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SOVIET PUBLICIST PRAISES WORKERS' SELF-MANAGEMENT--

BUT FOR ALGERIA

Summary: The Soviet Union has exhibited a contradictory attitude on the question of workers councils. On the one hand, whenever Soviet publicists are writing about the attempted introduction of workers councils in Czechoslovakia or of the Yugoslav experience, they describe that institution as anarcho-syndicalist. On the other hand, they view Algeria's copy of the Yugoslav self-management model as a positive development which should be adopted by the "third world."

The Soviet publicist Igor Belyayev's praise of Algeria's workers self-management system stands in sharp contrast with various expressions made in recent months by Soviet media concerning those favoring this type of institutional development for other Communist countries. (1) Without specifically referring to Yugoslavia, the Soviet and other East European publicists have labelled workers' self-management in the form of workers' councils as a type of anarcho-syndicalism and hence an ideological anathema for much of East Europe.

It is well to remember that in March 1963 President Ben Bella of Algeria signed a decree which provided for the transfer of management over the major part of the Algerian economy to workers.

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- (1) TASS International Service in English, 22 May 1969 (2154 hours) reporting on an article written by the Pravda editor of the department of Asian and African countries entitled "Algeria Has Made Its Choice" and published in the Soviet weekly for overseas readers, Za Rubezhom, No. 21, 23-29 May 1969, pp. 16-18.

Algerians unashamedly admitted that their experiment was fashioned after Yugoslavia's system adopted some ten years earlier. In fact, the then Vice-President of the Yugoslav Federal Assembly Mijalko Todorovic was invited to attend the First Congress of Self-Management Organs in the socialist sector of Algerian industry which was held during 28 March-4 April 1964, on the first anniversary of the decree creating workers' self-management in Algeria. (2)

A few weeks earlier, President Ben Bella visited Yugoslavia and admitted his indebtedness to Yugoslavia when he observed that:

Great political ideas which have been circulating throughout the world find their way through Yugoslavia, through Belgrade. You have created a new dimension, thus enriching socialism. (3)

During his visit to the ITM engine factory at Rakovića near Belgrade, the enterprise which supplied Algeria with tractors at a time which Ben Bella thought was very trying, the President of Algeria heaped lavish praise:

I want to stress that it is not by accident that our first visit to Europe is paid to Yugoslavia...We have come here because you have selected the road which we regard as correct-- the road to socialism. We have come here because you have taken the kind of road to socialism which we regard as the best of all, since it pays attention to democracy and harmonizes socialism and democracy. (4)

But he left little doubt as to what he meant by this form of harmonization in another remark made to the members of the workers' councils of ITM:

You in Yugoslavia have been applying the system of self-management for the past few years, and we have only started this project. We did not waste a lot of time on discussing this matter, since the workers themselves made up their minds to do so. In fact, both the land and the various enterprises were abandoned by colons, and the workers then spontaneously began to work on the land, and if it may appear necessary to provide evidence of self-management as the only road harmonizing socialism and democracy, in that event we too could serve as an example of it.

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- (2) For a report on his address see "The First Congress of Self-Management Organs in the Social Sector of Algerian Industry," Borba, 30 March 1964, p. 1.
 - (3) "Peter Stambolic Gives Luncheon for Ben Bella," Borba, 7 March 1964, p. 1.
 - (4) D. D. Markovic, "Algerian Workers Have Made Up Their Minds to Adopt Self-Management, Ben Bella Said," Borba, 7 March 1964, p. 1.

Since that time Ben Bella has disappeared from the Algerian scene and his successor, President H. Boumedienne, is now highly praised by the Soviet author for continuing the institution of workers self-management and for its improvement:

The fellahs are becoming the most important figure in the self-managed economies. They elect members of the board or the directorate. They, and no one else, now decides the destinies of self-management.

Perhaps, Belyayev's satisfaction with the Algerian experiment patterned after the Yugoslav model is best expressed in his description of what he considers to be a "unique" development in the "third world." He observed that:

One must have a great belief in the correctness of the road of social and economic development chosen by Algeria in order to see in self-management the beginning of the radical social transformations in the country.

At times Belyayev seems a bit unhappy because successes with the Yugoslav model in Algeria had not proceeded more rapidly, but nevertheless encourages others to follow Algeria's example of imitating Yugoslavia:

I am not going to overestimate the successes of self-management in Algeria but it would be wrong, too, to fail to notice progress in this important phenomenon, for this is the experience that is of great importance for young states that have won independence.

It is clear that Soviet publicists have followed an inconsistent policy in recent months on the question of workers self-management. While being highly critical on a large number of occasions of the type of workers councils favored in Czechoslovakia prior to the invasion and the type existing in Yugoslavia, the Soviet policy, at the same time, is one of high praise for the Algerian copy of the Yugoslav model of workers self-management.

Harry Trend

- (1) For a report on his address see "The First Congress of Self-Management Organs in the Social Sector of Algeria" Industry, 30 March 1964, p. 1.
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