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3 April 1981

Near East/North Africa Report

(FOUO 12/81)

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NEAR EAST/NORTH AFRICA REPORT

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INTER-ARAB AFFAIRS

RABAT SEEKS DIPLOMATIC RESOLUTION OF SAHARAN CONFLICT

Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 13 Feb 81 pp 350-351

[Text] Morocco does not seem to have come away with any diplomatic advantages from the Islamic Summit in Taif, as far as the former Spanish Sahara is concerned. In fact, the plenary session on that occasion left the matter to the Organization of African Unity, which for several years has been in charge of that problem and very active in its mediation efforts. On the other hand, and contrary to the expectations of a good part of Moroccan opinion, the high level contacts made possible at the time on Saudi soil have only permitted a banal exchange of inconsequential courtesies between the Moroccan Monarch and the Algerian President (see MTM of 6 February, p 287).

It is true, as a result of the extremely cautious attitude of the Islamic states, that the POLISARIO Front has reason to be equally disappointed. In fact, its Assistant Secretary General, Bachir Mustafa Sayed, declared on 25 January for the benefit of the summit leaders assembled at Taif: "To take up the Zionist challenge, and to bring about a reconciliation between the warring Islamic factions, are the urgent primary tasks of an Islamic nation." If the first of these tasks held the total attention of the conference, the second has been prudently circumvented.

King Hassan II, to all appearances has persisted in the hope that his presidency of the El Qods (Jerusalem) Committee, will end up giving him an opportunity for meaningful talks with the representatives of Algeria, a leading member of the Arab steadfastness Front. Morocco, on the other hand, continues to believe, in spite of denials, that discreet discussions are being conducted, albeit at a much lower level.

The Moroccan foreign ministry continues to assert that Algeria has all sorts of leverage with the Western Saharans and seems eager to diversify diplomatic efforts that would permit such a decidedly difficult approach. On the eve of the French Prime Minister's visit to Morocco, the head of the Moroccan government, Maati Bouabid, stated that it was up to his country and Algeria "to finally decide on an end to the conflict," and added, that it would particularly suit a country like France to participate in the establishment of a "dialog and negotiating process with Algeria... either directly or within the framework of a common undertaking of the EEC, or jointly with other countries, enjoying similar confidence, such as Tunisia or Saudi Arabia." (LE MONDE, 22 January 1981).

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Mr Raymond Barre nevertheless remained very reserved, alluding to "respect for the demands of justice and security" in offering his opinion that "this was the price of the patient search for a political settlement of the Saharan conflict-- which France desires and to which it would not refuse to contribute if such were desired."

Not long ago West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, while also on an official visit to Morocco, was forced to comment on the same subject and did so with equal caution.

On the other hand, it was necessary to give up the dwindling hope of involving Spain in effective diplomatic cooperation on the subject of her former territories. To make their partners pay dearly, the Moroccan negotiators have refused to renew the Spanish-Moroccan fishing agreement. By striking at the economy of Spain, and especially that of the Canary Islands, Morocco's intransigence would seem to be a means to render the Government in Madrid more cooperative on the Sahara subject, but the success of such a maneuver remains questionable.

The Opinion of the West

The trend of opinion in Europe and the United States is, moreover, not of the kind to satisfy the Moroccan leaders. If it's true that the public at large, whose attention to foreign events has been riveted on Poland, Iran and the Gulf, has generally ignored the Saharan conflict, political circles have been giving it increased attention. On the one hand, they are sensitive to the claims for self-determination, held by the Saharan side, and on the other hand to the fact that the POLISARIO control a large part of the territory they claim.

The "Parliamentary Group for the Study of the Western Sahara," established in October 1980 by 35 deputies representing the four principal departments of the French National Assembly, sent a five member delegation in early January to the POLISARIO. The latter had them travel a thousand kilometers in liberated "Saharan territory," push on as far as Lebouirate, a southern Moroccan post, destroyed several months ago, and all the way to Haouza, seat of the Saharan Democratic Arab Republic situated 60 km to the east of Smara.

According to Morocco's contention, a trek of this kind in desert is no more significant than the long-distance military expeditions the POLISARIO boast about. "The Royal armies," declared Prime Minister Maati Bouabid, "are in total control of the area. Neither the incursions of the POLISARIO, nor their suicide missions, nor their triumphant communique will change anything...." Meanwhile, the declarations of the Director of the Studies Group, Alain Vivien, asserting the existence of a "Saharan reality within the boundaries of the former colonial borders, in which a nation is establishing itself" (LA CROIX, 13 January) and the POLISARIO control of "nine tenths of Western Saharan territory" (LE MONDE, 11 January) have had sufficient impact on the European political scene for the semi-official Moroccan information service to point out the unilateral character of that mission and for its foreign ministry to discreetly express the desire that such parliamentary inquiries not be repeated.

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The Saharan propaganda effort is presently directed--in a very particular way--toward the European youth. In this regard, with the help of the Pan-African Youth Movement and the National Union of Algerian Youth, a Conference of Solidarity with the Saharan people is scheduled to be held in Rome on 14 and 15 February.

Military Operations

During the first weeks of 1981, the operations--always very active--of Moroccan forces and elements of the POLISARIO, took place mostly either in the Ras Al Khanfra sector, midway between Smarna and Tan Tan, or near Bou Craa, the large phosphate mining center of the former Spanish Sahara.

The Saharan command has reported particularly violent engagements near Ras Al Khanfra on 7 and 22 January. The fierceness of the POLISARIO in that region shows their willingness to maintain, as best they can, an access route to the "undisputed Moroccan territory," to prevent the re-supply of Moroccan outposts in the region and to put obstacles in the path of expansion to the south-west of the Moroccan "blockade" which is part of the defenses of Djebel Ouarksiz. The Moroccan reaction is very strong, and it doesn't look like the POLISARIO have gained any notable advantages in this region lately.

On the other hand, on 7 January Saharan elements launched a surprise attack against the Moroccan defense in the Bou Craa region, which seems to have had some success.

Meanwhile, the Moroccan side is emphasizing the considerable losses sustained by POLISARIO elements during their attacks on permanently reinforced Moroccan positions as well as the progressive decrease over the past several months, of the pace of operations launched by the Saharans. The POLISARIO side, as reported on 24 January by their representative in Europe, Mohamed Padhel, estimates that the Moroccan strategy is now reduced to a "fanciful idea of defending one very small parcel of land in the Western Sahara."

Diplomatic Plans

After receiving, without surprise, Iran's declaration severing diplomatic relations with Rabat, Morocco's foreign ministry is trying to find firmer support from the Middle East Arab nations, traditionally friendly to them: King Hassan is reportedly planning an early trip to Jordan, the United Arab Emirates and possibly Saudi Arabia.

The Saharan Democratic Arab Republic, for its part, is determined to gain its admission this year to the Organization of African Unity. Its Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ibrahim Hakim, told the Ethiopian Press Agency on 1 February, that he will insist on that at the Ministers' Conference of that organization, scheduled for the end of February, noting that a simple majority of the member nations has already declared itself so in favor.

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INTER-ARAB AFFAIRS

KHALID AL-FAHUM NOTES ARAB MEETING'S RESULTS

PA141622 Havana PRELA in Spanish 2105 GMT 12 Mar 81

[Report by Wilfredo Fernandez]

[Text] Algiers, 12 Mar (PL)--Khalid al-Fahum, head of the Palestine National Council (parliament), has condemned the arrogance of the incumbent U.S. administration, which wants to keep the entire Middle East in its grip.

Al-Fahum, head of the Arab Parliamentary Union, told PRENSA LATINA that the second congress of this body, which recently closed in Algiers, adopted common stands on serious current dangers.

He warned that the new U.S. secretary of state, Gen Alexander Haig, "will make a tour of the Arab nations to try to place them in the grip of U.S. power with the haughtiness and arrogance that characterizes the administration of Ronald Reagan."

The United States, he said, wants to set up alliances with those Arab governments that will allow them to undermine the cause of the peoples of the region, to try to water down the support for Palestinian resistance and to attack the nonaligned movement.

"The dangers of this visit must be denounced and the need to maintain the independence and concerted action of the nonaligned movement must be played up," he underlined.

Al-Fahum also explained that the second union council decided "to broaden its relations, including dialogue with the legislatures in Latin America, Africa and the socialist countries, this year."

He stated that parliamentary representatives from Latin America have been invited to attend the Inter-Arab Council meeting scheduled to be held in Damascus in April.

"We think of the Soviet Union as a friend and ally which supports the PLO at all international meetings and endorses the Palestinian people's right to establish its independent state on Palestinian soil," he noted.

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The congress is an important step in the work of the Arab Council and, following Kuwait's recent entry, the council is now made up of 13 nations, he indicated.

He explained that "even though some Arab countries still don't have legislatures, cooperation among us is strong and it is advancing toward the reinforcement of unity."

Regarding the Iranian-Iraqi conflict, he said: "The congress has decided that we should do everything possible to stop this war because it is diverting our efforts from the main objective, which is to defend the Palestinian cause."

He added that "we have agreed to reinforce Arab unity to fight the dangers threatening it, particularly the work of imperialism aimed at liquidating the Palestinian people."

"Here we have stated our unity against the regime of al-Sadat and against the work of President Reagan, both of whom slander the PLO so as to justify their acts of aggression against the Palestinians," he pointed out.

"The Arabs have firmly opposed all these enemy plans and I can assert that the Palestinian cause has come out of this congress stronger," al-Fahum said.

He also noted that "the military activities of the Palestinian combatants from Lebanon (?are limited) to defending ourselves against Israel's attacks; therefore, any pretext used by imperialism and Zionism referring to Lebanon's territorial integrity is false."

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AFGHANISTAN

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER KESHTMAND INTERVIEWED BY 'BOHEMIA'

Havana BOHEMIA in Spanish 23 Jan 81 pp 66-67

[Report of Interview with Afghan Deputy Prime Minister Sultan 'Ali Keshtmand by Teresa Mederos Diaz of BOHEMIA in Havana; date and time not given]

[Text] "Afghanistan defeated the aggressions by North American imperialism, the Chinese hegemonists and the forces of world reaction, particularly the reactionaries of our region who have imposed an undeclared war on us for which they use the territory of Pakistan from which they act to undermine our revolution, our people..."

With these words of accusation, Sultan Ali Keshtmand, chief of the Afghan delegation to the Second Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba, prepares to give us a picture of the situation in his country. To the foregoing he adds: "At this time there are some 80 military training camps in Pakistani territory and also in Tsenquian in Chinese territory. Mercenaries are being trained in those camps for the purpose of carrying out sabotage in Afghanistan. They burn schools, hospitals and so forth. They are antisocial individuals, professional thieves, murderers and counterrevolutionaries. Among them are North American, Pakistani, Chinese, Egyptian and other agents. We have proof of all those criminal actions and of their origins because we have captured many of those agents and hundreds of thousands of weapons they have used to attack our country. Those weapons are manufactured in the United States and China. We also have documents which they have distributed among our people. They are the proof we have and no one can deny it."

As to the objectives pursued by these constant attacks against Afghanistan, the leader of the People's Democratic Party, the leading force of the country, tells us:

"They have wanted to create difficulties for our people and interrupt normal life. Their objectives are the elimination of our revolution, our gains and our successes. They have caused much material damage, particularly to our economy. Those bandits are actually mercenaries who sell themselves for North American dollars. They infiltrate in small groups to attack those primary objectives of our people such as housing, transportation, schools and then they flee."

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"Many of the large groups have been eliminated in our territory; only small groups who are not capable of making frontal attacks against our army remain now. This is a struggle which continues, and will continue for some time. You know that the imperialists always try to carry out criminal actions against a socialist revolution for the benefit of the masses, against a democratic revolution. Our revolution is of a democratic, progressive and socialist nature. That is why the imperialists attack us, however, we are sure and confident that the present situation will not last for long and that the groups of bandits and terrorists shall be eliminated. We shall eliminate those bands with patience and determination."

He strongly emphasized that "A hard fight is being waged but I repeat to you with all confidence that we shall win it. Victory is ours, counterrevolutionary resistance shall be eliminated. The progressive forces, the socialist community, and particularly the great Soviet Union, are with us. We have their solidarity and sympathy; we have the support of all the progressive forces of the world."

As to the reply by the people to those aggressions, Sultan Ali Kishmand says that "The Afghan people will react vigorously in defense of their sovereignty."

"The most important thing is that in the past year of this second phase of our revolution under the leadership of Babrak Karmal, the party and the people are increasingly united. It is a process which advances and the people trust in the patriotic line of the party and the government and are prepared to help in the fight to eliminate those bandits..."

The Afghan leader then said that throughout the country the systems of people's government loyal to the People's Democratic Party, which is the undeniable vanguard of the working class, are being strengthened and that they are loyal to the government of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan.

"We are optimistic; we are sure that we shall be successful. There are many obstacles but gradually we shall overcome difficulties and win," Sultan 'Ali Keshmand emphasized strongly. He is a man of fluid conversation, who communicates easily to establish a pleasant dialog which is much more than a question and answer interview despite the language barrier.

Delving further into the internal work of the Afghan revolution, he says that at this time "We are engaged in carrying out a realistic program for the construction of a new society, the socialist society. That is our objective, although at this time we are advancing along the phase of the democratic-national revolution. Today all our efforts are directed towards fulfillment of the objectives and goals of this phase so that we may then advance toward socialism."

"We have much backwardness in the economy. We must not forget that the Afghan revolution took place at a time in which feudal and semifeudal conditions prevailed. Those traces and their consequences must be eliminated, as must the consequences of capitalist domination. This is the fundamental thing at this time so that later we may direct development toward socialism."

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"This is guaranteed," emphasized Keshtmand, adding that he can speak this way because "political power is in the hands of the party of the working class; it is a single power. To organize the working class under the leadership of the People's Democratic Party, we are in the process of organizing the Fatherland Democratic Front, which will include all the democratic and patriotic forces, all the social classes of the country, so that we may organize them to orient their activities toward the tasks of the construction of the new socialist society."

The interview took place after the Second Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba, before which Sultan 'Ali Keshtmand spoke as chief of the delegation of his country invited to this top event of the Cuban Communist. Shortly afterward, reports from Kabul brought the news that a national conference was held, attended by more than 1,500 delegates, representatives of all sectors of Afghan society. During that conference, directed by Babrak Karmal, it was agreed to create the Fatherland Democratic Front, and on following days there were demonstrations of support for this initiative in various parts of the country.

The vice president of the republic and deputy prime minister, Keshtmandi, is also in charge of the tasks of planning at this time. On this he says that "We shall put into practice the general laws of the socialist society under the specific conditions of our country. Obviously, we shall keep in mind the experiences of other countries, among them those of Cuba, whose revolution also began under conditions of backwardness and underdevelopment, as is happening in our country."

He said that at this time the Afghan party has many skilled cadres in all regions of the country and they work with great enthusiasm and self-sacrifice. Once more he speaks of international support and the Afghan revolution:

"Again I point out the fact that we feel deeply grateful for international revolutionary solidarity. At the center of this solidarity is the Soviet Union, which in an unselfish manner endeavors to help us, loyal to the principles of proletarian internationalism and its own Leninist international policy. We are also very grateful to all the socialist countries and to all the forces of the revolution and the movements of national liberation."

He recalled that more than 60 years ago, from the beginnings of its victory, the Soviet revolution was at the side of Afghanistan in all areas. At that time Afghanistan was fighting against colonial domination.

He then spoke of the distortion which imperialist propaganda seeks to make of that internationalist help:

"The imperialists want to present the help and cooperation we receive from the Soviet Union as the opposite of what it really is. After the victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution, the fraternal Soviet people have always been at the side of the Afghan people, they have always helped them. For everything we now have in our country we can be grateful to the great help of the Soviet Union in all areas. This multifaceted help should be revealed just as it is so as to unmask the distorting and lying propaganda of the imperialist mass news media."

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Sultan 'Ali Keshtmand spoke of the power of that media and how that propaganda acts to misguide world public opinion. "They have powerful means of disinformation," he said, repeating that it is not exactly news they provide because they distort the truth in favor of the interests of the great capitalist powers and the forces of world reaction.

He said that is the reason the work of information performed by the progressive countries is very important. "That is a noble and very important task because an attempt to counteract the disinformation of the powerful capitalist propaganda media is being made with fewer resources."

The Afghan leader asserted that despite the imperialist distortion about the so-called "Afghan problem," the truth will out because no "Afghan problem" really exists. It has been created by imperialist propaganda to hide the true criminal objectives which have led to the actions by reaction against Afghanistan.

"The imperialists have created that climate around the 'Afghan problem' to hide their intervention and their aggressions against our country. The imperialist circles have initiated a great campaign of lies as a pretext for continuing their actions against the Afghan revolution and as a pretext for increasing their military power, their preparations for war in the Persian Gulf, for obtaining new funds for the armament race and for intensifying tensions throughout the world..."

This accusation concluded our interview with the same firm conviction with which the Afghan leader had spoken, who with a broad smile repeated: "We are optimistic and we are confident of total victory..."

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ALGERIA

MEETING EMPHASIZES COOPERATION WITH ITALY ON ENERGY, OIL PROJECTS

Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 13 Feb 81 pp 360-361

[Text] Mr Belkacem Nabi, Algerian Minister of Energy and Petrochemical Industries, made an official visit to Rome from 5 to 7 February at the invitation of the Italian Minister of Industry, Mr Filippo Maria Pandolfi. He was received by President Sandro Pertini as well as by Prime Minister Forlani, and held discussions with several members of the government such as Mr Columbo, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and with the leaders of the ENI, the Italian National Office of Hydrocarbons.

According to APS reports, Mr Belkacem indicated at the close of these discussions that they had allowed the two countries to treat pending problems and to restart, notably in the energy field, cooperation between Algeria and Italy.

Mr Nabi specified that in regards to the energy domain and the completion of the Algerian-Italian gas pipeline through Tunisia, the operation transcended the commercial company-to-company framework to become an endeavor constituting an important political act. This act is betting on the future and should be able to engage itself into the framework of a new international economic order and a new equitable approach, of which Algerian-Italian relations are an example, between industrialized and developing nations.

Mr Belkacem Nabi indicated, moreover, that these discussions emphasized the political actions that the two countries were supposed to put into effect to reinforce peace in the Mediterranean area. In dealing with the problem of the price of natural gas that Algeria was supposed to supply to Italy during 1981, the Minister declared that negotiations between the two parties had allowed the ENI and SONATRACH experts to clear up the situation regarding a new formula for natural gas prices. During the course of these negotiations which will stretch out into the near future, this formula will take into consideration the evolution of the international market conditions and the parameters of the national economies of the two countries.

In this regard, one remembers that the agreement between SONATRACH and ENI, arrived at in October 1977, foresees the delivery of 12.4 million cubic feet of gas to Italy for 25 years beginning in 1985. This gas will be routed by the trans-Mediterranean pipeline which has just been completed and which links Hassi R'Mel to Bologna through Tunisia and Sicily. This pipeline covers 2500 km with an underwater section of 158 km; the Tunisian section covers 370 km. The pipeline will have cost \$3400 million with Algeria and Italy contributing equally.

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The Algerian-Italian discussions at the end of last week will have allowed the two parties to plan as well the ways and means of steering their cooperation towards other projects. Even now one remembers that in last October, the ENI and SONATRACH signed an agreement for oil exploration in the eastern Grand Erg, and that Algeria supplies Italy with a million tons of crude oil a year.

On the other hand, among the existing agreements or those in the process of finalization, figures a contract of roughly \$400 million for the construction of a Pirelli tire factory, and a \$500 million contract for the construction of an industrial vehicle plant and heavy industrial equipment by the Italian firm Fiat, whose President, Mr Giovanni Agnelli, was received in Algiers last December.

The extent and the importance of the discussions which have just taken place in Rome, denote, as did President Pertini's visit to Algeria in May 1980, the willingness of Algeria and Italy to make of their relations an example of sound cooperation based upon the pursuit of a new equilibrium between industrialized and developing nations.

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ALGERIA

BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH NETHERLANDS

Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 13 Feb 81 pp 360-361

[Text] Mr Christoph Van Der Klaauw, the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, made an official visit to Algeria from 1-3 February. He was received by President Chadli Benjedid and held discussions with the Prime Minister, Mr Mohamed Abdelghani, as well as with several government members, particularly with his counterpart, Mr Mohamed Benyahia, to whose invitation he was responding. It was decided during these discussions to prepare the framework of a technical and cultural cooperation agreement for future signing. Mr Van Der Klaauw also announced on the other hand, that the Netherlands had decided to give to Algeria a new 5 million florin grant, earmarked for the current reconstruction phase of El-Asnam. Mr Van Der Klaauw's visit is a prelude to the Near East itinerary that he must take in his capacity as acting President of the European Community's Council of Minister for Foreign Affairs, and during which he is supposed to unveil a European peace initiative.

While considering the evolution of bilateral relations during this visit, and after having remembered the difficulties that these bilateral relations have experienced until 1975 due to the Hague's pro-Zionist leaning, the national Algerian Press Service envisages welcome opportunities due to a change of attitude which has since been functioning in a climate rendered more favorable by the recent opening of the Algerian embassy in the Dutch capital.

The APS notes that the constant progression of economic relations between the two countries since 1975, without being defined by an explicit legal framework, attained in 1979 the relatively modest aggregate total of 1,268 million dinars. Algeria essentially sells oil products to the Netherlands. Its imports from the Netherlands are comprised of foodstuffs, materials, mineral products, fats, chemical products, etc. In the field of energy, a policy of cooperation and joint action has been established, particularly in relation to the problems of fixed gas prices and the preservation of this natural resource. This is the atmosphere in which the Hague visit in February 1980 of Mr Belkacem Nabi, the Algerian Minister of Energy and Petrochemicals, took place.

The APS concludes that, modest as they may be, Algerian-Dutch relations can expect an exemplary development due on one hand to Algeria's willingness to diversify its foreign relations, and on the other hand, the good disposition of the Dutch

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government in matters involving cooperation with developing nations; dispositions which even now constitute an essential platform of its foreign policy. Even now nothing stands in opposition to more intense relations between both countries on the political and economic level. On the cultural, scientific, and technical level everything remains to be done, and the opportunities in these fields exist demanding only to be exploited.

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ALGERIA

BRIEFS

SUPPORT FOR POLISARIO--Algeria has just spectacularly reaffirmed its support of the POLISARIO by its warm reception during a week-long official visit of a POLISARIO delegation headed by its assistant general secretary, Mr Bachir Mustapha Sayed. At the invitation of the sole Algerian party, the FLN (National Liberation Front), the POLISARIO has accomplished a long and complicated journey which has led it from one end of the country to the other, from Annaba in the east to Oran in the west and through Ouargla in the south. The Saharan delegation ended its visit on 9 February in Algiers, where it had been cordially received by the entire body of the national party members. Mr Mohamed Cherif Messadia, speaking for the permanent secretariat of the FLN's central committee, repeated at this occasion "the firm support of all the Algerian people and his party, the FLN, for the Saharan people's struggle for independence and its legitimate cause." He said to them, "we are proud of your successes for they are our own, as are those of the Arab community, those of the entire African continent, and all the forces in the world which are struggling for their freedom and for progress." Onlookers note that Algeria's solemn reaffirmation of support for the Saharan cause is taking place after several Algerian denials conflicting with foreign news items, according to which Algeria would have changed its opinion regarding the Western Saharan conflict. It also takes place after the fortuitous "shaking of hands" between King Hassan II of Morocco and the Algerian President, Chadli Bendjedid, during the Islamic summit in Taef, and to which the Algerians were prompt to make of it an expression of "simple courtesy." Algeria notes that it was one of the first countries to have officially recognized the Arab Republic of Democratic Sahara which, pending the nomination of an ambassador, is represented in Algiers by a diplomatic envoy. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 13 Feb 81 p 360] 9745

NEW AIRPORT--Mr Mohamed Kortebi, the Minister of Public Works, visited Djanet and In-Amenas at the end of a long journey that he conducted in the southern governments from 26 to 31 January. Immediately after his arrival in the Tassili capital, Mr Kortebi proceeded to inspect the site of the city's future airport. The construction of this airport, which will include a 3000 m main runway and a 2400 m secondary runway, responds to the Djanet region's need to "open up." The former airport is no longer capable of fulfilling Djanet's needs. The Minister of Public Works supervised the building of the new airport in In-Amenas. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 13 Feb 81 p 360] 9745

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COOPERATION WITH CZECHOSLOVAKIA--At the invitation of his counterpart, Mr Mohamed Seddick Benyahia, the Czechoslovakian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Bohuslav Chnoupek, headed a delegation that conducted an official visit to Algeria from 3 to 7 February. He was received by President Chadli Benjedid, to whom he transmitted a message from President Gustav Husak. During this visit, Mr Chnoupek was also received by the Algerian Prime Minister, Mr Mohamed Benamed Abdelghani, and assisted in the signing of a legal agreement with the Minister of Justice, Mr Boualem Baki. A common statement issued by the Algerian and Czechoslovakian delegations emphasized that their discussions were "in the spirit of friendship and mutual understanding" and dealt with bilateral cooperation and the international situation. The two parties "reaffirm their willingness to pursue their efforts with the idea of intensifying and increasing cooperation in all fields," and in regards to economic, scientific, and technical cooperation, "are very pleased with the results of the fifth session of the mixed committee and of the future opportunities which have arisen to give it a new and continuing influence." As to the international situation, the two delegations expressed their support for the people of Namibia and Western Sahara by giving homage to the role of the non-aligned movement and proclaiming a "full and complete solidarity for national liberation movements in their legitimate struggle for the exercise by their people of the right to self-determination and independence." They especially feel that "the ways and means of a just and durable solution to the Western Saharan problem were as clearly defined by the OAU and its ad hoc committee as by the General Assembly of the United Nations, particularly resolution 35-19 of 11 November 1980. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 13 Feb 81 p 361] 9745

THREE DOLLAR PER BARREL SURCHARGE REMOVED--Japanese sources point out that Algeria has suppressed the \$3 per barrel surcharge on the official price of its oil. However, Algeria would still not have notified Japanese businessmen of this reduction, the current contracts having not yet expired. In Japanese industrial circles one estimates that this decrease, which would be applied by other countries like Nigeria and Kuwait--whereas Malaysia has already given notice of a reduction retroactive to 1 February, of .5 dollar on its surcharge of \$1.50 per barrel--reflects a shrinking demand. One emphasizes as well that it is the first time that the prices are being revised downward since the Iranian revolution in February 1979. According to the Japanese oil industries, of the 23.97 million barrels of oil produced by the OPEC nations each day last November, only 2.2 million barrels a day were affected by the surcharges. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 20 Feb 81 p 417] 9745

JAPAN CP TALKS WITH FLN--Tokyo, Mar 5, JPS--Presidium Vice-Chairman Tomio Nishizawa of the Japanese Communist Party had talks with Cheriet Lazhari, member of the Central Committee of the National Liberation Front [FLN] of Algeria, in Algiers on March 3. JCP Vice-Chairman Nishizawa heard of social and economic developments in Algeria, and exchanged views on international issues. Both sides stressed the importance of the principles described in the joint communique between the delegations of the JCP and FLN in 1967, and confirmed that solidarity between them will be developed on these principles. [Text] [OW051107 Tokyo JPS in English 0916 GMT 5 Mar 81]

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U.S. GAS DELIVERIES--The delivery of Algerian gas to the United States, interrupted for almost one year because of a price disagreement, could resume before long. This was the prevailing impression among knowledgeable circles on the eve of the new round of negotiations which were to take place in Algiers on 17 and 18 February, where for the first time the new Reagan government was called upon to intervene in the discussions begun in May 1980. At the El Paso company headquarters, the principal American importer of Algerian gas, one estimated moreover that this next round of discussions should be particularly "important." Remember that the conflict on the price of Algerian gas had been provoked by the decision of the Algerian government to raise the price from \$1.75 to \$6.11 a thousand square feet. The opposition to this increase, both on behalf of the U.S. Government and the El Paso company, had brought about the halt of the Algerian deliveries. The El Paso company suffered losses estimated at several hundreds of millions of dollars due to this fact, mainly because of the grounding of its gas tankers and the reduction of its ground installations' activities. In economic circles, one estimates that even now an agreement could be made on a price of around \$5 per 1000 square feet, thus equalling what the United States accepts to pay for natural gas from Mexico (\$.82) and Canada (\$4.95). We emphasize, finally, that the following factors work especially in favor of the early conclusion of an agreement: the establishment of better relations between the United States and Algeria following Algeria's role in the settlement of the hostage affair; Algeria's financial needs in its development plan and the prospect of future decontrol of natural gas prices in the United States. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 20 Feb 81 p 417] 9745

GAS PRICE TALKS WITH MEXICO--On 15 February, Mr Jose Andres Oteya, the Mexican Minister of Natural Resources and Industrial Development, arrived in Algeria for a 3-day official visit. His visit follows the one to Mexico in 1980 of Mr Belkacem Nabi, the Algerian Minister of Energy and Petrochemical Industries, with whom he was supposed to examine the means of developing technological cooperation between the two countries in energy and industrial matters. In Algeria, it is thought that the Mexican minister was supposed to bring up the policy of Mexican and Algerian natural gas exportations with Mr Belkacem. Both countries are important suppliers of natural gas to the United States. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 20 Feb 81 p 417] 9745

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LEBANON

PRESIDENT SHAM'UN DISCUSSES CURRENT ARAB EVENTS

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 30 Jan-5 Feb 81 pp 32-33

[Interview with Camille Sham'un: "Camille Sham'un Tells AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI, 'I Expect Nothing from the Lebanese-Syrian Summit' "]

[Text] Lebanon is to benefit the most from Iraq's victory.

I was the first one to suggest the use of oil as a weapon against the West.

The withdrawal of the Syrians from Lebanon has become a national necessity.

Former Lebanese president Camille Sham'un is over 80 years old. So far he has spent half a century in politics amidst the opposition and the government, in revolutions and in wars. He may be one of the most experienced Lebanese politicians in the affairs of the region. He is known to have many friends and many enemies. He participates in many activities, and he is one of Lebanon's decision makers in peace as well as in war.

His friends and his supporters regard him as absolutely the most prominent of the Lebanese politicians. His opponents are adamant in their opposition to him, but they respect and fear him. In all cases one cannot go by the name of Camille Sham'un without paying attention. One is either for him or against him. In many cases one is with him and against him at the same time.

AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI met with him to ask him about his position as president of the Lebanese Front on his Phalangist allies, on the matters of concern for Lebanon and the region and on the changes that the world has seen in the latter part of the seventies. The [following] interview ensued.

[Question] Ever since the operation that has been called the 7 July operation took place and Lebanese public opinion has been bewildered by President Sham'un's position which seems to have sanctioned the Phalangist conditions for cooperation. What are the reasons that seem to prompt you to show such sanction to which you have not been accustomed throughout your political life?

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[Answer] I denounced the 7 July incident, and I condemned the attack on the lives of innocent people. Among those innocent people were those who happened to be passing through, young men who are members of the national liberals, young men who are members of the Lebanese Phalangists and foreign workers who unfortunately were in that spot at the time of the incident. In view of this massacre and its direct and indirect results, I had to take one of two positions: either avenge the victims, shed much blood and firmly implant division within the same rank; or exercise self-control in order to preserve the military and the political activists under the present circumstances. I took this road despite the pain it cost me and despite the control I had to exercise on my feelings and on the wounded vigor of our young men. I was not to forget that I was the president of the Lebanese Front, which includes the Lebanese Phalangists and the National Liberal parties; it now controls its political and military wings. The front had done well in the recent events at Zahlah where the efforts of the various forces had converged to oppose the aggression.

[Question] Is the return of al-Damur residents to their town imminent?

[Answer] The return of the residents of al-Damur to their town is their indisputable right. The Palestinians have to honor this right, and they have to give back the town to its legal owners. This is what they should do if we assume that the Palestinians have a wise policy that seeks to win them the sympathy of the Lebanese people in whose midst they are living today. Before anything else they need that sympathy. A policy that is based on weapons is not a long-term policy. At any rate the people of al-Damur will go back to their town, and so will all those who were forced to leave their villages and their lands all over Lebanon.

What Is Required of the Phalangists

[Question] Do you believe that the exit of the Syrians from Lebanon will bring the Lebanese disputes to an end? Will the Phalangists' power in the eastern region be enough as an alternative? What power in your estimate can equal it in the western region?

[Answer] The exit of the Syrians from Lebanon will make the accord among the Lebanese easier. After the Syrians' departure there would be no point in pursuing the policy of "divide and conquer" or the policy of collecting clients and spheres of influence. Furthermore, the lawful forces will consequently undertake to preserve public security and safety in the various regions of Lebanon. Until this happens I hope that the work of the Phalangist forces and of other organizations will be up to the level of this mission.

[Question] What are your expectations for the Lebanese-Syrian summit if it is held?

[Answer] I have no expectations of the Lebanese-Syrian summit if it is

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held. It is a passive meeting like the other meetings that preceded it. Words and resolutions that lack implementation.

[Question] Would you comment on the efforts of the Lebanese Front to internationalize the Lebanese question?

[Answer] The Lebanese Front is justified in its efforts to bring the UN forces to preserve public safety in Lebanon. At any rate, the withdrawal of the Syrian forces from Lebanon has become a national necessity.

Victory Is the Ally of Iraq

[Question] How do you view the tension that is being renewed on the Syrian-Jordanian borders?

[Answer] The tension that is being renewed every day between the Syrian and the Jordanian government is contrived. The only reason for it is the desire of Damascus to distract public opinion from the reality of conditions in Syria.

[Question] The Iraq-Iran war continues. What has been the effect of this war so far on the Lebanese crisis and on the Palestinian question?

[Answer] The war between Iraq and Iran is about to come to an end. I believe that victory will be on the side of Iraq. Iraq's victory will have a direct impact on numerous affairs of this spot in the Middle East. Lebanon will benefit the most from this because it will find in Iraq especially and in Jordan and Saudi Arabia loyal friends who are well-disposed to broad, constructive cooperation.

I Fear That....

[Question] Early in your political life, you were one of the first to defend the Palestinian question. What is your historical explanation for opposing the Palestinians today?

[Answer] There is a vast difference between the Palestinian question that I used to defend desperately and the Palestinians and their conduct in Lebanon [today]. It was the Palestinians and their conduct in Lebanon that caused the Lebanese-Palestinian war, with the encouragement of some Arab and foreign countries.

[Question] You used to have an unpublicized dialogue with the PLO. Has this dialogue been suspended or is it continuing?

[Answer] This dialogue stopped not only because of the Palestinians alone, as it appears to me, but rather because of the interference of Arab authorities that can be found in Lebanon.

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[Question] In your judgment was the PLO a loser or a winner in 1980 on the world scene?

[Answer] If the measure of profit or loss is the vote that takes place at the UN General Assembly, there is no doubt that the Palestinian question maintained profits that often times crystallized in international consensus. But as far as the liberation organization itself is concerned, I fear that some of its local and international conduct may have caused it to lose many of its friendships and much of the support which it had acquired.

The Federation and Lebanon's Role

[Question] After the recent events in Zahlah observers noticed a change in the French and American positions. These positions had opposed the Syrian role in Lebanon. What in your opinion are the reasons for this change?

[Answer] The reason was the fact that the Syrian troops had shelled a large city such as Zahlah at random and had threatened its destruction. It was natural for world public opinion to move especially after it saw what had happened in the past in the regions of al-Ashrafiyyah, al-Hadath and 'Ayn al-Rummanah.

[Question] The recent document of the Lebanese Front proposed the idea of amending the 1943 National Pact and looking for a federation or a confederation formula. Will this suggestion be met with preliminary approval in Europe and in the United States? What is the Soviet Union's position on this proposal?

[Answer] The Lebanese Front did not seek Europe's opinion or that of the United States or the Soviet Union when it proposed the subject of broad decentralization, federation or confederation because it considered this subject to be purely Lebanese and that it would be only the Lebanese who would express their opinion on it. This internal matter has no effect on international relations or affiliations. Foreign policy, defense and the economy will continue to be subject to the control of the central government, that is, the government of all of Lebanon.

[Question] Do you believe that the fall of Begin's government and the return of the Israeli Labor party to power will help stir the Lebanese crisis?

[Answer] I see no direct relationship between the presence of Begin in government, the return of the Labor party to power and the crisis in Lebanon. But it is being said that the Labor party is less extreme than Begin and that the fact that it will take over power may lead to a solution of the Palestinian question and thereby help stir the crisis in Lebanon.

[Question] What do you expect for the future of the Camp David

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negotiations? What effects will the success or the failure of these negotiations have on the Lebanese scene?

[Answer] It would be hasty to express an opinion about what will happen after Reagan becomes the president of the United States and Perez [comes into power] in Israel. It would be better to wait and see how each one of them will view the Camp David negotiations. Will these negotiations be resumed from the point which they had reached, or will they be replaced by new suggestions? King Husayn has rejected the principles of Camp David, and he has also refused to take part in the negotiations to which he had been invited.

[Question] Poland, Afghanistan, the Arabian Gulf, Chad and Lebanon are considered turbulent regions. They are the touchstones of international detente. Are you one of those who are saying that international detente is being threatened and that the Middle East will be the field of the principal struggle in 1981?

[Answer] This is an important and a sensitive question that requires international experts to answer it.

[Then we went back to President Sham'un, the old-fashioned man in Lebanese politics. We asked him about himself and whether he regretted some of his political positions].

If the Arabs Were To Agree

[Question] You have reached the 8th decade of the 20th century, and your political struggle is as old as the history of Lebanon's independence. Today, as we begin 1981, how do you assess your long political history in contemporary Lebanon?

[Answer] I carried out the first positive political action to speak of in 1929 when I took part in an active way in the parliamentary elections that took place. I became a deputy early in 1934; then I became a minister of public works and of finance in 1937. Ever since then it can be said that I took part in all the events that happened and [I was involved in] all the historical, political decisions that were made and that have to do with the present and the future of Lebanon at that time, and especially after the success which crowned the struggle of the Lebanese people for their independence and the sovereignty of their homeland. I feel, now that many years have gone by, that I have always tried to do my national duty on all occasions and in the different circumstances that Lebanon experienced.

[Question] Can it be said that in recalling and relating the history of your political struggle, one is relating the history of Lebanon since its independence?

[Answer] I do not exaggerate when I say that my political life was completely merged with the history of Lebanon, and I am proud of that.

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[Question] What are the positions that you took in your political life in the past and in the present that led to change the course of Lebanon's modern history?

[Answer] First, there was my entry into the political battle ground, and I am being presumptuous in making this statement. This decision was the beginning of everything in my political life. Second, there was my position since 1942 against the mandate. I was the only politician who revealed his intentions and his plan for independence. Then I worked afterwards with some politicians who pursued the same path in 1943. They approved amending the constitution, and they dispossessed the mandatory power of the authorities granted to it by the constitution.

Afterwards I stopped working in domestic politics and I agreed to go as an ambassador extraordinary to London, which was the lodestone of diplomatic affairs, to complete the independence of Lebanon and Syria. I worked for both countries at the same time as though they were one country. Then, since mid 1945 I became engaged in the battles for Palestine. In 1946, 1947 and 1948 [I fought those battles] at the United Nations. Naturally my defense of Palestine did not change the face of history, but I am certain that if the Arabs had been prepared to adopt my suggestions at the United Nations and at the Arab League which met in Cairo, they would have been able to change the face of history. The suggestion was made early in 1948 for the first time that oil be used as a political weapon to exert pressure on the West. I was the one who made that suggestion.

In September 1952 I was elected president of the Republic of Lebanon. During my administration the political rights of Lebanese women were recognized, the courts were strengthened, the state's administrative offices were organized and construction projects were established. Among these were the Litani project; Beirut International Airport; highways, irrigation and electricity projects. The sports complex in West Beirut was built, and the government complex in al-Dakunah [was also built]. Streets and main roads were paved in the heart of the capital and on al-Ramlah al-Bayda'. Nevertheless, it is my view that the greatest work for which I was fully responsible was that in which I opposed the attempts that sought to make Lebanon one of the regions of a united Arab republic. Despite cruel circumstances and numerous betrayals I preserved the sovereignty of the people of Lebanon and the safety of its lands.

[Question] If you had to live your life over again, would you choose to be Camille Sham'un and would you live as Camille Sham'un has lived? In other words, what would you keep in your life and what would you get rid of?

[Answer] I would choose to be Camille Sham'un in particular, and I would do more than I did in the various fields. I would avoid some errors. May God be praised. Only He is infallible.

[Question] Is there something that worries you about the political

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succession? Do you consider politics to be [the cause of] breaking up families?

[Answer] I did not understand the question or what you intend by it. At any rate I am not one of those who considers the practice of politics to be the exclusive domain of a family or a legacy intended for the members of a single family. But I do hope that my two sons, Duri and Danny will use all the power, knowledge and experience they have to serve the homeland and to improve its condition.

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WESTERN SAHARA

SDAR WILL SEEK 'OTHER SUPPORT' IF MILITARY SITUATION DEMANDS

LD061119 Paris AFRIQUE-ASIE in French 2-15 Mar 81 pp 10-14

[Interview with Saharan Democratic Arab Republic Government Chief Mohamed Lamine by Kamel Djaider: "Hassan II Besieged in His 'Useful Triangle'"--date and place not given]

[Text] [Question] Now that the Saharan Democratic Arab Republic [SDAR] has been in existence for 5 years, could you tell us how the Saharan state's structures have evolved, and what kind of hearing the SDAR is now getting in the world?

Mohamed Lamine: First, we thank AFRIQUE-ASIE for the interests it has always shown since its foundation in all just causes and in oppressed people throughout the world, particularly in Africa. The SDAR, which was proclaimed on 27 February 1976 in response to the Spanish Moroccan and Mauritanian governments' colonialist maneuvers, filled the political and legal vacuum resulting from these same maneuvers which those countries tried in vain to legalize.

Our people showed that those maneuvers could not be continued because they constituted a threat to their existence and their civilization in this part of the Arab Maghreb. You know in what conditions our young state was proclaimed. Thousands of our citizens were the victims of bloody and abominable massacres. Morocco's king wanted to physically eliminate the Saharan element from this region in order to realize his objective--a crucial point in the West Saharan question--namely to seize our phosphate resources. On 5 March 1976 the first Saharan Government was formed. Several ministries were combined into single bodies, as was the case with the health and education ministries which were entrusted to the martyr Bala Ahmed Zein--the only doctor trained in 100 years of Spanish colonialism.

After solving the most pressing problems affecting our country, we turned to the formation of our army in order to give it a planned organization, to transform it from a guerrilla army into a classic, conventional army, but one which was still capable of pursuing the guerrilla war at any time. Thus we succeeded in hitting at the enemy--Morocco and Mauritania--at their most sensitive points and at considerable distances from our home bases. Those battles were launched by one of our militants, the martyr el-Ouali Mustapha Sayed, who proved to the world that a liberation movement's leaders must be on the battlefield. Without wishing to dwell on this question I will simply say that in 5 years of war, of sustained

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struggle, sacrifices and tears our people have succeeded in establishing an organized administration not only in the army but also on the civilian level. Ministries have been created to run their affairs. At present, for instance, our people are suffering little illness. The Health Ministry has played a crucial role in prevention in keeping with the 3rd Polisario Front Congress decisions. We now have several hospitals and are systematically implementing prevention campaigns at national level.

As regards education, I can tell you that 75 percent of the children who have escaped the Moroccan Air Force's bombings and napalm are pursuing their studies normally despite unfavorable climatic conditions--the region in which we are now living was formerly only inhabited by animals; and we hope that they will move on to higher education in future. Still on the subject of education, a 5-year program was drawn up in 1980. To implement this program cadres who are pursuing their studies abroad in friendly countries are going to start returning this year.

At administrative level the Interior Ministry, which heads the national administration, has played its role fully by moving the administration closer to the citizen and vice versa. Grassroots people's congress elect administrative officials who work in direct coordination with the wilayas, which in turn take political and administrative action in liaison with the Interior Ministry and the Polisario Front Politburo. At social level, and particularly in the people's justice sphere, it should be pointed out that Spanish colonialism formerly drew a distinction between its own justice and traditional justice.

Consequently we were quickly faced with difficulties when it came to transforming the old judiciary into a new and modern judiciary evolving in accordance with the facts of our time, especially since the SDAR Constitution proclaims that Islam is the state religion and source of the laws. It is on this important basis that the law courts solve our people's problems. Other institutions have also been established, including the Saharan Red Crescent, which plays a very important role in aid operations for our children with the help of other international humanitarian organizations or with our own means.

We also have semimilitary schools, because we are convinced that the national liberation war will be a long struggle although we will inevitably win. We founded these semimilitary schools which are also national education centers for our children and for adults. Existing social institutions such as communications, trade and so forth are functioning normally, and any shortcomings are due to the transition from a traditional administration to an organized administration, which takes time and effort to establish. The militants who run these institutions have acquired an experience and maturity which in the future will enable them to eliminate the effects of colonialism.

Before turning to the international sphere I would like to say that the entire Saharan people are organized within the framework of the Polisario Front and that there is coordination between the military operations and the activities of our people's masses in the occupied zones. For example in el-Aiun, Smara and Dakhla there are very close relations between the liberation army leaders

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and the population. That has important repercussions at international level, which is natural from our viewpoint because the enormous sacrifices made by our people automatically have repercussions on the struggle at international level. I would now like to discuss the way in which we make our just cause known in the world.

Great confusion was created by Hassan II's regime in 1975 on conflicting themes: "The Saharan people do not exist.... The Saharan people are not in a position to found their own state.... They are a handful of Bedouins...herdsmen.... The West Sahara question is simply a policing operation.... It is a rheumatic pain which appears when the sun rises and vanishes when it sets...." Well, the Rabat regime's rheumatism has finally turned into cancer. The same thing happened with Ould Daddah's regime in Mauritania, which collapsed thanks to the immense sacrifices made by our people whose combativeness and organization have aroused admiration, esteem and respect in the world.

Today the SDAR has diplomatic relations at ambassador level with more than 45 countries despite the lack of cadres trained in this sphere. We think that any victory at international level is merely the reflection of sacrifices on the battlefields. It must be added that all the world's democratic forces are adding their voices to those of our people and supporting their liberation battle politically, materially and morally.

[Question] What do you think of the resolution on the West Sahara which has just been passed by the nonaligned countries' ministerial conference in New Delhi?

Mohamed Lamine: The nonaligned movement, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary, constitutes a hope for us because it is a militant anticolonialist movement whose members have virtually all gained independence recently. That movement had already studied the West Sahara question before this meeting, and even before we launched our armed struggle. I would like to take this opportunity to point out that, despite the Polisario Front's frank and eloquent collaboration with the OAU, considering that we are African first and foremost, Morocco has opposed the implementation of the African decisions even though two consecutive periods of 3 months were given to Hassan II to reconsider and put his mistake right. Having said that, we know that any decision taken by the non-aligned movement requires consensus among its members; and that affects the course taken in adopting decisions. In this connection the recent New Delhi resolution was rather modest especially since it was preceded by some important events, including the resolution passed by the 35th UN General Assembly, which could not have been clearer and which was passed by a majority drawn from the nonaligned movement.

Furthermore, the recommendations made by the OAU ad hoc committee on the West Sahara have not been implemented owing to Morocco's obstructions. The world is unanimous in demanding that Morocco withdraw its troops and respect the Saharan people's right to self-determination and independence, at a time when Morocco is engaged in the construction of a barrier around what it calls the "useful triangle." There is a flagrant contradiction between the operation being mounted by Rabat in the field and the noisy campaign being waged on the ad hoc committee's

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recommendations by the media which serve the royal palace. This is part of a diversionary maneuver aimed at diverting Moroccan and international opinion from the reality of the odious operation to construct a fortified line around this phosphate-rich region.

[Question] What is the significance of the visit which an important Polisario Front delegation has just made to Mauritania?

Mohamed Lamine: There are historical facts which cannot be ignored. The Mauritanian people are a fraternal people to whom we are bound by several relationships. There are the militant historical relations forged in the struggle against French colonial penetration at the beginning of our century. The living conditions of our refugees whom colonial Spain forced to remain in Mauritania are also one aspect of our relations. There are also the repercussions of the lost war which Ould Daddah's regime launched against our people. Finally there is the peace treaty signed between the Polisario Front and Mauritania on 5 August 1979. All those factors added to the danger posed by the famous Moroccan symphony of demands on Mauritania are elements which bind us to each other.

As Saharans these links oblige us to show an interest in what is happening on our southern border because the existence of an independent state on Mauritania's northern borders is a sine qua non of any stability in that country. The same is true of our country, which cannot imagine living in peace if Mauritania is in a state of destabilization. Thus we must remove the scars of this war, which was damaging to our two peoples even though it only lasted 2 years. The Mauritanian patriots must be informed of the Polisario Front's good intention to revive the long-standing historical relations between Mauritania and Saharans.

In this context and in view of the danger which threatens our two countries, namely Morocco's claims on our territories, not to mention other demands which come from Mauritania's south, we took the initiative of holding frequent meetings in keeping with the 5 August treaty, in order to build a new type of relations founded on mutual respect for the two countries' sovereignty. It is in this context that our delegation visited Nouakchott. The talks with our Mauritanian brothers were fruitful and reflected the concerns we share as well as our individual concerns. A higher level visit will probably crown this process in the future in that our two peoples might rediscover their historical ties, their common destiny and their mutual respect.

[Question] How do you explain the attitude adopted by the United States which, after making a de facto recognition of the Saharan people by sending a State Department delegation to visit you in the liberated territory for the first time, suddenly decided to supply arms to Rabat? Is this the result of the change at the White House? Or is Washington in a way taking over from French intervention?

Mohamed Lamine: U.S. policy is constant. We know that the Moroccan king is a friend of the United States. This is not just the Saharan people's notion. It is the opinion held by the Moroccans and Americans. The United States naturally gives Morocco unqualified support. But the existence of a historical reality,

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namely that the Saharan people exist, have their own state and enjoy an international standing, forces some powers at a given moment to be cautious about this lost war. Of course the United States, which is supplying Morocco with destructive weapons, also knows perfectly well that this is a lost war. But that is the price paid for friendship. It is true that we were visited by U.S. administration delegations, but we have been visited by various political organizations (House and Senate organizations in particular). Nonetheless, this plan to arm Morocco is not in the least new. It follows the visit which Hassan II made to the United States last year. In effect this gesture expresses open hostility to a struggling people. It is also inconsistent with the ideals of the American people, who fought for years to win their independence. But this constant U.S. policy does not change when the White House staff changes.

By supporting Jimmy Carter against Ronald Reagan during the U.S. election period the Moroccan king may have been taking his internal policy into consideration. That did not prevent Reagan from deciding to supply new arms. I think that the burden of friendship with Morocco is shared by all Hassan II's allies, be it the United States, France, Saudi Arabia or even other Arab regimes, including those who have most often loudly proclaimed the virtues of their progressive line. Any U.S. initiative in the region is taken in conjunction with others. France intervened directly with military force against our people in 1977 and 1978. But that did not solve the problem. At present it is the United States which is supplying arms to Morocco, despite the deep conviction felt by the U.S. and even Moroccan leaders that the problem is a political one and can only be solved politically. The Americans' argument is that they are supplying arms to Morocco with the aim of placing themselves in a position of strength, so that they are able to negotiate. But this is throwing fat on the fire. The more Morocco's military potential is strengthened, the more determined it is to annex or at least claim more territories. I believe that there is close coordination among all the forces arming Morocco and supporting its war. From Pretoria to Washington...

As peaceful people who condemn war, we can only continue to defend our right to existence, whatever the scale of Moroccan military means. But the factor which the Moroccans and Americans pretend to ignore is the Moroccan soldier himself. Thousands of Moroccan soldiers and officers are in our hands; thousands more are opposed to the war even if they do not expressly say so for fear of the repression constantly hanging over them. The results of the military operations are the best illustration of that. How can anybody imagine a big, trained conventional army having humiliating military setbacks inflicted on it by a "band of guerrillas"? If the Moroccan soldier had been motivated, he should have rediscovered the natural courage he had during his patriotic wars. For instance, in 1954, 1955 and 1956 the Moroccan resistance against colonialism was fierce. That produced great feats of arms and epics which nobody can forget. But in the West Saharan war that courage has been worn away, owing to a lack of motivation and faith in the justice of this war.

[Question] Do you envisage a particular response to the U.S. decision?

Mohamed Lamine: Our military policy is unchanging. We will fight in the sands of the Sahara as the Vietnamese fought on the plains and in the forests of their

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country. We will confront this supply of arms, which constitutes a danger to our entire region, with all the means at our disposal. We have always opposed the internationalization of the conflict, but it seems that the West's complication of the Saharan problem will force us to resort to other support. Despite France's direct intervention in 1977 and the increased injection of various different types of arms from that same country, we did not want to move in a given direction in order to safeguard our movement's independent nature and its individuality. But if people persist in these provocative operations they must realize that we too have friends in the world. I mean this from the military viewpoint.

As regards the diplomatic and political spheres, I think that this operation has already been widely condemned. The least that can be done is to denounce it, because it followed a remarkable development in the Saharan people's struggle-- the imposition of the SDAR on the international scene as an unavoidable reality enjoying full sovereignty over more than 95 percent of the national territory.

[Question] Can the French stance be said to have evolved in a positive way?

Mohamed Lamine: We can say that its stance has been frozen, but French arms are still circulating behind the scenes.

[Question] What is the position in the field on the Moroccan strategy of the "useful triangle"?

Mohamed Lamine: As you know, there have been numerous reorganizations of the Moroccan Army. From large concentrations of mobile troops it changed to light commando units and then to autonomous regiments named the Ouhoud and the Zelaka. But after this total failure due, as I said before, to the Moroccan soldier's lack of enthusiasm for the war, and after we liberated Mahbes, Amgalha, Tifariti, Haouza, Jdiria and the whole southern part of our country aside from Dakhla and invaded Moroccan posts and areas like Lebouirate, the Moroccans started to construct a barrier identical to the notorious Morice line in the Algerian war.

This dishonors the Moroccan Army and illustrates the false nature of Rabat's allegations against the Sahara. The Moroccan king, who was demanding the entire Western Sahara, Mauritania and part of Algeria, is now strangely enough limiting himself to a section of the Sahara less than 400 square km. However, our army is well informed on this subject. The construction of this barrier requires control over a line around 500 km long. I do not think the Moroccans will succeed even with the U.S. Army's direct participation. So far they have only managed to construct a line almost 21 km long, when they had envisaged celebrating the completion of the first 90 km in Smara on 6 November 1980.

That is why the Moroccan king said that 1980 would see the solution of the Saharan conflict and a little later asked for an additional month (until January 1981)... That is reminiscent of 1975 and the scenario of the Moroccan "policing operation" in the West Sahara. On the battlefield more than 27,000 Moroccan soldiers have been concentrated at Ras el-Khanfra since August 1980, where they are suffering violent attacks from our fighters and are besieged to the extent of being unable to reach the Saharan border. The more this operation develops,

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the stronger and more definite the resistance becomes. All this shows Morocco's inability to win a victory in the field, however small, and the failure of the strategy drawn up by its military elite.

[Question] What do you think of the persistent rumors about secret negotiations on the Saharan question?

Mohamed Lamine: So far we have not conducted any unofficial or secret negotiations with the Moroccans. I think that the talk of secret negotiations between other parties and Morocco and, to be more clear and direct, between Algeria and Morocco is an attempt to disguise the additional military means placed at Rabat's disposal. This is a maneuver aimed at playing for time in order to distract international opinion and particularly the Saharan people's friends. Algeria has reaffirmed its position many times. But it seems that this campaign is being coordinated from Morocco to tarnish Algeria's image in the world and reduce the scope of Morocco's repeated defeats and its growing international isolation.

[Question] What about the speculations on the evolution of your relations with Algeria and Libya?

Mohamed Lamine: We think that there is a new attempt aimed at preventing any rapprochement between Algeria and Libya--two countries which have a common militant past and which have great influence in the region. As far as we are concerned, any rapprochement between Algeria and Libya is in the interests of the Saharan, Algerian and Libyan peoples; especially since in 1976 we called for the creation of a strategic alliance between the three revolutions. As regards our relations proper with these two countries, I can tell you that they are very strong. As long as those relations remain strong, what does it matter about foreign rumors being spread outside our borders and outside Algeria and Libya!

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WESTERN SAHARA

BRIEFS

JCP-POLISARIO FRONT TALKS--Tokyo, 2 Mar (JPS)--Tomio Nishizawa, vice-chairman of the Presidium of the Japanese Communist Party, on 27 February attended the ceremony to commemorate the 5th anniversary of founding Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic, and on the next day talked with a deputy secretary of the Polisario Front. In the talks Nishizawa thanked the front for the invitation, greeted achievements won by the Saharawi people guided by the Polisario Front, and expressed solidarity to the struggle of the front and people. The JCP vice-chairman also handed the message of the party's Central Committee to the Central Committee of the Polisario Front. [Text] [Tokyo JPS in English 0929 GMT 2 Mar 81 OW]

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END

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