
OTHER NATIONS

The Algerian Quagmire

"Algeria's War on Itself" by Andrew J. Pierre and William B. Quandt, in *Foreign Policy* (Summer 1995), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2400 N St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037-1153.

Since early 1992, Islamic militants and Algeria's military regime have been locked in a bloody struggle that has reportedly cost more than 30,000 lives. Now Algeria's woes are becoming a crisis for France, say Pierre, a senior associate of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and Quandt, a political scientist at the University of Virginia.

Contrary to the conventional wisdom, France's relationship with Algeria is not especially close, and Paris remains very much in the dark about what is happening in its former colony. "Conversations with senior officials in Paris," the authors write, "reveal that the military-led government in Algiers is opaque to the French; they do not know where real power lies, nor can they account for the reasons behind the shifts in Algerian policies and attitudes. French contacts with the sizable Islamic opposition groups . . . are very limited."

When Algeria in 1962 finally won its eight-year war for independence, its economic ties with France were strong; but they have since shriveled. Algeria buys only about one-third of its imports from France, down from more than 80 percent at independence. The former mother country now gets only two percent of its oil and 30 percent of its gas from Algeria. "In the years after independence," the authors note, "some 60,000 French were involved in business, communications, and civil administration in Algeria. Now the number is down to 1,500, and for good cause: Islamic terrorists have been systematically assassinating foreigners since 1992." Within France, Islam is poorly understood, despite the presence of 800,000 Algerians, some of whom have lived in France for generations.

The French are alarmed. They fear not only terrorist bombs but the prospect "that hordes of Algerian boat people will migrate and take jobs away in a country with a 12.3 percent rate of unemployment."

Early this year, under the auspices of a Catho-

lic group called Sant'Egidio, leaders of the Algerian National Liberation Front, the Islamic Salvation Front, and other opposition groups reached agreement in Rome on a "National Contract" calling for multiparty democracy. It was intended to serve as a basis for talks with President Lamine Zeroual's military government. The regime quickly denounced the move as foreign interference and promised to hold presidential elections by the end of the year, the authors note, "without quite explaining how these elections would restore peace."

French officials have come to realize, Pierre and Quandt say, that they may need help to achieve peace. For the Algerian antagonists, "the former colonizers are more familiar than others, but they are also less trustworthy." The Sant'Egidio declaration, the authors point out, "included an appeal to the international community as a whole—not to France alone—for assistance in resolving the conflict."

Confucianism Lite?

"The New Confucianism in Beijing" by Wm. Theodore de Bary, in *The American Scholar* (Spring 1995), Phi Beta Kappa Society, 1811 Q St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

During China's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution of the late 1960s and early '70s, Confucianism and its supposed agents were viciously attacked. Today, with the hollowness of the official Marxist-Leninist ideology more and more apparent, the Beijing regime has been trying to reclaim China's Confucian heritage and use it to ward off the threat of Western decadence. Confucian temples have been restored to their former elegance, and a China Confucius Foundation, headquartered in Beijing, has been established. At a major international congress in China in 1994 to commemorate the sage's birth 2,545 years earlier, Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew, the world-famous champion of the Confucian work ethic, social discipline, and zeal for learning, and a staunch critic of Western individualism, was given a thunderous ovation. Yet de Bary, an emeritus professor at Columbia University and author of *The Trouble with Confucianism* (1991), doubts that China's new commitment to