

Youth Revolt: Fresh Wind Hits Algeria

Statement by the Committee of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement

Stable, "non-aligned," "independent," "oil-rich" Algeria has exploded in the face of the imperialists and their local rulers, rebelliously announcing the end of the relative resignation to the compradors in power, who for too long have passed off their rule as "socialist" and "revolutionary." This powerful eruption by Algerian youth who took to the streets with stones and homemade torches setting ablaze all that symbolised the state machinery and private wealth is a refreshing and welcome sight. Indeed, although this was the outpouring of rage of youth with an empty future, it has posed much bigger questions challenging the social order and the future overall. Just as it also stirred the aspirations of hundreds of thousands of Algerians living abroad who spontaneously demonstrated their support, the imperialists from Paris to Washington and their lackeys throughout North Africa reacted with telling dread and apprehension, jolted that anything could go astray in "model" Algeria.

Significantly, as the youth in the poor neighborhoods of Algiers targeted Chadli Bendjedid's government and party offices, town halls, state-run stores, police stations (and their records) as well as luxury hotels, nightclubs and travel agencies, the rebellion spread quickly to other cities and towns. And Chadli's forces of repression snapped out their answer with all the confidence of a regime indeed taken by the throat; declaring a state of siege, the army occupied the streets they could enter with tanks, filled the sky with helicopters armed with rockets to intimidate the masses from assembling, and in the space of a short week, gunned down cold-bloodedly some 500 youth and arrested over 3000.

For not only has the regime's naked reliance on terror been brutally exposed to all, but the ugly helpless face of a neo-colonial, dependent state — *very* unstable and *very* aligned to western imperialism has been abruptly unmasked in the first major revolt shaking Algeria since the war of liberation fought against the French three decades ago. The uprising has helped to reveal the true nature of these post-"independence" leaders who have parasitically plundered the Algerian masses on behalf of imperialist interests, particularly French imperialism, in the name of their credentials in this heroic war waged by the masses of Algerians against French colonialism.

The Algerian war of national liberation led by the FLN (Front de Liberation Nationale) represented a sound defeat for French troops and forced the withdrawal of the colonial administration, shattering the notion that a smaller dominated country could not defeat an advanced imperialist one. However because this war was not led by the proletariat, it could not achieve its true goal of national liberation, and the bourgeois leadership of the FLN betrayed the cause of the war and the Algerian people. The *Declaration of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement* has summed up bitter experiences such as the aborted Algerian revolution: "While such revolutionary formations have led heroic struggles and even delivered powerful blows to the imperialists they have been proven to be ideologically and organisationally incapable of resisting imperialist and bourgeois influences. Even where such forces have seized power, they have been incapable of carrying through a thorough-going revolutionary transformation of society and end up, sooner

or later, being overthrown by the imperialists or themselves becoming a new reactionary ruling power in league with the imperialists.”

The Algerian government neither completely broke with reaction and imperialism nor was able to develop a self-reliant economy. Instead it has remained in the protective strangling tentacles of the western imperialists, especially France and the U.S., and this is the root cause of all the grievances being righteously brought to the world's attention today.

An oil-dependent economy has brought increasing chaos and disequilibrium in nearly every sector with growing hardships to the masses that are reflected in inflation, water and food shortages, tremendous rises in prices and unemployment, particularly among poor youth (and even more specifically among those who could not or did not want to escape to France to find jobs) which has climbed to over 40% in some of the main cities. Coupled with widespread corruption, the building up of a small but fat and pretentious urban bourgeoisie underneath the regime, pseudo-revolutionary talk that in practice amounted to few means of political expression and other anticipated semblances of bourgeois democracy, these and other factors have all nourished the present crisis and the revolt by the youth, which was clearly a long time in the making. They are the expression of the painful reality that far from being liberated, the masses still must resolve the question of political power. And the *only* way not to repeat the farce by the bourgeois betrayers of the first courageous war of the Algerian people is to launch a people's war to make new democratic revolution under the leadership of the proletariat which ousts and *completely* ruptures with imperialism, reaction and all remnants of the old society. For this to be successful it must be led by a revolutionary headquarters based on the science and ideology of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought, which the Algerian revolution has never had. No representatives of the exploiting and oppressing classes of any hue or disguised in any militant-sounding rhetoric — whether nationalist or Islamic — can take its place.

The current revolt has served to disfigure the false progressive image of a non-aligned state which some advocates of the three-worlds theory count among their victories. And if the masses have paid heavily to learn that Chadli's Russian-trained murdering troops are not only not fighting on behalf of the people but now guard the fort for the West, let us not be falsely led by those illusions either the second time. It should furthermore be no surprise that the popular spontaneous sentiment for pluralism and (bourgeois) democracy is echoed in the citadels of Europe (where Chadli's "excesses" have been mildly criticised, but his firmness in handling the situation clearly upheld) because this solution too, a facelift of a few political reforms including *multiple* bourgeois parties instead of one, enables them to maintain their same oppressor's grip on Algeria while the *oppressed* masses have the right to continue to be exploited and silent with the neo-colonial army at the ready if they should decide to "speak."

The revolt of the Algerian youth is a fine thing, breaking through the stale silence of the past with a new and defiant language that the oppressors hate. It provides a new and excellent opportunity for those rebels to pick up the weapon to finally liberate Algerian society from imperialism and reaction — the science of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought. The enemies are preparing too. Take note of Yasser Arafat's phone call to Algiers to make sure "everything is under control." Those worried neighbors of the Algerian ruling class, the Arab compradors who have come running to Chadli's support, from King Hassan II in Morocco to Tunisia's Ben Ali, to Khadafi in Libya are very aware of the dangers of such a spark in the dry kindling of the Maghreb. If the rebellion has temporarily subsided in Algeria, the underlying combustion has certainly not, and chances are it will ignite again.

Let the Flames of the Algerian Rebellion Spread!
Down with Imperialism and the Reactionary Comprador Regime of Algeria!
Step up the Struggle for Revolution around the World!
Long Live Proletarian Internationalism!



Rocking the Algerian Casbahs

The first week of October the shortages of bread, grain and water grew unbearable. On October 4th, after a week of strikes and overabundance of police and army in the streets to restore order, the "Casbahs," the poor proletarian neighborhoods of Algiers, began to burn, spreading by the next day to similar areas in and around the capital city. Dozens of youth began to fall under army fire and quickly this attempt to repress the youth boomeranged: fighting with whatever was at hand and taunting the tanks and soldiers, the revolt swept throughout the country to all the major towns of Algeria, including the minority nationality Kabyle area. Before President Chadli Benjedid called his dogs off, he had filled the prisons with thousands of youth and killed several hundred in cold blood. Hardly a "zionist plot" as some of the Arab states called it, the rebellion was aimed right at the Algerian ruling class.

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Banks are target for Algerian youth.

One youth testified about how during the riots the Algerian army used torture, which they had learned from the French 30 years ago: I almost lost my life here as another victim of the Algerian paratroopers, 100 feet from where the French paras shot down my father. The Algerian War of Independence, launched in November 1955, raged until 1962 when the French imperialists lost administrative and military hold of their bitterly fought-over North African colony, a war in which nearly one million Algerians were killed.

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At the swank complex in Riad-el Fath (Garden of Victory, presumably over French colonialism), which offers bars, cabarets, luxurious boutiques, western restaurants, audiovisual and dance studios to a privileged urban few, a bottle of scotch sells for 2500 dinars.

For the under 20-year olds, who represent more than 60% of the 24 million population and the majority of whom line the walls with nothing to do all day long, it was amongst their first targets as they sacked the main street of Algiers. In a country where 95% of the export revenue comes from oil and gas — whose reserves are dwindling and thus setting off some alarms — the GNP is over \$2000 a year, but this relative prosperity has lined the wallets of a new small bourgeoisie while increasing immiseration even for basic foodstuffs is reserved for the masses. Two-thirds of the food is imported and before the riots meat and vegetable prices were sky high; the staple grain of the daily diet, semolina, had disappeared from the markets altogether. In the countryside, sharp water shortages brought production almost to a standstill.

