

Algerian Special

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BULLETIN

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We are pleased to be able to present the following two articles, written by a correspondent in Algeria, as a supplement. We have often argued the importance of the Algerian Revolution and will not repeat those arguments. However, we must note that the question of the Algerian Revolution is still causing a lot of disputation in the left wing in Britain and other countries. This is hardly surprising; it is precisely in relation to dynamic and quick moving events that polemics have arisen and will continue to arise. We cannot go into a long argument on these questions but will merely say that three guiding principles should never be forgotten. Firstly, all these questions should be approached from a CLASS point of view. Secondly, and flowing from that, an attempt should be made always to analyse the social forces involved rather than the ideas of, or the personalities of, leading figures. And thirdly, we should always try to see these events from a long-term historical point of view rather than be overwhelmed by the events of the moment.

This, we believe, has been borne in mind by our correspondent, in contrast to many who write on Algeria.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

(1) S.A.P. Page 1.

This was founded by the French administration and although now manned by Algerians has still retained some of the old colonial ways.

(2) Revolution Africaine Page 2.

We recommend all readers to buy this journal regularly as it is one of the most conscious expressions of the Algerian Revolution. The issue referred to is of 10th August and should be carefully studied on the question of the Agrarian Reform. The address of the journal is:

Revolution Africaine, 7, Boulevard Khemesti, Alger, Algiers.

The correspondent also adds a note on the Constitution:

The type of Constitution adopted does not reflect the socialist way of march proposed for the country. The way the Constitution was adopted by a party meeting with selected cadres in a cinema, without prior discussion, and by a show of hands leaves much to be desired. Unlike, for instance, the recently-adopted Yugoslav Constitution it does not seek in its essence the system of workers self-management. In passing, readers should try to get hold of the Yugoslav Constitution - it represents an important advance on the question of workers democracy.

This is a special supplement to the Bulletin, a weekly information service. This supplement is by no means characteristic of the Bulletin as it usually contains a number of short, factual reports or reprints on such questions as the Sino/Soviet dispute, the progress of the colonial revolution in various countries, problems of the labour movement in capitalist countries, and a great deal of space is given to issues facing the British Labour and trade union movement. We concentrate on material which is not generally available in the Socialist press and each issue usually contains a 'scoop'. If you would like to receive a sample copy send a 2½d stamp.

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THE ALGERIAN REVOLUTION ON THE SOCIALIST ROAD

"Everyone is not for Socialism, which signifies the democratic management by the workers, according to a plan, of the social property...."

"In our free country we are building Socialism by giving to the direct producers, to the workers, the management of the land and factories...."

"But there are others who naturally are against self-management, and we do not speak only of the former owners, of the rich in general, but we speak equally of the swarm of petty bureaucrats who do not accept that workers themselves shall decide democratically the management of the farms and factories."

"The self-management is constantly put in danger by the arbitrary and illegal interventions of these petty bureaucrats, often functionaries of the administration; of the SAP: of other services even who gravely deform self-management and empty it of its content, by intimidating the workers, by breaking their creative elan, and putting in their way all sorts of obstacles in the management of farms and factories."

"We shall expose in detail the acts of counter-revolutionaries conscious and unconscious, and shall not cease to call on the workers to take fully their rights that are accorded to them by the decrees of March 1963."

.....

Every day at 8 pm, over radio and television, in French Arabic and Kabylie, is broadcast the VOICE OF SOCIALIST ALGERIA, the broadcast of the BNASS (National Bureau of Animation of the Socialist Sector.) We have quoted above from the broadcast of the 7th August. The next evening the VOICE OF SOCIALIST ALGERIA, went into the detail promised of those arbitrary acts of the petty bureaucrats. Those of the SAP (1) have sold petrol to the management committees at a very high price. They have even in certain cases taken away certain equipment from farms under self-management.

The sector of the economy under workers committees is seen in Algeria, as the guiding light for the future socialist measures. Arising from the Decrees of March 1963, they have marked the high-point of the Algerian Revolution up till now. There has been a tremendous struggle around this sector, of which these last broadcasts of the BNASS are a reflection. Arising from the low cultural level in Algeria ("cultural" for the lack of a better word, meaning the high rate of illiteracy, lack of modern production methods, particularly in agriculture, low living standards, remnants of feudalism, both in economic and social relations as well as in ideology.), the attempt of the March 1963, decrees to introduce workers democratic manage-

ment in an important sector of the economy naturally aroused immediate obstacles, particularly from the bureaucratic elements.

It would be wrong too, to think that this is a single battle to be resolved in the coming weeks and months. Rather, because the bureaucratic tendency is rooted in the objective circumstances of the country, it will be a continuous struggle to prevent grave bureaucratic deformations of this structure of workers self-management.

In Algeria the Revolution is present everywhere. But it must be noted that over the months since March, there has been a certain pause. Of course some may say that it is only after all a few months. But in the given circumstances of Algeria, there is an urgent; impetuous need for the Revolution to go continuously forward, step by step.

This pause itself can be seen to be having effect already. If there has been the necessity of this fight against the bureaucrats in this self-management sector, by the BNASS, even against other bureaux and departments of the Government, it has been because the socialist sector is still relatively small in regard to the rest of the economy. If it becomes in fact isolated for any length of time as only one sector, particularly in agriculture fighting against other powerful sectors, tendencies and interests, then its bureaucratic degeneration, if not its very existence, becomes endangered.

It is in this context that the Agrarian reform takes on great importance. The Agrarian reform is being posed now as one of the greatest urgency. With the harvest proceeding now, the ploughing is due in October. For obvious reasons, any Agrarian reform will have to be effective by October. Colonel Boumedienne, vice-President of Algeria, stated recently in Cuba, during his visit there that the Agrarian Reform, was on the order of the day. This was taken up by "Le Peuple", on the 7th August, which featured a front page article. "The Democratic and Popular Revolution is first of all an Agrarian Reform". This aroused comment in the following day's French press.

Revolution Africaine, of 10th August, goes into much detailed analysis of agrarian reform, under the title "SOCIALISM AND THE AGRARIAN REFORM". From this article we see three forms of Agrarian Reform. First the agrarian reform, will affect all properties, both Algerian owned and French owned which cover more area than is needed to keep a family at a reasonable standard of living. This is estimated at about eleven to twenty two acres of fertile land, and from twenty five to fifty in infertile parts. The three forms are, firstly, self-managed land which will cover over seven million acres. Secondly, "production co/operatives of about three million acres and the rest of about fifteen million acres of land divided among peasants. (2)

With such a genuinely revolutionary agrarian reform, the Algerian Revolution will have made a historic turn. Indeed the momentum and necessities of such an agrarian reform will carry

forward the Algerian Revolution to new advances, to new nationalisations, to evolutions of political structures that we could only now get a glimpse of. As with the Cuban Revolution, basing itself upon the desire for a thorough-going land reform, the revolutionary government will of necessity have to take other steps.

Although we have spoken here only of two aspects of the Algerian Revolution, of the Self-Management and the agrarian reform, which are of course, the crux of the whole question, we have not spoken of other revolutionary measures. The Campaign against Illiteracy which only began last month is now in full swing and the slogan "Alphabetisons" is everywhere. Carried out in a fully revolutionary way it is a most inspiring movement. Taking its lessons particularly from the Cuban experience, the Algerian experience will be more difficult as in most cases the lessons must of necessity be in French, which is, after all, only a second language for the Algerians. Still, there are plans for an "Arabisation" to be eventually carried out.

Another point that should be mentioned: the Revolution is, in comparison with past revolutions, extraordinarily democratic. That is not to say that everything is perfect and that things do not happen which are even extremely undemocratic. But in the given context, the freedom of tendency inside the general framework of the Revolution is remarkable. Within the concept of one Party of the FLN, the right of tendency exists to a greater degree than in any other recent revolution. It is worth mentioning the general category into which the numerous tendencies can be placed: first, there is the out-and-out bourgeois tendency, which even when paying lip-service to Socialism urges that it be delayed for a long period, which in fact adds up to forever. Within the broad bourgeois tendency exist sub-tendencies, some of whom, such as Ferhat Abbas, represent a genuine bourgeois-democratic tendency desiring a full and real bourgeois democracy on the West European model. One can name many of the members of the National Assembly who seek above all to protect the rights of that Assembly. On the other hand, there are the genuinely bourguibists, authoritarian, semi-feudal to their roots. As well, there exists the bureaucratic tendency, seeking the bureaucratic transformation of the bourgeois state. Of course, here there are many sub-tendencies also. There are the "conscious" bureaucrats; either outright Stalinists or elements who have learnt their politics in the Stalinist school. Next are the more "unconscious" bureaucrats who have learnt through their experience in office that the self-management is something which challenges their absolute authority and which therefore they accuse of giving rise to "disorder", etc. With all these tendencies there is the desire above all to defeat or deform the self-management. The bureaucratic tendency is strongest in the administration and in certain sections of the Party and other non-Governmental organisms. Lastly, there is the left-wing of the Revolution, basing itself above all on the Self-Management committees, and on the need for the dynamic development of the Revolution. One must first of all include here Ben Bella himself. As well, in the very spearhead of the Revolution is the BNASS, which particul-

1727-early over the past week has been leading a determined struggle against the attempts at bureaucratic deformations of the self-management sector. As well, one must include the press, LE PEUPLE and REVOLUTION AFRICAINE, as well as most of the other weeklies and fortnightlies. Throughout the administration and in the activities of the party are to be found many cadres with an understanding of the need for the Revolution to go continually forward, on the basis of self-management by the workers themselves. The ANP (the Army) is above all a basis for the Left wing of the Revolution, especially at the present stage around the question of the Agrarian Reform.

The Algerian Revolution comes to another crucial turning-point. What role do the external factors of the World Revolution as a whole play? First as regards the Workers States in themselves? It is undoubtedly Yugoslavia that plays the most progressive role. Not only in its practical help to the Algerian Revolution, but also in its ideological aid particularly on the question of the self-management committees. It is worth noting that the most regressive elements on this question are the Chinese who deny even that nationalisation under self-management is socialist. For them it must be managed from the top completely in a typical stalinised way. As for the rest of the workers states, Bulgaria gives some aid, while there is presently an economic mission from the Soviet Union travelling throughout the country, the prelude to aid from the Soviet Union.

Ben Bella has stated a number of times that the Algerian Revolution can only progress in the measure in which the African Revolution progresses. The work of the Addis Ababa Conference is of great importance and should be analysed separately. Its major importance besides its sense of African Unity, was the decision to aid in all ways including by arms the revolutionary struggle in South Africa, the Portuguese colonies and the Rhodesias. But this seems to have been somewhat disappointing in that the decision on Angola was to support Holden. It is again necessary to go into some details on this question which is not possible here. Algeria goes along the Socialist road. How far it will go depends on many factors, and the decisions in coming months, particularly on the agrarian reform will be of great importance. It will be a big defeat for the bourgeois and feudal elements. It will make the transition to a workers state a great possibility. What will have to be decided is the form of the workers state. Is it to be a bureaucratically deformed one, or one in which there is to a great extent workers democracy? That will also be decided to a large extent by the form of the agrarian reform. Under the given objective conditions it is almost inevitable that there will be some deformations in the Revolution. What is the duty of the revolutionary left-wing is to limit these deformations, to fight continually for the maintenance and extension of workers democracy. Such a struggle has every hope of success but will only be the result of continuous struggle, not only against the bourgeois tendencies, but also against the bureaucratic ones. It is a struggle that deserves the support of all Socialists, for if the Algerian revolution succeeds to a victory of socialist democracy then it will be a lesson of tremendous import for all Socialists throughout the world.

11th August, 1963

under workers self-management.

La Trappe was at first a Trappist monastery, then at the beginning of this century it was turned into a huge capitalist farm producing some of the most famous wines in Algeria. And now it has gone through a further transformation; for now it is under workers self-management.

On the night of 14th May this year Monsieur Henri Borgeaud slept peacefully enough in his luxurious villa some tens of kilometres outside Algiers. The Algeria his father knew when he took over La Trappe had certainly changed. But he was still the owner of this famously rich 3,000 acre farm. (Well, 4,000 acres actually, but for the taxation office of course, only 3,000) And he intended to stay on. His association with the OAS had been discreet and there was a good chance that the Algerians did not know that he gave freely to their funds and even hid some of their leaders..

But unfortunately for Henri Borgeaud the Algerian government had discovered this last secret. And on that night the Algerian Army had surrounded his farm. He was rudely awakened and removed from his villa, without even being allowed to shave.. the next night he slept in France.

"The gate of Heaven" is inscribed in Latin above the entrance to La Trappe. The Virgin Mary stands guard above the gate. The visitor enters into a courtyard and on the left stands the iron gate that guards the villa. The villa now is empty and is to be preserved as a reminder of how the colons lived. We had a look around the farm, and then went into a small office of the President of the Management Committee. Here, with some other members of the Management Committee we had a discussion.

The day following the expulsion of Borgeaud, Ben Bella and the official of the National Bureau for the Animation of the Socialist Sector (the BNASS) came to La Trappe. Under the presidency of Ben Bella the workers on the farm elected a Workers Council of 33 members. This Workers Council in turn elected a Management Committee of 9 members. Unanimously elected Ouali Djilali as President of their Committee. There was one woman elected on the Workers Council and one on the Management Committee. She was also present when we spoke with the President of the Management Committee.

The farm we were told, employs over 700 workers on a permanent basis and many seasonal workers. The Workers Council and the Management Committee had both met several times and had had full responsibility for the management of the farm since May, and for instance, had been responsible for the harvest that was still proceeding. We were keen to hear about how they managed such an undertaking after all the French technicians, foremen etc., had

left with Borgeaud. The answer we got was very simple. "We have had no technicians coming in to take their place. The workers who have worked here, in some case for over forty years, know much more than some young college graduate. They advise us about the whole process of wine-making, and tell us which wines must be sold quickly and which we may keep for some time."

For the sale of the wines, those that are sold overseas are handled by the State, and the proceeds are handed back to the Management Committee in the form of credits. As for the sale of wines inside Algeria, they receive offers and then the Management Committee discusses the offers and votes on them.

And how was the harvest this year? Proudly we were told that it was double that of last year. Of course, it has been a good year along most of the Mediterranean, but it is equally true that the workers' management committee has managed the affairs exceedingly well. Another factor also enters into the good harvest...the enthusiasm of the workers. "We all work very well and hard", said Ouali Djilali. "If I leave, everything will collapse", said Borgeaud as he was hustled out on that May dawn. Well, the workers have proved him more than wrong.

One could sense a dogged determination to prove Borgeaud absolutely wrong. When we asked about wages for instance, the President of the Management Committee replied: "We give each worker an advance per week, and then at the end of the year we will divide up the profits after the Government has taken its share, deciding what each worker shall receive. But we are not looking for benefits", he continued, "but to double production, to show what can be done by self-management by the workers. We have enough to eat and drink, we don't want to be millionaires. We live here in a very privileged area. We want to help our brothers in the mountains. We want to help other management committees who do not make enough money, and who have difficulties."

Other things confirmed that the workers here were better off without their boss. Borgeaud tried to sabotage certain crops when he thought he would have to withdraw. He failed to invest in new stock and machinery. The management committee decided to do so. The wines are tended with loving care, as never before.

If the workers of Bouchaoui Amar do not want to be millionaires, they have taken their rights to a decent living standard. Before Borgeaud left, they lived in miserable huts without any facilities whatsoever. So, when the French technicians left and vacated small villas with about 10 rooms, the workers moved in. The wives had for the first time, gas, a decent bed, and a table to eat from.

We asked about the seasonal workers who are quite a considerable group. We were told that they were housed in dormitories (as they come without families) and are paid at exactly the same

1730 rate as the ordinary permanent workers on the farm. Even sometimes, when they have large travelling bills the Management Committee decides to help them out financially.

For the estate Borgeaud ran his own shop.. He paid his workers in "Borgeaud money", specially manufactured light coins, which could only be used in his own shops. Such was the modern form of feudalism invented by Borgeaud. Now the shop is run by the workers themselves with the goods for sale at very reasonable prices.

We asked next about health and educational facilities. "A doctor and nurse visit us twice a week and are always available by phone at any time. We have a dispensary on the farm." And as for the school,.. "We have four forms here, while those children we cannot fit in for the moment go to a nearby village school. We have a car which takes them to the school each day and picks them up. They eat at the school at lunchtime. As well, there is an evening school run in the framework of the Campaign against Illiteracy, where a young worker here teaches adult workers to read and write in Arabic" One of the visitors with me asked about facilities for looking after the children of the women who work. "Not yet", was the reply, which recalled to us that this had all been done in a few months.

The Borgeaud estate bordered the sea. He had his own private beaches, one of which was the base for a very exclusive French club. Now they are run by the Workers Committee for the general public, who pay a parking fee for their cars. There are some large wooded areas on the farm. In these there was at the same time of our visit a group of scouts encamped, who work on the estate in the morning, and then in the afternoon swim and relax. They have come from all over Algeria.

The Bouchaoui Amar farm is certainly a "model" farm, a pilot experience, as it has been called. Others do not work as well, and have not such an excellent team to lead the work as here. There are many who seek to destroy the workers committees. These are not only the Borgeauds or their Algerian equivalents. Often there are those little bureaucrats who detest the sight of workers managing their own affairs. That is the other lesson of the La Trappe experience. Not only do the workers not need the capitalist boss, but they do not need the dominating all-powerful little bureaucrats either.

Brother Mammeri Moussa, Director of the Bouchaoui Amar farm could not have agreed more. Fulfilling strictly the functions laid down for him in the Decrees of March, 1963, he works in close co-operation with the Management Committee, carrying out the plans made by them, helping them with his expert technical knowledge. But at La Trappe the danger of the bureaucratic interference comes from outside. "We are very friendly with our friends, and very hostile to our enemies", said Ouali Djilali.

And lately the S A P has been an "enemy". The SAP was an agency established by the French for agricultural aid, of course, to private French farmers. It is still staffed with many of the former French staff, as well as by new Algerian staff. However it still appears to maintain many of the old colonialist tendencies. THE VOICE OF SOCIALIST ALGERIA, the daily broadcast of the BNASS has recently exposed some of the methods of the SAP. The SAP has been charging the Management Committees an exorbitant rate for petrol. The President of the Bouchaoui Amar estate claimed that they used the tractors, harvesters, etc., that they should have hired to the Management Committee, as a means of pressure. We should like to be able to buy the machines ourselves", the President of the Management Committee stated.

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Many times the cry of "the need for efficiency" goes up from the opponents of the Management Committees. In public they are very careful to speak in riddles, and not to openly attack the Self-management. Ferhat Abbas, in his statement of resignation as President of the National Assembly of August 14th, spoke of those "who do not fail to experiment, to the detriment of the national interest, with the most fantastic theories". While the ALGER REPUBLICAIN in an article by Abdelhamid Benzine, a leading former member of the Algerian Communist Party, wrote on Aug. 15th, "To be a revolutionary it is to be efficient..." But on this very question of efficiency it is a lesson that we must stress, that the resources opened up by giving the workers themselves the management of the farms and factories is immense. There is often nothing more inefficient than a petty bureaucrat ruling all-powerful over a factory or farm.

Another danger that has arisen is the intervention by various bodies in the democratic election to the Council and Committees. Often, varying pressures are brought to bear by some organisation or department to have appointed their own team, with farcial elections. This had often occurred, and it was necessary to have a Campaign for the democratisation of the election of these committees. But the problem remains and will continue to remain while there is illiteracy, low living standards and in part a lack of full consciousness in the masses.

The Management Committees in farm and factory do not cover the majority of the economy. In agriculture they cover 1 M. acres, but often of the best land. There are over 600 small industrial enterprises taken over, as well as over 100 cinemas, etc. under self-management. What is of importance and which will determine the future of self-management to a large extent is the complete land reform, of all properties above those needed to keep one family at a decent living standard. Both Algerian and French will be effected. If, as has been put forward in REVOLUTION AFRICAINE all the modern sector is put under self-management (some 7 M. acres) while some other 2 M. acres is under "producers co-operatives", the future is bright. If however it is a bureaucratic reform; then self-management is very much weakened, and in danger either of outright destruction or bureaucratic deformation.

As we drove out through the "Gate of Heaven" there could be little doubt about the success of this farm. We could only hope that its example would spread throughout the country and become the key motor force of the Algerian Revolution.

15th August, 1963