

The "creative alternative" of the non-aligned movement

by C. V. Svoboda

In an earlier article in this journal concluded with the observation that the non-aligned grouping was, and probably would remain, "large unwieldy body that will take few practical or economic decisions" but that it would also, since it had with the passage of time developed a "curious life of its own... probably... continue to exist". The latter forecast has, during 1974 and 1975, proved its fundamental soundness; whether the earlier conclusion will bear the scrutiny of time remains, essentially, as open as before.

The conception of a non-aligned group arose in the 1950s as a reaction by certain states to the bipolar world that emerged out of the Second World War. The basic common factor shared by the states that met at the first conference at Bandung was a desire to remain separate from "European quarrels". This desire to free themselves of European influences extended beyond a mere urge to rest aloof from European antagonisms; it included a desire to further the development of the "Third World" and the exploration of solutions to problems shared by non-European countries. During the 1960s, as bipolarization became less important, the members of the movement became increasingly preoccupied with economic and social concerns.

The reorientation of the non-aligned movement came to full flower at the Algiers summit meeting in August 1973. Under Algerian guidance, the conference demonstrated a greater degree of non-aligned cohesiveness than ever before. There was little debate over the identification of problem areas such as racism, development, imperialism, and peace and security. Rather, the emphasis was on the preparation and elaboration of common positions.

The Sixth Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly, called at the request of the then evident leader of the non-aligned movement, Algeria, saw the first solid manifestation of the "Spirit of Algiers" in the UN context. In practical terms, this reflected, in a political

dimension, many of the economic aspirations of the Third World earlier seen in the contexts of the UNCTAD forum, the Second Development Decade Preparatory Commission and the energetic and continuing debates of the General Assembly's Second Economic Committee, where the Group of 77, the economic incarnation of the Third World, focused its collective energies for many years.

Until relatively recently, the non-aligned lacked any formal cohesiveness either in terms of bureaucratic structure or ideology. As a result, the movement tended to suffer an absence of focus and had to endure serious internal communication problems that perhaps only now are being faced squarely. This has meant that there are few sources from which the interested outsider can gather material on the movement; indeed, the tendency of many writers on international development and the policies of developed/developing country relations has been to limit their analyses to the regional level except as regards specific common economic problems.

There is a natural tendency to associate the non-aligned nations with the underdeveloped nations, or so-called Third World. Indeed, it is often assumed that the two coincide. In fact, they do not,

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