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7 November 1980

Near East/North Africa Report

(FOUO 40/80)

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NEAR EAST/NORTH AFRICA REPORT

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TUNISIA

RESTRICTIONS ON GROWTH OF FREE PRESS REPORTED

Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 24 Sep 80 pp 46, 47

[Article by Souhayr Belhassen and Abdelazia Barouhi]

[Text] Although there are important differences, the national press from all sides have accorded a favorable prejudice to Prime Minister Mohamed Mzali for 5 months. There is little difference between LA PRESSE, a pro-government daily, and the independent ESSABAH group (Arab language daily). Headlines, articles and editorials applaud the action of the government: liberation of political prisoners, elimination of some dubious party leaders. "It is no longer necessary to follow Mr Mzali's rhythm of liberalization," stated the enraptured ESSABAH.

"Mzali forges ahead," a headline in the 10 August issue of LE PHARE, the 8-month-old independent French language weekly. Somewhat regional and cultural at first, LE PHARE is also forging ahead, and remarkably, is supporting the "legitimate" UGTT.

On the occasion of Aid (the end of Ramadan, 12 August), one of its journalists, who paid a visit to Mr Habib Achour in his closely guarded residence, reports the words of the ex-secretary general of the UGTT (Tunisian General Federation of Labor) in an article entitled "A Morning with Habib Achour" (24 August issue).

Doling Out

The latter was addressing the members of his executive board and of the loyal unions. While recognizing the present improved political atmosphere, he recommended that they: "Hold on." These are words which could have been interpreted as a challenge to the authorities at a time when difficult negotiations are straining to "normalize" the life of the affiliated trade unions. This issue will not be put on sale, and LE PHARE has been suspended for 3 months by a court order.

Officially, it is not the 24 August issue that is under indictment, but the previous number (on sale for a week, since there was no preliminary censorship), for publication of false news. Specifically, which was actually erroneous, news of the reception of the secretary general of OATUU (Organization of African Trade Union Unity) by President Bourguiba.

"This action must not be interpreted as putting the brakes on openness," an official source assured us. It is to avoid giving weapons to defenders of

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orthodox opinion within the PSD [Destourian Socialist Party]. These party members would have exploited the article on Achour to demonstrate the "dangers" of democracy.

It should also be noted that an issue of the satirical newspaper KOL CHAI BIL MAKCHOUF, published quite openly by the party, was also seized for "defamatory attacks." In all, one blow to the left, one blow to the right. Mohamed Mzali is categorical: "Freedom of the press must not be used against openness. Everyone must understand his rights and his duties."

While profiting from the critical support of the PHARE, TUNIS HEBDO (independent) and the liberal opposition newspapers ERRAI (OPINION) and DEMOCRACY, the Mzali government has paradoxically had more trouble from the party newspapers (EL AMAL, L'ACTION, DIALOGUE and LA PRESSE). Still in the hands of loyal followers of the ex-director of the PSD, Mr Mohamed Sayah, they only dole out certain news items. At the end of August, the management was turned over to young Destourian technocrats without any political past.

As for the other political currents, since his nomination, Mr Mzali has proclaimed too loudly that the opposition press is well-situated, since the birth of new headlines cannot be prevented. Already, Mr Ahmed Mestiri, leader of one wing of the Movement of socialist democrats, has obtained authorization, during the month of July, to publish two periodicals, L'AVENIR and AL MOSTAKBAL--although it is still not known when they will appear.

As for the organ of the PCT [Tunisian Communist Party], it seems that it will not finally be authorized. It is said, "The communists should be the last to claim the right to freedom of speech when it is known that they have it when they are in power."

As for the Popular Unity Movement (MUP of former minister Ahmed Ben Salah), on the other hand, the request presented in July 1978 by Mrs Brahim Hayder, wife of one of the leaders of the movement, is reviving a debate within the PSD. The "pros" stress that freedom of speech cannot be exclusive, and that there is nothing to be feared from her newspaper, JNITY. The "cons" bring up the past "antidemocratic" policy of the former minister.

The Doctrine

We tend to believe that the response will finally be positive. It is not out of the question that this is related to the issue of political contacts which would develop between the friends of Ben Salah and the regime (J.A. No. 1025).

And the "integrationist" movement? It is said that it is taken for granted that its newspapers will reappear. "A contingency," it is said. The authorization would be on condition of the ending of the alignment of this group with Khomeyni's ideas. An alignment that caused the suspension of AL MOJTAMAA (the Society) in January 1980, although 1 month earlier the integrationists had requested authorization to publish under a new title. The Ba'athists, who may also have intended to establish newspapers, apparently had no opportunity to do so.

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The doctrine that is emerging is one of authorizing only newspapers that give proof of independence, and those whose national characteristics are established. In this case, it is said, no matter what ideas are concerned, authorization comes "automatically." This is the official line of "progressive" establishment of "the democracy of speech," while awaiting "the democracy of organizations."

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TUNISIA

PROBLEMS OF MIGRANT WORKERS DISCUSSED

Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 26 Sep 80 pp 2339, 2340

[Text] The 14th seminar of Tunisian workers abroad, which was held in Tunis in August and was opened by Prime Minister Mohammed Mzali, has assumed special significance. On the one hand, general economic conditions make it desirable that emigrants receive technical training and eventually return to Tunisia to invest their savings. On the other hand, the open door policy inaugurated in Tunisia requires strict loyalty on the part of the emigrants who, more than other groups, are subject to being diverted by the action of opposing Tunisian groups which have been established abroad, particularly in France.

The migrant workers generally complain of the strictness exhibited by Tunisian customs that would interfere with importing of equipment that they intended to employ in Tunisia and of a lack of understanding by the government with regard to the plans that they intend to implement after returning to their country.

Therefore, the seminar recommends, in addition to improvement of the services dealing with repatriation of the workers, streamlining of government red tape and effective technical assistance for the purpose of implementing their plans for establishment of regional or local enterprises as well as consideration of the establishment of a national bank charged with promotion of their investments.

Prime Minister Mohammed Mzali assured the participants of the seminar that he would do everything in his power to eliminate any difficulties arising from red tape, which he said is "a word that simply does not exist in the Arabic language." He announced that the initiative taken by Monzi Kooli, leader of the party, led to creation of the economic and social service of the Destourian Socialist Party which will assist interested parties in taking the necessary administrative steps. Furthermore, Hedi Mabrouk, Tunisian ambassador to France, volunteered to establish a "cell" in each consulate which would help each repatriated emigrant with the formalities required to create a new enterprise.

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At the same time, Mr Mzali informed the emigrants of efforts that will be made to achieve a large-scale economic boom which will benefit all Tunisians and which will "eliminate the causes of emigration." This involves solving the unemployment crisis since, as he said, "this is a problem that stares us in the face, although some people are reluctant to speak about it." Consequently, it will be necessary to create 600,000 jobs during the next 5 or 6 years in accordance with the Sixth Plan. The solution will consist of establishing large agricultural and industrial enterprises "in continental Tunisia between Jendouba and Medenine" which are regions that do not benefit from "the same rate of growth as the coast."

Meanwhile, in accordance with the resolutions of the seminar, the fate of the migrant workers should be improved in the countries where they are employed and where the problem exists. However, this is not the case in France which contains 210,000 Tunisian emigrants, more than half of whom are qualified workers (of a total of 350,000 emigrants) and very few complaints have been made by them. Nevertheless, it is an urgent matter to conclude an agreement with the East German Government and to provide social security benefits and equal rights for Tunisian workers.

The participants of the seminar expressed "their deep satisfaction with regard to the new political climate which tends to solidify national unity." However, one of the most important recommendations generated by the seminar deals with "the need to strengthen the power of the Destourian Socialist Party for the purpose of informing as many as possible of the migrant workers and, for greater effectiveness, to coordinate the actions of the administrative organizations of the national government with those of the services of the party abroad."

While praising the patriotic spirit of the Tunisian emigrants, their attachment to their country and the active role that they play in defense of its interests, Mr Mzali denounced the dangers that they run "due to certain organizations and governments" which subject them to blackmail and attempt to align them against their country by making them believe "that the policy employed is not the proper one and that the choices offered are not satisfactory" and by endeavoring to transform them "into subversive agents ready to overthrow the government."

The name of no country or organization was cited. However, certain allusions, particularly to actions taken against "all Africans", suggest that the most likely nation is Libya, which is known to be involved in the Gafsa affair, and which shelters approximately 80,000 Tunisian migrant workers. Nevertheless, the approaches taken by small cells which tend to convert the worker into "a revolutionary, a left or a right extremist" indicates that the subversive propaganda conducted by the western nations is also being considered.

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At the present time, the communist infiltration does not seem to inspire the most terror. Clandestine units of the Tunisian communist party in the home country itself on 25 August distributed copies of a leaflet stating that, under present circumstances, they believed it was indeed possible "to arrive at a national compromise provided that substantial political changes were made," that is, that a general amnesty, guarantees of freedom of speech and the proper modification of trade union and student representation should be provided. The question of amnesty is indeed of primary importance since the approval of this measure would permit reelection of members of the former governing staff of the Tunisian General Federation of Labor, which was recently pardoned but, because of this, did not regain their civil rights that would only be returned by means of an amnesty.

On the other hand, relations between the Destourian Socialist Party and the French Socialist Party have not been restored in spite of the excellent reception accorded Alain Savary due to the services rendered by him to the cause of Tunisian independence. Following the events that took place in January 1978, relations between these two parties had become strained and the Socialist Party had drawn close to the opposition Tunisian organizations in France and in particular to the Popular Unity Movement headed by Ahmed Ben Salah.

Following a secret "national conference" held in Tunisia in July, the Popular Unity Movement refused to consider its participation in "spotty or partial political solutions" unless there was a "basic and real change" and, in particular, general amnesty and respect for civil liberties. The decision of the Popular Unity Movement, which is appreciably harder than the position of the Tunisian Communist Party, makes the former the most determined opponent of the policy of gradual overtures now being firm the importance of the Popular Unity Movement in France, it is obvious that contamination of the migrant workers by its propaganda is worrying Mr Mzali. The strengthening of overtures of the Destourian Socialist Party in France is aimed at combatting such actions.

"The strangest part of it", said Mr Mzali to the members of the seminar of the migrant workers "is that some parties and groups try to make contact with you. Wouldn't it be better for them to operate in their own backyard? Whether they come from the West or the East, what right do they have to give us lessons in advanced social doctrine?... It is unreasonable that the last word should go to the one who speaks loudly and who bangs his fist on the table..."

Mr Mzali, who was interviewed by France-Inter during the seminar, stated that the situation of the migrant workers in France is one of the matters to be dealt with by him jointly with the French prime minister and said "The most important item on the agenda is the future of cooperation."

"We must", continued Mr Mzali, "reorganize the cooperation effort, advance to a higher level and consider not only the problem of commercial exchange or the problem of technical assistance. We must go further than this. It is necessary that the Tunisians and the French be able to make joint investments, to take joint economic risks, to promote the trilogy together,

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to employ Arab capital and to create the wealth that will benefit the French as well as the Tunisians and the Arabs since cooperation means reciprocity.... Large Franco-Tunisian plants can be constructed for exporting and the French will find certain advantages in this arrangement."

We can see that it is a question of employing more Tunisian labor efficiently in Tunisia. It is not necessary for the Tunisian worker to emigrate. Everything depends on the flexibility and logic of the political thinking of Mr Mzali and the Destourian Socialist Party.

In fact, even during this vacation period, the effort of the party is directed to other social and economic facets. It is a question of satisfying the needs of the citizens in all aspects and in various activities. It was in this vein that Mongi Kooli, head of the party addressed the new members of the National Office of Destourian Students. "The important thing" said he "is to impart new life to the student movement in order to rally to the party the greatest number of competent students." The leader stated Mr Kooli "should first of all be devoted to success in his studies which will earn him more respect and influence. He must also possess the gift of persuasion and must conduct himself in an exemplary fashion." An office has been created under the direction of the Party for the purpose of teaching and guiding the students.

At the same time, Abdeselem Dinassi, secretary general of the Tunisian Union of Youth Organizations told the press that the time has come for the students "to organize themselves freely and democratically in one or more organizations of their choice.... There is no longer any place for careerists, unscrupulous individuals and opportunists.... Our major objective is to endow all of the youth organizations with a functional, democratic and representative function."

During the same day, Mongi Kooli chaired a meeting of the Destourian cell of shopkeepers and craftsmen of the Tunis native markets whose problems, according to him, concern the government a great deal. He recalled the role played by the markets in the struggle for freedom, for the spread of civilization and for maintenance of the Tunisian personality. In regard to this subject, he said "What I recommend to you above all is to never allow a single handicraft industry to die out." He concluded by insisting on the values of morality and integrity as well as the complementary nature of the interests of the producer and the consumer. It should be pointed out that the native marketplace is an important employer of labor. Its prosperity will contribute to the elimination of emigration. Thus is demonstrated and coherence of the socioeconomic policy of the Tunisian Government.

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WESTERN SAHARA

MOROCCO SAID TO CONTROL MORE TERRAIN, POLISARIO TO CONTROL PROPAGANDA

Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 24 Sep 80 pp 30-34

[Article by Abdelaziz Dahmani: "The Turning Point"]

[Text] The wind has changed in the Sahara, and over the past few months it is blowing more and more to Morocco's advantage in the long war that sets it against the POLISARIO. On the eve of the fifth anniversary of this murderous confrontation I am almost inclined to write that Morocco is in a fair way to win its war, for very substantial reasons and with a number of indications in evidence.

Counterstroke

While crossing through the parts of the Sahara reputed to be the most dangerous, the most "rotted-out," at the end of August and the beginning of September 1980, I noted that the climate of this war has markedly changed in the last few months.

First it is in order to correct some false pictures. The Sahara war is absolutely not "the war of the sands." More properly, it is the war of the mountainsides, of the bald peaks, hollowed out by the sun, the cliffs of the Hamada, the beds of the dried-out wadis, the rubble, the caches and the rare water-holes. The sand is there sometimes, for the sake of nostalgia and poetry. It is a marginal factor in this war of position which picks up activity more often than not in the disputing of the most mountainous regions, such as Ouarkziz or the manifold irregularities of terrain in the Saquiet El Hamra. Further south the Guelta Zemoun is already more firmly in Moroccan hands. Control of these regions determines the security of a great many towns, hamlets and garrisons. And Morocco is gaining more territory every day.

It was precisely into the foothills of Saquiet El Hamra that I asked to go, incidentally expecting a polite refusal. But General Ahmed Dlimi and his aides, such as Colonel Abdelaziz Benani, chief of staff at Southern Front Headquarters, gave me the run of the area and supplied all necessary means for getting there. I counted no less than 29 landings by helicopter, Bell and Puma, and several trips by Land Rover, that new camel of the desert.

Last March and April, however, it was the triumphant communiqués of the POLISARIO that then seemed to be in control of the major part of Ouarkziz, right in the midst of "uncontested Morocco," and the foothills of the Saquiet. The Ouarkziz mountain chain along the Algerian-Moroccan frontier, then the south flank of Wadi Draa,

almost to the Atlantic coast. This is the axis that enabled the POLISARIO to carry the war all the way into Moroccan territory, from Akka to Tan-Tan, over an arc of several hundred kilometers. It was enough to control these mountainsides and the unavoidable passes, to know the terrain well, to have secure caches and a few accomplices to strike swiftly and disappear.

Thus, during the first three years of the war the Moroccan Army had to endure the blows of the POLISARIO. Masquerading under the guise of strategy was a static policy, content with mere defense of the towns, mines and highway axes, abandoning the desert zones. It was dangerous, as the Sahaoui guerrillas could organize as they pleased and had the initiative the whole time. The result: military defeats and the lowest possible morale.

The riposte began in October 1979 with mobilization of the Ohoud group, followed by the Zellaka and Larak units. Their objective was to rake the Sahara, progressively push back the POLISARIO, regain control of Guelta Zemmoun and Ouarkziz. Up to mid-April 1980 the POLISARIO score. Since then the change in strategy has borne fruit, and for the Sahaoui, it is the turn of the tide.

Great Discretion

This change is also to be explained by the new state of morale in the Moroccan Army, which appears to have gotten over its complexes and traumatisms of the past. The officers are full of confidence, starting with General Dlimi who has directed the totality of operations since last April and May. A tall man with a lean face, eyes very mobile and wrinkled brow, white at the temples, the commander of the Army of the Southern Front, age 48, is an officer with "command presence," which does not exclude a certain timidity and a discreet sense of humor.

Enjoying the confidence of King Hassan II, he is chiefly known for his great discretion and his capacity for adapting to every kind of terrain and condition of life. Thanks to a good supply system and an excellent communications network it was possible to see him that very day--in the Sahara, with binoculars and a General Staff map in hand, then later in the royal palaces of Rabat or Fez in his capacity of Chief ... of ADC's to His Majesty. This particular hat he wears enables General Dlimi to function as one of the closest collaborators of Hassan II. He is also one of the few Moroccan officials, together with Ahmed Reda Guedira, who is familiar with the fundamentals of the Sahara affair, in all its facets. A bit of this stems from his origins--the Dlimi tribe--a lot from a profound knowledge of the terrain acquired since age 5, without mentioning several diplomatic missions conducted discreetly, including certain "secret" meetings with Algerian and POLISARIO emissaries at Bamako, Geneva and elsewhere.

But let us get back to Ouarkziz, only recently a hangout for Moroccans, where I have just spent several days which turned into a ... tourist promenade. There, for the mere asking, the helicopter took me taxi-fashion, together with the region commander, Colonel Boujendar, to Assa (attacked by the POLISARIO on 4 June 1979), to Fom El Hassen (attacked and occupied 14 July 1979), to Akka (attacked and partially occupied 25 January, then 29 June 1980). Each of these towns (each with some thousands of Berber or Arab inhabitants) are about 50 kilometers distant from the theoretical Algerian-Moroccan frontier, below the Bani chain and next to the Draa valley, while to the east El Ouarkziz raises its dark and ominous bulk.

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A Regular Billiard-Table

I flew over this mountain chain at several different points, with some anxiety on take-off. But the serenity of my two pilots who fly the routes without maps, and the friendly company of Colonel Boujendar quickly allayed my fears. From Assa we even plunged just above ground-level toward the Algerian frontier and flew over the Braber Pass, where we saw a traffic-jam of trucks! Those in one direction, fully loaded, were bringing supplies to Zag; the others, empty, were on the way back to Foulimine. It was suggested that I land there, if I wished, and go along with some of the convoy as far as Zag, on the other side of Ouarkziz. I preferred to drop down half-way along, at Tisgui-Remz, on the eastern slope of Ouarkziz, where the POLISARIO often took journalists. Below begins the enormous plain of Hamada, a regular billiard-table, which leads to the environs of Tindouf...

Tisgui-Remz today hardly gives the impression of a threatened garrison. Despite temperatures of 46° C in the shade, I ate fine fresh grapes brought in from the north... At Assa, Fom El Hassen, Akka, I was particularly astonished by the casual bearing of the military, for whom "all thought of danger is from now on out of the question." And as it was just about everywhere I went, the preoccupation of the moment at this time, beginning of September, was being separated from one's family. Particularly the circumstances that children were soon to go back to school, those from the north, to various parts of the country.

At Assa I found a small town cut in two by a palm plantation. The old town of Ksar El Haratines has a mainly black population. Lots of new buildings and even some TV antennas, even though there is no electric power in the town yet. Water, on the other hand, is abundant there, breaking out of the ground in many places. Unable to find any signs of anxiety, I set about finding a Berber necklace in the local souks. This piece of jewelry alone brought back old memories. Here the Ali-Youssa (the local population) were from time immemorial sworn enemies of the Reguibets a living burden in Algeria and present skeleton-framework of the POLISARIO. [Typo in text, last sentence a guess, Tr.]

For centuries the Reguibets attacked the villages of Bani (and vice-versa) to raid the livestock and bring back from the other side of the Hamada of Tindouf ... the jewelry of the Berber women as trophies for their own wives.

Without Escort

I encountered the same situation at Fom El Hassen and at Akka, inhabited by the Ait Mribet (Berbers) and the Ouled Jellai (Arabs). Akka nestles on a hillside and the palm plantation is bigger than anywhere else.

At Akka, in the early afternoon of this 2d of September, I left Colonel Boujendar to settle some military matters and did a tour of the town, then of the palm plantation, some 17 kilometers, in a little 4 hp Renault accompanied by the Caid (a young administrative official of the region). No escort of any kind. Even when visiting the adjoining villages of Tagadirt. Ait Antar, Douar El Kasba, Agadir-Ouzrou. The quest for a Berber necklace became a pretext for many discussions and stops for tea. Behind humble facades they sometimes serve you tea in glasses manufactured over a century ago in the famous French crystal-works of Saint-Louis. In the late afternoon--with the temperature more clement--we found

ourselves under the pomegranate-trees of the Caïd's house, and he pressed hard for us to spend the night there. The colonel's appointment-book gets us off the hook! We take our leave with regrets. We learn later on that on the following day, 3 September at dawn, the POLISARIO attempted to approach Akka (and Tata) and that it was halted by one of the Ouarkiz patrols some 20 kilometers from its objective.

Prestigious Officers

This did not surprise me. The day before this attack I overflew several elements of the Moroccan Army well deployed on various hills and plateaus with impressive matériel: armored vehicles, heavy machine-guns, tractor-drawn artillery camouflaged behind stone walls. Moreover, the inhabitants of Assa, Fom El Hassen, Akka and other villages recently received arms at their request so they might participate in the defense of their families, property, livestock...

At this time in the beginning of September Ouarkiz, even though bordering on Algeria and despite the attacks of 3 September on Tata and Akka, is no longer the first concern of the Moroccan Army. Tata and Akka were harried from a distance, thanks to the exceptional range of the "Stalin-organs" and above all, it would seem, to impress the members of the Committee of Wise Men of the OAU who were supposed to hold a meeting a few days later at Freetown.

The thrust of the current war effort aims to control the region crossed by the path from Tan-Tan to Smara, especially the obligatory passes of the Abatteh region at the half-way mark, from Tan-Tan to the holy city of Smara. Several times in the past few weeks the POLISARIO announced that it had attacked and even occupied Abatteh. I went there three times at the end of August, and on the afternoon of Saturday the 30th, taken there in Colonel-Major Abrouk's Bell helicopter, I witnessed an award of decorations by General Ahmed Dlimi in the name of King Hassan II. Some twenty officers, noncommissioned and enlisted men of other ranks received war-palms for high feats of arms... Among them a bearded captain named Khomeyni. As it happened, several days before, a POLISARIO column, under siege and starving, was driven to the imprudent move of attacking almost right out in the open a food supply convoy... The result was 80 vehicles destroyed and several key positions lost on the hillsides of Saquiet El Hamra.

At that point a vast clean-up operation began, and immediately Morocco regained several hills, making the opening of the Tan-Tan - Smara path by control of the obligatory passages to be expected soon... This region south of Abatteh was where I saw, even more than on El Ouarkiz, the greatest concentration of military equipment and the most prestigious officers.

On this peak, unnamed on any map, even a Headquarters military map, an entire ballet-troupe of helicopters simultaneously landed General Dlimi, Colonel-Major Abrouk (chief of the Zellaka Group), the colonels Benani and Ben Othman (chief of the Larak Group) as well as a large number of their staffs. The vacillating morale of last year is no longer in evidence, all the more so as the opposition is no longer fighting with the same faith or the same conviction.

Warriors from Elsewhere

Something fundamental about this war began to change in May, and as these officers see it, the end of the war seems closer. Nor is there any question in their minds

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any more of letting go the slightest bit of "their" Sahara, now that they see with ever increasing certainty the profile of military victory behind the next row of hills. Peace? "That's the business of the political people," one of them told me.

Curiously enough, it is in the most recent "triumphalist" communiqués of the POLISARIO that certain officers are today assessing their own measure of success. At the time of the Battle of the Rgueibyne on 21 August, in the Abatteh region, the POLISARIO announced that 582 troops of the Royal Armed Forces had been "put out of action." As interpreted by Colonel-Major Abrouk, who knows what really happened that day, "The POLISARIO must have reported to their own headquarters in Tindouf three times the number of their own dead in order to camouflage their defeat with an illusory and mendacious victory."

In this battle the POLISARIO may well have lost the chief of this region. At the bottom of a gully was found a service tunic with a clean collar, spotted with blood and riddled with bullet-holes, with the white scarf of a major commander, but no body. The measurements tally with those of the famous Algerian-Sahraoui major commander Ayoub, who for the past 5 years has always given a formidable account of himself to any who opposed him. Neither has there been any official confirmation of this casualty. The corpse--if there ever was a corpse--or the gravely wounded man, was removed. The fact that the POLISARIO in the last few months has been leaving more dead bodies than usual behind on the battlefield is because they are recruits who come from further and further away (from Mauritania or Mali) and because the guerrillas no longer feel the compunction to remove them to send them back to their families, as they do for the authentic Sahraoui.

Ambushes

How many are there left of these Sahraoui guerrillas, who came from what was the Western Sahara? According to very reliable sources, and after interrogation of some deserters and prisoners, there could not be much more than a thousand, many of whom are tired, ill and suffering backaches from the tens of thousands of kilometers of riding a Land Rover.

This situation paradoxically brought about a net change in familiarity with the terrain. The original members of the authentic POLISARIO are fewer and fewer, while over 5 years the Moroccans, of whom there are more anyway, have made themselves totally familiar with the desert and its traps and ambush-points. It is, however, still necessary to use guides, Sahraoui who have chosen to come over to the Moroccan camp.

Unless Algeria ...

From the week I spent in the hottest spots of the Sahara I drew the conclusion that Morocco is effecting a lot of cleanup operations silently, thanks to an air force that is becoming increasingly operational. Several of these victorious strikes have never been mentioned. Contrarily, the POLISARIO is putting out a lot of psychological activity which reverberates the next day all over Africa and the world. Today's reality is that Morocco controls more ground, and the POLISARIO controls the propaganda.

- At the beginning of September an influential POLISARIO leader clandestinely based at Nouadhibou in the north of Mauritania chose of his own free will to abandon the struggle and disappear in the direction of Dakar. He passed the following terrible confidential remark: "In the field, Morocco, silently, is in the process of getting rid of the POLISARIO, one man after the other. And there aren't very many of us left." Unless Algeria, Libya...

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BRIEFS

POLISARIO GETS SOVIET WEAPONS--French officials are concerned about deliveries of sophisticated missiles to the POLISARIO. This Soviet-manufactured equipment is supplied by Libya which is involving itself more and more on the Sahraoui side. While Algeria appears to be keeping itself apart. [Text] [Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 17 Sep 80 p 50] 2750

MAURITANIAN PRISONERS OF POLISARIO--Two hundred seventy-eight Mauritians are said to be still prisoners of the POLISARIO. This is the total of confidential tabulations made by Headquarters at Nouakchott following the recent liberation of 125 military and civilian personnel. [Text] [Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 17 Sep 80 p 50] 2750

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