

USSR In African Peace Offensive

Last week the Soviet Union launched a peace offensive in the Horn of Africa region, exerting considerable pressure on all parties susceptible to reason — especially the pro-socialist government of Somalia — to stop the escalating warfare in Ethiopia's southern Ogaden region between ethnic Somali guerrillas and the Ethiopian army. The East European press, increasingly backed by their West European counterparts, are warning the Carter Administration in increasingly strong language to stop sabotaging the peace effort on the Horn.

"The Soviet Union is urgently pressing Somalia for an immediate ceasefire in the fighting in south-eastern Ethiopia..." reports the Aug. 4 *Washington Post*, cataloging this action among the "crimes of the Soviet Union," and claiming that Somali President Mohammed Siad Barre is resisting the Soviet initiative. The Somali government has, however, agreed to mediation of the dispute by the Organization of African Unity, which at the request of Ethiopia began meeting on the question Aug. 5. Announcing Somalia's agreement to attend the meeting, a Somali ambassador said, "Any move which would lead to a peaceful solution is most welcome."

In addition, delegations from both Somalia and Ethiopia are presently in Moscow, although it is not yet known if these two delegations have met.

Another Soviet ally in the region, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) that has good relations with Ethiopia and most other neighboring states has undertaken to discuss the matter with leaders in Saudi Arabia, where the pro-American faction of the royal family has been actively supporting the secessionist movements threatening to dismember Ethiopia. After the return of the PDRY's Prime Minister and Defense Minister from a hurried trip to Moscow last week, the Yemeni President journeyed to Saudi Arabia to meet with King Khaled. The Yemeni government also announced that it is prepared to mediate between Ethiopia and Somalia.

On August 1 the Soviet daily *Izvestia* directly accused the United States of trying to "dismember Ethiopia" and "neutralize Somalia." "In the Red Sea area," said *Izvestia*, "the U.S. uses all methods of neocolonialism — instigating nationalism and separatism to discredit the progressive African regimes and to slander their ties with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries." *Izvestia's* attack, unusual by singling out the United States alone, was followed on Aug. 2 by an article in *Pravda* on the CIA's activities in Africa generally, and another article in the Czech Communist Party daily *Rude Pravo* charging the U.S. with using "tribalism, regionalism and other means of ideological diversion to

divide the revolutionary forces." These most recent attacks on the Carter Administration's sabotage of peace efforts on the Horn are the first time that the East European press has targetted the United States as solely responsible for the destabilization of the region.

The reason for concentrating on the U.S. is that much of Western Europe's press agrees with the socialists. The U.S.'s announcement that they are prepared to sell arms to Somalia, notes the British conservative *Economist* July 30, "...brings the Horn of Africa closer to at least an indirect east-west confrontation." The *Economist* also notes that Carter's pipe dream of "making Somalia our friend," is nothing more than that. The West German daily *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* on the same day noted the strength of the pro-Soviet faction in Somalia, which would smash any attempt to move toward the Carter Administration, because this faction feels that "Soviet socialism cannot be separated from the economic and technological progress (the Somalis) are achieving." This continued progress, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* notes, "will become more important in the future than the dream of a 'Greater Somalia'." The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* was noteworthy in reporting the matter in terms of the economic cooperation between the Soviets and Somalia, in contradistinction to other Western press reports concentrating on Soviet military aid. Simultaneously, it was announced that West Germany is planning to increase its own economic aid to Somalia.

Unsusceptible to reason, Carter is pushing ahead with his war plans on the Horn. A Pentagon delegation left Washington on Aug. 2 for Khartoum, Sudan, to begin negotiations for selling weapons to the regime of President Jaafer al-Nimeiry, junior partner of American puppet Anwar al-Sadat of Egypt, and the most rabid of Ethiopia's opponents. Nimeiry's army has been on alert on the Ethiopian border for some weeks now, and the Sudanese government is the primary conduit for weapons and the only sanctuary for guerrillas of the secessionist movement in Ethiopia's coastal province of Eritrea, and the monarchist Ethiopian Democratic Union, operating further inland.

The American press, in the absence of a single eyewitness report, continues to publish grossly exaggerated battle communiques from the Ogaden desert region, where the ultra nationalist guerrillas of the Western Somali Liberation Front claim to have control of 85 percent of the region's territory, and to be threatening the key town of Dire Dawa, situated on Ethiopia's only railroad to the sea.

—Peter Buck