

Somalia National Movement

In August «Democratic Palestine» interviewed two leading comrades of the Somali National Movement: Executive Committee member Abdel Kader Kossar and Military Coordinator Abdullahi Askar. Though not a large country, Somalia has great importance for imperialism and local reactionary forces. It has extensive coastlines on both the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, vital for the oil routes, and has been used as a base for striking at socialist Ethiopia. Thus, mounting opposition to Siad Barre's reactionary regime is of prime importance not only for Somalians but for all the Arab and African peoples.

What are the origins of the Somali National Movement?

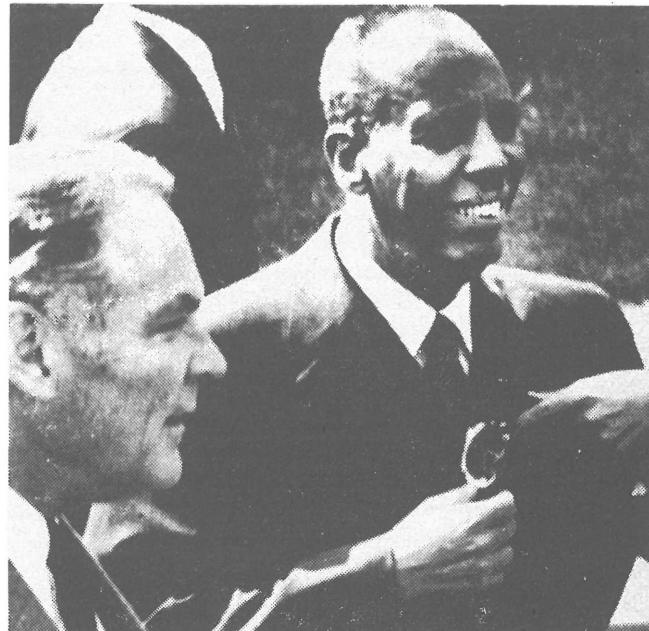
After Siad Barre's aggressive war against Ethiopia, and Somali's subsequent defeat, there was general discontent with the regime. In 1978, when a group of officers attempted a coup, but failed, the regime carried out more repressive measures. This in turn led to more discontent with the regime's socio-economic policies, especially its new pro-imperialist policies.

In this situation, the Somali National Movement began as an underground trend grouping senior army officers, intellectuals, trade union leaders and teachers. Underground cells were established in every major urban center, and within the armed forces, the police, student organizations and trade unions. The Somali National Movement grew as a popular movement with grassroots throughout the country, and was proclaimed as an organization in 1981. As the name indicates, we are not a party, but a movement comprising all political views.

As a result of the infamous trial of 52 intellectuals in February 1982, there were mass demonstrations against the regime in Hargeisa, Burao and Berbera. The regime responded with mass arrests of students, intellectuals and community leaders. Since that time, the Somali National Movement has grown into a national organization representing the Somali people against the regime. In this situation, in October 1982, we embarked on armed operations against the regime after having solidified our internal organization and our contact with the Somali community outside. Our presence is felt in every corner of the country. We have offices in Asia, Africa, Western Europe and North America, for making propaganda against the regime, organizing demonstrations at its embassies on national occasions and for collecting support. We are solely dependent on the support of our people in Somalia and those living abroad.

How do you see the political issue of opposing imperialism in relation to the social problems facing your people?

Opposing imperialism is not a question of words, but due to the nature of imperialism. We are actually opposing the socio-economic structure in our country, which is the result of imperialism. We are opposed to capitalism that makes a class of overnight millionaires based on tribal relations. We are for a national economy for the good of all the people, not only for Siad Barre, his cronies, the compradors and overnight millionaires. We are opposed to imperialism because of its effects on our country and people. The IMF is running the whole economy of our country, and this has brought disaster. The regime has opened Somalia as a Rapid Deployment Force



Barre in Washington with then US War Secretary Haig

base, and for use by South Africa and Israel, which undermines our people's sovereignty in their own country. The aggression against Ethiopia cost the lives and resources of the Somali people, that could have otherwise been used for development.

What is the current situation in Somalia?

The internal situation is a desperate one for both the regime and the people. There is total rejection of Barre's corrupt, repressive regime throughout the country. There are tens of thousands of political prisoners. Public executions and mass arrests are the most prominent activities of the state. Destruction of villages, nomadic settlements and watering points; raiding, raping, looting and narcotics trade have become the major activities of the regime's troops.

The regime has moreover armed various clans and set them against each other, deliberately instigating civil strife to divert attention from the real problems. There is a total breakdown of law and order, social services, and all that could be called real government. The regime has become a military junta, totally isolated from the people, depending on the repressive forces to stay in power, and placing Somalia under US domination. It was the regime itself that requested participation in the Bright Star military maneuvers which we strongly condemned.