

## Africa Report by Thierry Lalevée

### Regional war in the Maghreb?

*Moscow, with aid of the Kissinger circle, is having an easy time turning North African nations against each other.*

On Aug. 14, Morocco's King Hassan and Libya's Colonel Qaddafi simultaneously made the surprising announcement that they had signed a state treaty to "merge" the two countries. The development could mean a major strategic victory for Moscow, pointing in the direction of the Maghreb's division into two hostile camps for early multilateral warfare.

Admittedly, while Qaddafi has conducted no less than seven such mergers previously, with Egypt, Sudan, Syria, South Yemen, and Tunisia, none ever actually developed. However, that the pro-Western monarchy of Morocco could consider such a step with a Soviet client-state like Libya implies a dramatic political shift in the region with wide-ranging consequences for the Mediterranean and Morocco's immediate neighbors.

King Hassan and Col. Qaddafi met on Aug. 13 in the city of Oujda near the Algerian border. The merger decision followed months of bilateral negotiations after an already spectacular reconciliation between the two countries in May 1983. It also came after months of international negotiations between the Soviet Union and variously gullible, terrified, or treacherous Western diplomats, the latter of the Kissinger stripe, who have given more than one helping hand to a Soviet propaganda campaign aimed at portraying Qaddafi as disappointed over recent foreign-policy failures and ready to change.

Essential to such a campaign has been, for example, West German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher

and Italian Foreign Minister Giulio Andreotti. According to *La Stampa* Aug. 9, both ministers forewarned Qaddafi of May 8's attempted uprising in Tripoli. Hence, as anti-Qaddafi commandos crossed into Libya on May 6, they were easily picked up by security men. Last Month, Andreotti paid a visit to Libya and offered to arrange privileged relations with the European Community.

The latter move was immediately rejected by Britain, which stressed the Libyan government's role in the machine-gunning of anti-Qaddafi exiles in London from the roof-top of Tripoli's embassy there, resulting in the death of a British policewoman. But a week later, the Italian press reported that the guilty Libyans had been tried and hanged on Qaddafi's orders.

Just as false a report was Andreotti's assurances to President Reagan that Libya "was not involved in the mining of the Red Sea," contrary to what President Mubarak of Egypt has been saying!

In general, Moscow has made the protection and even strengthening of Qaddafi's regime a condition *sine qua non* in any broader "crisis management" negotiations with the West. There is thus little doubt that King Hassan decided on the recent "merger"-treaty with the full agreement of many Western leaders, including the Kissinger circle in the United States. Indeed, most of Hassan's special emissaries to Qaddafi over recent months have been known for their Western connections.

Morocco, of course, also has its

own own reasons, such as ending the eight-year long guerrilla warfare it faces in the formerly Spanish-occupied Western Sahara. Confronting the Moroccan army, whose permanent mobilization has been a heavy burden on the national economy, is the so-called Polisario Liberation Front, created in 1976 by the Soviet Union through then Algerian President Houari Boumediene, with much materiel aide subsequently coming from Qaddafi.

Capitalizing on the inability of the present Algerian leadership to extricate itself from the artificial crisis in relations with Morocco caused by the Polisario affair, Qaddafi unilaterally made a deal with Morocco in late 1983. As revealed in an interview with King Hassan appearing in *Le Figaro* magazine last January, in exchange for an end to Libyan support of the Polisario, Morocco recognized Libyan annexation of Northern Chad!

The growing rapprochement between Libya and Morocco has been countered by an alliance of other Maghreb nations. A friendship treaty is in effect between Algeria, Tunisia, and Mauritania, who have been accused by Morocco of harboring or otherwise aiding the Polisario guerrillas. Last July, as Morocco threatened to attack Mauritania, Algiers announced that in that event, it would attack Morocco.

Thus, with Qaddafi as its Trojan Horse, and Kissinger's friends as its allies, Moscow has had an easy time manipulating one country against the other, dividing the Maghreb region into two hostile and opposing blocs. In the medium-term, this could mean disastrous warfare, while the gambit of the Moroccan leadership will give a new boost to the Qaddafi-brand of Islamic fundamentalism. Ultimately, Moscow will rule over the region alone.

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