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JPRS L/8643

4 September 1979

Near East/North Africa Report

(FOUO 33/79)



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NEAR EAST/NORTH AFRICA REPORT

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INTER-ARAB AFFAIRS

POTENTIAL FOR EGYPTIAN ATTACK ON LIBYA ASSESSED, DISCUSSED

Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 22 Jul 79 p 36

[Article by Omar S'Habou]

[Text] "This time, Qadhafi will not get away from me!" A year after having made this pledge, which is somewhat unusual among heads of state, Sadat launched his troops on 21 July 1977 against the Libyan military base with the rather significant name of Gamal Abdel Nasser. That was the Four Days' War--with armored vehicles, aircraft, tanks, dead, and wounded. That war seemed to fit into the logic of things, an indication of how much personal relations between the two presidents had deteriorated and how opposing the strategic interests of the two countries had become.

The elimination of the Libyan leader, guilty of a triple crime (continuation of Nasserism, "revolutionary subversion" inside Egypt, and alliance with Moscow) after 1974 became a declared priority objective of Sadat: "Egypt will assume its responsibilities toward the Libyan people so that it may get rid of the deviationist dictatorial power of Qadhafi" (22 July 1975). But the Four Days' War did not solve anything. Qadhafi pursued his objectives more openly than ever before. The roles even seem to have been reversed.

While the surprise and half-victorious war, unleashed by Sadat against Israel in 1973, was able to remove the essence of the complaints and slander hurled against him by Qadhafi, the separate peace with Israel in 1979 on the other hand placed the Egyptian chief of state in a less comfortable situation. This is especially true since his bubbling neighbor has the benefit of the anti-Sadat consensus in the Arab World.

Will Qadhafi, who discreetly amassed more tanks than France and Great Britain together, try to rush Sadat by declaring, for example, a jihad (holy war)? Libyan strategists rule out this eventuality: "The Arab countries would not follow us. We would be left high and dry!"

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In point of fact, it seems that we can look forward to a new, even bigger Egyptian attack. In spite of the serious trouble which Begin continues to make for the causes of the 26 March treaty, Sadat is trying to give the process of peace with the Hebrew state an irreversible character. The idea is definitely to lay a strong foundation for the Tel-Aviv--Washington--Cairo "security triangle," the keystone in the American strategic re-deployment in this region. And Qadhafi in this respect is a stumbling-block. His downfall would more than ever before round the sharp corners off. While it would deprive the Arab rejection front of its toughest nucleus, it would make it possible for the Western belt to be deployed more securely.

For many long hours of trilateral discussions at Camp David and in Washington, the dangerous notion of "living space" was frequently stated by Sadat. After all, had not the latter declared in July 1973, perhaps in a constructive spirit: "We will consider the Libyan people and their territory as the natural continuation of the Egyptian people and their territory?" The Israeli and American conversation partners of the Egyptian president displayed "much understanding." That is not astonishing since the Pentagon in January 1977 considered Colonel Qadhafi "one of the potential enemies of the United States, right after the Soviet Union and China."

In Tripoli it is believed that a new Egyptian attack, under any kind of pretext, is inevitable. "The logic of geopolitics would then come out to the fullest extent," it was explained to us by a close collaborator of Colonel Qadhafi. "Algeria, 'Syak' (Syria plus Iraq), and Ethiopia, with Soviet logistic support, would not simply stand by. We even expect that the spirit of the Baghdad Conference will persuade the entire Arab World actively to side with us." Is that so sure? Could one imagine Morocco, Tunisia, and Saudi Arabia hurrying to the aid of Qadhafi?

And can the new Algerian president Chadli Bendjedid, who received Qadhafi in May, repeat the demand addressed by Boumedienne to Sadat in July 1977, "to put an end to his aggression against Tripoli?" Is the resumption of tension to the west not liable to neutralize this in part?

As for "Syak," the new and powerful ally of Egypt--Israel--will probably take care of that. Carter's support was obtained a long time ago: "America appreciates the role which Egypt plays in world affairs," he declared just 20 days prior to the Egyptian attack against Libya on 21 July 1977.

Simple assumptions? These scenarios in any case corroborate one certain and verifiable fact: The presence of something like 100,000 Egyptian soldiers along the border with Libya.

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NORTH AFRICAN AFFAIRS

INCREASINGLY MILITANT FUNDAMENTALISTS IN MAGHREB CRITICIZED

Paris AFRIQUE-ASIE in French 23 Jul-5 Aug 79 p 13

[Article by Ali Gharbi: "Islam, They Claim!"]

[Text] The appearance of the fundamentalist phenomenon in the countries of the Maghreb is not a fad from the East, as people originally tended to believe.

In Morocco and Tunisia, mainly, but in Algeria as well, the Moslem Brotherhood increasingly constitute a particularly militant and aggressive faction of the Maghrebian societies.

In Morocco, the "Ikhwan," the brotherhood, have essentially organized within the lycees and universities in the kingdom, where the government can use them, if need be, to put down the young "Marxists" or persons so designated.

They have set up headquarters and publish and distribute their tracts with complete freedom. They enjoy a kind of immunity, even when they engage in attacks on leftist militants, one of whom -- now imprisoned in Kenitra -- had his arm broken by the Brothers. During a period of crisis, one must say that they know how to turn into zealots of the Moroccan police!

Moreover, in the name of an "Islamic Republic" which they are fervently calling for, the movement's speakers do not hesitate to denounce the corruption of the working class. The result of this contradiction can be summed up in an ambiguous image: that of the two Moslem Brotherhood who spent 2 years in prison in the same cell as their "Marxist" classmates from the Mohamed V Lycee in Casablanca!

The same contradiction exists in Tunisia, where the movement has been given free rein. Occupying the vacuum created by the government, which has banned all opposition and put all its detractors and union leaders in prison, the brotherhood has well known sports, cultural and military organizations, publishing houses and bookstores.... Their messengers: the "princes," the "guides" and the "speakers," crisscross the country and preach in public squares and the mosques. Their leaders are equally well-known and the most famous of them: Shaykh Moro, frequently travels to Ryad.

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Not only are they active in the field of morals, where they have mainly succeeded in forcing many girls to wear Islamic dress, thereby creating a style that is still wreaking havoc, but they mainly cluster in the university in order to track down the "agents of atheistic communism."

Having penetrated even the highest circles, they have managed to convert many upper-level government employees and officials from among those having graduated from the most famous European schools! Several years ago, in the name of Islam, they even destroyed the laboratories of the School of Medicine, where the students were accused of engaging in experiments contrary to the spirit of the Koran.

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AFGHANISTAN

JAPANESE INTERVIEW WITH ISLAMIC PARTY LEADER

Tokyo TOKYO SHIMBUN in Japanese 29 Jul 79 Morning Edition p 9 OW

[Interview with Mr Fusayn, chairman of the Afghanistan Islamic Party (HIA) Culture and Public Information Committee, by correspondent Shigeo Hayashi, at a restaurant in Peshawar, Pakistan--date not given]

[Text] [Question] When was HIA organized and what kind of organization is it?

[Answer] It was organized at Kabul University in 1969 by professors and students burning with Islamic pride. Its purpose was to overthrow the corrupt bureaucracy under King Zahir Shah and also to safeguard Islamism against leftist imperialism which was then infiltrating Afghanistan. At first, the organization was merely called "Mujahedin" (martyr). However, as it later developed into a political party the title "Mujahedin" began to be used to designate the armed personnel under the control of the party's military committee.

[Question] When did it begin its antigovernment armed struggle?

[Answer] The struggle began in 1975 when Mr (Hakmachial) was reelected as party head. It was waged to oppose the Daoud regime supported by the Soviet Union. However, the struggle earnestly began in April 1978, when the Soviet puppet Taraki regime was formed and began repressing Moslems.

[Question] What is the actual armed strength of your party?

[Answer] The organized "Muhajedin" force under the HIA's command numbers between 5,000 and 6,000. In addition, whenever those soldiers fight they are supported by tribesmen in various places.

[Question] Where and how are they fighting?

[Answer] They are now fighting the Taraki government troops in mountain areas in Kunar, Nangarhar and Paktia provinces. They are wholly engaged in "hit-and-run" guerrilla warfare. Taraki's army cannot bring their tanks and armored cars into the mountainous area, enabling us to fight with our

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light weapons. Some Soviet servicemen are assigned to Taraki's military. We have confirmed this by discovering some bodies.

[Question] Could you talk about any major recent battles?

[Answer] There was a big battle in Paktia Province on 18 May. In this fight "Mujahedin" destroyed 17 armored cars and killed 150 government troops. Our side also captured 200 Kalashnikov machineguns, 4 bazookas, 2 antiaircraft machineguns and 8 trench mortars. In another battle fought the same day in the same province, we demolished 14 armored cars and 8 bazookas, and many of our soldiers were "martyred."

[Question] Some say that you have the assistance of neighboring countries. Is this true?

[Answer] Nothing of the kind. We are absolutely fighting for ourselves. We are supported only by Afghan people who help us wage this holy war to safeguard Islamism. Taraki's army is our source for weapons and ammunition. Taraki's troops have often surrendered to our side in groups, giving up their attack plans. The more the Taraki force attacks us, the greater our supply of arms becomes.

[Question] What is your present strategic goal?

[Answer] It is to completely liberate Jalalabad (a major city on a main route connecting Kabul and the Khyber Pass) and thereby cut off a principal supply line for the Taraki regime. Toward this goal, some operations are now being carried out by our colleagues hiding in Kabul and Jalalabad.

[Question] What is your major bottleneck now?

[Answer] There are many other Moslems fighting the Taraki troops, besides HIA members. Virtually, the Taraki force has no control over the mountainous area. Equally, antigovernment forces in various mountain positions have failed to establish mutual links for combined action. HIA is calling on other rebel groups to send it their liaison personnel.

[Question] What relationship is there between HIA and Pakistan?

[Answer] We have refugee visas and I am sure that the Pakistani Government is annoyed by our political activities. This is why we are avoiding open political action in Pakistan. HIA is now headquartered in Peshawar because of its geographic proximity to the three border provinces. However, we would like to move the headquarters into Afghan territory as soon as possible.

[Question] My last question is where party head (Hakmachial) is now.

[Answer] I cannot answer that question. He is sometimes in towns, sometimes in the mountains. We are not afraid of Taraki's intelligence agency, but we know the KGB (the Soviet intelligence agency) is to be feared.

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ALGERIA

CHADLI'S REGIME: CHANGE OR CONTINUITY

Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 18 Jul 79 pp 28, 29

[Article by Jean-Louis Buchet: "The Chadli System"]

[Text] Strange Algeria, who makes judgment without passion so difficult. For the past 6 months a new team under the direction of President Chadli Bendjedid has been governing it. How is it doing? For some, there has been profound change under an apparent continuity. For others, the essence has been maintained behind surface modifications.

Supporting the first hypothesis is the release of Ahmed Ben Bella after that of other less celebrated political prisoners. Too, promised rectifications in the economic domain seem to announce the return to a certain liberalism and the progressive abandonment of the socialist option. In the same way, some moderation on the diplomatic front can be observed and there are those who do not hesitate to predict that Algeria is looking for an honorable way out of the Saharan affair and might even go so far as to drop POLISARIO.

Partisans of the second hypothesis do not lack supporting arguments either. It can be said that clemency towards the opposition simply shows that the powers that be are no longer afraid of them. All the same, a number of signs show that before his illness the deceased president himself wanted to embark upon this route. Boumediene too had recognized that the economic system needed reforms and touching up, and that an active diplomacy should not exclude realism. That said, it must be added that the fundamental remains: There is no question of renouncing the one-party system, the socialist option, or militant third-worldism.

So, is Chadli's Algeria already one of apostasy or fidelity? The two concepts contain elements of truth. But neither the will to rupture or devotion to continuity are hallmarks of the Chadli "system." Those who command today have built their careers under Boumediene, in a rigid framework of state, army and party. It is inconceivable that they could embark upon a true breach, or even have a clear wish to do so. However, they all act as though, beginning with President Chadli, they had been finally 'liberated' 6 months ago. They do not challenge their heritage, but they act as if they had been born--politically--after Boumediene.

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It is in this sense that it can be said that a new team is in power, even, which will doubtless appear later, that a new Algerian Republic is being born. Abdelaziz Bouteflika's fading star (see following pages) is the most tangible proof of a real change. Considered as second in command to the preceding government, Houari Boumediene's closest companion, he was above all, which has perhaps been forgotten, the true architect of Ben Bella's fall. And it is not coincidence, though a bit farfetched, that the former president should reappear, discreetly to be sure, at a moment when Bouteflika is on his way out.

But the change need not become a break. It takes more than a day, or even several months, to get rid of the referents, the acts, and the customs of a system as constraining as that built by Boumediene. This is why Chadli and his companions give the impression of hesitating to make changes in full view. For the past weighs on the decisions of today--to the point that Bouteflika is not (yet) entirely dismissed and Ben Bella is not yet completely freed.

Though it can be said that President Chadli, father of the new Algerian pragmatism, is still learning his trade, it must also be said that he's doing pretty well. Those who claimed several months ago that he was only qualified to be a military leader have been gainsaid today by foreign leaders who have approached the new president. The portrait sketched is that of a man "speaking little, but to the point; up to date on his portfolios, relaxed enough to be agreeable." In any case, a man sure of himself, a man who has shown himself adroit enough to concentrate his essential powers and who has shown he intends to exercise them.

He has, they add, good back-up, his principal counselors being the powerful Lt Col Kasdi Merbah, former chief of military security, and Taleb Ibrahim, excounselor (he is the exception) of Houari Boumediene. Between these men, the Prime Minister Mohamed Ben Ahmed Abdelghani and the minister of foreign affairs, Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia, there is a good enough understanding that discussions would be, relatively, open. To be sure, there is some wrangling at the heart of power. It's logical, after all, the nomination of Chadli being the fruit of compromise, as it were. An element that can be qualified as "hardcore," meaning by this the most dogmatic and integralist, could present problems to Chadli, Mohamed Salah Yahaoui can be placed as leader of this element. If it is true that there has been friction with the FLN coordinator, it can be supposed that the affair has been purposely inflated. Some what in the same trend, but perhaps more of a problem in the long term for the regime, is UGTA [General Union of Algerian Workers]. Some even claim to see shaping on the horizon danger of an evolution comparable to that of the Tunisian center when, under Habib Achour, it stopped being a driving force.

Even if it seems a bit excessive, a comparison with Tunisia has symbolic value. Doesn't it let it be understood that Algeria could become a country--almost--like the others?

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ALGERIA

THE RISE AND FALL OF ABDELAZIZ BOUTEFLIKA

Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 18 Jul 79 pp 30-37

[Article by Hamid Barrada: "When He Who Pulled Down Ben Bella Stumbles"]

[Text] Abdelaziz Bouteflika, the all-powerful foreign minister for 15 years, today finds himself on the outskirts of, if not altogether outside, the regime. Since the formation of the new government on 8 March, it can be stated that he was the principal loser in the redistribution of power which had followed the disappearance of President Houari Boumediene. He who had been considered as the preceding regime's second in command, and who seemed to have a good chance of succeeding the deceased head of state, is brought down to the level of a ministerial adviser to the presidency, the same rank as Dr Ahmed Taleb Ibrahimi whom he had hardly ever cared for, and who had never had more than the external emblems of power.

It's true that Bouteflika has a seat, as do all the former members of the Revolutionary Council (CR), at the FLN's Political Bureau, officially the supreme arbiter of the country. But, in Algeria as elsewhere, the realities of power are not to be read on the organization chart of party or state.

At the death of Boumediene it was necessary to redistribute the exorbitant power he had accumulated in his hands. The post of prime minister was created, the single party was given a political bureau, a secretary general, a coordinator, etc. The rivalries between Revolutionary Council members had well defined stakes: obviously, to whom would fall the presidency, the office of prime minister, the leadership of the party, but also and above all that which De Gaulle called the ministries of sovereignty (defense, interior, foreign affairs). It can even be maintained that it is the control of these which lets us tell the winners from the losers. Col Chadli Bendjedid, president of the republic and secretary general of the FLN as he is, would have but factitious power if he did not have a strong hand on the Ministry of Defense. The practical prerogatives of the prime minister in relation to the attributes of the presidency are not yet known.

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Evicted

But Colonel Abdelghani still has a chance to 'count' because he's kept interior. The FLN coordinator, Colonel Yahiaoui, has his word to say to the extent that he continues to direct the party apparatus and above all if he succeeds in finding a place for himself--not secured yet--close to the army and the administration. Thus, now that the cards have been dealt out again, it is plan that Bouteflika is the only one to have been ousted from his manor: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

He should not have been surprised by his misfortune. During the February congress he had moved out his papers from the ministry perched on the heights of Algeria. After the ministerial appointments, he had retorted to a friend astonished that he would have accepted a post so little worthy of his former rank and his ambitions, "It's better to be in than out," a way of admitting that he is no longer "in." With those close to him he was critical of the regime, as if he were no longer part of it. He had been relieved of the Sahara portfolio, though he is one of those few who know its ins and outs. After some prolonged stays in Paris, he was in Geneva during the last few weeks to have an old kidney infection treated, an infection complicated, it seems, by a diplomatic illness.

Everything indicates then, that for the Algerian Republic Bouteflika is in mothballs. Only, here it is, this--which even could look like a second death of Boumediene to the extent that the former foreign minister incarnates, more than anyone else, the legacy of the deceased president--this spectacular event has passed unnoticed. The concern for cohesion which prevailed among the Algerian leaders following the death of Boumediene required that confrontations be muffled, that the distribution of power be carried out without hubbub or uproar and that eliminations be carefully disguised. Bouteflika was eliminated very quietly, according to the rules and form of the art, but has been eliminated well and good. This gives rise to the question which faces us now: Will he again have a place in the regime, or, as they say in Arabic, in Algeria's political syntax? Or must it be admitted that at 42 years of age he is a has been and his career has peaked?

Bencherif's Mustache

The circumstances in which it was decided to cold shoulder Bouteflika could sketch an answer to these questions. Officially, it was the FLN congress who raised Col Chadli Bendjedid to the presidency of the republic, to the detriment of his rivals Abdelaziz Bouteflika and Mohamed Salah Yahiaoui. In fact, the candidature, possible or actual, of the minister of foreign affairs, immediately ran into the brutal hostility of some of his CR colleagues. Without speaking of Colonel Yahiaoui, himself a candidate, the Colonel Bencherif in particular saw in the designation of Bouteflika no less than an attempt on his honor. "If he is president" he repeated to anyone who would listen, "you can shave off my mustache!" The eight members

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of CR being incapable of agreeing on a nomination, and the risks of a confrontation becoming real, the army was called in to cut the knot.

Bouteflika's chances at the start were good. Had he not been affirmed as the regime's second in command (thus the heir) in being the only one to go to Boumediene's side in Moscow and to tread with him the return road? He it was who gave the funeral speech of the deceased president. Further, to outsiders he seems, if not the natural successor, then at least a credible candidate.

To be sure, Col Mohamed Salah Yahiaoui was not a rival to be scorned. In a country where the war for liberation had propelled the plebeian classes into political life, he seemed to present a more adequate profile than the dashing minister of foreign affairs. He had made himself a reputation as a leftist, defender of the "option," (meaning socialist), and at the same time he could pride himself on having the support of the Islamic element, situated more to the right. But to be at the same time the Man of Moscow and the Man of Mecca did not help him. Public opinion wanted to see the rigid and authoritarian aspects of the regime disappear. And in this respect, Bouteflika was reassuring. Between the two candidates the choice of the FLN congress was not sure. But its session only ratified a decision taken by the army according to criteria and modalities which have remained totally protected from the curiosity of public opinion.

Nevertheless, it is clear that the military did not look on the accession of the foreign minister to head of state with a favorable eye. And it can be asked if they had not at first encouraged Yahiaoui's candidacy in order to block Bouteflika's route and to open the way to Col Chadli Bendjedid. Why this hostility to the minister of foreign affairs by the army? "He is too subtle, too clever, he risks upsetting what is already established," replied a highly placed official who is in on the secrets of the gods. A colonel enumerated reasons for the elimination of Bouteflika like so many pistol shots. "We didn't like someone's declaring himself a candidate, and he declared himself a candidate. He has sympathies for the West and we don't like the West. He embodies continuity and we want change."

A Poem

The adventures of Boumediene's succession shed little light, in the end, for those questioning Bouteflika's future. Perhaps his rocket-like career might be more illuminating.

Abdelaziz Bouteflika was born in 1937 (some biographers make him older by 2 years) at Oujda, Morocco. While taking a French baccalaurat he also did a degree in Classical Arab, giving him a solid foundation. His political classes were more in the Moroccan Istiqlal, than in the Algerian FLN. August 20, 1953 (Mohamed V deposed) had more effect on him than November 1, 1954 (insurrection unleashed in Algeria). One of his friends at Oujda remembers Abdelaziz reciting a poem he had written

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himself in which he lambastes the colonial authorities who had deported Sultan Ben Youssef. Nothing so astonishing in that.

The Heady Smell of Powder

At the time, the "Maghreb of the people" was not a propaganda theme but a reality. After the general strike launched in 1956 by UGEMA [General Union of Moslem Students of Algeria] he rejoined ALN [National Liberation Army] whose western command post, as it happened, was at Oujda. There Si Abdelkader (Bouteflika's pseudonym) encountered those who would be called the Oujda group: Si Djamal (Cherif Belkacem, Si Houcine (Ahmed Medeghri) and above all Houari Boumediene. Later, when Bouteflika recalled to a French minister "the heady smell of powder" he laid himself open to sarcasm: he had hardly breathed in much of the odor in question. It was not by his military feats that he distinguished himself but by his organizational work, though this was not something to be ashamed of, at general staff headquarters in Oujda or Ghardimaou (in Tunisia). But that which set its seal on his destiny was a completely diplomatic mission. It was 1962. A serious crisis had burst out at the heart of the Algerian revolution. The GPRA had disbanded the general staff of the ALN who, because of this, found itself in a delicate position. It would be in a better position if it could obtain the support of the historic leaders imprisoned in the Chateau d'Aulnoy in France. Bouteflika was charged with this mission. Boumediene felt that Mohamed Boudiaf was the man for the situation. Bouteflika leaned towards Ben Bella. He won out. The future president of the republic was won over by the young man. At the end of the meeting, he put this question: "Tell me, Abdelaziz, how many like you are there in the ALN?" "They are all better than I," Bouteflika responded.

The alliance between the general staff (EM) and Ben Bella sealed at Aulnoy was a determining weight on the events to come. It was not based only on the common hostility to GPRA. Each of the two partners needed the other: Ben Bella, vice president of GPRA, brought, outside of his popularity, a 'providential legitimacy,' to use the phrase of an Algerian historian. In turn, he found in the EM's units the decisive instrument that enabled him to seize power. Strengthened by his success at d'Aulnoy, Bouteflika is still the artisan of the collaboration between Ben Bella and Boumediene after the entry into Algiers. In the eyes of other EM members, such as commanders Ali Mendjili and Slimane (Kaid Ahmed), President Ben Bella is a 'politician' like the others and the army should hold itself at a distance from political confrontations. Therefore, it is not a question of whether Colonel Boumediene would accept the Ministry of Defense proposed by Ben Bella. His place was at EM where he was to continue consolidation of the army. Bouteflika felt that times had changed and the army should be represented in the government, just for this consolidation. Boumediene also took this point of view whose rightness the future would show. In effect, he would control and reinforce the army from within the walls of the Ministry of Defense.

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A Vacant Post

During the discussions between Ben Bella and Boumediene to form the government, the latter claimed the Ministry of the Interior for the Army and put forward the name of Bouteflika. The candidate for president was Bachir Boumaaza. His choice finally lighted on Ahmed Medeghri who, it should be said in passing, was then closer to the president than the defense minister. And it was Ben Bella's lack of adroitness which led him to collaborate closely with Boumediene. To Abdelaziz Bouteflika fell the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Tourism. This last sector encompassed the management of nationalized hotels, which would be disastrous and limited to pillage. Happily, he did not stay with it long. For he was called to replace the foreign minister, Mohamed Khemisti, who was assassinated in April of 1963. Kaid Ahmed, the lively commander Slimane, felt the vacant post should by rights come to him. Was he not president of the commission on foreign affairs of the assembly? He was so sure of his appointment that he installed himself in the ministry and summoned the staff to give them their orders.

In preferring Bouteflika, Ben Bella provoked a general surprise. Hadj Ben Alla, the president of the assembly and one of the closest collaborators of the head of state at the time, gave his opinion openly that Bouteflika "is not worthy to occupy so important a post." The former underground leaders, Zbiri, Yahiaoui, Chadli, Ben Salem, did not hide their disapproval. The men of GPRA such as Saad Dahlab, M'Hamed Yazid, jeered openly. For all that, Ben Bella was not shaken. He invariably replied to his critics: "You'll see. In 6 months he will be better than Saad Dahlab!" He was alluding to GPRA's foreign minister who had perked up Algerian diplomacy and whose savoir faire and dynamism had won him esteem and admiration.

Bouteflika's debut was laborious. Diplomats who had begun their careers in GPRA could be heard saying "the boss is embarrassing us." A former Tunisian minister who had met Bouteflika at a meeting of the Arab League in Cairo in 1964, said that he was obviously out of place. In this place where everyone knew everyone else, he was an intruder. He read his statements painfully, as if he didn't know Arabic, yet he knew it perfectly well. He did not lose a centimeter of his modest height, but visibly he did not have the stature of a minister of foreign affairs.

Neutrality

A change of scene: from Cairo let's go to Moscow. Bouteflika was a member of the delegation which in May 1964 accompanied President Ben Bella on an official visit. The talks proceeded under excellent conditions. Then came the moment to put together the joint news release, a task assigned to Abdelaziz Bouteflika and Boris Ponomarev (responsible for liaison with the foreign party). What should not have been more than a routine exercise provoked insurmountable differences. In effect, the Algerian had a concept of neutrality which scandalized the Soviets. He demanded that the party of Lenin be treated in the same way as the United

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States! And this in regards to Vietnam! Not only had he the guts to put forward such an enormity, but he wouldn't back down. It was 0200. Informed of this, Krushchev flew into a rage. Then he waked Ben Bella, who immediately ordered his minister to give it up. The next day the Algerian president made a point of showing his host that he kept all his confidence in his minister. During a meeting at the University of Lumumba he acclaimed Bouteflika lengthily in presenting him as "a model for revolutionary youth."

A year later Ben Bella, to his misfortune, decided to take him out of foreign affairs. In doing this he provoked a conflict with the army which climaxed in his own removal 19 June 1965. The military had considered Bouteflika's dismissal, which occurred after that of two of their own representatives in the government (Medeghri and Kaid Ahmed) as a breach in the balance favoring Ben Bella.

But why would he want to get rid of the minister he had imposed on everyone 2 years earlier? Several complaints were formulated by the president. Bouteflika did not support the militant policy of the chief of state in the Arab world and in Africa. In particular, he did not see the utility of defeloping relations with sub-Sahara Africa and was convinced that Egypt was more a rival than an ally. For the rest some chiefs of state such as Nasser and Modibo Keita had complained about him. And further, he organozed a meeting of ambassadors without getting clearance from the president in advance, or from the Political Bureau of which he was a member. "He does what he wants," said Ben Bella, "while for me to see an ambassador I have to go through him." In a word, the president felt that diplomacy was his domain and found himself affronted by his minister's lack of docility.

A Misunderstanding

And in dealing with the problem, he worsened matters, for in raising the young Abdelaziz to the head of the diplomatic element he had hoped to detach him from Boumediene and then made the bitter discovery that the Oujda clan was more solid than ever. It should be noted, however, that without the determination of the foreign minister the conflict would not have come to a test of power. All the witnesses agree: Bouteflika is well and good the architect of Ben Bella's fall. Boumediene took a waiting posture, certainly so by temperament, but also because he was not sure of coming out the winner in a confrontation. He even thought of resigning. Contrary to what one may believe today, the die was not cast on the eve of 19 June 1965. The relationship of forces between the two camps gave rise to a sort of mutual misunderstanding: each erred to begin with by an excess of prudence in exaggerating the power of the adversary. The historian Mohamed Harbi, who was an active witness of these ups and downs, cites with humor a southern proverb to illustrate this reciprocal overestimation: "Bousadia*fears the dogs, and the dogs fear Bousaadia." That is to say that the spirit of decision, the audacity which Abdelaziz Bouteflika in particular had shown, had been the determinants.

*A dancer with cymbals, originating in the southern Sahara region, known in Morocco under the name "Gnaoua." 14

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After the coup d'etat of 1965, the foreign minister, naturally restored to his post, would come into his own as the darling of the international diplomatic community. His finely drawn features, sparkling eyes, toothy smile, luxuriant mustache, lend seriousness to his youthful face. Premature baldness is hidden, more or less, by long locks combed across the crown of his head. His voice is soft. Dapper, he affects waistcoats, likes good cigars and pretty girls. From a distance the man is irritating, but he charms those who are near to him. He skirts confrontations and willingly proclaims that he has no enemies. But watch out, this playboy is conning his world: behind the nonchalance lies a formidable intransigence; his elegant, almost frivolous style, hides a sharp consciousness of representing his country; he is sure of himself, and for those not on guard, a personality that dominates.

In any case, political leaders charmed by Bouteflika are countless. The paeans of praise mounting from the various frontiers is without doubt proof of his success.

President Senghor, otherwise reserved regarding Algerian diplomacy, admitted one day that he much enjoyed conversing with Bouteflika "for it was an intellectual pleasure." President Bourguiba was soon charmed by the young minister, one of the rare Algerians who knew how to talk to him.

Sidna

As concerns the two countries dispute over the border (the famous milestone 233), Bouteflika had thrown at the Supreme Combattant: "We are all outsiders. Only you have the authority over your people necessary to take a chance on the future and give up a piece of desert earth." With Mrs Wassila Bourguiba, who plays a real role in politics ("She is the only true man of politics in Tunisia" said a humorist), he maintained an affectionate relationship and she was prodigally free with advice. The friendship between Bouteflika and Masmoudi had survived the Jerba episode (Tunisia-Libya Union in January 1974). This capacity to keep the friendship of men with whom he had been in confrontation, an inseparable part of the diplomatic art, is one of the keys to Bouteflika's success. Maintaining relations with an adversary is certainly another. Thus, in full Sahara crisis, he contrived to send a gift to Hassan II, whom he addressed only as "Sidna" (our Lord). Every New Year's he received greetings from the Algerian minister...from Madrid. From this it was not surprising to hear a former Moroccan diplomat say to us "Bouteflika was a great minister of foreign affairs. True, he enjoyed the prestige of Algeria, but he played his own part in it." And he added with some bitterness, "He had the chance to last a long time!" To our knowledge, Abderrahim Bouabid, the leader of the Moroccan left, is one of the rare few who did not succumb to his spell.

Talleyrand

From this it is not far to suppose that Bouteflika represented the prototype of the "gangocracy" which rules in Algeria, in his eyes. The man

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stung them all the more as he felt personally humiliated by the indolence of Rabat diplomacy. A part of the Moroccan delegation to the 1974 conference of nonaligned states at Colombo, he abandoned his habitual courtesy to buttonhole Bouteflika just before the session on Sahara and tell him "I'll screw you." The Algerian kept his poise and riposted with this proverb: "The stone thrown by a friend is an apple!"

Abdelaziz Bouteflika identified himself so with Algerian diplomacy, dominated it so for so many years, that it looks like he created it. The truth is, it was under GPRA and around Krim Belkacem, and after that Saad Dahlab (secretary general of the department and then minister) and a team of intellectuals, that diplomacy got underway and established its network that is still functioning. Bouteflika's merit lies in having conserved the structure and developed it. He knew how to use the help of men he didn't like and who returned the sentiment. He blamed Ben Bella for promoting diplomacy at all points of the compass, which indeed was what he was doing once the regime born of the 1965 coup d'etat was consolidated. It goes without saying that Algeria's efforts to seat its economic independence and install a new world order as well as the aid it was giving to liberation movements made the task of the foreign minister easier. He was showing himself more as an entrepreneur with a sharp sense of strategy, than as a statesman haunted by a noble plan, "more Talleyrand than Metternich." The place of Algeria in the world and an active diplomacy were never too much to hold out against France and to bring it around to a more positive attitude after the nationalization of oil decided upon by President Boumediene in February 1971. It was not easy, and for a long time Pierre Guillaumeot, president of ELF-ERAP would repeat this phrase, which says much about the resentment Bouteflika inspired in him: "That oil, he stole it from me!" Generally speaking, the leader of Algerian diplomacy knew perfectly well how to play the game so that his country remained a confusing element in domestic French politics. The majority in power could not totally reject the heritage of General de Gaulle who had established 'privileged relations' with Algeria and the left, all factions indiscriminately, and was not through harking back to the bad conscience twinged by its not very creditable position during the war and continues to be almost as benevolent towards Algeria as it is towards...Israel.

Relations with Washington were broken during the 6-Day War and were not renewed until 1974, but cooperation had not stopped developing as shown by the gas contracts. The prudence of the Americans in the Sahara affair is not unrelated to this economic cooperation. It is true that the U.S. is handling Algeria as well for at heart they do want to see the Soviets reinforce their position in North Africa.

Pro-West?

However that may be, it is considerations of this sort that have won for Bouteflika his reputation of being pro-West. But it is significant that a man as well up on things as Michel Jobert should be much surprised by it.

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The reality is doubtlessly more complex. To what degree was such a reputation sustained by Arab and European ambassadors posted to Algiers and with whom Bouteflika dealt with easy, offhand manners? The West has not, after all, retained a very pleasant memory of the year 1974 when Bouteflika presided over the United Nations General Assembly in what seemed the crowning point of his career. As all know, he used the authority conferred on him by his office to welcome Yasir Arafat, the president of the PLO as a head of state and to expel as unsavory the representatives of South Africa.

But perhaps the Sahara affair best expresses the ideas and style of the former foreign minister, his audacious coups, the limits and aftertaste of his actions. In the beginning (1966) Bouteflika threw out a little phrase: his country is 'concerned' by the decolonization of Saguia el-Hamra and Rio de Oro. Later on President Boumediene declared that his country had no territorial claim to put forward as did Morocco and Mauritania and that his objective was simply to speed the departure of the Spanish. Therefore, it was a question of organizing a referendum so that the people of the Spanish colony could choose their destiny. But Bouteflika provided before a Moroccan leader a rather sinuous interpretation of the Algerian position: "The referendum question should bear on several possibilities: continued Spanish presence, or independence, but also the ties that bind to Morocco, Mauritania, and, not least, Algeria."

In effect, Morocco must be prevented by any means from recovering the territory claimed. Moreover, did not Bouteflika confide to a friend while pointing it out on a map of Western Sahara: "If Morocco installs itself in this region, Africa will be definitively closed to us!" Thus the head of Algerian diplomacy did not hesitate to make a deal with Spain. The multiplicity of claims to the Spanish colony suited Madrid very well.

Nerve

Only during early times, when the Spanish could no longer prolong their occupation of Sahara and while they were packing up, that area fell more or less directly under the influence of Algeria. This judicious calculation was encouraged by a series of factors which, in Bouteflika's eyes, paralyzed Morocco: The gulf separating the opposition from those in power didn't allow the country to be mobilized and the purging of the army after two putsch attempts (1971 and 1972) hardly made it operational before a long period had passed; the historic distrust between Morocco and Mauritania insured that no compromise between the two was conceivable. Now, once Spanish plans and Algerian plots were clarified, Morocco moved. The political parties and the palace put their differences aside. And it was the opposition leader who took the initiatives that reconciled the points of view of Rabat and Nouakchott. The understanding between the two capitals took shape during the United Nations session preceding the one presided over by Bouteflika. No doubt about it, he felt the event as a personal affront. For the moment he acknowledged the fact, then effected a digression in Algerian policy. In July 1975, less than a year afterwards,

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he arrived in Rabat to declare: "I bring good news." At the close of his talks with Hassan II, reconciliation between the two countries seemed a serious engagement. The kingdom would ratify the 1972 treaty, delimiting its frontiers with Algeria. The latter would support the understanding between Morocco and Mauritania in order to isolate Spain. It became rapidly clear that the scenario laid out by the monarch and the minister was not going to be followed. What happened?

The opinion most widespread in Morocco was that Bouteflika was simply trying to con or lull his interlocutors. We tend to believe that once the Algerian minister got home, Boumediene did not follow up. In any case, two things are sure: Bouteflika disappeared from the political scene for many long months, and from this time on the Algerian president took the Saharan affair directly into his own hands.

If we have dwelt on this episode, it's because it illustrates so well certain personality traits of the Algerian minister. To agree with the Spain of Franco, one should not be encumbered with 'principles'; and inso-much more easily if passing one's time in proclaiming them. It also shows a lot of imagination and nerve. All things which Bouteflika, as seen through an overview of his career, does not lack. The last trip to Rabat indicated a remarkable capacity for recovery, or at least to limit the damage. Bouteflika, in contrast to Boumediene, knew how to distinguish intransigence from stubbornness. The episode is of further interest because it was a reminder that relations between the minister and the president had not always been idyllic. After all, the differences appearing the summer of 1975 were not the first. Two years earlier a serious conflict brought the Algerian head of state into opposition to his friends Ahmed Medeghri, Cherif Belkacem, but also Abdelaziz Bouteflika.

Humiliation

Most curiously, purely political differences burst out as a result of a circumstance which was the epitome of private, not to say intimate life: Houari Boumediene's marriage. The president's most venerable colleagues, those who belonged to the 'Oudja group,' and who recognized each other as members of this 'brotherhood,' reproaching him for not respecting their collegial aspect, of taking intemperate measures, of 'making like Ben Bella,' according to the revealing phrase of one of them, would not accept that he marry. Was it because of the choice of bride (a divorcee) and the ill-natured gossip about her--as with any self-respecting woman in a closed society [as published]. Perhaps, but not only. Was it not because Boumediene's censors were not altogether angelic in this respect and hardly bothered to hide it? In effect, it seemed that the marriage of the president disrupted and upset the customs and laws of the clan. From then on they could no longer spend long nights discussing things more or less seriously while sipping glasses of mint tea. To meet Si Boumediene, Djamel (Cherif Belkacem) or Houcine (Ahmed Medeghri) would have to--supreme humiliation--go through his wife. Bouteflika confided to a Tunisian friend: "Tunisia may have a First Lady, but Algeria--never!" The marriage not

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only brought into question the group's working rules, but touched its constitutional principle. Everything happened as if the other clan members had conceded preeminence to Boumediene only because he had imposed upon himself an asceticism resistant to every test.

Endurance

The conflict took on such proportions that Boumediene gave in to his friend's inunctions. At least for a period he sent his wife away and only took her back several weeks later.

This political-moral crisis marks the time when the Oudja group disappeared for all practical purposes. Ahmed Medeghri, the dynamic minister of the interior, died under mysterious circumstances (officially, a suicide). Cherif Belkacem retired from political life. Kaid Ahmed went into open and virulent opposition to Boumediene before dying in exile in Morocco. Only Tayebi Larbi, the minister of agriculture, whose influence had never been strong, and Abdelaziz Bouteflika, were left.

Boumediene turned to him more than anyone else. For his part, Bouteflika held up well. And his obstinacy and endurance seemed to be paying off. Because he was the president's last friend, his influence grew. Thus, in the Sahara affair, he lined himself up with Boumediene's intransigent position. He mobilized the diplomatic apparatus to make Polisario a credible liberation movement. But it's justified to ask to what degree he had ended up by bringing Boumediene around to his views, as is indicated by the secret negotiations he conducted with Morocco.

Premonition

But how can we not see that it was Bouteflika's fidelity to Boumediene that, in the final analysis, played him false in the battle for succession? The minister of foreign affairs had thought of retiring at least once (in 1974). When he confided this to the president, the latter responded, "Let's both of us go!"

This little phrase now seems charged with a premonitory fatality. With Boumediene gone, Bouteflika must go in his turn. First of all, because contrary to those who won over him in the struggle for succession, he held his power exclusively by favor of the deceased president. He has no base, either military or popular. Further it is not by chance that those now in the forefront of the new regime have at one time or another fought the preceding regime.

Can one conclude that Bouteflika's future lies behind him? Two clearly contrasting responses summarize the speculations and reflections heard around. One is by a friend of the former leader of Algerian diplomacy who does not disguise his admiration for him and gives him credit as a statesman. "How can this initiator of the Euro-Arab and Arab-African dialogue, who for many years was the spokesman for an Algeria of the Third World, nonaligned, progressist, who figured simultaneously as a

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moderate element open to the West, can come out of this conflict as a definite loser in which he opposed men scarcely emerged from the shadows?" Thus Bouteflika would not have said his last word, only taken a rain check on it.

Now let's listen to an Algerian diplomat who knew the former foreign minister well and whose appreciation for him was only moderate, while he was full of praise for the deceased president. "Bouteflika no longer has a place. For Boumediene is dead and thoroughly dead and he came from him. Another scene is beginning with different actors, new rules of play. If Bouteflika wants to play a role again some day, he must first train himself, exercise every morning, show he's not lost his wind, that he can survive a desert journey. In a word, that he has what it takes."

Who is right?

Ambiguity

In our opinion, both, or, if you prefer, neither. The first judgment takes into account only those qualities of the former foreign minister that are not overrated. But it ignores the changes in the political class that were brought about by the force of things after Boumediene's death and which the second judgment has the merit of bringing out. But both neglect what is most striking about Bouteflika's personality: his ambiguity. It is excessive and unfair to say he 'came out of' Boumediene. More than once he has given quite the contrary impression of 'pushing' his president and friend. Didn't he put himself behind him the better to push?

Nevertheless, he has always sheltered behind Boumediene who, as no one will deny, was only a convenient umbrella. On the other hand, Bouteflika's abilities are not the only thing in question. The paths to power, in Algeria as elsewhere, are not conbested with capable men only. Above all, the country has been going through a slow but real mutation since Boumediene's leath. There is even a feeling that the battle for succession is not yet finished. President Chadli is learning the trade and no one knows if he will be anotheroumediene, if he will be grabbing for power, or if he must form a government. Nor is it known how long the alliances (especially between the president, Yahiaoui or Abdelgham) which brought him to power will hold up. And don't forget that many of the men who 'count' (such as Col Ben Cherif, the former police chief, or Abdessalem Belaid, the 'father of industrialization') are outside the decision-making center and are reduced to presiding over party commissions.

Bouteflika's career seems to be a continual rise, irresistible. To be sure, Lady Luck has smiled on him, but when necessary he knew how to round his back and make the most of transforming obstacles into favorable factors, into levers. Knowing how to get out of a bad spot, turning bad luck into good, effect comebacks, are probably the major trumps of the political man. In ancient times, a statesman in the twilight of his life was asked

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the secret of his success. He replied: "When I was young I met God in the desert. And God said to me: "My son, to succeed, everything is a means to that end, even obstacles." There is no doubt that Abdelaziz Bouteflika had met God somewhere between Oujda and Ghardimaou. Will he still know how to make good use of these precepts? Must he meet God again? More than ever he needs it today.

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LIBYA

LIBYAN AMBITIONS SPUR ARMS, MUNITIONS PURCHASES

Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 22 Jul 79 pp 34-35

[Article by Hamza Kaidi]

[Text] Miscellaneous interventions, the invasion of Chad by a kind of foreign legion referred to as Islamic army (JEUNE AFRIQUE, No 966), designs on Malta, atomic ambitions added on top of a formidable arsenal of war--Libya and its leader continue to worry everybody.

They arouse as many questions as worries among the neighbors of the Jamahiriya and the faraway countries, including the big powers. In addition to weapons purchased in the West, Libya has bought impressive quantities of Soviet materiel. These are quantities which appear to be way out of proportion when compared to the defensive requirements of a country of less than 3 million inhabitants and an army estimated at 37,000 men in 1978.

According to the London Institute of Higher Strategic Studies, the Libyan army in July 1978 had 178 combat aircraft and 2,000 Soviet T-54/54 and T-62 battle tanks. Since then it also received several squadrons of Mig-21 and Mig-23 aircraft and, above all, half a dozen Mig-25 reconnaissance aircraft (dubbed the Foxbat B by NATO) which the Kremlin until now had refused to turn over to any other country, excluding Algeria. On top of that materiel we can add a by no means negligible number of warships which, according to the wish of Colonel Qadhafi, should make Libya the third biggest naval power in the Mediterranean around 1980. But the Libyan leader does not stop there. A contract involving several billion dollars supposedly was signed with the Italian firm of SIA [Aircraft Company] Marchetti. It supposedly involved the supply of 250 SF-260 trainers, the installation in Libya of an assembly line to put these aircraft together, and the development of a new aircraft, the SIA Marchetti 211 which Tripoli has pledged to buy. Discussions were held with Yugoslavia for the construction of a big factory which is to turn out spare parts for Soviet equipment. A military cooperation agreement was signed with Turkey and, in addition to the training of Libyan troops, provides for the construction of a joint shipyard and the production of certain

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types of military equipment (ships, trucks, ammunition, etc.) by these two countries.

About two score Mirage F-1 aircraft and a dozen frigates of the Combattante type were ordered from France. American equipment is not disdained either, in spite of the embargo ordered by the White House. Colonel Qadhafi has threatened to cut off his supply of petroleum to the United States if the eight C-130 Hercules and the three Boeing 747 transport aircraft, ordered and paid for, are not delivered to him.

In spite of their size, all of these Western military supplies look rather modest when compared to the equipment ordered from the Soviet Union. According to the American journalist Arnaud de Borchgrave (NEWS-WEEK, 9 Jul), Libya by 1980 will have 400 combat aircraft and about 10,000 Soviet armored vehicles. Colonel Qadhafi supposedly admitted to our fellow newsman that his country would acquire more weapons from Moscow than the shah of Iran ever purchased from the United States. These statistics and these intentions, with which the Libyan leader is credited, look rather exaggerated because, to equal or exceed the military expenditures of the shah (\$10 billion in 1978), Libya would have to spend almost all of its petroleum revenues (\$12 billion in 1978) for its defense.

Libyan ambitions do not stop with conventional weapons; Tripoli supposedly has the intention of getting nuclear arms. After having tried to buy an atomic bomb from China, the leaders attempted to make one with the help of Argentina. This cooperation was denounced by Buenos Aires. An attempt in Pakistan was supposedly more successful. Since the time India joined the atomic club, Islamabad has spared no effort to get this weapon for itself. A Pakistani physicist, who worked for a research center in Holland, was recalled to direct the agency created for this purpose not far from Islamabad. He supposedly brought back to his country the blueprints for a simplified uranium 235 enrichment system. But the operation continued to be too expensive for Pakistan which moreover lacked equipment.

Libya then supposedly stepped in, proposing financial support as well as the equipment necessary, provided that it could benefit from Pakistani research. An agreement reportedly was concluded along those lines. During his last trip to the Middle East, early in July, Colonel Qadhafi alluded to an exploit which would mark the tenth anniversary of the Libyan revolution on this coming 1 September. Some people thought that this would involve the explosion of an atomic bomb. But for the time being one could not say so with certainty.

In the meantime, Colonel Qadhafi continues to provide his country with an impressive quantity of conventional equipment, mostly Soviet. Some people consider this to amount to Moscow's control over Libya. "Qadhafi serves the objectives of the Kremlin by intervening in numerous conflicts where the Soviets do not want to dirty their hands," writes A. de Borchgrave

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who believes that there is a Soviet machination, aimed at "utilizing the Libyans to pave the way for their own bases on that island" behind Libyan financial assistance for Malta. For the time being, this "Soviet-Libyan hold on Malta" boils down to the supply, by Tripoli, of "financial assistance aimed at making up for the loss of 21 million pounds sterling following the closing of the British bases and some super-Frelon and Alouette III helicopters offered by the Jamahiriya." As for Libyan intervention, it is difficult to admit that Moscow's hand is behind assistance given Idi Amin Dada.

Relations between Tripoli and Moscow for the time being are those between a customer and a supplier. In contrast to most of the other countries, the Jamahiriya pays for all its purchases in cash which gives it privileged status.

But what are the Libyan leaders figuring on doing with this entire arsenal? Their thinking might be summarized in just a few words: "A country of 3 million people is nothing, even with its petrodollars. With a strong army, it can become a respectable power."

The proximity of a man such as Sadat, who swore in public to "crush Qadhafi like a fly" (see p 36 [of original]), is not designed to reassure the Libyan leaders. They might well ask themselves questions about the intentions of the Egyptian leader who, in spite of his peace treaty with Israel, is busy equipping his army, consisting of more than 400,000 men, with numerous American aircraft and tanks. Unable to get F-16 fighters, the Egyptian president was satisfied with Phantom F4 aircraft and M-113 light tanks [sic; APCs]. The United States, as a bonus for the peace treaty, promised him military aid in the amount of \$1.5 billion.

The Libyans think that Egyptian numerical supremacy may be compensated for by superiority in equipment. But they will have to find enough soldiers and technicians for using this arsenal. This is their biggest weakness. Just to make their 2,000 battle tanks operational--which can be used to equip six armored divisions--they would have to double the numerical strength of their army. There is also a lack of pilots and maintenance technicians for the aircraft. North Korea is partly filling this gap by furnishing some 300 pilots and technicians. The Soviet Union and the countries of Eastern Europe furnished advisors in all fields--Libya presently has close to 2,000 Soviet advisors.

On the other hand, the Libyan leaders try to increase the personnel strength of their army through a crash conscription program. In addition to all Libyan adults, for whom military service would become obligatory, Arab volunteers would also be integrated, regardless of their nationality. It supposedly was a formation of these international units which, according to the leaders in N'Djamena, clashed with the troops of FROLINAT [Chadian National Liberation Front] in the northern part of Chad. According to the leaders in N'Djamena, some 2,500 men from that Islamic army early in July,

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supposedly supported by Libyan aircraft, tried to seize several Chadian towns. "They were intercepted by elements from the FROLINAT which cut the Islamic army to pieces."

It is difficult to determine the truth in all of these statements but four soldiers (one Egyptian and three Libyans), who were members of the Islamic army were shown off at N'Djamena.

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MOROCCO

REPRESSION IN MOROCCO DENOUNCED

Paris AFRIQUE-ASIE in French 9-22 Jul 79 p 63

[Text] The Rotterdam Arts Foundation has awarded Moroccan poet, Abdellatif Laabi, a political prisoner in Morocco since 1972, a prize of 10,000 florin in recognition of the entire collection of his works of poetry. The Laabi Committee and the Committee To Fight Repression in Morocco released a press bulletin on the occasion stating that the Foundation had sent Laabi an invitation to go to the Netherlands to receive the prize.

The invitation was not honored by the king of Morocco or prison authorities answerable to the palace.

In addition, there is still no news of El-Kohen Lamchili, professor at the School of Fes and editor of the periodical ASSAS. The publication has not been issued since the professor's kidnapping. The last edition, published in March 1979, contains two articles, one of which recalls under what conditions the UNEM [National Union of Moroccan Students] was banned, while the other openly criticizes the Moroccan Army, which costs the Moroccan people over 6 percent of the country's gross national product, which is nearly an African record.

Finally, the trial of the persons who murdered Omar Benjelloun began -- after a preliminary investigation lasting three and one-half years -- with the disappearance (into thin air) of a key piece of evidence from the indictment and in the absence of the principal defendants: Abdelkrim Moutir and Abdelaziz Nouamani (abroad!). One can certainly see what good Benjelloun's killing accomplished!

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TUNISIA

AMNESTY CALLED PROPAGANDA MANEUVER

Paris AFRIQUE-ASIE in French 9-22 Jul 79 pp 63-64

[Text] In answer to an appeal from the Tunisian people on 26 January, two attorneys from the Parisian Court of Appeal, P. Cohen Seat and Eveline Meyer Manville, held a press conference. The two have completed a broad investigation in Tunisia sponsored by the International Association of Democratic Jurists (AIJD) and the International Movement of Catholic Jurists (MIJC). After enumerating the many contacts they have had in Tunisia, mainly involving the families of trade unionists arrested following the black night of 26 January 1978, lawyers, government circles and various opposition groups, the two attorneys reported a number of confirmations.

It has been shown that Habib Achour, now hospitalized in Tunis, was definitely the victim of an attempted poisoning. His current state of health and the physical condition of members of the Executive Bureau of the legitimate UGTT [Tunisian General Federation of Labor], also in prison, are alarming.

During the first quarter of this year, 39 movements started by workers and trade union members loyal to their legitimate leaders were also registered, confirming the total isolation of the UGTT, which is a puppet of Tjani Abid and the Destourian Socialist Party.

In addition, the International Labor Bureau, meeting recently in Geneva, condemned this "official" UGTT, thereby demonstrating that international opinion is not ready to forget the excesses of 26 January 1978 and the blood-bath that enabled the government to decapitate the only organization representing the Tunisian workers movement.

The two Parisian lawyers also confirmed, following their investigation, that the famous presidential amnesty of 1 June was only a vulgar propaganda maneuver. No one arrested after 26 January has been released. Nor has the government published any list of those to whom amnesty has supposedly been granted.

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TUNISIA

SOUHAYR BELHASSEN DISCUSSES POSSIBILITIES OF AMNESTY

Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 1 Aug 79 p 11

[Article by Souhayr Belhassen: "Tunisia: A Birthday Unlike Any Other"]

[Text] Sentenced to 10 years of forced labor, he will be freed only 10 months after having been tried by the State Criminal Court: Habib Achour, 66, former secretary general of the UGTT (Tunisian General Federation of Labor), imprisoned at Borj Roumi, is going to be pardoned by President Bourguiba. On 3 August, on the occasion of the 76th birthday of the Tunisian chief of state. The former strong man of the trade unions was tried and on the night of 9-10 October, found to be responsible for the riots of 26 January 1978 that resulted in 51 dead and 324 wounded, according to official figures.

Since that time, various political parties, trade union organizations and humanitarian groups have intensified their campaigns and petitions demanding the release of Habib Achour. Friendly countries let it be known that they would welcome a gesture of clemency. But President Bourguiba did not intend to act under pressure and the most friendly and discreet interventions were not the least effective. Let us cite those of prominent French persons such as Pierre Mendes France, Charles-Andre Julien and Alain Savary, who personally contacted the Tunisian chief of state.

Is the release of Habib Achour, which cannot fail to be favorably welcomed in Tunisia and abroad, a humanitarian gesture or a political act? Probably both. It will be a humanitarian act because the age and the state of health of the prisoner, who has suffered from the difficult conditions of his detention, influenced the decision. It is obviously a political gesture, linked to a certain African context marked by the new importance granted to human rights (as seen in Monrovia). Or, closer to Tunisia, in Algeria, by the conditional release of Ben Bella, 3 years younger than Habib Achour.

There is naturally a purely Tunisian context as well. On the eve of a congress of the Destourian Socialist Party, at which leaders intend to democratize the operation of the party (JEUNE AFRIQUE, No 966), Achour's pardon appears to be the real beginning of a liberalization of national political life.

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But Achour is not alone. The principal defendant, he was sentenced with 14 other trade unionists. If the main leader is pardoned, then the logic of the presidential gesture means that the comrades of the former secretary general of the UGTT should benefit from the same measure.

It is not possible to stop there. If these 15 men sentenced for the most painful events in the contemporary history of Tunisia are freed, can one continue to hold in prison men and women accused of much less grievous crimes? There are five "perspectivists" in the Borj Roumi Penitentiary, most of whom have been there for 10 years (JEUNE AFRIQUE, No 964); 22 persons from the Marxist-Leninist al-'Amil al-Tunisi Group (GMLT), sentenced in 1974 and 1975; 13 members of the Tunisian Progressive Liberation Front (FPLT); 22 trade unionists and demonstrators from Sfax, Beja, Mateur and Kasserine; 8 members of the Tunisian Progressive Revolutionary Party (PRPT), sentenced on 30 June; and 21 defendants from the underground newspaper AL-SHA'B.

In all, there are 106 political prisoners still tarnishing Tunisia's image. Once the prisons are empty, the conditions will exist so that nothing can oppose the free enjoyment of the liberties guaranteed by the constitution and the government will have to be credited with its democratic intentions.

On 3 August 1979, will there be no more political prisoners in Tunisia? One can answer in the affirmative. This year, the birthday of President Bourguiba will be the "celebration of harmony" (al-Wifaq). As for the Supreme Commander, he will make that day figure among the greatest dates in Tunisian history, of which he is so anxious to be one of the main artisans.

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