

'Restore Hope' exposed as colonial operation by the new world order

by Paolo Raimondi

The violent polemics emerging from the conflict between the "humanitarian" attitude of the Italian peacekeeping forces of the United Nations mission in Somalia and the "exclusively military" approach of the U.S. contingents, have begun to reveal the dirty truth behind the "Restore Hope" mission. The U.N.-U.S. mission to Somalia was never intended to return peace and economic stability to the country, but was conceived exclusively from the outset as an act of economic and political neo-colonialism in the framework of the Bush administration's "new world order" fantasies. Sad to say, the Clinton administration has continued the Bush new world order extravaganzas, as the wanton bombings of Iraq and the targeting of Sudan this year have proven.

Some Italian newspapers, as well as numerous political researchers, have discovered that the directors behind the scenes were some of the most powerful Anglo-American "Seven Sisters" oil companies. The daily *La Repubblica* of Rome on Aug. 3 ran an exposé, "In Somalia Looking for Oil." The paper reported that the U.S. diplomatic strategy was built on the basis of the existence of rich oil fields and of other strategically important raw materials like uranium and tungsten.

In 1991, the World Bank had prepared a study on the oil potential in Somalia calculated at around 10 million tons per year, which would give the country about \$2 million in daily revenues. Thomas O'Connor, the author of the World Bank report, is quoted saying: "There is no doubt, the oil potential exists; it is enough that the Somalis find an agreement among themselves." The study mentioned seven African nations with potential oil fields, topped by Somalia and Sudan—another country under attack from the new world order, in which the destabilizing role played by the Chevron oil company (in which Henry Kissinger is a major shareholder) is notorious.

The ugly oil 'sisters'

It has been discovered that four American oil "sisters," Amoco, Conoco, Philips, and Chevron, plus the French Elf and the Italian Agip, had been involved in economic warfare in previous years, trying to get concessions for oil exploration from the government of Siad Barre.

According to documents quoted in the *Los Angeles Times*, the American companies obtained concessions for the

mainland, Elf got the right for the offshore drilling, and Agip got a minor concession partially onshore and partially offshore in the extreme northern part of Somalia. More specifically, Conoco controls the Mijerteyn region (the historical name for the people who inhabit the coastal regions north of Mogadishu) and ex-Somaliland (west of Mijerteyn on the Gulf of Aden); Amoco controls the Issak territories (north, mainly around Berbera); Chevron controls the areas near the border with Djibouti. Agip has a small area near the Indian Ocean; Pecten, the U.S. subsidiary of Shell, is involved in the central zone of the country; Texaco is in the southern Juba region, bordering Kenya.

In the pivotal position is Conoco, which is a subsidiary of the Du Pont chemical multinational, interested also in the mineral ore mines. This Texas company had carried out geological explorations already in 1952, but became massively involved in 1986 when two big oil fields were discovered in Yemen, which extended under the Gulf of Aden to underground regions of northern Somalia.

In war-torn Mogadishu, Conoco's office has been kept open and functioning, and its staff has had no problems, perhaps because of the company's close connections with the forces of Gen. Mohammed Farah Aideed, chief of the Habir-Ghedir tribe. Osman Ato, a rich businessman, one of Aideed's key collaborators, used to be a representative of Conoco, and has served as the mediator between the American military and Aideed. (Osman Ato was captured by the American U.N. troops on Sept. 21.)

From Dec. 9, 1992, when U.S. Marines landed under the command of Adm. Jonathan Howe, notorious as the "Rambo of Sigonella" (referring to the first attempt of the U.S. new world order to violate with impunity the national sovereignty of Italy, an allied nation), the Conoco office became the new center of the U.S. Embassy and the home of U.S. envoy Robert Oakley. The office is about 100 meters from one of General Aideed's headquarters. Aideed personally received Oakley on his arrival. State Department officials are quoted by *La Repubblica* explaining that "we are paying a king's ransom for the offices."

Oakley, known also for his close connection with U.N. Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, was one of the key members of the "secret government" of George Bush in the Iran-Contra affair when in July 1985, as director of the State

Department Counter Terrorism Office, he joined the terrorism task force under the direction of then-Vice President George Bush together with luminaries such as Vice Adm. John Poindexter, Lt. Col. Oliver North, and Oliver "Buck" Revell of the FBI. It is reported that Oakley is now a consultant of Conoco. This is officially denied by the company, but repeated by leaders of the Somalian Front of Democratic Salvation of Mijerteyn, who add that in this new position, Oakley has visited Somalia twice in the recent period.

Conoco dumps Aideed

At the beginning of Operation Restore Hope, the Americans were totally on Aideed's side and the Conoco played a critical role in this connection. In exchange for American support, Aideed had agreed to give Conoco exclusive oil exploration rights. In a letter by Gen. Frank Libutti, military adviser to Oakley, quoted in the *Los Angeles Times*, the role played by the Conoco head of mission in Mogadishu, Raymond Marchand, is underlined, since "without his contribution the operation would have failed." The same Marchand, interviewed by the company paper *Conoco World*, admitted: "We remained in Mogadishu for the potentialities Somalia represents for our company and to defend our businesses and interests."

In February, the love affair with Aideed began to fizzle when the United States and the Conoco realized that the general could not guarantee control over the situation. In Kismayu, in the south, the previously dominant forces of Col. Omar Jess, an ally of Aideed, were challenged by the troops of Morgan, brother-in-law of ousted President Siad Barre. While the U.S. troops did not intervene to stop the fight, Morgan took over the area and was allowed to retain most of the weapons, with the permission of an American commander in the region.

The definitive breakup of the Aideed-U.S. deal occurred in May, after Oakley left Mogadishu, replaced by the new envoy, Robert Goosende. Then Aideed was told that his rival, Ali Mahdi, leader of the Hawale tribe, had signed a "preliminary agreement" with Conoco to guarantee exclusive oil exploitation rights at the end of the war.

Later, April Glaspie (the U.S. ambassador to Baghdad who told Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein that he could intervene into Kuwait without any U.S. retaliation), one of the political advisers of Adm. Jonathan Howe, "discovered" that the winner in the Somalia war will not be Aideed, but Gen. Mohammed Abshir Mussa from the Mijerteyn region. General Mussa was soon defeated and lost even his town of Boosaaso.

All these developments were interpreted by Aideed as proof that the United States and Conoco had abandoned him; he decided to reject all negotiations, refused to lay down his arms, and began military resistance against the U.N. and U.S. military presence. In the ensuing showdown, the U.S. and U.N. command imposed the line of "no negotiations, no peaceful solution," but total military confrontation with Aideed, now profiled

in the international media as the new Saddam Hussein; no distinction was made, as seen previously in the Gulf war, between military and civilian targets. A report prepared by the African Rights organization on the human rights abuses by the U.N. forces, details a number of U.N.-U.S. attacks against civilian targets, like the Digfer hospital in Mogadishu on June 17, with high civilian casualties.

This is why, at the end of a long series of disputes and tensions between the Italian U.N. command in Somalia and the U.N.-U.S. leadership, on Sept. 10, during a memorial for two Italian soldiers shot by unknown snipers in Mogadishu, Italian Army Chief of Staff Gen. Goffredo Canino charged: "They wanted to involve us at all costs in violent actions to set us up. . . . There was constant disinformation against us. A powerful system that has made accurate disinformation. Everything started with the *Washington Times*, then *Newsweek*. I do not say who was behind that, but I am thinking about specific circles." Enzo Caretti, the editor-in-chief of the conservative economic daily published in Rome, *Il Globo-Ore 12*, pointed to the "shadow of Wall Street over Somalia," naming the oil companies and two Wall Street brokerages, Goldman Sachs and Salomon Brothers, among the economic interests moving the "rampant Anglo-American neo-colonialism."

The Kuwait parallel

A look at Kuwait after the Gulf war, and one can see how Somalia has become another victim of this economic attack launched by the speculative, malthusian, and colonialist forces of the new world order. According to a report published in the Italian weekly *Espresso* of Sept. 19, George Bush's trip to Kuwait (where there was an alleged plot to kill him, which then became the pretext for the Clinton administration to bomb Iraq) was orchestrated to give him and his cronies huge business contracts for billions of dollars.

The deals involve key members of Bush's White House team and family. Baker, once secretary of state and now consultant of the Houston-based Enron Corp., which produces gas pipelines, is signing deals for rebuilding electric power plants destroyed in the war. General Kelly, head of operations in the Gulf war, another consultant to Enron who works with Wing-Merrill of Aspen, Colorado, is also part of the deal. John Sununu, Bush's White House chief of staff, is working for Westinghouse to win a \$1 billion contract to build up a "defensive alarm system" for Kuwait. The Enron company is also part of this business. Neil Bush, the scandal-ridden son of the former President, working with two oil-related companies from Houston, is organizing contracts in the water management and energy sectors of Kuwait. Marvin Bush, another son of the former President, is also working for Enron on the electronic barriers. With this precedent, one cannot be surprised to see the deadly combination of Anglo-American geopolitical interests and shady economic interests at work in Somalia.