

# Somalia asks for peace and development

by Marco Fanini

In July, a conference on the pacification of Somalia was held in Djibouti, thanks to the mediation of various countries and organizations, including Italy, Egypt, the United States, the Arab League, the Organization of Africa Unity, the European Community, and the United Nations, all of which sent observers. One hundred and fifty delegates participated, from the four movements of the south of Somalia and two from the north. The Presidents of Kenya and Uganda were also there.

The decision was made to set up a national unity government right away, to hold democratic elections, and to return to the constitutional and parliamentary form which had prevailed until 1969, i.e., until the advent of the dictator Siad Barre. The conference also decided that Siad Barre had to be driven out of the country, and it offered the northern secessionists, the Isaak, considerable regional autonomy, provided they return to being part of unified Somalia.

## Obstacles are serious

This is an important accord and a first step toward pacification, but some grave problems remain in the way of the implementation of the Djibouti accords: the stubbornness of the northern secessionists; defining what military force gets the job of driving Siad Barre and his followers out of Somalia; and finally, handling the cumbersome presence of the leader of the Hawiye, General Aidyd, a bizarre and quarrelsome figure who has shown little inclination to accept diplomacy and mediation.

As to the problem of the Isaak secessionists in the north, it should be observed that since their organization, the National Somali Movement (MNS), was first set up, they have been aiming at secession and at reviving Somaliland, the old British colony. They took the unilateral moves of the United Somali Congress (USC), the political and military organization of the Hawiye clan which, after Siad Barre was overthrown, established a new government without consulting the other clans, as a pretext to formally secede. The USC was taken by surprise by this move by the Isaak, because a close alliance had existed between the two organizations.

The National Somali Movement was founded about 10 years ago in London, and several observers say that the British government is indirectly supporting it. In short, London would look favorably, if not on the creation of a new state in northern Somalia, at least on a return of former Somaliland

into the British sphere of influence, with the hope of reappropriating the port of Djibouti, currently in the hands of the Americans, who have made it known they do not consider it strategically crucial.

Another problem in implementing the Djibouti accords arises from the fact that the "militarist" faction, headed by the shady and ferocious General Aidyd, has taken over the USC, and Aidyd has become its president. The question is whether Aidyd will accept the Djibouti resolutions. So far, he scorned the conference, refused to go to Djibouti, and stated over Mogadishu radio that the Djibouti resolutions are not valid. Anyone who wanted to negotiate seriously, he said, should go to Mogadishu. Yet, more moderate representatives of the USC did go to Djibouti.

The USC is probably playing a double game: leaving power in the hands of the intransigent Aidyd but, when need be, parading some conciliatory leaders. This tactic has to be kept in mind considering that General Aidyd is disliked in Italy, and the political role of the Italian government in Somalian affairs is enormous, because Somalia is a former Italian colony. (The general sued the leaders of the Italian Socialist Party, Craxi and Pillitteri, in the Milan Tribunal, for not having given him commissions he was owed in the past, when the general was still one of the loyal followers of Siad Barre.)

Aidyd imposed himself following a brutal battle in the streets of Mogadishu in June between the two factions of the USC, which was almost more intense than the battle to chase out Siad Barre. Despite the 600 dead and thousands of wounded, the international press has almost remained totally silent about it. In fact, the Hawiyas had revolted against Siad Barre not so much for political reasons, but as a struggle by their clan against the hated Darod clan, to which Siad Barre's sub-clan, the Marehan, belong. The intention of uprooting the Darod from Somalia appears rather ingenuous: the Darod are very numerous in the center and south of the country, perhaps even more than the Hawiye themselves.

The other problem is driving out Siad Barre: Who will take on the military task of fulfilling this specific mandate of the Conference of Djibouti?

What ought to be formed is a unified command among the various organizations, especially those which represent the Hawiye and Darod clans. But the Hawiye, as mentioned, see the Darod as mortal enemies, and the Darod in turn declare themselves disposed to forming an alliance to fight Siad Barre, but on condition that the collaborators of Siad Barre, who have today become members of the USC executive committee (ex-vice presidents, finance and defense ministers, etc.), would be ousted.

Resolving these problems will determine the possibility for Somalia to end the civil war which currently prevents even the sending of urgent food and medical aid, and hence of providing for reconstruction, on a new basis, of an economy which was extremely poor before the war, and now is simply nonexistent.