

SWISS

ETHIOPIA

Movement adds regime's headaches

Yet another liberation movement has reignited guerrilla activity in Ethiopia, bringing to nine the number of movements openly campaigning against the besieged regime in Addis Ababa headed by Mengistu Haile Mariam.

It is the Afar Liberation Movement (ALF) founded in 1974, but relatively inactive since 1975. ALF operates chiefly in the Aoussah region close to the Djibouti border and is carrying out strikes on the vulnerable main road linking Addis Ababa with the Red Sea port of Assab. The road is Ethiopia's last remaining direct link with the Red Sea following the sabotaging of the Addis-Djibouti railway in June. The Ethiopian government is now forced to provide armed escorts for its convoys to and from the Red Sea port, particularly those bringing vital oil supplies from the Assab refineries to the capital.

The revival of ALF means that seven liberation fronts and two political organisations are now actively involved against the Ethiopian government.

Three of these movements, the Marxist Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), the pan-Arab Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) and the coalition ELF - People's Liberation Forces (PLF) movement. The EPLF is active in the central regions of Eritrea and in parts of the province's Red Sea coastal zone. ELF is concentrated in the north and on the border with Sudan from where it receives active support.

Eritrean guerrillas: the war goes on



GENOUD, FRANCOIS



Mariam: besieged regime

ELF-PLF is scattered throughout the province, particularly in those areas where the other two organisations are not involved.

Two movements, the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) and the Somali-Abo Liberation Front (SALF) are now active along the Somali border. The WSLF is in Harar and the eastern parts of the Ogaden and the SALF in Bale, Sidamo and Arssi. Both enjoy the full support of Somalia which has been accused by Ethiopia of involving its regular troops in the border war. SALF is a newcomer. It was set up in June this year for geographical and strategic reasons.

The Tigre Liberation Front (TLF) dates back to the reign of the late Emperor Haile Selassie, but is now reportedly controlled by former Ethiopian landowners who went underground after their property was confiscated by Ethiopia's new military rulers.

In addition to the guerrilla movements, two political movements - the right-wing Ethiopian Democratic Union (EDU) and the left-wing Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP) - are actively involved in subversion against the military regime. The EDU, headed by former supporters of Selassie, is active in Gondar province and is backed by Sudan. The EPRP is mainly concentrated in the urban areas, particularly Addis Ababa.

ALGERIA

Financial jiggery-pokery

Salting away money in a Swiss bank account has become almost a reflex action for some politicians, particularly in the Third World with its changing political fortunes. But withdrawing what one has stashed away can become a problem, as the Algerian government discovered recently when it tried to recover R3.5 million deposited at a Swiss bank

in 1962.

Xp60 & fold figure

The attempt to recover the money - the war chest of the Algerian revolutionary movement, the FLN - has developed into a long legal wrangle, through which move shadowy figures like Ben Bella, the former Algerian president who is believed to be under house arrest in Algiers, Mohamed Khider, the FLN treasurer assassinated in Stadria in 1967, and a mysterious Syrian called Zouheir Mardam.

It was Khider who deposited the money at the Banque Commerciale Arabe (BCA) in Geneva after Algeria's independence in 1962. Khider used the money entrusted to him to buy 20 000 BCA shares at about R175 each, and as this represented a two-thirds share holding in the bank, Khider became its effective owner. The Algerian government knew nothing of this transaction, and when Khider was assassinated in 1967 not even his family was told about the shares.

A clearer picture of the situation began to emerge only after the Algerian government had resorted to a series of court actions in a bid to recover the money. A twist in this rather tortuous story is that after it had instituted a court action against the bank, the Algerian government discovered it was acting against itself. "We realised that we were, in fact, the bank's owners," a bemused Algerian official said.

Since Khider had never denied that the funds belonged to the FLN, the Algerian government's title seemed unassailable. But it turned out that in the meantime Zouheir Mardam had completely changed the situation. It was revealed in a recent judgment of the Geneva Appeal Court that at two shareholder meetings in 1967 and 1968 Mardam had substantially reduced the share values.

The Algerian government has already fought its way successfully through four legal actions, only to lose before the Swiss Supreme Court on the question of whether Khider was acting as an agent for the FLN or for himself. The court ruled that there was no evidence to prove Khider represented the FLN, indirectly exonerating the BCA of charges of misappropriating funds.

Meanwhile the Swiss director of the BCA, Francois Genoud, has taken legal action against Mardam. Genoud claims he and Mardam had agreed the money should be returned to the Algerian government after the bank's name had been cleared. Since Mardam does not seem to see things in quite the same light, Genoud has taken him to court. As a result of this action, the Geneva Appeal Court has ruled that the share manipulations by Mardam in 1967 and 1968 were invalid because they had not been authorised by a representative of Khider.

The next move may well be up to the Swiss authorities who have been asked to investigate the "irregularities" that the Geneva Appeal Court has noted in the conduct of the bank's affairs. Meanwhile the Algerian lawyers who are themselves considering their next move, may finally accumulate so much in legal fees from the case, that they might be in a position to open their own Swiss banking accounts.

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