

ALGERIA'S SELF-RELIANCE THEME BLOW TO MOSCOW

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The failure of Moscow's efforts to identify with Third World causes has been underlined by recent Algerian statements which make it clear that there is no role for the Soviet Union or any other "Super Power" industrialised nation in the affairs - especially economic - of the non-aligned world.

President Boumedienne, opening the first Third-World Youth Conference in Algiers on July, emphasised that "economic liberation depends on our own will and the realisation that our development is our responsibility alone". And Mohammed Seddik Behyahia, the Algerian Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, addressing the same conference, stressed that Third World youth should place its faith in self-reliance, looking neither to the East nor to the West.

The statements may be expected to cause concern to the Russians who in the past have been sensitive to the apparent inability of some Third World States to distinguish what are to Moscow vital, obvious and inevitable differences between Soviet society - based on Marxist-Leninist doctrine - and developed Western societies.

In August, 1960, *Moscow Radio* charged that "neither East nor West" was not an attitude of "positive neutrality" but merely served Western interests, and in February, 1970, the radio asserted that "non-alignment does not mean political neutrality; it proves worthwhile only when both in form and content it is anti-imperialist". Moscow's *Radio Peace and Progress*, commenting in August, 1972, on the meeting of non-aligned Foreign Ministers in Georgetown, Guyana, warned of "the slippery path of the so-called opposition of development countries to all developed States, without taking into account the differences between their social régimes and policies", an attitude supported by "world imperialism and its Maoist accomplices".

In November, 1973, the *World Marxist Review*, the Communist theoretical magazine, derided "the shopworn concept of 'two super-powers', the struggle of 'rich' and 'poor' countries, the 'incompatibility' of the interests of socialism and non-alignment". Propaganda from the imperialist foes of non-alignment was "trying to emasculate the movement of its social content".

In the economic sphere, Soviet efforts to identify with efforts to repulse "economic exploitation" will not have been helped by Moscow's own

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trade practices in the Middle East, particularly its barter deals. Egypt and Sudan cancelled such deals involving their cotton crops and Iraq, which has close relations with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, is now demanding hard cash for oil exports instead of barter arrangements. Iran is currently trying to get Moscow to pay a price more in line with international rates for its natural gas exports to the Soviet Union.

Algeria also had trouble with Moscow over natural gas in the autumn of 1969, when Algerian exports to Federal Germany seemed threatened by Siberian natural gas. In May, 1973, the Algerian newspaper *El-Moudjahid*, said that the Soviet Union was becoming a competitor to developing countries in raw materials exports - such as oil, gas, uranium and copper - to Western markets.

Soviet-Algerian contradictions

The fundamental contradiction between Soviet and Algerian Third World views, both political and economic, was seen by the Lebanese magazine, *Al-Ussbu' al-Arabi* (March 4, 1974) when it commented that Boumedienne was gradually becoming the leader of the non-aligned world and added that at the Algiers Non-Aligned States Summit Conference in September, 1973, Cuba's Prime Minister, Fidel Castro, had led a political group which refused to criticise the Soviet Union while the Algerian President had refuted the theory that the USSR was "the mother" and leader of the Third World.

In fact, the Third-World Youth Conference, organised under the auspices of the Algiers-based Pan-African Youth Movement (PAYM) and the JFLN, the youth wing of Algeria's National Liberation Front, marked a further step in Algeria's bid for the leadership of the non-aligned bloc, the first major effort being made at the Algiers "Summit".

Addressing the youth conference - at which 126 countries from Asia, Africa and Latin-America were represented - President Boumedienne said that the advanced States of the northern hemisphere had gained "tremendous economic power" as a result of 30 years of peace, but "world peace and security cannot be limited merely to an agreement reflecting a balance of power between the big powers... Efforts for world peace cannot succeed unless they are supported by action to achieve fairness in relations between the industrialised States and those of the Third World. The realisation of this new world order for which we are striving will only be possible as a result of our own efforts and struggle..." (*Algiers Radio*, July 6).

Boumedienne alleged that industrialised States, by monopolising markets, had imposed an unjust system on the world. He affirmed his belief in nationalisation and said that Third World States should form united fronts to defend their interests and to fix prices "to achieve the fair development of the world economy".

The President's self-reliance theme echoes his statement to the magazine *Jeune Afrique* in May, 1972, when he asserted that "to rely on the great Powers, whether friendly or enemy, does not serve our interests". He said all big Power influence should be rejected - a line which is reflected in Algerian efforts to rid the Mediterranean of the influence of

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non-Mediterranean Powers; particularly by the removal of both the Soviet and American fleets.

Apart from a message of greeting from Soviet youth at the start of the conference, Moscow seems to have refrained from commenting on the proceedings, possibly because it is aware of the scope for potential disagreement. Certainly the Russians can have taken little comfort from the implications of the speech by Mohammed Seddik Behyahia, who referred to the "victory" of the oil-producing States in gaining full control of their own resources and the prices obtained for them, and stressed that Third World Youth - in ensuring further gains and victories - did not need the East or the West: "Be weak and we shall have enemies; be strong and we shall have friends; be very strong and we shall have no need of friends. Thus we shall compel people to come and talk to us, because it will be a question of their own survival" (*El-Moudjahid*, July 13).

Second conference

The Algerians, however, seemed well pleased with the meeting and *El-Moudjahid* reported that a General Union of Arab Youth was to be created and the PAYM and the JFLN were told to prepare for a second youth conference - an instruction which can be seen as a further blow to Communist youth groups which would undoubtedly like to be involved in the proceedings.

These include another Algerian youth organisation, the National Union of Algerian Students (UNEA) - now banned - which is affiliated to the Communist-controlled International Union of Students (IUS). According to the Ghanaian *Mirror* (May 11, 1973) trouble involving the UNEA occurred at a preparatory meeting in October, 1972, for the Tenth World Youth Festival (which subsequently opened in East Berlin on July 28, 1973, under the sponsorship of the IUS and another Communist front organisation, the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY)). An Algerian PAYM delegate attending the October meeting accused the IUS of "lacking anti-imperialist fervour" and also objected to the presence of a UNEA representative; he reportedly threatened a boycott of all PAYM affiliates unless UNEA representatives were excluded.

The situation was further exacerbated through the PAYM's 1st Pan-African Youth Festival in Tunis ending on July 22, 1973 - less than a week before the opening of the Tenth World Youth Festival, whose organisers saw the Tunis meeting as a prelude to their own event and a convenient rallying point for African participants. This angered some PAYM members who saw their own event as a specifically African Festival.

Dr Jozsef Gombar, the President of the National Council of Hungarian Youth, said that the Tunis Festival had "gained special significance through the fact that it was held a week before the Tenth World Festival, but added that there had been attempts to turn it into a counter-festival. Eventually, the organisers of the two events settled their differences and both Soviet and East German delegations attended the Tunis Festival, the latter putting out some advance publicity for the East Berlin meeting.

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Yet the episode seems to have affected Communist chances of being deeply involved in Third World cooperation in youth work, for neither the IUS nor the WFDY - far less the UNEA - seems to have been involved with the Third-World Youth Conference.

The Communists have, however, not given up their task of penetrating the non-aligned bloc. A member of another Communist front organisation, the World Peace Council (WPC) who attended the 1st Conference said that "a conference of non-aligned countries on world peace" would be held in Algiers next year (*El-Moudjahid*, July), which may indicate that the WPC is to be the vehicle for a new Communist effort to win effective influence in the non-aligned movement.

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