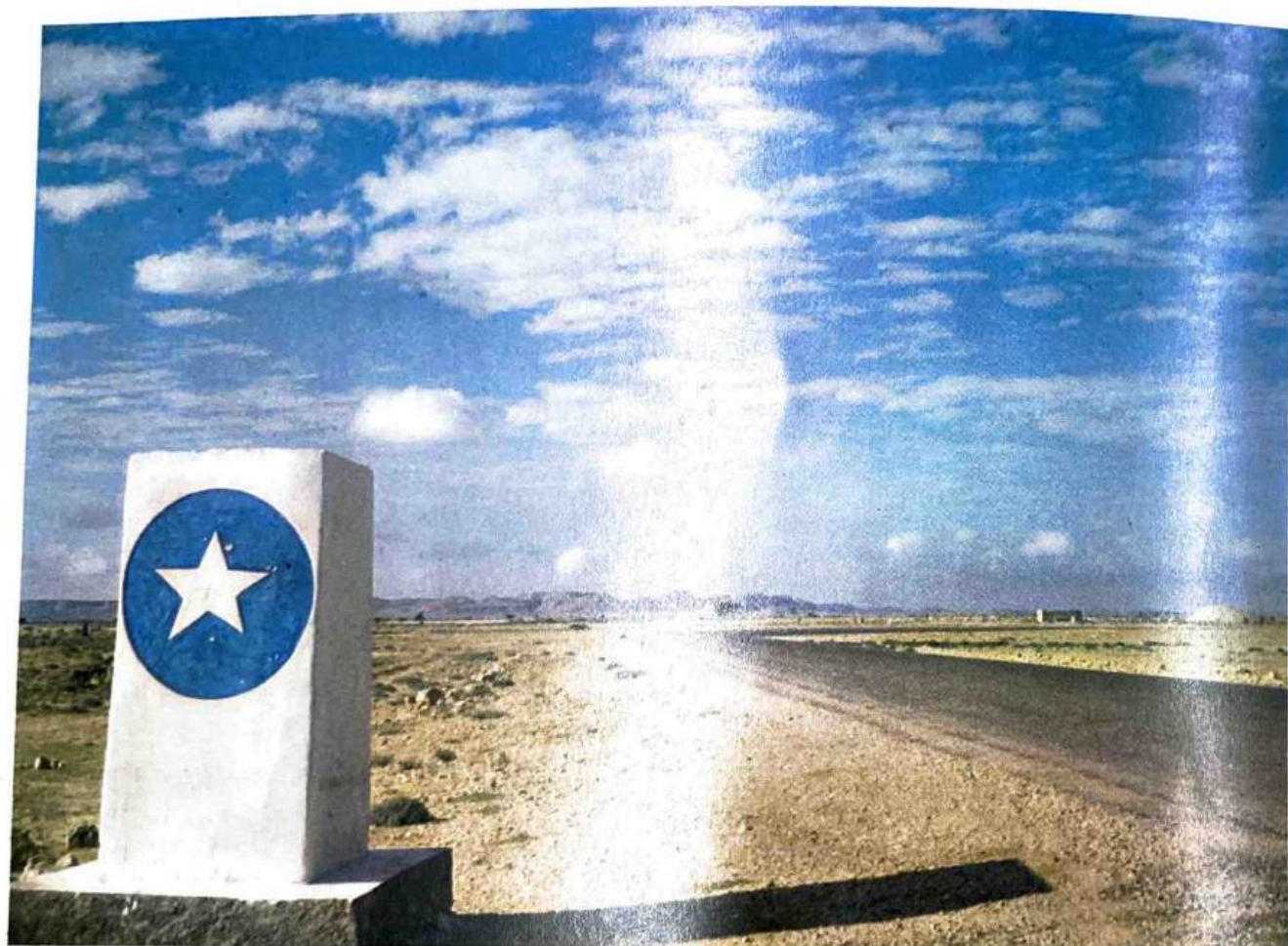


**GO FROM MY
COUNTRY!**



**THE SOMALI NATION
AND ABYSSINIAN COLONIALISM**

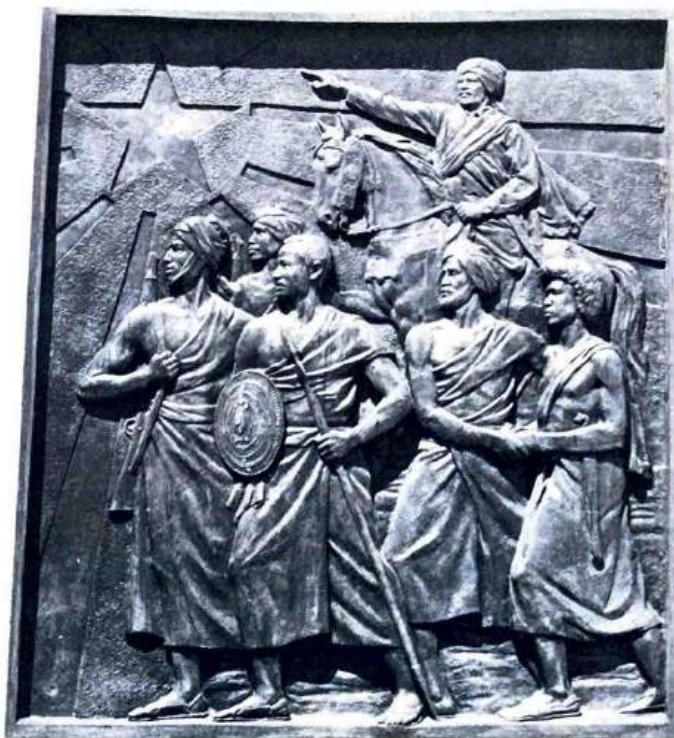


'May peace be upon you in the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. The flag is a symbol of Unity. Somalia will remain independent for ever. Sweep away injustice, envy, division, tribalism and imperialism—old and new'

**General Jaale Mohamed Siyad Barre
President, The Supreme Revolutionary Council,
Somali Democratic Republic
1 December 1970**

'... If you want peace I am also content. But if you want peace, Go from my country to your own!'

Letter of Sayyid Muhammad Addille Hassan,
Father of Modern Somali Nationalism
(written in the Haud, 1904)



THE SOMALI NATION AND ABYSSINIAN COLONIALISM

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SOMALI DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC**



'Go from my Country', echoes this determined Freedom Fighter, her expression capturing the defiance of all true daughters of Africa in the face of Colonialism of any and every colour, race and creed.

Below is a cheerful Somali crowd celebrating the liberation of their village in the Southern Ogaden, after 30 heavy years of Ethiopian colonial domination. Their sign in Somali reads 'May all colonized peoples win their independence.' Unfortunately these freedom fighters have had to take up their arms yet again, for Cuban forces entered their village in March 1978. Their struggle is the struggle of all oppressed humanity—it cannot but continue until victory or death intervene.



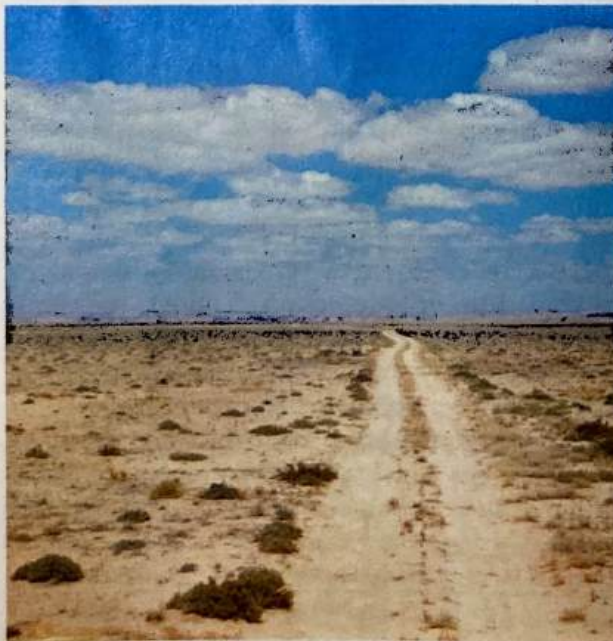
'... It is the inalienable right of all people to control their own destiny'

Charter of the Organization of African Unity,
25 May 1963

'No race, no people, no nation can exist freely and be respected at home and abroad without political freedom. . . . independence . . . is meaningless unless it is linked to the total liberation of Africa'

Kwame Nkrumah, Independence Address
Accra, 6 March 1957

Seldom has a liberation struggle been so arduous, so historically significant, and yet so little understood as that of the Somali Nation in general and the Western Somali Liberation Front in particular. The long and courageous struggle of the Somali Nation for total liberation, self determination and freedom, will sooner or later be crowned with success—despite the recent recolonization campaign conducted by Ethio-Soviet and Cuban mercenaries. The continuing struggle in what is sometimes called 'the Ogaden' (after only one of several clan-groups of the Somali people who live there) together with the confrontation in Southern Africa, where colonialism also persists, must be counted amongst the longest and most bitterly contested colonial issues of our time. Even so, the principles which underlie it and the history of the struggle itself, are very clear. Nor can the outcome be doubted—that would be to reverse the pattern of history. These struggles will one day be described as the last phase in the total liberation of Africa.



'... My heart rejoices at the decision you have come to,
When in the early morning, at dawn, you rise
and mount your stallion,
Apart from the sand and dust that rises up
around you—the columns of dust—
The road which you will follow is not one on
which people lose their way . . .'

Sayyid Muhammad Addille Hassan; lines written early in this century, on the road to self-determination and freedom for the Somali Nation and addressed specifically to his own clansmen, the Ogaden, exhorting them to resist the colonialism of the Abyssinian Amharas and the British.



'The British, the Ethiopians, and the Italians are squabbling,

The country is snatched and divided by whosoever is stronger,

The country is sold piece by piece without our knowledge,

And as for me—all this is a sign of the last days of the world'

Farah Nur, Somali Poet, (died c. 1930) lines on the colonial predicament of the Nation, in the tradition of Sayyid Muhammad.

Sayyid Muhammad exhorts an audience of Somalis to take up arms if necessary to preserve the culture and safeguard the destiny of the Somali Nation.

The very first principle asserted by Heads of African States and Governments assembled in 1963, was '... the inalienable right of all people to control their own destiny'. Decolonization was seen as so fundamental that the point precedes not only all the articles of the CHARTER OF THE OAU, but all the rest of the preamble as well. Similarly it is Article 1 of the UNITED NATIONS CHARTER which asserts the principle of 'SELF-DETERMINATION OF PEOPLES' and recognizes the needs

'to ensure, with due respect for the culture of the peoples concerned, their political advancement, their just treatment and their protection against abuses'; and 'to develop self-government, to take due account of the political aspirations of the peoples, and to assist them in the progressive development of their free political institutions according to the particular circumstances of each territory and its peoples'.

Indeed the Charter goes so far as to say that where a full measure of self-government has yet to be attained 'the interests of the inhabitants of those territories are paramount'.

It is likewise the position of the Somali Democratic Republic that Somalis—whomsoever they have been colonized by in historically recent

times—are as entitled as any other peoples to the rights so defined. This booklet is intended, therefore, to describe the particular circumstances' and the 'territory' and 'people' of Western Somalia. Reference might also be made, not only to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights but also the covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and on Civil and Political Rights. Article 1 of each of these covenants affirms in identical terms that 'all peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development'. Unfortunately neither the Imperial Government of the Ethiopian Empire, nor its successor regime have as yet acceded to these two covenants which offer mankind further protection against the very injustices which the UN and OAU seek, as cardinal priority, to guard against. Let us proceed directly, therefore, to the question: Who are the Somali people?

The poetry quoted is from B. W. Andrzejewski and I. M. Lewis *Somali Poetry* (Oxford 1964) pp. 57, 73 and 94.

THE SOMALI PEOPLE IN HISTORY

The origins of the Somali Nation date back thousands of years into the very earliest history of the Horn of North-East Africa. That this is so is today asserted by all leading scholars—and the Somali people have always known it. Indeed, how often in Africa has the wisdom of ages, despised during the colonial period, been vindicated only when the shackles of imperialism are thrown from mind, body and nation—usually in that order.

Throughout the Somali lands, archaeological and linguistic evidence; cave paintings and oral traditions; records of the famed ancient realm of Punt with which the Pharaohs traded; references by Greeks and Romans; the sites of ancient cities and settlements—many still awaiting more detailed survey—are today being subjected to exacting scientific study by Somali scholars and foreign colleagues.

Several old cities including Mogadishu the present capital remain thriving administrative and commercial centres. Smaller centres serve as markets for agricultural areas. However, the Somalis have always been a pastoral people and they developed early on an in many ways unique state framework to reflect their social structure and way of life.



This ancient but abandoned site typical of many, lies on the coastal plain east of Berbera, an historic and still thriving Somali port. In classical and later times the term 'black Berber' was used to describe the Somali peoples. These ruined walls and foundations are yet to be scientifically studied. From a hill they command a view of the eastward approach sea lane used by dhows sailing into Berbera port and also the route towards the Sheikh Pass (where there are further ruins).

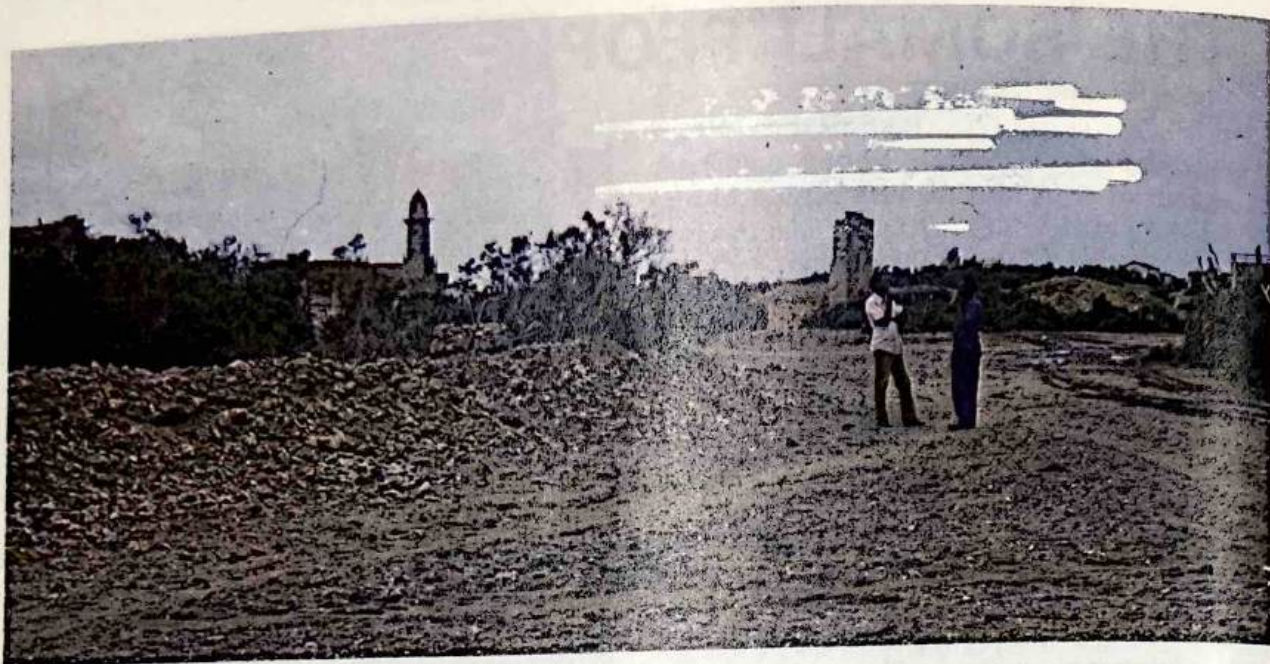


Prehistoric 'painting' in a rock shelter south-west of Berbera. Such shelters preserve valuable records of very early times and peoples in Africa. Very similar designs are also found in Uganda and other paintings in the Sahara, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, throughout Southern Africa, and elsewhere.

No nation lives in complete isolation and contacts there have been aplenty across the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean and to the South, particularly along the Coast. Likewise to the west, trade routes have long extended into the lands where the Oromos or Gallas, the Afars and the Eritreans now live and even beyond into the highlands of Abyssinia above the western escarpment of the Great Rift Valley. The Somali territories, however, have always maintained a geographical, ethnic and cultural distinctness, particularly from those highlands, on which city states and squabbling feudal principalities rose and fell in profusion over the centuries.

The study of the rich Islamic Culture in Harar and the currently occupied Somali areas has of course not been adequately encouraged over the years either by the Imperial Ethiopian Government or its military successors, but enough is already known to repudiate the mythology to which some Ethiopian leaders fall prone. Moreover their claims that ancient Abyssinia ruled vast areas of the African Continent are quite spurious. Since the unfortunate Greek fashion of referring to all North Africa as 'Libya' and all the rest of Africa as 'Ethiopia' has also led to honest confusion, it is best to cite most recent scholarship on this matter.

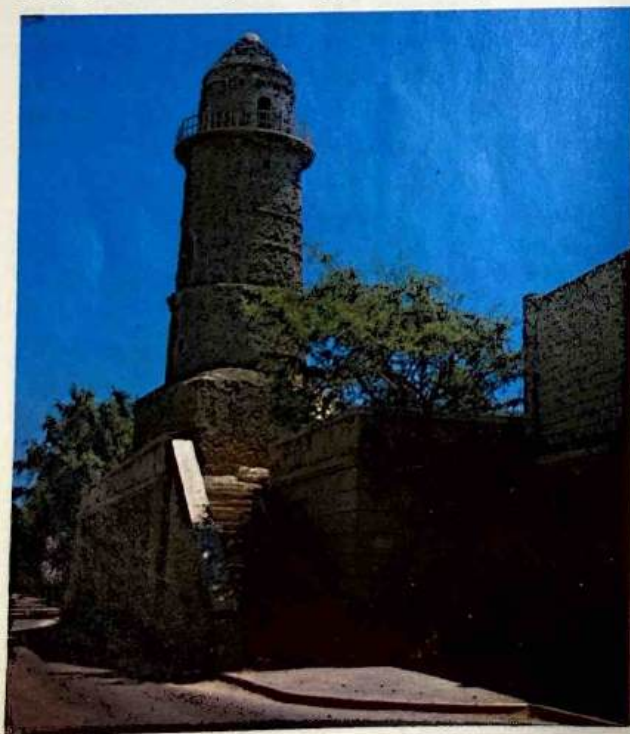
Even before the rise of Islam the effective rule of the kings of Abyssinia was 'mainly limited to the highland areas of central Ethiopia . . . but



Ruins at Zeila, a Somali port controlling many of the important historic routes which have run since time immemorial throughout the Horn of Africa and beyond. The Imam Ahmed 'Guray' moved his court from a nearby settlement, the ruins of which still survive some miles west of Zeila, to Harar from whence in the sixteenth century his armies were to defend the Horn from the Abyssinians and even foray across the Abyssinian Highlands themselves.

by the second half of the ninth century, the frontiers' of Abyssinia began to be pushed 'further south and they apparently reached the northern parts of the Shoan plateau'.¹ Even Shoa, where today's capital is now located, was itself a Muslim Sultanate,² which fell early victim to spasmodic but sustained attempts by the Abyssinian state, throughout history, to expand

at the expense particularly of its southern and eastern neighbours. Christian outposts were 'founded as far south as the Ziqwala Mountain and the upper basin of the Awash river in the early part of the thirteenth Century'.³ There was, of course, much local resistance and sometimes fullscale wars which usually occurred when one or other of the Abyssinian kings was able to



The Sheikh Abdulaziz Mosque, Mogadishu, which has stood for many centuries near the old port of Mogadishu. The Arba' Rukun, Fakhr u Din and Jami Mosques dating from the thirteenth century, are the oldest mosques in Mogadishu but the earliest surviving Islamic funerary inscription in the city is eighth century. There are also many references by Arab travellers to the importance of early Somali ports to the south, such as Brava and Merca.

'One of the customs of the people of this city is that when a ship arrives at anchorage the small boats come out to it, each carrying a group of young people and every one brings a covered dish of food. Each one offers it to a merchant on board and calls out "This is my guest"'.⁴

Ibn Battuta, travelling from Tangier—after two years at Mecca—reaches Mogadishu and describes traditional African hospitality towards those who come in peace—January 1331

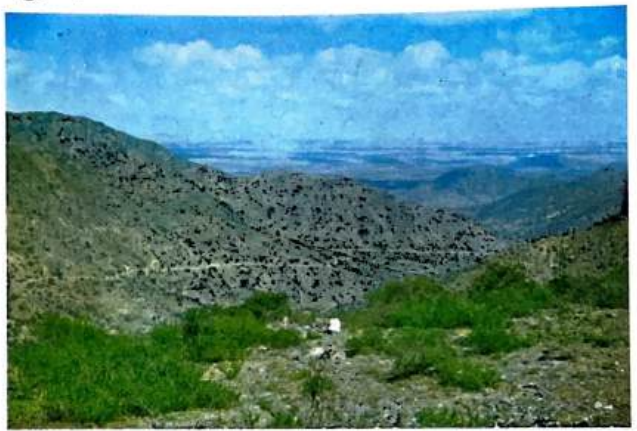
effectively assert himself as emperor and in true imperial fashion, attempt to raid and collect tribute or plunder from neighbours in every direction.

In the east, who were these neighbours? Modern scholarship describes three peoples: 'the Somalis', the 'ancestors of Saho-Afar speakers in the Danakil depression' and also 'the Galla . . . whose presence in the whole region became increasingly dominant only from the sixteenth century onwards . . . It is the Somali who are referred to in the accounts of the early Arab Geographers. In fact there was a basic continuity in the use of the term Berber since the first century of the Christian era, to describe the land and people of the Horn . . . there seems to be no doubt now that the Arab geographers had particularly the Somali in mind when they spoke of the "Black Berbers" of the Horn; and the earlier use of the term by Greek writers may well indicate a more ancient occupancy of the Horn by the same stock of people'.⁴

The Abyssinian invaders were usually successfully contained by the Somalis—for example in the fourteenth century reign of the Abyssinian Emperor Amde Seyon and the fifteenth century reigns of Emperors Dawit, Zara-Yakob and Baida Mariam. Since by their time, the sultanate of Shoa had been overrun: Ifat another muslim state which was further east in the rift valley, and then Adal, based on Zeila and Harar, were to bear the brunt of further Abyssinian pressures.

One ancient Ethiopic manuscript contains an eyewitness account of the wars of Amde Seyon who ruled from 1314 to 1344 and who 'advanced into lands never previously occupied by any Ethiopian emperor'.⁵ It was written by an anonymous Christian monk or priest and records how in the south-east the ruler of Adal—from the important Walasma dynasty—counselled his people: 'We shall not go to the King of Abyssinia, but if he comes to us, we shall not fear but will fight and die for our country'. True to his word he did this, and when his sons were brought before the Abyssinian ruler, the two youths declared; 'Hear O King, Our country and we ourselves recognize none who rules us but God alone and there is none who can rule us! . . . We are as many as the sand of the sea and the stars of the heaven . . . It is not you only whom we did not fear, but if all the kings of the earth came from one end of the earth to the other we should not fear them but would attack them . . .'⁶

Such has always been and continues to be the spirit of the people in adversity. Friction con-



The pass at Sheikh—a Somali trade route of antiquity.



Historic Mogadishu.



View of Merca.

tinued in Adal—where most of the population was Somali—and Bale. However, there were also periods of quiet, unthreatened by Abyssinian imperial ambitions, when peaceful commerce was more typical. The political significance of

'In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.
Hast thou not seen how thy Lord dealt with the
possessors of the elephant?
Did he not cause their war to end in confusion?'

The Holy Koran, referring to the
failure of early Abyssinian
colonialism in Arabia.

the Sultanate of Adal, which maintained good relations with Arabia, is that it unified all the Islamic forces in the region.⁷

In the sixteenth century the number and size of Abyssinian raiding parties, and the consequent plunder and destruction, was again on the increase. Eventually, the harassed Somali Nation was obliged to retaliate. Somali armies, led by their hero, the famous ruler of Harar, the Imam Ahmed Ibn Ibrahim El-Ghazi (nicknamed 'Gurey' the 'left handed') swept across the rift-valley right up into the Abyssinian highlands. His exploits and those of his forces, drawn in particular from the Darod, Isaq and Dir Somali clan-groups, were recorded at the time and have lived on in the traditions of Abyssinians and Somalis alike.⁸

To the Somalis, his name ranks with those of later nationalists such as Sayyid Muhammad Abdille Hassan—and has become an inspiration to the nationalists of today. In Abyssinia it is used to intimidate unruly or disobedient children.

The Abyssinian imperial forces of those days were allied with the first generation of Portuguese imperialists who as part of their world plan sought to control the trade of the Indian Ocean and the adjacent Gulfs. The Portuguese did lay siege to and occupy certain points on the coasts of north-eastern Africa, from time to time, but were never in a position to overcome the Somali Nation.

It is important to point out that neither the city of Harar—nor any Somali city—included Abyssinians from the highlands west of the rift valley among its citizens. The nephew of Gurey, the Emir Nur bin Mujahid built the great city walls, as is mentioned in the chronicles which survive to this day, in an attempt to protect Harar from further invasions. Meantime Harar and the other cities continued their distinctive development,⁹ and for two centuries Somali Merchants and peoples travelled with their caravans and herds largely unhindered throughout the length and breadth of their country.

Much has been written by Arab and other

travellers and scholars touching on the Somali Nation of those days which had trade links as far as China, but the first European known to have passed across the country to enter one of the five gates in the walls of Harar, which, like Mogadishu, had become a most important centre of Muslim learning, was an Englishman disguised as a Muslim Merchant. Although this was not until the mid-nineteenth century, it was still before the internecine strife of the Abyssinian highlands seriously overflowed again at the time of the 'Scramble for Africa' and well before the Abyssinian capital had moved as far south as Addis Ababa.

So much, then, for Ethiopia's so-called historic claims. Regrettably, it is to naked colonial aggression on her part and collusion with the imperial powers of Europe, that she owes her present position and to that deplorable episode attention must now be turned.

¹ R. Oliver (Ed.), *The Cambridge History of Africa* Vol 3 (Cambridge 1977) p. 100-1.

² E. Cerulli, *Il Sultanato dello Scioa nel secolo XIII secondo un nuovo documento storico Rassegna di studi Etiopici* (Rome 1947) I p. 5-14.

³ R. Oliver, *Cambridge History* Vol 3 p. 130.

⁴ R. Oliver, *Cambridge History* Vol 3 p. 135-6 and Harold C. Fleming 'Baiso and Rendille: Somali outliers' *Rassegna di studi Etiopici* (Rome 1964) 20, p. 82-3.

⁵ R. K. P. Pankhurst, *The Ethiopian Royal Chronicles* (London 1967) p. 20.

⁶ G. W. B. Huntingford, *Amde Seyon* (London 1965) p. 101-2.

⁷ R. Oliver, *Cambridge History* Vol 3 p. 150.

⁸ Arab Faqih, *History of the Conquest of Abyssinia*, and in French translation by R. Basset, (Paris 1897-1901).

⁹ For an outline History of these years see R. Caulk, 'Harar Town and its Neighbours' *Journal of African History* XVIII (3) (London 1977) pp. 369-86.

For a comparative table of Abyssinian rulers and those of Adal and Harar, see P. Paulitschke, *Die Geographische Erforschung der Adal-Länder und Harar's in Ost Afrika* (Leipzig 1884) p. 39-42.

'When Adal was at peace with Abyssinia, in the sixteenth century, then the latter became rich . . . a war with Adal, on the contrary, had its origin in a violent desire of a barbarous people, such as the Abyssinians were, to put themselves in possession of riches which their neighbours had gained by trade and industry.'

James Bruce of Kinnaird *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile* 5 Vols, (Edinburgh 1790) Vol II p. 126.

THE HORN OF AFRICA BEFORE THE SCRAMBLE

Sir Richard Burton was the English traveller and his impressions are significant, for he was quite clear on the independence of the Somali country. He described Harar and its environs before the scramble.* His journey was on behalf of the East India Company 'to ascertain the productive resources of the unknown Somali country in East Africa' which he correctly described as occupying 'the whole of the Eastern Horn'. He described the transhumantic patterns of the majority of the peoples and called Harar an 'ancient metropolis of a once mighty race, the only permanent settlement in East Africa, the reported seat of Muslim learning, a walled city of stone houses, possessing its independent chief, its peculiar population, its unknown language and its own coinage, the emporium of the coffee trade . . . the great manufactory of cotton cloths etc.'

The wider 'country of the Somal' Burton considered 'by no means destitute of capabilities. Though partially desert and thinly populated', he wrote, 'it possesses valuable articles of traffic and its harbours export the produce of the Gurage, Abyssinian, Galla and other inland races'. Like the missionary Krapf before him, he mentioned trading contacts he had repeatedly heard of at Zeila and Harar, which reputedly extended right across to the West Coast of Africa. Although he did not explore it, there is also a long tradition of Islamic students from the region living and studying in special quarters at the Great Mosque in Damascus. Many indigenous documentary histories await an appropriate political and cultural climate for scientific study.

Burton met the ruling Emir, Ahmed Abubakr and described him as wearing 'a flowing cloth, edged with snowy fur and a narrow white turban tightly twisted around a tall conical cap of red velvet.' Burton had his own views on the structure of the Somali Nation. He described the Issa, for example, as 'probably the most powerful branch of the Somali nation', living 'northward to the Wayma family of the Dankali, southwards to the Gadabursi and midway between Zeila and Berbera; eastwards bounded by the sea and westwards by the Gallas around

*Sir Richard F. Burton, *First Footsteps in East Africa or an Exploration of Harar* (London 1856).

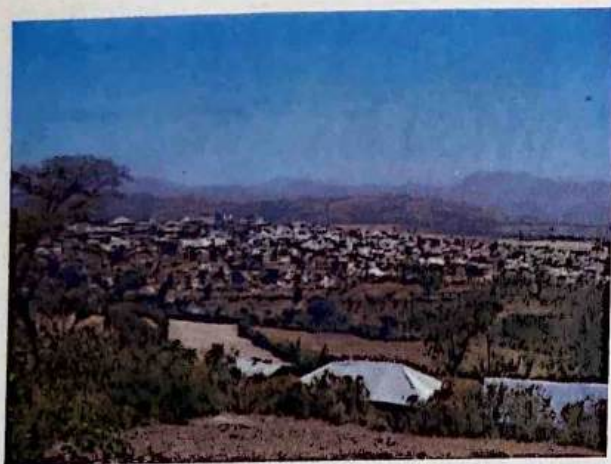
Harar'. He did not mention any resident Abyssinians.

The Ottomans and their successors the Egyptians had long endeavoured to control the Eritrean and Somali coasts and associated trade routes. In 1875, the Egyptians, affecting the imperial designs of the Khedive Ismail, seized the Somali coast and occupied Harar. The ruler, Sheikh Muhammad Abdelshakur was killed, despite his submitting, and replaced by a governor. However, the Egyptians were never able to subdue the people of the area. There was, for example, a serious revolt all round Harar in 1880. In 1882 the British occupied Egypt and organized the Egyptian evacuation of their forces from Harar. Although, particularly since the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, the British were well aware of the important trade routes and valuable economy of the area, they did not seek to annex or 'protect' the city of Harar and its environs. This was in deference to the French rather than to the local people. Instead they arranged that Abdullahi a son of the last Emir, should succeed.

Meantime Menelik, the Abyssinian ruler of Shoa, who had been amassing fire-arms with the



The New Mosque, Mogadishu—built as a gesture of friendship by the Royal Government of Saudi Arabia.



The City of Harar from the west.



The Walls of Harar.

help of European governments, began an expansionist policy which through conquest, colonization and agreements with other imperialists from Europe, was to more than double the area he ruled and in the process, make him Negusa Neghast (king of the kings) of the Ethiopian empire. He coveted not only Harar but Zeila, Hargeisa and great areas belonging to

the Somali Nation. The defeat of the Italian armies by the Abyssinians at the battle of Adowa in 1896 certainly raised Menelik's stature in the imperial capitals of the world, but it inaugurated years of deprivation and tribulation for the entire Somali Nation which fell victim to reckless and insensitive colonial partition by the French, the British, the Italians and the Abyssinians.

THE PARTITION OF THE SOMALI NATION

'From some oversight on the part of England giving up territory on the south-east borders of Abyssinia in Somaliland, and by the Italian Government not having their Somali Hinterland defined, there is a great chance of difficulties arising on the south and south-eastern borders of Abyssinia.'

A. B. Wylde, *Modern Abyssinia*, (London 1901)

Landing parties arriving apparently casually at points on the coast were most often resisted, as the Portuguese adventurers had been before them, but eventually the Somali Nation found itself encircled. The interest of the French, the British and the Italians in the coasts of the Gulf of Aden and the Horn of Africa did not abate. Treaties, agreements and protectorates established by European companies and powers with Somali chieftains and dignitaries on or near the northern and eastern coasts soon began to affect the lives of the people further inland. They are too many to list separately in this short booklet, but it should be noted that the formula they followed, with minor variations, clearly set

out as paramount the maintenance of the independence of the Somalis.

The territorial integrity of the Somali Nation was of course vital and non-negotiable. Being in the main transhumant and dependent upon herds of cattle and camels, their forefathers had, over the centuries, built up a measure of mastery over the seasonal ecology of the semi-desert lands of the Horn. Thus it was never implied that Britain or anyone else might be empowered to alienate any part of that territory—quite the reverse—or to restrict the vital patterns of transhumance. A typical agreement, dated 14 July 1884, reads: 'Whereas the garrisons of His Highness the Khedive are about to be withdrawn from Berbera and Bulhar and the Somali Coast generally, we, the undersigned Elders of the Habr-Awal tribe, are desirous of entering into an agreement with the British Government for the maintenance of our independence, the preservation of order etc. . . .' and there was always a declaration, quoted here from the agreement signed by 'Ahamed Murgan', a 'Chief of the Ogaden' on 1 September 1896, '. . . that I will not, nor shall my successors or any of my people,

'The Hawash (River Awash), here upwards of two thousand two hundred feet above the ocean, forms in this direction the nominal boundary of the dominions of the King of Shoa'

Major W. Cornwallis Harris, *The Highlands of Ethiopia* (London 1844) Vol 1 p. 303.

'So stubborn was the resistance (of 6000 Somali spearmen at Brava in 1506) that over forty Portuguese were killed and over sixty wounded before the town was won. The invaders left it, like Mombasa, a stripped and smouldering ruin. They made next for Mogadishu, reputed to be one of the richest and strongest towns on all the coast. The beach, as they anchored, was thronged with soldiers, many of them horsemen . . .'

R. Coupland, *East Africa and Its Invaders* (London 1956) p. 46

cede or alienate any portion of my territories or dependencies . . .'.* Taken in toto these provisions affirmed Somali sovereignty over their territory.

Meantime, from the highlands of Abyssinia, King Menelik of Shoa began to put pressure on Harar. The Emir refused to submit, even on receipt of the threat 'I will come to Harar and replace the Mosque with a Christian Church'. The Emir did however send a Somali, Hersi Ali, to appraise the British in Aden who had brought his family back to power, of his precarious

*E. Hertslet, *The Map of Africa by Treaty*, 3rd Edn, (London 1909) p. 387. Ahmad Murgan belonged to the Muhammad Zubeir branch of the Ogaden clan-group of the Somali Nation.



The Rift Valley floor from the air. Beyond, in the distance, the precipitous rift valley escarpment rises steep and abrupt up to the Abyssinian mountains where the Ethiopian empire-state developed, based on an ancient form of Christianity. The people of the lowlands are Muslim.



The nineteenth century limit of Shoaan expansion—the Gorge of the River Awash.

position (see page 13). Well aware of the extent of Menelik's armoury, they took no action. The Shoaan forces crossed the Awash river which the French poet Arthur Rimbaud among others had just described as 'the boundary of Menelik's kingdom' and, not for the last time, the Abyssinians put Harar and its environs to the sword. The Emir fled to his kinsmen in Jigjiga, and set up a resistance movement, but he was finally captured and put in chains on 25 June 1889.

In February 1887, Menelik advised the British colonial authorities at Aden that he 'king of Shoa and of all the Gallas good and bad (had) hoisted his flag in his (the Emir's) capital and my troops occupied his city . . .'. In a clear reference not to the Somali Nation but to the Christian terminology used by the other imperialists to justify colonization, he added ' . . . This is not a Muslim country as everyone knows'. He later wrote to his Italian ally, 'my occupation of Harar augurs well for the commercial relations between Italy and Shoa', and anticipating further colonial adventures, added, ' . . . but more important is the question of Zeila, (a centuries old Somali port and trade terminus on the Gulf of Aden) if Your Majesty will see to its cession to me, the port will be open to trade'.*

In 1891, after further communication with Italy—his major armourer who nevertheless secretly aspired to a protectorate over Ethiopia—Menelik laid detailed claim, in letters to the heads of European states, to the areas he intended to colonize. He confirmed, what his

*ASMAI 36/4:40 Menelik to Umberto, (Entotto) May 1887

RECIPE FOR BETRAYAL

The treaties offering supposed 'protection'—(our emphasis)

TREATIES between Britain and Somali Tribes, 1884-5.

WE, the undersigned Elders of [clan inserted here], are desirous of entering into an agreement with the British Government *for the maintenance of our independence*, the preservation of order and other good and sufficient reasons.

Now is hereby agreed and covenanted as follows:-

Article I.

The [clan inserted here] to hereby declare that *they are pledged and bound never to cede, sell, mortgage or otherwise give for occupation*, save to the British Government, any portion of the territory presently inhabited by them or being under their control.

Article II.

All vessels under the British flag shall have free permission to trade at all ports and places within the territories of the [clan inserted here].

Article III.

All British subjects, residing in, or visiting, the territories of the [clan inserted here], shall enjoy perfect safety and protection and shall be entitled to travel all over the said limits under the safe conduct of the Elders of the [clan].

Article IV.

The traffic in slaves throughout the territories of the [clan inserted here] shall cease for ever, and the Commander of any of Her Majesty's vessels, or any other British Officer duly authorised, shall have the power of requiring the surrender of any slave and of supporting the demand by force of arms by land and sea.

Article V.

The British Government shall have the power to appoint an agent or agents to reside in the territories of the [clan inserted here], and every such agent shall be treated with respect and consideration and be entitled to have for his protection such guard as the British Government deem sufficient.

The above-written treaty shall come into force and have effect from the date of signing this agreement.

In token of the conclusion of *this lawful and honourable bond* [names of elders inserted here],

and

[name of Assistant Political Resident inserted here together with witnesses] and successors, and the latter on behalf of the British Government, do each and all in the presence of witnesses affix their signatures, marks, or seals at [place inserted here] on the [date inserted here].

SUPPLEMENTARY GENERAL TREATY, 1886. [Between Britain and Somali clans.]

[Clan inserted here.]

The British Government and the Elders of [clan inserted here] who have signed this agreement being desirous of maintaining and strengthening the relations of peace and friendship existing between them:

The British Government have named and appointed Major Frederick Mercer Hunter, CSI, Political Agent for the Somali Coast, to conclude a treaty for this purpose.

The said Major Frederick Mercer Hunter and the said Elders of the Habr Gerhajis have agreed upon and concluded the following articles:-

Article I.

The British Government, in compliance with the wish of the undersigned Elders of [clan inserted here] *hereby undertake to extend to them and to the territories under their authority and jurisdiction the gracious favour and protection of Her Majesty the Queen-Empress.*

Article II.

The said Elders of [clan inserted here] agree and promise to refrain from entering into any correspondence, agreement or treaty with any foreign nation, or power, except with the knowledge and sanction of Her Majesty's Government.

Article III.

This treaty shall come into operation upon the first day of February one thousand eight hundred and eighty-six.

(Signed) F. M. HUNTER, *Major, Political Agent, Somali Coast.*

[The names of Elders inserted here.]

TREATY of Friendship and Protection between France and the Chiefs of the Issa Somalis. Obock, 26th March, 1885.

BETWEEN M. Lagarde (A.M.J.L.), Governor of the Colony of Obock, acting in the name of the French Government, and the Issa Chiefs *hereinafter defined:-*

Absi Handa, Robbè Tonk, Bare Ali, Bèder Guédi, Guédi Dagah, Dira, Dedis, Roblé Guélé, Hassen Guédi, Guédi Robbè, Moussa Seïd, Mahéramé Egué, Ouacis Gardadoub, Guédi Hersi, Chérè Djilèbour, Allalé Ouacis, Assobi Bonis, Ouré Baré, Ouacis Gouled, Bouhe Derrer, who control the territory extending from Gubbet Kharak and beyond Ambaddo, near Zeylah, the following Treaty has been signed:-

Art. I.—There shall henceforth be eternal friendship between France and the Chiefs of the Issa.

Art. II.—*The Chiefs of the Issa hand over their country to France that she may protect it against all foreigners.*

Art. III.—The French Government undertakes to facilitate commerce on the coast and especially at Ambaddo.

Art. IV.—The Issa Chiefs undertake to assist France at all times and to sign no Treaty nor conclude any Agreement, under penalty of nullity, without the consent of the Governor of Obock.

Done at Obock, the 26th March, 1885.

(sd) LAGARDE

(Marks of the Issa Chiefs.)

(Our emphasis, but translation from) E. Hertslet, *The Map of Africa by Treaty* 3rd Edn. 3 Vols (London 1909) p. 633.

THE ABYSSINIANS ARE COMING!

There are very many contemporary documents in the archives of other colonialists on the Abyssinian colonization of Harar and the Somali lands. Here are four examples.

Early in 1887, the British Government received the following warning from their Political Agent in Aden, who was Consul for the Somali Coast, of a battle near the River Burka in Arusi, a headwater stream which in the rains reaches the River Webbi Shebelli to the south-west of Harar, and of imminent danger to the ancient Muslim city—

12th January 1887—

Memorandum,
Hirsi Ali, a Mijertain Somal, whom I formerly employed as an Arabic writer at Harar, and who came with me to Aden has visited me on behalf of the Amir of Harar.
This man was sent to the Amir

—from the State Archival Collection, Mogadishu.

12th January 1887

Memorandum,

Hirsi Ali, a Mijertain Somal, whom I formerly employed as an Arabic writer at Harar, and who came with me to Aden has visited me on behalf of the Amir of Harar.

This man was imprisoned by the Amir on suspicion of his being an English spy, and he has now only been released and sent on this mission.

He states that the Amir expects to be attacked by Menelek's lieutenant Waldagabri, about the 15th February, and he wants to know if the British are inimical to him, for should this be the case he will fly into the interior. A battle took place near the river Burka, on the Shoa side, in October 1886 . . . on that occasion the Amir had 500 men with firearms, besides 3000 other Somalis and Gallas under Bakri Saleh, . . .

(This report asserts 'the attack was commenced by the Abyssinians', then lists the forces, firearms and other weaponry available to either side) and continues:-

. . . It cannot now be stated how many men Menelek can put into the field but certainly their

number will exceed that of the Amir's available forces. The latter is afraid that if he does not make his peace with us we may attack him in the rear. I have merely replied that the 18 rifles must be sent back with the Indians now in Harar who were formerly at Gildessa.

(F.O. 178/4077)

(Major) F. M. Hunter

In due course the Abyssinian forces attacked and captured the city of Harar on 6 January 1887. Even so their colonial appetite was far from satisfied. They began to dispatch columns to raid, loot and burn in the Ogaden. There are many reports describing such raids, one of which was addressed by a British Officer in Aden, Lt-Colonel E. V. Stace to Sir Evelyn Baring in Cairo, on 12 April 1892. It concludes as follows:-

12 April 1892

A large Abyssinian expedition returned from the Ogaden whilst Mr. Harris was in Harar, bringing with them as booty some thousands of camels and cattle and property of all descriptions. I hear from other sources that they have devastated a large part of the Western Ogaden and slaughtered the people. This will probably, I regret to say, seriously affect the trade of Berbera.

Harar itself, and the country near it in the direction of Shoa, are in a most lamentable condition. Many people are dying of starvation, and an epidemic said to be cholera, but which may be 'starvation fever', has broken out, and carries off numerous victims daily. It is an actual fact that the hyenas and dogs are feeding off the flesh of the dying in the streets of Harar during the night time. The cries and lamentations throughout the night in this large town are described as most heartrending. This state of affairs is attributed entirely to the conduct of the Abyssinian soldiery, who eat up everything . . .

The cholera, or whatever the disease may be, originated, it is said, amongst the plundering host just returned from the Ogaden. The Europeans and higher officials and all the soldiery have now fled from the town.

I have, &c.

(Signed) E. V. STACE

Further Correspondence respecting the Red Sea and Somali Coast.

(F.O. 403/177 Inclosure 1 in No. 19)



Abyssinian raiders photographed in Western Somalia at the beginning of this Century.

Later, on 3 May 1893, the British Foreign Secretary, the Earl of Rosebery, wrote to Count G. Tornielli, the Italian Ambassador, speculating over what the next Abyssinian move might be: the typical colonial thought pattern of 'divide and rule' is clear in the concluding sentence of the communication:

The Abyssinians declare they hate the idea of being protected by any European Power. They want a port, of course, Massowa, Jibuti, or Zeila and say that if they get one of these, there will be no further sense in their advance on the Ogaden. They declare that the country which gives them a port will be given the monopoly of all the Abyssinian trade.

On the other hand, it is to be feared that, as the Abyssinians are very ambitious, they are aiming at conquering all Somaliland and reaching the sea coast. They will probably some day receive a lesson from some of the Ogaden and Dolbahanta whom they intend to subdue in due course.

The arrogance of the Abyssinians appears to be a natural result of the immense supplies of arms which they have received from various sources.

Safety for the present seems to lie in the dissensions of the Abyssinians amongst themselves.

Meantime the Emperor Menelik of Abyssinia—like King Leopold of Belgium and others scrambling for lands and goods in Africa—employed often unscrupulous European adventurers (today they would be called mercenaries) to stake out claims and 'open up' lands where and when they could. They were usually rewarded by the 'right' to levy taxes on the unfortunate 'natives' whom they dispossessed. Below is part of a letter to one such, the Russian Count Leontiev who falsely claimed to Menelik that he was a colonel and a brother of the Czar. Menelik gave him an Ethiopian title. Later on Leontiev had his legs blown off by his own cannon!

Addis Ababa 9 June 1897

'The lion has prevailed! To the Count Leontiev, peace be with you!

'... by this letter I inform you that it is my wish to appoint you forever over the land on the limit which you open. So as to pay for your losses we will give you as much as five years gratis; but after that, if in the land you have opened be found any gold, silver, ivory, coffee—as my country and my government officers, as the tribute they pay—so shall you pay your tribute. This land on the limit that I give you will be on the south side of Ethiopia'.

Seal of the Emperor Menelik

was determined to subdue 'all the Gallas (Oromos)'. 'I shall endeavour' he wrote, '... to establish the ancient frontiers (tributaries) of Ethiopia up to Khartoum (present capital of the Republic of Sudan) and as far as Lake Nyanza (Lake Victoria)'.*

There is of course no historical justification for such claims against the lands of pre-colonial sister African states. Towards the east he included, 'the country of the Borana Gallas and the Arusi country up to the limits of the Somalis, including also the Issa Somalis, etc.'. Then, alone among the rulers of Africa, he boasted 'If powers at a distance come forward to partition Africa between them, I do not intend to be an indifferent spectator.' Nor was he.

With Harar as an advance base, Shoan military expeditions began to raid and burn settlements and loot the herds of the Somalis. As in other parts of Africa the fact that many a patriot lost his life in valiant but unsuccessful resistance to such colonial savagery, is well documented. Part of a British political agent's report dated 12 April 1892, typical of many, is cited on page 13. Missionaries; travellers; big game hunters—all repeatedly describe countless similar horrors suffered by men, women, children and livestock in Western Somalia.

Yet the British, particularly after the Ethiopian defeat of the Italians, concentrated only on the need to secure fresh meat for their

*See FO 403/155 and FO 1/32; 4 and 13 May 1897, Correspondence between Menelik and Rodd and Rodd and Salisbury, and ASMAI 36/13:109 etc. and reproduction on page 17.



Steamer Point, Aden, in the colonial days. The British were more concerned with the meat supply for this barren and drought ridden outpost than for the livelihood, land and lives of the Somalis they had insisted on 'Protecting'.



Mogadishu Old Town at Sunset. The Sultan of Zanzibar had, from 1842, established a nominal control over the port area, but visitors reported that his soldiery could not venture out far or alone or at all at night. An Italian Company obtained a concession in 1889 which was taken over by the Italian Government four years later. The French and the British likewise established themselves on the Somali Coasts (see map on page 18).

Aden garrison astride the imperial route to India. This, together with their serious difficulties in the Sudan before and after the death of General Gordon, suggested an urgent settlement with Ethiopia, despite the many incidents and problems constantly drawn to their attention by the 'protected' Somalis which they had duly noted. Accordingly, and it must be stressed without much regard for 'protected' Somalis, whom they also denied arms to protect themselves, they restricted their sphere of influence in the Horn of Africa and negotiated new boundaries with Emperor Menelik, and in particular with the latter's governor in Harar (the Ras Makonnen, father of Haile Sellassie) and with other colonial powers. Mr Rodd (later Lord Rennell of Rodd) who conducted these negotiations in 1897, mentions in his report that when it was pointed out to Emperor Menelik that the British had established themselves in Somali country 'by treaties with the native tribes before the Abyssinians had come to Harar', the Abyssinian ruler 'referred to the ancient limits of Ethiopia'. 'I asked him', reports Rodd, 'how the Somalis, who had been established in those regions for so many centuries, could possibly be looked upon as included within the ancient limits of Ethiopia. His majesty then propounded the extraordinary doctrine that the Somalis had been from time immemorial, until the Muslim invasion, the cattle-keepers of the Ethiopians

who could not themselves live in the low countries'. Then Menelik asked that Britain as 'a great power' cede him lands belonging to the Somali Nation as a personal favour! Part of Rodd's account of these negotiations is reproduced on page 17. Significantly, Mr Rodd advised Lord Salisbury that he had seen to it that while a limit to 'British' territory was defined, none of the phraseology used recognized any Abyssinian 'rights' to Somali land beyond it.*

The British government still betrayed the Somalis. The records note that the country they had once been so anxious to protect, was disappointingly 'sparsely populated and barren' and if it did include 'certain tribes with whom we have protective treaties and who own camels employed in the caravans from our coast ports' this 'trifling concession was but a slight loss . . . since it puts to end a long standing dispute and secures a definite acceptance of the whole line' of policy based on British Imperial interests and also 'the friendship of Makonnen'—their fellow imperialist!

'Slight loss, it may have been to the British—but for those Somalis it has meant their very freedom and livelihood. Nor did it put anything 'to end'—this year it has cost the lives of their grandchildren, cynically unassisted by the world powers who talk so much of liberty and freedom—including the power that betrayed their fathers—as they continued the fight for their own with a handful of guns, spears, stones and in fact whatever came to hand, against the mightiest imperial army ever to operate in Africa. A great fleet of Soviet tanks and armour, airlifted over what little natural protection their "barren" country afforded and literally thousands of Cuban mercenaries—a disgrace to the third world—armed to the teeth by the new imperialists sitting safe in the Kremlin.

Although the British were the main culprits and are taken as an example here, both France, because of her imperial ambitions on the Upper Nile and expanding commercial activity in Abyssinia, and Italy likewise failed to honour protectorate agreements with the Somalis.

These arrangements are all clearly null and void in international law since the Somalis, although materially affected, *were not party to them*. Their effect was that Ethiopia gained control—although in most areas she did not exercise this at least until the 1930's and in some

places not at all—over many more thousand square miles of Somali country. As has been observed, the Somalis had in no case delegated to anyone the right to cede territory on their behalf. Several other *criteria* held legally relevant, such as 'effective occupation', the 'reciprocity' of certain clauses, etc., all demonstrate the illegality of Ethiopia's occupation of Western Somalia—a claim she bases on colonial treaties between imperialist powers. This is particularly so, since the signing of the United Nations Charter, with its emphasis on equal rights and the self-determination of peoples, and the subsequent departure of British, Italian and French colonial administrations. In decolonization struggles which involve the ascertainment of title, the principle of the right of self-determination of the people of the territory is the only relevant norm of contemporary international law, as recent cases involving Namibia and other areas have demonstrated.

At the time of partition, the Somalis themselves remained largely in ignorance of any new arrangements despite their being so vital to their very livelihood. Small wonder, therefore, that when an attempt at demarcation was later made, righteous indignation led to tension, riots and even the death of a commissioner involved. Meantime also, the more aware of the opinion-formers throughout the bewildered and suffering Somali Nation—which like others in Africa and elsewhere did not cease to exist just because of the veneer of multi-faceted colonialism—also began to comprehend and vigorously to oppose all influences which seemed to 'divide and rule' their country and their common culture.



*FO 403/255 Inclosure 173, Mr Rodd to the Marquess of Salisbury, (Addis Ababa) 13 May 1897—see also No 35 of 4 June 1897.

The people of the Ogaden hail their moment of Liberation October 1977.

Part of the Confidential Report on British Negotiations with Abyssinia

Addis Ababa 13 May 1897

I would submit that this appeared to be the only way out of the "impasse", for although my instructions on this point are large and liberal, I could not see my way to accepting the arbitrary line proposed by the Emperor without endangering the main interest for which the Protectorate is maintained, and from our experience of the treatment which the Abyssinians mete out to their subject tribes, to which I have alluded elsewhere, I do not think anything but the most urgent political necessity could justify handing over tribes to the tender mercies of this marauding race.'

Throughout the colonial era Somalis to whom the negotiations also 'meant so much', were never party to such vital discussions. Mr Rodd even advised Lord Salisbury that the Abyssinian Governor of Harar had assured him 'Anything I had discussed with him would remain between ourselves'.* Indeed all negotiations were kept secret until they began to affect the day to day life of the people. Then of course, they were—and are—and will be—resisted.

[illegible]

*FO 403/255 Inclosure 189 (No. 36 secret) Rodd to Salisbury (Harar) 4 June 1897.

The lands of the Somali Peoples were not the only ones to which the Abyssinian Emperor Menelik laid claim. Had he been able, he intended to seize—for example—Khartoum and Lake Victoria. Would the OAU then have taken the position that the Sudan and Uganda are part of Ethiopia? No—because they are no more Ethiopian than is the Ogaden.

Opposite is a section of a letter Emperor Menelik wrote to King Umberto of Italy on 14 Miazia 1883 (Ethiopian Calendar, i.e. 10 April 1891). He wrote:

Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Menelik II, Elect of God and King of the Kings of Ethiopia, to my friend Umberto, King of Italy . . . while tracing today what I have presently occupied I shall endeavour if God gives me life and strength, to re-establish the ancient colonies of Ethiopia up to Khartoum and as far as Lake Nyanza (Victoria) and the Galla lakes. For one thousand four hundred years Ethiopia has been a Christian island in a pagan sea . . .

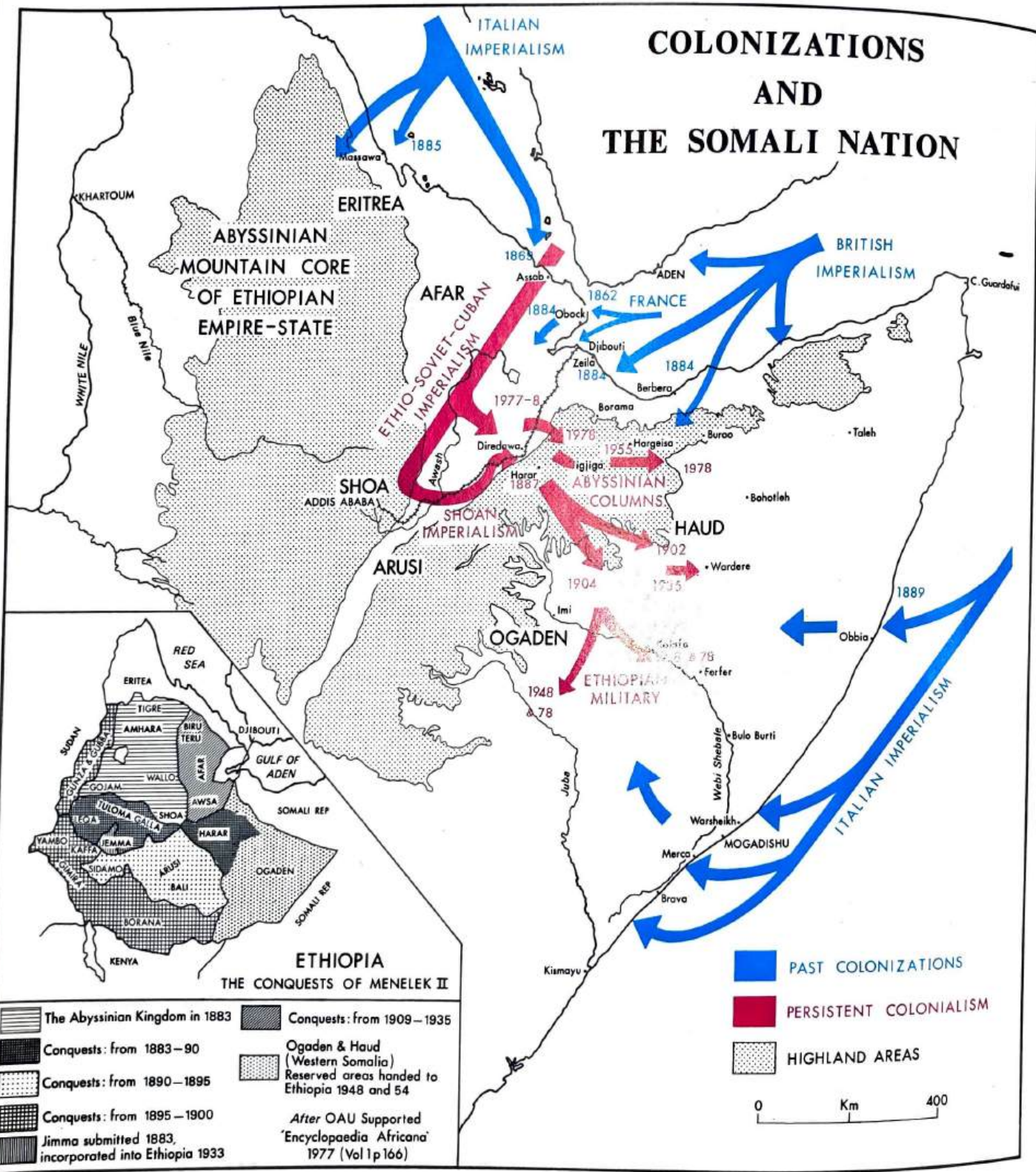
'Our task is not done and our safety not assured until the last vestiges of colonialism have been swept from Africa'

Kwame Nkrumah, Conference of African Journalists, Accra, 1964

'The people of a small country can certainly defeat aggression by a big country if only they dare to rise in struggle, dare to take up arms and grasp in their own hands the destiny of their country. This is a law of history'

Chairman Mao Tse Tung, 20 May 1970

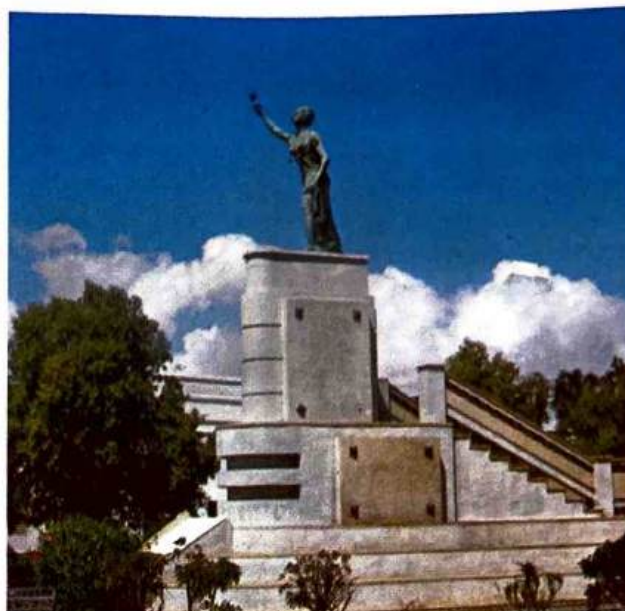
COLONIZATIONS AND THE SOMALI NATION



THE RESISTANCE OF SOMALI PATRIOTS

... Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed ...

*Declaration of Independence of the United States,
4 July 1776.*



Memorial to Hawa Osman Tako, Mogadishu—despite being struck by an arrow fired by the colonial forces, her courage symbolizes the determination of all Somali Women to be free.

It was through the Somali Nation's great literary tradition in its own language that protest was most strident. New strength was drawn from the exploits of the Somali freedom fighter, Sayyid Muhammad Abdille Hassan. A renowned and travelled scholar, he had resented the affront which all colonialism entailed, to political independence and other aspects of the indigenous culture of the Somali Nation. He fought the British, the Italians and the Abyssinian colonialists for 20 years—and even Somalis if he considered them collaborators. The British and Italian archives and records show that they knew well that this great African freedom fighter was very far removed from the 'mad mullah' image with which the colonialists nevertheless tried to discredit him. He was indeed a visionary who was also one of Africa's greatest poets.

Sayyid Muhammad was born in or about 1864, and was from the Ogaden clan of Western Somalia. He had mastered the Koran by the age of seven and soon proved a most adept pupil in horsemanship and the martial arts. In his late teens he studied at Harar and Mogadishu and in the Sudan. After a period in Berbera he left for the Haj. At Mecca, his faith in the spiritual strength of his people was much encouraged.

In 1895, he returned to Berbera, where at first hand he viewed with distaste the increasing influence of the colonialists before he travelled

inland into the heart of Somali country. There his early prominence was due in part, like that of Ahmed Guray more than 300 years previously, to his patience and skill as an arbiter—and also to his gift of poesy.

As a natural focus for a Somali nationalism, smarting under the impact of colonialism from four directions (see map on page 18), he soon came to the attention of British imperial officialdom. With characteristic insensitivity they suggested that he might be responsible for some missing firearms and made much of the fact that he wrote denying this, understandably rather brusquely, on the back of the envelope. Far from rudeness, this was an act of courteous traditional promptness. Ibn Battuta, when in Somalia nearly 700 years before, had commented 'In a matter where there is need of consultation with the Sultan, they write about it to him and he sends out the reply to them immediately on the back of the note—and such is always the custom'.

But colonial rulers have seldom understood the resilience of the culture of peoples they seek to subject. Sir John Kirk, British Consul in Zanzibar, commented in a despatch dated 17 January 1885 'It is wonderful how little we have yet managed to impress the Somalis, even those on the Gulf of Aden, with respect for our superior power'. Indeed, this has remained a truism, for later in the 1970's, Somalis in

'The Struggle of both the Eritrean and Somali peoples against Ethiopian garrison rule cannot be explained as mere Eritrean banditry on the one hand or as Somali expansionism on the other. It is better understood as an anti-colonial war—no less intense and no less justified than the struggle of Mozambique and Angola against Portugal or the struggle of the people of Namibia against South Africa.'

Editorial, *New Internationalist*, No 62 (Oxford & Toronto) April 1978

Western Somalia were observed by the Ethiopian military authorities to prefer always to 'observe rules and regulations made for the Somali public. They normally cross the border when they need legal help to settle disputes—or else mediators are sent from Somalia'.¹

There are several contemporary accounts of the early colonial campaigns against 'the Mullah'—all confirm that the horn of north-east Africa is the 'home of the Somali people' and that it had 'been partitioned by treaty between Great Britain, France, Italy and Abyssinia'. They do not hesitate to refer to 'Abyssinian Somaliland' as well as 'British', 'Italian' and 'French' Somaliland.² The Ethiopians later

The Fortress built at Taleh by Sayyid Muhammad Abdille Hassan at a late stage in his struggle, as it stands in 1978, 58 years after it was bombed by the British RAF.



dropped the term and Haile Sellassie persuaded de Gaulle to further obscure the facts by substituting the 'Territory of the Afars and the Issas' for the French colony—nevertheless its eventual emergence as the independent Republic of Djibouti in 1977, could not be prevented. The official British Military History, published in 1907, includes a geographical description of 'Abyssinian Somaliland', under the headings 'The Harar highlands' and 'The Ogaden country', in which it includes the 'Southern portion of the West and Central Haud' (see map on page 18).

The Somali peoples freely donated horses and camels to support the Sayyid's struggles once skirmishes began in 1899 after his forces had first clashed with those sympathetic to the British,

near Burao and Sheikh in the north. Once military expeditions were mounted against him, much of the fighting took place in Somali areas claimed by Abyssinia. The conflict continued on and off for 20 years, but Sayyid Muhammad was never captured and the resistance he began has never stopped.

So effective a guerilla leader was Sayyid Muhammad Abdille Hassan, that no Englishman ever saw him once he took to the field. His feats of courage and defiance compare with those of the Mahdi in the Sudanese struggle; Samore Toure or the uncowed Asantehene Prempeh I. The deeds of his followers were in the pattern of the Impi of Chakka, the Maji-Maji warriors and many later nationalist heroes. Today, detailed accounts of all these liberation struggles are not





Memorial to 'Muhammad Somali', Mogadishu—with no other weapon with which to defy colonialism than a stone, he stands perpetual symbol of the nationalism of the Somali Youth League and the historic struggle of all Somalis for freedom.

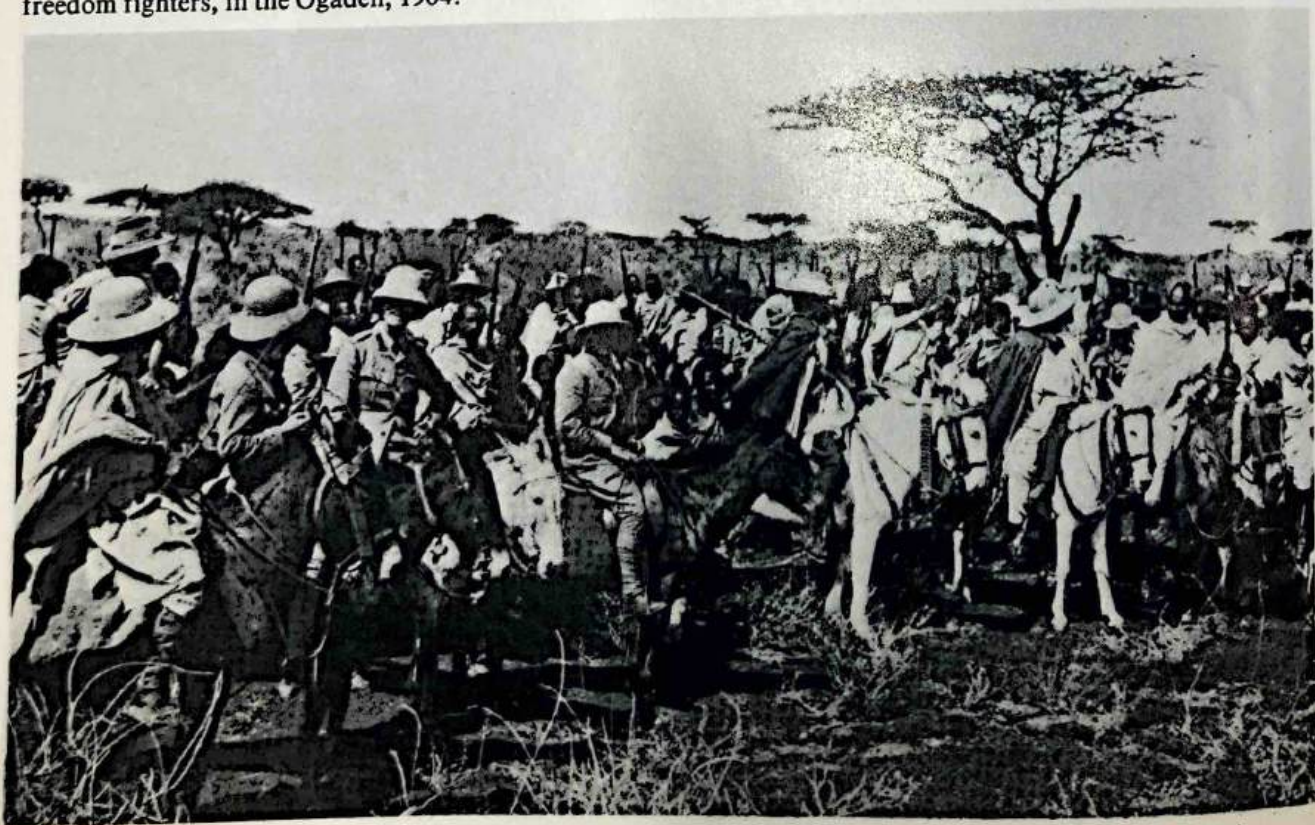
only taught in schools throughout free Africa and elsewhere but remain inspiring and living traditions recounted at firesides in the remotest countryside. In contrast, Abyssinian troops combined with other colonial forces in most of the punitive campaigns, for it was the emperor of Ethiopia himself who first suggested joint action

by colonial powers against the Somali nationalist and his freedom fighters.

The Sayyid's campaigns and battles are too numerous to set out in detail. One account details how 'a well armed Abyssinian expedition of about 15,000 men was despatched against the Mullah from Harar under the command of Grazmatch Banti. The force failed to locate the Mullah's men and after looting the Rer Ali, an Ogaden Somali group, retired on Jigjiga where they constructed a large thorn Zariba. There they were attacked with the utmost boldness by some 6,000 of the Mullah's Ogaden following'. Much of the looted Somali livestock and property was recovered.

A further punitive expedition was decided upon and in 1901 a British officer accompanied an Abyssinian force of 15,000 commanded by Grazmatch Adanabru into the Haud. It was noted 'when recording the enemy's dead', that 'a large number were Hajis or Sheikhs'. The British sent an expedition in 1902-3 but it suffered serious defeats and as on previous occasions had to withdraw. Even larger forces were despatched in 1904; naval forces were involved and the Italians also co-operated, but Sayyid Muhammad invariably surprised the invaders before disappearing into the countryside in true guerilla fashion. The entry in the official British Army field diary for 20 March 1904 is typical of

A joint Anglo-Abyssinian Colonial Expeditionary Force vainly searching for Sayyid Muhammad and his freedom fighters, in the Ogaden, 1904.



many, 'No sign of enemy. No fresh tracks'.

An observer wrote of the Abyssinian, British and other colonial forces:

They were united in an imperial adventure the like of which had seldom if ever been essayed before, in a campaign against an inscrutable enemy, whose range of movements extended from Cape Guardafui to the equator, from the sea into Abyssinia, who offered no target for attack, no city, no fort, no land, and no possessions save those of others which, if lost, could be replaced as easily as they had been acquired. In short there was no tangible military objective but only an outlaw who would know how to fight when the odds were in his favour and how to scuttle across waterless barren deserts when the odds seemed against him.³



A Somali warrior, in traditional attire.

The Seyyid was not himself cowed by such a combined show of force 'if you were strong' he taunted 'you would have stood by yourself as we do, independent and free', and smartly eluded the massive Anglo-Abyssinian pincer movement under the command of Fitwary Gabre Mariam and Lt-General Egerton.

The Somali patriots were not always victorious

and their forces suffered many casualties—particularly in brave charges against Gatling machine-guns—but their leader never gave up. He spent most of his time in the interior of Western Somalia. That war was not his choice, he often emphasized, as in an open letter he wrote in June 1904 addressed to the British people

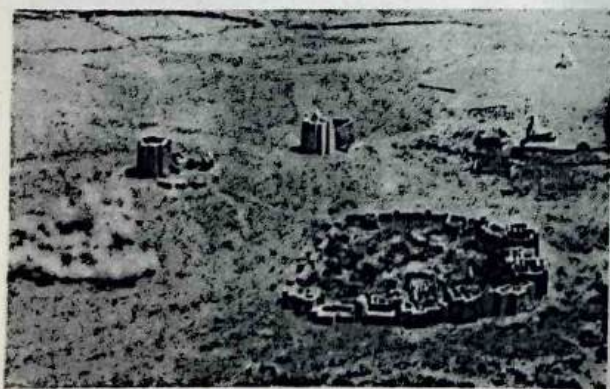
Sayyid Muhammad and his freedom fighters, from an artist's impression on his memorial statue in Mogadishu.



... I wish to rule my own country and protect my religion. We have both suffered considerably in battle with one another. I have no forts, no houses. I have no cultivated fields, no silver or gold for you to take. If the country was cultivated or contained houses or property, it would be worth your while to fight. The country is all bush and that is no use for you. If you want wood and stone you can get them in plenty. There are also many anthills. The sun is very hot. All you can get from me is war, nothing else.'

The Abyssinian Governor of Harar had taken a personal interest in this expedition, even vainly toasting, in the company of his son Tafari Makonnen, (later Emperor Haile Sellassie) the success of his 'Abyssinian Expeditionary Force', as it was (properly) called, in imported champagne. And well he might, for though the official archives make no mention of such delicate matters, a handwritten letter from Field Marshal the Earl Roberts to General Egerton dated 27 August 1903, survives, commenting 'money to the extent of £10,000 will also be paid to Ras Makonnen... please write to me fully and unreservedly. Your letters are seen by no one...' Lord Roberts did however reserve the option of showing this private correspondence to the Secretary of State and the British Prime Minister—such was the importance attached to the hoped for defeat of Somali Nationalism even then.

Fighting continued on and off over the years, meantime the Seyyid did not neglect other responsibilities of leadership. In 1913 he wrote of himself 'I am a pilgrim and a holy fighter and have no wish to gain power and greatness in this world', and repudiating tribalism, the great



British Airforce bombing of Sayyid Muhammad's forces culminated in an air attack—seen here just beginning on 4 February 1920—which severely damaged the otherwise impregnable fortress he had built at Taleh.

Somali nationalist concluded 'neither am I of the Dolbahante, the Warsangeli, the Majertein nor the Ogaden'. Later that year, he was to compose a famous poem to commemorate the battle of Dulmadobe, in which a British Officer sent to lead a camel corps against the nationalists and most of his troops was killed.

In 1920, however, the British Airforce was used to destroy the great fortress the Seyyid had built later in his life at Taleh. After a series of reverses inflicted, as in 1978, by massive technical superiority, he was obliged to withdraw to the valley of the Webi Shebale with a few indefatigable followers. His forces were in disarray, but the guerilla war he taught and fought was to revive as it continues to, to this day. Like Lobengula of Zimbabwe, Sayyid Muhammad was never captured but died late in 1921 of natural causes in the freedom of the countryside for which he fought—undaunted, defiant and condemning imperialism to the end.

This is a message for those who follow the Prophet's Faith

And it is against those with the (alien) government!
Behold how the infidel lays traps for you as you become less wary!

The coins he dispenses so freely now will prove your undoing,

First he will disarm you as though you were defenceless women,

He will then deceive you and rob you of your lands
And then burden you with onerous loads as though you were donkeys.

But do you still need warning now that I have been forced beyond Harar and Imi

And the enemy could reach even here before long
with the speed of his diabolical telegraph?

These were the Seyyid's last words on this earth but his spirit lives on in the struggle of all who are oppressed, not just in the Somali lands but throughout the world.

In the 1920's and 1930's oppression, particularly in Western Somalia, worsened. Except

'It is a lie that any of the Issa countenance the Abyssinian occupation... They wish to seize our flocks, kill our people and burn our settlements; they wish to settle in our country and oust us. We will not have it!'

Mudun Golab, a Somali leader
30 September 1891, quoted in R. E. Swayne,
Seventeen Trips through Somaliland
(London 1895) p. 115

at Harar and close-by there was no permanent Ethiopian administration and what little there was has always been military. Undisciplined raiding parties pillaged wantonly. With the advent of the Italo-Ethiopian war in 1936, Italy over-ran Ethiopia. She occupied the British Protectorate in 1940 during World War II. Somalis, except those in Northern Kenya and Djibouti, were placed under one administration. After the occupation by British Commonwealth, Belgian and local forces in 1941-2, the British military continued this administrative pattern for some years.

The attitudes of Haile Sellassie and his imperial government, however, had not changed. His mobilization order at the beginning of the war had read 'Italy prepares a second time to violate our territory . . . soldiers gather round your chiefs and thrust back the invader. You shall have lands in Eritrea and Somaliland'. For any Ethiopian soldier who did not fancy the life of a settler in someone else's country, and knew that no Somali would accept serfdom, there was the warning that anyone apart from the blind and lame, found in their villages after the receipt of the proclamation 'shall be hanged'.

The Italo-Ethiopian war did not mean much to most Somalis who disliked the colonialism of Shoa Amhara just as much as any other. And true to form, soon after Haile Sellassie's return to Addis Ababa from exile in May 1941, he laid claim to all of Italy's adjacent colonies. Regrettably, he achieved imperialist support over the fate of Eritrea, but not with regard to ex-Italian Somaliland. Moreover, the administration of Western Somalia and certain other 'reserved areas' was retained by the British military and they were not administered by Ethiopia until as late as 1948 and in other parts 1955—when non-self-governing countries elsewhere in the world had already begun to achieve self-determination.

In 1946, Ernest Bevin, then British Foreign Secretary, proposed to the Council of Ministers of the Four Power Conference that all the Somalilands, including 'Ethiopian Somaliland' be 'lumped together as a trust territory', to enable the people to 'lead their frugal existence with the least possible hindrance' so that 'there might be a real chance of a decent economic life as understood in that territory'. He was not supported—indeed the great powers were neither consistent nor could they agree on the future of Italy's former colonies, which rapidly became mere pawns in a wider diplomacy. The price of their cynicism and indecision is paid for daily by



During their all too brief moment of liberation 1977-8, some Western Somalis near Jigjiga loudly assert their freedom as a human right. Unfortunately there are no minerals; they are custodians of no investment, and President Carter sentenced them by requesting their brothers and sisters to withdraw to free Somalia and abandon them to a cruel fate.

the suffering Eritrean people. Meantime, in 1949, Italy was granted a ten-year United Nations Trusteeship over her former Somali colony. Haile Sellassie cabled the Secretary General, curiously condemning the General Assembly for 'overriding the principles of self-determination of peoples so clearly expressed by the Somalis'. In point of fact Ethiopia did not then and does not now adhere to this principle and the world—still less the Somalis—was not deceived. The true struggle of all Somalis for the restoration of their rights of self-determination and independence continued in every part of the nation—as many a monument to the brave and many an unmarked grave attests today.

Everywhere the Somali Youth League—a social and political movement which sprang up spontaneously throughout the Somali lands—took up the banner of Sayyid Muhammad Abdille Hassan and called for the restoration of cultural and political freedom. At Jigjiga in Western Somalia, they declined to haul down their flag and the Ethiopian police opened fire, killing 25 persons. The Somali Youth League was then proscribed by the Ethiopians and an attempt was made to ban all political activity in the areas they had occupied. In 1954-5, the Ethiopians took over control of the Haud and the Reserved Areas, again occasioning violent demonstrations throughout the Somali lands. Tens of thousands of refugees fled from the Ethiopian military and both Britain and Italy



The Ethiopian Governor's compound in Jigjiga, sacked by a jubilant populace immediately following the 1977 liberation of the town. Below, the record office of the hated Security Police of the Colonial authorities suffers a similar fate. All the records were burnt and destroyed—only one charred picture of the former emperor survived.



'No man can hope to dragoon a proud independent and sensitive race and any attempt to do so must certainly end in failure and possible disaster'

D. Jardine, *The 'Mad Mullah' of Somaliland*, (London 1923).

recognized them as political refugees. Events in the areas controlled by these two powers, much to the Ethiopian emperor's chagrin, moved inexorably with the postwar pattern of decolonization.

¹ Capt Keseteberhan Ghebrehiwet quoted in *West Africa* No 3152, 5 December 1977.

² Here quoted from D. Jardine, *The Mad Mullah of Somaliland* (1923) London: p. 16, but see also Lt O. E. Wheeler, *Somaliland or the North East Horn of Africa from the Gulf of Tadjourah to the Equator* (Simla 1884); Capt R. E. Swayne, *Seventeen Trips thro Somaliland* (London 1895) and *The Official History of the operations in Somaliland 1901-04* Vol 1 and 2 (London 1907).

³ D. Jardine, p. 47. Further detail may be read in M. McNeill, *In Pursuit of the 'Mad' Mullah* (London 1902); J. W. Jennings and C. Addison *With the Abyssinians in Somaliland* (London 1905); A. Hamilton, *Somaliland* (London 1911); H. F. P. Battersby *Richard Corfield of Somaliland* (London 1914); I. M. Lewis, *A Modern History of Somaliland* (London 1965); and R. L. Hess *Italian Colonialism in Somalia* (Chicago 1966) etc.

There are of course serious works in Somali—*The Poetry of Muhammad Abdille Hassan* (Mogadishu 1974) for example and many articles by Muhammad Ahmed Ali, L. Silberman, R. Hess, R. Turton, Abdi Sheikh Abdi and others on Abdille Hassan, particularly in *The Journal of African History*, *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, *Samalya* and *History Today*.

⁴ D. Jardine, p. 57.

⁵ Ernest Bevin at 4 Power Conference, 29 April 1946 and British House of Commons, see *Debates* 4 June 1946, cols 1840-1.

Somali children rescued from the horrors of the Ogaden famine of 1974, happily demonstrate their skill at traditional African dancing, in a refugee camp in the Somali Democratic Republic.



THE TURNING OF THE TIDE

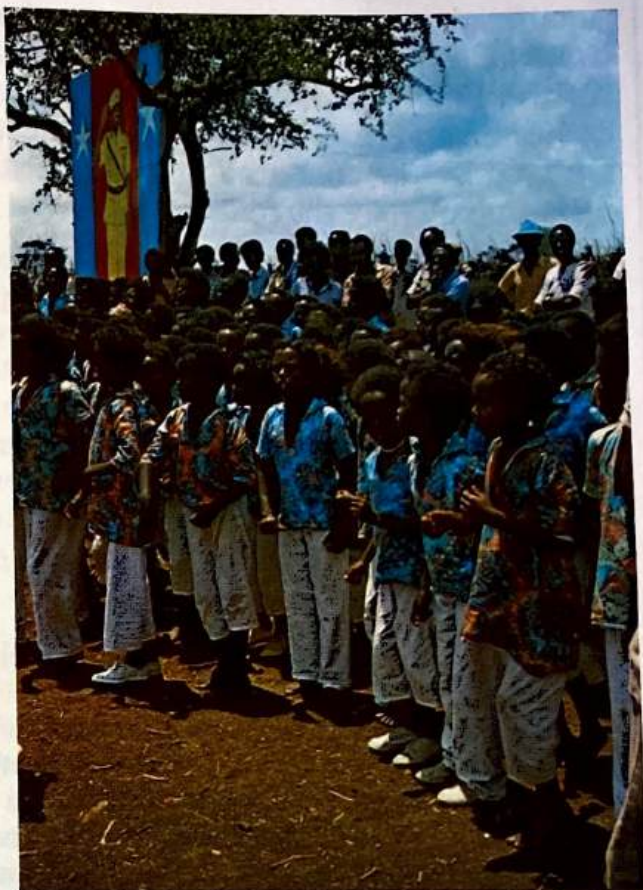
'The peoples of the colonies have the right to elect their own governments, without restrictions from foreign powers. We say to peoples of the colonies that they must fight for these ends by all means at their disposal . . .'

Declaration of the Pan-African Congress, Manchester, October 1945

In 1960, the Somalis in the British Protectorate and those in the Italian Trust Territory were due to regain their independence and as that time approached there was a general atmosphere of excitement throughout the entire Somali Nation—in Western Somalia not least. Emperor Haile Sellassie meantime tried belatedly to revise the image of Amhara colonialism (see page 28) but in common with colonialists elsewhere in Africa he was to learn that 'assimilation' was not acceptable to the people. He quickly turned again to the use of force.

Nor did the emperor's ambition end with the Somalis of Western Somalia. In true Imperial tradition he concluded a speech in the Ogaden with the comment ' . . . we consider that all the Somali peoples are economically linked with Ethiopia . . . we do not believe that a (Somali) state can stand alone, separated from Ethiopia'.¹ The Somali Youth League was however in no mood for any further compromise over the Somali Nation's return to total independence which then appeared possible. Through the Youth League, the Somalis made clear their out of hand rejection of assimilation.

The coalescence of so many colonial pressures has meant that the Somali people have had few opportunities to demonstrate their own firm aspirations to their African brothers and sisters and to the world at large. Nevertheless it is their views which are the fundamental ones in International Law. Even though principles in the annexures to resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly do, in certain circumstances, allow a non-self-governing territory to be said to have reached a full-measure of self-government through integration with an independent state—as well of course, as through free association or emergence as a sovereign state—the implementation of any and all of these options is held to require 'free, voluntary and informed choice' and must be 'on the basis of complete equality and through free political in-



Refugee and orphan children from the Ogaden, cared for in the Somali Democratic Republic, 1974.

stitutions'.² None of this, for sure, is applicable to Western Somalia. In international law, any purported integration by Ethiopia may be seen to be null and void. At this stage, however, the Somali Democratic Republic prefers to approach the OAU that justice might be done.

No serious student of the Horn of Africa was surprised, when, on the restoration of their independence in 1960, the former British Somaliland and the United Nations Trust that was formerly Italian Somaliland, joyfully and at once reunited. Unfortunately but understandably, there followed over the years, not infrequent friction with the Ethiopian soldiery still clinging to their occupation of Western Somalia. It has been pointed out that the British were not competent to hand over sovereignty to Ethiopia, which the Somalis whom they did not consult had never relinquished to them in the

CULTURAL COLONIALISM

It has not been in the nature of colonialism anywhere to foster anything but the superficial study of indigenous peoples and Western Somalia was no exception. Colonialists are more concerned with assimilation. In British colonial Africa, the 'British Empire' and 'Europe and the outside World', were taught to the point of exclusion. In French colonial Africa, even metropolitan timetables were sometimes imposed by the conquerors. Colonialists always try to impose their language and culture—compare the following:

It is no less desirable that the natives of the country abandon the use of their language and begin all to speak the Portuguese language, for thus shall cease the inconveniences of speaking both languages not to be understood . . . to facilitate this interchange among all, the natives shall begin to speak the Portuguese language and the priests and school teachers shall teach the children in the same . . . and for this reason in all practices and occasions they shall use the Portuguese language till they become fluent in it; for which I assign to them the time of three years within which all shall speak in the Portuguese idiom and shall use it in their dealings and contracts made in our lands . . .

Viceroy Francisco de Tavora, Count of Alvor, Portuguese Colonial Governor-General in Goa, 27 June 1684.

Difference in language often creates misunderstanding and can seriously affect the responsibilities that are being bestowed on you. We wish to commend those police posted in the Ogaden, who in execution of Our orders left their homes and the comforts of life . . . for the maintenance of the security and public order of this area . . . Our police whom We have sent among you have come to assist you in keeping order and security . . . It is Our desire that schools will not only impart education, but also will foster understanding and co-operation among the military, the police and the civilian population . . . Acquire the necessary education whereby you will be able to take over the various positions and responsibilities that await you in the Central Government Administration . . . lack of knowledge of the national language will be a barrier. You will now have a good chance to learn to read and write Amharic.

Emperor Haile Sellassie, in Western Somalia, 25 August 1956

During the few months of freedom 1977-8, the Somali population in Jigjiga obliterated all Amharic signs, the language of the colonialists—even the hotel was renamed 'hotel freedom' in Somali.



Nothing ever came of what Haile Sellassie, using the royal plural described as 'Our long cherished but delayed plan to initiate (development) plans which posterity will long remember'. That he was thinking in terms of assimilation into Amhara culture is clear enough, but even the few Somali children who were brought to schools in Addis Ababa rejected Amharic, as did the Eritreans when an attempt was made to impose that language on them. They, like the South African students of Soweto and elsewhere who today reject Afrikaans, knew well the political relationship



Two Western Somali Liberation Front Freedom fighters attend a briefing in the Ogaden, late 1977.

between the medium and the message. Somalis, proud of a distinct and rich culture, put it quite graphically in a proverb: Let no one who merely promises greener pastures, control your moving camp.

Ethiopia has clearly violated the United Nations Charter with regard to Western Somalia, viz:

Members of the United Nations which have or assume responsibilities for the administration of territories whose peoples have not yet attained a full measure of self-government recognize the principle that the interests of the inhabitants of these territories are paramount, and accept as a sacred trust the obligation to promote to the utmost, within the system of international peace and security established by the present Charter, the well being of the inhabitants of these territories, and, to this end:

- (a) to ensure, with due respect for the culture of the peoples concerned, their political, economic, social, and educational advancement, their just treatment, and their protection against abuses;*
- (b) to develop self-government, to take due account of the political aspirations of the peoples, and to assist them in the progressive development of their free political institutions, according to the particular circumstances of each territory and its peoples and their varying stages of advancement; etc.*

United Nations Charter, Chap XI, article 73

*(San Francisco 26 June 1945)
(our emphasis)*

The territory of the Western Somalis is a non-self-governing territory. Ethiopia has failed to ensure 'political, economic, social and educational advancement'. For example, the few schools and the government offices use Amharic rather than Somali. It has obviously failed 'to develop self-government, to take due account of the political aspirations of the people and to assist them in the progressive development of their free political institutions' and it has failed to encourage self-determination. (It has in fact this year used and encouraged others to use the fiercest and most horrible methods of repression.) There exists in the world today no clearer case of failure to discharge the 'sacred trust' of Article 73—a trust recently also affirmed by the International Court of Justice in the in many ways parallel case of Namibia.



ETHIOPIA ATTEMPTS TO USE THE AFRICAN REVOLUTION FOR HER OWN ENDS

It should be remembered that when the founding fathers of modern African nationalism and Pan-Africanism began to plan the systematic transformation of traditional African resistance to all forms of colonial oppression into what came to be termed the 'African assertion' or 'Revolution', Ethiopia was not much in evidence. She did not host or even participate in early Pan-Africanist conferences—even in the vital one held in Manchester, England, in 1945, when it was decided to open a new phase of the struggle in Africa itself. Abyssinian rulers had indeed discouraged visiting delegates propounding any form of black consciousness or more progressive concepts. It is a well known, if not often repeated fact that even in the early days of the United Nations Organization, Ethiopia preferred to identify on ideological and even ethnic grounds with the other imperialist powers. Members of the Imperial family frequently stayed with settlers in Kenya. Another example of her controlling allegiances—is her subsequently sending delegates to Lisbon, before the recent changes, to celebrate the five hundredth anniversary of the activities of Prince Henry the Navigator of Portugal—which initiated among other evils the hideous slave trade and the very era of territorial imperialism itself.

There was little discussion on frontiers in the early writings and resolutions of Pan-Africanists. Their concern naturally was more for human than national rights. However, the African Revolution—although it derived much from black consciousness, modern nationalist and other views, in the West Indies, the United States and the diaspora generally—had its roots in Africa. It is pertinent to note, therefore, that loyalties in ancient Africa, and therefore the frameworks of government of tribes and states had an ethnic basis—although, as elsewhere in the world, wider empires created by conquest and cemented by tribute or taxation rose and fell. Nevertheless, frontiers were rarely lines on the ground as represented on maps and it was the self-identity or oneness of the clan, tribe and nation that dictated common attitudes to relations with neighbours and to the land, its ownership and use. The cry for self-determination, when it came to be voiced and recorded in the ensuing colonial times, was thus by no means a new concept.



Constant Ethiopian air attacks caused the death of many innocent civilians, not only in the occupied areas but within the Somali Democratic Republic itself. Here a lorry is seen burnt out, west of Jigjiga.



Rocket launchers and other debris from Ethiopian planes shot down near Hargeisa, in the Somali Democratic Republic, in December 1977.



The Jigjiga Mosque damaged by Ethiopian rockets, in a reprisal air raid shortly after the 1977 liberation.

A Message from Abdellahi Hassan Mahamud, Secretary General of the Western Somalia Liberation Front

Born in Jigjiga in the occupied areas, when Secretary General Abdellahi speaks of the aspirations of the Liberation Movement, he can speak for all Somalis.

I appreciate this opportunity to clarify the history of the liberation struggle of the Somali people in Western Somalia. It is the same historical struggle for independence as that fought by Ahmad Gurey in the past: as that of Sayyid Muhammad Abdille Hassan and as that of the Somali Youth League (SYL). Its translation into the present movement—the Western Somali liberation Front—is the most recent phase. The Liberation Front developed in 1963 from the *Nasar Allah* movement in that part of the Somali country where Ethiopian colonialism, and consequently the armed struggle, still continues. It is only the level of intensity of the People's struggle that has increased since 1963. Since that time suffering and the loss of life and resources has admittedly been on an unprecedented scale but serious losses have also been inflicted on the enemy colonial forces.

The attainment of independence by the member states of the Organization of African Unity, has been an inspiration, as has the development of armed struggle by the people of Africa against the former Portuguese empire and the achievement of self-determination and independence from Britain and Italy—not just by the two regions of Somalia, but by former subject peoples throughout the world.

Our own struggle—our part of the whole struggle—has been held back by the lack of sufficient international support . . . Yet our armed struggle has continued to develop from 1963 on and has been built up on the resources of our own people. In the recent and all too brief period of liberation the territories of Western Somalia underwent enormous change. The people had until then been subjected throughout their lifetime to the worst form of colonial suppression—it kept them at subsistence level—ignorant, hungry, disease-ridden, divided and separated. Although the devastating drought in the region in recent years is closest to the memory—for thousands of people perished and others lost what worldly goods they had—it is important to remember that *all* these evils are an affront to Africa and to humanity.

The colonialist Ethiopian regime had the means to respond to our suffering, not only in the immediate sense but in the past, and they did not. It was our brothers and sisters in Somalia, smaller and with fewer resources and manpower, that responded and assisted our people, with of course aid from the international community. The changes we seek when our country is eventually liberated will be fundamental and based upon self-determination and self-government for the people and the victory of their armed struggle.

The Soviet Union and its Cuban and East-European surrogates have sent massive supplies of sophisticated weapons for use against our people and their National Liberation Forces. In spite of this, and the despatch of thousands of mercenary troops, we remain unshakably confident that victory is sure and will one day be ours. We *shall* overcome whatever hostile forces persist in trying to abort our just national struggle.

1978.

Abdellahi Hassan Mahamud



Abdellahi Hassan Mahamud, Secretary General of the Western Somali Liberation Front.

Writing of the colonial period 1884–1957, one scholar concludes ‘Europe left Africa balkanized, with the pan-African dreams of political unity far from realization. It could be argued that Europe had reduced considerably the number of separate sovereignties in Africa but at the expense of overriding old national boundaries and of splitting up once-complete cultures bound together by intimate ties of language, land and religion’.¹ Ethiopia’s active role in this has been discussed, but see the map inset on page 18, based on a map in the OAU sponsored *Encyclopedia Africana* which clearly demonstrates this.

The most vital of the Pan-Africanist Congresses, held at Manchester in 1945, resolved that: ‘The artificial divisions and territorial boundaries created by the imperialist powers’ constituted a ‘deliberate step to obstruct the political unity of the West African peoples’. What then did Africa propose to do about this situation?

Many African intellectuals and political leaders have acknowledged the influence of the ten-point declaration, based on the UN charter and on Nehru’s five principles, made by the Bandung Conference in 1955, which was attended by 29 largely third-world countries. It specifically endorsed the UN Charter and repeated relevant sections in almost identical words.

The Charter of 1945 had laid stress on human rights, international law and the peaceful resolution of conflicts, self-determination and the territorial integrity and political independence of states. But no conflict was then

‘Possible outcome is that Eritrea will become independent. However as long as Ethiopia retains an enclave in Eritrea that includes the port of Assab, the loss will be alleviated. Ogaden might also secede. But one must not assume that this will necessarily lead to a series of secessions in Africa. The Horn is a very special area. After all, Ethiopia was not only (an) independent country in Africa at the beginning of this century but also the only African ‘empire’. In other words one can look upon the Ogaden and Eritrea revolts as further struggles for decolonization.’

Gérard Chaliand, ‘The Horn of Africa’s Dilema’ *Foreign Policy*, No 30, p. 116–31 (Washington DC 1978).

envisaged between ‘self-determination’ and ‘territorial integrity’. Nor was the vital issue of which comes first, at all considered.

The All-African People’s Conference (AAPC) which met in Accra, Ghana, in December 1958, resolved that ‘*artificial barriers and frontiers drawn by imperialists to divide African Peoples operate to the detriment of Africans and should therefore be abolished or adjusted . . . at an early date*’. The resolution specifically mentioned those ‘*which cut across ethnic groups or divide peoples of the same stock*’, describing them as ‘*unnatural and not conducive to peace or stability*’. It called upon the independent states of Africa ‘*to support permanent solution to this problem founded upon the true wishes of the people*’.

The AAPC also endorsed the UN Charter’s approval of ‘Regional arrangements’ and earlier in September 1958, a ‘Freedom Charter’ for the Peoples of East and Central Africa had been adopted at Mwanza, Tanganyika (now Tanzania). This asserted that ‘*The right of self-determination is God-given and no man or nation is chosen by God to determine the destiny of others*’. That the delegates did not only have ‘European’ or ‘white’ powers in mind is clear, for the passage resolved further that ‘*the Movement [PAFMECA which later became PAFMECSA], shall fight white racialism and black chauvinism*’. Indeed the same meeting also requested the AAPC to discuss ‘*the democratisation of Independent African States*’. That request had great influence both on growing criticism of the Imperial Ethiopian Government on the part of intellectuals and



Sand dunes, from the Indian Ocean coast, encroaching on farm land, south of the capital. Control of these dunes and other vital national projects is hindered by the duty to combat Ethiopian persistent colonialism.

students in Addis Ababa and Asmara and on the emperor's foreign diplomacy and specifically on his policy towards Africa.

Several political commentators date the involvement of the Ethiopian empire-state in African Conferences and affairs from this time. Because of the imperial structure of Ethiopia it was obvious that her African policy should at once reflect concern over her own frontiers, achieved as they were by conquest and connivance with colonial powers during the scramble for Africa.²

There were two differently motivated factions behind this African policy in the late 1940's and 60's. There was the pragmatism of the old regime and the idealism of the new elite which was eventually to overthrow not only the cabinet ministers but the emperor himself, before the revolution started to consume its own unfortunate children in 'Red Terrors' and the like.

With the Somali Democratic Republic on the road to independence in 1960, Haile Sellassie, who had not previously shown much interest in the rest of Africa, saw at once that forums for discussion of Ethiopia's unnatural frontiers could soon come to include most African gatherings. Indeed in January 1960, the Second All-African Peoples Conference at Tunis did 'hail and support the struggle of the people of Somaliland for independence and unity in order to give birth to a bigger Somaliland.' Ethiopia—and the same charge could not be and was not levelled at Kenya—was held by a delegation from the Somali Youth League, the leading Somali Nationalist party, to have incorporated a large

part of the Somali nation within her frontiers.

Since no Somali had been party to any one of the agreements on which these boundaries were based—and not all were or are available to this day—at independence, the Somali Democratic Republic at once disassociated herself from them. Ethiopia grew more alarmed, for the very existence of the Somali Democratic Republic constituted a rebuff to Haile Sellassie's ambition, reflected in his pronouncements in the 1940's and 50's, to further continue the process of colonization by incorporating all Somalis within the 'Ethiopian Family'.

Independent Africans were of course very concerned indeed to see things peacefully put to right. In May 1961, the Monrovia Conference unanimously resolved that 'a written appeal be made . . . (to) the Emperor of Ethiopia and the President of Somalia to make renewed efforts towards a sincere and early solution of all their existing frontier and any other disputes'. Others saw an East African Federation as an avenue for settlement. But Pafmeca did not long maintain its early fearless and correct stand, for Emperor Haile Sellassie subtly took an interest—which typically extended even to scholarships for the children of top officials.

The Acting Foreign Minister of Ethiopia and the Secretary General of Pafmeca began to correspond regularly on broadening Pafmeca. It was decided that Ethiopia should host the next Pafmeca conference—the 4th—and apply to join the regional grouping which was planned. The Emperor advised 'the problem of establishing such a federation would not be very difficult even though Ethiopia is a constitutional monarchy'. This view is difficult to reconcile not



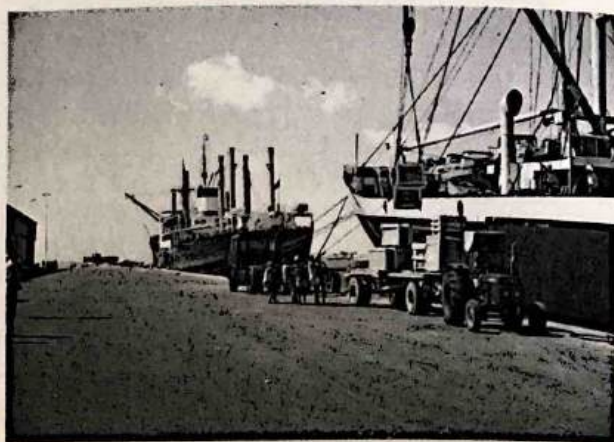
The Somali Government rejected costly foreign estimates and the dunes were stabilized by self-help programmes. It took a government of the people. Such successes are impossible for colonial regimes, such as that in the occupied areas.

dignitary as 'seeking advice on how to rule his subjects' has been revealed but the successor regime has to date proved incapable of replacing out-dated and arrogant Amhara attitudes towards other nationalities. In fact it continues to practice similar and even more cruel methods to suppress their aspirations.

Meantime the problem of Western Somalia was still wide open. There were far fewer Somalis in Kenya than in the Ogaden but although independence was still pending, tension continuously mounted. The British Government was well aware of the serious issues lying unresolved ever since the colonial division of the Somali peoples: an awareness that was emphasized by her sending an impartial Commission to Northern Kenya in 1962, consisting of a Canadian General and a famous Nigerian Judge. Within their terms of reference, they duly and correctly reported the aspirations of the Somali people there for some form of reunification. Britain however chose yet again to betray the Somalis and ignore these findings.

When the OAU Charter was signed in May 1963, all regional groupings, including those based on Monrovia and Casablanca were superceded. Naturally, rejoicing in the new spirit of optimism, the divided Somali Nation at once pressed the Government of the Somali Democratic Republic—when the OAU was formed and at every subsequent opportunity—to strive for a peaceful resolution of the problem of Ethiopia's continuing colonial occupation of Western Somalia. Ethiopia meantime stepped-up the centuries-old pattern of Abyssinian intrigue, for the careful wording of the OAU Charter, with its emphasis on self-determination—*'the inalienable right of all people to control their own destiny'*—and the *'eradication' of 'all forms of colonialism from Africa'*, did not provide a sound enough basis for the survival of Abyssinian imperialism.

The territorial disputes between the Somali Democratic Republic and Ethiopia have thus from the very beginning been tabled before the OAU and at the Council of Ministers meeting held in Lagos in February 1964, all parties concerned were called upon to enter into direct negotiations with a view to finding a peaceful solution and to report back to the next meeting. Later that year as the Assembly of Heads of States and Governments to be held in Cairo approached, a serious constitutional crisis happened to occur in Somalia. A newly formed Government failed to obtain a majority in the National Assembly. This was unfortunate, for it



Imported Agricultural Equipment being unloaded at the dockside of the new port, Mogadishu, 1978.

gave Ethiopia opportunity for devious further mischief. It was clearly not possible for the Somali head of State to travel at such a juncture. In the spirit of brotherly understanding to be expected between African States at such a time, Somalia requested a temporary postponement of talks scheduled on the territorial disputes resulting from the partition of the Somali Nation, and the deletion of items concerning those disputes from the Agenda of the Summit Meeting. This was all agreed at a meeting held on 15 July 1964. The meeting was attended by the Ethiopian Foreign Minister and his Minister of State, the Kenyan Ministers of Pan-African Affairs and Justice and Constitutional Affairs, the Somali Foreign Minister and Dr Tesfai Gebre-Egzy, who was then provisional Secretary-General of the OAU.

The aide memoire they signed records *inter alia* 'that, as a result of constitutional developments in the Somali Republic necessitating the formation of a new government . . . that item 9 of the provisional agenda of the first Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of States and Government be deleted from the agenda of the present session. This was agreed by the representatives of the three states concerned. It was also agreed that bilateral talks . . . would be resumed in accordance with the Lagos Resolution of the Council of Ministers as soon as it could be arranged, preferably in September 1964. It was also agreed that, during the session of the Assembly of Heads of States and Government, *no action would be taken by any of the 3 parties which would prejudice such bilateral talks.* It was further agreed that the

Provisional Secretary General should notify the Assembly of the agreement at this present meeting'.³

Technically, the three parties kept the letter of this agreement—just how 'technically' will emerge! It is for the reader to judge whether or not the spirit was that of the new Africa. Imagine the astonishment of the Somali Foreign Minister when, within hours, a last minute request was made to add to the agenda an item on ways and means of avoiding new boundary disputes. The verbatim record of the relevant session makes it crystal clear that this suspicious exercise—which was conducted in such unseemly haste that its proposer asked for approval prior even to finalizing his exact wording—nevertheless concerned *new* disputes only. Territorial disputes relating to the boundaries of Somalia were very specifically exempted. The Foreign Minister of Somalia drew attention at every stage to the agreement made only a few days previously but this was ignored and he had sadly to point out that his Government could not be bound by discussion in the absence of the Head of State. Prophetically he warned that even though he noted the assurance that the item concerned only *new* disputes, in his opinion it could 'create further problems between Somalia and her neighbours'—indeed in retrospect, was that not so intended?

Much has recently been made by the Ethiopian Government of the fact that the Assembly of Heads of States did subsequently adopt a resolution which—apart from re-affirming sections of the Charter of the Organization of African Unity, with its emphasis on self-determination and territorial integrity to which, properly understood, no one takes exception—also introduced the curious phrase that '... Member States of the Organisation pledge themselves to respect the borders existing on their achievement of national independence'.⁴ The *complete* background merits examination.

It is to be regretted—and is it not perhaps even sinister?—that the resolution included no mention of the discussion to the effect that the agreement referred only to *new* disputes—although President Nyerere, who proposed it, confirmed this to pressmen and others immediately after it was adopted. It is this omission that allows the Ethiopian government to posture absurdly that the OAU itself has approved of persistent and brutal colonialism on her part.

That there was a conspiracy—all of Ethiopia's making—to hustle the OAU into this position,

'Serious border disputes have broken out and disturbed our Continent... good sense and African solidarity has prevailed... but the disputes have been smothered not settled'

Kwame Nkrumah, Africa Summit Meeting, Cairo 1964

'The OAU was established by Heads of African States. But it is intended to serve the Peoples of Africa. The OAU is not a trade union of African Heads of States. Therefore, if it is to retain the respect and support of the People of Africa, it must be concerned about the lives of the People of Africa. We must not just concern ourselves with our own survival as Heads of State; we must even be more concerned about peace and justice in Africa than we are about the sanctity of the boundaries we inherited.'

Julius Nyerere—Speech, Dar-es-Salaam 1969

seems clear, despite the fact that the founding fathers had wisely avoided the mention of boundaries or frontiers. A clue to the origin of the wording of the 1964 resolution is an almost exact parallel in the seventh item of a joint communique which was issued *three weeks previously*, on 22 June 1964 at the conclusion of a state visit to Uganda during which discussions were held between Emperor Haile Selassie, Sir Edward Mutesa II (then President of Uganda and Kabaka of Buganda) and Dr Milton Obote (then Prime Minister of Uganda). This reads '... The Emperor and the Prime Minister further agreed that claims by African States against each other adversely affect the interest of African Unity and progress. They therefore affirmed that all boundaries existing at the date of Independence of each State should not be changed. Instead, all States of the Organisation for African Unity should concentrate on measures designed to contribute to the Unity of Africa...'⁵ The normal custom by which communiques at the close of state visits are prepared by the host country was not followed (almost every item begins 'His Imperial Majesty and...') and that is no coincidence. It did not happen in Kenya or Tanzania, on the Emperor's State Visits which immediately preceded that to Uganda. Today the Ethiopian Government endeavours to suggest that they had nothing to do with the introduction of this item again in Cairo disclaiming their own wording and maintaining falsely that it is a cardinal principle of OAU policy, whereas in fact it was at best a partial record and at worst the culmination of a deliberate attempt to hood-wink Africa and thereby preserve the illegitimate occupation of

EXTRACTS FROM THE OFFICIAL RECORD

What was actually said in July 1964?

At the Foreign Ministers Meeting:

The Foreign Minister of the United Republic of Tanganika and Zanzibar (who introduced the item):

Existing disputes are something different, they are disputes presently being discussed and negotiated. In order to avoid disputes in the future—not the past but the future—it is desirable that the Heads of States establish Principles which could be incorporated . . . may be it is different in French but it's very clear in English . . . I believe we should use the expression 'guiding principles in relation to boundaries', indeed I feel, Mr. Chairman, if the idea is agreed, it may be possible for me to put forward a written formula later.

I believe that my proposal has no relation whatsoever to the negotiations which are now going on between Somalia and other states which have a boundary dispute with her.

At the Head of States Meeting:

Chairman, the Hon Sekou Toure, President of the Peoples Republic of Guinea:

. . . the 15th item concerns the means by which it is intended to contribute to the resolution of disputes over boundaries between African States. I call Algeria, no, Tanganyika!

The Hon Julius Nyerere, President of the United Republic of Tanganyika and Zanzibar:

. . . Mr. Chairman, in relation to the question of means which will help in avoiding disputes over boundaries between African States I have a proposal which I wish to put forward so that our brothers [Fellow Heads of State] can look into it. This proposal has already been put forward during the speeches which were delivered by our brothers [the Foreign Ministers]. The proposal which I wish to put before you—it is necessary to accept it in the form of a resolution and I have asked that this resolution be distributed, and I am not certain whether it has been so distributed. But it is the spirit of the resolution to do two things: Firstly, after drawing up a suitable preamble this conference should re-affirm its adherence to the principles which are contained in article 3 [of the OAU Charter] and secondly, make provision that all new states undertake to accept boundary lines current on the attainment of their national independence. Re-affirmation should not affect the current discussions between the two or three countries to reach agreement on a long-standing problem.

Sekou Toure:

That clarification put forward by Tanganika has been understood . . .

The Ministry of Information in Mogadishu (opposite). The improvement of the offices of the Government Ministries is but one of many priorities which has resulted in more efficient services for the Somali people.

The Hon Dr Kwame Nkrumah, President of the Republic of Ghana:

... re respect for existing borders on the attainment of national independence—before this there should be a yard-stick, that is the body which we have already established [the Arbitration Commission] to solve these problems.

Aklilu Habtewold, Prime Minister of the Ethiopian Empire:

... in my humble opinion, there is no connection between this resolution and the dispute obtaining between Somalia and Ethiopia, for instance. We are agreed on this in accordance with article 3 of the Charter, (para. 4) which calls for peaceful settlement by way of negotiation, mediation and arbitration. We have agreed to meet around a table in order to negotiate . . .

Sekou Toure:

I summarise that the Arbitration Commission continues to exist for the responsibility allocated to it. What is required is that this Conference re-affirm the principles contained in the Charter and these discussions do not concern disputes which exist now, but are (nevertheless) of concern to all Member States of the O.A.U. . . .

(From the Arabic of the official record, Cairo, July 1964)



'... Most people's maps show the Ogaden as part of Ethiopia, and most of the governments of Africa oppose the changing of any African frontier because they fear that theirs could be the next to change. But the political reality behind this comfortable African and American legalism points in a different direction. The Somali-speaking people of the Ogaden are manifestly different from the people of the Ethiopian heartland, and manifestly do not want to be ruled by them. For the Organisation of African Unity, and Mr. Carter, to acquiesce in the reimposition of that rule is to acquiesce in a re-establishment of imperialism. Moreover, the return of Ethiopian rule to the Ogaden at Soviet and Cuban bayonet-point is likely to produce a number of effects which President Carter may regret.'

from the *Economist*, 25 February 1978 as read into the *Congressional Record* 1 March 1978 by Senator Eagleton. (Washington DC)

Somali lands by Imperial Ethiopian forces.

The Cairo resolution was immediately challenged by the Somali Foreign Minister. It is in any case doubtful whether a resolution of an Assembly of Heads of States and Governments extra to the Charter, is binding, especially one adopted in a manner which violates procedural fairness, such as the principle *audi alteram partem*—that the other side must be heard. The Somali President was not present. There were other irregularities. Advance notice of the issue was not provided by customary inscription on

Jaalle Mohamed Siyad Barre, hardworking President of the Somali Democratic Republic, often toils with the people on the farms and on development projects.

the Agenda. The crucial word *new* disputes was omitted by the Secretariat. The issue was raised under a different agenda item quite contrary to prior agreement and was whisked through with unnecessary haste. Moreover the wording itself is confusing: when did Ethiopia, Liberia, Morocco or Egypt, for example, 'attain independence'—and what were their frontiers? Ironically, the boundaries of Ethiopia, whenever it may be said to have achieved national independence, were most certainly far to the north-west in the Abyssinian mountain fastnesses—hundreds of miles from Somalis later subjected to imperial conquest. Lastly, the resolution may well be in potential violation of substantive international law from which derogation is not permitted. If it is cited, as Ethiopia today appears to cite it, with the intent of subjugating the right of self-determination, it is void for three reasons:

- (a) because it is in violation of, and hence *ultra vires*, the Charter of the OAU;
- (b) because it violates the Charter of the UN;
- (c) because it violates a peremptory norm of international law.

Self-determination of the inhabitants of Western Somalia is the key international norm for the resolution of this problem.

¹ G. Shepperson in *The Horizon History of Africa* (New York 1971) Vol II p. 465.

² R. Cox *Pan-Africanism in Practice, Pafmecs 1958-64* (London 1964) p. 45 and passim).

³ *Aide Memoire* 15 July 1964, quoted in C. Hoskins, *Case Studies in African Diplomacy: 2* (Dar es Salaam, Nairobi and Addis Ababa 1969) p. 25 (our emphasis).

⁴ AHG/Res 17(1) (Cairo 1964).

⁵ Joint Communique, Haile Sellassie I and Edward Frederick Mutesa II, Entebbe, 22 June 1964.



'This is the most magnificent movement of all. There is a dignity, a majesty, a sublimity in this last effort of the Patriots . . . that I cannot but consider it as an epoch in history.'

John Adams, considering resistance in Boston, Mass.
December 1773

'Recent Soviet activities are incompatible with African nationalism and threatening to countries striving to maintain self determination. . . African nations can resolve their disputes both collectively and individually far more effectively than the superpowers can do it for them'

War in the Horn of Africa

A Report of the US House of Representatives
(Washington 3 Feb 1978) p. 47.

Who is the Aggressor?

Since the belligerence has long been between Somalis indigenous to the areas which Ethiopia improperly claims are part of Ethiopia, allegations of aggression against the Somali Democratic Republic are preposterous on their face. Moreover, Article 7 of the United Nations General Assembly's Definition of Aggression reads:

Nothing in this definition, and in particular article 3 [the article which enumerates acts that constitute aggression] could in any way prejudice the right to self-determination, freedom and independence, as derived from the Charter, of peoples forcibly deprived of that right and referred to in the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among states in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, particularly peoples under colonial and racist regimes or other forms of alien domination; nor the right of these peoples to struggle to that end and to seek and receive support in accordance with the principles of the Charter and in conformity with the above-mentioned Declaration.

Moreover, in the context of the 'universal realization of the right of peoples to self-determination and of the speedy granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples for the effective guarantee and observance of human rights' the General Assembly resolved, for example on 10 November 1975 (3382 xxx 8), to note

with appreciation the material and other forms of assistance that peoples under colonial and alien regimes continue to receive from Governments, United Nations Agencies and inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations and calls for a maximization of this assistance:

And there are many similar resolutions before and since that one.

Every African, with the apparent exception of the past and present rulers of the Ethiopian empire-state, knows well that *Colonialists* are *Aggressors by definition* and that *colonialism* itself is the *real aggression*. The record of Abyssinian colonialism, a terrifying document in human—or rather inhuman—terms, is particularly relevant in this context. There is no denying that Ethiopia is an Empire and the Somalis of the Western Somali area 'a people under a colonial and alien regime'. The Ethiopians themselves always used the term 'empire' and the adjective 'imperial' and if they have dropped it but recently, it is *without*—in contrast to the other colonialists—*divesting themselves of their illgotten gains acquired so recently in the Scramble for Africa*.

Colonialism is certainly not a monopoly of any one race or any one continent. Just and lasting peace between *all* Nations can *only* be based on *self-determination, freedom and independence*. Why should the Somali people suffer as the exception?

LIBERATION AND RECOLONISATION

'The Soviet form of Government has united a multitude of peoples to create the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, a voluntary union of sovereign Soviet Republics, enjoying equal rights—including the right of secession'

I. B. Berkin and A. O. Chubaryan in *A Short History of the World* (Moscow 1974) Vol II p. 62.

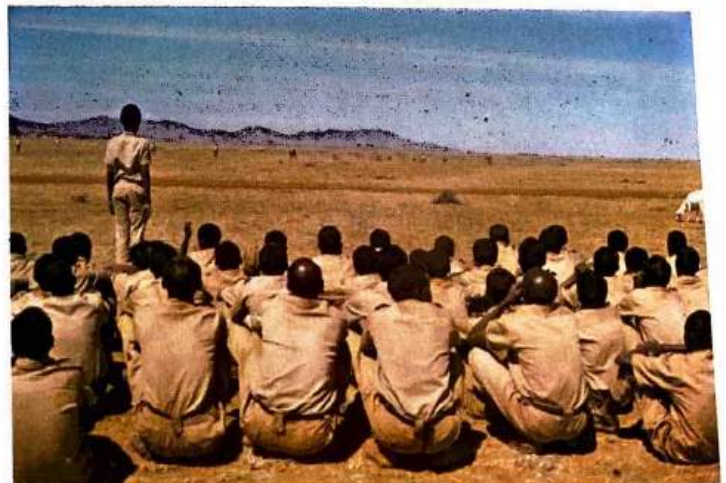
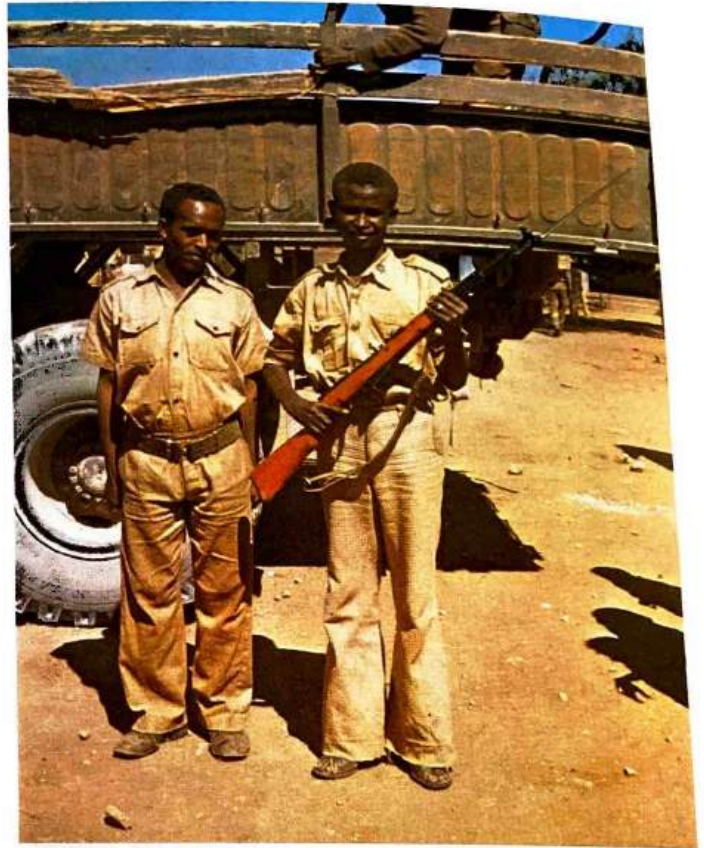
Meantime, however, events in Western Somalia were not standing still. There is a limit to the oppression which any human being can stand. When through negligence, incompetence and corruption, adequate measures were not taken to deal with the famines which recently struck part of North-Eastern Africa and the Sahel and instead attempts were made by an indifferent, colonial and aristocratic regime in Addis Ababa even to cover up the starvation and sorry suffering of the people—then the Western Somalis sent the pathetic message to the Government of the Somali Democratic Republic, that if they were to die, they wished at least to die as free Somalis once more.

The Somali Government was in fact already responding to their plight. The provision and even airlift of food and supplies was already under way. Refugee and resettlement training camps were established. Everyone co-operated. Even students temporarily gave up their studies to help tend the needs of their brothers and sisters.

Enough was enough. Early in 1977 the people

'According to Lenin . . . while the socialist state exists, the state borders will be determined in a democratic way, i.e. in conformity with the will of the people'

V. S. Shevtsov, *National Sovereignty and the Soviet State* (Moscow 1974) p. 17.



In January 1978, Western Somalis—young and old—prepared at Jigjiga to defend their recent and hardwon freedom. Pathetically under-equipped, the few who lived witnessed the much vaunted advance of the colonial army of Castro's Cuba and the cynical battle practice against blacks 'who do not matter' exercised by Soviet armour and air forces, only to face the vengeance of the Abyssinian 'civilizing missionaries'—who have requested funds even from the United Nations in a vain attempt to perpetuate the murder, rape and violence that—it is well documented—their colonialism has involved, since it began at the turn of this century.

of Western Somalia, the most oppressed and long suffering fragment of the Somali Nation, rose under the banner of their liberation front and ejected the last of the colonialists from Somali country. Although often accused of encouraging the freedom fighters who were after all their brothers and sisters, the Government of the Somali Democratic Republic had indeed long restrained the liberation movement still hoping against hope to achieve a peaceful and just African solution to the problem. Popular pressure among citizens of the Somali Democratic Republic who had themselves been born in the colonized areas but had escaped to freedom—particularly those with military training—to be allowed to join the Freedom Fighters increased. It reached the point where no Government could restrain them further. Such is the Human Spirit. Was this aggression?

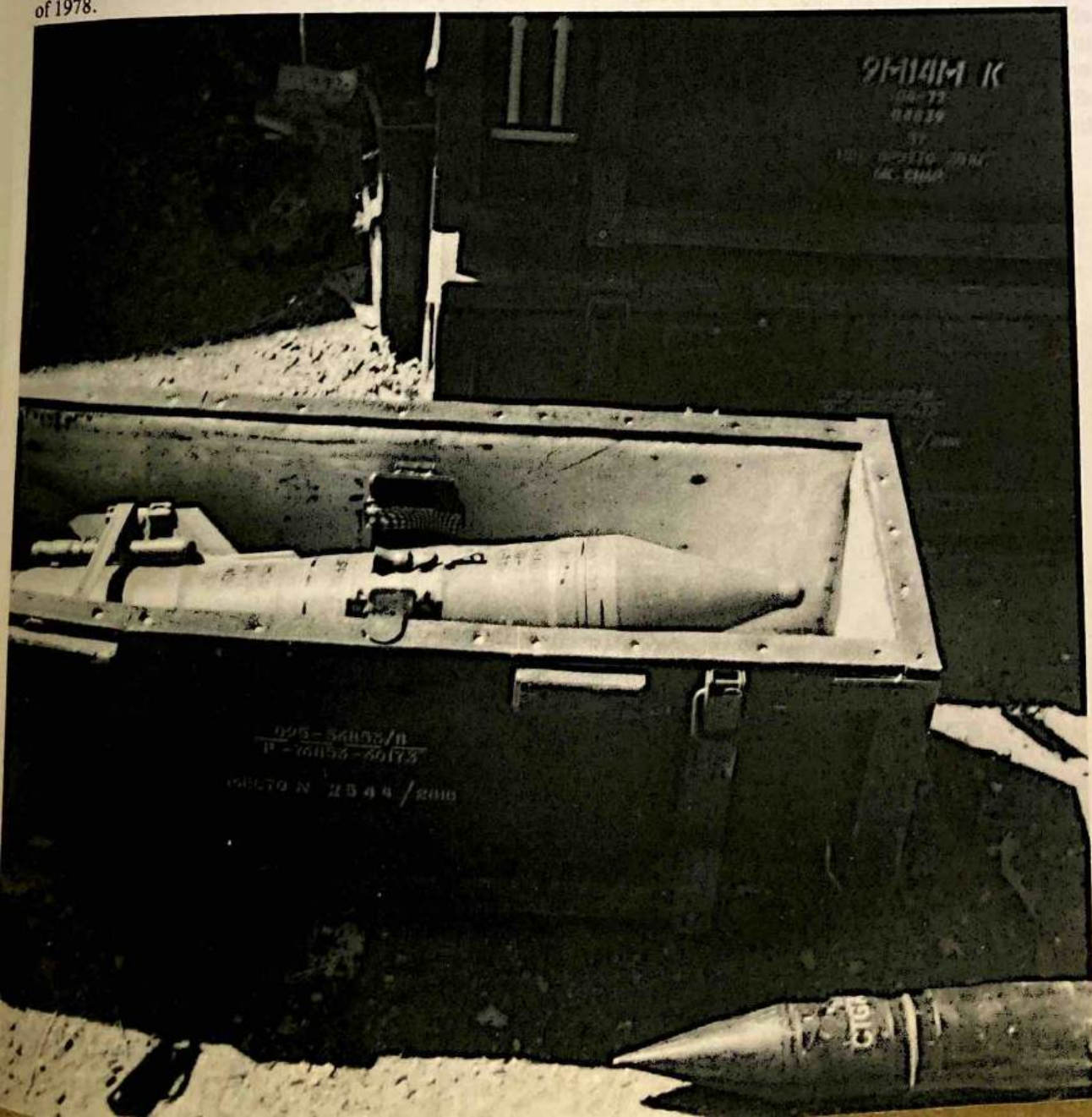
Despite frequent air attacks by planes with

A Russian missile among weapons abandoned by the Ethiopian forces, when they fled from colonized Somali areas in 1977. Later the Ethiopian Government had to call in non African soldiery to fight the new colonial war of 1978.

Ethiopian markings on citizens and property within the Somali Democratic Republic, Somali planes were rarely used and were never used in the colonized areas. Only when it became clear that the military successors of the Ethiopian imperial regime, unable by themselves to comprehend, let alone withstand the tide of history, had called in foreign mercenaries who were endeavouring to involve themselves in facilitating a new chapter of suppression of the Human Rights of the Somali Nation, were units of the Somali Armed Forces committed to the assistance of the freedom fighters.

The story of the savage recolonization early in 1978, by the most formidable mercenary army ever seen in Africa is well known.

The freedom fighters of Western Somalia, like their brothers in Eritrea, had sought and obtained arms and supplies from many sympathetic governments—including the government of the



Soviet Union. It might be noted also that a cadre from the Western Somalia Liberation Front was trained in Cuba. It is surely unprecedented that a great power and its allies—particularly, the same great power and the same allies—should aid a colonizer to reassert her sway over liberated areas—and even threaten other members of the Organization of African Unity and United Nations who properly sympathize with and support the struggles of colonized peoples!

How has such a volte-face come about? The Somali Democratic Republic declined to co-operate with those parts of the Soviet master strategy to dominate the Horn of Africa, the Arabian peninsula, the Red Sea and the air and sea routes of the Indian Ocean and its adjacent gulfs. Ambassador Samsonov, the Ambassador of the Soviet Union in Mogadishu openly threatened 'We will teach (the Somalis) a lesson they will not forget—we will bring them to their knees'. But the Somalis have never been and will never be cowed by any big power bully, including the Soviet Union, who mistakenly thought it could use the Somali Democratic Republic as it intends to use Ethiopia, as a springboard for military and political adventures that can bring no good to North-eastern Africa, to the continent or to the world community. The Soviet

Union cynically decided on revenge in total disregard of Africa's general agreement at the very first Summit conference of Independent African States in Addis Ababa in May 1963 to discourage and decrease foreign military involvement in the affairs of the African continent—an appeal which was directed, specifically and by name, to, among others, the Soviet Union.

Meetings of very senior Soviet and Cuban Officials and Military Officers were held, in an atmosphere of great secrecy, to plan the destruction of the Western Somali Liberation Front; the recolonization of liberated areas and even the subversion of an independent member of the OAU and the United Nations—the Somali Democratic Republic. These officials included Marshal Dimitri Ustinov and Raul Castro, the Soviet and Cuban ministers responsible for warfare, Admiral Gorshkov, Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet Fleet, General Kaliyakov, Soviet Chief of Staff in Libya, Major-General Arnardo Ochoa from Cuba and many other very senior officers. What right had General Petrov, formerly first deputy Commander of the Soviet Land Forces, General Borisov and General Ochoa and others to lead armies in Africa against Africans?

President Anwar el Sadat of the Arab Republic of Egypt and President Houphouet-Boigny of the Ivory Coast with Jaale Mohamed Siyad Barre, President of the Somali Democratic Republic, at the African Summit, Mogadishu, 1974.



Paragraph 3 of the Resolution on 'Interference in the Internal affairs of African States', unanimously adopted at the Fourteenth Ordinary Session of the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government at Libreville, Gabon, in July 1977 could not be more specific. It calls on all extra-African powers, particularly the big powers, to refrain from such interference.

Since late 1977 more than 250 heavy military transport aircraft, mainly Antonov 22s but including a fleet of the enormous Tupolev 76s, and some civil aircraft have taken part on an unprecedented scale in airlifts of men and advanced instruments of war which still continues. Air space and air safety regulations have been frequently ignored. The materials supplied have included ground to ground missiles; howitzer batteries Stalin-organs (40 122 BM-21 rocket launchers on a Ural 375 truck) and other artillery; T55 and T62 tanks; radar towers and mobile radar equipment; airfield construction equipment and electric fencing; Sukhoi fighter bombers, MiG 21s and even squadrons of MiG 23s—one of the Soviet Union's most sophisticated combat aircraft and massive quantities of fuel, rockets and ammunition. *As a direct result more people have died in the Horn of Africa in a few months than throughout the entire colonial period. Most of course were Africans.* To view this and to facilitate communication during the operation, a special cosmos satellite was launched.

The Mercenaries included pilots and ground crews. They made numerous attacks on roads and cities not only in Western Somalia and Eritrea, but also in the Somali Democratic Republic where villages had to empty during the day and schools postponed sessions until night. All observers agree that there had not been time for Ethiopian pilots to learn to operate the unfamiliar new planes, particularly since they also flew at night and as the United States authorities have pointed out, Ethiopian pilots were never trained in the necessary specialized skills, particularly important in view of the terrain in the Horn of Africa. Clearly the Russian and Cubans were not mere advisers but active participants in this cruel war. This is openly admitted and prisoners were taken.

Significantly Cuban prisoners revealed they had not been told that they were to be involved, unlike their role in Angola, in the suppression of a national liberation struggle. Their importance was their familiarity with the latest and most deadly Russian weapons with which the

Enlightened Ethiopian Viewpoints

'The Derg's policy and attitude towards the oppressed Somali nationality in the Ogaden is as chauvinist and reactionary as that of Haile Sellassie . . . progressives and democrats in the Horn of Africa and the world at large must actively support the rights of the oppressed Somali nationality in Ethiopia for a genuine self determination including and up to secession'

Wareqsa (Ethiopian Revolutionary Student Publication)
Vol 7, Aug.-Sept. 1977.

VIEW OF A FORMER DERG MEMBER

Capt. Kasete Ghebrehiwet of the Ethiopian Military Intelligence, who was desk officer for Somali affairs at the time of the creeping coup in Addis Ababa, has written:

'The Ogaden Somalis are blood and kin of the people of Somalia, and in spite of the efforts that Haile Sellassie made to have the Ogaden Somalis integrate into Ethiopian society, they did not in anyway. Independent in spirit and with a higher sense of equality, the Somalis have their own language, tradition, culture and religion. These could not allow them to easily integrate into Ethiopian society. Their day-to-day lives are so attached to the Somali Republic that if they get their primary education in Ethiopia, they then go for higher studies to Somalia and get jobs there. Some even hold very high government posts.

'It is only natural that they listen solely to radio broadcasts beamed from Somalia and they even observe rules and regulations made for the Somali public. They normally cross the border when they need legal help to settle disputes—or else mediators are sent from Somalia . . . They do not believe themselves Ethiopians—in fact, the hatred they have for the Amhara is monumental. During the many operations that Ethiopia conducted to oppress popular revolts in the Ogaden there was such inhuman treatment of the population that children grow up with a deeply imbedded hatred of the Amharas.'

West Africa No 31525 December 1977, p. 2447

'Victorious socialism must necessarily establish a full democracy and, consequently, not only introduce full equality of nations but also realize the right of the oppressed nations to self-determination i.e. the right to free political separation'

V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works* Vol 22 p. 143.

'The OAU must sometimes raise a voice against those regimes in Africa, including independent Africa, who oppress the Peoples of Africa. In some countries in Africa it might be the only voice that can speak on behalf of the people. If we dare not do that, even in private, we shall deserve the scorn of those who accuse us of double standards.'

Julius Nyerere—Speech, Dar-es-Salaam 1969

Ethiopians, with their long association with American equipment, are still unfamiliar. Were so many thousand mercenaries necessary merely to subdue the suppressed nationalities in the crumbling Ethiopian empire-state? Is there not a wider plan, with Africa the victim? Has not the new 'Scramble' begun? Is not this what the United Nations and particularly the Organization of African Unity was formed to prevent?

The Freedom fighters did not let down what today is recognized as the great tradition of opposition to colonialism, they fought with determination and bravery unsurpassed, even for them. After eighty years history repeated itself. The Somali Nation is again dismembered. The cast has altered, but the theme is the same.

The principal actors at the end of the last century were Great Britain, France, Italy, and Abyssinia. Today the Soviets, Cuba, East Germany and Israel replace Ethiopia's former allies. While Emperor Menelik of Abyssinia found willing accomplices in his imperial designs, the Somalis had to rely mainly on their own meagre resources. Today an even more awesome alliance has been marshalled against them. Now as then Ethiopia's appeal for international aid seems to carry greater weight. But the Somalis were not 'subdued' then and are not subdued now. The sons of Sayyid Muhammad Abdille Hassan still cry 'Go from my Country—Africa will be free'.

In righteous indignation and in a spirit of solidarity with the Western Somalia Liberation Front and the United Nations—for respect for the right of self-determination is not only incumbent upon all states, but following General Assembly Resolution 2625 (XXV) its promotion 'through joint and separate action' is a 'duty'—the government of the Somali Democratic Republic, without counting the cost in unfinished joint projects, expelled from its soil those who so abused hospitality and who demonstrated such contempt for human dignity as to provide mercenaries and supplies to the

former occupying power.

The Somali Government has acted totally within its rights and duties in international law. The retiring colonial forces took as hostages from Jigjiga such leaders as they could round up. These hostages were soon afterwards all killed at Hadu, six miles west of the Marda Pass. Several Sultans and elders—and in all some 70 Somali leaders—were massacred. The dead included the greatly respected Sultan Heban and Sheikh Ali Hussein, father of the Somali Democratic Republic's current Ambassador in Tanzania. May God's peace be upon them.

Despite such atrocities, when the United States Government asked the Somali Democratic Republic to conditionally withdraw their forces this was done. The conditions were that there should be a cease fire; the withdrawal would apply to *all* foreign troops; there should be an international peace keeping force and that the OAU would be assisted to seek a peaceful and lasting solution to the problem on the basis of self-determination of the inhabitants of the area.

The Somalis are not foreigners. Cuban forces on the other hand have become openly embarrassed to observe at first hand that the *entire population of Western Somalia is Somali*. They hardly venture from the fortified encampments. The Russians and their apologists falsely pretend to the world that the issue is closed. But for what purpose does Ethiopia wish to retain this colony? There can be no peace while 20,000 troops occupy Western Somalia. There can be no peace while villagers are murdered and villages razed. As recently as May 1978, for example, 31 persons were killed in one village, including Haji Isaak Nur, head of the village and 93 mainly defenceless women and children were massacred in another, may God's peace be upon them. Such is the barbarism of the new colonialism.

The struggle continues unabated. By June 1978, the Western Somalia Liberation Front had regained control over most of the countryside. Meantime, the bloodstained colonel who currently heads the Ethiopian Government threatens almost daily to invade the Somali Democratic Republic in the pattern of his imperial predecessors. And the people ask of their brothers and sisters *when will Africa hear us?*

Opposite

The Scramble 1978—the recolonization of Western Somalia begins. In late January 1978, Russian guns commenced a long range bombardment of the Freedom Fighters' supposed positions east of Harar, as a prelude to the massive airlift of Ethio-Cuban invading forces—the largest and most powerful mercenary army in the long history of Africa.

CONCLUSION

To pretend, as spokesmen in Addis Ababa tend to, that Ethiopia was the only state and the rest of Africa mere warring tribes, smacks of racism and arrogance but is nonetheless typical of what has been termed colonial mentality. It is to ignore ancient Ghana-Mali-Songhai, the Kingdoms of Asante, Dahomey and Benin, the Hausa-Fulani States, Morocco, Bakongo, Bunyoro and Buganda, the realm of the Mwene-Mutapa, the Zulu Nation—to say nothing of Nubia, Meroe and Egypt herself—to arbitrarily mention but a few historic African states.

Nations in Africa are not a colonial development. It was not the existence of Abyssinia or the Ethiopian empire-state that was uniquely significant, nor even its survival as a largely unconquered political expression into modern times. It was that, having acquired sufficient weapons, it alone among the states of Africa, participated in the scramble for Africa, conniving with other imperial powers from Europe and, moreover, when those other

colonialists gave up their illgotten gains, Ethiopia hung on to them. Her colonial repertoire varied from the once Portuguese pattern of cultural assimilation to the settlement of alien groups on alienated lands, punitive raiding expeditions, looting, rape and vicious repression: details and photographs of which have been previously published by the Somali Government.¹

Alienation of land, trampling on human rights and police oppression are the same, be they Amhara or Afrikaaner. Well might the leader of the Western Somali Liberation Front cry out with Sayyid Muhammad 'Go from my Country' or with Chief Luthuli, 'Let my people Free'.

There have been many Steve Bikos among the suppressed nationalities in Ethiopia. The study of colonialism not just in Europe but everywhere in the world—take the Ottoman empire for example—demonstrates a universal reluctance on the part of imperialists to lose control over the political and economic destiny of captive



nations. The situation in Western Somalia has not been unique. Nor are colonial boundaries by the very nature of their imposition sacred. Decolonization cannot be frozen half way through, to suit one anachronistic empire, in defiance of the pattern of world history. Mercenaries can bring nothing but bloodshed to Africa. Colonialism, while it persists is 'permanent aggression' which has to be resisted. **Only after national integrity is restored through self-determination are frontiers secure.** This interpretation is of course in conformity with the principles of justice and International Law.

Ethiopia has long benefitted from the fact that its capital was designated the seat of the Organization of African Unity. That location has permitted Ethiopia to distort the issue of its maladministration of Somali territories at the Somali Government's expense. An impression has been deliberately created in Africa and elsewhere that the Somalis repudiate the notion of the stability of borders and the principle of respect for territorial integrity and that accepting the justice of their claim will somehow create chaos throughout the continent. *That is of course not the case.* The Somali Nation is not a small divided tribe living on a boundary, but one of the largest ethnic blocks in all Africa. The issue of Western Somalia is unique and *sui generis* in the context of Africa.

The Somali Democratic Republic respects lawful boundaries and the principle of territorial integrity, as it accepts the right of self-determination and other relevant rules of international law in the resolution of the current problem.

The truth is that, aware that the mere fact that she was admitted to the United Nations does not import validation of illegal territorial claims, the Imperial Ethiopian Government and its successor regime have gone so far as to attempt to use the OAU itself to frustrate the legitimate aspirations of nationalities. This is doomed to fail, because the spirit of African Unity is one between equals, not between colonialists and subjects.

Nor is it in any way related to Marxism-Leninism. In the *Revolutionary Proletariat and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination*, Lenin insisted that the Russian workers could not carry out a democratic revolution unless they unconditionally demanded that all nations oppressed by Tsarism should be free to secede from Russia.² Doubtless the Soviet Union cynically hopes for support as her own 'national problem' in Asia grows.

It must be stressed that not all Ethiopians are guilty of encouraging such perversions. The terrible repression of opposition groups now current within the crumbling Ethiopian empire-state has been no more able to prevent the enlightened from defying official 'red terror' and constructively discussing the 'nationality problem' as they describe it in their many booklets and pamphlets—than it has to deny the equal rights and self-determination of the Eritreans and the Somalis of Western Somalia. It is with such enlightened Ethiopians that a free Somali Nation can, as in times past, live without outside interference in brotherhood and mutual respect. Meantime, however, this vision and that of continental unity itself will continue to fade unless the cancer of persistent colonialism in Africa's Southern and North-Eastern extremities is cured once and for all.

In many speeches, the President of the Somali Democratic Republic Jaalle Mohamed Siyad Barre has continued to endeavour to promote a peaceful settlement in Western Somalia. He has sent delegations and even sought by personal summitry to secure a just and equitable settlement acceptable to the people of Western Somalia. He met both the late emperor and his current successor. To date, all this has been to no avail, but the position of the Somali Democratic Republic has not changed. A peaceful and just settlement by negotiation is still the aim. The chances of securing such an African solution are, of course, rendered near impossible while Russian and Cuban mercenaries with massive arms supplies flagrantly appear to have taken control of large areas of North-Eastern Africa. Not only those involved in the legitimate struggle in Western Somalia, but also innocent and uninvolved Somali civilians in several towns and cities in the Somali Democratic Republic have been subjected to strafing from the air and to bombs and napalm. Fatalities and severe injuries have resulted and atrocities are daily occurrences in the recolonized areas.

The considered opinion of the Somali Government is that the OAU and the entire international community should call upon the Soviet Union and its allies to discontinue their intervention in the affairs of the African continent. An African settlement, having in mind the interests of the peoples involved—to be independently ascertained—would then have a good chance of achievement.

¹ *The Portion of Somali Territory under Ethiopian Colonization* (Mogadishu 1974) plates between pp. 34-35.

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 21 p. 413.

Monument to Sayyid Muhammad Abdille Hassan, Somali Patriot, Mogadishu.



