

UCLA

Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies

Title

Algeria: Ten Years of Independence

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5375572f>

Journal

Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies, 3(2)

ISSN

0041-5715

Author

Gallagher, Nancy

Publication Date

1972

DOI

10.5070/F732018288

Copyright Information

Copyright 1972 by the author(s). All rights reserved unless otherwise indicated. Contact the author(s) for any necessary permissions. Learn more at <https://escholarship.org/terms>

Peer reviewed

Algeria:

Ten Years of Independence

"The Algerian people, by taking the situation into their hands, and by persistently affirming their will to struggle, consciously or unconsciously have tied this will to struggle to the historical necessity to conquer and untiringly promote every aspect of progress in its most efficient revolutionary form."

- The Tripoli Program, June, 1962

During the week of July 2-8, 1972, Algeria celebrated ten years of independence. There were feasts, speeches, expositions and parades. Meriam Makeba recorded her first song in Arabic for the occasion. Not a single Head of State was invited; the festivities were to be by and for the people. In the smaller cities of the South, troops of musicians performed and there was *cous-cous* for all to eat.

An air of purposefulness pervaded the atmosphere. The preceding ten years had not been easy. Political, economic and social unrest had followed the years of bitter warfare. The FLN (National Liberation Front) had been weakened by internecine conflict; agricultural and industrial production rates fell while unemployment rates rose. In 1965, the austere and reserved Houarie Boumediene and the army officers of the Council of the Revolution replaced the more colorful government of Ahmad Ben Bella. Reports by such observers as Arslan Humbaraci (*Algeria, A Revolution that Failed*, 1966), seemed dismal indeed.¹

However, in 1972, Boumediene was proclaiming Algeria to be on the road out of "underdevelopment." An extensive program of industrialization, i.e., the Four Year Plan, was underway. Visitors to Algeria were impressed with the air of vitality as compared to earlier years. Government speeches centered around the three major programs of reform: industrialization, the Agrarian revolution, and Arabization (sometimes called the "Cultural Revolution").²

Industrialization

For many, the celebrations had a double cause as Algeria had the previous year concluded trade agreements

with France which had resulted in complete ownership of the oil industry. The exploitation of oil is transforming the coastline of Algeria as refineries, pipelines and ports are built. Oil revenues are expected to finance much of the Four Year Plan. Skida, Oran and Annaba are to be the new industrial centers, in addition to Constantine and Algiers. In Skida, Japanese and Italian engineers are building a large ethelene plant. Refineries which liquify gas and oil are also being constructed. Eight million tons per year of crude naphtha can now be exported. Heavy industry is being centered in Annaba. The steel factory has been vastly expanded. In 1968, 700 men were employed in it. By 1972, this figure had swelled to 5,500 and official estimates call for more than 10,000 by 1980.³

The Agrarian Revolution

The basis of the Algerian economy is agriculture, and a new program of agricultural development is being planned. The Four Year Plan for agrarian reform is as important as industrialization; the government expects that the development of the two sectors of the economy will be interrelated and interdependent. While the new plan has not been officially instigated, significant reforms are being made. Civil servants and members of the liberal professions are responding to campaign appeals and are donating their land to the state for redistribution to landless peasants. The government distributed seven million acres of land during the week of celebration.⁴ Self-management (*autogestion*) and collectivization are being extended into the traditional sector. During the summer, student volunteers went into the countryside to explain the new program to the peasantry. Grants have been made available to villagers who wish to rebuild their homes. This year, an exceptionally successful harvest is being brought in. The coincidence of the bumper crop and the new reform program will aid the cause of the Agrarian Revolution.

Arabization

One of the most frustrating and controversial legacies left by 130 years of French colonization is the cultural influence of French civilization.⁵ Most of the intelligentsia had been educated in the French system. Many scarcely knew Arabic. The Egyptian National Assembly was shocked to hear Ben Bella proclaim, in his first address: "*nous sommes arabes, arabes, arabes!*" It

only needs to be pointed out here that the linguistic problem (French and Arabic) has always been a major conflict of the two cultures. Boumediene had tried to foster Arabic and Islamic cultural values; the theme of conflict between North African and European values and the desire to modernize while maintaining an Arabo-Islamic personality had preoccupied intellectual thought.⁵ Algeria finds itself to be Mediterranean, Middle Eastern and Africa, all at once.

A major aspect of the "Cultural Revolution" is in education. Thousands of schools have been opened and nearly every village has its own school. A "Campaign for Literacy," for people of all ages, is being conducted throughout Algeria. The once dual systems of French and Arabic education have been unified, with a knowledge of both languages required.⁶ Arabic is being extended into the university levels and history, geography, sociology, psychology and most of the natural sciences are now taught in Arabic.

Algerian planners make no attempt to diminish the magnitude of the tasks they have set before the nation. They have a largely rural population, high unemployment and a very short history of national unity. The government has not been able to provide a national assembly or an elected president or prime minister. Boumediene generally avoids the discussions of socialist ideology which were prevalent in earlier years. Algeria continues to provide aid, however, to revolutionary, anti-colonialist movements, particularly on the African continent. Most of these groups have offices in Algiers and their statements of solidarity were included in the texts of the ceremonies.⁷

After the devastating War of Independence, the Algerian people have embarked upon a progressive but difficult course, which calls for economic austerity in the interests of the future course of the nation. The forced removal of French Colonialism (1962) freed Algeria to develop in her own historical terms. Ten years later, in 1972, we witness progressive measures on the agenda as goals in the continuing process of the Algerian Revolution.

As the editor of *Algerie-Actualite*, Youcef Ferhi, stated:

*Today, we must struggle against ourselves in order to enlighten this nation which remains an example in the fight for liberation and which will be tomorrow an example of the fight for economic development which will liberate the people and give a sense to life.*⁸

Footnotes

1. Humbaraci, Arslan. *Algeria: A Revolution that Failed*, Pall Mall Pub., London, 1966. See also: Chaliand, Gerard. *Algerie, Est-il Socialiste*, Paris, 1964.
2. *ash-sha'b ath-thaqafi. adh-dhikra l-'ashira li-l-istiqlal*, by al-ibrahimi, vol. 2, July 5, 1972, supplement, p. 3.
3. *The Guardian Weekly*, with *Le Monde*, vol. 107, no. 4, July 22, 1972, p. 13.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
5. *L'Action (Tunis)*, no. 4, April 22, 1972, supplement, p. iv.
6. *Algerie-Actualite*, no. 350, July 2-8, 1972, pp. 19-20.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

U.C.L.A.

- by Nancy E. Gallagher