

DEEPENING CRISIS AND CONTINUED REPRESSION

Even as the festivities to celebrate the first congress of the COPWE are going on, the economic crisis is deepening and the misery of Ethiopia's peasants and workers is increasing. This of course goes hand in hand with continued repression without which the military dictatorship can no more survive a single month.

- Mass layoffs continue

As the cost of living is rising and food shortages are being deeply felt specially by the urban poor, factories continue to close, for lack of spare parts, raw materials, etc. and as a result of the complete disorganization of the economy. 213 daily workers were laid off from the Ethiopian Construction and roads organization in early June 1980. 100 workers were dismissed from the GULELE Brick factory of Addis abeba and another 350 from the glassworks plant in the same locality.

- Peasants uprooted from their land

Peasants continue to be forcibly uprooted from their land. It is to be remembered that during the Haile Selassie days a young and greedy capitalist class invested much in cash crops and made huge profits from exports of such agricultural products. In the process, thousands of peasant families were being forcibly uprooted from their tenancy and completely ruined. This in fact was one of the most inhuman aspects of the feodo-fascist Haile Selassie regime. With the defeat of the revolution these practices again started to manifest themselves. The only difference now is that peasants are not forcibly uprooted by individual capitalists but by the regime's agents who want fertile land for foreign currency earning cash crops. We have seen how 400 peasant families near Assela in the ARSSI administrative region were forced out of their lands to make way for Cuban farmers. Now it is the turn of 4880 peasants near BISHOFTU who have been ordered to quit in order to make way for the governments "Fruits and vegetable corporation".

- Literacy for empty stomachs : The military dictatorship behaves as if there is no famine in the country. Busy as it is celebrating its own "great achievements" and proclaiming fantastic plans to "deal once and for all" with underdevelopment, it seems to have no time to mobilize the people to combat famine. After announcing that over 5 million people are threatened by famine in the country in April 1980, the government controlled mass media were forbidden to talk about the disastrous famine situation in the country. Instead all the government's propaganda is now "mobilizing" the people for the "historical literacy campaign" officially launched by Mengistu in May 1980

THE RESISTANCE CONTINUES AND INTENSIFIES

- "Russians go home!"

Soviet counter revolutionary intervention in Ethiopia's internal affairs and the violation of the motherland's national independence are inciting more and more patriotic Ethiopians to join the ranks of the opposition. ME'ISONE has taken the lead in this patriotic struggle by constantly exposing soviet hegemonistic designs in Ethiopia and calling upon all democrats and patriots to unite and resist. In recent months hostility to soviet presence is increasing in the urban centers and within the army units. On the occasion of the may day celebrations, ME'ISONE put out a special issue of its central organ "The Voice of the Masses" in which soviet violation of Ethiopia's independence was exposed. Now pamphlets and posters in the towns and specially at the National University, and carrying slogans like "Russians go home", "KGB is stained by the blood of militant communists" etc., are circulating among the population. Three weeks ago, 15 students of the National University were arrested in connection with this anti-soviet agitation.

- Clashes between Cuban and Ethiopian soldiers

Increasing arrogance and indiscipline of Cuban soldiers and officers is leading to more frequent clashes between the later and Ethiopian men in uniform. The latest in a series of serious clashes is the one reported at the "Tateke Military camp" near Addis Abeba. As a result of these clashes some Ethiopian soldiers and officers have been arrested on charges of "counter revolutionary activities".

- The untraceable ME'ISONE

"ME'ISONE militants have succeeded in laying an untraceable underground network in the administrative region. We must put up a tough struggle in order to undo this network and bring these militants under full control". This declaration, which is a far cry from the official propaganda, was made by Lt. Negussie Fanta, the regional governor of WOLLEGA at a meeting of the regions cadres in June 1980. This was promptly followed by a new wave of mass arrests of peasants and even government functionaries including the mayor of NEKEMTE, the regions capital. But only a few days later, pamphlets calling upon the region's population to rise up in defence of ME'ISONE's stands started to circulate widely, thus proving the "correctness" of the governor's assessments.

MENGISTU SAID TO HAVE ESCAPED ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT

The internal strife between rival factions continues and intensifies. In April, rumors of a coup attempt foiled by the government security forces were persistently circulating in Addis Abeba. Then came, in May 1980, the latest of a series of attempts on Mengistu's life. Two of his cooks who were involved in the plot to poison the chief of state were summarily executed and members of the personal guard of Mengistu were arrested.

The vicious internal conflicts are also taking a heavy toll of the members of the ruling clique. At the beginning of July, two leading members of the Derg Lt. Col. Demissie Deressa and Col. Abate Mersha were sentenced to 20 years imprisonment and other former activists of "SEDED", Lt. Desta Tadesse, Mr. Mekonnen Fikre etc. were sentenced to death. The former were accused of "corruption" while the other two were held in connection with charges of "collaboration with the C.I.A."

OTHER NEWS

ETHIO-SUDAN RELATIONS

Mengistu's main purpose in going to the Sudan on a state visit was clear : he wanted to persuade the sudanese president to stop all material and other assistance to the Eritrean liberation forces. By isolating the Eritrean liberation movements, the chauvinists wanted to facilitate their "final military solution" to the Eritrean problem. But considered from this angle, Mengistu's visit to the Sudan was a complete fiasco. The Sudanese president, who is under pressure from various pro-Eritrean quarters could not accept such demands. Instead he again proposed his good offices to solve the problem peacefully. But the Ethiopian chauvinists cannot negotiate because they have nothing to offer to respond to the democratic demands of the Eritrean masses.

Angered by this failure, Mengistu refused to give a scheduled press conference at the Khartoum International Airport. Two days later the Eritrean fronts' offices in Karthoum were reopened and sudanese emissaries were busily going around middle