



The Caucus Race: International Conflict in East Africa and the Horn

by J. Gus Liebenow



GENERAL

Conflict in East Africa and the Horn has already passed from the potential to actual. In terms of complexity of issues, it rivals if not surpasses the situation in southern Africa, and raises the possibility of direct Great Power confrontation.

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**THE CAUCUS RACE: INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT
IN EAST AFRICA AND THE HORN**

by J. Gus Liebenow

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World attention for some time to come will continue to focus on the southern third of the African continent as the "African powderkeg." This is perhaps inevitable, given the magnitude of the white presence in South Africa, Zimbabwe (Rhodesia), and Namibia, and given the white intransigence with respect to permitting black Africans to control or even share in decisions about their own political and economic destinies. For the situation in the "white redoubt," as well as the continued disturbance in Angola, have already raised the possibility of direct East-West confrontation, and they have exacerbated relations between whites and non-whites on a global scale.

Yet, in many respects the more immediate trouble spot on the continent is East Africa and the Horn. In common with the turmoil in the South, the conflict in that region has already passed from the potential to the actual. Civil wars and intermittent border fighting have been a reality for more than a decade. Moreover, the extent of involvement of outside powers and the fluid nature of the internal alliances make it perhaps an even more volatile arena than the southern region. In terms of the complexity of the situation, it rivals if not surpasses the southern sphere of conflict. True, it lacks the internal schisms between whites and non-whites. The only place in the region where it had been a serious problem was in Kenya, but this was checked by the Mau Mau uprising in the 1950s and by the subsequent British intervention. Those white settlers who have remained in Kenya after independence have had to accommodate to the principle of majority rule and to surrender their stranglehold on the land and the economy. East Africa and the Horn, however, have other internal conflicts that have racial overtones as well as deep cleavages based upon ethnicity, religion, and ideology which lead to serious domestic as well as international conflict.

Although the principal protagonists in the East-West struggle have thus far managed to avoid direct confrontation, it is doubtful whether they can continue for long to play the game of "revolving door" in which the United States or the Soviet Union becomes the immediate successor of the other in providing military and economic support to a local African regime or, indeed, both give military support to the same government. Other Western bloc states—not always having identical views with those of the United States—are also involved in the area, as are other representatives of the socialist camp. While Cuba may tend frequently to be a surrogate for the Soviet Union, the same could not be said for the Yugoslavs and particularly for the Chinese, who present themselves as the true apostles of Marx and Lenin in contrast to the current "revisionist" leadership of the Soviet Union.

Of equal complexity are certain crosscurrents and eddies which distinctly differentiate the Horn and East Africa from the conflict in the South. I refer to the fragmentation now manifest within the Arab bloc of states and the more general world of Islam, which has had direct consequences for peace and stability in the eastern region. While this obviously affects a state like the Sudan, in which an Arab Muslim majority predominates, it also has a direct bearing on non-Arab Muslim states, like Somalia and the fledgling Republic of Djibouti, which are members of the Arab League. Moreover, it also affects states with substantial Muslim minorities, such as Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Kenya, and states in which a Muslim leader exercises power in a predominantly non-Muslim society, as in the case of General Idi Amin in Uganda. Whether by choice or not, each of the states in this region has found itself called upon to choose sides in the struggle between the Palestinians and the Israelis as well as between the Arab states and the

West during the protracted oil crisis which began in 1974. Even more remote to their immediate interests, African leaders have found themselves being pushed and pulled between the more revolutionary version of Arab socialism, epitomized by the program of General Khaddafi in Libya, and the more conservative regimes of Egypt and Saudi Arabia. As the stakes at the core of the Arab struggle become higher the pressures and bidding at the periphery become more complex and explosive.

The manner in which alliances within the region and external interventions vary from month to month—and occasionally from day to day—confound simple analysis. There are many situations in which the contradictions clearly predominate over so-called logical or natural ties. Since many of the leaders in this region have only been participating directly in international politics for less than two decades, their style as well as the values they pursue differ considerably from those of the more routinized, or traditional, participants. In exasperation, a Russian diplomat recently referred to the international political behavior of the region as “Chess without rules.” But the political behavior both of the major powers—United States, Russia, and China—as well as of the Africans and Arabs, might more aptly be compared to the Caucus Race in *Alice in Wonderland*. In the Caucus Race there are no explicit rules and anyone may elect to play or not to play. Unlike the Caucus Race, however, in which everyone is a winner, there is no guarantee whatever that anyone will emerge a victor in this situation.

The Perspective of 1967

A decade ago serious observers of the politics of the region would have been rash to have predicted the turmoil of 1977. Admittedly, there were a number of serious cases of domestic instability among the states in the region, but the international consequences of domestic turmoil had been largely contained. Sudan, for example, in 1967 was engaged in a furious civil war that had commenced almost at independence in 1956 and would continue until 1973. It pitted the dominant Arab Muslims of the north against the Nilotic groups of the south, where Christianity or a traditional form of religious worship prevailed. The Nilotic groups protested against what they regarded as racial, linguistic, political, and economic discrimination. Although the Nilotic rebels found refuge among their ethnic

affiliates on the Uganda, Zaire, and Chad sides of the border, the almost unbroken policy of leaders in independent African states was to recognize the legitimacy of the existing colonial boundaries—however arbitrary or capricious they may have been. To give aid and comfort to minorities in a neighboring country or to press an irredentist claim raised the possibility of one's own minorities being encouraged to dissent or secede, and almost all states were collections of ethnic minorities. This recognition of colonial boundaries also permitted Milton Obote in Uganda to deal with the traditionalism and tribalism of various dissident groups, particularly the Baganda under the Kabaka but also the Banyoro, Batoro, and Banyankole. It permitted the Ethiopian regime from 1961 onward to contain the Eritrean secessionist movement without fear of external intervention from neighboring states, particularly the Sudan. The latter had actually opted for Sudanese control of the region in the negotiations at the end of World War II, and they have subsequently felt protective toward the Eritrean Muslims who have lived in a state dominated by an Amharic-speaking Christian minority.

The only deviation from the policy of recognizing the legitimacy of colonial boundaries came with respect to the irredentist claims of the Republic of Somalia, which had come into being as a result of the former Italian and British Somalilands being granted independence simultaneously as a unified state. The five points of the star on the Somali flag, however, attest to their determination to gather in the other “lost children” of Somalia in northeast Kenya, in the Ogaden province of Ethiopia, and in Djibouti (the former French Somaliland). This determination led to active support of the *shifitas* (Somali irregulars) who began attacking the isolated outposts of both the Kenyans and the Ethiopians immediately after Somalia achieved independence. The fighting between Somalia and its two neighbors soon reached a critical stage where it threatened the peace of the entire region. Only after the accession to power in 1964 of Prime Minister Egal, who agreed to accept the good offices of other African leaders acting through the Organization of African Unity, was a truce arranged. Remarkably, the military government of General Siad Barre, which overthrew Egal in 1969, preserved the spirit of detente with Kenya and Ethiopia until very recently, despite having come to power with the express commitment to pursue irredentism.

Without minimizing the serious character of these threats to regional stability, there was nevertheless a remarkable level of optimism evident in 1967 regarding the prospects for the region. Each of its six independent states still had civilian regimes, even though in Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda it took the return of British paratroopers to suppress the rank-and-file military revolts of 1964, which had spread from Zanzibar to the mainland. And Haile Selassie had managed to survive the army mutiny of 1961 which had occurred during his absence from the continent. Sudan, moreover, had only recently manifested the unusual occurrence of a civilian regime overthrowing a military government.

Additionally, each government in the region had ambitious plans for economic development and political modernization. In East Africa both Tanzania under Nyerere and Uganda under Obote were beginning to articulate fairly explicit plans for development based upon an African version of socialism. Indeed, even the government of Jomo Kenyatta in Kenya felt obliged to pay obeisance to popular demand and published a bland White Paper on African socialism. Most striking of all, however, the ancient kingdom of Ethiopia, with its intricate system of feudal landlords and an ultra-conservative Ethiopic Church hierarchy, was beginning its slow lurch forward into modernity. Apparently, the plans of Haile Selassie for constitutional, economic, and educational reform had sufficient merit among other African leaders that they felt not at all embarrassed in establishing the headquarters for the Organization of African Unity in Addis Ababa in 1963.

In addition to the growing optimism regarding the domestic front, the states in this region were attempting to stay relatively clear of the major power struggles going on at the global level. The policy of nonalignment or neutralism meant either reducing the influence of any of the major protagonists or engaging in a careful balancing act so that no one power or bloc became dominant. This policy was, for Africa at least, initiated by Ethiopia, which had regained its independence during World War II after the devastating five years of Italian rule. The British were asked to continue their training of the Ethiopian bureaucracy, the Americans were asked to develop the airlines, the Yugoslavs were invited in to develop the cattle industry, and various other arrangements were made with Russia and *both* Chinese governments.

An even more dramatic case of "bloc balancing" can be found in Tanzania. By the mid-1960s it had demonstrated its determination to pursue an independent course of action in foreign affairs by breaking relations with Britain and West Germany, both of which were significant suppliers of foreign aid. At the same time, however, the American, Canadian, Scandinavian, and other Western powers continued to be represented, although they were gradually being balanced by Russians, Yugoslavs, Czechs, and other Eastern bloc nationalities. When the United States and the World Bank considered the request of Tanzania and Zambia for a loan to build the Tanzara Railway (to decrease Zambia's dependence on white-dominated areas), it was rejected on the basis of narrowly economic grounds. Apparently, the United States had forgotten its own history and the political—rather than the strictly economic—significance of its own transcontinental railroad system. Undaunted, the Tanzanians and Zambians turned to Communist China, which obliged with a long-term loan on what were then regarded as very favorable terms. Ironically, the United States subsequently agreed to provide an all-weather road from Zambia to Dar es Salaam. Even though the road was of far greater significance during the past decade, the propaganda victory went to the Chinese. But the point is that Tanzania has been able to steer an independent course while continuing its dialogue with all sides in the East-West conflict.

There were only two areas where it seemed that the Cold War would be impressed on East Africa and the Horn in the mid-1960s. The first was in Ethiopia, where the regime had come to rely exclusively upon the United States to provide training and weapons for the military. The second area was the Sudan, which, in its enthusiasm to display its Arab credentials, broke relations completely with the United States during the early hours of the 1967 Six-Day War. To fill the vacuum in economic aid the Sudanese turned increasingly to the Soviet Union for military as well as economic assistance—thus giving Russia a considerable presence on the Red Sea.

With respect to the second major external arena—the Arab-Israeli conflict—the four non-Arab League states in the region attempted to maintain the same nonalignment in the early 1960s they had with respect to the Cold War. Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, and Ethiopia maintained good

relations with both Israel and the Arab states. During the early part of the decade Israel had been winning many friends in Africa with a comparatively small outlay of investment capital in the form of loans or gifts and with a cadre of skilled technicians who could probably not have been easily absorbed in the Israeli labor market at that time. Training the Uganda Air Force, establishing a national service corps in Tanzania, and providing technical training in Israel for Kenyans and Ethiopians had contributed to a tremendous bank of goodwill for the Israelis in their diplomatic struggle with the Arab states. The Israelis were, after all, viewed as a people who had been oppressed by European colonial rule; they had experimented with various forms of socialist and collective economic development models; and, best of all, they had "made the desert bloom" in contrast to their immediate Arab neighbors. This did not mean that Arab aid would have been rejected by the Africans had it been forthcoming. The fact is, it was extremely scarce in 1967.

Beyond the relative internal stability of the states of this region in 1967 and their success in pursuing a course of nonalignment, there was one further event of that year that contributed to a spirit of optimism in the region—the signing in Kampala of the Treaty for East African Cooperation. This was an effort to capitalize upon the more than two decades of cooperation among the former British dependencies of Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. Prior to the Kampala Treaty, cooperation had been largely confined to technical fields such as the joint collection of customs for the region; the operation of the railways, harbors, airways, and post and telegraphs on a regional basis; and in interterritorial cooperation in higher education and in research in the fields of medicine, meteorology, agriculture, and forestry. Kenya would be the initial beneficiary of the establishment of a common economic market for the region—an area roughly equivalent in size to all of Western Europe currently included within the European Economic Community. This advantage was the *quid pro quo* for the greater benefits which the other two states received through cooperation in the technical services. Mechanisms were devised, however, to bring about equalization of benefits and the distribution of major industries among all three partners. Collective action would presumably enhance geometrically the prosperity and stability that the states separately were beginning to experience in the early postindependence era.

What made the Kampala Treaty of 1967 particularly significant for the region, however, was that it envisioned the ultimate expansion of the treaty area to include other states in East Africa. Indeed, almost before the ink was dry, states as far south as Zambia and Botswana as well as Zaire and Rwanda to the east and Sudan, Somalia, and Ethiopia to the north had registered their explicit interest in future inclusion in the Common Market. To those who had been wistfully pursuing the dream of Pan-African unity, the Kampala Treaty seemed to provide the best prospects for breathing life into an idea that had remained stillborn. Such was the euphoria of 1967.

A Decade of Change

Needless to say, the unraveling of this rather promising tapestry did not occur overnight. Indeed, even at this writing, some of the more significant strands are only now coming apart. Nor can one attribute the drastic change of events that have taken place in the past decade to any one event or even a discernible chain of events. In certain respects the events do not proceed in logical order. Frequently, when one gets to the tenth stage of a particular drama, the participants themselves have forgotten the relevance of many of the preceding stages.

Arab-Israeli Impact on the Region

Unquestionably one of the more significant series of events has been the altered relations between African states and Israel. As a consequence of the Six-Day War and the Yom Kippur War of 1973, the Arab states accelerated their campaign to secure the diplomatic and economic isolation of Israel. What made Africa so important to the Arab cause was the procession of new African states entering the United Nations during the 1960s and '70s. Its 49 members today make it the largest single bloc in the General Assembly and thus a key to any isolation or censuring of Israel.

What ultimately turned the tide against Israel was the realization on the part of the Arabs that they had two things to serve as *quid pro quo* for African support. The first was Arab diplomatic and financial support for the liberation struggles in Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Namibia as well as the isolation of South Africa in all international quarters. In essence Israel has been

swapped for South Africa. The second element in the *quid pro quo* has been the Arab states' promise to share their oil revenues in assisting African development. Unfortunately for the Africans any massive support has yet to materialize. In the meantime OPEC price fixing has played more havoc with the economies and growth strategies of the developing countries than it has with the economies of the more direct targets of the oil embargo of 1974.

There have been two major additional consequences of the prolonged stalemate regarding the Palestinian question. Frustration over the failure of negotiations leading to a peaceful solution has enhanced the influence of those who advocate violence as the only means available. This happens also to be the group that seeks a more radical socialist reshaping of Arab society. Thus, with considerable oil revenues to support his ideology, General Khaddafi of Libya has been supporting revolution among Muslim populations over an area ranging from North Africa to the Philippines. Within East Africa, Khaddafi has been a principal supporter of the regime of General Amin, who is a Muslim. With respect to the Sudan, and its neighbor Chad, the Libyan leader has been accused of intervention. President Nimeiry of the Sudan was convinced that Khaddafi had played a direct role in the attempted coup during July 1976, and this was a contributing factor to Sudan's general realignment of its political position within the region. Pitted against Libya for influence in Somalia, as well as in North and South Yemen and other Arab states in the region, have been Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The last has even more substantial oil revenues than Libya to hold out as a carrot for development. At this writing the rivalry of Egypt and Libya for influence has actually led to a border war between the two states.

East-West Rivalry in the Region

The second additional consequence of the prolonged stalemate over Palestine leads us into the other major extrinsic situation affecting politics within the region. I refer to East-West rivalry, and the changing influence of the chief protagonists. On this particular issue, the Soviet Union over the past decade has been regarded as the net gainer in terms of prestige and influence and the United States as the net loser. Russia not only has had a long-standing feud with Israel over the question of Russian Jews being denied permission to emigrate

to Israel, but it had also given diplomatic support to the Arab bloc in both the 1967 and 1973 wars with Israel. It was, moreover, the principal supplier of arms to the most vociferous anti-Israeli states (Libya, Syria, and Iraq) as well as to Egypt and Sudan during most of the decade since 1967. On the other hand, the United States was viewed as the major supporter of Israel, a factor which many felt permitted Israel to remain intransigent about returning the occupied territories. In addition, the United States had strong economic and military ties with the more conservative Arab states (Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and, subsequently, Egypt and the Sudan).

On the issue that was paired with the Arab-Israeli conflict, namely southern Africa liberation, the Soviet Union again had the decided influence advantage over the United States during most of this period. Having little to lose and much to gain, the Soviet Union had supported liberation movements both verbally and with a substantial supply of military aid. It had the good fortune, moreover, to be supporting the winning side in the three-way struggle in Angola. Its stances on liberation made it particularly attractive to at least one state in the region, Tanzania. Conversely, the United States, which had established a fairly good record on anticolonialism during the two decades immediately after World War II, found its voice somewhat muted as the liberation struggle in the mid-1960s reached the southern African stalemate. Its NATO alliance with Portugal, negotiations over the Azores bases, and the American exploitation of Cabinda oil complicated the American stance with respect to Mozambique and Angola. The United States did supply aid in the Angola liberation case, but to one of the losing sides! Similarly, the chrome lobby in the United States succeeded in getting the Byrd Amendment through Congress, thereby undermining any effectiveness of the Rhodesian boycott. Even more important to the issue, United States' investments in South Africa and the mystique of gold as a prop for the international monetary system made it difficult for the American diplomats to face the issue of apartheid squarely until the Carter-Ford presidential campaign of 1976. Whether the Tanzanians and other front-line states regard the recent conversion as genuine or merely cosmetic remains to be seen. The South African press and radio would have you believe that the United States has completely capitulated to international communism.

While the matters of prestige and influence are important, the significant factor is that the actual involvement of the Soviet Union and the United States within the Horn and East Africa has increased considerably during the past decade. In this manner the policy of nonalignment has been all but abandoned by the states of the region. Those states which have opted for a socialist, or at least a more radical, solution to their problems of economic growth have openly solicited support from the Soviet Union. Uganda is a case in point. The initial involvement of the Soviet Union began after Obote moved to a socialist position, and under Amin the Russians have continued as the primary prop of the military dictatorship. Somalia, which until its 1969 coup received United States' aid in the training of its constabulary, turned almost immediately to the Soviet Union for ideological as well as economic and military support in its efforts to build the very model of a socialist society in Africa. Indeed, its friendship went so far as to include Russian rights to the naval base the Soviet Union had constructed for it at Berbera. Similarly Sudan tended to regard the Soviet Union as a more trustworthy and ideologically compatible source of aid until the Russians last year were implicated in the Libyan efforts to topple President Nimeiry.

The ideological position of the United States as well as its ability to be involved in African problems during much of the decade from 1967 to the present was further complicated by the all-absorbing attention being given to the Vietnamese War, which most African leaders regarded as an imperialist war. And on three very important issues which directly affected East Africa and the Horn, the United States again seemed to come out on the unpopular side. In reverse chronological order, there was the abortive effort of the Ford-Kissinger administration to get the United States involved in opposing an MPLA victory in Angola. Second, there was the United States' role as the exclusive military supporter of Ethiopia until the rupture earlier this year. This meant not only that we were supporting one of the more feudal societies in Africa while Haile Selassie was in command, but that continuation of support under the military *dergue* linked us to one of Africa's three or four most oppressive regimes. Additionally, United States' support had implications for Ethiopia's neighbors. American military aid was the primary deterrent to renewed intervention by Somalia in the Ogaden province. Even more important, the

Sudanese viewed American military aid as one of the principal reasons why the Ethiopians were able to continue their oppression of the Eritrean Muslims in their liberation struggle.

The third American action which brought forth complaints from Somalia, Tanzania, and other African leaders in the region was the acquisition from the British of a naval base on Diego Garcia island in the Indian Ocean. This was regarded as a necessary strategic counter to the Russian presence at Berbera. Unlike the Russian-Somali military agreement, which still is largely secret, however, the American action in the Indian Ocean was subjected to public discussion and opinion.

It is not my intention to ignore the other participants in East-West rivalry in the region. Britain and West Germany do play a considerable role in the economic affairs of nations in East Africa and the Horn, and France continues—even after the independence of Djibouti—to play a key role in the military stabilization of the Horn. Similarly, a number of Eastern bloc states, including Cuba, are playing increasingly significant military as well as economic roles. The position of the Chinese, however, is a curiously ambiguous one. Clearly, earlier in the decade the Chinese had overplayed their hand in Burundi and were expelled. Since then they have tended to keep a lower profile. Like the Americans, moreover, they used bad judgment in backing one of the losing sides in the Angolan crisis. In many cases, the Chinese seem to be spending less time confronting the Americans and more time upstaging the Russians in their efforts to present the "true" socialist case. The one state where the Chinese have substantial—but certainly not commanding—influence is Tanzania. The long-term loan agreement regarding the Tanzara Railway has linked Tanzania with China in more ways than the Tanzanians belatedly realized.

Impact of Domestic Politics on International Relations

The previous discussion of the impact of the Arab-Israeli conflict and of East-West rivalry on international politics in East Africa and the Horn should not imply that external factors alone affect the way in which the states in the region relate to one another. That only two of the six states that were independent in 1967—Tanzania and Kenya—still have civilian regimes in 1977 must be taken into account. While it has not been demonstrated

that a military government is *ipso facto* more warlike than a civilian regime, the evidence tends in that direction. A military regime has to have something to justify the considerable outlay for a basically unproductive activity—especially in a society of limited resources. In any event, this would seem to be as rational an explanation as any to apply to the actions of General Idi Amin in Uganda. Despite its being a landlocked country, he has managed to perpetuate a continual state of war with one neighbor, Tanzania, and intermittently to offend the other neighbor, Kenya, which controls Uganda's access to the Indian Ocean. The military character of the government must also be a factor in the case of Ethiopia.

The rise of military governments, however, is not the sole domestic factor complicating international politics of the region. Changes in the ideological posture of the two remaining civilian regimes, Kenya and Tanzania, have been perhaps the single most important factor affecting relations within East Africa. Admittedly, there were other factors that contributed to the demise of a greater East African Economic Community. These would include the inability of the Kenyan and Tanzanian heads of state to recognize the legitimacy of Amin; the initial built-in advantages that Nairobi enjoyed and that led to its unrestrained reaping of most of the additional benefits of economic cooperation; the difficulties of the two poorer states in transferring revenues collected for the operations of the railways and other technical services; and Tanzania's all-absorbing moral commitment to Southern African liberation. This compelled Tanzania to orient its relationships southward to Mozambique, Zambia, and the white-dominated areas and, consequently, away from East Africa.

Yet, the key to the East African disengagement was the growing ideological incompatibility of Tanzania and Kenya. For in the same year that Tanzania signed the Kampala Treaty on East African Cooperation, Nyerere and the party issued the Arusha Declaration, which was to give it the most articulate philosophy and program for socialist development anywhere in the continent. Its emphasis was upon distributive justice, with sacrifices being demanded not only of workers and peasants but also of students, the civil servants, the military, and others. Specifically, it was a form of *agrarian* socialism in that it recognized that upward of 90 percent of the population still lived in the rural area and that whatever development

had taken place in Tanzania came largely from the proceeds of agriculture. It was necessary, therefore, to reject urban growth in favor of improving the quality of life in rural villages. Under the *ujamaa* "villagization" scheme every citizen potentially was to be identified with a rural settlement which would be provided with the minimum services of government (schools, clinics, markets, and the like) and which was to serve as an essential unit in national decision making regarding development. While the Tanzanian leadership did not reject industrialization, it recognized that it was essentially capital rather than labor intensive and thus at the early stages of development would only further aggravate the problems of unemployment.

In contrast to Tanzania, Kenya in the past decade has dropped even the rhetoric of socialism and is moving unabashedly toward a model of state and private capitalist development similar to that of the Ivory Coast in West Africa. Although its critics would label it a "dependency" model of development, the Kenyan leadership insists that it is fully in control of the massive infusion of capital and personnel coming from the West, Japan, the Arab oil states, Latin America, and even the Eastern bloc countries. They insist, too, that the remarkable growth and prosperity that is everywhere evident in Nairobi is trickling down to the countryside and the other urban centers.

Leaving aside the merits of the two polar models of development, it early became evident that the two economic systems could not mesh easily within a unified East African Community. Instead of providing a focal point for unity within an even larger region, the path of cooperation within East Africa itself, to paraphrase Lenin, was a case of "one step forward; two steps backward." One by one cooperation ceased in the fields of higher education, railways, harbors, posts and telegraph, and the airways. By February of 1977 relations between Kenya and Tanzania were so strained over the distribution of the formerly common assets that Tanzania "permanently sealed" the border, effectively bringing contact by road to a halt. The splendid new buildings at Arusha, which were to serve as the headquarters of the Community, now serve as the gravemarker commemorating the death of a noble idea.

The Ethiopian Disaster

Insofar as domestic situations have contributed to international instability in East Africa and the

Horn, however, it is clear in 1977 that the Ethiopian crisis stands at the heart of regional problems. The toppling of the ancient monarchy in 1974 by a revolutionary coalition of the military, students, labor leaders, and the urban unemployed came as a surprise to many. It should not have, for the pressures had been building at an accelerated rate. The regime had become increasingly corrupt and had delayed the implementation of necessary economic and political reforms. Strikes by the students or workers were crushed in a ruthless fashion. The starvation associated with the Sahelian drought had reached mammoth proportions, and the relief program was totally mismanaged because the regime refused to acknowledge that the situation even existed. Most significant of all, however, the Eritrean campaign had gone badly for the Ethiopians, and the Eritreans were achieving victory after victory against a demoralized Ethiopian army.

The enthusiasm which the general public initially displayed toward the military *dergue*, or collective leadership, was short-lived as inflation and economic dislocation accelerated. The *dergue* as well as the uncontrolled troops seemed to strike out simultaneously at foe and recent allies alike: the feudal landlords, the intelligentsia, the labor leaders, and even the students. The last were rusticated to the rural hinterland to assist in the re-education of the peasantry regarding the goals of the revolution—an action which managed to annoy both the students and the peasants. Moreover, instead of assuming a De Gaulle-like posture and recognizing the validity of the Eritrean liberationists, the *dergue* was more determined than the monarchy to crush the revolt. The army was expanded, and there was talk of a Moroccan-type peasant army march into Eritrea. Nonetheless, the Eritreans continued to capture one town after another and were actually bringing the war to the non-Eritrean sectors of Ethiopia.

Inspired by the ease with which the Eritreans were succeeding, two of Ethiopia's African neighbors have been encouraged to break the standing agreement not to support separatist movements. Sudan was the first to break with the principle and began to provide not only refuge but also military support to its fellow Muslims in Eritrea, who might be expected to join the Arab League once independence was achieved.

Somalia also took advantage of Ethiopia's state of chaos and dropped the pretense of detente which had prevailed since the mid-1960s. It confronted Ethiopia on two fronts. First, President Siad Barre openly admitted giving support to the Western Somalia Liberation Front in the Ogaden, and it was reported on Radio Mogadishu that *shiftas* and Somali regulars had achieved smashing victories against the Ethiopian forces in taking control of most of the Ogaden. (Incidentally, although it at first appeared that Somalia was also encouraging the *shiftas* in northeastern Kenya, a hurried visit to Nairobi by the Somali Foreign Minister in July of this year was intended to reassure the Kenyans that the renewed *shifita* activity in Kenya had not been sanctioned by his government.)

The second situation which put Somalia and Ethiopia on a collision course was the granting of independence, in June 1977, to the Republic of Djibouti (the former French Somaliland, later restyled the Territory of the Afars and Issas). Although Somalia claims the territory as part of its homeland, the railroad linking Djibouti to Addis Ababa will be Ethiopia's only outlet to the sea once the Eritreans succeed in capturing Asmara and the Red Sea port of Massawa. Both Somalia and Ethiopia claim they will fight if either side attempts to incorporate the new republic. Although Djibouti is expected to join the Arab League, there is internal dissension between the Afars, who are pro-Ethiopian, and the Issas, who favor union with Somalia. It is only the continued presence of a French military force of about 4,000 troops that guarantees some measure of stability at the very entrance to the Red Sea.

The last point demonstrates that the Ethiopian crisis has implications far beyond the immediate situation. It has, for one thing, changed the roles of both Western and Eastern bloc states within the region. The United States, which was the primary military supporter of Ethiopia, had become increasingly restive about its contributory role in suppressing both internal dissent and Eritrean liberation. Even before President Carter's announcement of a cutback in Ethiopian aid because of violations of human rights, the United States under President Ford had decided to close down several of its installations in Ethiopia: the *dergue's* expulsion of all American officials other than embassy staff earlier this year was really a face-saving device. The Russians quickly moved in to fill the vacuum and immediately began a massive

effort to provide arms and training to the beleaguered Ethiopian forces. This led, then, to the Russians being in the anomalous position of supporting both sides in the Ethiopian-Somali armed struggle over the Ogaden. In an attempt to calm the Somalis, Fidel Castro of Cuba—acting both for himself and as a surrogate for the Soviet Union—visited the region shortly after the Russians had made the commitment to Ethiopia. He proposed that since Somalia and Ethiopia—as well as South Yemen—were all committed to a radical socialist restructuring of their societies, they should sublimate their differences within a larger federated socialist state.

Far from placating the Somalis, the Castro suggestion seemed only to propel the more moderate faction within the Arab League to immediate action. Faced with the prospect of Russian-controlled Red Sea and Arab Gulf, the Egyptians and the Saudi Arabians accelerated their diplomatic and financial campaign to bring Somalia and South Yemen into their camp. After several visits of Somali leaders to Egypt and Saudi Arabia, it was apparent that they were becoming more receptive to the idea of eliminating, or at least reducing, the Russian presence, which had grown to about 6,000 military and economic advisers. The United States, moreover, has been considering “in principle” the possibility of supplementing Soviet support with United States’ arms to Somalia! Thus, a complicated East-West rivalry and schisms within Islam had translated their struggles to the region.

To further complicate the problem, the *Kenya Weekly Review* reported in mid-July secret arrangement between Ethiopia and Israel in which the latter agreed to train and fully equip an Ethiopian task force of around 15,000 men for guerrilla warfare. This means that Israel (which receives its main backing from the United States—Russia’s principal rival at the global level) would be joining the Soviet Union (which is the principal backer of Israel’s Arab foes) in supporting the military *dergue* in Ethiopia (which is fighting Arab-backed groups in Eritrea and the Ogaden).

There is one further dimension to the spinoff from the Ethiopian crisis. The Americans, who found themselves displaced by the Russians in Ethiopia, in turn find themselves displacing the Russians in the Sudan. The level of American public aid and private investment in Sudan has stepped up this year, and there are serious efforts by the Sudanese to have the United States provide significant military support as well. At the same time, the Americans have been steadily enhancing their positions in Kenya and there has recently emerged a potential Kenya-Sudan alliance to serve as a counterweight to Soviet influence in Ethiopia and Somalia. Discussion has already proceeded on the possibility of constructing a 600-mile road, which would link Kenya with the Southern Sudan. The latter area, which is still lagging behind considerably, is being touted as the potential granary for the whole of the Middle East. Almost as a way of demonstrating its new commitment to an Arab neighbor, Kenya this year broke its long silence and issued a statement condemning Israel.

During this time, the Chinese have been scurrying about making economic, cultural, and other agreements with the Somali, the Sudanese, the Kenyans, and the Ethiopians while continuing their more serious commitment to Tanzania and the southern African liberation movements.

Thus, the Caucus Race continues in East Africa and the Horn, and it has actually moved to a newer level of complexity in 1977. To many, the cross-currents, contradictory alliances, and the propensity to uncontrolled violence along the borders of the seven countries is frighteningly reminiscent of the Balkans in the period prior to World War I. Some optimistic observers regard the very complexity of internal dissension and international involvement as the best guarantee that nothing really serious will actually happen. Everything, it is alleged, will cancel out. I think it is far more likely that a minor miscalculation could have serious global repercussions. At that point, the analogy with the Caucus Race would end.

