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8 August 1979

Near East/North Africa Report

(FOUO 31/79)

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NEAR EAST/NORTH AFRICA REPORT

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INTER-ARAB AFFAIRS

CONGRESSIONAL RESOLUTION BARRING PLO ENTRY INTO UNITED STATES DENOUNCED

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 1-7 Jun 79 p 42

[Article by Shafiq al-Hut: "The Ugly American Decision"]

[Text] Several days ago the American Congress approved a proposal prohibiting any member of the PLO from entering the United States. This resolution came as a reaction to the visit I made last April after being invited by a number of American universities and institutes to give some lectures on the PLO attitude toward the U.S.-Egyptian peace treaty and the Camp David accords.

I will mention at this time that a number of political commentators, both Arab and non-Arab, insisted on regarding the entry visa granted me at the time by the State Department as signaling a positive change in Washington's policy toward the PLO. Even though I disagreed with those holding this opinion and refused to attribute more to the American position that was merited by the facts, I now wonder what those commentators might say about the position of the new, old Congress. It is a position characterized by disgraceful hostility as much as it is by great ignorance. The PLO is not a political party in the usual sense of the word, nor is it an organization in the usual sense of the word either. Rather it is the national framework and temporary substitute for the usurped nation. It includes all people of Palestine, since they are the legitimate members of it, no matter what their political or intellectual identity, males as well as females, active in its organs or not. Every Palestinian is a member of the PLO, and membership here means Palestinian citizenship which cannot be taken away from anyone.

Therefore, Congress, which either is ignorant of or ignores this fact, through its racist resolution has taken a position with regard to the entire Palestinian people, not just the several hundred persons active in PLO organs, including the top leaders. I don't think our people are the losers in such a situation as much as the United States is, as far as its government, people, and interests are concerned. There are those among us who have expressed their delight with this thoughtless resolution because it contributes, though indirectly, toward mobilizing our people against American imperialism, which was and remains the sole support of the state of the Zionist entity. Also,

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this resolution tends to widen and deepen the gap between the government of the United States and a number of moderate Arab governments which have consistently tried to make America better and have begged us to make a distinction between Washington and Tel Aviv. The benefits of this resolution are compounded because it comes at an appropriate time to show the Palestinians, all the Palestinians, the falseness of the urgent appeals being made to them to participate in the treacherous negotiation process for the sake of what is called "administrative autonomy." One aspect of the resolution requires the Palestinian to give up his national identity as a condition for recognizing him and granting him an entry visa, not to the United States alone, but also to the contemptible negotiating table.

This resolution reflects the actual state of official thinking in Washington and in other capitals with an imperialist history, which usually contains three stages that may blend together.

The first stage is to drive the adversary away and eliminate him if possible. If that is difficult and impossible, they begin the second stage which is an attempt to contain and encircle the adversary. If that is impossible, the third stage then begins, which is to actually negotiate with him.

Brezinski once told a man of Polish origin like himself who was a colleague when he was a professor, "Your friends the Palestinians are no threat so far to our higher interests, so why must we be worried about them or attach any significance to them?"

This was in a personal note in which Brezinski was replying to his friend, who had taken him to task for his offensive phrase, "Bye-bye PLO," a phrase which Brezinski later disavowed, but which remains, it seems, the slogan of the U.S. government and its Congress in Washington.

Now we are in a contest with history and the general laws of life. Who knows when the day will come when Congress will apologize for its decision to withhold entry visas to its country from us? I think that will happen when the Palestinian revolution possesses the capability to adopt a resolution to withhold an entry visa for American interests in this region. Is it difficult to imagine this? Perhaps, but it is certainly not inconceivable.

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INTER-ARAB AFFAIRS

CALLS FOR MORE SOVIET AID, GUERRILLA ACTIVITY

in AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 1-7 Jun 79 pp 28-29

[Article: "Intensifying Operations in the Interior; Asking Soviets for More Support"]

[Excerpt] The Palestinians are not carefully scrutinizing the autonomy negotiations which the three participants, al-Sadat's regime, Israel and the United States, began in their "absence." Rather they are focusing their attention on confronting the negative consequences of the Israeli-Egyptian treaty. They are intensifying their militant activity in both the Palestinian and Arab arenas, both internally and externally.

Successive developments in the Lebanese arena and the entry of President al-Sadat's regime in the tunnel of negotiations with Israel over Palestinian autonomy have prompted the Palestinian resistance, Fatah to be exact, to establish a "plan of action" for the current and future stages in order to meet all eventualities.

The Central Committee of Fatah held a series of meetings last April under the chairmanship of Yasir 'Arafat. At their conclusion, agreement was reached on the necessity of formulating the above-mentioned plan.

Palestinian sources expect the next stage to witness greater Israeli-Egyptian political and military pressure on the Lebanese scene for the purpose of muting the Syrian and Palestinian decisions and bringing an end to their role, which is an obstacle to both the Camp David agreements and the measures of compromise and negotiation with Israel.

One of the leaders of Fatah who participated in drawing up the above-mentioned plan of action told me, "The next 3 months are much more dangerous than those which the resistance has faced during the last 14 years. The Palestinian problem as a whole faces the most dangerous and most critical situation it has faced in 21 years. We are facing a crucial stage which may be the final chapter in eliminating the Palestinian problem in accordance with the American-Israeli plan.

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Articles of the Palestinian Plan

AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI has learned that the Palestinian plan of action was approved at the beginning of last May and its implementation was begun. According to informed sources, its most prominent points may be summarized as follows:

- First, intensifying military activity in the occupied territory.
- Second, striking against American interests in the Arab world.
- Third, expanding the framework of consultations with the Soviet Union.
- Fourth, opening up Palestinian-Arab contacts, especially with Syria and Iraq.
- Fifth, acting with flexibility on the Lebanese scene.
- Sixth, supporting democratic dialogue in the Palestinian arena and thereby bringing about Palestinian national unity.

With regard to the first point, the resistance will undertake to strike deep into Israel at all the main military and production complexes. These operations are expected to increase during June and be accompanied by a transformation of Palestinian mass action in the occupied territory into cases of civil insurrection.

As for the second point having to do with striking against American interests in the area, it was agreed that any move in this direction be within the framework of an overall plan specifying the time and place, with the stipulation that detailed lists of all American interests in Arab states be compiled.

Palestinian Requests of Moscow

Concerning the third point, it was agreed that a high-level Palestinian delegation headed by Mr 'Arafat be sent to the Soviet capital at the first possible opportunity, preferably before the U.S.-Soviet summit to be held in June, to ask the Soviet leadership that the Middle East crisis in general and the Palestinian problem in particular be an issue of special Soviet concern at the bipartite summit and that pressure be applied to link the Arab problem and the SALT II agreement. A request will also be made for increased Soviet military and political support of the PLO in the coming stage. Contacts are actually being made now between the Soviet and Palestinian leaderships to set a time for the Palestinian delegation's visit.

Informed Palestinian sources confirm that the coming visit of the Palestinian delegation to Moscow will be the most important Palestinian visit to the Soviet capital, both from the standpoint of the problems to be discussed and the consequences.

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In the context of opening up Palestinian contacts with Arab states, Syrian-Palestinian meetings are being held continuously to agree on the steps of the next stage. The most recent meeting was held between President Hafiz al-Assad and Mr 'Arafat. A Palestinian delegation is expected to visit Iraq shortly, and the Palestinian-Jordanian dialogue is expected to resume within the next 2 weeks.

In addition, Palestinian delegations are visiting the Gulf states and the Maghreb. There are other delegations visiting European and American countries.

Palestinian political activity is paying particular attention to the non-aligned summit conference to be held this year in Havana. Extremely important resolutions are expected to be issued on the Palestinian problem. A resolution to freeze Egypt's membership in the non-aligned bloc is also expected to be issued.

In a desire to clarify the picture of the Palestinian position, AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI correspondent in Kuwait Mazin Shaddid asked several questions concerning the latest problems of Palestinian leaders Majid Abu Sharrar and Bassam Abu Sharif. The former is the permanent secretary of the Revolutionary Council of Fatah and is responsible for unified Palestinian information. The latter is the spokesman for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and a senior assistant to Dr George Habash, secretary general of the Front.

The questions and answers are as follows:

[Question] The stage after the Egyptian-Israeli treaty is a subject of interest to all the parties and forces concerned in the region's crisis. How does the Palestinian resistance view this stage?

[Majid Abu Sharrar] The treaty has made the entire Arab world confront a new stage of struggle requiring programs and alliances which take into consideration the developments that have taken place and the separatist operations which the Arab arena has witnessed and will witness.

Undoubtedly the treaty has placed the Arab regimes face to face with a historic question: Who is for the treaty and who is against it? In other words, who is with Israel and America and who is against them?

Formerly, the regimes could avoid a clear answer to this question. Today the margin for maneuver is extremely limited. Al-Sadat has not left any room for maneuvering. He is with Israel and America and nothing stops him from attacking anyone who opposes him. He too asks the question clearly and wants a precise answer: "Who is with me, my policy and my alliance with Israel and America, and who is against me?"

We think the slogan "Arab solidarity" is actually incapable of taking a determined stand against America and Israel. A new militant alliance must be made among the Palestinian revolution, Syria and Iraq in order to establish

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an eastern front. This would reflect positively on Jordan. Also, the formulation of a Palestinian position should be more distinct and crystal clear due to the dangers surrounding the revolution. I believe that the situation of the Palestinian arena now encourages the achievement of this, especially in view of the fact that the last National Council program is leading us toward this objective.

[Bassam Abu Sharif] After the signing of the treaty, in accordance with which the western front was removed from the front of confrontation with the enemy and transformed into a front of confrontation against us, imperialism is now striving to bring the eastern front under its hegemony too. Therefore, it will proceed to carry this front through another dissolution. However, if it fails, it will inevitably resort to violence, using its local tools to strike against the forces opposing its project.

We think that these steps which are required of the progressive regimes are a true, practical translation of the slogans raised. They may be summarized as follows:

1. Establishing an eastern front under the slogan, "Our battle is a battle of existence, not one of borders."
2. Transforming the economy of the region into a war economy.
3. The necessity of blending traditional military thinking calling for a classic collision by amassing a huge quantity of tanks and airplanes with the line pursued by the Palestinian revolution, in other words the path of a people's war.

However, it must not mean we are demanding this now. Rather we are demanding sound preparation for such a war, and in the meantime, we call for opening the borders to guerrilla activity. From now on it is no longer acceptable to talk about any obstacles, whether political or geographical, preventing the launching of guerrilla activity.

We are confident that this activity will place the enemy in a constant state of instability, and this will certainly be accompanied by a transformation of the arena of occupied Palestine into a real battlefield, thus proving every day to the enemy and the world that the land of Palestine will remain an arena of battle despite all treaties.

We Expect New Fires

[Question] Talk about "separation" and "continued separation" may mean that you expect divisions to occur in the Arab arena?

[Majid Abu Sharrar] When we talk about division, we don't mean the usual kind, but another form based on the ignition of new fires in the region and leading to Arab internecine fighting, the division of some existing structures

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and the abolition of others. Perhaps what happened in Yemen recently is a sample. While the Arab countries were rushing to put out the fire, we found America proceeding to kindle the struggle by establishing a military bridge to supply arms to North Yemen.

We also believe that the states which hesitate to rush into battle against the treaty will face riots and internal unrest provoked by the reactions of their masses.

[Bassam Abu Sharif] With what is happening, it is natural for a separation to occur within the Arab forces. Separation is a logical, scientific step which should be made during this period.

Lebanon Is One of the Arenas Which Is a Candidate for an Explosion

[Question] On the basis of what you have pointed out with regard to an attempt to subdue the states opposing al-Sadat, how do you see the effect of this on Lebanon?

[Majid Abu Sharrar] Lebanon has suffered a great deal for the Palestinian cause. It has paid a higher price because of Arab mutual contradictions. We in the Palestinian revolution are most eager to spare Lebanon all the expected repercussions from the present struggle.

However, this eagerness on our part requires the isolationist forces to completely review their plans and programs if they want to spare Lebanon the repercussions of the coming struggle. As long as these forces are connected with Israel and plan to divide Lebanon and strike against the nationalist movement, this means they are trying to inundate Lebanon with the consequences of the present struggle.

[Bassam Abu. Sharif] Lebanon is one of the main arenas mobilized to receive reactionary, imperialist violence against the forces of liberation and all the forces opposing the "peace" treaty, especially in view of the fact that the Lebanese scene is full of fascist pockets allied with the Zionist enemy and willing to be a tool to strike against the Palestinian revolution and the nationalist movement.

Dialogue With Jordan

[Question] Talk about the eastern front and opposition to the treaty once again brings up the problem of relations with Jordan. How far has the Palestinian-Jordanian dialogue gone, and what do you think about its progress?

[Majid Abu Sharrar] There are serious difficulties which have so far prevented the attainment of significant steps with Jordan in this regard. However, improvement of the position on the eastern front will determine the nature of the relationship with the Jordanian regime, and that will decide the outcome of this dialogue. If we can form a militant Palestinian-Syrian-

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Iraqi alliance with the establishment of the eastern front, this will push Jordan toward more progressive positions with regard to the struggle. It will put more distance between Jordan and the snares of the Egyptian-Israeli treaty.

The problem is not one of delegations or discussions. It is a problem of objective conditions by means of which we can improve the Arab position in general and consequently make political gains within the Jordanian arena.



Bassam Abu Sharif



Majid Abu Sharrar

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NORTH AFRICAN AFFAIRS

EDITORIAL DENOUNCES STATEMENT BY HASSAN, PRAISES ALGERIA, SAHARANS

Paris AFRIQUE-ASIE in French 25 Jun-8 Jul 79 p 12

[Editorial by Simon Malley: "The Arab World; the Maghreb: War"?]

[Text] President Chadli Bendjedid's admonition to King Hassan II, through the intermediary of the secretary general of the UN, is clear. No ambiguity whatsoever. The Algerian people will never sacrifice the principles that have characterized their history since they took up arms in order to drive out--defeat--the French colonists and to free themselves. They will never consider that the destiny of the Saharan nation is an affair between the Algerian and Moroccan governments, because every Algerian knows that it is a question of a war of national liberation. The only valid interlocutors are these fighters of the desert; these men and women who, under the leadership of the martyr El-Ouali--whose third anniversary of death they have just commemorated--had pledged to not abandon their struggle as long as the Moroccan and Mauritanian armies occupied a single particle of their land.

That is, if the despot of Rabat carries out his decision of the "right of pursuance," if he violates the Algerian land, all of the people will rise as a single man to teach him a lesson that he will never forget. A people in arms that have defeated the most powerful Western land, naval, and air armies cannot accept defeat. They will prove to this apprentice sorcerer and to those miserable, low-down politicians, corrupted by the royalist party and that of the opposition that support him because they are in his pay, that any aggression against Algeria will mean war--a war that will fatally entail the definitive liquidation of the monarchy.

And neither recourse by the king of Rabat to the Security Council after the Saharan victory at Tan-Tan, nor his attempts to sabotage the forthcoming Franco-Algerian negotiations will divert the Algerian government from its indomitable will to continue and to increase its aid to the Polisario.

At the very moment when imperialism and Zionism are intensifying their intrigues and their machinations in order to further divide the Arab world,

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in order to incite conflicts against each another, in order to arouse antagonisms and contradictions, the threat of this bloodthirsty man is particularly significant. He who sanctioned and supported the secret negotiations between the Israelis and Egyptians that the latter were going to develop at Camp David and the separate peace treaty in any case must realize that Algiers is neither alone nor isolated.

Progressives and revolutionaries throughout the world, especially those in Africa, the Arab world, Asia, and Latin America, will be at its side--as was the case whenever its borders were threatened and its sovereign rights violated--because they know that its revolution is also theirs, that the protection and defense of the latter is a common duty.

On the eve of the Monrovia and Havana summits, the chief of Algerian diplomacy, Mohammed Benyahia, was as clear as anyone could be at the ministerial meeting of the nonaligned, in Colombo, when he said: "The direct tie that exists between the situation in Africa and that of the Middle East is no longer something that has to be proved. It is asserted as much by the synchronized strategy elaborated by imperialism, always determined to maintain its ascendancy or to re-establish it in the two regions, as by an ever-increasing awareness among our peoples of their common destiny and of the urgent necessity to strengthen the front that unites them in one and the same decisive struggle."

To ignore the warning of President Chadli Bendjedid is to forget those memorable words of the deceased President Houari Boumedienne: "We will defeat any aggressor with our planes and our tanks, and if we no longer have any, with the arms of our men, our women, and our children--the arms that forged our national dignity, our liberation, our freedom..."

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ALGERIA

BELGIANS MAKING PREPARATIONS TO RECEIVE ALGERIAN LNG

London THE MIDDLE EAST in English Jul 79 pp 92, 93

[Article by Susan Traill, in Brussels]

[Text]

Energy planners in Belgium breathed a sigh of relief in the early summer when, three years late, the government at last gave the go-ahead for the construction of a liquid natural gas (LNG) terminal and related facilities at the North Sea port of Zeebrugge.

The new facilities should have been ready to receive 5mn cu.m a year of Algerian LNG at the start of a 20-year contract with Sonatrach in 1982. Now, barring any further setbacks, they are unlikely to be completed before the end of 1985.

But at least the decision has dispelled doubts that the Zeebrugge terminal would ever be built. The project has come up against persistent political and environmental problems. Belgium's French-speaking Wallonia region demanded compensation for the siting of this major project in Flanders and the Port of Antwerp made known its dissatisfaction at the development of a potential rival.

Preparation work on the harbour infrastructure was held up by difficulties over siting the berthing facilities (which will take ships of up to 125,000 tons), the terminal, storage tanks and regasification plant in a port which also handles a con-

siderable volume of explosives. It is now thought likely that the explosives terminal will be closed once the Sonatrach gas starts to come in.

A contract worth 5.6bn Belgian francs has been placed with the Anglo-Dutch consortium Zeehouw-Zeezand for the next two phases of the harbour construction and the Belgian gas distribution firm, Distrigaz, is working out final details of the terminal structure. In the meantime, Distrigaz has lost no time in seeking alternative supply routes to cover the period from 1982 to 1985 while the Zeebrugge facilities are being built.

With a "take or pay" clause in the contract signed with the Belgians in 1975 Sonatrach has been assured of delivery or an indemnity of 1bn Belgian francs a month. The indemnity is daunting but it seems that Belgian policy makers were more daunted by the prospect of losing the contract since Algerian gas is a key element in the country's medium and long term energy plans and Sonatrach is not short of alternative customers.

Gas provides 25% of Belgium's energy needs and it is likely to be used increasingly as

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a chemical feedstock as the price of oil rises. At present Belgium relies largely on supplies from Holland's Slochteren field, but the Dutch reserves are running out and deliveries to Belgium are due to end in 1993.

Gas supplies from the North Sea, which began in 1977, will increase to 3bn cu.m a year but Algerian gas is seen as the major replacement for Dutch supplies over the next 10 years.

In 1990, however, a further 5bn cu.m a year will be needed and by then Belgium will probably want to diversify its sources to a greater extent, possibly looking to Nigeria, the Soviet Union or Iran. Depending on what eventually happens to plans for a second pipeline to

convey Iranian gas to the Soviet Union, which in turn would supply gas to western Europe, Belgium may decide to link in with a section of the Soviet pipeline crossing southern Germany to France. The new Iranian Government, however, has had second thoughts on this link-up.

Swap arrangements: When the government announced its decision on Zeebrugge, it also authorised Distrigaz to sign an outline agreement with Gaz de France to land the Algerian gas at the northern French port of St. Nazaire. A new LNG terminal will be completed there next year.

The St Nazaire facilities will be able to take up to 3.5bn cu.m a year of the Sonatrach-Distrigaz deliveries and various possibilities are being explored for the remaining 1.5bn cu.m. This could be shipped to Marseilles or Holland, but the ultimate decision will depend on swap arrangements being considered by Gaz de France under which the St Nazaire gas would be taken onto the French network in exchange for Dutch gas, and possibly at a later date, gas from the proposed Wilhelmshafen complex in West Germany.

With a well-developed pipeline system through Belgium to France, the northern gas could easily be stopped in Belgium. Gaz de France is studying the cost involved, the volume and the timing of the different options and in the meantime the Belgians are holding exploratory talks with other distributors.

The Sonatrach-Distrigaz agreement thus seems certain to hold. The final details to be worked out between the two sides concern shipping. Algeria and Belgium will share the shipping of the gas on a 50:50 basis but they have yet to settle how this will work in practice.

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ALGERIA

DEVELOPMENT OF ALGERIAN ENERGY RESOURCES DISCUSSED

Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 29 Jun 79 p 1720

[Text] Algeria, which is preparing for the "post-oil era," has just begun an important phase in the implementation of its plan for developing its energy resources, in which natural gas is expected to take over from oil as the main source of foreign exchange.

The commissioning by President Chadli Bendjedid of the second liquefied gas module in the Hassi R'Mel complex on 18 June and the beginning of work on that same day on the construction of the first trans-Mediterranean gas pipeline which will provide Italy and a part of Western Europe with massive supplies of Saharan natural gas, both of which events were reported in our columns last week, represent one of the key aspects of this plan, named the Valhyd Plan, covering the period from 1976 to 2005.

Algeria hopes to obtain earnings of about 156 billion dollars, 93 percent of it coming from foreign sources, from the exploitation of its gas in the period between 1976 and 2005. The Valhyd Plan calls for the building of six units for the liquefaction of natural gas in Algeria, three of which have been built or are under construction in Arzew, in the northwestern part of the country, and the building of gas processing units in Hassi R'Mel and at other oil fields.

The overall cost of the Valhyd Plan is estimated at 33.4 billion dollars, of which 17.4 billion will be obtained from foreign credit.

Processing Plant and Compressing Station in Hassi R'Mel

The gas processing plant commissioned on 18 June was begun on 31 October 1976. Named Module II, this unit is the counterpart of Module I, commissioned on the same date last year by the late President Boumediene. It is designed to process gas in the crude stage to produce gas for sale (60.5 million cubic meters per day), stabilized condensate (11,000 tons per day), and liquefied propane gas (2,667 tons per day).

Built according to the Hudson Engineering Corporation procedure by the Japan Gasoline enterprise, Module II has three production lines with 26

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producing wells. Its completion required the employment of a large and highly skilled staff totaling 4,223 persons at the peak period.

The Hassi R'Mel natural gas compression station, commissioned on the same day, has turbo-groups divided by modules and located in acoustical enclosures. The cooling systems for the gas and lubricating oil and the gas proofing are air cooling systems.

Reinjection is effected by means of a series of 52 wells. The building of these stations required the use of foreign personnel for a total of 700,000 labor hours and Algerian personnel for a total of 1,500,000 hours.

Once completed, the Hassi R'Mel compression system can inject 180 million cubic meters of gas per day into the subsoil.

The Trans-Mediterranean Gas Pipeline

The trans-Mediterranean gas pipeline, the commissioning of which was effected by President Chadli Bendjedid, will link the Hassi R'Mel field with Mnerbio, in the North of Italy, over a total distance of 2,498 kilometers. This project, which will be equipped with 12 compression stations, will cross Tunisia and the Sicilian straits. In a first phase, it will have a capacity of 8.3 billion cubic meters per year, reaching a capacity in its final phase of 18.5 billion cubic meters per year.

The Algerian-Italian gas pipeline, the APS national news agency stresses, is made up of four main sections, one in Algeria, one in Tunisia, one across the straits of Sicily and the Italian section.

The Algerian section, linking Hassi R'Mel and Oued Es Safsaf, is 500 kilometers long and 48 inches in diameter (1,220 millimeters). It includes among other things the Hassi R'Mel shipping terminal, two section stations, four intermediary locations where the future compression stations will be located and a receiving terminal and metering station near the Algerian-Tunisian frontier.

The compression stations, of which there are four, will be built in later phases and each of them will be equipped with three turbo-compressors with a unit power of about 30,000 horsepower. They will be built at the 110, 236, 359 and 465 kilometer markers.

The completion of the section will require 220,000 tons (550 kilometers) of pipe. A part of this tonnage, i.e. 43,000 tons (116 kilometers) will be produced by the National Steel Company (SNS) in the El Hadjar and Ghardaia plants.

In addition, 400,000 tons of material and equipment essential to the completion of the section located in Algeria will be transported by the National Railroad Transportation Company (SNTF) and the National Highway Transportation Company (SNTR).

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The section crossing Tunisian territory, for its part, will be 370 kilometers long with a diameter of 48 inches (1,220 millimeters). It will run southwest to northeast for the most part and will link the Algerian-Tunisian frontier with Cap Bon, on the Tunisian coast. It will be equipped with three compression stations of various capacities.

The Algerian-Italian gas pipeline will go into the Mediterranean at Cap Bon in Tunisia and will emerge on the surface again in Sicily, 160 kilometers away, at Mazero del Vallo.

The submarine section will be made up of three channels with a diameter of 20 inches each. Two of them will follow the southern submarine route and the third the northern route. The three will be located at a maximal depth of 625 meters.

The Italian section, finally, will cross Sicily, the straits of Messina, Calabria, Basilicata and Campania over a distance of 1,418 kilometers, finally linking Lazio with Rome and Rome with Minierbo. It will be equipped with five compression stations with a total capacity of 185,000 horsepower.

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ALGERIA

MINISTER OF LIGHT INDUSTRY VISITS SONITEX UNIT

Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 22 Jun 79 p 1661

[Text] Within the framework of a tour he made beginning in June through a number of wilayate in the eastern part of Algeria, Minister of Light Industry Said Ait Messaoudene visited a number of industrial facilities in the Constantine region on 4 and 5 June.

Among the units to which the minister turned his attention was the National Textile Industries Company (SONITEX) in Chaab Er-Sas Constantine. It was noted in Algiers that it began operations in 1967 for spinning and weaving, 1971 for dyeing and 1971 for the new spinning facilities. The production from January to May of 1979 totaled 519,536 kilograms for the spinning section, 837,565 linear meters for the weaving section, 100,422 kilograms for the dyeing section (colored) and 451,938 kilograms (unbleached), with 964 laborers and employees, including 151 women.

The SONITEX unit in Constantine produces about a quarter of the nation's needs in thread (3,000 tons per year), working clothes, military fatigue uniforms, etc.

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ALGERIA

STATUS OF MECHANIZATION OF AGRICULTURE DESCRIBED

Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 22 Jun 79 pp 1162-1163

[Text] "Just after independence was won, our country had only 9,000 tractors. Today, according to the statistics up to 31 December 1978, we have 66,000 tractors (53,000 with tires and 13,000 caterpillar types), to which must be added 11,000 harvesters and an impressive volume of various agricultural machines," the director general of the National Agricultural Equipment Office (ONAMA) stated in Bordj-Menaïel last 6 June, adding that "except for several thousand hectares developed since, however, our area has not increased."

This mechanization is inevitably reflected in impressive replacement parts figures. In the report he wrote on the statement made by the director general of the ONAMA, Mr Said Small, correspondent for the daily EL MOUDJAHID, says that he stated that Algeria spent 25 billion a year in replacement parts, tires and batteries, and that the range of equipment in circulation accounted for a total volume of 250 replacement parts listings.

To say that from the farm equipment point of view Algeria is the most mechanized country in the Third World is an assertion doubtless justified by the figures mentioned. However it appears that this would lack objectivity if the official report did not at the same time take into very frank account the very numerous practical problems this mechanization poses. The best illustration of this is provided by the fact that in the same issue of the daily EL MOUDJAHID in which the statement by the director general of the ONAMA was reported, an APS dispatch from Oran was carried discussing these difficulties at length. A local official of the National Union of Algerian Peasants (UNPA) stressed in the article that "only 10 percent of the farm equipment is in good condition, 500 tractors having broken down in the wilaya as a whole for lack of replacement parts." Reports of this sort are a common occurrence.

This reveals a situation which not only lacks justification on the basis of the substantial sums spent to import farm equipment which is costly in foreign exchange, but which is also and unfortunately the result of multiple shortcomings in its use, organization, and responsibility in general. Would this situation be less critical if the equipment in question were domestically produced in a greater proportion than it presently is? One can only doubt

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that on learning from the same issue of EL MOUDJAHID (12 June) about the incredible paralysis from which the farm machinery complex of the National Mechanical Engineering Company (SONACOME) in Sidi Bel-Abbes has been suffering for months on end.

The report first notes the size of the stake invested in this unit, which was built within the framework of a "product in hand" contract signed with the West German Deutsche Industrieanlagen Gesellschaft (DIAG) company, with testing scheduled to begin in 1976 with a view to "production of 33 farm machine products, including harvester-threshers to be produced at a rate of 45 per month." Author M. A. Mahmoudi goes on to describe the "rather inconclusive tests." "In a two-year period, only 100 harvester-threshers were produced, i.e. an average of 4 per month. It took 1,300 workers, some 20 administrators, and mountains of raw materials to produce 4 harvester-threshers per month! In addition to that, let us note that some parts were not produced here, such as the gear boxes which the manufacturer imported from the FRG, although in principle and objectively, all the parts, from the nuts and bolts to the engine, should be manufactured in Algeria."

It is not surprising that such mediocre performance has provoked a sharp polemic between the German builder and the Algerian authorities. The basic thing in any case is the demonstration of the determination to change the situation, to "take up the challenge." This was seen with the appointment at the end of 1978 of a new director, Mr Benina, formerly of the valve plant in Berrouaghia. In 4 months, 100 harvester-threshers were produced, which is already a more encouraging average.

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ALGERIA

ACHIEVEMENTS IN SEVEN YEARS OF AGRARIAN REVOLUTION EXAMINED

Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 22 Jun 79 p 1662

[Text] On 17 June Algeria celebrated the seventh anniversary of the implementation of agrarian reform. It was in fact on 17 June 1972 that President Boumediene presented the first land allocation deeds in Khemis el Khechna. Since then, almost 100,000 landless peasants have been made beneficiaries of the agrarian revolution, and about 4,000 cooperatives have been established.

At the press conference held in Algiers on 17 June in connection with this anniversary, Aissa Nadjem and Mohammed Abdelaziz, member of the Central Committee of the FLN, secretary general of the National Union of Algerian Peasants (UNPA), and secretary general of the National Commission of the Agrarian Revolution (CNRA), president of the Agriculture and Agrarian Commission of the National People's Assembly (APN) and deputy, respectively, discussed the state to which the agrarian revolution has advanced after seven years of implementation. Mr Mohammed Abdelaziz said in this connection that 1,291,071 hectares of public land were placed in the National Agrarian Revolution Fund between the launching of the first phase and 31 December 1978. As to partial or full nationalization of surplus private land, this has led to the recovery of 640,075 hectares for the agrarian revolution.

In all, 1,931,146 hectares of land have been recovered for the agrarian revolution, including 1,145,376 hectares of useful farm area. The agrarian revolution also benefited from recovery of 1,165,725 date palms.

On the other hand, 1,406,825 hectares were distributed, representing 76 percent of the total land area recovered. Moreover, nine percent of the fertile farm land remains undistributed. The balance is developmental area and in some places even unsuited to cultivation.

The secretary general of the CNRA expressed the hope in this connection that all the areas suitable for cultivation will be distributed in order to improve national farm production and to meet the food needs of the population. "Above all since we know," he specified, "that Algeria does not have a large

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a large farm area." It has all in all 7,200,000 hectares of arable land, i.e. 0.40 hectares per inhabitant.

It is a matter, he said, of covering 80 percent of the domestic food needs in order to guarantee the economic and food security of Algeria.

With regard to the farm cooperatives, Mr Mohammed Abdelaziz stated that 5,980 cooperative units have been established, 80 percent of them being Agricultural Production Cooperatives of the Agrarian Revolution (CAPRA), which is a tremendous number. He also mentioned the existence of 674 Communal Multi-Service Agriculture Cooperatives (CAPCS) and 31 Fruit and Vegetable Cooperatives (COFEL). In this connection, he stressed that the service aspect of the CAPCS had been converted into trade in farm products solely, thus depriving the peasants of farm and other equipment.

Assessing the construction of the socialist villages, the secretary general of the CNRA stated that of 779 programs, 375 of them registered, 93 have already been completed. In this connection he stressed that the agrarian revolution is encountering tremendous difficulties in this sector, for neither the national companies (DNC, SONATIBA [National Infrastructure and Building Construction Company], SORECAL) nor the private construction enterprises wanted to undertake the construction of the socialist villages.

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ALGERIA

BRIEFS

CFP ACTIVITIES--The 1978 report of the French Petroleum Company (CFP) indicates that the group was able to obtain 11.8 million tons of oil in Algeria in 1978, as compared to 10.6 million in 1977 and 9.7 million in 1976, from the Hassi-Messaoud, Haoud-Berkaoui, Mereksen and Stah deposits, in connection with the CFP interests in partnership with the National Company for the Transport and Marketing of Hydrocarbons (SONATRACH). The same report notes that new agreements were signed pertaining to the undertaking of development drilling and the supervision of construction of the installations at the Alrar gas fields, supervision of development operations at the In Salah gas fields, and also the development of the distribution network. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 22 Jun 79 p 1662] 5157

MARITIME TRANSPORT COMMISSION--The status of maritime relations between Algeria and France was the subject of the work of the mixed Algerian-French commission on maritime transport which met on 11 and 12 June at the Higher Maritime Institute in Bou-Ismaïl. In the course of the meeting, the APS national press agency stressed, the mixed commission, for which the maritime agreement signed between the two countries in 1967 provides, also studied means of rationalizing and improving the procedures at maritime conferences held between Algerian and French ships outfitters, and also that it studied the possibility for cooperation in the training and ship-repair sectors. Like France and the FRG, Belgium insisted on the principle of sharing freight on a 50-50 basis in the agreement recently signed with Algeria. "It is generally believed that it was a 'take it or leave it' matter," the transportation of gas probably being the determining factor. Thus the Belgians and Algerians will share the freight to be shipped through Belgian ports, including French freight, equitably," according to the DUNKERQUE EXPANSION. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 22 Jun 79 p 1163] 5157

OIL TERMINAL OPERATIONAL--The new terminal for the 28-inch Haoud El-Hamra-Arzew oil pipeline is operational. The West Algerian Transport Administration (RTO) project, to which Mr Belkacem Nabi, minister of energy and petrochemical industries, paid a visit on 19 June, will receive condensate and GPL [liquefied propane gas] from the deposits in the southern part of Algeria. The project, the second of its kind in the Arzew industrial zone, is equipped with seven storage tanks ranging from 35 to 55,000 tons capacity.

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It also has a control room for the gas pipeline (40 inch) and another for the loading of vessels from stations located at the Arzew oil port and Sea Lines. With the commissioning of the new facility, the director of the RTO said, the west administration is now administering 3,123 kilometers of pipeline and employing 1,491 persons. Since it was established in 1967, the west transport administration has transported 230 million tons of oil and 46 billion cubic meters of natural gas from the southern part of Algeria. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 29 Jun 79 p 1720] 5157

EMIGRE WORKERS--New measures designed to speed up the return of Algerians working in France have been adopted by the Algerian government, Mr Abdelhamid Brahimi, Algerian minister of planning and national development, told the Algerian National Assembly recently. However, the minister gave no indication of the nature of these measures. He said that the number of jobs created in 1978 (175,000) is expected to increase this year to the benefit of Algerian emigrants to France, following recent French government measures designed to reduce foreign manpower. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 29 Jun 79 p 1720] 5157

CUBAN TECHNICIANS--Technicians of the Cuban firm, UNECA, are to assist the Algerian state-owned construction company, SOREC Sud, in building 1,000 housing units in Biskra, under the terms of a wide-ranging Algerian-Cuban cooperation agreement--the first such accord to be reached between the two countries. One hundred Algerians are also to be trained in construction in Cuba as preparation for joint activities in urban planning and public works as well as light industries, hydrocarbons and petrochemicals. [Text] [London THE MIDDLE EAST in English Jul 79 p 96]

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EGYPT

POSSIBILITIES OF EGYPTIAN-LIBYAN CONFLICT ANALYZED

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 29 Jun-5 Jul 79 p 28

[Article: "The Egyptian-Libyan Front: Live Ammunition Drill for the Egyptian Patrol Officer"]

[Text] It is not unlikely that the United States will conduct a live ammunition drill on the Egyptian-Libyan border to test President al-Sadat and to make sure that he is qualified to play the role of patrol officer for which he has often nominated himself.

Informed sources in Washington are not hiding their apprehensions that this summer might be "a hot and a very dangerous summer" along the Egyptian-Libyan borders.

In spite of the fact that U.S. newspapers have focused their attention on the oil crisis in a manner that has pushed the Middle East crisis to a secondary level of importance, the question of the "inflamed borders" between Libya and Egypt did find a place in more than one of the principal newspapers that have been known for having a cooperative relationship with the Department of Defense and the Department of State in Washington. This has led to speculations that reactions to any increase in the price of oil which the United States and the West may consider burdensome would become evident in preparations for a blitz operation that would target Libya as a principal oil producing country. Such an action would serve as a warning to the other oil countries.

The deteriorating relations between Egypt, on the one hand, and Libya and the different Arab countries--with the exception of Sudan--on the other, do naturally make the Libyan-Egyptian border the perfect stage for such a "limited" operation. Factors pertaining to this geographical location would prevent any entanglement between Egypt and Israel from turning into a general struggle in the Middle East in spite of the ties that exist between Libya and the opposition countries.

In the course of justifying possible Egyptian actions on the Libyan borders in advance, BUSINESS WEEK Magazine, the spokesman of financial and business circles in the United States, stated that the intransigent Arab countries

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that had resolved to overthrow President al-Sadat's regime to put an end to his policy of appeasement with Israel "were letting Libya spearhead their campaign against Egypt."

At the same time several media sources have indicated that every since the Camp David accords were signed, tension was secretly and openly rising on the Egyptian-Libyan border.

Egyptians Go West

The fact is that two weeks ago while the vanguards of the Israeli negotiating delegation were arriving at the Mena House Hotel in Alexandria, additional battalions of the Egyptian army were taking up new positions in the midst of the western Sahara near the Libyan borders, and especially near the borders of the oasis area. They were reinforcing the troops that had been amassed earlier along the borders by the Supreme Military Command in accordance with instructions and orders from the Supreme Political Command. Accordingly, a significant number of rocket and artillery companies had been shifted from the western and the eastern banks of the Suez Canal. This had taken place 3 or more months ago, specifically after verbal agreement had been reached on the date of handing al-'Arish over to Egypt after the separate peace treaty between Egypt and Israel was signed.

Hence, U.S. sources concluded that such actions justified their inference that "the possibilities for a second blitzkrieg similar to the 1977 Egyptian-Libyan war had become imminent." Specifically, it was not unlikely that Cairo might be tempted by Libya's oil revenues which amount to 10 billion dollars per year. Cairo might especially be tempted by the implications of attacking the borders and the Libyan forces. Colonel al-Qadhafi, who is being openly accused by Cairo of financing many sabotage and terrorist incidents and accidents in Egypt--perhaps to justify the expected hostile aggression--would be the target [of such an attack].

But what is causing concern in both Cairo and in Washington is the fact that an Egyptian military campaign against Libya may have unfavorable consequences or cause complications in the heart of the Egyptian army. Recent reports have proven that important elements in the Egyptian army were opposed to any military action against Libya and were sympathizing with the policies of the Arab rejectionist front.

Some informed analysts believe that the purpose behind engineering another blitzkrieg on the border between Egypt and Libya may go beyond that of warning the oil countries, attempting to introduce change into the Libyan regime or encouraging such a change. Its purpose, with U.S. encouragement, may be to evaluate the magnitude of the developed Soviet arms which Libya obtained; to find out the extent of Libya's use of those arms; and to learn how much of these weapons were being sneaked away to extremist Arab countries and to revolutionary organizations throughout the world. The prevailing opinion in U.S. circles--and this is based on intelligence reports supported by special Egyptian reports--is that Libya has three times the developed

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weapons that its army of 33,000 soldiers can use. This situation gives Libya the capability to intervene with effective assistance in "hot" areas like Chad and Yemen.

War and Oil

Several informed sources, however, think that any Egyptian-Libyan war, no matter how brief and how limited, may not be without effects on the international oil situation and on the United States' oil supplies. It is known that 8 percent of U.S. oil imports come from Libya whose geographic location is closer to U.S. and European markets than Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states. Consequently, any interruption in the flow of oil, no matter how brief, will have unfavorable effects on the economy of the west and of the United States.

Relations between the United States and Libya are poor on every level. In spite of the special efforts made by Billy Carter, President Carter's brother, the U.S. government continues to refuse to authorize shipment of three 747 Boeing airplanes and eight C-130 cargo airplanes that Libya has already paid for in full. The Department of State and the Department of Defense in Washington are basing their opposition to such authorization on the fact that supplying Libya with additional airborne equipment that would give it an additional military capability would be prohibited under the present conditions of U.S.-Libyan relations and in the light of Libya's policy in the Middle East and in Africa.

Zionist sources and behind the scenes agents have been playing an active role in maintaining the tension in relations between Libya and the United States and in promoting circumstances conducive to an Egyptian military campaign that would target Libya. They are publicizing and spreading news that worries Americans. Among such news is the report which states that volunteer pilots from North Korea were being trained on 24 MIG airplanes which Libya had purchased and that there were more than 2,000 Soviet soldiers manning the radar stations and the guided missile stations, training Libyan troops and participating in sabotage operations that were taking place in Egypt.

The prevailing view is that the explosion of the situation on the Libyan-Egyptian border has become nothing more than a question of time. It is a question of considerations that are related to the oil situation, and this will become evident after the Geneva Conference.

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IRAN

NEW REGIME PONDERES FATE OF KRUPP HOLDINGS

Hamburg CAPITAL in German Jun 79 p 3

[Article: "What the Persians Are Planning To Do With Krupp. Inshallah."]

[Text] Dr Wilhelm Scheider, head of the Friedrich Krupp Foundries Corp. at Bochum, showed no lack of polite attention and at the end of April devoted 2 days to Dr Mahmoud Ahmadzadeh-Hervari from Tehran. The steel manager walked with the Persian, in the name of Allah, newly appointed mining and industry minister of Shah overthrewer Khomeyni and at the same time his delegate to the Krupp works board of directors, through dusty plant yards to blast furnaces and rumbling steel melting crucibles. Scheider guided him across iron gangways along the trains of rollers and patiently explained the business figures.

"After all, he is our principal stockholder," said the business manager, giving the reason for his effort on behalf of the guest from the Orient. It was only at mealtime, when the Moslem, faithful to the Koran, reached for the water, that the German did not go along but followed his own life style and drank wine. "There are limits to my love for the principal stockholder," he said.

In the middle of May, Krupp had a second Iranian to welcome, this time at the company headquarters, Friedrich Krupp Corp. in Essen. Dr Reza Salimi, state secretary in the Ministry of Economics and Finance, introduced himself to Berthold Beitz, head of the Krupp Foundation, as the new representative from Iran in the group of shareholders and as board member in the Krupp corporation. The Persian made his first appearance in the Villa Huegel's Park Room whose walls are covered with Gobeling showing Christian themes.

True, the Krupp managers had gathered as much information as they could about Khomeyni's watchdog. They knew that Salimi, formerly a student at the Paris Sorbonne, had lain low during the Shah regime as a case worker dealing with electricity price lists--"for political reasons," as Salimi explained later in a personal conversation. And mining minister Ahmadzadeh-Hervari who, as professor at the Technical University in Tehran, remained politically aloof during the Shah-era, had retained his knowledge of German from his 4 years as a student at the Clausthal-Zellerfeld Mining Academy.

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But it was much more important for the Germans to find out how the new government of the Islamic Republic of Iran assesses the 25-percent share in the Krupp Corporation and the foundry which it inherited from the imperial Persian state. "We always," reported foundry finance manager Dr Guenter Fleckenstein after the 2 days with Hervari, "wanted to steer the conversation carefully towards finding out what is going to happen now, but we never got to the point. The minister remained noncommittal."

The Germans' thirst for knowledge is understandable. For they can by no means be certain that Khomeyni's Islamic revolution against the Shah will not in the end hit Krupp, too. For personal sympathy between the Krupp leadership and the Shah must have played a role when the then Persian-emperor was willing to shell out more than a billion marks between 1974 and 1978 for his share in the heavy industry concern. In the meantime, under the pressure of the European steel crisis, the Krupp works accumulated losses of DM 189 million. And the Krupp Corporation-parent-company maneuvered so closely to the break-even point that for the last year there remained an entire DM 6.25 million in profits for the Persians. In spite of it, Dr Albert Lukac, who as the corporation's finance manager negotiated the details between Krupp and the emperor, believes that the price was not too high.

But so far at least, the trade, highly praised by Beitz as "exemplary" and by the Federal government as a "piece of reality of world-economic interdependence," has brought benefits to only one side. The Persian billion-payment improved Krupp's financial and cash situation so that even the decline in sales and the drop in price in the steel business did not rock the Ruhr colossus. Furthermore, with the Shah's blessings, Krupp's business transactions with Iran flourished as never before. With DM 370 million, exports to Persia reached their peak in 1977. The Iranians, on the other hand, have hardly taken advantage of their opportunities for cooperation with Krupp because their economic and administrative forces were overburdened anyhow and because, according to Lukac, "we had said quite clearly, that no handout was to be expected from us." On Tehran's credit side of the cooperation with Krupp were at the end only a few dozen Persians who had come to the Ruhr for training.

Since the power change in Tehran, the Krupp leadership must be prepared for the possibility that the Iranian revolutionary government might cancel the agreement with them before it can be transformed into a partnership. True, according to the contract, the Persians cannot get rid of their share whenever they feel like it, but can sell only with the approval of Krupp's board of directors chairman Beitz, and Lukac by his own testimony had by mid-June "no indication, no information, no aviso that such intention prevails." And it was music to the ears of the firm's leaders in Essen and Bochum when the new economic and finance minister Ali Ardalan (incidentally the only one from the new guard with whom Lukac had been briefly in touch even at the time of the Shah), said in March about the participation in Krupp: "We are happy about it." In the meantime, he and his colleagues on the board of directors have been following with suspicious professional interest the way in which the Iranians have since recently been dealing with the Siemens Subsidiary, Kraftwerk

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[power station] Union (KWU) which--with deliveries of Krupp products--is building two atomic energy stations at Bushehr on the Persian Gulf. In spite of existing contracts, the Islamic revolutionaries have continued owing it overdue installment payments and they refuse also, as incompatible with the teachings of the Prophet, to credit its account with interest--even at the risk that the building site will now lie idle and the already erected installations worth DM 5.5 billion will decay without care and turn into scrap metal within 1 to 2 years.

"One must not exclude the possibility," remarked a Krupp director if soon thereafter, that in the case of Krupp also, the Persians might suddenly get off; and he probed discreetly among the new board of director members to find out whether Khomeyni himself had already divulged anything. But the information obtained from Ahmadzadeh-Hervari and Salimi ("We only constitute the provisional government") remains unsatisfactory. The Ayatollah, so they said, in his consultations with the ministers in Qom, is more interested in existentialist questions, for example, whether the last imperial prime minister Bakhtiar is active in the underground who has repeatedly attacked offices of the revolutionary committees after executions were carried out, and under what assumed names coworkers of the Shah have gone under cover abroad. In spite of the continuing state of suspension, one consolation remains for Krupp. The comparison of Khomeyni's commissars with their predecessors on the Krupp board of directors, who were loyal to the emperor and trained at U.S. universities, comes out in favor of the new ones. "They are much more pleasant," remarked Lukac, "than those polished Harvard people before."

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MOROCCO

KING HASSAN DESCRIBED AS 'AT BAY', PRISONER OF STRATEGY OF DEFEAT

Paris AFRIQUE-ASIE in French 25 Jun-8 Jul 79 p 13

[Article by Hassen Zenati]

[Text] Everyone will have ended by making the observation: the "right of pursuance" reappears in the panoply of Hassan II each time that his occupation troops in the Western Sahara undergo a serious military setback.

This was the case recently near Assa, 66 kilometers below Goulimine in South Morocco, beyond the Oued Draa that goes along the Anti-Atlas mountains. Monday, 4 June, at dawn, with heavy artillery in place, the county seat of Caidat was attacked by a Saharan column. Result: 112 Moroccan soldiers, officers and assistant officers, killed; about 100 hundred wounded; a barracks, the power house, post office, motor fuel tanks, armories and munitions depots, about a dozen trucks, 9 all-terrain vehicles, and 4 heavy guns destroyed.

And then Tan-Tan, occupied a second time since this past January by the Front.

Royal reaction was not long in coming: for example, Oum Dreiga, Sabkhat or Droues--those multiple murderous battles that have characterized the occupation of Western Sahara for two years. Hassan II brandishes "the right of pursuance"...against Algeria. He even goes a little further this time, by announcing that he has given a "written order" in this regard to his officers, after having consulted the "defense council" and having consequently obtained the endorsement of all Moroccan political parties, including those of the "opposition." The latter can be "happy" to have extracted an order for which they had long clamored. The same with the Moroccan army staff which for an even longer time has had experience with these colonial type practices.

It may seem inopportune, at the moment when peace initiatives are being increased, for the king of Morocco to again brandish the "right of pursuance" against Algeria and dramatize the situation a little more by announcing that he has already given an order "in writing" to his army--perhaps with the

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intention of blocking or of torpedoing any political approach to a solution whose urgency no one any longer doubts?

Actually, Hassan II is already playing a losing game. A few weeks before the forthcoming OAU [Organization of African Unity] summit, which is to take place in Monrovia at the beginning of July, his diplomatic obstruction policy seems to have misfired. He will not even be able to benefit any longer from Mauritanian support when it becomes a question of confirming the Saharan people's right to self-determination--because Nouakchott for some weeks has been reiterating that it is in favor of the application of this right to the zone that it occupies. It even gave its consent "in writing" (it, too) to the secretary general of the UN as far back as 1975. It repeated it again at the time of an official visit that was made in Algiers.

The common diplomatic action that was based on the distribution of roles between Rabat and Nouakchott was well planned: in connection with the former, threats of withdrawal from the African organization; with the latter, the enlisting of the undecided. But this time this strategy of obstruction will probably confront a hurdle. Under these circumstances, one can understand, on the eve of the Monrovia summit, Hassan II's attempt at a final maneuver to divert attention from the basic problem: that is, the right of the Saharan people to self-determination and the reduction of the matter to a conflict between one country and another, Morocco against Algeria.

The UN, moreover, is only one stage in a series of formidable dates for the Moroccan monarchy: the summit of the nonaligned in Havana and the United Nations General Assembly session, scheduled for 18 September. Numerous countries of these two international organizations in fact are waiting for the OAU's verdict before coming to a conclusion on the substance of the Saharan question. As long as the African organization confirms its previous resolutions and acknowledges the Polisario as the sole legitimate representative of the Saharan people throughout the entire territory of the SDAR [Saharan Democratic Arab Republic], neither the nonaligned nor the United Nations will be able to counter this.

To again block the Saharan case in the UN thus becomes a vital political necessity for the Moroccan monarchy--a way perhaps of gaining a little time, while waiting for some solution that is forged outside these international circumstances to fall to it from a French or an American sky. In reality, Hassan II has become a prisoner of a strategy of defeat which risks leading him to the worst. After the Saharan massacres, will he take the responsibility of a general conflagration in the Maghreb? One must be careful, because this monarch at bay is ready for anything: after me, the deluge...

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MOROCCO

EFFECTS OF AUSTERITY MEASURES ON COUNTRY DISCUSSED

London THE MIDDLE EAST in English Jul 79 pp 86, 87

[Article by Susan Morgan, in Rabat]

[Text] Even government officials now admit that the Moroccan economy is facing problems, and that the country may well be entering a period of severe social unrest.

The severe austerity measures which have been in force for a year--reversing the previous four years of ambitious capital-intensive industrial growth--have had some effect but they are viewed by the Government as no more than a first step.

The Director-General of the Treasury, Mohammad Tazi, is full of praise for the impact the austerity programme had had in cutting the trade gap from MD8.5bn (\$2.15bn) in 1977 to MD6.2bn last year. It has also had a dramatic effect on the foreign-currency shortage, which Tazi considered the top preoccupation.

Now, with the 1978-80 plan (only parts of which have so far been published) in its second year, the cuts will continue. Tazi told THE MIDDLE EAST that some social unrest was inevitable as a result. But, he said, the same economic remedies had been applied in Europe, where social conditions were "more serious."

For the Moroccan opposition, however, hardship to the workers, whose standards of living have been seriously eroded, is a serious problem. They consider that higher wage demands (expressed in waves of strikes throughout the country) are thoroughly justified.

The Government acknowledged this on Labour Day when it announced wage increases for the lowest paid. Minimum industrial and agricultural wages, which Finance Minister Abdel-Kamel Reghaye himself admitted to be among the lowest in the world, were raised by 40% and a 15% increase was awarded to the worst-paid public employees. But the opposition, complaining that these increases did not even keep up with inflation, described them as "derisory."

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The austerity measures have not only fuelled labour unrest; they are also felt in some quarters to have caused severe distortions in the economy. Business confidence, particularly in the important private sector, has been badly affected.

The influential economic review CEDIES INFORMATIONS has labelled the situation "disturbing" and described the credit restrictions as "rigorous and indiscriminating." Growth in some areas of the economy--notably construction--has either been minimal or nonexistent. Capital investment, which rose by 30% in 1977, fell by 14% last year.

The Government for its part is critical of the private sector for not acting independently and initiating its own projects. Businessmen complain, however, that this is not feasible in the unfavourable economic climate. They also maintain that the Government has delayed paying them, which in turn has meant they have been unable to pay suppliers.

Debt burden: Efforts to expand exports last year were affected by a considerable oversupply of Morocco's chief export, phosphates, on the world market. So although tonnage was up on 1977 levels, earnings had reached only MD1,400mn by the end of the third quarter, compared with MD2,111mn for the whole of the previous year.

The overall increase of 6% in last year's exports was due to a large extent to a strong recovery in agricultural products, led by citrus fruit (see THE MIDDLE EAST No 53, p 101), and by output of phosphate derivatives. Phosphates and phosphate derivatives together are estimated to have earned MD2.4bn last year and the projection for this year is MD2.6bn.

At the same time, workers' remittances, encouraged by a preferential dirham rate, rose by 23% over 1977 to MD3.2bn. Tourist receipts also improved slightly, reaching MD1.65bn in 1978, compared with MD1.5bn the previous year.

The cuts in spending, meanwhile, did enable the Government to reduce both domestic and foreign borrowing; the latter actually fell from MD6.7bn in 1977 to MD5.5bn last year. But the country remains heavily indebted and debt service payments are going to mount until 1981.

The debt servicing ratio is already estimated at 35% this year and some believe that inclusion of repayments for unofficial arms purchases would make this figure still higher. Adding to Morocco's predicament is the repayment now falling due on the principal and interest of a substantial portion of the short-term Eurodollar loans accepted during 1975-77. Debt service payments, which represented 5% of the 1976 budget, accounted for no less than 10%.

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Also on the negative side is the apparent fall-off in Saudi aid, which cushioned the country for part of last year. Observers are still wondering whether King Khaled's recent visit to Morocco, with Defence Minister Prince Sultan, will change Saudi policy.

Although it is generally recognised that the austerity measures are vital, few Moroccans have any illusions about the difficulties they will continue to face in the next few years.

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TUNISIA

TOBAL STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF NATIONAL OPPOSITION MOVEMENT

Paris AFRIQUE-ASIE in French 25 Jun -8 Jul 79 p 35

[Article: "Tunisia: Clarification by Ibrahim Tobal"]

[Text] In the name of the Tunisian National Opposition Movement, Ibrahim Tobal made the following statement available to us:

The political action undertaken by the Destourian regime against the militant, Zine el-Abidine el-Medhkouri, secretary general of the Tunisian People's Revolutionary Party (PRPT), was accompanied in the Tunisian and foreign press by a series of slanted--that is, false--news...

1- The Tunisian National Opposition Movement formally denies belonging to, or directing, an alleged "nationalist and progressive front for the liberation of Tunisia," and does not even know of its existence. The same is true for the PRPT, which has always been able, through its search for support from abroad, to jealously maintain its independence at all levels. One can ask for no better proof of this than the fact that not once was outside material help to this party mentioned in the bill of indictment.

On the contrary, the police investigation formally establishes that the PRPT budget consists wholly of contributions from its members, to the exclusion of any other contribution. The utilization of this alleged "front" makes it possible to fraudulently claim that the PRPT is an "appendix" of a neighboring country, Libya, with which we state that the PRPT has never had any relations. The same is true for Algeria, where no PRPT cell has ever existed. Moreover, the PRPT has always had relations as an equal with all Arab revolutionary movements, without allowing the least interference in its domestic affairs.

2- Relations between the PRPT and the Tunisian National Opposition are militant relations, the same as those that our movement entertains, and

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will continue to entertain, with all revolutionary opposition movements in Tunisia. The PRPT is closer to us, being given the social composition of its militants and its political program which is a natural extension of the Tunisian National Movement, betrayed by Bourguibism and Destourianism. We now wish to renew our support to this party and our unconditional support to its leaders who are imprisoned in the worst conditions that a Tunisian revolutionary militant has ever experienced in the jails of the administration. We also wish to denounce the torture that they have undergone and to hail their steadfast courage, their resistance, and their resoluteness with respect to principles, that remind us of our own militants who were tortured and murdered by the Destourian militia between 1955 and 1962 and who died faithful to themselves and to their country.

3- Finally, we wish to denounce the attempt of the Tunisian court, under the sway of the government, to reduce the political aspect of the trial to nothing and to put it simply on some other level. With respect to all of the indicted leaders: belonging to a nonrecognized organization, offense against the chief of state and members of his government, etc., are ascribable to the Criminal Court of Investigation of the State, which has already tried other opposition groups for the same reasons. The incompetence of the petty court is thus flagrant. This choice comes from a deliberate decision of the government for the purpose of avoiding the root of the matter which is, and will continue to be, political: to impose a revolutionary alternative in Tunisia."

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TUNISIA

TRIAL OF 44 PRPT MILITANTS RECOUNTED

Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 11 Jul 79 p 42

[Article by Souhayr Belhassen]

[Text] "I was beaten and tortured. My lips and sex organs were burned. My fingers were crushed. I was not permitted to sleep, eat or drink. I was threatened with death...." With his body tensed, face animated and quick gestures, Zine Medhkouri, principal defendant in the trial of the 44 members of the Tunisian People's Revolutionary Party (PRPT) described the tortures to which he was subjected in police stations to the impassive president of the court.

11 Charged

Eleven arrested workers and students appeared to face charges before the correctional chamber of the Tunis court of first instance. The other defendants had been released on bail or were fugitives from the law. Arrested for the most part in 1977, the prisoners are charged with carrying weapons, establishment of and membership in a clandestine organization, dissemination of false news and insults to the president of the republic and the government. Almost all of them denied these charges.

Three of the defendants, former workers who had immigrated to France in the region of Saint-Etienne and Lyon where they were active in the unions of Rhone-Poulenc, did, on the other hand, acknowledge membership in a nationalist Arab organization established in 1975 whose objective is "to install a national and democratic government." Although they did not deny that they had crossed the Algerian-Tunisian border in possession of revolvers, bullets and tracts, they violently objected to the fact that there is a border between two Arab countries. The notion of border being "a delay-action bomb left by colonialism." "And then," Zine Medhkouri said, "we must one day be able to defend ourselves against the armed militia which is scourging the country." Referring to a recent statement by Mohamed Sayah, director of the sole party, in which he recalled that the PSD (Destourian Socialist Party) has

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never had authorization, Medhkouri said that what is unconstitutional is not the establishment of association but the law which prohibits it. As for the tracts and charges of defamation, the defendants replied that they had merely analyzed the real situation in the country.

Not Political

The interrogation of the defendants revealed not only the tortures to which they had been subjected but also police practices. Thus one of the defendants was kidnaped. Another, free on bail, revealed that he was a member of a regional cell of the PSD to vindicate himself. A third said, "My mail was opened systematically to the point that they were able to imitate the handwriting of a friend and invite me to a meeting in a cafe where I was arrested."

The fact that the trial was held in a single session and that it took place before a simple correctional court attests to desire to keep from transforming it into a veritable political trial, during this period of preparation for the PSD congress.

Sentences of 1 to 7 and 1/years in prison and 16 acquittals were ordered on 30 June for the defendants. Zine Medhkouri was given the heaviest sentence. As for Brahim Tobbal, who lives in Algiers, he was sentenced to 6 years in prison.

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TUNISIA

POLITICAL, SOCIAL, ECONOMIC CLIMATE OF COUNTRY DESCRIBED

Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 11 Jul 79 pp 41-43

[Article by Jean-Louis Buchet]

[Text] The beginning on 20 June of the trial of the 11 PRPT (Tunisian People's Revolutionary Party) militants, a small opposition group, did little to disturb the apparent calm of political life in Tunisia. A kind of lassitude seems to have replaced the tension which one could discern at the end of 1978, after the conviction of Habib Achour, former secretary general of the UGTT (Tunisian General Federation of Labor), and other labor union leaders. It is true that numerous other union leaders who were convicted after the tragic riots of 26 January 1978 were released. Of the 30 who are still in prison, only the top leaders, we are made to understand by the government, will not be quickly set free.

At the beginning of June scant attention was paid to the fact that President Habib Bourguiba had returned from one of his long and frequent trips to Europe. Today Tunisians are almost accustomed to seeing the social-democratic movements (opposition movements tolerated but not recognized by Mr Mestiri and Caid Essebi) expressing moderate criticisms in their newspapers (AL-RA'Y and DEMOCRATIE). Moreover, the functioning of the governmental machine is none the worse because of it. In between two "tours of inspection" in the governorates, Prime Minister Hedi Nouira has been doing his job without incidents and without problems. He is running things, and running things rather well, as witnessed by the 1978 figures which have just been released. Growth was 9 percent (compared to 4.1 percent in 1977); and, for the first time in three years, the balance of payments was positive. During the first five months in 1979, the trend reportedly was the same.

Against this background of fairly good economic health and relative political detente, Tunisia seems more than ever faithful to its reputation of balance and moderation. Could it be otherwise at this time of the year? After a particularly hot start of summer, offices have remained open at lunchtime since 18 June, a fiction which means that Tunisians are going to

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- do little work. Tunis has fallen into a half-sleep; those who have the means have gone to their summer homes in the luxury villas in the northern suburbs; the others, the great majority of Tunisians, daily flock to the beaches in the southern suburbs.

There are already great numbers of tourists. Barely underway, the season is pronounced excellent, and the hotel managers are rubbing their hands. The country is getting ready to live as in September at the rhythm of this coastal facade which, from Gammarth to Nabeul and Hammamet, from Sousse to Jerba, is witnessing the proliferation of luxury complexes and European paid vacation facilities [usines]. It should be added, finally, that Ramadans begins on 25 July, a period of inactivity if there ever was one.

However, the authorities say that the present political situation is not entirely standing still. These summer months, they say, will be utilized to put the finishing touches on preparations for the PSD [Dastourian Socialist Party] congress, preparations which were started at the beginning of the year with the establishment of reflection [reflexion] committees.

An event associated with the return of parliament, these meetings will take place beginning 5 September. We already know certain things about these meetings. It is no longer a question, for example, as intimated several months ago by the young liberals in the entourage of Nouria, of an "overture" in the direction of moderate personalities of the opposition. And still less is it a question (even if the question is taken up) of introducing a multi-party system of any kind which would permit the social democrats, and indeed other parties (communists and the MUP--Popular Unity Movement--close to Ben Salah, former strong man of the 1960's, notably) to participate in the political debate in broad daylight.

The accent is on the strengthening of the party and the development of "domestic democracy." Nouria who is also, even if one at times one tends to forget it, secretary general of the party, seems prepared to go quite far in this regard. The prime minister told us on 15 June that he was in favor of permitting "the expression of factions within the party," adding that the congress could orient itself in that direction. On condition, of course, that these factions "do not become parties [clans]." That would permit the establishment of "a solid consensus, a veritable synthesis, which takes into consideration the different attitudes expressed."

Will these plans of Nouria (whose government is made up in great part of technocrats who are not PSD "figures") be well accepted by the apparatus? In any case, Mohamed Sayah, director of the PSD and veritable patron of the party, says that he is also in favor of broad discussions in the congress. Moreover the somewhat schematized opposition between a tough wing which is said to be led by Sayah and a liberal faction headed by Mouira seems to be out of place. "There are, of course, differences of temperament between the two men," one leader emphasizes, "however, they are above all most noticeable

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"in time of crisis. After all, it is Nourira, who is playing the tune; and Sayah has to dance to it."

This recognition of the different attitudes inside the PSD is said to be part of a package of orientations which are to be specified during the congress, in domestic policy and international relations. Orientations which should not cause surprise: Nourira does not seem ready to deviate from the line followed up to now with a certain amount of success; as for the foreign sector, it is more a sum of constraints than possibilities of choice.

Are we then to believe, setting aside the promise of greater flexibility within the party, that the congress in September is to be above all a formal rendezvous? That is readily stated by the opposition.

For a sympathizer with the social-democratic movement, the preparation of the congress "is a lot of wind. Nothing will happen there, as usual." For another, an MUP activist, "nothing will change, including the inside of the party. The government cannot change."

There is, of course, an obvious side taken in these remarks. However, there is also a great deal of truth. For, since Bourguiba's illness in 1969, the political system has become progressively sick. "The Supreme Combatant could precede the event, insure adaptations, prepare changes," we were told by a man who drew close to President Bourguiba in the 1960's and still has great admiration for him. "Nourira is effective; however, he is satisfied with managing from day to day." In reality, the present team cannot permit things to change too abruptly. What else can be done without decreasing after-Bourguibism under...Bourguiba?

However, one should not believe that the government is totally insensitive to outside influences. "It is not just by chance," a liberal attorney said, "that at a time when some are demanding a multiparty system there is so much talk of democracy within the party." In this regard, in spite of appearances, the congress could have results. It is a secret to no one that, vis-a-vis the members of the opposition, feelings are nuanced within the government, ranging from professed tolerance to declared hostility. Between the two camps, a degree of balance will be confirmed at the end of the congress, which will not fail to be reflected in the subsequent evolution of the question.

While stating that the problem of the multiparty system cannot be considered as the "priority of priorities" and showing his irritation at seeing that occasionally it is made "an end in itself," at a time when the urgencies of development are weighing heavily, Nourira did not exclude the possibility that the system could evolve along these lines in a moderate amount of time-- in five years perhaps, "if everything goes right and if the objectives of development are attained." The argument is not new; however, to those who are today demanding an open political debate, one could retort that they more

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often recruit among the comfortable middle classes of Tunis than among the poor farmers in the interior of the country.

"Multiparty system or not," a university professor on the fringe of the political scene asserted, "it is not with rates of growth that one responds to the ground swells which are shaking Tunisian society." Then he mentioned "youths (60 percent under 18 years of age) who have not known the Bourguibism of independence, whose ambitions are frustrated, who are left to their own devices and who cannot find their place in the present system." And then: "This new union movement, which has emerged with the changes of the past few years, used, of course by Achour, but whose existence the government does not wish to recognize." And finally, "the fundamentalist faction, in reaction against the changes and vis-a-vis which an ambiguous position is adopted which smells of politicking policy."

The picture doubtless is black. However it was effectively stated that neither the government nor the opposition have wished to run head-on against the fundamentalists who propose to question certain basic positions [acquis] of Bourguibism (such as the statute on women). And no one is unaware of the fact that the present calm was also attained thanks to the constant surveillance of young people and the energetic resumption of control over the enterprises. Is it necessary to recall the roundups of the unemployed less than 21 years of age, as well as the controls over the unions? After all, Tunisian politicians seem to be saying, for many reasons it is better to live here than elsewhere in Africa. There is real development and a minimum of freedoms.

Therefore, rather than seeking to innovate, one takes refuge in what is known and is working: a good dose of liberalism to insure regular growth, zest for voluntarism to moderate regional imbalances and social inequalities. The rest should follow. That is a gamble which can be successful, barring any accident. But in the summertime who remembers these accidents.

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TUNISIA

ATTEMPT TO POISON TRADE-UNIONIST ACHOUR REPORTED

Paris AFRIQUE-ASIE in French 25 Jun-8 Jul 79 pp 34, 35

[Article: "Tunisia: Achour Poisoned"]

[Text] Habib Achour, secretary general of the UGTT [Tunisian General Federation of Labor], imprisoned in the Nador prison, was the victim of an attempt at poisoning during the afternoon of 7 June. The trade-unionist leader was suddenly stricken with stomach pains, vomiting, then fainting a short time after eating. The doctor who was called to his bedside had a very difficult time of reviving him, and there is concern over the possible consequences of this "indisposition" on the future state of Achour's health.

"Habib was the victim of an attempt at poisoning aimed at his physical elimination," stated the Movement for Popular Unity (MUP) in a communique given to the press. Achour eats only food from his residence. When the food was divided into two separate portions, the first for Achour and the second for his fellow-prisoner, Abderrazak Ghorbal, a member of the executive bureau of the UGTT, "the 'toxic' element was present only in the portion meant for Achour, since his fellow-prisoner, who had also eaten from the same meal, did not suffer from 'food poisoning.'"

In spite of the insistence of Achour's family to have him examined by a doctor not connected with the penitentiary services, the authorities refused to grant the request. In addition, Amnesty International issued a communique informing the Tunisian authorities of their concern regarding the circumstances of what the authorities describe as food poisoning.

The Tunisian press, on orders, of course denies these facts and states that it is a question simply of food poisoning resulting from having eaten "food that was spoiled from heat." But this is not the first Destourian attempt at physical elimination. Did it not cause Salah Ben Youssef to be killed in 1961? Did it not try several times to have Ahmed Ben Salah assassinated? Did it not order the massacre of hundreds of innocent people

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on 26 January 1978? Did it not cause the arrest and torture of hundreds of progressive militants and trade-unionists? Did it not always display its most profound disdain for human dignity, for trade union and political freedom? And what is the meaning of keeping a 67-year old man who suffers from diabetes in prison, in deplorable and dangerous circumstances?

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TUNISIA

BRIEFS

OIL EXPLORATION--Total Exploration Tunisie, a subsidiary of Compagnie Francaise des Petroles (CFP-Total), is to invest TD4mn (about \$9.7mn) in oil exploration on a 6,720 sq km concession in central Tunisia, under the terms of a four-year agreement with the state-owned Entreprise Tunisienne d'Activites Petrolieres. [Text] [London THE MIDDLE EAST in English Jul 79 p 96]

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WESTERN SAHARA

SAUDIS AGAIN TRYING TO RESOLVE SAHARAN PROBLEM

London THE MIDDLE EAST in English Jul 79 pp 18, 20

[Article by Susan Morgan]

[Text]

Pressure is mounting for a solution to the Saharan dispute, with a flurry of diplomatic activity in Maghreb capitals. Saudi Arabia, in particular, has been trying to push forward a plan for settlement to Morocco and Algeria in an attempt to further stabilise and unify the Arab world against President Sadat's Peace Treaty with Israel. Morocco especially is seen as a weak link in the apparently united Arab anti-Egypt front.

This is not the first time the Saudis have tried to mediate on the Sahara but their latest initiative, launched two months ago, is seen as the first really serious attempt. The Saudi plan, which apparently includes substantial aid for both Morocco and Algeria and guarantees for all parties with respect to the Bou Crna phosphate mines, was given an enthusiastic response by Morocco, informed sources said. But the main problem will be to find a formula acceptable to King Hassan who has staked so much on his "recuperation" of the Sahara.

The war, now in its fourth year, is undoubtedly a drain on Morocco's economy, and the resumption of badly-needed Saudi aid, allegedly cut off last year, must seem very attractive. The broad lines of the plan were put to Morocco earlier this year, and in May Crown Prince Fahd of Saudi Arabia discussed the matter with French President Giscard d'Estaing, informed sources said.

The visit to Morocco last month of King Khaled and Defence Minister Prince Sultan

took things a stage further, and the Saudis subsequently asked King Hussain of Jordan to continue the process with a trip to Rabat and Algiers. Hussain briefed President Giscard in Paris on progress in the matter before returning to brief the Saudis on mediation results.

The support of France, which has close links with Morocco and which has consistently supported its policy on the Sahara, is seen as vital to the success of the Saudi plan. For the US is applying pressure in a different direction in an attempt to prevent Morocco from going over completely to the anti-Egypt Arab bloc.

The US is reconsidering its ban on the sale of weapons to Morocco under pressure from the Jewish lobby in Washington. And in this respect the visits to Morocco last month of Jewish US Senator Jacob Javits and Under-Secretary of Defence Charles Duncan are significant. Previously Washington refused to give Morocco weapons for use in its Sahara war, but recently some spare parts and ammunition have been sent. Moreover, Moroccan sources said that President Jimmy Carter may visit Morocco later in the year.

Only France would be in a position to give Morocco the weapons it needs and so lessen the leverage which Washington may have

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over Rabat. Saudi Arabia can give money but it cannot give arms. So the battle for Moroccan allegiance is on, with the US and Saudi Arabia on opposite sides although both would like to see an end to the conflict.

But the final outcome will probably be decided by what positions the other parties to the Saharan dispute adopt - the Polisario guerrillas backed by Algeria and Libya, and Mauritania.

On the ground, Polisario is having increasing success and Mauritania would be more than willing to give in to its demands if it did not have to consider reprisals from Morocco (see *The Middle East, No 59, p36*).

Moreover, Algeria under its new leadership is so far showing no signs of adopting the more moderate line on the Sahara which had been expected. And the slight strain in relations with Libya which had developed over Libyan policy in Africa in general has been relieved by a series of high level meetings, particularly by Colonel Qaddafi's visit to Algiers last month.

The Saudi plan was no doubt discussed at these meetings and a common stand was apparently worked out which would ensure that at least some of Polisario's demands would be satisfied. Certainly Algeria and Libya would concur with the Saudi desire to keep Morocco in the Arab fold, and to this extent the Saudi plan was given a more sympathetic hearing than would otherwise have been the case, informed sources said.

At present, therefore, the balance seems to be tipped in favour of the Saudi initiative and also in favour of the establishment of some kind of Saharan entity with guarantees for continued Moroccan exploitation of the phosphate deposits in the territory. It remains to be seen, however, whether the Saudis have found a formula which allows King Hassan to save face if he agrees to relinquish the Sahara. If not he may choose to join the US-Israeli-Egyptian alliance.

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