

## NEWS ANALYSIS

# The Real OPEC Story: Iraq Proposals Thwart Rocky

by Bob Dreyfuss

March 8 (IPS) — Decisively taking advantage of the weak and dissension-ridden states of the Rockefeller-OPEC petroleum cartel, the pro-socialist Iraqi delegation led by Saddam Hussein won a series of major victories this week at the Algiers summit meeting of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries. Intervening into the timorous and crumbling collection of CIA-backed sheikhs and military dictators with a socialist programmatic alternative to the capitalist collapse now spilling over into the OPEC countries, Iraq succeeded in polarizing OPEC around the only real choice that faced the delegates: will OPEC commit itself to using its oil to revive European industry around real development of the Third World and expanded East-West trade, or will OPEC continue to prop up the worthless U.S. dollar and slavishly accept Rockefeller-ordered production cuts. That is the real story of the Algiers OPEC meeting.

This reality was nowhere evident in the controlled Anglo-American press. Led by the New York Times, Rockefeller's dailies managed to exclude any reference to Iraq beyond minimal necessary coverage, edited out salient features of the important Algerian contributions, and either hid or actually inverted the factional differences now tearing OPEC apart.

Immediately, three important victories stand out clearly as a result of Iraq's determined intervention in Algiers. First, the Iraqis succeeded for the most part in swinging Algeria's opportunistic President Houari Boumedienne behind a credible version of Iraq's programmatic strategy.

Second, the Imperial Shahanshah of Iran was humbled and forced to back down on the issue of the CIA-instigated border war between Iraq and Iran, and signed a comprehensive truce with Iraqi leader Hussein.

Finally, by polarizing the delegates Iraq managed to neutralize OPEC as a vehicle for advancing Rockefeller's "fascism with a human face" strategy. In effect, the Iraqis prevented OPEC from pushing the Zero Growth austerity

rhetoric usually associated with the CIA fiefdoms of Iran and Saudi Arabia — a stalemate reflected in the OPEC final communique issued March 6.

The coordinated blackout of the pro-development sentiment at the OPEC conference was most evident in the treatment of the speeches by the Algerian Foreign Minister Bouteflika and Pres. Boumedienne. In particular, the Bouteflika statement, which contained a perceptive and essentially correct analysis of the joint U.S.-French "hard cop/soft cop" role and a strong attack on the April 7 producer-consumer conference called by French President Giscard, was purged of all content by the New York Times and American wire services.

The Boumedienne statement received similar treatment. In his remarks, as reported in the French press and the Italian Communist daily *L'Unita*, the Algerian president offered to lower the price of oil in exchange for real development, and urged Europe to "affirm its own political identity" against "those who intend to use our deposits of petrodollars as a maneuver to extend their hegemony over countries in difficulty." Naturally, these remarks — which are obvious reflections of the influence of Iraq's conference organizing — were omitted in New York, London, and Washington press!

Instead, only glimpses of reality could be gleaned from the hysterical Anglo-American press. Whether from Washington Post reports of OPEC ministerial sessions running as late as 4 a.m., to New York Times hints about Saddam Hussein's "extremely frank and pragmatic" behavior during the closed-door OPEC sessions, to reports in the staid *Journal of Commerce* that several OPEC delegations were "stunned" by the sweep and ambition of Boumedienne's speech, subtle evidence of the powerful Iraqi presence could be discerned.

### The Boumedienne Shift

Perhaps the most important result of the conference was the surprising shift by Algeria's Boumedienne away from purely CIA-Hudson Institute fascist rhetoric and toward a real approximation of the Iraqi position.

The change in the Boumedienne-Bouteflika position reflects accurately the current pressures on OPEC — with the radical-nationalist regime in Algeria simply being the most sensitive weather-vane to those currents.

The OPEC member states have been hard hit, since the fall of 1974, by the abrupt decline of the U.S. dollar, the collapse in Western industrial production, and a brutal series of Rockefeller-imposed production cuts. Each of these interrelated factors has drastically affected both the revenues and, more importantly, the development plans and budgets of the OPEC countries. Increasingly, the various OPEC regimes — outside of independent Iraq — have found themselves squeezed ever more tightly between their ties to the crumbling Western economy and the political-economic "promises" of development made to their pitifully deprived populations.

For a variety of reasons, the Boumedienne-Bouteflika leadership is most vulnerable to Iraq's powerful arguments for exchanging oil — itself fast running out — in return for Western technology and capital imports. The Algerian volatile, working-class base that supports Boumedienne's ruling Front de Liberation Nationale, combined with Algeria's position as an Arab radical bastion, makes Algiers particularly susceptible to pro-development thrusts by the Ba'ath in Iraq — especially since Rockefeller has nothing left to offer. This tendency is reinforced by the Algerian FLN's connections to the French Communist Party and "traditional" French policies of independence.

### And the Shah Backs Down

Another victim of the Iraqi drive around international socialist development, announced at the OPEC meeting in Algiers, is the Iranian-CIA conspiracy against Iraq. In a major diplomatic victory, Iraq's Saddam Hussein, in a face-to-face meeting with the cowardly Shah, reached an agreement which explicitly calls for "definitive cessation of all subversive infiltrations" across the Iraq-Iran border — a reference to Iranian support for the CIA-backed revolt of Kurdish tribalists in northern Iraq.

Above all else, the Shah's retreat underscores the relative strengths of Iran and Iraq. Under the same pressures as Algeria

and the rest of OPEC, the Shah has much less room to maneuver as the puppet head of the tightly CIA-run regime in Teheran under CIA Ambassador Richard Helms. In the last month, he has been forced to reduce his sights from dominating Asia to shoring up his international position. Iraq, on the other hand, is currently riding the crest of the organizing wave that, with Soviet support, has propelled the Iraqis into a leadership position of the rapidly coalescing Eurasia bloc.

Breaking out over the Iraq-Iran accord, the fanatically pro-Iran London *Financial Times* headlined its article: "Iran, Iraq Reach Accord as Kurds Are Bombed." The entire article, reflecting the FT's hysteria, is a rabidly anti-Soviet fantasy which speaks of a "major new offensive" by the Iraqis against the (nonexistent) Kurdish movement, complete with "the heaviest bombing raid since last spring."

"The fiercer the fighting," scribbles FT reporter David Housego, "the greater the danger of confrontation with Iran" — despite the Iran-Iraq truce signed that very day!

### OPEC Chaos

The political stalemate in OPEC between the Iraqi-led group and the preponderant Rockefeller-Saudi faction is best seen in its "final communique" issued March 6. Filled with contradictions, the communique is a mass of vague generalities with no practical political implications, meaning that the Rockefeller thugs from Iran and Saudi Arabia did not succeed in ramming their fascist proposals through the body.

While attacking the "general tendency of the developed countries to consume excessively and to waste scarce resources" — Zero Growth talk — the communique also stated: "The future of mankind ultimately depends solely on man's capacity to mobilize imagination and will-power in the service and interest of all." Such a statement reflects Iraq's position.

In this manner, the Iraqis effectively prevented the Rockefeller-CIA forces from using OPEC and the rigged "oil crisis" as a ramrod for enforcing fascist austerity in the West. By neutralizing the Rockefeller-OPEC cartel, the Iraqis have helped gain valuable time for working class organizing in North America and Western Europe.