

negative, and enterprises that turned inward toward the domestic markets are collapsing.

Faced with this situation, the mistake of the African leaders—inspired and egged on in their leanings by the French African lobby—was to plug the holes by all-out borrowing. Between 1980 and 1990, the public deficit on average surpassed 6% of the gross domestic product. In 1987, the deficit reached 13%. The debt, three-quarters of it held by France, exploded, going from 28% of the GDP in 1980 to 110% ten years later for all of sub-Saharan Africa. In Mali, for example, 60% of the government revenues and half of export revenues are swallowed up by debt repayment.

Over the years, this foreign indebtedness was compensated for by aid from France: Between 1987 and 1993, Paris more than quadrupled its “adjustment aid.”

The problem is that this French aid—whether by Socialist governments or not—has followed a patronizing custom in taking little account of the actual imperatives of development. It has disappeared into the gulf that grows ever deeper between revenues and expenses, most often in pure losses. Revenues have collapsed in the wake of gross mismanagement that sacrificed the rural areas, and expenses have exploded as a result of supporting cliques close to power, especially in the army and civil service. In total, 50-60% of French public aid will have served as debt repayment and payment for the civil service, and most of the rest will have been more or less directly diverted overseas into international financial markets, with only 5-10% having actually contributed to the national economies, and not in the best of circumstances, at that.

Thus, the decision by Messrs. Balladur, Alphantéry, and Roussin to abandon the African countries of the franc zone is no innovation, but a consequence of an inevitable evolution under way for a long time and due to France’s submission—both in its general policy and in Africa policy in particular—to the monetarist model of the Anglo-Americans and the IMF. The Socialist governments, which had the trump card in hand to change policy, bear particularly heavy responsibility in this development.

Today, only 1% of France’s foreign trade is with the franc zone and, viewing its former partners as a burden, is delivering them over to the IMF—like a used Kleenex. Obviously, that is morally and economically unacceptable.

The solution is not easy, nor should it be merely “African.” It requires a change in policy, on an international economic and financial scale, by the French government—going from a monetarist logic to an infrastructural and productive logic—and, in francophone Africa, structural reforms corresponding to the change in French policy, coherent with that kind of renewal, which can only be reestablished in the context of a broader Franco-German design. The current policy will leave Africa helpless before a chain-reaction of devaluations, lead to the ruin of its infrastructure (especially public health and education), and turn the franc zone into nothing more than a pious memory.

Interview: Rabah Kebir

The IMF is fostering civil war in Algeria

Rabah Kebir is the leader of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) outside of Algeria. He gave the following interview to EIR in Germany in mid-January.

We publish this interview in the perspective of the necessary dialogue which is the only way to assure peace in Algeria. The two conditions for such dialogue are the adoption of a national design for growth, based on the country’s industrial and human capacities and rejecting the International Monetary Fund’s conditionalities; and the freeing of political prisoners. The industrial nations must base policy toward Algeria on this perspective, the only one which can prevent social chaos and a rupture between the intellectual elites and the majority of the population. The ongoing, terrible civil war cannot be truly ended except through a common project which gives Algeria a program, a memory, and a future—all together. The definition of the role and place of Islam in this project belongs, clearly, to the Algerians themselves.—The Editor

EIR: Can you tell us about the FIS, its background and program?

Kebir: The Islamic Salvation Front is the leading party in Algeria. It was founded in 1989 and took part in the municipal and departmental elections. It won in 852 municipalities, i.e., 50%, and has governed them for a year and a half in a manner which the citizens have found satisfactory. The FIS program is to develop the economy of the country along Islamic lines. The FIS is based on Islamic principles, because that is our heritage. It has chosen the peaceful road to changing the policy of the country, which was run by the FLN for 30 years, and led to catastrophe in all domains. The FIS has tried to defend the Algerian people and, as a result, has won two elections, municipal and legislative, the second time by an overwhelming majority.

The FIS wants to distribute the wealth of the country equitably among the citizens, guarantee employment for everyone, and eliminate corruption and mismanagement from the Algerian administration.

EIR: At your Dec. 17 press conference in Bonn, you said the FIS was not responsible for the terrorist attacks against foreigners. Who was responsible? You also spoke of certain groups “out of control” and of the danger of revolution.

Kebir: In my view, there are two ways to effect political change: the peaceful way through dialogue, and revolution. The FIS has chosen the peaceful way, which is why it partici-

pated in elections twice, despite the fact that during the second election campaign, the FIS leaders had been unjustly imprisoned. But the FIS chose to run in the elections, so as to prevent bloodshed among Algerians. The regime used violence in June 1991 during public demonstrations, and a second time after annulling the elections. It repressed citizens with exploding bullets (*balles explosives*). There are video tapes which testify to the repressive methods used to kill people brutally. In this situation, the FIS cannot stand with arms folded and ask people to do nothing, when they are being massacred.

As for the killings of foreigners, we have said time and again that this is not FIS policy. The FIS has nothing against foreigners, but against the Algerian dictatorship. We want the Algerian people to choose freely their course and their leaders, we do not want to have bad relations with foreigners. We need foreigners for the development of the country, for cooperation, and foreigners have always been welcomed by the Algerians. But this time, I think it was the hand of the special services which acted.

Every time there is a call to dialogue, to calm and national consensus, the special services, who benefit from violence and anarchy, do terrible things. The first time, for example, they killed Boudiaf; the second, there was an assault at the airport; and this time, the killing of foreigners. They are the ones who killed the foreigners. It may be that there are uncontrolled elements among the population. At a time when the FIS leadership has some in prison, some in exile, and

some underground, it is not easy to control the population.

EIR: Is there proof of who killed Boudiaf?

Kebir: In my view, it is clear that it was the special services and the generals who organized the murder. The presumed assassin was in the hands of the regime. Since then, in prison, he has still not been put on trial. In the airport affair, those considered guilty were executed.

EIR: What motive would they have had to kill Boudiaf?

Kebir: They had called Boudiaf out of exile to fight against the FIS. Boudiaf at the time was an honest man, who had not been involved in Algerian power politics. His hands were clean, and that is why he was eliminated. He must have been thinking of doing certain things which would not have coincided with the interests of the military, indeed, which could have divested them of power. They decided, therefore, to liquidate him.

EIR: The Algerian general Mohammed Touati proposed in December opening a dialogue with "FIS leaders who respected the law of the land." You answered with five conditions [the liberation of political prisoners; a free and independent committee made up of judicial, political, and religious representatives; prosecution of those responsible for "bloody and murderous acts"; abrogation of emergency laws; and a neutral country as the site for dialogue]. Shortly thereafter, an FIS communiqué announced a call to armed struggle. Can

Algeria, a chronology

June 1991: President Chadli Benjedid and Army crack down on FIS after riots over the June 4 weekend. Incoming Prime Minister Sid Ahmed Ghazali equally blames FIS leaders and ruling National Liberation Front (FLN) bureaucracy for violence.

September-November: Ghazali government fails to break with IMF-dictated "free market" reform policies.

Dec. 26: FIS wins in first round of elections, riding on popular anger at corruption, economic decline, and "martyr image" due to government repression.

January 1992: Army carries out cold coup to prevent runoff election (and likely FIS victory) on Jan. 16.

March 5: Government outlaws FIS.

April 23: FIS underground newsheet issues call to arms: "After vain calls for dialogue, the people should move from words to rifles."

June 29: President Mohamed Boudiaf is assassinated, one week after IMF forces regime to increase already murderous austerity. Algerian and international media blame FIS for killing, without any documentation. Iranian

government applauds the murder.

July 9: Prime Minister Ghazali replaced by Belaid Abdessalam, who had denounced privatization.

Nov. 11: Draconian IMF-dictated import curbs are imposed, which "will save Algeria \$570 million." Suspended imports are meat, fruit, fish, and chocolate; quotas are set for cereals, vegetables, sugar, flour, tea, and spare parts for farm machinery.

Aug. 21, 1993: Redha Malek, a hard-line anti-Islamist, becomes prime minister at the behest of the IMF and western creditors, replacing Belaid Abdessalam, who refused to negotiate a new debt accord with the IMF.

Aug. 23: Kasdi Merbah, a former premier and security chief, is ambushed and killed near Algiers. Government blames Islamic militants. *EIR* reports that it is widely believed that many recent assassinations of political figures (including Boudiaf) are linked to a power struggle within the regime, and are not the work of Muslim militants.

Nov. 10: French Interior Minister Pasqua orders arrests of more than 80 persons suspected of being FIS members and using French territory to conduct FIS support operations, after increasingly violent attacks on French citizens in Algiers.

you explain?

Kebir: First, Mohammed Touati is a criminal. He is the mind behind the terror in Algeria today. He is a criminal who should be brought before a court of law. It is he who has trampled on the law and the Constitution. The law states that elections must be respected. If the forces in power are serious, they should take into consideration our five conditions, including the prosecution of criminals.

EIR: What was the response to your conditions?

Kebir: Torture. After my press conference, they went to the Algiers mosque, arrested hundreds of youth, tortured them, and put them in prison. That was the response.

EIR: On Jan. 25, there will be the National Conference. Will the FIS attend?

Kebir: This conference is nothing but a facade. They are not serious. First of all, all those parties who respect their principles have decided not to go to that conference. It is only an attempt to gain time. Even the Dialogue Commission, which prepared the conference, said that the dialogue would begin only *after* the conference. They know that the conference will be fruitless. Until there is a real dialogue—real negotiations between the FIS as the principal party and the ruling power, on our conditions—there will never be a solution to the crisis. And the parties know this, the FFS, the FLN and Ben Bella, which is why they are demanding that the FIS be present.

EIR: The government has spoken of possible participation of FIS “representatives.” Are these former FIS members, or individual personalities?

Kebir: This is another sign that the government is not serious. If they want to negotiate, they should not nominate a Dialogue Commission, but rather let such a commission be made up of the main parties elected by the population, among them the FLN, the FFS, and the FIS. The government knows that the “personalities” are ex-FIS members who, having been rejected by the FIS and the people, can represent nothing.

EIR: What is your view of the International Monetary Fund?

Kebir: We do not respect the agreements made between Algeria and the IMF. And the Algerian population will not accept them in the future, because they were made by an illegitimate government. The IMF is considered to have a certain responsibility in the Algerian crisis. The FIS wants to build a government based on broad popular consensus, with all the viable forces in the country, to overcome the crisis.

EIR: Which are the viable forces?

Kebir: We are ready to work with all those who accept the principle of Islam as the basis of the Algerian state. All who accept this are asked to cooperate with us, and we think that the majority of the Algerians agree. In these conditions, we are not ready to accept the conditionalities of the IMF; they have as

their aim to trample on the sovereignty of Algeria. No Algerian can accept these conditions, except those in the current government, who unfortunately have no national dignity.

EIR: What would you do, if you were in government?

Kebir: We would like first to develop our agriculture, because people who are hungry cannot work. The FIS is based in the first place on agriculture, and secondly, on light industry, industry which serves agriculture, the food-processing industry. We can succeed, with cooperation with all those countries which agree, and which accept negotiations for credits with which to build agricultural and light industrial infrastructure. If tomorrow, we can feed the entire population and find dignified labor for every citizen, we can continue to develop industry and technology. But our primary objective is to combat famine and unemployment.

EIR: Would you accept an offer of a coalition, an alliance against the IMF?

Kebir: Certainly. The IMF policy today is a colonialist policy, which wants above all to safeguard its own interests. It does not take the suffering of the population into consideration. There is a catastrophe in Algeria right now. Every day, people lose their jobs, unemployment grows and grows. What is the aim of the IMF? One might ask if it is not to precipitate the country into an internal confrontation, into civil war. But this will not happen.

EIR: What could France do to contribute to solving the crisis?

Kebir: France is involved in one way or another in what happens in Algeria, because the policy of [Interior Minister Charles] Pasqua against our brothers in France represents another face of France for us. France knows that it cannot ignore what happens in Algeria, there are economic and historical ties. But France must know what the Algerian people want, and if it wants to help, it can. France could play a very interesting role. But not by continuing in the Pasqua policy; this is not in the interest of France, to help a government rejected by the population, founded on dictatorship and torture.

We are ready to cooperate with France and other countries. We know we do not live in isolation; the world has become a small village. We want to cooperate with everyone. Contracts must be in the mutual agreement of the two peoples. France, with its historical, economic, and cultural links, could play a role in favor of the Algerian people.

EIR: What is your forecast for Algeria?

Kebir: The Algerian regime has tried to impose its methods by force, and I think it has failed. For the last two years, it has not achieved what it wanted to do. Now, if there are some “wise men” in the regime—and I think that there are—they will think of seeking an opening with the FIS leaders currently in prison. Under these conditions, a further degeneration could be avoided.