

countries. *Sin Chew Jit Poh*, a Singapore paper, pointed out that with the three Indochinese countries as its base, the Soviet Union will be a greater threat to other parts of Southeast Asia. The Japanese magazine, *Nation and Politics*, said in an article that the situation on the Indochinese Peninsula at the present time deserved vigilance. If that area was reduced to a Soviet

naval base, the Strait of Malacca would certainly come under its control, as would the South China Sea and the Taiwan Straits. This would mean the Soviet navy's tight control of the sea route from the Middle East to Japan, which would not only pose a tremendous threat to the People's Republic of China, but also have a vital bearing on Japan, the article added.

## Eritrea: Past and Present

IN Eritrea fierce fighting broke out again between the Ethiopian government troops and the Eritrean guerrillas not long ago. Government troops were reported to have launched a large-scale attack in mid-July on Nakfa, Karora and other areas held by the guerrillas. It was the biggest battle since the armed conflict between the two sides started. The Eritrean Liberation Front announced that it counterattacked and carried the day, capturing three Soviet-made T-54 tanks and some light weapons.

### Strategically Important Region

Eritrea is in the northern part of Ethiopia and has about 1,000 kilometres of coastline along the Red Sea. North across the Red Sea are Yemen and Saudi Arabia. Eritrea controls the route from the Red Sea into the Indian Ocean and Massawa is the only deep-water port in the Red Sea. Because of its strategic importance, Eritrea has always been the target of struggle between big powers. In the 1880s, Italy occupied Eritrea's two seaports, Assab and Massawa. And in 1889 King Menelik II of Ethiopia signed a treaty with Italy, handing Eritrea over to Italy. In World War II, Eritrea was under British occupation. After the war, Eritrea, along with other Italian colonies, was the object of many claimants. Its ownership was endlessly debated. Britain proposed that the area inhabited by Islamites be incorporated into the Sudan, which was then under its occupation, and the area inhabited by Christians into Ethiopia. Ethiopia would have none of it, demanding that the whole of Eritrea be incorporated with Ethiopia. The United States backed Ethiopia's demand. The Soviet Union, however, proposed establishing an independent Eritrea. The people of

Eritrea were divided by their nationalities and religious beliefs. Some wanted an independent Eritrea, others wanted to join the Sudan, and still others wanted to join Ethiopia. The problem was submitted to the United Nations for discussion and, in 1950, the United Nations adopted a resolution calling for a constitution, parliament and government for Eritrea, with Ethiopia responsible for Eritrea's national defence and foreign affairs. Ethiopia gradually took direct control over Eritrea, and in 1962 declared that Eritrea was one of its provinces.

### Armed Struggle

In 1961, an armed struggle led by the Eritrean Liberation Front erupted in Eritrea. In the early 1970s, the Front was divided into three factions: the Eritrean Liberation Front—the People's Liberation Force; the Eritrean Liberation Front—the Revolutionary Committee; and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front. The three factions today have their own armed forces and bases, but their political programmes all call for an independent Eritrea.

The problem of Eritrea is one left over from history, and the Organization of African Unity and various African countries have tried to mediate, but as a result of the intensified contention in the Red Sea region between the two superpowers, the Soviet Union and the United States, particularly the former's interference in the region, the fighting between Ethiopian government troops and the Eritrean guerrillas have escalated over the years.

### Soviet and Cuban Interference

In the name of "supporting the national-liberation movement," the Soviet Union has al-

ways backed the Eritrean movement for independence. Cuba, after being reduced to a Soviet dependent, also supports the Eritrean guerrillas. As late as February last year, Vice-President Rodriguez of the Council of Ministers of Cuba still declared that Cuba had no intention of interfering in Eritrea. But shortly afterwards the Soviet Union and Cuba changed their attitude vis-a-vis Eritrea and following their interference in Zaire and the Horn of Africa, they openly backed Ethiopian government troops in their offensive against Eritrea.

It is reported that since the second half of last year, Cuban pilots in Soviet-made Mig-21 and Mig-23 planes have carried out many bombing missions against Eritrean forces. Soviet-made T-55 and T-62 tanks are also being employed against Eritrea. Many parts of Eritrea have been devastated by Soviet and Cuban manned planes and artillery. Soviet warships have shelled Eritrean guerrilla bases from the Red Sea. This armed interference has caused enormous losses of lives and property.

The Soviet Union's about-face in its stance on the Eritrean problem was to push ahead with its global strategy. It has been stepping up its aggression and expansion in the Middle East and Africa, plundering strategic materials and grabbing strategic bases there to outflank and encircle Europe. It wants desperately to control the sea routes leading through the Mediterranean, the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. And the key to completing this strategic deployment is to seize bases on the Red Sea coast. The Soviet Union has always tried very hard to get a foothold in the Red Sea region. When its expansionist activities were frustrated in Egypt, the Sudan and Somalia, Moscow treacherously did an about-face and turned on Eritrea to get new bases on the Red Sea coast. Thus the problem of Eritrea became even more complicated. What the Soviet Union and its Cuban mercenaries have done here has thoroughly exposed themselves as the most dangerous enemy of the people of Africa.

— De Wen

## New Postures of Japanese Diplomacy

**I**N recent months, the Japanese Government has devoted major efforts to developing its "active diplomacy" and "independent diplomacy." According to Japanese public opinion, "the time has come for Japan to develop its international diplomacy."

### Strengthening Relations With the Third World

An important feature of recent Japanese diplomatic activities has been to strengthen relations with third world countries while maintaining its traditional "partnership" with the United States and Western Europe. This year, the government has invited the leaders of Thailand, Senegal, Indonesia and other countries to visit Japan. At the same time, it has sent many government delegations abroad. Last April, Japan took part in the Third Economic Co-operation Conference with the ASEAN countries. Prime Minister Masayoshi Ohira participated in the Fifth United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) convened in Manila in May. At the end of June, Foreign Minister Sunao Sonoda attended the

Enlarged Meeting of ASEAN Foreign Ministers in Indonesia. On July 7, the Minister of Trade and Industry Masumi Esaki began his visit to Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates. Before Esaki returned home, Foreign Minister Sonoda started his trip to five African countries — Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Senegal, Tanzania and Kenya. Beginning on August 12, Sonoda went to Mexico, Brazil, Peru, Chile, Argentina and Venezuela, holding talks with state leaders of the six countries on questions of economic and technical co-operation. This is the first time after World War II that the Japanese Government has conducted such diplomatic activities with third world countries in the span of a few months.

### Stressing "Dialogue" and "Co-operation"

Japan has emphasized "dialogue" and "co-operation" with the developing countries, a trend which has been more pronounced since the formation of the Ohira cabinet. It is reported that the Japanese Government's