

The Socialist-Soviet deal to wreck Africa

by Thierry Lalevée

On Sept. 17, French Foreign Minister Claude Cheysson announced that an understanding with Libya's Muammar Qaddafi had been reached, and by Sept. 25, Libyan and French troops would begin to withdraw from Chad. What is involved is not a diplomatic settlement over Chad, but a political deal with Qaddafi of the same nature as that which pushed Morocco into a suicidal political "merger" with Libya at the beginning of the month.

The breakthrough, as Paris likes to call it, was brought about by the apparatus of the Socialist International and several countries of the East bloc, including the Soviet Union. Chad is only the first country to be dealt with as part of a broader political deal between the Socialist International and Moscow.

The Socialist International

At the core of the negotiations were two leading luminaries of the Socialist International, former Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kreisky and Greek Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou. Papandreou, who is leading his country away from NATO into the Soviet orbit, will be the first Western diplomat to visit Tripoli after the agreement—on Sept. 23-24. He will discuss not only Chad, but a "nuclear free zone" in the Mediterranean.

Similarly, Kreisky, in an interview on Sept. 18, reported that the agreement was finalized at the beginning of September while he was in Madrid, where he was visited by Mitterrand's special emissary, Roland Dumas, with a new message for Qaddafi. What Kreisky did not mention was that he was in Madrid attending a Socialist-sponsored conference on "international development" whose leading speaker was E. Primakov, of Moscow's World Economic Institute, and the Oriental Institute of the KGB. Last spring, Primakov was in the United States negotiating a deal over Asia with associates of Henry Kissinger within the administration, resulting in the cutting of military aid to the Afghan resistance movement. Kreisky also revealed that he was involved in quiet negotiations for Israel and the Soviet Union to restore diplomatic relations!

Backing up Kreisky and Papandreou was the weight of both Yugoslavia, which signed a defense cooperation treaty with Libya last August, and Bulgaria, whose technical expertise in all fields is much appreciated in Tripoli. On the

French side was "journalist" Eric Rouleau of *Le Monde*, a former member of the Egyptian Communist Party now associated with the U.S. Eastern Establishment who was in Libya for weeks, perhaps months, holding continuous private talks with Qaddafi. In the Sept. 18 *Le Monde*, Rouleau described at length the "crucial role played by quiet and secret diplomacy over months."

The destruction of Africa

Looking at the small print on the contract signed by French Foreign Minister Claude Cheysson and Libyan Foreign Minister Ali Treiki Sept. 16 in Tripoli, there is no doubt that Chad is being sacrificed. Qaddafi's verbal commitment that Libyan troops would also leave beginning Sept. 25, provided the face-saver Paris needed. That this doesn't solve the Chad problem, with President Hissein Habre still challenged by the rebels of Goukouni Weddei backed by Libya, is no more Paris's concern.

Indeed, French politicians on the right and on the left have unanimously, cynically been saying now is "the time for Chadian reconciliation"—the more cynical in that France's neo-colonialist Cotton Chad firm has been funding a rebellion in southern Chad, to create a separate, cotton-dominated state. More than a million Chadians are now reported to be starving thanks to the civil war and to increased cotton production at the expense of agriculture.

There is little doubt that in a matter of weeks, Hissein Habre, abandoned by France, will be overthrown, and a new government will officially request that the Libyans return to provide "technical assistance." Official communiqués from Tripoli are already stressing that there were "no Libyans troops, but only technical advisors" in Chad.

Hence, Qaddafi has been given Chad, as he was given Morocco, even if the Moroccan leadership deludes itself that their decision to unite with Libya provoked Qaddafi's "outburst of moderation" over Chad. Qaddafi can be moderate in words for sometime still. Ultimately, he will get everything he wants. France will renew military contracts with Libya, including sales of Mirage jets.

Flushed with this "success," Paris now plans a new Middle East initiative which, it thinks, will receive Soviet support. Complementary to Kreisky's efforts between Jerusalem and Moscow, Mitterrand has offered to mediate between Israel's Shimon Perez and Jordan's King Hussein. The offer was presented to Hussein on Sept. 15 by French Defense Minister Hernu, just as Hussein was confirming he would go to Moscow in mid-October for an official visit. Meanwhile, messages were sent to Cairo concerning Mitterrand's July proposal for an international conference on the Mideast to be discussed at an upcoming session of the U.N. General Assembly.

Nowhere in such initiatives is the United States ever included, leaving no doubt as to the speed and extent of the process of decoupling of the Socialist International's Europe and Washington.