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Near East/North Africa Report

(FOUO 26/82)

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NEAR EAST/NORTH AFRICA REPORT

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AFGHANISTAN

GUERRILLA LEADER EVALUATES MILITARY SITUATION

OW051912 Tokyo TOKYO SHIMBUN in Japanese 3 Jun 82 Morning Edition p 5

[Interview with Haji Mangal Husayn, external affairs official of the Islamic Alliance of Afghan Freedom Fighters, by reporter Yoshio Kasahara in Tokyo--date not indicated]

[Text] It has been 2 and 1/2 years since the Soviet Union launched its military intervention in Afghanistan. The Afghan issue tends to escape the people's attention, being overshadowed by the recent new developments in the Falklands dispute and the Iran-Iraq war; but there is no denying the fact that "another war" is going on in that country. Engaged in a determined guerrilla warfare against the massive Soviet forces are Islamic fighters called Mojahedin. The guerrilla forces recently attained their cherished desire, unity, which boosted their fighting spirit even more. This reporter has called on Haji Mangal Husayn, one of the guerrilla leaders now visiting Japan, at a Tokyo hotel and asked him about the latest developments and prospects in the Afghan war.

Question: How far has the unification of the guerrilla organizations progressed?

Answer: Last September seven major groups agreed to band together. They then made efforts to unify the various organizations, and set up the "Alliance of Afghan Freedom Fighters" on 14 March. The largest guerrilla organization, "Islamic Front" (the Hekmatiyar faction), naturally joined this alliance. The new alliance has set up 12 committees, including the military, education and refugee measures committees, under it. The heads of these committees and the chairman, vice chairman and secretary general of the alliance make up the 15-man supreme leadership.

Question: Thus far the guerrilla organizations have gone through a repeating process of unification and division. Is there no chance of another split?

Answer: The alliance this time is very firm and lasting. There was the question of who should be named chairman of the unified organization, but this time we decided on a monthly rotating system based on voting. Re-elections are accepted. The present chairman is Professor (Saif) of the Islamic Revolutionary Front. Mr Hekmatiyar, the strong man, made a

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concession and became vice chairman. This shows consideration for the sake of keeping unity.

Question: How are you going to coordinate differences in campaign policies and views among the various groups? What is the basic strategy of the new alliance?

Answer: The internal differences within our organization have largely been exaggerated and are contrary to fact. Our aim is to chase out the Soviet forces and establish a true Islamic government in Afghanistan. The Soviet forces control "points" (cities) in Afghanistan only during daytime, and 90 percent of the territory is under the control of the guerrillas. Local governments have been established in the liberated areas. We enjoy the support of the entire people. We firmly believe in the victory of the resistance movement.

Question: How are you going to chase out those mighty and huge Soviet forces? Do you not think that it is militarily impossible?

Answer: We do not think so. Afghanistan did not yield to Alexander's expedition forces, nor to the repeated attacks by the British forces. We will absolutely not lose. The morale of the Soviet officers and men is extremely low, far from being mighty and huge. They have doubts about what they have come to Afghanistan for. In comparison, the Islamic fighters engaged in carrying out Jihad (holy war) have a firm belief. The weapons used by the guerrillas have been mostly seized from the Soviet forces. We will accept assistance from outside on a case-by-case basis.

Question: How do the guerrillas view the present situation? Can you give figures?

Answer: The Soviet forces stationed in Afghanistan number 150,000 men making up 17 divisions. Thus far they have suffered 40,000 men killed in action with the number of wounded many times that number. The Afghan government forces have been reduced to between 20,000 and 30,000 men. Armed members of the guerrilla forces number 200,000 men. There are 3 million refugees in Pakistan and another million in Iran.

Question: How do you evaluate the plans for a political settlement of the Afghan issue or for a neutral Afghanistan?

Answer: They are totally out of the question. We do not want to be swayed by the big powers. As a matter of fact, is the Soviet Union, a superpower, not carrying out aggression in Afghanistan? What we seek is not neutrality for our fatherland but true independence and the establishment of an Islamic government.

Question: My last question. What do your people want from Japan?

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Answer: The purpose of my visit to Japan this time is to let the Japanese people know about the present situation of the Mojahedin. I am not in a position to ask for assistance for the Afghan refugees, but I sincerely thank you, the people of Japan, for the warm assistance you have given.

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ALGERIA

AFTERMATH OF UGTA REORGANIZATION REVIEWED

Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French No 1904, 7 May 82 p 1188

[Text] An important speech by President Chadli Bendjedid opened the Sixth Congress of the UGTA [General Union of Algerian Workers] on 6 April. The head of state did not limit himself to dealing with the problems of workers and work from a very pronounced production perspective; he devoted part of his speech to foreign policy, and especially to relations between Algeria and Libya.

The UGTA, as such, had only a limited place in the president's speech. "Its effective contribution in the struggle to build the nation" was mentioned, and this was the only praise bestowed upon it. Then "its everyday activities within the context of general worker status and strengthening socialist management of companies" was briefly noted. Finally, its subordination to the party was forcefully recalled: The UGTA "is in the forefront in being responsible for applying and spreading the party's ideology among workers," resulting in its "importance as a permanent human resource for the party, and its responsibility in developing awareness among workers and mobilizing them."

A Strong Appeal to Production

The president strongly emphasized the personality and the role of the Algerian worker as being "fundamentally different from those of a worker in a capitalist economy." In fact, he asserted, "the worker who labors in the enterprises of the Algerian revolution is an integral part of this revolution and of the political leadership.... The Algerian Government is a government of workers.... The worker in our country cannot be considered as just a wage earner, but must be considered as responsible for production at the work station which he occupies.... There can be no 'master' or 'subject' here, but only a distribution of responsibilities according to the type of work and the obligations connected with it. Besides, the rights of the worker are guaranteed by the law." Consequently, contrary to what happens in the capitalist system where the worker struggles to seize his rights, "in our socialist system, there can be no reason for conflict, and complementarity and uniformity must be imperative."

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Making several references to errors, shortages, oversights and mistakes, the president justified the campaign to improve sanitation and the institution of quality control; he will not hesitate, he said, "to take the necessary steps, despite the atmosphere of confusion that some people are trying to introduce among activists and citizens."

Social developments in progress were then reviewed: overall status of the worker, socialist management of enterprises, restructuring of enterprises, social legislation, wage increases and so on; as well as the measures taken against those in charge who have tried to delay application of these provisions. The president particularly stressed the restructuring of enterprises for better management, along with decentralization of the headquarters of national enterprises. He endeavored to dispel workers' fears in this regard and asserted that this reform is not at all intended to cause layoffs; quite to the contrary, 140,000 new jobs were created in 1981.

Housing, reintegration of emigrants, wages and price control were also mentioned. But, the president noted, the cost of subsidizing the vital necessities rose from 900 million dinars in 1979 to 2.35 billion in 1981, and could reach 4 billion in 1982. As we cannot count on petroleum revenues indefinitely, it is essential to increase national production and to eliminate waste. If not, the speaker stressed, in a few years the consumer will perhaps have to pay four or five times as much for his sugar as he does today!

Union Confederation Reform

With an emphasis intended to be noted, the president therefore recommended an increased production effort. For the workers are generally dissatisfied, especially in the national companies, and strikes have increased over the past 2 years. The UGTA has not been able to discourage, or even to moderate, these protest tendencies; furthermore, many of its members have incited them. This seems to be the consequence of the policy of openness toward the extreme Left which the union federation followed not long ago under the influence of former party coordinator, Mr Mohammed Salah Yahiaoui, who is no longer part of its administration. Although the secretary general appointed at the time, Mr Abdallah Demene Debbih, responded strongly to accusations directed at him, and succeeded in having his moral report adopted, he was not reelected; nor was the national secretary long responsible for socialist management of enterprises, Mr Moustafa Boudina.

Thus, in the opinion of the president and the Central Committee, the permanent secretary of the FLN Central Committee, Mr Mohammed Sherif Messadia, the party's true motivator, has succeeded in reorienting the union confederation along orthodox lines. Cleverly coached by him, the congress replaced the UGTA's Executive Committee with a mostly new national council, decided to eliminate the large union federations (energy, education and the like) and to emphasize communal unions and other more manageable horizontal structures, and created national "professional sectors" directly inspired by federation leadership.

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It would therefore appear, once again, that the party will now more clearly impose its authority over mass organizations. Thus the revival and the strengthening of the FLN are following their course.

Meaningful Rapprochement with Libya

The president took the opportunity offered by the UGTA session to bring up some important international matters. The problem of the Western Sahara, through political prudence no doubt, was mentioned only discreetly: "As for the question of the region, our position is well known and there is no need to go over it.... In regard to our region, our policy is clear, as it is based on the principles of a good positive neighborly relationship."

After having asserted that revolutions could be neither exported nor imported, the president dwelt at length on relations with Libya, several of whose leaders met with their Algerian counterparts on 3 April in order to build a complementary economy. While conceding certain "differences of opinion with our Libyan brothers, "Mr Chadli Bendjedid firmly declared that any attack directed against Libya today will be directed against Algeria tomorrow, for it aims at the progressive forces in the region."

Due to a clearly recognized common destiny, Algeria and Libya have therefore begun to prepare a joint program: economic complementarity and rapprochement of political points of view in favor of the Maghreb and Arab unity. They will proceed toward these goals in stages, through Algerian-Libyan meetings at all levels, with the Algerian people obviously having to have the last word as far as the decisions to be made.

A briefer reference was made to cooperation with Tunisia, which has been pursued sincerely despite "disagreements on several political points." Good relations with our "brothers to the south" are being implemented through the mar-ing of Algerian borders which is in progress.

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ISRAEL

APPROACH TO ZAIRE, OTHER AFRICAN NATIONS ANALYZED

Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French No 1117, 2 Jun 82 pp 28-31

[Article by Sennen Andriamirado: "How Mobutu Was Lured"]

[Text] "There still remains one racial problem to solve. Only a Jew can understand it completely. I am thinking of the African problem." These words were not spoken by Menachem Begin, whose intimacy with the only political system in the world openly based on racial discrimination, apartheid, is well-known. They were written at the beginning of the century by Theodor Herzl, in "Altneuland," in a sense, the bible of Zionism.

Later, much later, an African statesman would echo him: "Israel has become a place of pilgrimage for African nations seeking a source of inspiration in the building of their country." It was not Mobutu Sese Seko who delivered this credo in order to explain his decision to restore diplomatic relations between Zaire and Israel on 14 May 1982. Rather, it was former Malian President Modibo Keita, who, at the beginning of the 1960's, wanted to breathe into his country a "pioneer spirit" inspired by the myth of the time: that of the Israeli pioneer who "made oranges grow in the desert."

Twenty years have gone by. The myth has evaporated. The Sahel does not produce oranges, to say nothing of the Sahara, because Africans do not have the means of the Jewish Diaspora that financed the orange groves in the Neguev in such an exorbitant manner for the sole purpose of glorifying Israeli technology. Israel has been "found out" by Africa: intransigent, dominating, smug. The October 1973 War put an end to Israeli-African relations. Out of solidarity with Egypt, part of whose territory had at that time been occupied since 1967, and with the Palestinians, deprived of a homeland because of Tel Aviv's will, Africa drove Israel out. At the beginning of 1982, except for South Africa, only two nations were still hosting official Israeli representations: Malawi and Swaziland. Everywhere else, the front of solidarity with the Arab countries and against Israel held firm. Zaire has opened the path to a new Israeli foothold in Africa. It is a diplomatic success of Israel, which sees in it the culmination of a campaign to charm launched less than 2 years ago and completed by sustained pressure lasting scarcely 6 months.

The signing of the Camp David Accords in 1979 ratifying the Egyptian-Israeli peace would serve as a basis for the Tel Aviv offensive aimed at Black Africa.

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In March 1980, Special Ambassador Eliashiv Ben Horin made a visit to Zambia and the Ivory Coast to test the water. His message to the Africans: You have broken with us out of solidarity with Egypt. Now that Egypt has dealt with us, you are freed from your commitments. The response: A resumption of diplomatic relations is still untimely. On the other hand, the OAU chiefs of state steadily refuse to condemn Camp David, to the detriment of the hard-liners in the Arab League.

Other (secret) contacts were made, always at Israeli prompting, revealed by words dropped by African officials. In December 1980 in Nigeria, the principal leader of the opposition, Chief Obafemi Awolowo -- who had lost in the presidential elections the previous year -- came out for a "resumption of diplomatic relations with Israel in the country's interest." Two months later, in February 1981, Kenyan lawmakers invited to Israel by Labor Deputy Moshe Shahal canceled their visit at the last minute. Israeli radio had triumphantly announced their coming.

This blunder did not discourage Tel Aviv. At the beginning of March, Rahamin Timor, director of international cooperation, discreetly toured Africa from east to west. His objective: to strengthen Israel's economic cooperation with Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi (which has never broken off relations), Nigeria and the Ivory Coast. In mid March 1981, the JERUSALEM POST revealed that David Kimche, general director from the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, had made an unpublished visit to Kenya but had not been able to go to Zimbabwe. Formerly director of the African Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he was at the time expected to head the Mossad (secret services).

This long march toward Africa would end with a sprint. In mid November 1981, Ariel Sharon, the hard-line minister of defense, headed a large delegation (from 5 to 15 high officials, depending on the source) to "African nations that might be the target of Libyan expeditions": Central Africa, Gabon and Zaire. The trip would not be confirmed in Jerusalem until 3 December, after the Zairian president had said in Washington, on 2 December 1981, that "we could immediately renew relations with Israel." At the same time, Israel made a decision that would only embarrass African candidates for reconciliation: the annexation of the Golan Heights. Even Kinshasa had to get its back up and on 5 January, its representative in the United Nations, Kamanda Wa Kamanda, voted that Israel should be condemned by the Security Council. He was sharply rebuked by President Mobutu, who, the American press revealed, wrote to Ronald Reagan saying that his ambassador to the United Nations had misunderstood his instructions. Since that time, Zaire has abstained from participating in any vote against Israel.

The process continued its inexorable march and the evacuation of the Sinai on 25 April 1982 removed the last scruples. No parcel of territory of any African nation was occupied any longer, as the OAU had demanded. But it was forgotten that the OAU was also demanding "that the Palestinian people regain their legitimate national rights in full." Mobutu had said in December: "Zaire is not alone in Africa. There must be consultations with other African nations. For the time being, I am waiting to see what the others do."

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He would not wait. JEUNE AFRIQUE's weekly TELEX CONFIDENTIEL revealed (No 30 of 7 May 1982) that President Mobutu could "announce the restoration of diplomatic relations between Kinshasa and Tel Aviv on 20 May, at the time of the congress of the MPR (Popular Movement of the Revolution), the single Zairian party." The congress of the MPR was postponed until November. The restoration of diplomatic relations with Israel was moved up to 14 May and greeted with a general outcry in the Arab world, especially since the Zairian Government had first of all decided to set up its embassy in Jerusalem, Al-Qods, the holy city seized by the Jewish state. This was a supreme offense to the Muslim world. Kinshasa took a half step backward, announcing on 20 May that its representation would definitely be opened in Tel Aviv out of respect for UN resolutions condemning Israel's decision to make Jerusalem its "eternal capital." The Arab countries were not thereby appeased. Ryad broke with Kinshasa and others followed. The PLO demanded a boycott of Zaire. All Arab aid was suspended, a serious warning to anyone tempted to follow the movement.

Precisely what other African nations might widen the breach opened by Zaire? The question does not even concern members of the Arab League or those which are strongly Islamized, as in the case of the Comoro Islands, whose government has taken an indignant stand. Also excluded are those which pass for revolutionary or anti-imperialist. To believe Jerusalem, several so-called moderate states were only awaiting the first step taken by Zairian. In the confusion following Kinshasa's decision, names were mentioned: the Ivory Coast, Gabon, Togo, all of which vigorously protested their loyalty to the position taken by the OAU in 1973 and which, because of having been thus singled out, would probably not decide to immediately renew relations with the Jewish state.

For the time being, Israel wants to push its advantage and has revealed that 4,000 of its advisers are reportedly still on African soil. The absence of diplomatic relations has not prevented commercial trade: from \$30 million, Israeli exports to Africa have risen to \$100 million in 7 years, according to Naftahil Blumenthal, general director of the Korr Industries, the top-ranking Israeli industrial firm. In many countries, Israeli enterprises are opening up, particularly in public works and building. In Tanzania, it is an Israeli firm that will build an international hotel in Arusha. It is true that President Julius Nyerere has always demonstrated great independence in the Arab-Israeli conflict: "We shall not allow our friends to choose our enemies," he has said. Less doctrinary but more direct, Gabonese President Omar Bongo hopes that Arab-African solidarity will operate in both directions: "Arabs must understand that the African countries have broken with Israel solely out of solidarity with them. They must in turn put their money in our countries and not in Geneva or the United States."

Arab money has truly not been lacking in Black Africa. From 1973 to mid 1981, the total commitments of Arab countries or institutions in the South Sahara amounted to \$6.67 trillion. The main beneficiary, Guinea has received credits amounting to \$604.6 million, 85 percent of it on preferential conditions. Senegal has reportedly received \$413.3 million and should expect additional efforts in its behalf. Mali has commitments of \$345.5 million and Niger \$273.8 million. Mathematically speaking, these figures seem to explain why certain countries are not willing to stand in Zaire's way.

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And yet, it would be unfair to maintain that African solidarity with the Arab countries -- and against Israel -- is based solely on promises of financial aid. Proof of this is that after Guinea, it is Zaire that has obtained the largest commitments from the Arabs: \$444.4 million in less than 8 years, three-fourths of it already paid. The remaining one-quarter will not be and there will be no new commitments. Mobutu knew this and took the risk. Therefore, money does not explain everything.

Although contrary to the Zairian path, Senegal's way also shows that money alone does not determine solidarity with the Arabs. Here, religion is an important factor. The social influence and individual nature of Senegalese Islam give to the religious brotherhoods, particularly the Mourids and the Tidians, a quasi political dimension (see JEUNE AFRIQUE, No 1096). Solidarity with Arab countries is religious and is instinctively expressed against the "sacrilege" of which the Israelis have been guilty against Islam. Thus, following the massacre in the courtyard of the Al-Aqsa and Omar mosques in Jerusalem on 11 April, the protest strike decreed by the government was widely followed.

Other countries do not have such large Muslim communities to deal with. Or subsidies to expect from Arab funds! This is the case of the Ivory Coast, which, of all the countries having broken with Israel in 1973, has received the least from the Arabs -- and has asked for nothing: a total of \$58 million in credits in 8 years, little more than what Cameroon received in a single year (\$55.8 million in 1981). What is more, the Ivory Coast received no favors for the total: Some 89 percent of the credits were obtained at market rates. The United States would have done better. But Houphouet-Boigny will not therefore decide to renew relations with Israel -- immediately. He has still not forgotten that the Israelis "betrayed" him in 1977 when Jerusalem published the contents of his talks with Yitzhak Rabin. Nor can Begin calm the "Old Man," who has never liked the arrogance of the current Israeli prime minister.

Then who will follow the Zairian example? Togo and Gabon, to which Israel has proposed to supply with military equipment and the construction of a munitions plant in Libreville, have denied having any such intention. So has Zambia. Nor will Cameroon take the step. Nigeria, the ailing OPEC giant, cannot now market its oil on the world market without Arab pressure on Western buyers. In short, Zaire has gone too far -- too soon -- to be followed en masse, even if "only" to Tel Aviv.

Despite certain fairly embarrassed denials, a few nations are awaiting the proper time to renew relations with Israel. The Central African Republic is tempted. In Bangui in November 1981, Ariel Sharon, flanked by Ariet Ganger, specialist in Israeli arms exports, spoke the same language as in Kinshasa: "You are threatened by Libya. Commandos from your country are being trained with Qadhdhafi or in Palestinian camps in Lebanon. Entrust your security to us. We are used to terrorism." Gen Andre Kolingba still hesitates: His country receives too much aid from Iraq, particularly to resume uranium mining, to decide to give it up. But two other factors work in Israel's favor: The Central African Republic now has the feeling of being the poor cousin of French cooperation. It therefore seeks an alternative which, if it is not Libyan or Soviet, could be American and Israeli, especially since the Central African regime has privileged links with that of Mobutu, once again the friend of the Israelis.

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Another country tempted is Kenya, which it naturally denies, at least until President Daniel Arap Moi is no longer president of the OAU. Then he will feel free and will have time to recall that it was in Nairobi -- with the consent of the Kenyan Government -- that commandos from Tel Aviv set up their rear base at the beginning of July 1976, at the time of the freeing of the Israeli hostages held at the Ugandan airport of Entebbe. Kenya has received a great deal of money from the Arabs? Yes, some \$339.6 million between 1973 and mid 1981. But Israel and especially, the Zionist lobby in the United States will make a major effort to take the Arabs' place because for Israel, Kenya is the maritime port of a key region: East and Central Africa.

The political-strategic interest of the region stems from two considerations, in the eyes of the Israelis. First, it is the least Islamized of Africa and Muslim solidarity would therefore not work in favor of the Arabs. Second, it must stand up to the Soviet belt which, it is thought in Jerusalem, is tightening more and more, from Angola and Mozambique. Third, it is the closest to South Africa, whose objective and subjective alliance with Israel is ignored -- or denied -- by no one. With Kenya, Zaire, the Central African Republic, Malawi and Swaziland -- the two eternal loyalists -- the Hebrew state intends to start or consolidate privileged relations, for in its opinion, the region is part of the "Western defense arrangement" against what Ariel Sharon calls "Soviet expansion in Africa." In an interview granted to the French weekly PARIS-MATCH in February, the Israeli minister of defense betrayed his true obsession with the subject. Ten times he pronounced the word Africa to ward the Soviet threat. In France, Ariel Sharon criticizes its "passiveness in East Africa." And Menachem Begin proposed French-Israeli cooperation (including military) on the continent to President Francois Mitterrand. According to some information, he reportedly even asked him to help Israel renew relations with French-speaking African nations. Mitterrand refused. On 17 May, when questioned by Radio-France Internationale, he responded: "I do not see why the countries of Black Africa that recognize Israel could be (prevented) from recognizing Arab countries or the reverse. Having said that much, it is their business. It is not my job to give them advice on their conduct on the international scene. That would be a complete violation of the way I proceed and especially of my convictions. Every one of those countries is an adult."

We are willing to believe the French president, especially since Israel might become an awkward partner (or even dangerous rival) of France on the political and even military level. Menachem Begin does not conceal the fact that Israel's return to Africa is part of the Israeli-American strategic cooperation agreement signed in the name of the defense of the West. France will get nothing out of it, for its reputation as a great power is also based on its influence in Africa. And what about Africa? Which Africa? It cannot be viewed in the singular, but only in the plural. The current crisis in the OAU has divided it even further and has undoubtedly helped Israel because the crisis has encouraged individual moves.

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JORDAN

QUEEN NUR INTERVIEWED ON ROLE IN SOCIETY

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI No 274, 14-20 May 82 pp 19-22

[Interview with Queen Nur of Jordan by Florence Ra'd: "Every Woman Has a Destiny and Mine Is Husayn"; date and place of interview not given]

[Text] "The most beautiful word in my life is Husayn, the most enjoyable days are those I spend outside Amman and the palace. I meet with ordinary, older people and talk with them. I believe in God's will more than in destiny...To be a queen was my fate!"

These words of Queen Nur, Nur al-Husayn, and these spontaneous confessions in AL-WATAN AL-'Arabi were part of a long interview in which she says, "Anyone who is afraid will not do anything in life, and I will not let fear enter me either as a citizen or as a queen."

However, in Nur al-Husayn's life and the happiness that radiates in the Jordanian court, there is some regret: "Neither of us has enough time for the other. We do not have time for our hobbies. I share all of Husayn's problems as a trusted wife."

She is straight-forward when dealing with others, warm when she meets them, quiet, a deep thinker, elegant and she has a smile on her face that rarely disappears. These are some of our initial impressions of the lady of the Hashemite court, Queen Nur.

She is a graduate of an American University, Princeton, in the field of architecture. She participated in international city planning projects in America, Australia and Iran. She worked for the Royal Jordanian Airlines, ALIA, in 1977 as director of planning, a year before her marriage to the Jordanian monarch on 15 June 1978, and has been blessed by two children, Hamza and Hashim.

Between Queen Nur's meeting with the members of the Higher Committee for the Environment to study the pollution problem in the city of al-'Aqabah, attending the celebration to award prizes to the top Jordanian children in Princess 'Alia College and supervising the Spanish art exhibit in al-Thaqafah Palace in Amman, we were able to meet with her in al-Hamr Palace, which is located 15 kilometers from Amman. We had the following conversation with her:

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[Question] You met Husayn before marriage, and you got to know him better after marriage. What is the difference between the king that you met and the one that you married?

[Answer] The most important difference is the depth of feeling. I have now become more understanding of the various problems which His Majesty has faced for 30 years.

I am happy that he shares in our family life as the father of our children. His giving is limitless and increases daily. I can't imagine a better father for my children, nor a better partner until the end of my life.

Al-Husayn is still the same man I loved at the beginning, but our love has grown and developed with time, the friendship that brought us together before marriage arose from his agreeability, warmth, sympathy, selflessness in his work and responsibilities and noble feelings toward everyone, me or his children, or anyone else. I love him as a husband, respect him and admire his characteristics as a man and a king. In my entire life, I have never shared this feeling with another human being. We are partners, and I will stay at his side, working with him until the end of my life if he asks me to.

[Question] In every woman's life there is one word which she considers the most beautiful. In you life with Husayn, which word is the most beautiful?

[Answer] It is the word "Husayn."

[Question] But when a man calls to his wife, he doesn't use his name...

The Queen laughed and came back to me with the question, "If someone loves you what will he call you?"

I said, "He will call me 'sweetheart' or 'my life' or..." The Queen interrupted with a laugh to add, "You just said the word for me. The word 'Husayn' includes all these words..."

[Question] Before marrying al-Husayn, did you have other ambitions? What were they and what are your ambitions today?

[Answer] My ambitions before and after marriage are the same--to help in development and in making life better on this earth, to do something good for the inhabitants of the world and to improve their lives in any way possible. This idea still attracts me, and I ask God to give me the ability to do any job for a better life and future for the people of my country and through this for the Arabs and the world.

Not a Prisoner

[Question] Are you a prisoner of the rules of protocol in the palace, and what are these rules specifically?

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[Answer] In Jordan we do not have protocol controlling our daily lives because we are still one family. My husband feels responsibility toward his people in the same way he feels it as a father.

We do not need protocol. However, there are a number of principles throughout the world which are not difficult for a person to heed because they are natural. I can go wherever I want and talk with whomever I want, whenever time allows.

[Question] Where do you stand with regard to Jordanian women and Arab women in general? If you were asked to categorize the problems of Arab women, what would you say?

[Answer] Women throughout the world face many similar problems. Jordanian women face some of the same problems as European and American women. However, there are some issues that Jordanian women alone face, and others which Arab women, or women all over the world, face. Most of these problems stem from the limitation of the role of women and how this ties in with the economic situation. Working women are the result of historical models throughout human development and growth. In Jordan we are trying to give women opportunities to choose suitable ways of life that will balance their family and working lives. We are concentrating on the necessity of keeping the strength and cohesiveness of the family, which characterize Arab society, without ignoring women's role in developing themselves as individuals and as partners in national development.

[Question] I repeat...how would you categorize the problems of Arab women?

[Answer] It is difficult to categorize these problems because each country is different. I do not think that I could define the most important problems that Arab women face. There are many problems which boil down to finding the opportunities for them to play their role in developing the Arab world alongside men. This is the problem that men and women in every country must strive to solve. Every woman has her own situation and circumstances in her development, and I can't say that the most important problem that confronts Arab women is the one that I see as the most important Jordanian problem. This isn't right because I don't think I have the right to speak for women in all the Arab countries.

Women and Traditions

[Question] What about Jordanian women?

[Answer] We are passing through a special stage in development. Women have their civil and political rights, like men, and share in development. The main problem is in their joining with men. Jordanian women are now passing through a stage of education and training to participate and find the opportunities to prove their ability to take part in different spheres. Today women bear the responsibility of proving their ability to share in development in the Arab world.

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[Question] What Arab women complain about primarily is that they have been cheated. Because you are the first lady of Jordan, if you were asked to draw up a new law to eliminate this unfairness, what would it be?

[Answer] Women have begun exercising their rights, a draft law for political rights has been submitted and we are struggling for women to be equal with men in development. There is no doubt that traditions have prevented Jordanian women from exercising these rights, which are fairly recent rights. There are good opportunities for Jordanian women. However, the problem concerns their exercising other rights, which is of great concern. This applies to women in other countries of the world, and women must strive to prove their abilities to men. I worked before my marriage, and therefore I know the true situation and my opinion of these matters comes from my own experience.

Daily Problems

[Question] What is your role as a queen and as a woman in projecting a clear, accurate image of Arab women, and how do you represent these women?

[Answer] My role as a queen is a complement to my husband's role in special situations that concern me as his partner and as a woman. My role as a queen uses my experience to find solutions to citizens' daily problems because H.M. the King deals with the large problems, draws general plans and devotes most of his time to establishing the general principles for political activities which affect all walks of life in the Kingdom. I hope to round out this work, but on a narrow scale, through tending to the small details in citizens' lives and working to establish social and cultural foundations for a better future.

I also hope to play my role as a queen to make the Jordanian people feel that their lives are an expression of their legacy and hopes. As far as representing Arab or Jordanian women on the international level, I work hard to carry the message of the Arab world and Arab women, which is linked to our great legacy, our aspirations for the future and strengthening our ties with women all over the world. I try to confront the Western images of Arab women that are not positive. These images are a result of inaccurate information about the situation of Arab women in Arab society. There is no doubt that this mistaken view of Arab women has negatively affected relations among the cultures of the world.

[Question] Leadership is a responsibility and a trust in the ruler. Through your sharing, do you feel this responsibility and to what degree?

[Answer] I share my husband's concerns and I bear with him the burdens of leadership through my role as a loving concerned wife. I share his happiness and sadness through his past and future accomplishments. However, my participating is not through political activity, but as the trusted wife of the king.

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Flying Airplanes

[Question] What hobbies do you and al-Husayn share?

[Answer] Unfortunately, we don't have enough time for our hobbies. However, we do participate in sports, especially tennis, skiing, water sports and flying airplanes. The king finds that very enjoyable. When he is under great pressure, he flies the plane himself, which calms and stimulates the nerves at the same time.

When I was a child, I used to go with my father on his trips, and he also loves to fly airplanes.

Another of our hobbies is traveling, which is no longer a hobby because we usually travel on official visits. We also enjoy taking the children to the zoo or museum or to any place for children.

[Question] Does His Majesty set aside a great deal of time for you?

[Answer] Neither of us has enough time to give to the other because the king is preoccupied most of the time with his responsibilities. I divide my time between my official work and my family responsibilities. Despite this, we always find some time to spend together.

[Question] Do you share your problems and responsibilities with the king or do you try to face them yourself?

[Answer] I always try to avoid sharing them with him unless I face a problem of great importance and I feel that I need his advice. Anyway, I try not to add new problems to his own because he already has enough. I also try to lighten his burdens by solving those problems that I can.

[Question] What have you gained from your marriage to King Husayn?

[Answer] I have gained a great deal from my marriage and from my special position with its responsibilities. I have gotten to know Husayn's characteristics well and hope to be able to incorporate them into my personality. In the end, I have gained a good example in my life to emulate.

[Question] Officials' lives are exposed to dangers such as assassinations. Do you feel this fear as a wife?

[Answer] The lives of officials are complicated and full of problems and challenges, but these dangers are part of our lives, no more important than any other part. In fact, they are the least important. When my time comes, I hope that I have helped do something and have lived a full life. For this reason, I will not let fear control me at any time. The most important thing is to make a mark in this life, and anyone who is afraid cannot do anything.

[Question] Which Arab or international figure has earned your admiration?

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The queen laughs, trying to avoid the question, then says, "If I have to answer, the Arab personality who has impress me is my husband. This is of course not objective."

[Question] On the international level?

[Answer] I am impressed by any person who has the courage to make difficult decisions. I will give as an example the former American president Dwight Eisenhower, was was able to do what no president has been able to do since. He had the courage to stand by his principles and bear his international responsibilities and those to the Arab world. This has not happened since. Remember that he was the first to face lobbies and private interest groups and the first to say, "I am doing this because I am right." I am impressed by him, especially after seeing recently how difficult it is for a person in his position to take such a stand and maintain his principles.

[Question] And if you were asked to name a woman?

[Answer] I would not select anyone in particular. The women who impress me are those who devote their lives to taking part in something and to giving that goes beyond their family circles to touch on the interest of society and the nation as a whole. Yes, I admire women who devote themselves to the interest of society. Arab women who give themselves and their families to serve society's interest deserve admiration.

[Question] Who are your friends?

[Answer] Our friends are the people we get together with for hobbies and common interests. We have friends in various countries, among them kings and presidents. Our friendship with them is not just personal, but is linked to the relationships between us as officials at the same level. I also have my childhood friends in the United States and other parts of the world.

[Question] What are the most beautiful moments in your life?

[Answer] The most beautiful moments of my life are those when I share my husband's problems as a wife and mother.

They are simple moments. For example, a few days ago, I came back with the king from al-'Aqabah to Amman in our small car. The trip took 4 hours. It was a very beautiful trip that gave us the chance to be together and to see up close the villages which we passed through.

[Question] Queen Nur is an educated, purposeful young woman. How do you see yourself helping develop the Jordanian Arab society?

[Answer] Arab women had a large role during the spread of Islam and even until the 15th century. They played an important role in the events of that period. Today, as the Jordanian queen and an Arab queen, I carry the Arab legacy in my heart, and I identify with Arab women. I work hard to help develop my country as Arab women helped during the spread and conquests of Islam.

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The Queen's Letters

[Question] Do you receive many letters? From whom? Do you always answer them?

[Answer] I receive a large number of letters from all over the world. Many of these letters come from people who want pictures, a word or an autograph from us. Some have suggestions and projects to help solve the crisis in the region. We also receive many letters with various comments about an official visit that we made or a press interview. We also receive requests to help individuals or areas that need something specific. We usually try to find general solutions instead of dealing with a limited private matter. There are also some trivial letters.

We always try to help whomever we can, to answer all letters and to keep in touch with the people who show sincere interest in and concern for Jordan and its future.

[Question] How do you deal with the children in the royal family?

[Answer] As you know, the family is large and I do all I can with all His Majesty's children to rear them to be like him, endowing them with the characteristics that have made him a loving leader to his people.

I try to rear them like other children who do not have the titles of prince or princess, to be humble, sympathetic and sincere and to learn to treat others as they treat each other. This way in the future they can help build Jordan as their father and grandfather did before them. Their titles must not be what distinguishes them, but their deeds and characters.

[Question] Do you select His Majesty's clothes yourself? Do you find this difficult?

[Answer] Most of the time we select his clothes together. He like to try new things, and I try to bring new colors and touches to his clothes. Men are like women, they enjoy change. His Majesty is flexible in this regard. In the morning I choose his clothes, as well as when we travel abroad.

Most Enjoyable Days

[Question] How does the queen spend her day? Does she follow a specific routine?

[Answer] Every day has its own schedule and rules. For example, Friday is devoted to the family in principle and as much as possible. There are days that we spend traveling or on official duties, spending the entire day cementing our relations with one country or another and opening new fields for the exchange of ideas, groups and expertise. Some days we stay in the office until late at night. Sometimes I work in the afternoon so that I can meet with ministers and officials since they are busy in the morning. The most enjoyable days are those that I spend outside Amman meeting groups of older people and young people and talking with them.

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[Question] What countries had you visited before?

[Answer] Before my marriage I worked in the field of architecture in Iran and Australia and had done research in the Arab world, visiting Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Jordan and also visiting Europe. After my marriage I got to know most of the European countries, Southeast Asia and America. I would like to visit the rest of the Arab countries to know them better.

[Question] Do your official visits give you an opportunity to know the true situation in the country?

[Answer] Official visits do not give you the chance to know the actual situation in the host country, nor to get in touch with the ordinary people. My visits before my marriage were more useful because I got to know the people from my own point of view, not the official one. Personal contacts reveal the truth of the country's history and future. I have visited some countries with H. M. the King unofficially, and it was very enjoyable because we were in direct contact with the public.

Politics

[Question] Does the king talk to you about political matters?

[Answer] Yes, and this is part of the understanding and harmony that brings us together as husband and wife and as two people. He talks to me about things that worry him, and I pay attention most of the time. I consider this part of my responsibility as a wife who is concerned about her husband and considers him part of her life.

[Question] How do you assess your recent visit to the United States?

[Answer] The visit was welcomed by the Arab community and by many Americans who are interested in the Middle East. My role came as a surprise to some people because they considered it political rather than traditional. At any rate, this doesn't mean that my future visits will be of the same nature, although I am willing to play any role that the king and the Jordanian people ask of me.

The speech which I made in Washington was the essence of the king's concerns and opinions about the present situation. I think that my visit in general was an unusual way to represent Arab women. Being an Arab-American, I grew up with a special understanding and ideas. Being the Queen of Jordan, I understand the relationship between Jordan and the United States very well. My visit was a challenge to the widespread, mistaken idea in the United States about Arab women and their marginal role in developing their countries.

[Question] What is your opinion of Lebanese women?

[Answer] Lebanese women have faced a continual state of war for 7 years. I am sure that they live through heartbreaking events unable to do anything except maintain their courage, faith and families. They deserve admiration

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and sympathy for their great suffering and loss. We are ready to give any kind of aid to the women and people of Lebanon as individuals or groups.

[Question] Psychiatrists say that colors reflect personality traits. What are your favorite colors?

[Answer] I can't narrow it down to one color. However, the impression which colors leave on your psyche is important. Among my favorite colors are the colors of the desert, a sunset on the beach and the sunrise.

I Believe in God's Will

[Question] Do you believe in destiny?

[Answer] I believe in God's will more than in destiny. When I compare my life before and after marriage, I feel that many of the unconscious decisions that I made were in preparation for my marriage and my life now. Therefore, it seems to me that it was my destiny.

[Question] Do you think that you are lucky?

[Answer] Life has blessed me. However, life is full of blessings and challenges at the same time. I am very fortunate of course, and the most important blessing is that I have learned from the challenges to live a fruitful life.

[Question] Do you want to say a word to the readers of AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI?

[Answer] I want to tell them that I hope my answers were clear and expressed my feelings for my country, my family and my people. I am sure that the readers of AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI share these feelings with me and that we have many things in common, not the least of which are our hope for a better future, our striving for a better present and the necessity of our working together for this.

Chairwoman

A list of Queen Nur's honorary and actual responsibilities:

Honorary Chairwoman of the National Federation of Business and Professional Women

Honorary Chairwoman of the Working Women's Club

Honorary Chairwoman of the Queen Nur Flying Institute

Honorary Chairwoman of the Jordanian Natural Medicine Association

Honorary Chairwoman of the Royal Society for Jordanian Arts

Chairwoman of the Royal Foundation for Culture and Education

Chairwoman of the Higher Organization for the Protection of the Environment

Chairwoman of Princess 'Alia Community College

Chairwoman of the Higher Committee for the Jerash Fair

Chairwoman of the Ma'an Housing Project

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Chairwoman of the "Jordan Society" in America, which includes many Americans interested in improving Arab-American relations.

She also supervises the construction of several hospitals, sections of the Jordanian Dabka Fair, the encouraging of exchange visits between Arab children and preserving architectural and engineering monuments in Jordan and the Arab world.

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OMAN

COUNTRY'S WIDENING ROLE IN GULF, REGIONAL AFFAIRS EXAMINED

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic No 275, 21-27 May 82 pp 28-29

[Article by Ahmad Hafiz: "Qabus' Egyptian Trip Within the Logic of History and Geography"]

[Text] The Sultanate of Oman is active these days on the Gulf and Arab levels. The Omani concept of Gulf security, and the pan-Arab nature of the battle with Iran, are among the clearest concepts recently. AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI sent a correspondent to Oman to try to connect Omani logic with history and geography, in an interview with several Omani officials.

There is nothing new under the sun. History repeats itself, and positions essentially are repeated through developing forms that accompany the vicissitudes of the times.

In the 19th century, when the Persian Safavids attempted to occupy Basrah, the Omani army opposed them in defense of the religious protection that composed the basic factor of Arab solidarity. Oman received compensation in the form of a generous "financial grant" from the Ottoman authorities at that time, who ruled the entire Arab area, with the exception of Oman, which had come to the aid of its Arab brothers in Iraq. It did that out of its spontaneous feeling of Arabism and its common destiny with Iraq, and not out of anticipation of a gift from the Ottoman authorities.

Officials in the Sultanate referred to this historic fact in submitting their interpretation of the active initiative that Sultan Qabus has carried out on the Arab scene, through his recent official visit to Egypt, and his surprise private visit to King Husayn, for the purpose of mending the rift in Arab relations and taking a decisive Arab position with respect to the Iraqi-Iranian war, whose continuation threatens the entire area with flames.

The Omani initiative was tantamount to starting over.

The fact is that the visit of the Sultan of Oman to Cairo, and from there to Jordan, stirred up far-reaching reactions in Gulf and Arab capitals, and political predictions on other levels, especially since it coincided with heated political events in the Gulf. Certainly the most important of these was the confirmation to everyone of Iran's intransigence in its rejection of

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all offers of international and Arab mediation, and prior to that, the statements of President Husni Mubarak, in which he made a connection between Egypt's security and Gulf security, and described the Gulf states as "Egypt's strategic security dimension."

Mubarak's statements were accompanied by semi-confirmed information about Egypt supplying Iraq with various types of arms, and about the Omani role in this regard. There were rumors in Gulf capitals about a new Omani role which this time took the form of arranging the restoration of bridges or relations between Egypt and a large number of Arab states, especially since Oman was one of the Arab states that did not sever relations with Egypt.

Why?

Political observers in the Gulf area give great pause these days to the intensive political activity on the Arab level, which the Sultanate has carried out. It is the active member of the Gulf Cooperation Council [GCC], especially since it is well known for being cautious about interfering in Arab disputes, and for confining itself to announcing its pan-Arab support for Arab issues, and especially the Palestinian question. Its rulers devoted themselves to the important matters and issues of internal growth and the development of the Omani society. This had been the case since Sultan Qabus assumed power in his country in 1970. Perhaps the question that is currently being asked in the Gulf area, apropos of this Omani political activity, is why, at this particular time, did Sultan Qabus begin to bring Oman out of its well-known role into these spasms of activity on the Arab scene?

I asked this question of more than one high-level official in Oman, and I heard the same reply from all of those I interviewed: "We in Oman, after completing constructing the basic infrastructure of the state, and establishing the basic pillars of the political, economic and social sectors, have begun to look more to the outside, especially toward our Arab brothers, in order to carry out our pan-Arab duty with respect to their issues, which are our issues as well, fateful issues of an indivisible Arab Nation."

Sultan Qabus himself recently expressed this position in a press statement: "Oman always wishes to participate, if it has the opportunity, in any good endeavor. We sanction any effort by any Arab, Islamic or non-aligned nation, or by any other state, to solve a problem between two Muslim neighbors, to restore right to its normal position and spare the blood of Muslims. We are prepared to make any effort in this regard."

When the Sultan of Oman was asked about the facts of his country's role in mediation between Egypt and Iraq, he said: "The matter of mediation to purchase arms for Iraq can be summarized in a few words: When one asks us to do a service for any brotherly Arab nation, we do not hesitate to do it."

Return to History

Those who follow Omani activities on the Gulf scene can confirm that a new stage in Omani-Iraqi relations and Arab-Omani relations has crystallized and

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its basic features defined. On this level, the question that must be answered is: If what is rumored is true about "new Omani mediation" between Egypt and the Arab states to restore relations between the two sides, what is the essence of this mediation and how is it proceeding?

In their response to this question, Omani officials are inclined not to describe the efforts being undertaken by Oman as mediation. They prefer to term this as "an effort to unite the efforts of brothers with respect to mutual dangers."

They say that, if Egypt has a view regarding solving the Arab-Israeli dispute, it is still impossible to forget the role it could be playing in confronting the dangers surrounding the Gulf region and the Arabian Peninsula. It is the only Arab state qualified by virtue of its large population to be the natural strategic depth for that region. Political observers feel that when Egyptian President Husni Mubarak recently declared, yet again, that Gulf security was a part of Egyptian security, it was not in the interests of anyone to neutralize Arab Egypt in this struggle that threatens the Arabism of the Gulf. When Egypt expressed its desire to assist Iraq militarily in its war against Iran, out of a pan-Arab sense of its Arabism, would it have been proper to reject this assistance on the grounds that al-Sadat signed the "Camp David" accords?

Those observers add that the Omani point of view regarding the development of recent events in the Gulf region was governed by the logic of history and geography. The Gulf states and the Arabian Peninsula, including Iraq, form a homogeneous security belt for the Arab Nation, with its natural and strategic depth being Egypt. Based on this premise, the Omanis do not see any difference between Iran's occupation of the Lesser and Greater Tumb and Abu Musa islands in the Arab Gulf and its war with Arab Iraq, and Turkey's occupation of Arab Syria's province of Iskandarun and Israel's occupation of Arab Syria's Golan Heights. Occupation is occupation, and a threat is a threat, whether it is Israeli or Iranian. Moreover, the Iranian threat to Iraq is a threat to the Gulf's Arabism. Iranian designs on the Gulf states are historic and well-known. If it happens--God forbid--that Iran is victorious over Iraq, who can guarantee the Arabs that a new Persian imperialism will not sweep the Gulf, and who would be able to prevent the Iranian advance after that?

Defining Positions

Perhaps this interpretation of the reality of the situation justifies the intensive Omani activity on various levels. Fortunately, matters currently have become clearer in the Gulf region more than at any other time. The two enemies of the Arab Nation, who war against it every day, are Israel and Iran. Consequently, those who support those two, whether Arab or non-Arab, are in turn enemies of the Arab Nation. Based on this premise, a conviction has formed among the GCC nations that certain rulers of Arab states, who are aiding Iran in its war against Iraq, are working against the basic interests and sentiments of pan-Arabism. In this regard, the GCC nations are currently working to make those rulers, led by Hafiz al-Asad, radically re-consider their position regarding the Iraqi-Iranian war. In concert, they

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sent al-Asad a letter to this effect. The GCC foreign ministers conference, held in Kuwait last week to discuss taking a positive and unified position regarding the development of events in the Gulf, was aimed at showing every Arab party from outside the Gulf region that it has pan-Arab responsibilities.

Gulf sources, who closely followed what went on behind the scenes of the Kuwait conference, say that the Syrian position was the object of harsh criticism from the GCC nations. However, most of the foreign ministers preferred to give the Syrian regime another chance to back away from its support of Iran, which is not aimed just at Iraq alone, but also at the Gulf nations as a whole. Accordingly, it was decided to postpone the conference until 25 May, under the pretext of "more consultations with other Arab nations." If the prevailing sentiment in Gulf political circles weighed heavily in favor of al-Asad's not retreating from his position of support for Iran against Iraq, the evidence was that he has begun to prepare to hold an impromptu "Steadfastness and Confrontation" summit. They say that if it is held, it will be a summit steadfastly resistant to the Arab pan-Arab consensus, or to be more precise, in reaction to the Gulf position regarding the Iraqi-Iranian war. This would then split the Arabs into two camps: the Arabs committed to defend Arabism and the Arab Nation from east to west, regardless of who the enemy is, whether Israel or Iran, and the Arabs who call for an attack on Israel, but who at the same time are cooperating with Iran, who is supported by Israel against Iraq, and against all the Gulf states and the Arabian Peninsula.

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