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8 December 1980

Near East/North Africa Report

(FOUO 43/80)

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INTER-ARAB AFFAIRS

S'HABOU EXAMINES PROSPECTS FOR INTEGRATED MAHGREB

Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 8 Oct 80 pp 28-30

Article by Omar S'habou

[Text] During an official visit to Algiers, the Tunisian Prime Minister Mohamed Mzali stated, on 7 September, his country's will to build "a common future" with its Maghreb neighbors. For his part, the Algerian President, Chadli Bendjedid, while reaffirming his support of the Polisario, mentioned a few days later the "Moroccan brother people". Unity, the ritual incantation, in a divided Maghreb? An ancient idea in any case, once indestructible, still topical.

"The Maghreb project." It is not an abstract or empty expression. Twenty-two years ago, in April 1958, in Tangiers, the leaders of the principal political parties of the three countries (the Moroccan Istiqlal, the Tunisian Neo-Destour, the Algerian FLN [National Liberation Front]) decided solemnly to create an "advisory Assembly from the local national Assemblies of Tunisia and Morocco and from the Algerian National Revolutionary Council" and to confer to this assembly "the competence to study the questions of common interests and to formulate recommendations to the local executive organs."

So the Maghreb was truly a project. All the more credible since it was continuing a process begun at the beginning of the century by North-African students living in France. By becoming aware both of belonging to the same geocultural area and of their opposition to the same adversary--colonialism--these young people were led to combine their thoughts and their efforts. The charter of their association, the first Maghreb institution in contemporary history (the Association of North-African Moslem students 1927) today leaves us dreaming. It proclaims that North Africa is one and indivisible; that it is a nation whose language, culture and customs should allow the creation of a united front to ensure its defense.

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As passionate as these professions of faith were, they were not without consequence: since the liberation movements of the three countries, even if they developed separately under the standard of their respective nation, were at the origin of events which concerned the entire Maghreb.

On 20 November 1937, the Tunisian Neo-Destour organizes a general strike to protest against the measures of repression taken by the colonial authorities in Morocco and in Algeria.

In 1947, the leaders of the three principal nationalist parties of the three countries meet again in exile in Cairo and create the Committee for the Liberation of Arab Maghreb. Emir Abdelkrim, the belated Moroccan counterpart of Emir Abdelkader, is its honorary president, Habib Bourguiba, the secretary general and, among the other leaders, appear such prestigious dignitaries as Mohamed Khider (FLN) and especially Allal el-Fassi (Istiqlal).

In 1952, bloody demonstrations take place in Casablanca, right after the assassination, on 5 December, of the Tunisian union leader, Ferhat Hached.

A New Dimension

The idea of a Maghreb was thus able, in half a century, to take on a content and a form which it had never known. The historian Mohamed Cherif demonstrates¹ that the Maghreb, aside from the attempt at unification by the Almohades² in the 12th century, was never mobilized around an ideal of unity by the "States which administered it over the centuries." The fact is that, when independence was achieved in their country, the intellectuals and the leaders of the Maghreb political movements no longer thought solely in terms of narrow nationalism, but took into account the Maghreb dimension. The proof is that the three newly independent States soon inscribed in the preamble of their respective Constitutions the construction of the Maghreb as an historical objective and duty.

Contradictions

The translation into fact of the burgeoning Maghreb feeling, which the pre-independence demonstrations of solidarity let us glimpse, has not been easy. From complementary, the nationalistic motivation and the Maghreb intention have come to be, in practice, in conflict. The Tangiers conference for the unification of the Maghreb did recognize that the federal form was the most appropriate one. It did recommend, consequently, the

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establishment, during a period of transition, of "an advisory Assembly and of an executive secretariat which would be charged with coordinating the efforts aimed at the constitution of this federation."

Now, not only did nothing ensue, but the three countries have been regularly opposed in conflicts over sovereignty and doctrine. Algeria and Morocco went to war in 1963 because of a border dispute. Morocco and Tunisia had ups and downs in their relations, which were even interrupted after Tunisia's recognition of Mauritania in 1961. Algeria and Tunisia have lived until the beginning of the Seventies and because of a border line, in a state of tension which has been more than verbal.

As for the doctrines of development adopted by the three States, they could not favor, they were so divergent, a convergence toward the Maghreb objective; for the Tunisian Neo-Destour, of one excepts the Ben Salah episode, private property is not an evil, provided that it fulfills a social function and socialism must tend to respond to the capital-intelligence-work parameter.

On the other hand, the Algerian charter considers private property as the principal cause of all the evils of society and it advocates its disappearance. While Moroccan "monarchistic socialism" can be analyzed practically as "live and let live." It could, in any case, not be recognized in this statement by Ben Bella, the first president of the Algerian Republic: "Socialism is a broad fan which ranges from the socialism of Fulbert Youlou to that of Fidel Castro. We have chosen Fidel!"

Conflicts over sovereignty and doctrinal divergences could thus only nullify the declarations of intention and the numerous decisions made in common by the Maghreb conferences of the ministers of Foreign Affairs and of the ministers of the Economy.

In 1964, the latter did decide the creation of the advisory Committee of the Maghreb (CGM). This important organization was charged, in 1967, with preparing a project for the economic integration of the Maghreb which was to be preceded by a period of interim harmonization of 5 years. Recognized as a masterpiece of its type by the UN experts, this project was ready in 1970. Not only was it not adopted, but the principal recommendations, sound and logical ones, which it contained, have been up to now contradicted.

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Neither the harmonization of the protectionist measures toward the third party countries, nor the increase in inter-Maghreb trade in agricultural products, nor the creation of a multi-lateral mechanism for payment to encourage regional trade, nor the compiling of a list of industries which no country could set up on its own territory without previous consultation of its partners, have been carried out.

Better still: the three countries began at the same time to create their own steel, textile, mechanical, fertilizer, etc, industries. From complementary, the economic apparatus of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia have become anarchically competitive. And, in 18 years of economic independence, the Maghreb project has not advanced, in fact, by one iota. On the contrary.

Visions of Hegemony

The responsibility is incumbent upon everybody and nobody. One perceives this when attempting to untangle the web of arguments and counterarguments on all sides.

Before 1970, Algeria adhered fully to the "Maghreb of the States." It actively participated in all the conferences of the economic ministers. It collaborated in the preparation of the project of economic integration of 1970. But, without explanation, it refused to adopt it. Along parallel lines, it embarked on the construction of a heavy industry which visibly surpasses the dimensions of its market and which turns its back on the logic of Maghreb integration.

In 1974, the cause of the Sahraoui, which did not exist previously, was openly sponsored by Algiers. Boumedienne explained: "We want first of all to create an Algeria which is economically and culturally healthy and independent. Some day even, the peoples of the Maghreb will see for themselves that they form one nation without anyone having to announce a fusion which was decided from above."

Moreover, there are many who, taking into consideration these facts, suspect Algeria of having dreams of hegemony. This accusation is confusedly but broadly spread through the other two countries. It is not rare that one hears it said that Algeria has ambitions to play the role of Prussia in the unification of Germany. "If such is the case", affirms the Moroccan minister, "well, Algiers has picked the wrong time and the wrong neighbors! Prussia is rather the great Morocco!"⁴

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As for the Tunisians, they are circumspect: "We will stick to the facts," they say. "The day Algeria presents the Tunisian market, for instance, with an automobile, if it is cheaper and of better quality than the European or Japanese product, we will buy it. Otherwise, we will decline the offer, politely but firmly. First of all, because our neighbor did not consult us before it constructed its factory, then because those are the rules of the market."

Fair's Fair

The Algerian leaders are not unaware of the charges being brought against them. They explain their country's attitude by the different conception which they have of the building of the Maghreb. For them, recent history having demonstrated that unity is not made by summit agreements, it must be forged at the base by "the solidarity and the common action of the popular masses." They accompany this notion with two restrictive political and ideological conditions. They maintain, first of all, that the unity of the Maghreb could only be accomplished in a "sure and lasting way, with the exclusive participation of the workers, of the peasants and of the patriotic elements." They then affirm that the actual economic integration cannot be accomplished "as long as there subsist in this region notions and socio-economic structures which are founded not for the benefit of the popular masses but in the service of international capitalism."

In short, and by analogy with the current European debate, Algiers contrasts the "Maghreb of the workers" with the "Maghreb of capital". This notion is completely respectable. It is worthy of debate. It could even have had a greater impact on an important part of the Moroccan and Tunisian elite, if certain Algerian political maneuvers had not contradicted this. In May 1972, in Kef⁵, Boumedienne proposed to Bourguiba a complete union of Tunisia and Algeria. The Tunisian chief of state refused with a jest: "Give back our Constantinois, then we will see about the union!"⁶

Worrisome Prospects

Six years later, in August 1978, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, then minister of Foreign Affairs, came to see Bourguiba, convalescing in Paris and argued on behalf of an Arab union of Tunisia, Algeria and Libya. "For the time being, young man", the Tunisian president answered, "it is I who, by sending you every year a few hundred professors, am teaching you to be Arabs, because you are not, yet!"

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These maneuvers unquestionably give the idea of the "Maghreb of the people", which Algeria is advocating, a hollow ring. Can these contradictions prove right those who accuse Algeria of covering "Prussian" ambitions with fallacious ideological arguments?

In any case, Algiers has no monopoly on contradictions. Historians and political experts are always pondering the profound motivations which led President Bourguiba, with no previous consultation, to merge, if only for a day, Tunisia and Libya. And the Moroccans have never understood why, in September 1977, the Tunisians called for the constitution of a Maghreb confederation including Mauritania and Libya, but excluding... Morocco. In any case, constraints from internal policies or geopolitical ones have led the States of the Maghreb to drown the Maghreb project in an ocean of ulterior motives and assumptions.

Can we blame anyone? The responsibility must be shared. The result is, however, that the Maghreb finds itself today, as a Moroccan minister told us, "in a coma". We would have even said that it was already dead, if it were not for the worrisome prospects and ruthless constraints of the future.

The last quarter of the 20th Century is marked by regional regroupings. Nations of the size of France, of the FRG and of Great Britain have already understood that the implacable competition for life implies multinational and multidimensional integration. A firm of the size of Volkswagen or Renault, for instance, can only make a profit, that is, survive, with the contribution from the foreign markets.

On the geopolitical level, the small States are no longer safe from a classic and unpunished invasion such as in the Middle Ages! That is as true for Cambodia or Vietnam as for the three countries of the Maghreb.

Integration is Possible

Now, the objective data on Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia argue for integration, at least economic: predominance in the three countries of the state control sector in the national economy; narrowness of the local markets which constitute a serious obstacle to any effort at development; the same stage of development or rather underdevelopment. Integration would make immediately possible a policy of effective investment, a greater absorption of labor force, the construction of great industrial complexes, the application of scientific methods of economic management, the creation of vast and specialized

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scientific institutions, the rationalization of the process of production and trade, a more efficient mass production system and better outlets. While on the strategic and geopolitical level, a Maghreb army could constitute a not so negligible deterrent.

To Live Together

Before these objective data and these future needs, we are, therefore, in the presence of two ideas and two projects: the "Maghreb of the people" and the "Maghreb of the States". Why not study this debate more in depth, without ulterior motives? By confronting clearly and honestly these two theses, one could reduce to nothing the mistrust, the suspicions, the reciprocal abuse. Especially if this debate were to be accompanied by a few simple but effective common actions such as:

- the rehabilitation of Maghrebization which, after having functioned successfully at the beginning of the Seventies and brought the three public opinions considerably closer, ceased to exist because of Algerian-Moroccan tension;
- the resumption of inter-Maghreb sports competitions, suspended for the same reasons and the constitution of Maghreb sports teams in the great international competitions;
- the introduction of a greater number of hours in the school and university curricula for the history and geography of the Maghreb.

In short, we must learn to live together, which contradicts neither the Maghreb of the people nor that of the States. And the problems which are currently in abeyance, including, and especially, the grave Sahara crisis, would be surpassed by the realization of the Maghreb project.

FOOTNOTES

1. Mohamed Cherif: "Histoire de l'Afrique du Nord," Paris, Pub. CNRS, 1979.
2. Tribes from Mauritania, which established during 60 years a central authority over the whole of North Africa.
3. Prussia had opted for a compelling, even violent maneuver, to unify the independent Germanic States in 1871.
4. The "Great Morocco" covers, in the mind of certain heirs of Allal el-Fassi, the current Moroccan territory, Mauritania and the Moorish territories of Senegal, as far as the river, the "natural frontier".

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5. Chief town of the governorate of Tunisia, very close to the Algerian border.
6. The Constantinois was a part of Hafside Tunisia until the Turkish occupation in the 16th century. It was the Ottomans who rejoined the Constantinois to the Algiers Regency.

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EGYPT

OPPOSITIONIST SEES NEED FOR 'REBELLION' AGAINST SADAT

LD191549 Paris AFRIQUE-ASIE in French 10-23 Nov 80 pp 23-25

[Interview with Egyptian National Progressive Unionist Party leader Khalid Muhyi al-Din by Sobhi Chafik: "Time for the Alternative"--date and place of interview not specified]

[Text] [Question] Egypt is now at a critical point. Its sociopolitical development, brutally called into question a few years ago, is being hindered even further by the facilities which President as-Sadat has granted to the United States. The Pentagon has strengthened its military bases in upper Egypt to guarantee the survival of the Cairo regime and the U.S. military presence in the Middle East. As leader of the National Progressive Unionist Party [NPUP]--the only legal opposition, if not revolutionary, body in Egypt--can you explain your party's present position? In addition do you intend to abide by the broad lines of your program which was drawn up in 1971 or are you contemplating altering the NPUP's strategy?

Khalid Muhyi al-Din: The situation which prevailed when we drew up our program has clearly now changed. Egypt is not only a military base; it forms part of U.S. strategy in the Gulf and in the Middle East. Under the existing regime Egypt constitutes a permanent threat to all Arab countries in the region, however moderate. The peace speech delivered by as-Sadat in November 1977 has now been replaced by a whole series of aggressive actions: taking over the shah's role as Middle East "gendarme"; warning the United States about a possible "Soviet invasion" of the Gulf oil powers; offering military bases and facilities to the Pentagon. In keeping with this policy there will be joint maneuvers by the U.S. and Egyptian air forces and navies throughout November.

As far as domestic policy is concerned, none of the promises made when the Camp David Agreements were signed has been kept. Opening the door to the West has led to inflation, price increases, imports of sophisticated products to satisfy the new rising bourgeoisie. Even the price of bread has trebled in less than 2 years; this is having repercussions on daily life. Indeed, the middle classes and the working classes are now beginning to have some awareness of the consequences of the peace treaty with Israel.

The policy of turning to the West in all spheres has not brought prosperity. As early as 1977 as-Sadat began to include in his speeches a "sprinkling" of references to the miracle which was going to happen in 1980, holding up the lure of "prosperity," lower prices, technology placed at the service of each citizen and a roof for each

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young couple by building thousands and thousands of apartment blocks whose apartments would be distributed with long-term credit. Today the image which the man in the street has of as-Sadat's policy contrasts markedly with the official opinion put out by the media, the leaders of the National Democratic Party, the government party led by as-Sadat himself, and top officials.

All prospects have been well and truly hidden. In Egypt it is daily experience which dictates the people's behavior. It is clear that everybody, including senior army officers, the liberal professions and university professors, is finding it impossible to live a decent life with the present wages.

In addition to that there is stagnation in the economic situation. Aside from the multinational enterprises which belong to three families in power, any notion of development has been ruled out on the pretext that the ideas of a "plan," "industrialization" and "nationalization" belong to an-Nasir's language. In the leaders' eyes an-Nasir's language is impregnated with Marxist language, and that is accused of having hindered the development of the economy.

The immediate consequence of this argument is that the economy has been subjected to conditions imposed by the World Bank which has instructed the regime to end the state subsidy on essential products such as bread, meat, flour, sugar, oil and so forth. The second consequence is that, in order to tackle the economic crisis, the government constantly has to resort to loans. However as the overseas debt rises, interest rates increase. This debt has reached 4,620 Egyptian pounds (\$11,846 million) as against 200 million Egyptian pounds in 1970. The difference is, however, that in an-Nasir's days the money borrowed was invested in basic industrialization, economic and social development and hence in establishing an infrastructure capable of boosting Egypt's productivity while, under as-Sadat borrowing corresponds to the need to construct new presidential residences and, in most cases, Cairo is borrowing to repay loans and interest.

[Question] Breaking with the policy which has emerged from the Camp David Agreements and proclaiming a halt in the negotiations means, as you have just clearly explained, that the problem which must now be solved is that of an "alternative" in both domestic and foreign policy. Is this problem at the center of the current attempts to alter the NPUP's strategy?

Khalid Muhyi al-Din: At present social tension seems to have increased to a level at which it could have political repercussions. The guiding principle behind the NPUP's current policy involves transforming the people's discontent into organized political action; accepting an alliance with existing political forces which denounce the present government; expanding the grass roots and drawing support from the national and progressive forces on the five continents.

[Question] What are the chances of this policy succeeding?

Khalid Muhyi al-Din: Almost all the nationalist movements have joined our ranks. For instance the WAFD--which is now trying to submit a new list of members to the authorities after urging some of its members to prosecute the leaders who, in July 1978, agreed to dissolve the party, protesting against the government's "feigned democracy"--has opened dialogue with us.

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[Question] The WAFD, however, strongly condemned the an-Nasir era. Its present leader Siraj ad-Din, regarded as continuing the work of Sa'd Zaghlul and Mustafa an-Nahaas (note) (Sa'd Zaghlul, founder of the WAFD, the Egyptian Nationalist Party, led strong opposition to the British occupation of the Nile Valley (Egypt and the Sudan). It was Mustafa an-Nahaas who succeeded him and on his death the WAFD, banned under an-Nasir, gave its leadership to Siraj ad-Din. However the neo-WAFD which emerged from the WAFD has moved toward a less ambiguous policy than that which an-Nahaas' successors originally intended it to follow) described the 1952 revolution as a "criminal revolution." In those circumstances how could you form an alliance with the old Nationalist Party?

Khalid Muhyi al-Din: Beware of intentions. What counts is political action. The program adopted by the WAFD and, more particularly, by the neo-WAFD (for the old WAFD is now disappearing, being the representative of classes which no longer exist or which exist as a minority without any real impact) comprises the continuation of the 1952 revolution by carrying its reforms and achievements to their conclusion. It wants competitive coexistence between the public sector and the general [as published] sector; it recognizes the structures of the republic instituted in 1953; it advocates nonalignment and joint Arab action in the foreign policy sphere. What more can you expect?

That is not all, however: we must also reckon with progressive elements in the Islamic groups. While they reject any Westernization of the region they are nonetheless a considerable political force capable of boosting the move toward joint Arab action. In order to make an accurate assessment of the political phenomenon which has emerged over the past few months and the degree to which it is to be found in the various groups, it is important to realize that it is being demonstrated above all by the desire to close ranks and rally the political forces in joint action. I will give you a specific example: during the examination of the law on the "protection of values against immorality" in the People's Assembly in May 1980, the press, the Egyptian lawyers, the Magistrates Association, the Alexandria University Teachers Federation adopted our stance on the promulgation of this emergency legislation which was intended to silence the opposition while reducing the judiciary to one official, the "public prosecutor" appointed by the president himself whose job would consist of stripping all those who oppose the regime's structures of their political and civil rights.

These joint efforts are backed by the action of opposition parties, including the Socialist Labor Party which as-Sadat formed in 1978 with the aim of representing the opposition as the head of state sees it, but which has been forced to support our action by its members' dynamism. In short the formation of an extended national front with the aim of proposing an "alternative" is now an integral part of Egyptian life and society. However do not ask me to give details of its organization. All I can say is that the opposition groups have started to move closer together, specifically by action based on common struggles in order to radically change the situation which has been produced by the open-door policy and the Camp David Agreements.

[Question] Do you not expect as-Sadat to use his usual method and resort to a new referendum and then, backed by the semblance of majority support, again open the prisons to his opponents, while sheltering behind the "rule of law," since the "socialist public prosecutor's" powers are still in force?

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Khalid Muhyi al-Din: In view of rising prices, corruption, the monopoly on essential products, favoritism and economic dependence on U.S. monopolies, our action will find support among the entire population. Tell me which of us citizens will agree, as as-Sadat has suggested, to the U.S. army general staff leading our national army? Do you think that our soldiers who, as soon as the opportunity arose, struggled heroically for a national cause, will be able to sit back while an attempt is made to turn Egypt into another South Vietnam or that the Egyptian army will serve to protect the imperialists against our Arab brothers in the Gulf?

[Question] Although the peace treaty with Israel is considered by Western opinion an initial step toward an all-embracing settlement of the Israeli-Arab conflict, your party and most Arab leaders totally reject the clauses of the Camp David Agreements. How do you think a definitive, radical and just settlement to this conflict can be envisaged?

Khalid Muhyi al-Din: Contrary to a widely-held opinion we are not opposed to a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Arab conflict and we have no objection to the principle of negotiations with Israel. However what happened in March 1979 is entirely different: the signing of a separate peace treaty in which no mention is made of the Palestinian people's right to emancipation under the leadership of the PLO, which is their legitimate representative, suggests that, for the signatories of the Camp David Agreements, the conflict was originally an Israeli-Egyptian conflict. That is not the case; it is clearly the Palestinian question which is the essential point in this conflict. Indeed the Camp David Agreements by avoiding the real causes of discord are only aimed at associating the Egyptian Government's efforts to the efforts Israel has been making since 1948 to maintain 40 percent of the 4 million Palestinians within territories which are in fact occupied but in which a semblance of autonomy could be granted, and this runs completely counter to the UN Charter and the Geneva Convention on military occupation.

Nonetheless I must add a few details on the stance adopted by the NPUP with regard to the conflict and to the developments in the negotiations since December 1977. Without Egypt's alignment with the decisions taken during the Rabat Summit in 1974, and without the PLO's participation, any negotiations with Israel would be likely to accentuate Egypt's isolation.

Aside from the fact that the Camp David Agreements cut Egypt off from joint Arab action, they undermine the country's national interests and sovereignty. In addition they make provision for absolutely unacceptable security measures, as if it were Egypt and not Israel which had attacked its neighbors. That is why we advocate a halt in the negotiations with Israel.

[Question] However the United States continues to refuse to regard the PLO as a valid and legitimate interlocutor. Now, therefore, do you envisage the real solution to the conflict? Do you intend to abandon the stance you defined in the NPUP program which consists of posing acceptance of UN Security Council Resolution 242 as a precondition to any agreement?

Khalid Muhyi al-Din: In my opinion everything depends on the balance of forces in the region...as soon as the joint Arab action is capable of exerting all its influence on the sides concerned other prospects will be opened up. At present

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all the problems hinge on one essential point: defeating the existing Egyptian regime which is the real instigator of this separate peace and bears most responsibility for the "erosion" of the United Arab Front. Unless this is done no strong position will be adopted and the margin for action which the Arab leaders will have will be increasingly narrow. All in all I am optimistic: aside from the as-Sadat regime's economic stagnation there are the successive failures in the negotiations on Palestinian autonomy. In these circumstances there is only one solution: rebellion by the Egyptians against as-Sadat and by the Palestinians in the occupied territories. When that happens the entire Arab nation will respond.

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LIBYA

FRG MAGAZINE INTERVIEWS LIBYA'S QADHDHAFI

DW211104 Hamburg STERN in German 20 Nov 80 pp 64-68

[Interview with Col Mu'ammarr al-Qadhdhafi, Libya chief of state, by reporters Kari-Guenther Barth and Gerhard Krug at Sebha barracks, date not given]

[Text] STERN: Colonel al-Qadhdhafi, you have just painted the devil on the wall for your scholars, namely the Americans. Your greatest enemies have elected a new president. You called the old president "naive and ignorant." Everything going to be even worse now?

Al-Qadhdhafi: I am most content with the elections.

STERN: What do you mean?

Al-Qadhdhafi: Because Carter is gone.

STERN: But Reagan is much harder and more determined to use U.S. power.

Al-Qadhdhafi: If somebody is particularly disgusting, one is first of all happy to have gotten rid of him. After all, it was Carter who brought as-Sadat and Begin together at Camp David.

STERN: But Reagan will not discontinue the agreement. Is he not even more friendly toward Israel than Carter was?

Al-Qadhdhafi: Reagan is more serious than Carter.

STERN: How do you mean that? After all, Reagan has called the PLO, which you very much support, a gang of murderers.

Al-Qadhdhafi: Well, it is his character, his personality that makes the difference between him and Carter. Moreover, the Republicans are closer to us than the Democrats.

STERN: But you hired the brother of a prominent democrat, namely Billy Carter, for several hundred thousand dollars to mediate between Libya and the United States.

Al-Qadhdhafi: We have asked him to pay everything back.

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STERN: How much was it?

Al-Qadhdhafi: I do not know exactly, but he will pay everything back.

Al-Qadhdhafi understands English very well; he also speaks in half sentences at times. He has everything translated into Arabic, thus gaining time. He makes long pauses and almost presses the words out, and the frog all Arabs seem to have somewhere in their throats, seems to be even bigger with him than with others. Whenever he speaks of the Americans it seems that his brown eyes reflect a persecution complex.

"The Americans," he says while polishing the brass handle of his stick with his meaty right hand, "the Americans threaten us, and the threat is growing daily."

STERN: And therefore you are calling your compatriots to arms?

Al-Qadhdhafi: Yes, we are mobilizing, we expect an American invasion any day.

STERN: Where exactly does the danger come from?

Al-Qadhdhafi: From everywhere. The Americans stand at the Egyptian border, and they come from the Mediterranean.

An attack against Libya would be about the last thing the Americans could have in mind in these difficult foreign policy times. But Al-Qadhdhafi states it quite seriously, and it is hard to tell where the plain propaganda ends and where the persecution complex begins. He knows that he is the world villain number one for the Americans, next to Khomeyni.

We asked him whether he had read the bestseller "The Fifth Rider," the novel by Collins and Lapierre. Al-Qadhdhafi, the novel's main character, has an atomic bomb hidden in New York, and threatens to explode it in 36 hours if the United States does not see to it that Israel withdraws from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Al-Qadhdhafi grins, his skin with its large pores inflates over both cheeks and he shows two rows of pearl-white teeth.

"That is a good story," he says.

"Just a story?"

Now the man who once warned the oil-hungry superpowers by saying "just one word and the whole world will explode," dares make a joke: "If that really does happen some day, you of STERN will be responsible--because you reminded me of it."

He becomes serious again when we ask him: "Do you have the bomb?" Al-Qadhdhafi answers spontaneously by ignoring the question: "We are against the argument of the bomb. The atom should serve only peaceful aims..."

Al-Qadhdhafi, all statesman, denies his striving for the bomb, denies cooperation with Pakistan in that sector. When we began discussing the half dozen states on

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the threshold of the nuclear bomb club, he hurriedly tried to cover up the tracks: "I do not believe Pakistan will have the bomb in the near future." When the situation becomes critical, al-Qadhdhafi flees into noncommittal phrases. He does not become loud and wild, as he used to in earlier interviews.

How about the 1,000-kilometer-long wall he wanted to build along the Egyptian border?

"Just a joke."

Whether he needed a wall after all around all of Libya, so that even more highly qualified compatriots do not flee from his paradise of partners?

"Why, everybody is quite well off."

Al-Qadhdhafi boldly ignores the dissatisfaction in the country, admitting, if at all, some early difficulties on the path toward Libyan socialism.

A few days earlier we had visited an enormous cement factory in Holms that was equipped with German machines. There were no personnel. We were told that all the workers were fighting in Chad. While the translation was taking place, al-Qadhdhafi inquired about the factory. Then he said: "The workers had sessions in the people's committee. You ought to go there once more, then the workers will be there." He adds a warning: "You fish in dirty waters."

We go on fishing: "Here close by is a tomato factory--no work has been done there for 2 years."

Al-Qadhdhafi inquires again and says: "I will make inquires."

We say that the year-long fight against property is killing all personal initiative in the country.

"I see that differently," says al-Qadhdhafi. We say: "You ought to ask the taxi driver of Tripoli who you have just deprived of two of his three taxis."

Al-Qadhdhafi: And you ought to ask the two slaves who worked for him and whom he was exploiting.

It is that simple with socialism a la Libya. Al-Qadhdhafi contests that frustration exists in the country about the planning bureaucrats who build only supermarkets, thus sweeping small dealers off the shelves. He contests that there is fear of the army bloodhounds and the arbitrary confiscation of automobiles for military purposes.

"Here," he says, "only fear of reactionaries and imperialists exists. Here the people ruled."

What about the opposition people who are sitting in jail?

Al-Qadhdhafi: A small group that was sentenced by the revolutionary court after the 1969 revolution.

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STERN: How many?

Al-Qadhdhafi: A small number.

STERN: Does the small number also contain those 2,000 persons whom were arrested after the attempted assassination against you in Benghazi?

Al-Qadhdhafi abandons his casual attitude, he sits up straight, but tries immediately to cover up the uneasiness, joking with the armed ladies Fatima and Alima [bodyguards] as if he wanted to say: "Who can do me any harm if you protect me?" He denies the assassination attempt, and he also denies the unrest in Tobruk this spring.

What about the many political emigrees who he gave an ultimatum to return to Libya?

Al-Qadhdhafi: They live like all the others.

STERN: And those who did not return voluntarily? Many emigrees have been shot to death in London, Rome, Athens and Bonn.

"One cannot be responsible for all revolutionary commandos," says Libya's leader, trying to sanction the murders: "Many of them were enemies of the people, instigated by the U.S. Intelligence Service CIA."

STERN: Did you give orders to shoot the people without legal procedures?

Al-Qadhdhafi: No, I was against that. That must not happen any more.

STERN: Did you order the executions stopped?

Al-Qadhdhafi: No, that was beyond my sphere of influence. On the previous day in Sebha we sensed how tense the situation is in Libya. When STERN photographer Robert Lebeck took some pictures at a filling station, a dozen Libyans jumped at him and tried to take his camera away. A secret service man brought him to a police station and took the films away from him.

STERN: Why are people so fearful here?

Al-Qadhdhafi: The people have complexes. They are afraid of new colonialism. Maybe you look too American. Sorry--you will get your films back.

"We have them back already," says Lebeck, "but they were exposed."

We asked al-Qadhdhafi whether he wanted to come to the Federal Republic after his visit to the GDR in order to campaign for himself in the Western world. Al-Qadhdhafi gives a sign of refusal: "As long as the Federal Republic is a satellite of the United States no thanks."

After he had finished stating this he hurried down the long corridor, passing the general staff room with its enormous map of Libya on an easel and the maps of neighboring countries on the walls. He also passed many green telephones as well as a bartender who only metes out orange juice and pepsicola. He is protected by Fatima and Alima who open the door of the green BMW 733-I for him and off he goes to the desert.

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MAURITANIA

BRIEFS

MORE CHILDREN ATTENDING SCHOOL--Education: the number of children attending school has increased by 10 percent. The total number of students in elementary schools has increased this year by a little more than 10 percent. According to figures of the National Ministry of Education, the total number for the new school year is 93,730 students, up from 85,151 last year. The percentage of children attending schools in the country is at present 23 percent. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAU ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 24 Oct 80 p 2610] 8693

ROK COOPERATION, TRADE--Cooperatives-Commerce: the exchanges with Korea. Mauritania has had diplomatic relations at the ambassadorial level with the Republic of Korea since 1979. It imports fabric and various commodities from Korea, while Korea imports iron ore from Mauritania. Cooperation between the two countries includes fishing, with the establishment of two mixed fishing companies already operational according to the new policy on fishing. Korean technicians will participate in the construction of dwellings in the Zouerate region. Furthermore, the Koreans are training young Mauritians in scientific methods, especially in regard to fishing, rice-growing and textiles. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAU ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 24 Oct 80 p 2610] 8693

ECONOMIC CONTROL BODY APPROVED--Creation of an Economic Control. In addition, at the meeting on 3 October 1980 the Cabinet approved three proposals for ordinances on the creation of an organization for economic control. The Department of Commerce will be granted the necessary instruments for the application of an effective control policy. [Excerpt] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAU ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 24 Oct 80 p 2611] 8693

REVISION OF NOUAKCHOTT ADMINISTRATIVE BREAKDOWNS--Nouakchott: new administrative divisions. The Mauritanian Cabinet approved an order terminating and replacing another 1973 order creating districts in Nouakchott and setting the powers of the district heads. The new order, approved by the government, will change the structures at the district level. New boundaries have been set. Districts will no longer have numbers. The final result of the new divisions is an increase in the geographical boundaries of districts. There will still be six districts. But the new organization will mean the expansion of some of the new districts and the absorption of others which existed under the old arrangement. The six new districts are as follows: the districts of Ksar, Tavrak Zeina, Tayaret, Toujounine, Sebkhah and El Mina. In its 11 and 12 October edition the daily paper CHAAB published the geographical boundaries of the new districts. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAU ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 25 Oct 80 p 2611] 8693

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SAUDI ARABIA

NAVAL ARMS AGREEMENT SIGNED WITH FRANCE

Paris AIR ET COSMOS in French 25 Oct 80 p 47

[Article by Pierre Langereux; passages in slantlines originally printed in boldface]

[Text] France recently signed what could be the "contract of the century" with /Saudi Arabia/ for naval arms. After 2½ years of negotiations, the Ryad government has in fact just signed a contract for about 14 billion francs (14.4 billion francs, according to some reports) covering ships, helicopters and weapons systems. This contract follows that of /Qatar/ which was signed a short time earlier for the delivery of /three patrol boats/ of the "La Combattante" type armed with /"EXOCET MM40"/ antisurface vessel missiles from AEROSPATIALE [National Industrial Aerospace Company] and /two coastal batteries of "MM40"/ for an overall total of about 1.5 billion francs (cf. AIR ET COSMOS, No 830). This comes to about 16 billion francs in French contracts signed during the last few months, representing over 8 million manhours for the French arms industry.

The contract which was signed (cf. AIR ET COSMOS, No 826)--under the code name "Sawari"--provides for the delivery over a 5-year period of:

--/four 2,000-ton frigates/ armed with /antisurface vessel Matra "Otomat" missiles/ and /Thomson-CSF antiaircraft/ "Crotale naval" missiles/;

--/two 17,000-ton/ "La Durance" type/refueling tankers/;

--a large number (there is talk of 24) /carrier-borne/ AEROSPATIALE/ Dauphin 2/SA 365 helicopters/, comparable to those ordered by the American Coast Guard; and
--AEROSPATIALE/ "AS15TT" air-surface missiles/ mounted on Dauphin 2 helicopters.

The Dauphin 2 helicopters will also be equipped with Thomson-CSF/ "Agrion 15" surveillance and objective designation radars which will simultaneously service the firing of short-range "AS15TT" missiles (15 km) and objective designation relays for the firing of "Otomat" antisurface vessel missiles whose maximum range is 180 km (the longest range by Matra to date was 135 km attained with a designation of objectives relay helicopter) (cf. AIR ET COSMOS, No 819).

/Thomson-CSF is the biggest contractor in this market/ of which about one-third of the total (nearly 5 billion francs) will cover the supplying of materiel produced by the group. The other principal contractors are /AEROSPATIALE, Matra/ and the naval shipyards.

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This order is also important for Matra (about 10 percent of the market) to the extent that Saudi Arabia has selected the "Otomat."

Thomson-CSF is, in fact, responsible overall for weapons systems and equipment.

As for the frigates, this includes the entire "Sea Tiger" radar surveillance system and the tactical information processing and display system, as well as the firing of the cannons (40 to 100 mm) by "Castor 2" radar fire. Thomson-CSF is also supplying the "Crotale naval" short range, antiaircraft weapons systems (eight ramp-mounted missiles per firing unit) and "Diodon" sonars (one stationary in a bow-mounted dome and one towed on each vessel). The group is also taking care of the integration of telecommunications and navigation systems, as well as the supplying of the dual axis/homing devices/ for the "Otomat" missiles.

Thomson-CSF is also supplying the "Agrion 15" radars for the helicopters, the personnel training systems (including a simulation system) and logistics.

Saudi Arabia is, therefore, now one of the biggest clients for French arms and the most important Arab client for naval arms. It is also one of the leading clients of arms from the Thomson-CSF group which has already sold Ryad /double-barreled, 30 mm/ antiaircraft cannons on AMX30, "Crotale" missiles/ on land vehicles (cf. AIR ET COSMOS, No 775) and "Shahine" missiles on AMX30 tanks (cf. AIR ET COSMOS, No 819). Saudi Arabia is also the number one foreign client of the "Crotale naval" --and of the "AS15TT." The Ryad government has also purchased about 200/AMX30 combat tanks/ from France. These previous contracts represented about 12 billion francs worth of arms.

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SYRIA

IMPLICATIONS OF SOVIET TREATY ON RELATIONS WITH LIBYA EXPLORED

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 17-23 Oct 80 pp 34-35

[Article: "Is the Syrian Treaty with the Soviets a Substitute for Unity with al-Jamahiriyah?"]

[Text] The month that had been designated for setting up the institutions for the merger between Syria and the Libyan Jamahiriyah went by and no announcement was made about the unity project. In fact, Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad preferred to turn to Moscow to conclude a treaty of friendship and cooperation with the Soviet Union. Is this treaty then a substitute for unity with Libya?

The time is the 9th of October 1980.

This date was the date that had been designated for completing the establishment of the institutions and the machinery for the immediate merger between the Syrian regime and the Libyan regime. This is in accordance with the stipulations made in the proclamation of the two presidents in West Tripoli on the 10th of last September.

On that date, however, instead of traveling to Tripoli, President al-Asad traveled to Moscow where he signed a friendship and cooperation treaty between Syria and the Soviet Union.

If the element of surprise in al-Asad's move to Moscow was that it occurred on the same date he was to have gone to West Tripoli, there was yet another surprise. The document which Brehznev and al-Asad signed was not a mutual military defense treaty or a strategic alliance against the U.S.-Israeli-Egyptian Camp David alliance as officials in Damascus and the Syrian media claimed. It was merely a traditional treaty of friendship and cooperation of the kind which the Soviets have had with a number of Third World countries ever since the sixties. This treaty is the fifth in a series of similar treaties: there was one between Moscow and Cairo in 1971--this treaty was abrogated by al-Sadat's regime in 1976; there was one with Baghdad in 1972--it is still in effect; with Mogadishu (the Somali Republic) in 1974--it was abrogated by Siad Barre in 1977; and with Aden in 1979--it too is still in effect.

In view of the fact that the Syrian-Libyan merger did not take place on schedule and was replaced by a treaty with the Soviets [proclaimed] on the same date, political observers are raising more than one question.

For example, is the treaty with the Soviets a substitute for unity with Libya?

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Observers are trying to respond to that question by saying that the fact of the matter as well as appearances strongly suggest this impression.

If this is a correct impression, there is then no doubt that deep differences must have occurred during the month that was designated for the negotiations between the two regimes to complete setting up the institutions for the merger. Or it may be that the two parties, at least after some give and take, were confronted with the impossibility of fulfilling their promise in 1 month. They may have come to realize the fundamental differences that exist in the natures of both regimes and that unity means that one of them would dispose of the other and not unite with it.

Observers support this line of thought by noting the geographic gaps that the establishment of such a state would face between its Asian part and its African part as well as the nature of the presidential regime in each one of them. Despite the fact that the presidential figure who has sole power remains the center [of the regime] in Syria and Libya, the Syrian regime is set up on the basis of a ruling party beside which small friendly parties exist. The leaders of these parties join together in a front. Furthermore, there is a people's assembly to which the government is supposed to be accountable. At the same time the Libyan regime condemns partisanship absolutely and considers "anyone who joins a party to be a traitor." In accordance with the Third Theory devised by President al-Qadhdhafi, the Libyan regime does not recognize a government, or a people's assembly. It rather assumes that all power [should be vested] in the masses through what is called revolutionary committees.

Observers do not stop at this sharp discrepancy between the regimes of the two countries, but they add that a disagreement must have taken place over who will be the president of the new united state: al-Asad or Al-Qadhdhafi? What will happen to the powers of the one who does not win the presidency? Will he become the commander of the unity army? This was the position which al-Qadhdhafi had asked for in his proposed unity with Egypt, but al-Sadat had turned that [idea] down. Did al-Qadhdhafi make this demand again, and did al-Asad assume the same position that al-Sadat had assumed?

Observers are also inclined to believe that there were some disagreements about the budget of the united state in the sense of combining the sources of oil-rich Libya with those of Syria, which has no oil, and merging them into a single fiscal system.

The Interim Month

Finally, observers think that in view of the fact that it was impossible to establish a merger between the two countries within the month to which the two presidents had committed themselves in front of the masses, both presidents were extremely embarrassed. This embarrassment was made plain by the inconsistency between the enthusiastic words and promises [that had been made] and the actual achievements. The way which the Syrian president chose for himself out of this situation was to hasten the signing of the treaty with the Soviets with the excuse that the treaty was of the utmost strategic necessity and could not be delayed, not even for unity. President al-Qadhdhafi remained in his predicament and in his embarrassment, making fiery statements during the celebrations commemorating Revenge Day, the anniversary of the evacuation of Italian occupation from Libya.

Al-Qadhdhafi was threatening death to everyone who opposed unity or was lax in establishing and supporting it. He did so without mentioning a single word of apology

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for the fact that the merger had not been completed on schedule; nor did he explain the reasons why the promise had not been kept.

In the course of their analysis of the course of events, observers go back to raising questions. If the treaty with the Soviets was a substitute to the Syrians for unity with Libya, was it the same for Libya?

In this regard observers call attention to the fact that al-Asad and Brezhnev made no reference whatsoever to the proposed merger between Syria and Libya in the welcoming remarks they exchanged at the dinner banquet that followed the signing of the treaty.

Although the treaty was concluded with Syria as though the merger with Libya was neither present nor [expected] in the foreseeable future, Libya, accordingly, because of the political reality and the provisions of international law regarding treaties, was not taken into consideration in the Syrian-Soviet treaty.

Does this mean that Moscow and Damascus do not view what has been broadcast and published about the Syrian-Libyan merger seriously? Or does this mean that Libya is now obliged to accept this treaty if it completes its merger with Syria successfully? Such an obligation would mean approving of President al-Asad's assessment of the treaty. [That assessment was made] in the political statement al-Asad made in Moscow on the eve of the ceremony that was held to celebrate the signing of the treaty. Al-Asad summarized his assessment of the treaty by saying, "The documents of this treaty realize the interests of our people. [They serve] the interests of the struggle for peace in our area which is based on justice. This is the peace that will lead to the withdrawal of the aggressors from occupied Arab lands and the establishment of firm rights for the Arab people of Palestine, and especially their right to return to their homeland, to determine their own destiny and to establish their independent state on the soil of their homeland."

This assessment means a commitment only to remove the effects of the 1967 aggression, to establish the Palestinian state on the land that is liberated and not to encroach upon the Israeli entity. Libya absolutely rejects all of this. Col al-Qadhafi insists in all his speeches on regaining all of Palestine and fully avenging the 1948 disaster. He considers anything less than that to be treason.

But observers, on the other hand, are not unmindful of the fact that Soviet-Libyan relations are semi-favorable.

Nevertheless, Libya has not concluded a treaty of friendship and cooperation with the Soviets until today. In fact, Col al-Qadhafi did more than once strongly criticize Iraq when it concluded a friendship treaty with the Soviet Union. He also said nothing when al-Sadat abrogated the treaty with the Soviet Union.

In addition to its proposed merger with Syria, Libya is, nevertheless, an associate of Syria in what is called the Opposition and Confrontation Front. It was at one of the meetings of this front, the last one he attended before his death, that the late Algerian president, Boumediene proposed a choice in confronting the Camp David alliance: a road of integrating the Arab countries militarily, economically and politically into an independent, united force; and a road of polarization with the Soviets through a strategic alliance against the strategic alliance of Egypt and Israel set up by the United States.

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Boumedienne had warned against hesitation and ambivalence about the two choices and not making a firm decision. He had stated that the underlying assumptions for both choices did in fact exist and that the decision that was required in this regard would clarify for us the ways, the methods, goals as well as the time that was necessary for actually making the choice. He affirmed that making the first choice would remain the preferred and the more effective choice even though it would require more time, greater efforts and self preparation so that the necessary sacrifices that would be imposed on every country could be borne. [He also affirmed] that by making this first choice, effective and influential relations with the Soviets can be established without falling under their standard.

If the second choice is made, it would mean that the doors to the first choice would be closed permanently. One must then take into consideration the fact that a number of Arab countries other than Egypt will be drawn in one way or another to the United States. Consequently, choosing polarization will make the battle more vicious and more difficult. Furthermore, the Soviets must be persuaded that they have a vital interest in adopting all the Arab demands against the United States and Israel.

Observers remind us that most members of the Opposition and Confrontation Front had reservations about Boumedienne's proposal. President al-Asad and President al-Qadhafi asked for time to think it over.

But after Boumedienne's death, there was a rush of events in the struggles that occurred between the Camp David front and the Baghdad Conference front. This included the proclamation of the pan-Arab Iraqi-Syrian [unity] and its collapse after the conspiracy against the party and the regime in Iraq was discovered; the intense internal struggles in Syria and Libya; the establishment of the Khomeyni regime in Iran; and the threat the Khomeyni regime posed to the Arab character of the Gulf area. The ideas of Boumedienne were proposed again at a meeting of the Opposition and Confrontation Front, and a decision was made to discuss the strategic alliance openly with the Soviets.

President al-Qadhafi was commissioned for this mission. He traveled to Moscow and returned from it to say, "The Russians are our friends, but they are ultimately not Arabs."

The front stopped talking about the strategic alliance until state agencies and the media in Syria reopened the discussion about it around the middle of this year by talking about Syria's special wish "to establish this alliance with the Soviets." Internal bloody confrontations inside the country between the regime and the Moslem Brothers as well as other opposition forces had intensified.

Moscow and Damascus exchanged delegations and studies until finally an ordinary treaty of friendship and cooperation was produced. It was one of those treaties which the Soviet Union concludes with Third World countries. Suddenly, after some hesitation, President al-Asad accepted the treaty and agreed to sign it.

It is here that observers pause to raise this question: Was President al-Qadhafi, along with the Soviets, hoping for a strategic alliance against the United States and Israel, and did he turn down the friendship and cooperation treaty when it was presented to him whereas President al-Asad accepted it? Or is the conclusion of this treaty with Syria a preface to a [similar] treaty with Libya? If this is the

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case, why the rush? Why weren't [the parties concerned] patient until the merger between Syria and Libya would have been completed and a treaty would then have been signed with a united state?

Five Observations

Observers are roaming the hallways of political life in the Arab homeland with these questions on their minds, but they are not getting definitive answers to these questions. However, they do agree on recording some observations that include objective facts about the situation.

The first observation is that the fact that Syria concluded a treaty with the Soviets made her break the date that had been set for completing the merger with Libya.

The second observation is that President al-Qadhafi made neither a positive nor a negative comment on the Syrian-Soviet treaty. He also did not offer an explanation for the fact that the merger did not take place on schedule. President al-Asad too did not offer such an explanation.

The third observation is that the Syrian-Soviet treaty falls under traditional, ordinary boundaries. It is as far as it can be from being the strategic alliance which officials in Damascus and in the media had been heralding.

The fourth observation is that the Syrian-Soviet treaty was signed while the Iraqi-Iranian war was being fought. [The treaty was signed in the context of] the Iraqi army making progress in regaining Iraq's national sovereignty over Shatt al-'Arab, liberating Iraq's occupied lands and emerging as an effective, capable combat force whose capability was growing on the scene of battles in the Middle East and on the scene of the Arab-Israeli struggle as well.

The fifth observation is the fact that Chairman Brezhnev said in the presence of President al-Asad on the eve of the signing of the treaty, "The imperialists are now engaged in further serious deception with regard to the war between Iraq and Iran. The imperialists would very much like to deal a devastating blow to Arab unity."

Brezhnev pledged non-interference in the ongoing struggle, declaring that his country "would approve of the fastest political settlement in this dispute. We are saying to others with determination, 'Hands off these events! No country whatsoever has the right to interfere in the Gulf or to present itself as its guardian.'"

President al-Asad, however, made no direct or remote reference to the Iraqi-Iranian war in his response to Brezhnev's speech.

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TUNISIA

ABOUT-FACE IN TUNISIA'S INTERNAL POLICIES

Paris AFRIQUE-ASIE in French 29 Sep-13 Oct 80 p 33

[Article by Adel Wahid: "Return to Zero"]

[Text] The single party in power wishes to change its image. However, it wants to turn something old into something new.

Even though the dealings with the legitimate leadership of the UGTT [Tunisian General Federation of Labor] have had their ups and downs after Mohamed Mzali became prime minister, it should be considered today that they have reached a dead point and that they risk to maintain it for quite some time. In any case, this is the prevailing feeling in Tunisia after the chief of state himself clearly warned that "people sentenced to jail terms and forced labor have no right to assume trade union responsibilities." Thus Habib Bourguiba excludes almost all the members of the executive bureau and over one-half of the members of the administrative commission appointed in March 1977 at the trade union congress. In simple terms, he refuses to the workers the right to be represented by those they have elected quite freely and who have proved, both before and after the 26 January 1978 massacres, their determination to defend the interests of the toiling masses. It is essentially for this reason that the general and unconditional amnesty never saw daylight despite the insistence with which it was demanded by all popular circles. Loyal to himself, the Tunisian chief of state reserves himself the right to strike again at those he released yesterday while, at the same time, depriving them of their civil rights.

Such a sudden about-face clearly illustrates the limits of the detente applied for the past few months, hastily described by some as an "opening." In fact, what is the value of releasing political and trade union prisoners when such release is followed by house arrest and when they are denied the right to resume their work? Where is the respect for the freedom of opinion officially acknowledged by the prime minister when the newspaper LE PHARE is confiscated at the printing press and then banned for three months under a flimsy pretext while it is, in fact, penalized for having always supported the workers' struggles and the legitimate leadership of the trade union? In what way has the system truly changed allowing some people to give the "benefit of the doubt" to the "new" governmental team?

Naturally, some observers made a great deal of the purges which affected some high officials of the Destourien Party such as Ameer Ben Aicha, who was deprived of his mandate as a deputy and expelled from the PSD [Destouorien Socialist Party] for

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having "interfered in judiciary affairs," and Hassen Kacem, currently in jail for his participation in a fraud...back in 1975. At the time it had been commented in the press and had ended with the detention of several minor accomplices.

As the servile and interested agents of a system which insured their political and material fortunes, Hassen Kacem and Aneur Ben Aicha both bear a severe responsibility for the 26 January 1978 massacres. They were also members of the State Security Court which sentenced to hanging 13 of the Gafsa insurgents last 17 April. Their fall from grace--temporary perhaps?--may be due as much to the struggle among the clans within the PSD, which is trying to gain a new breath, as to the desire of the prime minister and his collaborators to separate themselves from the most corrupt elements of the system in order to attract those who have put a distance between them and the system for a number of years. The abolishment of the position of attorney general of the republic, held for the past 25 years by Mohamed Farhat, brother of Abdallah Farhat, the former defense minister dismissed one year ago, one of the most important experts in the Tunisian political process since its independence and the executor of Bourguiba's dirty deals, fits this logic equally well. Other heads may fall but, as usual, scapegoats will be found for the others.

The convocation of an extraordinary congress by the only party in power, requested by Bourguiba for next spring, triggers a great deal of curiosity. In the best of cases, such a congress could wind up the purge which is unwilling to mention his name and wishes to eradicate the sequels of "Nourism" and shift governmental activities closer to the center. For the time being, high officials are only claiming that the sole purpose of this extraordinary congress will be "to study the general lines of the 1981-1985 Five-Year Plan and the means to provide it with all the psychological and human factors needed for its success." However, no more than the last congress, held one year ago, will this congress be noted with granting the basic freedoms demanded by the broadest popular strata. Unquestionably, it will provide the occasion for a new settlement of account at the summit which will result in the definitive removal of Hedi Nour's supporters. Actually, the latter are beginning to be more or less "thanked for their services." The latest, Hedi Zghal, was dismissed both from the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Political Bureau. His successor, Mohamed Kraiem is a former trade unionist who, throughout these last months, acted as a middleman between the government and Habib Achour in effort to find a solution to the trade union crisis. As a minister, Mohamed Kraiem thus put an end to the persistent rumors according to which he was to become the UGTT secretary general.

Other "readjustments" are planned as well. Thus, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs may soon have a new head. Furthermore, it is claimed that Sadok Mokaddem, National Assembly president for the past 16 years, may be dismissed as well. In addition, the parliament could, in turn, be affected by a wave of purges which would allow the "election" of an assembly where the supporters of the current governmental team would hold a strong position. However, such settlements of internal accounts and divisions within a system which has turned them into its golden rule of government are totally indifferent to the population as long as they do not exacerbate the profound frustration of the working class whose great sacrifices, undertaken in January 1978, specifically, may be eliminated, yet once again, for in Tunisia, and until a new order prevails, there is always a stick hidden behind the carrot.

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TUNISIA

OPPOSITION LEADER UNDER HOUSE ARREST

Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 8 Oct 80 p 34

[Report: "Decontraction Yes, But..."]

[Text] Brahim Hayder, member of the Political Bureau of the Popular Unity Movement (MUP) was placed under house arrest on 26 September in Jendouba, his native town (in the northwest), which he was allowed to choose rather than at his residence in Megrime (not far from Tunis). His passport had been withdrawn 2 weeks earlier, following his return from Sweden where he had undergone surgery. On 28 July Hayder had held in his home a general conference of the MUP, whose secretary general is Ahmed Ben Salah, former minister of the economy, currently in foreign exile. It is equally true that the tone of the adopted resolutions was quite vigorous.

In addition to the absence of "Comrade Ahmed Ben Salah, victim of repression," on the political level the "struggle among clans, which is nothing but the reflection of the class struggle" was deplored. The principle of lifetime presidency was condemned and the "struggle of the toiling masses" was supported.

Sandwiched between the introduction and an abrupt conclusion, was a chapter on "the desire for change." This is a measured text which, in fact, reflects the breach within the MUP. On the one hand, the "hard core," which are in the majority, deny any legitimacy to the system and reject anything which could support it even at the cost of rejecting pluralism within the system for which they are struggling. As to the moderates, their only representative in the MUP Political Bureau was Brahim Hayder.

However, in a motion recently made public, presenting the conditions of the democratic development of a congress held by the General Union of Tunisian Students (UGET), the movement described as "positive indicators" the release of the last political prisoners and the elimination of night watchmen at the university. This appreciation was found in the statement by Ahmed Mestiri, leader of one of the two trends within the Movement of Socialist Democrats. Following his 24 September meeting with the prime minister, he "confirmed" the "favorable prejudice" which he himself and his colleagues had for Mohamed Mzali. Mestiri is in the government palace while Hayder is under house arrest: The will for decontraction always gives warning shots.

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