

Africa Report by Douglas DeGroot and Mary Brannan

The Fez summit and the Horn

Secretary Shultz seems bent on involving the U.S. in a new round of warfare and destabilization in the Horn of Africa.

Observers of the African scene noted with special interest point IV of the final communiqué of the recent Arab League summit in Fez, Morocco. Point IV is the strongest Arab League statement to date of support for Somalia in its ongoing conflict with Ethiopia in the Horn of Africa.

The strong Arab statement of support for Somalia is a tradeoff between the Arabs and the Reagan administration: In return for the new Reagan Middle East initiative advanced after George Shultz replaced Haig—an initiative mildly critical of Israel's policy in the Middle East—the Arab nations are supporting the anti-Soviet "strategic consensus" policy throughout the Middle East that former Secretary of State Haig picked up from Zbigniew Brzezinski.

Until Shultz came into office, the option for fanning tension in the Horn had been kept at arm's length by the U.S. With the Reagan administration's late-July decision to ship \$5.5 million worth of arms to Somalia President Barre, heating up the Horn has again become an active part of U.S. policy in the Middle East-Horn area—Brzezinski's "arc of crisis."

The Ethiopia-Somalia conflict in the Horn has been portrayed as a proxy East-West conflict since the 1977-78 invasion of Ethiopia by Somalia. However the situation is not so simple.

Ethiopia ended that Somali attempt to annex part of Ethiopia by resorting to aid from the Soviets and the Cubans. Since then, the internal in-

stability of the Somali regime and the growing internal isolation of Somali President Siad Barre has led Barre to offer himself as a pawn to the strategic consensus makers as the only way to maintain himself in power. As one London press source asserts, it is Barre's internal problems that are the key to the conflict with Ethiopia.

In early July, the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) launched raids into Ethiopia, claiming to have killed 250 Ethiopians. The WSLF is a Somali-backed group attempting to "liberate" part of Ethiopia; during the Somali invasion in 1977-78, Somalia claimed that the activity of its military inside Ethiopia was the work of the WSLF.

Following the early July WSLF attack, Ethiopian-based anti-Barre groups captured two Somali villages—Balambale and Goldogob. Since the loss of the villages, little has happened in the conflict.

Internal Somali politics is based on clans. Siad Barre is from the South, and when he took power in a coup d'état in 1969, he ousted the two major northern clans from power—the Issaq and Majerteen. Political groups based on these two clans are leading the attempt to oust Barre.

Barre's support began dropping rapidly after the 1978 Somali defeat. All the benefits that Barre promised would result from the Somalis letting themselves be used in an anti-Soviet crusade, never materialized. In April 1978, after the Somali defeat, north-

ern elements in the military led an abortive coup attempt against Barre.

In early 1980 the Carter administration expressed interest in air and naval access in Somalia as part of the Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) strategy. When talks were initiated, Barre had a shopping list worth \$1-2 billion. When, by August of that year, he was offered only \$40 million, opposition at home asserted itself ever more strongly.

Barre's hopes were raised when Kissinger visited Somalia in January 1981, before Reagan was inaugurated. But in a May 1981 trip to Washington, Barre got very little from the Reagan administration. His support dwindled, and he maintained his witchhunt to keep the opposition in check, with his base of support being reduced to his own clan and that of his mother, a closely-related clan originally from the Ogaden region of Ethiopia.

Executions of officers and men of northern military units for alleged collaboration with attacks from opposition forces based in Ethiopia, and a government shakeup took place early this year after riots in the North, and before Barre's second visit to the U.S. The visit produced no new offers of aid.

At the time of this trip, a member of the Carter administration told me that Somalia was not that important from the standpoint of the RDF. "There's never been a good case for doing much there," he said. "I was puzzled to see the Reagan administration welcome to the old boy. We kept him out."

The source also said that only about 40 percent of the refugee aid that was given to Somalia actually got to the refugees, the rest being diverted to allies of Barre, and finding its way to the black market.