

THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT

- Connie Dlingea

The progressive international community is awaiting the month of September this year with special expectations. During this month the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement will be holding their 6th Summit Conference in the Cuban capital of Havana.

A meeting of such magnitude and importance will be the first of its kind taking place in Latin America. It is of special importance because its venue will be the Island of Freedom, socialist Cuba. It is of significance because of the topics that are going to be discussed there, all reflecting the major trend in the international political arena. It is important because so many changes have taken place internationally since the summit meeting which was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka five years ago. It seems this movement is destined to grow as more countries strike the progressive line of development. Because of this fact, and because of the fact that many African states, including Liberation Movements, belong to this movement, a short survey becomes necessary. It is all the more necessary because of the movement's positive attitude towards the total liberation of the African continent from colonialism, racism and apartheid.

The Movement of Non-Aligned countries formed in September, 1961, with just 25 member countries at the time, has evolved into one of the vigorous and dynamic political forces in the international community. Over 90 developing countries, including National Liberation Movements in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe belong currently to this Movement as full members or as observers. This number is likely to increase after the Havana meeting, as some countries have already expressed their readiness to join the Movement of Non-Aligned countries. An example is the declaration of the new government of Nicaragua, which expressed the country's desire to attend the Havana meeting and formally join the Movement.

The Non-Aligned Movement is approaching the 18th anniversary of its foundation. Its constant

evolution constitutes the most outstanding characteristic of the movement. The existence of common interests, the adoption of common strategies of action have helped to preserve and strengthen the unity in the movement, despite the diverse political systems, the different ideologies pursued and different levels of economic development of member countries.

The Non-Aligned Movement is composed of over two thirds of the members of the United Nations. This fact alone makes this movement a strong force in the United Nations. The intense activities of this movement in the community of nations have converted it into a determining factor for the solution of many complex problems of international relations. The change of the balance of forces in favour of the progressive forces finds itself well reflected in the manifold activities of the underdeveloped countries in search for a common language in their struggle to eradicate the backwardness imposed by the long period of colonial domination, in search of self determination.

The Afro-Asian Conference of Bandung, which was held in 1955, was an important milestone to the later intergration of the Non-Aligned Movement. One year later, in 1956, the Heads of State of Egypt, Yugoslavia and India - Gamel Abdul Nasser, Jossip Broz Tito and Jawahar Nehru - respectively met on the Island of Brioni, in Yugoslavia to examine the perspectives of what was later to be become the Non-Aligned Movement.

In September, 1961, the first summit meeting of the movement was held in Belgrade, in Yugoslavia. This initial conference was attended by 25 countries. Cuba was the only Latin American country present, and this was two years after her revolutionary triumph.

The Non-Aligned States are working together on the basis of set principles. These principles are that these countries pursue an independent policy. They respect the principle of peaceful co-existence between states with different social systems. They support the National Liberation Movements. They do not grant military bases to foreign powers in their territories.

These basic aims which serve as a premise for the emergence, intergration and later development of the Non-Aligned Movement eighteen years ago, have been reaffirmed in all the summit conferences since the Belgrade meeting of 1961. These were underlined in Cairo, in 1964, in Lusaka in 1970, in Algiers, in 1973 and in Colombo, in 1976. These principles will undoubtedly be re-emphasised in the coming summit conference to be held in Havana, this coming September.

The progressive content of the Non-Aligned Movement does not please the imperialists, who would have liked to misuse this powerful movement to serve their aims. The anti-imperialist platform on which these countries operate, make it possible for them to be a strong political force to reckon with in today's international political arena. The numerical and political strength of the countries belonging to the Non-Aligned Movement, their commitment to the struggle against colonialism, racism and apartheid make them one of the natural allies of the people of Southern Africa, struggling against the racist regimes, for the seizure of political power, for black majority rule and social progress.

The importance this movement attaches to questions related to the support for Liberation Movements in Southern Africa has been clearly demonstrated by the fact that SWAPO, of Namibia, and the Patriotic Front of Zimbabwe, have been granted the status of permanent members of the Non-Aligned Movement

The liberation movement of South Africa, led by the African National Congress, will certainly benefit from the deliberations, decisions and resolutions of this important international forum. The ANC of South Africa, as participant in this summit conference will find yet another platform to strengthen the support for our liberation struggle and to mobilise world public opinion to isolate completely the racist apartheid regime which still continues to exploit and oppress the Black people of South Africa.