

Rise of Third World and Decline of Hegemonism

massline.org/PekingReview/PR1975/PR1975-02a.htm

[This article is reprinted from Peking Review, #2, January 10, 1975, pp. 6-8.]

THE people of the Third World scored successive victories in their sustained, vigorous offensive in 1974 against imperialism, colonialism and hegemonism. The course of the struggle last year showed that the people of the Third World are the main force combating imperialism, colonialism and hegemonism, the motive force of revolution propelling history forward.

The imperialist powers previously divided the world among themselves, and world affairs were once forcibly decided by a few colonial empires. Today, the two hegemonic powers, the Soviet Union and the United States, are locked in a fierce battle to redivide the world. But the days when power politics held complete sway are done for ever. The present-day world is neither one where the two hegemonic powers decide everything, nor a "multipolar world." The Third World has now entered the international arena and is playing an increasingly important role.

The Third World's anti-imperialist and anti-hegemonist struggle in the past year has brought to the surface a number of fundamental problems in international relations that once were distorted or covered up:

In international relations, should the strong bully the weak and the big oppress the small, or should all countries, big or small, be equal? Today, despite the two hegemonic powers' dream of maintaining the old international order under their hegemony, the Third World countries' resolve to master their own destiny has become an irreversible trend. A case in point is Middle East developments. The "no war, no peace" situation painstakingly created by the two overlords in their own interests was upset by the Arab people in the 1973 October War. Last year both again set new traps in the Middle East. The U.S. Secretary of State made seven visits to the region with the intention of bypassing the Soviet Union and manipulating the Middle East problem through a U.S.-designed "phased solution." The Soviet Union, eager to intervene, pressed for holding a "Geneva peace conference" which would give it a voice in any settlement. But the Arab people want to take their own road—fight to the end in closer unity to recover their lost territories and regain the Palestinian people's national rights. This determination found expression at the Arab summit in Rabat.

As in the past, the superpowers always want to continue to dictate the internal affairs of the Third World. According to their logic, the medium-sized and small countries cannot exist on their own without "protection" from them. If one superpower does not

provide the "protection," the other will have to "fill the vacuum." Hence the proposals for things like systems and blocs with all sorts of superpower tags, such as the "Asian collective security system" designed for the Asians by Moscow, the "Western Hemisphere community" designed by Washington for the Latin Americans. But the Third World is not interested in such items because it wants to follow its own road. At the Inter-American Foreign Ministers' Meeting in February 1974, Latin American representatives rejected the U.S. proposal for a "Western Hemisphere community." The Asian countries, too, stood up to Soviet revisionist pressures and turned down the "Asian collective security system." To run their own affairs, the Asian, African and Latin American countries have set up or reinforced many regional organizations excluding the two overlords, and transformed some others formerly dominated by the big powers.

Who is to play the leading role in various international conferences and organizations? The series of major 1974 international conferences point to the trend that it is not the one or two superpowers but the Third World which plays the main part.

In the past the United Nations served as a voting machine manipulated by the United States. Later it became a tool of the United States and the Soviet Union in their contention for hegemony. Today the United Nations as a voting machine is not so effective as it was, and it is gradually losing the function as a tool for contention. Now and then it looks rather like an international court, with the United States and the Soviet Union in the dock as the Third World makes the charges and holds the trial. The Special Session of the U.N. General Assembly on the problems of raw materials and development last April was a meeting initiated by the Third World which worked out the agenda and drew up the documents, a meeting which finally adopted a declaration in the interest of the Third World. At the conference the Third World settled accounts with imperialism and the superpowers for their crime of exploitation and strongly demanded the establishment of a new International economic order. Despite all their machinations, the two superpowers failed to disorient the conference. At the U.N. Conference on the Law of the Sea in Caracas last summer, the Third World once again bombarded the two overlords, resolutely upheld 200-mile maritime rights and bared the two overlords' effort to hold on to their maritime hegemony.

In the 1940s imperialism used the United Nations to set up an Israel and imposed it on the Arab people. Again at the United Nations in the 1960s, the superpowers tampered with the fundamental question of restoring Palestine's national rights by posing it as a "refugee problem." However, as a result of the protracted and unyielding struggle of the Palestinian and Arab people, the 29th Session of the U.N. General Assembly, which was attended by the representative of the Palestine Liberation Organization, corrected this distortion of history and adopted a resolution which confirms that the Palestinian people are entitled to restore their national rights. This is another instance attesting to the power of the Third World.

To enable the United Nations to reflect today's realities, the Third World countries in 1974 raised the just demand for the revision of the U.N. Charter. At this, the two hegemonic powers flew into a rage and poured out a torrent of abuse. One asserted that revising the Charter would lead to a nuclear war, while the other alleged this was a "tyranny of the majority." These fallacies were sharply denounced by the Third World. The adoption of the Third World countries' resolution by an overwhelming majority vote testifies to the decline of hegemonism in the United Nations.

In the test of strength between the oppressed nations on the one hand and colonialism, neo-colonialism and hegemonism on the other, which actually fears which? Which will emerge the victor? In 1974 the African national liberation movements continued to mount fierce attacks on the remnant positions of old-line colonialism in Africa, ending with the defeat of the Portuguese colonialists who for 13 years had been fighting a colonial war on the continent. Lisbon was compelled to recognize the independence of Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique. Following the defeat of the U.S. aggressors by the Indochinese peoples, this event provides yet another instance of the weak triumphing over the strong. Colonialism is losing its position in southern Africa and the racist regimes in Rhodesia and South Africa are trembling with fear. The superpowers are also worried. This proves anew that the law of the jungle practised for centuries has been relegated to the junk pile.

The Independence and liberation of weak and small nations are achieved mainly through the united struggle of the people in these countries, especially through protracted armed struggle, and are never "bestowed" by a saviour. Independence cannot be a gift on a silver platter from the colonialists, much less a trophy of social-imperialism in its contention for world hegemony. But the odd thing is that whenever victory is won in a war of national liberation somewhere, Moscow hastens to claim it as an outcome of the "peace programme of the 24th congress" and a fruit of its policy of "detente." Such pronouncements not only are contemptible attempts to take the credit for the arduous liberation struggles by the people of the small countries for itself but also reveal its evil intent to incorporate a new-born country into its sphere of influence. But since small countries are capable of toppling the brutal rule by a colonial empire, they must be equally capable of smashing the superpowers' schemes for hegemony.

Who actually depends on whom in international economic relations? An important feature in the Third World's anti-imperialist and anti-hegemonist struggle last year was the intensified fight in the economic field. This very struggle points to the following truth: It is not the poor countries that depend on the rich, but quite the opposite. (See "Earth-Shaking Struggle," *Peking Review*, No. 1, 1975.)

The Arab people achieved great success through the use of the oil weapon. In doing so, they brought to light one of the secrets of how the contemporary imperialists and superpowers amassed their wealth—making superprofits through plundering Third World raw materials by forcing down their prices. Inspired and encouraged by the use of the oil weapon, countries exporting raw materials and primary products have got

together, set up organizations among themselves and reinforced existing ones to safeguard national resources and defend raw material prices. The Third World's conscious application of their raw materials as a weapon against imperialism and hegemonism is something new. This worried the imperialists and superpowers all the more because one important source of their wealth has been taken over by the Third World.

The Third World has also long been regarded by the imperialists and superpowers as a market for their industrial products. At the U.N. General Assembly special session last year, the Third World denounced the rich countries for taking away raw materials from them at low prices while selling manufactured goods and food at high prices. The Third World strongly demanded a change in these inequitable economic relations. The significant thing is that countries of the Third World now do not expect the rich countries to suddenly become "benevolent," but have begun transforming single-product economies imposed on them by colonialism, reducing their dependence on imported industrial products and food, developing agriculture and industry and diversifying economies in accordance with their own resources by relying on their own efforts. As a result, there is less and less room for imperialism to exploit the Third World through the "scissors differential" and shift [the] burden of the economic crisis on to the Third World.

The Third World's fight against plunder and its national economic development have caused the imperialist and superpower world markets to shrink, and as a result, have aggravated the capitalist economic crisis. The imperialists and superpowers now find themselves in the plight as a Chinese verse describes: "Flowers fall off, do what one may."

* * *

Of course, the two moribund imperialist overlords, the Soviet Union and the United States, are waging a death-bed struggle and will continue to make trouble. There can be no plain sailing in the struggle of the Third World against imperialism and hegemonism. But in the course of struggle the Third World has gradually become aware of its own strength and has seen through the hypocrisy and essential weakness of the superpowers. It has closed its ranks and raised the art of struggle to a new level. It is bound to achieve new and greater victories in the days ahead.

Imperialism and hegemonism are like a sinking ship. The new emerging Third World, in contrast, has swept ahead full sail to greet the struggle in the new year with boundless confidence.