

Why the Third World listens to Fidel Castro

An eyewitness report on the Sixth Nonaligned Summit

The sixth summit conference of the Heads of State/Government of the Nonaligned nations in Havana, Cuba this past week will undoubtedly be remembered as a crucial event in the history of our time. For some two weeks the officials, foreign ministers and heads of state—some 52 of them—representing 94, mostly developing nations plus numerous liberation movements—gathered to determine the leaders and the policies which will guide them for at least the next three years and certainly, beyond.

Raging debates took place, meetings behind a variety of closed doors from morning to first light of the following day, and the policies of entire governments were changed in the course of the conference. History was made in Havana and the implications of this have yet to be fully understood or even witnessed.

The terms of the battle of Havana, as it was reported in almost all the Western press and even as it was understood by many delegations before the conference began, was disarmingly simplistic. The Cubans, and Fidel Castro, the hosts of the summit, were portrayed as trying to swing the Nonaligned movement from a principle that has been 'sacred' since the official founding of the movement in the first summit of 1961 in Belgrade, Yugoslavia—the principle of 'equidistance', even 'neutrality' from the two main power blocs of the United States and the Soviet Union. Under Cuban leadership, the story went, the Nonaligned would align with the Soviet bloc. As the conference concluded—in a manner which hardly pleased the purveyors of this

line—we were finally told as fact that, indeed, the Cubans had 'manipulated' and 'forced' the Nonaligned into an unabashed anti-Western posture.

Anyone who was there *in Havana*, as this reporter was, knows this to be quite simply *a lie*, completely contrary to the reality of the historic Havana summit.

The real issue at Havana

The fundamental issue at Havana was development, the fight of the Nonaligned developing nations to bring their nations into the modern era through economic development. The battle focused on whether or not they could achieve the political will, the determination to win this battle, including forcing the developing nations of the "north" into acceptance of the establishment of this New International Economic Order. For most of the Nonaligned their ability to resist the destabilizing imposition of backwardness through the agency of the International Monetary Fund and its allied London-New York private banks was posed as a question of their own qualities of leadership.

The single greatest achievement and import of the Havana Summit was the establishment of that political will and leadership—to carry the fight for economic development to not only the developing nations, but right into the developed countries whose own commitment to this process was directly called for by the Summit.

The Havana Summit made its rejection of the IMF system unmistakable. The Final Declaration calls for:

a new international monetary system and new institutions aimed at fostering rapid economic growth; expansion of world trade without protectionist barriers; industrialization of the Third World and explicit rejection of the World Bank doctrine of "basic needs" which opposes industrial development; the peaceful use of nuclear energy and the development of new energy sources; and the cooperation, through the United Nations, of all countries, developing and developed, in achieving these aims.

It was the unique contribution of Cuba and of its remarkable leader, Fidel Castro, to provide both the example of a nation committed, successfully, to development despite the most adverse circumstances and of a leader who embodies that commitment and will. Cuba and Fidel were an "issue" at the Summit, in that sense only.

The frontal political battles of the conference, which drew most of the attention, were two: Kampuchea and the question of who would occupy the seat representing that sad nation; and Egypt and the Camp David agreement. How should the nonaligned respond to the flagrant violation of all that the movement stands for by a founder-nation which has concluded a virtual military pact with Israel and the United States? But if these two questions occupied most of the attention, they were themselves only surrogates for the larger fight. In the working committees of the summit, the Economic and Political committees, attention was focused on the draft of the final declaration drawn up, as is customary, by the Cuban hosts. The draft, too, was a central object of contention.

The conference lines were loosely drawn from the beginning. At one end were the "radicals," led by Cuba, who were committed to an aggressive statement of the movement's commitment to economic progress, the new international economic order, and to strong political opposition to the dangerous role of "imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism and zionism." At the other end were the upholders of impotence, defenders of Pol Pot and of Sadat, and in favor of a policy of capitulation to the rapacious role of the IMF on the grounds that confrontation with the forces of a New Dark Age would risk "war." Here was the "Old Man" of nonalignment, Tito, alongside Egypt, Singapore, the main defenders of Pol Pot, and the more reactionary of the largely Francophone African states. In the middle of this spectrum stood the 'silent majority' of the Nonaligned, the majority of African and Asian nations.

Ultimately this battle, and the moments within it, was won by the Cubans and their allies for one fundamental reason—to the 'silent majority' they represented a revitalization of the movement, a sense of change and progress which was not a question of agreement on every issue but one of a profound sense of identification with the spirit, the confidence which Fidel Castro best expressed.

The stage is set

While the Heads of State summit formally opened on September 3, a Monday, the actual work of the conference began almost a week earlier with, first, a meeting on the level of Ambassadors and Experts, whose job was to finalize the agenda preparation, and then, a meeting of Foreign Ministers where, normally, most of the political issues are expected to be largely resolved before the heads of state actually meet. The movement meets in summit only once every three years, the last time in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The host becomes chairman for the next three years while a Coordinating Bureau, made up of 25 countries (now expanded to 36), functions continuously.

The Cubans had submitted their draft to all the countries in June of this year, and meetings on the draft and suggestions for changes had already been submitted before the Havana meeting began. As Fidel Castro was to later charge in his opening address to the conference, and confirmed by others, strong efforts had been underway to attack and totally rewrite the Cuban draft on the grounds that it was stridently pro-Soviet. The U.S. State Department was in possession of the draft from the beginning and engaged in strenuous diplomatic efforts to have it changed. The Yugoslavs, leaders of the "opposition," were similarly active, as was the Peking regime. In short, this combination was determined to create a battle and to deal what they viewed as a defeat to Cuba's bid for leadership of the Nonaligned movement.

The Cuban draft was a tough document but in no way a call for the movement to join the Warsaw Pact. On the political side it placed emphasis on a determined fight against the policies of imperialism throughout the Third World, expressed as the perpetuation of the old colonial system of domination and perpetuation of backwardness in the developing countries. While rumors, fed liberally by the vast crew of Yugoslav journalists and others, talked of a statement calling the socialist countries the "natural ally" of the Nonaligned, in fact the Cuban draft referred mildly and only in one particular context to their desire for solidarity with "peace-loving and progressive forces" in the world in pursuit of world peace.

While attention was focused on the search for "code words" in the Political Declaration, the Economic draft was in fact far more significant and interesting. In sum, the Cubans strongly attacked the entire failure of the North-South dialogue—"dilatatory" they called it—and the approach of piece-meal "reform" of the IMF which has led the developing nations down so many garden paths these past years. They further pinpointed the IMF's "conditionalities" policy, the massive burden of Third World debt, the growing trend of protectionist trade barriers in the advanced sector against particularly manufactures from the Third World and, in general, the manifest lack of political will in the West (and Japan)

to respond seriously to the need to create a New International Economic Order.

This political assault on the old order was accompanied by a clear call for the creation of new international institutions, including a new, universal monetary system. This view in the first draft was accompanied by a strong emphasis on the "collective self-reliance" of the developing nations themselves, something which is perhaps more an expression of frustration with the failure of the North-South discussions to date than a serious economic concept.

How the battle was won

The first, preparatory week of the summit ended with a failure to reach *consensus*—the accepted decision-making criterion in the movement—on the hot issue of Kampuchea and Egypt. The halls were filled with rumors of fights, of division, while the Yugoslavs, who became a psychological and political barometer of the process inside the conference, were strutting about with arrogant confidence in their 'showdown victory' at Havana. The method of Tito was that of the backroom, the use of fear and the deployment of pressure—with the U.S. and China in the background.

The major issues unresolved, everyone awaited the morning opening of the summit and Fidel's opening speech in an atmosphere of tense expectation. What would Castro say? How would he respond to the well circulated charges of Cuban domination and the concerted attack made over months on the Cuban leadership of the movement? Would Fidel—the revolutionary speak, or would a quieted, diplomatic Fidel, the host, speak?

On Monday morning the heads of state, their delegations, 1,100 journalists covering the conference, and the entire nation of Cuba, given a national holiday on the opening of the summit of which all Cubans were justly proud, were waiting—on the floor of the conference and before their television sets.

The speech of Fidel Castro that morning was undoubtedly one of the most masterful and powerful addresses ever given before such a gathering, a speech which had the oratory and physical presence which Castro is famous for in his hours-long speeches before hundreds of thousands in the Plaza of the Revolution in Havana, combined with a display of "open diplomacy," and a shattering sense of honesty and sincerity that few heads of state would dream of under such circumstances.

Like a master composer, Castro began with a gesture that was calculated to both shatter the sense of tenseness and express Cuba's total continuity and ties to the history of the movement—he opened with warm praise, remembrance and a moment of silence in memory of the recently demised and well-liked Nonaligned leader, President Boumediene of Algeria. After welcoming the new members of the movement—Iran, Pakistan,

Nicaragua, Grenada, Bolivia, Surinam, and the elevation of the Patriotic Front of Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) to full membership—Fidel mounted an open attack without hesitation on the attempts behind the scenes to sabotage the conference. (See excerpted text in this section)

The sharp identification of the U.S. and Chinese role without mention of their allies within the conference hall was followed by a point by point response to the slanders circulating against Cuba through the hallways.

Without apology, Fidel defended Cuba's socialist character, its relations with the Soviet Union and powerfully presented Cuba's role in aiding liberation struggles in Africa and its *economic assistance*, there and elsewhere, as the *raison d'être* of the "imperialist hatred" for Cuba. Any attack was turned into a mantle of honor for Cuba, which was followed in turn by a strident unremitting assault on the Camp David agreement, on the Anglo-American imperialist maneuvers in southern Africa and a condemnation of the genocidal regime of Pol Pot and its Chinese backers.

Time and time again his speech was interrupted by waves of applause. The theme throughout, a sense of the dignity of development and the fight for it, was carried into his final section on economics where he ironically attacked the IMF's conditionality policies, saying: "We Cubans, who were excluded from that institution because of an imperialist dictate, aren't quite sure whether that exclusion was a punishment or a privilege." While calling for unity between the oil producing and consuming countries of the movement, Fidel echoed the sentiments of many countries including many African states in calling on OPEC to invest its petrodollar surplus in productive expansion of the Third World economies.

At the end a standing ovation. The "Silent majority" was no longer silent and the first phase of the battle had been won. At this point the enemy stepped into the trap. Egypt represented by the unimpressive and somewhat slippery Foreign Minister Ghali, demanded the "right of reply" to the speech, something almost unheard of in these meetings. Some members spoke objecting to any such thing—the Sri Lankan president still chairing the meeting pending formal handing over of the chair to Castro, deferred decision to the afternoon session. As it opened in the afternoon Castro led the mouse into the trap, declaring his desire not to be accused of misusing the powers of the chair and giving the floor to Ghali. Ghali delivered a pathetic response, defending the Camp David agreement. For several hours afterward, heads of state, one after another from Yassir Arafat and Saddam Hussein of Iraq to leading Africans and others, got up to denounce Egypt, not only for its policies but for its "insult" to the chair. Egypt, which had thumbed its nose at the summit by having Sadat meet in Haifa with Begin at the same moment, was totally isolated.

That night our Yugoslav barometers were decidedly depressed at the mood which had swept the conference. But they and others awaited the reply of Tito, who was to lead off the general debate with the first speech of the next morning. The opening was delayed as rumors spread that Tito was hurriedly redrafting a section of his speech. The Tito speech was summed up by one observer succinctly in this way: "Fidel threw down the gauntlet, Tito looked down and said, 'No thanks, I'm too old'." The theme of Tito's weak speech was two-fold—defend the sacred principles of nonalignment, or rather equidistance, from "alien elements in our movement" and a fearful warning that an aggressive posture by the Nonaligned against the IMF system and its controllers bore the risk of provoking war. Tito's warning reveals their adoption of the dangerous policy of accommodation and capitulation before blackmail, a policy which provides a much surer road to war than any other. The speech was received without enthusiasm except for the respect offered an acknowledged 'Old Man' of the movement.

On the plenary floor in the days that followed there were several more key speeches which revealed the emergent leaders of the movement and showed the fearful reticence Tito-style of some old leaders. Strong addresses in support of the Cuban position and even going beyond it in some ways were delivered by Jamaican Prime Minister Michael Manley, a gifted speaker who aroused the enthusiasm of the assembly

in a way second only to Fidel, by Mozambique President Samora Machel who, with the death of Angolan leader Neto (just after the conference which he did not attend) is clearly the strongest leader of the former liberation movements of southern Africa, by Zambian President Kaunda, who is bidding to be the leader of black Africa, and by the Nicaraguan leader, Ortega, who brought the victory of the Sandinista revolution to the summit.

The other side of the movement brought forward two African leaders formerly regarded as leaders of progressive Africa—Sekou Touré of Guinea and Julius Nyerere of Tanzania—who pushed the siren call of "equidistance," but with little impact. The open supporters of Egypt and Pol Pot were confined to figures like the King of Nepal, a Chinese-influenced state, and Singapore.

The conference deliberations for the most part remained behind the closed doors of the Political and Economic committees, the former chaired by Iraq (who

will chair the next summit in 1982) and the latter by Mozambique. As the end of the conference came, Sept. 7, it was clear that many major issues remained unresolved and the finalization of the draft (which had been submitted in a second revision when the summit began) was far from over. The first major battle to be won, however, was that of Kampuchea (see separate article in this section) which saw the formal ousting of the Pol Pot murderers from their claim to a seat, and an agreement to leave the seat empty pending further discussion in the Coordinating Bureau and a review at the Foreign Minister conference scheduled for New Delhi in 1981.

The conference was forced into overtime—in fact not concluding until 9:30 am of September 9—and providing a dramatic ending with an all-night session from the 8th into the next day without pause. That extended period was required to finally resolve the Egyptian question, resulting in an unexpected and resounding denunciation of the entire Camp David

The Heads of State or Government (of the Nonaligned Nations) called upon the developed countries to exercise political will and courage and take steps to seek a solution to the problem of recession in their economies through restructuring the international economy, based on the generation and growth of aggregate demand and productive capacity in the developing countries. Any other approach based on short-term considerations would in the long run operate to the long-term political and economic detriment of the developed countries themselves.

policy—unexpected because by the end of the week, Egypt had managed to gather some reactionary African states behind it to try to block a strong denunciation (see separate story here).

The final declaration itself was not finalized until late on the night of the 8th—but what emerged, despite continued rumors of intensive watering down, was a strong and clear statement of political and economic determination of the Nonaligned states and a clear mandate to Cuba and Castro's leadership of the movement in the coming years.

The meaning of Havana: where to now?

Close observers of the Nonaligned movement were without hesitation in describing the Havana Summit as the most important and the most exciting in the history of the movement. It was a summit of real politics, not of empty speeches filled with rhetoric and a predetermined outcome. One observer said it could only be compared in impact and character to the Algiers Sum-

mit of 1973, also a scene of fiery battles out of which emerged the entire thrust for a New International Economic Order. It certainly surpassed the previous Colombo Summit which produced a historic set of concrete proposals for economic development but lacked the sense of political will expressed in Havana, as showed in the virtual collapse of the Colombo impetus—admittedly under heavy fire from the outside—in the following three years.

The unique character of the Havana Summit can be accounted for in many ways. Certainly where the conference took place—revolutionary and developing Cuba—and the presence of Fidel Castro, a man who is without parallel as a Third World leader today and is more widely respected and even revered than any other such leader, made a crucial difference.

But the success of Fidel is not due to his presence alone. His power rests on his ability to sense the mood of the nations and their leaders, to voice their aspirations and their determination to bring real development to their largely impoverished nations in a way that clearly goes beyond what any single one of them would express on his own. For them Fidel represented a new dynamic, a forward motion—Tito could do nothing against that; he was left behind in the wake of history, appealing to the past, not the future.

It now remains to move beyond, to produce, as Fidel said in concluding his opening speech, “deeds, not just words.”

The next step in the process will be clearly indicated when the General Assembly of the United Nations convenes this month in New York. Fidel Castro will revisit a sight of past historic importance for him, this time to deliver a speech on behalf of the entire Non-aligned movement of nations, presenting the results of the conference. Mexican President Lopez Portillo is expected to deliver an important address, a vital new proposal for global energy cooperation. This has, according to informed sources, the assured backing of Castro and others and embodies the spirit of Havana. The response of many nations—the hostile response already displayed by the Carter administration, and the different view of the Europeans—will be the key to the UN session, and the future of both North and South.

For the first time in several years those in the advanced sector—capitalist and socialist—who are looking for real solutions to the urgent need for global economic development can look across to an equally determined partner in the developing world, led by the Nonaligned nations. If this opportunity is allowed to pass unrealized, a far darker path—of war, chaos, and economic collapse—lies ahead.

—Daniel Sneider
Asia Editor

The political declaration

The following are excerpts of the political declaration of the Sixth Conference of Nonaligned Countries, held Sept. 3-7 in Havana, Cuba.

1 ...In its inaugural session the Conference heard an important and wide ranging speech pronounced by his Excellency the President of the Council of State and the Council of Ministers, Commander-in-Chief Fidel Castro, the text of which was included by unanimous decision in the records of the Conference.

The speech was an historic contribution to the definition of the objectives of the Movement and an important assistance to the deliberations and final success of the Conference....

6 ...The Movement represents an overwhelming majority of mankind which is struggling to eliminate the inequalities between the developed and developing countries and to eradicate poverty, hunger, sickness and illiteracy and to establish a new world order based on justice, equity and peace instead of the present order in which wealth is still concentrated in the hands of a few powers whose wasteful economies are maintained by the exploitation of the labour as well as the transfer and plunder of the natural and other resources of the peoples of Africa, Asia, Latin America and other regions of the world.

New economic order

8 ...The Non-Aligned Movement (calls for)...the early establishment of the New International Economic Order with a view to accelerating the development of developing countries, eliminating the inequality between developed and developing countries and the eradication of poverty, hunger, sickness and illiteracy in the developing countries.

11 ...The Sixth Conference reaffirmed that quintessence of the policy of non-alignment, in accordance with struggle against imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, *apartheid*, racism including zionism and all forms of foreign aggression, occupation, domination, interference or hegemony, as well as against great-Power and bloc policies.

14 ...The Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, accordingly, dedicate themselves to translating these principles into action. They solemnly pledge to undertake all the necessary steps for the realization of the above objectives. They are convinced that only through concerned action can the objectives be attained.

20 ...The Conference acknowledges the co-operation received by nonaligned countries from other peace-, freedom- and justice-loving, democratic and progressive States and forces in the achievement of their goals and objectives, and expresses its readiness to continue to co-operate with them on the basis of equality.

29 ...The Conference noted that the imperialists have continued to react to the victories of the liberation struggle by a policy designed to maintain their interests in areas that have not yet attained independence, especially in Zimbabwe, South Africa and Namibia where racist domination prevails. It also warned that the imperialists were using new tactics to divide the Arab countries and support Israel's continued occupation of Palestine and other Arab lands...

192 ...The principles of peaceful coexistence should be the cornerstone of international relations....Active peaceful coexistence remains the sole option of mankind faced to the danger of general military confrontation and the policy of force. The principles of active peaceful coexistence should be universally applied in relations among all States, irrespective of their size or socio-economic system....

193 ...The principles of active peaceful coexistence and the principles of nonalignment constitute the basis of global detente, establishment of the New International Economic Order, peace, independence and equal security for all peoples and countries....

290 The Conference noted that the arms race is incompatible with and contrary to the efforts directed to the establishment of the New International Economic Order. It underscored again that increasing material and human potentials were being wasted through investment in armaments, which considerably diminishes the availability of resources indispensable for development....

Human rights and the rights of peoples

244 The Conference declared that the question of human rights could not be isolated from its national, economic and social context, that personal freedom was inseparable from the peoples' rights, and that human rights and the basic freedoms of individuals and peoples were inalienable. That, to fully guarantee human rights and complete personal dignity, it was necessary to guarantee the right to work, education, health, proper nourishment, and the satisfaction, in general of basic needs. These aims form part of the struggle for a change in unjust, unequal international relations....

245 ...The Conference cautioned against the exploitation of human rights issues by the great Powers as a political instrument in the confrontation of social system and for purposes of interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states.

1 Summit bids West join in new world monetary system

In a late August preview of the Havana Summit, *Executive Intelligence Review* wrote in summary that "the success or failure of that conference will be defined by whether or not the Nonaligned movement gets back on the track of Colombo"—the 1976 Nonaligned Summit which called for debt moratoria and the creation of a new international credit institution—"relaunching its programmatic campaign to replace the IMF with a more equitable New World Economic Order."

By these criteria, there is no question that the Havana Summit was a resounding success. In its scope, in its precision, and in its commitment to go beyond words and adopt "determined and effective action," the Havana Economic Declaration (excerpted below) has brought the entire Third World way beyond the achievements even of the excellent Colombo Action Program. Most significant is the fact that, in it, the Nonaligned directly call on the developed capitalist world to "no longer shy away from its share of responsibility," but instead help to inaugurate a New World Economic Order of peace and development. This is followed by an extraordinary appeal to the common interest of developed and developing nations alike, explaining that the best solution for the advanced sector's own economic crisis is the "growth of aggregate demand and productive capacity" in the developing sector.

The declaration also dissects the current economic crisis besetting the Third World, and charges that it is the result of the looting, imperialist policies which have left that sector with over \$300 billion in unpayable debts. Urgent debt relief is demanded, and the IMF is roundly denounced for using this indebtedness as blackmail to enforce policies of suicidal economic contraction. The document goes on to reject the World Bank's low-growth policies of satisfying "basic needs," and then demands full-scale industrialization, transfer of technology, and scientific development for the Third World.

A powerful section on nuclear energy is also con-