

United States Department of State



Washington, D. C. 20520

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INFORMATION MEMORANDUM

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April 25, 1986

TO: The Acting Secretary

FROM: NEA - Richard W. Murphy *RM*

SUBJECT: How Libya Works

You asked for an explanation of how Qadhafi controls Libya without occupying any formal position other than "Brother Leader of the Revolution." At the outset, you will find instructive a diagram of the governmental process (Tab A) as prepared by our UK colleagues. The key to understanding the circular policy flow pattern is to recognize that Qadhafi has created a system of "mass-rule" or participatory democracy which allows him to intervene when he wants to achieve the policy he wants without any formal hand on the levers of power.

Qadhafi has developed a system of rule in which the masses are supposed to play a continuous part. The outlines of this system are described in his "Green Book" which sets out his "Third International Theory", a hypothetical alternative to both Capitalism and Communism. Qadhafi's thesis is that representative democracy is a "fraud" and that direct participation by the masses is the true way for the people to express their beliefs.

The people's policy starts at the level of the "Basic Peoples Congresses" representing over 700 localities and interest groups. These recommendations are considered by the General People's Congress (GPC) at an annual meeting. The GPC also votes the budget and decides on leadership of the executive body, or General People's Committee, members of which are also the Ministers of the various Ministries.

The GPC resolutions are communicated for implementation to the Ministries, various local committees and autonomous bodies, such as the electricity company. However, the guidance typically includes such a large number of contradictory and overlapping resolutions passed by the various Congresses that the implementing bodies have considerable flexibility.

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Qadhafi typically intervenes in the system by appealing to the Revolutionary Committees, a cadre loyal to the him and the Green Book controlled by Qadhafi's number two helper, Major Jallud. While the Revolutionary Committees are considered lower-class rif-raf by many Libyans, they do have a direct line to Qadhafi, and energetically carry out such tasks as checking the background of persons proposed for government service, or carrying out protest demonstrations.

Depending on his concern of the moment, Qadhafi also appeals to the masses directly, asking them to act against individuals in a Ministry or Committee, to oppose tribal, bourgeois or other interest groups, to demonstrate in favor or against a particular issue, etc. Because of vagaries of politics, most people are reluctant to air their views with frankness, although debate in the Congresses can be very genuine.

There are some areas over which, even in theory, the people of Libya have no authority, such as the armed forces and intelligence authorities. We have occasionally seen Qadhafi use the title "Supreme Commander in Chief", illustrating his control over these institutions.

Under the present anarchic and chaotic system, the emphasis is on guidance from above. Qadhafi perceives that his revolution has failed to meet his expectations; on occasion, he complains bitterly about failures of various institutions. At the last GPC, nearly half of Libya's ministries, including the Petroleum Ministry, were simply abolished at his request. It appears they are to be replaced by autonomous companies, such as the Libyan National Oil Company, or local cooperatives.

However, Qadhafi will forestall the development of any independent power bases, whether in the economic, political or military spheres. In the past year for example, he has repeatedly injected both people's militia and revolutionary committee members into the Armed Forces. All in all, Qadhafi governs with extreme cageyness combined with a messianic charisma which enables him time and again to reach the masses, and start fresh on projects which have reached a dead end.

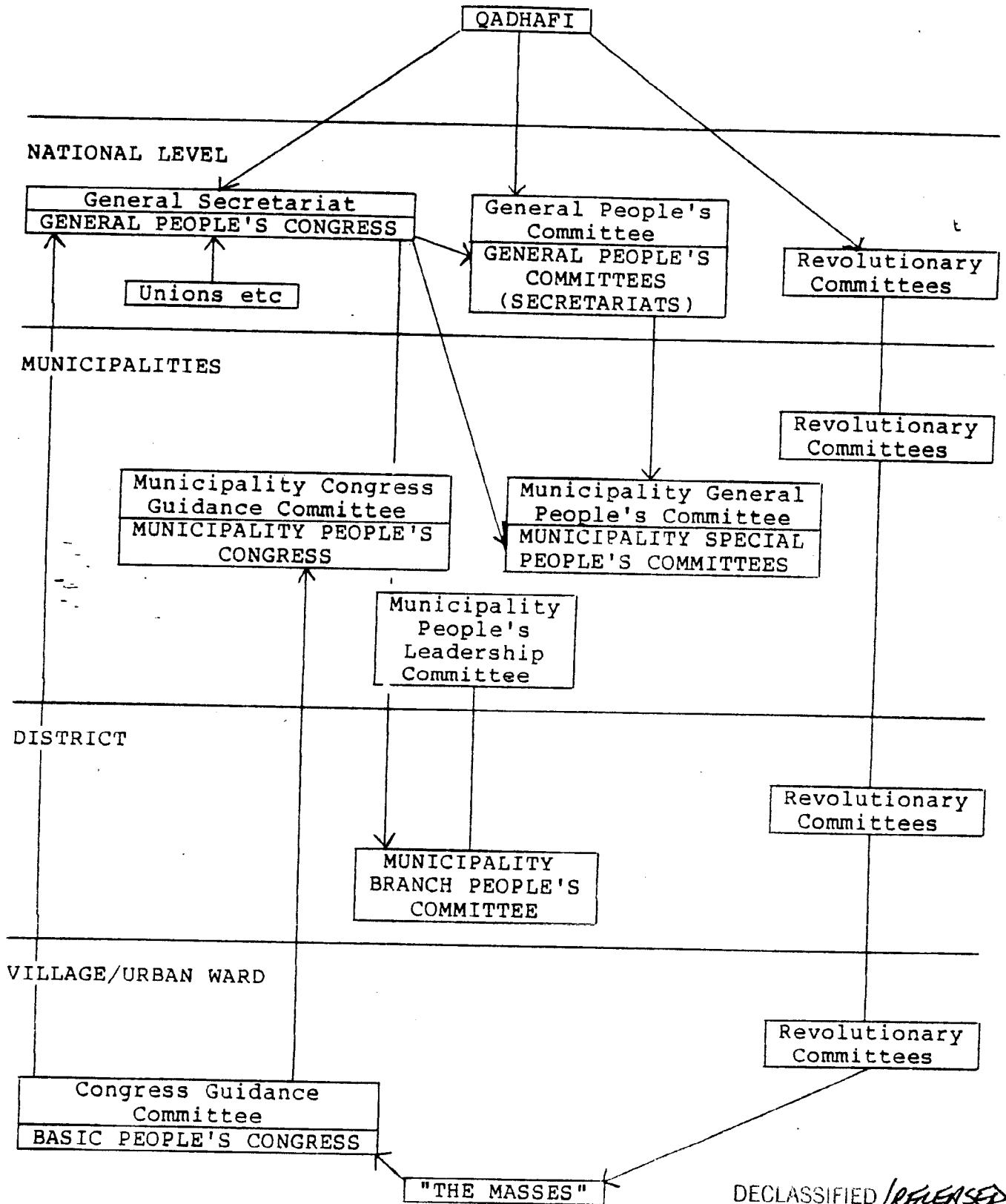
Attachments: TAB A - Conceptual Diagram

NEA/AFN: RLDanker *RL*
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Clearance: NEA/AFN: DZweifel *DZ*
NEA: MUssery *MU*

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ANNEX



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