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THE HORN OF AFRICA CONFLICT

BY

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The purpose of this paper is to describe the struggle of the Somalis for their freedom and complete independence from colonialism, in general, and the Ogaden Somalis, in particular, who are trying to achieve what their brothers achieved already and with their help.

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THE HORN OF AFRICA CONFLICT

An Individual Study Project
Intended for Publication

by

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ABSTRACT

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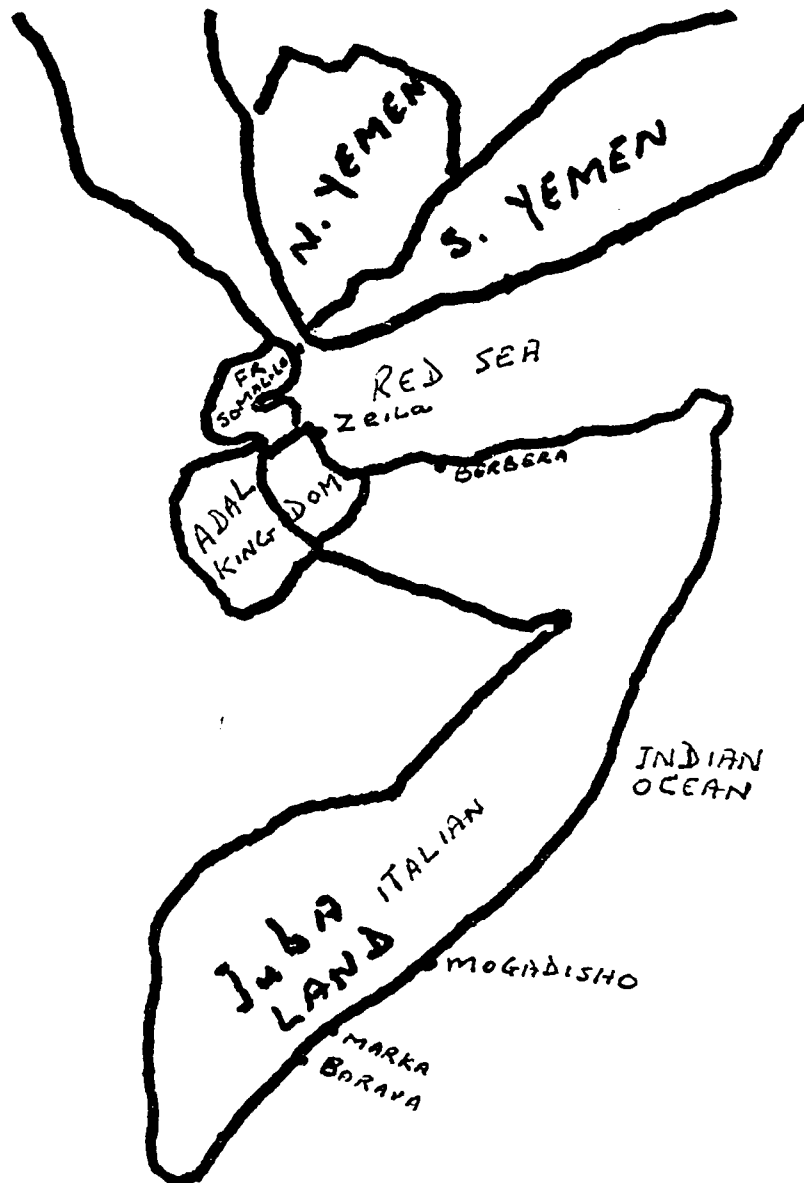
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INTRODUCTION

Seldom has a national struggle been so arduous, so historically significant, and yet so little understood as that of the Somali Nation.

The long and courageous struggle of the Somali people for total liberation, self-determination and freedom, will sooner or later be crowned with success--despite the recent recolonization campaigns conducted by certain foreign governments and superpowers.

The ever-continuing struggle of the Somalis, the Eritreans, and the Tigres in the Horn of Africa together with the confrontation in Southern Africa, where colonialism also persists, must be counted among the longest and most bitterly contested colonial issues of our time.

Even so, the principles which underlie them and the history of the struggles themselves are very clear. Nor can the outcome be doubted--that would be to reverse the pattern of history. The struggles will one day be described as the last phase in the total liberation of Africa.

THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Somalis in History

The origin of the Somali people dates back thousands of years into the very earliest history of the Horn of 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 scientific study by Somali scholars and foreign colleagues.

Somalia is that portion of land situated on the Horn of Africa and stands at the crossroads between Africa and the Near East. Since antiquity, the Somalis have maintained commercial and cultural relationships with North Africa and the Arab Peninsula. Somalis have a longstanding history, unique traditions and cultural heritages.

Pre-Islamic Arabs and Persians founded trading routes and ports in Zeila on the Gulf of Ader and Mogadishu on the east coast of the Indian Ocean.

A ninth century Chinese document mentions Berbera, as the Horn of Africa was known then.

Alyaqubi, an Arab geographer writing at that time, mentions the Somali coast as an important commercial route with an advanced civilization exporting ivory, hides, aromatic gums, spices and cattle to the Far East and the Persian Gulf.

Ibn Battuta, another Arabian traveler, visited the trading ports of Zeila and Mogadishu in 1331.

Somalis also had relations with the ancient Greeks and Romans, whose trading ships were well acquainted with the coast of the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean.

The 19th century saw a commercial boom for the East Coast of Africa, with European, American, and Zanzibarian merchants trading along the coast. During this period the Somalis exported ivory, textiles, ostrich feathers, hides, spices, vegetable dyes, and oils.

Before the colonization and the partition of the Horn, the Somalis were free people with a common heritage, language, faith, culture and traditions--

they still do have the qualities, what is more, they acquired a strong sense of nationalism.

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

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 live and even beyond into the highlands of Abyssinia above the western escarpment of the Great Rift Valley.

The Somali territory, however, has 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 culture of the Somali territory and lands--especially those in the occupied Somali areas--has of course not been adequately encouraged over the years, either by the imperial Ethiopian government or by 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.

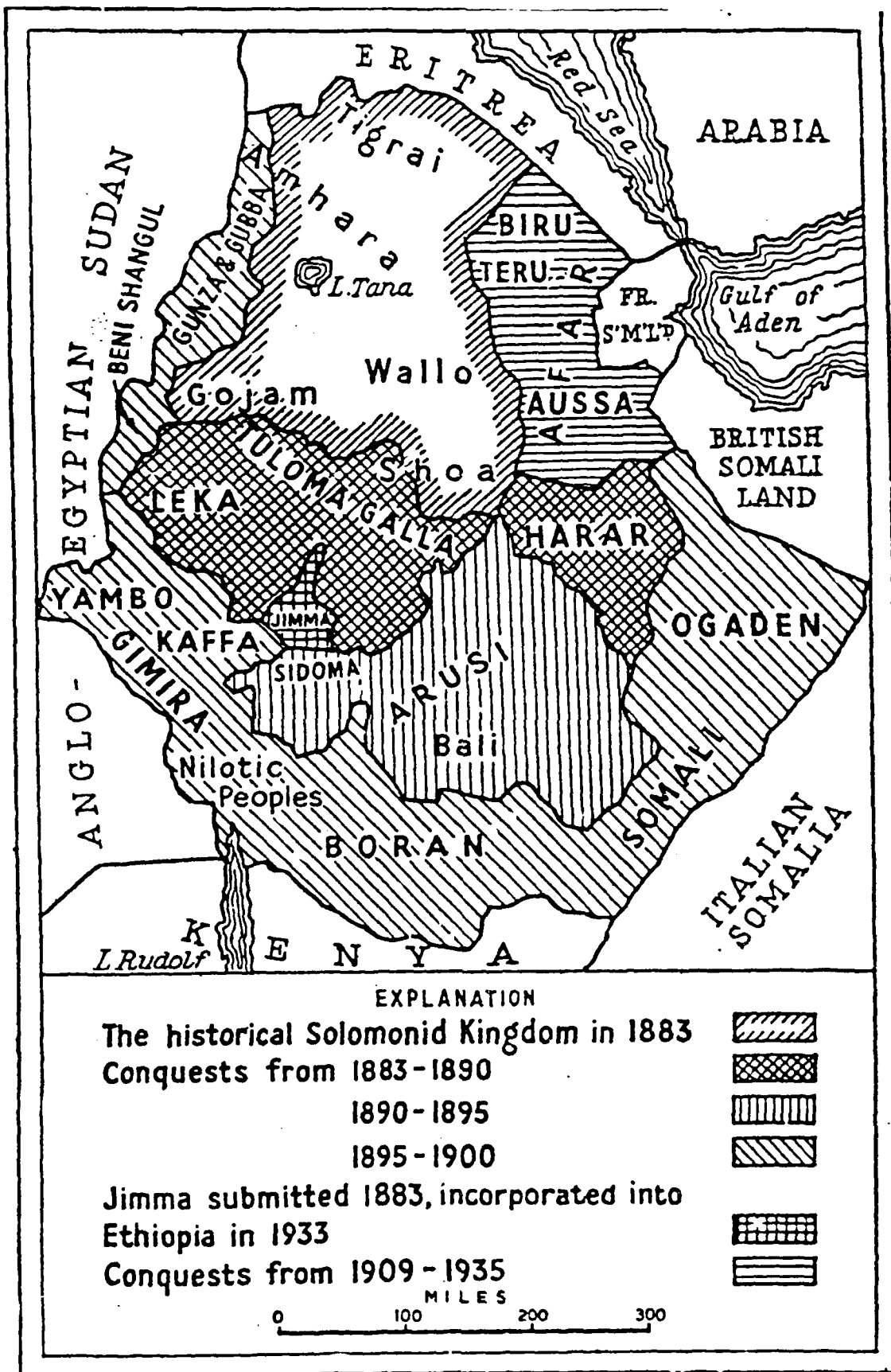
Ever before the rise of Islam the effective rule of the Kings of Abyssinia was mainly limited to the highland areas of central present day Ethiopia--but by the second half of the ninth century, the frontiers of Abyssinia began to

be pushed further south and they apparently reached the northern parts of the Shoa plateau. Even Shoa, where today's capital (Addis-Ababa) is now located, was itself a Muslim Sultanate, 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 neighbors. 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. There was, of course, much local resistance and sometimes full-scale war which usually occurred when one or another of the Abyssinian Kings was able to effectively assert himself as emperor and in true imperial fashion, attempt to raid and collect tribute or plunder from neighbors in every direction.

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, Zarayakob 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.

In the 16th century the number and size of Abyssinian raiding parties, and the consequent plunder and destruction, was on the increase. Eventually, the harassed Somalis were obliged to retaliate.

Somali armies led by their famous hero, the ruler of Harar, Ahmed Guray, swept across the Rift Valley right up into the Abyssinian highlands. His exploits and those of his forces, were recorded at the time and have lived on in the traditions of Abyssinians and Somalis alike. To the Somalis, his name ranks with those of later nationalists such as Sayid Mohamed--and has become an inspiration to the nationalists of today's Somalia. In Abyssinia it is



THE CONQUESTS OF MENELIK II

used--till now--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 Northeastern Africa, from time to time, but were never in a position to overcome the Somali people and their lands.

It is important to point out that neither the city of Harar--nor any Somali city or town--included Abyssinians from the highlands west of the Rift Valley among its citizens. Meantime Harar and the other Somali cities continued their distinctive development, and for two centuries Somali merchants traveled with their caravans and herds unhindered throughout the length and breadth of the Horn.

THE HORN

Before the Scramble for Africa

The first European traveler known to have passed across the country was Richard Burton in 1885. 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. The Englishman's 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 also mentioned the transhumantic patterns of the majority of the peoples and called Harar an ancient metropolis of a mighty race, the only permanent settlement in East Africa at the time; the reported seat of Muslim learning and teachings; a walled city of stone houses, possessing its independent chief, its peculiar population, its unknown Somali

language and its own coinage; the emporium of the coffee trade--the great manufactory of cotton cloths, etc. The wider country of the Somali, Burton considered by no means destitute of capabilities. Though partially desert and thinly populated, he wrote, it possesses valuable articles of traffic and its harbors export the produce of the Garaga, 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 extended right across to the West Coast of Africa. Many indigenous documentary histories await an appropriate political and cultural climate for scientific study.

The Ottoman Empire and later the Egyptians had long endeavored to control the Somali and the Eritrean coasts and associated trade routes. There have been many battles fought to that effect, but the Somali coast and towns were always free except for a short period of Egyptian occupation in 1875.

THE PARTITION OF THE SOMALIS

Menelik, the Abyssinian ruler of Shoa in the 19th century, who had been amassing fire arms with the 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 himself the king of kings.

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

European landing parties arriving apparently at points on the Somali coast were most often resisted as the Portuguese adventurers had been before them, but eventually the Somalis found themselves 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 elders on or near the northern and eastern coasts soon began to affect the lives of the people further inland. These agreements are too many to list them all separately, 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 nonnegotiable. Being in the main, transhumantic 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 semidesert lands of the Horn. Thus it was never implied that Britian or anyone else might be empowered to alienate any part of that territory--quite the reverse--or to restrict the vital patterns of their living in their absolute territory. A typical agreement, dated July 14th, 1884 reads:

We, the undersigned elders of the Somalis, are desirous of entering into an agreement for the maintenance of our independence, the preservation of order, the development of our trade, etc;¹

There was also always a declaration, quoted here from another agreement signed by a Somali chief on 1st September 1896 "that I will not, nor shall my successors or any of my people, cede or alienate any portion of our territories and dependencies. . . ." ² Taken into consideration these provisions affirmed Somali sovereignty over their territories.

Meantime, from the highlands of Abyssinia, King Menelik of Shoa began to put pressure on Harar. The Emir of Harar refused to submit to the wishes and threats of Menelik but instead resorted to a resistance movement till his death in June of 1889.

In February 1887, Menelik advised the British colonial authorities at Aden that the King of Shoa and all of the Gallas had hoisted his flag in Harar and that his troops had occupied the Somali territory. 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 that "my occupation of Harar augurs well for the commercial relations between Italy and Shoa," and anticipating further colonial adventures he 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."³

In 1891, after further communication with Italy--his major armorer which 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 campaigns had already made obvious, that he was determined to subdue all the Gallas (Oromos). "I shall endeavor," he wrote, to establish the ancient frontiers (tributaries) of Ethiopia up to Khartoum (present capital 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. 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."⁴ 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.

The British were well aware of all these happenings, but did not abide by the agreements they signed with the Somali subjects. They only concentrated on the need to secure fresh meat for their 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 the Somalis, whom they also denied arms to protect their territory and property, they restricted their sphere of influence in the Horn of Africa and negotiated new boundaries with Emperor Menelik at the expense of the Somalis and their land.

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 they had protective treaties and who owned camels, employed in the caravans from coastal 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 Emperor Mokannen (Menelik's Father) their fellow co-religionist and imperialist.

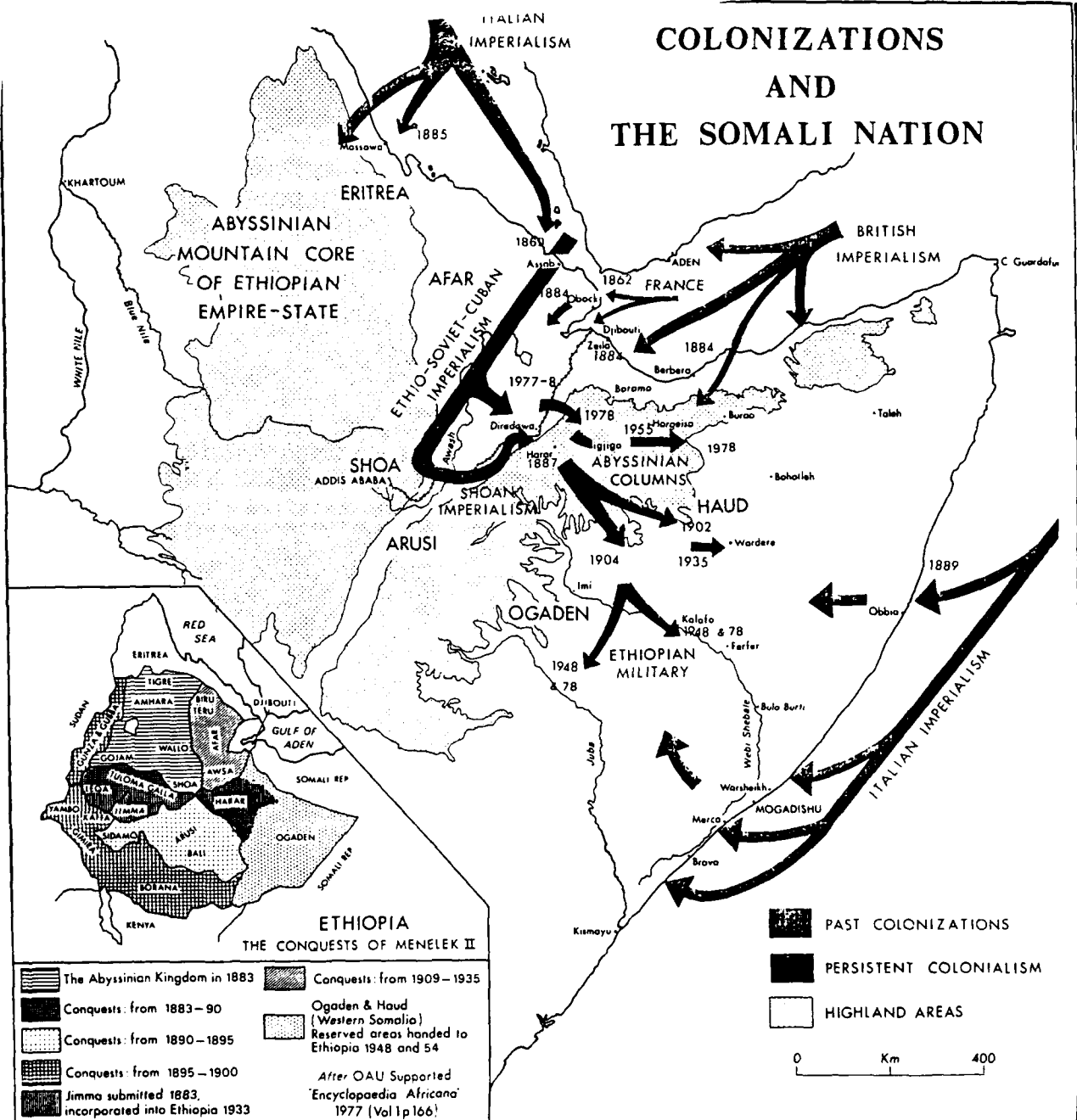
Slight loss it may have been to the British then, but for those Somalis it has meant their freedom and their livelihood. Nor did it put anything "to end" for those oppressed people of Somalia are suffering from it till now--every year costing the lives of their grandchildren, cynically unassisted by the world powers who talk so much of liberty, equality, human rights, and freedom--including the power that betrayed their fathers. They continued the fight with a handful of guns, spears, stones, and in fact with whatever came to hand, against the mightiest imperial army ever to operate in Africa, a great fleet of Soviet tanks and armour with hundreds of sophisticated bombers and Mig fighters, airlifted over what little natural protection their barren country afforded, and literally tens of thousands of Cubans and other mercenaries armed to the teeth by the new Ethiopian ally and fellow imperialist sitting safely in the Kremlin and watching delightedly the play.

Although the British were the main culprits and are mentioned here, both France, because of her imperial ambitions on the upper Nile and expanding commercial activity in Abyssinia, and also Italy likewise failed to honor protectorate agreements they had with the Somalis.

These agreements 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 1940s and some places not at all--over many more thousand square miles of Somali territory.

As has been observed, the Somalis had in no case delegated to anyone the right to cede territory on their behalf.

COLONIZATIONS AND THE SOMALI NATION



Several other criteria held legally relevant, such as effective occupation, the reciprocity of certain clauses, etc., all demonstrate the illegality of Ethiopia's later occupation of western Somalia, the OGADEN--a claim Ethiopia bases on colonial treaties between imperialist powers. This is particularly so since the signing of United Nations Charter, with its emphasis on equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and the subsequent departure of the British, Italian, and French colonial administrations from the Somali territories. 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 the partition, the Somalis themselves remained largely in total ignorance of any imperial betrayals and 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 those involved. Meanwhile, 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 nation.

THE STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE

Somalis, who are noted for their hatred for colonialism and interference in their free life in the Horn of Africa, have never accepted colonialism.

Before they were dismembered by the colonialists, alien powers had tried to colonize parts of the Somali territory, but each time the Somalis resisted heroically and made it impossible for outsiders to enter Somali lands.

Somali history is full of struggles and heroes who fought against the Abyssinian, Ottoman, Portuguese, Egyptian, British, French, Italian, Russian, and Ethiopian and, in certain cases, allied forces of some of the above countries with their modern and mighty armies.

The differential access to modern arms and European alliances enabled the Ethiopians at the turn of the century to incorporate large tracts of land and to expand. Though out-gunned and out-numbered the objects of the expansion did not abandon their struggle and even claimed many victories.

Resistance was wide spread and vigorous. The earliest recorded major encounter between the Abyssinians and the Somalis occurred in the fifteenth century. The unrest was caused by the Abyssinian ambitions in Somali territory. A number of leaders appeared on the scene to resist foreign penetration into the area. They launched a series of holy wars against the Abyssinians. The most famous of these Somali patriots was Ahmed Guray (1506-1543) who was a prominent leader in campaigns against Abyssinea. Another prominent figure was Sayid Mohamed Abdulle Hassan who led the struggle of the "Darwishes" in the nineteenth century and fought the combined armies of Britian, Italy, and Abyssinia for over twenty years (1899-1921). Many expeditions were undertaken against the Sayid and his forces, and in 1920, the British had to resort to aerial bombing, the first ever outside Europe, to defeat the Somalis and their forces.

There are several contemporary accounts of the early colonial campaigns against the Somalis--all confirm that the Horn of Africa is the home of the Somali people and that it had been partitioned against their will between

European powers and their Abyssinian ally. These partitioned territories were known and referred to as the British, Italian, French, and Abyssinian Somalilands.⁵ The Europeans later dropped the term, and Haile Selassie (the latest King of Ethiopia) persuaded DeGaulle of France to further obscure the facts by substituting the territory of the Issas and Afars for the French colony--nevertheless its eventual emergence as the independent Republic of Djibouti⁶ in 1977 could not be prevented.

The official British Military History, published in 1907, includes a geographical description of Abyssinian Somalilands under the heading "the Harar Highlands" and "the Ogaden Country" in which it includes the southern portion of the west and central Haud.

In the 1920's and 1930's oppression, particularly in western Somalia, worsened. Except at Harar and close-by areas 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 1935, Italy overran Ethiopia. She occupied the British protectorate in 1940 during World War II. Somalis, except those in northern Kenya and Djibouti (under French colonization) were placed under one administration. After the occupation by British Commonwealth, Belgian and local forces in 1941-42, the British military continued this administrative pattern for some years.

The attitude of Haile Selassie the Emperor of Ethiopia 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, as a reward you will have lands in Eritrea and the Somalilands."⁷

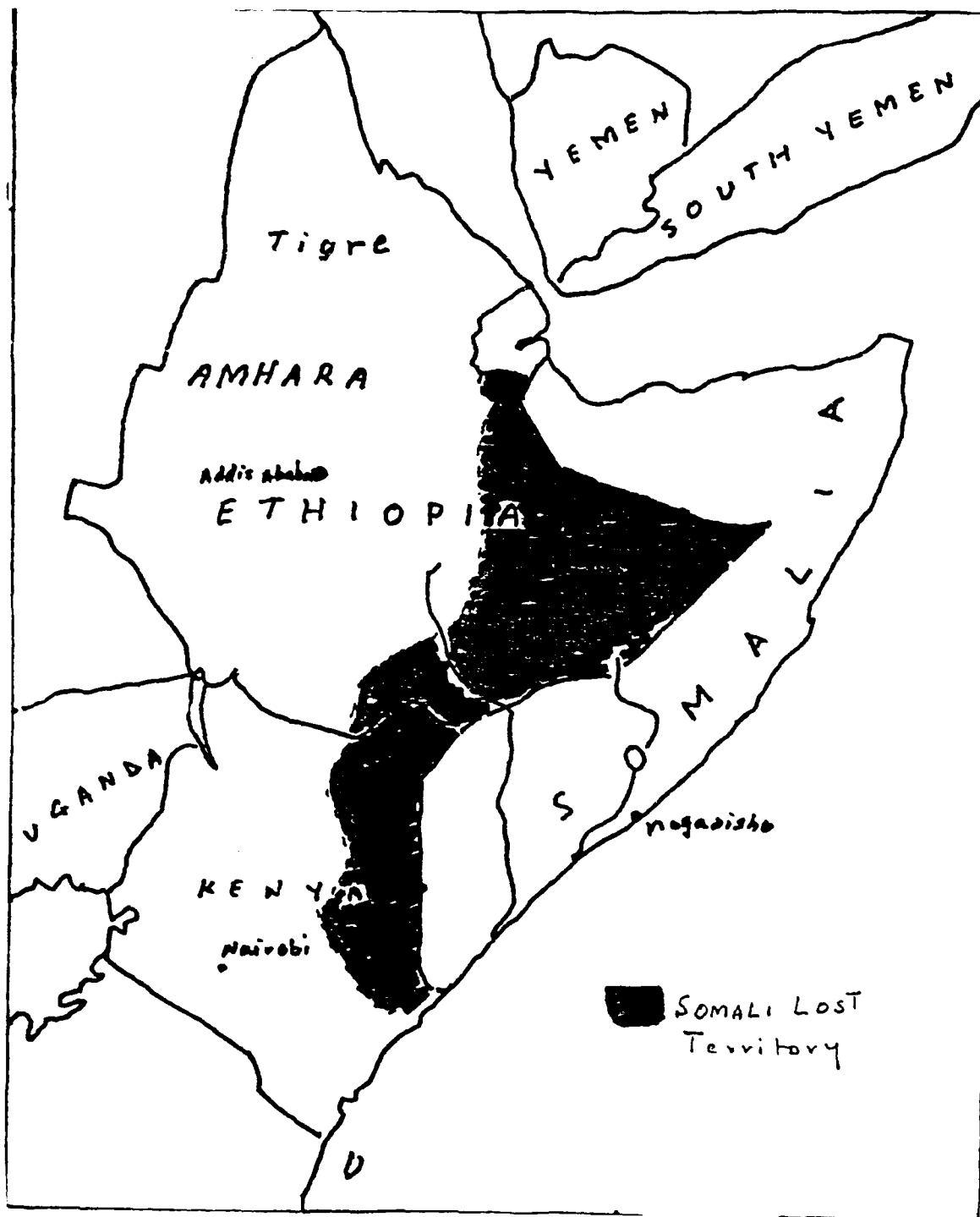
The Italo-Ethiopian War did not mean much to most Somalis who disliked any form of colonialism. Moreover, the administration of western Somalia and certain other "reserved areas" was retained by the British military and were not handed to Ethiopia until as late as 1948 and in other parts in 1955--when non-self-governing countries elsewhere in the world had already begun to achieve their independence.

In 1946, Ernest Bevin, then British foreign secretary, proposed to the Council of Ministers of the four power conference that all the Somalilands, be lumped together as a trust territory, to enable the people to lead their frugal existence with the least possible hinderance so that there might be a real chance of a decent economic life as understood in that territory.⁸ He was not supported--indeed the great powers were neither consulted 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 the Somalis and the Eritrean people.

The true struggle of the Somalis for the restoration of their rights of self-determination and national independence continued in every part of the nation and under any colonial system--as many a monument to the brave men and women and many an unmarked grave attests today. It was during this period that the predecessors of the post independence political parties were formed.

The S.Y.L. (Somali Youth League) was the first to be founded in 1943 and very rapidly gained membership with strong efforts to promote the concept of a Somali nation.

In 1947, the party had reached every district and village of all the Somalilands. The party platform included planks calling for the unification of all the partitioned Somalis over and above colonial, clan, and tribal differences; increased opportunities for modern education; development of the



land; an introduction of a written form of the Somali language; and a united opposition to the continued colonial fragmentation of Somalia.

In November 1949, the United Nations General Assembly entrusted Italian Somalia to the Italians as a U.N. Trust Territory, with the specific goal of preparing it for independence before the end of 1960.

No serious student of the Horn of Africa was surprised, when, on the restoration of their independence, the former British and Italian Somalilands joyfully and at once reunited forming the present Somali Democratic Republic on 1 July 1960.

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 of the Somali lands "the Hawd and western Somalia" to the Ethiopians--after the Somalis refused the British trusteeship--and annexing the lands of the Somalis to Ethiopia. The Somalis never relinquished their sovereignty to the British, and never were they consulted in the first place. Nor can agreements made between two parties injure a third not privy to them--even if they were not made under duress or did not violate peremptory norms of international law, all of which they did. Ethiopia's attempts at integration were clearly void in international law, since she had followed none of the normal lawful procedures.

The repeated United Nations efforts to secure a demarcation of the boundary between Ethiopia and Somalia from 1950 to 1960, as well as the language of the trusteeship agreement itself, makes clear that the United Nations did not believe that the provisional administrative line of 1950 was a legal border line. In the absence of a legal border line, the international

principle of self-determination, is the appropriate principle for boundary demarcation in cases of this sort. That the Somali people and government made every attempt to solve this problem by negotiation, is a matter of record at the United Nations, but the Ethiopians just did not cooperate.

SUPERPOWER INVOLVEMENT IN THE HORN

The strategic location of the Horn of Africa which occupies indispensable positions to some vital sea lanes and routes to and from the Middle East and Southwest Asia is what makes the region very important strategically.

Somalia, which is a member state in the region, is situated in the North-Eastern part of the Horn and is bounded on the North by the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, on the East by the Indian Ocean, on the West by Ethiopia, and on the South by Kenya.

Because of its geographical location, strategic importance, and economic potential, this country was in the vital interests of foreigners, especially the Europeans in the 19th century, and had more than its share in the scramble for Africa, which resulted in the colonization of Africa and its partition into political units based on European rivalries and interests.

After the end of the Second World War, the emergence of the superpowers and the grouping of the world into Western and Eastern blocs, Africa once again became a vital ground for influence, and the Horn, because of its occupying crucial navigational points, attracted growing military interest from both blocs with superpower involvement.

One point worth noting in regard to African politics and influence is that, as a result of the colonial partition, ethnic groups were divided and artificial borders were made. This makes for pressure for territorial revisions with the objective of achieving unity in almost all of the African

states, the root of modern African politics, and in terms of African nationalism, a problem which could be settled only militarily.

United States military strategy for the region is designed to meet the challenges to U. S. security interests, and there are multiple connections of increasing importance between Africa and the United States as well as Africa and the Soviet Union, of which the social, economic, political, and balance of power--particularly in the Horn--complicates the formulation and execution of U. S. and Soviet regional policies.

Some factors of immense consideration for the superpowers in regard to Africa are:

- o The vastness of the continent which comprises one fifth the land mass of the earth;
- o The economic potential where oil, mineral resources, and raw materials of the continent are not fully exploited and serve as a world reserve;
- o The population which is so huge and growing so fast that in terms of cheap labor and military personnel it must be considered an asset;
- o The strategic points, communication lines, linkage of Europe and Asia, main sea routes such as the Cape of Good Hope, the Red Sea, the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean, and the Suez Canal which make the continent of Africa very significant;
- o The market for finished products--the fast growing demands of Africa--and the world's growing industrial revolution which are inseparable.

Because of the above mentioned factors and many others, the United States and the Soviet Union are actively involved in Africa in general and in the Horn in particular, each pursuing a unique interest and a different strategy, but mainly for military purposes.

In the Russian concept, victory over the enemy is the total destruction of his manpower, the conquering of his territory, primarily the militarily strategic points as well as economic points of importance, and the changing of his political structure by building a puppet regime in his own terms. To achieve this Russian military doctrine attaches much importance on territory for maneuver reasons, manpower for echelon reasons, and technology for the war machine and economic reasons. That is why the Russians are attaching much emphasis on Africa plus their intention of gaining global political attraction and influence in the United Nations General Assembly through Third World countries. A good example of that is what happened in the Horn of Africa.

In 1977, Somalia was involved in an all out war with Ethiopia over the Ogaden region, and the Somali conquest of the Ogaden would undoubtedly have been successful except for foreign, particularly Russian, intervention.

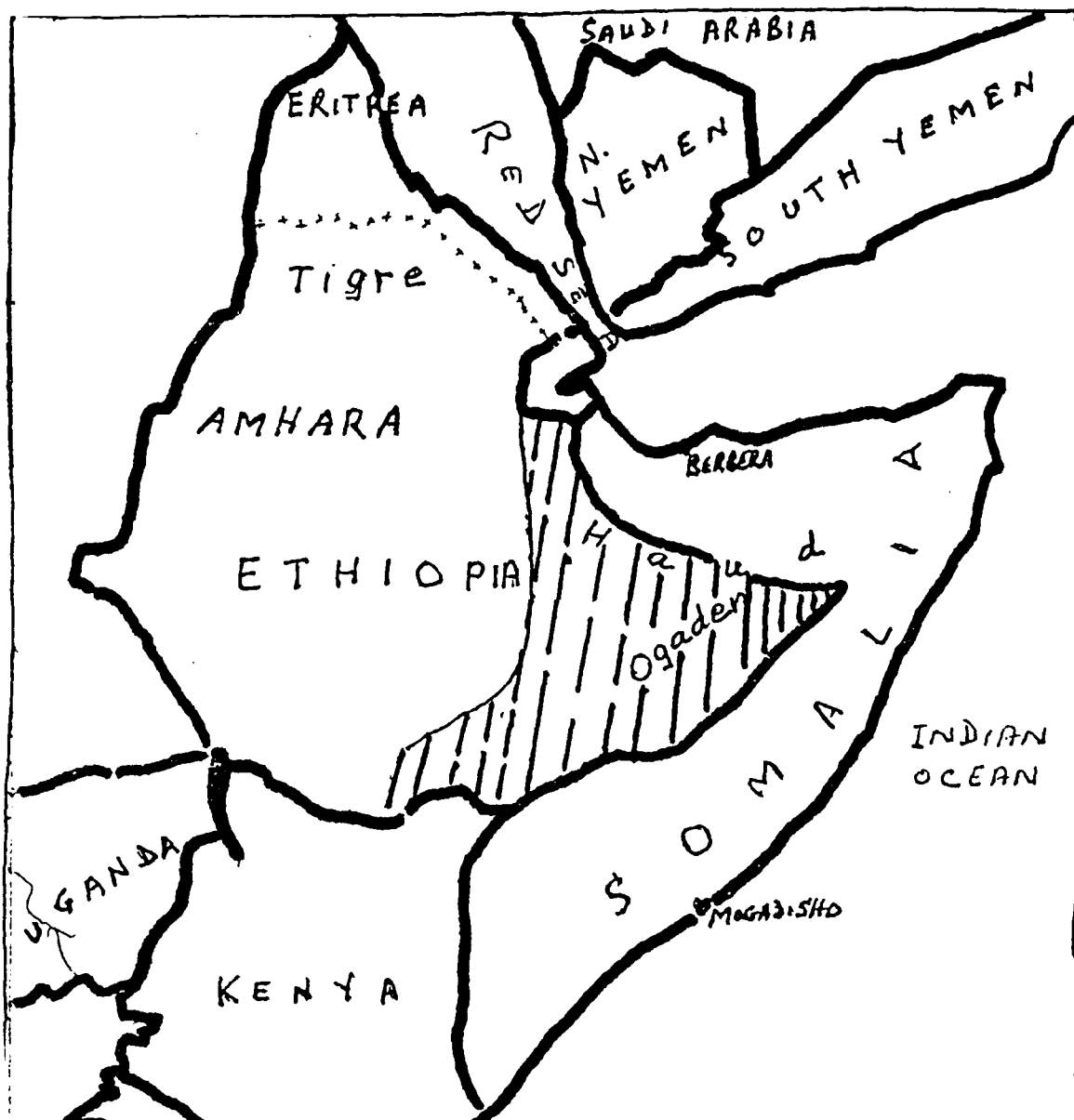
Somalia broke with Soviet bloc countries, expelled the Russians and severed diplomatic relations with Cuba. Communist reaction was very quick. Their determination to punish Somalia was very strong, and their airlift of Soviet arms and military equipment to Ethiopia was massive and quick. What also resulted in Ethiopia was the expulsion of the United States military mission and from Ethiopia. By early 1978, the Russians had concentrated large amounts of arms, equipment, and military personnel in Ethiopia. Cuban troops from different places, but mainly from Angola, South Yemeni troops, Libyans, and East Germans were in preparation for conducting the final and fatal blow to Somalia.

The story of the savage recolonization early in 1978, by the most formidable mercenary army ever seen in Africa, is well known. The Somalis did not fit 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. A senior member in the Soviet government boasted publicly that they will teach Somalia a lesson and will bring them down to their knees.⁹ What he forgot was that the Somalis have never been and will never be cowed by the Russian big power bully, who mistakenly thought it could use Somalia 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.

Meetings of very senior Soviet and Cuban officials and military officers were held, in an atmosphere of great secrecy, to plan the destruction of Somalia and the recolonization of liberated areas. These officials included Marshal Dimitri Usfinov 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 senior officers. What right had General Petrov, formerly first deputy commander of the Soviet land forces, and others to lead armies in Africa against Africans?

Since late 1977 more than 400 heavy military transport aircraft, mainly Antonov 22s but including a fleet of the enormous Tupolev F6's, and some civil aircraft have taken part on an unprecedented scale in the airlift 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, BM rocket launchers; T-62 and T-55 tanks, radar towers, airfield construction equipment and electric fencing; Sukhoi fighter bombers, Mig 21s and 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 the Ethiopians to learn to operate the unfamiliar and sophisticated new weapons and materials. Clearly the Russians and the Cubans were not mere advisors but were active participants in this cruel war. This was openly admitted after Russian and Cuban prisoners were captured.

The Horn of Africa and Somalia especially is an arena of East-West confrontation. Although it did not result in United States military commitment, the Russians were and are in a constant active involvement and are gaining ground. The massive build up of arms in the Horn with bases in Ethiopia, the Russian strong grip in South Yemen with military bases in the Island of Socotra, and the continuous Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea is a clear sign of the degree of Russian commitment and determination.

CONCLUSION

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.

The principal actors at the end of last century were Great Britain, France, Italy, and Abyssinia. Today the Soviets and Cuba replace Ethiopia's former allies. While Ethiopia found willing accomplices in her 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 never subdued.

A peaceful and just settlement by negotiation is still the aim. The chance of securing such an African solution are, of course, rendered near impossible while Russian and Cuban mercenaries with their massive arms supplies flagrantly appear to have taken control of large areas of North-Eastern Africa.

The considered opinion of the Somalis is that the organization of African unity, the United Nations, and the entire international community should call upon the Soviet Union and her allies to discontinue their intervention in the affairs of the African countries in general and in the Horn of Africa in particular.

An African settlement, having in mind the interests of the people involved--to be independently ascertained, would then have a good chance of achievement.

In February 1988, the presidents of Somalia and Ethiopia met in Djibouti, sat together at the peace table and talked a peace package between themselves.

The key points in that peace package were:

- o To end all hostilities between the countries immediately.
- o To stop the hostile propaganda aired by their respective means of communication (TV and Radio).
- o To exchange the prisoners of war captured since 1977 when all out war broke out between the two countries.
- o To pull back 30 kilometers all military units from each side of the existing colonial border within 30 days from the signing of the agreement.

c To set a later date to the second phase of the peace talks seeking a permanent solution to the "Ogaden" problem.

This is a true example as to what can be accomplished by heads of African States who could understand their problems and set themselves to solve them without intervention and foreign influence.

The peace agreement was endorsed by the peoples of the concerned countries jubilantly, and today all of the points agreed upon were fulfilled to the letter, and we hope that we may see the Horn of Africa becoming one of the most stable regions in Africa and all the peoples involved living harmoniously.

ENDNOTES

1. From Somali Book Translation, Mogadishu, 1978.
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3. Thomas M. Hutcheson, Jr., Technical Report: Soviet Foreign Policy in Somalia: Implications for American Policy Toward Africa.
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6. Ibid.
7. Department of State Bulletin, May 1985.
8. Ronald G. Riley, LTC., QM, United States Interest in the Horn of Africa, USAWC Student Essay, April 1986.
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