

Book Reviews

The Call from Algeria: Third Worldism, Revolution and the Turn to Islam

By Robert Malley. Berkeley: University of California Press, 323 pp.

The main theme of the book is the study of how "Third Worldism"—as a school of thought—was born and developed, how it reached its apogee in the mid-1970s, and how it disappeared from the international scene in the 1980s, leaving in its place new trends such as liberalization, democratization, and Islamism. The author demonstrates his thesis through an examination of Algeria. Robert Malley explains his choice of Algeria for this case study by saying that Algeria is one of the "principal surrogates of Third Worldism," adding that "understanding Algeria's contemporary history is a good way to understand what has happened to the formerly progressive Third World." This led the author to divide his book into three parts.

Part 1, "Gestation," is itself subdivided into two chapters. Chapter 1, "When South Met North," shows how Third Worldism was born through a process of dialogue/conflict between the North and the South. Chapter 2, "The Origins of Algerian Third Worldism," demonstrates how Third World ideas were born and developed in Algeria, starting from the Ottoman era, through the colonial period and the war for Algerian independence up to its apogee in the mid-1970s. In particular, he emphasizes the roles played by such Algerian personalities as Messali Hadj, the Emir Khaled, Ferhat Abbas, and Ibn Badis, in promoting the ideas of freedom, equality, solidarity, and justice, which have been the founding principles of Third Worldism. The author also shows the role that Islam has always played in Third Worldist Algeria, notably through what has been called "Socialist Islam."

Part 2, "Apogee," includes two chapters. In chapter 1 (the third chapter), "The Making of a World," the author starts with the concept of Third World (*Tiers Monde*) as used for the first time in 1952 by French economist Alfred Sauvy, in relation to the "Tiers-Etats" which played an important role in the French Revolution in 1789. Then, the author recalls the authentic founding event of Third Worldism—the Bandung Conference of 1955. At the conference, twenty-nine Afro-Asian "heads of states, including the Algerian FLN, representing 1,300 million people," met to promote a collective self-reliance strategy within Third World countries; curiously enough, at the end of it, a resolution was adopted calling for the independence of Algeria. The apogee of Third Worldism, the author recalls, was reached in 1974 when the U.N. General Assembly launched its Sixth Special Session on Raw Materials and Development and called—under the initiative of Algeria—for a New International Economic Order (NIEO) based on the principles of equity, sovereignty, equality, interdependence, common interest, and cooperation among all states, irrespective of the economic and social systems.

In part 2, chapter 2 (the book's fourth chapter), "Algeria in the Age of Third Worldism," the author attempts to show that, while Algeria developed a strong Third Worldist strategy in the 1970s, it has neglected the domestic sphere, at least on the political side. On the international front, Algeria "carried forward two central objectives: multiply political, economic, diplomatic, and cultural exchanges between countries of the Third World in order to unite them around a set of coherent propositions, and gradually move these propositions in the direction of an all-out assault on the existing economic world order." On the domestic side, the FLN, which played a crucial role during the war for independence, "had to avoid day-to-day administrative tasks," a fact that "reduced [it] to the status of symbolic leader," that is also "political impotence."

In part 3 (composed of chapters 5 and 6), "The Demise," the author analyzes the death of Third Worldism and the rise of new trends such as liberalization, democratization, and fundamentalism (or as the author prefers to call it, Islamism). Chapter 5, "A Farewell to Utopia," demonstrates the collapse of Third Worldism in the economic as well as in the political fields. Economically, "Third Worldist strategies had fallen depressively short of satisfying basic human needs, let alone sustaining solid growth levels, achieving self-sufficiency, or putting an end to inequality." In particular, the accumulation of debts and the drying up of international financial flows pushed Third World countries to "accept painful prescriptions of the international financial institutions" and turned to more individualistic strategies of development, giving up the strategies of collective self-reliance that were once a hallmark of Third Worldism. Politically, the situation is characterized by increasing conflicts between and within Third World countries, a continuing struggle to seize and/or to keep power, a continuing imitation of Western cultural ways of life, a deepening separation between states and societies, and the emergence of countersocieties such as the Islamist movements. The author concludes this chapter by stating: "The sad irony of it being that Third Worldism is a victim of those very conditions—dependency, material and cultural inequality, poverty—out of which it originally had grown." The last chapter, "Turning to Islam" is an attempt to analyze why Islam, or rather Islamism, is experiencing a revival, a kind of renaissance, in Algeria in the 1990s. The reasons given by the author for this resurgence are, among others: absence of democracy; the legitimization of Islam as a religion of the state and its use both against the leftist movement and the Islamist groups; deteriorating socioeconomic conditions; and the cultural and ethnic policies implemented, including the linguistic question. As the author puts it: "What planted radical Islamism firmly in the core of oppositional politics by the early 1990s was the encounter between religion and social discontent. The conjunction of the two lent to the former a power base and to the latter a channel of communication as well as a voice that was relatively unrestrained."

The author ends his study with a chapter titled "Afterthoughts" in which he makes the following two challenging remarks: first, it is not certain that the new trends of liberalization, democratization, and Islamization will do any better than the polarization and marginalization that have led to the death of Third Worldism; second, the gap between the poor and the rich at various levels—domestically and internationally, and materially and culturally—is widening more and more in the Third World.

Clearly, Robert Malley's book will interest not only those concerned with the current history of Algeria but also all those interested in the economic, political, historical, cultural, and religious fate of the Third World. Also, the reader will

particularly benefit from an extensive bibliography which draws from Algerian, French, and American sources and from the social sciences of economics, political science, and history.

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