

tained commitment to societal transformation required not only an ideological crystallization on the part of the political leadership and organs but also a strong social base of support for social transformation. Neither of these was clearly in place. The collective leadership of the early years gave way to the personal rule of Siyaad Barre.

The war with Ethiopia hastened the pace of degeneration. The human rights violations of the early years, which were mainly part of elite and factional conflicts, became more of a vicious ethnic targeting. Siyaad Barre used all levers that were at the disposal of the increasingly predatory regime to perpetuate his personal rule. Clan, class, and state institutions and resources were used for domination and control purposes. The social, political and economic actions of the regime affected in turn clan, class and state institutions. It is this interpenetration of factors which is crucial for the understanding of the rise and fall of the Siyaad Barre regime and the waxing and waning of the autonomy of the modern Somali state. External factors provide a context which enhances and/or hinders institutions and the resultant state formation or disformation.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup>The extensive writing of I.M. Lewis is a great source on traditional Somali social structure.
- <sup>2</sup>K.N. Chaudhuri provides an excellent overview of trade in the Indian Ocean area and Coquery-Vidrovitch covers rather well the role of long distance trade in Africa.
- <sup>3</sup>Lewis, Karp, Cassanelli, Holtzman and Abdi Samatar discuss the issues of pastoralism and commercialization of the livestock sector.
- <sup>4</sup>On strong societies and weak states, see Joel S. Migdal.
- <sup>5</sup>Personal communication from Hasan A. Iimaan, a member of the "Anti-Corruption Committee."
- <sup>6</sup>Most of the following discussion is based on interviews and talks over a rather long period of time with the core group, some other members of the SRC, and other army officers who were not as involved.
- <sup>7</sup>Khaawi, though not a member of the SRC, was intimately involved with the maneuvering. He supported Salaad and therefore alienated members of his group. He was detained on August 1970.
- <sup>8</sup>The Soviets alerted the SRC on both occasions. Supposedly, they taped some telephone conversations and provided some "verbatim" discussions. Increasingly, it appears that the reports were disinformation calculated to show their credentials and support.
- <sup>9</sup>For further discussion, see Laitin and Samatar and Ahmed Samatar.
- <sup>10</sup>This section draws on Galaydh.
- <sup>11</sup>The Italian government was embarrassed by the disclosure of the fraud and suspended all assistance in the summer of 1988.
- <sup>12</sup>David Laitin and Said S. Samatar, "Somalia: Native In Search of a State", 1987, p. 168.

## THE SOMALI OPPOSITION FRONTS: SOME COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

DANIEL COMPAGNON

In response to a suggestion of the Editor of *Horn of Africa*, I will try hereafter to focus on the role of the opposition fronts fighting against the military regime in Somalia. However, taking into consideration that written sources are scarce and that it is for the most part difficult to check the accuracy of collected information, this paper cannot be very ambitious. It is intended to be a modest contribution to the study of the dissent movements as proposed alternatives to Mahammad<sup>1</sup> Siyaad Barre's personal rule. It aims to stimulate the academic debate. No particular clan or group is targeted.

To be honest, the questions which arise are not simple. All entirely depends on the perceived goals of the opposition movements: if their main purpose is to topple Somalia's Head of State, we have to admit that they have not yet succeeded<sup>2</sup>. It could be more modestly to challenge Mahammed Siyaad's authority and create such an upheaval in the country that the current regime would finally collapse. If so, the major military fronts<sup>3</sup> have attained different stages of achievement; so there is no general and peremptory appreciation to be given. Moreover, they are still in the process of fighting and coming events are almost certain to change our present view of the question.

Independent scholars and local observers usually express severe judgments on these organizations; on the contrary, their members always emphasize the strength, the popular backing and successes of their own movement. Therefore, it is difficult to achieve objectivity and furthermore establish the facts when these diverse opinions are as often as not based on rumors. But as far as politics are concerned, representation is as important as real behavior: if it emerges that a majority of the Somali are bitterly critical of the existing opposition fronts, this might appear as a major element in the future political landscape of Somalia.

Instead of writing an exhaustive history of each of them, which is beyond our means due to the lack of original documents, we will focus on three major items: the experiences and prospects in overthrowing Mahammad Siyaad's rule; the necessary but always postponed unification of the opposition; the limited credibility of the fronts as true democratic alternatives to the dictatorship.

EXPERIENCES AND PROSPECTS IN OVERTHROWING  
MAHAMMAD SIYAAD BARRE*Ten years of failed attempts*

The abortive coup of April 9, 1978 showed a lack of preparation and coordination among the plotters: apparently planned for April 12, Army Day, it was precipitated by colonel Mahammad Sheekh 'Usmaan (Cirro) for unknown reasons- perhaps the fear that the political police(NSS) would find out. Thus, the rebel military units could not reach the heart of the capital and desperately lacked fresh supplies<sup>4</sup>. The officers who were expected to participate on April 12 did not move on the 9th. I.M. Lewis describes the coup as a "narrow, parochial initiative" of Majeerteen colonels which "alienated members of other groups who shared their feelings of discontent."<sup>5</sup> Indeed, sixteen of the seventeen plotters executed on October 26, 1978 were Majeerteen.

In late June 1982, a well-armed invasion force of approximately 15,000 soldiers- in which the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF) counted no more than 5,000 fighters- crossed the border in Mudug and Hiirraan regions, in order to cut the "Chinese road" and in so doing, split the country into two parts; this was supposed to finally lead to the collapse of Siyaad's regime. It did not happen, not only because government troops resisted more than expected, but also because the USSR prevented Ethiopian leaders from launching a full-scale offensive to smash the Somali army, even though the latter was below strength, badly equipped and had a low morale.<sup>6</sup> It was hardly a victory for Siyaad Barre: the Ethiopian army kept on occupying the symbolic enclaves of Balambale and Goldogob until the conclusion in 1988 of a peace agreement. But the failure of this military attempt undermined the credibility of the Front among Somali public opinion and in the eyes of the DERG, the Ethiopian military junta, which felt misguided by SSDF leaders.

In the aftermath of the peace agreement signed by Mengistu and Mahammad Siyaad on April 3, 1988, which specified that the two governments would cease any kind of support to their neighbor's opposition fronts, the Somali National Movement (SNM)<sup>7</sup> launched a general offensive, although with a limited fighting force, on the towns of Burao (May 27) which was captured and controlled for several days, and Hargeisa (May 31) which was partially invaded. Despite a massive uprising of the local population of these towns- at least of the Isaaq majority- SNM guerrillas were defeated in the middle of June after heavy bombing of these towns- with artillery and planes- which were nearly completely destroyed. More than 300,000 Isaaq fled to Ethiopia and SNM forces had to retreat in the bush.<sup>8</sup> However, refugees in Ethiopia provided a crowd of new fighters highly motivated by what their families had suffered from the Somali Army and some fighting started again in

late October 1988. I understand that the SNM has now secured most of the area between the Djibouti border in the West and the Dhulbahante territory in the East and is tightening the rope on the suburbs of Hargeisa, Burao and Berbera. But, as a matter of fact, this change of fate of the civil conflict is not sufficient to cause the collapse of the central government.

Besides tactical and technical aspects, the failure of these attempts to topple the military regime had more profound political causes among which clanism is the most frequently quoted.

*The clan complex of the opposition fronts*

The strategic choice of the targets for military attacks was often 'polluted' by tribalist considerations. As Ahmed I. Samatar noted: "Significantly, thus far both these organizations have focused their activities on areas that are primarily inhabited by their respective lineage segments."<sup>9</sup> Indeed the SSDF in June 1982- and in its later attacks- put emphasis on the Mudug province and particularly on its capital, Galka'ayo, where the 'Umar Mahamuud- the clan of 'Abdillaahi Yuusuf and a majority of his followers- lived. At that time, it might have perhaps been easier to seize strategic positions in the Togdheer, after the mutinies of late January and the riots of February and March of the same year.

However, depicting the SSDF as a 'Umar Mahamuud organization is not totally true. First of all, it attracted members of the Mahamuud Saleebaan section of the Majeerteen, but none from the smaller sub-clans like 'Abdirahiin Saleebaan or 'Ali Saleebaan. The fact that the latter groups felt deprived under the previous civilian administration, when members of the Mahamuud Saleebaan represented the whole clan in the ruling class, could explain the fact that a Majeerteen remained loyal to Siyaad- notwithstanding the case of individuals like Mahamuud Gelle Yuusuf.

Secondly, the SSDF included elements from Isaaq and Hawiye clan families who were previously members either of the Somali Democratic Action Front (SODAF)<sup>10</sup> which merged in February 1979 with 'Abdullaahi's band to make the Somali Salvation Front (SOSAF), or of the leftist groups, Somali Workers Party (SWP)<sup>11</sup> and Somali Democratic Front for the Liberation of Somalia (SDFLS)<sup>12</sup> amalgated with the SOSAF in October 1981. The provisional eleven member Executive Committee included two Isaaq, one Dhulbahante and one Hawiye<sup>13</sup>. However, the domination of the Majeerteen was weighed after the First Congress of February 1983: only four of the twenty new Executive Committee members were affiliated to other clans, a convenient way to firmly ensure 'Abdullaahi's personal control of the organization. We understand that in late 1988, the remaining Hawiye elements of the Front left: in January 1989, some of them joined the United Somali

Congress (USC) in Rome; another group of around twenty-six (or thirty-three) activists<sup>14</sup> decided to stay in the SNM. Apparently, this group has led the revived guerrilla activity between Beled Weyne and Dusa Mareb in 1989.

Because they were powerful before the 1969 coup, the Mahamuud Saleebaan are suspected of scheming to restore their past prominence in the state affairs and thus replace one clan domination by another. But also the Mahamuud Saleebaan could legitimately complain that they became the target of a systematic repression by the security forces in the late 70's; for example, many were arrested, villages burned to the ground, herds slaughtered and women raped in the Mudug area in 1979 to "punish" the Umar Mahamuud for their alleged support of "Abdillaahi Yuusuf's guerrilla. As Said S. Samatar and David D. Laitin noted: "From the early period of the revolution, Siyaad exhibited what some would call paranoia but others a justifiable fear of the Majeerteen clan.... Siyaad found himself identifying them on the basis of their clan membership."<sup>15</sup> Though the persecution started as early as August 1975<sup>16</sup>, it was accentuated after the attempted coup of 1978. Thus it is not surprising that the Umar Mahamuud formed the bulk of SDDF troops.

The SNM voluntarily confined war operations to the Isaaq territory and the surrounding areas, a deliberate strategy more than a result of limited military abilities. SNM officials usually justify it in saying that their guerrillas would not benefit from the same support from rural people of the other clans.<sup>17</sup> It is a way to admit that the "national liberation struggle" is in fact superseded by a clan-family uprising and it is precisely why some Somali from Hawiye, Dir or Daarood affiliations suspect that secession of the North is the 'hidden agenda' of this movement. Little evidence has been produced yet to support this dubious treason, except that SNM raised its own flag in the captured towns and that the Isaaq crowds sometimes shouted: "Daarood Afoon."<sup>18</sup> It remains to be seen whether the dispute on this issue which fiercely divided the SNM in 1981 is really over. If the current leadership can easily be credited for its clear statements on the necessity to preserve Somalia's territorial integrity engraved in the SNM constitution (Art.6) and underlined in its political program since 1984, there is no guarantee that tomorrow a new majority could not advocate the opposite stand. Paradoxically, ceaseless suspicion on the part of other clans may strengthen the separatist faction inside the SNM.

The large scale offensive launched by this front in late May 1988 reinforced the clan-family nature of its popular backing. The fierce repression conducted by the Somali Armed Forces against the civilians either in the towns or in the rural areas had the effect of rallying nearly unanimously those of the Isaaq who were still neutral or even in favor of the regime. The atrocities of the Government troops are well documented in a report written in August 1989 by a U.S. State Department consultant, Robert Gersony, whose main conclusions are worth an extensive quotation: "In response to SNM's May 1988 inten-

sification of the civil conflict in northern Somalia, the Somali Armed Forces appear to have engaged in a widespread, systematic and extremely violent assault on the unarmed civilian Isaaq population of northern Somalia in places where and at times when neither resistance to these actions nor danger to the Somali Armed Forces was present. The Somali Armed Forces conducted what appears to be a systematic pattern of attacks against unarmed, civilian Isaaq villages, watering points and grazing areas of northern Somalia, killing many of their residents and forcing the survivors to flee for safety to remote areas within Somalia or to other countries. ... In an additional pattern of systematic, organized and sustained Somali Armed Forces actions in Berbera, which has not been the object of an SNM attack or the scene of a conflict, at least five hundred, and perhaps many more Isaaq men were systematically rounded up and murdered, mainly by having their throats cut, and then buried in mass graves, during the four months following the intensification of the conflict, apparently solely because they were Isaaq. ... While some survivors of these kinds of actions, as well as civilians simply escaping the major battles in Hargeisa and Burao, were attempting to flee to sanctuary in Ethiopia, they were attacked by Somali ground and air forces, which probably resulted in the deaths of hundreds of asylum seekers."<sup>19</sup>

The report also mentioned summary executions of prisoners, looting and raping of Isaaq women. The death toll of Isaaq civilians is "conservatively" estimated to reach at least 5,000 between May 1988 and March 1989. These findings corroborate the reports previously released by human rights organizations such as Amnesty International and Africa Watch.<sup>20</sup> In fact, this upsurge of state violence is obviously the peak of a long-standing persecution perpetrated by the Government security apparatus against the Isaaq.<sup>21</sup> No doubt it has created a deep rift between Isaaq and other Somalis.

Of course, SNM's pledges to defend national interest would have been more convincing if they had first opened their Central and Executive Committees to non-Isaaq prominent politicians. The first non-Isaaq member in the SNM leadership was colonel 'Abdisalaam 'Usmaan Dini (Gorgor)- an Habergidir- appointed as Secretary in November 1983. For a time the chapter chairman in Washington was Habergidir, too, an ex-minister in Siyaad's regime Mahammad 'Ali Warsame (Kimiko). The Hawiye in the Central Committee elected in 1983 numbered only two. A serious effort was made in the Fourth Congress, 1984, and led to the following distribution of the forty-one elected members of the C.C.: twenty-nine Isaaq, eight Hawiye (predominantly Habergidir) and one of each following groupings, Dhulbahante, Majeerteen, Godabiirsay and Rahanweyn. "Although SNM leaders have tried to make a broad appeal to Somali values- criticizing the president for neglecting the Islamic and democratic values of all Somali people- they remain predominantly a party of Isaaqs."<sup>22</sup> The SNM was never able to

rally a mass support in the other clans as it succeeded to do- at least since early 1987- among the Isaaq. However, a new generation of liberation fronts, like the USC (Hawiye) or the Somali Patriotic Front (Ogaadeen) which are openly based on kinship loyalties, is coming now and somehow the endless debate upon tribal nature of SNM appeal is outdated.

### *Side-effects of the Ethiopian sanctuary*

The three major military fronts made the political choice to take refuge in Ethiopia and to beg the support of the latter before starting their guerrilla war: the SSDF since its inception, the SNM from March 1982 and as I understand, the USC which commenced negotiating conditions in early 1989.

It is a common complaint that these movements were used by the Ethiopian rulers and their "new" Russian friends to destabilize Mahammad Siyaad Barre's regime: "The so-called Somali Salvation Front ... in reality is nothing more than a pawn in the anti-Somali schemes of Ethiopia and its Soviet ally", wrote Abdi Sheik-Abdi,<sup>23</sup> who also denied it any right to defend Somali national interest. A typical statement from an opponent who would never have supported an organization backed by Somalia's "traditional enemy." Another Somali intellectual, Hussein Abdillahi Bulhan, held a very similar opinion on the SSDF: "disgruntled and misguided members of the captive intelligentsia" which began to collaborate with Ethiopia."<sup>24</sup> In a more moderate formulation while extending the judgement to the SNM, David D. Laitin and Said S. Samatar also pointed out: "Because of their complicity with Lieutenant Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam, the Ethiopian Head of State, they [i.e. the SNM and the SSDF] are subject to the charge of treason, a charge made regularly by the Somali authorities in Mogadishu on national radio."<sup>25</sup> The answer of pro-SNM is also very clear: "For the Somali people who support the opposition movements, Gen. Barre and Col. Mengistu Haile Mariam of Ethiopia, were choosing between two evils, and under the circumstance at that time Ethiopia was the lesser of two evils."<sup>26</sup> Whether it was practically possible or not to do anything else,<sup>27</sup> this choice indeed lent some credibility to Government propaganda. It seems to us, however, that this issue is less controversial than it was in the past, maybe because Mahammad Siyaad himself ruined the very idea of Somali nationalism when he implicitly renounced Somalia's historic claims on the Ogaden area,<sup>28</sup> while signing a treaty with Mengistu, even though the reality of the alleged "secret clause" was not convincingly documented.<sup>29</sup>

Setting up military bases across the Ethiopian border instead of maintaining an underground force inside the country, always a hard task, proved to be counter-productive because it allowed only hit-and-run attacks.

This tactic is very unpopular among the civilians who suffer both from the fighting in their neighborhood and from the retaliation measures from the government side. It was particularly obvious when the neighborhood and from the retaliation measures from the government side. It was particularly obvious when the Ethiopian air force was supporting SSDF operations by bombing Somali border towns. Neither the SSDF nor the SNM could keep under their control for a long period even small portions of the "liberated areas." The case of Balambale and Goldogod does not contradict this observation: the Ethiopian army was heavily present on that battle front. It only became possible in the Togdheer and Sanag regions after the uprising of the whole Isaaq population in June 1988 which changes guerrilla activity into a civil war.

To conclude on this point, the outbreak of a civil war all over the country by mid-1989 is certainly a major threat to the rule of the president and his clique but it is hardly an achievement of the prevailing opposition fronts: the SSDF has been silenced by its Ethiopian patrons since late 1985 and as for the SNM, its "last chance" offensive in May 1988 stimulated an uprising of a population turned desperate by increasingly savage repression suffered since 1982. The Mogadishu riots of July 14-16,<sup>30</sup> fomented by fundamentalist Muslim activists,<sup>31</sup> and the rebellion of Ogaadeen clansmen in the south owed more to the political disintegration of the regime<sup>32</sup> than to the effectiveness of the opposition fronts, even though they might benefit from the current upheaval since they are the main structured forces. It seems that the Government has lost control of most of the country, especially the northern and central regions and the Jubaland. But a complete breakdown of law and order opening avenues for some looting and violence by gangs of unbridled bandits is more likely to take place there than anything else.<sup>33</sup> None of the fronts has yet been able to extend its control on these areas, let alone to set up any kind of alternative political rule.

### THE STRENUOUS WORK OF UNIFYING SOMALI OPPOSITION

#### *A constant motto but little practical achievement*

The inception of the SSDF was the first attempt to amalgamate different movements which had in common the desire to overthrow Mahammad Siyaad. At first, it was partially a success: it gave a broader representation to the movement, in terms of clan allegiance; it created a genuine dynamic and people of some importance joined between October 1981 and late 1982. But at last, internal deep contradictions between 'Abdillaahi Yuusuf's authoritarian style of leadership and the ambitions of the left wing leaders appeared to be fierce. Instead of a dialectical process producing a better synthesis, as marxist rhetoric puts it, the factional struggle foundered in a deadly feud, at the ex-

pense of the "leftists" who felt over-confident because of their closer relationship with the Ethiopian DERG.<sup>34</sup> Finally the Front was neutralized through the direct involvement of the Ethiopian security: 'Abdillaahi Yuusuf and 'Abdillaahi Mahammad Hasaan (FASH)- General Secretary of the SSDF- were arrested in late October 1985. The former is still in jail and the latter died. Most of his lieutenants were rounded up or killed in the following months as the Ethiopian Army attacked SSDF camps to seize the sophisticated armament granted by the Libyans.<sup>35</sup>

Logically, the SSDF proposed to the SNM that the two fronts merge and talks were opened in March 1982. Despite the agreement signed on October 7, the same year, cooperation between these organizations was restricted to sharing Radio Halgan. In 1984, the SNM Congress proclaimed its wish for an immediate merging of the two guerrilla fronts, but for the SSDF it was too late: its leaders were at that time too busy fighting one another to contribute in any positive way to the unification of Somali opposition. In any case, it would have proved uneasy to elaborate a common political platform since the remaining nucleus of the SSDF after the Fall of 1985 was dominated by communist propagandists.<sup>36</sup>

In the late 80's the relation between the very recently born United Somali Congress (USC) and the SNM- the more powerful of the two groups- became almost comparable to the one which previously existed between the SSDF and SNM. At a time when the SNM had seriously challenged the government army, it was surprising to see some of its Hawiye members founding their own independent organization in Rome, on the eve of 1989. Even more remarkable was the subsequent creation on March 3, 1989 of a seven member committee of the USC set up to negotiate with the SNM the conditions of a merger of the two groups. Mahammad Faarah Jim'aale was designated to head this body apparently because, unlike the current chairman of the USC, he has a good relationship with Silanyo, the Head of SNM. As proposed on a working USC conference held in Rome, from February 27 to March 2, "the two committees [of the SNM and the USC] can discuss about the possible unification between USC and SNM, and submit their recommendations to the higher leading bodies of the respective organizations."<sup>37</sup> This method of creating a joint committee to discuss a possible future union has already been used in the past by the SNM, with the SSDF, to astutely delay any effective step forward. We understand that USC leaders believe that their organization is too weak in terms of membership and that it has to launch an effective guerrilla in the central regions before a successful merger of the two fronts as equal partners could materialize.

Even the oldest alliance cannot resist a change of political context: the Ogaadeen clan was used until December 1988 by Siyaad Barre to fight the SNM, either within commandos of the Western Somali Liberation Front

(WSLF) operating inside Ethiopia or through the refugees in Somalia forceably conscripted in the government army.<sup>38</sup> Now the clan is split up and one faction supports the Somali Patriotic Movement, namely a rebellious group of Ogaadeen officers and soldiers close to the ousted Defence Minister Aadan 'Abdullaahi Nuur (Gabyow). Since Ahmed 'Umar Jess defected with two hundred soldiers in late June 1989, there are discussions between the SNM and the Ogaadeen rebels for coordination of military effort, and possible kind of political unification of these two opposition fronts.

In one document the SNM calls for the formation of a "united opposition force"; in another, we are reminded that it has to follow "a democratic and realistic course." A view exists that the SNM, taking an argument of its unexpected military successes in the North since last year, is more confident of being alone able to challenge, eventually topple the regime and thereafter has ambitions to comprise the whole opposition in its ranks.

To be fair, other attempts to unify Somali opposition should be mentioned here but none has produced any lasting result yet. We refer to the group "Somalia First" set up in 1983<sup>39</sup> and also to the meeting of several ex-ministers and civil servants- on June 5, 1983 and October 22, 1988- in Washington. The first meeting issued a communique signed by seven prominent politicians from three major clan families (Daarood, Isaaq, Hawiye), including the chairman of the SNM and the former Prime Minister Abdirisaak Haaji Huseen. All participants agreed that national reconciliation and restoration of democracy in Somalia "required minimally the departure of Siyaad Barre."<sup>40</sup> Although their call for unity and removal of the current regime received apparently little attention, another meeting was convened in 1988 to react to the sequence of dramatic events in the North. The seven people who signed this time were more representative since they were affiliated to four clan families. They formed a "Coordinating Committee of the Opposition in North America." Even though they expressed the need to unify "all opposition forces" under a "common strategy and a political programme of action", their aim was not to create a new organization as their explicit support of "the struggle of the opposition movements" attested.<sup>41</sup> Taking the long view, they purposely began to prepare the post-Siyaad era. However, the announced conference in Europe has not been held ever since and this goodwill approach might not survive the ongoing chaos in Somalia.

#### MAJOR OBSTACLES TO AN EFFECTIVE UNIFICATION

Foreign interference often creates more problems than solutions. Hence, the debate on unification between the SSDF and the SNM was much complicated by the attitude of the Ethiopian patron and the Libyan sponsor. They put pressure on the two movements all year long in 1982,<sup>42</sup> to hasten a

decision which would have meant for the smaller SNM a crude absorption. It is frequently stated the clan-based nature of the opposition fronts is a good explanation of their failure to join together in a single organization. Traditional enmities between Daarood and Isaaq or Daarood and Hawiye could explain their reluctance to trust one another in the dangerous and delicate activity of subversion.<sup>43</sup>

It is particularly obvious in refugee communities abroad: except for a few open-minded individuals, the opposition circles are split up, as well as the community organizations, along clan-family lines. One can argue that clan identity is the only effective ground for political mobilization in Somali society due to its segmentary structure, but many opposition activists also confess that this profound "tribalistic" fragmentation of the opposition was abundantly manipulated by Mahammad Siyaad for the sake of his regime: in this context, it is not so surprising to see some ex-members of the SSDF having been used by the Machiavellian President, who called for Daarood solidarity, to fight against SNM in the northern regions, since the Mahammad Saleebaan frequently complain that they have received little support from the Isaaq from 1978-1979 onward, when their tribesmen were massacred in Mudug.

Criticisms of the Fronts for being tribal-minded<sup>44</sup> proved to be self-fulfilling prophecies, even when their leaders, like for example those of the SNM since 1984, really tried to enlarge their political base.

The argument of clanism was used by many self-exiled Somalis- particularly from Dir or Daarood clan affiliations- to explain why they could support neither the SSDF nor the SNM. It is this opinion that Mahamed Said Samatar<sup>45</sup> held as follows: "It is high time that one said 'No' both to the dictatorship of Muhammad Siad Barre and the clannish militancy of SNM and SSDF. The liberation of Somalia is a matter for all Somalis and it will not come about except after all Somalis have agreed not only on the meaning of 'liberation', but more especially on *who* is liberating *whom*."<sup>46</sup> The last sentence of this quotation better than any further comment show that most of the op-ponents would hardly trust a group dominated by another clan than theirs. It also contradicts the major viewpoint that this author formulated in his article and indicates that clan segmentation is indeed of some relevance to understand Somali contemporary politics. However, one can legitimately point out that these dissidents claiming to be free of tribal thinking did not however build themselves the "authentic national opposition disposed to offer a valid alternative against the incumbent political regime"<sup>47</sup> they still call for.

Furthermore, some Somalis not necessarily enthusiastic about the regime let the President use them to confront the SNM, directly on the battlefield: "The government of President Siyaad Barre has armed clans which traditionally oppose the Isaaq, hoping they will help beat back the SNM."<sup>48</sup> In fact the strategy was successful enough to limit the extent of SNM territorial

gains (though it failed with the 'Iise). These conflicts are certainly rooted in past clan feuds between the Isaaq and their neighbors but their modern resurgence is the outcome of a deliberate policy personally engineered by the Head of State. The elders of these clans (Godabiirsay, Dhulbahante and Warsangali) actually agreed to set up a clan militia financed and supplied by the central power.<sup>49</sup>

More than a sign of allegiance to the regime, it was a bargaining posture since they expected to be rewarded with money as well as various privileges.<sup>50</sup> From a SNM point of view, they took sides in the civil war and consequently some clashes occurred between Isaaq guerrillas and these militias. Thus the SNM cannot be blamed alone for the mounting polarization in the North between Isaaq and non-Isaaq.<sup>51</sup> On the contrary, its leaders tried on many occasions to reach a modus vivendi with the other clans as its fruitful cooperation with the 'Iise in Loyada and Seila' tends to demonstrate.

Even if Ogaadeen movements and Isaaq SNM were in the future successfully amalgamated (or any other formula of cooperation), this alliance might prove hard to maintain: the question of self-determination of the Ogaden region will come out one day, and it is believed that Isaaq leaders nurture little interest for the pan-Somali issue. Moreover, it is said that the SNM already reached an agreement with Ethiopian Head of State according to which a future SNM government would recognize the Ethiopian sovereignty on this region and would recover the Haud and "Reserved Areas" in exchange.<sup>52</sup>

It seems that another major point of disagreement was the question of the leadership in the future organization. According to private testimonies on the autocratic style of 'Abdillaahi Yuusuf, it is understandable that SNM leaders did not want to join the SSDF without guarantees for their political representation and their influence on decision-making: about three months after the ambiguous agreement of October 7, 1982 'Abdillaahi showed that he was determined to keep his position by any means when he arrested thirty SSDF officials (mainly ex-members of the SWP and the SDLF) because they demanded accountability from his leadership.<sup>53</sup>

Last but not the least, coping with a segmented society, the democratic rule of the majority ballot is of little help: no clan will accept for a long time to be treated as a minority within a party or a region, even when it seems to be actually the case. The Hawiye who left the SNM to form the USC in January 1989, provide us with a good example of such an attitude.

Nevertheless, not all of the Hawiye left the SNM, some elements- particularly among those who joined the Movement in November 1988 and doing so quit the desperately immobile SSDF- still believe that a united transclanic opposition is needed and that the SNM is in a position to achieve it. Some remain in between, like Mahammad Farah Jim'aale, still a member of SNM Central Committee, but also promoted last June to the Executive

Committee of the USC- the number two on a list of thirteen people. Apparently he expected the quick implementation of an umbrella front to unite the two organizations but no such decision has come out yet.

### *Devastating Consequences*

The lack of even an umbrella organization which could coordinate both the military operation and the external communications of the fronts towards Somali civilians and foreigners is weakening the opposition. Public opinion in Western countries is a heavy weapon, as the SNM finally recognized. Ever since the release of reports from Amnesty international, Human Rights Watch and others, detailed human rights abuses in Somalia, the lobbying of this organization in Washington and elsewhere has become much more efficient than ever before. Its impact would probably be higher if the opposition could speak with a single voice.

There is no obvious consensus between opposition forces on the future of Somalia, no common proposal for a political solution including all Somalis in the event that Mahammad Siyaad relinquishes voluntarily the power or manages to flee secretly. Nevertheless, many argue that an agreement ought to be urgently set up to prevent an extension of the civil war.

No evidence has been produced yet to indicate that the competing fronts are ready to share power tomorrow. It is certainly not of the interest of the Western Powers which backed Mahammad Siyaad Barre during the last decade to abandon him when there is no governmental alternative.

Disunity delays eventual victory. Many Somalis who are not members of the clans supporting one or another of the fighting fronts are not willing to join, even though they dislike Mahammad Siyaad's dictatorship. Many clans (from Dir, Digil or Rahanweyn) are not involved in any opposition front<sup>54</sup> because they do not expect anything from a change limited to governmental circles: they suffered from the political domination of the three major clan families either during the civilian regime or under Mahammad Siyaad Barre's rule. Whether they are right or wrong when saying that SNM, SSDF, USC and others are basically tribal-minded, is a rather rhetorical question: disunity surely fuels their stand. It seems that the judgement formulated by *Africa Confidential* in 1983 is still accurate: "Until now Barre's greatest strength has been the weakness of his opponents."<sup>55</sup>

### ALTERNATIVE LEADERSHIP OR TRUE POLITICAL ALTERNATIVES ?

#### *Vague political programs*

The cornerstone of the opposition fronts' programs is the call for the removal of the present regime and the return to full democracy, in the words of the SNM, "building of a democratic and constitutional system of government consistent with the cultural and religious beliefs of the nation"<sup>56</sup>; "the establishment of a national-democratic system of government and the solution of the matter of power in the service of national democratic and progressive forces"<sup>57</sup> in SSDF language. For the USC too, "the objectives and aims of the party are the restoration of human rights and democratic liberties of the Somali citizen [and the establishment of ] a democratic system and institutions."<sup>58</sup> The SSDF seems to advocate a new version of Somali socialism- without using the word, and calls for "national-democracy" but does not mention the usual elements of a parliamentary regime- i.e. free elections and multipartism. The other two openly support a "restoration" of a Western-style democracy, with reference (in one document) to the American presidential system in the case of the SNM.

However, available texts indicate a paucity of thinking about future institutions and the specific problems induced by the implementation of democracy in the Somali social environment. For example, how will they take into account, in a pluralist parliamentary system, the pervasive influence of clan loyalties? This question divides itself in two main issues: the risk of fragmentation of the nation in microstates, and the ability of the political system to protect the legitimate interests of the different clans. On the first point, the SNM puts the principle of "protection of the unity of the people and land of Somalia" at the top of its objectives and proposes an original institutional scheme: "The system of government will be unitary and national with strong powers, precisely declared in the Constitution, vested upon lower governments such as regional governments, and with the people having the power to elect the central government and lower governments in a free, legal and verifiable manner."<sup>59</sup> Truly speaking, it is closer to the British decentralized system, for example, than to any kind of federalism. Yet, little is said about the number of regions (if more than four or five, the regions would not be able to play any significant role in economic development, precisely their main function), the rights of a minority clan within a region dominated by another more numerous one (clearly an alarming prospect for the Godabiirsay), and also the relations between the central government representatives<sup>60</sup> in the regions and the elected local bodies (a source of conflict in a unitary state). On the second point, the SNM formula remains obscure: "The enactment of political re-

sponsibility will be based on collective decision-making with the participation of the elders of various social groupings of the society and the religious scholars."<sup>61</sup> Is it to say that the traditional *shirs* (councils) of clan elders would be granted a share of the legislative power by virtue of the Constitution or else be systematically consulted upon specific matters? Thus, the SNM proposals for the renewal of the political institutions, the most formalized among those disclosed by oppositions fronts up to now, are not totally convincing.

Regarding the economic crisis and new solutions to be brought in, the picture is even more disappointing: "The economic management of the country will comprise the public sector... and the private sector ..., cooperating together and serving in harmony for the advancement of the people."<sup>62</sup> Except for a reminiscence of "self-sufficiency of the people" but without any proposed strategy to attain this goal, there is more wishful thinking than concrete proposals. The economic and financial turmoil is however as serious as the political situation<sup>63</sup> and the SNM supporters might prove to be overconfident about the abilities of the northern businessclass in stimulating the economic recovery. Nothing very original in SNM future foreign policy except for a commitment to peace in the Horn which will be based on "brotherhood and cooperation" between Ethiopia and Somalia which "are tied together by bonds of common interests and inseparable destiny which fully benefit the peoples of both nations."<sup>64</sup>

When I hear a USC activist claim that the Hawiye clan-family represents two thirds of the population so the ballot will automatically give its MPs a strong majority in the parliament, I wonder how other Somalis would welcome such an attitude. Has any progress been achieved in clan mentalities during the thirty years of independent Somalia? The same comment could be made on a statement by an SNM supporter who admitted that the unanimous wish of his tribesmen was self-government- i.e. rule over the Isaaq populated regions by Isaaq officials- for their own sake, whatever the government in Mogadishu should be. These "misguided" feelings tend to demonstrate that the mobilization of the opposition forces in Somalia today is fueled by clan chauvinism much more than by appealing political programs. It is hard not to regard this as a failure of the fronts' leadership.

As a famous Somali intellectual convincingly puts it: "These serious weaknesses are partly due to the naive belief that the demise of General Barre's rule will automatically usher in a buoyant economy and democratic politics. This is compounded by an inability to envisage a coherent theory of mobilization and renewal."<sup>65</sup> This however calls for two comments: First, the author refers implicitly to marxist paradigm as a frame for the "creation of a set of powerful ideas", but it is doubtful that any kind of socialist ideology is likely to be accepted by those who suffered from Siyaad Barre's "scientific socialism". Secondly, I am not sure that the historical record shows so

obviously that ideas are true motive to pull the masses into action; a political ideology has more to do with symbols than with rational ideas produced by social scientist. Those who mediate- let us call them "urbanised petty bourgeoisie" to please this author-between intellectual elaboration and the masses always twist the ideas to fit their own interest as organizational- and later state- ruling elites.<sup>66</sup>

### *Contradictory Tendencies*

Both SSDF and SNM are divided into competing factions with very different ideological backgrounds. In the case of the SSDF, it nearly led to the complete obliteration of the group. Despite the consolidation of Silanyo's position in the 1987 Congress, underground competition, as I understand, is still severe inside the SNM. "Though it is dominated by religious doctrinaires (Islamic fundamentalists, Isaaq supremacists and regional separatists), its leadership is composed of people with opposing ideologies", as *Africa Confidential* portrayed the SNM in 1983.<sup>67</sup> The picture has evolved since Ahmed Silanyo took over SNM chairmanship in 1984, but fractions are still there. "Both groups are a mixture of ideological elements, often pulled apart by individualistic and petty capitalist values, Islamic fundamentalism, divisive clanism, and even impulses of social democracy."<sup>68</sup> The Islamic fundamentalist wing got its share with the "General Principles" of SNM Constitutions: "The Constitution shall be based on Islamic Sharia" (Art. 1), Somali traditional law will apply except when "contrary to the Islamic Sharia" (Art. 3), the SNM flag will bear as an inscription the first surat of Quran in Arabic (Art. 10). After the 1984 Congress, the implementation of "an intensive Islamic Programme through which it will effectively instruct its Mujahids in Islamic teachings and practices" was one of the eight 'Short Term Objectives' of the Movement. In 1987, this was replaced in the official program by a mention among the duties of SNM during the armed struggle, of "the enhancement of the Islamic religion and its implementation." This seems to clearly indicate that visible Fundamentalists' influence<sup>69</sup> inside SNM structure has decreased- not necessarily within the membership.

Of course, Islam remains the religion of nearly all Somalis and the SNM still advocates a "constitutional responsibility" of the future Somali government in "the development of ... Islamic religion and the implementation of its practice- a status of religion of the state that Islam already enjoys, but it will appear rather as a rhetoric reference, as it was in the two previous regimes, if the rest of the political program is effectively implemented.

However, ideological struggle is not necessarily the only force for division: for example, it is not totally clear whether Abdulkadir Kosar Abdi's faction which took the upper hand in the SNM in November 1983, was advo-

cating a more pro-marxist oriented policy, possibly to win a stronger backing from Libya and Ethiopia, or simply looking for a better share for his own Haber Yunis sub-clan<sup>70</sup>, well represented in SNM guerrillas at a time the leadership was dominated by members of Haber Awal. Similarly, the long-standing challenge of Silanyo's leadership by Ibrahim Meygag Samatar (an ex-minister of Siyaad too and the official representative of the SNM in North America)<sup>71</sup> may reflect either the aspiration of his fellow clansmen (Haber Awal) or an alternative political orientation—allegedly supporting future secession of the North. The clan segmentation dynamics and the ideological disputes are two combining factors in the intricate politics of the SNM, an organization which appears to us as an aggregate of minorities.<sup>72</sup> The USC is split up alike along clan lines when it comes to leadership issues and it is questionable whether this organization will be able to mobilize the Abgal— one of the major Hawiye clans— since its chairman and several Executive Committee members are recruited among the Habergidir.

We also have to take into account human psychology : some observers believe that the creation of USC in January 1989 is partly due to the personal hostility between 'Ali Mahammad 'Osoble (Wardhiigley)— its current chairman— and Silanyo. Wardhiigley had been elected Vice-Chairman of SNM at the 1984 congress, a gesture intended to show SNM leaders' willingness to make a political overture towards the Hawiye. However, the two leaders disagree on many points and Silanyo might have perceived Wardhiigley as a menacing challenger. The rivalry came to the point that the latter was ousted of the SNM executive in 1987.<sup>73</sup>

### *Ideology as a means of power*

Being large coalitions which bring together politicians of different backgrounds and also civil servants and soldiers who are neophytes in politics, the opposition fronts have to put aside ideological disputes. This is not unusual. But was the SSDF really free to choose its political orientation when it was so dependent on Communist Ethiopia? 'Abdillaahi Yuusuf was not dedicated to marxism or socialism; in his first public statements in 1978, he emphasized the questions of human rights, Islamic beliefs of the Somalis and the return to "full democratic rule." Later on when the SSDF emerged, the socialist rhetoric prevailed in the Front speeches. How should we understand the rather recent allegiance of this movement to Western-style democracy? It seems to me that a political set of ideas (sometimes "democracy" or "socialism" or "Islamism" etc...) is nothing more for many opposition activists than a useful tool in the power struggle, rather similar to Siyaad Barre's attitude. The contradictory statements in the programs of the various fronts might

also have something to do with the necessity of pleasing foreign supporters from opposite ideological stands.

More specifically, how should we understand that some brilliant leaders of the opposition who now seem to be sincerely dedicated to "democracy", "human rights" and "free ballot", had previously served under Mahammad Siyaad's regime during the 70's as ministers, diplomats or in other high-ranking positions? Did they really have to wait for six to twelve years to find out that "socialist" Somalia was not, by any standard, a genuine democratic country? Indeed everybody has a right to change his opinion at any moment but public—not necessarily emphatic— self-criticism is still awaited to turn the mounting tide of skepticism within the Somali youth regarding the ability of these politicians to restore freedom and democracy in Somalia, a task which requires not only imaginative institutions but also a sincere adherence of political elites to the corresponding values.<sup>74</sup>

At least, according to many observers, the commitment of the SNM to Western-style democracy seems more credible since it manages to follow the rules established by its own constitution<sup>75</sup> for the allocation of power, and exercises a kind of control over its leaders : according to my sources, changes in its leadership resulted from a majority vote inside its regular institutions, without a deadly feud.<sup>76</sup> The local branches abroad regularly elected their committees and delegates to the different congresses but little is known about the implementation of democracy within SNM structure either in Ethiopia (military bases) or in Northern Somalia. The "Mujahid's Constitution" provides the leadership with all the means to impose its people and its decision in the name of security requirements (Art. 38 (d) and (e), Art. 39 (d), Art. 40 (d)). The very precisely described and apparently coherent architecture of the Movement, the creation of an internal justice system and financial control are given evidences of the commitment of the SNM to "the rule of the law."

When it comes to human rights, however, the record of this organization might appear much darker : killings of civilians were reported not only when the SNM attacked the refugee camps in the North but also in various situations, when its guerrillas murdered asylum seekers fleeing from conflict areas for the sole reason that they were not Isaaq.<sup>77</sup> It will be rather difficult for a movement claiming for *national* liberation to justify such abuses. Moreover, people from other clans will hardly find themselves encouraged to join the SNM if it emerges that its political and military chiefs are not able to control their guerrillas and contain the growing Isaaq chauvinism within the "Mujahidin."<sup>78</sup> There were also some allegations of purges in the ranks of its guerrillas on the orders of the Chairman<sup>79</sup>, but all SNM officials I could interview denied these executions and brought in plausible explanations.

To appear as a convincing political alternative, a liberation movement needs also a step-by-step strategy for the transition to democracy. This is

maybe even more important than a clear vision of the future or an unambiguous ideological posture. At the present time, the opposition has not gone very far in such a direction, at least in its public statements: little more than asking the Somali president to leave power.

To be fair, however, the final section of the program of SNM calls for the establishment of a "transitional administration ... for a maximum period of two years ... which will lead the country in the process of eliminating the legacy of difficulties inherited from the dictatorial system" and set up the democratic institution. In other words, the people are requested to fully entrust the SNM for managing the transition to democracy, for what many of them will certainly not be prepared, especially if the current disunity still prevails. The USC advocates "the establishment of a national democratic government in the transitional period following the overthrow of the dictatorial regime, that shall hold free and fair elections within a year."<sup>80</sup> Nothing is said about the composition of a transitional cabinet which is supposed to introduce new legislations on many important subjects (a reform of the judicial system, the future constitution, the status of political parties etc...).

Who would be allowed to participate in the planned general elections? How to implement such a delicate process in a country completely disorganized? How would they prevent a rigged ballot at a time there is no credible data about potential voters? Would they recognize or ban political groupings based on clans? What would be the guarantees given to individuals who are not affiliated to the winners' clan-family?

These are a few of the basic questions to which the main opposition fronts should give an answer if they want first, to rally most of Somali intellectuals and educated elites and then to mobilize the masses. If they fail, another alternative force which has remained largely underground until now, totally different in its ideology as well as in its structure, might arise from inside Somali society, with a clear identity—radical Islamism—and a definite project: the establishment of an Islamic state whose constitution would be the Quran and the Sunna, its ruling class the community of sheekhs and ulemas.<sup>81</sup> This would sanction the eventual failure of Somali opposition fronts and thus of the whole political class.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>I adopted the official Somali orthography, except for the use of h instead of x and instead of c, to facilitate the reading for Western scholars. However, the names of the Somali authors quoted in this article have retained the original spelling used at the time of the first printing. Mogadishu and Hargeisa retain their conventional spelling in the Western press. Following certain names, in parenthesis, are the Somali nicknames for these people.

<sup>2</sup>This article was written in mid-November 1989.

<sup>3</sup>The scope of this study will be restricted to the three most well-known organizations: the Somali National Movement, the Somali Salvation Democratic Front and the United Somali Congress.

<sup>4</sup>In particular, the troops of Abdillaahi Yuusuf (interview of opponents, Paris, 11/02/88).

<sup>5</sup>Lewis I.M., *A Modern History of Somalia: Nation and State in the Horn of Africa*, Boulder Col., Westview Press, 1988, p. 246. Many Isaaq and Hawiye that I interviewed blamed the Majeerteen for not associating officers from other clans in this attempted coup.

<sup>6</sup>See *Africa Confidential*, 25/08/82 and 8/09/82.

<sup>7</sup>Created in London on April 6, 1981 by about 500 exiled Somali, including former army officers, ministers and diplomats (predominantly Isaaq), the SNM resulting from the amalgamation of a clandestine movement which had originated in the Arabian peninsula and the political wing of Somali communities in Britain. Its head office is in London. The SNM was inaugurated during a seven day conference, October 13–20, 1981, attended by delegates from Saudi Arabia, Abu Dabi, Qatar, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

<sup>8</sup>See a summary: "Somalia: Generals fall out", *Africa Confidential*, v. 29, NO 19, 23/09/88.

<sup>9</sup>Ahmed I. Samatar, *Socialist Somalia: Rhetoric and Reality*, London and New Jersey, Institute for African Alternatives, Zed Books Ltd, 1988, p. 154 note 41.

<sup>10</sup>Being the first organized opposition force to the regime, according to our sources, the existence of SODAF was disclosed by some of its founding members in August 1977. It gathered together ex-civil servants opposed to Siyaad's dictatorship and disappointed by the so-called "Somali Revolution" [*African Contemporary Record 1977–78*, B 390]. First based in Rome then in Nairobi, the Front nominated as General Secretary Usmaan Nuur 'Ali (Qonof); and Ismaan Mahamuud, Minister for Justice, Labour and Religious Affairs during the civilian government, also president of Mogadishu's C.A.S.S. until his departure in 1977. Umar Hasaan Mahamuud (Sterline) an Abgal, mayor of Mogadishu from 1963 to 1969, jailed from 1969 to 1975, then in exile in Rome, was the Chairman. Mahamuud Gelle Elmi, Habergidir, Secretary of State for Commerce in the first cabinet of the military regime from November 1969 to July 13, 1970 served as Foreign Affairs Secretary. SODAF included also ex-diplomats of Siyaad's regime like 'Abdirahmaan Salah Ahmed and a former ambassador to Kenya, Huseen Haaji 'Ali Dualeh, who defected publicly in January 1978 [*Africa Contemporary Record 1977–78* B 390]. The Minister of Education within the first cabinet formed after the coup (he resigned at the same time as Mahamuud Gelle Elmi), Hasaan 'Ali Mirreh (Majeerteen) was also a founding member of SODAF. Some observers believe that the SODAF collapsed in July 1977 [Ahmed I. Samatar, (1988), p. 140]. Most probably it merged with 'Abdillaahi Yuusuf's group in the beginning of February 1979 (despite the disapproval of this union by its General Secretary). Somali Salvation Front (SOSAF) [sometimes 'SSF' or 'SRF'] was the name of the new organization aimed to broaden the opposition to the regime [*Weekly Review*, 16/02/79]. Some prominent members of SODAF executive entered in the SOSAF. Colonel 'Abdillaahi Yuusuf became Deputy General Secretary in charge of military operations, so that he could attract new dissident officers of Somali Army; Sterline was another Deputy General Secretary; the post of General Secretary was offered to the popular Mustafa Haaji Nuur (Issaq). He was a well-known speaker for Radio Mogadishu until 1969, then for the BBC. It was expected that his audience in the country would help to rally popular support [*Africa Contemporary Record 1978–79*, B 379]. Muse Islan Farah, a previous ambassador in Cairo also joined the SOSAF. 'Abdillaahi became president of the movement in 1980 [*Le Monde*, 8/04/81].

<sup>11</sup>The SWP was a group of pro-communist intellectuals established in Aden and led by Sa'iid Jama Huseen, Siyaad's sometime counsellor for ideology.

<sup>12</sup>The DFLS gathered together dissidents from the left of the governmental SRSP, led by 'Abdirahmaan Aydiid Ahmed (Dhulbahante, President of Mogadishu University until 1976, member of SRSP's Central Committee in 1976 and Secretary of the Bureau for Foreign Affairs, acting Minister for Foreign Affairs from April 1976 till July 27th, 1977, appointed Governor of Central Shebelle on 31/03/78).

<sup>13</sup>See *Africa Confidential*, "Somalia: Of Barre's making", v. 23, NO 18, 8/09/1982, footnote.

<sup>14</sup>See *The Indian Ocean Newsletter*, 8/10/88, p.4.

<sup>15</sup>David D. Laitin, Said S. Samatar, *Somalia: Nation in Search of a State*, Boulder, Col (London, England), Westview Press (Gower), 1987, p.91.

<sup>16</sup>A circular letter dated August 23, 1975 and signed by Siyaad ordered in particular the transfer of all officers and civil servants posted in the region of Galka'ayo (Mudug) who were born there, the "punishment" of the traders and businessmen hostile to the Government and an increased control from the local branches of the security apparatus (police, army and the NSS), in what appears to be an official campaign against the people of the Mudug region, whom Siyaad accused of being "by birth committed to tribalistic thinking". See *Africa Confidential* vol 16, NO 19, 26/09/1975.

<sup>17</sup>From interviews with several SNM officials. When asked why the SNM was not trying to extend its operations in the south in order to finally seize the capital, they answered that every "tribe" has to liberate its own area, thus the Hawiye are in charge of the Benaadir and Hiiraan regions. However, Silanyo constantly repeated that the objective was to liberate the whole country and overthrow the current regime (for example in Paris last June, see *The Indian Ocean Newsletter*, NO 387, 17/06/1989, and also the press release of SNM U.K. Office, *Appeals to the United Nations: to all Somalis: and to all friends of the Somali People*, June 1988).

<sup>18</sup>For a nomad from the bush the rebellion against the central government is very similar to the past inter-clan feuds. An Isaaq will be more easily mobilized while shouting "Daarood Aduun" instead of "Down with the dictatorship". Is an opposition movement however entitled to fuel and manipulate such a feeling in order to win a broader audience?

<sup>19</sup>Robert Gersony, Consultant, Bureau for Refugee Programs, Department of State, *Why Somalis Flee: Synthesis of Accounts of Conflict Experience in Northern Somalia by Somali Refugees, Displaced Persons and Others*, August 1989, typescript, pp. 60-61. The fact that Mr. Gersony personally conducted a field research of nearly three months in Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya and interviewed two hundred and fifty refugees and displaced persons directly affected by the conflict gives weight to his findings.

<sup>20</sup>See for example, Amnesty International, *Somalia: A Long-Term Human Rights Crisis*, Amnesty International Publications, September 1988, *Somalia: Imprisonment of Members of the Isaaq Clan since Mid-1988*, A.I. December 1988; *Human Rights Abuses and Civil War in the North: A report from the U.S. General Accounting Office*, Africa Watch, May 26, 1989, *Somalia: An Update on Human Rights Developments since Mid-July*, Africa Watch, September 22, 1989.

<sup>21</sup>Although it began back in February 1982 with the unfair trial in Hargeisa of a group of twenty (thirty according to some other sources) medical doctors, civil servants and businessmen members of a community organization engaged in self-help projects [See Amnesty International, *Somalia: A Long-Term Human Rights Crisis*, p. 26; *Africa Events*, "Grieve the Beloved City", May 1987 p. 10; Saeed Sheikh Mohammed, "Siyaad's Vendetta Against the North", *New African*, September 1987 p. 21; Lewis L.M., *A Modern History of Somalia*, (1988), p. 252-4253], it went on with the brutal repression of demonstrations in the predominantly Isaaq towns in 1982, 1983 and 1984 ordered by General Mahammad Haashi Gani (Marechaan), accompanied by repeated curfews and military blockades which provoked food supply problems in Hargeisa and Burao. Thus, the most convincing evidence of a planned persecution is probably given by the secret report dated January 23, 1987, sent to Mogadishu by General Morgan, at that time sector commandant of the Northwest region [See

the comment of R. Greenfield, "Somalia's Letter of Death", *New African*, July 1987; *The Times*, "Somali military bid to obliterate clan as Barre era fades", July 2, 1987].

<sup>22</sup>See Laitin and Samatar, (1987), p.93.

<sup>23</sup>Abdi Sheik-Abdi, "Somali Dissidents in Ethiopia", *Horn of Africa*, v. 3, NO 3, 1980, p. 51.

<sup>24</sup>See Hussein A. Bulhan, "Partition of Land and Psyche in Somali Society", *Horn of Africa*, v. 3, NO 4 (1980), P. 20. The fact that the SSDL fought with the Ethiopian army against the Somali army on many occasions has always been criticized. The SNM made the same mistake in February 1987 [*The Indian Ocean Newsletter*, NO 270, 21/02/87; *New African*, April 1987].

<sup>25</sup>Laitin and Samatar, (1987), p. 93.

<sup>26</sup>M.M. Abdi, "Patriotism For What?", *Africa Events*, June 1987, p. 39.

<sup>27</sup>Even, Abdi Sheik-Abdi acknowledges now that going to Ethiopia was probably the most convenient way to start a guerilla war against Siyaad (from a conversation in Atlanta, 1/11/89).

<sup>28</sup>R. Greenfield - a sometime adviser of the Somali Government for Foreign Affairs - came to the same conclusion. See his paper, "Deep Roots of Strife", *The Middle East*, June 1988, pp. 10-13.

<sup>29</sup>See: "Secret Agreement on Ogaden", *The Indian Ocean Newsletter*, 28/05/88. A press release from the WSLF issued in Mogadishu on April 4, 1988 reflected Ogaadeen activists' fears of having been sold out by Siyaad: "WSLF who is the sole representative of Western Somali People has already stated that peace will never prevail in the region while Western Somali People are suffering (sic) under the colonialist Ethiopia. WSLF declares that the joint communique released by the two sides on 3.4.88 and the bilateral agreement signed in Mogadishu on the above date doesn't concern the cause of Western Somalia....Article 1 in the agreement ("Integrity and Sovereignty of Abyssinia"): WSLF will not and does not recognize the so-called integrity of Ethiopian Empire as far as it colonizes the Western Somali people and many other nationalities....It is very unfortunate that the Mogadishu declaration which has been issued by the Joint Committee did not study thoroughly (sic) core problem of the region which is the cause of the Western Somali people." [*The Stand of WSLF on the Mogadishu Declaration*, press release of the WSLF, Mogadishu, 12/04/88]. This text was also distributed in leaflets in markets of the main cities of Somalia. The reaction of the Ogaden Liberation National Front (ONLF), a dissidence of the WSLF founded in August 1985 (its existence was disclosed in the Spring of 1986 and its first congress was held in Cyprus from 11-15 August 1987) and based in Kuwait was much more bitter: its leaders condemned the agreement and criticized Siyaad for abandoning of the Ogaden national cause [see *The Indian Ocean Newsletter*, NO 328, 16/04/88, and also an interesting analysis: "Breaking Out", *Africa Events*, September 1987, pp. 50-4].

<sup>30</sup>The bloody repression (about 1000 deaths from street killings, night round ups and execution as well) has thrown all the major clans into the civil war. According to R. Greenfield ["Somalia slides into chaos", *New African*, November 1989], a breakdown of the victims by "ethnic" (sic) origin clearly demonstrates "widespread opposition to the regime".

<sup>31</sup>Little is known about the Somali Islamic Movement allegedly created on May 9, 1986. Many observers believe that it is led by a handful of popular young sweekhs educated in the Sudanese, Egyptian and Saudi Islamic universities. Several of them were arrested a few hours before the riots started and this event might have angered their followers. The head of the Movement is possibly Sheekh Mahammad Ma'allim Hasaan, a graduate from Al-Azhar that the regime has persecuted since late 1974 (he was detained in prison from 1974 to 1982 and from 1986 to last March). A *Press Statement from Somali Islamic Movement* was released in April 1987. This text mentioned a 'Supreme Council' of the SIM which supposedly convened secretly in Mogadishu from April 15th to 23rd, 1987, but I am not sure of its authenticity. The SIM is said to have no formal structure, yet, but it obviously benefits from the network of urban mosques.

<sup>32</sup>See for example the courageous *Open Letter to Somalist Scholars*, from Said S. Samatar, April 24th, 1989.

<sup>33</sup>See the *New York Times*, "Somali Army Said to Kill 5,000 Unarmed Civilians", 9/09/89.

<sup>34</sup>After the boycott of a Central Committee meeting in Dire Dawa in late January 1983 by the leftist opposition, 'Abdillaahi Yuusuf arrested thirty of his adversaries, including Executive Committee members, mainly from the former SWP, like Jama Salah, and SDLF like 'Abdillaahi 'Abdirahmaan (Enlay). In the congress held two weeks later 'Abdillaahi Yuusuf was re-elected chairman and filled the Executive Committee with loyal supporters. However, under the pressure of Ethiopian and Libyan leaders, he was compelled to release his opponents and to call another congress in November in order to find a compromise. Some of those arrested came back in the new committee but the power struggle still went on [See *African Confidential*, v. 24, NO 15, 20/07/83 and v. 24, NO 24, 30/11/83]. The following year, 'Abdirahmaan Aydiid Ahmed and Iskar Haaji Mahammad Huseen were shot in the SSDF office in Dire Dawa, on the order of 'Abdillaahi Yuusuf [Ahmed I. Samatar, 1988, p. 155]. Meanwhile, mutinies arose in several SSDF camps in Ogaden and about 600 fighters seized this opportunity to come back to Somalia and take advantage of a presidential amnesty. At the same time, many SSDF officials left for exile abroad. The last SSDF military raids on Somali territory, after a long break, were mentioned in February and May 1987 (*The Indian Ocean Newsletter*, NO 271, 28/02/87 and NO 281, 9/05/87).

<sup>35</sup>See "Betrayal of the SSDF", *New African February 1987*, p. 23. The author lays emphasis on the turn of Ethiopian foreign policy which came to the front page when Mengistu and Siyaad Barre met in Djibouti on January 16, 1986: to disband the SSDF was accordingly a prerequisite for a peace agreement with Somalia. Although this factor certainly played a role, it is doubtful that the Ethiopians would have dismantled a good bargaining instrument so quickly if they had not been obliged to do so, due to the erratic behavior of the SSDF chairman. The fact that the SNM remained free to operate as before until April 1988 indicates that Mengistu was not very eager to meet Siyaad's demands.

<sup>36</sup>See, for example, the booklet: *SSDF Struggle and Socio-Political Situation in Somalia*, SSDF, September 1984. The militant tone of this piece of propaganda and the abundant marxist jargon it contained were not really appealing to the Isaaq moderate conservative Muslim 'Masses'.

<sup>37</sup>See the press release of USC working conference 27/02/89-2/03/89, *Cooperation, Alliance and Eventual Unity of the Somali Opposition*.

<sup>38</sup>Gersony's report cited above confirmed (pp. 53-55) the presence of Ogaadeen refugees in the Somali Army even before 1988 and the organization of refugees in para-military units as a counterforce to SNM guerillas in the North. Morgan's secret report in January 1987 also mentioned the remobilization of the WSLF to fight against the SNM.

<sup>39</sup>As its name clearly shows, it was an opposition group- based in London- dedicated to Somali national unity, formed by exiled intellectuals fed up with clan politics. Its chairman was Mahamuud Sheekh Ahmed Musa (former president of the Supreme Court in Somalia in the early 70's) and its Secretary General, Mahammad Robleh, a barrister. Mahamuud provided a useful contribution to the opposition struggle in the 80's as President of the Somali Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, with headquarters in London. This group was responsible for translating into English many important documents like Morgan's report. Mahamuud Sheekh Axmed's well-known probity and his "non-aligned" stand within the opposition gave much credibility to the Committee statements.

<sup>40</sup>*Somalia on the Brink of Civil War*, Washington, D.C., June 5, 1983, p.1.

<sup>41</sup>*Deliberations of the meeting by the opposition in North America*, Washington, D.C., October 22, 1988.

<sup>42</sup>For example, SNM and SSDF met again in Tripoli with Mengistu, on the request of colonel Jalloud, Qadhafi's assistant in Lybia, and the unification issue was the main item on the agenda [*The Indian Ocean Newsletter*, 23/10/82.

<sup>43</sup>As an Hawiye opponent told us: "To the Hawiye, there is nothing worse than the Marechaan, except the Majeerteen" (interview with an opponent 11/02/88). However, some Hawiye did indeed join the SSDF or the SNM: clan affiliation does not always determine political attitudes.

<sup>44</sup>For example, Hussein A. Bulhan's judgement on the SOSAF, in the article previously cited: "Their motivation is to replace one rule of the family by another. Ironically, the military wing of this clique calls itself: The Somali Salvation Army!"

<sup>45</sup>Former Ambassador to Italy and France, Ph D (in fact one of the few Marechaan who were educated when Mahammad Siyaad came to power, he is closely related to the President). He has been living in Paris since he resigned as a Minister at the Presidency in 1981.

<sup>46</sup>Mohamed Said Samatar, "Who Whom?", *Africa Events*, March 1987, p. 32. The words were underlined by the author himself.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.* p. 33.

<sup>48</sup>Lindsey Hilsum, "Somalia riots end in army massacre", *The Guardian*, July 22, 1989.

<sup>49</sup>As planned by the Head of State and his close associates. See Morgan's secret report (23/01/87) translated and annotated by the respected Mohamoud Sheikh Ahmed Musa. Godabiirsay, Warsangali and other Daarood clans were cited.

<sup>50</sup>For example, the Samaron (Godabiirsay) convened, on the government request, a meeting of about 100 elders which was held from 4/10/88 to 6/10/88 at Qulujeed, in the Borama District. In the name of the Unity of Somalia they agreed to establish a defence force to protect their territory ("the region of Awdal") from the "armed bandits" (official formula not to mention the SNM by its name). In exchange and besides the expected weapons and ammunitions, they asked for more public investment in the region, transport infrastructures and also some measures to favor the trade activities conducted by clan businessmen [from a typescript report of this meeting]. The existence of a Godabiirsay Front fighting against the SNM is explicitly mentioned in Gersony's report. See also, *The Indian Ocean Newsletter*, NO 356, 12/11/88.

<sup>51</sup>For the opposite point of view, see: Omar Osman Rabeh, "The North remains part of the Nation...", *Revue d'Etudes Somaliennes/Somali Studies Review*, NO 8 July 1989, pp. 5-8. Although the whole question is still a matter of debate and some of the author's arguments should be taken into consideration, the tone of this paper is more than polemical and many of its propositions appear to us very unfair to the SNM. The responsibilities of the military regime in the current disintegrating situation of the state are not mentioned- not even the name of the President! Let alone the atrocities perpetrated by the Somali 'National' Army. This article is representative of the extremist anti-SNM point of view.

<sup>52</sup>See the *Cosmopolite*, NO 6, April 1986. This information was also confirmed by a SNM official in interview. As a matter of fact, the political program of the SNM claims it will to "conform to the objectives and principles of the United Nations Organization and Organization of African Unity" which could lead a future government to give up all claims on Ogaden in accordance with the acknowledgement of the colonial borders.

<sup>53</sup>*Africa Confidential*, v. 24, NO 15, July 20, 1983; *Africa Now*, March 1983.

<sup>54</sup>However, some Rahanweyn and Digil are said to have created in 1989 their own party, opposed to the present regime; see *The Indian Ocean Newsletter*, No 388, 24/06/89.

<sup>55</sup>*Africa Confidential*, v. 24, NO 15, July 20, 1983.

<sup>56</sup>SNM: *Fifth Congress, February 28–March 10, 1987, Political Program of the Somali National Movement*, prepared and translated by the U.S. and Canada Branch of the Somali National Movement, June 14, 1989, p. 3. Previously, a political programme had been disclosed after the 1984 congress and published in a booklet with the constitution, some "constitutional rules of procedure" and a chapter titled "Basic Facts on the Somali National Movement". It contains unambiguous references to the main elements of the Western kind of parliamentary democracy: civil rights, secret ballot, multipartism and accountability.

<sup>57</sup>SSDF, op. cit. p. 15. We have not been able to secure a copy of the latest texts of the SSDF which might show a notable evolution of its political stands.

<sup>58</sup>USC: *The political strategy of USC*, the working conference, Rome, 27/02/89–2/03/89. We have also been told that a more detailed political program will be discussed and voted by the next congress of USC, in 1990. A draft is now circulating within the organization.

<sup>59</sup>SNM political program (1987) cited above, p. 4.

<sup>60</sup>Who will represent Mogadishu state power if the regional governor is elected? See: SNM, *Peace for the Horn of Africa in the Political Program of the SNM*, paper submitted at the 4th annual conference of the Center for the Study of the Horn of Africa, May 26–28, 1989, New York, P. 5. The local government is justified by the authors in possibly refusing to apply rules edicted by the central government (p. 8). The latter is granted very limited competences: the monetary, foreign and defense policies (p. 8); dependent on the regional government for its financial resources, it is certainly not a "strong" state.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid.

<sup>63</sup>Even though the Movement foresees some "essential problems that will be inherited from the totalitarian dictatorship", op. cit. p. 5.

<sup>64</sup>See, SNM, *Peace for the Horn of Africa in the Political Program of the SNM*, cited above, p. 2. The SNM proposes a very extended cooperation between the two countries.

<sup>65</sup>This creative Somali intellectual who lives in USA chose to sign his interesting, although too brief paper with a pseudonym: 'Faaliye'. See "Nowhere to Go?", *Africa Events*, June 1987, pp. 40–4.

<sup>66</sup>Of course an articulate theory of elites, distinct from class analysis, is needed to go further from this point.

<sup>67</sup>Africa Confidential, v. 24, NO 15, July 20, 1983.

<sup>68</sup>'Faaliye', op. cit. p. 41.

<sup>69</sup>The analysis should not confuse however the Islamic conservatist wing led by the Madar family and backed by Saudi Arabia, well represented among the local elders, with the Islamic fundamentalist militants close to the Egyptian Islamic Brothers who are proselytizing very actively several Isaaq communities in the Arab countries.

<sup>70</sup>Apparently these army officers wanted the movement to be led from its strongholds in Ethiopia and work in a closer association with the SSDF and its Ethiopian and Soviet patrons: the previous leadership was regarded as too close to the United States and Saudi Arabia [See *Africa Confidential*, v. 24, NO 24, 30/11/1983].

<sup>71</sup>Just before the 5th Congress held in late February 1987, Silanyo was said to be losing influence and Ibrahim likely to replace him [See, *The Indian Ocean Newsletter*, No 267, 31/01/87]. Similar rumors are spreading around now and Ibrahim is believed to be in the field, campaigning for chairmanship, in preparation for the next congress in February 1990. But he is not the only candidate: Hasaan 'Ise Jama from the Arab clan is believed to be interested [*The Indian Ocean*

*Newsletter*, NO 385, 3/06/89]. Some Isaaq argue that after Haber Awal, Haber Yunis and Haber Ja'alo - two terms, it is the turn of this clan to secure the chairmanship.

<sup>72</sup>See for example, *The Indian Ocean Newsletter*, NO 398, 23/09/89.

<sup>73</sup>To insure the eviction of Wardhiigley, I understand, SNM constitution was amended by the Congress and the position of Vice-Chairman (Art. 51) disappeared.

<sup>74</sup>What the European philosophers of the 18th century who studied the prerequisites of a durable political order called "the civic virtue".

<sup>75</sup>See, *Somali National Movement: Mujahid's Constitution*, as amended by the Fifth Congress (February 26–March 10, 1987), signed by Mohamed Abdilkadir Farah, Coordinator of Secretariat of the 5th Congress, and Ismael Mohamoud Hurreh, Chairman of 5th Congress, typescript. The previous constitution was approved in the Fourth Congress (1984) and accompanied by a set of detailed rules and procedures which, as far as I know, very re-enacted in 1987. The main changes in the constitutional text dealt with the responsibilities of the Chairman of the Movement: his importance in the Central Committee was increased by his capacity to nominate 10 of the 55 members, his powers were extended with an article explicitly confirming them (Art. 53), the position of Vice Chairman was cancelled. The first constitution of the movement was adopted in 1981 and differed on many points, such as the designation of the Executive Committee, with the rule enacted in 1984. Unfortunately, I was not able to find a full copy of this text.

<sup>76</sup>The October 1981 conference elected Ahmed Mahammad Guled (a businessman who played a role in pre-independence politics in the British Somaliland in the 50's, who was jailed in 1969 and has been living since 1975 in Djibouti and Saudi Arabia) as Chairman and Ahmed Isma'il 'Abdi (a MP from Burao in the 50's and 60's, Minister of Planning in 'Abdirisaak's Cabinet from 1965 to 1967, jailed in 1969, released and allowed to leave the country in 1971, who has lived ever since in East-Africa and Saudi Arabia) Secretary General. Both were members of an Executive Committee of eight people including Colonel Sa'iid 'Abdullaahi Igal [*Africa Contemporary Record* 81-82, B. 261]. Ahmed Mahammad Guled was soon overtly criticized - particularly in Britain - for alleged inefficiency and violations of the inner rules of the organization. The SNM Second Congress in 1982 elected as Chairman Yuusuf Sheekh 'Ali Madar (former diplomat of Siyaad, Haber Awal, the dominant Isaaq clan in Hargeysa area and son of the much respected religious leader Sheekh 'Ali Madar). Under his influence, the SNM accentuated its Islamic identity and drew closer to the conservative Arab countries. Yuusuf lost the leadership during an emergency meeting of the Central Committee in November 1983. 'Abdulkadir Kosar 'Abdi (Haber Yunis, former colonel in the Somali army and head of the SNM military branch) became the new Chairman and the Executive Committee, reduced from eleven members to five, with only one civilian surviving from the previous E.C., Hasaan 'Ise Jama (Arab-Isaaq, a former BBC Somali service broadcaster). The Fourth Congress of the SNM met at the end of July 1984 in Ethiopia and elected Ahmed Silanyo Chairman of a renewed E.C. where civilians won back a majority. Silanyo was re-elected on March 9, 1987, at the end of the Fifth Congress.

<sup>77</sup>See, Robert, Gersony, op. cit. p. 40–4. The report mentions a summary execution of about fifty prisoners of non-Isaaq clans, a majority of which were civilians who had nothing to do with the Government or the Army, a clear violation of Art. 7, First Section, of SNM constitution. Looting and murdering contravene Art. 35, First Section. It would be nevertheless a bit dishonest to put these unpardonable excesses in balance with the Government campaign of 'obliteration' which went into the final phase in May 1988.

<sup>78</sup>Somalis who have lost relatives, possessions and positions may have narrow aims; due to bitter experiences of war they may put clan before nation absolutely. It does not mean, anyway, that they do not still look for forthright, alternate and uncompromising national leadership.

<sup>79</sup>See *Africa Events*, August 1987, "Death in Mustahil", anonymous.