

The Soviet Union and its World Influence III

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When the U.S. failed to deliver on time the military weapons the Dergue needed, the Soviet Union was invited to fill in the gap. Considering this a golden opportunity to advance its interests in the Horn of Africa and the Middle East, the Soviet Union abandoned Somalia, and delivered massive military aid to the Dergue. Slandering the just struggle of the Eritrean people and the democratic movement of the Eritrean people as “counter- revolutionary and imperialist instigated” and pressuring its followers to do the same, the Soviet Union intervened in support of the Dergue colonial war. It also strove-directly and through its allies in the world and the region- to discredit and isolate the Eritrean revolution. The EPLF consistently called upon the Soviet Union and its followers to end their intervention and to recognize the right of the Eritrean people for self-determination. The Soviet responded by the escalation of their intervention, which the EPLF has been successfully confronting. Within this context of the U.S. and Soviet policy, we will analyze different regional and national stances on Eritrea. But first let’s look at developments in the struggle of the Ethiopian people, which has a close bearing on our struggle.

The problems of Ethiopia the national problem in the first instance are the products of Amhara and Tigrean kings unrealized dreams of empire building. The consolidation of Amhara dominance during the regions of Menelik and Haile Selassie brought all “Ethiopian” nationalities under the dictatorship of the ruling class of one nationality. But Menelik and Haile Selassie, whose, regimes were backward and resorted to feudal repression could not unite “Ethiopia” or help develop a common national consciousness. The development of nationality sentiments was therefore inevitable.

During the Haile Selassie era, there were a number of national uprising in response to the regime’s repressive empire building measures. But as Haile Selassie quickly suppressed the uprising by brute force and sometimes by buying out leader-national movements and organizations were not able to establish themselves. Neither could multi-national organizations since elementary human and political rights were denied. The low level of education, the backward subsistence economy that was little influenced by economic and political changes in the world also left their marks on political developments in Ethiopia. This also was one of the reasons for the failure of the 1960 coupd’état.

The student movement and the growing political awareness among intellectuals and students were unable to influence the cities, let alone the country side. Most of the national and multi-national organizations came into existence at the beginning of the 1970s. One exception is the national movement of the Somali people in the Ogaden. But this should be seen within the context of the existence of an independent Somali Republic.