

# Ben Bella Regime 'In Deep Trouble'

ALGIERS (AP)—Ahmed Ben Bella's pseudo-Marxist regime is in deep trouble trying to put the new nation on its feet.

The dynamic, 47-year-old president seems to thrive on trouble. The more chaos and discontent spread across the country, the more Ben Bella tightens his grip on the state machinery.

Only the 80,000-man Soviet-equipped army—the mainstay of Ben Bella's regime—is not under his domination. Although Ben Bella is nominally commander-in-chief of the armed forces, only one man gives the orders in military matters: Defence Minister Col. Houari Boumediene.

Ben Bella's backside is being kicked by Ben Bella's Communist advisers. Boumediene re-

peatedly has saved the regime and stands steady to do so again.

French experts expect Boumediene and his men to stand by Ben Bella come what may—only because the alternative may be anarchy.

**LACKS AMBITION**

The French believe the colonel has no personal political ambition and does not have the makings of a military dictator. He rarely speaks in public, but makes a practice of appearing at Ben Bella's side at official functions as though to underscore his approval of the regime.

In return, Ben Bella has had to make some important concessions to the army. The president's advisers have been curbed repeatedly in their attempts to control the army's purse strings or take over the political indoctrination of the troops.

Two of the regime's leading Marxists, Economic Affairs Minister Bachir Boumaz and ideological theoretician Mohamed Harbi, are known to have clashed openly with the soft-spoken defence minister.

As far as is known, such quarrels have never ended with Boumediene backing down. He sharply rejected an attempt by revolutionary extremists to purge those of his officers who formerly served with the French army. When the ruling National Liberation Front set up a purge commission, the colonel drove home the point by naming a former French officer as his personal representative on the commission.

Although the army gets its equipment from the Russians, some of Boumediene's officers have sought out Western military attaches in Algiers to stress that the army has no Communist leanings.

With Boumediene standing beside him, Ben Bella recently told a mass meeting in Algiers outright communism is incompatible with the teachings of the Koran.

While the controlled press and radio are almost completely in the hands of Harbi and similar Communist-trained propagandists, Ben Bella frequently reassures foreign diplomats that he will not allow Algeria to become a Communist state on the Cuban model or to provide a foothold for Soviet expansion in Africa.

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**SHASTRI RETURNING**

**NEW DELHI (AP)**—Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri, who suffered a mild heart attack June 26, plans to return to his desk this week. A spokesman said Shastri, 59, will precede over a cabinet meeting Saturday. Shastri has been resting in his home since he was stricken. An aide said he is "rested, cheerful and eager" to return to work.

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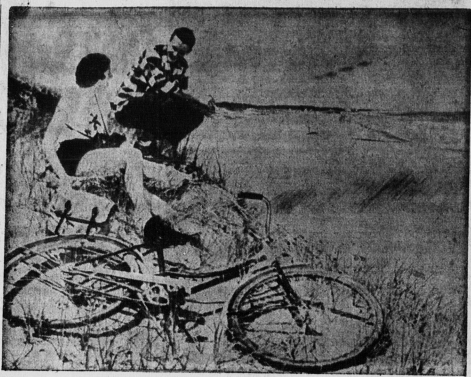
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