

EDITORIAL

Among the least developed and the most oppressed

The United Nations' Conference on the least developed countries (UNULDC) met in Paris from September 1 to 14, 1981. The 140 governments represented at the conference adopted a "Substantial New Programme of Action" to help the world's 31 LDCs to overcome some of the obstacles to their economic and social development.

With an annual income per capita of US \$ 130, Ethiopia stands among the least developed countries even within this group. In fact, world bank figures for the year 1980 show that only Three countries (Bhutan, Bangladesh and Tchad) come behind Ethiopia in terms of economic development.

At about the same time, the United Nations Human Rights Commission, this time in Geneva, was holding its annual session and reviewing the human rights situation in the world. In this respect too, the records of the Ethiopian regime are very poor indeed. It is to be remembered that at its annual session for the year 1980, the United Nations Commission singled out nine countries in the world and condemned them for "gross violations of human rights". These countries were Argentina, Bolivia, the Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Paraguay, South Korea, Uganda and Uruguay.

As if the thousands of summary executions over the past four years and the existence of "several thousand political prisoners held without trial" revealed by Amnesty International were not horrible enough, the "socialist" regime in Ethiopia is this time also accused of forced labour. The charge were contained in a report submitted by Mr. Peter Davis, general secretary of the London based "anti-slavery Society".



"Socialist Ethiopia" ? A most oppressed people living in one of the five least developed countries in the world. But is Ethiopia a poor country ? We say no. The country has enormous human, agricultural, mineral and water resources. In Ethiopia, more than anywhere else in the world, misery and poverty are the direct consequences of oppression and anti-democratic rule.

This fact has been brought to light by ME<sup>a</sup>'ISONE delegation which attended the symposium of the non-governmental organizations held in Paris on 5-6 September on the occasion of the UNCLDC. Ethiopia is caught in a vicious circle of poverty and repression. Anti-democratic rule, chauvinism and the violation of its national independence have touched off a series of politico-military conflicts that are ruining the country . Resources that should be allocated to financing the socio-economic development of the country are being drained in order to pay for soviet arms shipment and for the "services" rendered by foreign soldiers.

As pointed out in a document published by the French Institute for International Relations and distributed to the UNCLDC participants, this is a problem affecting all developing countries. The document draws the attention of the participants on the "extremely negative consequences of growing military expenditure on the economies of under-developed countries". It stresses the point that the consequences are even more alarming when considered in the context of the LDCs who are "diverting resources at the expense of economic and social development". In this respect, the figures on military expenditures revealed in the document are particularly overwhelming to the Ethiopian regime.

In terms of military expenditures, Ethiopia stands 12TH among the more than 100 third world countries. With an annual official expenditures of US \$ 526 millions for the year 1979, Ethiopia is first among the 31 LDCs. This sum is almost equivalent to that spent annually by all the LDCs in Africa which

in 1979 amounted to a little more than US \$ 600 millions. The country's officially recorded military expenditure amounted to US \$ 17.4 per capita in 1979 as compared to an average US \$ 5.3 for the other LDCs in Africa.

The famine in Ethiopia and the continuous misery of its people are essentially the results of war and repression. In this respect, the future holds nothing better for the Ethiopian people. In an address to the COPWE central committee meeting in early 1981, MENGISTU H. MARIAM had outlined the regime's plan aiming at depleting the country's meagre resources even further. In addition to the regime's plan to generalize the practice of forced recruitment, he announced that "the revolutionary army should be equipped with modern and sophisticated arms that can be provided by modern science and technology".

In other words, the natural resources that are very badly needed for the country's development are going to be depleted even more to buy arms that are to be used against the people. But as we have already pointed out, more repression coupled with less and less resources to solve the country social and economic problems will never lead to peace and stability in Ethiopia. The only choice left to the people is a determined struggle to do away with the military dictatorship and its foreign masters led by Soviet Union. That is the pass that ME'ISONE, together with all other democratic and patriotic forces in the country, has chosen to take. We are convinced that in this struggle, the Ethiopian people can count on the solidarity of all the progressive forces in the world that are concerned with justice and liberation.