

*Direct support
for guerillas
in the form of
equipment
and weapons*

Western Somalia Liberation Front (WSLF) in the form of weapons and various other kinds of equipment. Strengthened by the military training and modern weapons it had received from its former Soviet ally, the Somali army undertook to provide training and instructors for the WSLF. There is good reason to believe that the latter, of whom there were a significant number in the Ogaden District, were involved in combat with the Ethiopian armed forces from the outset of hostilities.

If Ethiopia had lost all three cities that controlled access to the southern provinces, it would probably have lost the provinces of the Ogaden to Somalia for good. In that event, the WSLF guerillas would have been in a position to spread out over the plains and threaten Addis Ababa directly. In addition, Djibouti would have been surrounded and cut off. Somalia would only have had to wait until the right time – that is, until France withdrew its protection – to seize the port. A third consequence of losing these cities in the Ogaden would have been that the WSLF forces could have joined up with the liberation movements of Eritrea and the provinces of the north, held by the Democratic Union, which would have isolated the capital even more. The Dergue, in spite of all its weapons and armed forces, would not have been able to reverse such a trend. This is why the Ethiopian Government was so anxious to receive Soviet and Cuban assistance, why its Eastern allies kept sending it massive quantities of arms and increasing numbers of advisers to protect their interests, and why they became directly involved in the conflict.

Several blitzes, led by Russians and based on a Soviet infrastructure, succeeded in routing the liberation forces and the regular Somali army in a matter of only a few days. After carefully scouting the territory, the Soviet and Cuban forces proceeded with an air-drop and surrounded Jijiga, thereby creating panic in the city and taking it over with ease. The first major thrust after the liberation of Jijiga was limited to the province of Harar. Encountering little resistance during this campaign, the Cuban troops drove the routed Somali troops back to the border. A second thrust, coinciding with the first, was aimed at taking the railway-line linking Addis Ababa to Djibouti. Once again, there was little resistance. The purpose of a third thrust, currently under way, is to eliminate any remnants of the Somali and WSLF forces in the provinces of Sidamo and Bale.

Changing alliances

It is interesting to analyse the alliances that have been formed in the Horn of Africa,

where the U.S.S.R. has sought to establish a secure position. It is also fascinating to consider how these alliances have been reversed as the situation in Ethiopia has developed.

Behind this regional conflict lies the ever-present opposition between the East and the West. Whereas the U.S.S.R. has involved itself directly and unreservedly with its satellites and allies and provided each of the antagonists with arms, the West remained outside the conflict from the beginning of the Empire until Somalia's defeat, though the West is not directly involved but indirectly involved through the mediation of regional allied powers.

In addition to these alliances between the major powers and the belligerent countries, there have been alliances between Ethiopia and Kenya, based on convenience and alliances between the Arab world, Somalia and the liberation movements, and between Ethiopia and Israel – all of which are based on emotion.

Since the Dergue was incapable of creating the economic, political and social conditions for normal life in a country no longer controlled, it had to appeal for outside help to the Communists. The Ethiopian dependence on other countries has increased continuously since 1974, following the success of the internal and external revolutionary movements. Today, revolutionary Ethiopia depends on such assistance not only for arms and part of its fighting strength but also for food and the stability of its national economy.

Without a doubt, the Soviet Union is the leading player in the drama unfolding in this strategic region. Encouraging both parties for a certain time, Moscow hoped eventually to further its interests. While the U.S.S.R. was Somalia's unconditional ally, it made that country many gifts and for 15 years provided various kinds of aid in return for port facilities and a missile-base at Berbera on the Gulf of Aden. It also trained the Somali army during this entire period, making it one of the most efficient and best-equipped in Africa. When, however, revolutionary Ethiopia asked for assistance, the K.S.A. could not refuse.

While the Soviet Union was fully aware that the two countries were ancestral enemies, it nevertheless responded favorably to Ethiopia's request in the hope of being able to exercise firm control over the parties and lead them to a peace settlement – thus gaining a twofold benefit.

This plan of action seems, however, to have been more than the U.S.S.R. could follow. Because of Saudi pressure on Ethiopia, especially following the increas-

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