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JPRS L/9041

18 April 1980

Near East/North Africa Report

(FOUO 14/80)



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NEAR EAST/NORTH AFRICA REPORT

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INTER-ARAB AFFAIRS

FRENCH WEEKLY CITES PLO GULF SPOKESMAN ON NEAR EAST POSSIBILITIES

LD011119 Paris LE NOUVEL OBSERVATEUR in French 17-23 Mar 80 pp 29, 30 LD

[Article by special correspondent Josette Alia: "After Giscard's Arab Harvest..."]

[Excerpts] The Saudi princes are pleased that the French president's tour ended at Riyadh, as this shows clearly that it is impossible to visit the Gulf without paying respects to the monarch. Was this a courtesy visit, or was it in the nature of a stocktaking exercise, or was it the fireworks finale of the diplomatic process begun in Kuwait?

It certainly does not seem so. In fact, there is no doubt that the visit to Riyadh marked the beginning of a second and more difficult and discreet round of negotiations in which the PLO in its turn is taking a cautious line. Indeed, after Giscard's departure, a strong, quiet man stayed behind at the Intercontinental Hotel, where he held numerous discussions and consultations. This was Khalid al-Hasan, PLO representative in the Gulf countries, who at present plays a role of the highest importance. What does he say? First, he says, smiling, that if he were French, he would be satisfied with Giscard: the French President has contributed relatively little on the diplomatic plane; (everything he said had already been said; Lord Carrington apparently had the same project up his sleeve). But he will certainly reap large Arab dividends-- whether in the form of industrial projects or strong guarantees of oil supplies. Well played! Has not Giscard taken a risk, at least an electoral one, in displeasing the French supporters of Israel? Khalid smiled: "What risk? The Jewish vote does not count for much in France. There is no Jewish lobby in the American sense. There is Israeli influence, but it would appear to be stronger on the media than on the voters. Besides, who could reproach Giscard for his Palestinian policy? Surely not the leftwing parties, which are all in agreement with the expressed principle. Nor the rightwing parties, which are obliged in the midst of the electoral campaign to support the one who is without doubt their best candidate. So the risk is minimal and the stakes are higher." But is what is a good measure for France also to the advantage of the Palestinians?

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At first sight it is. They have just been given many gifts: self-determination, recognition of PLO representation, and the new resolution in the United Nations--for once, France, Europe, Japan and the Arab states are in agreement in their support for their cause. Of course, that is all in theory.

The Gold Markets

Before this can be realized it will be necessary to overcome the main obstacle of the American veto, and the new resolution--discussion on which is now underway among the Arab capitals--will have to be worked out slowly, step by step. This will, however, allow the continued occupation of territory pending the expiry of the two deadlines--of 26 May ("the burial of Camp David," said a Palestinian) and of the American elections, (which are doubtless a pretext," said Khalid al-Hasan; "this handicap must be removed"). But in the end, in a month or in a year, it will certainly be necessary to set about serious discussions on the basics. And that is where the Palestinians will have their backs to the wall. That is where they are already anyway: since what could the next stage be? That of a Palestinian "state," which will not be a vague "homeland" but a well-defined concept. We are well aware, says Khalid al-Hasan, that at that moment when talk of a state begins, we will have to pay a high political price."

Nobody in the PLO is in a hurry to solve the problem, fraught with too many dangers of an explosion, and the Israelis are being relied upon to act in their classical manner (Israelis! be the first to reject [a plan for Palestine] so that [the PLO itself may] avoid the need to take up a stance. Only this time in the Gulf and at Riyadh, Giscard has precipitated things (possibly, it is said, with the support of some of Carter's advisers). He has told 'Arafat to take it or leave it; yes, he will receive him in Paris shortly, as soon as possible, even as early as June, but only on condition that 'Arafat at last makes this "significant gesture" which will enable matters to advance and which, with everything else already agreed, this can only be the recognition, however much disguised, of the state of Israel.

This is the problem which the French and the Palestinians have been discussing for some months. The first approach was a bad one: France was demanding a Palestinian "gesture" on southern Lebanon, which the PLO evidently refused. ("How can we decide the status of what we regard as foreign territory, when this is exactly what we are reproaching Sadat for doing?") This approach was abandoned and over the last few months another start has been made on a new basis, this time a Palestinian one. Two texts are ready, again far removed from each other. But hope of an early conclusion is not lost, since time is short in the Near East now. Iran is vulnerable; Syria is foundering little by little in internal disorder; Iraq is trying with difficulty to keep its distance from Moscow; while in Saudi Arabia there is a clear feeling that dangers are emerging which one does not know how to stave off.

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A Recent Treaty

What are the princes afraid of? Very simply: They feel threatened by a Soviet advance in the Gulf, which they believe to be inevitable. Giscard wasted his breath explaining to them that Afghanistan is a Soviet "regional" problem, a question of buffer zones; they do not believe a word of this. "We even know where the next Soviet push will occur," said a Saudi official. It will be made in Iran, after the death of Khomeyni. And even perhaps well before this, on our southern frontier in the Yemen. The West is ignoring the Yemen. Yet, it is there that danger lurks: the South Yemen Army, staffed by East Germans, trained by 2,000 Cubans, equipped with very sophisticated Soviet weapons, is certainly the best army in the whole region--and Ethiopia, which is devoted to Moscow, can easily secure its rear. A few months ago, San'a almost succumbed to its southern neighbor. Imagine what it would be like to have a vast and finally reunited "Red" Yemen on the southern flank of the peninsula. How then could we defend ourselves against an attack which might appear to be 'local,' but which would, in fact, be Soviet, when, as you know, a recent treaty forbids southern Yemen from undertaking any military action without the agreement of Moscow?"

It is true that against this type of attack, which is much more likely to occur than a real Soviet conquest, the United States offers no help. The United States has vaguely promised to defend vital American interests in the region, but none of the requests made by the Saudis have gotten them to specify any more precisely what sort of military assistance they would furnish effectively. France is certainly there, and its presence is increasing (there are already more French instructors than American).

But San'a is not Kolwezi. San'a is the weak spot, the coveted place: the Soviets have just offered armaments to North Yemen practically gratis--on condition that they admit Soviet instructors to the country. Rather than see Soviet advisers arriving on its southern borders, Arabia has preferred to pay for those Soviet tanks--but without the instructors. So that North Yemen now finds itself equipped with Russian armaments, paid for with petrodollars, but which nobody knows how to operate!

The Saudi military, which knows that its army is too young and unreliable, is consoling itself with the thought that Islam is, after all, the finest bastion against the communist wave. Now North Yemen--which neither the Ottoman empire, nor Abd al-'Aziz, nor Faysal, nor Abd-al-Nasir were able to control--is fiercely Muslim, Allah be praised. Hence, the return to Islam, the concern caused by the incident at Mecca, and the desire, now become a necessity, to resolve all those tensions in the region which can be resolved, the chief of these being the Palestinian issue. It must be done quickly, while it is still possible, before the communist wave hits them from outside, before the rise of Khomeynism wins over the youth of Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Arabia and even, yes even, the PLO where religious fanaticism is now emerging among certain young militants. Will all these

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pressures and reasons lead to peace through compromise, which everyone wants but still does dare not speak about. It would be Giscard's dream to be its architect, and to be able to invite both 'Arafat, and with Al-Sadat, who might have already accepted this in principle. Will peace in the Near East come via France? In his hotel room in Riyadh, Khalid al-Hasan shrugs his broad shoulders: "I personally think it will be a long time, perhaps too long. However...let us agree to meet, perhaps, this spring in Paris."

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INTER-ARAB AFFAIRS

MANY QUESTIONS SURROUND GAFSA ATTACK

Libyan Participation

Paris AFRIQUE-ASIE in French 18 Feb 80 pp 11-13, 16

[Article by Adel Wahid, AFRIQUE-ASIE special correspondent in Tunisia]

[Text] The circumstances to which the people were reduced explain their anger but, to explain the rejection of a government that had failed Bourguiba needed a "Libyan intervention."

Do the Tunisians today have the feeling that they have been honestly and completely informed with respect to the armed people's explosion in Gafsa? Have they been told of the ins and outs of this incident with consequences, both on the domestic and foreign plane, that continue to be felt? Nothing is less true. Because, in this affair, the official version that has been presented with a copious supply of propaganda by the Tunisian government sins as much by omission as by excessiveness. The haste with which the Tunisian leaders blamed the responsibility for the "Gafsa coup" on the Libyan authorities, after having first implicated Algeria, is eminently suspect.*

The revolt in the mining city of Gafsa during the night of this past 26-27 January, when Bourguiba was less than 60 kilometers from that place, has profound and long-standing origins in matters of domestic policy, in spite of the contrary statements of the Tunisian leaders.

* The version presented by the Tunisian authorities is decidedly quite muddled. Did they not just state that the "assailants" had first arrived by plane in Algiers, where they presented themselves as part of a... sports team!

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What is this serious accusation worth? Does it not merit being examined with a great deal of attention, especially since "the hand of the foreigner," that has been denounced today, as the "imported ideologies" were yesterday, has always been brandished by Bourguiba, Prime Minister Hedi Nouira, and the leader of the Destourian Party, Mohammed Sayah, each time that Tunisia was upset by popular demonstrations. This endless argument, repeated again by the Tunisian leaders, really no longer has any hold on a public that is confronted with the harsh realities of daily living. Is not the attribution of "the Gafsa affair" to foreigners a very convenient alibi to justify the call for French military intervention and for the armament so obligingly supplied by imperialist powers, in particular Washington and Paris?

Also numerous questions are being asked concerning the Gafsa events. In the opinion of some, it was a question of a suicide commando, since apparently it had not even bothered to provide a rear guard. Others see in it the beginning of a vast military and psychological operation for the purpose of causing successive violent clashes with the Tunisian government, leading to the final collapse of the latter. Finally, there are those who think that this spectacular, incoherent coup, organized by Tunisian militants who do not belong to any of the known opposition movements, was meant to "abruptly counter fear" and to show the country that it was possible to bring about a military defeat of Bourguiba dictatorship.

However that may be, one thing is certain: there is not the shadow of a doubt that the affair was a purely Tunisian one.

How could one fail first of all to call attention to the date? The 26th of January 1980 is the second anniversary of Black Thursday, the day of the massacres perpetrated by the Bourguiba government against workers and their trade union organization, the UGTT [Tunisian General Federation of Labor]. The Tunisian government moreover greatly feared a commemorative action on the part of schools and universities. It had also decreed 26 January a holiday for pupils, students, and the teaching staff, while at the same time it reinforced the disposition of police in Tunis and in the principal cities of the country--a fear that was all the more justified since the great increase in the prices of staple foodstuffs, "compensated" by an absurd increase in salaries, a week before the Gafsa events had caused profound discontent among the population throughout the country. Impressive demonstrations were organized in Sfax (railroad strike), in Gafsa, in Zeramdine, in Ouardanine, and in Tunis, where the workers of the National Transportation Company (SNT) carried out a general one-day strike that blocked all traffic of busses in the capital. But it is in the South, an underprivileged and forlorn region, that the explosion came, an explosion that encompassed nearly the entire country and that shook the government to its depths.

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It all began at 0200 hours, during the night of 26-27 January, when the city was soundly asleep. An armed group consisting of almost 100 members (300 according to other credible sources) split into three small groups. The first two simultaneously attacked the police station and the national guard station with light weapons. Explanations concerning the strategy of the operation differ. According to a direct source, claiming to belong to the "General Revolutionary Committee for the Liberation of Tunisia" (CRGLT), the purpose of this first attack was to cause a diversion in order to clear out the Ahmed-Tlili barracks, located in the periphery of the city, and to take possession of the stock of weapons that had been stored there. The soldiers indeed then rushed in a body to bring aid to their companions.

The third group then laid siege to the barracks, neutralized the few soldiers that remained there (some even followed them spontaneously), and took possession of the weapons that it feverishly distributed to Gafsa citizens while proclaiming revolutionary slogans, hostile to the government, over loud speakers and exhorting the population to join it in order to "escape from the tyranny of Bourguiba." Other caches of weapons and of ammunition, stored in ditches for many years, were rapidly recovered. The operation was thus carried out in minute detail by a group of Tunisians, for the most part young, determined, apparently well-trained in guerrilla warfare, and well acquainted with the topography of the region. The version of the facts related in a communique, signed by the Tunisian Armed Resistance, does not mention the diversionary operation, but otherwise agrees with that of the CRGLT.

For more than 16 hours the commando was in control of the city. It was only during Sunday afternoon that the Tunisian army, assisted by helicopters and pursuit planes, launched a violent counteroffensive to regain Gafsa. The bombed city was the theater of fierce battles, and it took more than 5 days to regain it, after several of the revolutionary militants had been dispersed to surrounding oases and hills.

The Fish In Water

But how could 50 assailants, according to the official figures given by Tunis, hold out all that time, if they did not have incontestable support from the population of the city, as the majority of foreign diplomats and observers pointed out? Still according to the General Revolutionary Committee for the Liberation of Tunisia, the perpetrators of the attack took shelter in houses, after having rid themselves of their packs and their weapons, and then they mingled, "like fish in water," with the inhabitants of the city who kept their identity secret. Why, when the fighting was over, according to Tunis, did the Bourguiba government continue to silence Gafsa and to ban access to foreign journalists, if not to cover up the fact of the resistance of the population of the city, the violence of the confrontations, and to

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prevent any contact with the inhabitants who would have had a great deal to say, especially concerning the summary executions of militants, that many witnesses have recounted? And the official report of the operation-- 40 dead and 111 wounded--is very far from reality, the dead alone being more than 300.

In any case, the Gafsa affair once again showed the world the weakness and unpopularity of a government that made of repression a means of government and that, in order to maintain itself in power, did not hesitate to call on Western armies. Some Tunisians stated that they saw some billeting of French and Moroccan soldiers in Ksar Mouemsa, Hmadi (Zarzis), and in El Aouinet (Gabes).

The fact that Tunisians took up arms and rose against a government, that they found positive support among the masses; that the government did not hesitate to request armed protection from a former colonial power while the memory of the Bizerte slaughter was still fresh in the minds of patriots; that some "Transalls" and other "Pumas" were dispatched to this country to slaughter citizens; that the Bourguiba government turned to the United States, France, and Morocco for weapons and diplomatic and military support--in spite of the considerable risk that their intervention might cause the entire Maghreb--these are signs of the beginning of the end of Bourguibism--and the proof of the failure of its liberal-capitalist policy.

Neither appeals for immodest and unrestrained requests from the Tunisian government, specifically through the intermediary of its ambassador in Paris, Hedi Mabrouk, nor the deployment of the French fleet to the Gulf of Gabes were able to weaken the determination of a people and the desire of its vanguard militants to resist a government imposed by force.

Did not the government, by stifling all freedoms, by repressing any contradictory opinion, and by causing the unarmed masses to be fired upon on 26 January 1978, leave only one way out--armed conflict? In announcing the "revision of political priorities" in the direction of greater austerity for the working class in order to "strengthen the defense of the country" through the massive purchase of armament, the Tunisian government entered a vicious circle that will even more rapidly precipitate its downfall, now inevitable. That is the feeling that is shared today by the overwhelming majority of the oppressed Tunisian people.

A Statement From Ibrahim Tobal, leader of the Tunisian National Opposition Movement

1 February 1980

Giscard d'Estaing's government has accustomed us to flagrant military interference and interventions in order to support and to rescue decayed

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and subjugated governments in their sphere of influence.

Faithful to this condemnable policy, the French government has just launched its fleet, its aircraft, and its parachutists to Tunisia to rescue the Bourguiba government from the anger of the aroused people, behaving in the same manner as in Zaire, in Mauritania, in Chad, in Central Africa, and in the Western Sahara.

The French military intervention and the eventual intervention of the American Sixth Fleet aim to annihilate the revolutionary desire of the Tunisian people, to impair its sovereignty, and to stir up tension in the Arab Maghreb. They aim also to frustrate the struggle carried out for 20 years by our people against neo-colonial subjection and oppression.

The Tunisian National Opposition Movement stigmatizes and denounces this French military intervention against the Tunisian people that is contrary to international laws and traditions. By the same token, it puts all the parties concerned, in particular the fraternal and neighboring countries of Tunisia, before their historical responsibilities, because their sovereignty and the security of the region as a whole cannot be considered separately from the sovereignty and from the security of Tunisia.

The Tunisian National Opposition Movement calls on all international progressive forces, in particular the French, to support the Tunisian people in the new ordeal. It exhorts them to oppose this flagrant and disclosed intervention.

It calls on the various progressive and democratic opposition movements of the Tunisian people and its national armed forces to close ranks in order to combat with all possible means, including weapons, this French military intervention and the government that has called on it.

Tunisian Illusion

Paris AFRIQUE-ASIE in French 18 Feb 80 pp 14-15

[Article by Hichem Moussa]

[Text] The tragic Gafsa events are still too recent for one to appreciate their entire dimension and all of their implications. But, in spite of intense Tunisian propaganda, relayed by a determined international press that distorts and deceives, the essential story is clear.

1. The armed action carried out in Gafsa was the act of Tunisians. Tunisians died in the violent confrontations. Tunisians were imprisoned

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by the government. How did it happen that Tunisians took up arms against the government and consented to sacrifice their lives and to expose their own families to misfortunes and the risk of reprisals or of vengeance? Did Qadhafi supply them with weapons? But did Qadhafi convince them to go and get themselves killed--for hard cash--or did he force them--by blackmailing them with the threat of unemployment--as the government tries to make one believe? Did Qadhafi also convince the Tunisian population, in Gafsa and elsewhere, to express their sympathy, at least to the "mercenary assailants," as was definitely charged?

The explanations that the regime gives would necessarily imply that Qadhafi had such power or such influence over Tunisians. That would, then, be very serious for the government. What can one in fact think of a government that loses political control to this extent over its population? That it doubtless is bankrupt. And if it were only a matter of the government! But, it is a question of Tunisia.

Very fortunately for Tunisia, it is not necessary to follow the fine logic of the official propaganda in order to come to the same established fact. The Tunisian government is bankrupt. And if some Tunisians came to that, it is because the government did everything to make the solution of counterviolence appear to more and more Tunisians as the only remaining solution capable of changing matters in the country.

In recent years the Bourguiba government continued to exercise increasing and multiform violence against the Tunisian people--economic and social violence through continued impoverishment of the masses, the frustrations inflicted on the great majority, and the accelerated and arrogant enrichment of a minority of upstart speculators; the cultural and "civilization-type" violence that systematically offends the Arab-Moslem values, characteristics and identity of the Tunisians that are assailed daily as a result of a harmful way of life; a "civilization-type" violence through a deliberate and constant desire to alienate Tunisia from the Maghreb and the Arab world to which it belongs; cultural violence through a selective and discriminatory policy with regard to education; political violence through total control of the means, not of "information," but of propaganda, of intoxication, of drugs, and of anesthesia; violence again by the permanent monopolizing of power through illegal acts and plots; political violence again through confiscation and the deformation of national history, humiliation and elimination of all those who have served the country, and a limitless megalomania; finally political violence through the institutionalization of a single party that no longer has anything to do with any group whatsoever and that is dominated by professional flatterers, opportunists, climbers, and members of the militia; political, police, and physical violence, all at the same time, through repression and contempt for any opposition, an increase in political trials, arrests, and arbitrary detentions, the systematic use of torture and of police methods.

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The government paid no attention to any analysis of the opposition, any program, any profound aspiration of the people, any proposal, any complaint, even if expressed by some of its own friends abroad. In the face of the development of the domestic crisis and of the dissatisfaction of the people, in the face of the escalation of social and political opposition, it only wanted and was able to reply through repeated cheating, shabby political maneuvers, manipulations of public opinion, Machiavellian traps, diversions and deceptive measures. Small maneuvers and speeches concerning "an opening" became the "openings." The presidential malady for a long time has been the alibi of non-responsibility. A generalized corruption has become the means, not only of governing but of controlling society and of plunging men into indignity and self-dissatisfaction, etc. The Tunisian government has persisted in its blindness and its errors.

Nothing that has just been said is exaggerated or excessive, either in form or in content. Nothing. And the government finally came to the point--and fatally--of perpetrating, on the occasion of another plot against the Tunisian General Federation of Labor (UGTT), the massacres of 26 January 1978. Since the police was not adequate, the government requested the army to fire on the people and involved it more closely with political life. In causing Tunisian blood to gush forth, the government had crossed the Rubicon.

In truth, it had inexorably gone downhill to finally become an extremist and reckless government, one that fell out of the frying pan into the fire. And yet the government had all the odds in its favor: climatic, economic, and financial, in the 1970's. It misappropriated and squandered these odds through an irresponsible policy and administration. They were diverted to the profit of a particularly voracious minority that wallowed in corrupt pleasures to the extent of reaching the peaks of a shameful refinement while the masses lived in misery.

During that period, the government did so much and so well that it tended to reduce the choice of every worthy and logical patriot to a single alternative: to accept helplessness, political paralysis, and in short to keep quiet--that is, to resign--or, in no uncertain terms, to take up arms. Between a minor role without responsibility or of submissiveness and bombing, the margin of maneuver for patriotic militants and of the people continued to shrink. And at the same time dissatisfaction on the part of the people and the impatience of the young people continued to spread.

How, then, can one be surprised that the Tunisians were stimulated to counterviolence which, under such conditions, can even find a legitimate

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basis in the people's right to resist oppression in Moslem public law* as well as in Western and socialist law.**

2. The Gafsa armed confrontations thus constituted the dramatic outcome of a domestic crisis that became increasingly rotten, the general crisis of a society that was frustrated and locked into more and more flagrant injustices and disparities.

And what did the government do? It answered this aggravation of the domestic crisis in an irresponsible and unacceptable manner.

First of all, let us clearly condemn the Tunisian government for its appeal--on the whole panic stricken--for foreign military forces and support. Let us recall that Hedi Nouria said that France intervened "instinctively." Clearly that means that the head of the government of a country that is supposed to be independent implicitly acknowledged to a foreign power a right of intervention--initial and spontaneous--in Tunisian affairs. Bourguiba and his ambassador in Paris made similar statements.

We must vigorously denounce French military intervention in Tunisia and the development of the American military engagement in our country. We must condemn these demonstrations of French and American naval forces that bring us back to the period of the Treaty of Bardo (1881).

The purpose was to intimidate the Tunisian people in their struggle for national and social liberation. These interventions aimed to maintain a government that was already quite weakened. Bourguiba, who did not stop boasting that he carried out the struggle against the French protectorate,

* See, for example, Louis Gardet, "The Moslem City" ("la Cite musulmane"), Paris, 1969, pp 37-38, and 175-176. To be noted is that the Iranian revolution emphasized this right.

** This right is consecrated by other texts, including French and American constitutional texts. The Declaration of Independence of the United States (1776) prescribes: "When a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty to throw off such government." Leon Duguit, eminent French jurist whose courses Bourguiba took during the 1920's, writes: "If people are oppressed by tyrannical laws, insurrection is a right, even a duty," (Treatise on Constitutional Law, 5 vol., Vol. II, 1928, pg 794). These passages by Duguit were analyzed by Fidel Castro for his defense before the judges of the Cuban tyrant, Batista, after the attack against the Moncada barracks (1953). (See E. Castro, "History Will Absolve Me" ("La Historia me absolvera"), Havana, 1964, p 164).

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in fact restored that protectorate in its military form by adding another, an American one this time. That is how the man of 1 June 1955 who, for me as a child and an adolescent, was the symbol of the liberation of Tunisia, in my eyes as an adult, ended his career as the underseller of the fatherland.

And now the government pretends to call on Tunisians to "protect national independence." What? One undersells the country, one places Tunisia under a military protectorate, and then on has the insolent audacity to claim to embody and protect national independence?

Of course national sovereignty and independence must be protected in all spheres, in the West as in the East, in the North as in the South; and all foreign or external interference must be rejected and opposed. But how can one protect an independence that practically no longer exists and to which as a matter of fact one has just dealt a coup de grace? It is no longer a question of protecting, it henceforth is a question of establishing, national independence. No! That truly is impossible. The Tunisian government has completely disqualified itself with regard to the matter of patriotism and, to tell the truth, that did not begin now. It cannot lecture anyone on this subject. Bourguiba and his people, on the contrary, have something to learn from the Tunisian young people. So that, to participate now in the orchestrated concert of a so-called national unanimity-- it must be said--would be an act of anti-patriotism. It is true that at the time of the foreign intervention, Mestiri and his liberal friends rallied, hastily and without glory, round the government.

The masks came off and it was a good chance to hasten to some portfolios that one had despaired of obtaining. Doubtless the opposition became a joke which had lasted only too long after having mystified some.

One must add that we do not want a nationalism like Chang Kai-chek's, "modernized like Formosa's. And neither do we want a Tunisian nationalism that would be characterized by a visceral hostility toward Arabs and Islam at the same time that it shamefully grovels before emirs and princes, false devotees of obscurantism and corrupted by petro-dollars, whisky, women, and gambling.

With respect to Libya, we must begin by recalling that it was Bourguiba, himself, who had signed with Qadhafi a declaration of "amalgamation" of the two countries (12 January 1974), an amalgamation that was mysteriously improvised and that did not go beyond an interview between the two men.

In any case we must not participate in an operation that would tend to make it seem that Libya is an enemy of Tunisia, and never will we play into the hands of those who want to set the Tunisian people against the fraternal

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Libyan and Algerian peoples. Never! Because it is precisely thus that we view the Arab Maghreb.

One must add that progressive Tunisian leaders cannot be easily manipulated, nor can they yield to calculating or opportunist petitions, nor be ready to fall into step with no matter who in unverifiable undertakings. Let us say this loudly and clearly: those who would believe that Tunisia is Zaire, Chad, or Central Africa would be making a big mistake. What is more, they would not be aware of the keen feeling of dignity in Tunisians, the fiery patriotism that beats in our hearts and our entrails, and the high sense of political awareness in Tunisia.

We refuse to think of Tunisia as belonging to any sphere of influence whatsoever. Tunisia must not be a stake for foreign forces. We must forcefully state our determination to prevent any foreign force whatsoever from profiting from the domestic crisis or to exploit the national and social interests of the Tunisian people for foreign purposes. Thus we must oppose the criminal process that tends to internationalize Tunisian problems, to drown them, and to create a diversion in order to maintain the people in a state of exploitation and servitude.

Finally, Franco-American intervention could set in motion an uncontrollable entanglement in the region. It is essential that all Tunisian patriots unite in order to put an end to this--without delay.

[Photo caption] A 35-year old Tunisian university jurist, Hichem Moussa has been teaching public and administrative law at the University of Paris-II for 11 years. He is also doing research on the general theory of the State and Law. He was a young member of the Desturian Socialist Party, from which he publicly resigned after the reactionary violent and illegal act of 1969. After the escape of Ahmed Ben Salah (February 1973), he participated in the Movement of Popular Unity (MUP) and became a militant. At the MUP trial in August 1977, he was sentenced in absentia to 8 years in prison. He lives in exile with his family. He expresses his personal opinion here.

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INTER-ARAB AFFAIRS

REPERCUSSIONS OF GAFSA ATTACK DISCUSSED

Participation of Algerians

Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 20 Feb 80 pp 31, 32

[Article by Souhayr Belhassen, JEUNE AFRIQUE correspondent in Tunis]

[Text] In order to avoid fighting on two fronts, Tunisia prefers to ignore it, but...

In the near future, Gafsa risks causing more repercussions in Algiers than in Tunis!" Is this remark that was made by a foreign diplomat stationed in Tunis just a quip? The questioning of the commando prisoners and the information gathered from several sources seem to confirm an Algerian participation. Of course the Tunisian leaders, with President Habib Bourguiba at the head, are steadfastly trying to exonerate the Algiers regime. But the Tunisians obviously are not deluding themselves: they simply do not want to fight on two fronts.

There is something else: everyone, including the Tunisians, knows that Chadli's Algeria is not Boumedienne's--far from it. The reins of the government are no longer in the hands of just one man. And on the Algerian political chessboard Gafsa was an important element in the struggles of the political groups within the government. Not at all because of Tunisia, but rather Libya. If, because of his extravagances, the leader of the Jamahiriya causes reticence in Algeria, he nonetheless has partisans among progressives of Marxist tendency and in Moslem integrationist circles. This current is exploited and channeled by Mohammed Salah Yahiaoui, strong man of the FLN, for whom Colonel Qadhafi has never concealed his sympathies.

The Algerian "Connection"

The Gafsa operation thus was able to benefit from Algerian complicity to the advantage of an internal political game. One can concede that, not

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having any "preoccupations" in the east as they state, the Algerians left a passage like Bir Om Ali unprotected. But certain other details are harder to dodge. Before being escorted by motor coach to Tebessa JA No 997), the 28 men of the "Amr Ibn el-Ass brigade" were met at the Algiers airport. They also spent a night nearby, in a villa made available to them by an Algerian.

According to the disclosures made by the commandos that were captured in Gafsa, the man's pseudonym is probably Said or Chakib. This person--known to the POLISARIO--acted in the name of Commander Slimane Hoffman, member of the Central Committee of the FLN, in charge of foreign relations, more specifically in charge of liberation movements within the party. He, himself, is directly responsible to powerful Col Kasdi Merbah, director of the dreaded SM (Military Security), who for several months has been secretary general of the ministry of defense.

Airplane tickets stubs, passports (not taken at the time of the passage of the commandos to Algiers), confessions, all elements of proof of these facts, exist. They constitute the essential part of the dossier that some Tunisian persons have had to submit to several countries, first of all Algeria, where Fouad Mbazaa, minister of information and of culture, went. It is possible that other items will enlarge the dossier of the Algerian connection--like the possible role of Brahim Tobbal, Tunisian opponent without any internal base, whom Algeria has been harboring for many years. This same Tobbal who, on 1 February, called for a revolt against the Bourguiba government, is an old Youssefite, like Ezzedine Cherif, one of the two leaders of the "Amr Ibn el-Ass brigade." The man is connected with the PRPT (Tunisian People's Revolutionary Party), 12 of whose members, arrested in Tunisia in August 1977, have been accused of having (previously!) "illegally crossed the Tunisian border," "illicitly carrying military weapons."

The Kremlin Game

Their trial took place in June 1979 (JA No 966). Brahim Tobbal was sentenced in absentia to 6 years in prison. The PRPT, itself, emerged from a scission that occurred in 1973 within the National Front of Tunisian Progressive Forces (FNFP), constituted in Tripoli in 1972. The "Libyan" wing then (at the end of 1973) took the name of Popular Front for the Liberation of Tunisia (FPLT), with Amara Dhaou and Ahmed Mergheni, who prepared the "Gafsa coup," as leaders. On this occasion, moreover, Mergheni took the pseudonym of "polisario"...The "Algerian" wing, connected with Brahim Tobbal, chose that of the Tunisian People's Revolutionary Party.

Was there a reconciliation between the two wings, the Algerian and the Libyan, on the occasion of the Gafsa operation? This is not excluded. All

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the more so since on that occasion new identities (result of a compromise?) appeared in the communiques of the organizations that conducted the attack: "Tunisian Armed Resistance" and "General Revolutionary Committee for the Liberation of Tunisia."

Did the implication of certain Algerian circles check the reaction of the other Arab countries? Of course Tunisia had the right to an expression of their sympathy. But one took the time to arrange a simple meeting of delegates in the headquarters of the Arab League for 16 February--a meeting from which the Tunisians moreover did not expect much--because of the attitude of refusal and the pro-Libyan attitude of the Soviet Union. Did not the TASS agency present the Gafsa events as "a sequel to the anti-governmental demonstrations of January 1978?" Everyone understood that the Kremlin, which had nothing to lose by supporting Qadhafi, was not unhappy at causing Tunisia to pay for its vote against the USSR in the Afghan affair. In the same way that it indulged the Algerian government, Tunisia exerted itself to minimize the Soviet attitude. The ambassador from Moscow to Tunis was not summoned; no explanation was requested of him --either concerning the origin of certain weapons found or, above all, with respect to the TASS remark. "What we allow ourselves to say to our Soviet friends," said Mohammed Sayah to JA, "is that they would do better to beware of Qadhafi's adventurous policy. We realize that one wants to make a pawn of us in the confrontation among world powers."

Expelled from Libya

Far from these strategic considerations, the average Tunisian is concerned about the fallout of the Gafsa affair on domestic policy. If one refers to Bourguiba's statements, it indeed appears that today there will be no change. On receiving Hedi Nouira on 9 February, for the first time since the attack, the chief of State congratulated him on his behavior. And he added: "He will be my prime minister as long as I live; then he will succeed me." Obviously the president makes light of the tokens of support given unstintingly by various opponents. But, for the man in the street, Gafsa has shown that, between a Bourguiba who rules over the country and a prime minister who directs and manages, the opposition has tried to exist.

For now, the most significant consequence of the "Gafsa coup" is the massive return of workers expelled from Libya. They cross the border at the Ras Jedir post each day--by the hundreds. In long lines, some with a bundle, some with a suitcase, some with a TV on their shoulders, they turn their backs on a huge poster that faces Tunisian territory and that declares, oh, what irony, "The Green Book, universal victory of man!" These expelled persons have been the object of strict sorting since their arrival. The young natives of the governorship of Medenine (adjacent to Libya) are sent to the civilian service camp of Ababessia. The others,

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a mixture of young and old, are sent to a camp located at Ben Garbane, not far from there.

Amnesty

The government seems ready to definitively clarify the situation of these 80,000 nationals located in Libya. It envisages quickly recalling them and President Bourguiba has even decided to give them a time limit of 6 months to choose between returning to the country and losing Tunisian nationality. The arrival of these emigrants will pose an employment problem. An increase is expected in the unemployment that had already encouraged some of these young people to leave Gafsa, with the consequence that one has come to know with respect to the Qadhafi commandos.

Those who were made prisoners in Gafsa will soon have to go before the State's Criminal Investigation Court. On 13 February, in the National Assembly, several deputies called for the death penalty. In any case, the men of the "Amr Ibn el-Ass brigade" never had any illusions. From the first day of the attack, they said to the people of Gafsa: "We know that we are going to die, but we are doing this for you." And Ezzedine Cherif, whom the policemen promised to protect in exchange for full confessions, replied: "Don't bother. I know that I am going to die...But I will tell you everything. Gratis."

Qadhdhafi's Vertigo

Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 20 Feb 80 pp 28-30

[Article by Bechir Ben Yahmed: "What I Believe"]

[Text] Three weeks after the attack on the Tunisian city of Gafsa by a commando of some tens of Tunisians armed by Libya, the affair has not yet been closed.

The Arab League, the OAU, and the Security Council knew, or know, some of them. Therefore, for African opinion and even for that of the Tunisians--both ask many questions--we must clarify the obscure points of this affair.

Chance

At the hour of drawing up a statement of affairs, the Tunisian leaders reviewed the errors committed on both sides and the manifestations of friendship--or support--received.

As in very affair of this kind, there are first of all the elements of chance, the sum of imponderables. They favored the assailants, who did not know how to profit from them.

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1. It seems that they did not encounter any complication, since they were able to go through airports (Tripoli-Rome-Algiers), then the Tunisian border, without any mishaps. Even in Gafsa they were able to hide, find their weapons and their accomplices without attracting the attention of the security services: the city was practically completely empty.
2. Between the time of the first shot fired by the assailants--about 0200 hours on Sunday, 27 January, and the arrival of the army at 1100 hours, they had nearly 9 hours to occupy the city, to win over the population, to recruit, to entrench themselves. They wasted those precious hours, where only a shock group of policemen, sent from Tunis in civilian airplanes requisitioned during the night by the security director, tried to contain them. They wasted them by firing wildly at random, with a superiority of weapons and an abundance of ammunition.

Their plan--not a bad one--was that each recruit was to immediately arm and direct 10 of his previously located friends. The commando of 30 men would thus be changed before dawn into 30 commandos of 10. The city conquered by these 300 men--natives--would then become unassailable, except that the Tunisian army had sufficient moral strength to reconquer it quarter by quarter, at the price of a thousand dead. It became above all a center of activity, an echo chamber, this famed "point of departure" and contagion expected by Tripoli to provide forceful and direct intervention: just as in the case of the Russians in Kabul!

The two commando chiefs who were arrested, the first in the vicinity of Gafsa on Tuesday, 29 January, the second very far away 2 days later, realized that they had lost the operation during those first 9 hours.

3. It is clear that while they were not denounced by anyone in the days preceding the operation when they were hidden in the city--a wait-and-see attitude on the part of the accomplices?--neither were they helped very much or followed when they were in trouble. Mergheni, the second commando chief, who was able to escape with two of his men and to cross the country from west to east, "remained in the maquis" only 4 days. Nowhere, it seems, did he feel "like a fish in water" and, in order to obtain food, he and his companions had to do violence.

The Error

The appeal for French (logistic) aid resulted in an emergency decision which now--that matters have calmed down--is most criticized--both domestically and abroad. Those who had to make the decision advance the argument--not an insignificant one--that in a battle one must make provision for the unexpected and summon up reserves in order to be in a position to have them available.

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For my part, I believe that that reserve could have been maintained in... Paris. All the more so since, and this is not very well known, the two French planes and the two helicopters arrived on the site only on Tuesday, 29 January, that is, 48 hours after the decision to send them and, in any case, after...the battle. Add to that that the details of their eventual use were the ground for a lively discussion between Paris and Tunis, and you will conclude--a posteriori, it is true--that that particular charge should not have been fired.

Very different from all points of view was Moroccan military aid. It was not requested by Tunisia, but was offered the very first day in these terms by the king of Morocco: "You do not have to give me any explanation. I have understood everything and I am taking the initiative to propose sending you, without delay or any condition, all that you may need and that I possess. I am ready to share my military resources with you."

The Tunisians, needing only means of transportation and aerial surveillance, requested, as they did of France, two big transport planes and some helicopters. In the hours that followed acceptance of their request--the time to cross the western basin of the Mediterranean--Moroccan planes and helicopters were there--ready. The French planes and helicopters that arrived several hours later became only superfluous and an enburmance...

Disagreement

Now that the Tunisian government on the one hand and Qadhafi on the other have (abundantly) expressed their position in the press, that their respective dossiers have been communicated to most of the chanceries of the world (Arab League, OAU, UN...), one knows the main facts concerning the responsibility for this affair:

. The assailants were Tunisians (from Gafsa); insurgents, not mercenaries. Qadhafi reminds one of this and, in this regard, he is right. The Tunisians on the whole do not deny it and in any case the public considers it to be the truth.

. Nevertheless, there is marked aggression on the part of Qadhafi against Tunisia, a neighboring country and a member, like Libya, of the Arab League, of the OAU, and of the UN. He armed, trained, and financed the men who invaded Gafsa. They had Libyan passports and Qadhafi received their chiefs on the eve of their departure. His radio supported their action to the end, and even beyond that.

In recent years there has been no more clear-cut case of violation of international rules and of neighborly relations. And yet, neither in the Arab League, nor in the OAU, nor in the Security Council, does condemnation

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of Qadhafi seem to be unequivocal and solid. And yet Qadhafi's other neighbors--the designated victims of his maneuvers--prefer not to demonstrate. And yet, in the case of the Tunisians, themselves, a good part of the students, particularly in Paris, all of the Marxist leftists, including the former minister of economy, Ahmed Ben Salah, refuse to prevent the foreign aggression against their country because they see only the mistakes of their government. And yet, in society, among the intellectuals, there are persons like Roger Garaudy (philosopher!) who continue to profess regard for the thinking and action of Qadhafi.

On these three planes--the international, Tunisian, and intellectual--there is very serious disagreement, a breach that will continue to widen if one does not plug it up.

For Tunisia the disagreement will soon be serious. The complaints addressed by both the Tunisian or European extreme left to the government, repeated by Qadhafi, for the most part are unjust, unjustified, or excessive*. But the government incurs a dual reproach which in my eyes is much more serious:

. Its propensity to live with what has occurred and its inability to communicate (well), in particular with its young people, at least a good part of them, whose language it does not understand and over whom it no longer has any influence.

. Its inability--an institutional one--to elaborate a long-term domestic and foreign policy.

Having said that, the questions that one asks oneself and that we are asked everywhere--in the street and at the governmental level--both in Tunisia and in other Mediterranean countries, African and Arab, are the following: What is Qadhafi going to do? Will he stop or continue? What will his next initiative be? Who will be his next victim? It's just that this man, whether he succeeds or fails, is creating a psychosis.

Evaluation

In Tunisia, itself--and at the top--opinions are divided, indeed contradictory: "muddled, incoherent, not disquieting," said Bourguiba who, to prove it, continues to walk among palm trees during the day and to listen

* Example: "The (Gafsa) situation is due to the political and economic policies of the Bourguiba regime, valet of imperialism...We consider the government to be chiefly responsible for these events"(!), according to a leaflet written by some Tunisian students in Paris.

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to poems in the evening in the shade of the same palm trees. "The situation is very serious," maintained Prime Minister Hedi Nouira. "Qadhafi is capable of anything...He will not stop at a first failure, such as the Gafsa coup." It is true that Nouira lives through the crisis in his office, where he has just read a Qadhafi tirade: "We will not agree to any mediation, any peace, any armistice in the struggle that has been set in motion by the Tunisian government. Revolutionary logic orders continuance of the attack, even to the elimination of the Tunisian government, which is hostile to the Libyan people's revolution."

Midway between these two positions is that of Mohammed Sayah, leader of the Tunisian Single Party (PSD): "According to the meaning that the Marxists give to this term Qadhafi is an adventurer." The implication: dangerous and contemptible...

The Tunisians, neighbors of Qadhafi, who have been putting up with his crazes, have reason to speak as experts on Qadhafi whims. But, they do not have enough room to recoil. And right now they are prone to consolidate a psychological war (against Qadhafi) and analysis.

In order to analyze this man and to deal with him, it is necessary to stand back and give oneself a little room; a diagnosis is then relatively simple. In any case, this is mine. To begin with, Qadhafi has some substance. He is fairly well educated, is uncommunicative, and is very stirred up by surrounding humiliations and injustice. He is inclined to action. What to do? How to do it? With whom? He does not know.

We have many men like him in the Third World. He is even a prototype... But he went even so far as a coup d'etat, succeeded, and came to power. Very quickly--in less than 5 years--he was afflicted with a disease, a disease that is well known in the Third World (and that will be even more so in forthcoming years), that I will call vertigo, the vertigo of power. This disease--incurable--progresses inexorably in the brain of a person who is afflicted with it, takes complete hold of him, and no longer leaves him.

It more easily afflicts those who attain power, those who gain it suddenly, without struggle, and thus without preparation. It just as easily strikes those who, for one reason or another, suddenly see their military or financial power increase inordinately and who can use it without "warning" (an applicable example indeed).

The more sudden the power, the more it is big and without limit, and the more the holder is subject to vertigo. To explain Qadhafi's case: he attained power suddenly on 1 September 1969 and this power, as a result of the quadrupling of the price of oil in 1974, suddenly became correspondingly

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immense. Qadhafi did not survive the second shock (oil).

The disease of which I speak at the same time struck the Shah of Iran, finding in him a particularly fertile "ground," since Reza Pahlavi was also sick when the oil shock occurred in 1974. He succumbed to the disease and was swept away in 5 years. People like Idi Amin, Bokassa, Macias Nguema, having attained power in an unexpected manner (for them and for the others), thus, attainers of power, were quickly afflicted by vertigo, even though their power was slight. It is because they, while wily, were naive, and thus more subject to vertigo by contagion.

The observer is obliged to put on the same plane--just to take Africa and the Middle East as examples--Reza Pahlavi, Idi Amin, Macias Nguema, Bokassa, and Qadhafi. They are attainers of power, contaminated more or less quickly, more or less seriously, by vertigo.

Qadhafi is an Idi Amin of the Mediterranean, Idi Amin having been the Qadhafi of the Indian Ocean, and Macias that of the Atlantic, Bokassa that of Central Africa, and Reza Pahlavi that of the Persian Gulf, in the Middle East.

There are of course some variants among these sick people, owing to the personal and national quotient of each: one afflicted by excessive industrialization; the other, with the "third theory;" all are in frantic and pathetic search of power--whence the unbridled purchase of armament--and of regard. A common characteristic of all of these sick people: they fall out obligatorily and very quickly with all of their neighbors. All do harm more or less soon: that depends on circumstances, their williness, and...their adversaries.

Naivety

Qadhafi, then, is neither the revolutionary that he proclaims himself to be and that certain intellectuals, fascinated by action, want to believe him to be--the Habaches, Hawatmehs of the PLO, certain leaders of the POLISARIO, some Tunisian leftists...the French philosopher (!), Roger Garaudy--nor the "crazy man of Tripoli" that his adversaries or his victims proclaim him to be.

He is a man who has won power and has lost self-control. Not having the human (or intellectual) resources for his policy, he makes policy from his financial resources. The intellectuals whom he fascinates as a result of the resources at his disposal and attracts by those that he puts at their disposal will regret--but too late--not having recognized in Qadhafi the signs of this deep-seated disease, vertigo.

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In the meantime, his unfortunate neighbors should not overestimate him or take his "declarations of war" literally or, even less, change their priorities, to become pawns in his initiatives.

In the face of men who are afflicted with vertigo calm, vigilance, and concerted determination are of utmost importance.

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INTER-ARAB AFFAIRS

BRIEFS

GAFSA INCIDENT FALLOUT--The Gafsa coup has created some stirrings in Algiers, where authorities are trading accusations about their complicity in the affair. Under fire, Col Kasdi Merbah, who is secretary general of the Defense Ministry, to clear himself is contending that the coup was planned in Houari Boumedienne's day. [Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 19 Mar 80 p 50]

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AFGHANISTAN

FIFTEEN-YEAR HISTORY OF THE 'KHALQ' PARTY (PDPA)

Paris AFRIQUE-ASIE in French 18 Feb-2 Mar 80 pp 47-52

[Article by Bouzid Kouza: "The PDPA: 15 Years of Turbulent History"]

[Text] Establishment of the PDPA

In the last few months of 1964, a group of revolutionaries decided to take advantage of King Zahir's policy of relative liberalization to found a political party, the Afghan People's Democratic Party (PDPA). A secret party congress was held, attended by 77 militants, 27 of whom were military personnel. The 1st of January 1965 was fixed as the party's birthday, and Taraki, Khaybar, Badanchair, and Karmal were assigned the task of proclaiming its foundation. The congress adopted a program and statutes for the party and defined its course of action which had but two essential elements: make maximum use of the advantages of lawful activity, and closely coordinate the latter with unlawful activity, particularly within the armed forces.

Pursuant to a thorough political analysis, the party was assigned the goal of creating, as soon as possible, conditions conducive to general mobilization of the country's vital elements for the purpose of overthrowing the monarchy and its supporting feudal structure, and embarking Afghanistan on a course of noncapitalistic development. Such was the meaning of the watchword, "national and democratic revolution," whose program was based on the participation of all political forces, organized or not, fighting against the monarchy and imperialism, and on rallying the awakened masses around a minimal political, economic, and social platform.

Platform

That platform included the following watchwords: strengthen the public sector, establish a planned economy, industrialize the country, control foreign trade, initiate democratic agrarian reforms, combat illiteracy and ignorance, eliminate unemployment and underemployment so as to develop a policy of social justice. The ways and means of achieving these objectives were clearly defined: broad alliances including all social classes and democratic political forces desiring to put an end to feudalism and extricate the country from its underdeveloped status.

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It was this "frontist" policy, adhering closely to the realities of Afghanistan--and creating conditions conducive to raising excessive expectations and accelerating the process--that became the target of criticism, as early as 1966, from a group within the party, headed by Hafizullah Amin, a member of parliament. More of an activist than a politician, Amin was conspicuous by his ultraradical views. He accused the "frontists" of practicing class collaboration and of being "liquidators" of the party, a party he had only recently joined by having himself appointed to the Central Committee under circumstances that are still obscure.

Two Wings

The party's social configuration predisposed it to a split. Composed mainly of intellectuals, white-collar workers, and small craftsmen, it surrounded itself with a mass of unreliable lumpenproletariat and uprooted, landless peasants. The split eventually occurred over differing strategic and tactical views, and social polarization accentuated the party's imbalance.

The Khalq wing, actually headed from the very beginning by Amin, rallied around maximalist watchwords that part of the PDPA leadership advocating unyielding opposition to the monarchy, ruling out any possibility of alliance and intermediate stages. Its views were favorably received among the lower middle class and lumpenproletariat. The Khalq's pure and hard revolutionary language appealed to both of these elements because of its schematism which simplified to the ultimate degree the real ratio of forces within the country, the complexity of the situation, and produced methods of political action approximating those called activism among minorities who make up for their ideological and organic weakness by redoubling localized and violent efforts. This wing called "Khalq" because it became organized around the party organ KHALQ (the People), expressed to some extent a revolutionary impatience resulting from numerous historical factors, the most striking of which is a hasty assimilation of Marxism and a desire to implement mechanically those experiments conducted in other countries, principally in the Soviet Union.

The party's other wing, the Parcham (the Flag), named after the organ around which the majority "frontists" rallied, was composed of intellectuals, small craftsmen, senior civil servants, military officers and non-commissioned officers. The Parcham supported and followed a policy of allying itself with other antifeudal forces, including modernist and reformist religious leaders.

Controversies

The 10-year period of 1967-1977 was replete with ideological and political controversies between the two wings, controversies in which were found, transposed onto an organizational level, certain forms of divisive tribal

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and clannish patterns of Afghan society (patronal relations, blind "tagalongism" and unconditionality, exacerbated subjectivism, etc.).

Amin asserted his leadership little by little in this volatile and complex situation. Supported mainly by the party's military network for which he was responsible, and by declassed individuals who joined the party because they strongly rejected Afghan society more than because they wanted to transform it, Amin succeeded in neutralizing the party's politicians, Taraki and Khaybar.

Reunification

The latter, however, did play a decisive part in reconciling the two wings. Members of the Parcham demanded Amin's exclusion from the party, accusing him, in 1967, of being a CIA agent. Failing to thwart reunification of the party, Amin narrowly contrived to retain a position in the unified leadership established through the efforts of Khalq members as well as Parcham members. This reconciliation, effected in July 1977, involved solely the party's civilian organizations, the military networks remaining separate. In this way, Amin retained an ace in the hole, a card he eventually played in April 1978.

Intense political activity by the masses marked the year 1978. The upsurge of religious fundamentalism fostered and manipulated by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and CIA officials, plus the provocative agitation of Maoist groups, furnished grist to the mill of the Daoud regime and its friends at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul who, in Afghanistan's rugged political terrain, very clearly saw the danger to be averted, namely a reunified PDPA.

Khaybar's Assassination

A series of plots and attacks were organized to cripple the PDPA. Mir Akbar Khaybar, the Parcham's theoretician and official responsible for its military organization, was assassinated. This murder was attributed to Alemayar, a member of the Moslem Brotherhood. But it was actually perpetrated at the instigation of Amin who had just learned that a majority of the members of the Central Committee had voted for his exclusion. Moving quickly, Amin launched--with the concurrence of the United States, according to the current view in Kabul--a series of operations aimed at starting a bloody repression that would liquidate the party with both its wings. According to this plan, Khaybar's assassination was supposed to incite the PDPA to retaliate frontally against the Moslem Brotherhood supported behind the scenes by the government. In the feverish agitation that followed Khaybar's murder, the PDPA deferred announcing Amin's exclusion so as to project the image of a united party to the masses. The latter transformed Khaybar's funeral into an imposing demonstration against the regime. The situation then became explosive, but not the way Amin's group had expected.

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Instead of indulging in isolated acts of reprisal, the party mobilized the urban masses into a massive political protest movement of nascent insurrectional though controlled character. In fact, did the power-seizing revolutionary uprising have to be launched at once? How and under what forms should it be started? Little is known of the discussions that took place within the PDPA at that time, thus making it difficult to determine their chronology. What is certain, however, is that Amin, recognizing the newly created situation, revised his plan. He relied on the mass movement's insurrectional core to take the initiative of armed opposition.

Postponed Arrest

This decision has to be viewed in relation to a series of events which took place at that time, disturbing events to say the least. The government already had wind of a planned uprising. More than a 1,000 officers were arrested and some were executed.

Three men met on 25 April in Kabul's Zalmay restaurant: Prime Minister Daoud, his defense minister, Rasuli, and the American ambassador to Afghanistan. They decided, inter alia, to arrest all PDPA leaders. Amin was on their list, but his arrest was postponed one day. Time enough for him to make necessary arrangements for the revolt within the armed forces. In point of fact, as soon as a number of PDPA were arrested, including Karmal, Amin's home was surrounded but he was not arrested until the evening of the 26th. Only to be released the following day with the other leaders, thus becoming one of the heroes of the revolutionary movement in the eyes of party members and the masses.

27 April 1978

By taking the initiative of launching the insurrectional movement initially with personnel of the military network he personally controlled, Amin forced the party as a whole into having to make a highly difficult choice, one that also had to be made quickly: either dissociate themselves from a movement whose adventurist and provocative character was well-known to the party leadership, or else support the movement and forcibly channel it in a truly revolutionary direction. The first alternative involved inordinately serious risks. First of all, there was no doubt that officers, soldiers, and thousands of party members, who were not aware of this initiative's hidden purpose and perceived solely its primary meaning--that of a movement which anticipated their aspirations--would be slaughtered. Then there was the risk of immediately shattering the party and isolating it from the masses seething with revolutionary fervor. These two risks combined could prove fatal to the PDPA and the people's movement. Consequently the party leadership decided to throw all of its forces immediately into the battle. The concerted action of popular demonstrations, armed militants, tanks, and aircraft succeeded in overthrowing the Daoud regime after a day of fighting.

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Among the organizers of the revolt, we must remember the names of General Abdelquader who commanded the air force, and Major Rafie who commanded the armored forces. Both were arrested by Amin in August 1978 and not released until the evening of 27 December. Also to be remembered are the names of Ouatanjan and Gholab Zaoui who went underground in September 1979 to lead the opposition to Amin's government and prepare his downfall.

Amin Grows Stronger

We all know what happened after that. Bolstered by a triumphant revolution, Amin managed to enhance his position and hold on. As he regained self-confidence, he resumed his attacks on the unitary members of the Khalq and the Parcham, accusing them of spinelessness and political indifference. As proof, he pointed to "this revolution that would never have taken place if we"--i.e. himself and his group of loyal supporters--"had not taken the initiative." This was the argument he used to circumvent Taraki and persuade him--and other leaders who were uneasy and still not aware of the dangers ahead for the revolution and themselves--to remove all those persons considered to be really dangerous and likely to oppose him because they clearly saw through his game.

The PDPA leadership--and Karmal first and foremost of all--affirm that back in 1965 the CIA had assigned Amin the task of destroying the nascent Afghan revolutionary movement, discrediting the ideals of socialism in the eyes of the masses, and inciting the masses to oppose the Soviet Union. The subsequent objective in this chain of events was: create, as part of a master strategy, conditions conducive to installing a regime like Zia-ul-Haq's, directly threaten the Soviet Union's southern borders, crush anti-imperialist Iran in a pincers, and join forces with Pakistan, a country that cannot conceal its role as reactionary bastion in the region.

Lenin's Appeal

Afghanistan's economic, social, and political structures are such that, unlike neighboring countries in which there is a national bourgeoisie, no rightist force could, at that time, have seized power and replaced the monarchy. The intermediate classes, i.e. those between the big feudal landlords--the backbone of the monarchy--on the one hand, and the poorer classes on the other, were too fragmented to be able to express themselves politically. Ever since the triumph of the October Revolution, the intellectual lower middle class has always been attracted by progressive ideas. Lenin's appeal made to the Moslem peoples of the East still remains graven on their memory.

For the past 50 years, Afghans have had the possibility of comparing various regimes in space and time. To take but one example, the Uzbek in Afghanistan knows that his cousin in the Soviet Union lives under much better conditions than he does.

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For these reasons, among others, it is stated in Kabul that the only way reactionary forces and imperialism could regain control of Afghanistan was to infiltrate a Trojan horse into the revolutionary government. Pending positive evidence capable of supporting this statement, we may consider that Hafizullah Amin's entire policy, during the year and a half he wielded absolute power, did gratify the wishes of imperialism and reaction to the fullest.

Pro-Fascist Practices

How was this done? By simply implementing the party's program. But his was a brutal, and extremist implementation of a series of economic and social measures that were certainly desirable in the more or less longer run but which, imposed indiscriminately, without explanation, and with repression thrown in, could not help but discourage the democratic and progressive classes and throw the bulk of the peasants and urban lower classes back into the arms of the feudal landowners. Such pro-Fascist practices in the name of socialism could not help but generate rebellion in those persons it claimed to represent.

An iron-handed rule was clamped on the country which lived under a reign of terror marked by nocturnal raids, the destruction of whole villages, secret arrests and executions. The targets of such measures? Party members accused of being counterrevolutionaries, religious leaders labeled members of the Moslem Brotherhood, intellectuals and youths suspected of "dealings with foreign interests," landless peasants ordered to take lands they could not cultivate for lack of resources, landowners brutally expropriated, not to mention the armed forces who were victims of the greatest bloodshed. In the space of a few months, the KAM (Proletarian Intelligence Service) played havoc with the country's elite in the name of socialism, the revolution, and Afghan-Soviet friendship! The party, operating totally underground, instructed certain of its leaders to maintain positions within the country's governmental machinery in conformity with the well-oiled and skillful coordination of lawful operations with underground activity.

Taraki Assassinated

The situation rapidly came to a head in the summer of 1979. Taraki, fully aware of the gravity of the situation, found himself virtually a prisoner of Amin's clique.

The Soviet Government had repeatedly warned him of the dangers threatening the April revolution, from within and without, as a result of the brutal methods employed by his prime minister.

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During his brief stay in Moscow, upon his return from the conference of nonaligned countries in Havana last September, the former president met with Karmal. Both men firmly agreed to eliminate Amin. The latter was informed of this meeting by one of Taraki's bodyguards.

We know, if not the exact details, at least the outcome of the last coup d'etat conducted by Amin, the third and final act of this bloody tragedy: Taraki was assassinated in the People's Palace and several hundred party cadres were arrested. Some were immediately executed. Repressive measures against all classes of people were intensified, particularly in the central provinces (highlands of the Hazarajat) and border regions where war was already raging between the Afghan army and the rebels.

Return to Clandestinity

The PDPA then went totally underground. With its two wings, whose reunification had been strengthened by the repression and by recognition of the mortal danger facing the revolution, the PDPA moved into action. The 27 December uprising was meticulously prepared. Why that particular date? And what connection was there between the uprising that ended Amin's regime and the military assistance furnished by the USSR at that same time? Two facts explain both the choice of date and its coinciding with the arrival of Soviet assistance.

The region's geopolitical situation, and mainly the threats of aggression which had hung over Afghanistan for the past year, prompted the former Kabul government to make several specific requests for assistance from the Soviet Union. The latter deferred its assistance because of several factors, especially the fact that these requests came from a government the head of which was partly to blame for the dangers of destabilization.

Government Problem

Government members hostile to Amin's policy very likely intended to retrieve the situation in favor of the Soviet Union. Had he wanted to oppose these demands, Amin could not have done so for fear of prematurely unmasking himself. It is now suggested that he had even favored Soviet military assistance, always in line with the part he was playing, that of a CIA agent disguised as a radical revolutionary. In that case, the entry of Soviet troops would have been for him the culmination of a process aimed at discrediting the Soviet Union by falsifying the facts on the one hand and playing upon national sentiment on the other.

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In the meantime, the PDPA had made the decision to settle, first of all and in complete independence, the government problem which was a domestic matter, and then call upon the Soviet Union to help cope with the foreign threats. Sometime in November, however, the Revolutionary Council, as the Afghan state's lawful authority, appointed Karmal president and submitted a request for assistance.

Whether Amin was or was not associated with these requests, he did know for a fact, on or about 20 December, that the Soviet Union was going to begin the famous airlift that put the imperialist West on tenterhooks.

End of Amin

Amin, therefore, vacated the People's Palace and entrenched himself, with his bodyguards, in the Darlaman barracks. Inside that fortress, he prepared, between 22 and 27 December, what was to become the final stage of a venture bewildering in its complexity and its Florentine and Shakespearean Machiavellianism, as informed circles in Kabul continue to steadily reiterate.

1. Kill the PDPA leaders detained in Puli-Charkhi prison and then claim they were killed attempting to make a mass escape.
2. Form a new government composed of representatives from the small fundamentalist groups fomenting rebellion from Peshawar, Pakistan.
3. This new government was supposed to, inter alia, denounce the friendship treaty with the USSR and call upon reactionaries in the region and upon the United States. Such was the major outline of the plan the new Afghan leadership has promised to reveal soon in meticulous detail. This plan was unable to succeed because the PDPA forestalled it and was helped by the Soviet Union who secured Afghanistan's borders.

Within a few hours, it was all over.

And then a new battle began: the one currently being waged to redress the economic and social situation, restore the people's confidence, reestablish national unity, and extinguish the last counterrevolutionary fires lit here and there and fanned by Americans in concert with the Chinese and pseudo-Moslems skilled in counting their beads and dollars.

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AFGHANISTAN

PRO-SOVIET VERSION OF AFGHANISTAN CRISIS

Paris AFRIQUE-ASIE in French 18 Feb-2 Mar 80 pp 49-52

[Article by Suleman Mehlati: "Hypocrisy, the Supreme Stage of Imperialism"]

[Text] Suleman Mehlati is a pseudonym chosen--for obvious safety reasons--by a prominent Pakistani educator who for the past 2 decades has closely followed developments in his country's domestic and foreign policies, as well as such developments throughout Central Asia. After a lengthy period in exile, he returned to Islamabad when Ali Bhutto became president. Since then, Ali Bhutto has been executed by the hangmen of Pakistan's current fascist president, Zia-ul-Haq. From inside Pakistan, transformed into a vast concentration camp that also functions today as a base for counterrevolutionary aggression, Suleman Mehlati was anxious to make his views known.

The entry of Soviet combat troops into Afghanistan gave the West the long-sought opportunity to assert its "moral superiority" over communism and its firm resolve to defend "freedom" everywhere in the world. As its immediate consequence, Soviet intervention has given the United States hope of altering the image of an "Islamic world up in arms against the West" as projected by Ayatollah Khomeyni's action, and also hope of turning "insurgent Islam's" whiplash against the USSR. Thirdly, and not least important, is the fact that Jimmy Carter felt the Afghanistan crisis would get him out of a trap from which he was unable to free himself, namely the issue of diplomatic personnel held hostage inside the American Embassy in Tehran.

The American response to the Afghanistan crisis pleased Westerners more--because it gave them the opportunity to regain a bit of their prestige that had fallen so low among Third World countries--than it prompted them to ponder the underlying causes and realities of this situation.

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In fact, the Western media's propaganda has missed the mark and lost all sense of proportion in its commentaries on the situation in Afghanistan.

The arrival of Soviet troops was described as the "rape of Afghanistan," and the overthrow of Hafizullah Amin's regime was depicted as the disappearance of a government considered, for the sake of the cause, independent and democratic. With complete lack of logic, the Western media have tried to give the impression that a "Western lake" had suddenly changed into a "Soviet satellite."

It is perfectly obvious that Jimmy Carter would definitely like to see the Afghan question remain a burning issue until the presidential election in November 1980. In the meantime, the "hard-line" he pretends to follow is liable to lead him to make decisions that might well be extremely prejudicial to Western interests in general and to American interests in particular, not to mention worldpeace and security.

Friendly Relations

Such are undoubtedly the dangers France and a few other American allies see in the hysteria provoked by the situation in Afghanistan. Even though they are disappointed in the boastful claims, that did not materialize, about the Afghan people's resistance to the Soviet forces and mutiny within the Afghan armed forces, the media of the Western establishment still cannot bring themselves to tell the truth about the conflicts in Southwest Asia. Here, therefore, are the facts.

Afghanistan never has been a "Western lake." The many efforts made by the British to subjugate that country always ran into fierce resistance from the Afghan people. And no Afghan can forget that if the West did recognize Afghan sovereignty, it was primarily because the Bolsheviks had previously recognized it. Ever since the reign of Amanullah Khan,* Kabul has always maintained close and friendly relations with Moscow. In geopolitical terms, Afghanistan, though nonaligned, can be said to have always had special ties with the USSR. And we must emphasize that the West had made no serious effort until then to put an end to this situation.

Daoud Khan, whose regime was so narrowly based that he feared being overthrown at any time, was the only one to change the balance in favor of the West by drawing close to the West's local policeman at the time, namely

*King of Afghanistan who succeeded Amir Habibullah in 1919. He assumed the title of king in 1924 and had to abdicate in 1929 under pressure from an ultrareactionary religious opposition movement supported by the British.

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the Shah of Iran. And yet Daoud was overthrown in April 1978 by a revolution which even the U. S. Department of State did not dare to say had been planned or guided by the USSR.

Nur Mohammad Taraki's government, ideologically closer to the USSR, followed a policy of closer cooperation with the USSR and signed a 20-year treaty of friendship and cooperation with Moscow. Soviet military advisers were then invited to come help the new government reorganize. These advisers trained the Afghan armed forces and later helped them combat armed resistance by mullahs and other reactionary elements opposed to the reforms advocated by the new government. The two succeeding governments maintained the treaty and sought Soviet military assistance.

An Infamous Mullah

The basic point of the Afghanistan crisis that has to be understood is that the conflict did not arise because of increased Soviet influence or as the result of any violations of religious freedom. The conflict erupted because a regime determined to put an end to feudalism and tribalism wanted to redistribute land, abolish usury, emancipate women, conduct a mass literacy campaign, especially among the women. The first to rebel against implementation of these reforms were members of the family of the mullah Shor Bazar, a mullah infamous for having opposed the modernization program advocated by King Amanullah and having overthrown him in 1929 with the help of the British. The family's current political heir, Sigbatullah Mujadaddi, visited the United States in 1978, raised funds, obtained various assurances of support, and announced the formation of a so-called National Liberation Front to combat the Taraki government's reforms.

A few months after the April revolution, many counterrevolutionary groups were formed in Pakistan. They were armed and trained by the Pakistani army for sabotage operations. An orchestrated destabilization campaign was launched, with Islamabad as its center and sanctuary, under Beijing's supervision and with Washington's blessing. To confuse this campaign with what was happening in Iran, it was cleverly labeled the "Islamic Revolution" so as to justify these counterrevolutionary activities.

These activities evoked little echo in the Afghan people who generally responded favorably to the revolution. Counterrevolutionaries gained no significant victory over the Afghan armed forces stoutly loyal to the new government. "Refugees" arriving on the Pakistani side of the border were greeted with hostility by local populations who viewed them as landowners and reviled usurers fleeing the Afghan people's wrath.

All of this began to change, however, when the ambitious Hafizullah Amin, the unscrupulous foreign minister, started maneuvering to seize power within the party and the government. Internal rivalries and intrigue became the primary concern of the party leadership, and enforcement of revolutionary decrees was relegated to a position of secondary importance.

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About March 1979, Amin had consolidated his power, using Taraki as a screen, and started an underhanded purge of all his opponents. At that time, the party had ceased performing its role and the government was losing all touch with reality. Massive reprisals were conducted against the people--who no longer understood the discrepancy between expectations the new regime had raised and the everyday methods and dealings of some of its representatives--whereas a bit of patience would have made such repression avoidable. Small groups of exiles started to materialize and their ranks were swollen by innocent victims of the terror among which the counterrevolutionaries began recruiting.

Nur Mohammad Taraki's overthrow and assassination in September 1979 and Amin's accession to the presidency completed the isolation of the regime. Friends of the Afghan revolution, both inside and outside the country, had lost much of their enthusiasm for it.

Enthusiastic or not, the USSR was faced with a veritable nightmare. Looming ahead it saw the danger of the establishment, at its very gates, of an openly hostile, pro-American Afghanistan ruled by a government of religious fanatics already committed to the cause of subverting the Soviet Asiatic republics in the name of one of the most reactionary Islamic fundamentalist movements.

The direct role of the United States in the outbreak of the Afghanistan "crisis" is not yet clearly known. It is significant, however, that it was precisely at this moment that Pakistan, an American "client" state, experienced such a strong desire to arm itself even more, and that Beijing, Washington's enthusiastic ally, adopted a policy toward Afghanistan that, in all logic, could only lead to Soviet intervention.

As a great power, the United States, more than any other country, is able to understand how another great power may feel when it finds itself faced with a hostile government on its borders. Consequently, when a government that has perpetrated modern history's most brutal war of aggression (in Vietnam) and that is accustomed to sending troops into Latin America--not to mention elsewhere--for a mere trifle, when such a government proclaims its "moral indignation" at the "violation of the sovereignty of an independent country," its hypocrisy becomes far too transparent and insolent.

As for the USSR, it did not find itself in an extremely comfortable situation, despite its own great-power logic, and even though the Afghan government had been continuously soliciting its help. Its ideological commitment to support threatened progressive and anti-imperialist governments inevitably prompted it to help the Afghan revolution. But the Amin regime's incompetence and insensitivity, coupled with the continuous subversive activity directed from outside the country, had opened the door wide to destabilization of the central government and the Afghan revolution while, at the same time, posing threats at the USSR's very borders. As a result, what began as fraternal assistance to a revolutionary government was soon combined with action necessary to the USSR's own national security.

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Ponderous Sociological Factors

There is no doubt that the USSR is paying a price for this involvement in the Afghan situations. The "hammering" by the Western media did unquestionably succeed in misleading certain Third World nonaligned leaders who asked themselves questions. And although the USSR's prestige may have suffered therefrom it will regain that lost influence the quicker Babrah Karmal's government is able to demonstrate its competence and its sensitivity to the real problems of the Afghan people, and establish its credibility by maintaining unity among rival groups and individuals within the Afghan People's Democratic Party.

The new government's major asset will probably be its political program for elimination of oppression and feudal exploitation. If such an objective is pursued with sincerity and efficiency, while giving due consideration to the ponderous sociological factors that sometimes vitiate the best of intentions, the government will ultimately win the minds and hearts of the Afghan people. At that time, the Afghan government will become a major asset to the USSR which will have thus proved that its strategy and calculations were not unsound.

Such obviously can never be the case with the United States which, unlike the USSR, steadily supports Third World governments and regimes that continue to cling, with all of their weight, to the hands of the clock of history in an effort to keep them from turning. This is why any parallel artificially drawn between American interventions and Soviet international assistance can only be fallacious and have as its sole purpose keeping peoples ensnared in the toils of neocolonialism.

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ALGERIA

AGRICULTURE: GOVERNMENT'S FIRST PRIORITY

Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 7 Mar 80
pp 547-548

Text Confirming his tendency, already pointed out towards gradual readjustments and systematic arrangements, President Chadli Bendjedid is the source of a governmental action program presented during the meeting of the Council of Ministers on 17 February. The main idea of the new program thus inaugurated lies in the desire to effectively coordinate the operations handled by the various departments.

After an objective evaluation of the results already obtained and of the defects which exist, a work undertaken several months ago by the authorities and which seem to have already allowed the president to get a more precise, general idea of the situation, it is a question of improved management of continued development efforts, which have too often been marked until now by certain extravagancies. The interest in better coordination is accompanied logically by an equal determination to institute a strict control, for which the government, moreover, has outlined here and now the assignments and created the organizations.

The governmental action program drawn up, taking into consideration investment plans, the operational budget and import estimates, was explained on 17 February by the prime minister and adopted "as a whole" after discussion, according to the communique.

As described by a semiofficial report, this program would include: fulfillment of planned programs, improvement of management, reorganization of enterprises, the continuance of decentralization, the completion of texts of regulations, exercising control and maintenance, improvement of distribution, meeting citizens' basic needs, efficient utilization of personnel and training.

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On the other hand, it is envisaged that the Council of Ministers will examine the results achieved twice a year, and if there is need for it, will consequently change the program of one or the other ministerial departments.

However, we must point out these very general directives do not include any indication of priorities. But in this respect, decisions already made previously are now entering the implementation stage.

There are Good Reasons to Give New Impetus to Agriculture

Agriculture is in the forefront of these government priorities. It is now clear today that for a country such as Algeria, the importance of agriculture is not only economic or even social, but political to the first degree. The minister of agriculture and agrarian reform, Selim Saadi, a member of the FLN Central Committee, strongly emphasized this idea on 15 January, in addressing the leaders of the FLN agrarian revolution, agriculture and hydraulic subcommittees: "The food program, he said, is actually a weapon in the hands of the developed countries." In 1979 Algeria imported more than a third of its consumption of grains and milk, 80 percent of its oil consumption and almost all its sugar consumption. Population growth will only highlight these shortages, if, moreover, they are not corrected. For Saadi continues, agriculture lacks skilled workers and has serious organizational and management defects.

The agricultural area is disappearing rapidly and dangerously for the lack of a sufficiently prompt implementation of land distribution. In Oran Governate, for example, between 1970 and 1976 the amount of good agricultural land absorbed either by state institutions or domestic companies, in particular, to be used for industrial zones, urban housing, roads or private encroachments considerably exceeds 5,000 hectares, appropriated from a useful rural area which hardly exceeds 80,000 hectares now.

From now on the problems of land distribution will be the subject of studies which will be given extensive publicity and thus will begin to affect public opinion. Consequently there were successively held in Algiers in January a conference, then a round table devoted to this multidisciplinary field of investigation and thought.

The congressmen's aims include, first of all, increasing and standardizing revenue so as to stabilize populations, then a

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development effort for each region according to its natural resources and peculiarities, each investment based on a concerted decision, so that it can be considered as an integrated plan affecting all economic sectors.

On its part, the UNPA [National Union of Algerian Peasants] has drawn up a preliminary plan for the status of the agricultural village and a statement of agricultural results since 1962. The minister, on his part, emphasized the need to continue vigorously the creation of new rural living conditions: Out of 1,000 socialist villages planned, he pointed out on 13 February to leading workers in city planning, construction and the environment, meeting in a seminar, only 200 have been finished and 200 others are in the process of completion. And the function itself of the socialist village is to be reconsidered; once more, the minister explained the need to "decentralize" the future villages, whose center will only be constructed by the public authorities as a service area, and whose "clusters" the peasants will build themselves several miles from there, with it all forming a sort of constellation.

The State's Objectives on the Subject of Agriculture Will Include a Strengthening of Administrative Organizations

On the other hand, Minister Selim Saadi met the leading workers of MARA [Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform] on 16 and 17 February to acquaint them in a general way with the main objectives which the government intends to reach in agriculture. These objectives are divided into four categories.

- 1) Improvement of general cadres in the agricultural sector.
- 2) Logistic reorganization
- 3) Reorganization of the production machine
- 4) Modification of the training system

As regards general cadres, the reform is already in progress on the commune level, where technicians have been assigned who will draw up the local plans of agricultural development, will give the necessary encouragement and advice and will supervise all agricultural operations.

On the Governate level the creation of new subadministrations is also taking place (rural planning, general use of

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machines and technical supply, vegetable production, stock raising etc) which will strengthen the existing organizations and will allow a better approach to problems. It is contemplated creating on the same level a CAPCS /Communal Multi-Service Agriculture Cooperative/ Association provided with various facilities: a rural engineering unit, a transport park etc. Moreover, the CAPCS will have to be reorganized.

As regards production there will be continued rejuvenation of rural labor, the staffing of operations with a view to improving worker management, stabilization of rural populations thanks to better living conditions achieved to a great extent by worker construction. A particular effort will be made to promote poultry raising, which has a low production.

As for training, which should give a new value to the human factor, its practical effectiveness will be increased by requiring students in schools and institutes connected with agriculture to actually work in agricultural operations. A system of pilot farms will offer the peasant models of management and productivity.

During the discussions thus started by the minister, the problem of rural exodus come to the foreground, in fact it is certain that the departure of young peasants for the city has led to the overall aging of agricultural labor. Some fear that the measures taken until now are inadequate: granting land, increase of agricultural wages, efforts promoting rural living conditions etc; there is reason to continue and especially to diversify these efforts.

Alongside the "socialist sector" there must besides be considered the "private sector": in agriculture itself where it provides a considerable part of production and especially in the marketing of fruits and vegetables, where the usefulness of its operation is lessened by the abuse of speculation and the lack of regulations.

The Agrarian Revolution: Still Serious Shortcomings

Moreover, during these discussions, there did not pass unnoticed the risk of increased bureaucratization, even of conflicts of authority which could arise because of the proliferation of new organizations, in particular on the Governate level. But the establishment of these organizations will involve the creation of numerous jobs, thus offering an opportunity to various types of university or technical graduates.

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Is it certain, on the other hand, or simply probable, that the essentially administrative and technical measures which are thus involved will be enough to change the present state of affairs? Although more than the defects in staffing and technical advice, than the shortage of equipment and even the difficulties in marketing, it is in many cases the lack of morale in the rank and file which has caused the delays or the failures of the agrarian revolution. The student volunteers of the last winter harvest again confirm it.

For example, in Djelfa Governate 8 years after the payment for the surplus lands, "many nationalizable owners have never been disturbed and others, who had been affected by limitation or nationalization measures, have continued cultivating lands without anyone objecting. There where founding of cooperatives have taken place, these activities only had a symbolic nature, with some CAPRAS [Agricultural Production Cooperative of the Agrarian Revolution] having been set up on sand, at Hassi Bahbah especially...the first and second stages have only been slightly implemented...the third stage has not even entered the preparation phase. The mass organizations, whose main purpose is to work for the application of the RA [expansion unknown], are far from meeting the needs of one of the main tasks of the socialist revolution." At the basis of this state of things, there is pointed out in particular "the feudal mentality ...whose corollary is an extraordinary mentality of abdicating local authority for the benefit of a mythical authority, which is exercised through men and organizations which have nothing to do with the organization of authority as defined by the national charter, the constitution and other codes of the commune and the Governate...With the exception of the representative of the national people's army, the members of the appeals committee do not assume all their responsibilities...when they do not stay away unconditionally from the proceedings" (Mohamed Hamdi, EL MOUDJAHID, 15-16 February). Moreover, it is assured that even in this sector, things are in the process of change; for certain, it is time enough!

The creation of a High Commissariat for Pastoralism will make it possible on the other hand, to start the third stage of the agrarian revolution on the basis of the results of the first experiments; a single but flexible authority, including the various regional and local organizations, would seem in fact strictly necessary for carrying out the ambitious programs of transforming the steppes.

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IRAQ

BRITISH COMPANIES ATTRACTED TO DEVELOPMENTAL PROJECTS

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 29 Feb-6 Mar 80 p 46

[Text] A British trade delegation led by (Baron Selston), chairman of the Middle East Trade Commission, concluded its 5-day visit to Iraq. The delegation aimed at examining the possibility of British firms participating in a number of Iraqi construction and developmental projects.

This trip came about as a consequence of a marked improvement in relations between the two countries following successive visits to Iraq by British officials in the past 2 years, including Lord Carrington, the British foreign secretary, and Cecil Parkinson, the minister of trade.

Commercial relations between the two countries had been affected by the political and diplomatic crises which occurred in 1978 and which led to the decline in the value of British exports to Iraq from £215.5 million in 1978 to £201.2 million in 1979.

The British say that one of the indications of the improvement in Iraqi-British relations is the conclusion of a £14 million contract early this past February for Iraq's import of 200 buses manufactured by the British Leyland Company. They hope to win further Iraqi contracts this year for the construction of railroad projects as well as defense projects.

Britain is currently showing great interest in improving its commercial and political relations with Iraq. This is in consideration of Iraq's position as the second largest oil producer in the Arab world after Saudi Arabia (daily production 3.7 million barrels).

The British point out that Iraqi financial allocations for development this year (the final year of the current 5-year plan) amount to \$17.7 million. This translates into a great opportunity for the industrialized countries to win contracts relating to developmental projects that Iraq intends to carry out within the framework of the huge industrialization program it is now implementing. The British estimate the Iraqi balance of payments surplus for 1979 at \$11.4 billion, with reserves figured to be about \$15 to 20 billion. They estimate that Iraqi oil revenues in the same year were \$40 billion.

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QATAR

PROGRESS AND DEVELOPMENT OF NATION SUMMARIZED

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 7-13 Mar 80 pp 50, 51

[Excerpts] On 22 February 1972, Shaykh Khalifah Bin-Hamad Al Thani took charge of the government of Qatar. Since that day, the country has been making swift progress in construction, education, agriculture, industry, and other fields of modernization.

The amir of the country said in the consultative council, "You know that the domestic policy of our country is based on scientific foundations and relies on nationalistic values to which we turn for inspiration as we work to join the march of progress and follow the course of development through the efforts which we exert to exploit the resources of our bounteous land in the optimum manner, to diversify the sources of our income, to develop our industrial capabilities, and to expand our area under cultivation to the full extent of our capability."

There are now more than 38,000 students of both sexes in the primary, preparatory general, and secondary general grades, the religious institute, the teachers' college, and the technical industrial and mercantile schools.

The enrollment of adults of both sexes in the centers for the eradication of illiteracy has now reached 5,292, an increase of 983 over the previous year.

The University of Qatar

The University of Qatar, in this seventh year of its existence, has enrolled 2,500 students of both sexes. There were 2,793 students sent abroad for university and higher education studies in 1979, an increase of 267 over the preceding year.

The University of Qatar consists of a college of education, a college of sociology and social studies, a college of sciences, and a college of law and Islamic studies, and an international academic delegation is now preparing studies for the construction of a college for engineering.

The university also has a center for educational research and another for scientific and natural research.

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Youth Care

In January 1979, a royal edict was issued for the creation of the Higher Youth Care Council under the leadership of Crown Prince and Minister of Defense Shaykh Hamad Bin-Khalifah Al Thani. The first acts of the council were to create four new athletic clubs, to take charge of all other athletic sports federations, and to continue the expansion of the Khalifah sports city, which has become one of the chief features of the state of Qatar.

Petroleum Resources

The country's production of petroleum amounts to 500,000 barrels per day, and this, in addition to gas, has enabled Qatar to play an important role in both the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC).

Building an Industrial Society

Allotments to finance the industrial projects in this year's budget have amounted to 1,665.2 million riyals, as compared with 1,064 million riyals for the preceding year. A technical center for industrial development has been built and is engaging in studies and preparing plans which are appropriate to the revenues and requirements of the industrial development in the country so as to bring about a balanced economy which will be able to withstand technological, world, and political vicissitudes.

The gross production of the iron and steel mill in 1979 was 377,000 tons of steel rails, whereas the plan called for the production of 337,000 tons.

The production of chemical fertilizers was 360,000 tons of ammonia and 475,000 tons of urea fertilizers in 1979, or about 40,000 tons of ammonia and 60,000 tons of urea fertilizers above the amount called for in the plan.

The construction of a petroleum refinery with a capacity of 50,000 barrels per day is now being completed. It comprises an asphalt production unit which will meet the country's construction and road-paving requirements. The country also has a refinery which was built in 1953 and one which was built in 1974 with a capacity of 9,500 barrels per day, and the three refineries together will be able to supply the country's domestic requirements till 1995.

The cement industry, which began with one kiln in 1969, now produces 300,000 tons per year.

Other Industries

There is also an organic fertilizer plant, which began production in 1977 and is supervised by the ministry of municipal affairs. There are also

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grain mills, a plastic film factory, and a national fishing company, and numerous other projects to build new industries.

Commerce and Public Services

For the promotion of commerce, Qatar has created the Qatar currency establishment, which carries out the financial policy of the state and supervises the banks, and also the Qatar chamber of commerce.

The ministry of communications has provided all necessary facilitations in the airports and seaports. It also built and developed the wire and radio communications lines, to which 17,000 telephone lines were added during 3 years. The automatic Telex exchange, with a capacity of 600 subscribers and 80 lines for world communication, was opened in 1976.

Through the space communications ground station, telephone and telegraph communications will be carried on directly with all countries. Studies are now in progress for the construction of a ground station for space communications with the Atlantic Ocean to provide direct communication with Canada, the U.S., and Latin America.

Agriculture

The country has made allotments for the creation of experimental farms and for the preparation of a comprehensive survey to find out what possibility there is of making use of agricultural acreage and to find subterranean water and other sources of water for irrigation and afforestation.

There are five large hospitals in Doha. One of these, the Hamad General Hospital, has the most modern and technologically advanced equipment in the world.

There are clinics and medical centers scattered throughout Doha. There is a hospital in al-Shimal and another in al-Khawr. There is a health training center in Doha to graduate male and female nurses and public sanitation inspectors, the first of its kind in the area.

Information

Radio Qatar has begun broadcasting from nine stations for 18 hours each day in the Arabic and English languages.

The Qatar television system, which opened in 1974, broadcasts for an average of 9.5 hours per day, and the local program has begun to take up 40 percent of the broadcasting time. There are also several new projects to develop the television services. Among these are the construction of a large studio and the installation of a second channel to be used for news, cultural programs, and foreign programs. The work on these projects will be completed in the middle of the coming year.

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The Qatar News Agency has continued to maintain correspondents in most of the Arab countries and the European and Asian capitals, and has acquired posts in the large world capitals.

Foreign Policy

The policy of Qatar is based on supporting Arab solidarity to protect the Arab nation from any danger which threatens its common security.

Foremost among the issues to which Qatar is committed is the Palestine issue, which the Amir of the country expressed as follows:

"Let us stand with all the capabilities which we possess at the side of our Arab brothers to bear our share of the responsibility of regaining our occupied Arab territory, at the head of which is holy Jerusalem, and regaining the rights of the Arab Palestinian people to their state and their self-determination on the land of this nation. Furthermore, we shall continue to offer all the support that we can offer to uphold and sustain the Palestine Liberation Organization, considering it the sole legitimate representative of our brother Palestinian people."

Qatar is working to reinforce its solidarity with the Islamic nations.

Qatar has played host to the third world conference on the life and Sunnah of the Prophet at the beginning of the 15th century of the Islamic calendar.

Among the most important recommendations which the conference issued was one to consider the Palestine issue an Islamic issue, to consider the liberation of Palestine the responsibility of all Moslems, and to consider the holy war to liberate Palestine incumbent on every Moslem, and another to call attention to what Moslems are suffering in the Philippines, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Cyprus and elsewhere.

Furthermore, the state of Qatar is greatly desirous of supporting the bonds of cooperation and solidarity with the African nations, and considers that a national requirement in view of the historic, cultural, and geographic ties which link the Arab nation with the peoples of the continent of Africa.

It has stood by the side of the African peoples, who are suffering backwardness and enslavement; it has often denounced the policy of racial discrimination to which they have been exposed; and it has offered aid to the friendly African nations to help them withstand the policies of racists.

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SAUDI ARABIA

FINANCE MINISTER DISCUSSES MAJOR ECONOMIC ISSUES

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 22-28 Feb 80 pp 46-47

[Interview with Muhammad Aba al-Khayl, the Saudi Minister of Finance, conducted by Badr al-Haj in Riyadh; date of interview not given: "Saudi Finance Minister Warns Arab Investors against Rushing to Buy Gold; Freezing of Iranian Assets Impaired Confidence in International Banking System"]

[Text] Has the Saudi economy been adversely affected by the incident of the Grand Mosque in Mecca and other events in the region? How does Saudi Arabia interpret the phenomenal rise in gold prices and was this rise the result of heavy buying by Arab investors? Why have the creditor Arab states complained to the IMF about Egypt? What are the consequences of the United States action of freezing Iranian deposits? Those major economic and financial issues were addressed by Saudi Arabia's Finance Minister Muhammad Aba al-Khayl in an interview with AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI. He answered the questions put to him thoroughly and precisely as can be clearly seen from his remarks. The interview went as follows:

[Question] Has the incident of the Grand Mosque in Mecca in any way affected the economic and financial situation in Saudi Arabia?

[Answer] Not at all. You who are abroad have come to view the incident through what was published in some European and American papers. These papers, and other media as well, have exaggerated the incident and interpreted it in ways that are simply fantastic. When Saudis read what is published in those publications, they cannot help laughing. The incident has been magnified, and I think that you have been affected by those exaggerations. The flow of trade is continuing and the spate of foreign companies that seek contracts and wish to operate in Saudi Arabia continues undiminished. Huge numbers of foreign companies and contractors from all over the world still bid for government projects, and visitors, whether they be bankers or government officials, are still pouring into our country. I reaffirm that the mosque incident has not had any impact on the economic

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situation. It was simply a transient incident. Do you believe that businessmen or bankers who manage vast enterprises and analyze things carefully would be affected by a mere incident? Incidents occur every day in all parts of the world, but the world does not stop and life goes on. At any rate, you are now in Saudi Arabia and you can ask any person or any businessman whether his business has been affected by what happened. His answer, of course, will be negative.

Zionism Behind the Campaign

[Question] Observers note that there has been an almost direct campaign in the American press against Saudi Arabia in particular, both before and after the incident of the Grand Mosque in Mecca. The campaign has primarily sought to distort the picture of economic stability in your country. How do you explain that?

[Answer] I believe that every Arab country is liable to be exposed to such a situation because of the influence of world Zionism. This is the only explanation of what has happened. The impact on the Arab countries varies from time to time and from state to state, but whenever world Zionism finds an opportunity to hurt and defame an Arab country it would not hesitate to do so for one minute. We here in the kingdom are interested in development, and it is therefore the axis of our life. We have accomplished a great deal, and a great deal more will be accomplished. We therefore do not pay attention to such machinations and lies. Our cooperation with the Arab states is limitless, and the kingdom's efforts with regard to the Palestine question, which is the Arabs' No. 1 question, are limitless too. Everyone in the kingdom or the Arab countries is well aware of our development endeavors. The state has to pay attention to domestic needs and diligently strive to exploit resources--all resources--in order to raise the level of the citizen. The state also has to take care of the Arab states to which we belong and to cooperate with them politically or in terms of development and support. We should also work for the major issues and causes of the Arab states. I do not think that anything more than that can be expected of the kingdom and, thank God, we are living up to what is expected of us.

[Question] Higher oil prices have adversely affected developing nations. To what extent is the kingdom helping in development projects in the developing nations?

[Answer] In terms of funds and assistance provided to developing nations, Saudi Arabia is second only to the United States. But in terms of the proportion of its foreign aid to its national income, Saudi Arabia is among the top countries in that regard. Together with the endeavors of the small group of countries comprising Kuwait, Qatar and the UAE and others, it is the highest percentage in the world. The level of aid provided by any other group of nations has not reached the level provided by this group, and I can say, quite simply, that it will not reach that level.

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Over the past 4 years, the kingdom has provided an average of 10 percent of its gross national income in aid to other countries, primarily to Arab states facing special circumstances, such as the confrontation states. We feel that assisting those particular states is a national duty required of us by virtue of our belonging to one and the same homeland. Our development aid is required by a moral responsibility toward the world, which by the way has become more interdependent. In giving aid to developing nations, the kingdom pays special attention to projects of useful economic return to the people and projects which have long-term benefits and effect, such as projects involving building roads and dams and agricultural and electricity projects. Such projects are the mainstay of development. Without them those nations cannot grow and progress. At the same time, those nations cannot get financing for this kind of projects through the commercial channels of the banking system, because the profit return is not a direct one. If a developing nation wanted to set up a cement plant, for example, it can get financing from a bank because a cement plant makes a direct profit. But if it wanted to build a road and it did not have enough resources to do that, then it has no other choice but to cooperate with other states. The kingdom seeks to promote such a cooperation. This has been the pattern which we have followed in giving aid. Our position on that matter derives from deep conviction and we will continue to pursue it.

[Question] President Al-Sadat says repeatedly that the Arab aid given to Egypt was miniscule and of no value. What is the volume and amount of aid Saudi Arabia extended to Egypt before the signing of the Camp David accords?

[Answer] (Laughingly) This is a question which should be addressed to the politicians.

Egypt's Debts

[Question] On what grounds did Saudi Arabia and other Arab states which are among Egypt's creditors complain to the IMF about the Sadat government's refusal to settle its debts and to pay the interests on the debts too?

[Answer] First, as a matter of principle, I should point out that in 1952, the IMF board of directors adopted a decision saying that any state which resorts to emergency and compulsory measures to protect its national security can stop money transfers to abroad, whether those transfers were designed to satisfy debts or serve other purposes, provided that it first notify the IMF as early as possible. If the IMF did not object after 30 days from the date of notification, then its measures would be deemed by the IMF to be sound and unimpeachable. In that case, the IMF accepts as reasonable and permissible the considerations which have prompted that state to take action.

This IMF decision has been actually invoked on a very few occasions since 1952. In September, Egypt informed the IMF during the IMF's annual conference in Belgrade that it has decided to suspend the settlement of Egyptian

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debts to Arab countries for national security considerations. Egypt's action, it appears, only pertained to the Arab creditors and not to Egypt's debts in general, on the grounds that those Arab creditor states have boycotted Egypt. In other words, the Egyptian regime felt that the Arab action provided it with the justification to stop the debt payments, by pleading the Egyptian national security. The view of the Arab parties which are Egypt's creditors is that Egypt has no legal grounds to refuse to pay off its debts and the interest on them.

(As a result of the IMF's position on the matter, Egypt has modified its position and agreed to pay the interests on the Arab debts, but it still refuses to pay off the debts--AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI.)

[Question] What are in your view the reasons for the recent rise in the world price of gold?

[Answer] Actually, what is happening in the world gold market is perplexing. I do not believe that there are any economic reasons for it. The world gold market is small and the quantity of gold which is bought and sold is limited. Therefore, it is easy to influence the prices in such a market. I mean that any person or any speculator can play with the market and affect it upwards or downwards. Also, any tendencies taken by investors, speculators or individuals can have an impact on the market of gold. There are no clear information on who is buying and selling gold. There is only talk that Arab investors are doing that. But this is mere speculation, because there is no definite information on this matter. At any rate, what I worry about is that all this may be a trap in which Arab investors have fallen. I believe that such a trap is full of danger. I am also afraid that this method is an attempt to retrieve the high incomes which resulted from prosperity in the Arab region, in the sense that it is one of other methods designed to regain those revenues. There is also a feeling that what has happened recently in the gold market implies an attempt to divert those [Arab] capitals from the dollar and other strong European currencies and refocus them on gold, because the owners of European currencies do not wish to convert huge dollar amounts into their currencies. In other words, there is an attempt here to divert the attention of investors from those currencies to gold so as to lessen the pressures on those currencies, I believe. In any case, this abnormal situation might continue. Any country which thinks in terms of the long term will want to avoid getting into this hassle, I believe.

[Question] What about the freezing of Iranian assets in American banks and the effect of that on Arab assets?

[Answer] It will be some time before the lessons to be learned from this question become clear, as militarists would put it. It is certain, however, that law offices will work on it for a long time. The problem involving the freezing of the assets also involves the banks themselves. The problem arose because Iranian assets were deposited in a limited number of banks. At the same time, a large number of banks had participated in extending

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loans to Iran and Iranian establishments. In other words, there are banks which have extended loans to Iran but hold no Iranian deposits and there are banks which hold Iranian deposits and have extended credits to Iran. Therefore, there are many problems. It has been said that as a result of all this, banks have scaled down their credits to states. This situation may continue for some time.

On the other hand, the freezing of such huge funds at once is unprecedented and no one had expected it. Therefore, such incident cannot pass without leaving an impact in its trail. To stop payment on enormous loans to banks, such as Iran's loans are, is a serious matter. It is bound to have continuing effects. Added to this that the emergence of problems among the lending banks and the differences in their viewpoints are also a serious matter. There is a controversy over the soundness of the American government's action of instructing branches of American banks in other countries to freeze those funds, when those branches fall under the authority of the central banks in the countries in which they operate. All these questions have been raised and are pending in courts or in central banks. The answers to them are difficult. But as to whether this situation has had an effect, the answer is yes, it certainly has. How will this situation end? One hopes that the problem of the hostages will end soon so that the situation may be corrected and things may return to normal, God willing.

Risks Are There

[Question] Do not you think that there should be guarantees and safeguards for nations which deposit their money in other nations?

[Answer] The fact of the matter is that freezing and other actions affect confidence in the international banking system. It is not strange that the world, with all its problems, should face some more problems and complications such as the ones involved here. What matters, however, is to solve those problems. I believe that the ability of the world--even the ability of any one nation or any one society--to face those problems and devise solutions for them is a vast one. We should not be overly alarmed and look at those enormous problems as if they spell the end of the world. Solutions are bound to be found, and the world community is capable of producing those solutions.

At any rate, there are risks in every financial transaction--be it a long-term investment, deposits or even opening a credit account with a bank to import from another country. There are risks in any economic enterprise conducted in another country. When the money of one country is in another, it is vulnerable. The degree of risk varies from one country to another and from one set of circumstances to another. But things will always be like this.

It is clear, however, that states and individuals know that confidence is essential if we are to live together and to cooperate with and benefit

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from each other. In other words, the re-establishment of confidence and trust is vital. I believe that many of the people who are concerned in the world want to restore confidence and correct errors very much, because the continuation of such a situation is in no one's interest. Despite its vastness, the world has become growingly interdependent as a result of communications and the evolution of contemporary life. Therefore, cooperation has become necessary, and so has the need to correct mistakes when they occur.

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SAUDI ARABIA

BRIEFS

SAUDIS BUILD HUGE PIPELINE--RIYADH--Mobil Oil is not saying what fee it will charge for supervising the operation of the oil pipeline which will stretch across Saudi Arabia from the oil fields in the Eastern Province to Yanbu' on the Red Sea in the Western region--a distance of 750 miles. The cost of building the pipeline is set at \$1,600, but that outlay is justified by the fact that the pipeline will be the largest in the world. It will have an initial capacity of 1.8 million barrels per day which can be increased to 3.7 million barrels per day when the pipeline is expanded. As is the case in Iraq's strategic pipeline project, the Saudi pipeline aims at diversifying Saudi Arabia's export terminals, so that oil shipments for export are not restricted to the Eastern region. Work on the project had begun in 1977, and arrangements are being made to make the pipeline operational in the first half of 1981. According to its agreement with PETROMIN, Mobil Oil will supply a team of 200 experts to oversee the operation of the pipeline. AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI has learned that arrangements are already being made to double the capacity of the pipeline as of the second half of 1982. This would turn the new port of Yanbu' a major oil terminal in the region. [Text] [Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 15-21 Feb 80 p 48] 9254

HIJAZ RAILWAY PROJECT REVIVED--Plans to reactivate the Hijaz railway (Damascus to Al-Madinah) have entered a new phase when the German (Dorche) consulting firm (Munich) won a \$4.7 million contract to conduct a feasibility study on the rebuilding and operation of the line. The German company's study will focus on the best ways to exploit this narrow gauge line, either by maintaining it as is, repairing the damaged sections and building a parallel line in the same specifications or by building an altogether new line with standard specifications, so that it may be linked up with European railway systems via Syria and Turkey. The Hijaz railway line, which was built toward the end of the last century, was severely damaged during the battles which raged when the forces of the Arabian revolution marched from Hijaz to Syria across east Jordan, parallel to the British forces which marched from Egypt to Syria via Palestine. The famous British spy Lawrence played a major part in blowing up sections of the line when he accompanied the advancing Arab forces. [Text] [Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 15-21 Feb 80 p 48] 9254

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SYRIA

BRIEFS

SOVIETS REFUSE 'COVER' REQUEST--Syrian Chief of State Assad has asked Leonid Brezhnev to have the Soviet air force "cover" Syria in the event of conflict with Israel. Brezhnev refused. "We will send you aircraft," replied the Soviets, "perhaps even some pilots to fly Syrian airplanes, but there is no way we are going to send in the Soviet air force." A confrontation between MiG aircraft flying the Red Star and Israeli air force planes would be a casus belli and lead to war between the Superpowers. [Text] [Paris L'EXPRESS in French 29 Mar 80 p 108 WA]

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