

Africa Report by Mary Lalevée

OAU divided as continent starves

The summit called for fast action on the famine, but felt the impact of the "New Yalta" divisions also wracking the continent.

The 20th summit meeting of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, opened on Nov. 14 with a walk-out by Morocco, one of the founding members of the organization, to protest the seating of the Polisario Front, the movement fighting for the independence of the former Spanish Sahara, now part of Morocco. The Polisario seating—meaning recognition as a state—has now led to the breakdown of the last two OAU summits.

What shifted the balance against Morocco was Nigeria's decision to back the Polisario's demand for a seat. Nigerian Foreign Minister Ibrahim Gambari tried to explain: "For the past few years, we have all watched helplessly as our organization has been paralyzed by the seemingly intractable problem of the Western Sahara. This unfortunate development has led to the abysmal neglect of other pressing challenges facing Africa. I need only mention the devastating drought, the famine . . . as well as political problems such as the disturbing developments in southern Africa."

True as that may be, there is a danger that Morocco's withdrawal from the OAU may split the continent into an "Arab" north versus an "African" south. This would conform to the global "New Yalta" package-deal between the Anglo-American and Soviet oligarchies: Northern Africa would be part of the Soviet sphere of influence, and the south under American influence with South Africa as the "gendarme" of the region.

Trilateral Commission member

André Fontaine hinted at just such a scenario in France's *Le Monde*. Citing Soviet problems in Afghanistan, Poland, and the Soviets' own agricultural problems, he asked: "Has the Kremlin come to the conclusion that it does not have the means to conserve the zone of influence it has created for itself in southern Africa since the American debacle in Vietnam?" Fontaine notes that Soviet allies Ethiopia and Mozambique are suffering a famine in which Moscow has done nothing to help, and that Angola has been forced to enter into talks with South Africa to try and end guerrilla warfare waged by the Unita organization.

The Moroccan walk-out was supported only by Zaire, with other African states considered conservative, such as Ivory Coast and Senegal, staying put, apparently to "punish" Morocco for its alliance with Libyan dictator Qaddafi.

The second day of the summit heard the OAU's secretary general, Peter Onu, give a grim description of an economic crisis, "unparalleled in history." He summed up the picture: "Millions of our people are starving and hundreds of thousands dying because we are no longer able to produce our own staple foodstuffs." He said that Africa's growth rate in food production had declined from 3.4% per year in 1982 to 0.4% this year, and that owing to Africa's \$150 billion foreign debt, many countries were practically bankrupt, unable to buy the food they desperately need.

Onu called for an emergency conference of drought-affected countries

on the continent to discuss the famine threatening tens of millions. He suggested that experts from other drought-affected nations such as Australia and Brazil should participate.

A special fund to fight famine was created at the summit, on the initiative of Algeria which immediately donated \$10 million.

On the same day, the latest U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) report on Africa was released. It warned that five African countries were already in the grip of famine: Ethiopia, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Mozambique; 27 African countries are now totally dependent on foreign food aid, while altogether, 36 African countries face "critical food shortages."

The lack of development in these countries combined with severe austerity policies imposed by the International Monetary Fund has led to a situation in which millions will die without immediate action.

The *Observer* newspaper of London recently predicted that 10 million African children would die in 1985—which, given that all the means are at hand to save them, means only that the British elite is planning such genocide. Indeed, at the recent Madrid meeting of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, delegates announced that famine in Africa has resulted from the fact that "land throughout the continent is over-used." Prince Philip, president of the World Wildlife Fund, opened the conference by saying: "We hear daily of so-called natural disasters such as the drought in Ethiopia and the Sahel countries, but the fact is that a proper concern for the conservation of nature and natural resources over the years might well have limited the severity of the drought and its tragic consequences."