This

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mission was known as the (Thorn) mission, Thorn being the chairman of the EEC Council for the second half of 1980. One of the most important results of the tours, contacts and talks of the mission was the declaration by the European countries of their readiness to offer international guarantees binding to both sides in the area within the framework of a comprehensive peaceful settlement. In July 1980, when Italy handed over chairmanship of the EEC Council to the Luxembourg, Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs Colombo was planning to underline the bilateral relations between Italy and the Arab countries. He paid an official visit to Tunisia during which he held talks with Chedli Klibi, the Arab League secretary general. Shortly afterward, "Izzat Ibrahim, the Iraqi vice president, visited Rome with 3 Iraqi ministers in response to an official invitation from the Italian Government. Meanwhile, active preparations were underway to receive Prince Saud al Faysal, the Saudi minister of foreign affairs. But suddenly the Iraqi-Iranian war erupted and the Italian cabinet fell. According to an Italian diplomat, Italy had attached big importance to the Saudi minister's visit and was looking forward to restoring Italian-Saudi relations to the conditions that prevailed before the ban on the exportation of Saudi oil to Italy. In any case, this problem has recently been solved satisfactorily to both sides.

Generally, it can be said that the relations between Italy and the Arab homeland are constantly developing in a positive direction at the various political, economic and cultural levels. Insofar as each individual Arab country is concerned, it is evident so far that Italy is trying not to interfere in the political axes that emerge between some countries of the Arab homeland. Italy's interest lies, according to the statements of more than one Italian official on more than one occasion, in the disappearance of the petty conflicts among the Arab states so that Europe, including Italy, may be able to deal with an Arab world that has unified positions on both the foreign and the domestic policies.

## Growth in Trade Relations

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic No 224, 29 May-4 Jun 81 pp 69-72

[Article: "Italy: Economic Artery Between Europe and Africa; Italian Exports to Arab World Triple in 4 Years"]

[Text] There is the following famous statement by a prominent Italian businessman in which he describes the necessary guarantees for the survival, growth and development of the Italian economy and industry: The only solution before Italy is to develop its economic relations with the Arab world, especially with the Arab oil countries, to the utmost degree possible. From them we acquire oil, which is the energy necessary to run the factories, and to them we export the largest volume possible of the production of these factories at prices and on conditions unmatched in other countries.

It seems that the Italian businessmen and the Italian Government have fully realized this fact or taken this advice, as they describe it in Italy. A single glance at the development of the Italian exports to the Arab countries shows us the extent of the stunning growth in the economic relations between the two sides in a short period not over 4 years. Whereas the value of the Italian exports to the entire Arab world did not exceed \$3,746,831 in 1976, we find that the figure rose to \$5,237,347 in 1977 and to \$6,219,446 in 1978. In 1979, the figure reached \$8,668,837. All signs indicate that the 1980 figures will exceed all the preceding figures and all the expectations following them. [All figures as published]

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Italy is the biggest industrial state in the Mediterranean Basin. Like all the industrial countries that lack local energy resources, Italy has been strongly affected by the rise of oil prices in recent years, especially when we learn that it depends on oil to meet 68 percent of its energy needs. Despite the efforts it is exerting to increase its imports from other sources, such as Nigeria, Venezuela and Mexico, the largest part of Italy's oil imports comes from the Middle East. Thus, crude oil represents the burden that saddles its balance of payments. This burden grew heavier in 1979 in particular when the deficit in Italy's balance of payments amounted in the first 8 months of 1979 to 11,182,000,000,000 liras--\$12,912,000,000.

## Energy Problems and Their Local Causes

Thus, the Italian economy, like the economies of the other industrial countries, has to shoulder the weight of the rising prices of crude oil and of the interruption of some oil supplies because of the Iraqi-Iranian war. The quantity of oil supplied by Iran to Italy has dropped by a large amount since the Iranian revolution whereas under the shah, Iran was the second largest supplier of oil to Italy after Saudi Arabia. Iraq then replaced Iran as the second largest supplier and this situation continued until the outbreak of the Iraqi-Iranian war.

However, many political observers and economic analysts believe that the blame for the interruption of oil supplies from some sources falls on the shoulder of Italy itself. The government-controlled Italian Hydrocarbons Organization, known as ENI, has failed to implement the direct importation deal for 12.4 million tons of oil concluded with the Saudi Petromin Organization because the Saudis stopped delivery of the oil when the political scandal concerning the \$114 million agreed upon as "commission" spread in Rome. The governmental and parliamentary investigations have reached no conclusive result and have found no evidence of any payments to certain Italians. However, this has not prevented Italy from importing Saudi oil via the international oil companies.

There is another story with Kuwait, the gist of it being that Kuwait has stopped delivering oil to two Italian importers who have not been able to pay what they owe it, namely the SIR Company and the Atilio-Italiana Group. Kuwait was also annoyed when the Pont Oil Company, headquartered in Genoa, sold a shipment of Kuwaiti oil on the high seas and this shipment was unloaded in South Africa. The situation has also been affected by the financial difficulties faced by the Italian consulting and contracting firms. The major shareholder of the (Itaxat) Company, a company which had an excellent reputation in the Third World, liquidated the company. However, the labor unions and the company employees protested very strongly and so the government appointed a representative to take charge of running the company. Exactly the same thing was repeated in the case of the group of construction companies supervised by Mario (Gingini) which had important contracts in Saudi Arabia and Iraq. The courts are still looking into the affair of these companies and no decision has been made yet.

It is evident from the above-mentioned examples that the curtailment of the oil relationship between Italy and the world's oil countries, especially the Arab countries, is due fundamentally to some domestic Italian actions which have nothing to do with the other side, meaning the oil source.

## Arabs and Economy

As for Italy's economic relationship with the Arab countries, it is, as we have already mentioned, generally good and developing, especially with the countries

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close to Italy, such as Libya, Tunisia and Egypt. Italy [presumably meaning Libya] is considered among the best markets for the Italian exports. Perhaps this is due to the old historical relations binding the two countries, in addition to the geographic proximity. Nearly 15,000 Italians work in Libya at present. As for Saudi Arabia and the Arab Gulf States, Italy is exerting urgent efforts to develop the relations with them. It has now become familiar to see Italian firms implementing large, medium and small projects in the Arab countries. Perhaps one of the most important projects entrusted to an Italian firm to implement in the Arab world is the pipeline which will carry Algerian methane gas to Italy via the Strait of Sicily. The first real and permanent link between Africa and Europe was completed in 1980. This link or this pipeline will go into operation by the end of 1981 to carry gas to Italy, and maybe to other European countries. The length of this pipeline which crosses the Mediterranean is 2,498 kms and its costs amounts to \$3.5 billion. It will transport gas from (Nasi Raml) in the Greater Sahara to the European pipeline network which extends to (Akonisk) in the North Sea, the gasfields in the Soviet Union and the Atlantic coast of France.

The observers liken this ambitious project, which is a record figure in laying pipeline in deep water, to a secret rope linking North Africa with Europe. The Italian firms taking part in laying down the pipeline prefer to call it the artery pipeline because an artery is a living thing that stands as a symbol and as a testimony to the two-way cooperation and communication across the Mediterranean. In any case, this pipeline is capable of turning Algeria into the biggest exporter of the gas to Italy because the pipeline will carry 30 percent of Italy's needs in 1985. The other suppliers, besides the local Italian production, are the Soviet Union, the Netherlands and Libya.

## Special Relations With Gulf States

This covers Italy's efforts in the biggest project of its kind being implemented in one of the Arab countries is concerned. If we continue to review the activities of the Italian firms in the Arab world, we will find that the Italian (Acoli Marilli) Firm, along with an Italian consortium, is implementing a contract valued at 400 million dinars to supply power production equipment and plants for waste treatment, air conditioning and power distribution.

In Kuwait, the Italian (Technit) group of companies has won a contract to design a system for loading oil truck tankers capable of controlling weight, flow and delivery, of recording the value [of deliveries] and of preparing the bills. This project will cost in its entirety \$115 million and work on it started in 1981.

These are just examples of the projects the Italian firms are implementing in a number of Arab countries. It is worth noting here that the economic and industrial relations between Italy and the Arab homeland are not confined to such projects but go beyond to other spheres, such as the exportation of consumer goods. There is, for example, the ICE [Foreign Trade Institute] which has branches in nearly all parts of the world, including 12 branches in the Middle East. They all work to enhance trade between Italy and the Arab homeland. At present, these offices are engaged in campaigns to improve the sales of Italian home appliances in Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Kuwait. There is also the Italian Industry and Commerce Fair which is held in Sharjah every year and which displays Italian foodstuffs, cooking ware, light machinery and construction materials, in addition to kitchen utensils and sinks.



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Future...

We thus find that the Italian firms have a broad market in the Arab world. If we continue citing examples, we find that an Italian firm is currently busy implementing a \$20 million contract to improve Benghazi's sewers. But one of the things for which Italy is best known is its production of marble, porcelain and granite. From Italy or by way of Italy come three quarters of the world's marble and granite production and 82 percent of the machinery used in cutting and polishing rock. There was a stunning increase in Italy's marble and granite exports from 1975-77 due to flourishing construction activity in the Arab countries. Saudi Arabia became the fourth largest importer of Italian marble whereas it had previously occupied 14th place. The value of the exports to Kuwait has risen by 500 percent. In 1978, Saudi Arabia occupied second position among importers of Italian marble even though there are similar good-quality materials in some Mideastern countries. But the Italian products are different in quantity and quality from the similar materials found in Iraq and the UAE, for example. In Saudi Arabia, the locally available marble is suitable for limited purposes, such as floors. Thus, Italian marble finds a broad market in the Arab countries, especially in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states where huge construction projects have been going on for years and will continue for many years to come. This fact is taken into consideration by the Italian firms and government which seek to take part in these projects that open broad spheres before the Italian economy, industries and labor.

Italy's Heavy Equipment and Machinery Exports  
to the Arab Countries  
(In millions of Italian Liras)

Name of Country	1977	1978	1979
Saudi Arabia	12.8	12.8	12.4
UAE	4.6	2.6	0.3
Jordan	0.8	0.8	1.3
Kuwait	6.8	4.1	2.7
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>25.00</b>	<b>20.30</b>	<b>16.70</b>

Italy's Arab Oil Imports in 1978  
(In Millions of Tons)

Name of Country	Volume in Million Tons	Percentage
Abu Dhabi	1.979	1.8%
Algeria	4.052	3.8%
Dubai	0.876	0.8%
Egypt	6.348	6.8%
Iraq	18.950	17.5%
Kuwait	9.577	8.9%

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Libya	14.899	13.8%
Qatar	0.854	0.8%
Saudi Arabia	22.394	20.7%
Syria	2.123	2.0%
Tunisia	0.912	0.7%

## Italy's Marble Exports to the World

Country	1978		1979	
	Volume In Tons	Value In Million Italian Liras	Volume In Tons	Value In Million Italian Liras
West Germany	691,151	169,381	590,759	122,073
Saudi Arabia	258,900	70,310	171,433	45,920
France	185,235	42,919	212,409	38,059
United States	130,798	42,344	106,202	32,484
Kuwait	126,828	15,676	92,994	12,025
Japan	42,962	15,101	35,122	8,810
Libya	72,648	14,163	77,070	8,294
Switzerland	139,026	14,017	122,760	9,656
Spain	68,378	13,571	58,963	9,023
Belgium	59,420	13,521	58,452	10,192
Britain	155,499	13,405	256,824	10,496
Austria	(79,670)	13,325	67,839	9,723
Netherlands	46,877	11,826	46,412	9,035
Grand Total	2,056,825	499,559	1,897,239	325,790

## Italy's Exports to the Arab Countries (In Million Italian Liras)

Country	1976	1977	1978	1979
Algeria	354,180	579,168	804,155	892,567
Bahrain	15,324	26,493	26,007	28,904
Djibouti	-	-	-	8,081

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Egypt	243,692	300,181	345,590	431,338
Iraq	206,297	202,315	274,035	558,050
Jordan	49,376	60,407	75,854	101,667
Kuwait	151,888	229,756	243,896	270,237
Lebanon	27,332	176,751	197,424	294,788
Libya	835,280	1,810,035	1,106,860	1,597,869
Mauritania	4,120	5,972	5,560	9,350
Morocco	117,880	185,945	181,925	216,861
Oman	9,808	16,248	16,643	22,921
Qatar	22,288	37,132	56,566	50,238
Saudi Arabia	55,635	953,612	1,242,889	1,563,153
Somalia	26,279	64,722	79,565	112,351
Sudan	56,612	63,823	50,662	37,384
Syria	189,950	192,102	201,275	376,004
Tunisia	109,572	163,858	167,655	281,356
UAE	115,446	170,240	213,148	280,402
Yemen (Aden)	9,803	16,349	15,157	21,135
Yemen (San'a')	16,601	34,621	37,638	57,816
Grand Total (In Liras)	3,117,363	4,561,730	5,342,504	7,212,472
Grand Total (In Dollars)	3,746,831	5,237,347	6,219,446	8,668,837

## [Box on page 71] Constant Growth in Italian Exports

Italian exports to the OPEC countries, and also to the Arab countries, registered considerable progress in 1979 and 1980. The increase rate in the 1980 exports to the OPEC countries, which include Arab countries, amounted to 31.3 percent over 1979.

The increase rate realized by the Italian exports to the Arab countries amounted to 10.84 percent in 1979 and 12.76 percent in 1980.

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[Box on page 71] Italian Trade Representation Offices in Middle East

Offices of the Italian ICE in the Middle East:

Algeria

Office Italien pour le Commerce Exterieur, 8 Rue Hamani, Algiers, tel 635889/  
635896, telex 52148.

Egypt

Italian Trade Centere, Shari Tahrir, Al-Dokki, Cairo, tel 705631, telex 92676.

Ethiopia

Italian Institute for Foreign Trade, Eresco Building, PO Box 3185, Addis Ababa,  
tel 444043, telex 21233.

Iran

Italian Trade Commissioner, 145 Shah Abbas Kabir, Tehran, tel 831001/832727, telex  
213300.

Iraq

Trade Promotion Section (ICE), 2/B/3/3 Zuqaq 4, Mahala 601, Mansur, PO Box 13006,  
Baghdad.

Kuwait

Italian Trade Commissioner, Al-Salhia Commercial Complex, 1/3rd floor, Kuwait, tel  
447582, telex 3483.

Lebanon

Institut Italien pour le Commerce Exterieur, Centre Sabbagh, Bureau 406, 4th floor,  
Hamra, Beirut, tel 342607/8.

Libya

Italian Institute for Foreign Trade, Maidan Dahara, Palazzo Saghezzi, CP 12368,  
Tripoli, tel 48207, telex 20291.

Morocco

Office Italian du Commerce Exterieur, 291 Boulevard Mohamed V, Casablanca, tel  
278182, telex 22850.

Saudi Arabia

Italian Trade Commissioner, Shari Khalid ibn Walid, Sharafia, PO Box 1193, Jeddah,  
tel 6655167/6659913, telex 40439.

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Tunisia

Institut Italien pour le Commerce Exterieur, Immeuble Africa, 50 Avenue H Bourguiba,  
PO Box 1222, Tunis, tel 255107, telex 40934.

UAE

Italian Trade Commissioner; Shaikh Hamdan Building, PO Box 6752, Abu Dhabi, tel  
21808, telex 3487.

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IRAN

FACTORS LEADING TO BANI-SADR'S DOWNFALL EXAMINED

Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French No 1069 1 Jul 81 pp 22-23

[Article by Marcel Peju: "The President in Hiding"]

The Shiite Moslems invented the "hidden imam": The only incarnation of the legitimate government, whose reappearance they expected for 14 centuries. In Iran, they are now associating with him the "hidden president": but as his ominous double, his evil reflection, his satanic counterpart. For if Abolhassan Bani-Sadr, chief of state dismissed on 22 June, on the orders of Imam Khomeyni, comes out of hiding where he has already taken refuge, it will be to be "judged" as a criminal,--the "new shah"--if not summarily shot. Unless he agrees--as the revolution's leader exhorts him--to repent, and become "a theoretician and thinker of the Islamic revolution." But the execution without trial of 23 of his real or presumed supporters, including the poet of the left, Said Soltanpour, will no doubt give him other reasons for concern.

This tragic reaction will also give such reasons to the observer: especially if he has followed with sympathy, even enthusiasm, the development of a revolution whose heroism and scope have few historic precedents. But, because of that, he must beware of two too easy temptations.

The first is to take refuge in a dilemma. Either condemn the revolution itself in view of what it has become, which leads to the retrospective restoration of the shah's regime. Or approve everything, precisely in the name of the revolution: which led elsewhere and in other times to resignation to Stalinism.

The second leads to disillusioned and rather vain considerations about the proximity of the Capitol and the Tarpeian rock or about revolutions which devour their own children...

On the other hand, it is more difficult to understand how one got there and what is the share of the inevitable--but also of what one could have avoided--in a development which threatens to become a catastrophe.

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For this analysis, which we can only outline, we probably must assume one fact. Contrary to the great revolutions of the modern era (French, Russian or Chinese) the Iranian revolution was not the work of a social, intellectual or bourgeois "elite," nor of an advanced party. It originated in a spiritual movement which rose from the depths, from a type of rejection response so fundamental, so foreign to all calculation, to all political strategy that it gave to the revolt of a people, its mass, intangible and finally irresistible nature. What none of the more or less westernized parties had managed to do--overthrowing the shah--religion accomplished in a few months, with a boldness, which stunned the world.

But having done this, the new Iran all the same had to join a concert of nations generally motivated by other "values." In other words, it had to reconcile its originality which was its strength, with some more rational demands, even generally accepted rules--even if their sincerity or their morality seemed questionable.

Now no Iranian seemed better fitted for this task than Abolhassan Bani-Sadr. Born in a family of mullahs, son of an ayatollah, sincerely religious, considered the "spiritual son" of Imam Khomeyni, he had nonetheless, because of his years of exile, a certain familiarity with the West: and even a certain feeling that there was something to be learned from it. With his youth (47 years old) his manners of an intellectual and his appearance of the eternal student, he seemed to be able, without betraying Islam, to reassure those who were disturbed by the more intense faith of many of the mullahs.

In fact, on 25 January 1980, Bani-Sadr was elected president of the republic by universal suffrage, with 76 percent of the votes: a result which was all the more remarkable since the candidate of the powerful IRP [Islamic Republican Party] only got 6 percent of them and he himself had no mass organization able to support him.

How then has he managed, 17 months later, to see himself cursed by the mob, condemned by parliament and no doubt abandoned by Imam Khomeyni, before being forced to flee. Apparently through a series of mistakes, blunders and neglected opportunities, none of which alone could have been decisive, but which cumulatively were unforgiveable.

The first mistake was due no doubt to this election itself. Too sure of himself and his popularity, Bani-Sadr underestimated his opponents' strength. A solitary figure, he wanted to stay that way, neglecting especially to develop a party. Now his adversaries in the IRP, humiliated by the presidential election, lost no time in getting their revenge in the Majlis [Parliament] election, winning 198 of the 271 seats to be filled.

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False Moves

And, certainly, 60 percent of the voters had abstained, which confirmed Bani-Sadr's conviction about the IRP's lack of representativeness. But, representative or not, these men, endowed with the constituent power, adopted nonetheless a constitution which reduced the presidential powers to insignificance. Crushed between an all powerful spiritual leader (the "Faqih": at this time Khomeyni) and a legally sovereign Majlis, the president of the Islamic Republic appeared in the documents as a superfluous cog.

Bani-Sadr's second mistake was in deciding to ignore it, forgetting that one can only disregard the letter--if one has the spirit--or strength. Now he denied himself the latter and he only had the former through the imam. When he lost the leader's support, he could not count on any "organization" to protect him: all the more so since that of the Tudeh (communist), a very small minority, but well organized, supported religious extremists for tactical reasons.

Bani Sadr, after having increased the false moves in the hostage affair, behaved nonetheless as if he could do what he pleased: refusing to attend cabinet meetings, not paying any attention to its decisions, defying his opponents verbally etc. Even the war with Iraq, which could have helped him as commander in chief to consolidate his power, ended up--after the first dangers were passed--by turning against him.

Since then, the IRP's undermining work with the aging Imam Khomeyni could not help but bear its fruit. Paradoxically, his dismissal for incompetence, for the worst reasons in the world, punishes all the same, in its way, a failure: that of the statesman which Bani-Sadr was unable to be.

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MOROCCO

REPORTER COVERS BERBER, FAR LEFT MOVEMENTS

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 5-11, 12-18 Jun 81

/Article by Fu'ad Abu Mansur: "AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI Opens the File on Moroccan Democracy"/

/5-11 Jun 81 pp 38, 39/

/Text/ Having reviewed the experiments of the National Liberal Grouping (15 May 1981), the Socialist Federation of popular Powers (22 May 1981), and the Istiqlal Party (29 May), AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI is opening the file on the Moroccan Popular Movement, which is led by Mahjoubi Aherdan. This instalment, also one of accusation, will attempt to sketch out the context in which the movement arose and its basic orientations in the context of the active political movements in Morocco, determining the Berber Moroccans' position in the process of programmed Arabization. Let us begin by reviewing the leaders' action plan and then meet with the movement's secretary general in a frank discussion.

The Popular Movement, headed by Mahjoubi Aherdan, does not stir the commotion we are accustomed to among the other Moroccan parties. There are reasons for this "silence," perhaps the most conspicuous being the fact that the Popular Movement is active in sparsely inhabited areas and settled in the towns only later, a relatively short time ago. There is the "language barrier." Berber circles speak their own local dialects but they were heavily affected by French. Giving testimony to that is a not insubstantial number of intellectual and organizational organs which the movement publishes in French in its headquarters in Rabat, such as the quarterly magazine AMAZIGH which is concerned with history and cultural affairs and a weekly paper which the Popular Movement publishes in Arabic under the name of AL-HARAKAH, whose administration and editorship is supervised by Haddou Abirkache Abdallah Bayali. However, the new generation of Berbers has been assiduously studying Arabic within the climate of Arabization embracing the various cultural and intellectual groups in Morocco.

Moroccan party figures have many criticisms against the Popular Movement and find much fault with it, including the fact that the movement sometimes defends the values of the Berber identity to excess and this imparts a racist tinge to its practices and interests. The people in the Istiqlal, the Federalists and partisans of the Liberal Grouping agree that the people in the Popular Movement were kind of Trojan horse of the French Protectorate in the period before and after independence and constituted a francophone colony at the peak of national action to Arabize the administration and impart a Moroccan character to modes of daily interaction.

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Discussions taking place on the pages of newspapers and criticisms aimed directly or through intermediaries against the Popular Movement are shifting to the tribunes in parliament, where the members of representatives' blocs direct blame against the movement's group, which they take to task for its positions and demands, in most cases characterized by localism and class interests.

Members of the Popular Movement do not stand by silently in the midst of the arrows of criticism flying in from all directions. They say that their defense of their party directives and conceptions is in keeping with the positions of principle to which they have remained loyal since their movement said "no" to the Istiqlal Party in 1957, rejecting the "fait accompli" which the members of Istiqlal imposed at that time in stipulating dominance of the Moroccan political stage by a single party. Since that turn was taken, the adherents of the Popular Movement continued, "We have been defending our genuine Moroccan nature and insisting on the need to form a solid intrinsic identity as part of the structure of the greater Moroccan society; the record of our struggle is full of achievements, including defense of the wilderness areas which historically have not received their share of progress and modernization. While the members of the Istiqlal have contented themselves by considering the wilderness areas 'a human mine whose revolution yielded up men to crush the French Protectorate,' the Popular Movement nurtured the wilderness and helped improve its social facilities. When the Istiqlal Party tried to monopolize party and political life, we resisted it with force of arms in 1958 and the secretary general of our movement, Mahjoubi Aherdan, went to prison because of our stand, which called for political pluralism. Our comrades sought refuge in the mountains and continued their struggle from there, even after the army intervened. The Popular Movement was victorious when a royal decree the Decree on Public Freedoms, was issued deeply implanting the principles for establishing parties and social and intellectual organizations and the publication of periodicals in the context of laws in force. Today the Popular Movement is represented by four ministers in the coalition cabinet and we have a parliamentary group composed of 44 deputies and about 800 offices and movement cells in all areas of Morocco."

#### The Tripartite Slogan

Discussion on the pages of newspapers and periodicals has not ceased, but the "dust" of the struggle does not touch upon the true nature of the file on Moroccan democracy in its real conditions. This is manifest in the position of the Popular Movement, which is working ceaselessly to give concrete form to the genuine Moroccan identity under a slogan of three elements: God, Nation and King. The Popular Movement speaks the dialects of Sousse, Riff, Tamazight and Hassania, pronouncing the "r" like a "gh," wears burnouses, lives in tents and has suffered from hardship and the administration's failure and party's failure to understand it. It has also, within the framework of its vision, which is inspired by genuine Moroccan nature, rejected communist, socialist and internationalist conceptions and has rebelled with obvious ferocity and a struggle not devoid of spontaneous and violent characteristics.

The Popular Movement was qualified to play the role of the Istiqlal Party's mobilization reserve and its adherents and supporters fought on the Istiqlal's behalf. Among these were people who had borne arms when the French armies came to Morocco. Through their pursuit of a rugged life removed from Western ideologies, they offered models of Moroccan patriotism linked to the soil of the homeland and its spiritual and material essence.

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These principles have not prevented rifts from appearing in the structure of the Popular Movement. These may be attributed to the weak presence of the democratic spirit among party staff people and the appearance and aggravated nature of chauvinism in the context of an absence of political criteria and conditions of planning and organization. This has turned the movement into a trump card which many people have played in the context of successive central committees and the contradiction between ministerial positions and political and movement orientations. That has made offering concessions an inevitable necessity if the movement is to be kept from blowing up from within. The former "first man" of the movement, Dr Khatib, felt that giving free rein to the democratic process was an urgent necessity if the organization was to endure. However, the circumstances which accompanied the "first exceptional state" resulted in Khatib's secession from the party and establishment of another popular movement, to which he imparted a character of constitutionalism and democracy. Khatib's breakoff led to further rifts, which caused confusion among the movement's staffs and infected its decrees with ambiguity and an air of dislocation. We can sense this "deviation" from the movement's participation in the first and second Moroccan parliaments. However, the limited character of the results it attained made it lose some of its credibility. The confusion was reflected in the leaders and the command both, and we witnessed a series of secessions, starting with Khatib and Oukouti, who established the Constitutional Popular Movement, and ending with Abdel Rahman Kouhan, who in turn split off from Dr Khatib's movement and launched the Party of Reform and Unity. Between Khatib and Kouhan, other party organizations and formation branched out; of these, we might mention the Labor Party, under the leadership of Sinhadji Abdallah, the group of Abdesselam ben Issa and Idriss Sharadi, the Democratic Movement, with Zaki Moubarak, and the Free Progressive Party which branched off from the Democratic Movement, headed by Bas-sousse, in addition to more than five various trade union organizations and political movements.

#### The Genuine Moroccan Nature

Moroccan observers attribute this fragmentation to "individualism" in the running of municipal, village and peasant councils the Popular Movement supervises and the absence of the sort of meaningful party training other political organizations exercise in Morocco. It is clear that the movement's new leadership, under the chairmanship of secretary general, Majoubi Aherdan, the current minister of state for postal service and communications, has paid attention to the need to make up for deficiencies in the party organization and is active today in the "training" process. Proof of this is the deployment of party cells in sparsely inhabited areas and some cities, such as Rabat, Casablanca and Agadir.

In spite of the polarizations which the Popular Movement has experienced in its struggle to establish its presence within the Moroccan political structure, a clear ideological line has characterized its concepts and its mode of behavior, an avoidance of Western ideologies, proceeding from a point of emphasis of struggle which seeks refuge under the slogan "genuine Moroccan nature."

Members of the Popular Movement say that their rejection of Western Political patterns keeps them free from "subordination" and that they thereby hold onto their intellectual and religious values. There is no doubt that by subordination they mean in particular the adoption of socialism and communism. They accuse Moroccans

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who bruit about internationalist slogans of representing a blatant schizophrenia, especially since some of them fall into the category of rich people who own thousands of hectares of agricultural land.

Mr Abdallah Bayali, editor in chief of the newspaper AL-HARAKAH, the Popular Movement organ, analyzes these notions by stating "We are fighting against what is called socialism because it is contradictory to our genuine nature and we oppose communism because it is against Islam. There are local socialist and communist personnel who put the interests of others ahead of their nation's interests. We are fighting on behalf of a politically strong economically vigorous Morocco, in the context of constitutional monarchy, which it accepts with all its directives. People who take the movement to task for its adherence to the genuine Moroccan nature ignore their country's history. Morocco lived under a monarchy before Islam and that worked to consolidate Arabhood and Islamic values. The wars we waged against Europe helped implant the ideals of Arabhood and Islam. Morocco is a barrier preventing the spread of apostasy on the western wing of the Arab world."

Idris El Miss, who is close to Mr Mahjoubi Aherdan, says criticisms are made that the Popular Movement has a racist Berber character. This is propaganda which the proponents of the Istiqlal Party spread about against the movement; they do not shrink from stating that we promote discrimination between Arabs and Berbers. We stress that Moroccans are a single solid bloc and that there is no difference among its members in terms of sex, race or color. There are features peculiar to Berbers--for instance the Amazigh language--which stamp us with a particular character, but that does not mean that we are racists. We are striving on an intellectual-cultural level to prevent the Amazigh language from dying out. We do not want the experience of Tizi Ouzou, which disrupted the cultural and social balance of Algeria, to happen in Morocco. We want to revive the language within the groundwork that is common to every member of the united Moroccan family, and when we realize that Amazigh is the lingua franca of the Greater Atlas, where the Arabic language is not very common, and that it has a special radio station broadcasting in Amazigh 12 hours a day, we do not know what is wrong with reviving a Moroccan heritage which has lasted for thousands of years, through channels of university education, for instance, by creating a chair for it. The intention in all this is to preserve the heritage of Islam and stay close to our roots and origins while keeping abreast of the new conditions of the era."

Idriss El Miss addresses himself to the problem of Arabization in Berber circles: "We support planned, programmed steps toward Arabization which are free from arbitrary measures. It is not in the power of officials to burn bridges, now that the French language has taken deep root as a consequence of the long duration of the protectorate, or to eliminate the cultural characteristics of the Berbers with the stroke of a pen. We are striving for a type of Arabization which will be in keeping with social and economic life while consolidating Morocco's position vis-a-vis its enemies and friends alike."

This sheds some light on the notions of the Popular Movement, which is a manifestation of one aspect of the struggle which Mahjoubi Aherdan's organization has been embarking on to reaffirm the Berbers' intellectual and social characteristics. There are other principles which constitute a plan of action for the base and command. We can summarize these as follows:

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1. Providing all Moroccan citizens with equal opportunities to enter into government departments and take part in the country's resurgence on various levels. Putting capable people on the sidelines creates a climate of injustice and resentment.
2. Establishing a united society enjoying a state of solidarity in the context of and for the sake of justice, in order to eliminate distinctions and privileges. This requires a just distribution of national income, development of production and the limiting of excessive consumption.
3. Establishing a contractual society emphasizing a single notion of economic and political power through administrative decentralization and respect for competition and the will of the people.
4. Promoting pluralism of parties as the backbone of the philosophy of liberation and democratic representation and strengthening party structures to help administer the pyramid of local authority and combat bureaucracy.
5. Defining development strategy as increasing the country's industrialization several times over, creating small and medium sized installations through tax exemptions, setting out a lending policy, controlling distribution systems and improving working conditions.
6. Considering the Sahara regions claimed by the motherland to be an inseparable part of Moroccan national territory and not open to bargaining or negotiation. In this context, the Sahara war appears to be an expansionist game aimed at isolating Morocco and tightening the noose around it; Algeria's aggressions require intensified solidarity and support for the king, the guarantor of the territorial unity of Morocco.
7. In the field of education, the Popular Movement stresses four goals: guidance, universalization, imparting of a Moroccan character to stipulated programs and units in the curriculum, and Arabization. These measures must embrace children in scarcely populated areas because they are the victims of educational schizophrenia.
8. Loyalty to Islamic teachings and their genuine premises, the purifying nature of Arabhood, and the cultural values it represents.
9. Focusing on "genuineness," which presupposes pride in one's intrinsic nature, self-confidence and the ability to innovate and create. This leads to the formation of strong generations of Moroccans who are proud of their nation, its ideas and its past. It also results in fortifying the national spirit against the importation of alien ideologies and ideologues, so that the problems Morocco is suffering from may be solved by nationalistic thinking that takes account of differences between ability and aspiration.

Today the Popular Movement is about 22. It has striven to adapt its conceptions and goals to the requirements of the state of affairs in Morocco. The rifts which have shaken its structure have earned it a distinctive experience in fighting especially since its position in parliament, the cabinet and politics makes it a prominent element in fashioning Moroccan national decisions. How does its

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secretary general Mr Mahjoubi Aherdan view the political and combative progress of the movement? In what light does he evaluate its achievements in the context of its basic principles, especially in the climate of criticism and rebuke which the members of the Istiqlal, the Socialist Federalists and the Liberal Grouping direct against his movement and its orientations?

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/Text/ Mahjoubi Aherdan, 59 years of age, is the secretary general of the Popular Movement and minister of state for postal service and telecommunications in the current coalition cabinet and has held a number of ministerial positions in the past. He has also worked as a consultant to the king. He was born in the village of Oulmas 170 kilometers southeast of Rabat in 1922. He stands out among Moroccan citizens by being a French-language poet and an artist who has had well publicized exhibitions in Europe and the United States. He is bold in defending his views and is military by temperament in leading his movement--or at least so he says. The experience of talking with him is one of a confrontation not devoid of poetic excitability.

/Question/ How do you evaluate the Popular Movement, now that about 22 years have elapsed since it was established? Are you satisfied with its achievements in the light of new developments on the Moroccan scene?

/Answer/ At the outset I would like to emphasize that the Popular Movement is the child of freedom and is connected to our emancipation from colonialism in its various forms and appearances. However, it was formed long before that, when a takeoff was launched to resist the single party, which was trying to impose its dominance by every means. I previously declared, while I was fighting in the Rabat area, that we did not obtain our independence in order to lose our freedom. Since that time we have worked to make the movement an active vehicle struggling for public freedoms.

When I say that the movement existed before independence, I mean that contacts were made in 1955 with our Tunisian and Algerian comrades to establish a movement in North Africa. The hope was not realized for a number of reasons. However, the plan for a movement gave birth to a political resistance movement which gained strength with the return of King Mohamed the Fifth. When the catastrophes and mass killings intensified and a number of citizens fell prey to them, we decided to "put the brakes" on single party dictatorship. After that the movement was forcibly dissolved, but the pursuit of resistance drove us again into organized combat. After the assassination in the city of Fez of the fighter Abbas Mousadi, whom we considered a commander of the liberation army in the Taza, Imouzar and Marmoucha areas, we escalated our action to a nationwide scale. Then I was arrested and that provided another reason for upping the intensity of the struggle in the areas of Fez and the northern regions. This is where the movement arose, as a result of the awakening of the conscience which emerged from the depths of the spirit of the Moroccan people, who remained true to themselves and proud of their principles, rights and culture.

/Question/ Why does a large group of Moroccan politicians accuse you of a sort of Berber racism? Are there activities and acts on the movement's part which fall within this direction?

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/Answer/ I do not know why certain Moroccans are always using us as a target for distortion. We accept Arabhood without reservation and we demand that those who claim to be Arab accept the Berber identity. His majesty the king has agreed to the establishment of an institute to preserve the arts and traditions of the people. He put me in charge of directing the activities of a special committee concerned with the matter. This is the object of our struggle, which is aimed at preserving venerable traditions which have deep roots in the Moroccan spirit. Today I am wondering, if these traditions disappear, what will be left in Morocco? We observe that culture is related to language and depends on its survival. Preservation of Berber traditions is an inseparable part of the struggle. To be a Berber does not just mean living in a tent and riding a horse. To be a Berber does not perforce make it necessary to be the enemy of everyone whose native language is Arabic. People who accuse us of racism feel that the Popular Movement is threatening them. If a citizen says that he is Lebanese, is that cause to brand him a racist? The Popular Movement constitutes an overwhelming danger to all reactionary parties in Morocco.

#### A Royalist Without Conditions

/Question/ Is the "balkanization" of democracy a relevant possibility in the absence of a focal point to draw diverse political forces together in Morocco, in view of the silent struggle among parties and among conflicting wings within each separate party?

/Answer/ The problem of the "balkanization" of political life in Morocco does not exist in the form certain adversaries of Morocco would like. We are calling for and defending pluralism and democratic freedoms, not out of fear but because they are principles that arise from the Moroccan personality. In addition, the monarchy is a factor for unity, federation and strength. I am sometimes accused of being a monarchist without restriction or condition. I am a monarchist but I do not always let administrative practices which are carried out in official guise pass uncriticized. Some Moroccan politicians tried to infiltrate Khouneifra and Abu Izza to create problems. The same thing happened in Rachidia. Their goal was obvious: to overthrow the regime. It is the people who are accusing us of racism today who were engaged in this destructive game, and their attempts continued until the establishment of Polisario. I therefore say that Algeria has never changed its policy toward Morocco. Today I hope that Chadli Bendjedid has changed his platform. Nothing distinguishes Algeria from Morocco. I have many friends in Algeria and we hope that the Algerians will start behaving properly again. What is unfortunate is that the world is doomed to the logic of force and interests.

/Question/ Is the Popular Movement a conservative or progressive one? What is to prevent you from occupying the top political position in Morocco?

/Answer/ The Popular Movement is conservative and progressive at the same time. However, it is not conservative in the reactionary sense. We are conservative on two levels: on the level of our constitutional monarchism and the values and sacred beliefs which that entails, and on the level of our genuine nature, with the language, culture and civilization that are in it and stamp our personality. This is where our roots strike deep, and the deeper our roots are the higher we can rise. The dialectic between depth and loftiness is obvious. From this, specific political principles branch forth:

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1. Our movement is progressive and aims at bringing Morocco up to the level of the most advanced countries in all fields, economically, socially and culturally.
2. Socialism, as far as the Amazigh go, is not an import. Morocco in the past attained an exemplary society in which individuals possessed a liberal spirit and individual character flourished. Today this assumes that the cells in the Moroccan body cooperate with one another and advance toward greater sacrifice and production. The collective lands are only a picture which reflects our traditions and fuses our mutuality. Morocco has a special genius and will develop only under the inspiration of this genius. It is a framework for our growth and our ability to keep up with the cultural upsurge in the world.

Thus we want to give democracy an economic and social meaning. We are not unaware of the development of the means of production, but such a phenomenon is contingent on efficiency in the context of the government's options and mobilization in the field of labor which issues forth from a developed collective conscience.

Question Does the Popular Movement's participation in the coalition cabinet presuppose that you have offered concessions in the framework of your basic program? What are these concessions and to what extent have you made them?

Answer I do not understand why the Popular Movement's participation has provoked such attention. Our work within the context of Maati Bouabid's cabinet is the embodiment of our national duties. Our movement devotes basic attention to the problems of the hour and this presupposes integration with government orientations. Without going into details, our duty is to resist greed, restore dignity to citizens and create a balanced society which appreciates the responsibilities it undertakes. Solidarity in the cabinet makes it possible to fashion a creative national enthusiasm, and I hope that I am not committing errors. Experience in mass action has taught me that the cabinet's task is not as easy as certain observers and commentators suppose. This is because the serious construction and development of the nation's sectors can be accomplished only through self-denial and absolute frankness among all officials in power at various levels. This also means that in its current composition the cabinet must play its part effectively and face all problems through scientific planning, especially on the economic and social planes, since the challenges are severe and will not brook temporizing or procrastination. In this regard we observe that our group in parliament, called "the Group of Genuine Moroccan Nature and Social Justice," is carrying out dynamic activity and supports the ranks of the ruling majority. However, this support is not blind. It is basically aimed at advancing the nation's interests, under the inspiration of the principles of the Popular Movement, and is striving to achieve its hopes and aspirations.

I Was a Military Man

Question How do you reconcile your political activity with your poetic and artistic work?

Answer At the outset, I was not political. I was a military man and still apply the military system with the adherents of my movement and my comrades. I believe that man is measured in terms of his various activities, and matters depend on their timing. What is important is that the adoption of a style not be artificial; rather, it is necessary to cling to the style spontaneously and automatically, out



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of a concern to assume mass responsibility. Sometimes our view of things, people and life is tinged with colors, feelings and sensibilities. Sometimes words are only slogans issued from a single undertaking, in which the word "politics" assumes its noble, sacred meaning.

Question After this interpretation of conscience, I wonder how you can shift from the world of poetry and painting to the battlefield of harsh political reality?

Answer There is no contradiction between the two worlds, except in appearance. We spare no effort to realize the citizen's vital demands. For example, we took part in setting out the new development plan which the Higher Development and Planning Council discussed in the city of Fez. It contains the details for building a stable, prosperous Morocco. The "Group of the Genuine Moroccan Nature and Social Justice" participated in this activity with all its powers and mobilized its staffs to clarify the Popular Movement's position on various points which it discussed preciently and deeply. Moroccan public opinion has confirmed the political capital and seminal relevance we possess. Our history, without a doubt, is full of activity to correct the political course of government, purify the political air and enlighten the masses on genuineness, dignity and justice, and we are still defending constructive government notions on grounds that they are a sound approach toward a comprehensive national resurgence.

Question It is said that the cabinet portfolios assigned to the representatives of the Popular Movement are secondary in importance and consequently that it is not able to bring about tangible changes in government programs and in the Moroccan economic and social structure.

Answer These charges levelled against the Popular Movement are among the criticisms which are flying about aimlessly. Government activity is based on collective planning, the outlining of development plans and close surveillance over the economic, political and social well-being of the citizens. All cabinet portfolios are important when it is a matter of national action. The Ministries of Power, Mining, Tourism, Equipment and Industry, Transportation, Education and Foreign Affairs are all vital and there is no priority among them except in terms of creative pioneering activity, loyalty to principles and concentration on scientific bases and planning and programing criteria. The citizen is the first and last objective of every action. Therefore what is desired is to fuse powers and abilities together in an overall framework which will reflect good and affluence in the citizen's daily life. At that point these "Byzantine" categorizations which are of use only as material for sterile comparisons will disappear.

Question How do you evaluate democratic life in Morocco? Is the Popular Movement taking into consideration priorities for action in this particular stage of Morocco's history? What are these priorities and how do you observe them out in actual practice?

Answer Democracy is an important Moroccan achievement. It is a state of consciousness which exists, grows strong and matures. Our country as it emerged from the war of liberation was characterized by weak points in structural formation which manifested themselves in the fragmentation of its territory, the fact that it had been appropriated by foreigners, the pattern of economic subordination, and the administrative machinery's failure to perform integrated activity. Democracy is

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the sum total of achievements in various national contexts, plus the freedom of speech and thought, in which we take pride. The Popular Movement believes that the country's political course and the survival of its principles require the strengthening of national sovereignty before all else. In this historic stage we have chosen to work to strengthen the government out of our conviction that there can be no freedom or democracy without sovereignty.

In spite of all the contradictions in the center, where our movement belongs, we list the notion of a strong, effective government at the top of our concerns. We embrace various initiatives and activities which are aimed at implanting independence, strengthening unity and enhancing territorial integrity.

There are national turning points which the Popular Movement took part in crystallizing, including the first referendum, the popular elections, enlistment in the border struggle in 1968 and the Green March. We are true to the oath we made, in spite of the new conditions and sudden circumstances. We record with satisfaction the establishment and healthy development of democratic institutions and the integration of capable administrative agencies into the constitutional monarchy. In the current stage, we are bearing our responsibility in full.

Question Therefore it is clear that the Popular Movement is loyal without limits. Don't you note some shortcomings in certain administrative fields? What are your criticisms of the "faltering" of democracy in certain specific fields? Moroccans within loyalists ranks have criticised it.

Answer We have our reservations about various practices which we believe assume an official character, and whose deficiencies and excesses we hope will disappear. However, this must not conceal the structural changes which have taken place in the Moroccan mentality and on the map of political life. This may all be attributed to the bitter struggle which we embarked on without quarter. Why should the deficiencies be left hanging, obstructing complete vision? Why impart a tragic character to them? We oppose monopolies, greed and haphazard price increases. Our program is clear and our struggle on behalf of the democratic process is clear. We must not remain spectators in the living room, calling for the rectification of what is crooked. It is better to bare our arms and embark on the struggle of action within standards which may be summarized as respect for organizations, the rules of the parliamentary game, basic freedoms, democratic choice, and the sacred right to oppose. We call for a just balance between a strong democratic government and the attributes of the constitutional pyramid, where the group is the core of the regime and the individuals are its dynamic, mobile, effective elements. Here is where political and artistic activity come together, because the goal is the same: it is the good.

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Text In this instalment on the Party of Progress and Socialism, AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI closes the file it opened 5 weeks ago on Moroccan democracy as manifested through party organizations. The four preceding instalments dealt with the experiences of the Istiqlal Party, the National Liberal Grouping, the Socialist Federation of Popular Powers and the Popular Movement respectively. In those instalments, we were concerned with objectivity to the maximum possible extent and aimed at a sort of

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"political survey" of the Moroccan scene. This survey may not be complete, because the requirements of journalistic work are different from the needs of field study in some respects. However, we will pay attention to everything we receive on this subject from Morocco after we have closed the file.

The party of Progress and Socialism stands to the left of the Moroccan opposition at times and to the right of it at other times. It also coordinates itself with it under certain conditions and circumstances, as was the case in the meeting of 2 June this year, when the Socialist Federation and the Party of Progress and Socialism insisted in a statement which the two of them issued on "adhering to the gains of the Moroccan people as regards the Sahara issue, the repercussions of recent government decrees raising the prices of basic foodstuffs, and their effect on the standard of living of the masses of the people." At its conclusion, the statement emphasized the need for "joint meetings in the future, especially since they constitute a positive element in the common struggle."

There is no doubt that political, economic and social developments govern Moroccan parties' resolutions on most occasions and depict the shifts in their positions and options. This means that opposition parties occasionally come together to perform a joint act of proselytization, as has been the case with the loyal majority parties. There is an example of that in what some Moroccan observers call the "spontaneous" price rise. This created an uproar in the country and all party organizations, in spite of their different ideological aspirations, joined to condemn it and demand specific clarifications from the government, because, as Mr Ali Yata, the secretary general of the Party of Progress and Socialism, says, the issue is related to the "vital matter of the Moroccan masses."

However, apart from the brilliant occasions and the times it rode a wave of popular demands--a gamble it was slated to win in advance--the Party of Progress and Socialism has remained the poor offspring of Moroccan democracy. It has Marxist-Leninist leanings in a milieu which is devoutly Islamic and structurally politicized in the framework of constitutional monarchy. In addition to that, a broad range of Moroccan public opinion rejects "imported ideologies" and adheres to what is called here "the genuine national nature." Thus it is no wonder that we see most Moroccan parties speaking of "genuineness," "a return to roots" and "concern with one's forebears," deriving their inspiration from the theories of such "fathers of Moroccan thought" as King Mohammed the Fifth, Allal El Fassi and so forth.

Enhancing the image of "the poor offspring" is the fact that the Party of Progress and Socialism has been proscribed three times in less than 10 years. Its secretary general went to prison for a year in the late sixties because he announced at a conference of European Communist parties, that his party was part of the international communist movement. Every time the prohibition against it was lifted, the process began again in the context of an ideological line polarized around such basic issues as "the national democratic revolution," the formation of "a national front in opposition to imperialism," or other technical terms from the Marxist dictionary.

Moroccan observers note that the gap between the Party of Peace and Socialism's concepts and its ordinary situation is great. The party has been revolving about one person, Ali Yata, since the days of the French Protectorate. While this phenomenon shows a "combative tenacity" it also on the other hand, unmasks the "poverty of party staffs and pyramidal organizations which communist parties throughout the

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world adopt." In addition, Ali Yata sometimes gives an impression of being a "fighter who does not get tired" whose objective is to monopolize all the keys of the party and decisionmaking positions within it. He holds the only seat the Party of Progress and Socialism has in parliament and at the same time supervises the production of two newspapers which are the party's organs, AL-BAYAN in Arabic and French. It is said that he sometimes is not content just to write the two editorials but that he resorts to editing the bulk of the journalistic material. This indicates a lack of pluralism of views within the party and an individual dominance which sometimes conceals a material deficiency; Mr Yata tries to avoid this by working day and night to bring out his two papers, which so far have attained only modest circulation figures in comparison with the other domestic papers, in spite of his repeated appeals to his supporters and party people to acquaint people with "the party papers and urge them to read them."

During my stay in Rabat I learned that Mr Ali Yata's son, named Nader, who has graduated from a university in France, supervises the management of AL-BAYAN in French, while his only daughter Layla is continuing studies in "feminine arts" in a university in Moscow.

These characteristics, which are very peculiar to the Party of Progress and Socialism, do not impede efforts to form a distinctive political and economic line, stand against the other parties and constantly attempt to give more illegible to the existence of communists in students' and workers' circles. In his numerous pronouncements, Mr Yata has insisted that his party is the legitimate spokesman of the Moroccan working class, or, more precisely, the revolutionary vanguard of the Moroccan working class, and that he considers himself the "spearhead of the struggle of the workers, peasants and downtrodden," especially those who are exposed to well-programmed exploitation as a result of the factors of inflation and the spreading abyss among the classes of the people.

#### A Course of Struggle

It is a permanent part of history and geography that "the party of Ali Yata," as it is called in some cities in Morocco, is enhancing the democratic experiment and its need for pluralism on the Moroccan stage. It is the only communist party in the Arab world which draws a free breath. Its circles stress that this freedom has not been granted by anyone but is the result of a long course of struggle which included experiences with detention and pressure since the days of the French Protectorate. In addition one should bear in mind that the party deviated from the ideas of some people who had broken with the French Protectorate and attracted a group of Moroccans in 1943. It then developed in accordance with the barometer of "maximum temperature and freezing cold" especially since the secretary general, Ali Yata, spent 12 years in detention between the prisons of Marseilles and Fresne (in the outskirts of Paris) and Casablanca.

Progress and Socialism people say that that legacy of struggle "has turned our party into an organized, tightly-knit party with bonds between the generations in our continuing struggle and enjoys ideological and political unity." They go on to say:

"We do not experience polarizations around personalities which are raging in other Moroccan parties. This phenomenon, which proves our vigor as a party, is connected to the democratic centralism which we are pursuing and distinguishes the revolutionary party from other ephemeral organizations."

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Democratic centralism is part of the ideological and doctrinal focus of the Party of Peace and Socialism, which is scientific socialism, a tool for studying the development and contradictions of society, not a frozen principle or a miraculous formula for solving all problems. Here of course we come to the heart of Marxist teachings, and the Progressive Socialists do not hide the fact that they are Communists who have studied at the knees of Marx and Lenin and have adapted their notions to conform to the Moroccan situation. They defend themselves in the face of "reactionary attacks" from other parties by claiming that ill will fuels these criticisms, which are aimed at preventing "the revolutionization of the toiling masses."

On the basis, the Progressives continue, it is necessary to end the sterile debate on "imported ideologies." They say, "When the national movement came to prominence in Morocco, no one accused it of deriving inspiration in its activity from foreign national movements. It is class society which produces numerous political forces, in accordance with a class struggle which Morocco has known since olden times. Thus we take pride in our particular character, which is that of the Moroccan working class and its allies, as distinct from the other classes and groups of Moroccan people who join together in solidarity on a class basis to confront a single national destiny in spite of contradictions in interests and affiliations."

#### Basic Hypotheses

We can summarize the hypotheses of the Party of Progress and Socialism in the domestic, Arab and international contexts in the following fashion:

1. In the domestic context, the Progressives insist upon the following priorities:

There is an everyday state of affairs most classes of the Moroccan people are suffering from, which may be summarized as the "failure of the liberal economy." This has created inflation, a balance of payments deficit and a rise in prices which is twice as great as expected. Only the capitalist oligarchy benefits from this state of affairs, which is reflected in the impoverishment of various classes of people.

A difference in development among regions, which may be attributed to the prevailing tentative centralism and to a disruption which is linked to an essential inequality that must play the role of the basic motive force in this organization.

The stock exchange of the big interests is based on a self-contradictory equation: enriching the rich and impoverishing the weak. In embodying this, in practice, monopolies, speculation and proliferating unemployment have arisen among labor circles in particular. Therein lies the suffering of the toiling classes, in the absence of an economic mechanism which is socialistically programmed and aimed at total independence. Therefore it is necessary to reform the system of direct taxes, especially in the direction of the large fortunes and real estate proprietors, set out a just labor law respecting the political rights of the workers in the trade union field, and prompt workers to aspire to a national role in serving the country (the Sahara War and the Green March).

2. In the Arab sphere, the Party of Progress and Socialism calls for struggle against imperialism and Zionism and sees signs, in Camp David, of a settlement to the Middle East question that was hatched in "reactionary kitchens," especially since it excludes the basic party to the issue, the representatives of the Palestine

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Liberation Organization. The party also casts blame upon "Arab fragmentation" and encourages concern for a socialist awakening to help the organization of nonaligned states and the capitals of Eastern Europe, in particular the Soviet Union, prepare for the Geneva Conference and recognition of legitimate Palestinian rights.

3. In the international context, the Party of Progress and Socialism calls for "international solidarity" and considers itself an inseparable part of the international revolutionary movement, whose objective it is to implant world peace in order to bring about the triumph of the causes of freedom, democracy and justice. In the same context, it stands for consolidation of the international labor movement, which focuses on principles of equal rights and nonintervention in the affairs of others. This loyalty to genuine internationalism and a solidarity opposed to imperialism, say the Socialist Progressives, is compatible with defending the national sovereignty of Morocco and helps crystallize the notion of preserving territorial unity. They insist upon integrating the two principles, the nationalist and the internationalist, because the party of the Moroccan working class is at the same time a sincere nationalist and internationalist organization fighting in the domestic and international contexts to protect the Moroccan front against the imperialist octopus.

After this review, we wonder where the particular character of the Party of Progress and Socialism lies within the struggle of international communism and whether it doesn't sometimes sacrifice the attributes of the Moroccan personality in restricting itself to the letter of world internationalism. One should bear in mind that the Marxist lexicon still has some glamor in labor circles and toiling classes. Don't the party supervisors sometimes exploit flexible Marxist notions to attract workers' frustrations and mobilize them at the expense of accomplishments in the field?

The Socialist Progressives say yes and no at the same time. Their "internationalist" activity does not prevent them from taking active part in the Sahara issue. While they differ with the other parties over the reasons why the war broke out, and go so far in their analysis as to accuse imperialism, what imperialism do they mean? American or Soviet? What is the role of such regional powers as Algeria and Libya in inflaming the struggle?

It is well known that the issue of the Sahara is the issue of all Moroccans, no matter how their ideological affiliations may differ, and the Party of Progress and Socialism does not harp on playing its own tune within the performance of the united orchestra. What attracts one's attention in its nationalist positions and conceptions is the position it takes on the other parties present on the Moroccan stage. Its supporters observe that the struggle to liberate the Sahara and the unanimity on this issue have, in addition to the democratic process and the election of representative institutions, created a new framework for political life which has politicized large segments of the population and caused them to experience "pluralism of ideological conceptions" in actual practice.

Classes have infiltrated into the political arena through this loophole, continue the supervisors of the Party of Progress and Socialism. Among them are the National Liberal Grouping, which has attracted a large number of staffs who are able to participate in political activity and has relied on the administrative apparatuses in order to stand on its feet and try to become a "vital force in the country."

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The Socialist Progressives consider this a kind of verbal embellishment aimed at preserving obsolete domestic institutions, and they cite evidence to prove that there is a link between the "grouping" and the bureaucratic interests of the bourgeoisie. The liberals have answered these charges through their media, such as the newspapers AL-MITHAQ and AL-MAGHRIB (in French). They have also described, on the pages of AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI, the values of economic liberalism to which they adhere, which, in their view is compatible with the aspirations of the silent majority in Morocco.

With regard to the Popular Movement, Progress and Socialism circles consider that that resorts to peasant demagogery in order to preserve the interests of people in the rural and sparsely inhabited areas. While it may have changed its tone since the emergence of the National Liberal Grouping, that was an accommodation of sorts to its electoral base in the cities and suburbs. Therefore its demands for social reforms do not possess adequate credibility, because they are launched on a class basis on behalf of a number of landowners in the countryside; it considers that it has been put on the sidelines in the democratic process and wants its share of the government's capital profits and those of some of the people who deal with the nationalized sectors.

The Party of Progress and Socialism accuses people in the Istiqlal of having changed their political position following the economic transformation which accompanied the 5-year plan, having the goal of realizing the interests of the oligarchy, and therefore taking part in the current coalition cabinet in order to reach positions where they can make economic decisions. In addition, internal polarizations exist in the Istiqlal Party which sometimes appear on the surface of official positions. The Socialist Progressives admit that Istiqlal members have influence in traditionalist petty bourgeois circles and among peasants, government employees and parts of the working class.

While the tone of the Party of Progress and Socialism, vis-a-vis the loyal parties of the majority is sometimes harsh, it becomes lyrical to the contrary, when the issue concerns the Socialist Federation of Popular Powers, its opposition ally. Here we are faced with the line of a party which is progressive but views scientific socialism from a particular angle. Its goal is national democratic revolution, which causes it to attract broad segments of the petty bourgeoisie.

On the sidelines of the main views and opposing positions stand large questions involving the course of the Party of Progress and Socialism and bearing on the manner in which it reconciles Marxism and the sociopolitical state of an Arab people believing in Islamic values: does this contradiction remain total, and how can one work one's way out of it while preserving essential Moroccan characteristics? Why has the party remained one of limited distribution in spite of its seniority, and its integrated orientations and programs, and what, consequently, are its achievements, after 38 years of struggle? How does it lay out the horizons of its struggle in the midst of the new domestic and regional developments?

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SYRIA

HAMAH DISTURBANCES DISCUSSED

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic No 226, 18 Jun 81 pp 21-22

[Article: Special Dispatch from Damascus: "What Happened in Hamah? A Group of Armed Men Disguised Themselves in the Clothing of Defense Companies and Took Part in the festivities of the Fourth Feast before the Bullets Resounded"]

[Text] The Syrian city of Hamah has recently witnessed armed clashes that are extremely serious. These clashes resulted in the death and the arrest of hundreds of citizens.

Although the investigation into these events is still continuing amidst total secrecy and although a media blockade around these events has been imposed by the Syrian authorities, numerous foreign newspapers did publish some information about these clashes.

AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI is publishing for the first time the complete story and the background behind these events. It is focusing the limelight on the new strategy which the armed religious opposition in the country has begun to employ in its confrontation with the regime.

The Syrian authorities are still investigating the recent events of the city of Hamah amidst very tight secrecy and confidentiality.

The baffling question with which security agencies here are preoccupied is the following: Is there some direct "contact" between the opposition and elements inside the regime who pretend publicly to be loyal to the regime but secretly provide detailed information about the regime's classified information as well as material and moral support?

The question is being raised because recent events in the city of Hamah have established indubitably that the armed opposition inside the country has recently attained an advanced level in the area of military planning on the one hand and in that of camouflage on the other.

Security agencies have begun a broad investigation that includes the files of a few officers and soldiers. This is part of a broad range

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organizational movement in the ranks of the military that seeks to reinforce and intensify supervision inside the military establishment.

These changes have become semi-continuous, since hardly does a period of time go by during which extensive transfers do not occur in the ranks of the army.

The events of the city of Hamah followed a series of deliberations that were held abroad between the various factions and movements of the chief elements of the opposition to unify efforts and to draw up a new strategy for military action inside the country.

This strategy requires that painful and sudden blows be directed against the defense companies and the special units in an attempt to weaken and exhaust the military establishment with successive blows that would create considerable tumult in the Arab and world media, penetrating the tight media blockade that has been imposed on the internal opposition and refuting recurrent claims that "terrorist operations" in some Syrian cities were produced by singular destructive elements that have no organization and are not backed by a broad popular base.

The story of the Syrian missiles in al-Biqa' (Lebanon) and the outcry that was raised around them contributed this time to the imposition of a greater blackout on the events of the city of Hamah despite the gravity of those events, and especially after the Arab countries announced that they would stand beside Damascus in any possible military confrontation with Israel.

What specifically did happen in the city of Hamah?

AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI reveals for the first time the details of these events.

Details Published for the First Time

On a Tuesday morning last 21 April a group of the armed opposition left from one of their secret bases in the city of Hamah and headed towards a few of the villages that are near the city. Among [those destinations] were the subdistrict of Salhab and the village of 'Ayn al-Kurum --they are 40 kilometers from the center of Hamah. There the residents were celebrating a sectarian feasts, which is known as 'Id al-Rabi', [the Fourth Feast].

It is known that those people are the strongest supporters of the Syrian regime and that they belong to the same sect to which President Hafiz al-Asad belongs.

The armed men disguised themselves in the clothing of the defense companies and special units. This was a new tactic employed by the opposition for the first time, and this made it impossible for the elements of the regime to discover them. The number of armed men [involved in that incident] has not been revealed, and Damascus authorities are still

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investigating to find out that number exactly and to find out how the armed men obtained the special military uniforms. Did they get them through collusion with someone on the inside, or was there a tailor who cut out and prepared these uniforms especially for that purpose. In this case the tailor's identity must be discovered since this is an extremely serious matter. Or did the clothes originally belong to elements who were [either] taken prisoners or assassinated?

The Damascus investigations are being conducted in total secrecy under the supervision of Mr Rif'at al-Asad himself, the president's brother. Instructions and higher orders have been issued to widen the process of questioning witnesses and to prepare a detailed report that is to be submitted to President al-Asad.

What is important is that on the morning of that day, Tuesday, the armed men arrived in groups to the squares of Salhab , 'Ayn al-Kurum and Saqaliyah where residents had gathered by the hundreds. They were chanting, singing and dancing.

Armed groups from the defense companies were sharing their joy.

When the disguised men arrived to take part in the joyful festivities, cheers for the life of Rif'at and for the beloved president began.

Those men were received with the [customary] trilling sounds of joy, and shots were fired into the air.

But a few moments later bullets resounded; victims fell; and the attackers escaped in no time.

The operation was carried out simultaneously in more than one place.

And it was a total success.

The attackers withdrew swiftly to a specific rendezvous to ensure final withdrawal before help should arrive.

On the return route, they were met by two buses that were carrying officers and soldiers of the [defense] company. There was a quick clash in which more than 40 persons lost their lives.

The attackers returned safely to their base, and none of them was hurt.

Surrounding Hamah

A short time later large groups of the special units and the defense companies arrived in the city of Hamah looking for those who had perpetrated the events.

The city was isolated, and the elements of the regime combed the city street by street where they were surprised to find a strong resistance.

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The sound of thundering bullets continued to be heard since the opposition had been hiding at the principal entrances to the city. Fearful battles in which inexperienced young men also participated took place in the city's inside streets also. A number of tanks and cars were burned with Molotov cocktails, and this led the elements of the regime to shell homes with heavy artillery. Families in their entirety were also arrested. Among them was the family of al-Shami. A number of its members was eliminated in front of everybody, and there was indescribable torture and violence. The battles continued for hours, coming to an end only after hundreds had been arrested.

The exact number of casualties has not been determined. There are those who are saying that both sides lost more than 300 persons, and there are those who are saying that the number of civilian casualties came to 600 persons. There was no "official" announcement of the incident, but the French newspaper, LE MONDE, estimated the number of casualties to be between 250 and 300.

The fact is that in the last 3 months the city of Hamah has experienced a wave of violence that is characterized by one-man assassinations and by the arrest of scores of residents who are under suspicion. For example, last 15 April the forces of the regime surrounded the district of al-Sabuniyah looking for the base of the armed men. The base was not discovered, and the elements of the regime avenged [their failure to discover it] by bombing one of the buildings with RPG missiles.

On the following day, that is, on 16 April, an intelligence patrol clashed with an armed person on Ibrahim Hananu Street near the old military police satellite station. The armed man succeeded in killing one of the members of the patrol and wounding three others before he himself died.

#### Tension and Worry

Tension still hangs over most of the Syrian cities like Latakia, Aleppo, Damascus and Homs. There is fear and apprehension. The residents are expecting action in retaliation for the events of the city of Hamah. News of eliminations and arrests travel from one home to another.

Last April--specifically at 8 am on the 14th--Muhammad Ma'la, the assistant to the minister of labor and social affairs was assassinated in Damascus. The government responded by raiding the mosques of the city and arresting a number of worshippers.

The regime sends out mobile patrols in most of the principal cities to question and to investigate suspicious passers-by. A large number of the members of the families of Hamadun, Shahin, al-Hafiz, al-Shaykh, 'Isa, al-Ghafari, al-Daqqaq, al-Abrash, al-Shi'ar, al-Siba'i, al-Husami and al-Durubi were apprehended in the city of Homs. They were under suspicion because they were praying regularly in the mosques of the city.

After the arrests were made several quarters in the city were surrounded

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and carefully searched: the Bab al-Turkuman quarter, the Bani al-Siba'i quarter, the al-Qusur quarter, the Bab al-Siba' quarter and the Jawrah al-Shayyah quarter. [The authorities] were looking for the bases of the religious opposition.

Syrian authorities are expecting increased activity these days from the religious opposition now that the missiles story has come to an end. That story had overshadowed Syria's internal events throughout the last 3 weeks.

Diplomatic observers here are affirming in their private gatherings that popular resentment is increasing, that the political climate is charged with rancor and that the coming days will be laden with events.

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TUNISIA

PREMIER DISCUSSES UPCOMING ELECTIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 12-18 Jun 81 pp 33-35

/Article by Florence Ra'd: "Tunisia Prepares for Parliamentary Elections: Muhammad Mzali to AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI: A Pluralism of Parties Is Not a Necessary Condition of Democracy"

/Text Tunisia is now preparing for the parliamentary election campaign, which is to take place this year rather than in 1984. What is new in this regard? Will a proliferation of parties be permitted before or after the campaign?

Prime Minister Muhammad Mazali replies, "A pluralism of parties is not of necessity an essential condition for democracy. We have been acquainted with parties in the past, and we may see them in the future. However, it is certain that we will allow lists of candidates opposed to us to run in the coming legislative elections."

The conversation with the Tunisian prime minister is a constantly unfolding one. AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI wanted it to be a broad discussion dealing with the various Arab and local subjects that are at issue, but it turned out to be more like a "self-disclosure" or frank statement for which, in any event, the premier is famous.

Doesn't he assert, for example, that Tunisia has not yet forgotten the events of Gafsa and that it is necessary to restore mutual trust between Libya and Tunisia?

Tunisia today is entering a difficult crossroads, facing the third series of labor pains in its political life since independence (1 June 1955), whose 26th anniversary it commemorated at the beginning of this week with broad mass celebrations while inaugurating a consumer cooperative for foodstuffs, concluding the soccer championships, inaugurating the family planning conference in the Palace of Conferences, and reviewing youth organizations on Youth Day. These festivals are all an indication in live form of the ordinary Tunisian, who has renewed his confidence in the political leadership following the jolt of the events of Gafsa.

The fact is that the first labor pains occurred right after independence, in the form of the process of bearing the responsibilities and consequences of independence. The second pains occurred during the tour President Bourguiba made of Arab countries, in which he presented a program for partitioning Palestine. Following the tumult which was raised at that time and the Arab opposition to that program, Tunisian foreign policy became introverted and Tunisia alienated itself from Arab currents. In 1979, following the transfer of the Arab League to Tunisia and the assumption by Mr Muhammad Mazali of the keys of government, the winds of liberalization, or "opening up" as the Tunisians say, proceeded to blow.

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Tunisia today is in the course of its third labor pains, passing through a transitional stage from single party rule to what is known as political pluralism, especially after President Bourguiba's decree encouraging such pluralism. Here the country is today, preparing for parliamentary elections whose date has been advanced to 1981 instead of the former date of 1984.

The question that arises is whether the establishment of political parties will occur before or after these elections. If the answer is before, the next question will be whether these political groupings will organize staffs, apparatuses and bodies in order to be able to cope with the coming stage. This is a large question, and the current prime minister responds to it by stating "People in the opposition will be given various circumstances and resources to establish their presence and pursue democracy within a normal atmosphere."

He appeared most vigorous and active following a series of meetings in the prime minister's office headquarters in the Casbah. It was close to 1830 hours in the evening. His secretary came in, bringing three books he had written, "Studies in Cultural and Educational Affairs," "Along the Pathways of Thought," and "Points of View." The third book contains the editorials the prime minister wrote for the magazine AL-FIKR, which he issued and supervised. He appeared anxious to "convey" the picture of a literary figure as important as that of the professional politician which shone forth brightly.

I started with questions on foreign policy:

How have Tunisian-Algerian relations progressed since you took charge of the government?

Answer Relations improved greatly about a year ago, on the occasion of the visit President Chadli Bendjadid made to Tunisia, in which he met the senior combatant, Habib Bourguiba. I then personally visited Algeria in September 1980, and our brother the prime minister of Algeria, Mr Ahmed Abdel Ghani, visited us last February first at Sakiet Sidi Youssef, the village which martyred itself, then second in Tunis. We managed to clear the air completely on the basis of a previous joint intention to deepen relations, not damage them, and establish mutual appreciation for one another's domestic and foreign positions.

Fortunately, thanks to determination on both sides, this did not remain a mere hope but rather grew into specific coordinated programs. We eliminated the various barriers which had been restricting the entry of our Algerian tourist brothers to Tunisia. More than 400,000 Algerians came into the country during the last tourist season. We also signed an agreement to eliminate customs barriers, except in a few special cases. In addition, there was an agreement on specific horizontal cooperation between the border provinces at the level of the governor and the administration of the two parties. We also signed an agreement covering people in the building trades, since Tunisian contractors in the border areas are anxious to build houses, schools and hospitals. The Algerians considered us to be their brothers and treat Tunisians just like Algerians. Agreement was also made between the Algerian and Tunisian finance ministers on establishing four institutes to train specialists in tax collecting and banking affairs, two of which will be in Tunisia and two in Algeria. The fourth agreement, in the field of higher education,

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stipulates an exchange of teachers, experts and educational experience between the two countries and an exchange of visits between students and teachers.

I consider this a great gain for our cooperation in the field and a boon to both parties.

Relations with Libya

Question When you took charge of the government, you said that you would pursue a policy of liberalism toward the outer world. Have relations improved with Libya, for example?

Answer I would say the situation is better now. This improvement is apparent through trade and commercial exchange. A number of transactions have also been made between the two countries. Matters are good from the media standpoint. However, there were 22 agreements signed between 1971 and 1972.

Question Have all these agreements been carried out?

Answer This is what I said in the National Assembly at the end of December 1980. Had we been carrying out our agreements since 1972 we would have made broad strides toward rapprochement. However, our situation is the same as that of other Arab countries. We sign agreements, issue joint statements and communiques, then forget about them.

Question Do you think that the effects of the Gafsa incident have been totally eliminated and that matters have returned to their natural course?

Answer It is hard for them to disappear quickly. However, confidence in the future is helping us to forget them. What we need now is to think about tomorrow.

Question Frankly, does confidence exist?

Answer I will not answer you directly, since what is necessary in this regard is full determination and desire on the part of both parties--like a marriage contract, which is made only if the two parties are in agreement. I hope that we will work to regain this confidence. Our brothers are working in this direction. However, we need time. "Don't worry, the factor of time is necessary." We have a proverb which goes "One hundred steps are better than one leap."

Relations with Morocco

Question How would you evaluate Moroccan-Tunisian relations?

Answer The Tunisian Council of Ministers recently discussed approving an agreement between Morocco and Tunisia to establish reciprocal air routes, one to western Africa and another to the Arab east. Joint projects are numerous. We have eliminated customs barriers. Meetings have also taken place on the level of Moroccan and Tunisian businessmen. This all results from a belief in the need for cooperation and useful activity for the sake of a shift and sincerity of heart.

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Question Reciprocal visits, mutual feelings, but what results have been attained?

Answer Personal relations among ministers or officials are important because they mean a great deal. When I speak with the Algerian or Moroccan prime minister, that on most occasions leads to an agreement on matters which might be simple but are important in the context of improving relations.

Question This development might qualify Tunisia to play an effective role in the Sahara problem. Have you made any attempts?

Answer Effective roles can be played only by agreement of the parties concerned with the matter. Our relations with Morocco, with Algeria, with Mauritania and so forth are good, and that gives us credibility with our brothers. If an initiative or signal takes place, or some gesture is made that we should participate, alone or with other brothers or friends, in this field, at that point our positive neutrality will turn into a campaign to bring people's views closer together.

In my opinion, as I told the diplomatic press last February in Paris, this subject can be dealt with once one transcends a narrow vision of matters and gives the future priority over all other considerations.

Question However, the Sahara problem is exhausting the powers of numerous Arab countries in the Maghreb. Have you contributed to solving it in any way?

Answer His Excellency President Bourguiba took the initiative to send the former foreign minister to the heads of the two states (Morocco and Algeria) to discuss the matter, and we have made numerous endeavors in this field. I, personally, during my visit to Algeria and Morocco and during my brothers' visits to Tunisia, have spoken on the subject, and we will continue the consultations and the beneficial statements which will have the effect of closing the gap while waiting for the issue to be relieved.

Question What is your view on the Lebanese situation?

Answer I have been familiar with Lebanon since 1959, when I attended the Mediterranean games (he added jokingly, "You weren't there") and made the acquaintance of many friends who were active in the fields of athletics, ideas and letters. I loved Lebanon and visited it several times. I said in Lebanon and I said in Tunisia, before my brothers, that a hemorrhage in Lebanon would be a hemorrhage in the heart of every Arab citizen, since it would be painful if that land of tolerance, joy of life, freedom, thought and vitality were to turn into a hell based on fanaticism instead of tolerance and for Lebanon to turn into the pawn of causes outside its scope in which it has no part at all. That would be folly and monumental catastrophe. What is Lebanon's fault in this? If it had remained as it was, that would have been the best argument in the hand of all parties to persuade the neighboring countries and world public opinion that coexistence among Christians, Moslems and Jews was possible and necessary. Lebanon was the argument in our hands, but it has now been transformed into a counterargument, and that is a catastrophe.

He went on: By God, we are sorrowful over this, and my sorrow and grief multiply when I try to understand and try to seek a solution but fail to do so at the present time. There are elements which are intertwined as if the very devil was advancing



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his moves behind a curtain. A solution, inevitably, will come within reach when Israel renounces its sins and recognizes the rights of the Palestinians. However, as long as Israel sins and is vicious and rigid, I say, if the Arab brethren reach mutual understanding and the balance of sanity tilts in favor of the Palestinian cause, they will achieve the greatest gains and accomplishments, because Israel is now 'beating their heads against each other. When Israel strikes the Lebanese, the Lebanese, Palestinians and Syrians die. Like a cancer, Israel is trying to extend its lines into every possible area and may be trying to partition and fragment Lebanon. This is a catastrophe. The responsibility is an Arab one, and the Arabs are not moving along one line. It is a crisis of leaders. This is my opinion, most frankly.

Question The Lebanese foreign minister, Mr Fu'ad Butrus, mentioned this at the latest foreign ministers' conference in Tunis. An Arab mistake was made and it is of long standing and repeats itself; Lebanon today is paying the bill for Arab contradictions and disputes.

Answer I can tell you something else in addition to that.

I can say that Israel's arrogance has reached this point as a consequence of mistakes in Arab leadership since 1947. If the Arabs had contented themselves at that time with international legitimacy and said, as President Habib Bourguiba did, "We consider the partition the injustice of the 20th century, but we respect international legitimacy," Israel's borders would not have been able to reach the Negev and Acre.

However, the leaders failed. Perhaps there were acts of treason among and as a result terrorist gangs prevailed over armies. Had there not been acts of treason and political stupidity, how can we explain the defeat of four, five or six armies at the hands of the Irgun and Stern gangs?

Every time we try "to crow like a rooster," and scream out speeches like a rooster, we appear to the world like a person committing aggression against Israel, while Israel appears like a downtrodden soul that is afraid of Arab attacks--at a time when it is launching an attack on us.

When I say that the Arab leaders are responsible, I mean responsible from 1947 to the present. I said that frankly in the presence of some of my brothers. I said, "The situation has brought us to the point where we have started attacking one another and our neighbors instead of Israel. Look at the situation in the Arab countries, in the east and the west. We are now arming ourselves and increasing our surveillance over our borders, while the Zionist enemy is striking out at us one after the other, or striking out at one of us with the other. There are many examples: the Sahara question, the issue between Syria and Jordan, the problem of the Sudan and Egypt, and so forth. It is easy for us to make colonialism, imperialism and Zionism responsible for every human mistake, but we also are responsible. In the common dialect we say, "a little of the hand and a little sympathy. Meanwhile, our strength lies in our cooperation and tolerance.

Question What must be done in this context?

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/Answer/ The highest priority is to expose Israel in front of the world and world public opinion, because Israel is now the gravest and greatest danger facing us.

Israel is reaping the contradictions I talked about in order to strike out at Lebanon, strike out at Syria, and strike out at the Palestinians.

Thus what must be done before all else is for us to explain the truth of our causes and the position of Israel, which is striving to strike roots in the whole region, to world public opinion, to all liberal people in the world and to the partisans of true justice. How long will Israel continue with its arrogance and viciousness?

Franco-Arab Relations

/Question/ Let us move over to another foreign issue. How does Tunisia view Arab-French relations now that Mr Francois Mitterand has come to power?

/Answer/ I already replied to the question the day of, or day after, Mitterand's election. I said that Mitterand the candidate was different from Mitterand the president. Mitterand is the leader of the Socialist Party, which includes a large number of liberals and partisans of the causes of the Arab people, that is, the causes of justice and the freedom of people to determine their own destinies. Therefore President Mitterand, in my opinion, will look after our rights. As for his friendship with the Israeli Labor Party, I am not pessimistic in this regard. In general, we must not forget that we are dealing with countries, not with people. It is true that our relations with Giscard D'Estaing were excellent, but we deal with countries, and in this situation objective criteria which are separate from emotional influences govern relations.

Elections and Pluralism

/Question/ Let us shift to domestic issues. You spoke recently about pluralism in the coming elections. What does that mean?

/Answer/ What I can say now is that the decision has been made to approve a variety of lists for the coming parliamentary elections, and we will hold the elections before their scheduled time, that is, in early November 1981 instead of 1984. The president said "I do not see any obstacle to the presence of lists opposed to the party." We are thinking of the /appropriate/ formula. One can say, as of now: There is absolutely no obstacle to the presence of lists competing with us in the coming elections. We, as a party, will try to win the elections, which is the rule of the democratic game.

/Question/ But is it possible for people in the opposition to enter the elections without organizations? By the nature of the case they will go into the elections in a fragmented state.

/Answer/ Would you like me to give you a surprise? That is that the Tunisian Free Destourian Party does not possess a permit or visa to give permits. This point may seem strange to you, but that is a fact. For 26 years Bourguiba did not ask anyone for a visa, and the government is not a bracelet put on one's wrist for embellishment or show.

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/Question/ Will the minister of the interior give agreement to the establishment of such activities, without a permit or "visa," as you say?

/Answer/ Yes, you can ask the minister of the interior, Driss Guiga (who was our ambassador to Bonn). You can ask him, and I can say that there is no obstacle to our brothers' pursuing activities no matter what their draft programs may be. They can be active and run while waiting for us to set out a solution to the problem of parties. What I can say now--and I do not want to say anything I am not confident about--is that the political leadership has not decided anything else so far. What I hope is that other lists will compete against us and we all seek the people's judgment.

We and the Communist Party of Tunisia

/Question/ Will the Tunisian Communist Party, for example, have the right to enter the elections and exercise its rights on radio and television?

/Answer/ We will allow it to take part in broadcasts if there is an electoral list with given candidates on it; whatever the list may be--green, yellow or red--it will have its share of coverage in the papers and the other media. As to whether a given list can hold meetings in sections of Tunis, Sousse, or Sfax, the person heading the list will go to the governor or the police representative and tell him, "We want to hold a meeting in such-and-such a place" and they will reply, "Welcome, we will ensure that you can."

The fact is that other parties came forward to oppose us in the first years of independence. We were 100 percent successful.

The Communist Party, in 1954 and 1959, advanced lists which just obtained a few thousand votes.

I can give you another example:

In 1957, Mahmoud Chaouche ran in the runoff against the president's list, but the president did not get angry at that. This means that we are not afraid of a crowd.

Every Monkey Is a Gazelle in Its Mother's Eyes

/Question/ Why don't you allow a pluralism of parties, as many countries do?

/Answer/ Most countries in the third world are ruled by an officer or a noncommissioned officer. There are popular democratic regimes in Europe which make a mockery of democratic ideals. Every girl is beautiful to her father and every monkey is a gazelle in its mother's eyes. That is to say, every regime considers that it is the best in the world.

There are other regimes, relatively democratic, whose constitutions stipulate that the single party is sacred. We have said "welcome to organizations."

We lived alongside the other parties in the time of the struggle. We lived with parties after independence and we will live with parties tomorrow. A pluralism of parties is not of necessity a democratic phenomenon or adequate necessary condition. Democracy, in my opinion, means virtue and tolerance. It means listening

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to the voices of others and respecting others. There are parties in democratic countries which are subject to giants of finance, giants of economic dominance and trusts. One should bear in mind that democracy, and I repeat this, means cleanness: cleanness of hands, cleanness of hearts, and honesty and sincerity toward the people.

/Question/ Recently Tunisia was the scene of episodes or movements which were religious in character. How do you explain that?

/Answer/ It is the use of religion for political purposes that causes us anxiety. We respect religion, and I myself am a devout person. However, devoutness must be restricted to private life and we must not let it appear in public life.

Public life means working with one's arms, one's brain and one's ideas, not putting on appearances and acting like a zealot.

Our educational policy and our political policy are aimed at opening people's eyes and liberating people's talents at a time when we see some people destroying free individual thought.

/Question/ There are people who have requested that censorship in the papers be eliminated and that more freedoms be granted.

/Answer/ The press is subject to the Press Law, and if the authorities consider that certain articles conflict with the stipulations of the current law, the courts of justice have the right to take a decision in this regard. We were compelled to take temporary measures with respect to some papers. It goes without saying that opposition papers which constantly make criticisms are coming out on a daily and weekly basis.

/Question/ Do you have any plans to develop the Tunisian educational system to embrace Arabization, especially since you are a writer, a literary person and editor in chief of AL-FIKR?

/Answer/ We are now intending to study a plan to review the educational system from all angles so that it may conform to the requirements of the age and economic and social development needs, since the educational system is linked to the degree of a society's development and must always be reviewed and amended. I myself have supervised the activities of educational committees and have encouraged them to be bold in their conceptions and to venture to make changes and radical reviews of the educational system so that it will produce generations which are in harmony with their age, can adhere to their genuine nature and will be able to face the situation in which they live.

/Question/ What are the general outlines of this educational modification?

/Answer/ Strengthening democracy in education, bringing training in line with employment, and giving scientific training and technological training greater status, above and beyond a gradual move toward what I call basic education, that is, a form of education which will guarantee every child a minimum of vocational training and will let him branch out into vocational and professional areas as well as theoretical ones. Our plague in the third world--and I know what I am saying,

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since I am a specialist in educational affairs--is that most of our education is academic. We still look down on vocational training, while now we need skilled manual labor which can work with its ten fingers, same as in the advanced world, whether that is in Europe or the Communist or Anglo-Saxon worlds.

As far as Arabization goes, I called for an Arab summit to unify curricula in the Arab countries at the conference of Arab ministers of education in December 1978. A unification of curricula is necessary in order to produce emerging generations which can speak a common language and cope with the challenges of the age.

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WESTERN SAHARA

CORRESPONDENT PAINTS PICTURE OF GROWING MOROCCAN DOMINANCE

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 19-25 Jun 81 pp 37, 38

/Article by Mustafa al-Yaznasni: "Polisario's Front Lines Have Dissolved and the Inhabited Areas Have Become Organically Incorporated into Moroccan Life"

/Text The Sahara issue has entered a new stage in the military and political spheres. In the military sense, the Moroccan forces have completed building a "defensive wall" extending from Ouarkazize to Bojador and protecting the inhabited areas of the Sahara from sudden Polisario attacks. In the political sense, the parliamentary elections which took place in Oued El Dahab for the first time underlined Morocco's clear insistence on its territorial unity. This insistence could move the struggle beyond the Sahara borders. In addition, Moroccan diplomacy in the recent period has registered international breakthroughs which are no less in importance than the military victories.

Before the convening of the Nairobi conference, AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI accompanied a press delegation from the five continents containing more than 100 journalists on a visit to the Sahara and a tour of its towns and front lines.

The direction of our movements did not become clear until the Quarkazize mountains extending from Morocco to Algeria appeared before us on the horizon. In the winter and spring of 1980 these mountains experienced violent fighting between the royal Moroccan armed forces and the forces of Polisario, which had infiltrated from the neighboring country in order to take over the three passes which make it possible to control the area, Khank El Baraber, El Nakab and Tasouizki El Ramz.

The Polisario forces had managed to infiltrate to Oued Taghizt to the northwest of El Zak, threatening to isolate defended positions and delivering repeated blows against Asa, Aqa, and Fomm El Husn, which are inhabited by the Ait Aoussa tribe, known for its historic loyalty to Morocco and its rejection of repeated attempts on the part of the El Rokeibat tribes to impose their decrees on the other tribes of the Sahara.

This being the situation, it was necessary for the Moroccan armed forces to impose total dominance over the three passes, which pass through the Ouarkazize from the Moroccan side, in order to guarantee the safety and security of the inhabited areas around the foothills to the north and thwart any attempt to surround El Zak, which is the closest point in Morocco to Tindouf, where the Polisario camps are. El Zak is no more than 80 kilometers from Tindouf.

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Therefore the Ouarkazize range experienced severe fighting between the Moroccan army and the Polisario forces which in the end resulted in purging the area of it for good. Moroccan military sources assert that Polisario lost its best fighting men in Ouarkazize, especially those of Saharan origin whose numbers no longer exceed 12 percent of the total Polisario forces.

In El Zak, a number of senior Moroccan officers were waiting for us, headed by Col Abdel Aziz Bannani, the head of the higher command for the southern region, and Col Abdel Ouahed El Hayek, commander of Brigade One.

Brigade One

We headed to a front-line position by Land Rover military vehicles, passing by the barracks courtyard, in which stood the wreck of a Polisario military vehicle bearing an antiaircraft cannon which had been sentenced to eternal silence.

In a tent erected at some spot in the position, the commander of Brigade One greeted journalists and answered their questions. He said, "We are determined to protect the territorial unity of our country, whatever the sacrifices may be." Col Abdel Aziz El Hayek denied that Moroccan forces had conducted raids outside Moroccan borders and added, "The day I receive the order, I will raise this flag, which the king gave me when I was assigned the command." He pointed to a Moroccan flag adorned with the insignia of Brigade One.

After mentioning Polisario's attempts to surround El Zak and the famous Ouarkazize battles, the Moroccan officer declared "the situation became totally normal more than a year ago after the royal armed forces managed to take over a strong point in spring 1980 and go over the whole area with a fine tooth comb."

In summary, then, said Col El Hayek, "Polisario, which is no longer able to attack the area has contented itself with firing Katyusha rockets with a range of 22 kilometers in 'harrassment' operations that last no more than a minute. The most recent of these was 3 days before our visit."

From El Zak, the press delegation went on to Ouarkazize on open Land Rovers through El Hamada, which is a desert of black sand broken up by mesas which remind one of the scenes in the notorious Death Valley in the United States of America.

We traveled about 80 kilometers before arriving at Oued Taghizt at the foot of the Ouarkazize. Moroccan dominance over the region is total and battles in the vast desert have left only a few marks, tangled tracks made by the tires of trucks and vehicles with tracks, empty boxes and, from time to time, the remains of a shell. Now and then the silhouette of a Moroccan soldier emerged from among the rocks signalling by hand to the caravan which was confidently pursuing its course. The enemy was not coming, and the desert within the security belt had been transformed into a mere set for Dino Buzatti's epic "Desert of the Tatars."

Suddenly the terrain opened forth and a few thorny plants declared that we had entered a valley. That was Khank El Baraber, which we reached by way of Oued Taghizt. We stopped to hear copious descriptions concerning the Ouarkazize, its three passes and their strategic importance to the defense of El Zak and the towns situated in the foothills to the north.

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The Story of Tintane

From Khank El Baraber, helicopters took us to Tintane, the Moroccan town which up to 1975 swarmed with refugees who had been coming from the "Spanish" Sahara and then in 1979 was exposed to surprise attack by Polisario forces. When the warning bell sounded, the Moroccan army applied itself to meet the challenge with the requisite seriousness, determination and firmness.

It was necessary to seize the initiative. This was in fact done, in the Moroccan armed forces embarked on a new advance, covering more than 450 kilometers, setting up a deterrent barrier between the inhabited areas of the Moroccan Sahara and Polisario.

It took almost a whole year to set up the security belt. The process was interrupted by violent fighting between the people building the Moroccan wall and Polisario forces, which continuously tried to stop the thrust from Oued Draa and Ouarkazize to Bojador on the Atlantic coast, proceeding via El Zak, Semara and Boucraa. There were battles in El Tih (August 1980), Ras Khanifra (September-October 1980), Khor-eibichat (November 1980), Ras El Homeira (January 1981) and El Douik (April 1981).

Tintane tells the tale of Spanish colonialism and the fragmentation of Morocco's national territory. Everything started there in 1959 with Morocco's claim for the return of the Tarfaya area. Until 1975, Tintane was like a Kaaba to which the people in the Western Sahara would turn and face submissively. This prompted Algeria to strengthen the infrastructure in Tindouf in order to turn it into a magnet attracting the inhabitants of the Sahara.

Tintane is now preparing to become the most massive Moroccan fishing port, beginning in late 1981, when work will end on the port project, which cost 3 billion dirhams. It is enough for us to point out that fishing resources on the Moroccan coast came to 3 million tons a year in order to imagine the development that is anticipated in this town, which lies on the edge of the Sahara.

In a meeting with the commander of the defense post in the town, in response to a question on Polisario's chances for repeating the 1979 attack, the commander replied calmly, "The protection of Tintane does not begin at Tintane; in your trip via El Zak you have been able to observe the extent of the field competence of the royal armed forces from the border to the coast. When the journalists pressed their questions, he also stated, "That is impossible!"

The Latest Attack

From Tintane, we headed for Khoreibichat, flying above the Moroccan wall over sandy desert broken up by hills. From the air, the wall looked like a swollen vein crossing the broad desert, broken up by blocks of boulders jumbled together and bristling with the muzzles of cannons. These were the support points, like beads in a rosary extending from the Ouarkazize foothills to the coast.

In Khoreibichat, which experienced violent battles in November 1980, we paused to familiarize ourselves with life in a Moroccan position along the wall and hear descriptions from Maj Tarya.



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Khoreibichat is situated 160 kilometers south of Tintane and 40 kilometers northwest of Hoza. It is about 120 kilometers from the coast. This area has not experienced any Polisario attack since last January.

From the position it is possible to examine the wall, which is 3 to 4 meters high and made out of sand and rock. It is about 4 meters wide at the base. In addition to this barrier, the defense belt is composed of barbed wire, minefields and electronic equipment which can detect any movement on the part of a person, animal or car from a distance of 60 kilometers.

The line was connected to the town of Semara on 3 March 1981 on the anniversary of King Hassan the Second's ascension to the throne. The link was made by Lt Col Najj, from the direction of Semara, and Col Gajrami, from the direction of Boucraa, last 11 May. Thus the Moroccan army has performed its mission of guaranteeing the inhabitants a normal life in the inhabited areas, in spite of the heavy equipment Polisario has moved forward in its constant assaults to breach the wall across the Sahara.

The latest battle between Moroccan and Polisario forces was on 19 April 1981 in El Douik. The attackers tried to halt construction of the fortifications as the wall was on the verge of completion. The attack began at 0600 hours in the morning against a number of strong points, in accordance with Polisario's normal procedure, but was repelled by Moroccan artillery and infantry, which inflicted big losses on the attackers that compelled them to withdraw, leaving prisoners, some vehicles and a certain amount of light and heavy weapons. Moroccan aircraft assumed the task of chasing Polisario across the Sahara.

At night, from Moroccan positions, I observed the lights of Polisario vehicles looking for the corpses of the dead, to remove them as was the custom. Although they were close (6 kilometers away, estimated the Moroccan officers), Moroccan artillery refrained from firing.

Polisario returned the ball on 22 April and the fighting ended with a rout in the direction of Oued El Assali, after 2 hours of fighting, after which contact was broken off following high losses.

Moroccan officers assert that Polisario's fighting capability has declined and that the viciousness which marked the attacks in the first years of fighting has become less intense than in the past.

The fact is that the losses Polisario suffered in the fighting in 1980 and 1981 were greater than its human resources could endure. Prisoners, for example, are no more than 20 years old in most cases. What perhaps draws one's attention is the fact that four senior Polisario military commanders, Ould Anah, Ould Agig, Ould El Bouhali and Ayyoub, took part in the latest attack.

From Khoreibichat we began a quiet trip by Land Rover toward Semara, covering 55 kilometers on sleek sandy terrain to the famous Oued El Sakia.

We proceeded in a line parallel to the wall, sometimes drawing away from it, sometimes going alongside it. Suddenly its importance became apparent to us. In two

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directions, from Tintane to Semara and from Semara to the other Sahara towns, there was an uninterrupted flow of civilian trucks, some bearing livestock, others food-stuffs and various commodities.

Life is normal in the area, now that the Moroccan army has made the routes and populated areas secure.

Semara, the religious capital of the desert, carries on its body a wound of which it is proud. In the fortress which the famous Shaykh Maa El Ainein built on orders and with the aid of the sultan of Morocco to be a hospice for scholarship and holy war, the traces of French bombs speak of the end of the line of the French officer Maurais, who came from Mauritania to occupy Maa El Ainein's hospice in 1913 but never returned. Semara also speaks of the collusion of French and Spanish colonialists during Operation Echophone in 1959 to occupy the town after the Moroccan Liberation Army had liberated it.

The Fervor of Elections

In El Dakhla, the capital of Oued El Dahab, the election campaign was at its peak when we arrived, and an atmosphere of jubilation on the occasion of the first parliamentary elections to take place in the area after its return to Morocco dominated the town.

The press delegation managed, in El Dakhla, Semara and El Uyoun, to become acquainted with the resurgence the Sahara has come to enjoy since it was merged into the general life of Morocco. For example, we can mention the provision of potable water in all areas of the Sahara, the elimination of shantytowns (in El Uyoun alone more than 1,500 dwellings have been built), the assimilation of all the children of school age into the primary and secondary stages, and the establishment of health service system encompassing all portions of the Sahara.

In this town, the correspondents met the Moroccan minister of education, Mr Driss Basri, and Gen Ahmed Dlimi at a press conference which, in addition to those two, featured workers in the Sahara regions, all of whom were from the regions they administered.

While the minister of foreign affairs focussed his review on the elections and the Sahara regions' participation in the context of institutions, Gen Dlimi gave accounts of the military situation. After pointing out that as far as the royal armed forces went the priority was to guarantee the security of the inhabitants, he said "The Moroccan army, which belongs to this people, has realized its goal and will continue its efforts to ensure a normal life in the Sahara regions." He stressed "Victory is in the muzzles of our rifles."

In answer to a question, Gen Dlimi said that the rest of the Sahara "will not require a military presence in points which are of no importance from the strategic standpoint. What is important is to protect the inhabitants, guarantee them a normal life, carry out overall vigilance and deal with any foreign intervention in the manner the situation requires."

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On the possibility of Polisario's carrying out new attacks, the Moroccan general, who, during the conference, seemed tranquil and confident, said, "As a military man I always expect the worst possibility and take my precautionary measures on that basis."

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