

Spain, France, and Italy

At the same time, Pasok-dominated Greece initialed accords with Syria, Malta, and, most recently, Bulgaria, the Soviet satellite state most tightly ruled by the Soviet KGB. Of the major Mediterranean powers of Western Europe, socialist Spain and socialist France both maintain an ambiguous "third force" policy which is also supported by Italian Foreign Minister Giulio Andreotti.

Former Chancellor of Austria Bruno Kreisky, a dean of the Socialist International, told the Spanish newspaper *El Pais* on Aug. 16 that he was negotiating a "Mediterranean pact" between the European socialists, Libya and Malta, to make the Mediterranean a "neutral zone." In sum, Western political influence, and U.S. influence in particular, have clearly declined over the past five years.

Syria, Lebanon, and Libya

Conversely, Soviet military and political power has significantly grown. The Mediterranean Squadron of the Soviet Black Sea fleet fulfills continuous duties in the Mediterranean and has been regularly modernized over the past decade. The U.S.S.R. has also created major air-strips for Soviet forces in northern and southern Libya as well as enormous, underground tank and armor depots near Damascus (Syria) and Tripoli (Lebanon). An entire tank division could be rapidly put on war footing with the equipment available near Damascus. Yet, more than a military theater, the area serves as an arena of political and subversive warfare in which the Soviet design is to destroy Western influence. The strategic significance of the United States and European military withdrawal from Lebanon cannot be underestimated.

Tripoli and Benghazi (both in Libya) are used as staging centers for the East German secret service, the Staatssicherheitsdienst (Stasi), and the Soviet KGB for all of Africa. Thousands of East German agents are processed through Libya. European intelligence reports indicated that between one and two thousand special operatives of the Stasi were deployed into Libya in July and August of 1985. East Germany maintains diplomatic relations with some 13 African nations and has commercial and representative offices in some dozen others.

Tunisia

Tunisia remains a key to the stability of the entire region. Were radical pro-Libyan elements around the UGTT trade union to succeed in their destabilization campaign against the present government, not only would the West lose a precious ally and the Islamic world a center of moderation, science, culture, and reason, but the entirety of northern Africa would enter into a spiral breakdown: Algeria and Morocco would soon follow under the joint pressures of economic crisis and growing religious irrationalism. In turn, such a radicalization would inevitably hurt the social and economic stability of all West European countries.

The mobilization to defend Tunisia

by Thierry Lalevée and Philip Golub

The visit of Algerian President Chadli Benjedid on Sept. 2 to Tunisia, followed on Sept. 4 by a courtesy visit of the chief of U.S. naval forces, Admiral Watkins, underscored the international mobilization which has rapidly gathered support for Tunisia against the threat of Libyan aggression. As the mobilization gathered momentum day by day, it sent a strong signal to Libya's ruler, Muammar Qaddafi, that not only was Libya's isolation growing, but that any attempt to carry out the Libyan threats would mean, with certainty, the end of the Qaddafi regime.

The effect of the mobilization has been seen in Libya's sudden change of behavior. On Sept. 1, Libya celebrated the anniversary of Qaddafi's "revolution" by sending one of its jetfighters to violate Tunisian airspace close to the Mediterranean island of Jerba. On Sept. 2, a few hours after the departure of Algerian President Chadli, Qaddafi broadcast over Libyan radio his new "admiration" for Tunisian culture, harping on how he had always wanted cooperation between the two countries. Qaddafi's speech misled no one in Tunisia, since only a few hours later, Libyan radio resumed its hate propaganda campaign, warning Tunis that should the Tunisian media continue attacking Libya, "Libya will have to react."

The strengthening of ties between Algeria and Tunisia, along the lines of the May 1983 treaty of friendship between the two countries, has done much to consolidate Tunisia's regional position. President Chadli's visit to Monastir, where President Bourguiba was taking his summer holidays, and his several hours of discussion with the President as well as Prime Minister Mohammed Mzali, were the outcome of several weeks of close cooperation between the two countries since the beginning of the crisis with Libya in early August.

Chadli came with several proposals which were revealed on Sept. 4 in a mass meeting of "national solidarity" chaired by Prime Minister Mzali. This included several badly needed economic measures, such as the creation of a special "solidarity fund" to finance the resettlement of the Tunisian workers expelled from Libya; the donation to Tunisia of one day of Algerian workers' wages; Algiers' decision to buy those

Tunisian products which used to be sold to Libya; and Algiers' increased contribution to the Arab Maghreb Development Bank. In addition, decisions were taken concerning the development and expansion of joint economic projects in the southern regions of both countries.

The military side of this cooperation was made very visible. On Sept. 4, a Tunisian military delegation led by Defense Minister Salaheddin Baly was received in Algiers. The following day, an Algerian military delegation was received by the Tunisian chief of staff, General Youssef Baraket.

The same strong message was sent on Sept. 4 when Chief of U.S. Naval Operations Adm. James D. Watkins personally traveled to Monastir to meet with President Bourguiba, Prime Minister Mzali, Defense Minister Salaheddin Baly, Chief of Staff Youssef Baraket, and the chief of the Tunisian Navy, Captain Habib Fadhila. Offering President Bourguiba a sword as a "symbol of the continuous support between the United States and Tunisia, and of the deep friendship between the two countries," Admiral Watkins stressed that he was "very honored to meet your very courageous President to express our admiration, our sympathy, and our continual support in this critical moment."

At the very same moment, units of the U.S. Sixth Fleet along with one vessel from the French fleet were being deployed around Tunisia's international waters, in a display of support.

The varying degrees of support Tunisia continues to receive, underscores the fact that the defense of Tunisia has become more than a local problem, and is now assuming international strategic proportions. Tunisia has so far received firm commitments of total support from such countries as Jordan, Iraq, and the United Arab Emirates. The PLO organization of Yasser Arafat held a press conference on Sept. 4 in Tunis to denounce the expulsion of Tunisian workers. On Sept. 5, Abdel Hamid Bakkoush, head of the Libyan Liberation Organization based in Cairo, also sent a telegram of support to the Tunisian government against Libya.

On the same day as Admiral Watkins' visit, the Tunisian weekly *Ashourouk* wrote that the United States was ready to attack Libya if Tunisia's borders were violated in any way. The weekly reported that the Schiller Institute of Helga Zepp-LaRouche "has indicated that President Reagan has received hundred of telegrams from within the United States and abroad, urging him to adopt a firm position toward the Libyan threats of aggression against Tunisia. . . . These telegrams have confirmed that the United States will, in no way, accept an aggression against such a friendly country as Tunisia!"

There is little chance that Qaddafi's dream of invading Tunisia will ever be realized. However, as the Tunisian prime minister revealed on Sept. 4, the danger of sabotage and terrorism is still very much at hand. On Sept. 6, the Tunisian government presented to the press three Libyan terrorists, arrested with their weapons, who planned to bomb some of the industries around Tunis, including oil depots.

Bourguiba receives

by Thierry Lalevée

As most Tunisians will tell you, the present crisis can be summarized in a nutshell: "Libya began massively expelling Tunisian workers on Aug. 5, the very same day that the Union Générale des Travailleurs Tunisiens (UGTT) called for a general strike against the government." Mere coincidence, or convergence, or internationally organized plot? No one within the government has yet come forward with a definitive answer. Pending additional elements, officials are sticking to a denunciation of this "convergence," as did Prime Minister Mohammed Mzali on Sept. 4, before of a several-thousand-strong gathering of militants of the ruling Destour party during a "national solidarity" conference.

However, while the immediate military threat from Libya has been contained, Tunisian officials are gearing up to face the second phase of what they consider a plot to destabilize their country: Libyan-sponsored commando operations and renewed social agitation instigated by UGTT chairman Habib Achour. As a warning, Mzali reminded his audience on Sept. 4 of the proven plots which the government has foiled in recent years: the January 1978 wave of riots which, with full financing from Libya, aimed at destabilizing the Tunisian economy; the January 1980 Libyan commando operation in the city of Gafsa in central Tunisia, which aimed at creating a "liberated" zone for unleashing a full-fledged Libyan-type revolution in the country; and the January 1984 food riots which were manipulated by then-Interior Minister Driss Guiga, who attempted to overthrow the government before fleeing into exile in Paris and London.

Ever since Tunisia's independence, Habib Achour's UGTT, the main trade union associated with the Neo-Destour party of President Habib Bourguiba, has played an essential role in most of these crises. After the January 1978 riots, Achour himself spent a few years in jail before being reinstated as the trade union's chairman. The government, as a good-will gesture, did not oppose this decision, but instead began to build up rival trade union federations. In the same spirit, while Mzali fiercely denounced Achour's policies on Sept. 4, he was careful to draw a line between the UGTT leader, the rest of the leadership, and its membership, who consist of industrial workers from the north of Tunisia who,