

Ethiopia: A Decade of Struggles and Revolutionary Changes

By Tesfatsion Medhanie

Part I

Many observers agree that in the last decade Ethiopia has experienced "the most profound social revolution" in contemporary Africa. The country has been going through successive phases of fundamental change which culminated in the inauguration of the Workers' Party of Ethiopia (WPE) in September.

The Ethiopian revolution has been the object of vicious propaganda orchestrated by neocolonial powers in the West, rightwing states in the Horn of Africa and the Middle East, and disgruntled Ethiopian groups in exile.

The enemies of the revolution have pinned various labels on the new régime in Addis Ababa depicting it as anything but progressive and popular: "fascist," "neo-imperialist," "Bonapartist," or even "garrison socialist." Some also allege that a "revolution" has been "betrayed" in Ethiopia, thereby suggesting that the new régime played a pre-emptive or even a counter-revolutionary role.

The working people of Ethiopia appreciate the progressive character of the change which has taken place in their ancient land; at the same time, they are also aware of the problems attending this change. Reflecting this attitude, an Ethiopian academician described what occurred in his country as a "genuine people's revolution with genuine problems and genuine objectives." (Negussay Ayele, 'The Ethiopian Revolution - Seven Years Young', in *Journal of African Marxists*, Issue 3, Jan. 1983).

The accuracy of this description is borne out by the situation in Ethiopia today. Ten years after overthrowing Haile-sellassie and the Solomonic Dynasty, Ethiopia inaugurated the formation of a party of working people, which is a landmark in the country's genuine march towards socialism. Indeed, the revolution has achieved highly significant economic and social gains.

Nonetheless, ten years after launching the national democratic revolution, Ethiopia is grappling with some serious problems, not only economic, but also political and in a sense ideological. These problems are the legacies of Haile-sellas-

ie. Some were perhaps exacerbated by the process through which the revolution developed.

Haile-sellassie's Ethiopia

Ethiopia is situated at the crossroads of Asia and Africa, in the region now commonly known as the Horn of Africa. It is close to the oil-rich areas of the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf.

Next to the Sudan, Ethiopia is the largest state in the Horn of Africa. With over 30 million people, it is the most populous.

Ethiopia is a mosaic of nationalities speaking more than fifty different languages. Sizable among the nationalities are the Oromo, Amhara, Tigreans, Somali, Afar, Wollamo and Gurage.

The Tigreans and the Amharas had formed the core of historic Ethiopia (Abyssinia). The other nationalities, particularly those in the southwestern, southern and eastern peripheries, were conquered by Amhara feudalists under Emperor Menelik at the turn of the century.

The conquered nationalities were victimized by a system of tenancy which reduced their situation to virtual serfdom. They were subjected to the political domination of the Amhara aristocrats and precluded from pursuing social, cultural and other aspects of their national development.

On the eve of the anti-monarchic revolution in 1974, Haile-sellassie's Ethiopia was among the world's least developed countries. Its annual per capita income was a meager 80 US dollars. Its infrastructure was poorly developed, displaying a few thousand miles of all-weather roads and a few hundred miles of railway. Its literacy rate was estimated to be 7 per cent. Public health facilities were very scanty, ill equipped and inaccessible to most people. There was one doctor for 750,000 people; half the doctors were concentrated in the capital, Addis Ababa.

The class composition of Haile-sellassie's Ethiopia was typical of a feudo-bourgeois society. At the apex of the structure were the big landowners: the royal family, the nobility, the top echelons of the bureaucracy including the military, and the Ethiopian Orthodox church which was the state religion. Closely related to these were the comprador bourgeoisie acting as agents of foreign capital, and the incipient national bourgeoisie engaged in industrial, commercial and

agricultural enterprises within the framework of the Ethiopian economy itself.

Several groups constituted the middle stratum or the petty bourgeoisie. These included small traders, small producers, teachers, other intellectuals occupying middle level positions in the state and private bureaucracies, and army officers of lower and middle ranks.

At the bottom of the pyramid were the peasants and workers. These were the most exploited and impoverished of social groups. The peasantry comprised about 90 per cent of the population. The small working class was not fully developed and was closely tied to the countryside.

Haileselassie's régime ruled with an iron hand. It suppressed democratic rights and freedoms. It forbade political opposition groups and political parties in general. It jailed progressive opponents and shot demonstrators to death.

From the late 1940s Ethiopia was a US client state. It joined the "Crusade against Communism" and even sent a battalion to fight on the US side in the Korean War. It became the seat of US military bases, intelligence organizations and centers of disinformation.

The US installed the Kagnew military base at Asmara, and the naval base at Massawa. These were used for military and intelligence purposes, including eavesdropping on the

national liberation movements in the region.

Haileselassie's Ethiopia was the largest recipient of US military "aid" in Africa. It played a considerable role in support of Washington's strategy on the continent. It served in the effort to blunt the anti-imperialist character of Africa's national liberation struggles. In 1960 it contributed substantial military personnel to the UN force" in the Congo, which, contrary to the Security Council resolution, was used by the US and its collaborators to overthrow the legitimate government of Patrice Lumumba.

Ethiopia's role in Africa was facilitated by several factors. The main ones were that Haileselassie was a venerated figure who wielded considerable influence on the continent, and that the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, was the headquarters of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

Haileselassie's régime was also supportive of US policy in the Middle East. It worked closely with the government of Israel and with that of the Shah of Iran.

Ethiopia was a haven for US and other western corporations which exploited its natural resources and human labor. The laws sustained an "investment climate" most conducive to the plunderous interests of those corporations.

Haileselassie's rule was not always unchallenged. In

Women from Addis Ababa in a literacy class.



1960 a group of army officers attempted a coup d'état when the emperor was on an official visit in Brazil. Their movement was quashed by elements of the armed forces loyal to Haileselassie.

Throughout the 1960s and in the early 1970s opposition to the emperor and the monarchy in general slowly gained momentum. Some of the growing opposition groups were radical and even professed "socialism".

The main exponents of radical or socialist political ideas were students inside the country and abroad, and after 1970, the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) in the north.

Since the early 1960s, the students had been the most vocal exponents of progressive demands in Ethiopia. They agitated for an end to feudal exploitation and of the oppression of nationalities. They demanded democratic rights for all people and the liberation of Ethiopia from imperialist control.

The students had been increasingly using Marxist phraseology and Maoist slogans in their protests; but on the whole, even by 1974 they were far from being well-grounded in the theory of scientific socialism, despite the presence of a few elements, particularly among the students in Europe, who were well exposed to Marxism-Leninism.

In the northern region of Eritrea an armed movement for independence had been going on since 1961. In this movement the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) had developed into an anti-imperialist organization. In 1971 it held its first national congress and issued a program which defined US imperialism and Haileselassie's occupation forces as the targets of the Eritrean revolution.

These developments in the ELF further inspired Ethiopian students and other groups to denounce the government of Haileselassie. But their ideological impact in Ethiopia was negligible.

The Anti-Monarchic Revolution

Early 1974 witnessed waves of popular uprisings in various parts of the country. Basically these were symptoms of popular discontent with the injustice of Ethiopia's socio-economic system which, by the early 1970s, plagued not only the peasantry but also most of the urban social groups as well.

These uprisings were precipitated by several factors, of which the most important were: famine, which killed about 200,000 people in Wollo province alone; escalation in the price of gasoline and other commodities; deterioration in the living conditions of the army and others in the middle and lower strata; overwhelming unemployment in the cities; and the threat by the government to introduce some educational "reforms," including payment of tuition for university education.

The February strike by taxi drivers in Addis Ababa "triggered off an avalanche of political change" in the country. The army divisions in various parts of the country mutinied, posing demands which at first were essentially economic. In due course the various army divisions coordinated their demands which became increasingly political in content.

Massive protests and demands by various sectors of the urban population followed the army mutinies. Teachers, students, workers, and Moslems demanding an end to discrimination demonstrated in the cities, sending shockwaves through the tottering régime.

The civilian groups voicing their respective economic



Women learning the alphabet in contemporary Ethiopia.

concerns and supporting the general political demands, including the students and other intelligentsia, were inexperienced. They certainly were not ready to lead a revolution. They had not even worked out the necessary alliances and organization to overthrow the status quo and seize state power.

The military too, particularly those in lower and middle ranks, were politically inexperienced. But they could be easily organized and possessed the physical might to topple the *ancien régime* and seize control.

As the civilian uprisings against the régime heightened, the lower sections of the army became not only more political in their demands but also increasingly organized on the national level. As the leadership of the highest form of this organization there emerged the Coordinating Committee of the Armed Forces, the Police and Territorial Army (Derg) which, with its motto *Ethiopia Tikdem* (Ethiopia first), galvanized the movement against the aristocracy. The stage was set for rapid events in this hitherto stagnant society.

As the climax of the events Haileselassie was deposed on September 12, 1974 and the Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC) took over as the ruling body in Ethiopia.

Ethiopia Takes the Socialist Road

At the time of the revolution, there was no sign of the existence of a Marxist or Marxist-oriented group in the Ethiopian military. There is no evidence that such a group existed even within the Derg.

There was, however, a radical group in the Derg, some of whose members are said to have been anti-capitalist. Prominent among these was Mengistu Hailemariam, the present chairman of the PMAC and Secretary General of the Workers Party of Ethiopia.

Soon after seizing state power the radical wing of the Derg gravitated toward socialistic notions of change. The first phase in this development was the declaration of Ethiopian socialism or *Hebretessebawinet*.

Hebretessebawinet was not based on the theory of scien-

tific socialism. It was a socialistic postulate — a blend of egalitarian and moral principles conceived primarily in the cause of patriotism and democracy. It enunciated five basic concepts: equality, self-reliance, dignity of labor, primacy of social interest and territorial integrity.

This is not to underrate the significance of *Hebretessebawinet* in the ideological growth of the new régime. Though essentially utopian and idealist, there is no doubt that it represented the burgeoning of socialist ideas in the PMAC.

In April 1976 the PMAC issued the program of National Democratic Revolution. The program declared, among other things, the adoption of scientific socialism as the guiding ideology of revolutionary Ethiopia.

Several domestic and international factors helped to speed up the process by which scientific socialism came to be embraced by the PMAC:

- Some Ethiopian Marxist intellectuals, particularly those affiliated with the All-Ethiopia Socialist Movement (MEISON), which was then in league with the PMAC, played a significant role. They in effect became the main political advisors to the military leaders. In fact, some among them were the actual drafters of the NDR program. (MEISON, which was led by the French-educated Haile Fida, originated as an organization of students in Western Europe.)

- To some extent the socialist community had its influence in speeding up this ideological growth. The PMAC had already been engaged in a moderate rapprochement with the socialist world.

- The ultra-left detractors of the PMAC contributed to this development in their own way. They purported to challenge the Marxist credentials of the military administration. They perhaps encouraged the PMAC to examine its notions of socialism, and to discard *Hebretessebawinet* in favor of scientific socialism.

The NDR program heralded the development of Ethiopia according to a socialist orientation. It stated the central task of the revolution thus:

To completely abolish feudalism, imperialism and bureaucratic capitalism in Ethiopia and with the united front of all anti-feudal and anti-imperialist forces to build a new Ethiopia and lay a strong foundation for the transition to socialism.

According to the program, the political objective of the revolution was the establishment of a People's Democratic Republic, to be led by the alliance of workers and peasants organized in a working class party.

Among other provisions, it proclaimed the right of nationalities to self-determination, which it defined in effect as the right to autonomy. It affirmed the right of the nationalities to pursue their economic and cultural development, and to promote the use of their languages.

Events of 1977: Termination of Neocolonial Ties

In 1977 Ethiopia terminated subservient relations with the US. The PMAC ordered the closure of all US bases, installations and institutions in the country.

These steps were taken following the assumption of PMAC's chairmanship by Lt. Col. Mengistu Hailemariam.

While the PMAC was proceeding to terminate neocolonial ties with the US, it cultivated friendly and cooperative relations with the socialist community. In May 1977 a delegation led by Mengistu Hailemariam visited the USSR and held talks with Soviet leaders. On this occasion a "Declara-

tion on the Foundations of Friendly Relations and Cooperation Between the USSR and Ethiopia" was signed. In addition, a protocol stipulating Soviet-Ethiopian economic and technical cooperation and a communiqué expressing the support of the Soviet people and government for the Ethiopian revolution were also signed.

Soon after, Ethiopia began to receive concrete assistance from the socialist community. The most important and timely of the assistance was the supply of military hardware, which Ethiopia's erstwhile supplier, the US, had refused to provide.

Imperialism Targets Ethiopia

The US and its allies were startled by what they saw as a clear indication of Ethiopia proceeding to become truly anti-imperialist, allied with the socialist community and the movements of national liberation. Following the ascendance of Mengistu Hailemariam to the chairmanship of the PMAC in February 1977, the US administration of Jimmy Carter began accusing the Ethiopian régime of "human rights" violations and terminated military aid and supplies.

Ethiopia Steps Up Relief Campaign

The Ethiopian government has stepped up efforts to alleviate the famine problem now threatening almost 7 million lives. This was stated in a UNICEF press release issued on the 12th of October.

According to the press release the Ethiopian government has established a "special committee" to deal with the situation. It has put an "increased amount of its own resources" towards the emergency requirements. It has bought and distributed a total of about 160,000 tons of grain covering the transportation cost to the Ethiopian ports as well as to the relief centers inside the country. It has put 50 military trucks—and plans to put more—at the service of the Ethiopian Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC) for transport of the food aid.

The government has appealed to the United Nations and other international organizations, and to governments and non-governmental agencies for urgent aid supply. In this connection, Ethiopia's Chief Commissioner for Relief and Rehabilitation, Dawit Woldegiorgis, arrived in the US towards the end of October.

In recent weeks the Western media have given increased publicity to the famine situation in Ethiopia. There has also been a larger pledge of contributions from private organizations and governments including the US.

It is to be recalled that the Reagan administration deliberately obstructed pledges and the supply of sufficient aid to Ethiopia because the latter has chosen the socialist path or is "allied with the Soviet Union". (*The New York Times*, Oct. 26, 1984). The administration had made various charges the main of which were that the Ethiopian government was "not especially interested" in dealing with the problem and that it diverted the food aid to military campaigns.

Truly concerned observers have actually lauded the relief efforts of the Ethiopian government. As reported in *The New York Times* of October 26, "private relief workers say Ethiopia actually has one of the best famine response programs in Africa."

The Carter administration targeted Ethiopia for subversion on the pretext of "challenging the Soviet Union." It took several interrelated steps aimed at weakening the PMAC



Tens of thousands of Ethiopians welcomed Cuban leader Fidel Castro when he arrived in Addis Ababa on September 12, 1978. With him is Lt. Col. Mengistu Hailemarian, PMAC chairman.

and derailing the Ethiopian revolution. It provided support to counter-revolutionary movements like the so-called Ethiopian Democratic Union (EDU). Through its surrogates in the region it acted to strengthen the incipient "nationalist" movements in various parts of the country. It maximized efforts to gain full control of the Eritrean movement and utilize it to undermine the "Soviet presence" in Ethiopia. It also made concerted efforts to woo the Somali government (ostensibly socialist-oriented) away from the socialist community and line it up with the rightwing states in the region.

In the middle of 1977 the Somali régime of Siad Barre invaded and occupied a big chunk of Ethiopian territory. With the assistance of the socialist community Ethiopia finally repulsed the invasion in early 1978.

Of particular note in this regard was the assistance rendered by socialist Cuba, which sent military personnel to fight on the side of the Ethiopian revolution in the Ogaden War. A few gallant Cubans gave their lives in that historic episode of internationalist solidarity.

In spite of Somalia's humiliation Washington's attempts to pressure Ethiopia continued. These intensified following the announcement of the so-called Carter Doctrine, and again after Ronald Reagan came to the White House in 1981.

The Carter Doctrine and Reagan's Policy

The Carter Doctrine, announced following the victory of the Iranian Revolution and the frustration of counter-revolutionary plots in Afghanistan, aimed to increase the measures for combating the growing socialist influence and anti-imperialism (dubbed "Soviet threat") in the general area.

Applied to the Horn of Africa, the doctrine meant desta-

bilizing the situation in Ethiopia and undermining its government. For this purpose it called for support to the anti-Soviet "nationalist" movements in the country, increase of the military assistance to right-wing states in the region, and installing new military bases and upgrading old ones in the area.

Reagan's policy toward Ethiopia was a modest intensification of the Carter Doctrine. It was firmly anchored in the concept of linkage and sought to destabilize Ethiopia as a means for combating the "evil empire" — the Soviet Union.

The Reagan administration maximized support to the anti-Soviet "nationalist" movements in Ethiopia. It practically encircled Ethiopia with a myriad of military bases. Such bases are installed in Berbera (Somalia), Mombasa (Kenya), in the Sudan, Egypt, and in the Persian Gulf minstate of Oman. They are all part of the mobile intervention force whose main center in the region is the US base on the Indian Ocean island of Diego Garcia.

The policy of the US and its allies aimed at draining the resources and energy of Ethiopia in wars. It sought to compel the government to concentrate solely on military operations, and thereby frustrate the prospect of socialist-oriented development.

Despite imperialism's efforts, revolutionary Ethiopia has scored remarkable achievements in social and economic reforms as well. □

Part II of this article, to appear in the November-December issue, will highlight the achievements of the first decade of the Ethiopian revolution, and the role played by Ethiopia's relations with the socialist community, especially with the USSR. It will also touch on some of Ethiopia's problems, including the problem of nationalities.

The Ethiopian Revolution: Achievements, Problems, Prospects

By Tesfatsion Medhanie

Part II

The first part of this article was published in the September-October issue. It discussed the historical factors leading to Ethiopia's revolution in 1974, the process of development through which the revolution took the socialist path, and the response of the Carter and Reagan administrations to these events.

Achievements of the Ethiopian Revolution

Despite the many internal and external difficulties the government and people of Ethiopia have faced during the first decade since the overthrow of Haileselassie and the old feudal structure, they have made remarkable social and economic gains. The following are among the most significant.

Agriculture and the peasantry: The first socio-economic problem addressed by the new regime was that of land and the peasantry. In March 1975 the Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC) took the most decisive and radical measure on this question. It nationalized all rural land, thereby terminating tenancy in the south and obsolete and cumbersome land tenure systems in the north.

The nationalization of land was historic. It destroyed the material base of the vestiges of feudalism in the country. For ninety per cent of Ethiopia's population it heralded the beginning of a new life.

The proclamation on land reform provided for organizational structure, institutions and projects suited to the development of the rural communities along the noncapitalist path.

Pursuant to the proclamation, peasant associations were soon established with their committees for economic affairs, construction work, cooperatives, etc. Organized under the umbrella of the All Ethiopia Peasant Association (AEPA), the associations have grown to a tremendous number. They are active participants not only in the ongoing socioeconomic change but also in the defense of the country against imperialist-instigated aggression like that which was launched by

Somalia in 1977-78.

Industry and commerce: In early 1975 the PMAC nationalized major industrial firms, banks, and insurance companies. But it had allowed private enterprises to continue in some industrial and commercial activities.

The state sector in industry and commerce has been growing in the last decade. The PMAC nationalized more and more of the private enterprises. These include commercial farms raising coffee, sugar and cotton, many of which have now become "mechanized state farms."

At the beginning of the revolution the industrial sector contributed a small percentage of Ethiopia's gross national product. Today, as part of the state sector, it represents a significant proportion of the country's economy.

Literacy and education: Tremendous strides have been made in this area.

The new regime launched a vigorous literacy campaign. It assigned thousands of students to teach the alphabet throughout the country.

The campaign, conducted in the various national languages, has been going on for several years. It has been highly successful. It has raised the literacy rate from 7 per cent to over 60 per cent, and promises to raise it even more in the coming years.

The new government has also expanded the educational institutions. It has increased the number of secondary schools and the branches of the national university.

Health, infrastructure, and living conditions: Medical facilities have been expanded since the beginning of the revolution. A total of 86 hospitals, 1,200 outpatient clinics and 530 inoculation centers have been built. The number of Ethiopian medical personnel is said to have "multiplied many times."

Likewise, there have been improvements in the infrastructure of the country. Numerous roads and bridges have been built.

Efforts have been made to expedite the improvement in the life of the rural communities. For example, those who were sent to teach literacy also performed other tasks. They enlightened the rural peoples on hygiene, agriculture, and even on the harmfulness of certain gross traditional practices. They participated in projects involving actual physical work, as road construction and the digging of water wells.

Efforts are also being made to improve urban life in the country. The basis for this was laid in early 1975 when the PMAC issued a proclamation nationalizing urban land and houses except those used as a residence by their owners.

The new government provided funds for the construction of buildings to house 5,000 families in Addis Ababa. It has allocated about \$20 million for urban development in the coming years.

Ideological and mass organizational work: After the proclamation of the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) program the regime launched an extensive campaign to raise the consciousness of the working masses along socialist lines. It allowed and encouraged the teaching of Marxism-Leninism.

The Provisional Office for Mass Organizational Affairs (POMOA) which was established in 1976 and run by the All-Ethiopia Socialist Movement (MEISON) has achieved a lot in this respect. It established schools of political education with several branches in the provinces and trained thousands of cadres for the revolution.

As early as late 1976 Marxism-Leninism became a basic course for all students at the University and later it was introduced into secondary and middle schools.

Experts from the USSR and other socialist states played a major role in this remarkable ideological advance. They taught Marxism at the university and frequently wrote in the pages of Ethiopian periodicals explaining various aspects of the theory of scientific socialism.

These ideological and political activities were facilitated by the existence of mass organizations, which emerged, developed and grew throughout the decade of the revolution. Now there are quite a number of such organizations: the All Ethiopia Peasant Association (AEPA), All Ethiopia Trade Unions (AETU), Revolutionary Ethiopian Women's Association (REWA), and the Revolutionary Ethiopian youth Association (REYA). Furthermore, the residents in the towns are organized as Urban Dwellers Associations (Kebelles).

REWA is one of the most recent mass organizations to be established. It signifies an important gain for Ethiopian women who had been victims of the feudal order, male supremacist traditions, and superstitious practices.

The laws of revolutionary Ethiopia have affirmed the equal rights of women. They have banned oppressive and repugnant practices like child marriage. The implementation of progressive policies on land tenure, health care, education, etc., have helped tremendously to promote women's rights.

The members of the mass organizations are provided with basic political education suited to their class and social positions and interests. This has helped to raise the level of their respective organizations, which in turn has helped to increase their roles in the life of the country.

The mass organizations are increasingly becoming active participants in the determination of Ethiopia's course towards socialism. They are evolving to become even more effective bridges linking the revolutionary state and now the

At the Phytopathological laboratory in Ambo a Soviet specialist shows Ethiopian students the results of tests of a new potato variety.



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Workers' Party with the various constituencies of Ethiopian society.

Nationalities and religion: The PMAC has engaged in certain constructive efforts concerning problems of the different nationalities. The 1976 program specified regional autonomy as the general basis for the resolution of the nationalities question. Implementation of this part of the program has been hampered by the persistence of certain problems of peace and security.

The new regime embarked on a comprehensive study of Ethiopia's varied problems in this area. In 1982-83 it established the Institute of Nationalities, whose tasks include formulating a framework for implementing regional autonomy for all nationalities.

It has taken some steps which, in the long run, will promote the equality and free development of the nationalities — a cause which was fundamentally served by the land reform, the literacy campaign and other cardinal measures.

On the question of religion, which in some cases is intertwined with the question of nationalities, the policy of the PMAC has been remarkably progressive. It proclaimed the equality of all religions, including Islam and Christianity. It effectively secularized the state; it demolished the basis of the Orthodox church's quasi-feudal power and even introduced measures to terminate the church's role as the purveyor of reactionary ideology.

The PMAC's policy on religion has a deep significance. It seeks to abolish discrimination against Moslems, who are slightly more numerous than Christians. It should provide confidence to minority religious groups including the Falashas (Ethiopian Jews) in the Lake Tana region of northwestern Ethiopia.

To a significant extent, the new regime has delivered on its promise to propel Ethiopia forward. It could do this only with the assistance of progressive humankind, in particular the Soviet Union and other socialist countries.

Soviet Assistance to Ethiopia

False propaganda abounds on the role of the USSR in Ethiopia. Its central theme is that the USSR is entrenched as the neocolonial master of this strategically located country.

Facts show the USSR is Ethiopia's true ally in progress. It has provided crucial assistance not only in military matters but also in economic, technical, cultural and educational spheres.

The following are some of the projects being carried out with Soviet assistance:

Industry and energy: The oil refinery at the port of Assab is the largest enterprise of the state sector. It operates efficiently and satisfies Ethiopia's requirements in basic kinds of oil products. The refinery was initially built by the USSR in 1961. In 1980 the USSR reconstructed the refinery greatly increasing its capacity, which has now reached 800,000 tons a year.

A thermal electric station was built at the refinery in Assab. This station has a capacity of 13.5 megavolts which satisfies the requirements of not only the factory but also the city and the port of Assab.

Preparations are underway for the construction of the country's largest hydroelectric station in the Melka-Wakana-Kaliti area. The station will have a capacity of 153 mega-



A Soviet scientist and an Ethiopian agronomist in an experimental farm.

volts, with a transmission of 220 kilovolts.

The importance of the Melka-Wakana station to Ethiopia will be considerable. On its completion Ethiopia's capacity of electrical energy will be nearly doubled.

Mechanical engineering and metal work: A tractor assembly plant has been built in the town of Nazareth. It is designed to produce 1,000 tractors a year.

In August the enterprise produced the first tractors assembled in the country.

Several enterprises and plants are also being constructed for repair of automobiles, tractors and agricultural machines.

Construction and woodwork: Facilities are being set up for the production of construction materials, glass, lumber and other wood products.

A large cement factory is under construction in Dire-Dawa, with a production capacity of 600,000 tons a year.

Light industry and food industry: 18 granaries with an average capacity of 206,000 tons are being built. Six refrigeration plants with an average capacity of 4,100 tons are also under construction.

Material-technical base for modern agriculture: A struggle is being waged to achieve the material-technical base for increased agricultural production. The USSR has made provisions for the development of up to 110,000 hectares of land in the basins of the Baro-Akobo Rivers in the Gambela region. It has worked out complex schemes to develop the water and land reserves of this region.

The USSR is assisting Ethiopia in the fight against plant

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Food & Famine as Weapons

For over two months now right-wing propagandists in the US, Britain, and other western states have been clamoring about the famine problem in Ethiopia. While they pretend sympathy for the plight of the famine victims it is clear that, in actuality, they are striving to use the problem for an offensive against the Ethiopian regime first and foremost, and against socialism and the socialist community in general.

Of the two dozen Sub-Saharan African states facing famine, Ethiopia is the most desperate case at the moment. But what disturbs imperialism and its propagandists most is that Ethiopia is the country in Africa most firmly proceeding on the socialist road.

In past years the West sought to use Ethiopia's food requirements as a weapon. The US administration and the British government in particular withheld food aid, unmistakably insisting Ethiopia should abandon its choice of the socialist path.

Throughout the years Ethiopia has refused to yield to the "food" pressures and has steadily continued on the national democratic and socialist road. Its inauguration of the Workers' Party apparently compelled the West to conclude Ethiopia is irretrievably "lost" if the present regime continues in power.

Ultra right elements in the Reagan administration and in the media have, in various ways, indicated their intent to use the famine problem to campaign for the overthrow of the government and for the restoration of the capitalist road in Ethiopia.

Some of them (e.g. columnist Patrick Buchanan) openly state that the "Marxist" regime in Addis Ababa, which "allowed" the famine "situation to happen" has to go. To make this point they engage in a farcical analogy of the present situation with that of the 1973-74 famine which was one of the precipitating factors of the anti-monarchic revolution.

Several of them have declared the famine is the result of "socialism," contending socialism does not work. Among these are UN Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick and US AID Administrator Peter McPherson. On various occasions they have called for the "privatization" of the agricultural and other spheres of the economy — i.e. for the reintroduction of laissez faire or capitalism in Ethiopia and in any other socialist oriented state for that matter.

Unabashed right wing ideologues in the US have even used Ethiopia's famine tragedy as an occasion for praising colonialism. They declare millions of people did not die of starvation in colonial Africa, unmistakably suggesting that colonialism was not bad for the African peoples.

These spokesmen are using the famine tragedy for portraying the USSR and other socialist states as ineffective partners in the struggle of the developing countries for economic growth. They have reiterated the lie that these states have not been of any assistance to famine stricken Ethiopia.

These ultra right ideologues are also using the famine calamity as an occasion for expressing racist views on various questions including that of population growth. They contend the famine is primarily caused by population growth in the developing countries, implying that neo-colonial structures or imperialist domination is not even partially responsible. It has even been said that population growth in these

countries is a threat to the "national security" of the US.

All these statements are completely baseless. Unlike Haileselassie's government in '73-74, the present regime is engaged in tremendous relief efforts which have been praised not only by truly humanitarian relief workers but also by responsible leaders of the international community including UN Secretary General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar.

The majority of states reject the bigoted views relating population growth and famine problems. They repudiate the charge that socialism is the culprit. They condemn all pronouncements praising colonialism which they know is one of the root causes of famine in the developing countries today. These states call for a "New International Economic Order" as a means of redressing the inequities of the international economic relations inherited from the colonial past.

The case of Ethiopia demonstrates that the USSR and other socialist countries are the most dependable partners in the struggle of the young states for socio-economic development: They have provided Ethiopia with tremendous assistance in the industrial, agricultural, educational and cultural spheres — assistance which aims at solving the country's socio-economic problems in the most fundamental sense. In response to the present emergency:

- The USSR sent tons of food items. It provided over 300 trucks, a dozen airplanes and two dozen helicopters to carry supplies to famine victims in areas remote from the ports. It also provided a number of large water tank trucks, water drilling and pumping stations and specialists in this field.

- The German Democratic Republic allocated \$8 million for immediate emergency aid to Ethiopia. It airlifted 3,000 tons of supplies including 200 tons of baby food, several tons of medicine, blankets and tents. It also sent 35 trucks.

- Bulgaria sent wheat and flour, trucks, tractors, and water pumps.

- Hungary sent tons of various food products.

- Poland delivered a large consignment of medicine.

- Czechoslovakia shipped a large volume of miscellaneous items.

- The People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) sent 1,250 tons of wheat flour.

- Libya rushed a large team of doctors and nurses.

Ethiopia's leaders have expressed their gratitude to the peoples of the US and other donor countries for their positive response to the call for relief assistance. They have made it abundantly clear however that they resent all attempts to use the famine as an occasion for anti-socialist and other sinister designs.

This is not the first time in history that imperialism has used food and famine as weapons against socialism. A few years after the Great October Revolution certain regions of the then war ravaged Soviet land were inflicted by drought and famine. The US sent food aid but earnestly tried to use it for capsizing the revolution. Its efforts were in vain.

Ethiopia's situation today is in many ways *analogous* to that of the Soviet Union in its youth. It is so in regard to the famine problem as well. To the chagrin of imperialism, Ethiopia will surmount this hurdle and triumph as a socialist oriented state.

T.M.

Ethiopia.

With the connivance of the US, which in the early 1950s established military bases in Eritrea, Haileselassie relentlessly violated Eritrea's autonomy and finally saw to the forcible dissolution of the "federation" in 1962. These violations spurred political struggles for independence which in turn led to the formation of an armed movement, the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF).

The US had actively supported Haileselassie's government in its efforts to suppress the Eritrean movement. But it changed its policy following the overthrow of Haileselassie and the radicalization of the Ethiopian revolution along socialist lines. It gradually came to support the rightwing and sectarian factions in the Eritrean movement.

The strongest of these factions is the organization known as the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF). Emerging as a splinter group in 1970-71, the EPLF pursued divisive and destructive policies which polarized and weakened the Eritrean movement.

Ever since imperialism targeted revolutionary Ethiopia, the EPLF has become increasingly anti-Soviet. On the basis of that stance it established a most intimate alliance with a counterrevolutionary movement in Ethiopia's Tigray province, known as the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF).

In 1980-81, the EPLF-TPLF alliance supported by the US, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and other surrogates of Washington in the Middle East attacked the mainstream ELF, which was identified as the "pro-Soviet" force in Eritrea. They thus caused the end of its existence as an armed movement.

US imperialism is now heavily manipulating the EPLF and other *armed* organizations in Eritrea. It is utilizing them to galvanize and sustain other "nationalist" movements in Ethiopia. These movements serve in the effort to destabilize Ethiopia and to combat socialist influence in the region.

In spite of this, the Eritrean question is still a genuine national question.* It is a problem which calls for a political solution within a framework which best guarantees unity between the anti-imperialist forces in Eritrea and Ethiopia.

Another serious problem facing Ethiopia today is that of drought and famine. This is actually a problem which has affected many other countries including 23 states in sub-Saharan Africa.

For the last several years neocolonial circles in the West have sought to exploit the problem to put pressure on the Ethiopian government. They have withheld food aid in the hope of forcing the government to abandon its choice of the socialist path.

The US and its Western allies are now donating food to Ethiopia. They have been prompted to do so by popular pressure and private humanitarian undertakings spurred in part by the wide publicity recently given the Ethiopian famine situation in the Western mass media.

But the Reagan administration and its allies continue to try to exploit the famine situation even while they are sending food aid. They are conducting a vicious propaganda campaign designed to villify Ethiopia's socialist orientation and turn the Ethiopian people against their government.

*The author of this article is an Eritrean. He has addressed the details of the history and issues of the Eritrean problem in a substantial work under preparation.

This propaganda falsely portrays the Ethiopian government as being insensitive to the plight of its people. It charges the government spent an exorbitant \$150 to 200 million to celebrate the inauguration of the Workers' Party. It alleges that the government diverted food aid from the famine-stricken people to its armed forces engaged in campaigns against insurgencies.

The Administration also accuses the Ethiopian government of non-cooperation with relief agencies and donor governments. It charges that the state bureaucracy's sluggishness and excessive red tape weaken all aspects of relief operations in Ethiopia.

A number of relief workers and other observers have testified to the baselessness of these charges. They have praised the Ethiopian government's tremendous efforts to deal with this problem. They have noted that on the contrary, some Western governments — notably the Reagan administration and the Thatcher government in Britain — deliberately curtailed and delayed food aid, which they viewed as a weapon against Ethiopia.

A Prospect of Hope and Further Progress

Recent visitors to Ethiopia, including one of the two US journalists who reported on the inauguration of the Workers' Party, noted the "remarkable" changes which have taken place in the last decade. These changes show the viability of the socialist path and demonstrate the humaneness and effectiveness of socialist aid to the developing world.

Followers of Ethiopian events also note the gravity of some of the country's problems, including the Eritrean problem.

Socialism is capable of solving such problems as it has in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. The growing commitment of Ethiopia to socialism would therefore raise the government's capacity and readiness to address and solve these problems in the best possible way.

There is reason to hope that for Ethiopia the coming decade will be one of speedier progress, unfettered by wars and famine. □

Correction

In Part I of this article, it should have been stated that in Haileselassie's Ethiopia there was one physician for 75,000 people.

