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1 of 1

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15 May 1979

TRANSLATIONS ON NEAR EAST AND NORTH AFRICA
(FOUO 20/79)



NEAR
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CONTENTS

PAGE

INTER-ARAB AFFAIRS

Arab Nations Carefully Providing Aid to Mauritania
(THE MIDDLE EAST, Apr 79) 1

NORTH AFRICAN AFFAIRS

Mauritania, Morocco Trying To Protect Fishing Industry
(THE MIDDLE EAST, Apr 79) 4

Moroccan 'Terrorism' Against Algeria Denounced
(AFRIQUE-ASIE, 16-29 Apr 79) 6

EGYPT

'AFRIQUE-ASIE' Exposes 'Secret' Israeli-Egyptian
Understandings, Collaboration
(Sion Malley; AFRIQUE-ASIE, 16-29 Apr 79) 7

IRAN

Japanese Officials Analyze Iranian Crisis
(Shigeo Omori; ASAHI EVENING NEWS, 27 Apr 79) 11

MAURITANIA

Uncertainty Whether Nationalism Will Win Over Racial Issue
(THE MIDDLE EAST, Apr 79) 14

MOROCCO

Reportage on Aborted Coup, Social, Economic, Labor Problems
(H. Abcu Feriel; AFRIQUE-ASIE, 16-29 Apr 79) 16

- a -

[III - NE & A - 121 FOUO]

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CONTENTS (Continued)	Page
PERSIAN GULF AREA	
Problem of Immigrant Labor Discussed by Ministers (Salih Zaytun; AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI, 2-8 Mar 79)	20
SULTANATE OF OMAN	
Qabus Seen Moving Closer to United States (AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI, 2-8 Feb 79)	24
TUNISIA	
Destourian Campaign Against Oppositionists Denounced (Adel Wahid; AFRIQUE-ASIE, 16-29 Apr 79)	27

- b -

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INTER-ARAB AFFAIRS

ARAB NATIONS CAREFULLY PROVIDING AID TO MAURITANIA

London THE MIDDLE EAST in English Apr 79 pp 104-106

[Text]

The Mauritanian Minister of Finance & Commerce, Sidi Mohammed Ould Bnejara, told *The Middle East* on taking over his cabinet post after the coup d'etat in Nouakchott last July that the economic situation inherited from the previous regime was "catastrophic".

Foreign reserves, he said, were down to \$20mn, sufficient for only one month's imports, and there was absolutely no money in the Treasury, which was anyway running a \$50mn overdraft with the Central Bank. The former government had been obliged to take 160mn ouguiyas out of the state insurance company, SMAR, to pay employees and the money had to be repaid.

There was little doubt at the time that the situation was as bad as Ould Bnejara painted it. The question is now being asked, however: what steps is the new Government taking to reverse the slide into bankruptcy?

On the plus side, the new leadership has received substantial aid, mainly from friendly Arab states in the form of gifts and soft loans. For the first time, too, it has succeeded in obtaining funds from the STAHEX scheme operated by the

European Economic Community for developing-country signatories to the Lomé convention. In Mauritania's case these funds were to compensate for the shortfall in output of iron ore. Finally - and most important - it has seen a tentative end to the three years of war against the Polisario front, fighting the joint Moroccan-Mauritanian annexation of the Western Sahara.

On the other hand, it was clear that medium-term and long-term measures were needed to rectify the "errors of the past". According to Ould Bnejara, long-term improvement would require changes not only in economic structures but in the people's mentality. In the short term, he said, a complete survey of the economy was being carried out and investment legislation was being revised to liberalise the economy.

The international economic community endorses these plans for economic recovery in general terms, advising the Government to concentrate on streamlining the flow of foreign funds into the economy and on fiscal reforms. Many experts think the acid test is whether the Government can put life into the staggeringly inefficient administration.

Although some economic

difficulties can be rectified, others are proving extremely difficult to overcome. For one thing Mauritania has been hit by the lethal Sahelian drought. Last year was the first year of reasonable rainfall since 1949, and it will take many more such years to overcome the long-term socio-economic changes caused by eight years of drought.

Added to the effects of the drought, of course, the guerrilla war has brought economic ruin. Iron-ore production, hit by sabotage, fell during the first three months of 1978 to 30% below normal. Output for the whole of last year slumped to some 6mn tons, which is 2mn tons below the figure at which production begins to be profitable. This is particularly crucial for a country where (according to the latest World Bank Atlas) average income a head stood at only \$270 in 1977 and where iron exports account for over 80% of foreign revenue.

Immediately after last year's coup funds poured into Mauritania from Arab countries which were previously loth to pump money into what appeared to be a bottomless pit.

The Saudis, for instance, had been incensed to find a consignment of weapons bound for Nouakchott still sitting on a

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Marseilles wharf four months later. Funds sent to pay for them had simply been channelled into current expenditure. Indeed it was subsequent Saudi refusal to release funds which dealt the coup de grace to the old regime.

Reassured by the change, however, the Saudis promised \$100 mn to the Government of Ould Salek almost immediately. Some \$30mn was destined for budgetary support and \$70mn as a long-term development loan. Morocco also gave \$15mn as a gift for the budget, forming the first slice of a promised \$60mn.

Libya (allegedly vying with Saudi Arabia) provided \$10mn and launched a number of co-operation projects and Kuwait provided \$15mn as a loan at 3.6% interest. The IMF and France have also allocated funds, amounting to \$4mn and \$2.2mn respectively.

These donors were reassured by the political stability which followed the coup, and the influx of aid staved off immediate economic problems. Since then, however, there has been a noticeable political shift towards Libya and Algeria, combined with increasingly overt tension between blacks and Berbers, and it is not known, under the circumstances, whether

Morocco will release the remainder of its promised funds.

One factor causing major donors to monitor aid to Mauritania very closely is that even though the sums involved are not great, they nevertheless represent a very high per caput investment, as Mauritania's population numbers only 1.5mn. Another problem is that, apart from iron-ore and under-exploited fisheries, Mauritania has few natural resources, especially since its livestock herds have still not recovered from the drought. This factor holds down economic growth to a slow 1.5% a year, lagging behind a population growth rate of 2.2% (with a 50% infant mortality).

It is hoped, nevertheless, that the private sector may take off later this year and force the growth rate up. Mauritania has also made strenuous efforts since the coup to reschedule foreign debts of some \$750mn. The World Bank's report for 1978 put the country's debt-servicing ratio for 1976 at 37% of exports of goods and services - the highest ratio in the bank's list.

This state of affairs was caused in part by a 37% increase in budget expenditure between 1975 and 1976 and an increase of 27% between 1976-1977, putting a heavy strain on the balance of payments. Last year the balance-of-payments deficit widened even further with imports expected to reach \$388.2mn, costing about twice as much as exports, projected at \$180.2mn. It is hoped now that the heavy toll of defence spending (accounting for roughly 60% of Mauritania's meagre budget) can at last be reduced, although this cannot happen on a significant scale until the de facto ceasefire observed by the Polisario is translated into a long-term agreement.

Precisely because of the paucity of natural resources, great stress is placed on continuing iron-ore production as the back-bone of the economy. The biggest scheme the country has ever undertaken, the Guelb project, is designed to prolong production until well into the next century by opening new mines when the deposits near Zouerate are exhausted. Unfortunately, this scheme, although vital for Mauritania's future, has had setbacks.

Under Mohktar Ould Daddah, the Societe Nationale Industrielle et Miniere (SNIM) was changed from a state company to a mixed venture, largely at the request of Arab states who were to contribute money to the scheme. This process has continued under Ould Salek, and four Arab donors have now given firm promises to subscribe to the \$900mn project.

But a first upset came with the resignation on 3 January of Ismail Ould Amar, SNIM's Secretary General, on the mysterious grounds that he could "no longer fulfil his job". His post has been taken by Ely Ould Allaf.

Another setback was the refusal by both Kuwait and the Arab Mining Company to accept Mauritania's evaluation of SNIM's assets as \$360mn. At the end of January they finally settled on \$290mn. Since then, Kuwait, the Arab Investment Company, Morocco and the Islamic Development Bank have agreed to subscribe a total of \$95mn for the capital of the new SNIM. Libya and Iraq are also expected to take part but details are not yet known.

This is only half the battle, however. Economic experts agree that this project is vital for Mauritania, but they warn that it will not break even unless efficiently administered. They

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stress that the capital cost is huge and that burgeoning administration in Nouakchott threatens to eat up profits, which are already declining because of the unfavourable world situation.

Hopes for the long term are pinned on fishing, which is potentially an even bigger earner than iron-ore and contributed \$14mn last year.

The British White Fish Authority recently estimated that 3mn tons of fish is caught in Mauritanian waters every year, at least 2mn of which is caught illegally. They warn that immense difficulties are involved in making this sector profitable for the country at large. Mauritanians are also anxious to improve agricultural output, held up by delayed irrigation schemes. But agricultural self-sufficiency will take at least 20 years to attain, even without a recurrence of drought.

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3
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NORTH AFRICAN AFFAIRS

MAURITANIA, MOROCCO TRYING TO PROTECT FISHING INDUSTRY

London THE MIDDLE EAST in English Apr 79 p 106

[Text]

Hardly a week goes by without some incident between patrol boats from Morocco and Mauritania and foreign fishing vessels working the rich Atlantic coastal waters, which run from Tangiers in the north to beyond Nouadhibou in the south.

Most recently, a series of attacks by Polisario guerrillas against South African and Spanish vessels, which the liberation movement alleges are fishing illegally in the Western Sahara's territorial waters, has led to a significant reduction of fishing activities along this stretch of the seaboard.

This 3,000km-long coastal zone contains some of the world's richest fishing grounds, with Western Saharan waters alone possessing an estimated 2bn. tonnes of fish. The annual catch in this area is conservatively estimated at upwards of 2mn. tonnes.

With the growing world need for protein, these fishing grounds have attracted a veritable armada from the Soviet Union, South Africa, Japan, Spain and Portugal. Boats from these countries work with ultra-modern refrigerated fish-processing and canning ships. Both the governments concerned and Polisario have

made repeated protests, but most of the owners of these floating factories tend to ignore them.

Over recent years both Morocco and Mauritania have been attempting to develop their own fishing and canning industries, but their boats are small and out of date and cannot compete with the better-equipped vessels from the developed states.

At the same time, Morocco has been especially hard hit by a European Economic Community decision giving preference to Portuguese, Spanish and Greek sardines. Tinned sardines represent about 80% of Moroccan fish exports and more than half of these are absorbed by the European market. Morocco's over-specialisation in this domain is a serious weakness.

Moroccan fishermen have been complaining that over-fishing by foreign boats has tended to reduce their catch, a serious matter since the local canning industry depends on a steady supply of fish. Studies are under way to see whether modern fishing boats can be chartered, and expansion of onshore refrigeration facilities is also being considered.

The state-owned Office National des Peches is going ahead with a scheme to modernise the Moroccan fleet. If budgetary restrictions do not affect its programme, 12 sardine and nine tuna boats as well as 18 trawlers worth \$45mn. are to be bought in the next two years.

The Moroccan Minister of Industry & Commerce, Abdel-Kamel Reghaye, signed a fishing co-operation agreement with the Soviet Union last year. In exchange for Soviet aid in training Moroccan crews, financing feasibility studies for canning facilities and the possibility of forming joint ventures, Soviet ships were granted special fishing rights in Moroccan waters.

This agreement, however, touched off a minor diplomatic incident because Algeria and the Polisario thought that King Hassan was using it to achieve de facto recognition from Moscow of Moroccan control over the Western Sahara. Polisario Secretary-General Mohammad Abdel-Aziz later told *The Middle East* that his movement had received assurances from the Soviet leadership that the agreement covered only Moroccan waters and did not involve the disputed

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Saharan zone.

Mauritania's Minister of Finance & Commerce, Sidi Mohammed Ould Bnejara, has also stressed that his country is to put a great emphasis on the fishing industry in its economic recovery plan (see *previous article*). To reach this goal Nouakchott has decided to form joint ventures with both Arab and European states. So far such ventures have started with Libya and Iraq, and an agreement with Egypt should be signed soon.

Previously Mauritania had established a system of licence agreements with the principal fishing nations, but this arrangement proved unsatisfactory as foreign vessels failed to supply the Nouadhibou-based canning industry with an assured flow of fish.

In 1978, for example, only 60,000 tonnes of fish came ashore out of a total catch estimated at between 800,000 and 1mn tonnes. What is more, the Mauritanian Government received a mere \$12mn in royalties and fees from fishing companies for a catch valued at around \$1bn.

Putting the new fishing programme into action, the Mauritanian Minister of Fishing & Marine Economy, Ahmad Ould Bouceif, negotiated the basic principles of a three-year draft agreement on fishing co-operation with the EEC. Under this scheme, which should come into effect in 1980, the EEC countries will take part in joint ventures and provide technical skills. In the meantime they will be granted special rights. □

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NORTH AFRICAN AFFAIRS

MOROCCAN 'TERRORISM' AGAINST ALGERIA DENOUNCED

Paris AFRIQUE-ASIE in French 16-29 Apr 79 p 17

[Text] The Moroccan intelligence services are presently recruiting terrorist candidates from among the vast number of unemployed flooding the kingdom as well as former convicts who are urged to "reform"; the idea is to train them and organize them in the form of urban sabotage groups intended to spread death and destruction in Algeria.

Several attempts have already been made in the border region at Maghnia, where a bomb, placed by a Moroccan agent, exploded in a big cafe in the city, injuring about a score of persons. Hassan II's advisors on terrorism are currently pushing him into spreading this experiment to the entire border strip.

These acts of sabotage will be pictured as counter guerrilla operations aimed against the fighting men of the Polisario Front. Theoretically, the terrorist groups will be under the authority of the "National Defense Council" created recently with the participation of political opposition parties, especially the USFP [expansion unknown] of Master Abderrahim Bouabid and the PPS [Party of Progress and Socialism] of Mr Ali Yata who, for a month now, has been calling for "more energetic action" by Morocco against the Saharan fighters. That would seem to be the thrust of the "new strategy" promised by the king to his feudal followers.

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EGYPT

'AFRIQUE-ASIE' EXPOSES 'SECRET' ISRAELI-EGYPTIAN UNDERSTANDINGS, COLLABORATION

Paris AFRIQUE-ASIE in French 16-29 Apr 79 pp 8,9 LD

[Article by Sion Malley: "The Secret al-Sadat-Begin-Carter Agreements"]

[Text] Since Anwar al-Sadat's visit to Jerusalem on 19 November 1977 there has been a constant stream of official and secret meetings between Israelis, Egyptians and Americans. In Rabat, Washington, Paris, London, Vienna, Rome, New York and Geneva, top officials and experts from the three countries had hundreds of hours of talks to establish what kind of relations Egypt and Israel would have after the signing of the separate peace treaty.

The fact is that, from the day the Israeli secret services conveyed to al-Sadat, through Morocco's King Hassan II, allegedly authentic documents revealing that Libya had organized a plot to overthrow his [al-Sadat's] regime (documents which his own secret services confirmed as genuine), the Egyptian head of state decided once and for all that he could trust Tel Aviv and collaborate with its leaders. And first on 26 March in Washington, and later on 2 and 3 April, during Begin's visit to Cairo, the two men reached agreement on implementing a whole series of secret understandings, which had already been negotiated at length between the Egyptian and Israeli secret services.

In actual fact, it all started in a European capital (probably Vienna). There, al-Sadat met with Ezer Weizman and asked him for a "special" favor: to organize for him a personal audience with the all-powerful chief of Mossad (the Israeli secret service). The latter, Mr Yitzhaq Hoffi, whose name is never published in the Israeli press, obtained permission from Begin to accept the invitation. He arrived in the European capital barely 12 hours after al-Sadat had made his request and was closeted with him for several hours. Even Weizman himself was not allowed to attend the talks.

7

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Few people know what the two men said to each other. The only thing which has filtered through from their conversation that day is that the rais requested the "active and permanent cooperation" of the Israeli secret services to "protect" his regime against its "Arab and communist" enemies, and that Hoffi gave his consent.

From that day forth collaboration began between the two countries and it has indeed grown more active since the signing of the separate peace treaty. In Cairo and Jerusalem, and also in several western and nonaligned capitals, regular meetings are held between Egyptian and Israeli agents to exchange information of particular interest to the two countries. This exchange means that al-Sadat has now become Israel's informer not only on Arab problems but also on international events of all kinds.

Today we are in a position to reveal some of the secret understandings concluded between Israelis and Egyptians, with, of course, the approval and close cooperation of the United States.

Here are some of them.

1--Measures To Be Taken To Destroy the Unity of the Arab Front Hostile To the Peace Treaty

Provoke permanent troubles on the Libyan borders to destabilize the Tripoli regime. At some time in the future this could enable the Egyptian troops to use the right of pursuit as justification for entering Libya and trying to overthrow al-Gadhafi. Al-Sadat assures the Israelis and Americans that he has a Libyan political team all ready to form a new regime which would join forces with Egypt.

Incite certain Kurdish mercenary elements to foment hotbeds of rebellion in northern Iraq to distract the Ba'th government from the Arab-Israeli problem and persuade it to reverse its decision to merge with the Syrian government.

Provoke community and religious troubles in Iraq and Syria. At the same time, submit to the latter country a proposal for the gradual withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Golan Heights provided that it joins in the peace process initiated by al-Sadat and abandons the idea of merging with Iraq.

If Syria proves "obstinate," provoke incidents on the Syrian-Israeli borders which would give Tel Aviv the opportunity to attack Syrian territory and claim subsequently that the aggression was committed by Damascus.

Arouse mutual suspicion between Syrians and Iraqis regarding their respective intentions toward the Soviet Union and the United States.

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Prevent a rapprochement between Iran and Iraq by playing on the Sunnite-Shi'ite factor so as to maintain permanent friction.

Exacerbate disputes among the members of the Saudi royal family regarding the separate peace treaty. If necessary, "actively" help the Fahd-Sultan-al-Faysal wing, which is more amenable to an agreement with Israel. (In this connection, we may recall the role played by certain Saudi princes in the assassination of King al-Faysal whose anti-American feelings were a source of serious concern to the CIA and Henry Kissinger.)

Keep Algeria "occupied" by urging Morocco to maintain constant tension on the borders. For this purpose take advantage of the Saharan affair and offer substantial aid to Mauritania to prevent it from reaching agreement with Algiers and the Polisario.

Insure that the preliminary agreements between the two Yemens come to nothing. This is to prevent Aden from resuming its assistance to the Dhofar combattants against Oman, which along with Sudan is the only Arab country to support the Israeli-Egyptian treaty, and to rekindle the conflict between the two Yemens.

2. Actions To Be Undertaken To Paralyze the PLO and Enable Cairo To Play a "Protection" Role in the Arab World and the African Continent

Track down the most hardline Palestinian elements, who consider that the granting of internal autonomy to the West Bank and Gaza is totally unacceptable. Tracking them down means physically liquidating them.

Persuade the nonaligned African countries (or at least some of them) to renew relations with Israel. A dozen countries have already given their consent in principle, the Israelis and Egyptians claim, notably Zaire, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Central Africa, Upper Volta and Gabon.

Aggravate discord among the different groups of the Palestinian resistance--if necessary by fabricating "documents" which would set them up in arms against each other.

Convince Husayn of Jordan by various means (agents provocateurs, assassination attempts, and so forth) that Syria and the PLO are plotting against his regime. If necessary, threaten to overthrow him in favor of another member of the royal family or by proclaiming a republic.

Triple or quadruple the number of Egyptian troops stationed in Sudan to prevent any popular revolt or coup d'etat against Nymayri. The latter, moreover, has allegedly agreed to the presence of Israeli secret service "advisers" in Khartoum.

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Let certain African and Arab countries know that Egypt is prepared to support them, if necessary, by sending its troops in the event of an insurrection "against their anticommunist regimes" or by recruiting mercenaries.

Indirectly encourage South Africa to maintain its pressure against Mozambique, Angola, Madagascar, Zambia, Tanzania and so forth, to prevent these countries from actively supporting the adversaries of the separate peace.

3. Pledges Made By the United States

Despite frequently ambiguous wording, the Israeli-U.S. memorandum accompanying the separate peace treaty clearly stipulates the pledges made by Washington.

If al-Sadat did not request that a similar document linking his country to the United States be drafted, it was because the Israeli-U.S. memorandum corresponds perfectly to his wishes. According to well-informed American sources, the memorandum signed by President Carter contains the following:

Washington promises to insure that the separate peace treaty is respected at all costs. It informs all Arab powers and organizations that if this "historic experiment" were threatened, its armed forces would intervene immediately. America would be all the more capable of doing this since it will have at its disposal in the area (chiefly in Egypt and Israel, of course) naval, land and air bases as well as all possible military facilities.

Washington has decided that any hostile action against the oil wealth of the region would constitute a blow to the security and interests not only of the United States but also of the entire western industrial world. The blackmail could not be clearer. Washington thus informs all the Baghdad summit participants, and also the socialist powers, that its armed forces will intervene to insure that the Israeli-Egyptian treaty is respected, in other words to protect "its" Arab oil and its strategic interests.

These are some of the secret agreements made among al-Sadat, Begin and Carter. They are clearly an act of defiance against the Arab peoples, an attack on their dignity and their sovereignty. It is up to them to meet the challenge by making sure they do not fall into the dangerous traps laid for them by the signing of the traitors' peace in Washington, and also by remembering that the 1 million U.S. soldiers sent to Vietnam could not prevent their overwhelming defeat, any more than the 1 million French soldiers sent to Algeria succeeded in crushing the Algerian nation.

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IRAN

JAPANESE OFFICIALS ANALYZE IRANIAN CRISIS

Tokyo ASAHI EVENING NEWS in English 27 Apr 79 p 2 OW

[Article by Shigeo Omori, head of ASAHI SHINBUN Analysis and Research Center, from the "Weather Van" column entitled: "Political Situation in Iran"]

[Text] It is difficult to make out precisely what has been happening in Iran since the revolution. The impression one gets from reading press reports is definitely one of confusion and instability. But the stability of the new government is directly connected with Iran's capacity to produce and export oil, and this is a matter of great concern.

I recently had the opportunity to listen to the views of two government officials who are concerned with Iran. One is Nadhiro Amaya, the director-general of the Natural Resources and Energy Agency; the other is Tsutomu Wada, Japan's ambassador to Iran, who had returned briefly to Tokyo. The views of the two diverge considerably.

Amaya, in the course of an address on the critical oil situation, said that the government of Prime Minister Medhi Bazargan rested on precarious foundations. It was being obstructed by the left and was under pressure from the right. The principal factor in the overthrow of the shah, he declared, were the strikes of the oil workers which brought production to a halt. Left-wing elements which had penetrated the labor unions were strong enough to organize strikes at will and bring down the government. The pressure from the right comes from the religious forces, in which Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeyni is the most powerful figure.

Relations between Khomeyni and Bazargan are touchy, alternating between clashes and cooperation, and Khomeyni can stop oil production whenever he pleases. In his analysis of the situation in Iran, Amaya indicates that Japan cannot afford to be optimistic with regard to the oil supply.

Ambassador Wada took up his post in Teheran last December. Earlier, he had gained some attention for predicting--correctly, as it turned out--the fall of the Pahlavi dynasty. In describing developments in Iran to me, Wada

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began by saying, "I was astonished at the large number of people in Tokyo who believe the political situation in Iran is extremely unstable and that great upheavals are coming in the not too distant future."

Wada has been observing carefully at firsthand developments in Iran and the latter half of this article is based on his analysis of it.

A State of Calm

According to Wada, the tension which had built up throughout Iran disappeared at once with the departure of the shah, and the country quickly returned to a state of calm. Visitors from Japan are all surprised at what they see, saying, "It's inconceivable that this is the country about which there's been all that clamor in the news media."

The number of rifles which the revolutionaries took from the armories is said to be about 300,000. But the great majority of those rifles which have not yet been recovered have been registered with the local revolutionary committees by those who are still carrying them, and these young men are being organized into a revolutionary force. The authorities are by no means disregarding the problem of weapons in the hands of the populace.

These young men, under the control of the revolutionary committees, have been maintaining law and order since the dismissal of the military forces and the police. The situation is in hand and not a single Japanese has been hurt either before or after the revolution. New York City is a much more dangerous place.

Bazargan, although an engineer by profession, is also an Islamic scholar with a notable record of resistance to the shah's rule. Khomeyni, in naming Bazargan as prime minister, praised him lavishly, saying that no other man could serve as well in the post. His character and reputation are such that the doctrinaire zealots around Khomeyni cannot point accusing fingers at him behind his back. Although he thinks like a Western liberal and his way of thinking may differ from Khomeyni's, he is not in opposition to Iran's religious forces, but seeks to work with them. Now that his position has become stronger, he can speak out more freely to Khomeyni.

There may be clashes of opinion between the two but these are merely disputes within the family. Neither can afford to allow the other to step down and that is why I think there will be compromise and accommodation between them. In the unlikely event of Bazargan quitting, his successor would be a man from the religious forces.

Islam, with its more than a thousand year tradition, pervades all aspects of Iranian society. The revolution in Iran has from first to last proceeded under the direction of the religious forces. The left did undertake a vanguard role but it did so only under Khomeyni's leadership, riding on the great wave of religious fervor. The left is not strong enough to challenge the religious forces and take power in its own right. Again, the oil workers' strike was part of the general strike ordered by Khomeyni.

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The world's petroleum experts assumed, immediately after the revolution in February, that Iran would not be able to resume oil exports until December because of the opposition of the left to exports. However, oil exports began again 3 weeks after the Bazargan cabinet took office. The new government's policies give priority to resuming oil exports, putting public finances back on a sound basis and restoring normal conditions in the economy.

Overwhelming Support

The overwhelming majority of the people support the Khomeyni-Bazargan regime, and the government is coping with its problems in an efficient, capable manner that exceeds expectations. Iran's difficulties are formidable but I believe the government will somehow or other be able to overcome them.

Daily oil production in March was about 2 million barrels, but the government plans to step up exports during the course of this year to between 2.7 million and 3 million barrels a day. If the government has an annual revenue of \$20 billion, there need be no concern about Iran's stability in the long run.

Iran is extremely grateful for Japan's action in promptly extending recognition to the revolutionary government. Japan enjoys a favorable reputation throughout the country, and Iran has great hopes in cooperative relations with Japan, in connection with the Mitsui group's petrochemical plant project and other projects.

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MAURITANIA

UNCERTAINTY WHETHER NATIONALISM WILL WIN OVER RACIAL ISSUE

London THE MIDDLE EAST in English Apr 79 p 14

[Text] Mauritania's geographical position, linking the Arab Maghreb with sub-Saharan Africa, is continuing to play cruel tricks, as the new regime of Colonel Mustafa Ould-Salek cautiously tries to disengage the country from the Saharan conflict. The ceasefire in territory controlled by Mauritania proclaimed by the Algerian-backed Polisario front after last July's coup d'etat in Nouakchott has removed the direct military menace from the north. But the ruling Military Committee for National Recovery (CMRN) has now had to turn its attention to the south, where a different problem is threatening the fragile national unity.

Dissatisfaction on the part of the black population along the Senegal Valley has made itself felt increasingly in recent weeks. Initially the black population had supported the new regime in the hope of ending what they considered to be a war "between Arabs." In the new cabinet, black officers hold several posts, but none of them are key positions, and this fact has given rise to complaints of discrimination.

This racial problem is not particular to Mauritania; to a greater or less extent all the Arab states of North Africa face it. Sudan suffered 10 years of fratricidal war before the Arab and black populations found a modus vivendi. Chad is now experiencing strife between the Arabic-speaking nomads of the north and the black Christian population of the south.

Mauritania has a long history of racist tension. In 1966 there were major riots when former President Mukhtar Ould-Dadda tried to make Arabic the official language. The black population also objected to Mauritania's joining the Arab League in 1973, and to the introduction of an independent currency, the ouguiya, which they say is cutting them off from their "brothers" in black Africa who use the CFA franc.

Language problems are not limited to Mauritania. Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria have all had to come to grips with them. Whether preference is given to French or Arabic tends to determine which sector of the ruling elite is privileged.

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Over the past few months the CMRN's attempts to hasten Arabisation have exacerbated friction, and former black Minister of Education Seck Mame Diack disavowed Government policy by publicly supporting the continuation of a bilingual educational system. This provoked such an uproar that the radical Minister of the Interior, Jiddou Ould-Salek, felt obliged to "reaffirm the country's attachment, in its totality, to Arabo-Islamic culture."

When asked if the demands of the black population were justified, one senior Mauritania diplomat told THE MIDDLE EAST that whenever the country has political problems the racial issue comes to the fore.

Unlike Sudan and Chad, Mauritania has only one religion and culture, although there are ethnic differences. The diplomat added that the differences were being emphasised by forces intent on preventing the CMRN from continuing its dynamic for peace. Even before the new Government took over the Senegalese President Senghor threatened to demand "self-determination" for Mauritania's black population if a regime he disapproved of was installed in Nouakchott. Senghor is a staunch ally of King Hassan of Morocco, and is thought to resent the rapprochement taking place with Algeria. Moreover, Morocco is not without allies inside the present regime. THE MIDDLE EAST has learnt that some other Arab capitals are also exerting pressure to get Colonel Ould-Salek to slow down the peace process.

It is not just pan-Arab sentiment which is behind the CMRN's attempts to align Mauritania with the Arab world. Any strategy for putting the shaky economy back on its feet is contingent on the inflow of petrodollars. The opening of new iron mines north of Zouerate, for example, depends on the goodwill of several Gulf states.

It remains to be seen whether the nationalist sentiment which animates both the Arab and black populations can provide the necessary cohesion against strife.

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MOROCCO

REPORTAGE ON ABORTED COUP, SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, LABOR PROBLEMS

Paris AFRIQUE-ASIE in French 16-29 Apr 79 pp 16, 17

[Article by H. Abou Ferial: "The Aborted Coup d'Etat"]

[Text] For three years now, the Moroccan army has been living in a contradictory situation: Double pay but more and more stagnation. Overthrowing Hassan II is the only way out.

But where, then, are the 19 Moroccan officers who "disappeared" from their units more than a month ago? They were simply executed summarily on orders from King Hassan II in person, following an attempt at a coup d'Etat which was extremely hare-brained. The news was confirmed for the families of the executed individuals indirectly.

The mutineers had a twin objective: To overthrow the Alaouite monarchy at Rabat and to turn the shah of Iran, who at that time was a refugee in Morocco, over to the Iranian revolution.

Once again, in less than 10 years, "baraka" [luck] was with Hassan II but, even more surely, so was the vigilance of the country's secret services for which, following the fall of the shah, it was neither desirable nor opportune to lose another pillar of imperialism in the Mediterranean and Africa.

The few persons close to the king's entourage, who were briefed on the affair, still tremble with fright before that perseverance of the military since 1972. For them, the warning is quite clear: In spite of--or because of--the humiliations which it suffered in the western Sahara, in spite of--or because of--the humiliations to which the king subjects it regularly in order to divide it and contain it, the army for the time being has not given up its idea of getting rid of its "commander-in-chief" Hassan II.

It is in this context, pregnant with threats to the throne, that the king has just addressed his instructions to his court, his government, and his administration: Do "something new," do "the unexpected," in order at least to give the illusion of movement.

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Officially, there is at least a triple objective involved here against the background of this crisis: Regain credibility on the international scene, restore the military situation in the western Sahara even at the price of extending the war, and finally restore "social peace" at home without however having to pay the price for that, or at least at the lowest possible cost.

The creation of a "national defense council" and the replacement of Mr Ahmed Osman by Mr Maati Bouabid at the head of the government moreover reveal the limitations imposed by the broad range of the economic, social, military, and diplomatic crisis engulfing the kingdom. They look more like an aspirin given to a dying individual. The appeal to "sacred union" at home, the warlike accents along the borders, and the press campaign unleashed abroad to explain the "big change"--these in effect are part of the usual set of instruments employed by regimes that are in deep trouble but are incapable of achieving real change.

But this redistribution of roles within the monarchic machinery is interesting because of the number and importance of avowals which it contains: Recognition, at last, of the war in the western Sahara for what it is; fear in the face of a hardening of social struggles leading to labor union renewal--often against the desire of the established bureaucracies; anxiety in the face of the diplomatic deadlock which King Hassan II's advisors are trying to exorcise by henceforth rejecting what they oddly enough call "any interference in Morocco's internal affairs," in relation to a problem which for more than 3 years now has been taken up by international instances.

How to avoid war or how to fight it? A cruel dilemma indeed.

How to avoid it, with the leaders of the political parties within the "National Defense Council"--and the king himself--involved in their own game of trying to outdo each other which leaves them no way out other than military adventure?

How to do this amid diplomatic isolation and even without the support of "friendly" powers--France and the United States--for whom the king's political and military credibility is at its lowest ebb and who refuse to commit themselves on his word alone?

How to do this also with an army of which nobody today knows whether it is reliable and which has been piling up frustrations and rancor since 1971.

The king has done everything to eliminate the cadres of yesteryear, those of Ahermoumou tradition, from the mountains of the Rif and the Middle Atlas, and he replaced them with "new men," more closely tied to the social strata from which the regime draws its support. And has he managed to make it more reliable? After Iran, can anybody be sure that this will ever come about?

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The Moroccan army as a matter of fact has been living an existence full of contradiction for three years: Double pay, but it also got stuck in the sand. A useless and unusable force, it looks defeated by the Polisario Front. It paid heavily for responsibility of the Saharan raid on Tan-Tan, as witnessed by the executions during the days thereafter and the appointment of a "new man," Colonel Abroq, to "fight against anybody who breaks the unity of the ranks and rebels against the order of the commander of the believers." One thing is sure in any case: Regardless of what order Hassan II gives his army in the end (advance, stay in place, or withdraw), it will turn against him in the end.

Crying Social Disparities

Along with the deterioration of the military situation--which, no matter how one looks at it, proves to be rather uncertain as far as the king is concerned--the thrust coming from the social struggles adds a new element to the political crisis which the country sank into since the end of the euphoria of the "green march." It was day-to-day reality which brought out the contradiction between the unanimist and mystifying argument of the monarchy, in the name of the "unity of the nation" against "foreign perils," and the concrete and vital needs of the popular masses, illustrated by the slogans at recent demonstrations in Oujda: "Bread--no war!"--in other words, very close to the demands of the Mauritanian people on the eve of the downfall of Mokhtar Ould Daddah, "Water and peace!"

The decline in the standard of living is at the core of the popular demand: The purchasing power of the interoccupational guaranteed minimum wage--whose nominal value presently at the official rate does not exceed 1.40 dirham--dropped between 15 and 20 percent, at least, since 1972. Moreover, the principal local food products, which constitute a source of income for the Moroccan peasants, are running into stiff competition from imported food products whose prices (strangely enough) are going up at a lesser rate. We must realize that a Moroccan worker must work more than one hour for a loaf of bread, more than 1 hour and 30 minutes for one kilogram of sugar, 1 hour and 15 minutes for one kilogram of beans, and close to 11 hours for one kilogram of beef.

Now, as far as the unemployed are concerned, their number keeps growing all the time. More and more young people are joining the labor market and the multiple consequences of the worldwide economic crisis (closing of subcontract textile mills and return, in short-range or medium-range terms, of a large portion of the workers who had emigrated to Europe, and reduced returns from public--down one-third--and private investments, down 20 percent, etc.)--these make employment prospects look darker than ever before. On top of that we have the crying social disparities which only make for a wider gap between the poor and the wealthy of the kingdom. This is true to such a point that, several years ago, the government was forced to establish an inquiry commission whose first expiatory victims,

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according to good established tradition, could even be the former courtiers or leading agents of Hassan II.

In this explosive political and social context, the king has fallen back on his usual tactics: He addresses the agency machinery over the head of the militant rank and file and tries to turn the old into something new by negotiating the necessary compromises in the palace. In the final analysis, what "change" is there in appointing a former minister of justice --who is particularly discreet about the "dirty tricks" of the king's secret agents--as prime minister? Or in elevating a former director-general of security, who represents the very face of repression to the Moroccan militants, to the post of minister of the interior? Or confirming Mr M'hammed Boucetta in his post as minister of foreign affairs? Or almost completely reshuffling all of the ministers in the preceding government and finally putting the outgoing prime minister on the "National Defense Council?"

"Laborite" Solution?

As far as the compromises are concerned which must be entered into in order possibly to reduce social tension, if the leadership of Mr Abderrahim Bouadid's USFP [expansion unknown] were ever to dream about this, it is certain that the partisans of Mr Mohammed Basri would oppose that with all of the force they still have inside the party, precisely at the moment when the recrudescence of social struggles enables them to achieve the construction of the new labor union organization, that is, the CDT (Democratic Confederation of Labor).

As far as the old political friends of Mr Maati Bouabid are concerned, they continue to remain silent; Abdallah Ibrahim has been completely absent from the political scene since 1974 and Mahjoub Benseddik, UMT (Moroccan Labor Federation) secretary general since 1955, has just been quietly reelected by the Sixth Congress at Casablanca. There is little likelihood that he is thinking of a social truce in the immediate future, at the precise moment when the new rival labor union (the CDT) will force the old apparatus of the UMT to wake up or to vanish. Are both of them thinking of the "laborite" solution which they have been recommending since the beginning of the seventies? What links did they maintain with their former fighting companion in the struggle for independence--whom they suspended but did not kick out of the UNFP when he was appointed minister of justice in the last Osman cabinet?

The fact is that one of the biggest unknowns in the new crisis staged by the king remains the role that was assigned to Mr Maati Bouabid and what means he will have available in order to launch a "laborite solution" that will serve the monarchy.

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PERSIAN GULF AREA

PROBLEM OF IMMIGRANT LABOR DISCUSSED BY MINISTERS

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 2-8 Mar 79 pp 20-21

[Article by Salih Zaytun: "Foreign Labor: Time Bomb Appointed To Explode"]

[Text] The dangers of the population imbalance in the Gulf area due to the presence of foreign laborers was the main topic at the first conference of ministers of labor and social affairs of the Persian Gulf states. The ministers met in Doha to inaugurate the cooperation of area states in the fields of labor and social services based on the great similarity of conditions in the various Gulf states.

One of the most important outcomes achieved by the ministers was an agreement on the basic organization of their conference. However, it behooves us to stop and consider the remarks made by some of the ministers during the sessions--remarks which sum up the problems and the distinctive character of the area.

Saudi Arabia expressed interest in cooperation by area states in manpower development, training and social research by utilizing the area's abundant resources. When the conference proposed that new regional centers be established--a move which would lead to duplication and redundancy beyond that which already exists--the Saudis offered the other Gulf states the opportunity to utilize their special training organizations.

Bahrain stressed the importance of establishing regional Gulf centers to develop human resources in the labor and social fields in response to the needs dictated by the process of growth in Gulf society.

The United Arab Emirates called for control over the influx of manpower into the Gulf states in order to guarantee the attraction of Arab manpower. The UAE minister of labor revealed the recognized and disturbing fact that 80 percent of the manpower in the Gulf states comes from foreign countries, and perhaps this is the reason for his eagerness to control the influx.

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Iraq considers that by setting up the basic structure of the conference their work will be pushed forward and the efforts being made in the field of social and economic development will be channeled. Iraq also praised the UAE's comments on the control of manpower. Like Kuwait, Iraq also considers labor the main instrument in the production process.

It can be said that the results of the Doha meeting are the first practical step toward dealing with the problem of foreign immigration which threatens to change the composition of the population in favor of the unanticipated immigrants. In this regard, perhaps the UAE will become the most important setting for the crystallization of this problem.

UAE's Problems: Demographic Shortage

One of the studies on this problem stated: To show just how large a phenomenon the process of importing manpower and experts from abroad is, we provide the following figures: In 1964, the total population of the UAE was no more than 84,000, most of whom were employed in raising cattle, fishing and collecting pearls. Then the population grew to 180,000 by 1968 as oil operations began to expand and manpower was drawn from neighboring or nearby countries. By 1975, the population had multiplied more than three times, bringing the total to about 656,000! This population was distributed among the emirates as follows:

<u>Emirate</u>	<u>Population</u>
Abu Dhabi	240,000
Dubai	210,000
Sharjah	88,000
Ra's al-Khaymah	57,000
Umm al-Qaywayn	16,000
Fujayrah	24,000
'Ajman	<u>21,000</u>
Total	656,000

The latest statistics prepared in 1977 indicate that the population has reached 862,000 distributed among the following age groups:

Population Groups in the UAE

<u>Age Group</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
4 years and under	98,400	11.4
5-14	128,700	14.9
15-24	183,600	21.2
25-34	245,600	28.5
35-44	120,900	14.0

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45-54	51,100	5.9
55-64	20,200	2.3
65-74	9,900	1.2
75-84	3,200	0.4
85 and older	<u>400</u>	<u>0.1</u>
Total	862,000	100

The country's labor force is no more than 35 percent of the total population.

These figures make it clear that the critical problem is that foreign workers who have come to the UAE comprise no less than 75 percent of the total population, and the majority of them do not know Arabic. Established statistics show that 80 percent of those who entered the UAE in 1976 did not speak Arabic. In the oil industry, 2,730 workers are Arabs as opposed to 3,164 foreigners.

Studies by security experts sum up the dangers which could result from the population imbalance caused by an increased importation of foreign labor, singling out first of all the strategic factor. According to the experts:

The strategic factor is one of the main causes of the immigration of foreign workers and technicians into the UAE due to its oil and its location on the shores of the Persian Gulf, controlling 400 miles of shoreline in a vital area.

It is now clear that the increase in the number of immigrants to the Gulf states, including the UAE, coincided with a longrange Iranian plan to gain control gradually and without a war over the other coast of the Persian Gulf by sending groups of immigrants as workers and technicians and eventually establishing an Iranian majority there. This is considered the most serious effect of foreign immigration into the Gulf.

In recent years, the strategic motives for immigration have become stronger. The United States has overseen a process in which thousands of South Koreans and Taiwanese of armsbearing ages have been sent to the Persian Gulf states.

Strategic Goals of Immigration

The strategic goals and dangers can be clearly summed as follows:

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1. Immigration from several non-Arab countries to the Persian Gulf area is nothing but an attempt to eliminate the national identity of the Arab population by making them a minority incapable of determining the fate of the area, after the foreigners have become an overwhelming majority.
2. The presence of foreign immigrants in large percentages provides a pretext for the immigrants' native states to interfere in a host country on the basis of protecting them in an emergency. Thus, the host country becomes the target of foreign interference which could become very serious.
3. Colonies of immigrants owe loyalty to their native country regardless of the nature of its political system. Because of this loyalty, they can be used as a fifth column for their country's propaganda purposes or for sabotage and espionage. Moreover, if the need arises, they can be used to assist in any military action which their state directs against the host country.
4. The individuals who belong to immigrant colonies attempt to weaken the ties which bind the Arab citizens in the host country with the Arab nation as a whole because foreign colonies see the ties between the Arab population in the host country and the Arab nation as a threat to their welfare.
5. There is an increase in social fragmentation, cultural conflict, moral disintegration, outbreaks of crime and a host of various imported moral and behavioral defects which can be attributed to the contrasting origins of the values and manners.

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SULTANATE OF OMAN

QABUS SEEN MOVING CLOSER TO UNITED STATES

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 2-8 Feb 79 p 26

[Article by Persian Gulf affairs editor: "Sultan Qabus' Nightmare Impels Him to Military Rapprochement With Washington"]

[Text] There is a measure of agreement among observers that the Sultanate of Oman will be the first place where the changes in Iran will be reflected in the Persian Gulf area. The reason for this is the departure of the shah which nullifies the validity of the secret agreements which had existed between the shah and Sultan Qabus on a personal basis since the Dhofar Revolution. These agreements made the Sultanate of Oman practically a center of Iranian influence and point of departure in the shah's plans to control the Strait of Hormuz and to use the Sultanate to exert pressure on neighboring states, insuring that the will of Iran could be imposed in various ways, including direct and indirect intervention in local disputes and disagreements.

The Sultanate After Changes in Iran

The fact is that the changes in Iran, based on the statement by Iran's new prime minister, Dr Bakhtiar (representing the opinion of the opposition), that Iran does not intend to continue to play the role of policeman in the Gulf area, has caused new anxiety in the Sultanate of Oman. The sultan and his advisers have been intently studying the effect of these developments on the sultan's positions and policies in the area.

To help him with this matter, Sultan Qabus has called on a number of British and American experts to evaluate the possibilities and deduce the outcomes.

Observers and analysts believe that if the new regime in Iran continues its course of reducing Iran's role from a state endeavoring to gain open control over the Gulf area, the Sultanate will be forced in the final analysis to move toward improving its relations with Saudi Arabi and the UAE in order to fill the vacuum left by Iran--a vacuum which the Omani Government fears may provoke the government of Aden to resume its encouragement of revolutionary activity in the Sultanate.

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Contacts With the United States

As we await the results of the new evaluations, it appears clear that the sultan has entered into immediate contacts with the United States so that it can take Iran's place in the Sultanate. This is based on the expansion of the military facilities for air and naval forces which the sultan previously granted the U.S. 7th Fleet.

Moreover, AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI has learned that Sultan Qabus has decided to pay out of his own treasury the Iranian forces who are stationed in Oman and Muscat as a reserve force against a resumption of the Dhofar Revolution and in accordance with the joint communique issued by the sultan and the shah in December 1977. This communique stated that Iran and the Sultanate of Oman considered themselves responsible for guaranteeing the security of the Strait of Hormuz.

This decision was made as a result of reports that the new Iranian regime decided to withdraw Iran's forces from the Sultanate of Oman in order to reduce expenditures and to give an indication of the radical change in its foreign policy.

In spite of the concerns of Bakhtiar's government, Sultan Qabus sent a message to the commander of the Iranian Army and the minister of defense informing them that his government was ready to explore the possibility of paying part of the payroll expenses so that the Iranian forces could remain in Oman.

AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI has learned that the prime minister of Iran issued instructions that this message be ignored and that it not be answered.

Recent reports from Muscat state that confusion reigns in the offices of the royal palace because of the Iranian developments, and Sultan Qabus feels that with the shah's departure he has lost a strong ally who had backed him in his silent struggle with his neighbors, especially the UAE, inasmuch as the shah supported his demand that the Sultanate's borders with Ra's al-Khaymah be changed right after oil was discovered in the disputed area.

Three months before, the sultan had ordered military move and concentrations in order to exert psychological pressure; however, responsible authorities in the UAE ignored these actions, although they had already taken the precautionary measures dictated by probable developments.

Informed sources revealed that the shah had played an important role in Sultan Qabus' move away from Saudi Arabia, despite the large amounts of Saudi aid he had received for a road construction program, to strengthen the army and to develop and invest in copper mines.

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The shah was behind Sultan Qabus' rejection of a project to lay an oil pipeline from Dhahran to Raysut on the Omani coast, a project which would have helped to diversify outlet points for Saudi oil.

At that time the shah considered this project an "act of aggression."

The Shah, Al-Sadat and Qabus

The shah also played an important role in steering Sultan Qabus toward absolute support for Sadat's policy, and he obtained special facilities from the sultan which permitted Iranian planes to make reconnaissance flights over neighboring areas.

The shah was planning to help Sultan Qabus establish a college for Persian Gulf youth attached to the University of Shiraz. It would have provided the kind of captivating propaganda which Mussolini resorted to during the Fascist regime in Italy prior to World War II in an attempt to entice Arab youth and impress upon them the greatness of Italy.

Trilateral Axis of Pressure

The long range goal of the Iranian policy of simultaneous rapprochement with the Sultanate of Oman and Egypt was to establish a trilateral axis of pressure composed of Iran, the Sultanate of Muscat and Sadat's Egypt in order to control the petroleum lines in the Persian Gulf area and the Red Sea and to dominate the waters of the Horn of Africa, with the strategic cooperation of the United States.

In order to accomplish this, the shah began secret negotiations with President Sadat 6 months prior to his downfall. In these negotiations, he agreed to stop using Israel's Elat-Ashqelon oil pipeline to pump Iranian oil to the shores of the Mediterranean provided that he could use Egypt's Sumad oil pipeline for that purpose instead...however, in exchange for obtaining naval and air force facilities in both Port Said and Suez.

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TUNISIA

DESTOURIAN CAMPAIGN AGAINST OPPOSITIONISTS DENOUNCED

Paris AFRIQUE-ASIE in French 16-29 Apr 79 pp 18, 19

[Article by Adel Wahid: "The Mutiny Against the Militants"]

[Text] Unable to come up with any solutions to the Tunisian crisis, the Destourian government has just launched a vast operation against oppositionists.

"I will have their heads before they have mine," shouted Mohamed Sayah in a speech delivered several weeks before the 26 January 1978 massacre, thus directly tackling the UGTT [Tunisian General Federation of Labor]. Then the chairman of the Destourian party, the leader of the "hawks" in the PSD [Destourian Socialist Party] and one of the chief instigators of all the killing on "Black Thursday," acted on his threat and showed what he is capable of in the matter of repression. One must not take his words lightly; he knows what he wants and he does not care what means he has to use to attain his goals at the moment when the preparations for the coming congress of the PSD, scheduled for next September, once again "lacerates" the Destourian family.

In the dull rivalry between the various factions of the PSD today, anything goes in an attempt to control a maximum of Destourian cells and thus gaining a position of strength.

The stakes are indeed high: The side that can gain control over the congress will have all chances on its side in the race for power which today enters its decisive phase.

Now that Mohamed Sayah prides himself on having gotten scores of thousands of citizens to join the party recently--a figure which has been tremendously inflated and which includes phony memberships, we must point out here--Premier Hedi Nouira is more skeptical. Without of course going so far as to admitting that the PSD has become a sclerotic organization, devoid of any substance and content, he considers this sudden influx to involve a lurch of opportunists, mostly, and he does not refrain from scolding them roundly by declaring: "Some people are joining the party for personal reasons."

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Hedi Nouira opposes Mohamed Sayah's manipulations with "openness" and "dialogue," although he surrounds these two ideas with such a large number of restrictions that they wind up meaning nothing in the end. This is a strange policy of "opening" which right away excludes all representative political currents, thus denying them the right to a legal existence, which keeps political militants and labor unionists in prison and energetically rejects the multiparty system as a "product of the West" which is not in line with Tunisian reality. The premier is lacking a certain degree of aplomb when it comes to pillorying Western "models," whereas he was the first, ever since his appointment in 1971, to open Tunisia's wide gateways to Western civilization in terms of the worst it has to offer, such as the import of luxury consumer goods, repeated appeals to foreign businessmen to invest in Tunisia through exorbitant tax exemptions (the law of April 1972), and the establishment of offshore banks. The economic growth figures are carefully calculated according to methods and models copied from those of the West: After all, was not the famous and ephemeral "progress contract" itself patterned after the "social contract" of Chaban-Delmas?

The premier is gearing his "opening" particularly toward the young people! Repressed at the university, consigned to so-called "public service" camps when they could not get a job, victims of unemployment spreading to all sectors, subjected to all kinds of vexations--Tunisian young people are in a good position to interpret this "opening" for what it is.

By striking the terrible blow of 26 January 1978 against the popular movement and by responding with a massacre to the demands of the young people and the workers, the establishment believed that it had for a long time finished off any opposition and in the illusory calm of recent months saw proof that it had succeeded. But it failed to reckon with the determination of the country's active forces to pursue the struggle. Labor union resistance, loyal to the UGTT leadership still in jail, is being reorganized and, compared to the puppet directorate headed by Tijani Abid, it looks like the authentic spokesman of the workers. The students are once again challenging selective policies in the matter of education and recently conducted a strike.

Discontent is even spreading to the farthest corners of the land. Thus, the small village of Dahmani, 28 kilometers from Kef, on 10 and 11 February witnessed unusual agitation. Interior minister Dhaoui Hannablia, who was holding a public meeting, responded with insults and crude remarks to the protests of the inhabitants who were victims of unemployment and deplorable road and health conditions. The minister's statements were received with an outburst of spontaneous hatred; several hundred persons gathered in the village square and remained there, lined up for 48 hours, shouting slogans hostile to the government; they kidnapped the commander of the National Guard, who had used his weapon and wounded a demonstrator in the hand. Police and gendarmerie reinforcements, hastily summoned from Kef, severely repressed the demonstrators. Out of 200 persons arrested, 28 are still in jail.

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Divided though they are, the groups within the PSD are in agreement at least on one point: Express the voice of the opposition at any price and present the image of a calm and harmonious Tunisia to domestic and international public opinion, just a few months before the opening of the congress. The fact is that the campaign of international solidarity with the labor union militants and the untiring activity of the Tunisian opposition abroad are upsetting and worrying the establishment more than it wishes to admit in public.

Good Job

The recent trip by Mr Ahmed Ben Salah, the brains behind the MUP (Movement for Popular Unity), to the United States and West Germany and, generally, the good job done by the left-wing opposition "are tarnishing the image of Bourguibian Tunisia and are isolating the regime on the international scene" according to responsible Tunisian individuals talking in private.

To palliate this state of affairs and to kill any opposition movement, the Tunisian regime has launched a vast campaign of threats and intimidation against Tunisian militants abroad and more particularly against those of the MUP. Several scores of plainclothes police officers and informants of the PSD in recent weeks were dispatched to Paris with the mission of infiltrating the ranks of immigrant workers who are becoming more and more attentive to the suggestions of the opposition, in order to establish PSD cells there and counter the exile oppositionists by all means available.

Shadowing, anonymous phone calls with death threats, and searches of homes have increased considerably.

While it is difficult to say just how far the Tunisian government intends to go along this road, must it wait for the irremediable to happen? Must it wait for Tunisian militants to become victims of physical aggression by a regime which today more than ever before realizes the point to which it has become isolated and discredited both at home and abroad?

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