Role to play for the nonaligned despite group's unwieldy natu

Post-Algiers assessment

By Godfrey Morrison

The 1973 Middle East War may have curtailed motoring in Western Europe, worsened the energy crisis in North America and made more likely a recession in international trade in 1974, but it did have its beneficiaries. Perhaps the most unlikely of these was that vague group of nations, or "movement", many of whose members had started to despair – nonalignment.

When the kings, presidents and other delegates from more than 70 countries trooped wearily away from the fourth summit meeting of nonaligned nations in Algiers last September, few actually expected that much in the way of practical results would follow from their deliberations. Certainly, few expected that many nonaligned states would act on the conference's call that member states should take individual and collective political and economic measures against Israel.

Yet, a few weeks later, when fighting between Israel and the Arabs started once again, almost all the states of black Africa severed diplomatic relations with Israel. Not that this series of decisions was solely the result of post-Algiers nonaligned solidarity – far from it. Other factors, such as a growing feeling that Israel was no longer searching as earnestly as it should for a peaceful settlement with the Arabs (not to mention the blandishments of Libyan President Muammar Gaddafi's chequebook), played their part. But the fact that the Africans had acted as they did suggested at least a certain degree of Third World solidarity. Events that followed suggest that this solidarity, which am to little more than a vague feeli shared powerlessness in the face superpowers and the industrialized tries, is a factor that will play an in ing role in international politics the next few years.

Riddled with contradictions

In severely logical terms, the nona movement as currently constitut riddled with contradictions. It is durally cumbersome, has little ideo "cement", and, at its last summit me failed to carry out the agenda and gram it had set itself.

It has been suggested that, w political movement tries to define precisely, the very attempt is a sign the organization is dying. This m may not be true, but what is cert that to try to define a movemen closely can sometimes kill it – or at impair its effectiveness. At Algiers were suggestions that nonalignment s be provided, like the United Nation the Organization of African Unity, a charter and that its aims, qualific for membership and so on should b cisely defined.

That this suggestion was not lowed up was owing partly to the di ties involved, partly to lack of time partly to the realization, by at least of the delegations, that the attem seriously embarked upon, would brea the grouping. Nonalignment's curre stitutional difficulties are, paradoxi very largely the result of the move success in attracting adherents. A first summit meeting, in Belgrade in there were only 24 members, but thanks largely to the flood of Africa tions gaining independence in the there are more than 70.

Ideologically and strategically t mate is very different. Nonalignmen its first conference at the height of th War, when it was clear that even a miscalculation by NATO or the W

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