
Commentary

Somalia: a bad end for the U.S. empire

by Leonardo Servadio

July 12 might be chosen by posterity as a meaningful day to mark the end of the U.S. empire. On that day, the helicopters of the Marine expedition corps bombed warlord Gen. Mohammed Aideed's headquarters in Mogadishu, killing 80 Somalis. They were killed to strike a blow against Italian diplomatic "mediation" attempts among different factions fighting in Somalia and the U.N. expedition.

For the first time, all the Italian political parties (save, for the moment, the Northern League), have widely criticized U.S. behavior; national unity has been reached for the first time in the postwar period, from the left to the right of the political spectrum. The government stood firmly behind Gen. Bruno Loi, publicly rejecting U.N. Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali's request to recall him for not following the U.N. (U.S.) line.

The case of Mozambique

An example of the way Italy has been acting recently in its policy toward the Third World is the case of Mozambique. On Oct. 15, 1992, an agreement was reached in Rome between the former Marxist regime of Frelimo (National Liberation Front of Mozambique) and the guerrilla Renamo (National Resistance of Mozambique), which put an end to a 12-year-long internal war, which had made of Mozambique one of the poorest countries on earth (\$80 annual per capita income). The agreement came about as a consequence of the years-long efforts by the Comunità Sant'Egidio, a Catholic community which operated in concert with the Italian Foreign Ministry. The fundamental element moving the efforts of Sant'Egidio Community was humanitarian—a moral attitude. The agreement still holds, while a group of international donors, led by Italy, is starting to channel aid, which is delivered to the population by a U.N. military corps in which the Italian presence is predominant. The economic situation is still desperate, and there is no guarantee that peace will hold in the future; yet so far, the situation is improving.

Mozambique Catholic bishops report that the Christian community (some 2.5 million persons, approximately 20% of the population) and the Islamic community (more or less the same size) get along well together. When a Catholic bishop reaches a village dominated by Muslims, he is hosted fraternally.

The aim of the U.N. mission there is to help the country re-start its economy and establish a democratic process. The U.N. functionaries in charge have let it be known that there is no hurry to set up elections: These should take place when all the weapons of the conflicting parties have been given back, and there is an established concept of general peace, and national institutions have started to work. U.N. Program for Development functionary Aldo Ajello has said that it will take between 18 and 24 months before national elections are called. There can be no hurry when people came out of years of internal fighting.

Nearly 30 missionaries are involved in the peace effort. The Italian troops are defending the railroad, which cuts through the country, connecting the capital, Maputo, to Zimbabwe. Peace in Mozambique will hold if the foreign mission is able to maintain its moral purpose, since in this way people will soon experience actual economic development and, in a context of peace, jobs will expand rapidly. Couldn't a similar approach be taken in Somalia?

An asinine foreign policy

People remember the day when the U.N. mission in Somalia began: U.S. Marines landed during the night on the Somali shore, heavily armed and with their faces painted black, to conceal themselves in the darkness. As soon as they took hold of the terrain, they were surrounded by journalists and were blinded by the camera floodlights.

In an interview published July 16 in *La Stampa*, U.S. strategist Edward Luttwak said that President Bush wanted the Somali operation to deflect the mounting pressure pushing the U.S. to intervene and save the Bosnian people. Somalia was chosen, according to Luttwak, because the Marine Corps had a new, expensive amphibious landing craft which was to be tested, and the Somali beach was an ideal place for that. While such statements probably do not tell the whole story, they contribute to revealing the level of stupidity involved in U.S. policy deliberations.

Continuing the Iraq tragedy

When the "U.N." operation against Iraq was decided in July 1990, *EIR* warned that it was an operation aiming at establishing a firmer U.S. control over Europe, by consolidating the Anglo-American hold on the Middle East; yet few in Europe believed it, and even fewer opposed the U.S. "surgical strikes." Now the Food and Agriculture Organization is warning that in Iraq a famine of catastrophic proportions is developing as a consequence of the war waged by the United States in order to "free" Iraq of its dictator Saddam Hussein.

What is happening in Somalia now, where the U.S. has targeted Aideed as the bad guy, is the continuation of the policy established by the Anglo-American interests in Iraq. It is a policy which has no future, and if the United States keeps pursuing it, it will be digging its own grave.