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Near East/North Africa Report

(FOUO 3/82)



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INTER-ARAB AFFAIRS

PLO PLAN TO ESTABLISH BASE IN JORDAN REVEALED

PM301549 London THE OBSERVER in English 29 Nov 81 p 7

[Report by Colin Legum: "'PLO Plans Foothold in Jordan'"]

[Text] A document has reached Western capitals purporting to be a secret plan under study by six leaders of the Palestine Liberation Organization to re-establish a foothold in Jordan from which to carry on the fight against Israel.

The document reached neighbouring countries from Amman.

The need for a new independent base for military operations has become acute because of Syria's hostility to the PLO leadership, especially Yasir 'Arafat and the opposition they are encountering in South Lebanon from the Christian militias, their Israeli allies and the Lebanese and Syrian authorities.

Due to the extremely sensitive nature of the plan, the document outlining the new strategy is said to have been given for study to just the six top leaders who attended the secret conclave. It is said to have leaked out despite extreme precautions.

Those attending the meeting were Yasir 'Arafat; his deputy Salah Khalaf (also known as Abu Iyad); Abu al-Walid, the head of the PLO's operational wing; Abu al-Hul, the chief of intelligence; Hani al-Hasan, 'Arafat's close confidant; and Faruq Qaddumi, head of the political department.

The purported plan examines at length the 'developments in the Palestinian revolution' since Black September 1970, when the PLO guerrillas were driven out of Jordan by King Husayn, leaving them only Lebanon as a centre for military operations.

After reviewing the advances achieved in the Arab world and the international community since 1970, the document concludes that no real progress has been made towards fulfilling the PLO's main aim of liberating Palestine.

Analysing the reasons for failure, the purported plan emphasises the 'physical separation' between the area of military operations in Lebanon and the main concentrations of Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

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It attributes responsibility for this separation to 'the Syrian occupying forces,' the Lebanese Christians and their militias, and Israel's military intervention in Lebanon.

The document concludes that Jordan is the only place from which it would be possible to reach the Palestinians in the occupied territories and where the PLO would be free from the military pressures of the Syrians and Christian Lebanese.

It would also allow close contact with the Palestinians who make up 50 percent of Jordan's population. The document stresses that their passive support could be converted into active cooperation through a PLO military presence in Jordan.

The conclusion reached is that, unless the PLO military presence can be shifted to Jordan, there will be no future for the Palestinian revolution.

What is needed, the document insists, is that the Palestinians should acquire the same rights as they enjoy in Lebanon to establish autonomous areas of control, free from Jordanian interference. It goes on to discuss ways of getting Jordanian acquiescence to allowing the PLO to return.

The document admits it will not be possible to get King Husayn's agreement to the return. It will be necessary to conduct clandestine nationalist activity among Palestinians in Jordan setting up 'revolutionary cells' which will serve as the bridge over which the Palestinian revolution will march back into Jordan.

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INTER-ARAB AFFAIRS

GULF DIPLOMATS COMMENT ON MEDIATION EFFORT

JN301351 London REUTER in English 1306 G/T 30 Dec 81

[Excerpts] Bahrain, 30 Dec (REUTER)--Syria and Saudi Arabia have apparently agreed on a major diplomatic drive to heal divisions in the Arab world following Israels annexation of the occupied Syrian Golan Heights, Gulf Arab diplomats said today.

An understanding was reached last week by Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad and Saudi Crown Prince Fahd and supported by other Gulf states which envisaged fresh attempts to end the Gulf war and reconcile Syria and Iraq and Saudi Arabia and Libya, the diplomats, who asked anonymity, said.

They said they were not confident of the outcome because of the complexity of the rifts and what they called many negative factors combining against reconciliation. They were unable to give specifics of how the understanding would be carried out.

But the diplomats said they expected other unidentified Arab countries and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) to join the efforts at some stage.

Mr Asad, who ended a tour of Saudi Arabia and other states of the Arabian Peninsula on Monday, was expected to try to persuade Islamic revolutionary Iran, with which he has strong ties, to accept peaceful efforts to end its 15-month-old war with Iraq, the diplomats said.

Syrian officials in Damascus said today a high-level Iranian delegation was expected there tomorrow.

Saudi Arabia and Kuwait will at the same time approach Iraq on the possibility of ending the fighting and restoring its relations with Syria, severed by Baghdad at the start of the war over alleged Syrian support for Irans war effort, the diplomats said.

Relieving Iraq of the war burden and normalising its ties with Syria are regarded as essential to enable the Arabs to present some sort of cohesive front on Israels eastern border.

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While Iraq has been responsive to peace efforts by United Nations, non-aligned and Islamic mediators, Iran has rejected any notion of a ceasefire until after Iraq had withdrawn all its troops from Iranian territory captured in the first weeks of the war, the diplomats said.

Relations between Syria and Iraq, both ruled by rival factions of the Ba'th Party, had been at a low ebb even before the war, reflecting political and ideological disagreements and deep mistrust.

The diplomats said Syria was also expected to work for normalised relations between Saudi Arabia and Libya, one of Damascus partners in the hardline Arab steadfastness front.

The Syrian and Saudi leaders also agreed on the need to hold an Arab summit if the Security Council failed to act against Israel, the diplomats said.

An Arab summit in Morocco last month collapsed because of conflict over the Saudi peace plan, which was opposed by Syria and other radicals for its implied recognition of Israel's right to exist.

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INTER-ARAB AFFAIRS

BRIEFS

PFLP ARMS SHIPMENT--The PFLP, George Habash's Palestinian organization opposed to Yasir 'Arafat, has just received an important arms shipment. The agent: Cuba. The cargo was unloaded at a north Lebanese port under Syrian control. [Text] [Paris L'EXPRESS in French 11 Dec 81 p 99] [COPYRIGHT: 1981 s.a. Groupe Express]

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ALGERIA

ALGERIAN ECONOMIC SITUATION REVIEWED

Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French No 1882, 4 Dec 81 pp 3215-3221

[Text] At a time when French-Algerian relations seem to be taking a new turn and experiencing a revival, we are presenting a number of essential elements of the economic situation in Algeria, as that country endeavors to apply the new development strategy that guided the conception of its 5-year plan for 1980-1984.

Based on area (2,381,000 square kilometers), Algeria is the second largest country on the African continent, after Sudan, and tenth largest in the world. Because of an extremely high rate of demographic growth (3.2 percent), its population has nearly doubled since independence, numbering almost 20 million inhabitants, over half of which (57.5 percent) are under the age of 20 and heavily concentrated in the northern region of the country, with nearly 90 percent of the national territory constituted by Saharan zones.

Despite the problems posed by this strong population growth, Algeria has been able to attain and maintain a particularly high rate of formation of fixed capital, mainly thanks to massive investments which, from 10 percent of the gross national production (GNP) during the first decade of independence, went as high as 40 percent of the GNP in recent years. These investments, essentially made in the productive sector (70 percent in 1980), have absorbed oil revenue (which made up nine-tenths of Algerian exports from 1970 to 1979 and about one-third of the GNP) and are at the root of the foreign debt, service on which amounted to 21.7 percent of the value of exports at the end of 1978. However, because of the increased cost of hydrocarbons in 1979, service on the debt dropped to about 20 percent at the end of 1981.

Algeria's development strategy was based on the establishment of a heavy industry, financed by oil revenue, which was to become the country's subsequent instrument of development when hydrocarbons reserves would be exhausted. Actually, despite a ten-fold increase in investments between the first plan (1970-1973: 12 billion dinars) and the second (1974-1977: 129 billion dinars), industrial production still represents only 10 percent of the GNP, while the share of agriculture is stagnant at 8 percent. Furthermore, it is income from gas that apparently must complete, then replace, oil revenue in ensuring the continuity of the development of the Algerian economy. The productivity of the industrial public sector has not lived up to hopes. Some plants have reached only 40 percent and sometimes as little as 15 percent of their capacity.

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The perhaps excessive priority reserved for industrialization, criticized by certain economists, and the adoption following independence of a foreign pattern of development have imposed heavy sacrifices on the people, whose essential needs, particularly in the area of health, housing and basic consumer needs, have been neglected.

Therefore, after two years of reflection and in keeping with the orientations defined at the beginning of 1980 by the Central Committee of the FLN, the new 5-year plan for the 1980-1984 period proposes to correct past errors and deviations, gain control of the national production apparatus in order to improve productivity, particularly through the decentralization of responsibilities at the level of production units, give a new thrust to agriculture and make up for the lag in meeting the basic needs of the people. The era of accelerated industrialization making massive use of foreign assistance and peak technology seems to be coming to an end in Algeria. The country must henceforth invest in keeping with its needs and means, economize on its oil resources and rely more on its own resources, while the utilization of foreign loans must remain limited. In 1978, Algeria was the third-ranking net borrower of all Third World countries, following Brazil and Mexico. One of the objectives of the 1980-1984 Plan is to reduce the weight of the debt to 15 percent of the value of exports.

Algeria's Gross National Product at Current Prices (in billions of dinars)

	<u>1970</u>	<u>1975</u>	<u>1976</u>	<u>1977</u>	<u>1978</u>	<u>1979</u>	<u>1980</u>
Exports	5.4	19.4	22.9	26.2			
Public sector consumption	4	8.4	9.5	11.6	15.0	17.1	22.2
Private sector consumption	12.2	26.8	31.9	38.9	46.8	55.1	70.8
Formation of fixed capital	7.6	24.4	31.2	39.3	52.4	53.1	64.9
Variations in reserves	0.7	3.9	0.6	2.4			
Less: Exports	7	- 26.5	- 27.5	- 36.5			
Gross national product	22.9	56.3	68.5	81.9	98.4	122	132
Variations in revenue (%)	+ 11.7	+ 16	+ 21.6	+ 19	+ 20	+ 24	+ 9
Exports/revenue (%)	+ 24	34	33	32			
Imports/revenue (%)	30	47	40	45			
GNP (constant prices) growth % Annual average 1973-1978 =	6.4	10.2	7.2	6.5			

Algeria undertakes this new phase of its development with solid assets. Among the poor countries, Algeria is a rich nation with a gross national product in 1980 of 154 billion dinars (some 184 billion francs). In 1979, the per capital GNP was \$1,580 (Morocco: \$740; Tunisia: \$1,120) and it placed Algeria in a good position among intermediate-income countries in World Bank classifications. Even if its construction was onerous and even if errors were made, the public industrial sector constitutes a platform for future development if Algeria does succeed, as it seems to want to, in putting together a diversified industrial fabric of small and medium-size enterprises that should revive it and increase its wealth. Algeria has been wise enough to tenaciously build one of the instruments that can guarantee future generations of the country's economic independence and meet social needs, particularly employment.

Retroactively marking the beginning of the new 5-year plan, the year 1980 began with the main reorientations of Algerian policy on the working and marketing of hydrocarbons, industry and agriculture.

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The priority given "to the conservation and preservation of national strategic reserves" led Algeria to make a voluntary 12-percent reduction in crude oil production in 1980. Nevertheless, the discovery of new deposits in 1980 increased petroleum reserves to 1,213,000,000 tons, which could guarantee production at the current rate for 20 years.

Natural gas production is linked to its marketing and Algeria has come to prefer halting deliveries of liquefied gas in certain cases, waiting for results from the negotiations it has entered into with its main customers concerning prices, which it wants to link to the price of crude (see MARCHES TROPICAUX of 27 November, p 3169). It has also put off construction of the LNG 3 liquefaction complex at Arzew.

For the time being, the predominance of the hydrocarbon sector in the Algerian economy remains very marked, representing 32.3 percent of gross national production for the 1976-1979 period (annual average) and 37.5 percent in 1980.

The agricultural sector remains the "poor cousin," despite an improvement in climatic conditions. It contributed only 7.3 percent of the GNP in 1980, down from the average for the 4 previous years.

Finally, the substantial investments made in the industrial sector did not prevent a certain decline in its contribution to the GNP, which, from an average 10.6 percent for the 1976-1979 period, dropped to 10.4 percent in 1980.

The 1980-1984 Plan aims to correct these imbalances. The volume of investments will reach 400 billion dinars, half for the cost of projects included before startup of the plan and not yet completed. The essential objective -- that is, the implementation of actions that could meet the people's aspirations by about 1990 -- will be achieved through a far-reaching transformation of the general investment planning system, greater flexibility in and decentralization of the management of the economy, the establishment of forms of organization that will provide greater control of the production and marketing apparatus, maximum utilization of capacities and better organization of work.

This plan provides for a real annual growth rate of 8.2 percent, higher than that of the previous plan -- 7.5 percent -- although it had actually been only 6.2 percent for the 1970-1976, 7.2 percent in 1979 and the low 6.5 percent in 1980, marking a substantial improvement over the 1960's, when the average was 4.4 percent.

An important change compared with the past is expressed in the more vigorous rate of the growth in consumption compared with the growth in investments. Growth in consumption will be 8.6 percent annually, compared with a little over 7 percent for investments.

Inasmuch as the utilization of foreign borrowing has been limited to 50 billion dinars for the duration of the plan, plan financing must essentially come from budget savings, estimated to total 200 billion dinars during the period. Some 60 percent of resources will come from oil taxes and 38 percent from regular taxes, as well as savings of enterprises and private parties.

At 1979 prices, import needs for the period of the plan are an estimated 270 billion dinars, an annual growth rate of 6 percent.

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General Investment Program 1980-1984 (in billions of dinars)

	Programs			Spending Authorizations		
	<u>RAR</u> <u>1979</u>	<u>New</u> <u>Prog.</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>1980-</u> <u>1984</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Beyond</u>
Industry	79.5	132.2	211.7	154.5	(38.6)	57.2
including hydrocarbons	28.4	49.3	77.7	63.5	(15.7)	14.7
Agriculture	17.8	41.6	59.4	47.1	(11.7)	12.3
Forestry	0.7	3.3	4.0	3.2	(0.8)	0.8
Agriculture	6.0	17.9	23.9	20.0	(4.9)	3.9
Waterworks	10.9	19.1	30.0	23.0	(5.7)	7.0
Fishing	0.2	1.3	1.5	0.9	(0.3)	0.6
Transport	2.4	13.4	15.8	13.0	(3.2)	2.8
Economic Infrastructure	19.9	36.2	56.1	37.9	(9.5)	18.2
Communications excluding rail	6.8	12.5	19.3	12.5		6.8
Rail infrastructure	1.8	7.1	8.9	5.0		3.9
Telecommunications	1.8	6.2	8.0	6.0		2.0
Storage-distribution	8.8	9.0	17.8	13.0		4.8
Industrial zones	0.7	1.4	2.1	1.4		0.7
Housing	34.5	58.0	92.5	60.0	(15.)	32.5
Education-training	30.3	35.4	65.7	42.2	(10.5)	23.5
Social Infrastructures	6.7	14.3	21.0	16.3	(4.1)	4.7
Including health	3.6	6.2	9.8	7.0		2.8
Collective Equipment	2.4	10.9	13.3	9.6	(2.4)	3.7
Construction Enterprises	3.4	21.6	25.0	20.0	(5)	5.0
Total	196.9	363.6	560.3	400.6	(100)	159.9

Principal Economic Sectors

Oil and Natural Gas

Although it represents by far the main source of foreign exchange, Algerian oil carries little weight in the international oil balance. Algerian production is not over 2 percent of all world production, 4 percent of OPEC production and 6 percent of Arab production, although Algeria has taken from its reserves the highest proportion registered in the world, reaching 6 percent in 1979, compared with an average of 3 percent in Arab oil-producing countries and 1 percent in Norway and the North Sea.

Oil Production and Exportation

	<u>Production</u>	<u>Exports</u>	
	<u>(1,000 tons)</u>	<u>(1,000 tons)</u>	<u>(\$ millions)</u>
1972	50,085	46,592	1,032
1973	51,154	45,002	1,430
1974	47,172	42,110	4,878
1975	47,664	39,662	3,723
1976	50,424	45,600	4,799

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(Oil Produc., cont.)

1977	51,696	48,400	5,536
1978	54,420	49,000	5,825
1979	53,700	48,400	7,513
1980	47,424	40,000	11,700
1981 (est.)	35,500 to 39,600		

Algeria's Energy Reserves (1980)

	Gas (billions m ³)	Oil (millions tons)
Current reserves	2,974	1,100
Predicted reserves	520	91
Potential reserves	299	22
Total	3,793	1,213
World	77,600	91,100

Crude oil production, which reached a ceiling of between 50 and 54 million tons between 1976 and 1979 and which was deliberately reduced by 12 percent in 1980, should experience a forced regression of some 25 percent in 1981 as a result of the decrease in deductions from foreign companies because of the reduction in world consumption but also the high cost of Algerian oil.

Brought down to \$37.5 a barrel following the OPEC meeting of 29 October 1981, the cost of Algerian crude is among the highest in the world and Algeria must face the competition of Nigerian crude and crude from the North Sea. Nevertheless, bartering (using oil to pay for all or part of the equipment or consumer good imports), the generally predicted increase amounting to 3 percent of the price of crude annually in real terms over the next decade, and the increase in upgraded products in the form of condensates and refined oil should largely compensate for the reduction in value of the production of crude.

Actually, it is gas and not oil that is the main energy resource of Algeria, whose immense proven reserves, some 3 trillion cubic meters, represent 3.9 percent of world reserves in 1981 and put Algeria in fourth place in the world, after the Soviet Union, Iran and the United States.

Algeria produces two kinds of gas: natural gas and gas combined with oil, but at the present time, Algeria resells only the former. As for the latter, it is either burned or used as an auxiliary means for the extraction of oil.

Algerian gas production is still low (between 14 and 16 billion cubic meters a year (1978-1980). It is estimated that it could reach 100 billion cubic meters in 1984, providing Algeria with foreign exchange equivalent to its oil revenue.

If the country agreed to export unrefined gas in order to respond to the urgent needs of the international market, it was on the condition that in the future, the major portion should be turned into liquid gas before export. However, Algeria now has an excess liquefaction capacity. In August 1981, the national liquefied natural

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gas production capacity has doubled, reaching 30 billion cubic meters, with the startup of the latest three liquefaction lines at the GL 1 K unit in Skikda. However, three liquefaction programs were abandoned this year (GL 3 Z at Arzew; GL 2 K at Skikda; and GL 1 C at Issers).

Actually, 1981 like 1980 was a year of transition for Algerian authorities, a year that should gradually lead to the equivalence of crude oil and gas prices. For that purpose, Algeria has gone so far as to break several contracts with American customers (Tenneco and El Paso, at 20.5 billion cubic meters a year). Sales contracts that are currently operational were reduced from 16.8 to 6.3 billion cubic meters.

Liquefied Natural Gas Sales Contracts

<u>Customer and Country</u>	<u>Quantities</u>		<u>Startup Date</u>	<u>Duration Contract (Years)</u>
	<u>Billions Thermal Units Year</u>	<u>Billions M³ Year</u>		
Active				
British Methane (United Kingdom)	103.4	1.1	1965	15
French Gas Company (France)	5.3	0.6	1965	25
French Gas Company (France)	35.0	3.7	1973	25
Distrigas (Belgium)	12.0	1.3	1976	20
Enagas (Spain)	45.0	4.8	1976	23
Revived				
El Paso (United States)	103.4	10.9	1978	25
Distrigas (Belgium)	50.0	5.3	1980	20
French Gas Company (France)	51.5	5.4	1980	20
Panhandle (United States)	45.0	4.8	1980	20
ENI [National Hydrocarbons Agency (Italy)	85.0	9.0	1982	20
Being Approved				
El Paso (United States)	103.4	10.9	1982	20
Tenneco (Canada)	100.0	10.6	1981	20
Ruhrgas-Gasunie (FRG)	75.6	8.6	1982	20

SONATRACH is turning back to Europe. The two partners ready to receive additional quantities are France and Italy. However, in both cases, although the laying of the Algerian-Italian gas pipeline and construction of the Montoir terminal have just been completed, negotiations begun on prices have turned out to be difficult.

Actually, the Algerians, who have invested heavily in working their gas, do not intend to "sell it off" (see MARCHES TROPICAUX, 27 November, p 3,169, Algerian position on the price of liquefied natural gas).

Industry

Industry is in second rank after energy in the Algerian economy. It concentrates on heavy industries: iron and steel metallurgy, machinery, electronic and

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petrochemical complexes. The objective of Algerian planners was to replace industry for oil in the future as the main source of national revenue. But the results have not been in proportion to the sums invested. In 10 years, the industrial sector absorbed 170 billion Algerian dinars, which were spent to set up plants that, based on the quality of their equipment, were to vie with those in many industrialized countries. Poor management and carelessness, joined with the control exercised over them by foreign experts, reduced their capacity to 40 percent, 30 percent and sometimes less.

Consequently, the growth in investments in the industrial field was accompanied by a considerable drop in production and, consequently, in production. In metal-lurgy and iron and steel, production dropped by 27 percent between 1974 and 1978.

Lead production dropped much more than iron and steel production, dropping by 75 percent in 1978 compared with 1972. The same is true for zinc (down 42 percent).

Heading the industries with noteworthy progress are weaving, spinning and tanning. As for the equipment industry (trucks, tractors, harvesters, and so on), part of the production is still stored because it was not marketed to self-managed properties and farm cooperatives under the agrarian revolution. By way of example, out of 200 trailer tractors already built, 174 were still in stock.

Actually, according to the objectives of the new 1980-1984 Plan, investments in industry should increase moderately until they represent 38 percent of all investments, compared with 60 percent for the previous plan. New plans tend to strengthen industries that can meet the urgent needs of the population and increase productivity.

Program of Industrial Investments Planned for 1981 Annual Plan

	Remaining Investments To Be Made	Share of Rem. Inv. To be Made in Total Prog. (in %)	New Pro- grams	Total	% of Total
Hydrocarbons	8,800	56.8	6,700	15,500	40.8
Electricity	1,000	32.2	2,100	3,100	8.1
Petrochemistry	900	94.7	50	950	2.5
Mining	350	63.6	200	550	1.4
Iron and steel industry	3,230	92.3	270	3,500	9.2
Mach. and elec. construction	4,750	91.3	450	5,200	13.7
Light chemistry	1,290	96.3	50	1,340	3.5
Building materials	1,150	79.6	295	1,445	3.8
Food	2,600	92.8	200	2,800	7.3
Textiles	1,820	95.8	80	1,900	5
Leathers	105	65.6	55	160	0.4
Wood and paper	870	91.5	80	950	2.5
Local industry	500	86.2	80	580	1.5
General studies	15	100		15	
Total	27,380	72	10,610	37,990	100

Source: Ministry of Planning and National Development (MPAT)

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Half of the expenditures provided for in the plan will be devoted to the completion of projects underway (paper mills, cement works, petrochemistry) or already planned (chemistry, mechanical industry). The other half will be allocated for the construction of smaller and more concentrated units in the building materials sector (iron and cement) and the durable consumer goods sector.

Nevertheless, of the investment program for 1981 (83.8 billion dinars), some 38 billion will be devoted to industry (45 percent). However, the 72 percent of the industrial investments already committed actually correspond to investments previously planned and not completed.

The share of the industrial sector in the GNP showed a slight decline in 1980-1981 to 10.5 percent, but processing industries rose 11 percent in 1980 compared with 1979. This improvement corresponds to a certain resurgence in productivity covering 25 percent of production capacity. The latter suffers in particular from difficulties in receiving supplies of agricultural products due to the deterioration of the agricultural sector.

By way of example: the Relizane agroindustrial unit, which represented an investment of 200 million dinars, went into production in 1975 with a processing capacity of 15,000 tons a year for five assembly lines (processing of oranges, tomato paste, grape juice, processing and packing of olives and various vegetables). At the present time, two lines are operating regularly, with the others being halted for lack of supplies of the necessary agricultural products. The plant handled 4,588 tons of farm products in 1980 (30 percent capacity), compared with 2,490 tons in 1979 (16 percent of capacity).

In addition, the SONIC (National Cellulose Industries Company) alfalfa complex produced 20,000 tons of paper pulp in 1980 (30 percent of the capacity of 66,000 tons), up 12.5 percent compared with 1979. This complex still suffers from agricultural supply problems (alfalfa). Normally, it should receive 500 tons a day of alfalfa, but it never received over 60 tons a day.

Building and Public Works

The building and public works sector (BTP) is of such importance in the Algerian economy that it is the second employer after agriculture and in third place in the structure of the GNP after services and industry. This sector now includes 6,236 enterprises, 5,500 of these in the private sector (86 percent employing fewer than 20 wage earners).

The instability of the private enterprises and the negligence of the public sector have significantly emphasized the imbalances between production capacities and the BTP demand induced by the high rate of investments, which engenders longer delays in building and increased spending that is intolerable for the national economy.

All means of construction, whether it be a question of design or construction capacity, national or local means, will require the injection of over 20 billion dinars in constant terms during the 1980-1984 period. In value, housing programs will be five times higher than those included in the latest 4-year plan. Major means will be granted to the private sector and do-it-yourself construction will be encouraged, mainly in rural areas. By appealing to foreign builders, in keeping

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with terms of intervention to be defined, the Algerian Government hopes to complete construction of 100,000 housing units a year, compared with 25,000 at present (see MARCHES TROPICAUX, 16 October 1981, p 2616).

Agricultural Sector

The agricultural sector represents only about 7 percent of the gross national product, although it employs over half of the population. Actually, it has been so neglected by the government that the increase in agricultural products has not exceeded 30 percent in 17 years, an average of 1.7 percent a year, while the population doubled and the increase in the cost of living tripled.

It should be noted that the per capita share of food products has gradually declined over a period of more than a quarter century, dropping to half in the 1970's compared with the 1950's, a drop that had to be made up for by imports. In 1979, Algeria imported over one-third of its consumption of grain and milk, 80 percent of its oil consumption and nearly half of its sugar consumption.

Algerian development plans have given priority to the industrial sector at the expense of the agricultural sector, with the development of the former making it possible to improve the products needed to develop the latter. That is why the farm sector has begun to receive investments in the field of development only starting with the second plan. However, it can be noted that credits made available to the sector scarcely exceed 75 percent of the credits allocated by the plan.

This policy has resulted in a rural exodus toward the cities. Incapable of engaging in industrial activities because of a lack of professional training in the technical and technological fields, rural people join the army of the unemployed, thereby worsening the social crisis and making the country even more dependent on foreign countries for food, whose prices have increased considerably. Nor have government subsidies aimed at stabilizing the prices of basic products, in order to make them accessible to the poor who make up the majority of the people, increased in the same proportions. In 1981, the Algerian Government devoted 2.3 billion dinars to supporting the prices of these products (oil, sugar, flour, in particular).

The government has decided henceforth to grant top priority to agriculture. The 1980-1984 Plan doubles investments devoted to agriculture itself, compared with the previous plan, and increases credits allocated to waterworks five times. The total represents 11.7 percent of the investments planned during the period in question.

The farm policy tends to reintegrate the crop-livestock-forestry association in the three climatic zones (steppes, high plains, coastal tell), combining irrigation and dry farming so as to break with the traditional specialization. The plan provides for continuing development of the soil, protection and expansion of the forestry patrimony, development of sheep and cattle raising and development of orchards. Some 25,000 hectares of old farm areas will be renovated and 50,000 of new perimeters should be developed, in connection with the use of new dams and the drilling of more wells.

Credits reserved for waterworks will make the construction of a number of large dams, including one at Oran, possible, but essentially, the creation of many small reservoirs and systematic use of isolated water resources. A survey of resources

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will be made to permit the implementation of medium- and long-term programs. The upper plateaus and the semi-arid zones will receive priority in the development of small and medium-size water projects.

Nevertheless, the plan provides for an average growth rate of only 4 percent annually, scarcely higher than the rate of population growth. As the plan states, the result envisaged will require an improvement in production structures, particularly the cooperatives, true interest on the part of producers in short- and medium-term results and a policy of encouraging young people to remain faithful to agriculture by guaranteeing them social advancement in keeping with progress in other activities and priority training for foreman and management posts.

As for the fight against food shortages, it will depend on better organization of distribution, thereby eliminating speculation and hoarding that leads to waste and preventing any increase in the food imports which weigh so heavily on the trade balance. By way of example, wheat imports alone now represent the equivalent of two months' oil exports.

At the present time, wheat, barley, grapes and dates head the list of Algeria's agricultural products. While oil and gas constitute the essential basis of Algerian economic development, dates are considered to be the cornerstone of the Saharan economy. Their harvest, approaching 140,000 tons a year, actually places the country in sixth place in the world after Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. Wheat production, which totaled an average 1,444,000 tons a year between 1970 and 1980, places it in third place among Arab producers after Morocco and Egypt, as does barley production, after Morocco and Iraq.

Foreign Trade and Balance of Payments

(In the following section, certain apparent contradictions will be found between the figures on the trade balance in the first table and those given later for the balance of payments. Actually, the first table, drawn up based on statistics from the International Monetary Fund, uses exports at the FOB stage and imports at the CIF stage, while the other table uses both imports and exports at only the FOB stage.)

Foreign Trade

The strategy followed for economic development in Algeria helped increase the share of foreign trade in the gross national product and accentuate the dependency of the Algerian economy on foreign countries. From 1974 to 1978, the value of Algerian imports exceeded half of the GNP, while exports represented only one-third.

This situation is naturally reflected in the trade balance, which has shown a constant deficit except for 1974, when the trade surplus was due to a partial recovery of the real value of oil. In 1974, it had remained under the 1958 level despite the strong increase in oil prices. In 1979, despite the increase in price for Algerian oil amounting to 46 percent and the restriction on imports (down 1.5 percent), Algeria's trade balance still showed a deficit (- \$313 million).

The trade deficit that marked the last decade in a constant manner, except for 1974, can be attributed to two factors:

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1 -- an import demand that has increased to the point of far exceeding the level required by the real rate of growth in revenue, whence an increased demand for finished and semi-finished products (representing 22 percent of all imports), whose value in 1978 quadrupled compared with 1973, although local products had been expected to take their place.

2 -- an exorbitant increase in import prices, first of all for equipment (making up 40 percent of the total), whose value in 1978 more than quadrupled compared with 1973 for a substantially lower quantity, and for food (representing 30 percent of the total). The increase in import prices is attributable to the worsening of inflation in industrialized countries, the depreciation of the dollar, a gauge of the value of imports, and the readjustment by industrialized nations of the prices of their exports to developing countries, including oil-producing countries, in terms of the higher prices for oil in 1974.

Consequently, the trade deficit experienced a strong increase in 1975 (totaling \$1,318,000,000), nearly quadrupling compared with the 1971 figure, while in 1974 the balance showed a surplus for the first time. What further worsened it was the tension in trading relations between Algeria and France in 1975, with which the trade deficit amounted to \$1 billion, while it did not exceed \$240 million in 1974. (France actually greatly restricted its imports from Algeria, although Algeria did not do the same. Consequently, total Algerian exports did not increase at all, while the overall value of imports increased 41 percent over the preceding year.)

During the same decade, the trade deficit reached its second record figure in 1978 (\$2,335,000,000), when it nearly doubled compared with 1975. This is due to a worsening of the world economic crisis during a year when oil prices tended to dwindle with the drop of the dollar. Consequently, Algerian exports showed a small increase (up 7 percent over 1977), while the value of imports continued to rise (up 21 percent over 1977), despite the policy adopted by Algeria aimed at restricting the importation of products not considered basic.

Trade Balance (in millions of dollars)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Export</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Import</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Balance</u>
1971	852		1,221		- 369
1972	1,306	+ 53	1,493	+ 22	- 187
1973	1,906	+ 45	2,259	+ 51	- 353
1974	4,688	+ 245	4,620	+ 88	+ 428
1975	4,690		6,008	+ 41	- 1,318
1976	5,332	+ 13	5,082	- 11	- 250
1977	5,928	+ 11	7,125	+ 33	- 1,197
1978	6,347	+ 7	8,682	+ 21	- 2,335
1979	8,198	+ 29	8,511	- 1.5	- 313
1980	12,410	+ 51	10,714	+ 25.9	+ 1,696
1981 (first half)	6,160	+ 7			
1981 (estimate)	11,700	- 5.7	10,000	- 6.5	+ 1,700

The trend was reversed in 1980, when the Algerian trade balance registered a record surplus of \$1,696,000,000 (nearly quadruple the 1974 figure) due to the increase in oil prices (up 23 percent). Rising Algerian exports (up 51 percent) reached a

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record of \$12.4 billion, compared with \$10.7 billion for imports (up 25.9 percent). In 1981, the reduction by several companies -- essentially American -- of their collections of Algerian oil, from 10 to 20 percent, due to the pressures of excess Saudi production sold at an exceptionally low prices had strong repercussions on African exports. Algeria's sales reportedly dropped in volume by one-fourth compared with 1980.

Despite the reduction in oil sales, it is estimated that the 1981 trade balance will still show a surplus of \$1.7 billion, due to the estimated 6.5-percent drop in value of imports, compared with 5.7 percent for exports.

Structure of Imports (in billions of Algerian dinars)

	<u>1973</u>	<u>1974</u>	<u>1975</u>	<u>1976</u>	<u>1977</u>	<u>1978</u>	<u>1979</u>	<u>1980*</u>	<u>1981*</u>
Total imports	9.5	16.8	23.7	22.2	29.5	34.4	32.8	40.0	37.0
Including:									
Raw materials	0.5	1.3	1.3	1.0	1.6	1.5			
Equipment	3.2	5.6	9.3	9.8	10.3	14.3			
Consumer goods	1.4	2.0	2.7	2.6	3.8	5.0			
Semi-finished products	2.4	4.9	5.4	4.9	9.2	7.9			
Food products	1.9	3.7	4.1	3.6	4.4	5.0			

* Estimates

Structure of Exports (in billions of Algerian dinars)

	<u>1973</u>	<u>1974</u>	<u>1975</u>	<u>1976</u>	<u>1977</u>	<u>1978</u>	<u>1979</u>	<u>1980*</u>	<u>1981*</u>
Total exports	7.5	19.6	18.6	22.2	24.6	25.2	31.5	47.6	25.9
Including:									
Crude oil	5.6	16.9	15.9	18.9	22.5	21.5	27.3	41.2	21.6
Refined oil	0.4	0.9	1.1	0.8	0.5	1.5	1.6	2.5	2.2
Food products	0.9	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.5	0.6			
Semi-finished products	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2			

* Estimates

Source: IFS [expansion unknown], June 1980 and September 1981

Structure of Exports

Algeria's dependency on its oil has increased in recent years. Oil deliveries actually constituted 92 percent of all exports for the 1974-1980 period, compared with 88 percent in 1972. As for the rest, the already small portion has declined even further: For example, manufactured products dropped from 6 percent in 1972 to 2 percent in 1978, while exports of food products, which represented 3 percent in 1972, became almost negligible in 1978.

In fact, the lack of diversification of Algerian exports is one of the major problems posed by the single-product economies of Third World countries in general, including oil-producing countries. And yet, the efforts Algeria has made and the

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sums it has spent on the industrial sector in order to be able, once freed from its dependency on a single product, to obtain foreign exchange by substituting manufactured products for oil, have had no equal in any other country, even among those that produce oil. Nevertheless, Algeria is doomed to export its oil and gas for a long time to come.

Evolution in Algeria's Foreign Trade by Country (in millions of dollars)

Imports into Algeria

<u>Country</u>	<u>1972</u>	<u>1973</u>	<u>1974</u>	<u>1975</u>	<u>1976</u>	<u>1977</u>	<u>1978</u>	<u>1979</u>	<u>1980</u>
France	444	729	1,184	2,099	1,444	1,716	1,694	1,936	2,627
FRG	190	310	350	684	780	1,031	1,403	1,242	1,274
Italy	152	188	348	496	472	690	1,045	529	710
Japan	19	33	127	221	285	435	809	343	448
United States	103	244	509	904	632	618	512	404	542

Algeria's Exports

United States	109	209	1,096	1,294	2,350	3,010	3,362	4,940	6,576
FRG	247	413	962	902	967	852	1,063	1,698	2,280
France	300	421	900	700	723	737	643	1,114	1,719
Italy	99	180	270	488	401	316	424	1,074	1,295
Spain	109	179	291	222	157	141	153	195	550
Japan	nd*	nd	nd	nd	10	24	38	60	450

* [expansion unknown]

Source: OECD 1981

Algeria's Principal Trading Partners

For France, Algeria is a particularly important trading partner. It is in fact its front-ranking African customer, as well as its main customer among Arab countries and its prime customer among Third World countries, surpassed for purchases of French products only by the EEC, the United States and Spain. Algeria's imports of French products and equipment represented 35 percent of all Algerian imports. This share remained at about 25 percent in 1979 and 1980, despite Algeria's desire to diversify its commercial trade. Mechanical industries retain a preponderant place (50 percent) among French exports to Algeria. In 1981, it became the third-ranking customer of the machine and metal processing industries with, for the first six months, 6.03 percent of French exports from the sector. It occupied only fifth place with 5.04 percent in 1980. This progression is explained by the choices of orientation of the 1980-1984 Plan.

The essential portion of French imports from Algeria is made up of crude oil, natural gas and refined petroleum products. Out of a production of 47.2 million tons of oil in 1980, the share of the French oil companies was 10.4 million tons. For natural gas, French imports experienced quantitative fluctuations in 1980 as a result of the nearly total halt in deliveries from Skikda between March and July. Nevertheless, gas imports held steady in value last year. Gas deliveries increased

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substantially at the beginning of 1981 (up 168.9 percent between the imports for the first half of 1980 and those of the first half of 1981).

Evolution in French-Algerian Trade (in millions of francs)

	<u>French Exports</u>	<u>French Imports</u>	<u>Balance France</u>	<u>Rate of Cover (%)</u>
1970	3,214	3,539	- 415	89
1971	2,771	1,293	+ 1,478	223
1972	2,383	1,702	+ 681	140
1973	3,339	2,117	+ 1,222	158
1974	6,178	4,806	+ 1,372	129
1975	8,071	3,183	+ 4,888	254
1976	7,034	3,315	+ 3,719	212
1977	8,786	3,894	+ 4,892	225
1978	6,913	3,204	+ 3,709	215.8
1979	8,239	4,729	+ 3,510	174
1980	11,098	7,265	- 3,833	153

Source: French statistics

For oil, Algeria went from third place among France's suppliers in 1974 to fourth place in 1977 and fifth place in 1978, behind Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Nigeria and the Emirates. On the other hand, in 1980, Algeria was the third supplier of natural gas to France after the Netherlands and the Soviet Union.

Overall commercial trade between France and Algeria in 1980 totaled 18.5 billion French francs. According to figures available for the first nine months of 1981, it should reach and even exceed 20 billion francs for the entire year.

The deficit in the trade balance with France has steadily grown since 1973 and it is a constant concern of Algeria to restore the balance in its trade. Nevertheless, the trend seems to have reversed during the months of July and August 1981, during which the value of Algerian imports dropped 30 percent compared with the average for the preceding months, while the value of Algerian exports to France shot up (+ 72 percent). The result, for the two months considered and for the first time in the history of French-Algerian trade relations since 1973, is a surplus in favor of Algeria estimated at some \$150 million.

Among Algeria's other trading partners, the top-ranking ones are the United States, the prime customer for oil (and whose balance gave a surplus in 1978 of 10 billion dinars), the Federal Republic of Germany (whose sales to Algeria have remained stable for 3 years at 6 billion francs and represent 14.4 percent of Algerian imports), Italy (13.5 percent), Belgium (13 percent) and Japan, which could make a spectacular entry on the Algerian market after the development of large Japanese equipment contracts paid for in oil. In fact, the overall amount of commercial trade between the two countries, at a low point 10 years ago, increased considerably at the end of the decade and at the end of 1981, doubled the 1980 amount, which was 40 times the 1971 total! Japan's acceptance of compensation contracts expresses its desire for long-term cooperation with Algeria.

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Algeria's Trade With Japan 1976-1981 (in millions of dollars)

	<u>1981</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1979</u>	<u>1978</u>	<u>1977</u>	<u>1976</u>
Algerian Imports	217.3	452.2	345.9	729.3	469.1	204.3
Including:						
Textiles	3.6	51.5	18.5	13.8	13.1	1.4
Rubber tires and tubes	918	31.1	22.6	20.7	15.6	1.9
Metals	24	75.6	121.8	196.1	118.8	54.9
General machinery	72.7	129.5	107.8	258	155.5	82.5
Electrical equipment	25	40.3	28	53.5	53	24.1
Motor vehicles	70.8	87.2	5.4	43.2	6.6	20.7
Ships and boats	0	nd	20.1	117.9	90	8.5
Algerian Exports*	398.1	451.5	57.5	38.3	24.2	10.2

* Over 99 percent of Algerian exports to Japan consist of oil and oil products.

Source: Japan External Trade Organization

Balance of Payments

While the (FOB) trade balance showed a surplus two or more times during the 1970's, the balance of invisibles has always shown a serious deficit. That deficit has grown alarmingly worse in recent years, increasing 13 times and over in 1980 compared with 1972 (\$5,103,000,000, compared with \$328 million). This is mainly due to an increase in service on the foreign debt (interest and repayment of loans) equivalent, on the average, to half of the total imported services (over \$4.3 billion in 1979, compared with \$421 million in 1972): transport costs, insurance, transfer of revenue for foreign investments and other invisibles, which also increased in the same proportion.

The effect carried over to the balance of current operations, which showed a continuous deficit, except in 1974. The deficit has therefore grown worse in recent years to the point of a total of \$3,539,000,000 in 1978, compared with \$126 million in 1972. Nevertheless, the surpluses registered by the trade balance in 1979 (total of \$1,688,000,000) and 1980 (\$4.07 billion), compared with a deficit of \$953 million in 1978, have helped reduce the deficit in the balance of current operations to \$1,718,000,000 in 1979 and \$643 million in 1980, despite the worsening of the deficit in the balance of services.

Algerian Balance of Payments (in millions of dollars)

	<u>1974</u>	<u>1975</u>	<u>1976</u>	<u>1977</u>	<u>1978</u>	<u>1979</u>	<u>1980</u>
Goods exports	4,589	4,428	5,186	5,916	6,340	9,485	13,660
Goods imports	3,667	5,452	4,693	6,197	7,293	7,797	9,590
Trade balance	+ 922	- 1,024	+ 493	- 285	- 953	+ 1,688	+ 4,070
Services exports	285	313	269	340	362	612	500
Services imports	1,019	1,376	2,109	2,705	3,313	4,344	5,603
Balance of services	- 734	- 1,063	- 1,840	- 2,365	- 2,952	- 3,702	- 5,103

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(Algerian Balance of Payments, cont.)

Private transfers							
not required	396	437	476	343	379	305	400
Government transfers							
not required	426	12	14	18	13	9	10
Balance of cur. oper. +	158	- 1,662	- 885	- 2,325	- 3,539	- 1,718	- 643
Foreign capital							
Long-term	+ 529	+ 1,385	+ 1,758	+ 1,897	+ 3,652	+ 2,717	
Short-term	- 273	+ 1	- 45	+ 119	- 160	- 130	
Errors and omissions	+ 149	- 59	- 204	- 39	+ 139	- 374	
Final balance	+ 563	- 336	+ 624	- 348	+ 92	+ 495	
Foreign reserves	1,454	1,128	1,765	1,684	1,981	2,659	3,773

It is estimated that maintaining the surplus in the 1981 balance of payments would once again make the situation of the balance of current operations and the balance of payments less erratic. Foreign reserves dropped slightly in August (down 3 percent compared with 1980), corresponding to three months of imports, or the same level as the previous year.

Foreign Debt

Algeria has undertaken to balance the growing deficit in the balance of current operations through foreign loans, whose amount was \$3,652,000,000 in 1978 and \$2,727,000,000 in 1980 (compared with \$200 million in 1972), thanks to which it was able to cover the entire deficit mentioned. Its balance of payments showed a surplus of \$92 million in 1978 and \$495 million in 1979, compared with a deficit of \$348 million in 1977.

At the same time, foreign loans helped consolidate foreign exchange reserves, totaling \$3,773,000,000 in 1980 (compared with \$285 million in 1972), an amount that will go to pay for imports for a period of 3 months.

Algeria's Foreign Debt (in millions of dollars)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Overall Debt*</u>	<u>Distributed Debt</u>	<u>Service on Debt</u>	<u>Service in % Export</u>
1972	2,697	1,488	189	11.8
1973	4,916	2,932	300	12.2
1974	6,002	3,304	710	12.7
1975	9,591	4,477	457	8.7
1976	11,976	5,846	773	13.0
1977	15,005	8,316	1,029	15.3
1978	20,078	12,699	1,454	20.4
1979	23,376	15,330	2,687	25.6
1980 (est.)			2,190	23.0
1981 (est.)			2,556	20.0

* Including undistributed debt.

It is thought that in 1979, Algeria paid back \$2,687,000,000 as service on the foreign debt, or 25.6 percent of the value of exports, compared with 9 percent in 1975.

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According to the preceding table, one can see that the foreign debt in 1979 exceeded 23.3 billion, of which \$15.3 billion were actually drawn off. The rate of increase rose nearly tenfold compared with 1972. But Algeria, which resorted to foreign loans to pay back its previous debts, has contracted for no new loan on the financial markets for 2 years. Service on its foreign debt could therefore fall to 20 percent of Algerian exports in 1981, compared with 25.6 percent in 1979.

The FLN weekly, REVOLUTION AFRICAINE, carried an article 2 years ago strongly condemning the excessive dependency of the Algerian economy on other countries, which had "gained control of the strategic sectors of the national economy through loans, studies, construction, the supplying of equipment, technical assistance and the export market."

As expressed in the plan, the policy of the new authorities is aimed at restoring a balance and better responding to the social needs of the population and manifestly intends to break that domination.

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ALGERIA

MORE FLEXIBILITY SEEN IN POLICY ON BERBER LANGUAGE, CULTURE

Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French No 1882, 4 Dec 81 p 3223

[Text] Latent for many years, then suddenly exposed in the spring of 1980 by the disturbances in Tizi-Ouzou, the problem posed by the insertion of Berber culture and traditions into a centralized, Arabic Algeria has in recent months constituted one of the major concerns of the government in Algiers. Following lengthy reflection and deliberations, the question would appear to be on the way to a relatively liberal resolution, albeit within a unitarian, Arabic perspective.

For several months, a liberal orientation has been recommended by a number of advisers to President Chadli Bendjedid, particularly by Dr Ahmed Taleb Ibrahimi. In a report submitted at the beginning of this year, Taleb states that "dialects must not be pitted against the national language, nor does the national language need dialects to disappear in order to develop." The son and spiritual heir of an illustrious reformist doctor and comrade of Abdulhamid ben Badis, Shaykh Bachir Ibrahimi, Taleb also shows his attachment to Arab and Islamic values in this document: "It is cosmopolitanism that threatens the national culture," he writes, "not the people's cultures."

Taleb's article was published on 25 March under the pseudonym of Ibn al Hakim, in a supplement to the daily EL MOUDJAHID. However, it seems scarcely to have influenced the authors of the very copious "FLN Report on Cultural Policy" (about 15,000 words), which, at the end of June-beginning of July, served as a basis for the work of the Central Committee and was adopted by it. This document made only a very brief reference to the historic role of the "Berber princes" previous to Islam and the "mingling of Arabs and Berbers," described as giving birth to a society whose civilization is "of Islamic essence, Arabic speaking and humanist in vocation."

After deploring "the extreme insufficiency of cultural production in all its forms," the "FLN Report" reports that the national culture should develop in "three strategic directions":

- 1) "working toward the establishment of the cultural identity of the people... through an overall view of the genesis of its civilization..., a strengthening of its Arab-Islamic entity..., the utilization of its patrimony in its positive aspects and in the service of its unity...";
- 2) "vigorously working to build a socialist society through the formation of an enlightened spirit..."; and

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3) "being open to the values of our time and committed to the defense of human causes," with a creation of awareness of the importance of unified action "at the level of the Arab Maghreb and Arab unity," and so on.

Naturally, "in their interaction with the national culture, the people's languages and cultures" are among the half-dozen multiple and additional aspects of this culture enumerated by way of example. But much greater importance is attached to "the (Arab) language in its continuation and evolution" and to "the (Islamic) religion in its unifying nature and specific characteristics throughout history," for "Islam's penetration into the heart of the Berbers, their adoption of Arabic in religious practice and the express of thought have reached such an extent that the Maghrebian peoples, including the Algerians, have taken it upon themselves to propagate Islam and spread Arabic," which would possibly take the place of governments.

At the present time, the masses "refuse to view the generalization (of Arabic) as any attack on local dialects... of which it is the source, if not the catalyst."

Finally, it is recalled that "the cultural patrimony, with its genres and diverse types" is among "the bases of the national culture" and that the forms of expression in the different dialects, privileged means of gaining access to the treasures of popular tradition, should feed the search for an effective language and style. However, it is emphasized in conclusion that "the interaction of the Arabic language with the people's literatures and arts in the different dialects gives this language the task...of making this people's tradition known throughout the Arab world, by enhancing it."

People's Literatures and Dialects Taught in Four Universities

This concept of a people's tradition that is undoubtedly recognized, but destined to be "enhanced" and disseminated by the Arabic language could not fail to worry the Berber culture zealots. Consequently, by the middle of September, a "Movement for Berber and Democracy" launched a protest against the "antidemocratic and segregationist policy of the government," and issued an appeal for a general 24-hour strike in Kabyle for 28 September.

If the appeal fell on empty ears, it was undoubtedly because, in his televised interview of 24 September, the minister of higher education took the initiative and stated: "It is not the objective" of the national language, he said, "to crush the people's heritage, but on the contrary, to enrich it." Therefore, in the programs of the four major universities in Algiers, Annaba, Qacentina (Constantine) and Wahran (Oran), "there will be instruction in the people's cultural heritage, in its different component parts," on a required or optional basis. A working group set up in July is putting together the courses, the minister added, courses that will include, for example, "the morphology and syntax of spoken Arabic, compared Arabic dialects of the Maghreb, traditional Algerian arts, Berber linguistic structures, Berber phonology and morphology compared, ancient, contemporary and Berber Algerian oral literature."

In addition, research in these same subjects will be organized in the form of areas of study for the master's degree (for example: cultural sociology, Maghrebian literature) and research groups organized by the National Office for Scientific Research (ONRS).

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These provisions probably do not entirely satisfy the backers of the Kabyle demands. The reform does in fact remain clearly centralized: There was no local consultation, teaching and research will remain the monopoly of the university and the ONRS, and only the "major universities" -- therefore excluding Tizi-Ouzou -- will be included.

The leaders of the Movement for Berber and Democracy therefore felt obliged to continue their strike appeal. They alleged the continuation of the imprisonment, for the past 5 months, of members of the University of Algiers cultural group and brought up the exclusion of lycee students in Bejaia and Tizi-Ouzou, as well as the "laying off of workers sympathizing" with their movement. Except in a few schools, the appeal went unanswered. On the whole, the Kabyle population thought another day of protest, analogous to those of 16 April 1980 and 15 March 1981, was useless. The people had the feeling that the government authorities, while remaining intransigent about maintaining public order, had reversed their linguistic position in giving up the idea of outlawing the Kabyle talks and in even manifesting a certain interest in Berber popular traditions.

And yet, as for any other reform, it is the application that will be the essential thing. Will the major universities and the ONRS hasten to launch education and research in that vast and confusing domain of traditions and dialects? Will this cultural policy go so far as the detachment, in Kabylia itself, of study organs? Will the desire for a relaxation of tension lead to a rapid glossing over of past incidents and the release of those responsible? If such is not the case, a resumption of agitation in Berber regions in the fairly near future could be feared.

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ALGERIA

FUNDAMENTALIST VIOLENCE, PENAL CODE, PERSONAL STATUS LAW DISCUSSED

Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French No 1882, 4 Dec 81 pp 3222-3224

[Text] In Algeria, as in most Muslim countries, some of the young people, mainly students, have been won over by the Islamic fundamentalist propaganda put out by the Muslim brotherhoods and members of similar associations working underground. A few years ago, following a number of incidents, authorities reacted to the Al Kiran (Values) association, which, on the pretext of defending morals, took it upon itself to impose a sometimes brutal censor's role in certain university schools. Since the beginning of last year, one could observe -- especially in the universities of Algiers and Oran -- a renewed outbreak of activity on the part of fundamentalist students. Invoking the need to defend and spread Arab-Islamic civilization and its moral values, they use violence, either against those of their comrades who profess liberal ideas or defend Kabyle claims, or against peaceful students who use Western dress. However, authorities seem to have systematically minimized these facts and to have closed their eyes, perhaps because the Islamic activists were at the same time the most zealous propagandists of the policy of Arabization.

Laghouat Affair

A death had to occur -- in this case, that of a public order official -- before authorities reacted and resolved to take drastic action. On 1 October, Minister of Religious Affairs Abderrahmane Chibane told the Islamic High Council and the upper-level personnel in his ministry of a bloody incident that had taken place a few days earlier in Laghouat and during which a public order official had been killed when he tried to arrest a fundamentalist who was creating a disturbance. In the days that followed, the Algerian press published a detailed account of the event, along with the deliberations and resolutions of the Islamic High Council.

Among other things, the Laghouat fundamentalists wanted to urge fellow citizens to eat only dates and milk and to go barefoot. After driving out the official priest, they took it upon themselves to impose an imam as prayer director. As their leader, a physics professor and deserter from the National Service, had been arrested, the fundamentalists took refuge in the mosque, which they occupied and from which they incited local disturbances for a long time.

Without using force, police tried to gain access to the mosque. They were greeted from blows from iron bars and daggers. They nevertheless managed to disperse the demonstrators, but one of the officers was stabbed in the back as he questioned one of the authors of the violence.

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The members of the Islamic High Council and the upper-level personnel in the ministry passed a motion denouncing "these ignorant adventurers who pursue suspicious designs contrary to our religious faith, the interest of Algeria and that of the Islamic nation...(and) these types of behavior resulting from a mistaken understanding of Islam." They demand "an end to any anarchic action within the places of Allah" and recommend that preachers and priests "intensify their efforts to educate in order to bar the way to the ignorant."

Incidents Near Algiers

In the weeks that followed, the press devoted large amounts of space to other violent, but less serious, incidents caused in the Algiers suburb by fundamentalists: punitive action taken against an El Madania family suspected of having hired a singer for a marriage ceremony who was not sufficiently respectful of Muslim mores; throwing acid at and bludgeoning girls wearing western dress, this for the 12th time in El Harrach. On this occasion, several similar incidents in the past 4 years would be recalled.

The authors of the El Madania violence were acquitted. The judge noted that "the witnesses are afraid of them and dare not tell the truth." At the request of the Ministry of Justice, they were tried once again and sentenced to prison. The chief magistrate, Mrs Aslaoui, told them: "Your so-called 'religious' motives mask your determination to violate public order. They have no connection with Islam... Islam is the state religion. One must not claim to make a distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims among the faithful."

According to the press, "the trial brought out the danger of the rapid growth of a phenomenon, in which fundamentalism and crime are mixed, in sections of the capital where groups are formed to act in the name of Islam and wage 'their purification' campaign" (EL MOUDJAHID, 28 October).

Penal Code and Conception of Islam

In November, the National Assembly examined various bills, amendments to the Penal Code and the drafting of a Personal Status Code that would question, fairly directly, the conception that the citizens of Algeria might have of the regulations of Islam.

The partial reform of the Penal Code particularly concerns the rights and freedoms of citizens and the protection of society. It has given rise to interesting positions on sanctions and the death penalty. Different members of the Assembly have stated, for example, that the death penalty should have been applied either to those who recruit mercenaries for a foreign power or to those who profane the national flag.

However, Deputy Belayat caused a sensation in proposing a ban on the death penalty, which in his opinion shows "an obvious lack of civilization" and on life imprisonment, inasmuch as "only God can tell a man that he must spend the rest of his life in such a situation" and rehabilitation of the guilty party must never be systematically excluded. "Islam does not forbid the death penalty," Belayat states, "but it does not require its application. We must give a positive and humanitarian interpretation to this religion, which seeks the redemption rather than the destruction of man."

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Commenting on one article in the bill, which excludes the application of life imprisonment to women, Minister of Justice Boualem Baki states that the government was faced with a choice: "Either respond to the watchword of the emancipation of women and their legal equality with man, and therefore punish them in the same way, or protect them as the Prophet urged." More generally, Baki felt that to preach outrageous punishments would be to compromise the fairness of the Code: "Our conduct must be dictated by clemency," he said.

Proposed Personal Status Bill

On 4 October, the government presented a personal status bill to the Bureau of the National Assembly, a bill aimed at filling one of the last great gaps remaining in Algerian legislation. Aware of the difficulty of the subject, often debated in public and always giving rise to strong conservative positions, the Bureau entrusted study of the text to a coordinating committee made up of magistrates and university professors. In setting up such a body, Assembly President Rabah Bitat said: "The bill must be in keeping with our religion and our national traditions...(and) also adapted to currently existing social conditions and the socialist society that we want to build."

Five women deputies are on the committee. Nevertheless, some 100 teachers, students and employees or civil servants demonstrated before the Assembly on 28 October to demand that "women be included in the study of the bill, rank-and-file debate and in informing the public." Petitions have been circulated in the country and have gathered many signatures.

Examination of the bill by the Assembly began on 9 November. On 16 November, a group formed by students belonging to the National Union of Algerian Youth organized a demonstration of 200 to 300 women headed by Mrs Rabah Bitat, heroine of the FLN, who came out of her customary reserve for the occasion. A delegation, received by the Assembly, asked that the bill be the subject of a rank-and-file discussion. The demonstrators then approached the National Union of Algerian Women (UNFA), which was holding its National Council. Several members of the Union suggested that the parliamentary debate be adjourned so that their organization would have the time to formulate proposals. It does in fact seem surprising that UNFA has not been brought into the drafting of the bill. Not prohibited by law, this procedure would perhaps have been timely.

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IRAQ

SADDAM HUSAYN INTERVIEWED ON ARAB ISSUES

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic No 247, 6-12 Nov 81 pp 18-28

[Interview with Saddam Husayn, President of Iraq by Walid Abu Dhahr; in Baghdad; date of interview not specified]

[Text] On Fahd's plan: Iraq supports the Arab-Palestinian consensus; the Arab Summit is the natural place for any solution.

On the Gulf and the Arab-Persian war: We are grateful for the help of Saudi Arabia and of the Gulf countries. We are prepared to hold talks with and to support the Iranian opposition.

Iraq is opposed to U.S. and Soviet bases and facilities.

On Syria and Lebanon: The sectarian regime is extremely dangerous to Syria's future and rulers.

The Defense Companies make up a sectarian army that is isolated from the Syrian army.

It is possible to have a Lebanese solution apart from the Palestinian question, provided that the Palestinians be understanding and the Arabs do not interfere.

On Egypt: Mubarak should consider what happened to al-Sadat, and he should exercise deliberation on both the Arab and international scenes.

We want peace based on principles that would guarantee our interests and our sovereignty; prolonging the war may cause the disintegration of Iran.

The war did indeed restrict some of our Arab capabilities, but it did not force us to make compromises.

The Arabs should tell us what they believe is wrong in our policy, and they should encourage us when they believe we are doing what is right.

Al-Sadat died the day he visited Jerusalem; he was buried the day he signed the Camp David Agreement; and he found no one to come to his rescue when he was shot.

We cannot believe that the United States did not know of Israel's intention to bomb our nuclear installations.

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We want Lebanon to be sovereign and stable, and we do not want anyone to interfere in its domestic affairs. A non-aligned role is called for now more than ever before, and this is what we are striving for. We are intent on strengthening our relations with the new French regime, but we have not yet signed the final agreement for the new reactor. We share with the Soviet Union its wishes to develop cooperation, but conditions are not yet right for normal relations with the United States.

I was tired of the heavy clothing I had to wear because of the cold weather in Paris. When the first pleasant warm breezes greeted me as I got off the plane that flew me to Baghdad, I knew I had to get rid of my winter clothes quickly. The fall in Baghdad is like the spring: it is gentle with the city's visitors and guests as though it were apologizing for the city's summer heat.

I may be reprimanded for saying I was a visitor or a guest in Baghdad which has never considered Arabs visitors or guests. Arabs come to Baghdad as though they were coming to their homes. This is how Baghdad treats hundreds of thousands of Arabs--Egyptians, Gulf citizens, Palestinians, Lebanese, Syrians and Moroccans--and this is how it wants to be treated. Baghdad wants the Arabs to reciprocate its feelings and its emotions.

Indeed, one does not feel that one is a stranger in Baghdad. One suddenly loses the sad dejection that comes over one when he is in exile in Paris or in Europe, far from his country, from his relatives, from his loved ones and from his roots. One is reassured upon hearing the sounds of the Iraqi dialect, sounds that suggest goodness, kindness and masculinity.

Baghdad is at war. This is the reality with which it has been dealing for over 1 year. However, the sounds of buzzing airplanes and the sounds of artillery are nowhere to be heard. The noise of workshops and of construction is drowning out the sounds of the war. This is what was suggested to me by Baghdad as I blended in its crowds and in its hubbub on my way to meet Saddam Husayn.

This may be the first time in the history of a country that war has not kept that country from going on with the course of life. War here does not only mean destruction and death; war is not consuming all the capabilities, the energies and the abilities of the country; war has not brought life to a standstill. The war has provided an incentive for construction and for making preparations for a better future. It is for this better future that the Iraqi citizen is fighting and building. The Iraqi citizen gives up his life for this future, but from his sacrifice a new vital force will spring, and in peace time that force will turn into a verdant, shady tree.

Buildings are continuing to rise; bridges are being built; roads are being paved and widened; hotels are being opened and are filling up with thousands of visitors, tourists and business men; and the Tigris River is

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flowing slowly and silently while the historical city is being transformed gradually into a modern metropolis, with all its hubbub, prosperity and dense population. And yet, at the same time, one feels that it is a comfortable city, a city that is at ease with itself. There is no affectation, no gloom, no hardship and no misery.

The presidential palace is a piece of land with vegetation and gardens at whose center stands a sprawling building, like most traditional buildings in Baghdad, which seem to prefer horizontal expansion to vertical expansion. The furniture is comfortable and elegant; it has an Iraqi folk character, and it is neither luxurious nor ostentatious.

One is greeted and escorted to the library of the palace. It is a medium size room; its walls are lined with bookcases whose glass covered shelves are filled with thousands of old and modern books. In the corner next to a desk that is placed in the front portion of the room is an Iraqi flag wrapped around a column of moderate height.

I do not know what it is that makes me think of 'Abd-al-Nasir whenever I meet with Saddam Husayn. Is it the similarity between the characters of the two leaders? It may be. There is a curious similarity in their physique. Both men are tall with impressive appearances and captivating features. Both have pleasant personalities that soon endear them to one when one first meets with them. One feels that their physique harbored a strong, inflexible will and a tremendous power of endurance and tenacity in the face of responsibilities and events.

It may be that the two men pursued different and dissimilar roads to revolution and then to power. 'Abd-al-Nasir realized the revolution the easier way. He used one of the tools of government: the army. Saddam Husayn, however, realized the revolution by one of the means of the revolution: the party. Therefore, Saddam Husayn's road to the revolution and to power was more difficult; it was longer, more dangerous and more arduous than that of Jamal 'Abd-al-Nasir.

Although the means the two leaders pursued to bring about revolution and achieve power were different and dissimilar, their objective was the same. It is this sameness of objective that rounds out the similarity or identity between them. It may be said that Saddam Husayn came to complete the course of Jamal 'Abd-al-Nasir, notwithstanding the former's observations on the latter's style of government and view of the masses. Both men demonstrate this nation's deep faith in Arabism and unity. Viewed with a pan-Arab emotional awareness, they can only be seen as men who staunchly insisted on their independence. Both men considered this independence to be an inseparable part of their pan-Arab faith. As long as one was an Arab, one had to be free of all restrictions and of all [forms of] subordination.

I would not be unfair to Jamal 'Abd-al-Nasir if I were to say that he came [to power] and became popular during the easy time, the time when Arabism was a sweeping, emotional wave that shook thrones, folded alliances and mocked obstacles and difficulties. Saddam Husayn, however, came [to power]

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when the tide of Arabism had lost its momentum, its vigor and its lustre and was floundering under the brunt and burden of blows that had been dealt to it by foes and friends alike.

It was the fate of Saddam Husayn to make the shift from revolution to power during the difficult time. It was his destiny that the banner of Arabism he was carrying would be unfurled the day the banners of others were lowered. It was his destiny to fly his banner amidst crowds of skeptics who doubted everything: Arabism, unity, liberation, independence and everything for which 'Abd-al-Nasir had fought. 'Abd-al-Nasir died in grief because he had not attained any of the things he had fought for.

It was also the destiny of Saddam Husayn to fight to protect the Arab character of Iraq; he fought once in the north and another time in the east. He fought this battle amidst the rancor of the rancorous and the excesses and conspiracies of those among his own people who made up stories about him. It were as though the battle was not theirs; it were as though the destiny of Arabism was not their destiny; and it were as though the Arabism of Saddam Husayn and the pan-Arabism of al-Ba'th posed a more serious threat to them than the anti-Arab Persian movement which is masquerading in Khomeyni's religious habit.

I think I meditated long enough as I sat waiting for my interview with Saddam Husayn. I need only say that what fills the hearts of those who have retained their faith in their nation with hope is the fact that Arabism has a stronghold in Iraq whose pillars were built by [that] man on a firm foundation of work and construction. This was done at a time when the doors to others' strongholds were breaking open in front of enemies and usurpers and the bridges leading to them lay open to the greedy.

President Saddam Husayn soon came into the room. This time he was wearing his military uniform, the same clothes he usually wears when he is touring the battlefields. The only thing that distinguishes his uniform from that of an officer can be seen in the supreme commander stripes he wears on his broad shoulders.

The military uniform is becoming to the physique of the leader with the impressive appearance. He is huge but not flabby. One senses [when one meets him] that he is in the presence of a leader who has just returned from the front, not from a military parade. This is Saddam Husayn: the military uniform is not a matter of appearance for him; it is an expression of a situation or a condition. It were as though his military uniform served to remind Iraqis, Arabs and the whole world that his country was at war. He wants to make his soldiers and his officers feel that he is sharing their bunkers and that he is one of them.

However, military clothing does not change Saddam Husayn's nature or his mood. He has always been able a few moments after one meets with him, to dispel any previous impressions one may have acquired of him from a certain characterization or from any foreign propaganda against him. One discovers that Saddam Husayn is a human being before being a revolutionary, a party

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man or a statesman. He asks one how he is, and he communicates with one plainly about the affairs and concerns of daily life, such as those that interest and concern millions of ordinary people. He is concise; his ideas are unequivocal; and his speech conveys a mixture that combines the poet's imagination and the revolutionary's realism.

The burden and the responsibilities of the war have not gotten the better of him. He maintains his composure, his courage and his ability to carry on a conversation on various matters and to drift from one subject to another without going into the subject of war and letting it take over the conversation unless one asks him about it. He is a skillful conversationalist: his listening skills are as good as his persuasive skills. When he speaks, he does so in a quiet voice, with a tone of self-confidence. His eyes remind one of 'Abd-al-Nasir as they probe one's mind to find out what one's opinion and position are.

Saddam Husayn began the interview by asking me about Lebanon. He is concerned about my small country, and he thinks about it. He also asked me what Lebanese public opinion was on the Iraqi-Persian war. I sensed that he was greatly relieved when I told him truthfully that the Lebanese people, especially those among them who are aware, did not understand why war had broken out between Iraq and Iran. However, as the war developed and as the Iranian leadership deteriorated and the truth about its Arab position was revealed, the Lebanese people acquired a greater awareness of the validity and objectivity of the reasons that made Iraq rise to defend its Arab character and the Arab character of the Gulf. I cited the letters that AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI has been receiving from everywhere in the vast homeland. At first, there were many questions and there was sometimes criticism of Iraq's position, but these letters soon became quite different. Today these letters demonstrate the universal Arab conviction that Iraq's position is a sound one. The letters reflect an awareness of Iraq's point of view in the face of Iranian ambitions against the Arab character of Iraq.

We talked about other subjects, and then he brought the conversation to an end by talking about the experience of the political leadership in Iraq. He explained the party's predicament before and after the 1963 setback and until its course was corrected with the 1968 revolution.

Then he told me, "It is now your turn. What questions do you have for me?"

My first questions naturally dealt with the Arab-Persian confrontation.

[Question] Mr President, do you believe that there has been a change in Arab feelings and points of view regarding the Iraqi-Persian confrontation? Can you give us details about the positions of certain Arab and foreign parties, for example, Syria, Libya, the Palestinians, Algeria, Turkey and the Soviet Union?

[Answer] In general, we must say the truth. Not all the countries that you have mentioned have had the same attitude towards the war. Some of them understood it, and some had a negative attitude towards it.

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But what is known with certainty now is that the regime in Iran helped many people take a correct stand against it. It revealed the fact that the attitudes of many had been wrong or deviant not because of a lack of information or an inability to analyze the situation [correctly], but rather because of previous ill intentions to do harm to the Arab nation and even to humanity.

In all cases we always make a distinction in the Arab homeland between the position of some regimes and the position of Arab citizens. I believe that this regime made it considerably easier for the Arab public to make an accurate evaluation of Iran's regime. It is a backward, racist regime. It is even suspected within its own ranks, and this is contrary to what was being publicized about it being a progressive regime that is striving for the liberation of Palestine. Liberating Palestine is not a matter of rhetoric; it is a matter of intentions. Rhetoric will not liberate Palestine; but intentions that are linked with a practical plan and with concrete, practical individual incidents whose objective is the liberation of Palestine can. This is my comment on the question.

[Question] How do you explain the fact that the Arab parties that sided with Iran against Iraq have said nothing about the arms relationship between Iran and Israel despite the fact that this relationship has been exposed and established?

[Answer] Actually, I have no comment to make that would be more telling than their own bias. Any comment I may make about their position will be less effective than their own bias for the Iranian regime despite the fact that the arms story between Iran and the Zionist enemy has been exposed.

Iraq's Steadfastness Is Due to Ideological Reasons

[Question] The Iraqi regime has established its steadfastness and its cohesiveness in a lengthy confrontation with Iran, whereas signs of a breakdown are beginning to appear on the Iranian side. What in your opinion are the political, military and psychological factors that helped form these two disparate positions on both sides of the battle line?

The president paused for a while as though he were trying to collect the essence of 1 year of Iraqi steadfastness against the Persian attack.

[Answer] The principal reason for this lies in the fact that power, distinction and superiority are not technical ingredients, but rather ideological ones. Thus the matter has to do with who is proceeding within the proper course of history and who is proceeding outside the proper course of history. For if superiority in combat against Iranian aggression were simply the technical superiority of the air force, the tanks, the artillery, the naval force or all of these, the case would have been different and the effect of other factors would have become evident. Iran would have been favored since nature gave Iran a special advantage and since technical superiority would take a back seat to strategic factors by virtue of nature and by virtue of the superior historical makeup, such

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as the area of land and the number of the population. Iran, for example, has more land and more people than Iraq does.

But the principal reason for Iraq's steadfastness and cohesiveness lies in its ideological superiority. This is how matters shape up: one case is antithetical to history and to historical evolution and antithetical to all the central components of the features of the modern age; and a case that is consistent with history, consistent with proper historical evolution and with all the components of the modern age in its basic, radiant features. This is the case that exists in Iraq; its antithesis exists in Iran. Therefore, the political regime in Iran is on the brink of disaster, and the political regime in Iraq is becoming stronger every month.

This is not speculation on my part; these matters have become known. But let us give only one undeniable example. The Iranian regime withdraws Khomeyni's guards from the front to shore up Khomeyni's strength in the cities, including Tehran, and to face the opposition. But the regime in Iraq sends the presidential guard to the front to participate [in the fighting], and the president is left with only his bodyguards who provide him with direct personal protection.

We tour the countryside, and we spend the night in rural areas in the home of any peasant, but they cannot get out of a particular hiding place or they would be exposed to assassination and murder by the opposition.

It was not because we needed additional soldiers on the front that we sent the presidential guard there, but it was rather because of their wishes that no units of the Iraqi army be denied the honor of taking part in combat on the front. Iraqi citizens and the Iraqi army share our feelings. On this basis and in accordance with the wishes of the presidential guard, its units were sent in sequence to the front, and they took part in what were for us the most difficult battles.

All the people of Iraq and all the Iraqi army make up the presidential guard. The area of the presidential palace is no longer that specific prescribed area, but it is rather the area of all Iraq. Wherever we may be in Iraq, the people are the presidential guard. Thus, superiority, as I believe it is, is ideological superiority. It is the superiority of one who is right, one who represents the proper historical course over another who is wrong and who represents a course that is counter to the proper course of history.

[Question] Do you believe that a change in Iran would favor bringing a quick end to the fighting?

[Answer] I believe that any ruler in Iran who wants what is good for his country has to stop the fighting. Therefore, everyone who wants what is good for his country has to stop the fighting regardless of the technical conditions, wherever it may be in this regime now or in a new regime with new rulers. But I believe that he who wants what is good for the people of Iran and wants to rule has to stop the fighting.

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[Question] The fighting is gradually turning into warfare in the fixed positions. Do you expect there will be military activity on the front as the war begins its second year? Why are the Iranians concentrating their attacks on the central sector? Does the Iraqi political leadership still hold the view that Iranian cities, like Abadan for instance are not to be penetrated?

[Answer] There are some details that I will not discuss with you because when we are involved in fighting and talk about details and intentions, the enemy benefits. But apart from everything else, let me say that from the Iraqi point of view, or in the minds of Iraqis, the war is a case of self-defense. We are defending our sovereignty and our national and pan-Arab security. This situation requires whatever measures might achieve this objective and prolong national and pan-Arab security. Use of any means we think would succeed in ensuring security and use of any land we think is necessary for security [would be justifiable]. We have to give up any land we think is not essential. All this constitutes the defense that is required against those people who attacked us in an obvious fashion as that was mentioned in all documents. They even shelled cities and some oil installations on 4 September 1980, and they closed Shatt al-'Arab on 18 October 1980.

We Are Prepared To Talk with the Iranian Opposition

I wanted to find out what the Iraqi president thought about the split that occurred recently in the political leadership in Iran and the effect of that split on the war.

[Question] Do you believe that the various rightist or leftist factions of the Iranian opposition are serious and sincere in their [professed] inclination to end the war with Iraq, or is the purpose of their present negative attitude toward the war designed to win the sympathy of Iraq and of the Arabs in their confrontation with the existing regime?

[Answer] I believe that the attitude of some parties of the Iranian opposition and the statements that were made by them describing the intentions of Khomeyni's regime as one that wanted the war to continue for purely personal, local reasons are accurate. They are historically accurate, objectively accurate, tactically accurate and strategically accurate.

As to whether or not the Iranian opposition would abide by this position if it were to come to power, that is another matter. However, in reply to a previous question I said that any ruler who loves his people could not wish to see them killed for any reason. Any ruler who wants to rule must befriend the Arabs. One of the conditions for his country's security is the establishment of friendship with his neighbors, especially since his neighbors make no conditions that are at the expense of his security, his national sovereignty or his legitimate national interests. Iraq's conditions are clear: Iraqis and Arabs are to be secure; they are to protect their sovereignty and respect others.

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Regardless of anything else, we are prepared to talk with any opposition group, and we are prepared to offer that group support and reinforcement. We are prepared to offer them everything that would place them in a better position without setting prior conditions on what their position on war or peace would be [when they come to power]. We leave their position or their opinion on the war or the peace to the future.

[Question] Regarding Arab and international efforts, are there new efforts being made to solve the dispute between Iraq and the present regime in Iran?

[Answer] There are no new Arab or international efforts. There are only those bodies that were formed by the non-aligned countries and by the Islamic Conference.

[Question] Do you still maintain the position that Iraq does not want the disintegration of Iran? [If so], why?

[Answer] We still believe that the interests of the area and perhaps the interests of humanity as well are not served by fragmenting Iran. However, we are no longer intent on the unity of Iran. There is a difference between working to break up Iran's unity and not being a positive factor in its unity. Iran is a country at war with us. Therefore, we are not interested in its unity or disunity, but prolonging the war, along with the factors of chaos and backwardness in Iran, may make the task easy for those who wish to break up Iran's unity.

At any rate what we are basically interested in is that peace be achieved on principles that guarantee our interests and our national and pan-Arab sovereignty. We want to live freely in our country, and we want to choose our course. We want the Iranians to live freely in their country and to choose their course by themselves [also].

[Question] How true is the news in western or Iranian newspapers which talks about rebel movements on the borders in the autonomous region (in North Iraq) which are taking advantage of the dispute between Iraq and Iran?

Saddam Husayn smiled quietly.

[Answer] There may be infiltrators on the borders with Iran, with Turkey and with Syria, and any number of those infiltrators may fire a few cartridges and fire shots on the roads and on defenseless people traveling in those areas. Such things may occur in any mountainous region in the world. However, from a practical standpoint there has been no substantive change in the northern area from what was there before the war.

[Question] Mr President, some people are saying that the dispute with Iran has restricted or limited the Iraqi role on the Arab scene and has forced it to compromise. Is this true?

[Answer] Yes, the dispute with Iran has restricted and has limited Iraq.

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More precisely it has limited some aspects in the usage of Iraqi capabilities which would have been put to use elsewhere. This is an objective fact. But it is not true that the dispute with Iran has made Iraq compromise its positions or not take any positions where unequivocal positions had to be taken. We don't know compromise. The fact that more mature expressions of our positions may have coincided with the war is due to the maturity of Iraqi policy and not to the war. This is possible. Our positions are not, however, compromises. They are an expression of revolutionary conviction, and they will continue to be so.

Iraq Supports the Collective Arab Position

[Question] Where does Iraq see itself then, Mr President, amidst this polarization on the Arab scene between the course of Camp David, the course of moderation and that of extremism?

[Answer] We see ourselves assuming the proper nationalist position which is not extreme, does not compromise and does not yield. The proper nationalist position on fundamental questions and the professional expression of that position is something the Arabs are to consider with an open mind, without boundaries or background influences. Any position they agree about on such questions would be more proper than any individual position. It is true that each one of us must start out with the notion that his point of view represents the proper nationalist position. However, we represent not only the Arabs of the masses; we also represent regimes and rulers. The proper position is that which all the Arabs agree upon on the basis of a heart-felt desire to achieve the interests of the nation, quite apart from any outside influences or personal, selfish or regional interests. Any position about which all the Arabs agree is better than the position of a group or an individual. As far as the Palestinian question is concerned, we will not work against a position upon which all the Arabs and the PLO have agreed, regardless of our ideological and our intellectual posture. There is a difference between not working against something and being with something. We may not be in favor of the position, but that does not mean we will work against it.

I rephrased the question because I wanted to get a more detailed answer.

[Question] Mr President, a few proposals regarding a solution to the Middle East crisis have taken shape recently. What is Iraq's opinion, for example, on the plan that has been proposed by Saudi Arabia? Is this plan suitable as an Arab alternative to the Camp David plan?

[Answer] I said in my answer to the previous question that looking for an alternative that was relatively better than the Camp David plan or any other plan that may be proposed was not important. What we must do is look with an open mind and a vital Arab conscience for a position that is historically and actually more correct. Every Arab may in his own mind believe that the practical course he is proposing to solve crucial Arab questions, chief among which is the question of Palestine, is better than what others are proposing.

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However, as far as the mechanics of getting the work out are concerned, it is our view that the more correct position is that which all the Arabs agree upon, including the PLO. Such an agreement would be reached in a healthy climate where open-minded thoughts are freely expressed. There is a stipulation in the resolutions of the Baghdad Summit Conference, which rejected Camp David, that any separate solution to this question would be rejected and that the normal place for any solution was at Arab summit conferences.

I asked President Saddam Husayn what he thought of the U.S.-Libyan confrontation.

[Question] Iraq strongly condemned the U.S. fleet's confrontation with the Libyan airplanes in the Gulf of Sidra. However, Libyan propaganda portrayed the shooting down of the two Libyan airplanes as a military victory for Libya. This was then followed by President al-Qadhafi's threat that Libya would enter into a nuclear confrontation with the United States. Do you believe that an involvement in an unequal military confrontation would serve the Arab cause? Do you approve of this method of confrontation with the enemy?

The quiet smile reappeared on Saddam Husayn's face.

[Answer] At any rate our position on the fighting between Libyan airplanes and U.S. airplanes is a position that we have always declared and held on to. When an Arab fights with a foreigner to defend his sovereignty, his security and his honor, we side with the Arab.

But if President al-Qadhafi makes a statement in this or another incident, as was stated in your question, we would in all cases hold that an Arab needs to understand himself, not to disparage, belittle or aggrandize himself without having the capabilities and the principal ingredients for building the proper character that can play its historical role in building the country and fighting for it. Therefore we are always delighted when an Arab, like a foreigner--any foreigner whatsoever--feels that he has a right to life, that he has a right to choose the course of construction and that he is capable of building and defending his life and his choices as he proceeds with his construction efforts regardless of attempts foreigners make against him and even if these foreigners who are against us were superior in their professional and technical capabilities. However, we always think that it is proper for an Arab to make the proper preparations for forming the national and pan-Arab character without talking about these preparations in a loose framework. This is a general appraisal of what things ought to be like on the Arab and national scenes.

Thanks to the Arabs of the Gulf

From the Gulf of Sidra in Libya we moved to the Arabian Gulf.

[Question] Mr President, Iraq has good relations with the countries of the Arabian Gulf. However, this does not necessarily prevent one from

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saying that there are sometimes different points of view about some marginal or secondary issues, such as the disagreement with one of the countries over U.S. military presence. How does Iraq reconcile its strategic course in preserving good relations with the countries of the Gulf with its differences with them? Is Iraq satisfied with the position of the Gulf countries on the confrontation between Iraq and Iran?

[Answer] We must start with the fact that there are 22 regimes, 22 choices and 22 leadership bodies in the Arab homeland. Friendships between the Arabs, with this number of regimes, and the world are varied. That is, these friendships are not the same; they are different.

We must always start with central, constant facts [on the one hand] and with others that are subject to change and motion. Among the central facts is that we must not assume that because of proximity and fraternal relations points of view on all the affairs of politics and life would be identical.

It is certain that conflict in crucial questions weakens the fraternal tie and diminishes its fervor. The other rule is that differences in points of view or in positions must not lead us to despair and must not keep us from making sincere attempts to interact with opinions and with efforts to develop these positions or to improve them. This is to take place in the context of the fraternal, national responsibility we have for our relations with our brothers, the Arabs, or for the relations our Arab brothers have with us.

We assume that our Arab brothers have a responsibility toward Iraq in general to tell us what they believe is wrong in our policy and to encourage us [to do] what they believe is right. Iraq is also entitled to exercise the same responsibility toward its Arab brothers, whether they be in the Gulf or outside the Gulf.

Among the matters on which we have a clear and an understandable point of view is this: [we think] that it is not in the interests of Arabs to have foreign soldiers on their land, whether these soldiers are there in bases or using facilities which yield the same results as those that are yielded by foreign bases on Arab land. Arab sovereignty, as well as its terms, must remain the domain of the Arab people. Sovereignty is not a superficial process. In order that we may say we are exercising full sovereignty over our land, there are terms which are to be observed in our actions. Among these terms is that which states that foreigners must not have a corner of the land which they can dispose of freely as though it were their own. Therefore, we have always been opposed to foreign bases and to facilities which lead to the same results that foreign bases lead to.

We oppose foreign bases for this and another consideration as well. We believe in the policy of non-alignment which presupposes first that, regardless of our national and patriotic interests, we are not to enter into the framework of international balances so as to favor this or the other party.

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The third consideration is this: the presence of any foreign base on the Arab homeland has to be countered by another foreign base. This is determined by the framework [which decrees that] the strategic balance of the two superpowers or of the major countries is to be preserved. When there is a U.S. base anywhere in the Arab homeland, we expect the Soviets to try to establish another base opposite it so as to maintain the balance in accordance with the Soviet and American view of the strategic balance problem and the problem of preserving the balance of powers in the world.

From a practical standpoint then, from whose share is this [land] being taken? It is being taken from the nation's share whether this base is Soviet, American, French, German, Polish or Japanese. The nation pays the price. For these reasons we have always been against the presence of armies in the form of bases or facilities, which yield the same results as those yielded by foreign bases set up on Arab land and in Arab waters.

Regarding the attitude of our brothers in the Gulf states, including Saudi Arabia, on the matter of the war with Iran we say that despite the fact that the Gulf states have so far not declared a political position supporting Iraq, we were reprimanded, nevertheless, by some of our brothers because we made no reference to the facilities and assistance they offered us. And they are still offering us assistance even though the assistance and facilities they are offering and the support required by the situation may be the subject of debate with our Arab brothers. However, we must express much gratitude to the Gulf states for the facilities and assistance they offered Iraq even though it is in a state of war. This aid has special results, and we thank them for it.

As to what our position is or what is the position we prefer and believe in, [this is where we stand]. We would accept from Arabs a heart-felt statement of support if they really supported us and if there was a reason why they could not declare their support for us publicly. If they cannot declare their support publicly and if they believe that if they were to declare their position they will be hurt and they and we will not be able to ward off this damage, we would accept such a position from them.

But what is the attitude that any Arab should assume, whether he be in Morocco, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Libya or Algeria vis a vis the enemy who thrust the war upon us? His attitude ought to be that of an Arab. The proper attitude for Arabs is to support us with their men, their weapons, their funds and their political and publicity posture. All Arabs without exception ought to assume this attitude vis a vis the Iraqi-Iranian war because this was the attitude we assumed when they clashed with the foreigner. This will be our attitude with every Arab when he clashes with a foreigner.

When the war is over, we will remember everything in detail that Arabs offered us because Iraqis have a right to know this in detail so they can behave accordingly with a special pan-Arab responsibility.

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[Question] I shifted from the Gulf to the Iraqi-Syrian dispute. I said, "In the decade of the seventies the relationship between Iraq and Syria was subject to vicissitudes. In a recent statement you described those relations as not good. Does this mean that an understanding or an agreement between the two political leaderships in the two countries is impossible in the future?"

The rapid shift from a thorny issue to a sensitive one did not embarrass Saddam Husayn. His reply was marked by a mix of a statesman's tolerance, the firmness of a man of principles and the flexibility of a politician.

[Answer] I am not inclined [to favor] absolute situations in politics, except those that are by nature absolute. Among the absolute rules are [those two]: there is one God, and justice is a constant objective and a constant course. However, in situations that may be mutable, in politics [for example], absolutes may not be applied because one may be forced to retract an absolute statement he may have said one day.

This does not mean that there are assumptions underlying relations between us and the regime in Syria other than those underlying current relations or that there are attitudes between us and Syria other than current ones. The attitudes of Syria's regime toward us are known. Chief among them is Syria's attitude supporting the Iranian enemy that attacked us. However, as a responsible person I do not wish to state political facts and I do not wish to make absolute judgments. I will say, however, that current attitudes make any positive, significant relationship [in the future] impossible.

The Defense Companies Make Up a New Sectarian Army

[Question] Mr President, the political dispute between the Syrian and Iraqi regimes is well-known, but is Iraq objecting only to the Syrian regime's political positions, or is it also objecting to the organic make-up and the structure of the Syrian regime?

I sensed that I had touched a deep wound that had not yet healed itself. Saddam Husayn's features showed pain mixed with sorrow for Syria's condition. The moment of silence that transpired between my question and his reply was pronounced.

[Answer] We object to any narrow sectarian makeup, and we object to erroneous or deviant policies. The regime in Syria is known to the Syrians and to the world not only as a regime whose postures are known to be erroneous and deviant, but it is also known as a purely sectarian regime.

Let us take one subject and ask [a few questions]: Are the Defense and Struggle Companies now equal to the entire Syrian army? Are they superior to the army in arms and numbers or not? What is the sectarian makeup of the Defense and Struggle Companies?

If we were to assume that the Defense and Struggle companies were given

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that name because their essential prerequisites do not exceed a limited number of companies and the weapons, equipment and individuals that are essential prerequisites of independent companies are limited and do not reach the level of prerequisites for "the new army" of the so-called Defense and Struggle Companies, we would then conclude that these [units] were called companies because they are supposed to be unrelated to a regiment for transporting one, two or three companies. In practice, however, these units are now defense and struggle divisions as far as their size and their weapons are concerned, and they all have a special sectarian makeup. The regime came out with a case for not being able to impose its presence in the Syrian army without creating grievances that would be rejected directly in the army. Therefore, the regime created a new army with a sectarian makeup that was separate from the original army. The regime is also intent on having sectarian circles present within the official army to function as its sentinel and to preserve the balance [in its favor] with a sectarian framework. We believe that the policy in Syria is dangerous; it is dangerous to the ruler, and it is dangerous to Syria as a whole and to Syria's future as well.

[Question] Naturally, my small country, Lebanon, had a share in the interview with Saddam Husayn. I told him, "Some Arabs are saying that Iraq's position on the Lebanese crisis is based principally on Iraq's dispute with Syria. Is this true?"

The features of the Iraqi president relaxed again as he said:

[Answer] Did our position on the Lebanese crisis change when our relationship with Syria was good? If our position changed, then the explanation of those Arabs is correct. If it has been constant, then our explanation is correct. Our position is a national position regardless of the Syrian regime's position. It is a position that wants any Arab country to be stable, to control its own sovereignty and to have no interference in its domestic affairs. Is this strange? Have matters reached the point that when such a position is declared by a certain body we consider it strange and we look for incorrect explanations for it?

Our position on Lebanon is a national one, and if any similar situation were to recur, God forbid, in any part of the Arab homeland, our position would be the same. Take Libya, for example, which sided with Iran. When Libya's airplanes clashed with U.S. airplanes, we sided with Libya. This is a matter that is not tied to the positions of others; it is basically tied to our position which is based on our ideological assumptions and on the views we hold on the questions of the Arab nation.

[Question] What is your evaluation of what the inflamed Lebanese incidents have come to? How can a secure way out of this situation or an Arab solution to it be achieved that would guarantee that all Lebanese people of all sects, as well as Palestinians have their rights in the context of the unity of higher common national interests?

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[Answer] Let me say that no Arab solution can be 100 percent honorable. It may be better than the present situation, but it would not be honorable. I know the Arab organization, and I know the spontaneous and outside influences that are applied to it. Therefore, I cannot describe any Arab solution, no matter what that solution might be, as an honorable solution unless it is a solution that comes from all Arabs in the presence of Lebanon. Such a solution would be better than others. However, it too would not be quite honorable because I know collective Arab decisions. I know their assumptions; I know the factors that influence them; and I know how the trade-offs are made. I know how one word can be deleted and another added to favor this or the other formula and to have this or the other formula accepted.

The solution that I believe would guarantee Lebanon's interests is a Lebanese solution, that is, the solution that would be chosen by all the parties concerned with the struggle without exception. This solution would be reached under the umbrella of the nation; it would be reached in the interests of Lebanon and its unity. I believe that the Lebanese people can come up with a proper solution to the question of Lebanon under such an umbrella. This solution would be the best solution. In order for the solution to be practical and not to impair national principles, it would be best for the PLO to have a limited presence in [the formulation of] such a solution.

[Question] Does Iraq believe that the Lebanese crisis can be solved separately from the Palestinian question?

[Answer] Yes. When the Lebanese people want to solve it and when the Arabs stop interfering in their affairs. But when the wishes of the Lebanese people are not represented in the resolutions formulated by responsible leadership, when those wishes are found only in the minds of the Lebanese people, [a solution would be hard to reach]. I know that all the Lebanese people without exception, Christians, Muslims and all political factions, want a unified, independent, stable Lebanon now. But I am referring to the presence of leadership, for when the Lebanese people find themselves without responsible leadership, and when their ranks are sabotaged by some Arab regimes, the situation then will remain as it is, and the enemies of the nation and of Lebanon will continue to link the solution for Lebanon's situation with a solution to the question of Palestine. This would impose humiliating solutions in Palestine and would turn the political situation in Lebanon to a source of destruction for the national struggle in addition to destroying Lebanon [itself]. But when the responsible political Lebanese decisions are represented not only in the official regime but also in all the levels of responsible leadership in the political and popular organizations and in all the parties without exception, the question of Lebanon can then be solved before a solution for the question of Palestine is found. It is then that that solution will be satisfactory to the Palestinians. It will be understood by them and particularly by the PLO.

[Question] From Lebanon we shifted to the hot sands of the vast Arab Maghreb.

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Mr President, what do you think about the heated conditions between Sudan and Libya and between Morocco and Algeria? What is your explanation for this stage?

[Answer] All Arab disputes weaken Arabs. This is a general rule and a fact whose opposite we cannot affirm. This is an absolute, objective fact. We reject all fighting between Arabs regardless of the reasons and motives for such fighting. We consider fighting among Arabs serious. Whenever there is an opportunity, and such an opportunity must always be available, we must solve our problems without fighting; at least Arabs must not fight Arabs.

Let Mubarak Consider Carefully What Happened to al-Sadat

[Question] Today, since the assassination of al-Sadat, all events have been focusing on Egypt. What is your evaluation of what happened and of what is happening? What is your evaluation of the action and the reaction to it?

[Answer] Regardless of anything else, what happened was expected. Not that it was expected in the absolute sense, but it was expected in the sense that any revolutionary, popular leader, even if he were popular among his people, may be assassinated. There are similar cases and examples in history.

Al-Sadat died, however, the day he visited Jerusalem and not since the day he signed the Camp David agreement. I believe he died on the day he visited Jerusalem and was buried the day he signed the Camp David agreement.

What happened in Egypt, had you seen it on television, was that many people who were on the reviewing stand [with al-Sadat] found others to [help them] shake the dust off their suits. Some may have found others to help them pick up the chairs that had fallen on them and to help them get up. But al-Sadat was alone. There was no one for him among all those who were there on the reviewing stand. He found no one [to help him] in all the military parade from which fighters had come out firing their guns at him. This is the most important point: there was no one for him. Had there been anyone for him, scores of people would have quickly used their bodies to keep the bullets away from him. Al-Sadat may have been killed, but he would have remained alive, had there been those among the people who would have protected him from the bullets. It is this situation that will explain what will happen.

We are hoping that the new rulers will consider carefully what happened. We hope they will make decisions that would make their international relations more balanced and their relations with the Arab nation more vital and immediate as a matter of principle and as an actual fact. This is what I am hoping. I am hoping that the rulers of Egypt will pursue this course and not that which al-Sadat pursued.

The established fact is that what happened, had you seen it on television,

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and had you noticed the steadiness with which the guerilla fighters advanced until they were extremely close to al-Sadat before firing their weapons, you would have become certain beyond any doubt that those fighters were part of a popular psychological condition that prepared them fully in their relationship with the people to the fact that if they were to die in their attack on al-Sadat, they will become national heroes. Otherwise, it would not have been possible for them to advance with such steadfastness and such courage to carry out this guerilla operation.

I saw people removing chairs that were lying on top of their friends, and they were throwing those chairs on al-Sadat. Al-Sadat was the last one and not the first one to be asked about. This fact explains the meaning of al-Sadat's isolation, even from those in his entourage. This is because the entourage of a government that is disintegrating is not the same as the entourage of a responsible leadership and government of the people.

We hope that the new president will consider and understand these facts. One of these facts [he must consider] is the fact that he is not one of the July revolutionaries. Even the prestige that al-Sadat had for a period of time early in his administration, the new president cannot have in Egypt, given the same conditions. He is also not one of the most prominent officers in the Egyptian army. He was a senior officer in the Egyptian army when he became vice president. He is taking over a country whose economic condition is not like that which existed when al-Sadat took over the government. Now, the economic condition is worse than what it was early in al-Sadat's administration. The new president's political condition in his relationship with the Arabs is well-known, and his international standing, other than his relationship with the west, is not good. Al-Sadat took over the government after 'Abd-al-Nasir, and opposition had been crushed completely. Now the new president is taking over the government amidst an opposition which, among its other actions, killed al-Sadat. He has to realize these facts. He has to realize that chief among the reasons that made this group kill al-Sadat was his position on the question of the Arab-Zionist struggle. We are hoping that the new president will be guided to the proper solution. It is then that he or anyone else will be able to rule Egypt in a manner that would be satisfactory to the people. This would make Egypt part of the [Arab] nation and enable Egypt to solve its problems in a better way. But if he follows the same course that al-Sadat followed, then the judgment on that matter is already known.

[Question] It is being hesitantly whispered in some Arab circles that the new Egyptian president, Husni Mubarak, may be invited to the next Arab summit conference this month in Fez. What is Iraq's position on the possibility of Mubarak's participation in this conference?

[Answer] We must first ask was Iraq's position a personal position on al-Sadat? Was the position of all the Arab brothers who approved the resolutions of the Baghdad Summit also a personal position. This is not a matter of whether or not the new president attends. The boycott against al-Sadat's regime was carried out not because he did not attend the Baghdad Summit Conference, but because he adopted a course that conflicted with that of the

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nation. In the final analysis, whether or not the Egyptian president attends the conference, the attitude of Iraq or of other countries towards him and his regime at the summit conference and outside the summit conference will be determined on the basis of evaluating the position he will take on the course that brought al-Sadat to his well-known end. We will be watching the regime and hoping that it will pursue a new course. In fact, it is in its interests to pursue a new course.

[Question] Mr President, the starting point in the opposition to Camp David was the Baghdad Conference and its resolutions in 1978. The events that occurred after that undermined Arab solidarity which had been achieved under the auspices of that conference. Is there not an Arab effort that ought to be made to reinforce the resolutions of the Baghdad Summit Conference? What is Iraq's role in this, taking into consideration conditions in Egypt, the continued Israeli aggression and the Camp David conference?

[Answer] In all cases we must look for everything that would strengthen the Arabs, and we must make outstanding efforts in that regard. The established fact is that the Baghdad Summit spared the Arabs disasters that could have been worse than Camp David. All sincere Arabs have to remember this fact.

Iraq has to be present in any new effort that is made to increase the power of Arabs and to reduce attempts that are being made in their midst to fragment them. I am not saying, as other conceited and ignorant people do, that without Iraq nothing will happen. I think that the nation is greater than any country, and the prestige of the nation is not the sum total of the prestige of the countries. The nation's prestige is the product of the actions its citizens take on the right course. I have faith and I believe that Iraq always sees the interests of the nation with a detailed presence. Therefore, I believe that any form of Iraq's presence that would strengthen the nation is an important factor.

[Question] Some nationalist forces of the opposition inside Egypt are criticizing the method that was used in carrying out the Arab boycott. That method is criticized for making no distinction between the Egyptian regime and the Arab people in Egypt, and for hurting the Egyptian Arab masses in the interests of the regime. These forces are also criticizing the attempt made by some regimes to interfere in their affairs. They say this breaks up their powers. Where do you stand on this matter, and how do you think it can be remedied?

[Answer] I believe first that everyone must give up the guardianship mentality. The people of Egypt are an ancient, great, patriotic and nationalistic people. When our relationship with the people of Egypt is a fraternal and a national relationship, we must give up the logic of guardianship and the logic of the superior view and deal with them as we do with brothers, with a national, responsible viewpoint.

This is a general judgment. We reject the attitude of those who say that a position places the rulers and the people in one rank. We reject [this

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notion] with any ruler and with any part of our people in any Arab country. We have always thought that in the Arab homeland there are people and a nation and there are also rulers. The failure to make a distinction between the rulers and the people is a mistake. We must always make a distinction between one case and another, between one position and another, between a ruler and the people, especially when the ruler and the people are miles apart from each other.

This is a constant condition in our thinking. We had this in mind with regard to our people in Egypt, in the most critical stages of the psychological condition that the nation went through immediately after Camp David. When we went to the Tripoli Conference we adamantly rejected a boycott of the Egyptian people. We stated that the consequences and the formulation of the boycott must be against the regime and the ruler. This principle was endorsed at the Baghdad Summit so as to weaken and isolate the regime but without hurting the people. The evidence for this lies in the fact that we opened our doors to our fellow Egyptians. Iraq became their second home where they could live as equals with Iraqis, enjoying the same and occasionally more rights and privileges than Iraqis.

[Question] On the occasion of the next summit conference for the Movement of Non-Aligned countries in Baghdad, I asked the Iraqi president, "The Movement of Non-Aligned countries has lost its lustre and its brilliance. Is this because its historical leaders are no longer with us or because political conditions in the world have changed?"

[Answer] It is a fact that political conditions in the world are the fundamental reason for this, but this does not mean that the loss of its historical leaders did not play a role in reducing the lustre of non-alignment and diminishing its positions. The historical leaders of that movement have always played a role both in regional and international movements and in their national regimes as well.

However, we must not view the role of the Movement of Non-Aligned countries and the modes which express its positions in the same way we used to view them when the movement consisted of a few small countries and when its first founders were Tito, Nehru, 'Abd-al-Nasir, Sukarno and others. The fact is that in the past Third World countries were either subject to western colonialism or struggling to liberate themselves. Some countries in Asia, Africa or in Latin America had recently won their independence. At that time the Soviet Union had not come out of eastern Europe, and the conduct of Americans with Third World countries was not like their conduct with them now.

The two most important changes in the international sphere now are [as follows]: [first], the United States entered the Third World to succeed old European colonialism. Its relations with Third World countries differ from the relations it had with them in the fifties. The United States has become an imperialist leader. [Second], the Soviet Union has come out of eastern Europe: it has direct relations with well-known regimes in Third World countries and it exercises influence in well-known Third World countries.

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These facts are evident to everyone at the conferences of non-aligned countries.

Thus there are three trends within the [bloc of] non-aligned countries; one is influenced by and related to Soviet strategy; one is influenced by and related to U.S. strategy; and an independent trend. But within the two [former] trends there are those who yearn for independence. At the same time there are objective factors that place those countries within either the trend which is influenced by U.S. strategy or that which is influenced by Soviet strategy. These factors are due to the country's weapons situation, its economic condition or its political condition.

These are facts, and it is in accordance with these facts that we must view the non-alignment policy. However, the role of non-alignment is still needed. More than any other time in the past its role is fundamental to the purpose of spreading peace or at least helping provide the factors for peace and stability in the world. This is what we believe in and what we are striving for.

[Question] Let us go back a little to the incident of Israel's bombing of Iraqi nuclear installations. Does Iraq have doubts about whether western parties, such as the United States, had anything to do with the incident, such as offering facilities or information to Israel to carry out the operation? Do you believe that these doubts have anything to do with the fact that there are U.S. AWACS airplanes in the skies of the Gulf?

The United States Knew

[Answer] I believe I answered a similar question last July, and I said that suspicions about the U.S. attitude toward what Israel did to the July reactor were justifiable. We still believe that the Israeli action was not far from an international conspiracy that was suggested by or directly related to some of the major countries or the superpowers that are related to Israel. The Israeli action may be related to Israel's search for the trend that would be desirable and acceptable to these countries.

What is certain in all cases is that we cannot possibly accept the United States' claim that it did not know of the incident until it occurred. No one can believe the United States. At the same time we cannot believe that the AWACS airplanes lacked the technical capability to find out the movement of the airplanes when they turned toward Iraqi territory.

What is certain, however, is that it would never occur to us that our brothers in Saudi Arabia were involved in this. This never occurred to us before or after the incident.

[Question] Italian newspapers have recently claimed that the nuclear reactor operation was [the result of] domestic sabotage and that the raid was a mere coverup.

[Answer] I think this is an obvious Zionist attempt to reduce the

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[intensity of] the world's reaction. It were as though the Israelis thought that the world was naive enough to forget even their own statements. They themselves stated that they did bomb the reactor. At the same time this is a professional attempt to promote the role of Israeli intelligence in Third World countries and to show that Israeli intelligence is so precise that it timed the raid to occur simultaneously with the destructive action undertaken by Israel's intelligence agents inside the Iraqi reactor. This is false. The destruction that occurred was a result of the air bombing.

[Question] Iraq reached a preliminary agreement with France on rebuilding the nuclear reactor. In your opinion, how much time will this take? What is your evaluation of relations with the new French regime?

[Answer] Relations are good. The French, or the new French regime is intent on developing relations between us and them on the same principles and with the same spirit. We too are intent on developing, furthering and expanding relations with the French regime on the same principles and with the same spirit.

Regarding the time required for the construction of a new nuclear reactor, I do not wish to discuss this subject because construction time will be set in the agreement that will be reached. So far, we have not yet signed a final agreement with France on that regard.

Iraq and the Soviet Union Are Intent on Developing Their Cooperation

[Question] Iraq is saying that its relations with the Soviet Union have improved. What are the indications of this improvement? Has the Soviet Union resumed execution of the arms deals agreements that had been concluded with it? Does the Soviet Union have new positions on the Iraqi-Iranian war?

[Answer] Regardless of the Soviet Union's former or subsequent position on the war between Iraq and Iran, I am saying that the Iranian regime has generally been exposed, even more so on the international level. Many countries in the world, either in their ideological attitudes or in their practical position of viewing their interests or their requirements for proper strategic thinking, no longer in reality view this regime with respect. Many countries have reconsidered their positions in light of these facts. One of these facts is the steadfastness of our regime. Our regime has survived and has continued to adhere to friendly relations with friends. It has maintained its point of view toward enemies, without changes and without, illegal tactical variations.

The Soviet Union has affirmed more than once that it was intent on developing its relations with Iraq in all the areas in which it was cooperating with Iraq before the war. We share the Soviet Union's wishes; we want to develop relations between our two countries in a balanced manner and in accordance with the known principles of the revolution.

[Question] My final question was about relations between Iraq and the

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United States. Iraq is almost the only Arab country that did not resume diplomatic relations with the United States ever since Iraq suspended diplomatic relations after the 6-Day war in 1967.

There is growing talk about the possibility that diplomatic relations between Iraq and the United States might be resumed. However, in a statement you made recently you said that this was unlikely at the present time. Were the circumstances of bombing the nuclear reactor the reason for removing from consideration the resumption of diplomatic relations?

[Answer] Any action, good or bad, in a relationship between two countries must be measured on a scale. In all cases, however, we always assume authentic positions that harbor no doubts or ambiguities. In conditions of war if our relations with any country are poor, we do not improve them. If relations are good, we prefer that they do not worsen. The normal conditions under which a relationship is considered are those of peace, those that would not yield a poor explanation of the relationship if it were to be reconsidered.

In all cases we have never said that present relations with the United States were normal and ought to continue as they are and be suspended for ever. Having normal relations signifies that our relations with the United States or with any other country in the world would not be suspended. Abnormal relations are diplomatic relations that are suspended. However, in the course of our evaluation, our analysis and our studies of all considerations and circumstances, we have not yet determined that having normal diplomatic relations with the United States would serve our pan-Arab and national interests. When conditions for normal diplomatic relations with the United States are available, when such relations are in the national or pan-Arab interest, we will say this publicly to public opinion, and we will restore this relationship with the Americans without fear or hesitation.

It was almost 1:30. My interview with him had lasted 3.5 hours. I felt that I had said everything I had to say and that I had taken enough of his time to be able to convey his opinions and his impressions to Arab public opinion. I no longer hoped for more.

The president, however, was still composed and magnanimous. He asked me jokingly if I was certain that I had asked him all the questions I had for him.

I thanked him, took my leave and left. Once again the fall breezes of Baghdad greeted me, imparting to my limbs a delightful sensation of warmth and assurance.

I looked out the window of the car to the side of the road. The Tigris was flowing proudly and silently. It were as though the river were staying in step with the course of Baghdad, a historical witness of the city's transformation into a huge, modern metropolis bustling with life, traffic and power in the age of Saddam Husayn and for the first time in many centuries.

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PEOPLES DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF YEMEN

USSR BUILDING MILITARY BASE

JN201255 London REUTER in English 1233 GMT 20 Dec 81

[Text] Bahrain, 20 Dec (REUTER)--The Soviet Union is building a new military command centre and missile bases in Markist South Yemen, according to an Omani weekly received here today.

The centre at Jabal Hal, overlooking the South Yemen capital Aden, would replace the existing Soviet joint headquarters at Khormaksar civil and military airport in Aden, the TIMES OF OMAN said.

Besides increasing its air and naval facilities, the Soviet Union is installing missile bases in the Aden suburbs of al-Mansura, B'r Fadl and Dar al-Amir and at Sagiya on the North Yemen border, the weekly said, quoting what it called diplomatic sources in Aden.

The 12th Soviet air squadron, which includes fighter, reconnaissance and troop-carrying aircraft, is based at an airfield at B'r Fadl, east of Aden, the TIMES OF OMAN said.

A new military area is being established on the Aden coast and the Soviet base on Perim Island, at the mouth of the Red Sea, is to be expanded, it added.

Oman, a pro-Western state which has no diplomatic relations with South Yemen, waged a war until five years ago against Aden-backed leftist guerrillas in the southern Dhofar Province.

South Yemen has a friendship treaty with the Soviet Union.

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TUNISIA

ELECTIONS, DEMOCRATIC PROCESS IN COUNTRY DISCUSSED

Death of Single-Party System

Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French No 1089, 18 Nov 81 p 22

[Text] After the great hopes engendered by Tunisia's first pluralist elections, has come surprise and disarray. How the vote counters could have acted so outrageously is beyond all understanding. But perhaps the exercise was not in vain. The opposition was not the only loser. The reign of the single-party system belongs to the past, as noted by Francois Poli and Habib Boulares (pp 23, 26). And democracy has certainly taken its first steps. Even if it is not yet spelled with a capital "D."

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Causes of Anger

Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French No 1089, 18 Nov 81 pp 23-25

[Text] A good number of Tunisians who feel they were swindled in the 1 November legislative elections have nevertheless not lost their sense of humor.

"The balloting," they say, "was like when you use henna. You put the powder on your skin and it is green; you remove it and it's red!" (An allusion to the green ballots of the MDS [Socialist Democratic Movement] and the red ones of the National Front, and to the electoral fraud people realized was practiced. See JEUNE AFRIQUE Nos 1086, 1087 and 1088.)

Not everyone thinks it is amusing, of course. I have even seen women on the verge of tears: "I quit. I will never vote again!" But the government and the newspapers with ties to the government continue to proclaim that everything went off without a hitch. But everyone knows, and knows that everyone knows. Including the people in the PSD, the Destourian Socialist Party, who are in a better position than anyone to know.

The system could be manipulated at several levels. First of all, before the voting, through pressure put on the voters. That was applied by those burly fellows stationed almost everywhere in the proximity of the ballot boxes. One female voter's testimony: "My children, who are for the opposition, told me: If

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you vote red, don't come back home! So I took a green ballot. A man who was there gave me a red one. This is the one you must take. I refused. He acted so menacingly that I had to go back without voting."

There could also have been fraud before the boxes were opened for counting. It must be recalled in this connection that each time a voter slips his ballot into the box, a member of the election bureau is supposed to note on a piece of paper called the "voting list" that he or she has voted. Shortly before the voting is over, people know the number of voters who have up to then stayed home and who doubtless will not come. Members of the bureau may well permit others to vote in place of those who have not voted. This is one form of the notorious practice of "stuffing ballot boxes."

To avoid this kind of fraud, the Tunisian election law gives each slate the right to designate an observer to watch over the voting to insure against irregularities. By withdrawing their observers at midday on 1 November (those who were able to take their positions), the three opposition groups, whatever justifications may be given for this withdrawal, facilitated possible fraud.

Once the vote counting was finished, each election bureau sent its official report of the results of the balloting to the headquarters of the commission (at the subprefecture level), the third stage where fraud could take place, by the simple substitution of false reports for true ones. The commission members in turn communicated their results to the governorate; the governors to the minister of the interior, Mr Driss Guiga, who proclaimed them officially on Tuesday 3 November at 1100 hours, after a delay which has not been fully explained. Here was the reaction of Ahmed Mestiri, leader of the Socialist Democrats, to the official count giving his group only 3.28 percent of the votes cast in the country as a whole: "I accuse the minister of the interior, the governors, and the commission members of having falsified the results of the voting." One might note that Mr Mestiri himself only levelled accusations at one minister--Mr Guiga--doubtless because he believed, as seems to be the case, that the other ministers, including the prime minister, played the democratic game by the rules. To assume otherwise would make it very difficult to explain to the contrary the official invitation addressed to some 40 foreign journalists who followed the elections in Tunis, only to conclude unanimously that there had been fraud.

The MUP II [Popular Unity Movement] (a faction of the Popular Unity Movement opposed to Ahmed Ben Salah, former minister of national economic affairs) obtained only 0.81 percent of the votes cast, the Tunisian Communist Party (PCT) 0.78 percent, independents 0.35 percent. Thus the opposition vote amounted in all to only 5.22 percent. According to the opposition, this figure is unrealistically low. (see separate article.)

It is certain, nonetheless, that even if the MDS, the PCT or MUP II got as many votes as might normally have been expected, they would not have threatened the very wide margin of victory the National Front would have had. So why bother with fraud? "How did we come to this pass?", many Tunisians are asking. The answer: by means of a chain of events which perhaps we must recapitulate. We will start by recalling that the government in Tunisia is Bourguiba and no one else. Bourguiba feels that in large part he is responsible for bringing the

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country to its present position. He won independence, liberated the women, introduced mass education, built a state which bears up well by comparison with any African country.

All that is unquestioned. But then came the events of 26 January 1978, during which soldiers fired on rioters and there were deaths. Then came January 1980: an attack on the mining town of Gafsa, in the southern part of the country, in an attempt to destabilize his regime. The operation failed, but it was able to happen. Thus, something had changed, Bourguiba's political instincts, extremely well-sharpened, told him the country could no longer be governed in the same way as before. The French left (in particular) continued to underline periodically that there were too many political detainees in Tunisian prisons. "Tunisia," people said, "does not quite rhyme with Chile, but it is close."

The moment had doubtless come to take a step toward real democratization. Mohamed Mzali was to be the architect of that overture. The prisons were emptied. Opposition movements came out of the shadows. The news kiosks sold AL-RA'Y and DEMOCRATIE, which openly opposed the regime. On 10 April 1981, the 2d Congress of the PSD was held in Tunis. Bourguiba gave a speech. It said that: "The degree of maturity the people have attained, the aspirations of the young people, the advantages there are to having all Tunisians participate in decision-making, all these factors lead us to say that there is no objection to the emergence of national, political and social organizations." There was sustained applause. And who applauded? The PSD militants themselves, who even went so far as to ask--as if they could not get over it--for Bourguiba to repeat what he had just said. He did so. But right up to the last second, people wondered if the head of state would say that sentence again. It was not in the original text of the speech. It had been added later! So there are influences pulling him in two different directions.

In this country which since independence has been under single-party rule, the speech was considered important enough to be given considerable international press coverage. People began to talk about a multiparty system, and about early pluralist legislative elections. Bourguiba did nothing to discourage it. Was it not his will? Elections were scheduled. They were to be democratic, and opposition spokesmen would have access to radio and television. They used it effectively. If 2 years ago they had said 1 percent of the things they were now saying, they would have landed in prison! In his palace at Carthage, Bourguiba listened. And we understand he did not say a word. But one can still imagine that he might have gotten worried all of a sudden: Are we not going too fast and too far? He had not forgotten Gafsa and Qadhdhafi. And if one of the new parties were to fall under the influence of Libya--that subversive Libya that has more money than it knows what to do with? Perhaps the time has come to slow things down a bit? Bourguiba in fact decided to put on the brakes, and gave the necessary instructions for it to be done.

There are no liberals in the Tunisian political elite. The regime has its hard-core supporters, to use the time-honored expression. Even the Tunisians do not know all of them. Democracy, opposition, liberalism, pluralism--these words leave a kind of bitter taste in their mouths. And when it comes to bringing the machinery to a halt, they can be counted on. If the head of state should pass

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from the scene and a liberal come to power, their future would definitely be a thing of the past. For that reason, it was of course necessary for the National Front to win an absolute victory, not merely a very large one. The legislative elections of 1 November were thus a tactical victory for them. It remains to be seen whether the results of one election can turn back the clock. Probably the answer is no. Tunisia can no longer be what it has been in the past. There will be 27 deputies representing the UGTT [Tunisian General Federation of Labor]--the main trade union confederation--in the House. This would have been unthinkable only a year ago! Even if one does not think them highly representative of the base, it would seem that the base will certainly be obliged to identify with them. And they will speak out. Could this be the birth (still far in the future, in all likelihood) of a labor party? Why not?

Things are not completely ideal, to be sure. Opposition newspapers are published, but everyone knows that all it would take would be a little heavyhanded pressure here and there on the vendors and these papers would be very hard to find. I had considerable difficulty, a few days ago, getting a copy of AVENIR (the Socialist Democratic newspaper) in Tunis. AL-RA'Y, the paper put out by Hassib Ben Ammar, is another opposition organ, and it has had problems of this sort in the recent past. All the same: despite everything, it was read. No doubt the step democracy has taken is not a big one--nor even the step it had hoped to take. But what does the Tunisian proverb say? "A thousand little steps are worth more than one great leap."

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Truth

Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French No 1089, 18 Nov 81 p 25

[Text] The opposition, officially credited with 5.22 percent of the total votes cast in the 23 electoral districts, believes that in reality it garnered 40 to 45 percent of the votes. Official truth versus opposition estimates: What is the real truth? We have at least a few figures from reliable sources: In the country as a whole the opposition got 25 percent of the vote, and did best in the town of Keft, where it took 45 percent.

In Tunis, with 103,856 registered voters and 79,405 going to the polls, 77,950 votes were cast. The official figures gave 72,413 votes to Beji Caid Essebsi, the top candidate on the National Front List, and only 1,603 to Mr Mestiri, head of the Socialist Democratic Movement list (MDS)--or less than any of his fellow candidates. In reality, Mr Mestiri obtained 21,000 votes. In the same electoral district, the PCT received on the order of 2,500 votes, and MUP II about 1,000 votes. These figures are too low, for they do not take into account the pressures brought to bear on some voters. So they should be considered as being higher, though obviously it is not possible to be more precise.

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Little Steps Toward Democracy

Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French No 1089, 18 Nov 81 pp 26-27

[Article by Habib Boulares]

[Text] "This is only the beginning, let us continue the fight," chanted the youth of France in May 1968. In its own way Tunisia has just been through a kind of May '68--irrational, impassioned, exultant and to all appearances just as disappointing as the original in its tangible results; but the deeper effects are sure to make themselves felt as the days go by.

In the immediate aftermath of the legislative elections of 1 November 1981, Tunisians felt they had been the victim of a cruel joke. In effect, the only candidates to win election as deputies were representatives of the National Front--including the author of these words. What was to be the spectacular demonstration of a peaceful transformation from an authoritarian political system became an embarrassment to those in every camp who had loyally played the game of nascent democracy. "I am ashamed," one elected official told me on 3 November. It is futile to point out that the National Front was comprised not only of militants of the PSD (Destourian Socialist Party) but also of leaders of the UGTT [Tunisian General Federation of Labor] and independents--the only thing public opinion both in Tunisia and abroad understood was that no candidate on any of the other lists was elected.

A 100 percent victory--whether by a front or a party, is not credible. It is even less so when, as in this specific case, the balloting was marred by incidents and the counting of the votes was not in any way monitored. "They are taking us for imbeciles," was the remark thrown in my face by an angry academic, who added bitingly, "I am going to become a naturalized Frenchman!" While excessive, that reaction shows the degree of disappointment felt.

During the 2 weeks of the electoral campaign (18-31 October), Tunisians lived in a dream world. At the start, they did not believe in it. Skeptical, the voters did not rush to attend public meetings. Then, television viewers began to see the faces of opposition candidates on the little screen. Inhabitants in remote areas of the country were astonished to see this. Mohamed Harmel, a Communist, Ahmed Mestiri, a Socialist Democrat, Mohamed Belhadj Amor, of Popular Unity, were saying things that previously were considered "subversive." They listened--on the radio as well--to people criticizing, analyzing, and dissecting the government's actions with no holds barred. "These broadcasts alone were enough to convince me that something had changed in Tunisia," one doctor told me. "I thought I must be dreaming."

Suddenly, the campaign came to life. A real campaign, where candidates on all sides really fought it out. The meetings began to draw larger and larger crowds. The big-circulation dailies and the opposition newspapers began to print more of the truth. People tore down the placards of groups they opposed. People were distributing tracts for their own party at the exits of meetings held by others. There were some fistfights. The atmosphere was at once like a village fair and an important athletic contest where everyone hoped his own

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team would win. People mistakenly thought they would be elected, forgetting that this was only a beginning....A sincere desire for change stirred the Tunisian people. And, contrary to the stereotyped picture of the government on one side and the people on the other, the latter did not all support the opposition.

One also had to note the social classes attracted by the National Front meetings, which often drew the poorest people. The PSD apparatus, which over the years had become a lifeless structure, revived. Militants and cadres who had drifted away over the last decade came back into service, as if pluralism had cleansed them of an original sin. Every Tunisian wanted to assume his place, or return to it, when the political playing field suddenly took on added dimensions. Young people not even old enough to vote yet ran from one meeting to the next, to see and hear the candidates compete and serve an apprenticeship in political struggle.

In the general euphoria, people tended to forget that though this "happening" was taking place, it was because the government had agreed to loosen the reins. Doubtless pluralism within the PSD itself was already a reality, but nothing required the head of state to move ahead with the early elections. He might just as well have recognized the parties and--as the opposition was demanding--allowed the preceding legislature to finish its normal term in November 1984.

Why, under these conditions, was no opposition candidate able to get a seat in the new parliament? "It is as if someone had lifted the lid of a pot and then put it immediately back in place," said one embittered jurist.

There was a tendency, in the impassioned climate, to forget the facts of the situation. At the start, the opposition did not think it would have any success at the polls. Their statements prove this. The Tunisian system--in which people vote for several members on a list, and have the right to split their vote among candidates from different parties, and the winner is selected in one round of voting--could not work to the advantage of the opposition unless the voters played the game of vote-splitting with great precision, in other words voting for candidates belonging to different lists.

Now on the one hand it was in the interests of the National Front to exhort Tunisians to vote for all its candidates without discrimination; and on the other hand the opposition groups had the modest ambition of getting more than 5 percent of the vote so as to obtain legal recognition, and they too were inciting the voters to vote a straight party ticket. Finally, the citizens themselves showed something of a tendency to support one side or the other unreservedly, like sports spectators at a game. In short, only an infinitesimal percentage of the voters exercised their right to split their vote. Under those conditions, even if they had received 49 percent of the votes nationwide, the opposition could not have won any deputies. It could do this only if it obtained a majority in one or more of the electoral districts.

That does not explain the ridiculous figures put out respectively by the opposition and the Ministry of the Interior. It is not credible that all the lists competing against the National Front could only muster 5 percent of the vote between them. The opposition parties made a serious mistake in withdrawing

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their observers from the voting bureaus on the day of the balloting--because of some incidents, numerous to be sure but in any case limited to a few places around the country. Accounts by foreign journalists were basically confined to the electoral district of South Tunis. And even there, one could not indict all the heads of the voting bureaus, since it was in fact the letter from one of them that Mr Mestiri, the head of the MDS, read at a press conference to prove the existence of tampering.

Besides, if all the presidents of the voting bureaus had been implicated, how could one explain the fact that in some towns, when the ballot boxes were opened, it was discovered that there was a substantial number of votes for the opposition, even though there had not been any observers? By keeping their observers in place, the opposition groups would have been able--despite the incidents--to increase the number of places, particularly in the urban centers, where they obtained some success. It was in any case a good lesson for those groups in the future.

As for the government, its conduct was very ambiguous. A 75 percent victory for the National Front, for example, would have been viewed by the whole world as a great victory for President Bourguiba. Think about that! After 25 years in power, sharing that power with no one, after multiple crises, some of which resulted in bloodshed, three-fourths of the voters still have faith in the head of state! Yes. But, in the government view, that would have revealed publicly the existence of 25 percent who were dissatisfied. For a system accustomed to being obeyed, that was too much to be swallowed in the first pluralist election. One should not be deceived: The Tunisians did not vote for a particular person, nor for a particular program. The journalists who followed the campaign noted that the party programs did not differ greatly from the program of the National Front.

Tunisians voted for or against the system in place. A vote along ideological lines would have indicated the direction in which the voters want to see their society evolve. A homogenous vote of either affirmation or rejection pushes the government toward opting for the path of guided democracy, a path which it preferred from the start. This is in contrast to what happened in Senegal or Ivory Coast, where the government made a deliberate effort to bring new men, if not opponents, into the parliaments.

But it remains true all the same that something has happened, something that seemed impossible only 18 months ago. We have moved from monolithism to pluralism. The results of the election were clearly less than what had been hoped, but they did confirm a fact that will become increasingly evident. By the very nature of things a coalition government is now in power in the new assembly. The trade union deputies, though they do not represent an incorporated party, are not a part of the PSD. They are autonomous. They will probably have their own parliamentary group and defend the program of their congress. Outside the governmental institutions, another party has legal existence: the Communists. A third, the Socialist Democrats, has good prospects of legalization in the near future. And one must not forget the newspapers of the various factions which are vigorously expressing the feelings of the public. This is a major advance, one which must be consolidated.

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The advance toward democracy has not been aborted. The gears have been engaged, but need to be put in motion. Democracy does not just happen. It is something that must be practiced daily. Everyone--both government and opposition--who wants to see it become deeply rooted in the country must make it his own.

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