

THE ETHIOPIAN REVOLUTION    STABILIZATION

by Roberto Aliboni

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by Roberto Aliboni

At the end of 1977 the Somalis were besieging Harar; the Eritreans had surrounded Massawa; the internal repression, organized by colonel Debelu Dinssa was at its height. Many observers might believe that the revolution was going to collapse and that the Dergue's imperial heritage was on the verge of being dismembered. Today Ethiopia seems to have overcome these difficulties. Although she continues to be threatened from the outside as well as by powerful domestic centrifugal forces she appears to be enjoying a growing stability.<sup>(1)</sup>

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In this article I intend to discuss the factors underlying this stabilization:- recent trends in Ethiopian regional foreign policy;- the containment of centrifugal forces;- the economic situation; and -the political and ideological struggle which converges<sup>on</sup> the building of a political party. Nevertheless it should be pointed out that a stable Ethiopia does not necessarily mean a stable Horn of Africa. The persistent instability of the region, along with international factors tied to the crisis in Afghanistan and the Gulf could easily disrupt the process of stabilization presently underway in Ethiopia. I shall discuss this last point in my conclusions.

#### Regional politics

The most significant recent developments in Ethiopian foreign policy have been at the regional level. Obviously international diplomatic developments have also been very important. There have been close ties with the socialist countries, symbolized by the treaties of friendship and cooperation signed with the USSR (November 20, 1978) and the DDR (November 13, 1979). Ethiopia has taken a "militant" role in African politics. She has made a major commitment to the OAU, along the lines proclaimed at the Conference on anti-imperialist solidarity, held at Addis Ababa on September 14 -17, 1978. She has maintained excellent relations with the Europeans - though at "low politics" level - this being facilitated by the institutional role played by the European Commission through the Lomé Convention. She has given full support to the Moscow line on proletarian internationalism, and has thus had very poor relations with China. All these positions however were in some way obvious.

Ethiopian policy in her own region, with all its implications for the country's security, was a much more complicated affair.

The most obvious aim was to isolate Somali irredentism, at least on diplomatic grounds. At the same time, Ethiopian diplomacy attempted to create a propagandistic network in order to prevent international support for Somalia, or for other possible enemies, such as Egypt. Agreement was thus reached with many countries in the region over the need to preserve security and peace in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. A second aim, pursued perhaps less persistently yet with success was to weaken, if not completely eliminate, support in the region for the Eritreans, particularly from Sudan.

As far as Somalia is concerned one should recall the 20 year treaty of friendship and cooperation with the PDRY, signed during a visit by Mengistu Haile Mariam to Aden and published in Addis Ababa on December 4, 1979. On January 16, 1980 a treaty of military cooperation was also signed, during an official visit by the Yemeni Defense Minister to Addis Ababa. The former treaty contains, among other things, a commitment by the two countries to make every effort to maintain the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean as an area of peace and to preserve freedom of navigation in the Red Sea.<sup>(2)</sup>

The formal content of these treaties, with their stereotyped formulae is fairly banale, though it is worth pointing out that there has in recent years been a degree of Yemeni support for the Eritreans, according to the changing nationalist mood prevailing in Aden. Less banale however was the way in which these same formulae were applied in relations with other neighbours of Ethiopia. Thus, following a visit to Addis Ababa by the deputy prime minister and foreign minister of the ARY on April 13, 1980, the final communiqué expressed the two countries'

concern to avoid international conflicts in the Red Sea and their preoccupation with the militarization of the Indian Ocean. North Yemen expressed her support for Ethiopia's struggle to defend her revolution, territorial integrity and unity.<sup>(3)</sup>

Relations with Kenya are even more important. Given that one of the five points on the Somali star is her own Northern Frontier District she is a natural ally of Ethiopia's. The Nairobi government was seriously alarmed by the Ogaden conflict and did not hesitate to halt an Egyptian aircraft carrying arms to Somalia.<sup>(4)</sup> From January 29 to January 31 Kenyan president Daniel Arap Moi paid an official visit to Addis Ababa. A few days prior to the visit the two countries had signed a treaty of friendship and cooperation which emphasized their determination to guarantee their independence, territorial integrity, unity and borders inviolability. To this end they agreed to intensify their political, diplomatic and military cooperation. The treaty made no mention of security in the Indian Ocean. In his toast Mengistu declared that Ethiopia would not be a "silent spectator" if Mogadishu attacked Kenya. On March 24, 1980, during the 28th session of the Ethiopian-Kenyan interministerial consultative Commission, held in Mombasa, the two countries' foreign ministers reaffirmed their determination to face up to the common Somali enemy.<sup>(5)</sup>

Close ties have also been developed with Djibouti. Although initially the Ethiopians hinted at vague plans to partition the new republic<sup>(6)</sup> (presumably so as to satisfy Afar demands for autonomy and prevent them from supporting the Eritreans) the Ogaden conflict led to the adoption of a more reasonable line, if only so as to guarantee Ethiopia's access to the Addis Ababa-Djibouti railway line. This implied support

for Djibouti's independence and for her fragile ethno-political balance. At the beginning of July 1979 a Djibouti delegation, led by the minister for internal affairs, visited Addis Ababa, supplying guarantees concerning the working of the Border Commission. At the end of a further visit to Addis Ababa by Moumin Bahdon Farah, Djibouti's foreign minister (June 5, 1980), the final communiqué emphasized the absolute need to respect the principles of territorial integrity and the inviolability of state borders to renounce the use of force and to avoid interference in other states' internal affairs. Both parties agreed on the need to maintain stability and security in the region. (7)

To conclude, it should be recalled that an agreement to scrupulously respect the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, national unity and non-interference and to make every effort to preserve peace in the Indian Ocean is also to be found in the communiqués published on March 13, 1980, following the visit to Addis Ababa by Sudan's first deputy president and defense minister, Lt.-Gen. Abdel Majid Hamid Khalid, and on May 24 after a visit by Mengistu to Khartoum. (8)

In reality the rapprochement between Ethiopia and Sudan after years of what were at times extremely tense relations concerns wider issues than just Somali irredentism - even though Sudan has offered to mediate between Ethiopia and Somalia. (9)

Although this is not mentioned in the communiqués a key role in the normalization of Ethiopian-Sudanese relations has been played by the Eritrean question, that is by the second important aspect of Addis Ababa's regional diplomacy to which we now revert.

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Two basic developments have emerged from recent contacts between Sudan and Ethiopia. On the one hand there has been Numeiry's announcement at the 3rd Congress of the SSU (Sudanese Socialist Union) in January 1980 that Ethiopia would be willing to open negotiations to achieve peace in Eritrea along with "autonomy" for the region. Sudan would then play a mediating role in the talks. (10)

The other new development came at the end of January 1980 with the re-establishment of the Border Commission. This held its first three day meeting in Asmara, half way through March 1980. (11) The first impression was that of a move to force the Eritreans to negotiate under the pressure of tighter control over their Sudanese sanctuary. A more detailed analysis suggests however that this could well be an over-simplification.

In Sudan there has been insufficient progress in the process of national reconciliation. The growing instability which this situation was to induce has led Numeiry to remove its main cause, namely the defensive alliance with Egypt. Since the attempted coup d'état in 1976 this alliance has been the corner-stone of Sudan's security policy, protecting her against the expatriate right-wing militia, Libyan subversion and Ethiopian and Ugandan complicity. The right has played a key role in the reconciliation process. At the same time however it is allied to Libya and has always opposed the close relationship with Egypt. It accepted reconciliation but would not allow this to be fully achieved until the tie with Egypt had been broken. Following the peace between Egypt and Israel, the alliance with Egypt has become even harder to maintain and ever less compatible with national reconciliation. By the end of 1979 it was abandoned. (12)

What kind of security policy is to replace the defense pact with Egypt? The full satisfaction of the right's demands has removed the threat of the Ansar expatriates in Libya and Ethiopia, trained in military camps close to the border and always ready to engage in armed subversion against the government. Nonetheless the real problem which worries Khartoum is now the Soviet presence. The idea has thus begun to prevail that the only solution is to resolve the Eritrean problem. As "Sudanow" put it, "Remove the security threat (the Eritreans) and the Ethiopian government will have the leeway to distance herself from the Russians".<sup>(13)</sup> Does this mean that Sudan is intending to close her borders to the guerillas and the refugees? Closing the borders is not enough to convince the Eritrean movements to negotiate. In practice the Border Commission is simply a means of exerting pressure on the Eritreans, of exploiting their contradictions and thus of persuading them to bargain for "autonomy" rather than for independence. Meanwhile Sudan's new position in the Arab world means that she is likely to be subjected to contrasting pressures from Iraq and Saudi Arabia. While both give financial aid to Sudan, they sponsor different Eritrean organizations. This seriously hinders any form of unification of the Eritrean nationalist movements.

There can be no doubt that Ethiopia is aware of these contradictions and that she expects no substantial contribution to her security from the closure of the Sudanese border. Her commitment has been exclusively to her own plan for peace, that is to Eritrean "autonomy". Numary has been left with the thankless task of trying to organize negotiations. Nonetheless the normalization along the Sudanese border represents a success for



the Ethiopian diplomatic offensive in order to strengthen her own stabilization within the region.

### Centrifugal forces

The list of the main armed national and separatist movements presently operating in Ethiopia is a long one. As well as the Eritrean movements, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), the Eritrean Liberation<sup>Front</sup> (ELF) and Osman Saleh Sabbe's ELF-PLF, there are also the Tigre People's Liberation Front (TPLF) in the Tigre region, the Afar Liberation Front (ALF) in Assab province, the Wariya (WSLF) and Abbon (ASLF) wings of the Somali Liberation Movement operating in the Ogaden and in the regions of Bale, Arussi and Sidamo, and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), which is fighting in the Southern provinces.

The respective roles of autonomist, independentist and social aspirations differ from group to group. This implies that some are much more of a threat to Ethiopian territorial integrity than others.

The Oromo and Tigre movements are politically and militarily weaker than the Eritreans or the Somalis. The deep motives underlying their uprising can be traced back to the violent attack on their culture by the Shwans, the loss of social status suffered by the Tigrinyans and the very limited political and economic role which the Shwan conquerors allowed the Oromo. In view of the redistribution of wealth presently being promoted by the Dergue and the government's policies of cultural development it is becoming ever less probable that the local populations really support these movements for independence. Autonomy, if really put into

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effect, could provide an appropriate solution.

The Afar movement poses a different kind of problem. As Farer <sup>(14)</sup> has put it, this movement emerged because in 1974 the Dergue believed that the Afars had ties with the ELF. Given the government's "Jacobine" tendencies it failed to follow the emperors policy of treating the sultan's domain as a de facto semi-autonomous fiefdom". In June 1979 Asieta oasis, the residence of Sultan Ali Mireh Hanfare was attacked, the result being that the Sultan went into exile, the ALF was formed and Saudi Arabia became involved. In practice the Afars present more of a political than an institutional problem. The Dergue could well grant them a high degree of autonomy. Nonetheless it will never agree to leave power in the hands of the sultan. The whole situation is further complicated by the fact that the Afars are divided between Ethiopia and Djibouti (though they all feel themselves to be subjects of the sultan). The removal of the sultan by the Dergue along with the supremacy won by the Issas when Djibouti became independent, have created a "national problem" which had previously lain latent. As a result the Dergue now have to face a situation which it will be hard to resolve simply through the granting of autonomy. All the same, despite Saudi and Islamic support the ALF does not represent a particularly dangerous military threat.

The really dangerous centrifugal forces are Eritrea and the Ogaden. These problems are fairly well known and I do not intend to discuss them in detail. Nonetheless it is worthwhile emphasizing certain distinctions between the two situations. First of all it should be said that the Somali

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movements are permeated with a degree of nationalism which has never been eased by Mogadishu's scientific socialism. The ideological differences between the Somali government and the WSLF have emerged on several occasions as has the political independence of the movement's leadership. The two main Eritrean movements on the other hand, that is the EPLF and the ELF, although conducting a national struggle, are deeply concerned with social change. A second distinction between the two situations is the tie between the Somali movements and Mogadishu's irredentism. This injects a strong international element into the situation, which is lacking in the case of the Eritreans. These distinctions have important practical consequences. Thus whereas the Ogaden question could easily lead to the internationalization of the conflict Eritrea is still, essentially, a "domestic" problem. What is more, given the absence in the Eritrean movement of any purely nationalist component such as the WSLF, the ideological affinities with the Ethiopians should be more likely to facilitate a political settlement than those with the Somalis. So far however this has not been the case.

How has the Dergue reacted to the worst threats to Ethiopian unity? As far as the Eritreans are concerned the key developments recently <sup>(15)</sup> have been the increased military and political power of the EPLF and the weakening of the ELF, the dominant movement up to 1977. On the one hand ethnic and religious differences are now less important than in the past; on the other political and ideological differences have worsened. There can be no doubt that the EPLF is now more sectarian than it has been. As a result the agreement on the political and operational unity of the move-

ment has remained a dead letter. In military terms up until the beginning of 1978 the Eritrean movement succeeded in keeping Eritrea out of the Ethiopians' hands.

Since then however the Dergue has gradually retaken the cities even though much of the countryside, the province of Sahel and the city of Nacfa still belong to the Eritreans. Between 1979 and the beginning of 1980 Nacfa was unsuccessfully attacked three times.<sup>(16)</sup> Very recent reports refer to persistent divisions between the EPLF and the ELF which have even led to armed clashes. At the same time the Ethiopians are reported to be preparing a major offensive using new Soviet material delivered in June 1980.<sup>(17)</sup>

Obviously it is impossible to predict the outcome of this new military campaign. One has the right however to wonder why there has been no political solution, despite the pressure exerted by the Russians, the Cubans and the Sudanese. While differences remain unsettled, one may also ask what is the real balance of power between the two movements.

The real problem should to be the national question. The Eritreans have no intention of negotiating for the autonomy being offered by the Dergue. What they are asking for is negotiation without preconditions concerning their future institutional relationship with Ethiopia. The Ethiopians, for their part are unwilling to accept negotiations without conditions, as this would mean accepting that the talks could lead to Eritrean independence. It would seem however that the real position of the EPLF is that the front would be prepared to give up the idea of independence if the Dergue gave "guarantees" that it intended to follow a correct Marxist-Leninist line. This position, which presumably differs at

least to some extent from that of the ELF, has repeatedly caused bitter divisions inside the Dergue, worsening the conflict between the left-wing military, who may find it attractive, and their more nationalist colleagues. What is more the "guarantees" being demanded by the EPLF may appear in practice to coincide with the objectives of the EPRP and the Me'ison. The Eritrean question thus comes to constitute yet another factor in the violent class conflict in the country and in the bitter struggle for power within the Dergue. Reactions have been murderous. The Eritrean question has certainly played a tragic role in the liquidation of Aman Andom, Taferi Banti and Atnafu Abate.

If this interpretation is correct one is led to the conclusion that the ideological and revolutionary affinities between the Ethiopian and Eritrean leadership hinders rather than facilitates the negotiations. Paradoxically they may well have been the major obstacle to the numerous attempts at mediation attempted by the Russians and Cubans. Perhaps a more pragmatic line on the part of the Eritreans would make it easier to find a solution. So far however no such pragmatism seems to be on the horizon. Rather the contrary, since its refounding at the January 1977 Congress the EPLF seems to have adopted an ever more sectarian line. It is as if the EPLF's military and political success within the Eritrean movement has been matched by growing presumption at an ideological and political level. Sherman quotes an evaluation by Hirui Tedla, a dissident from the ELF who instead of joining the EPLF formed a new movement (the Eritrean Democratic Front - EDF): "He viewed the EPLF as

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too sectarian an organization for this support".<sup>(18)</sup> Richard Lobban offers a very penetrating analysis: "One perspective would insist that the EPLF has become more "revolutionary", while my own perspective is that it has, in fact, become 'ultra-left'. Some characteristics of this 'ultra-leftism' are: 1) a preoccupation with leftist and radical terminology, 2) emphasis on 'self-reliance' rather than internationalism at a period when they have few foreign allies, 3) internal splitting tendencies, viz., Osman Saleh Sabbe, and 4) emphasis on military, rather than political, dimensions of the struggle, and 5) isolation or separation from their foreign based student, youth, and women's organizations".<sup>(19)</sup> What is more this attitude is reflected at the international level where the Eritrean movement still enjoys considerable sympathy but where concrete political support has been lacking. Self-reliance, interpreted in sectarian terms, would well turn into a trap.

The divisions inside the Eritrean movement, the sectarianism of the EPLF, and international isolation are weakening the Eritreans and their ability to impose a political solution to the conflict. This weakness becomes even more significant if one considers that the Eritreans are facing an enemy who is no longer in danger of a catastrophic defeat, as in the period between the end of 1977 and the beginning of 1978 and who is now consolidating his internal position and successfully rejoining the international community. Given these conditions an Ethiopian military victory is not to be ruled out, although for a long time the guerillas would still rule the countryside.

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The situation in the Ogaden is very different. During 1979 and the first half of 1980 the conflict grew worse and worse. Here the whole problem is far less complicated than in Eritrea. The Ogaden movement is purely nationalist and secessionist. Drought and war have combined to steadily increase the number of Ethiopian refugees fleeing to Somalia. Whereas in the first three quarters of 1979 there were about 800-1000 refugees arriving per day, half way through 1980 this figure had reached 2000-2500. Today in Somalia about one person in four is a refugee.<sup>(20)</sup> The crisis is worse than in Cambodia. From a political point of view it is not hard to find similarities between the two situations. The different ways in which this extraordinary population movement may be interpreted filter through in press reports. According to the "Sun"<sup>(21)</sup> endemic guerilla fighting "persuaded the Ethiopian government to depopulate the region by driving more than a million ethnic Somali refugees across the border into neighbouring Somalia". The Washington Post<sup>(23)</sup> commented "... the women and children of the Somali fighting men are streaming into refugee camps in Somalia". In practice there are several reasons for the flow of refugees. They could however combine to lead to a new war between Ethiopia and Somalia.

In more recent times Mogadishu has changed its official position on the Ogaden, stating that Somali support for self-determination takes exclusively peaceful and legal forms. The term "reunification" has dropped out of usage.<sup>(23)</sup> Siyad Barreh's leadership has always given secondary priority to national demands. At the same time however it has never managed to escape the influence of internal nationalist

pressures supported from the outside by countries such as Saudi Arabia; nor can it avoid the implications of WSLF activities, as a consequence of the front's substantial independence from Mogadishu. In other words a settlement in the Ogaden is being hindered by nationalist tendencies. These keep the war alive, with the continual risk of involving outside powers.

From the Dergue's point of view the Ogaden is less dangerous than Eritrea. It is a purely military problem which does not involve the domestic political process. In the Ogaden as in Eritrea, Ethiopia continues to receive assistance from the Soviet Union.<sup>(24)</sup> Meanwhile, Ethiopian diplomacy is improving the country's international position.

All in all, however cautious one should be, and despite the near certainty of a continuing domestic and international armed conflict, it would seem that on this front too Ethiopia has consolidated both her political and her military positions.

### The economy

Following the 1975 agrarian reform and nationalizations in October 1978, the Dergue renewed its attention to economic questions with the proclamation of the National revolutionary economic development campaign and central planning. This campaign has involved both a central and a local apparatus. Its political implications are no less important than those for the economy. After the most intense years of the war this apparatus launched two, highly pragmatic short-term economic plans, the first on February 1979 and the second on October 30. The latter was due to expire in

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August 1980. These plans give top priority to the development of agricultural production. The results of the first plan are held to be encouraging.

It is difficult to evaluate Ethiopia's economic performance. The most recent available figures for GDP show a slight fall in 1974-5 and a recovery in 1975-6. Ethiopia has a very simple economy where more than 50% depends on agriculture. The index for agricultural production thus gives an approximate idea of overall economic performance. The FAO index gives the following figures: 1975:98, 1976:102, 1977:100, 1978:99.

Official statements confirm this stagnation. According to an official of the agricultural administration Ethiopia's total agricultural product dropped from 5.5 million tons in 1976 to 4.7 million in 1978, a fall of 800,000 tons.<sup>(25)</sup>

How is this poor performance to be explained? One of the underlying causes is obviously the permanent state of war which has withdrawn labor from the economy. At the same time the fighting has created huge financial needs, which have been met through borrowing from the banks and increased budget deficits. War finance has contributed to a rate of inflation which now lies at about 15%. What is more this inflation is not just due to increased money supply. It is also linked to a shortage of basic products, such as teff, which do not reach the cities owing to the destruction of the transport system and insecure communications. In August 1977 the official price for teff was 67 birr a quintal. By the end of 1978 the black market price had reached 130 birr.<sup>(26)</sup> A second factor has been adverse natural conditions. One of the causes of the Ethiopian revolution was the drought and the

consequent famine in the Wollo in 1973-4. In 1977 the famine returned; in 1980 there was another major drought. In the meantime the rains have been irregular. In certain areas famine is now chronic. This has led the Ethiopian authorities to formulate a program to resettle hundreds of thousands of people. A third factor has been the results of the agrarian reform. It does not seem as though the reform has led directly to a fall in production, as has usually happened elsewhere. The real problem it has caused is the way in which crops are delivered. The government pays for the crops it receives. The lack of goods means however that for the peasants the money they receive is useless. What is more, official prices are a long way below those to be had on the black market. The result has been that cereals have either been stockpiled or sold to merchants for distribution through the black market. Some of these merchants are peasants with an entrepreneurial spirit, and personal land allotments close to the maximum limit of 10 hectares fixed by the land reform. Often they have evaded the ban on the use of wage labor. In some areas these peasant merchants - who are looked on as "kulaks" - (27) were brought into line as early as the end of 1977, thanks to a more rigid division of land and tighter application of reform regulations.

All this would suggest that the Dergue's agrarian reform and its resettlement programs have laid the basis for the long term development of Ethiopia's immense agricultural potential and for a more balanced development of Ethiopian society. In the short and medium term however natural and politico-institutional factors are severely limiting the

effectiveness of government agricultural policy. The campaign for the students to educate the peasants, put into effect between 1974 and 1975 has had extremely uneven results. The most important achievement was probably the organization of the peasants into 25,000 local associations, affiliated to the All-Ethiopian Peasants' Association, the aim being to encourage politicization and social awareness. The reform also led to the setting up of service cooperatives. In June 1979 however the Dergue decided that the latter had failed to give adequate results and decreed the setting up of production cooperatives.<sup>(28)</sup> In December 1979 tighter measures were taken on public cereal stockpiling,<sup>(29)</sup> an indication that the peasants were continuing to withhold a proportion of their crops.

Although the state of war still exerts a negative effect the relaxation of tension has enabled the Dergue to pay more attention to the economy and to reform. The importance of short term factors and objective constraints makes it pointless to attempt to evaluate this policy from the statistics. What one should note however is the institutional organizational capability and the pragmatism which have characterized policy-making. In the medium and long run these could make a major contribution to its success.

Obviously if the war lasts it is going to become ever more difficult to control the economy, even if the Dergue succeeds in creating efficient institutions and a strong mass organization. It should not be forgotten that the war has imposed an appalling burden on Ethiopian resources. Soviet deliveries of military material have been estimated as amounting to 1.5 billion dollars.<sup>(30)</sup> In 1978 the country's external

debt amounted to another billion dollars. Despite the excellent performance at times of Ethiopia's coffee exports the balance of payments is suffering from growing deficits. The foreign currency reserves are falling at an alarming rate.

### Political struggle and the creation of the party

The question of the building of an Ethiopian proletarian party has long been at the center of the revolutionary process. The most important statement of the régime's ideology, namely the Program for the National Democratic Revolution dated April 21, 1976, calls for the setting up of a single party system. Nevertheless the building of the party is more than just an ideological problem. The various mass organizations which emerged during the revolution—the peasants, workers and citizens it involved—lack political leadership. The military government has eliminated a whole series of parties and groups which had put forward their candidature to organize the country and the masses politically. At the same time however it has failed to propose a solution of its own. Everyone in Ethiopia is convinced that it is impossible to develop the new society which has emerged from the revolution under a military régime. Nonetheless six years after the revolution only limited progress has been made in ensuring the transition to a civilian, albeit a one-party, régime. The first step was the setting up on December 18, 1979 of the Commission for Organizing the Party of the Working People of Ethiopia. Mengistu was nominated Chairman of the Commission. The COPWE held its first congress from June 16 to June 19, 1980. An executive committee, (Politbureau) was formed consisting of seven members presided by Mengistu. (31)

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It is this organism which has been given the task of building the party. This will presumably mean little more than a change in the name COPWE.

Mengistu and the other military men thus seem to have resolved their most serious problem, namely that of how to achieve a transition to a civilian régime without losing power. There have been rumours of strong rivalry between Mengistu and Legesse Asfaw the executive committee member with responsibility for organizational problems who is also alleged to be Moscow's man in Addis Ababa (32). Nevertheless, from the point of view I have adopted in this article, it would seem that the building of the party (which has coincided with the end of internal opposition of the régime) is a sign of Ethiopia achieving increasing stability. As it has been claimed that the question of the party is of fundamental importance to the Ethiopian revolution it is useful to examine the social and political developments which led up to the creation of the COPWE.

So far there have been three phases to the Ethiopian revolution (the third phase is still in progress). In the first phase the petty bourgeoisie emerged victorious from the revolution though without taking power, which remained in the hands of the military. In the second phase the petty bourgeois intelligenzia organized into marxist-leninist parties used antagonistic strategies to try and win power and were destroyed in the process. The third phase has been marked by the attempt to organize the transition to civilian politics despite the impoverishment of the political and social environment during the last six years of bloody struggle.

In February 1974 a series of almost chance developments began to interreact, leading to the complete break down of the old feudal and imperial institutions. At this time there were very few organized political forces in the country. The Confederation of Ethiopian Labor Unions (CELU) and the Ethiopian Teachers Association (ETA) were essentially corporative organizations. The students, the heirs of the radical opposition which had emerged in the 1960s were often Marxists but lacked any really genuine tie with the working and peasant masses. They conceived their own role as that of an élite<sup>(33)</sup>. Their petty bourgeois origins led them to adopt positions as radical as they were abstract.

As well as these organized forces it is important to recall the groups in exile, some of which consisted of more or less professional-like revolutionaries, such as Haile Fida's supporters. In the army one could find groups with corporative aims such as the "exiles" from the patriotic war against Italy.<sup>(34)</sup> At the same time however there were also a number of politicized groups. In particular there were the radical airforce officers, who had close ties with the student movement, whence they came, and the intelligenzia.

The first phase of the revolution was marked by two parallel developments. On the one hand the aristocracy negotiated with what little there was of an Ethiopian bourgeoisie to decide whether the new constitution should provide for an attenuated form of absolute monarchy or a constitutional monarchy. On the other there was the growth of the Coordinating Committee of the Armed Forces, the Police and the Territorial Army, the body which had coordinated the mutinies and the initial union demands. In May-June this committee took on more

permanent form, becoming the National Coordinating Committee. Each of the 40 units of the Ethiopian army and police elected three representatives, one for the privates, one for the NCOs and one for the junior officers. These formed a 120 member National Committee known as the Dergue. During this period the Dergue was the only representative body in Ethiopia. Its members represented the aspirations of all the forces present on the Ethiopian political scene. There were high ranking officers close to the monarchy and the bourgeoisie; most importantly of all there were officers and soldiers representing the students' and the intelligenzia's plans for radical social change. The Dergue represented the effervescence of Ethiopian society; its activities were chaotic. Nonetheless, unlike the government and the Commission charged with drawing up the new constitution, it was capable of putting its decisions into effect. By the time the new constitution was published (August), attesting to the victory of the bourgeoisie, the Dergue had already begun to arrest representatives of the régime. In practice it had seized power. The political struggle shifted to within the Dergue itself.

This struggle saw the defeat of left-wing groups both inside and outside the Dergue, the elimination of the last remaining bourgeois-monarchical influence in the person of Aman Andom and the emergence of a petty bourgeois nationalist leadership grouped around Mengistu, nationalizations and the slogan Ethiopia Tikdem (Ethiopia First).

The left consisted of airforce men, army engineers, representatives of the Medical Services, the tank and artillery corps and the old imperial bodyguard. Among the military and through its delegates in the Dergue it expressed the intell-

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ighenzia's key demand for the organization of a popular-based democratic civilian government. In the coming years this demand was to be at the center of a bloody political struggle. The first blow against the left was struck on March 25 when paratroopers surrounded the Debre Zeit air base. About a week later they arrested some twenty left wing officers. In a letter published in "Africa" five of these officers clarified the motives underlying their struggle. They stated that their objectives had been to "establish a people's democratic government . . . Unfortunately as ring leaders, we were imprisoned along with members of the armed forces. . . Our past and present objective remains the same, then we unanimously condemn all reactionary elements who seek a military take-over". The decisive blow came in October when the 4th division attacked an engineers corp barracks and arrested a group of airforce officers. On October 9 the Dergue proceeded to make a further 21 arrests. The list included eminent Marxist intellectuals among whom Eshetu Chole, the well-known author of many underground pamphlets, student and CELU militants leader and perhaps the leader of Communist cells at the university.

Later, while the security situation in Eritrea, the Tigre and among the Afars precipitated and the famine continued the Dergue began to discuss agrarian reform, the future of the Negus and internal and external security problems. On October 18 a decision was taken which was meant to be a prelude to the agrarian reform, namely to launch a students' campaign (zemecha) among the peasants to promote education, hygiene, the principles of Ethiopia Tikdem and those of the agrarian reform. At the beginning of November a debate was begun on the fate to be reserved for the members of the former régime.



Half way through November three measures were submitted to Andom:- a list of those to be executed, a reform of the penal code to simplify the procedure for arrest, judgement and confiscation, and the dispatch of 5,000 soldiers to Eritrea. The moderates were very concerned by these measures as well as by the results of the debate over the kind of reform to be adopted. Reflecting these worries and encouraged by his independent temperament on November 15 Andom rejected the measures. In the hope of opening a debate and winning back the initiative he offered his resignation to the army and police's 40 units. On November 22 the Dergue ordered his arrest. The next day he was killed while resisting the order.

In the interval between Andom's resignation and his death - or to be more precise on November 17 - Addis Ababa radio named major Mengistu, first vice-president of the Dergue, as one of the key leaders of the revolution. On November 18 Mengistu made his first public speech centred on the meaning of the revolution's slogan, Ethiopia Tikdem. According to Mengistu five conditions had to be met if the slogan was to be put into effect. 1 "get rid of our selfishness"; 2 - maintain the unity of the country; 3 - "diligence, cooperation, and love" must be substituted for "ill-will and laziness"; 4 - "especially in the army despising others and unfounded criticism" must be totally eliminated "in favor of respect for each other" and for "discipline which must be worshipped even more than religion"; 5 - "the heroism and love for country inherited from our forefathers must at this time be further renewed and increased".<sup>(36)</sup> Little time was to pass before the first economic policy measures showed the kind of political and social balance on which Mengistu's power was relying.

December 20 saw the publication of a "Declaration of Socialism". What this amounted to was a program for the nationalization of the most important sectors of the manufacturing and mining industries, transport and the media. The banks and insurance companies were nationalized on January 1, 1975 even though they had not been included in the December 20 declaration. On February 3, seventy-two manufacturing and trading companies were taken over. The real victors in this first phase of the revolution were undoubtedly the petty bourgeoisie who believed that nationalization would give them the access to income and employment which the emperor and his economic policy had denied them. (37) Their typically nationalist ideology, crudely expressed by Mengistu, was shown at the end of November 1974 when Taferi Banti ordered the departure for Eritrea of the 5000 soldiers whom Ahdem had refused to send.

Nonetheless the problem of how to translate this victory into political terms remained. There was a gap between the fresh economic opportunities which had been opened for the petty bourgeoisie and their total isolation from political power. It was to be filled by a highly politicized *intelligenzia* which had developed its ideology during 15 years of struggle, underground activity and exile. The second phase of the Ethiopian revolution centered on the question of the transition from a military to a civilian régime. It may be interpreted in terms of the struggle for power between two intellectual petty-bourgeois Marxist parties: the Ethiopian People's Revolution Party (the EPRP) and the Me'ison (Mela Ethiopia Socialist Nekenake, All-Ethiopian Socialist Party). The two parties social analyses

were not particularly dissimilar. (38) Both believed that the revolution would have to pass through a democratic transition period based on an alliance of workers, peasants and the progressive petty bourgeoisie. The EPRP however demanded that this transition should be led by a popular-based democratic government regularly elected by the civilian population, whereas the Me'ison believed that given the masses' lack of political consciousness and the progressive forces' poor organization, elections would signify a return to power by conservative, or even reactionary forces, with imperialist backing. Initially the Dergue, under Mengistu's leadership, used the Me'ison to eliminate the EPRP. Later when the Me'ison also showed signs of calling for a civilian political solution it was to suffer the same fate.

The EPRP's origins go back to the University organizations of the 1960s. The party was officially set up on August 31, 1975 as an underground movement. Nonetheless its newspaper "Democracia" had already been coming out for several months. The platform distributed in Addis Ababa on September saw the main contradiction in the revolutionary process as the struggle between the masses and the "fascist" junta. Its immediate objective was the elimination of the Dergue so as to proceed to the election of a civilian government. These conclusions reflected the party's evaluation of the outcome of the initial phase of the revolution which had been marked by attacks on the left and the consolidation of military power. The intellectuals and unionists who had joined the EPRP believed that these views were confirmed by events. The launching of the Zemecha, only a few days after the arrest of Eshetu Chole, was interpreted as a means to isolate the

students from the political struggle, scattering them throughout the country. The students' work in the field (recruitment for the zemecha was obligatory) proved to be a shattering yet educational experience. It has been described by Marina Ottaway:- "The students were thus given a crucial political role, but their response was curious. In many cases, they used their position to organize the peasants not only against the former landlords, but also against the Government. All snags encountered in the application of the land reform were attributed to the lack of revolutionary fervor of the members of the Derg. When landlords resisted, the students unsuccessfully demanded that the peasants be armed, and when the local police, historically a tool of the landed class, took an ambiguous position towards the reforms, the students accused the Government of betraying the revolution. Many students were arrested, or removed from their posts, and increasingly the Derg became suspicious and reluctant to allow them to play a political role". (39)

When the question arose of applying the agrarian reform (promulgated on March 4) the students took the view that it was insufficiently revolutionary, in that the land was distributed to individuals, and only secondary priority was granted to collectivization and peasant politicization. The agrarian and urban reforms (the latter was begun on July 16) were seen as being imposed by the government. The kebeles and the peasants organizations, which had been organized at all levels and on a national scale were viewed as bureaucratic bodies smothering revolutionary pressure from the grass roots, effectively controlled by the military leadership. Then on May 20, 1975 the leaders of the CELU were arrested. New leaders

were elected in June. A special congress which closed on September 4 demanded the immediate establishment of civil liberties and a multiparty system. On September 27, seven unionists belonging to Ethiopian airlines were killed by troops while giving out leaflets. The general strike called on September 28 was not a great success. Nonetheless it led to the declaration of a state of emergency which lasted until December 5. On December 6 the CELU was finally abolished and replaced by the All-Ethiopian Trade Union (AETU).

Whereas it is hard to find fault with the EPRP's criticism of the Dergue's repressive nature and its love of power there could also be no doubt about the ideological extremism of its members in their evaluation of the Dergue's policies and objectives. Following a typically petty bourgeois model the party sought to impose solutions, such as the collectivization of agriculture, which did not correspond to the effective level of development of social forces. They criticized the administration's tendency to impose its decisions at the grass roots level but failed to recognize their own tendency to behave in exactly the same way. The Me'ison, on the other hand grasped how urban and rural reform could lead to the emergence of a series of contradictions which, if guided in the right direction, could give rise to a further shift in the social balance in the country. During the second half of 1975 the groups led by Haile Fida, Fikre Merid and Negede Gobeze began to swing towards Mengistu and other members of the Dergue. The idea was to make a tactical alliance with the Dergue and to use its power to further socialist objectives. This, it was believed would necessarily be a long process, requiring close attention to the development of social forces and relations of production.

The publication of the Program for the National Democratic Revolution on April 21 1976 gave the Dergue its first ideological document of any weight. The program had been written by the Me'ison. Its analysis is very similar to that of the EPRP. Apart from other details, such as nationalities' right to self-determination, strongly supported by the EPRP and denied by the Me'ison, the fundamental difference was the postponing of the creation of the People's Democratic Republic indefinitely and the proposal for a one party system. More important than the program itself was the decision, taken at the same time, to set up a Provisional Office for Mass Organizational Affairs (the POMOA). In practice this was the Dergue's politbureau. Haile Fida became the POMOA's first president; Fikre Merid took on the role of vice president. The other important development was the setting up of the Yekatit '66 school (the reference is to February 1974, the month when the revolution began). This was to train cadres from the regime's various mass organizations from the kebeles to the unions.

In the meantime the EPRP had developed an underground organization, the party's aim being to infiltrate the official mass organizations. In the first elections to the kebeles in 1975 many EPRP members were elected. The peasants associations and the military were also successfully infiltrated.<sup>(40)</sup> This success, the visible results of which could be read on the walls of Addis Ababa, was more than just a challenge to the Dergue. It represented direct competition with the Me'ison and the POMOA which were cultivating the same ground. The struggle began in the autumn. On September 19, 1976 the Dergue proclaimed the EPRP enemy of the

revolution number one. In September 23, there was an attempt to assassinate Mengistu who was lightly wounded in the leg. This started a long series of political murders (Fikre Merid on October 1, Demeke Haragewon, a leader of the POMOA on December 8, Birane Tekle-Mariam, another POMOA leader, on January 21, 1977 and Tewodros Bekele, the president of the AETU on February 26, to list only the best known of the victims). The EPRP had decided to begin the armed struggle (it is not known whether this decision was taken prior to or only following the Dergue's declaration). The Dergue did not respond to EPRP assassinations with ferocious repression alone. On November 6, 1976 there were new elections to the Kebeles under the direct supervision of the POMOA. Ever since June the POMOA had been making calls to arm the masses. (This is what the EPRP's young militants had been demanding for the peasants at the time of the Zemecha). The new kebeles, many of whose members belonged to the lumpemproletariat, were given arms not very selectively. There followed a period of severe bloodshed which has only to come to an end during the early months of 1978. During this period it was often hard to distinguish between violence against enemy groups and violence within particular factions.

At the end of the year, on December 31, it was announced that the Dergue was to be organized into a Congress, (comprising all its members), a central committee (40 members) and a 16 member Standing Committee to be elected from among Congress members. This reorganization improved Taferi Banti's position and weakened Mengistu and Atnafu Abate's. The EPRP was still very much alive. Nonetheless on January 29, Taferi, in a long speech to the nation failed to include the party

among the revolution's internal and external enemies. On February 3 Mengistu along with other members of his faction and supporters of the Me'ison, confronted Taferi Banti and his group, weapons at the ready. Taferi Banti and the other key figures in the recent reorganization failed to survive the encounter. The hunt for EPRP supporters was re-opened with the Me'ison and the grass roots organizations, especially the Kebeles, supported by the POMOA and the Yekatit '66 school. The hunt reached its highpoint with the massacre during the May 1 festivities in 1977.

The POMOA's demands to arm the citizenry and the peasants have already been mentioned. Thanks to the Me'ison's propaganda willingness to give the people arms became a test for revolutionary fervor. On the whole the military tended to oppose the idea. A popular militia had been set up. From a military point of view however it was good as useless. Mengistu, Atnafu and the Me'ison's new power was translated into an expansion of the militia and a more generous supply of arms to the kebeles than that decided in the autumn of 1976. This development however, together with the improvement in Mengistu's relations with Moscow (which he visited at the beginning of May) led to a crisis for the Me'ison. Many believed that Ethiopia's new ally was social-imperialist. A number of Me'ison militants told "Libération" that the Dergue was no longer following a scientific road to socialism.<sup>(41)</sup> Probably there had been expectations that the group's opportunism was about to pay off. These however were dashed by the policies which Mengistu was now pursuing. The creation of the Proletarian party, promised in the Program for the National Democratic Revolution, in August, was again postponed. Immediately following the



elimination of Taferi Banti the POMOA had taken on responsibility for the political education of the militia, which was now a larger, better-armed force than previously. Mengistu and Atnafu thus considered it more of a threat to the Dergue's power than Taferi had done. Between May and July the Me'ison's decline was very rapid. On July 14 the POMOA and the Yekatit '66 school were re-organized. The membership of the central office was reduced from 15 to 5. According to a pamphlet issued by the Dergue's Propaganda and Information Committee the Me'ison "was displeased with restructuring of the POMOA", and withdrew from the organization. In August the group, with its cadres in the POMOA its ministers and its militants disbanded. According to the Dergue it went underground. Probably it was given no choice. Like the EPRP the Me'ison had sought a short-cut to hegemony over the masses. Both parties had been profoundly petty-bourgeois. Neither had succeeded in their attempts to build an organic tie with the masses. The EPRP had hoped to attract them to positions more advanced than relations of production would allow. In the end it had been forced to resort to terrorism. The Me'ison had hoped that the Dergue would present it to the masses on a silver platter; now the party disappeared underground. The second phase of the revolution was over.

Ethiopia was now fighting both in the Ogaden and in Eritrea. There was a real risk that the country would disintegrate. This was avoided thanks to aid from her new Soviet ally. On December 12, 1977 Atnafu Abate was executed. Like others before him he had arrived at the conviction that Eritrean demands for self-determination had in some way to be satisfied. The Soviets and Cubans

wanted a solution to the fighting based on the Ethiopians' and the Eritreans' common ideology. Atnafu probably clashed not so much with Mengistu and the Dergue's well-tryed nationalism as with their fear that his support for a settlement in Eritrea could increase his prestige with their allies. Atnafu's death came in the middle of the so-called "Red Terror" during which the remaining opposition was bloodily crushed.

Now that Mengistu had eliminated the armed threat to his regime the third phase of the revolution could begin. As early as 1977 Ethiopia's socialist allies had been pushing for the creation of a single proletarian party. Mengistu's problem was how to achieve this without this leading to a break of his own and the military's hold on power.

It is worth recalling at this point that although the POMOA was originally set up and dominated by the Me'ison by the beginning of 1977 it was formally under the control of the Emaledh (the Union of Ethiopian Marxist-Leninist Organizations), that is of a front of organizations whose position vis-à-vis the Dergue was one of "critical support". Apart from the Me'ison these included the Echa'at (Oppressed masses), a minor group which had split away from the Me'ison, the Woz Ader (Labor League); the Malered (Marxist Leninist Revolutionary Organization) and Abiyotawi Seded (the revolutionary flame), Mengistu's group, which included the majority of the military. It was here that Mengistu began his struggle to build a single party and to prevent this party from falling into the hands of those of his comrades with a better ideological training than he had, such as the members of the Me'ison. On June 16, 1980 Mengistu described

the history of this struggle in a speech to the COPWPE's first congress. "A call for stronger unity was made during those dark days (i e. 1977) to member organizations of Emaledh in order to co-ordinate the masses for the defense of the country... On the contrary, the leaders of the so-called Me'ison openly rejected co-operation in the belief that a situation enabling the dominance of their organization had been created... Me'ison advocated instant and "inconditional democracy" in the name of the oppressed... as of August 1977 they finally went underground". Successively, "Instead of struggling for the unity and the common freedom of the masses, the so-called Echa'at group embarked upon dividing the working people along ethnic lines. Some members of that organization had openly joined forces with the reactionary regime of Somalia... Because of this fifth columnist stand, the organization was expelled from Emaledh". Despite the effort to maintain unity, "the effort failed because some members, particularly a few individuals among the leadership of Woz Ader and the Marxist Leninist Revolutionary Organization were caught red-handed... It was discovered during the second half of 1978 that Woz Ader had infiltrated a limited number of its members into the ranks of Abiyotawi Seded. Consequently, a dangerous situation was again created. However, as you know, the danger was averted and normality re-established as a result of the stand taken by Abiyotawi Seded and the corrective measures taken by Woz Ader as regards its leadership. Later on, a few individuals, members of Abiyotawi Seded, feigning to be overcome by desperation and masquerading as if they embodied organizational interests more than anybody, have tried to promote

their own interest from the vantage point of narrow factionalism. The struggle waged to secure the leadership of a party which our revolution lacked cannot be viewed in isolation from the general program of our revolution..." Nonetheless, "It became clear that it was impossible to form a party of the working people through the merger of organizations as was previously envisaged. It was therefore agreed by the three member organizations of Emaledh (i.e. Abiyotawi Seded, Woz Ader and Malered) in February 1979 that considering the realities of our time, it was necessary for the establishment of the party to rally around a central leadership individual militants on the basis of their revolutionary stand, ability and contribution". (42)

Mengistu's account is hard to follow clearly. Above all it is difficult to tie it in with the frequent government reshuffles, condemnations and executions which marked this period. In the first half of 1978 the Echa'at group was subjected to the same kind of pityless repression which had previously been exerted against the EPRP the Me'ison and the EDU (The liberal Ethiopian Democratic Union) during the Red Terror. In August and September 1978 the POMOA, which had been reorganized following the liquidation of the Me'ison, was again purged after it had demanded that military cadres be subject to the politbureau rather than to the PMAC's political and military affairs committee. Three members of the politbureau and the director of the Yekatit '66 school were arrested. In the violently anti-Chinese speech by Mengistu on May 1, 1978 Woz Ader is among others indirectly accused of being maoist. According to some observers the real conflict was over the way the party was to be organized.

Woz Ader preferred a "more devolved organization"<sup>(43)</sup> to the rigid democratic centralism being proposed by Abiyotawi Seded. As Mengistu informs us, when in February 1979 the three surviving organizations decided to form a completely new organization rather than merely merging the existing ones, Malered and Woz Ader, in their purged form, practically had ceased to exist.

This fresh delay in building the party, the tortuous procedure adopted to achieve this goal and the care which Mengistu took to ensure his nomination as chairman of the new party by an assembly of military commissars (July 24, 1979)<sup>(44)</sup> and as leader (December 20, 1979)<sup>(45)</sup> - this time during a major mass demonstration, marked by clear signs of a personality cult, were all presumably signs of Mengistu's concern to remain independent of his powerful socialist allies, and to keep aside their man, Legasse Asfaw.

What one should really emphasize is the significance of the remarks on the nature of the party and the chairman's powers with which Mengistu closed his speech. The essential point was that existing organizational structures were to be disbanded and that none of these were to join the new party in any guaranteed position. Rather the contrary, one of COPWE's tasks was to be to "screen individuals as potential Ethiopian party members". If in his role as COPWE chairman Mengistu managed to organize the transition to the new party - whatever this was eventually called - while at the same time keeping control over the choice of cadres his scheme to maintain his grasp on power would be complete.

It is difficult to know whether Mengistu is going to succeed in this task or whether the new conflicts and rivalries reported recently are going to cause further troubles. Today at any rate the surviving members of the Dergue are all working in the complex local and central structure of the National revolutionary economic development campaign and central planning which is meant to constitute the new state administration in embryonic form. The party is strictly under control. After six years of unprecedented turmoil Ethiopia's stabilization now seems to be complete.

#### A few conclusions

The main argument put forward in this article is that Ethiopia is beginning to enjoy increased stability. This stabilization has emerged however in a highly unstable and turbulent regional setting. As has been shown Somali guerilla activities are on the increase. What is more Somalia herself has been integrated into the plans which moderate Arab diplomacy has laid to respond to the Iranian and Afghan crises. Thus while Egypt has maintained relations with Somalia, Iraq has resumed supplies to the Eritreans. Sudan, North Yemen and Djibouti are the only regional Arab countries with which Ethiopia has succeeded in achieving a diplomatic rapprochement and this only because of their own internal problems. It is clear that in the event of a conflict this rapprochement would not last. The agreement granting the US a base at Berbera represents a further serious factor of instability in the area. By the terms of the agreement the US government is going to supply exclusively defensive military

aid as well as major assistance for the refugees and the Somali economy. What does defensive aid mean however when this goes to the one aggressive country in the whole region? The political significance of the aid is aggressive regardless of whether or not the arms delivered are defensive. What is more, while it is quite true that the refugees are in a tragic situation, the Ethiopians can quite reasonably argue that every family put up in the camps means more men free to take part in the fighting.<sup>(46)</sup> It should not be forgotten that the Berbera agreement is just one element in a broader US commitment which includes bases in Kenya, Oman and Egypt. These ties puts the USA in a contradictory position. Quite apart from the (relatively minor) contradiction of simultaneous alliances with Kenya and Somalia, Egypt could become involved in the Eritrean question and this, indirectly could involve the USA. Should there be any new conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia doubtless the Arabs would renew their support to the Eritreans, if only to ease the Somalis' military position. At the time of writing (mid-September 1980) Ethiopia seems to be seeking a final military solution against a weakened Eritrean movement. The risk is that someone might seek to drag the country into a war on two fronts in a renewed attempt to use Somali and Eritrean nationalism to eliminate Soviet influence in the Horn of Africa.

There are many observers, both in Europe and the US who believe, on global strategic grounds, that this is exactly what has to be done. The search for bases in the region, and in particular the agreement over the base at Berbera represents a very negative shift in Carter's African policy,<sup>(47)</sup>

which previously, and quite rightly, gave priority to southern Africa. Colin Legum <sup>(48)</sup> has argued-correctly in my view - that a peaceful western success in Southern Africa would have the long term effect of politically displacing the Soviets. Even if we ignore the more complex regional strategy which the American administration seemed to be following up until 1979 by maintaining a "low profile" in the Horn of Africa, <sup>(49)</sup> I believe that a realistic assessment of the nature of the Ethiopian revolution should convince the US to keep on adopting a low profile, preventing conflicts, encouraging the stabilization of the Mengistu regime and thus its natural tendency to evolve in a moderate and non-aligned direction. Analysis produced so far on the Ethiopian revolution has given a clear picture of its essentially petty bourgeois nature <sup>(50)</sup>, as well as of the corporative pressures it faces and the persistence of models of political culture and behaviour which seem to belong to the past <sup>(51)</sup>. May be these features have overshadowed the key role of nationalism in determining the positions taken by the regime and by the military group, which, under Mengistu's leadership, has guided the process leading to its stabilization. The regime's simple, basic ideology is all summed up in the slogan "Ethiopia Tikdem". A second consideration to which insufficient attention may have been paid is the Dergue and above all Mengistu's highly developed sense of power. Even though these are purely superstructural factors, it would be wrong to underestimate their importance. The West has to avoid **streaming** these tendencies into hostile channels. Rather they have to be allowed to grow and to produce their own results.



NOTES

- 1) Reports confirm this evaluation: see Jean-Claude Pomonti, L'Ethiopie reprise en main, November 6-7, 1979
- 2) "Africa Research Bulletin", 1979: p. 5520 and 1980: p. 5541
- 3) "Marchés Tropicaux et Méditerranéens", No. 1797, 1980: p. 939
- 4) "Africa Research Bulletin", 1978: p. 4742
- 5) "Africa Research Bulletin", 1979: p. 5117 and 1980: p. 5603-4
- 6) "Africa", No. 79, March 1978, p. 15
- 7) "Africa Research Bulletin", 1979: p. 5332 and 1980: p. 5700
- 8) "Africa Research Bulletin", 1980: p. 5603, 5666.  
Abdel Moneim Awad el Rayah, On the Brink of a Breakthrough?, "Sudanow", April 1980, pp. 10-16.  
See also the editorial of "Sudanow", June 1980:  
The deadlock is broken, p. 6
- 9) "Marchés Tropicaux et Méditerranéens", No. 1787, 1980: p. 332 and "Africa Research Bulletin", 1980: p. 5569
- 10) "Marchés Tropicaux et Méditerranéens", n. 1787, 1980: p. 332. It should be recalled that for a long time the two countries had been attempting to resolve their dispute at an OAU level. In February 1979 a meeting had been held in Freetown but completely failed owing to Ethiopia's refusal to consider the Eritrean question.

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See Sir Sidahmed, Back to Square One, "Sudanow",  
March 1979, pp. 15-17

- 11) Abdel Moneim Awad el Rayah, op. cit., p. 10, "Africa Research Bulletin", 1980: p. 5569
- 12) A recent review of the developments in Sudan can be found in Wolf-Ruthard Born. The Democratic Republic of Sudan under Numeiry, "Aussenpolitik" (English edition), 31, 2, 1980, pp. 210-234. See also the editorial of "Sudanow", April 1980: Important Steps Forward p. 6
- 13) Abdel Moneim Awad el Rayah, op. cit. p. 12
- 14) Tom J. Farer, War Clouds on the Horn of Africa: A Crisis for Détente, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington D.C. 1976, p. 47
- 15) See Richard Sherman, Eritrea, The Unfinished Revolution, Praeger, New York, 1980
- 16) "Africa Research Bulletin" 1979: pp. 5342 and 5403; 1980: p. 5541
- 17) This would consist of 200 tanks, 24 helicopters and chemical arms, together with 200 advisers; "Marchés Tropicaux et Méditerranéens", n. 1809, 1980: p. 1755. As for the conflicts between the various Eritrean organizations, this has been amply dealt with by the press during the whole of 1980. The information which I have gathered at Rome describes confrontations and fightings of a rather serious nature.

- 18) R. Sherman, op. cit., p. 64
- 19) This is a letter from Lobban to Sherman which was quoted by the latter in the cited work, p. 69
- 20) David D. Pearce, Refugees Pour into Somalia as Fighting Rages Inside Ethiopia, "The Washington Post", February 13, 1980; Edward Girardet, Desert War Refugees Inundate Somalia, "The Christian Science Monitor", July 2, 1980; Edward Girardet, Horn of Africa Beset by drought and internal conflicts, "The Christian Science Monitor", July 17, 1980
- 21) Hundreds dying daily in drought-stricken, war-torn northeast Africa, "The Sun", July 13 1980
- 22) The Somali Connection, "The Washington Post", May 25, 1980
- 23) Edward Girardet, Somalia not ready for more fighting, "The Christian Science Monitor", July 10, 1980. This caution can already be found in the constitution which was adopted in August 1979, (The Somali Democratic Republic, adopting peaceful and legal means shall support the liberation of Somali territories under colonial occupation and shall encourage the unity of the Somali people through their own free will), but its practical value is difficult to estimate.
- 24) "The Times", June 14, 1980, reported that a contingent of Hind M 24, the highly offensive helicopter used by the Soviets in Afghanistan, had been supplied to Ethiopia.
- 25) "Africa Research Bulletin", 1979: p. 4994

- 26) "Africa Contemporary Record", X 1978-79: p. B255;  
the price at the end of 1978/beginning of 1979 was  
noted by myself during my stay in Addis Ababa.
- 27) Lefort, René, Le "deuxième réforme agraire" de la  
province de Kaffa. "Le Monde", 26 October 1978
- 28) "Africa Research Bulletin", 1979: p. 5169
- 29) Ibidem: p. 5335
- 30) Pranay B. Gupte, Ethiopian Civil War Hurts the  
Economy, "The New York Times", July 10, 1980
- 31) "Africa Research Bulletin" 1980: p. 5706-7
- 32) "The Guardian" January 1, 1980
- 33) See Marina Ottaway, Social Classes and Corporate  
Interests in The Ethiopian Revolution, "Journal of  
Modern African Studies", XIV, 3, 1976, p. 469-86
- 34) See Ethiopia, in Colin Legum (ed.) "Africa  
Contemporary Record", VII, 1974-75, Rex Collings Ltd.  
London, <sup>1975</sup>/p. B162. This and following volumes of ACR  
are essential to acquire a knowledge of the Ethiopian  
revolution. My survey is based essentially on these  
volumes.
- 35) N. 38, October 1974 cited by Legum (ed.) op.cit.,  
p. B189
- 36) Legum (ed.) op. cit., p. B188-9
- 37) See John Markakis, Garrison Socialism: The case of  
Ethiopia, MERIP Reports n. 79, June 1979.

- 38) Ibidem, pp. 11-12
- 39) Op. Cit., p. 483
- 40) Markakis, op. cit., p. 12 and 14
- 41) Claudio Moffa, Cinque anni di rivoluzione in Etiopia 1974-78, "Politica Internazionale", (Rome), 2, 1979, pp. 71-89; p. 84
- 42) Report delivered to the First Congress of Copwe by Comrade Mengistu Haile-Mariam, Chairman of PMAC and Commander-in-Chief of the Revolutionary Army, June 16, 1980. Addis Ababa (leaflet published by Dergue )
- 43) Mesfin Gabriel, Air of Self-Confidence, "New African", December 1978, pp. 36-8
- 44) "African Research Bulletin", 1979: p. 5371
- 45) "African Research Bulletin", 1980; p. 5504
- 46) This is the subject of the editorial of "The Washington Post" May 25, 1980: The Somali Connection. "The Christian Science Monitor" has warned several times against the risks of an alliance with Somalia (July 10, 1980 and June 27, 1980)
- 47) Richard Deutsch, Carter's African Policy Shift, "Africa Report", May-June 1980
- 48) The African Crisis, "Foreign Affairs" 57, 3, 1978, pp. 663-651
- 49) Gérard Chaliand, The Horn's of Africa Dilemma, "Foreign Policy", 30, Spring 1978, pp. 116-131

- 50) See the works of Markakis and of D. & M. Ottaway
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