

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

25 April 1964

ONE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: A New Phase in Soviet-Algerian Relations

The last six months have seen a marked improvement in Soviet-Algerian relations which will be capped by Ben Bella's visit to Moscow for May Day. Apart from Soviet military assistance during the border warfare with Morocco and a substantial extension of economic aid, there has been a growing tendency for Moscow to approve the ideological line expressed in Algiers.

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1. The Soviets had good reason to be disappointed with the phase of events in Algeria which opened with the Evian agreements. The Algerian leaders deliberately kept the Soviets at arms length, and, within the country, the Algerian Communists failed to make any headway. Their calls for a united front were rebuffed, they failed to get their candidates elected, or included in the new government. Finally, in November 1962, the party was outlawed. All this led to an unusual formal protest by the Soviet Central Committee:

"facts show that the leading circles of a number of countries have resorted to anti-Communist measures, not without pressure on the part of the western powers. It is characteristic that the banning of the Communist party of Algeria was disclosed immediately after the arrival of the US economic mission in the country and literally on the eve of the beginning of the Franco-Algerian economic negotiations in Paris." (Pravda 22 Jan 1963)

2. Since last fall, however, there has been a rapid and remarkable change in the Soviets' attitude, and Soviet-Algerian relations are so far improved that Ben Bella will attend the May Day festivities in Moscow. While there are some precedents, it is still unusual for a non-Communist leader of his standing to participate in these traditional Communist celebrations.

- 2 -

S-E-C-R-E-T

To illustrate further the complete turnabout by the Soviets, the Central Committee last week sent an amiable greeting signed by Khrushchev to the FLN party congress, again an unusual step, since the Soviet party normally does not associate itself with non-Communist political parties in this way.

3. The improvement in Soviet-Algerian relations dates from and was probably influenced by Algeria's involvement in border warfare with Morocco in the fall of 1963. In those circumstances, the Algerians apparently abandoned the reserve with which, presumably out of concern for their relations with France, they had been treating the Soviets. They finally accepted a Soviet offer of economic assistance. This \$100 million line of credit was the largest single Soviet deal since 1961. Chinese competition (a \$50 million credit) may have influenced Soviet generosity. For the first time since the end of the revolution the Soviets began to furnish military equipment to the Algerian forces in October and December. It seems almost certain that a military aid agreement has been concluded. Some Algerians are already being given military training in the USSR. The followup to these agreements was a visit to Moscow last December, by an Algerian party-government delegation that was feted in the usual Khrushchevian style.

- 3 -

S-E-C-R-E-T

4. In the realm of ideology the Soviets have gone far in accepting the Algerian regime's pretensions to creating an acceptable brand of "socialism". In November 1963, the Soviet theoretical journal Kommunist described the Algerian revolution as being in a new stage because of internal reforms initiated in March 1963. The important aspect of this Soviet pronouncement is the attempt to create a new impression of the nature and character of the Algerian regime. It has been a crucial point of the USSR in intra-Communist debate that there can be no "stage-jumping", that true "socialism" is only possible if the proletariat gains the leadership, that in the interim the most that can be achieved is some way station called "national democracy". In this article, however, the Soviets brushed off these fine distinctions and portrayed the regime as already at the point of "proletarian" leadership:

"the distinctive feature of the first stage of the Algerian national liberation movement was national unity, with the working classes, and in particular, the peasantry, playing the dominant role in the violent struggle to influence the intermediary population strata being waged between the bourgeoisie and proletarian ideologies, victory is gradually being won by ideology of the worker's class."

Kommunist then cites the Tripoli program of the FLN as evidence that Algeria has achieved the prerequisites for the "transition

of Algeria to a true Socialist regime." This quite favorable view of the Algerian situation is reconfirmed in the Soviet party message to the recent FLN congress and in Soviet comments on the FLN's party program which was before the Congress. The party message describes Algeria as a "national democratic state laying the foundation for a socialist society" And the Soviet May Day slogans accept Ben Bella's claim that Algeria is a "peoples democratic state."

5. All these ideological fine points simply mean that the Soviets are once again, as in the case of Cuba in 1962, making ideological adjustments to enable Ben Bella to come as close as he desires to the fold of true "socialists". To be sure, the Soviets have made favorable ideological pronouncements on other countries such as Ghana, Guinea, and Mali, and even sought, unsuccessfully, to create party-to-party relations. An important difference in the Algerian-Soviet relationship, however, is Moscow's apparent acceptance of Ben Bella's assertion that he is charting his own special ideological course, one which he says parallels that followed before him by Mao, Tito, and Castro. Ben Bella's recent birthday message to Khrushchev further underlined the theme of ideological sympathy in his remark that "we need to consolidate all peoples, particularly those who are

- 5 -

S-E-C-R-E-T

inspired by socialist ideals." It is the prominence of this ideological note that differentiates Algerian-Soviet relations from Moscow's ties to most revolutionary nationalist regimes.

6. It is obvious that an observer like Jacques Soustelle had his own reason for asserting recently that Algeria is "following the Castro pattern." There are vast differences, however, in the position of the two countries and the requirements of their foreign orientation. In particular, unlike Cuba, Algeria has continued to cultivate cooperative relations with the great power with which it was previously linked, especially by economic ties. Yet, there are disturbing coincidences, and we can be sure that the Soviets will make every effort to draw Ben Bella into close alignment with the Bloc.

7. Algeria may be much more important to the future shape of the Soviet Bloc than some of the currently more dramatic situations, such as Zanzibar. The Soviets have seen hopeful projects (e.g., Guinea) turn quickly sour. Presumably, they have learned to be more patient and flexible in handling the problems posed by nationalists who proclaim an independent Marxism and show sympathy to the USSR, but reject Soviet discipline. Presumably also, these nationalists have learned Nasser's game of working both sides of the street. Nevertheless,

- 6 -

S E C R E T

the ideological gyrations of the USSR suggest that Khrushchev is painfully trying to find some formula to embrace these regimes. Such a course may be the logical extension of the break up of monolithic communism. Algeria seems to be shaping up as an important test of this effort by Khrushchev to gain new adherents.

- 7 -

S-E-C-R-E-T