

Ethiopian Students Hold 20th Congress

This article was written for The Call by a member of the Ethiopian Students Union in North America who was a delegate to the recently held 20th Congress. Because the E.S.U.N.A. is an important component part of the anti-imperialist united front struggle, we feel it is necessary to inform our readers of the character of their struggle. —Editor.

U.S. imperialism and domestic feudalism were attacked as the "arch enemies" of the broad masses in Ethiopia at the 20th Congress of the Ethiopian Students Union in North America.

More than 300 delegates attended the Congress which convened between August 26 and August 30 in Washington D.C.

The major aim of this Congress was to define the characteristics of the impending revolution in Ethiopia and the role of the Ethiopian Student Movement.

Evidence abounds that the fierce and unflinching resistance of the Ethiopian masses to Portuguese, British, French and Italian colonialism for more than five centuries has been compromised by the autocratic regime of Haile Selassie. Ethiopia today, as in the past two decades, is the most stable neo-colony of U.S. imperialism.

Exploited by U.S.

More than 200 U.S. companies ruthlessly exploit the human and natural wealth of the country. U.S. firms are involved, among other things, in potash and petroleum exploration, spice extraction, ceramic tile and paper manufacture and hotel industries. To facilitate the penetration of U.S. imperialism, the puppet regime has enacted special laws protecting U.S. firms against expropriation, and has provided "generous" duty-free and tax exemption provisions. These policies have placed fetters on genuine national economic development while ensuring the U.S. monopolists' super profits, cheap labor and unlimited access to the mineral and natural wealth of the country. The recent discovery of oil and natural gas deposits in the southeastern province of Bale will no doubt tighten the strangle hold grip of U.S. imperialism on the feudal regime.

U.S. imperialism also has significant strategic and political interests in Ethiopia. The U.S. maintains in Ethiopia one of its most important military bases. Manned by more than 3,000 military personnel, the Kagnev strategic communication base is a primary relay station in Pentagon's global communications complex. It also serves as an intelli-

gence station for monitoring communications particularly those in the Middle East and the Soviet Union.

In payment for the right to keep this aggressive military base, U.S. imperialism lavishes military and financial aid to the despotic regime and has signed "Mutual Defense" treaties which have provisions for U.S. intervention in case of the need. Ethiopia receives more than two thirds of all U.S. military assistance given to Africa. Besides bombs, supersonic fighters and ammunition, the U.S. has supplied its largest contingent of military teams in Africa to train puppet troops in counter-insurgency as part of an overall program to stamp out the potential peasant and national rebellions.



More than 10,000 U.S. military personnel, State Department officials, A.I.D. technicians and advisors—placed in all government agencies and on all levels of decision making—directly supervise the repression of peasants, workers and students and also manage the affairs of the U.S. monopolist class.

Allied to and kept in power by U.S. credit, loans and assistance, feudalism is the principal domestic enemy of the broad masses in Ethiopia. 28% of all cultivable land is in the possession of the Church barons. A remaining 62% is owned by the Imperial Family, the aristocracy, the nobility and top bureaucrats. Grabbing up as much as three-fourths of the produce of the peasantry, these owning classes are responsible for the destitution, ignorance, and misery of the lot of the peasantry. The theocratic state has reduced the

majority believers of Islam and Animism into second-class citizens. The chauvinistic feudal regime is daily trampling on the national rights of a greater part of the nationalities in Ethiopia who are subjected to institutionalized "Amharization" —which is a forced policy of assimilation.

Thus, the 20th Congress resolved that the task of the Ethiopian revolution is the overthrow of feudalism, bureaucrat capitalism and the elimination of the neo-colonial domination of U.S. imperialism, Israeli Zionism and other imperialist powers.

The more than 24 million masses of workers and peasants of all nationalities —which are the principal victims of serfdom and imperialists plunder—constitute the basic force of the revolution.

In Ethiopia, as elsewhere, it is among the intellectuals and students that Marxism-Leninism was first disseminated and accepted. It is little surprise therefore that the Ethiopian Student Movement has, for the last seven years, taken the lead and marched in the forefront of the ideological struggle against feudalism and imperialism.

"Land to the Tiller"

The two strategic banners of the E.S.M., "Land to the Tiller" and "Imperialism Out of Ethiopia", have served as a clarioncall for the dispossessed masses in Ethiopia, especially those in the urban areas. Yet, there was a clear recognition at the 20th Congress, that the anti-feudal and anti-imperialist contingent of students is an insignificant fighting force in the face of organized reaction in Ethiopia. There was a clear awareness that no matter how strong the activities of the masses, this fact alone cannot lead the revolution to victory and that revolutionary students must integrate heart and soul with the activity of the common people.

In defining the nature and role of the Ethiopian Student Movement in the national democratic revolution, the Congress rejected those who confuse the student unions with proletarian parties and those who wish to convert them into free-wheeling social clubs.

Since the basic forces of the national democratic revolution are the workers and peasants in Ethiopia, it was finally resolved that patriotic and revolutionary intellectuals must integrate with the broad masses to disseminate revolutionary aims and themes among them, to mobilize them, organize them and help in the creation of a genuine Marxist-Leninist Party.