

## Renewed Solidarity In North Africa

Early this month Tunisia's President Habib Bourguiba accepted Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi's offer to shelve an ongoing water rights dispute in the interest of inter-Arab unity, thus defusing a point of confrontation between the two countries. Within one week of this show of good will, Tunisia announced to Algeria, its neighbor to the west, that it was reconsidering the heretofore moribund Algerian proposal to build a gas pipeline via Tunisia to Italy.

Behind this renewed North African solidarity is the emerging European-Soviet-Arab axis, which is currently formulating a Mediterranean economic development program, the only viable solution to the Middle East war danger. Prior to the Belgrade Conference on European Security and Cooperation, Tunisian Foreign Minister Habib Chatti issued a joint statement with Czech Foreign Minister Chnoupek calling for "new impulses for new and closer cooperation chiefly in the political sphere."

### *Euro-Arab Diplomacy*

The ongoing feud between Tunisia and Libya, over ownership of the oil rich Gulf of Gabès region, erupted May 29, when a Tunisian naval vessel was deployed to the contested waters in order to demand the departure of an American-owned drilling rig in the employ of the Libyan government. The intervention of Arab League President Mahmoud Ryad, who met with Tunisian and Libyan Foreign Ministers on June 10, was a diplomatic success. Both parties agreed to refer the dispute to the International Court of Settlements at the Hague. Libya's Qaddafi reported that the Tunisian-Libyan dispute was no longer a problem. "In the interests of pan-Arab unity, the only solution to the problem is for Tunisia to unite with Libya. In that way, both countries can exploit the oil resources together."

The idea of a Tunisian-Libyan union was originally floated in 1974, when Tunisian Prime Minister

Mohammed Masmoudi authored the deal with the full backing of Libya's Qaddafi. Through the influence of the current Tunisian Prime Minister, Hedi Nouira, Bourguiba rejected the idea of union and Masmoudi was forced to leave the country in a classic power struggle. The authoritative London weekly *Arabia and the Gulf* has recently hinted that a rapprochement is in the making between Masmoudi, now living in exile in Paris, and Tunisia's Bourguiba.

The solution to the Gulf of Gabès dispute is apparently the key to the ongoing Algerian-Tunisian squabble. According to the June 14 issue of the *Journal of Commerce*, "There is some possibility that Tunisia's refusal on the Algerian pipeline may be tied to the offshore dispute with Libya."

The disputed gas pipeline was originally planned to cross Tunisian territory before taking to sea on its way to Italy. This billion dollar project would help to solve some of Italy's nagging energy problems. The Algerian-Tunisian dispute was apparently one of the main topics of discussion when Libya's Prime Minister Jalloud visited Italy in mid-May. Libya was asked to clean up its own dispute with Tunisia in order that the Algerian project could be renegotiated.

### *Algerian Stupidity*

According to a spokesman for the Palestinian Liberation Organization, the remaining problem in Tuniso-Algerian relations remains Algeria's stubborn commitment to harbor and support the Polisario Liberation Movement, a synthetic guerrilla band demanding independence for the Spanish Sahara. By championing the Polisario, Algeria's role in the emerging Euro-Arab-Soviet axis is severely weakened, slowing the motion toward a Mediterranean peace agreement. So far, Tunisia has ignored the Spanish Sahara issue, which has pushed its staunch ally Morocco toward the brink of war with Algeria.

## Brzezinski Cocks Djibouti Trigger Against USSR

Zbigniew Brzezinski's National Security Council has started the countdown to a shooting war between the littoral states of the Red Sea on the Horn of Africa, a countdown scheduled for ignition with the June 27 independence of the French colony and naval base of Djibouti, at the mouth of the Sea.

Djibouti contains the route to the sea of Ethiopia's only railroad, regularly blown up by the NSC's African counter gangs, but also part of the territorial claims of neighboring Somalia, whose traditional territory was carved up between Britain, Italy, France and the Ethiopian Empire during the colonial period.

The bloody destabilization of Ethiopia and Somalia over this issue is intended as a black eye for the Soviet Union which has close relations with both countries. Other African countries depending on the Soviets for economic and military support and who might otherwise be wide open to Wall Street's economic blackmail, are then expected to back away from the USSR.

In the face of panic from the inexperienced Ethiopian regime and pressure from ultra-nationalists in his own country, Somalia's socialist president, Mohammed Siad Barre is trying to counter this war scenario with a proposal for a "united anti-imperialist front" between