

MUNICH, 26 March 1969 (CAA Dept.)

The following is a Radio Liberty Research article (CRD 103/69) by Sally Bissinger issued under the above title on 19 March.

Soviet President Podgorny's forthcoming visit to Algeria in March at the invitation of President Boumedienne (1) comes in the wake of several months of intensive activity between Moscow and Algiers on various levels.

A steady stream of Soviet visitors has poured into Algiers since the new year began, the most prominent of them being Deputy Premier and Gosplan Chairman Baibakov, who arrived on February 6. During his 8-day stay, he conferred with the Algerian leaders on the implementation of the long-term economic agreement for 1969-75 that was signed in Algiers on December 28, 1968 (2). This latest agreement falls within the framework of a series of general protocols on mutual cooperation negotiated in July 1968 by Algerian Industry and Energy Minister Abdessalam during a trip to Moscow. By the terms of the agreement, trade between the two countries is to double, reaching \$110 million in 1969.

On March 6, Algerian Foreign Minister Bouteflika flew to Moscow in response to a Soviet government invitation extended on November 30. There, he conferred with Gromyko and other Soviet officials "on the questions of the development and strengthening of friendly Soviet-Algerian relations and several other problems." On March 7, he signed an agreement setting up a permanent Intergovernmental Soviet-Algerian Commission for Economic and Scientific-Technical Cooperation, which was termed "an important new step in the development of Soviet-Algerian economic, trade, scientific and technical ties" by Chairman of the Soviet Commission for Economic Ties Skachkov (3). Bouteflika also met with Kosygin on March 7 and with Podgorny on March 8. Following his talks with Podgorny, on "the further development of cooperation," both sides "expressed satisfaction with the good progress in Soviet-Algerian cooperation, which serves the interests of the peoples of both countries" (4). The joint communiqué issued after M. Bouteflika's visit (5) states that both sides "examined questions connected with

1. TASS announcement in Pravda, March 1, 1969.
2. Pravda, January 2, 1969.
3. Pravda, March 8, 1969. It is interesting to note that during the talks between Bouteflika and Gromyko, Pravda reported among those present the Algerian ambassadors to the USSR, Italy, Czechoslovakia/Poland/Hungary/Albania (one ambassador for the four) and Spain, as well as several Soviet Foreign Ministry officials.
4. Pravda, March 9, 1969.
5. Pravda, March 12, 1969.

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preparation for the forthcoming visit" of President Podgorny and "expressed the conviction that this visit will reflect an important new stage in the development of relations between the two countries and that it will, to an even greater degree, strengthen the fraternal ties of friendship and broad cooperation" between Algeria and the USSR.

Soviet press coverage of Algeria, also intensive in recent months, has focused on economic development and Soviet assistance for a number of technical projects. Pravda's chief political correspondent, Yuri Zhukov, spent several weeks last December covering the Algerian political and economic scene and wrote two comprehensive articles describing industrialization and modernization in the country (6).

President Podgorny's visit also comes after a period of considerable strain, accumulated since summer 1968, in Algeria's relations with its main trading partner, France. In fact, the Soviets lost no time in profiting from both the Algerian government's nationalization of the French oil companies with its refusal to pay compensation and the French government's failure to honor its 1964 contract to purchase Algerian wine. In the first case, they immediately dispatched Soviet technicians to fill the posts left by the withdrawal of French experts; in the second, they offered to absorb the surplus wine -- at half the French price.

But, if Algeria seemed to be moving away from France, it was taking a giant step toward its neighbor and former adversary, Morocco. President Boumedienne's state visit to King Hassan II January 11-16 -- largely a symbolic gesture to cement the improved relations built up on many levels, especially since the June 1967 war -- resulted in pledges of mutual friendship and cooperation and a statement of the two countries' faith in the construction of the Arab Maghreb. This historic rapprochement was followed on February 2 by the signature of two agreements between Algeria and another Maghreb state, Libya, providing for friendly relations and mutual cooperation.

While it is now in Moscow's interest to achieve a semblance of Arab unity, in the long run, these contacts should enhance the economic and political independence of the North African states. It is indicative of President Boumedienne's independent line that the Algerian-Egyptian rapprochement sought by Moscow has yet to materialize. This aloofness from Nasser stands in sharp contrast to the rapprochement with two less militant and more Western-oriented states.

For, in its four years of dealing with the Soviets, the present Algerian leadership has clearly demonstrated that while it welcomes technical and military assistance, it intends to formulate

its policies (including its hard line toward Israel and its ban on the Algerian CP) without Soviet help. Its basic policy, as outlined by M. Bouteflika in a major address almost exactly one year ago, appears still firmly grounded:

"Our policy is one of national independence; of non-interference in the domestic affairs of others; of cooperation and friendship with all peoples on a basis of mutual respect and interests; and of dedicated struggle and aid against imperialism"(7).

As President Podgorny and the other Soviet leaders have seen, "struggle and aid against imperialism" to the Algerians also means not accepting dictates from Moscow.

7. El Moudjahid, February 10, 1968, Supplément Spécial, p. 3.

205/12-15/69
