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27 February 1979

TRANSLATIONS ON NEAR EAST AND NORTH AFRICA  
(FOUO 4/79)



NEAR  
EAST



NORTH  
AFRICA

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INTER-ARAB AFFAIRS

PALESTINE RESISTANCE LEADERS ASKED REASONS FOR DISUNITY

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 4-10, 11-17 Jan 79

/Article by Fayiz al-Mur'ibi: "On the Occasion of the Approaching National Council Session: AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI Asks Resistance Leaders Why Palestinian Unity Is Not Being Attained"/

/4-10 Jan 79 pp 26-31/

/Text/ Eyes are riveted on the coming session the Palestinian National Council will hold in Damascus around the middle of this month. The results the council produces will constitute the true indices of the size of the step the detachments and organizations of the revolution have taken and will take toward national union, in attainment of the Tripoli Charter and the recommendations which came after it.

In the light of the new variables in the Arab situation and the general conditions in the area resulting from the joint national action compact between Iraq and Syria, and as a result of the Baghdad summit conference resolutions, the need for unity within the resistance has become more pressing so that all vacuums in the common Arab front which has resolved to counterattack the two Camp David agreements and the effects which could arise from them may be filled.

Relying on and proceeding from the Tripoli Charter, meetings took place between resistance leaders which led to promulgation of a draft political program and an organizational and unificationist formula which the National Council will discuss.

In response to many queries on the tendencies of the detachments of the Palestinian revolution, and their viewpoints regarding these historic steps, AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI's correspondent, Fayiz al-Mur'ibi, conducted a series of interviews with five leaders.

Three of the interviews are published herewith--those conducted with:

Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad), FATH.

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'Abd-al-Rahim Ahmad (Arab Liberation Front).

Zuhayr Muhsin (al-Sa'iqah).

This is in the form of an indirect dialogue setting forth viewpoints on the pages of AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI.

Salah Khalaf (FATH Organization): National Unity Is Not Possible

Question Let us begin with a question we have asked of the other resistance leaders: how far have efforts to achieve national union, which began after al-Sadat's visit to the occupied territories, gone?

Answer Let us begin by talking about the notion of national unity, lest the Arab citizen give this issue more than its due. National unity, in the sense that organizations are to dissolve intellectually, politically and militarily into a single framework, in order to become one movement, is impossible for many reasons. However, national unity in the sense that there be a single command within a single national front as part of an agreed-upon political program, along with unification in the areas of the military, finance and, if possible, the media--this unity, for example, can be achieved.

There remains the organizational and intellectual issue. Each organization has freedom with regard to means for acculturating its staffs and the nature of the organizational frameworks it approves; in this sense, I believe that national unity is possible, indeed must be achieved.

The meetings which occurred on the level of the Central Council and the secretaries general in past months confirm that it is possible to establish such a unity, in the sense I have propounded. Agreement was made to a political platform and organizational principles, and the coming National Council is to approve these plans. Let an important point begin, which is the matter of practice on these bases.

If the confirmation of practice and commitment to the political line and organizational plan does not occur, national unity will be afflicted with the same catastrophe it experienced in past years. In addition to that, it will be necessary to stress the issue of confidence among Palestinian detachments, on grounds that all information within the Palestinian command be provided so that decisions may be issued from within this command in the light of this information.

In addition to practice, and commitment to practice--and in addition to confidence--it is necessary that the Arab states, or some of them, cease their guardianship over or interference through some organizations, because without this it will not be possible for national unity to last or be established, basically.



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#### Organizational Fanaticism

Question What in your opinion are the obstacles which prevented establishment of national unity during the previous stages, in spite of its importance for the Palestinian cause?

Answer The real reasons why national unity has not been established lie first of all in organizational fanaticism. It might be permissible for such fanaticism to exist within the context of each organization's ambition to be paramount; this is very legitimate, since it is obvious that each organization should strive to be paramount. However, on numerous occasions this organizational fanaticism has been without real justification. In spite of that, given organizations have intended to educate their staffs in unjustified fanaticism.

The second reason for the obstruction of national unity, is Arab regimes' intervention in Palestinian action, and their interests in maintaining a number of organizations which they can each deal with as they like.

I believe that many of these regimes find a direct interest in keeping Palestinian action constricted. We find some of them choosing the organization which will deal with them the way one sometimes chooses songs, from the standpoint of mood--from the standpoint of "what the listeners want."

Unfortunately, some organizations respond to these divisive appeals for momentary, trivial material benefits.

The third reason is an objective one related to the intellectual and ideological disputes among organizations present on the Palestinian stage, which cause the process of thinking about methods of action to differ from one organization to the next. This, in my opinion, is by far the easiest of the reasons, because it may be solved through correct relations within the context of the front and agreement on a common minimum among these detachments.

#### FATH Is the Backbone

Question There are people who say that the FATH organization's inclination to dominate and monopolize power is one of the major reasons why national unity is being obstructed.

Answer There must be collective leadership and there must not be dominance in the strict sense of that word. However, at the same time, I state most frankly that if the leaders do not have a head which will consequently bear responsibility for decisions and responsibility for carrying out decisions, there will be no revolution. Show me one revolution in the world which emerged without having a head; show me any revolution in the world which was established on the basis of alliances among a number of organizations or parties yet did not have a major party representing the backbone of that revolution.

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The issue is clear, from the standpoint of principle. There should be a head leading these organizations within the context of collective leadership, but it is in no way permissible that the revolution be governed by its weakest ally; otherwise, action will be disrupted and there will be no serious revolution.

It is true that there has been some monopolization of power on FATH's part in some institutions of the Palestine Liberation Organization, and it is necessary that this phenomenon be corrected. However, in my opinion this is a secondary matter because there must ultimately be a body which is able to adopt decisions within the context of unified front action and is not condemned to failure by any link with weak allies. He who pays the price for decisions, materially and morally, must have a part in decision-making which is commensurate with the extent of his responsibility.

There are people who call this dominance and there are people who call it guardianship, but in reality it is guardianship over the weakest links in the alliance which exists on the Palestinian stage.

For example, but not exclusively, FATH, by virtue of its position in the Palestine Liberation Organization, is compelled to deal with all Arab regimes, except for those which have been convicted of treason against the nation, such as al-Sadat's regime, for example. The others can attack Arab regimes as they like and can categorize them as they wish. Ultimately they know that responsibility for the families of martyrs, for example, lies on FATH's shoulders, and that this budget comes to more than \$15 million a year. Let me ask where this money would come from if we followed the same techniques as other organizations which categorize regimes as reactionary or non-reactionary.

What we are getting from some progressive countries in the form of financial support can be described only as a tragedy, but this in no way means that the conservative states are paying what they should.

We are compelled, for example, to finance the Palestinian Red Crescent, which offers services to all Palestinians without exception and to any organization they belong to. Where should we get the money for this? This is a responsibility which on most occasions causes us to be silent about facing up to regimes. Should we stand behind microphones and tell all the facts we know about these regimes, leaving the families of martyrs to eat these words instead of bread?

It is sad that most Palestinian leaders know these facts and feign ignorance of them in their talk or when they stand behind microphones.

These are some examples which we are presenting in order that the picture may be clear. This does not mean, by the nature of the case, that the participation process must not exist. This in no way means that we do not honor the opinions and positions of our brothers and comrades in other

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organizations. Although we appreciate their role within the framework of the Palestine Liberation Organization institutions, these people must commit themselves to the resolutions and positions which are adopted and they must commit themselves to what is said inside closed rooms.

If there are some errors which may be interpreted as dominance, we are ready to correct these errors, on condition that it be known--whether some people wish it or not--that FATH will have a large share in Palestinian decisions because it is the largest organization and bears the responsibility for these decisions. This is not narcissism or conceit at all, so much as representation of a reality which exists in the context of actuality.

#### A Dispute on Technique

Question There are people who say that it is the political disputes which have arisen in the past period that have obstructed national unity.

Answer Let us ask ourselves what political dispute is. If we want to be more exact, we can say that there is a dispute on methods for dealing with political events, but not a comprehensive political dispute.

If we admit that there is a political dispute inside the Palestinian stage, this means that we admit that there are people who want to liberate all of Palestine and people who want to liberate half of it, or a quarter of it.

The dispute concerns the method and not the substance. Before the October war, what was the political dispute?

There were, naturally, ideological disputes. Before the 1973 war no political disputes concerning major issues had yet appeared on the stage, and there was no national unity.

The ideological dispute exists; true. However, I am convinced that three quarters of those who claim to be Marxists do not understand or practice Marxism. The quarter that does practice it practices it erroneously, because it has not assimilated it or has tried to adopt it out of whole cloth; Marxism is a guide to action for every situation and not a carbon-copy guide to action which people apply in its original form in every country. China speaks of Marxism, yet its relations with the United States are stronger than its relations with the Soviet Union; which of the two is the proper Marxism? I am convinced, though, that the Soviets are very Marxist.

Thus the issue of the political dispute is a lie through which some people try to make fun of the masses.

After the October 1973 war we propounded a stage-by-stage solution which holds that a Palestinian state must be established on any square inch of

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Palestinian territory which is liberated, or from which Israeli forces evacuate. We are now in 1978, and what has happened? We told the rejectionists, ('We have been rejected but we are not rejectionists,') and time has actually proved that we have been rejected and are not rejectionists. A devastating war passed over us in Lebanon; if the statements of surrender and of the capitulationists had been correct, we would not all be in one trench now, agreed on one political plan which all organizations, as well as the Central Council, have approved.

The Basis for National Unity

Question Some people propound the notion of working to establish military and organizational unity, provided that the door be left open to the forces to struggle politically with one another in accordance with democratic principles. What is your opinion on that?

Answer There cannot be military or organizational unity without political unity. However, if the intent is to attain a form of military and organizational unity within the framework of the Liberation Organization, while retaining ideological disputes, that is possible.

We Want Agreement

Question Do you believe that the scope for attainment of national unity has now broadened?

Answer We wish and hope for this with all our hearts, provided that the conditions we previously mentioned be taken into consideration, that is, trust, practice, and abandonment of organizational fanaticism, as well as the need for every unit to realize its actual, real material potential.

We are optimistic as far as the coming National Council goes; our people have had enough of the experiments we have made, especially since the people are not on their territory but are in exile.

The Important Thing Is That There Be Trust

Question Do you consider that the new political and organizational program has transcended the weak points of previous programs, which did not lead to establishment of the requisite national unity?

Answer I stress once again that it is not the political program which is important, and it is not the organizational programs that are important--although I believe that they are necessary and that it is necessary that there be agreement on them; rather, I believe that what is most important is trust, practice and a readiness to sacrifice within the framework of joint action in the Liberation Organization.

We have flexed our muscles enough and everyone has become familiar with the size of given organizations and their resources and powers; there is not reason--after the passage of these long years--for us to continue adhering to names and slogans.

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If we make the Liberation Organization predominant, we, our people and our Arab nation will be at ease and we will enjoy greater respect from our friends and enemies alike.

The Minimum Required

Question Do you believe that there is now a real seriousness on everyone's part to realize national unity?

Answer I do not believe that there is now a real seriousness to realize national unity in accordance with the concept I have mentioned, which is that there be the highest level of political, military and organizational coordination.

We want everyone to be guided by a serious attitude this time, lest we continue to be the laughingstock of Arab and international public opinion and in order that the slogan of democratic dialogue may dominate the Palestinian stage so that we may achieve what we all aspire to.

The Important Thing Is the Application

Question Will the National Council be an index of the seriousness of moves toward national union?

Answer The convening of the National Council is not in itself an index because it convened in the past, more than 12 times, and always produced serious resolutions and good programs agreed upon unanimously, or almost unanimously.

What is important, in my opinion, is the application. I am often amused, during the convening of the National Council, to turn on the tapes of sessions or previous councils and see how similar the discussions were, how similar the dialogues were, and how similar the interruptions were; almost the identical sentences were repeated, the same words, the same notions--even the people were always the same, and the same is true of the resolutions and concluding statements.

We hope that a quantitative leap will occur this time and that the talk or the dialogue will not be the same.

The Iraqi-Syrian Compact

Question Do you not believe that the national action charter between Iraq and Syria has helped create suitable ground for Palestinian national unity, by virtue of its repercussions on the stage?

Answer What is certain is that the charter has probably helped generate a new climate for mutual understanding among the detachments of the resistance, in view of the fact that the dispute between Syria and Iraq was not just a dispute between two Arab countries but was also a dispute

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between two parties and consequently between two organizations present on the Palestinian stage; this naturally had a negative influence on the revolution and on national unity specifically. Therefore, in my opinion, the value of the Iraqi-Syrian meeting lies in closing an important breach on the road to national unity; this might be the important positive aspect of the charter, in addition to the other national and domestic positive features with which it has been distinguished.

What Is Desired

Question What in your view is the practical way to attain national unity?

Answer That the detachments of the Palestinian revolution cause the masses to have confidence in this unity and its benefits, without any chicanery or behind-the-scenes maneuvering, and in its importance as far as the national cause and the question of continuing the struggle are concerned; that certain Arab regimes take their hands off the Palestinian revolution; and, lastly, that each unit be humble enough to stay within the limits of its capabilities for participating actually and sincerely in creating unity.

'Abd-al-Rahman Ahmad (Arab Liberation Front): We Will Not Accept Co-optation, Dominance or Guardianship

Question Many people see, in Palestinian national unity, a real bulwark for and guarantee of the triumph of the revolution; how far have the efforts to achieve this unity gone?

Answer During the convocation of the first Perseverance and Counter-action Conference in Tripoli, its intrinsic circumstances, and objective Arab circumstances, compelled the detachments of the Palestinian resistance to meet among themselves on the sidelines of the conference to discuss the specific Palestinian situation following the developments which al-Sadat's treasonous visit to occupied Jerusalem had created. Following this meeting, there was issued what it was agreed would be called the Tripoli Unificationist Charter. This charter was drawn up in order to form a common denominator among the various Palestinian detachments, and it was to have been translated into action and practice by everyone.

However, as usual, some people determined to dilute this compact on various pretexts and excuses, among them the fact that it had not been signed by the Palestinian National Council, that it was not binding on the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (which commits itself only to the resolutions of the Palestinian National Council, which had not yet ratified the charter), and so on and so forth, and we kept going around in a vicious circle.

Then came the signing of the two Camp David agreements, which imposed a new state of affairs on the Palestinian stage and the Arab stage in general;

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this of necessity led to a meeting among the detachments of the resistance, in order that the means for coping with the probable sudden danger to the Palestine cause and the overall national cause of our Arab people be studied.

A series of meetings took place, during which a feeling of danger was apparent on everyone's part. At the end, after long meetings, agreement was reached on a political program representing a minimum and on general organizational principles:

The political program concentrated on means of resisting the conclusions of Camp David, especially as regards its Palestinian portion, and the need to counteract the autonomy conspiracy, which is one form of Zionist occupation. The organizational principles defined the framework of future joint action and the manner of developing that through the participation of all detachments of the Palestinian revolution, in the contexts of Palestine Liberation Organization institutions and leaders, by forming a front command, comprising all detachments, on condition that this be governed by democratic relations so that the minority would be subject to the view of the majority and the majority would serve the view of the minority, that is, that all would have room to take part in the adoption, and also the implementation, of decisions.

This is what we have come up with so far. However, in general the organizational principles need greater explanation and detailing, and this should have been the subject of discussion among the leaders of the detachments of the Palestinian resistance or the National Union Committee formed by the Central Council of the Palestinian Revolution. Unfortunately, this committee has not yet begun its meetings to consolidate the various notions on organizational principles, especially since this dilution attempt could influence the rate at which national unity is attained. Also adding to doubts is the fact that we are moving toward a new Palestinian National Council and that the objective of these dilution attempts could be to delay convening of this council by the stipulated date on the pretext that agreement has not yet been reached and that we must therefore not go to the council as disputants lest it blow up from within.

National unity, as we have viewed it, has made great strides, but it still is in need of numerous finishing touches, politically and organizationally, and this still conflicts with some people's efforts to obstruct, dilute and delay total and final agreement on overall details before the details can be discussed conclusively and given a legal form in the coming Palestinian National Council meetings.

The Obstacles Are Always the Same

Question Is this the first time the issue of national unity has been propounded and yet real, palpable results for the sake of attaining it have not been realized? What obstacles have obstructed, or still are obstructing, national unity?

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/Answer/ In my estimation, the obstacles to unity have not changed in the past or the present. These obstacles for the most part arise from the particular nature of the Palestinian scene. It is true that everyone on the Palestinian scene realizes the importance of national unity, in view of the fact that it is a basic condition for safeguarding the Palestinian revolution, not to mention that it is one of the conditions for its triumph.

It is well known that the Palestinian scene has its particular characteristics, by virtue of the dispossession of our Palestinian people and the nature of the struggle they are waging on behalf of their cause. These characteristics have led to the emergence of a number of intellectual currents which have become embodied in one form or another in the detachments of the revolution, and this of necessity has led to disputes on the overall general political situation, especially after the capitulationist settlement platform was clearly propounded on the Palestinian stage following the October 1973 war.

However, despite the existence of opposing intellectual currents and political disputes, it would have been possible to bring national unity about, because this kind of unity has been achieved in various revolutions, in the Arab world and internationally; we have a clear example in the experiences of Algeria and Vietnam.

In most countries which have embarked on a people's war, roughly the same situation has been faced, either from the intellectual or political point of view. However, there always was one general danger and one goal, namely liberation, which drew the forces engaged in this people's war together.

Therefore I believe that the basic obstacle in the way of national unity assumes the form of an erroneous understanding, on some people's part, of the means for attaining national unity. There are people who understand it as co-optation and dominance over and guardianship of the Palestinian revolution, in the sense that they have the right to have the first and last opinion on the totality of issues and that the others have only to implement it.

Naturally this is not a national unity founded on democratic bases, nor can this understanding encourage others to rush forward on the road to true national unity. This understanding thwarts many people's concerns and makes them unenthusiastic about attaining national unity. Unless this understanding is eliminated, it will be difficult to attain true national unity.

In exchange, there are people who consider that a diminution of their advantages and their presence at the center of the stage will result from national unity, and they therefore fabricate pretexts to avoid rushing onto the road to national unity, especially since they find, in the former group's conduct, an excuse to evade the issue of attaining national unity.



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Political Disputes Exist

Question There are people who say that the basic reason for the failure to attain national unity lies not in political disputes, because these do not exist, but in the extensions of Arab regimes onto the Palestinian stage. What is your opinion on this statement?

Answer I do not believe that this contention is valid and I do not believe that it is accurate, either in its premises or in its conclusions. They say there is no political dispute, while we say, yes, there is one, and the crucial point is not in the texts which are written or the resolutions which are adopted. It is true that these texts and resolutions, in their final version, reflect an agreement among the detachments of the resistance concerning the political issues at hand, but the disputes become conspicuous in an obvious way in implementation, when some of them are ignored.

There are people who try to conceal this state of affairs, which is unnatural, unhealthy and inappropriate for national unity, by claiming that if it were not for the interference of Arab regimes, there would be no political disputes on the Palestinian stage. This talk in reality is an evasion of the truth, and I do not believe that this issue would be an obstacle in the way of national unity if those who made allegations of this sort were serious, in deed and not word, about attaining national unity.

This excuse and pretext has been exposed, especially since what is meant by this statement are the progressive and national Arab regimes which have experience in national action and know that no achievement or progress can be realized except through national unity. However, if what is meant by this statement are regimes which endow some people with dominance and power, this talk is really valid.

From the standpoint of us in the Arab Liberation Front, we consider that we have been pioneers of true national unity since the establishment of the front. The programs which the front has presented to the Palestinian National Council in its various sessions bear witness to that, and all our positions, forms and formula for expressing this position have been presented in the framework of consolidating and strengthening national unity.

We, as a national liberation movement, know the nature of the alliances which we must achieve at every stage of our struggle; but what we know is one thing and what some people practice is something else, because these people practice policy through tactics. I do not believe that this kind of policy can lead to a real national unity because it shifts every day, according to emergency circumstances. Real national unity is agreement on strategy concerning overall issues. Tactics remain subject to circumstances but unfortunately some people in the Palestinian arena practice exactly the opposite.

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/Question/ Some people say that those who bear the responsibility of implementation must have primary responsibility for leadership and decision-making; what is your opinion?

/Answer/ In my opinion, here is the disease and the source of the malady. It is true that there must be a basic organization which constitutes the backbone of joint action in any real national union. However, this organization must understand national unity in the true sense, and the other parties must realize the extent of the seriousness of their participation in setting out decisions as well as in carrying them out. This talk about primary responsibility for leadership and decision-making cannot encourage other Palestinian parties to proceed in the direction of national unity, because one cannot accept dissolving them in the interests of one party.

Naturally we all aspire ultimately to become one detachment, but the present reality dictates that this is out of the question at the current time. Therefore, adherence to and insistence on this viewpoint inspires a lack of desire to attain national unity in proper form. As long as everyone is not convinced that national unity will offer them scope to play a role and have active, influential positions in the framework of Palestinian action, it will be impossible to achieve true national unity and induce other parties to emerge from their intellectual, political and organizational structures into structures and ideas which are still unclear. Revolutionary experience in all corners of the world has confirmed that no power, however great, can achieve serious accomplishments alone on the road of the struggle toward liberation.

Naturally we underline the importance of FATH and its pre-eminent role in any Palestinian national unity. The greatest detachment is supposed to be the pioneer in providing concessions which will encourage the other detachments to move toward national unity. The FATH movement, by virtue of what it represents on the Palestinian stage, must be the one to take the initiative to impell others and encourage them to achieve national unity through correct democratic practice based on respect for all parties' role in decision-making and implementation.

Unsuccessful Experiments

/Question/ Some people propound the idea of working to achieve military and organizational unity within the framework of the Liberation Organization, on condition that there still be room to continue the political struggles in a democratic manner. What is your opinion on the outlook for attaining this sort of unity?

/Answer/ It is true that we can envision the possibility of attaining many things, but envisioning is one thing and reality is something else. Military unity through what vision? Organizational unity through what vision? We have experience in this, experience on the Palestinian stage, and what has the result been? We have experimented with some forms of military

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union and have tried some forms of organizational unity; of these, only the name has remained. Why? Because the same causes which obstructed national unity also obstructed the attainment of lesser unificationist steps of this sort. We have the experience of the unified media; is this the media of the whole Palestinian revolution? We have unified security; is this security for the whole Palestinian revolution?

These small unificationist experiments occurred as the result of agreements, but, because there were no sound visions of unificationist action, these bodies became stripped of their meaning and content and remained as slogans seen on television, a small experiment on the road to national unity.

The malady is the same in the case of small steps and big ones; if we overcome this malady, it will become possible to achieve national unity without it being necessary to carry out small steps. We want complete, total unity on the various levels--political, military, organizational, media, financial, popular, and trade union--founded on bases of democracy in decision-making and democracy in implementation, supported by the broadest participation of all Palestinian detachments.

The Seasonal Nature of National Unity

Question It has been observed that the issue of national unity is always raised in a seasonal fashion, especially following the crises the Palestinian revolution passes through; why is talk about national unity stifled in ordinary circumstances and intensified in exceptional ones?

Answer The reason for this seasonal approach may be attributed to the fact that there is no serious, real orientation toward national unity; the situation consists of nothing but an attempt to exonerate one self before the masses, especially during crises, by a show of anxiety over the course of the revolution, and by struggling for the sake of the cause and the objective of liberation in such a way as to attempt to absorb the masses' resentment over the current state of fragmentation and rally around real national unity programs. We have been accustomed to this style since the days in Jordan, and nothing has changed but the details.

Gaps Still Exist

Question Have the new political platform and the new organizational principles succeeded in transcending the gaps in the political and organizational platforms which were set out on previous occasions but did not result in the attainment of national union?

Answer The fact is that the gaps of the past have not been transcended. The organizational principles could have partially transcended the gaps in the previous platforms, but that is not the case with the political platform. During the transactions on political conditions, we were all condemned to failure by a Camp David complex and there was a perception on

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everyone's part of the gravity of the new stage. Therefore talk was almost entirely fixed on means for resisting the results which characterized the two Camp David agreements.

However, in spite of that, the program was not fully consolidated--rather, it was greatly deficient. We agreed to it because we were convinced, through experience, that the lesson lies not in texts which are written down but in real practice. Therefore our efforts were directed to the organizational platform, on the basis of which we could translate the political platform texts in the best possible way.

The significant thing is that the political and organizational platforms are still ink on paper and consequently still need to be translated onto the ground of actuality and daily practice. This is the practical touchstone of the sincerity of intentions and directives on attaining of national unity, if only within the lowest limits of this unity.

The Coming National Council

Question Will the Palestinian National Council be an indication of the seriousness of directives and the sincerity of intentions regarding the issue of national unity?

Answer In brief, we can say yes. The coming session will be one of the very most important sessions of the council, because if during this session we are able to achieve what has been agreed upon, either politically or organizationally (which is more important), we sincerely believe that we will have achieved a quantum shift in Palestinian action. However, if attempts to dilute and then delay the council continue, as some people are seeking to do, in spite of the launching of official appeals, we believe this will be a sign which is not to the benefit of national unity (even if the council is held at the stipulated time), and if we do not attain the achievements reached during meetings among resistance leaders, that will have a negative reflection on the overall course of the Palestinian struggle during the next stage, which is to be considered one of the very gravest the Palestinian cause and the national cause have passed through. Therefore the council which is to be held must adopt clear, firm, decisive decisions and a collective, homogeneous leadership capable of bearing the serious responsibilities cast upon its shoulders in the next stage must emerge from it.

The Iraqi-Syrian Compact

Question Has the Iraqi-Syrian compact come about as a step which will promote the road to national unity, through its positive repercussions on the Palestinian stage?

Answer Naturally we look upon the Iraq-Syrian national action charter as a solid wall buttressing the Palestinian revolution, because, following

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Egypt's departure from the arena of the Arab-Zionist struggle, a psychological disruption occurred within the Arab citizen in general and the Palestinian citizen in particular. This compact has come to constitute a great bulwark in his behalf, in the form of a front of confrontation with and resistance to the Zionist enemy through revival of the northern front and consolidation of the Arab position--as was clearly and plainly manifested through the recent Baghdad summit.

The positive effects of this new reality, which has been made mandatory by the Iraqi-Syrian compact, must be highlighted on the Palestinian stage and must impart to the Palestinian revolution more confidence and optimism for the future and the ability to emerge from the circle of mistaken gambles on various Arab powers revolving in the firmament of a settlement, so that perhaps the revolution may be able to achieve something.

The Palestinian revolution ought to benefit from the combative, fighting atmospheres with which the compact has been and is distinguished, in order to strengthen the context of confrontation with the Zionist enemy by consolidating the Palestinian stage, strengthening the internal unity of revolutionary Palestinian forces, and moving on to new levels of relationships governing these forces--as far as they themselves are concerned and as far as their relationships with the masses and their popular bodies are concerned.

Zuhayr Muhsin (al-Sa'iqah): Everyone Bears the Responsibility for Falling Short

Question The results which have arisen from al-Sadat's platform have intensified the need for attaining Palestinian national unity; how far have attempts to achieve this unity, and to transcend Palestinian disputes, gone?

Answer In the past 4 years, two groups which believed that a settlement was close or inevitable have appeared on the stage. One of these tried to adjust its wavelength, and the other undertook to fight that group. Thus the two parties became immersed in a deepening internal crisis founded on illusory bases, because the objective conditions for realizing a settlement were in no way present during these years.

This was proved in the practical sense at the end of the journey, when the two parties discovered--after not a brief time had elapsed--that they were fighting one another over an illusion. Then al-Sadat's repeated acts of treason took place, particularly through the Sinai agreement and its aftermath, giving a clear idea of the form of settlement which was possible in the light of these circumstances and the reliance of al-Sadat's Egypt on the United States of America, and also drawing an accurate map of the place the Palestinian party might have in the American settlement program--a formula which no Palestinian combatant, or any citizen possessing a minimal national conscience, could accept.

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We can say that the blunder of those who bet on the attainment of a balanced or reasonable settlement through the movements of al-Sadat and the United States was a great one, but the blunder of those who believed that America's will is a power which must assert itself, and that such settlements can be imposed on our nation or our people, was also great--perhaps greater.

We are divulging no secrets when we say that al-Sadat, American imperialism and their allies in the area aspired to exploit the early internal Palestinian disputes, then disputes fabricated among various Palestinians and various national Arab governments from time to time, in order to impose the settlement through the breach they had succeeded in creating once upon a time.

We cannot ignore that this schism, at specific times, created improper conditions within the Palestinian nationalist man in the street in particular, and the Arab man in the street in general, and spread about a broad atmosphere of despair and dissension among the Palestinian and Arab masses. This played a basic role in causing the reactions to al-Sadat's visit to Jerusalem to be less violent and extensive than those which high treason of this magnitude should have stirred up. In fact, in the framework of the atmosphere of despair and dissension, we must suppose that many Palestinians themselves preferred to wait, since they were hoping that al-Sadat might achieve a miracle for them through the adventure in which he placed himself and with which he proceeded to the end. Perhaps some of these people were within the very ranks of the revolution, increasing the scope of chaos in people's spirits and the intensity of doubts and fears in the ranks of the revolution.

Let me say here that the first perseverance summit, held in Tripoli a few days after al-Sadat's visit to Jerusalem, was the first step toward salvation for both the Palestinians and the Arab citizens as a whole. On the sidelines of that conference, in order to make the conference succeed, on top of the growing feeling of danger, responsibility and the need to close tanks to confront the danger, the Palestinian leaders managed to formulate a united position which was established in the unificationist compact known as the Tripoli compact. We believe this still is valid as a basis for starting to set forth an organizational and political platform which meets the requirements of this stage.

Therefore we have been anxious to establish a commitment to this compact in the detailed national action platform approved last October by a special committee formed by the Central Council which lost no time in ratifying the platform a short time before the convening of the Baghdad summit, and even before the great historical transformation in Syrian-Iraqi relations, which must have important repercussions on the overall situation in the region, including the internal Palestinian situation and the relations between Palestinians and others, could take place.

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Chronic Palestinian Disputes

Question What are the obstacles preventing the attainment of national unity?

Answer The subject of national unity has always been discussed, even before a rift became crystallized in blocs, which happened after the idea of the Geneva conference was propounded. Stumbling and disputes have been endemic and old in the Palestinian stage, and have accompanied the revolution almost since its beginning. I do not want to justify this sort of phenomenon, although by the nature of the case there has been an explanation for it; foremost among its causes was a feeling on the part of some detachments that attempts were being made on the part of some people to engulf and dominate them.

In addition, political disputes, especially in tactical, everyday matters, have existed since the beginning. However, whatever the dimension of these political disputes, and in spite of the difference in the ideological foundations of most organizations, it would not have been difficult to attain national unity in the framework of balanced relations of solidarity, on the basis of a front, had there been an adequate amount of seriousness, desire and sound appreciation for the national interest and the greater interest the revolution, and every detachment by itself, could reap through a national union.

Perhaps the element of fear of dominance and arrogation of authority still has a greater effect than that of political division in obstructing national unity. While it is necessary to impose the responsibility for this shortcoming on everyone without exception, each detachment's share of this responsibility must be proportionate to its size and resources; therefore the greater responsibility lies of necessity on the shoulders of the largest detachment, which is supposed to assume the greater share of responsibility for leadership and a serious desire to establish relations of close adherence and stability among all detachments.

The Basic Complex

We have said this more than once to our comrades in all detachments. We have demanded a start toward the solution of the organizational problem, on grounds that all should be given their roles and their rights and that they should be required to commit themselves to their obligations and restrict themselves to the principles of unified action, on the basis that the principle of collective leadership and democratic relations within the revolution should be respected, in exchange. At that point, we would find ourselves discussing political propositions among ourselves openly and with full ease as to intentions, without being compelled to go to great lengths of doubt and suspicion.

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The Texts Are Not What Is Important

/Question/ This is not the first time platforms to attain national unity have been set forth; have the draft political platform and organizational principles recently set forth transcended the gaps in previous platforms?

/Answer/ Unfortunately there has not been sufficient surmounting of these gaps. While efforts were directed toward formulation of a political platform with complete, accurate details, talk about the organizational aspect was restricted to general outlines.

In any event, it is not what is written in texts that is important but what lies in people's spirits; since 1968 we have written many texts but all these texts taken together have helped the advance toward national unity only in small, limited measures.

We hope that the experiences of the past will have convinced everyone that no one organization, whatever its size and resources might be, can lead alone, that the process of establishing an axis to cope with an axis is also an operation lacking justification which benefits no one, and that this stage requires a serious pooling of all efforts and powers. The battle needs all these efforts, several times over, and does not need to have them stumble and lose much of their effectiveness in internal wars of attrition.

/Question/ What is your evaluation of the chances for success in applying the political platform and other organizational principles?

/Answer/ We hope that the destiny of the platform and principles will be different from that of many previous platforms, especially since a big basic problem was solved after the Baghdad conference--that of financing, which was one of the major reasons organizations had become alienated from one another and disputes among them had become aggravated. The desire to please sources of financing had overcome all other factors.

This is a new opportunity for the revolution, and its detachments must exploit it to the utmost, in order to liberate themselves from mortgaging themselves to sources of financing in every form and in order that we may be zealous of solidarity with one another, in order to ensure the use of a single fund, and consolidation of the role of this single Palestinian fund, in achieving Palestinian independence and bringing to prominence a Palestinian national will which is not stained by any blemishes.

A Decisive Arab Shift

/Question/ How can the Iraqi-Syrian agreement contribute to the attainment of national unity through repercussions on the Palestinian stage?



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Answer The decisive shift in Iraqi-Syrian relations, which has occurred to fill the void which had resulted from Egypt's shift from Arab ranks to the ranks of the enemy, has had its direct effects, which will increase and escalate with every passing day in the "psychology" of the Palestinian Combatant and the ordinary Palestinian citizen, both inside and outside the occupied territories.

This agreement has re-inspired hope for the future, self-confidence and confidence in the inevitability of victory against the enemy, in addition to the guarantees it has provided that the revolution will prevail and the feelings of self-confidence it has inspired that a positive spirit has begun to replace every form of negativism and pessimism engendered by the withdrawals of past years--especially the treacherous acts of al-Sadat, from the second Sinai agreement up to the Camp David agreements, via the visit to Jerusalem.

This important positive shift, which has been the beginning of a new resurgence movement in the Arab region and a basic step along the road to creating a new "geopolitical" reality--as it has been a basic achievement toward correcting the balance of power in the region between us and the enemy, after this balance had been blatantly disrupted to the enemy's benefit--today places all Palestinian leaders before a responsibility of a completely new kind and dimension, since it is no longer justifiable or reasonable in the eyes of the Palestinian man in the street or of the Arab man in the street that Palestinian detachments should continue to be pre-occupied with organizational competition and maneuvering against one another, or with any illusory struggles of the kind that had previously dominated.

All this of necessity requires an unflinching initiative to cut off all connections with the American settlement plan and its proponents and symbols and the closing of ranks of the forces of the revolution and the masses of the Palestinian people in order decisively, absolutely and radically to oppose the American settlement plan, of which the Camp David agreements are an expression. This all requires as well that one hasten to establish serious, firm relations of strategic alliance with Syria and Iraq in a manner enabling the revolution to assume a greater role in confronting the Zionist enemy and to increase its activities in all fields. This rare, historic opportunity, which the masses of our people have been dreaming of for a long time and which will recur again in history only with difficulty, is an opportunity which the leaders of the revolution must have the awareness to snatch and keep from losing.

This opportunity must give birth to a new pattern of thinking on the part of the leaders of the revolution, and it must impart a new sense to Palestinian national unity which is more positive than it has been in the past. I mean that while feelings of fear were the basic motive behind national unity, prior to the Syrian-Iraqi meeting, with the result that the notion of unity was depicted as guaranteeing the means to protect the

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revolution and thwart attempts to liquidate it, the motive following the Syrian-Iraqi meeting must be first of all the restoration of hope in the attainment of victory and optimism regarding the inevitability of the triumph of our national cause. Thus the new notion will be offensive and not defensive, active and not passive, positive and not negative.

The emergence of this new situation facing the Palestinian revolution coincides with the imminent convening of the 14th session of the Palestine National Council. This will help the leaders of the revolution to offer the National Council, perhaps for the first time, an integrated political and organizational platform which will take the initiative of planning for the future and attaining achievements along the road to the triumph of the revolution and restoration of the homeland, rather than revolving around ways to protect the Palestinian revolution and cope with the dangers surrounding it.

The Role of the National Council

Question Will the Palestine National Council, which is supposed to meet the middle of this January, be an indicator of the seriousness of the trend toward national union?

Answer It is well known that the National Council is no more than an enlarged map of the Central Council and the Executive Committee, and what the detachments of the revolution cannot realize among themselves, the National Council cannot realize. The National Council might be able to vote on a specific organizational resolution, but it is more important that the detachments which are requested to implement this resolution have conviction in it.

We do not intend, generally, that the National Council should achieve our unity for us; we ourselves are supposed to go to the National Council united or agreed on achieving unity, lest the council lose much time in sterile debate over issues which can only be solved in a practical way by direct mutual understanding among leaders of the detachments of the resistance.

The National Council's time must be wholly dedicated to a discussion of the political situation and the political platform of the coming stage, and this is a matter in which every Palestinian must have his opinion.

The National Council generally blesses all steps taken by the detachments of the Palestinian revolution along the road to unity; when these detachments fall short of achieving this kind of step, the National Council does its duty by inviting these detachments to resolve the organizational problem among themselves.

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### Giving Everyone His Role

/Question/ What is the practical method for achieving Palestinian national unity?

/Answer/ I am still wholly convinced that any serious step to achieve national unity must start on the basis of solving the organizational problem, first of all, and giving everyone his role and his rights, provided that he commit himself to his duties and confine himself to the principles of unified action.

It is impossible that the day could come when political positions and ideas will correspond completely; rather there is nothing to prevent differing political ideas from being subjected to democratic organizational relations which guarantee that Palestinian efforts will be wholly directed toward facing the enemy and at least guarantee that sporadic instances of armed clashes between two or more detachments be avoided and that all forms of mutual vituperation and slander and hostile political mobilization on the part of one detachment or another against certain other, or all, detachments be eliminated.

### The Requisite Positive Development

It is the progressive formulation of national unity on democratic bases, alone, which will enable the revolution to gain time and fully exploit the opportunities available in order to serve its combative purposes in a manner enabling the Palestinian revolution to gain greater respect on the Arab and international levels, official and popular simultaneously.

The future which lies before our people is brilliant and the fact that the triumph of our cause is inevitable is beyond dispute. However, this all requires that positive development within the Palestinian arena be wedded to positive development on the Arab stage, as represented fundamentally by the historic meeting between Damascus and Baghdad.

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On the eve of the convening of the 14th session of the Palestine National Council, AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI is continuing its dialogue with three leaders of the resistance--Messrs Nayif Hawatimah, secretary general of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine; Ahmad Jabril, secretary general of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, General Command; and Samir Ghawshah, secretary general of the Front of the Struggle of the People of Palestine--thus completing the dialogue it started last week with Messrs Salah Khalaf, 'Abd-al-Rahim Ahmad and Zuhayr Muhsin, in order to set forth the viewpoints of the leaders of the detachments of the Palestinian revolution regarding the national union plan which will head up the National Council session's agenda and the variables presupposing attainment of the goal of unity within a clearly-defined organizational political platform.

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Nayif Hawatimah (Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine):

We Want a National Fighting Front

Question al-Sadat's visit to occupied Palestine has again raised the issue of national unity on the Palestinian stage. How far have efforts gone in this direction?

Answer National unity is a major, pressing issue for a small people, more than two thirds of which have been dispossessed and are facing an organized expansionist colonial Zionist invasion supported by the forces of world imperialism, in particular American imperialism and the world Zionist movement. Therefore one of the most important essential ingredients for victory over this vicious hostile front is attainment of the unity of the people and a national revolution in the context of the Palestine Liberation Organization in this stage.

To this end, the Democratic Front has taken the initiative of offering the Palestine National Council and all detachments of the revolution more than one plan for national unity. The first plan was in September 1969, the second in July 1971, and the third in March 1972. The latter was the first integrated national unity plan offered by any detachment of the revolution. The National Council recommended it, but none of these plans have seen the light of day despite the daily urgency of the necessary ingredients for national unity.

This year, following al-Sadat's capitulationist visit to occupied Jerusalem, the seasonal spirit of propounding the issues of national unity was renewed. The Tripoli unificationist compact was a preliminary framework along this road, prior to the convening of the banner of the National Unity Committee composed of the Executive Committee of the Liberation Organization, the secretary generals of the revolution, and a number of members of the organization's Central Council.

Three unity plans were before this National Unity Committee: the first from FATH, the second from the Democratic Front, and the third from the Palestinian Rejection Front. We ourselves proceeded to publish these three plans in the Lebanese magazine AL-HURRIYAH so that they would be in everyone's grasp and so that judgment, in times of confusion, would rest with the court of the masses and the fighting men.

FATH'S Plan: Military Unity

Mr Nayif Hawatimah went on:

Here we must observe, first of all, that FATH's plan was not politically specific but reduced the whole national cause to a unity of military forces along. In addition, a spirit of domination emanated from it

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again, along with the appeal to give FATH wide powers in forming the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

The Democratic Front's plan relies on the principle of national unity by merger, on the basis of proportional representation, in accordance with the resolutions of the Palestinian National Council held in April 1972. This plan deals with the unity of forces, the militia, the media, diplomatic representation, the national fund and the mass, trade union and vocational organizations, via organizations which will result in the evolution of the Liberation Organization and its institutions into a national liberation front.

In its political aspect, it relies on the stage-by-stage national platform ratified by the detachments of the revolution at the National Council held in June 1974, which set forth realistic, positive solutions to Arab-Palestinian political relations and international-Palestinian relations, through reliance on Arab summit and United Nations General Assembly resolutions since 1974, all of which approved the historic rights of our people and the national platform to return, determine our destiny, and establish a national state without condition or restriction.

The Rejection Front's plan propounded long-range political strategic principles, thus jumping over the issues and tasks of the revolution, our people and the Liberation Organization of the present and during this stage. On the organizational side, it was also confined to principles for coordinating the detachments of the revolution.

The National Unity Committee discussed all this and concluded by approving a joint political platform which in essence conformed to the political plan the Democratic Front had presented, which was fully harmonious with the Phased National Platform of the Palestine Liberation Organization which was approved in 1974.

This means that the correct political platform our people have chosen and rallied around, the platform of the return, the right to determine one's destiny and the independent state, will succeed. The resolutions of the Algiers, Rabat and recent Baghdad summits were obtained under its banner, along with the resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly, in a manner guaranteeing the emergence of our national cause in specific political language into the conscience of the world and its adoption by all the forces of democracy, progress and peace in the world.

The approval of this plan means the defeat of the tendency which leaves matters unspecified and is content with long-range strategic slogans.

On the organizational side, matters remain within a framework of general principles, such as approval by the leaders, collective resolutions, the refusal to deviate from these resolutions, minority commitment to the position of the majority, and strengthening of coordination among

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detachments of the revolution. These organizational limits were a response to the position of the majority of the detachments, whereas our plan pro-pounded the unity of all common national instruments through incorporation by proportional representation.

We are now awaiting the convening of the Palestinian National Council in the middle of January for the political platform and organizational prin-ciples to be legislated, now that they have been ratified by all Palestin-ian detachments and approved by the Central Council of the Liberation Organization.

However, on this occasion we must point out that efforts to violate this platform and the desire to rush away from it will continue, as a result of pressure from Arab regimes, on the one hand, and the inclination of some detachments of the revolution to commit themselves to their private polit-ical platform and committing themselves to it in letter and spirit.

An example of that is what is going on in the first rounds of Palestinian-Jordanian talks, since something called the framework of common action has been formed and this constitutes a violation of the joint platform of national unity, which specified the palpable national foundations for Palestinian-Jordanian relations.

The Main Contradiction

/Question/ There are people who say that it is political disputes which have prevented national unity and can prevent the establishment of this unity as well; what is your opinion about that?

/Answer/ Our people, like any people on earth, consist of numerous nation-al classes which express themselves through organized political and intel-lectual tendencies, also numerous. This is not odd--indeed all revolutions at all stages of their struggles, especially in the stage of national lib-eration, have recognized it. These intellectual and political contradic-tions have been resolved for the sake of the main contradiction with the national enemy. This has happened in China, Vietnam, Angola, Algeria, Cuba and other countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The contradictions in the ranks of the people and the revolution must con-stantly give way to the major contradiction with the enemy and it has there-fore always been our appeal that the contradictions within the ranks of the revolution should be put in their true place, as secondary contradictions, and they should give way to the major contradiction with the national enemy.

Iraqi-Syrian Relations

/Question/ How will the Syrian-Iraqi agreement contribute to moving the wheel of national unity forward, through its positive reverberations with-in the Palestinian scene?

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/Answer/ We in the Democratic Front have struggled for the past 10 years to rectify Iraqi-Syrian relations, and we have paid an exorbitant price for this principled stand.

We have struggled on behalf of a united Iraqi-Syrian-Palestinian advance front constituting the main axis of the Arab perseverance front; the struggle with the Zionist enemy must be along an advance front within the occupied territories and along lines of contact in the Arab encirclement countries, especially the Syrian northern front. Our slogan is, "Let all Syrian-Iraqi-Palestinian powers be united along the advance front against the Zionist enemy, the Camp David conspiracy and autonomy."

The unity of these three forces in the context of the Arab rejection front will guarantee the restoration of a strategic balance with the imperialist-Zionist-reactionary enemy, following its disruption by Egypt's departure, at the hands of al-Sadat, from the front of confrontation with the enemy.

Ahmad Jabril (General Command): Is There Middle Ground between Unity and the Preservation of Organizations?

/Question/ What is new as regards the attainment of Palestinian national unity, following the long journey?

/Answer/ There is no doubt that the issue of national unity is an old one; it has been prominent since the birth of the revolution, although at the beginning it was restricted to the detachments which were present on the scene. Here we might remember that with the launching of FATH in 1965 we, as a front, tried to get in contact with it. It is well known to all that revolutionary action at that time was secret, so we did not know the leaders of FATH, and FATH did not know about us. The meeting between us took place after FATH's first operation; then we held a number of meetings which resulted in the establishment of joint leadership bodies, including the Emergency Committee, which took charge of commanding action, the Central Committee, which planned the general movements of the revolution, and the Media and Military Committees.

This continued until the end of April 1966, when opinions became divided, and that led to the end of united action.

After that--specifically, after the June 1967 defeat--we in the front had the honor of calling for establishment of a Palestinian national union comprising the detachments which were prominent on the scene. Thus the first meeting was held in Damascus, in response to this invitation, and it was attended by representatives of our front, FATH, the Revolutionary Youth, the Heroes of the Return, the Palestine Branch of the Ba'th Party  
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IRAN

CORRESPONDENT ON SAVAK, CORRUPTION AS CAUSES OF PRESENT CRISIS

Bonn EUROPA-ARCHIV in German 25 Jan 79 pp 43-52

[Article by Dr Arnold Hottinger, NEUE ZUERCHER ZEITUNG correspondent for Spain and the Arab countries, written at the turn of the year following a trip to Iran: "The Crisis in Iran--a Consequence of the Secret Service Regime"]

[Text] The old Ayatollah Kazemi, who has been resisting a particularly brutal military regiment in Isfahan for more than 5 months and has encouraged the population of his city to offer resistance until the overthrow of the shah, interrupted his aides and interpreters in the course of an interview in December 1978, as they were expounding to his foreign guest the origin of the unrest in Isfahan, and said: "First of all it needs to be stated that the cause of the evil and its real root are to be sought in the shah's autocracy." And indeed there is no better point of departure for explaining the unrest and ills that have befallen Iran since the beginning of January 1978. Until that time Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi had shown a tendency amounting to an increasingly absolute and arbitrary rule and to a growing unwillingness to listen to the opinion of others--whether high-ranking advisers or men-in-the-street--daring to exercise criticism of any aspects of his regime.

This unwillingness on the part of the monarch even to take note of voices other than those of pure flattery can be explained primarily by the fact that his secret service and intelligence organizations--particularly the secret security service, SAVAK--had got to be bigger than he was and were able to prevent him even from seeing any longer the social, political, economic and human reality in the country under his rule. Suffice it to recall the ruler's well-known remarks about the "great civilization" he thought he was building or, for instance, his predictions that Iran would "overtake" Great Britain in a few years.

The activity of the secret services really was what set the strategic course leading to the monarch's disorientation and isolation. They had always justified their actions by the alleged need for fighting subversive leftist groups and as early as in 1953 (the time of the coup under General Zahedi

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which brought the shah back to power) extended them to the media and university life. There their domination was so complete that they not only proceeded against people who voiced opinions which the secret police did not like but, in addition to that, told the newspaper people what to write and forced many professors, over and above their subject matter, to deliver encomiums of the shah and his regime to their students. Whoever did not follow the orders and suggestions of the gentlemen of SAVAK had to expect gradually increasing persecution, starting with chicanery and financial losses and, in case of persistent refusal to "cooperate," ending in severe torture and quite frequently secret service murders.

The Gagging of a Society

Pursuing the somber logic characteristic of such services, the SAVAK people, with the shah's consent, exacerbated their regime even further when in 1971 the first fruits of an increasing prosperity, due to the export of petroleum, began creating a kind of middle class. A reasonable policy, of course, would have proceeded the opposite way: it would have had to grant the better educated members of a gradually growing middle class a greater say, and thus a growing concern in the interests of the regime. The birth of violent revolutionary groups caused by the repression of SAVAK, gave the latter further excuses for gagging Iranian society ever more completely. The shah at the top apparently, to a far-reaching extent, harbored the illusion that the lack of any debate in the country was due to the fact that the great majority of Iranians agreed with his government. Similar illusions apparently spread to numerous foreign observers. Actually the lack of any criticism and the seemingly universal consent were nothing but the result of SAVAK's virtually perfect methods of repression.

The secret services extended their control to more and more spheres; after intellectual life and the media, it was the turn of the economy. At the same time a ban on parties and the founding of a government party caused all political activity to come under the strictest control. Through courts-martial, special courts and state control over the appointment and removal of judges, the whole legal system was turned into a caricature of a judiciary, with the judges increasingly becoming mere recipients of orders of the all-powerful secret services.

Development Undermined by Corruption

Corruption increased accordingly, manifesting itself most grossly at court in the immediate environment of the shah but taking in just about everyone in power down to the most remote provinces. Corruption became the actual "economic motor" of Iranian "development." Thanks to the foreign currency obtained from petroleum, it was possible to import enormous quantities of goods and whole manufacturing processes, but corruption led to a situation where the bribes received by leading government and industrial personages from interested firms abroad and at home increasingly played the main role.

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When at the beginning of 1974 the shah made the crucial mistake, against the advice of experts, simply to double Iran's existing 5-year plan in light of the country's quadrupled petroleum income, he furthered the already planted trends of corruption and inflation to an enormous extent. The country did not have the human, institutional and physical infrastructure enabling it usefully to spend twice as much money as originally planned. The result was a jump in the growth of inflation, corruption and failures. But all these facts were swept under the rug by the secret services, and the question today is to what extent the monarch in fact realized what the problems were that actually had been created for the country by his rule and the rule of his services.

Loss of Quality as a Result of Lack of Information

The regime of the security services thus led indirectly to the destruction of the country's economic base. Agriculture suffered particularly, because, as the product of a land reform placed especially under the ruler's aegis (part of the so-called White Revolution), it had to be a priori above any criticism, with any objective information about its actual state of health or slow death becoming impossible. The result was a migration of the rural population to the towns, rapid reduction of agricultural production and, for years on end, "successful" attempts by the civil services (always under the overall supervision of SAVAK) to conceal and gloss over the actual situation in the countryside.

The opaqueness of all life in Iran perforce affected also the quality of the administrative and economic officials and also led to disastrous results in the quality of instruction in all Iranian institutes of learning. Increasingly so-called "loyalty" to the regime became the criterion of selection in all state institutions--in other words, the desire and ability of the individual to come to be on good terms with the omnipotent secret police. Personal qualities or abilities of any kind were secondary, and in practice often even obstacles, when it was a question of obtaining an official position. Just as poor money drives out good money, so poor administration drives out the good administrators.

It may be said in general that the quality of the entire life, including the ethical and intellectual but also the physical side of it (e.g., air pollution, housing problems and traffic congestion in Teheran) and the economic aspect, became the main victim of the failures and the corruption of the last 4 years of the rule of the shah. This is a particularly deplorable result, because Iran is an extraordinarily complicated country with an ancient and highly sophisticated culture, based on delicate substructures and extremely sensitive and subtle people. The destruction of the quality of their previous life through the shah's so-called modernization, which in reality amounted to the most large scale corruption and devastation, was increasingly regarded by the Iranian population as a destruction of their entire previous existence and culture. And so it was, to a disastrous extent. In light of this preliminary history, it is no wonder at all that the population Iran in

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resisting the destruction and corruption imposed on it sought refuge in the actual center of its previous cultural life--Shiism.

Resort to Clerics

The situation with which the population was confronted actually offered it no other way out. Only the many thousands of clerics that exist in Iran had the opportunity to address the population from a platform which was not a priori occupied and controlled by SAVAK. The more it became apparent that this was a way which allowed them to obtain the assent and support of the population, the more the clerics were willing to put their network of information and their platform--the mosques--at the disposal of the critics of the regime. The ever-increasing popularity of the Ayatollah Khomeini, who had got into conflict with the shah and SAVAK as early as 1963 and thereafter attacked the regime from exile, was apt to orient the other clerics about what the population expected of them. When the clerics themselves at the end of 1977 again found themselves in the firing line of the secret services, which had forced the paper ETELAAT to print an article representing an insult to them, they decided to confront the regime. The first demonstrations against the regime and its henchmen took place in the holy city of Qum. The repression following it led to new demonstrations and new repression, at first at 40-day intervals determined by Islamic mourning customs but becoming increasingly frequent and violent as of the summer of 1978.

"Liberalization" of the Shah

Even before that unrest the shah had tried to introduce some minor political liberalization. In the course of 1977 something had become possible which previously had been unthinkable: to reach the monarch with petitions informing him confidentially of all kinds of bad situations without such action immediately leading to intervention by the secret police against the sender of the petition. It is not quite clear why the shah had decided on this minimal relaxation of the system. Perhaps there were a number of reasons why he did so. Under the pressure of inflation and corruption, economic development had come to its first halt in the summer of 1977. The previous prime minister, Amir Abas Hoveyda, had been dismissed, and the new development plan, which was to have started in 1977, was postponed indefinitely. The economic diagnosis read "overheating of the economy." The new prime minister, Jamshid Amuzegar, was asked to fight inflation and "consolidate" the economy. Perhaps the first setback, after all, gave the monarch a first inkling of the actual situation. In addition there was the human-rights policy of the new U.S. President, which the shah evidently was prepared to follow to the extent of improving the image of his regime a little. Finally, there were deliberations about the succession to the throne; as he had stated publicly on several occasions, the shah held the view that after some years a consolidated empire and one based more on consent than on constraint should be made over to his son Reza. In the course of 1977, it thus became possible for intellectuals and members of the middle class for the first time in a long time to voice their complaints discreetly about unsatisfactory states of affairs in the field of human rights, the judicial system, the economy (corruption), academic

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life and the like (with none of this being allowed to appear in the newspapers), and in some cases even to circulate copies of their petitions among like-minded people.

The fact that the shah permitted such activities and encouraged them to a certain degree, incidentally, is yet another indication of how little he realized what the true situation in Iran was. Clearly he regarded this start of liberalization as hardly dangerous precisely because he did not realize the amount of hate his regime had caused among the population and the extent to which the slightest relaxation of the previous gagging by SAVAK was bound to lead to the eruption of long built up resentment and longing for freedom.

A Setback for SAVAK

The key strategic position held by SAVAK in the whole regime up to that time became apparent once more when the shah--probably angered by the failures of the secret police--decided to remove the man who had been the head of SAVAK for many years, Gen Nematollah Nassiri, and in general started to curtail the responsibilities and standing of the secret police. This in fact signified the beginning of the end for the Iranian regime, which previously had been held together by the secret police by force. But the shah apparently believed the pretenses of his sycophants who told him that the loyalty of the people toward him was the most vital factor that held his empire together.

In the wake of the unrest in Qum, there was worse and bloody unrest in Tabriz 40 days later, with the shah blaming his secret services for having neither predicted them nor effectively prevented them. Due account must also be taken here of the dark chapter of provocations. There is serious evidence that the people of the secret services time and again before and during the unrest engaged in provocations and themselves put fire at least to part of the movie houses, banks, restaurants, etc in Iranian towns in order to "prove" the allegedly destructive character of the opposition movement.<sup>1</sup> Possibly the shah too got wind of such actions (which Iranians down to the most ordinary shopkeeper knew about), and perhaps he therefore decided to place his secret services on a tighter leash. It is also possible that the Americans, whose CIA was always in contact with SAVAK, influenced the shah to that effect.

Disintegration of the Regime

Already last summer one could sense in Teheran that the population had shed its previous almost desperate fear of the secret services. SAVAK suddenly was no longer surrounded by the previous aura of alarmed silence. Its brutalities did not cease by any means. But more and more Iranians, particularly among the young, were no longer prepared to be terrified by them.

In the summer of 1978 it became gradually clear that the previous government party, Rastakhiz, had lost all credibility. The shah himself encouraged the

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formation of fractions within the government party (for instance under court politician Nahawandi), and some of the more independent members of parliament (all appointed by the shah, not actually elected) left the government party.

But the shah's concessions, the disintegration of the once powerful secret police, the disintegration of the government party and soon thereafter the resignation (read dismissal) of the Amuzegar government in the eyes of the opposition were concessions which the monarch primarily had been forced to make under the pressure of its sacrifice-laden demonstrations. The leaders of the opposition concluded from this state of affairs that the shah was on the defensive and could be forced to make further concessions by their pressure just as long as this pressure was exercised consistently given the impression of a ruler surprised by the turn of events, a ruler who apparently had no choice but to give in impassively. His concessions again and again had come too late and had been too small to satisfy the wishes of even the more moderate parts of the opposition.

Distrust Toward Any Government of the Shah

Little credibility, concessions granted too late (though these now even concerned important matters, such as prosecution of corruption, the promise of freedom of the press, freedom of parties and future "free elections," and though former SAVAK chief Nassiri and former Prime Minister Hoveyda were now indicated) also characterized the next government appointed by the shah, headed by Jafar Sharif-Emami. Under the influence of the uncompromising Ayatollah Khomeini (who now was living as a tourist in Paris after the Iraqis had removed him from his many years' refuge in Najaf), the opposition agreed on the basic formula that the shah himself and his dynasty would have to disappear before the protests and unrest could end. The standing of Khomeini rose steadily, and his leadership was recognized more and more clearly by the other ayatollahs in the country--had to be recognized by them unless they were prepared to lose their popularity, which traditionally forms the basis of their standing. And under Khomeini's influence protest strikes began throughout the country--in the ministries, the large enterprises, the state banks, power plants, refineries and (more important than anything else) in the petroleum industry. Only at this late stage, when the petroleum industry was being affected, did the public in Europe and the United States wake up to the extent of beginning to take the Iranian crisis seriously, notwithstanding the fact that, as everyone could see, it had assumed acute aspects for more than a year.

Unsuccessful Military Government

The military government under Gen Qolam Reza Azhari which relieved Sharif-Emami (as of 6 November) and which had come to power through provocations,<sup>2</sup> proved incapable of fulfilling the main task it had been charged with--to put an end to the strikes and restore peace and order. By the time Azhari resigned in early January, some thousands of unarmed Iranians had been shot, but the

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strikes were continuing, the unrest had not stopped, and the drilling of petroleum had reached the bare minimum of 230,000 barrels a day (compared with a normal 6 million barrels a day). And this despite the fact that the generals under the sign of a state of emergency had tried to intimidate the towns by force and the troops had plundered some places,<sup>3</sup> and despite the fact that the petroleum workers had been punished by being deprived of their jobs and being driven from their (company owned) housing. The only clear result the army had reached with its brutalities was that the wrath of the population against the regime had risen enormously and that also an ever-increasing number of members of the middle classes (typically, doctors, for instance, who had witnessed the consequences of the repression in the hospitals) joined the popular movement of Khomeini and his clerics.

The end of the military government of Azhari probably was caused primarily by the allegedly mild heart attack suffered by the prime minister around Christmas. But, this coincidence aside, it had been clear for some time that the shah was trying to revert to a civilian government because his advisers insisted that the country was facing a political problem which had to be solved with political means, and also because certain phenomena of a crumbling of discipline had become evident in the army. The soldiers more and more often were refusing to fire at demonstrators, and desertions were increasing.

## The Search for a New Civilian Government

At first the shah tried to negotiate with the veteran former Prime Minister Ali Amini, but apparently this attempt failed because Amini demanded the full powers to which the prime minister was entitled under the constitution, and which the shah had seized increasingly during the decades of his regime. Later the monarch felt he had to ask Qolam Hussein Sadiqi to form a government. A retired professor of sociology, Dr Sadiqi had been minister of the interior under Mossadeq and in 1953 had conducted the plebiscite on the basis of which the shah had left the country at that time. The attempt at a solution with Sadiqi failed as well. The opposition refused to cooperate with him as long as the shah remained in the country, and reportedly there were also difficulties between the monarch and Sadiqi concerning the question of the delimitation of full powers.

Then the shah asked Dr Shapur Bakhtiar, a former deputy president of the National Front, the most important political opposition, to form a government. But the front expelled Bakhtiar when he put himself at the shah's disposal. Bakhtiar managed to play up the possibility of a "vacation" by the shah abroad and the formation of a regency council to take the place of the monarch (temporarily?), although spokesmen of the palace in constant denials claimed that the shah had no intention of leaving the country for an extended period, let alone for good.

## The Uncertain Future

At the time when this is being written, several possible solutions of the crisis are apparent. The shah either will revert to his constitutionally

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limited role or will have to remain abroad for good. The army either will have to submit to the civilian government or sooner or later will try to carry out one or several coups. In doing so, it may either remain united or fall apart. This last possibility is probably the worst imaginable alternative as it would amount to civil war and inevitably would pose the question of whether the two big powers, the Soviet Union and the United States, would be involved in it or would be able to avoid doing so. The best possible outcome probably would be the forming of a constituent assembly after the shah's departure and the conducting of a democratic experiment. This is not bound to fail. After all, Iran is a rich country, whose riches only need to be administered a little better and more honestly than heretofore to have a stabilizing, rather than destabilizing, effect. Iran also definitely needs a free debate about its main domestic political and cultural questions, including primarily the basic question as to how Islam and modern life can be reconciled.<sup>4</sup> This question remains unsolved throughout the Muslim world and can be brought closer to solution only if the societies concerned are allowed to express their opinions. The fact that this ceased to be possible altogether in Iran after 1953 probably lies at the very root of the current problems.

What probably is now no longer possible is a continuation of the regime of the shah in its previous form. The main instrument which upheld it, SAVAK, has been broken, and it appears hardly possible that this somber institution will return to power.

The whole population, under the leadership of the clerics, is determined to make sure that this does not happen.

In addition to the best and worst imaginable solutions, there remain a fair number of compromises which invariably are connected with the de facto power of the officers. Through pressure or attempts at a coup, these could interfere in politics, with the shah becoming their earnest, or their victim. The question as to whether, how long and under what circumstances the officers would then be able to rule the country must, however, remain open. Their first experiment with the Azhari military government cannot be regarded as a success by any means. But this failure can be a cause of encouragement as well as a deterrent for those eager for a coup--a deterrent rather for high-ranking generals, a cause of encouragement perhaps rather for officers of the middle ranks who think they can do better than their superiors managed to.

The shah's departure on 16 January 1979 for the moment is only a trip abroad, not an abdication. Therefore his leaving will not yet put an end to the struggle in Iran. There are followers of the shah remaining in Teheran, particularly the so-called hard-line army officers, who became hated during the state-of-emergency period because of their executions of demonstrators, and the agents of SAVAK and other previous instruments of the regime. Once the shah goes for good, all these must expect to lose their previous privileges and possibly to be called to account for their misdeeds.

So far the pro-shah officers have retained control over the army. The attempt by Prime Minister Bakhtiar to appoint as minister of defense Gen Fereidun Jam,

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a respected officer who had been removed by the shah from his post of chief of the general staff, did not succeed. The monarch refused to concede to him the full powers over the armed forces to which a minister of defense is entitled. Jam thereupon declined the ministerial post offered to him, compelling the shah to give it to Gen Jafar Shafaqat, a follower of the shah. The new chief of the army, Badrahi, named by the shah himself, is also regarded as one of the shah's followers. And leading officers of the imperial guard, the air force and the commando forces too are considered unconditional supporters of the shah. They too in many cases would have to figure on being tried for corruption and abuse of power if the regime fell once for all. They are therefore interested in the return of the shah. It therefore has to be expected that they will do all they can to prevent the Bakhtiar government--weak, anyway, because disavowed by the opposition--from governing successfully and to spread further the climate of insecurity and economic stagnation, and thus to prepare the ground for the monarch's returning as a savior. Whether or not they will be able to block Bakhtiar decisively depends in part on whether the army will continue to obey them and, on the other hand, on whether Bakhtiar will manage after all to get some support from the opposition, which so far has rejected him.

## FOOTNOTES

1. In the view of various Western military attaches, the arson in Teheran, Isfahan and other towns bore the marks of professional work. Reports about the alleged activity of provocateurs can easily be gathered in all Iranian towns. Cf LE FIGARO, Paris, 6 Nov 78, "Teheran at the Mercy of Rioters."
2. The military people administering martial law had clashed on several occasions with the Sharif-Emami government, most palpably concerning the question of censorship and freedom of the press. While the military tried to exercise censorship, Sharif-Emami promised "full freedom" to the press. On the day before he assumed power--on 5 November--the army for the first time had fired on students on a large scale on the university campus, killing numerous students. The day thereafter, it cleared certain parts of the downtown area, while at the same time organized arsonists, widely believed to belong to the secret services, began their activity. Masses of students penetrated the parts of the downtown area that were not covered by the officers. The British Embassy and numerous other buildings were set on fire. The U.S. Embassy was protected by the forces. After 1 day's arson, the shah decided to dismiss Sharif-Emami and to appoint a military government. Thereupon the troops returned to all parts of the town. Gen Qolem Ali Oveissi, the administrator of martial law in Teheran known as a hard-line activist, went abroad after a new civilian government (Bakhtiar, in January 1979) had been named--officially for reasons of health and reportedly because he did not concur in the reappointment of a civilian government. Cf LE FIGARO, loc cit. Concerning provocateurs in Amol who were seized and taken to court but then freed

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by the army by force, see LE MONDE, 20 Nov 78, "The Judiciary Affirms Its Opposition to the Regime."

3. Cf report by this writer in NEUE ZUERCHER ZEITUNG, 12 Jan 79, "Punitive Expedition in Nejefabad."
4. In this connection the fate of the Islamic philosopher Ali Shariati needs to be recalled. Shariati, a professor in Meshed and probably the foremost mind concerned with the problems of Islam and the modern age in the Islamic world since the time of the Egyptian Muhammad Abduh, for years was imprisoned and tortured. When his heart grew weak, he was released, and in 1976, at the age of 44, he died in London from a heart attack. Shariati today is the most important intellectual figure behind the Iranian uprising. His writings (he left behind 153 books and pamphlets) today are being sold in duplicated editions in the streets of all Iranian towns.

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IRAQ

VICE PRESIDENT'S RECENT TRIP TO PARIS ANALYZED

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 11-17 Jan 79 pp 24, 25

/Article: "What is behind Iraqi Vice President Taha Muhyi-al-Din Ma'ruf's Visit to Paris?"

/Text/ On the eve of his official visit to France this 9 January, Mr Taha Muhyi-al-Din Ma'ruf, vice president of Iraq, made statements to the correspondent of AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI concerning some aspects of his mission to Paris, in which he praised the understanding reply which French President D'Estaing sent in response to a letter from President Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr on the meanings and goals of the Baghdad summit and its resolutions.

The vice president of the Republic of Iraq confirmed that he would examine the development of conditions in the African Horn with the French party and would discuss developments of the situation in Lebanon.

There follow herewith Mr Taha Muhyi-al-Din Ma'ruf's answers to some of AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI's questions.

/Question/ Your visit to France is occupying a large portion of the attention of observers, in view of the fact that it is considered an indication that Iraqi-French relations have not been affected, in essence or detail, by the well-known incident in the embassy. In what context do you place this visit? What major objectives are expected of it?

/Answer/ As a matter of fact, it had been determined that our visit to France would take place last December, 1978, but it was postponed to its present date because of emergency circumstances. Iraq, whether through this visit or through visits by responsible officials at various levels in the country's political leadership, is facing the requirements of this stage, and the issues distinguishing it which are of concern to Iraq and the region, in a spirit of national responsibility. In this context, Iraq has stated its position of principle to diplomats with complete frankness.

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France's Just Positions

*/Question/* Can it be said that Iraq, through your visit to France, is dedicating its movement in the international context early in the new year, as previous reports have mentioned?

*/Answer/* Our movement toward France is in harmony with trends which portend well, toward the union between the nations of Syria and Iraq and with the joint agreements the Baghdad summit propounded in order to confront the plots hatched against the Arab nation and its central cause by the two Camp David agreements.

When I said that our movement toward France is in harmony with this proposition, there is nothing strange in that, because France is to be considered an international force whose just positions we hope will develop, in view of the good they hold for Arab-European relations in general and Arab-French relations in particular.

*/Question/* How would you describe the current status of Iraqi-French relations?

*/Answer/* Our bilateral relations are excellent, as everyone knows; they are developed relations which we hope will be the model for relations between the Arabs and the Western world.

In the context of demands for mutual understanding, we consider that much is requested of France the genuine, which has been endowed with a human cultural heritage and European moral influence, in the context of creating the wherewithal for understanding, on the part of the countries of Western Europe, of the justice of our national causes and the causes of the third world.

It is no secret that contacts are constantly being made between Baghdad and Paris. The letter which President Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr sent to President Valerie Giscard D'Estaing on the results of the Baghdad summit and its objectives was frank, detailed and justified.

The French president's response to the Iraqi president's letter was the object of amazement and esteem, in view of the good sentiments and objective understanding it contained.

Issues of the African Horn

*/Question/* Observers in the French capital conclude that you will present Iraqi points of view for discussion regarding the African Horn and as well as developments in the situation in the Middle East, in the light of the remedies approved by the Baghdad summit and the facts of the visit which Mr Saddam Husayn, vice president of the Revolutionary Command Council, recently made to Moscow and Havana. Is there any accuracy in these conclusions?

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/Answer/ Iraq supports African liberation movements and their demand for the right to determine their destinies, and there is no doubt that what is happening in the African Horn enjoys Iraq's attention. This will be among the issues to be discussed with the French party, which has broad concerns in this part of the world. I am anxious to point out that Iraq is stressing its position of support for the Eritrean revolution and stands alongside its leaders in their demands for the right to determine their destiny and their future conditions.

The Lebanese Issue Also

/Question/ It has been said that the issue of Lebanese developments, especially in the south, has started to occupy part of the mutual interest of Iraq and France. Will your discussions deal with the French role in Lebanon, within the United Nations forces, and the context of efforts to create a Lebanese political solution?

/Answer/ Yes, we will describe our position on the crisis in Lebanon, for one noble objective, which is to maintain the unity of Lebanon territorially and in terms of its people and to maintain its sovereignty and its Arab affiliation, and we will describe our efforts to support Lebanese legitimacy and our initiatives as regards Lebanon during the ninth Arab summit conference. We will encourage and support France's international efforts aimed at strengthening Lebanon's sovereignty on its territory in the face of well known Zionist ambitions.

We have lost much of what Lebanon represented for our Arab nation, but we have great confidence in its people and the reconstructed united, prosperous Democratic Lebanon they will achieve. The people of Lebanon have paid a lot, and we have lived through their sorrows with them and will forcefully support the reconciliation agreement which the Lebanese parties are approving, which will achieve the objectives we have mentioned.

Long-Term Agreements

/Question/ Will your mission in France deal with followup on certain arms agreements, in view of the fact that France is considered a relatively secure backup source of arms? In this regard, it has been said that you will, in your discussions, raise the subject of Iraqi-French cooperation in the context of nuclear research, in accordance with an agreement in principle to establish nuclear reactors for research in Iraq. Consequently, will the task of getting this agreement going enter into the framework of your discussions?

/Answer/ I believe that it will be feasible for our delegation to discuss the development of mutual Iraqi-French cooperation and its expansion on various levels and in various sectors.

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Iraq has long-range connections and agreements. In this regard, I do not need to say that we are faithful to all our international commitments, as regards both oil and other matters.

Iraq Does Not Want an Energy Crisis, But

Question It has been said that the French party might raise the issue of returning to a developed system of bartering oil for goods and services in the discussions with you. What is your basic position on this matter? Do you consider that French anxiety on the temporary suspension of Iranian oil production has any relationship to this trend, bearing in mind that French movement which the French minister of foreign affairs made in Kuwait and the Arab Emirates was aimed at gaining assured oil supplies for France and the West and at filling the Iranian gap in oil supplies to France?

Finally, what is your position on the idea of increasing your oil production in this period, in order to help eliminate disruptions in the movement of oil supplies?

Answer There is a fact which is worth mentioning and emphasizing, which is that Iraq has demanded and propounded in detailed form the idea of programming oil production in OPEC states in order to meet the real demands of the market and to prevent the fabrication of a surplus which will put pressure on prices, as it did in the past.

In this context, the requirements of the national development plan are what dictate our oil production policy and consequently we invest our revenues to achieve development goals.

We do not possess cash surpluses deposited in the coffers of international banks, although we could, for our oil reserves are great and immense. However, we deal with this situation with a great feeling of responsibility.

While we refuse to squander this national resource, we are not trying to create what might be alleged to be an energy crisis. We have emphasized this and have proved it.

As the industrial world trembles in fear over the occurrence of anything which might obstruct the flow of oil--as is currently happening in the course of the events in Iran--it is quickly pretending to forget the importance of this resource, which is prone to depletion in a short time, and is once again causing us, the oil producing countries, to suffer all the disadvantages of the international economic system.

Fortunately, however, we find that France totally understands what is going on in this regard.

As regards barter, we have refused to deal through that, in view of the fact that oil never has been an unsaleable commodity. I personally have

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no information on a "developed barter system" or the details of such a system; however, I would like to point out that Iraq has for some time assiduously been demanding that the prices of imported goods and services be linked to oil prices, but so far without avail.

We do not know how long we must lose an increasing percentage of the buying power of our revenues as a result of inflation in world prices and the repercussions which have resulted from unemployment compensation in the industrial countries and the artificial decline in the price of the dollar.

In addition, the visit to France by the Iraqi delegation, headed by Mr Taha Muhyi-al-Din Ma'ruf, assumes special importance in the eyes of observers not because it comes in response to an invitation sent by Mr Raymond Barre, the prime minister of France, but because it represents the first high-level Iraqi movement in the context of Iraqi-French relations since the press conference in which Mr Saddam Husayn, vice president of the Revolutionary Command Council, faced the largest press delegation ever to visit Iraq, and since the important changes which have appeared as a result of the national action charter between Iraq and Syria and the Baghdad summit.

Saddam Husayn's Appreciation of the French Role

Mr Saddam Husayn singled France out for an appreciative statement at the beginning of his talk, in which he said,

"In French policy, Iraq has found a desire to cooperate with the Arab world and the third world in a new context different from that of the antiquated mentality with which the behavior of some Western countries is characterized." Saddam Husayn reminded his listeners that France's relations were not disadvantageous ones for the French by material or moral criteria. Iraq supported French interests by choosing to develop relations with France at a time when the scope for numerous alternative choices was opening up before it.

Therefore he stressed the fact that "The exchange of view between us and France since the era of President Pompidou has been continuous, and it is our intention and plan that this exchange continue."

Regarding the issue of Iraqi military transactions with France, Mr Saddam Husayn said,

"At the press conference held on the periphery of the July anniversary celebrations, I said that we intend to buy military equipment from France, not because we are complaining about disruptions in equipment supplies from the Soviet Union but because, when relations between two countries grow, the development of relations should comprise various fields and there should be no vetoes over specific areas. France's share in Iraq's weapons supply is very modest, because the basic military equipment comes from the Soviet Union."

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In the light of that, observers say that the development of cooperation in the armament context will depend on the French party and on the criteria of just, realistic pricing.

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MAURITANIA

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS DISCUSSED WITH MAURITANIAN LEADERS

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 28 Dec 78 - 3 Jan 79 pp 24-26

[Interviews with Moustapha Ould Mohamed Saleck and Ould Mohamed Laghdaf by Nabil al-Maghribi]

[Text] The Mauritanian desert nights are apparently just like the Nile River waters, in that anyone who savors them once must return again.

The Corrective Movement led by Moustapha Ould Mohamed Saleck over 5 months ago clearly put Mauritania on the chart of general Arab concerns. It transformed Mauritania from a state sleeping in the shadow of reality and collapsing under its security and economic problems without moving a muscle while waiting for a miracle out of nowhere, to a state which has become infused with the dynamics of change, with a rebellion against its situation and with a search for Mauritanian solutions to Mauritanian problems.

It was this development that led me to Mauritania, where I was the first journalist to interview and question Colonel Moustapha Ould Mohamed Saleck, as previously indicated in issue 78 of AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI, dated 22 August 1978.

But the political nature of a news assignment encompasses more than just persons, for it extends beyond them to the environment and circumstances. Hence, my meeting with the Mauritanian desert and the wonderful, serene desert nights, which are sleeping over the treasures of mineral resources without that detracting from their enchantment.

The shift from the abundance of tumultuous noise in Paris to the symphony of fine silence in the Mauritanian desert was the beginning of a love affair with the desert and with the desert night. It was that enchantment that led me to spend a few days of vacation this time in the meadows of the desert. But the cares of my press work penetrated the walls of the vacation, especially since I arrived on an evening marked with great political significance, with the Mauritanian leaders possibly deciding to release 51 Polisario prisoners captured by the Mauritanian forces years

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ago. That was the second opportunity for a new meeting with Colonel Moustapha Ould Mohamed Saleck and a number of authorities in the new era.

As usual, Colonel Ould Mohamed Saleck was forthcoming, and it seemed to me that the months of rule, though short, had made him grayer, but they had not affected him as a modest man who does not erect barriers, created by intoxication with power between him and the others. And he smiled shyly when I told him that I had come to get the news right from its primary source. The interview went as follows:

[Question] Five months after the rise of the Corrective Movement that swept Moktar Ould Daddah out of power, what has been changed in Mauritania?

[Answer] Indeed, many things have been changed through the effort to implement a new policy of recovery to free the country of the accumulations of the past. Not many accomplishments have been attained thus far, for the simple reason that the legacy we inherited was burdensome, weighed down by wrongdoing and corruption. It is not easy to extricate ourselves from that situation with the necessary speed.

The stage we are in now is still one of examination, study and deduction, taking into account the conditions that produced the experiences of the previous regime. As far as we--that is, the authorities in this country--are concerned, we are determined more than ever to proceed on the path of recovery and to apply the principles of the movement for which we have come, by which I mean the following:

1. Achievement of the national recovery in two stages, economic and social;
2. Finding a just solution to the Saharan question, one that will preserve Mauritanian sovereignty and rights;
3. Consolidation of that sovereignty, and strengthening the basic elements of the Mauritanian existence by means of consultations and negotiations with the various parties.

We are giving priority to the economic and social problems, because under the previous regime the country reached the limits of bankruptcy.

[Question] Are you optimistic with regard to the solution of the economic problems?

[Answer] Naturally, none of us should founder in the sea of blind optimism. Certainly not! But that is no reason for us to be filled with unjustified pessimism.

You know that the heritage is a heavy one. We must work hard to rescue the country from yesterday's legacy, after most Mauritanian citizens have been freed of the decline of the economic conditions.

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For this reason, we attach special importance to improving those conditions. During the course of the recovery, we are working to make the others see that Mauritania can regain its vitality. Mauritania is rich in its history, culture and resources and in its privileged position, and these facts will help speed up the journey toward restoration and construction.

A Surprise Every Day

You know very well that until now we have not yet taken a complete accounting of the mistakes of the past. Every day, we come upon a surprise. Each day, hidden things are revealed to us. Thus, the uncovering of the continued existence of such things is foremost in the developments and concerns that have characterized the new stage. I tell you frankly that the work here is going along without any fuss, for fussing and yelling do not mean anything to us. The important thing is that we develop the country, that we succeed in rebuilding the state on a sound foundation in accordance with clearly defined goals.

[Question] How much time, in your opinion, is needed to solve all these problems?

[Answer] I tell you candidly that we must not expect to perform miracles in this small stage, that is, we must not be absorbed with fantasy and imagine that structures will rise here and there or that factories will be built by the tens. But we can say that between now and next July (the first anniversary of the Corrective Movement), we shall succeed in making inventory or a general list of the goals we intend to achieve, after pinpointing where the malady exists in various fields.

To make it even clearer, I will say that between now and next July we shall arrive at a clear outline of the goals and guidelines with a definite schedule for carrying out the projects that will be approved.

Our Deadline Next July!

[Question] Then you mean that you are making next 10 July a new turning in your course?

[Answer] I hope so. In any event, that date will be a deadline by which to begin the implementation of the plan for complete recovery.

[Question] There is another important development the country has witnessed recently: the start of the withdrawal of the Moroccan forces. What does that withdrawal signify? And within what new circumstances is that withdrawal taking place?

[Answer] Yes, of course, that is a new development. That is, the 10 July Movement would be aimless if necessary steps were not taken to strengthen

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our sovereignty. Morocco shares this view with us, and we agree entirely on this point, with regard to the withdrawal of the Moroccan forces when the Mauritanian forces will be in a position to undertake the role that the Moroccan forces have been playing. That is what the Moroccan monarch assured me at our recent meeting. Moreover, that is what we perceive in the statements made by the Moroccan authorities to the Moroccan and international press.

Thus, the Moroccan forces have begun withdrawing. But that does not mean we would refrain from asking for assistance if that were necessary in the future. The withdrawal coincides with the dynamism of the peace we are achieving.

[Question] Has a specific timetable been set for the withdrawal of those forces? In other words, will it take place in stages, and how?

[Answer] Not at all. We have not set a specific timetable. The withdrawal is being made on the basis of a simple balancing: Whenever there are sufficient Mauritanian units to replace the Moroccan ones in a given sector or barracks, the withdrawal will take place there.

[Question] When will there be enough Mauritanian units to take the place of the Moroccan forces now in Mauritania?

[Answer] On a zonal basis, matters must proceed rapidly. For our part, we have taken and are now continuing to take the necessary steps toward having enough units, forces and commanders to assume the role of the Moroccan forces. I believe we shall reach that stage within a short time, not more than the first 3 months of 1979.

A Different Kind of French Aid

[Question] What about French military aid?

[Answer] Here it is of a different kind. There are no French forces stationed on our land. French military support is limited to offering advisory services in military training, and nothing more. Under these circumstances, it is merely technical assistance. But this does not mean that Mauritania is suffering from an "inferiority complex" or "guilt complex" if the defense of our sovereignty were to necessitate our asking for French specialists in one field or another so that our forces would become able to ensure the necessary formations and cadres reinforced with the necessary equipment.

[Question] What about the role of French aircraft in supporting Mauritanian sovereignty in the Mauritanian airspace?

[Answer] That is a circumstantial (and therefore temporary) matter relating to factors involved in the Saharan issue.

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[Question] Where specifically are the French aircraft stationed? In Dakar, for example?

[Answer] In Dakar or France, it does not matter. That is not the problem. What is important is the emphasis on the fact that that aid is circumstantial, changing as the need for it changes.

[Question] As long as we are talking about France, there is a question that arises in this context. You met French President Giscard d'Estaing recently for the first time. What did you think of him?

[Answer] I have great respect for French President Giscard d'Estaing. There is no doubt that he enjoys a shrewd view of current international events. He has a great knowledge of problems that are raised.

[Question] You know, Mr President, that d'Estaing had a firm relationship with Moktar Ould Daddah. Candidly speaking, did the French president intercede for Ould Daddah's release.

[Answer] Certainly not! Our talk only touched in passing on Moktar Ould Daddah's present situation, nothing more.

[Question] Then he is still under detention?

[Answer] Moktar Ould Daddah's status will be considered at the appropriate time. There are more urgent matters before us at this time, concerning the Mauritanian people as a whole, and not just one person.

And a Certain Stage After Boumediene?

[Question] Regarding the recent Algerian developments, particularly the question of the succession to Boumediene, are they causing you apprehensions?

[Answer] Apprehensions? Why? It is difficult to predict now what may happen. But what is certain is that the problem is related to purely internal matters. I respect Algerian sovereignty and the right of the Algerian people to make its choice. I hope with all my heart that the people's will and the question of sovereignty will prevail over every [other] consideration in regard to President Boumediene's succession. As for the people competing for the presidency, that does not concern us. As I said, it is an internal matter.

So That the Pan Will Not Burn

[Question] What is the latest news of the Saharan issue? There is a popular saying that "too many cooks spoil the broth," and there have indeed been too many cooks these days: from the Committee of African Sages to the OAU, occasionally French and Arab interventions, etc.

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Colonel Moustapha Ould Saleck laughs heartily and says:

[Answer] I'll set your mind at ease. We will not let the broth burn. The Committee of Sages is now engaged in studying matters and viewpoints from all aspects. The committee is placing all its influence and reputation in the balance. I am confident that it will arrive at fruitful, positive results, at a solution that will save the broth from burning. It is assumed that the committee will draw up the essential part of its study within a few months. We hope that the sides concerned will succeed in removing the obstacles.

Why Haven't You Shown Your Hand?

[Question] Maritanian policy is being criticized for thus far not having presented a carefully studied, practical plan of action to solve the problem. In all candor, how do you envision the solution? What is your plan of action in this regard? Why haven't you shown your hand thus far?

The colonial answers candidly:

[Answer] If the matter were up to Mauritania alone, it would be easy to present a clearly defined plan or idea.

You know that the problem does not concern Mauritania alone. Why do you want us to disclose our papers and present a plan for solution before the other parties concerned present theirs? Let them offer their solutions and let us give our view. Then let us discuss those solutions and present our ideas on the problem.

Our objective now is to reach a practical, tangible solution; theoretical solutions and ideas are of no avail.

Yes, [There are] Limits to Patience

[Question] Even diplomatic patience has its limits. Consequently, how long will you be patient? How long will you wait for the other parties to present their solutions?

[Answer] There certainly are limits to patience, For our part, we set a maximum time limit. The ball is not in the Mauritanian court now.

We are waiting for the idea or plan that the others will propose.

In other words, we are now awaiting the report that the Committee of Sages will complete in a few months. Of course, the discussion of those results should not take long. We are optimistic, on this basis....

[Question] If the parties concerned do not reach a solution, what is the alternative? Do you believe, for example, that the failure to arrive at a solution will place the region in danger of some explosion?

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[Answer] In any event, I do not expect things to go that far. Our goal now is to work for a solution to such eventualities by finding the appropriate solution before things get out of control.

The replies of Colonel Moustapha Ould Mohamed Saleck explained much of the general framework of the Mauritanian orientations and policies being decided upon through consultation among the members of the National Council for Recovery, who established the Corrective Movement and harmoniously shared, and are continuing to share, the roles and functions.

To round out the picture, we held the meeting reported below with Foreign Minister Sheikh Ould Mohamed Laghdaf, who fortunately happened to be in Nouakchott. His duties have necessitated a good deal of travel among the Arab, African and European capitals in a series of dynamic contacts which apparently will crown him the "No 1 globetrotter" in Mauritania. This interview with the foreign minister took place in his office, characterized by the asceticism that marks everything in Mauritania.

[Question] After 5 months since you came to power, what are the broad guidelines of your foreign policy?

[Answer] The new regime's foreign policy is aimed at achieving many goals at the same time:

1. Act to restore the distinct Mauritanian independent personality to the country, because it did not enjoy complete independence and sovereignty under the previous regime;
2. Act to have Mauritania restored as an element of balance in the region, and not have it side with one country against another;
3. Improve relations with the various other countries, both in the North and South, and retain good neighborly relations with the adjacent countries;
4. Strengthen Mauritanian's special, distinctive role as a link between Africa and the Arab world;
5. Assume an effective role in international organizations and associations;
6. Impose the Mauritanian presence on the international forum, and interact effectively with Arab world issues. That is to say, Mauritania is endeavoring to play its role in the Middle East crisis, has participated in the Baghdad summit conference and has criticized the Camp David accords, clarifying its position on the question of the partial solution, asserting that such solutions cannot further peace in the region or restore the land and rights to the Palestinians.

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[Question] What steps are you taking under the present circumstances to resolve the Saharan question?

[Answer] The Saharan question concerns the Mauritanian people, naturally, but it certainly concerns Morocco and Algeria at the same time. We therefore aim at a complete solution and spare no effort that can bring the points of view closer in order to find that solution.

[Question] What stage do you expect to come after Boumediene? Are you anticipating something in this regard?

[Answer] This new stage may be reflected negatively or positively by the Saharan question. We cannot now indulge in premature judgments or expectations. What can be said at this time is that Mauritania is seeking to establish good relations with all [states], in order to serve as a balancing element between Morocco and Algeria.

[Question] As for the Committee of Sages, do you personally have broad hopes for it?

[Answer] Personally, I am optimistic on that account. It is assumed that the committee will present its study and ideas on the problem no later than next July. We hope that the committee will succeed in presenting a timetable on the stages for settling the question.

[Question] What concessions might Mauritania end up offering?

[Answer] We have made a number of concessions since 10 July 1978:

First, placing the question of peace foremost among Mauritania's concerns;  
Undertaking many intensive efforts to bring the viewpoints closer together, efforts that led to the formation of the Committee of Sages;  
Achieving a cease fire.

[Question] Do you desire to receive Arab economic aid?

[Answer] Why not? We have received considerable aid from Saudi Arabia, Morocco and Libya, and Iraq has indicated its readiness to carry out a number of Mauritanian development projects and to provide Mauritania with the necessary aid in various fields. The country's financial situation has improved due to the assistance of sister nations.

[Question] It has been said that France has made a great effort to assist you. What has France provided?

[Answer] France has set aside 50 million francs in aid for us, and of that sum 20 million has reached us thus far.

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MOROCCO

BRIEFS

PETROLEUM PRODUCTS REFINING--During its twelfth meeting in Rabat on 18 December, presided over by Moussa Saadi, minister of Energy and Mining Resources, the board of directors of the National Petroleum Products Company (SNPP) studied that company's activities during the year 1978 in commercial, financial and social areas. The study revealed that during last year the domestic petroleum products market experienced an increase of 8.5 percent, the same rate as the preceding year. The needs of the market were supplied at the rate of 74 percent from the national refineries, the remainder having been imported in the form of refined petroleum products. The situation will change in 1979, the refining potential being sufficient to satisfy over 90 percent of the country's needs. Concerning equipment, 1978 saw the beginning of work on several storage projects, maritime transportation and road and distribution projects; some were recently inaugurated. The value of these projects is figured at 75,000,000 dirhams. The board also examined and adopted the operating and equipment budgets for next year, in the light of new commercial and economic data. It is estimated that there will be development in this sector's activities. In other matters, the board studied the principle for organizing a national campaign to achieve economies in energy consumption in the various sectors. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 5 Jan 79 pp 22,23] 8946

ISLAMIC BANK LOAN--The Islamic Development Bank decided on 2 January to grant Morocco a loan of approximately \$4,500,000 to finance the purchase of cars to transport cement from the Oujda production centers to the distribution and loading centers at Fez. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 12 Jan 79 p 70] 8946

STRIKES--A four-day general strike was launched on 4 January by the Moroccan Federation of Rail Workers, involving the whole system. This federation is affiliated with the Moroccan Labor Federation (UMT), the country's most powerful union group. The railwaymen, who are demanding among other things a 15-percent salary increase, announced they intended to extend their movement beyond 8 January, 48 hours at a time, if they did not get satisfaction. They recalled that an agreement had been concluded between the Confederation office and the Labor Ministry, by which a salary raise of 15 percent had been promised them, to catch up with civil service pay. Other strikes are scheduled in Morocco to protest the austerity policy followed by the government, and the

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resulting wage freeze. This is the case in Fez, where civil servants affiliated with the UMT have been observing a 48-hour strike since 3 January, as well as in Mohammedia, an oil port near Casablanca, where workers in industrial establishments on 4 January, again on the UMT initiative, launched a 24-hour work stoppage in sympathy with General Electric Company's strikers, whose movement has gone on for over a month. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 12 Jan 79 p 70] 8946

AGRICULTURAL SITUATION IN 1978--After the bad 1977 season the Moroccan harvest of four principal cereals, estimated at 50,000,000 quintals, represents nearly double the preceding harvest. However, increased needs, linked this year with the need to reconstitute the stocks exhausted by the earlier bad harvests has enforced recourse to importing nearly 13,000,000 quintals of wheat. In industrial crops the harvest was 2,400,000 tons of beetroot and 318,000 tons of sugar cane, giving rise to a production of 375,000 tons of sugar, an increase of 60 percent over the 1977 production. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 12 Jan 79 p 70] 8946

AGREEMENT WITH BELGIUM ON KENITRA--The Moroccan minister of Housing and Territorial Development, Abbes El Fassi, and the ambassador from Belgium to Rabat, Luc Puttman, on 6 January signed a draft cooperation accord dealing with the establishment of the management plan for the city of Kenitra. On the other hand, Gustave Boeykens, vice president of the Belgian Parliament, in Marrakech for a private visit from 2 to 7 January, mentioned the plan to create a Morocco-Belgian interparliamentary commission, to promote development of relations between the two countries. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 12 Jan 79 p 71] 8946

AIR AGREEMENT WITH NETHERLANDS--The Dutch airline KLM on 4 January resumed its regular flights to Casablanca, after a two-month interruption. For its part, Royal Air Maroc, beginning on 9 January, was to resume its service to Amsterdam. This resumption followed on an accord between the Moroccan and Dutch authorities and will be in effect for one year. It is recalled that the Dutch-Moroccan difference on air transportation began last 2 November, the day the bilateral landing authorizations were suspended. For years the Dutch company has been requesting the Moroccan rights for a connection between Amsterdam and Tangier. The Dutch government's aviation department had proposed to Moroccan authorities that Royal Air Maroc's summer 1978 schedule be extended for one month while awaiting negotiations on the requested connection. Royal Air Maroc then suspended its Netherlands flights. KLM, which touches down at Casablanca twice a week, was authorized to open a Tangier connection beginning next 1 April. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 12 Jan 79 p 71] 8946

CITRUS PRODUCTION--Moroccan exports of early citrus, which as we recently pointed out made up for their slowness, at the end of 1978 revealed only a rather limited difference over the preceding season. In fact, as of last 31 December clementine exports amounted to 129,000 tons (against 133,500 tons at the end of December 1977) and navels amounted to 43,090 tons (against 48,800 tons). On 7 January the export programs handled 15,000 tons of clementines and 12,900 tons of navels. On this same date the export cumulative total was 144,000 tons for clementine and 56,000 tons for navels. However, it

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should be pointed out that Moroccan exports of clementines and navels for the current 1978-1979 season will ultimately be less significant than estimated. According to a report published in Rabat a downward revision of the estimates took place last month, putting back the estimated tonnage for clementines from 184,000 tons to 165,000 tons and tonnage estimated for clementines from 144,000 tons to 132,000. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 19 Jan 79 p 131] 8946

COST OF LIVING--The general cost of living index for November 1978 was established in Morocco at 183, against 182.7 the month before, or a 0.16-percent increase, against 0.88 percent in October over September. Thus, on the basis of the average of the January to November 1978 indexes, or 175.9 for the whole of Morocco, the evolution of prices in the 11-month term in relation to the average index for the 11 months of 1977 (or 161.2), marks an increase of about 9.12 percent. This rate is clearly lower than that recorded during the same period of 1977 in relation to the average index of the 11 months of 1976 (143.2), or an increase of 12.7 percent. For Casablanca, the average index for the 11 months of 1978 was established at 177.2, marking an increase of 9.72 percent in relation to the average of the 11 months of 1977 (161.5). There too the rate of increase appears to be lower than that recorded for the same period last year, or approximately 13 percent. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 19 Jan 79 p 131] 8946

SIGNS OF URANIUM--Encouraging signs of uranium have been found in the Upper Atlas, the Moroccan minister of Energy and Mining Resources, Moussa Saadi announced in Marrakech. The discovery was made in the Imintanout Circle, south of Chichaoua. Other signs had previously been discovered in 1977 by drilling in the Middle Atlas (a region of Upper Moulouya). It is recalled that Morocco envisages, in the next few years, extracting uranium oxide from phosphoric acid, of which it has become a large producer, thanks to its phosphates. The minister made these statements on the occasion of the dedication on 19 December of the Draa Sfar mine, 15 km northwest of Marrakech. The mine's present installations are designed for extraction of 81,000 tons of crude ore per year, yielding after processing 3,000 tons of lead concentrate and 7,500 tons of zinc concentrate. Marketing of the processed product will permit an annual turnover of 10,000,000 to 12,000,000 dirhams. Equipment cost amounts to 22,000,000 dirhams. In his speech Moussa Saadi stressed the importance of the mining sector in the national economic area, stating that the sector had participated in 5.6 percent of the gross national production in 1977 and that it employed some 40,000 workers. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 29 Dec 78 p 3555] 8946

OIL BASIN--An oil basin has just been discovered in the Sidi-Kacem region, 150 km northeast of Rabat, the Moroccan minister of Energy and Mining Resources, Moussa Saadi, announced during a dinner-discussion on 23 December in Rabat, arranged by the former pupils of the Oujda high schools. The minister indicated that a first stratum of oil was found in this region at a depth of 2,660 meters at the time of prospecting undertaken by the BRPM (Moroccan Mineral Exploration and Investment Office). Mr Saadi, who did not state the

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importance of this deposit, added that his department had recently appealed to international companies to proceed with broader prospecting in this region where they confirmed the presence of oil basins. After recalling the recent discoveries of gas and oil deposits, particularly in the Taza region and off Bssaouira, Moussa Saadi indicated that Morocco's efforts are now oriented toward increasing the drillings in depth by over 4,500 meters, estimating that "the chances for oil discoveries are proportionate to the effort agreed to in this area." King Hassan II, an AFP dispatch from Rabat recalls, recently stated that Morocco was going to begin exploiting its oil resources before next March. However, he did not go into detail as to which of the deposits discovered would be put into exploitation. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX AND MEDITERRANEENS in French 29 Dec 78 p 3555] 8946

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TUNISIA

OPERATING, CAPITAL BUDGETS UP FOR 1979

Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 19 Jan 79 pp 129-131

[Article: "Tunisia's 1979 Budget"]

[Text]

I. The State Budget

On 28 December 1978 Law No 78-59 constituted the finance bill for fiscal 1979 and Law 78-60 bore on the capital budget for the same fiscal year.

A. The Operating Budget

The total of expenditures authorized by the finance law exceeds by 15.5 percent that of the preceding fiscal year, that is, a higher rate of increase than that of the Gross National Product [GNP] at current prices (see MTM of 24 November 1978, p 3085). From 541.2 million Moroccan dinars (one Moroccan dinar equals 10.60 French francs, approximately) this amount rises to 625.1 million dinars. The increase of 83.9 million dinars involves the instrumentalities of the public services (49.2 million dinars), arrears and contingencies (14.6 million dinars), and interest on the public debt (14 million dinars).

Direct taxes are raised by 16.7 percent compared to 13.6 percent for indirect taxes and 9.1 percent for local dues. As for revenues from oil products, they are up by 6.1 percent.

The budgetary balance is practically the same. The ordinary budget allocates 143.5 million dinars to the capital budget as against 120 million dinars in 1978, that is, a coverage of 37.4 percent of capital outlays.

Credits pertaining to current expenditures of state agencies with an industrial and commercial nature and endowed with a supplementary budget are set at 40.4 million dinars. Revenues and expenditures of public enterprises have been set at 89.7 million dinars.

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## B. The Capital Budget

The law setting the capital budget determines both the state program credits (142,256,440 dinars), pledged credits (384,950,000 dinars), as well as payment credits (383,500,000 dinars). Capital funds total 383.5 million dinars, up by 9.6 percent compared to the revised level of 1978 (350 million dinars).

Following repayment of the debt, the available margin comes to 327.5 million dinars, that is, an increase of no more than 8.1 percent. The fact remains, however, that this level calls for an important effort backed by the reduction of operating expenses and the increased mobilization of current revenues.

Recourse to outside capital is estimated at 110 million dinars compared to nearly 101 million dinars in 1978.

The allocation of so-called capital credits is established with a concern to favor the productive sectors and to limit infrastructural investments. That is why a slight increase in direct investments (up 4 percent) and a rise in financial operations (up 12.6 percent) were approved.

Revenues of the State General Budget  
(in millions of Moroccan dinars)

	1978	1979
<b>1. Ordinary revenues:</b>		
Direct taxes	111.1	129.6
Indirect taxes	302.66	343.9
Imposts	11.04	12.0
Revenues from the state domain and from revenue-yielding state services	6.10	10.1
Revenues from financial interests and profits of state enterprises	95.31	113.5
Miscellaneous products	<u>15.0</u>	<u>16.0</u>
<b>Total Title I</b>	<b>541.2</b>	<b>625.1</b>
<b>2. Capital funds:</b>		
Contribution of the ordinary budget	120.0	143.5
Allocated tax revenues	17.5	19.5
Domestic loan funds	92.0	101.0
Surplus of the Postal, Telephone and Telegraph Service	7.5	9.5
Loan funds and foreign gifts	<u>131.0</u>	<u>110.0</u>
<b>Total Title II</b>	<b><u>368.0</u></b>	<b><u>383.5</u></b>
<b>Total Titles I and II (general budget)</b>	<b>909.2</b>	<b>1,008.6</b>

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## Revenues of the State General Budget (Continued)

## 3. Supplementary budgets:

Postal, Telephone and Telegraph Service	30.0	35.087
Tunisian Radio and Television	<u>4,734</u>	<u>5,357</u>
Total supplementary budgets	34,734	40.444

Breakdown of the Budget by Departments  
(in thousands of Moroccan dinars)

	State Budget (operating)		Capital Budget (equipment)	
	1978	1979	1978	1979
National Assembly	709	770	50	--
Office of the President of the Republic	2,470	2,720	988	628
Office of the Prime Minister	5,470	5,920	250	200
Ministry of Justice	4,571	5,250	1,400	870
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	9,598	10,730	1,000	650
Ministry of Interior	35,483	40,900	9,950	7,870
Ministry of National Defense	35,143	40,300	23,500	22,174
Ministry of Planning	1,532	1,670	174,300	177,200
Ministry of Finance	195,237	227,175	49,893	57,509
Ministry of Industry, Mines and Energy	5,117	2,540	270	400
Ministry of Commerce	--	3,355	--	119
Ministry of Agriculture	31,815	36,100	19,600	19,513
Ministry of Equipment	13,200	14,670	30,700	38,900
Ministry of Transportation and Communications	6,172	6,330	1,990	987
Ministry of National Education	118,300	110,700	26,500	8,589
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research	--	28,050	--	14,791
Ministry of Information	5,865	6,757	216	169
Ministry of Cultural Affairs	4,262	4,845	1,449	1,080
Ministry of Public Health	44,130	51,462	9,700	14,100
Ministry of Social Affairs	10,543	11,840	150	71
Ministry of Youth and Sports	8,583	10,016	1,600	1,315
Contingency expenditures	<u>3,000</u>	<u>3,000</u>	<u>2,251</u>	<u>3,709</u>
Total	541,200	625,100	355,757	370,844
Supplementary budgets:				
Communications	--	--	9,000	9,946
Radio broadcasting and television	--	--	<u>7,243</u>	<u>2,710</u>
Grand Total			368,000[sic]	383,500

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Budgetary Capital Expenditures  
(in millions of Moroccan dinars)

	1978	1979
Total	350	383.50
including		
Direct investments	161	167.5
Financial operations	142	160.0
Repayment of the debt	47	56.0

The 1979 budgets of most of the ministries show a drop compared to 1978 with the exception of that of the Ministry of Equipment.

As regards financial operations, the approved amount totals 160 million dinars. This figure makes it possible to support the productive sector by insuring the necessary funds for it for the realization of its investments program:

Financial Operations  
(in millions of Moroccan dinars)

	1978	1979
Agriculture and water	29.3	35.8
Mines	7.8	10.4
Energy	6.0	21.4
Manufacturing industries	26.5	22.3
Transportation	15.1	22.7
Tourism	14.9	10.4
Housing	20.0	20.0
Sanitation	6.0	6.5
Thermal power	0.4	0.5
Family planning	2.6	2.3
Occupational training	2.8	4.0
Miscellaneous	<u>10.6</u>	<u>3.7</u>
Total	142.0	160.0

## II. The Administrative Budget

The year 1979, third year of the execution of the Fifth Tunisian Economic and Social Development Plan for 1977-81, is designated as the year for the revamping and revision of certain choices. In fact, the plan's take-off occurred under hardly favorable conditions because of the difficulties in marketing Tunisia's major export products (edible oil, phosphates and byproducts, and textiles), the deterioration in the country's terms of trade, the insufficient rainfall and social demands.

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The aggregate economic plan approved for the year 1979 has the following features:

1. Growth of the Gross National Product at 6.9 percent.
2. Increase in public and private consumption of 6.2 percent (national savings rate of 20.8 percent).
3. Total investments of 852 million dinars at current prices.
4. Increase in exports of goods and services at the rate of 7.8 percent in volume (11.8 percent in value) and an increase in imports at a rate of 5.7 percent in volume (10.6 percent in value). This would result in a deficit of 285 million dinars in current transactions in the balance of payments.
5. The creation of 45,200 jobs in the nonagricultural sectors.

A. Gross National Product

The prospects of production during 1979 make it possible to estimate a 6.9 percent growth of the GNP in real terms. This estimate reflects a decrease in the rate of growth compared to 1978 (8.9 percent) and is explained by the prospect of a lower production growth rate in the agricultural sector (up 3.2 percent) followed by a decline in the sector of agricultural and food industries (down 2.8 percent). It is expected that the other sectors will grow at an overall rate of 8 percent, which may be brought about by an increase in the manufacturing industries other than food (up 14.5 percent) and notably construction materials and mechanical and electrical industries.

In a general way the various sectors of the economy apparently should account for the following shares in the increase of the GNP:

	Growth rates in percent*		
	1977	1978	1979
Agriculture and fishing	- 8.9	6.7	3.2
Mines	+ 2.8	- 3.6	12.0
Hydrocarbons	11.6	11.1	7.1
Electricity	4.6	- 3.7	9.7
Manufacturing industries	4.2	11.3	8.8
Construction and public works	10.5	9.6	6.3
Transportation and telecommunications	16.4	10.4	7.7
Tourism	- 8.1	4.6	4.2

\* Source: Ministry of Planning



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Thus, then, some sectors seem to fall short of target compared to the estimates of the plan. They are agriculture, because of weather conditions; mines and textiles, because of export difficulties; hydrocarbons, because of the delay in the putting of planned new facilities into production.

1. Agriculture and fishing.--A growth of 3.2 percent is projected for the agricultural sector overall on the basis of prudent hypotheses regarding weather conditions and the estimate of olive production:

Agricultural Production (in thousands of tons)		
	1978	1979
Cereals	900	1,000
Olives	625	400
Citrus fruits	200	170
Potatoes	105	120
Tomatoes	280	320
Meat	187	195
Milk	270	300
Sugar beets	80	600

Increases in production are expected in market garden crops (up 8.9 percent), livestock raising products (up 6.2 percent), fishing products (up 6.3 percent), and cereal crops (up 10 percent), but their effect would appear to be offset by the poor harvest of olives (400,000 tons compared to 625,000 tons in 1978--down 36 percent).

2. Mines.--In this sector the value added should increase by 12 percent in real terms, which reflects a drop of 3.6 percent compared to 1978. The production of phosphates reached no more than 3.6 million tons in 1978 (estimates of 4.1 million tons for the same year), but reactivation is anticipated in 1979 with 4.3 million tons. The production of iron may increase by 2.9 percent (to 360,000 tons) while that of nonferrous metals may see a rise of 22.7 percent thanks to the entry of a new zinc mine into full production (22,000 tons).

3. Energy.--The administrative budget anticipates an increase in the value added of this sector in the order of 7.7 percent in real terms:

	1978	1979
Crude oil (thousands of tons)	4,800	5,200
Gas (millions of cubic meters)	256	290
Refining (millions of tons)	1.1	1.35

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The production target in terms of volume (up 15 percent) was not reached in 1978 when it comes to the two products, gas and crude oil, undoubtedly because of the delay in the development of three essential projects.

As for electric power, its production is slated to increase by 11.3 percent.

4. Manufacturing industries.--As far as these industries are concerned a growth rate of 8.8 percent is anticipated in 1979 compared to 11.3 percent in 1978. The industries other than food are expected to advance at the high rate of 14.5 percent.

Estimates for 1979 regarding growth rates (in percentages) stack up as follows:

	1978 %	1979 %
Agricultural and food industries	13.9	- 2.8
Construction materials industries	19.8	30.2
Mechanical and electrical industries	15.4	13.8
Chemical industries	14.9	9.2
Textiles and leather industries	0	11.3
Lumber, paper and miscellaneous industries	18.1	13.5
All manufacturing industries other than food	10.0	14.5
All manufacturing industries	11.3	8.8

The growth rate of the construction materials industries (30.2 percent) may be justified by the entry into full operation of two new cement plants. As far as textiles are concerned, the latest agreement with the European Economic Community would suggest that the recession in effect since 1977 may be partially checked.

5. Transportation and communications.--The prospects of this sector are as follows: A 9 percent increase of production in terms of volume (as against 7.8 percent in 1978); a 7.7 percent rise in value added in real terms (10.4 percent in 1978). Production is expected to grow at a rate of 8 percent in the various modes of transportation, with the exception of maritime transportation for which a growth rate of 14.3 percent is anticipated.

6. Tourism.--The established estimates are based on a rise in accommodation capacity of 2,000 beds (66,097 in 1978 and 68,097 in 1979) and the consolidation of the improvement of the occupancy rate (39.2 percent in 1979 compared to 38.7 percent in 1978) so that the number of nights spent in hotels by patrons would increase from 9.2 million in 1978 to 9.6 million in 1979, corresponding to the arrival of 1.15 million tourists. Revenues from this sector may reach a total of 173 million dinars of which 160 million would be in foreign currencies.

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## B. Investments

The administrative budget for 1979 brings out a step-up in the investment effort to which both the public sector and the private sector are slated to contribute. An investment total of 852 million dinars at current prices is anticipated and represents 30.9 percent of the GNP (750 million dinars and 30.6 percent of the GNP in 1978). This figure is up by about 13 percent compared to 1978 and is significantly close to the projections of the plan (867 million dinars).

The table below indicates the breakdown of the aggregate package among the various sectors:

Investments by Sectors  
(in millions of Moroccan dinars)

	1977	1978	1979
1. Agriculture and fishing	70.5	90.2	109.0
2. Mines	26.5	35.3	33.4
3. Electricity	35.6	38.2	59.0
4. Planning	21.7	28.0	33.7
5. Hydrocarbons	64.0	58.0	84.5
6. Manufacturing industries	126.1	164.9	168.0
7. Transportation	116.0	99.6	130.8
8. Tourism	10.6	17.2	9.5
9. Housing	91.5	113.0	127.0
10. Equipment	77.5	94.8	91.0
11. Other	<u>5.0</u>	<u>10.8</u>	<u>6.1</u>
Total	645.0	750.0	852.0

Delays were noted in the realization of a certain number of major projects initially planned for hydrocarbons (exploitation of offshore gas, Isis oil deposit, refinery, etc) and for manufacturing industries (ammonite plant, iron and steel, etc). But the effect of these delays is in part offset by the re-evaluation of investments in other sectors.

The structure of the projected investments has been modified as a result compared to the projections of the plan. The manufacturing industries and hydrocarbons evidenced a weakening so that the share of the productive projects is no longer 64.5 percent as anticipated by the plan but only 61.7 percent.

Here, by sectors, are the major projects planned for 1979:

1. Major hydraulic projects: Dams of Sidi Salem, Sidi Saad and Joumine; outfitting of the irrigated areas; improvement of the herd.

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2. Expanded capacity of the ore-washing facilities.
- 3 and 5. Oil exploration and development of the exploited deposits; building of the Souasse thermal power station and startup of the Italian-Algerian-Tunisian gas pipeline.
4. Water lines (Tunis-Cap Bon) and Sahel; water supply project of the Gabes industrial region.
6. Tobacco plant of Kairouan; western and central cement works; phosphated fertilizer complex.
7. Improvement of the highway infrastructure; construction of agricultural trails; building of a Gafsa-Gabes railroad line.
8. Acquisition of two aircraft, two ore boats, and two coastal vessels.
9. Construction of 24,000 housing units.
10. Urban water sewers; rural development.

C. Financing

In order to realize the level of necessary investments an appeal was launched for the mobilization of resources, both domestic and foreign. National savings will have to increase by 17 percent so that their contribution to the financing of the administrative budget may be raised to 65.5 percent (64.5 percent in 1978).

The government has directed its budget toward a limitation of operating expenses and an increase in the share of budgetary savings assigned to the operation of the capital budget. This assistance will be increased to 143.5 million dinars (120 million dinars in 1978), that is, a rate of coverage of capital outlays of 37.4 percent (34.3 percent in 1978).

As far as outside funds are concerned, assistance of 355 million dinars is required. This corresponds to a net inflow of 285 million dinars representing a rate of outside financing of 33.5 percent. The external debt would be increased to 1,222 million dinars (1,002 million dinars in 1978).

The prospects for 1979 evidence a balance of payments involving a balance of trade showing a deficit of 460 million dinars (up 8.5 percent compared to 1978); a balance of services evidencing a surplus of 145 million dinars (up 10.7 percent); and a balance of current transactions closing with a deficit of 285 million dinars.

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Priority Action

The year 1979 will have to witness the implementation or failure of the goals set and to consolidate the growth process. The actions and measures to be taken, involving all the sectors of economic activity, consist of the following:

1. The promotion of the industrial sector by the consolidation of the integration of existing industries and the reinforcement of the effort of identification and realization of projects.
2. The promotion of the agricultural sector by the realization of major hydraulic dams.
3. The improvement of the balance of payments by stimulating exports and limiting the importation of nonessential consumer goods.
4. The consolidation of jobs and promotion of incomes.

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