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Near East & South Asia

ALGERIA

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International Affairs

'Cooling' French Relations; Specifics Noted

92AF0974A Algiers ALGER REPUBLICAIN in French
21 Jun 92 p 1

[Editorial by Fodil Ourabah: "Pressures"]

[Text] In the not so distant past, it would have taken much less than France's attitude toward Algeria in recent months to trigger one of the cyclical crises that have frequently clouded Franco-Algerian relations. If our diplomats are content for the time being to weather this cooling in our relations, the explanation must be that their capacity to react has been considerably curtailed by Algeria's internal difficulties and by changes around the world.

Specifically, there was the statement by France's president—"Algeria must resume...etc."—in reaction to the cancellation of the electoral farce that nearly plunged our country into a tragedy without end. Then there was the more recent statement by a French cabinet member who meant precisely what he said despite the guise of "humanitarian" considerations. These are instances of intolerable interference in Algeria's internal affairs, all the more intolerable because they come from a power known to have had little regard for the destiny of Algeria and the human rights of generations of Algerians.

There is a second component to the French Government's unfriendly attitude toward our country and that is the fact that terrorist groups seeking to destabilize Algeria have been allowed to enter French territory and conduct their activities freely.

The third component—and not the least of them—is the damper that France has placed on its aid policy at a time when Algeria is experiencing the greatest of economic difficulties. More than merely adopting a reserved stance, Paris appears to be pursuing a strategy aimed at strangling Algeria financially.

In fact, Paris seems intent on using various means to exert pressure on Algeria. In addition to economic pressures aimed at bringing Algeria to her knees, there are political pressures that attempt to galvanize the fundamentalist movement in our society or even place it on the path to power.

What does France gain by this type of behavior? Are we to infer that France is not interested in aiding Algeria unless Algeria is on her knees? Or has France calculated that a strengthening of fundamentalism promises advantages that it might not obtain from the advent of a democratic society in Algeria? Does France's behavior have undisclosed motives related to domestic politics, for example to fabricate an external threat that would justify the existence of a military-industrial complex that is no longer justified? Or, yet another possible explanation, is France putting in place the conditions that would allow it to invoke the "right to interfere for humanitarian reasons" and intervene in Algeria? One would like to think that none of the above is true. But in the present state of affairs, there is no choice but to conclude that none of them can be ruled out.

Emigres in Paris React to Boudiaf Killing

92AF1007B Algiers EL WATAN in French
30 Jul 92 p 6

[Text] The news of the assassination of Boudiaf spread concern on 29 July among the Algerians living in Barbes, a Paris area where a large, immigrant community lives. Several people interviewed feared that this will lead to the destabilization or even the "Lebanonization" of Algeria.

An Algerian who has lived in France for the past 40 years predicted: "It is unfortunate for Algeria. I fear a situation will develop that will be even more unstable or even turn into a civil war. There is going to be a kind of chaos, like in Lebanon."

In several cafes or restaurants radios were continuously tuned to Radio Orient, the Paris radio station broadcasting in Arabic. Algerian customers were still in a state of shock several hours after the news of the assassination became known. All kinds of speculation circulated.

Salah explained: "I was not really surprised. He had touched a sensitive point, corruption. He annoyed many people, including corrupt people. He wanted to take action against some people. This was a settlement of accounts between the big bosses in the government. I do not believe that this was the work of the FIS (Islamic Salvation Front)," said another customer, who refused to provide his given name.

He added: "Now the military government is going to stay. That is certain. I am afraid that there will be large demonstrations. Perhaps people will be killed."

On the other hand opinions varied regarding Boudiaf as a political figure. A customer in a bar said: "You cannot be happy to see a liberal assassinated. He was a man who had never wanted power. He wanted the development of Algeria."

On the other hand, in another cafe there was no compassion for him. A customer said: "He was looking for something. That is what happens when you count on a minority. He only had to stay where he was, in Morocco. That is what may happen to the others." (Editor's note: meaning the members of the Higher State Council.)

Islamic Presence in France Discussed

92AF0976B Algiers L'OBSERVATEUR in French
24-30 Jun 92 pp 7-8

[Article by Latifa Madani: "FIS (Islamic Salvation Front) Going to France"—first paragraph is L'OBSERVATEUR introduction]

[Text] All the information gathered recently agrees on one fact: the center of gravity of the Islamic Salvation Front [FIS], or what remains of it underground, is moving toward France. For known and/or unknown reasons, that country has become a very favorable operating ground. The geographic location has changed, the scene remains the same. It is in the suburbs and in the poorest neighborhoods of French cities that the FIS is attempting to reconstitute itself, with larger scale political and strategic stakes as a backdrop.

In the past few months, individuals with Arab or Arab-sounding names have been finding tracts and brochures in their mailboxes: from the "Jihad Islami," or the "Islamic Youth Movement," or again from the "fighters in exile," or from "Abtal Jeich Mohamed"—when they are signed.

At times, they also receive the famous "minbar" and "mirhab el-djoumoua" that are posted and distributed in Algeria's mosques.

In most cases, this mail is written in Arabic and comes from London. It is distributed essentially in urban housing projects with a high concentration of immigrants: in the suburbs of Marseille, Paris, Lyon, Saint-Etienne, and Lille-Roubaix. It is easier and more convenient, and it has greater impact and effectiveness. These are the areas where exiled Islamists, or those converted while in exile, tend to live. This is where they find their preys and their protectors: favorite grounds gradually whittled away from the Communists and the National Front.

They find parents—first-generation immigrants strongly attached to their roots and traditions—relatively willing to listen to them. They help the young who are disturbed and revolted by inequalities and by living on the fringe of society. Through the mosques, they can get some of them off alcohol and drugs. If a problem arises, they are always there to intervene, to preach and reconcile the parties, and to bring back order.

They initiate social and educational efforts: Arabic classes, teaching of the Koran, support to destitute families, organization of funeral ceremonies, circumcisions, and religious holidays.

Already seen, tested, and proved, the Islamists' methods and efforts in France will some day bear fruit on both sides of the Mediterranean. Certainly, the context is different, the objectives are not the same; the scope of the patient work they are performing can only be limited. But they are not out to islamize France. If they wanted to, could they really do it?

They want to get ready, the better to rebound here, in Algeria.

They will then possess strong additional assets, the rear bases they are now building. With Maghrebine outlines to boot.

Money: the Sinews of War

Like their methods, their means and logistics are not quite new either.

There is of course, the funds derived from smuggling and the black market. There is also money from the increasingly numerous shops they own or manage. A trade register number and money in a bank account are all it takes to comply with the law and to get a residence permit.

In addition to traditional shops—groceries, coffee shops, hotels, restaurants—they are beginning to get into the wholesale and the clothing trades. Like other foreign communities, they employ people who work at home and they operate illegal clothing workshops. At the market in Les Minguettes or Aubervilliers, you can see them with their

ostentatious look (beards and tunics), giving customers their sales talk; some sell women's underwear or cheap goods, others sell Indian and Egyptian videos, or the K7 cassettes published in Cairo or in London that used to be sold, not so long ago, in front of the Sunna mosque in Bab El-Oued.

They also get money from a sort of tithe (or forced contribution) they levy on their compatriots—entrepreneurs, merchants, and businessmen. A method borrowed from the Jewish and Asiatic communities.

These are not their only sources of income. There is what can now be called Islamo-dollars.

They come from the Saudis and other Gulf emirates, from the Pakistanis and, to a lesser extent, from the Iranians and the Sudanese. Mostly through the World Islamic League and its London headquarters. People may say that the Saudis "have shut off the tap since the Gulf War"; nevertheless, albeit through unofficial channels, they exercise leadership inside the World Islamic League and among Maghreb Islamists in France and Europe. A certain Djaballah, the third-highest ranking official at the Saudi embassy in Paris, is rumored to be connected with these channels.

The Maghreb International

The powerful Islamic League is represented in France through Muslim federations and associations.

It controls about 60 percent of the mosques, which it financed in whole or in part. To these mosques, it appoints imams from the Tunisian an Nahda [Islamic movement] or from the Algerian FIS.

It is through the networks of the London-based league that Kamarddine Kherbane is said to have reached Europe from Peshawar. Over three months ago, the alleged chief of the Algerian "Afghans" found "refuge" in France, more precisely in Pontoise, with a temporary residence permit from the Val d'Oise prefecture. He is said to have left the Paris area for London when the press disclosed his "secret" whereabouts, and probably under pressure from certain French circles.

Abdelbaki Sahraoui, a founding member of the FIS and its Majliss Echoura, the very man who read the FIS constitutive proclamation at the Ibn Badis mosque in Kouba in February 1989, is now preaching at the Myrrah mosque in Paris, in the 18th arrondissement. The mosque was built and is maintained with funds from the World Islamic League.

The head of the League's Paris office, Khalil Meroun—a French citizen of Maghreb origin—is said to be the one who obtained a residence permit for Abdelbaki Sahraoui. Meroun manages the large Ivry mosque, the construction of which was financed to a large extent by Saudi-Moroccan capital. It draws increasingly large crowds every Friday, and is close to counterbalancing the Paris mosque. Khalil Meroun, a friend of Youssef Leclerc, himself a friend of Abassi Madani, is a member of the National Federation of

Muslims in France. Together with the FAF (Algerian Brotherhood in France), it has organized Maghreb Islamist meetings, including FIS meetings at the Antony university (in March), in Roubaix (in April), and at Porte d'Italie in Paris (in May).

FIS, in France, equals FAF. FAF, in France, equals FIS. This is common knowledge. Its president, Djaffar El-Houari, and its spokesman, Moussa Kraouch, acknowledged that they are in charge of FIS meeting logistics, "because French law prohibits foreign political parties from operating on French territory."

As an anecdote, we should mention that Djaffar El-Houari, a mathematics researcher at the Antony university (Hauts-de-Seine), is one of the men who, in the midseventies, successfully demanded the opening of a prayer room at that university.

Some personalities distinguished themselves during these meetings: Anouar Haddam, an FIS member elected in the Tlemcen wilayat. A few months ago, in an interview with the national daily ES-SALAM, he mentioned the redeployment of Algerian Islamists in France.

Sadek Sallem, a very eloquent writer and academic; he has resided in France for several years and is said to have joined the Islamist movement only recently. Finally, Said Hilali, an FIS member elected in the Biskra wilayat.

More discreet, Ahmed Simozrag, Abassi Madani's lawyer, is said to have helped organize these meetings. Simozrag received a substantial check (several thousands of dollars) from the Saudis. He is president of the Ab'aad Islamiya association in Saint-Ouen.

In the first row at these meetings were officials from the Tunisian NAHDA. They have long stopped hiding. The NAHDA is the engine of the Maghreb Islamist movement in France.

Algerian and Moroccan Islamists must share a field in which the Tunisians are already strongly established. The latter are still the only ones with whom members of the World Islamic League and French authorities will talk. The NAHDA Tunisians and the Saudis often launch joint projects and activities (mosques, associations, bookstores, etc.).

They own and manage jointly, with the Elysees approval, the beautiful new Islamic university of Chateau-Chinon.

France Has Two Irons in the Fire

The revelations by the weeklies VSD and L'EXPRESS about the "FIS redeployment in France," did not cause much of a stir in French public opinion, which is more concerned by Europe after Maastricht, and more interested in the Tapie scandal and the queen of England's visit. On the other hand, the information with sensational and alarming connotations reported by the two weeklies did not go unnoticed at the National Front headquarters and among its constituency. The presence in France "of leaders of Islamist terrorist networks, and the risk of action on French soil," as presented by VSD and L'EXPRESS, confirm the extreme right-wing's arguments. In the political class and in

the government, they also encourage those who advocate drastic restrictions on Maghreb Arab's entry and residence in France.

Here and there, people will ask how come FIS party officials and elected members, some of whom are wanted, were able to come to France and reside there safely?

If someone has been too lax, only one [sic] of the parties can be blamed. On both sides, Algerian and French, someone, somewhere, was willing to look the other way while wanted suspects traveled, even though [sic], at times, the sheer numbers involved defeated the vigilance of both parties.

The traditional cooperation of French and Algerian departments, especially at interior ministers level, is known. In addition to the leniency, or even the complicity, that may have played a part, both at Algerian and at French level, one may wonder if, after all, it is not convenient for Algerian authorities to thus "get rid" of problem individuals who may be better "controlled" over there in France.

Traditionally, single-party Algeria has been willing to allow its opponents to express themselves and operate abroad.

Traditionally, France has sheltered and, to a certain extent, is sheltering opponents from all horizons. Just remember Khomeyni at Neauphle-le-Chateau.

Nevertheless, as with many other current problems, the presence of Algerian Islamists in France is a cause of division among the French. At all levels. It goes beyond the now obsolescent traditional left-right division. In this respect, the terms of the debate are similar to what followed the cancellation of the election process. People representing all political trends were heard saying conflicting things, e.g.: "the Islamists are repressed at home; they must be protected in our country"; or "the Islamists are dangerous at home; they may be just as dangerous in our country; there is no reason to welcome them."

At first, decisionmakers hesitated between the need to respect liberties and Human Rights, and the need for mutual cooperation and understanding between States.

As for those in charge of security and domestic affairs, they fear that they may eventually be outflanked by a movement that they currently barely manage to control.

On the other hand, they do not seem to share the views and the (more strategic) approach of those who manage security and foreign affairs. For the latter, the possibility of an Islamist government in Algeria and in the Maghreb cannot be ruled out yet.

Study Shows Fewer Foreign Citizens in Paris Region

92AF1025B Algiers MAG 7 in French 5 Jul 92 p 10

[Unattributed article: "Paris Area: Fewer Algerians"]

[Text] The number of Portuguese and Algerians in Ile-de-France (Paris and its suburbs) has declined for the first time, the National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE) indicated in its latest information bulletin.

On the other hand, the Institute observed that "new nationalities are appearing, such as the Chinese and people from the Indian subcontinent."

According to the INSEE, the number of Algerians in the Paris area has returned to its 1975 level; they now represent only 18 percent of the foreign population, compared with about 22 percent from 1962 to 1982. "Southern Europe and Algeria now account for only one-half of the foreign population," the INSEE bulletin indicates.

The Portuguese community in the Paris area, however, is still very numerous: it accounts for "more than one foreigner out of five, especially because nearly one out of two Portuguese living in France resides in Ile-de-France."

The number of Turks has more than doubled, from 18,820 in 1982 to 40,331 in 1990, but this population "represents only 2.9 percent of the foreign population" of Ile-de-France, which was estimated to be 1,369,804 in 1990.

Finally, the southeast Asian population (Cambodians, Laotians, Vietnamese) remains stable: around 50,000 people. The proportion of new arrivals decreased threefold between 1982 and 1990.

Accord Signed With Italy To Promote Employment

92AF1025A Algiers EL WATAN in French 29 Jun 92 p 5

[Article by H. Bouchaib: "Jobs and Training: The Italian Contribution"]

[Text] Yesterday morning, during a ceremony held at the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Algerian-Italian draft agreement on the promotion of youth employment and training was signed.

The four major orientations of the draft agreement were developed jointly by Mrs. Leila Aslaoui, the minister of youth and sports, and Mr. Badini, the Italian ambassador in Algeria. They cover in substance the social and professional integration of young people, the development of association movements, and the training of club organizers and experts in the youth sector, the prevention against drug and drug-related crimes, as well as social and cultural youth exchanges between Algerians and Italians.

"These are simple, credible, and modest efforts," Mrs. Aslaoui indicated. "Young Algerians no longer want to believe in what does not materialize. This draft agreement will not be a mere formality, a token document. I am convinced that it will make it possible to further strengthen the ties of friendship that already exist between the two countries. Our young people will thus be able to learn from the experience of others, as this cooperation will materialize in efforts aimed at exchanges. It will succeed, because both sides want it to succeed." The operations covered by the draft agreement lie within a dynamic and productive sub-sector. The most important ones involve the training of young women in managing small businesses, and basic training in small trades. For instance, feasibility studies will be made to implement an audiovisual laboratory (video, radio) at the national center for youth information and organization. Also, young Algerian-Italian writers will be published; there will be an info-youth pairing, feasibility

studies for the implementation of a videotex system, and studies on the relations between the government and association movements. In this respect, Mr. Badini estimated that "considerable importance should be given to the youth and sports sector. The quality of these exchanges must be enhanced, as this agreement is the result of an exciting study. Until now, Italy has developed various relations with Algeria, in particular in the economic, cultural, and other sectors. The youth sector is equally important considering the capacities of this social category."

Regional Affairs

Iranian Press Predicts Kafi Assassination

92AF1007D Algiers EL WATAN in French 6 Jul 92 p 3

[Text] On 4 July the Iranian press, which openly expressed approval of the assassination of President Mohamed Boudiaf, predicted the same fate for Ali Kafi, his successor.

JOMHUN ESLAMI, quoted by the IMA press agency, wrote that Mohamed Boudiaf paid for "his betrayal of the Algerian Muslim people." His successor as the head of the Higher State Council, "should expect to suffer the same fate."

For its part the TEHRAN TIMES, an English-language progovernment daily newspaper, considered that the Algerian leaders should respect the will of the people and accept the results of the elections, in which the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) won the first round.

Atyallah Ahmed Djanatti, president of the Iranian Council for the Propagation of Islam, said for his part, during Friday prayers, that, "The assassination (of Mohamed Boudiaf) had made all Algerians happy."

Since the dismissal of President Chadli Bendjedid, the Iranian Government has unleashed a campaign of unusual hostility against Algeria, a country which, moreover, saved it from the claws of the Americans in the matter of the hostages of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran.

The disappointment of the mullahs is understandable. They counted a great deal on using the FIS to turn Algeria into a base for subversion and a starting point for the establishment of republics loyal to them in North Africa.

It was through Hassan Tourabi, leader of the Sudanese Muslim fundamentalists and theoretician of the junta in power in Khartoum, that, together with others, they financed fundamentalist Maghrebian Muslim movements, most of their dollars going to those in Algeria.

A meeting in 1991 in Tehran even brought together Iranian leaders, representatives of the FIS, and a delegation from the DGSE (Directorate General of External Security, the French counter espionage organization), led by a colonel named Grossman, who is very close to French Zionist circles.

The purpose of this strange meeting between the three groups was the coordination of action aimed at the destabilization of Algeria. Several weeks later the same French colonel was to meet the same representatives of the FIS, but this time in France.

Saudi Ambassador Acknowledges Supporting FIS
92AF0943A Algiers ALGER REPUBLICAIN in French
9 Jun 92 p 3

[Article by M.B.: "We Financed the FIS"]

[Text] Saudi Ambassador to Algiers Mohamed Hassen El Faki's colleagues with the daily newspaper EL MASSA yesterday reported an admission by the ambassador that his "country has always aided Islamist movements."

Concerning the former FIS [Islamic Front of Salvation], "his country maintained relations with that party with the full knowledge of Algerian authorities," and he "personally met with Abassi Madani weekly."

"On the basis of these relations," he "always tried to rein in extremist aspects of the movement" because "Saudi Arabia has suffered the most from the extremist phenomenon."

"However, whenever his country has observed that extremism was gaining the upper hand, particularly during the Gulf crisis, Saudi Arabia has washed its hands of the party."

Concerning the continuation of ties between Saudi Arabia and a few dervishian movements that draw their ideas and resources from Saudi imams, the ambassador said, "My brother, we also have our fanatics who preach dervishian ideas that are incompatible with the spirit of Islam and modern progress, just as we have our rich fanatics. They are the ones who pay for the books and publications on which your lunatics base their ideas!"

"We have suffered tremendous damage from people who have nothing more to do but condemn people and criticize their appearance and dress."

El Faki also discussed a number of other issues relating to inter-Arab relations, the Gulf crisis, and so on.

Internal Affairs

New Member of HCE Profiled
92AF1007C Algiers MAG 7 in French 12 Jul 92 p 6

[Text] Redha Malek, president of the Algerian National Consultative Council, has been appointed the fifth member of the Higher State Council (HCE, the collegial presidency), it was announced by an official source on 9 July.

The new member of the HCE subsequently took his oath of office in the presence of the four other members of the HCE: Khaled Nezzar, minister of defense; Ali Kafi, secretary general of the organization of the Moudjahidine; Tidjani Haddam, former rector of the Paris Mosque; and Ali Haroun, former minister for human rights.

Also present at the oath-taking ceremony were Prime Minister Sid Ahmed Ghozali and the president of the Supreme Court.

Redha Malek replaces the late Mohamed Boudiaf as a member of the HCE.

Redha Malek is 60 years old. After completing secondary school in Constantine, he obtained a degree in French literature and in philosophy at the University of Algiers and then in Paris.

In 1957 Redha Malek was elected a member of the Board of Directors of the General Union of Algerian Muslim Students (UGEMA). In July 1957 the FLN [National Liberation Front] appointed him editor of EL MOUDJAHID, the weekly publication of the Algerian resistance.

In 1961 he was spokesman of the FLN at the negotiations in Evian. From 1962 to 1964 he was Algerian ambassador to Yugoslavia, before being appointed ambassador to Paris in April 1965.

In 1979 he was appointed ambassador to Washington and then to London, a post that he held until 1984. At his own request he has not held any other official position since then.

In 1980-82 he participated in the negotiations for the release of 52 American hostages held in Iran.

On 26 April 1992 he was elected president of the National Consultative Council.

HCE Chairman Receives Mujahidin Veterans' Delegation

LD0807212492 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in Arabic
1830 GMT 8 Jul 92

[Text] Within the framework of consultations with the country's dynamic and national forces, Mr. 'Ali Kafi, chairman of the Higher State Council [HCE], today received members of the National Secretariat of the Mujahidin [war veterans] organization. This was said in a statement issued by the presidency.

The statement added that the meeting dealt with issues facing the nation and matters of interest to the Mujahidin organization.

Kafi Appeals for Unity Round 'Algeria First' Slogan

LD2207190392 Algiers Radio Algiers Network
in French 1800 GMT 22 Jul 92

[Text] An informal cabinet meeting took place this Wednesday. No specific agenda [words indistinct]. During this meeting the chairman of the Higher State Council first congratulated the members of the government on their appointment. After praising the action of the previous government, Mr. Ali Kafi insisted on the necessary mobilization of all active forces of the nation in a cohesive and clear context to face up to the multifaceted crisis that Algerian society is going through today. The chairman of the Higher State Council stressed the existing interaction between the various political, economic, social, and security

problems. He also stressed the need for the pursuit of [words indistinct] state authority at all levels. The Higher State Council thus invited the government to state its economic and social priorities and present its action program as soon as possible.

The chairman of the Higher State Council appealed to all active forces of the country to unite around the slogan: Algeria first and before anything else. He recalled the appeal made by the Higher State Council for a dialogue with the political leaders and political parties and associations. Mr. Ali Kafi finally reiterated the complete trust of the Higher State Council in the government of Mr Belaid Abdessalem and its determination to support the action the government intends to carry out to resolve the problems of the country and the citizens.

Larbi Belkheir on Issues of Security

92AF0998B Algiers ALGERIE ACTUALITE in French
18 Jun 92 pp 5-8

[Interview with Larbi Belkheir, Interior Minister, by Fatiha Akeb; place and date not given]

[Text] [Akeb] Mr. Minister, the electoral process was suspended and the FIS [Islamic Salvation Front] was banned. Did the government expect a violent terrorist reaction?

[Belkheir] In our assessment, we foresaw some violence. We were expecting it, and we had to prepare ourselves (the security forces, in particular) to combat this phenomenon, which is new to Algeria. The country had rarely experienced that type of violent activity in the past. A number of steps had to be taken. The first problem was intelligence—finding out who the groups are, how they are organized, and their hierarchy if possible. After that, we had to take action and regain the upper hand in the streets. As you had no doubt noticed, the terrorists had the offensive edge, but it now belongs mostly to the forces of law and order.

[Akeb] Do you think that you have made gains toward re-establishing law and order?

[Belkheir] I think that the situation is stabilizing. That is an undeniable fact. There are terrorist groups with many convicted criminals among their members; there are those commonly referred to as the Afghans. But I can state that there is no national organization in existence now, merely small groups active primarily in the Algiers region. That is why we had to focus on the capital and drive these individuals out of Algiers. The efforts of the security forces have succeeded, causing them to flee into the mountains and overseas. Those groups are being hunted down on a daily basis. Not a day goes by without weapons being seized or fugitives being arrested or shot down. All of that helps to reinforce security in the country.

[Akeb] Have the political affiliations of these groups been identified?

[Belkheir] It is an undeniable fact that they have connections to Islamist circles. They are also connected to the former political party, the FIS: Hardened activists or even members of the FIS turn up in these groups. And there are convicted criminals who converted to the FIS, probably to

pursue their deeds under the banner of a religious group. That, by the way, would explain a certain number of thefts, hold-ups, etc., suddenly viewed as tolerated by religion in their version of jihad.

[Akeb] Security camps have been set up, but for how long? Is there a specific time frame?

[Belkheir] I remind you that the state of emergency was decreed for a 12-month period. In order to administer the state of emergency, and given the situation in our country, we had to detain for questioning a number of individuals who were placed in security centers as a precautionary measure. At the same time, we had to ensure that the centers were properly run, that the detainees' rights and dignity were respected, and that no overstepping of the law would occur.

So far, things have gone smoothly. We also made certain that conditions inside the centers were improved. It was heard that initially, large numbers were involved and conditions were not very good. But living conditions were gradually improved. As you know, we have been releasing large numbers of detainees for some time now. That much said, the state of emergency is to last 12 months and the Interior Ministry is responsible for administering it for the entire duration. What effect will the releases have on the situation? We will see what happens in the field. But I want to reiterate that the state of emergency remains in effect. Detainees have been released in response to concerns at the political level, at the highest level, and in response to the families who sought the release of their relatives in a spirit of national harmony and pacification. Nonetheless, all those who have been released are under surveillance. Those who obey the laws and abide by the government will have no problem, but second offenders will be prosecuted.

[Akeb] It seems, Mr. Minister, that the releases are not favorably viewed among the forces of law and order.

[Belkheir] I do not believe that to be true, even though the police, the gendarmerie, and the security forces have borne the brunt of the terrorism. But we cannot hold people in security centers indefinitely. The centers have classed the detainees according to profile. Those who pose no threat to law and order are to be released, and we are in the process of doing that. Those who do are still being held in the centers.

[Akeb] It is said, Mr. Minister, that the majority of the people being held in these camps have practically nothing on their consciences.

[Belkheir] If we were to go by what these people say, everyone has something on his conscience in this country...

[Akeb] Then are we to believe, Mr. Minister, that those who remain in the centers are suspects..?

[Belkheir] The facts are there. These people were arrested in specific circumstances, either during demonstrations or during unrest. Most of these people took part in the events of June last year and were back at it again this year. Generally speaking, they were identified in association with unrest, violent sermons, etc. It is very possible that a small

percentage of errors has occurred. But that is why the profiling was done and appeals commissions were set up. That is also why many have been freed. The figures are these: 7,683 detainees in all, 3,246 of whom have already been released. 4,437 remain in the centers.

[Box, p 7]

Status of Detainees	
Status	Number
Total number detained	7,456
Total released to date	3,246
Still in detention	4,210
Percent who are married	15.08
Percent who are single	84.92
Percent with employment	70
Percent unemployed	30

Detainees According to Age Group	
Age Group	Percentage
Under 25	12.3
26 to 30	23.0
31 to 35	26.9
36 to 40	20.6
41 to 45	10.2
46 to 50	3.8
51 to 55	1.9
56 to 60	0.7
61 to 65	0.4
66 to 70	0.1
Over 71	0.1

[Akeb] Should we expect to see additional releases?

[Belkheir] The appeals commissions are going to examine the cases, so there will be additional releases. I expect that the figure of 4,437 detainees will be significantly reduced.

[Akeb] Is it true that the centers at In-M'guel, In-Salah, and Reggane are to be closed soon?

[Belkheir] I believe that a number of centers should be closed once the number of detainees is brought down. Because of the summer heat, we plan to open two centers where conditions will be markedly better. Reggane, In-Salah, El Menaa, and Amgal will soon be closed.

[Akeb] Those remaining in detention will be brought north?

[Belkheir] Perhaps not all the way north, but to milder areas.

[Akeb] How are the people inside the centers behaving? For example, do they publicly lay claim to their political opinions?

[Belkheir] They have set up committees, since they are free to do what they want inside the centers. This is not a penitentiary system. The committees decided, for example,

to ban visits by the detainees' families. They ask the question, "Why are we here?" But they have not, to my knowledge, cited any problem regarding their dignity. They insist, however, on being told why they are there. It is clear that they are there because of administrative measures. Some are brought before the courts, once all the elements of their cases are in hand, with concrete evidence...

[Akeb] Have you already brought some of them before the courts?

[Belkheir] Yes, a number of them have been brought before the courts. In fact, when terrorists are arrested, we sometimes find a link to a detainee in one of the centers.

[Akeb] "Algeria is a nation with no government." For a long time, that was a central theme in political speeches. What does that mean and should the government's authority now be considered re-established?

[Belkheir] A government is ruled by laws. When laxity or anarchy occurs, there is indeed a problem. That is the case. That is my point of view. There was no government in that there was a great deal of laxity. A government must ensure that the laws are enforced. Had we all forgotten respect for the law, all of us—citizens, political officials, and political parties? This country went through a period of "anything goes" due no doubt to the move toward democracy. We seemed to believe that we were sufficiently civic minded and mature. Democracy is not anarchy. There are rules that everyone must abide by. To say that the authority of the government is now 100-percent restored would be a lie. It is a lengthy task that requires perseverance. We must pursue our course to re-establish the authority of the state in the areas of security, public service, and daily activities. That is the government's role. I adhere to a very simple principle: Laws exist and they must be enforced.

[Akeb] Do you believe, Mr. Minister, that the problem of security is less a concern now and that it poses no obstacle to a resumption of the electoral process, for example?

[Belkheir] Not a single country is free of security problems. Not even the most advanced. What is meant by a security problem? Whenever a bomb explodes or a shot is fired or a theft occurs, people say that there is no security. Security must be stepped up. But to my way of thinking, the problem is not one of security, but of law and order. It is a matter of how the political parties are behaving. In a word, we must come back to Algeria and put the country above partisan or personal interest.

[Akeb] You reportedly told a Kuwaiti newspaper that presidential elections will be held before the year is out.

[Belkheir] Those are not my exact words. I merely stated, as minister of the interior and citizen of Algeria, that it would be positive if presidential elections could be held before scheduled or as soon as possible. But it goes without saying that it is not up to the interior minister to name a date or determine whether the time is right for such a decision. I never stated that presidential elections would be held before the end of 1992.

[Akeb] Mr. Minister, when there is a call for dialogue from political parties, what is your impression as minister of the interior in charge of law and order?

[Belkheir] That depends upon what is meant by dialogue. It is to establish a national consensus? To take up urgent tasks? To reach agreement on a number of basic points with the goal of building up the country? Or is it to be a means of carving up the pie, with each one seeking his share?

[Akeb] The FIS leaders are to be tried soon. It will be a public trial. Are you worried about security?

[Belkheir] I believe that all precautions will be taken. The trial will be public and it will be rather lengthy, from what I have heard. The state must prepare for all contingencies and impose its authority in the area of security, regardless of the circumstances. I do not expect any problems.

[Akeb] A black marketeer from the south, Hadj Bettou, has 200 billion in stockpiled food. Doesn't that reflect a lack of government?

[Belkheir] The choice of an economic system, along with its monopolies, is not without consequences. There was talk of corruption, of stretching the rules for some. Hadj Bettou is a rather special case. All Algerians know that the price system is not airtight. But where did he obtain his supply? He must have been given a wink and a nod. You cannot drive tractor-trailers into In-Guezzam and Tamanrasset without someone noticing. So I suppose that there were many winks and nods along the way. One last point, that story began with a report on arms dealing. That man is an arms dealer, first and foremost.

[Akeb] Even without a report of arms dealing, could a stockpile of food worth 200 billion go unnoticed?

[Belkheir] The information we had concerned arms dealing. The operation was based in Algiers where it had supplies dropped by aircraft, and surprisingly no one was informed of it. Then the stockpile of food was discovered by the gendarmes. I have always said that commerce and civil servants do not mix. Obviously, there is a problem of monopolies, foreign trade, etc.

[Akeb] Algeria has antiterrorist brigades. Does Algeria have anticorruption brigades?

[Belkheir] At the Interior Ministry, the first priority was to equip our forces for the new state of affairs and for terrorism. The reason is that until then, the police and the gendarmerie had handled nothing more than the conventional, tradition operations of law enforcement. An Office of Security Coordination was recently created whereas nothing of the kind had existed before. There was the problem of coordinating the various branches. Then the DGSN [Directorate General of National Security] was reorganized: Two offices were created, one to combat terrorism and the other to combat drugs—the two most serious scourges. But when it comes to corruption, I believe that commercial and financial activities should be rigorously monitored by the government. It is true that the departments ought to be

following this problem. Investigations are under way. But it is not a matter for a brigade; it is a matter of rethinking an entire system.

[Akeb] Mr. Minister, according to the press, you plan to review the way cities are managed and the status they have. In what way?

[Belkheir] The Interior Ministry is, in fact, is looking into eight matters, among them the structure of local administration, which includes the status of the diara and the commune. Also among them are the administrative divisions of the country, to determine whether they should be redistricted. We have 48 wilayat, and the capital is governed by exactly the same structure as the other wilayat. Isn't it time that we took a fresh look at the administrative structure of the country and realigned it? And—this is still in the process of being considered—shouldn't we also determine whether there is a need to create regional entities that could better handle the citizens' problems? Or possibly increase the number of wilayat so that the citizen would be closer to the governing structures? Or better manage the communes—reexamine the national government's presence in them? The government is absent because it is practically unrepresented beyond the level of the wilayah. Since the diaras do not officially exist, shouldn't we reexamine their fate and give them official status? Shouldn't we reexamine the national government's presence in the communes, which do not even have a municipal police force or what used to be known as the "garde champetre" [rural police]? The state is absent at all levels. The review covers all those matters. We hope to complete the review process quickly and present these matters to the cabinet.

[Akeb] Have you brought in any former high-ranking civil servants to take part in the review process?

[Belkheir] No, we have not. But we have a group in charge of human resources and training of personnel.

[Akeb] Will the capital city be given a special status?

[Belkheir] That question has been posed and we are working on the answer to it. Should the capital with its population of more than 2 million continue as it is? I maintain that we will never be able to solve the problems of the capital unless we reshape its administrative structures and redistrict in a better way. No matter how well-intentioned the civil servants and the wali of Algiers may be, the area is too big to handle. For that reason, we are trying to determine what the most appropriate approach would be. Should Algiers be divided up into several urban centers or several wilayat? Should there be one person to oversee the whole? Examples are to be had from around the world and we are looking into this idea. Last, the problem of the civil registry must also be reexamined. An interministerial task force is taking a close look at it. There you have eight issues that had to be tackled if serious work was to be done.

We are involving all those concerned by these issues in order to avoid making any mistakes. We will therefore call on all administrators who are in the field and who have experience. We will call on the academics. If a new system is to be drawn up, it must be a modern one, staffed by skilled

managers, able to fulfill a mandate forthrightly. The desired result is to improve the handling of the citizen's problems; revive public service, the communes, and the APCs [People's Communal Assemblies]; and reestablish governmental authority. As you can see, the Interior Ministry is concerned with more than security matters. It is the backbone of the state. If all goes well in the interior ministry, the rest will follow; if not all is well, the rest will limp along.

[Akeb] Is that what made you accept the position, Mr. Minister?

[Belkheir] I had a position in the president's office that I was asked to take on when I was still the head of a school that was doing very important work. I was happy as the head of that school, ENITA [Algerian National Engineers and Technicians School], which trained high-level engineers. I can assure you that I would not have traded that position for anything in the world. The years that I spent running the school were the best years of my life. Duty compelled me to accept the position of chief of staff to the Algerian president from 1981 to 1985. I later returned to that position in 1989.

[Akeb] What did you do between 1985 and 1989?

[Belkheir] Principal private secretary to the president, which meant that I was much more involved in overseas problems concerning diplomacy. The position of chief of staff to the president is an observation post from which one has a view of all shortcomings. The nature of the position is such that it encompasses all problems, whether in administrative departments or the interior. I was asked by friends to join the Interior Ministry and I accepted. I was not specifically nominated. It was more the result of a team discussion over how to restore the state's authority. I accepted the position, although it is a difficult one in these times, but I did it for the country.

[Akeb] Do you feel more useful at the Interior Ministry than in the president's office?

[Belkheir] There is a very big difference. In the president's office, you are not the decision maker. You under pressure from all sides and you have no decisionmaking power. To outsiders, you are guilty of all evils; to those above, you are just as guilty. The bad things are always your fault; the good things are never your doing. Here, at least, responsibility is responsibility. I am the minister, in charge of a ministerial department. The successes are mine and the failures are mine. I am not somewhere in between.

But that is not peculiar to Algeria. It is true of all countries as far as that type of position is concerned. I am happier here at the Interior Ministry because the responsibilities are mine.

[Akeb] Is there a commission now at work on the elections?

[Belkheir] Of course—because elections will have to be held again one day or another. We need to prepare for them, particularly in view of the many problems we have had in the past—voter registration rolls and voter identification cards, among others. We are trying to work out a more effective and governable system for the next elections and for those who will have the task of organizing them. Every

country in the world has a modern electoral system. We cannot hold elections with the APCs under occupation, falsified voter registration rolls, voter identification cards that disappear into the woodwork, very poor census figures, and unreliable telephone connections to the most remote communes. We have a comprehensive program that will probably be completed by the end of the year. It will enable us to obtain information directly from any polling station. That was not possible last year when we had to put ourselves through all sorts of contortions. So, we need a modern system before we can hold a vote, all the more so because the burden of holding elections falls to the civil service and it is indispensable that the civil service be kept above the fray and its neutrality ensured. That has nothing to do with the issue of clean, honest elections. My opinion is that the civil service must be kept out of political disputes. If we want to ensure the future of this country, it is essential that the civil service—at the Interior Ministry, in particular—be neutral and nonpartisan. To each his own political preferences, but in carrying out his mission, an agent of the state must be uninvolved in partisan disputes. That is what we are in the process of explaining to our governmental agents.

[Akeb] ...Including APC officials, who did not remain neutral in the past?

[Belkheir] They are Algerian citizens who were elected to office. For my part, I do not adhere to exclusionary policies to the extent that the APCs, regardless of their partisan affiliation (and the APCs are no longer with the FIS since the FIS was banned), obey the laws and serve their electorates. Right from the start, we never raised the question of whether an APC was dominated by the FIS, the FLN [National Liberation Front], or the RCD [Rally for Culture and Democracy]; we merely raised the problem of APCs that were not functioning properly. Of the 485 APCs that were dissolved, there were 28 FLN, 11 independent, and 450 FIS. As for the rest, we have instituted judicial processes. Other APCs may be dissolved if they are not functioning properly. First and foremost, an APC has a mandate to carry out, and that is to serve the voter, rather than a political party.

[Akeb] You seemed upset during the announcement of the outcome of the first round of voting. Had you expected the outcome to be different?

[Belkheir] We had the results of a few polls that in no way indicated a landslide victory for the FIS. Did the FIS honestly and truly earn that victory or was it caused by the vacuum among the other political parties, setting aside the problems of voter registration rolls, voter IDs, fraud, and the twisting of voters' arms? The FIS mobilized itself and used all means at hand. What was there to stop it? I personally visited a polling station in Bab El-Oued. The monitors of the other parties were not all present. Never had I imagined that, one day, I would announce—it had to be done—such an outcome. Not because one party had defeated another, but because the modern country of our aspirations, a country headed for true democracy, had made a complete turnabout and was falling in the hands of a political party that rejected the rules of democracy. We were moving toward a dictatorship. It was intolerable to

see this country sink into obscurantism. It was unacceptable to me. As minister of the interior, it was my duty to announce the outcome. I did so. Was I upset? Fatigue also played a part in it.

[Akeb] You indicated, Mr. Minister, that the reports did not give a true indication of the situation.

[Belkheir] What reports?

[Akeb] The polls you referred to.

[Belkheir] None of the polls that were conducted predicted such a large turnout for the FIS. They gave it 23 to 34 percent.

[Akeb] Who conducted these polls?

[Belkheir] The ministry had several polls done through a number of organizations, including the CENEAP [expansion not given]. We had no tradition of polling. But that is not the problem. Perhaps we should be asking what happened before the 26th, the day of the vote, to make such an outcome possible. Why did 40 percent of Algerians not vote? Should the FIS be considered great victors in that election for having won 3 million votes? I do not see that as a great victory for the FIS. In fact, the party had slipped in comparison with the APC elections when it won more than 4 million votes. The FIS was beginning to lose ground and its losses were even greater considering all those among the 3 million who voted for the FIS out of fear, pressure, or its use of religion.

[Akeb] You are responsible for administering the state of emergency, but the aftermath of the state of emergency is certainly more important, it is not?

[Belkheir] Absolutely. It is very important to prepare for what will follow the state of emergency. Otherwise, what would have been the good of detaining thousands of people in security camps? We have taken a number of steps at the wilayah level with regard to the families and the population, to ensure that the people being released do not return to the same environment. It is a difficult and ambitious endeavor, and it is even pretentious on my part. But we must move toward a more responsible handling of problems. There are people who live in shacks or in shantytowns in deplorable conditions. That is why supplemental measures are needed. And by supplemental measures I mean more than what the Interior Ministry is doing. They must also include programs at the social, economic, and even political levels.

Ben Bella on Leaders, Politics, Embezzlement

92AF0931A Doha AL-SHARQ in Arabic 6 Jun 92 p 4

[Interview with former Algerian President Ahmed Ben Bella by Sa'd Bu'aqabah: "Ben Bella Tells Boudiaf: I Will Help You With Silence;" first paragraph is AL-SHARQ introduction; date not given]

[Text] Algiers—AL-SHARQ went to the home of former President Ahmed Ben Bella, who lives in a villa in [Alay], Algeria. The villa was owned by Colonel Abdelghani, a member of the Revolutionary Council, who participated in ousting Ben Bella from power in 1965. The villa was taken from him and given to Ben Bella after the latter's return

from exile. Ben Bella is in his eighth decade, but he still has all his faculties, as if he were a man in his sixties. He spoke to AL-SHARQ for nearly one and a half hours about Algerian and Arab affairs. Here is some of the interview:

[AL-SHARQ] You were one of the first to meet with President Boudiaf alone, after he returned to meet with several of the political parties. What occurred in this meeting between comrades of the struggle and prison, but adversaries in politics, after 30 years of alienation?

[Ben Bella] I told Boudiaf that the country was in an ordeal, its unity and independence threatened. You are destined to succeed in this mission. Therefore, you are proof that historians are the scourge of this country. At that time, the country will react as never before. Boudiaf said to me: Help me to achieve this success. I told him: I will help you with silence about what happened!

We discussed dealing with the present situation after his return. I said to him: You must avoid bloodshed. He said: But, respect for the state must be restored. I replied: Respect for the state, for whose benefit? You are entering a clash with your people, for the benefit of agencies or persons who brought this country to this situation. You must hold out your hand to everyone. This is an opportunity for a national consensus regarding the minimum that will unite Algerians, in order to emerge rapidly out of this dark tunnel.

[AL-SHARQ] What if Boudiaf doesn't take this advice and deals with the situation some other way?

[Ben Bella] Boudiaf came to power, dragging behind him the traditions of his party. He was also thinking that what was built during his 30 years absence has no value for him. These things make it difficult for him to understand the reality of the first hours. Those hours required decisive decisions. Perhaps, he was unable to make them. He has now begun to understand the situation better.

[AL-SHARQ] What is your evaluation of the situation in Algeria?

[Ben Bella] The situation warns of a true catastrophe. People have gone to the mountains, and blood is flowing. The political situation is not one to inspire hope—at the least—at the level of authority and what that authority expresses. The military establishment, the sole guarantee of national unity, has entered the vortex of violence, as a result of politicians' mistakes. National unity is threatened and the economy has exceeded the limits of possibility. So far, there is no hint of how we can overcome these ordeals in the immediate future. I still believe that Algeria's problem is political. It can only be resolved by political means. The first of these is dialogue. Unless a national dialogue is achieved, to bring together as much as possible of this political separation, the country will be in a situation not much different from that of Yugoslavia, God forbid.

[AL-SHARQ] You supported Ghazali's government when it was established. What do you think of it now?

[Ben Bella] Ghazali opened dialogue with the political parties, immediately after he assumed power. This was correct, and an excellent thing to do. If he had organized the

dialogue, given it a structure and channels, and implemented its results throughout the land, the country would not have reached the state it is now in. You know that Ghozali's popularity increased when he began the dialogue.

[AL-SHARQ] But, Ghozali says that he failed in politics but succeeded with the economy?

[Ben Bella] Ghozali's misfortune was like Hamroush's misfortune. Both of them tried to deal with economic problems as a basis for the political question. Both of them looked for economic solutions outside the country, by selling oil or incurring debts. However, the solutions are located within the nation, not abroad. If we had organized our affairs at home, the outside world would be knocking on our door to give us assistance.

We are a country on a continent that has resources to make us feel good about our future, provided that we overcome the political and social rivalry and resolve the problem of legitimacy in governing. We are now like someone who owns a building and wants to mortgage it to solve his financial problems. However, the building is the object of a legal dispute and, consequently, it cannot be mortgaged or sold, until the issue of ownership is settled. Ownership here is tantamount to legitimacy, which the people must determine by elections.

[AL-SHARQ] Major General Khaled Nezzar, the minister of defense, told me that you had expressed your satisfaction with Chedli's resignation, and that you considered it an honorable way to go for him, while Colonel Mohammed Saleh [Yehyaoui] thought that Chedli had deserted in a time of misfortune.

[Ben Bella] Yes, I said that to Nezzar, in the presence of a group of high-ranking officers. I told them: You have struck at the National Liberation Front [FLN]. Experience has proven that it still enjoys the people's support, despite the fact that the government was against it, the Islamists were against it, and all the other parties were against it. Even the international sentiment was against it. Nevertheless, it obtained this percentage of votes. This indicated a simple process of clean-up for a period of 18 months. However, what happened after that does not indicate that they took this advice. Perhaps, they had things that I don't know about.

[AL-SHARQ] Reports of your return to the FLN have been circulating for some time. What is the truth of these reports?

[Ben Bella] I am essentially a frontist; the Democratic Movement is a wing of the front. I have made contacts with many of those strugglers in the front, especially Hosein al-Sasi, the member of the Political Office, as well as Mehri and the other brothers, even the grouping, to which the seven parties belong—we formed it and left it open to the FLN and the Party of Socialist Forces.

[AL-SHARQ] Some observers say that the grouping that you formed from seven parties is basically to block Boudiaf?

[Ben Bella] No. We joined together to ward off Algeria's tragedies. There are 60 parties and, in reality, there is no multiplicity, no democracy, no politics. Boudiaf wants an

unorganized grouping of citizens, such as those who gather in coffee houses, whose only connection with each other is the venue. We want to gather around a group of mutual supports, such as identity, affiliation, and political programs and priorities. If Boudiaf's group agrees with us, he will find us at his side.

[AL-SHARQ] What is your comment about the National Advisory Forum, which Boudiaf wants to hold?

[Ben Bella] A national forum, yes; but advisory, no. We want a national forum that makes decisions, not a forum for consultation only, because that makes political power marginal and causes it to have no view about what is decided. Even if it has a view, it would be advisory. I say that searching for legitimacy in that way is a joke.

Not long ago, powers were taken away from human rights associations and given to an observer, which is useless and has no justification except to study the granting of legitimacy to crowds. Later, the National Advisory Council was formed, which includes a bunch of Communists, to bestow legitimacy on actions that do not require debate. Today, they want a national forum, and they say that its role is advisory. If there must be a forum, so be it, but it should encompass all political and labor forces and groupings. It should be sovereign and its decisions implemented. This is the correct and serious action to take, which will save the country from the vortex.

[AL-SHARQ] These days, a question is being seriously posed about changing the government. What is your position in this regard?

[Ben Bella] It must be a political government which, of course, does not ignore technicians. However, the sensitive ministries must be political, because the question requires political handling of political problems and not technical handling of political problems, as was done in the past. We have very high thresholds in politics, as well as in technicians.

[AL-SHARQ] Whom do you see as appropriate to lead a political-technocratic government?

[Ben Bella] The country is crying out for high level politicians, as well as scientific and technical cadres. The important point in choosing is that they are clean. I cannot mention names, in order to avoid sensitivities.

[AL-SHARQ] If this task were given to you?

[Ben Bella] I cannot undertake this task; I could only assist.

[AL-SHARQ] What is the truth of your accusing Chedli of embezzlement?

[Ben Bella] I don't speak out of a vacuum. I have documents and evidence, some of which I have given to the examining magistrate, who has listened to me. He is a fine, honest young man. He told me that justice will take its course, if there is a political decision to do that. I have documents in safety-deposit boxes in banks abroad. If justice does not take its course, I will be forced to publish these documents for public opinion.

I believe that international circumstances will assist me in raising this issue. The Western nations, which are now demanding to be rid of Third World debts, feel that it is better to help the developing nations to regain their funds stolen by the rulers and placed in Western banks. Switzerland recently returned Ceausescu's funds, amounting to \$300 million. There was also the Marcos affair, etc. There is talk about Musa [Traouri]'s money. Why doesn't Algeria recover what is in Caracas, or Belgium?

Furthermore, I say that there are 30 dossiers, the first of a group of 10,000 dossiers, awaiting justice now, which would enable the country to recover 75 percent of the debt burden which is choking the country today, threatening it with losing its independence.

In this regard, President Boudiaf's reply to my statement is not within his right as this country's first magistrate. He should let justice take its course and not exonerate Chedli with his statement before he is judged, because a statement of the country's first official influences justice, because he is the first magistrate.

This issue is of benefit to the nation, even from the political perspective. We must establish traditions of the accountability of officials, even if they were presidents.

Then, the process could contribute to deterring this malady, which has begun to become completely organized in the country. It still continues today. I am a person who does not have any private issue with Chedli. He is the one who released me from prison in 1980. However, national duty compels me to tell the nation what I know.

[AL-SHARQ] Observers believe that this position of yours vis-a-vis Chedli is to compensate for your position with regard to the late Boumedienne. Despite the fact that Boumedienne imprisoned you for 13 years, you do not think ill of him, like Chedli, who released you. Do you accuse Boumedienne of embezzlement?

[Ben Bella] I told you that I have no private issue with Chedli. However, the situation with regard to the late Boumedienne is different. Nevertheless, I say that Boumedienne was an Islamic, Arab nationalist. I knew him very well, because I was the one who brought him in the steamer "Tous" from Cairo to Algiers at the time of the revolution. He was a man who fervently loved Algeria. It is not at all true that he was the one who carried out the 19 June 1965 coup against me. No, on the contrary, the group surrounding him pushed him into this coup. He regretted that until the end of his days, especially when this group plotted against him in 1974 (the Oujda Group). They met in Annaba in the summer of 1974 and united against him. Their union broke up later, in the well-known incidents.

It was said to me that the late Boumedienne had told them: 'Be quiet! I have removed him from jail for you!' When he was returning from Russia on the medical aircraft, he told his escort: 'I violated Ben Bella's rights; you must release him!' However, they refused to release me, until matters of power could be arranged. Therefore, I would never think ill of him. I am a Muslim, and I would not dig up the tomb of the dead, especially if he was a comrade!

[AL-SHARQ] How do you now view the Arab situation?

[Ben Bella] It is a miserable situation. I cannot conceive how the Arabs could get to this level of disintegration and division. We now hear that there are attempts at reunion. We hope that happens in the near future, because the Arab family is one. This alienation cannot continue, because it is in no one's interests.

[AL-SHARQ] What about Arab relations with non-Arabs?

[Ben Bella] The West has imposed a cultural challenge on us. We are in the front line of the Third World. We have been able, geographically and culturally, to carry this responsibility. We must meet this challenge with a counter-challenge, or we will be eliminated and vanish. If the front line of defense falls, all of mankind will fall into the claws of the Western way of life.

[AL-SHARQ] A last word, Mr. President?

[Ben Bella] My greetings to AL-SHARQ's readers and the dear Qatari people. I thank you for giving me this opportunity.

Life of FIS Member Ali Belhadj Summarized

92AF0996B Algiers ALGERIE ACTUALITE in French
25 Jun 92 p 9

[Article by Djamel Benramdane: "The Last Sermon?"]

[Text] His childhood friends describe a fragile, quiet youth, subject to violent epileptic fits....

By the time he was six, Ali Belhadj was already an orphan. That was 1962. His parents died a year apart. Ali has a cherished photograph of his father, Lahbib, who died as a guerrilla in the bush. The picture shows his father in military garb, submachine gun in hand. His mother passed away after a long illness, and the three Belhadj children—Lahbib, who today bears his father's name, Ali and Abdelhamid—were cared for by their maternal uncle.

Ali Belhadj was born on 16 December 1965 in Tunis. His parents were both natives of southern Algeria. Later it was said his mother was Vietnamese, then Tunisian. The three children grew up with their uncle, a former teacher who became a school principal after independence, and they were raised by their grandmother in a small house in the "Michelle settlement," in Kouba. The uncle treated them as if they were his own children and encouraged them to study to achieve success in life.

After primary school at Ben Omar Park, Ali was accepted into first form and attended school in Kouba.

There he and a few comrades developed a passion for literature and Islam. His friends say now that he was predisposed to become a cleric, that even then he had the makings of a future imam. He spent his time devouring books and studying the great Arab poets. He played soccer, but never got "hooked." In the labyrinths of "Michelle settlement," he rarely joined his friends playing "belote" [a card game], preferring to expand his knowledge and to daydream. An unusual boy, fragile, he was subject to violent epileptic fits and spoke little.

In the summer of 1972, he was admitted into second form as a student of letters. He devoted his time to study and was frequently seen in the mosque. His social life was minimal, and he began to get interested in the circles of several obscure preachers. He began to discuss religion, morality, the laws and the *shari'ah* with his childhood friends. They too said their prayers, of course—but differently, “normally,” some would say. One day, he gave them a fiery discourse on the morality of Algerians. His friends made fun of it. They broke into laughter, invented “humorous” parodies and tried to perform them for him. Nothing doing. They went to “Franco” beach, already in their swimming trunks. Ali did not know how to swim, and like everyone else he jumped into the water. He nearly drowned....

In June 1975, Ali Belhadj flunked his diploma exam. The foreign language requirement barred his path to the university. He did not retake the examination but entered the competition for a position as primary school teacher at the El Harrach Institute. He came in first, but was not sent on to university. He spent a year in training at El Harrach, where he met his spiritual father, Sheikh El-Arbaoui. He began teaching in a small school in Kouba in 1976. He taught Islam and the “hijab” to his students. He embellished his grammar courses with verses from the Koran. On his free Monday afternoons, he went to El-Harrach, to the Abi-Hanifa mosque where Sheikh El-Arbaoui gave lectures to several young students. Theology and the *shari'ah* were Belhadj's favorite subjects, and he became the sheikh's favorite. Young Ali was a quick study and soon began preaching in a small musallan [place of prayer] in Kouba, in the squalid El-Bahia quarter. This would become “Jamaa Ennakhla,” the teacher's favorite spot, to which he would repair long afterward, when he had turned to politics, in search of serenity and inspiration for the Es-Sunna and Ibn-Badis sermons.

Ali Belhadj already had some followers in El-Bahia. His energy and charisma opened doors for him at the new Kouba mosque, where after a series of occasional lectures the titular imam let him have the *mimbar* [pulpit] every Thursday. It was here that the teacher found his first real devotees. His eloquence was remarkable, everyone knew of the young “imam on the motor scooter,” his reputation spread all over Algiers, there was much talk about him, and about his thundering sermons in the mosques—but the police, too, began to take notice.

In the early 1980s, he had problems with the security services. He mercilessly tore into the government. Relations with his uncle became strained. The old school principal wanted him to continue his career as a teacher, to make something of himself; his two brothers were causing no problems for the family. The elder, Lahbib, a jurist with a law degree, aspired to become a magistrate. Abdelhamid, the younger, was a fruit and vegetable merchant. Normal people.

Ali Belhadj left his uncle's house. A friend, who later became his brother-in-law, put him up in a small room of a house. Ali's books took up all the space: He already had an impressive library.

In 1982, Ali married his friend's sister. He obtained employee housing, a small “F2” in Kouba where he established himself. Already, in his own household, he tried to impose his ideas, the “hijab” at home, the Koranic laws. According to close acquaintances, he was becoming obsessed, banning soccer, television, gravestones. Belhadj's sermons made him famous. First Blida, then El-Achour. He made the acquaintance of Islamists, including Sheikh Nahnah and Bouiali, who would take up arms. He met the latter about the time the birth of “al-musalahah” [armed movement] was declared. The gendarmerie and police were getting nervous.

Bouiali was brought down. Ali Belhadj had told him he disapproved of armed struggle and urged him not to resort to violence. To no avail.

On 30 August 1983, Ali Belhadj was arrested and sentenced to five years in prison. Among other counts in the indictment, he was accused of “failure to denounce malefactors” for his meeting with Bouiali.

He served time in Serkadji, Tizi-Ouzou, Berrouaghia and finally Lambese. Altogether he served four years; he refused presidential clemency and spent three months under house arrest at Ouargla. How did he use his time in prison? He read. It was his passion. He studied Islam, but also the law, for close to 10 hours every day. He wrote several books and political or religious articles, as well as some poems, confiscated upon his release. In 1985, while in the Tizi-Ouzou penal center, he learned of the death of Sheikh El-Arbaoui, his religious mentor. Belhadj dedicated one of his poems to him: “Une larme pour El-Arbaoui” [A tear for El-Arbaoui]....

By the time he returned from Ouargla, many things had changed. He was 31 years old. He went to see his friends, told them prison had strengthened him. To an old friend who did not want to see him (because he disagreed with his sermons—a long-standing dispute that went back to 1982), he urged: “All right, then let me write to you.” The imam was tenacious, patient, sure of himself: He had chosen his path. It was a difficult time for “men of the pen,” as the Islamist intellectuals styled themselves. Very soon, in October 1988, came the open-air sermons. Belhadj won over the faithful from Es-Sunna to Bab El-Oued. At Kouba he was the idol of the young islamists. He was often seen with Abassi and other Islamist movement notables. He met the sheikh at the funeral of a common friend, then joined them at the houses of friends. The idea of a structure “bringing together men of the pen to resist oppression and work for the triumph of Islam” took shape. On 17 March 1989, the creation of the FIS was announced at Bab El-Oued, before thousands of devotees. Present among other founding members were Abassi, Sheikh Benazzouz, and Belhadj. The young imam often disagreed with the leaders of FIS. But he was the driving force, the one who fascinated the young. Everyone knew how important he was to the party. He raised his voice against one of his old “brothers”—Nahnah, whom he denigrated publicly—then Djaballah. Before the creation of FIS, his apartment was turned upside down in an inch-by-inch search of the F2.

Belhadj secluded himself at home. He received few visitors. Before his sermons, no one could see him: He meditated, wrote, read. In his view, the "Islamic republic" was not far off.

He devoted all his time to FIS. He named his children—four boys and a girl—after close disciples of the Prophet. The eldest, Abdelfettah, 10, is already a fervent student of the Koran.

Today, Belhadj's friends say his demeanor will be magisterial when he goes to trial, even if it means risking his head. It remains to be seen how the judges will rule.

FIS Trial: Jurisdiction of Court Discussed

92AF0996A Algiers ALGERIE ACTUALITE in French
25 Jun 92 p 7

[Article by M.C.: "Crimes and Punishments"]

[Text] It has been decided that the trial will not be political. People cannot be prosecuted on the grounds of their ideas or beliefs. But is it really ideas that are at issue, when people are called out into the streets to overthrow a government by hook or by crook? There have been many serious incidents and deaths since that historic month of June 1991. It is up to the judicial system to decide who bears the responsibility. But who would have said, back when this country allowed the FIS [Islamic Salvation Front] to exist, then to take over the streets, that its leaders—who every Friday basked in the crowd's hypnotizing adoration—one day would find themselves behind bars and before the judge? Thrilled with their early successes, they believed power was within reach and thought little of the damage they would have left in their wake. Algeria gave them a golden opportunity to air their ideas in public debate and would have made a place for Islamic politics, but the FIS disregarded all this in its haste to seize power. So, is this a political trial or not? Although it is for their alleged actions that the [Islamist] political leaders will be tried—and it is their actions they will have to defend—the trial is clearly being played out against a political backdrop. That backdrop is one of successive failures—initially, that of the FIS, but then the failure of a democracy that tried to assimilate it and ended by rejecting it.

The Military Tribunal of Blida is gearing up for an exceptional event. Herewith the highlights of a story that has only begun....

Several days after the arrest of the FIS leaders, the military prosecutor's office of Blida made public the seven counts of the indictment brought against the accused. Most of the accusations carry a possible death sentence:

- Abetting and inciting citizens to raise arms against the authority of the state;
- inciting fratricidal conflict and sabotage throughout the country;
- directing and organizing a rebellion against the authority of the state;
- establishing armed forces without prior authorization from the authorities;

- deliberate convocation of mobs in an effort to disrupt the functioning of critical components of the national economy;
- distribution of propaganda tracts damaging to the national interest;
- abduction, illegal imprisonment and torture of elements of the security forces.

The judicial inquiry opened, and more than 100 witnesses, including Mouloud Hamrouche and Mohamed Salah Mohammedi, were heard. The defense termed the press's premature disclosure of the counts of the indictment a violation of judicial secrecy. The juridical battle was joined, and the status of Abassi Madani, Ali Belhadj and their five companions was never defined. Were they political detainees or criminal suspects? Officially, they were arrested for "having knowingly fomented, organized, unleashed and led an armed conspiracy against the security of the state." The attack on state security is explicit, as are the political motivations of the presumed perpetrators. The communique of the military authority talks about "the attempted 'fitna' [dissension] to seize power for which they bear responsibility..." and says that "the accused are in fact political detainees." These expressions support the defense's contention that the trial is "political in nature."

March 1992. The examining magistrate did not sustain any of the original criminal charges. At all events, the new particulars had practically nothing to do with the first seven. He concluded the inquiry and approved six new charges, one of which (the sixth) is a mere assertion of fact, with no juridical interpretation.

Ali Belhadj (five counts):

1. Criminal attack and conspiracy against the authority of the state. Criminal attack in this case is punishable by death, while conspiracy carries a fine of 30-70,000 Algerian dinars.
2. Attempt against the security of the state, by slaughter and destruction. Punishable by death.
3. Attempt to disrupt the functioning of the national economy. Punishable by 15 to 20 years at hard labor.
4. Possession and distribution, for propaganda purposes, of tracts, bulletins and leaflets damaging to the national interest. Punishable by six months to three years in prison and a fine of 3,600 to 36,000 dinars.
5. Abduction, illegal imprisonment and physical torture of the abductees. Abduction and illegal imprisonment are punishable by 5 to 10 years in prison, while physical torture is a capital offense.

Abassi Madani (four counts):

Numbers 1 through 4 of the charges preferred against Ali Belhadj.

Ali Djeddi, Abdelkader Boukhamkham, Noureddine Chigara, Abdelkader Omar (one count): Charge Number 3.

Kamel Guemazi (two counts):

1. Charge Number 3.

2. Deliberate use of the resources and funds of a local governmental entity for partisan purposes. This is only an assertion of fact: Its juridical status is unknown.

The jurisdiction of the military tribunal:

The decree establishing the State Security Court (CSE) in 1975 divested the military tribunals (TMs) of jurisdiction over civilians implicated in attacks on the security and authority of the state.

In 1989, the CSE—which until that time exercised sole jurisdiction in cases of attacks against the security and authority of the state—was dissolved. Its powers were transferred to the ordinary courts, in other words to the regular criminal bench.

According to the prosecution, the jurisdiction of the TMs is unquestionable. Two arguments are advanced. First of all, the decree of June 1991 declaring a state of siege, which stipulates in Article 11: "the Military Tribunals may assume jurisdiction over crimes and serious misdemeanors committed against the security of the state, whoever may be the authors and accomplices..." Second, paragraph 3 of Article 25 of the military justice code, which grants the TMs jurisdiction over all crimes and misdemeanors involving attacks on the security of the state. On that basis, the examining magistrate of the Military Tribunal of Blida issued an order asserting jurisdiction. Defense attorneys appealed before the tribunal, which is taking the place of the public prosecutor's office, but it sustained the judge's order in a 31 August decree.

According to the defense, the prosecution's arguments are "nothing but a smoke screen." It contends that the creation of the CSE abrogated all contrary provisions of law, including paragraph 3 of Article 25 of the code of military justice. When the CSE was dissolved in 1989, no law was enacted to restore the jurisdiction of the military tribunals, except for the decree of 4 June 1991 declaring a state of siege. But a decree cannot abrogate a law, by virtue of the principle that "it takes a law to abrogate a law." As proof, they cite (among others) the case of Didier Roger, who although arrested during the state of siege was brought before the ordinary criminal court of Tissemsilt. So, is the military tribunal legally competent to try Abassi, Belhadj and their five companions? The Blida military prosecutor has given a definitive response to this question: "Some lawyers are trying to challenge a judicial decision (Editor's note: The judgment that the military tribunal has jurisdiction was confirmed by the office of public prosecutions in a decree of 31 August 1991.) They forget their standing as officers of the court and the provisions of Number 147 of the Algerian penal code, under which they could be subject to penalties provided in paragraphs 1 and 3 of Article 144. First, actions, words or public writings that have the object, after a final decision has been made on an issue, to influence magistrates' decisions. Second, actions, words or public writings that tend to cast discredit on jurisdictional rulings and are of such a nature as to impugn the authority or independence of the judiciary." The warning is clear:

Defense attorneys who continue to challenge the competence of the military tribunal run the risk of having legal problems of their own.

Draft Platform of Patriotic Rally Published

*92AF0943C Algiers ALGER REPUBLICAIN in French
9 Jun 92 p 3*

[Draft platform of the Patriotic Rally, 9 June 1992]

[Text] Algeria is in a deep crisis. It has the means it needs to overcome it.

The Higher State Council has pledged to do so before two years have gone by and, with the aid of all patriots, Algeria will be able to resume its economic, social, and cultural development.

Such a prospect presumes the establishment of a stable, coherent, mobilizing political framework.

On such a basis, the Patriotic Rally is faithful to its proclamation of 1 November 1954 and in a straight line with the "restoration of a sovereign, democratic, and social government within a framework of Islamic principles and respect for all basic freedoms."

In terms of its concept and operation, the single party system was the first distortion of the principle of the people's sovereignty.

While it is undeniable that this period has been marked by major socioeconomic accomplishments and that many Algerians have gained access to sociocultural advancement, the fact nevertheless remains that distortions of all kinds, the result of unbalanced development, led to a loss of confidence in the government and its institutions.

Whence the break between the people and their leaders.

The events of October 1988 were the culmination of this process and further discredited a government cut off from the people.

Intended to remedy all evils and restore the people's confidence, the Constitution of February 1989 quickly revealed its limitations. By setting forth the rules for an ad hoc democracy, it actually responded more to a concern for protecting personal positions than it did a determination to face the challenges confronting the country.

The government's abdication of its role, combined with leniency and sterile power games, opened the way to anti-democratic forces. Using the very machinery of democracy, these forces tried to seize power in order to destroy democracy and the freedoms which the constitution was supposed to protect.

The president's resignation came at a time when grave dangers threatened the country's unity and territorial integrity, the government's very existence, and the republican system.

The appeal to the Higher State Council marks a break with the practices, concepts, and attitudes at the root of the crisis.

After stifling immediate dangers by shoring up the government's authority restoring law and order threatened by subversive acts, and checking any trace of foreign meddling:

The Higher State Council summons our nation's forces and energies, driven by their civic mindedness and patriotic spirit, enamored of their Algerian identity and membership in the Arab world and the Muslim community, aspiring to the advancement of a united society open to progress and modernity, imbued with respect for government, a state of law and social justice, and convinced of the need for radical change, to:

Mobilize for the purpose of forming a Patriotic Rally behind clearly defined principles and objectives.

I. Patriotic Rally

The Patriotic Rally is made up of Algerian men and women who support the action of the Higher State Council aimed at restoring the government's authority, guaranteeing the smooth operation of institutions, and instituting a pluralistic democracy in the service of a policy of recovery for the country.

The Patriotic Rally aims to create a place for the expression and confrontation of ideas and participation. It aims to be a meeting place for all those who believe in the potential of the Algerian people. Through constructive dialogue, it aspires to become the instrument of national mobilization rallying behind a single watchword: Algeria first.

The Patriotic Rally is not a party, much less a single party. It is open, without discrimination, to all social categories, political sensitivities and associations, organizations and personalities determined to work for change.

The Patriotic Rally will not be the fruit of opportunistic compromises or political bargaining. It will bring about a convergence of live forces on a very broad basis in order to restore trust between the citizens and their state and the people and their leaders. For that purpose, it will constitute a cornerstone that will serve as a basis of support for the Higher State Council and a means for its members to exercise a counterbalance at all levels. The Patriotic Rally will work for the emergence of honest political cadres committed to the country's recovery. It will strive to integrate young people more fully by mobilizing them to solve their problems and encouraging them to fully assume their own responsibilities in the task of building our nation.

The Patriotic Rally is built around a national purpose. It will be the task of its structures to spell out its content. In the meantime, in order to achieve clarity of individual commitment, the following guidelines and principles are provided for further reflection:

II. National Platform

The national platform must fit into the logic of radical change so fervently desired by our people, meaning:

1) a radical break with the practices, methods, and personalities at the root of the crisis in which the country now finds itself;

2) a restoration of the people's confidence in themselves and their institutions;

3) the drafting of a long-term strategy serving a national ambition into which all short-term measures must be integrated.

The national platform includes the following programmatic proposals:

A—In Order To Further the Democratic Process and Establish Stable, Effective Institutions

1. Rehabilitate the government and restore its authority
2. Guarantee our basic individual and collective freedoms. All citizens, without any distinction whatsoever, are equal before the law.

The state protects women's rights. It also protects children's rights.

3. Know and respect the rights and duties of every individual. In no instance can exercising a fundamental right justify violating the dignity, freedom, or honor of another. No individual is above the law. No one may with impunity violate the rules of life in society.

4. Revise the constitution so as to ensure the continuity of the republic. Redefine the respective competencies of government institutions and the rules that govern them.

5. Preserve political pluralism and the multiparty system within a framework of national unity and territorial integrity. The constitution must ensure that national values (*amazighite*, following Islam, being Arab) are not used for partisan purposes.

6. Accept the principle of alternance.

7. Organize presidential, legislative, and local elections so that Algerians may choose their representatives within a context of peace and free political confrontation.

B—For an Efficient Administration Serving the People

1. Not only must the government be strong, but just and moral as well. Institutions must guarantee the cohesiveness of society. The people expect their administrations to change their behavior and demonstrate more respect and efficiency.

2. The government must have a modern administration whose operation is based on precise standards and rules with effective means of control so as to properly regulate economic and social life.

3. Central and local administrations have since independence been subject to instability and fluctuations as a result of changes in government. We must set up a corps of competent, efficient, and honest civil servants who will serve the public under any circumstances.

4. The administration and main agencies of government must be purged and the honest cadres who were driven out reinstated.

C—For a Strategy of Economic Development

1. Replace the economic system based on income with one based on work, production, and the creation of wealth. We must restore the values of work, effort and honest success. Workers who create material and intellectual wealth must receive encouragement and protection from the government.

2. Continue and go forward with reforms undertaken in an effort to ensure a transition to a market economy. Base development on maximizing assets and achievements and meeting the needs of society.

3. Promote investment by encouraging national capital, mobilizing savings, and attracting foreign capital, which must be given suitable guarantees within the framework of an investment code and a partnership leading to improved integration into the world economy and greater mastery of technological innovation.

4. Free initiative and individual enterprise by eliminating bureaucratic obstacles, administrative red tape, and blockages of all kinds.

5. Modernize operation of the economy through the integration of technological progress and personnel training and quality of management.

6. Redefine the economic role of the government, whose action must create the basic conditions needed for economic development: water resources, infrastructure, training, research, laws, control and supervision, and so on.

7. Create the conditions for a true revival of agriculture by striving to settle the land question, promoting development action and rural redevelopment, and developing rural economies in different areas (North, High Plateaus, the Steppe, the South).

8. Reorganize distribution and marketing circuits and reform the banking and finance systems to make them more efficient and more transparent. Develop services and tourism.

9. Through a suitable territorial development policy, the government must create the conditions for the coordinated development of all regions of the country. It must also draft the measures needed in the fight against pollution and protection of the environment.

D—For Social Justice and National Solidarity

1. Fight injustices (a source of frustration) that create a gap between the state and society by ensuring a fair distribution of the fruits of development, compensating effort and work, and eliminating all forms of illicit enrichment and parasitic activity.

2. Break with the policy that reduces Algerians to a state of dependency. Strengthen national solidarity and ensure greater social protection that is more dynamic and better adapted.

3. Promote a policy of construction and housing that takes the resources of beneficiaries into account. For social housing aided by the state, allocation procedures must be set up on the basis of justice and equity, with transparency and well-defined priorities.

4. Attack unemployment by a true policy of economic development that creates jobs. We must also organize access to the job market, facilitate the creation of businesses, and develop training and professional retraining. Jobs for young people will have priority.

5. Mobilizing the country's resources within a context of austerity implies that the burden of recovery is fairly borne. Eliminate waste, fight corruption, trafficking and smuggling, and reform taxes.

6. Defend the interests of Algerian communities abroad and bring them into the life of the country and its development by mobilizing their scientific and entrepreneurial capacities.

7. Regulate population growth: This is the price of economic development and social well-being.

E—For a Reform of the System of Education and the Advancement of Culture

1. Proceed to bring about a far-reaching reform of the entire system of education and training so as to adapt it to the demands of rapid development and access to universal modernity and progress. In order to do so, we must:

review the content of what is taught and teaching methods; improve the qualifications of teachers through training, continuous retraining, and advanced education; grant the same chance to all children throughout the national territory, which presumes a thorough reform of the distribution of means and improving the level of teachers; once and for all, remove the mosques and schools from any form of partisan activity and ideological struggle; open the schools and university to society and modern sciences;

2. For the general welfare, protect and upgrade Algerian culture in its different elements as the patrimony of the entire nation;

3. Promote access to all aspects of the cultural patrimony; claim our history in its diversity and place in civilization;

4. Improve the conditions of cultural production by spelling out the role of the government; encourage and protect artists;

5. Be open to the universe and find enrichment in cultural diversity.

F—In Order To Be Open to the World and Establish Peaceful, Just, and Harmonious International Relations

1. Reject meddling in any form and for any reason whatsoever. Algeria will also apply this principle to itself.

2. Develop harmonious relations with all countries, particularly the countries of the Maghreb, the Arab-Muslim world, and Africa, as well as with nonaligned nations and countries in the Mediterranean Basin. Cooperation between both sides of the Mediterranean can be an essential element of stability and security for the region.

3. Encourage dialogue between nations and be open to all possibilities of cooperation on the basis of mutual respect and the protection of mutual interests.

Establishment of the Patriotic Rally

The Patriotic Rally is a grass-roots organization. Algerian men and women convinced of the need for change will organize themselves into Patriotic Rally committees.

Such groupings will be territorial in nature (villages, districts, communes, *daira*, *wilayate* [governorates]) and the workplace.

It will be the task of Patriotic Rally members to:

- 1—Debate and contribute to the text of the national platform;
- 2—Spread the ideas of the Patriotic Rally and mobilize people behind its principles.
- 3—Draft platforms with proposals and suggestions for the desired changes.

Committee heads will be democratically elected from among members.

The Patriotic Rally will be based on a process that will organize committees on the local, regional, and national levels. The establishment of the Patriotic Rally will in fact end with the holding of the conference of the Patriotic Rally bringing together committee delegates whose task it will be to:

- 1) pass the final national platform; 2) draft and pass the movement's statutes and bylaws; and 3) democratically appoint the leadership organs of the Patriotic Rally.

While awaiting the national organization of the Patriotic Rally, a provisional national support committee will be set up. It may include associations, organizations, and personalities which support the Higher State Council for the Patriotic Rally.

Criteria for Membership

Membership in the Patriotic Rally is individual and based upon acceptance of the platform. Members of the Patriotic Rally must present all moral qualifications necessary to build a movement that will work for radical change.

Tuesday, 9 June 1992

MAJD Supports Patriotic Rally

LD2407102992 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in Arabic 0600 GMT 24 Jul 92

[Excerpt] The Algeria Movement for Justice and Development [MAJD] of [former prime minister] Kadi Merbah has decided to support the idea of a Patriotic Rally proposed by the late President Mohamed Boudiaf. MAJD also stressed the importance of dialogue and national reconciliation with all sides, without exception, and described this as an important factor to bring Algeria out of the current situation. [passage omitted]

Decision To Suppress 'Radio Beur' Denounced

92AF0976A Algiers EL WATAN in French 28 Jun 92 p 15

[Unattributed article: "Radio-Beur": An Appeal to the Higher Council on Audiovisual Media"]

[Text] On Friday, in Paris, the listeners association in defense of "Radio-Beur" published a communique denouncing "the decision of the Higher Council on Audiovisual Media (CSA) to deny a frequency to Radio-Beur, a decision that came as a surprise."

Radio-Beur listeners, many of whom have been gathering daily for several days in front of the Beur [Arabs born in France of immigrant parents] community station to protest the CSA decision and express their support to the association officials, also view this decision "as a blatant infringement of the legitimate right of free speech, the principle that inspired the law of 1901, and the basis of Human Rights and democracy."

"To deprive us of our public-service frequency," the communique added, "means preventing an entire cultural minority from getting organized against the horror of racist crimes, from mobilizing for equal rights and against injustice. It also means preventing it from engaging into a dialogue, from moderating and regulating in crisis situations active citizenship in French history."

Alluding to the CSA decision to approve the application of a former official of the association, who will be given a frequency in Paris for "Beur FM," the "Radio-Beur" listeners said they will refuse to express themselves "through a commercial company whose only motivation remains 'all-powerful money'" and will not "become hostage to a commercial media that cannot answer the need for integration nor meet the demands for citizenship."

In concluding, the listeners association in defense of Radio-Beur appealed to the CSA to reconsider "its decision with serenity and on the basis of ethics," adding that what is at stake is French society, the future of their civic role, and their need to express themselves through "Radio-Beur." (APS)

Argument for Rescheduling Debt Presented

92AF1003A Algiers ALGERIE ACTUALITE in French
18 Jun 92 pp 16-17

[Article by Mourad Benachenhou: "Rescheduling: Already Too Late?"—first paragraph is ALGERIE ACTUALITE introduction]

[Text] Rescheduling becomes something urgent but not expensive compared with the alternative, which is the total economic collapse that is threatening our country.... "Mourad Benachenhou explains here this cut-and-dried assessment.

Rescheduling is not fated, nor is it an unavoidable accident; it is the logical result of a series of errors of judgment made by economic and financial officials at well-defined times.

For Algeria, 1986 seems to have been the turning point: in fact, because of falling oil prices, falling even below \$10 per barrel after the famous OPEC ministers' meeting of June 1986 on the island of Brioni, debt service increased by 70 percent over 1985, from 36 percent to 56 percent of export revenues; the debt inventory rose from \$4.4 billion, a 23-percent increase in one year.

Algeria's foreign financing situation was then compounded by the fact that the decline in its export revenues was accompanied by a collapse of the dollar, which lost 30 percent of its value within 12 months. At the time, for reasons whose economic rationale is not clear, financial officials simply chose to ignore the seriousness of the situation, which could only get worse considering the structure of the Algerian economy whose foreign financial credibility rested on a single type of exports expressed in a single currency. Because Algeria had practically no access to the intermediate-term financial market, financial authorities had recourse to short-term financing, usually in connection with trade operations (they also had recourse to barter agreements, concealing the fact that oil was being sold at below-market prices); they thus drove the country into a "rescheduling" position while refusing to accept the consequences of this policy, which was making imports ever harder to pay for, was driving the country into recession, economic and social deterioration, and foreign political dependence, and was making the recourse to World Bank and IMF remedies unavoidable. Everything was done to drive the country into an inextricable foreign financial crisis and to reduce its room to maneuver with respect to its lenders and creditors: political survival was more important than saving the economy and the country; and it seems that the calculation made by financial officials at the time succeeded.

International financial circles were well aware of Algeria's critical situation; they started to talk openly about the ineluctability of rescheduling, which earned them the anger of the country's financial authorities; on 31 May 1986, an APS wire denounced with acerbity "circles known for their longstanding hostility to Algeria," which "ignored all the efforts made by Algeria to strengthen its economic bases and limit the impact of the economic crisis."

This policy of refusing to acknowledge facts has continued, with minor nuances, until now, although its cumulative effects on the production and distribution apparatus have led to a situation that is far more complex than in 1986, and far more costly to remedy, and made only worse by simplistic monetary management based on obsolete money supply statistics and an elementary analysis of the connection between the real sector and the money sector.

Until 1991, this policy was somehow consistent; financial authorities rejected rescheduling as a solution to lighten the Algerian debt burden simultaneously with recourse to the World Bank for "ready cash" financing accompanied by economic, financial, and institutional "restructuring" conditions, and to the IMF for credits linked to stabilization measures involving essentially the monetary and financial sphere—these being the institutions that supervise such operations; but as long as these two institutions were taking over the country's economic and financial policy—de facto depriving the government of any room to maneuver in these respects—rejecting debt rescheduling was no longer warranted and was becoming suicidal: in fact, the policies imposed by the two institutions are not supported by the granting of adequate financing to absorb their recession-like impact on the country's economy; we know for instance that the net amount made available to Algeria by the IMF for 1991 and 1992 will boil down to \$69.1 million when, from the \$400 million released in four instalments since June 1991, we deduct the \$58.7 million and \$272.2 million that represent our country's repayments to this institution for 1991 and 1992 respectively; the World Bank's net transfers to Algeria for fiscal year 1990-1991 were even negative by \$5 million.

The country's economic and financial situation, therefore, can only get worse; liberalization measures, which are supposed to introduce rationality in the use of national resource and give free rein to private initiative, can succeed only if financial resources in foreign currencies are available; otherwise, these measures will further disrupt the economy, stifle the production apparatus, lead to speculation, inflation, and the development of parasitic activities that feed on foreign-currency scarcity; the currency, whose strength originates in the economy that supports it, is subject to continued devaluation, which may or may not be acknowledged by the Central Bank and translates into an inflation rate estimated at 30 to 50 percent per year, depending on the source: under these conditions, striving for convertibility of the national currency becomes a dangerous delusion that can only compound the disorder prevailing in the economy and strengthen its speculative tendencies.

Our country's economic situation in 1991, as pictured in the present government's fourth "Economic Recovery Plan," confirms, if need be, this analysis.

Far from improving, the country's economic and financial situation has slumped further in 1991, despite a record grain crop that translated into a lower foreign food bill and gave "some colors" to the gross national product [GNP], and despite a relatively steady oil market. This year, the foreign debt service will take up 23 percent of our gross domestic

product [GDP], a world record, making our country the one that spends the largest share of its production on the repayment of its foreign debt.

Since the "economic recovery plan" is not adequately funded, it will not lead to an increase in the 1992 GNP, unless the oil market keeps getting steadier, which many experts doubt. This means that the debt service—\$8.38 billion according to the CPA [Algerian Oil Company] projections presented to the banks participating in the recent refinancing—may apply to a still more shrunken GNP and, therefore, may represent a still larger proportion of the GNP than in 1991.

The country's general impoverishment makes the debt burden steadily heavier; it endangers the present liberalization policy, and can only contribute to making the political situation still more complex and more tense.

The two solutions proposed to cope with this situation cannot slow down its deterioration; as their implementation has already begun, we can now analyze them.

These two solutions are:

- increasing foreign financial resources by selling oil and gas rights.
- refinancing part of the intermediate-term debt.

The first solution was proposed by the prime minister in July 1991; to be implemented it required the APN [People's National Assembly] to adopt amendments to the oil and gas law (Law 86/14) of 19 August 1986, which it did in December 1991. The basic idea was to get \$6 to \$7 billion in ready cash already by the end of 1991 or by June 1992 at the latest, by selling to international oil companies the oil and gas rights on 10 deposits whose production potential was already known. This would reduce the debt service to a bearable percentage of export revenues; it would release amounts sufficient not only to restore foreign-currency reserves to a level making possible an effective liberalization of foreign trade, the elimination of "trabendo," and the stabilization of the dinar exchange rate, but also to complete the reorganization of state-owned companies—either in preparation for their privatization or merely to ensure their survival in a free-market economy—to provide new impetus for investments and therefore absorb some of the unemployed labor force, and generally speaking to boost national production, both in the agricultural sector—which suffer far more from the lack of input and equipment than from the current farming system—and in the public or private industrial sector.

When the bill amending the law of 1986 was discussed, the chairman of the economic commission of the previous APN claimed that these amendments to the oil and gas law would enable the country to get \$5 to \$7 billion in initial payments from foreign oil and gas companies, and \$4 billion in investments, and that it would attract an additional \$14 billion in investments between 1992 and 2000; he also claimed that legal exports would bring in an additional \$75 to \$90 billion in revenues between 1992 and 2000.

Commenting on the provisions of the new law, the minister of energy stated that there were three ways these 10

deposits could be open to foreign companies, after they had submitted bids: selling production rights for all or part of a deposit; sharing with SONATRACH [National Company for the Transport and Marketing of Hydrocarbons] the production of jointly-developed deposits; prepayment of the future production resulting from foreign partners' investments.

It would seem that 21 foreign companies answered the invitation to bid, and opening of the bids started in May 1992; the conditions of their participation, and the initial cash payments required of them will be determined through negotiations.

However, based on various statements made by the energy minister to foreign trade publications, the amounts that can be immediately expected from the operation, and which might affect this year's balance of current payments may not reach the levels projected when the operation was launched in July 1991. In addition, the effect of projected investments on production volume will certainly not be felt already this year.

Therefore, the impact the operation will have on the foreign debt burden in 1992 may be far from meeting the expectations of some and the hopes of others.

As for the "reprofiling" of the \$4,881.5 million, including \$3,093 million owed to Japanese banks, it covers only 20 percent of the intermediate- and long-term debt, and it will not bring about the decisive lightening of the debt service that would enable Algeria to get once and for all out of the debt spiral with ever shorter maturities and ever higher costs that provides the minimum financing needed for the "survival" imports to which our country has been forced to have recourse since 1986. In addition, this operation emphasizes the continued deterioration of our country's financial credibility. This assessment is based on the following considerations:

- it took two attempts over 19 months to finalize the refinancing agreement: in the first attempt, the CPA, which led the negotiations on behalf of the Algerian Government, attempted to raise \$1.5 to \$2 billion on the financial markets, part of which was designed to purchase zero-coupon bonds issued by the French Government to guarantee repayment of the principal; this operation, carried out with technical assistance from the European Union Bank, failed—although inspired articles in the Algerian press let us believe for a long time that it was about to be completed; the second operation, for which the CPA received technical assistance from Banque Lazare Freres, required at least six months of negotiation with Credit Lyonnais, the selected lead bank, and its seven principal partner banks, before an acceptable formula was found; nevertheless, the basic agreement, signed on 9 October 1991, almost failed to materialize because U.S., Spanish, and Italian banks were reluctant to participate in the operation, which was finalized on 4 March 1992;

- high-level political interventions were required before the reluctant banks agreed to join in the operation; these interventions involved the finance and foreign affairs ministers of several creditor countries; in the case of

Italy, for instance, the Italian minister of foreign affairs called a meeting of Italian bankers on 17 February 1992, to convince them of the need to do everything possible to ensure that the operation would succeed; the [Algerian] head of state himself, in an interview on the national TV channel, on 9 February, took a stand and, referring among other things to the crisis "that cannot be concealed," stated:

"this will enable us to distinguish between our friends and our enemies, those who truly cooperate with Algeria with the intention of finding a solution to the crisis, because Algeria possesses real potential. We shall examine the nature of this cooperation. We shall also see whether there is a real will to cooperate or whether cooperation is used to exacerbate the situation. We have seen how Credit Lyonnais reversed its commitment to grant a credit to Algeria."

- leaving aside the "administrative" cost of the operation, i.e., the commissions of all kinds paid, as is usual in such operations, to those who participate in the refinancing, to the consulting bank, to the lead bank and the associate lead bank, which commissions may have taken up from 6 to 8 percent of the refinanced amount, the operation resulted in a financial cost (interest plus interest spread) higher than the initial contracts of the refinanced loans: actually, the interest spread on these loans varied from 3/5 to 1/2 percent above the LIBOR (London Interbank Offered Rate); this spread was multiplied by nearly three for the two refinancing installments (respectively, 1.5 and 1.375 above the LIBOR); as a comparison, we should mention the interest spread obtained by the Philippines for the rescheduling of their debt, which was concluded at about the same time as our refinancing: LIBOR plus 13/16, i.e., less than 1 percent;

- the refinancing period is very short compared with what could and should have been obtained based on Algerian financing prospects; the negotiators could have asked for a five-year grace period and a 10-year total maturity for both installments; this would certainly have been less favorable than the conditions obtained by the Philippines for the "new money" part of their debt rescheduling (maturities of 14 to 17 years with a five-year grace period), but nevertheless more realistic as to Algeria's capacity of relieving itself of its foreign debt within the next three to five years;

- the refinancing should have covered a maturity period longer than the 18 months from 1 October 1991 to 31 March 1993, so as to avoid the need for new negotiations concerning the years not covered by the operation, to which the country's monetary authorities alluded; Colombia, which signed a debt refinancing agreement in April 1991, shows that it was possible to go for maturities longer than 10 months, covering four years for instance; actually, Colombia obtained an integrated loan facility of \$1.775 billion, with a 12.5-year maturity at an interest rate of Libor plus 1 percent, enabling it to refinance the principal amounts becoming due between 1991 and 1994;

- this operation does not enable Algeria to get out of the debt vicious circle; on the contrary, it will sink deeper into debt, enter a new debt cycle—this time not to ensure

its development, but only its survival—until the opening of the oil and gas sector to foreign operators increases foreign-currency revenues and therefore reduces our foreign debt;

- finally, the amount made available—\$1.457 billion (less miscellaneous commissions and expenses that might add up to about \$110 million)—will cover one and one-half year of principal maturities and will have a marginal impact on the debt service ratio, as it will be used to pay the arrears due on short-term commercial loans.

In conclusion:

- the adjustment and stabilization measures recommended by the World Bank and the IMF, the continuation and extension of which are currently under negotiation, can have positive effects only if they are accompanied by the mobilization of large foreign financial resources; in particular, in order to accelerate privatization operations in the agricultural and industrial sectors, modify our industrial policy, and gear our industry to export markets (now that the rate of exchange of the dinar is no longer viewed as a matter of national pride), we will need financial resources that none of these institutions can provide and that exceed the capacities of the financial market, even the best-disposed toward our country;

- Algeria's economic and financial situation has deteriorated considerably in 1991 and is now on the verge of collapse: this makes recourse to intermediate- and long-term financing at acceptable cost both increasingly necessary and increasingly difficult to get;

- the two operations launched in 1991 to get out of the vicious circle of international financial dependence do not seem capable of yielding the definitive positive effects expected;

- the problem is not continued access to the international capital market: we should have recourse to it only in exceptional cases; if the problem is survival in impoverishment, we shall always find creditors willing to lend Algeria what it needs to cover its basic imports (especially as their loans will benefit their economies more than ours), but on condition that it agrees to high-supervision by the two Bretton-Woods institutions. Shall we eventually grasp the full extent of the absurdity of a policy pursued with obstinacy and which can be summarized as follows: it does not matter that Algeria keeps bleeding, as long as it is put under perfusion?

- it is becoming increasingly clear that the current strategy leads merely to a reduction in the durations and maturities of foreign debts and an increase in its costs, and to a renewal of the debt inventory but at increasingly unfavorable conditions; the solution involving drastic import reductions designed to achieve a surplus that would restore some colors to our balance of payments contributes to the breakdown of the production apparatus that has already been harmed by decades of incompetent and wasteful management, to the disruption of distribution circuits that are already unreliable, to the exacerbation of social inequalities and therefore to political tensions, and it sentences the country to slow agony;

- when we have exhausted all the "gadgets" and slogans that are supposed to pass for a consistent and carefully thought-out approach but are a mere sequence of poorly thought-out improvisations, it may be time to tackle the problem head-on before it is too late and to agree to a solution, perhaps less glorious but at any rate final, which will be all the more favorable as we have the natural resources to guarantee its success; the solution of our foreign financial problems, without which the present crisis can only get increasingly complex, can no longer be found in petty political calculations in which personal interests win over the national interest;

- rescheduling becomes something urgent but not expensive compared with the alternative, which is the total economic collapse that is threatening our country if this policy of self-inflicted financial strangulation goes on. Even a country like the Federal Republic of Germany has had recourse to debt rescheduling when circumstances have demanded it.

Potential To Compete in World Markets Discussed

92AF0977B Algiers EL WATAN in French
24 Jun 92 p 2

[Article by Farid Racim Chikhi—first two paragraphs are EL WATAN introduction]

[Text] What are the Algerian companies that might gain access to the international market?

Except for a few who did so a long time ago, such as PMA, ENMTP, ENIE [expansions not given], SONACOME [National Mechanical Engineering Company], etc., and a few private companies, the others do not at present meet the access criteria of the international market.

Exporting subjects producers to rules concerning the quality, price, packaging, and distribution network of the product, and the salesman's skills and experience, but partnership, too, has its own rules, defined according to the type of relations that the partners want to develop. The nature of these relations depends on the organizational model that can be deployed, of which the goal will be production, marketing, or both.

What partnership and exporting have in common are the ponderable variables on which the debate has focused in recent months—legal rules, regulations, taxation—and the imponderable variables linked to political, war, and other risks.

Actually, we should bear in mind that there is a complex relationship between the national market, exports, and imports. It is therefore necessary to enunciate clearly the philosophy or the definition of partnership, and what we expect from it.

Many company heads or their representatives who attended the 28th FIA [expansion not given], heads of German, Swiss, or Belgian firms, said that "Algerians seem to consider partnerships as the panacea that will get them out of the present crisis."

The Swiss are convinced that Algeria can pull out, that it possesses all the trump cards, that it is their arrangement

and their presentation that bothers possible foreign investors. "As long as the framework of laws and regulations does not spell out guarantees concerning profit transfers and product flow, investors will be afraid to attempt the creation of joint ventures," one of them told us.

"Algeria can offer at least the same facilities as those granted by other developing countries, which all appeal to other countries (Belgium, Switzerland, the Netherlands, etc.) for sales promotion or industrial development," a well-informed lady suggested about what is going on in our country.

"In Switzerland," she said, "as in smaller West European countries, the industrial fabric is much improved by the presence of several tens of small to midsize companies and industries, the heads of which work both as general directors, sales managers, product development managers, etc. Facing them, for a possible partnership, we have several individuals from the same company, or the same organization in charge of bringing together the interested entrepreneurs."

Although it should not be viewed as a panacea, the OMED (Mediterranean Trade and Development Office) recommends bringing together in the Mediterranean area all those who wish to build an area of freedom, coordinated cooperation, cultural and socio-economic exchanges, while working to improve relations in order to promote North-South exchanges and support the development prospects of the South-South axis.

Mr. Schember of OMED believes that "underlying partnership, there is an improvement of human relations, and that it should be supported by the generation aged 30 to 45, the only one that is in a position to innovate, create, and arrange for themselves the work pace that the end of the century imposes upon us. Dialogue is a prerequisite if we are to go beyond mere short-term trade relations."

Deadlocks and Monopolies

The OMED regroupes some 400 small to mid-size companies and industries north of the Mediterranean. It supports partnership as a relationship and its long-term development. This is why one of its objectives is to help change mentalities and provide the necessary impetus for Mediterranean promoters and investors to get together and meet one another without complexes.

It is true that the concrete implementation of partnership is no easy task, especially when the spirit of initiative is hampered by a poor mediatization of technical concepts, restricted to their superficial aspects only.

European countries, such as Finland, the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, etc., have developed types of partnership that suit their motivations and their socio-economic interests; they have thus turned it into a tool to develop trade relations and to achieve their objectives; first, they have provided marketing and negotiation training for their personnel.

A management expert interested in sales promotion and expansion between developing countries and Europe thinks that partnership will require a modicum of serious interest along six lines:

1. Feasibility study, a study of how to control production costs, and competitive prices ensuring a profitability threshold.
2. Avoid investing in heavy machinery, which is very costly to install, and realizing when the times comes to start production that ready cash is needed to buy raw materials and continue production.
3. Study of the market to be conquered and the product to be sold.
4. The applicant should look for subsectors and distribution networks different from those of the licensor, so as not to interfere with the latter.
5. Look for flexibility in small to mid-size companies and industries to make possible changes in product lines, should that prove necessary.
6. Management training for the personnel, as a starting point and permanent support for the rapprochement initiative.

A full-fledged program could be designed to implement these efforts. But before embarking on such an undertaking, it is also necessary to overcome certain attitudes of deadlock and monopoly, and to develop new ones on our own, marked by efficiency and the liberation of initiatives. The 28th FIA was placed under the sign of economic recovery and partnership; did it meet our expectations? We are all looking forward to the results...

Advantages of Price Support Policy Questioned

92AF0974B Algiers ALGER REPUBLICAIN in French
22 Jun 92 p 1,3

[Article by Mourad Metahri]

[Text] The government has abandoned consumer price subsidies and prices are rising. In a politically motivated discussion of these facts, the price hike would be emphasized, while scant mention would be made of the direct income subsidies and allowances that some Algerians have been receiving since February. But the question is, which of the two—price subsidies or income subsidies—is more beneficial to workers and citizens with no income?

Under the price subsidy system, the government allocated a certain amount to the compensation fund. By dividing that amount by the number of Algerians, we can determine how much each consumer saved. In 1992, the figure is 147 dinars a month for every Algerian.

But that figure is not an accurate reflection of the reality. According to a study of household consumption by the ONS [National Office of Statistics], the benefit to every Algerian is only 129 dinars a month. The difference—some 6 billion dinars on an annual basis—ends up in the pockets of black marketeers or benefits the industries that use widely consumed products like milk or sugar.

But the figure of 129 dinars is also an inaccurate reflection of the reality because not all households consume the same quantities of subsidized products. In fact, according to the ONS study, the poorer segments of the population save only 79 dinars a month per person, while the benefit to the wealthier segments amounts to 185 dinars.

Under the system of direct income subsidies, the poorest citizen would gain an additional 41 dinars because the subsidy is calculated on the basis of 120 dinars a month.

Thus, the removal of price subsidies works to the advantage of the poorest segments of the population who should see an increase in their purchasing power (for these products), particularly in view of the fact that the price rise amounts to only 90 dinars a month per person, according to the Ministry of the Economy.

In abandoning price subsidies, the government's intention is to achieve greater "social justice."

However, the government has not abandoned price subsidies for all products. In fact, it will continue to subsidize products for which the gaps between the consumption patterns of rich and poor are the most pronounced. The example of milk is enlightening. The wealthiest segments of the population benefit six times more from subsidized milk prices, saving 329 dinars as compared with only 55 dinars saved by the poorest. Moreover, milk is especially subject to illegal marketing practices.

The government obviously wanted to avoid an abrupt price increase, fearing that it would create more discontent. In that sense, four dinars for a liter of milk may be the "true price" but is it a fair price?

Energy Policy Objectives Stated

92AF0998A Casablanca LA VIE ECONOMIQUE
in French 3 Jul 92 p 15

[Article based on interview with Ait Laoussine, Algerian Minister of Energy, by Djamila Bouchra; place and date not given; first paragraph is LA VIE ECONOMIQUE introduction; quotation marks as published]

[Text] Algeria's economic stimulation program is predicated on the implementation of a new oil and gas strategy. As of the start of the semester of 1991 [as published], the energy sector had drawn up a comprehensive program for tapping oil and gas resources. The main objectives of the new energy policy are a judicious exploitation of reserves and resumption of the exploration effort. Mr. Ait Laoussine, Algeria's minister of energy, described the new policy to our reporter, Djamila Bouchra. A few days later, he was injured in the shooting that took the life of Algeria's President Boudiaf.

The first objective is to revive exploration. The reasons are that previous efforts were insufficient, and new exploration techniques have emerged since they were conducted.

The second objective is to develop known reserves that have not yet been developed by SONATRACH [National Company for the Transport and Marketing of Hydrocarbons].

The third objective is to enhance production conditions at fields already in production. A number of discussions have already taken place with foreign partners toward achieving those objectives.

Discussions on exploration began long before the adoption of this energy sector development policy, but the negotiation process is now being stepped up.

Bid Specifications To Be Sent to Competing Companies

Some 20 exploration contracts have been signed. SONATRACH is holding private discussions with about 10 foreign companies in a process of direct negotiations. In the future, SONATRACH will issue calls for bids, inviting the international petroleum industry to compete for exploration rights in specific zones. In a month, SONATRACH will send the specifications pertaining to the first call for bids to companies concerned.

Bidders will merely fill in the blanks on the specifications forms, indicating the exploration plan that they recommend, the distribution of profits to the company and to SONATRACH (in the event of a discovery), and a possible bonus. In exploration activities, it is possible to require a bonus when three or four companies are competing for a zone that is particularly promising from a geological standpoint. One way to make the final choice among them—in addition to their exploration programs and technical capabilities—is to require a payment.

Every six months, SONATRACH will issue calls for bids, gradually covering the entire country, we hope. The goal is to drill 100 wells a year, including the wells to be drilled by SONATRACH. We would like to see 30 percent of the overall exploration effort conducted by SONATRACH while two-thirds or 70 percent of it would be carried out in association with foreign partners.

Regarding the second objective, Mr. Ait Laoussine stated that discussions are continuing with a number of companies interested in developing about 20 fields of "wet gas," which contain nearly 200 billion metric tons of recoverable liquids such as condensate, butane, and propane. We are doing this for two reasons: First, we need to produce larger amounts of liquids in order to stabilize our production, and the second is to supplement gas production at Hassi-R'Mel.

Indeed, if we want to export 60 billion cubic meters of natural gas over a long period of time, we must develop a number of fields for natural gas production.

By virtue of SONATRACH's agreements with old and new clients alike, we have nearly attained that objective. We are committed to sales of 57 to 58 billion cubic meters and our goal is to export 60 billion cubic meters until further notice.

Toward Improved Production Conditions

The third objective involves bringing in companies to improve conditions of crude oil production at fields already in production. The first call for bids was issued in November of last year, after the APN (People's National Assembly) approved the new oil and gas law.

SONATRACH has received the bids and is in the processing of evaluating them. In the very near future, SONATRACH will enter into negotiations with the companies involved. Two similar calls for bids are being prepared and are about to be issued by SONATRACH.

On the subject of expected revenues, reportedly estimated at 6 to 7 billion dollars, Algeria's energy minister gave assurances that the figure of 6 to 7 billion dollars was never the amount expected from this operation; rather it is an estimate of the sum needed in order for Algeria recover from the recession. Our objective at both the Ministry of Energy and at SONATRACH is to do everything in our power to achieve that. It is too early to tell whether we will succeed. The discussions must be allowed to continue, Mr. Ait Laoussine concluded.

ONS Publishes Population Statistics

LD2307122492 Algiers APS in English 1017 GMT
23 Jul 92

[Text] Algiers, July 23 (APS)—The Algerian population reached on January 92 about 25.939 million inhabitants according to the last results published by the National Office of Statistics (ONS). Demography in Algeria shows [word indistinct] few years a decrease in growth defined by a relative decrease in births: 773,000 births were registered in 1991 which represents about 30.10 per 1000 inhabitants while the number of deaths is at 155,000 i.e. a 6 per 1000 rate of mortality.

Debate on Usage of Arabic Reopened

92AF0996C Paris LE MONDE in French 25 Jun 92 p 9

[Article: "Implementation of Law on Widespread Use of Arabic Is Postponed 'Sine Die'"]

[Text] Former Algerian president Ahmed Ben Bella said he was pleased at the change in composition of the HCE [Higher State Council] and the naming of Mr. Ali Kafi to the presidency, opining that the latter has "a sound concept of governmental alternation that will allow the generation of November 1954 to pass the torch to new forces and new people."

The Front of Socialist Forces [FFS], headed by Mr. Ait Ahmed, has for the first time denounced "terrorism" and condemned "in the strongest terms" the assassination of five police officers in the Algiers area on the night of 4-5 July (LE MONDE of 7 July).

Also, the National Consultative Council (CCN) has just revived an old but still controversial issue by proposing postponement of a measure to expand public usage of the Arabic language in Algeria.

The daily ESSALEM, whose editor is a member of the CCN, announced that implementation of the law on general use of the Arabic language, which was to go into effect on 2 July, was postponed "sine die." The linguistic reform required among other things that all public bodies, institutions and other organizations do all their work in Arabic. The adoption of this law on 26 December 1990 by the National Assembly—thanks to a tactical alliance between representatives of the FLN [National Liberation Front party] and the now-dissolved Islamic Salvation Front [FIS]—was apparently a concession to the Islamists from leaders of an exhausted regime, in the aftermath of the FIS victory in the June 1990 municipal elections.

Foreign economic interests raised a strident outcry against implementation of this law, even threatening to suspend all commercial and financial transactions with their overseas partners if forced to do business in a language weak in technical and scientific terms. In Algeria, the reform ran into strong opposition from the FFS, whose supporters—a majority of them Berbers—filed into the streets of Algiers by the tens of thousands on 27 December 1990 to protest it (LE MONDE of 29 December 1990). Then, in November 1991, a wave of major strikes shook the universities, where the firing of several French-speaking professors was condemned

(LE MONDE of 11 November 1991). Mr. Mohamed Boudiaf, former president of the HCE, supported the idea of a delay, declaring recently that "love of the fatherland is not a question of language."

The CCN's decision will doubtless rekindle the debate. Already, the daily EL MASSA is asking whether the CCN "was not trying to exploit the wave of sympathy for the recently deceased (president) in order to get this measure passed before the new leaders realize it is a mistake." In a communique issued on Monday 6 July, the CCN said it strongly deplored "those who want to appropriate the national language to use it for basely political ends."

Stress of Daily Life 'Showing' Among Citizens

92AF1025C Algiers MAG 7 in French 5 Jul 92 p 8

[Article by Kamel Berkane: "A Stroll Through Algiers"—first paragraph is MAG 7 introduction]

[Text] Have Algerians become indifferent to one another? The Algerois who, not so long ago, distinguished themselves through their exemplary, even legendary availability to their fellow men have turned during the seventies and eighties into passive, materialistic, uncaring men.

Could it be the hard facts of life, "Lemhayen" as we say, that have changed them so?

Yet, other Algerian citizens living in remote areas, in far more difficult conditions, and cut off from all modern amenities, still retain a kind and easygoing manner.

Anyone who has lived in our rural areas, our mountains, and our Sahara, especially, is aware of the kindness of these people. In other words, the closer to nature you get, the more sociable you become; and the farther away from it you get, the more you lose your kindness and humility. This explains what it takes for kind souls to reveal themselves.

Still, it doesn't take much to get people to like you and to be pleasant to one's neighbor. A mere hello, a wave of the hand, a greeting, or a small attention: everybody can do it, and it costs nothing.

It is a sorry sight the way people stare suspiciously at one another in Algiers buses, like boxers full of hatred, waiting for the bell to ring so they can rush into the ring.

You can see the same thing everywhere: at the local post office, in public transportation, in department stores, in the market, in the street, in brief, nearly everywhere where people meet.

The stress of daily life is indeed the major reason for it, but does it warrant losing control of oneself? Sociologists say that this is a societal phenomenon, like many other negative actions induced by the high crime rate. Is that really so?

We may doubt it, because hating one's neighbor is hating oneself.

Controversy Over Money Scandals Reviewed

92AF0941A London AL-AWSAT in Arabic 1 Jun 92
pp 14-15

[Article by Muhammad al-Shawi]

[Text] Algiers—Corruption and bribery issues have made the headlines of several leading Algerian papers in the past few weeks. Among them were papers that exploited these issues as a means to arouse sensationalism and a profit-making ploy with the aim of enhancing their own reputation and boosting their circulation in a media market that has become crowded with a large number of new titles. Even some leading politicians have been involved in this serious sensationalism, without regard to its grave consequences for all of the old guard politicians as well as for the regime and the state in general.

This sensationalism is characterized by adventurism and exaggeration. Former President Ahmed Ben Bella accused former president Chadli Bendjedid of transferring from \$10 billion to \$15 billion to his personal account. Former prime minister Abdelhamid Ibrahimi said two years ago that no less than \$26 billion were lost in the past 20 years in commission payments and fraud.

Recently some of the papers reported that between 1988 and 1990 the Chamber of Commerce allowed the transfer of \$27 billion in the form of import licenses issued to private institutes or individuals engaged in new projects.

These figures confuse facts with fiction in dealing with fraud and bribery issues in Algeria. Accusations are sometimes levelled out of the desire for political revenge or to confuse the issues with the aim of universalizing the calamity and, therefore, ease the pressure on those who are really involved while pointing a finger at people of integrity who have nothing to do with such issues. The manner and the level at which these issues are raised reveal a serious contempt for public affairs and a poor statesmanship spirit among certain former officials.

Abdelhamid Ibrahimi, for example, was the unrivaled strong man throughout president Bendjedid's era, before the October 1988 events. He was the planning minister from 1979 to 1984 and head of the government from 1984 to 1988. In both situations all development projects and foreign deals had to go through him or to be approved for consideration by him.

But after he was relieved of his post in the wake of October incidents, he started accusing others of bribery and fraud. In the spring of 1990 he surprised the domestic public opinion with the notorious \$26 billion case.

What is the truth in this case?

In early 1990 the central committee of the then ruling FLN party held a meeting during which the then prime minister Mouloude Hamrouche expressed regret at the lack firmness and the poor sense of responsibility in concluding foreign deals, which had cost the Algerian government considerable amounts of hard currency.

Prompted by this faultless remark, Abdelhamid Ibrahimi carried out some calculations of his own and drew conclusions. He surprised everybody by announcing the result of his efforts in the spring of 1990. He said that commissions relating to concluding foreign contracts during the past 20 years, 1970 to 1990, are estimated at \$26 billion, that is approximately half Algeria's foreign debts.

This statement has seriously hurt the ruling class and the ruling party in particular. The Islamic opposition exploited it in the recent local elections campaign, which helped it to score a great victory in the elections [about 60 percent of the votes].

The statement was the subject of an investigation by a parliamentary committee. It heard testimony by Ibrahimi more than once, but without reaching any significant results, because the author of the statement did not have sufficient documents to support his charges. The case file was then referred to the justice authority which, toward the end of the Bendjedid era, did not see the need to deal with it with the desired speed. But apparently the justice authority changed its attitude and reopened the file.

Recently a French magazine revealed a tangible case which can be called "The Pasteur Institute Case."

Put briefly, the case concerns a project that was underway for building a new Pasteur Institute in Algeria to replace the old one. It is a very ambitious program aimed at producing large quantities of serums especially to meet the needs of a number of African francophile countries. But in 1985 work on the project stopped halfway, allegedly because hard currency allocated for the project has run out. The French magazine's article aroused suspicions about some Algerian and French personalities that were involved in the "Union of Mediterranean Banks."

At this stage of investigation, the case seems to be the only tangible thing in the "\$26 billion" file, which calls for again listening to Abdelhamid Ibrahimi who is now in London.

The file is an example of the extent to which certain political circles take the figures lightly despite the serious charges they involve.

The same thing can be said about former president Ahmed Ben Bella's charges against President Bendjedid of transferring from \$10 billion to \$15 billion of state funds to his personal account. Ben Bella is called upon by the justice authority to submit evidence to back his allegations, particularly since President Bendjedid has denied these charges and expressed his full readiness to help the justice ministry in seeking the truth, the whole truth.

Just like the political circles, the media circles dismiss these figures. The best evidence to this is the "chamber of commerce case" which, according to the newspaper LE MATIN, allowed during the period 1988-90 the transfer of vast sums of hard currency, estimated at \$27 billion. The fact of the matter is that Abdelhamid Ibrahimi's government, while laying down the legal basis for a comprehensive economic reform in 1988, resuscitated the Chamber of Commerce which was charged with helping private sector contractors to import raw materials, expand their projects, and complete new projects.

Prior to 1988 this task was the jurisdiction of a government body known as "controller of private investments."

Toward the end of 1990, a dispute broke out within the authority administering the Chamber of Commerce (which consisted of private sector contractors). A chamber of

commerce vice president leaked information to the press to the effect that fraud was involved in license issuing that had led to the loss of vast sums of money. Acting on this information, a parliamentary committee was set up, and it investigated the matter for a period of six months. The deputies endorsed its report before it was submitted to the justice authority which began studying it a few days ago. According to the Chamber of Commerce's response to the press charges, it appears that the Chamber's involvement during the period in question, 1988-90, included the following aspects:

First: It granted import licenses for 1,164 projects of which only 282 were completed, most of which were in building materials and plastics sector. The total amounts invested in this regard are estimated at 1.778 billion Algerian dinars.

Second: It issued import licenses for raw materials with an estimated total value of 4.225 billion dinars. The Chamber points out that only a few of the 1990 licenses were used.

Third: It issued import licenses to establishments enjoying a monopoly in the field of importing certain building materials, and particularly spare parts. The money invested in these projects totalled 7.749 billion dinars.

This means that the total amount of money invested in the three categories comes to nearly \$625 million.

Malik Siray, the international expert whom the committee consulted on the question of the Chamber of Commerce, believes that "the talk about the transfer of large sums of money is an exaggeration because this authority [Chamber of Commerce] does not deal with money directly, and its role is primarily consultative because the final decision is up to the Ministry of Commerce.

"The attacks aimed at the Chamber of Commerce", the international expert affirmed, "came from pressure groups that have failed to achieve what they wanted from these attacks."

Alongside the "Chamber of Commerce Case" and the "\$21 Billion Case", in which the element of adventurism and exaggeration for political ends was evident, there was a third, the "Maj. Gen. Ben Lousif Case," which is based on more accurate and credible information.

Moustafa Ben Lousif was the first senior officer to reach the rank of major general in the "National People's Army." That was in the early eighties. Prior to that the highest rank was that of colonel, which was the highest position in the national liberation army before the independence.

Thanks to this rank and the close ties between Ben Lousif and Chadli Bendjedid, this senior officer assumed the post of secretary general of the Ministry of Defense and later the army chief of staff.

During the time Ben Lousif was the Defense Ministry's secretary general, the financial controller discovered major [financial] gaps that were the subject of investigation in 1988. The investigation was carried out by five senior officers. They were: Maj. Gen Abdallah Belhochat, former army inspector general; Lt. Col Lakhal Ayyat, formerly in charge of military security; Brig. Gen. Mohamed Atabliya,

commander of the first military sector (the capital and its suburbs area); Brig. Gen. al-Hashimi Hajras, former director of the army political sector; and Brig. Gen. Khalid Nizzar, commander of the land forces and the present defense minister.

The report prepared by this committee was recently leaked to a local newspaper, which published it before the file of "Ben Lousif case" was reopened and Ben Lousif himself was summoned to the military justice on 2 May and remanded to court custody. The gist of the report is that the committee recommends the following action:

1. That the person concerned should pay compensation in the amount of 28 million French francs and 3.5 million dinars.
2. That he should return a villa in Al-Abyar quarter (the capital) that belonged to the Defense Ministry; and a second villa in the town of Ennaba. The person in question carried out repairs in the two villas for which he paid from the treasuries of the Defense Ministry and the President.
3. That the person in question should return furniture valued at 8.5 million dinars which he obtained illegally.

One of the serious matters the report reveals is that Ben Lousif tried to involve Chadli Bendjedid and his family.

In its report the committee condemned what it considered to be an "attempted robbery." It has put a direct question to the suspect asking him: "Did you receive specific instructions from the president of the republic to furnish an apartment in Paris and to transfer money abroad?" Ben Lousif's answer was that "this was done at his own initiative."

Some observers believe that reopening Ben Lousif's file is an attempt to involve President Chadli Bendjedid personally whom Ben Bella had already accused of transferring \$10-\$15 billion.

In fact, a large sector of the public opinion expects charges to be brought against Bendjedid's brothers and brothers-in-law in particular who had no scruples about exploiting his name in order to enrich themselves and take advantage of many privileges. They did so openly under the eyes of the public.

Bendjedid kept quiet about these matters, unlike the late President Houari Boumediene who had forbidden his kin from exploiting his name.

The strange thing about these issues is that the new government is evading them and refuses to have anything to do with bringing them up.

Prime Minister Sid Ahmed Ghazali believes that raising these issues is a blatant attempt at undermining his government's stability and preventing it from implementing in a calm and clear atmosphere the economic revival plan it has laid down. He unhesitatingly points an accusing finger at the media circles that are linked to his political adversaries, foremost of whom is the "FLN gang," as he put it.

Sources close to the Supreme State Council see in this an attempt to raise secondary issues at the present stage, at a time the new government is confronted by pressing issues.

The public opinion in general is afraid that the new government is inviting the opening of several fronts against it simultaneously, before it can strengthen itself and take control of the security situation. This raises questions about its ability to get involved in an all-out confrontation and about its chances of success. In the public view, the timing of this is inappropriate and destabilizing due to the adventurism and exaggerations involved. People believe that the objective is to destabilize the new government, rather than help it to take control of the situation and carry out the necessary reforms in an atmosphere of clarity, seriousness, and fairness.

Power Company Complains of 'Sabotage Operations'

LD2007062892 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in Arabic 0600 GMT 20 Jul 92

[Text] The National Electricity and Gas Company has warned against the continuation of the sabotage operations that, since last March, have been aimed against the electricity power networks everywhere in Algeria, particularly at the company's institutions in the east of the country, costing the state huge sums of money.

The aforementioned company has emphasized that the citizen is the first harmed by such sabotage actions.

'Terrorists,' Trabendo Said Operating Together

92AF0943B Algiers ALGER REPUBLICAIN in French 7 Jun 92 p 3

[Article by Djamel Guessoum: "Terrorism and Smuggling Hand in Hand"]

[Text] It is also an almost indisputable fact that smuggling and speculation reign when public disturbances and terrorism are on the rise in our country. Statistics show that during periods of calm, interventions by law enforcement agencies are more important than when the latter are forced to maintain order and engage in the antiterrorist struggle.

For example, during the month of October 1991, which was quiet, the National Guard broke a record for the number of cases handled in 1991, in contrast with the record low between May and July 1991, the period of the FIS [Islamic Front of Salvation] protest strike and the terrorist acts that followed. According to the Gendarmerie, goods seized in Tam and Ain-Guezzam were reportedly shipped only two weeks before the raid, precisely when the operation to dismantle terrorist networks was in full sway.

This yields an equation quite easy to solve: Fundamentalism makes the task of speculators and smugglers easier (by destabilizing the established order and institutions), in exchange for which the latter supply arms and various types of financing and equipment.

There is seemingly no end to the revelations and enigmas supplied by Tam and Ain-Guezzam.

For example, how is one to explain how such a large volume of goods was shipped to the southernmost region of the country so easily? How did imported products such as French milk and Chinese tea reach Ali-Baba's caves in Tamanrasset, apparently without ever touching the national market? Accomplices in high-level positions obviously made it possible to pull off such an operation, high-ranking Gendarmerie officials believe. The investigation undertaken may well expose even bigger surprises and light is bound to be shed on the ties between those who deal in corruption, contraband, and speculation and the fundamentalists.

The French weekly VSD revealed in its Thursday edition (also published in Algiers) that the FIS has set up an entire organization based on the black market and the racket run by Algerian wholesalers living in France, Italy, and Spain.

Killing of Police Officers Said Trivialized

92AF0977A Algiers HEBDO LIBERE in French 24-30 Jun 92 p 5

[Article by C. Rekad: "Quiet Everybody, Assassins at Work!"]

[Text] "Isn't it a shame that fanatics have zeal and wise men do not? We should be cautious, but not timid."

This quotation from Voltaire summarizes very well the citizens' state of mind (if we substitute cowardly for timid). Isn't it a scandal to see policemen (more than 60) cowardly murdered every day in the midst of general indifference? Why do we view such crimes as commonplace? Why do political parties, the media, and civil society remain silent in the face of such excesses?

Indeed, how would political parties react if 50 members of the PRA [Algerian Renewal Party], the Nahdah, the FFS [Socialist Forces Front], or the PT [Labor Party] had been killed since January 1990?

Would they merely issue statements condemning violence wherever it comes from, while pursuing their politics that consist in talking again and again about "national reconciliation." Demagoguery, demagoguery. Unfortunately, in these hard times that have befallen Algeria, the vilest specimens of the human species are to be found among demagogues. For we should recall that these children of Algeria are dying so our country can enjoy political pluralism. And that a fundamentalist regime would end it. Also, these politicians who put their party's interest above the national interest will answer to history for all the calamities that lie in wait for our country (see the Yugoslav tragedy). Note that some so-called Islamic parties never firmly condemned these crimes. As for the media, with a few exceptions they report these murders like the results of soccer games; for instance, this daily's headline: "Seven days to go" (referring to the sheiks' trial), and, lower: "Field officer killed in Diar El Djemaa."

Nothing is done to show that these policemen (murdered while we are safely watching Euro 92) were plain ordinary husbands and fathers, human beings, Muslims, Algerians!

Far more attention has been given to an elimination from the Africa Cup than to the death of over 60 policemen! Why make horror so commonplace; is that information?

When some human rights advocates state that policemen's deaths are merely the result of political conflicts, this tends to make people believe that it is mere uniforms that are being killed, not Algerians (quite as good Muslims as others) who, like everybody else, have the right to live.

Conditions in Older Industrial Areas 'Dangerous'
92AF1007A Algiers EL WATAN in French 7 Jul 92 p 4

[Article by Ali Guissem: "Dangerous Activities Not Controlled"; first paragraph is EL WATAN introduction]

[Text] Dangerous activities are proliferating in the urban area of the capital. Detailed statistics on accidents that have taken place up to the present are not available. However, the losses in human lives and in property are often substantial.

The Casbah section of Algiers, with all of its crowded, architecturally unique character and its high population density, by themselves make the majority of its industrial or handicraft activities dangerous.

To the concentration of traditional handicraft activities still functioning with archaic tools should be added a flagrant lack of security precautions. In the old quarter of Algiers many bakeries, public baths, and other metal structures which, in fact, at times are real curiosities, continue to use wood as a fuel, as in the old days. The piles of split wood stacked in very small, dark, and stuffy places often stand next to tanks of bottled gas, without any ventilation provided or respect for storage standards. The fire stations that come when each disaster is reported compare these places, and properly so, to real mine fields. Help is still difficult to send to a place where there are no fire hydrants.

The Fire Department has made a list of 78 particularly risk-prone places, ranging from the simple shop of a self-employed jeweler to a distribution point of the SNIC [National Chemical Industries Company], in addition to factories making glue, matches, etc.

Belcourt is another area that holds the record in this respect.

The same redevelopment effort is going on in the Hamma section, which required the demolition of several laboratories and small factories. This area has even more dangerous, industrial centers. An effort undertaken by the wilaya of Algiers and involving expropriating ground for the construction of public facilities has apparently not succeeded in moving several small industrialists who are still in business. For those responsible for public protection, this phenomenon, which exposes to real danger many thousands of citizens, cannot be blamed in particular on the history of the growth of the city. In effect, exceptions are made to the laws protecting human lives and property, whenever individual interests are involved.

Many "industrialists" consider the most essential security standards the least of their concerns. Even more serious is the fact that, since 1988 fire services are no longer consulted

when the register of business firms is prepared. At present the views of the local administration are the only ones taken into account.

Therefore, since 1988 there has been no control to ensure that essential security standards are respected in shops that provide space for various forms of commercial activity.

The bakeries, the public baths, the self-employed jewelers, the mechanics, etc., often located on the ground floor with living quarters upstairs and in the newly established residential areas, are not subject to any security regulations at present. In Cite Bachdjarah residents have not hesitated to turn their small caves into real warehouses. They only need a pick and shovel to dig as far back as the foundations of a building. Who will be responsible if the building collapses?

Fifteen Arrested on Arms Charges; Former FIS Militant Arrested

LD0807210492 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in Arabic 1830 GMT 8 Jul 92

[Text] According to the National Gendarmerie Command today, 15 people who had been under a search warrant accused in particular of possessing firearms, were arrested yesterday in a number of places in the country.

The same source affirmed that among those arrested, nine of them—five in Batna, three in M'sila, and one in Oum El-Bouaghi—were found to have in their possession 13 firearms including automatic revolvers and hunting rifles.

Gendarmerie sources also asserted that one of the former Islamic Salvation Front [FIS] militants has been arrested at Ain Delfa accused of possessing 10 military uniforms.

In Tidjalabine, the wilaya of Boumerdes [west of Algiers], a person who has been under search warrant since last February was arrested as he was preaching to others.

In the wilayas of Skikda and Lakhdaria four people have been apprehended by the National Gendarmerie and accused of pulling down a number of electricity poles and telephone cables.

Police Pursuing Armed Group in Setif

LD2307093592 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in Arabic 2200 GMT 22 Jul 92

[Excerpt] There is tension in a number of regions in the country. After the assassination of two police officers in Constantine, the fear of the traditional bombs continues to be felt in other regions.

In Setif, the pursuit of an armed group by the national gendarmerie continues. It seems that there is something new here, according to the command of the gendarmerie in the region.

The national gendarmerie continues to chase the armed group in the Djemila mountains in Setif Province. Radio correspondent Faisal Ghames in Setif today obtained new information from the command of the national gendarmerie there. The armed group is said to consist of 12 persons who

have been on the wanted list since the events of last February. They are from the El-Eulma region and other provinces.

According to the commander of the national gendarmerie in Setif, this group has nothing to do with the Z'barbar group, contrary to rumor.

The national gendarmerie is currently asking for security reinforcements from the provinces of Jijel and Mila in an attempt to block roads and prevent the armed group from escaping into the neighboring provinces.

The commander of Setif national gendarmerie also confirmed that some members of the armed group have been wounded, and that one person was killed and his corpse handed over today to his family in Sougueur in Tiaret Province.

The commander of Setif national gendarmerie also told the radio correspondent that some inhabitants of Djemila and Maouia regions are currently being interrogated because their collusion with the armed group has been confirmed. [passage omitted]

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