ETHIOPIA IN EARLY 1989: DEEPENING CRISIS

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FOREWORD

This paper sets down some of the impressions and conversations I had during a five-week visit to Ethiopia in February and March 1989. Half this time was spent in Addis Ababa, half traveling in other parts of the country. I planned provincial travel to avoid duplicating most of the areas I had visited during 1987 and 1988.¹ I make occasional reference, however, to conditions and situations I experienced during previous visits.

To a greater extent than before I had the feeling in Ethiopia in early 1989 that the country was poised on the threshold of inevitable change. But how soon could it be expected? Would it be sudden and violent or gradual? These questions came up over and over again. They were in the minds of most Ethiopians, and many of them were more open about expressing both their fears and their expectations than I have found them at any time in recent years.

Answers to questions about imminent changes were many and varied and often contradictory, as were some of the expectations themselves. Thus, though President Mengistu Haile Mariam claimed in a press conference in early June 1989 that the violent coup attempt in mid-May 1989 surprised him, a majority of the people of the country certainly expected it.

Though widely known as a critic of Ethiopian Marxist leaders' policies and practices, I was not only given a visa for a month's visit but was also given a month's extension. I was courteously--in many instances warmly--received by officials in Addis Ababa and in the provinces and had frank and open discussions with many of them. I talked to a wide variety of Ethiopian scholars, professional people,

¹I summed up impressions from my 1987 visit (which included Kaffa and Eritrea) in Ethiopia: Contrasts and Contradictions, The RAND Corporation, P-7389, October 1987, and in a more comprehensive manuscript, yet unpublished, Ethiopia Between Famines. I have not published a summary of my 1988 visit, which concentrated on Wollega and Hararge.
businessmen, churchmen, and ordinary citizens. The fact that my wife was able to accompany me for most of the time I was in the country, and also undertook some travel and many contacts independently, provided additional insights.

We benefited from the hospitality and current knowledge of the U.S. Embassy staff and several other diplomatic and international missions in Addis Ababa. My wife and I are grateful for the warm welcome, as well as the knowledge and many kinds of assistance we received from long-standing friends, both Ethiopian and Ferenji, resident in Ethiopia.

The tiny Marxist clique that has tried to transform this proud and distinctive old country into a Stalinist Albania has isolated itself, but we did not feel isolated from the world in Addis Ababa. Ethiopian awareness of the world is greater than ever before in the country's long history. Contact between Ethiopians and the world beyond the Horn of Africa, especially Europe and America, is more extensive now—if in many ways more difficult and therefore more highly valued—than it was before the 1974 Revolution. The influence of the large, predominantly Western, international community in Addis Ababa penetrates into most parts of the country. The continual communication by telephone and letter with the sizable communities of Ethiopians living in exile deeply affects the country itself.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Though the travel which formed the basis for this paper was funded entirely out of personal resources, my continuing research on Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa is naturally reflected in the analysis and judgments expressed herein. I should like to acknowledge the support I have had for this research during the past several years from the Woodrow Wilson Center for Scholars at the Smithsonian Institution, The RAND Corporation in Washington, where I am a resident consultant, and last but not least, the United States Institute of Peace, which has been a major supporter of my work on the Horn of Africa during the past two years. None of these organizations, of course, bears any responsibility for the opinions I express.

I should also like to acknowledge the valuable contribution to my understanding and store of facts and data made by dozens of Ethiopian scholars, friends, and government officials, both in their country and abroad. Ethiopians everywhere remain deeply attached to their traditions, and love of country runs deep. It is no accident that the large and continually increasing Ethiopian exile community in the United States has one of the lowest rates of naturalization of any comparable refugee group. When conditions improve in Ethiopia, large numbers of these people will return and contribute to its development.
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FIGURES

1. Administrative regions of Ethiopia through 1988
2. Administrative and autonomous regions of Ethiopia as of early 1989
BACKGROUND

In February 1988 Mengistu went to Eritrea to encourage his armed forces to fight more energetically against Eritrean Popular Liberation Front (EPLF) insurgents. During this visit a popular army general, Tariku Ayene, questioned Mengistu's conviction that insurgency in Eritrea could be defeated by brute force. Mengistu had him shot. The devastating effect of this arbitrary action on military morale became quickly apparent when, during the following month, EPLF forces routed three Ethiopian divisions near Afabet and captured 20,000 soldiers (many of whom surrendered without resistance), vast amounts of Soviet-supplied armor, guns, ammunition, vehicles, and supplies, and three Russian advisers (who are still being held). As a result of strenuous efforts during the next few weeks Ethiopian government forces were able to retain control of the stronghold of Keren and block a potential rebel advance on Asmara, but at the cost of withdrawal of Ethiopian troops from all outlying positions in Eritrea.

During my visit to Ethiopia in the spring of 1988, I witnessed Mengistu's frantic efforts to compensate for these setbacks: rushing reinforcements to the north, calling up new manpower, and levying emergency contributions on the population. The confidence of party apparatchiki in Mengistu's leadership was shaken. The Soviets tried to bolster it by rushing in more military hardware and supplies and eventually even announced a gift of grain to relieve the famine threat. The situation was exacerbated by accusations by foreign relief workers and journalists that Mengistu's government was once again abetting the development of famine in rebellious northern regions.

Strenuous efforts were being made to get food to populations in the north isolated by military operations. Thanks to the combined exertions of international relief agencies and hardworking officials of the Ethiopian Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC), the threatened famine of 1987-1988 was for the most part averted. Unusually heavy
Fig. 1--Administrative regions of Ethiopia through 1988
rains in Eritrea and Tigre during the summer of 1988 resulted in the best harvest the region has experienced in almost a decade.

THE SITUATION IN EARLY 1989

Though the military situation in Eritrea remained essentially stalemate during the remainder of 1988, the official government press maintained that the country's armed forces were making significant gains in the neighboring province of Tigre and by the end of 1988 Mengistu claimed this rebellious province had been entirely brought back under control of the Addis Ababa government. It became clear during my visit in February-March 1989 that if they had deceived anyone it was themselves.

While Workers' Party of Ethiopia (WPE) spokesmen claimed that the population of Tigre accepted its rule, the Tigre Popular Liberation Front (TPLF), benefiting from support from the increasingly confident Eritrean Popular Liberation Front (EPLF), was preparing for a major offensive. Mengistu's armed forces suffered a stunning defeat at Enda Selassie in western Tigre in mid-February 1989. Four divisions were decimated and several generals lost. Twelve thousand troops surrendered.

At the same time, other northern insurgent groups were reported to be cooperating to attempt to bring the historic old capital Gondar under siege after the towns of Dabat and Debarek were captured by TPLF forces. Foreign technicians and aid personnel (from both the East and the West) were withdrawn from Gondar and the city was off-limits to visitors until mid-March 1989, when the situation to the north of it seemed to have stabilized, partly as a result of movement of reinforcements into the region from Shoa.

The consequences of the disaster at Enda Selassie were more serious for the government's position in the rest of Tigre. All government forces were withdrawn from the province by the end of February. Makelle, with its valuable airfield, thus became the first provincial capital to be lost by Mengistu's government.
The great national holiday, Adowa Day (March 2), was celebrated "for the first time in our history," as an official in Addis Ababa lamented to me, "without Adowa forming part of a unified Ethiopia."\(^1\) It was a galling situation for a regime which took power under the national unity slogan *Ethiopia Tikdem* (Ethiopia First) and has exacted almost 15 years of sacrifices from the population in the name of preservation of the country's territorial integrity. Mengistu made no public appearance on Adowa Day. When the State Defense Council debated withdrawal from Tigre, Mengistu is reported to have been the sole participant who advocated standing and fighting. He was overruled by his closest associates—an unaccustomed setback for a leader who has in the past summarily shot those who have questioned his judgment.

**THE MOOD OF THE COUNTRY**

The combination of widening internal rebellion and decline in the government's ability to manage the country's economy confronts Mengistu's Marxist regime with dilemmas which it lacks the flexibility to remedy. For the past four years it has been under increasing Soviet and Western pressure to implement basic economic reforms. Only a few minor adjustments have been made, and those grudgingly. Mengistu has avoided all semblance of *glasnost* and *perestroika*. In fact, Ethiopian newspapers have been under orders to avoid use of these terms, let alone report on Gorbachev's reforms in the USSR.

The official ostrich policy has not deterred Ethiopians at all levels of society from keeping themselves informed or from speaking their minds. During the excitement surrounding the Great Famine of 1984-1986 Ethiopians lost their fear of expressing their thoughts. Since then the regime has never been able to reimpose silence. Government media said nothing about the defeats in Tigre or the situation around Gondar, but the entire population talked of these

\(^1\)The armies of Emperor Menelik II, which had been gathered from all parts of the country, defeated invading Italian forces near the Tigrean city of Adowa in 1896. Mussolini felt he had finally avenged this embarrassing defeat when his fascist armies marched into Addis Ababa in May 1936.
events almost as soon as they occurred. News spread by word of mouth, telephone, and foreign radio. The BBC and VOA in both English and Amharic are the most popular stations among Ethiopian listeners, but the rebel radios broadcasting from Sudan in behalf of the EPLF, the TPLF, and the Ethiopian Peoples' Democratic Alliance (EPDA) are widely and eagerly listened to, recorded and circulated on cassette, and given greater credence than regime pronouncements.

Mengistu's government has not only for the most part lost its ability to intimidate the population at large; it is also losing the confidence of its own officials, its party machine, and its military forces.² The Workers' Party of Ethiopia (WPE) has always been more an agglomeration of opportunists and co-opted officials than a party with serious ideological cohesion. It is visibly shaken and increasingly unreliable as an instrument on which Mengistu can rely to execute his orders. The light blue party uniforms are much less in evidence than they were a year or two ago. Many officials apparently wish to avoid being seen in them, for people speak disparagingly of "the little blue men"--WPE members.

A party card no longer produces rapid and obsequious obedience in the countryside. Officials of the once feared kebeles (urban neighborhood associations) are lying low to avoid antagonizing the population. Overly zealous kebele officials are reportedly being attacked and occasionally killed; some are said to be increasingly susceptible to bribes from parents seeking to have their sons omitted from military conscription lists.

EXPECTATIONS OF CHANGE

Ethiopia in February and March 1989 was a country in a state of mounting political effervescence. One sensed it in gatherings in Addis Ababa, in conversations in the countryside, even in meetings in government offices and contacts with party officials. The great majority of the population was taking pleasure in seeing an unsuccessful

²As the mid-May coup attempt led by senior generals demonstrated.
and unpopular authoritarian government falter. Change was felt to be
inevitable. But when and how? There was fear of violence, fear that
things could come apart and no one could put them together again without
great additional harm being done. Memories of the difficult years
1975-1978 remain vivid. Ethiopians worry about the integrity of the
country but seem to have little sense of danger from abroad. Hatred of
Russians is widespread, so much so that the Soviet Embassy has been wise
to advise individual Russians to stay off the streets and go out only in
escorted groups.

New leaders who could promise an end to fighting and sacrificing
and commit themselves to a more open society, a freer economy and a
normal relationship with the Western World, of which most Ethiopians
still very much want to be a part, would enjoy the goodwill of much of
the population, including perhaps much of the alienated north. For most
Ethiopians the more distant the country's future relationship with the
Soviet Union, the better. Suggestions are now heard that the Soviets
should pay reparations for the damage their support of Mengistu's
government has done to the country. ³

Where can new leaders come from? The question was being endlessly
debated this spring. Some Ethiopians talked of exiles returning.
Others condemned political exiles for wasting their time squabbling
while enjoying the comforts of life abroad. There was widespread
expectation that new leaders would emerge from the military. But could
military officers, tangled in a web of Soviet-style security
arrangements, link together to oust the discredited Marxist clique
around Mengistu? For lack of any other obvious solution, most
Ethiopians believed that a group of generals or colonels would be able
to do so. Whether this hope remains in the wake of the failed May 1989

³The Lenin statue in Addis Ababa below the National Palace and
Africa Hall pointing toward Bole (airport) Road has taken on a new
immediacy. The principal relevance of Lenin to the current Ethiopian
situation might well be the ironic fact that the slogan he used to win
over the Russian population during the Bolshevik Revolution--"Peace,
Bread, Land to the Tiller!"--could appropriately serve as a rallying cry
to usher in a new non-Communist era in Ethiopia.
coup and the killings and purges among the officer corps that have followed remains to be seen. Hope may shift to civilians or exiles now.

Haile Selassie, though officially still an unperson, is increasingly praised in retrospect as a man who had the flexibility and wisdom to play off competing forces and hold the country together, bringing the best out of Ethiopians. No one talks of restoration of the monarchy but Ethiopians have little confidence in their ability to operate a democracy. A leader who jettisoned Marxism and led the country with a firm paternalistic, authoritarian hand but with a civilized sense of style and commitment to generally admired Western standards and values would have widespread support.
II. GOJJAM

I had not been in this highly traditional northwestern province since the spring of 1984, when signs of famine were becoming visible. I was invited to visit it in both 1987 and 1988 but gave other regions higher priority. On this visit I decided to go to Gojjam first. Thanks to the combined efforts of the WPE Central Committee, the Institute of Nationalities, and the U.S. Embassy Public Affairs Office, we were able to make a remarkably comprehensive eight-day tour of Gojjam (including two days on Lake Tana) visiting monasteries and historic sites, new villages, towns, markets, the Pawe resettlement area, and the Blue Nile bridge construction project.

Gojjami Amharas are famous for the beauty of their women and their stubborn adherence to tradition. The peasants of Gojjam rebelled against Haile Selassie's efforts to impose a modern tax system in the 1960s. During the first years after the 1974 Revolution, armed resistance broke out in several parts of the province in spite of the fact that Mengistu's original partner and deputy in the Derg, Atnafu Abate, was a Gojjami. He was executed in November 1977. Mengistu's wife, Comrade Wubanchi Bishaw, is a Gojjami. The province has been dealt with in relatively gingerly fashion in recent years and has been quiet politically.

AGRICULTURE IN GOJJAM

Gojjam has always been one of Ethiopia's breadbaskets. Even though relatively thickly populated, it has the potential to generate continual surpluses of grain. The central and eastern portions of the province consist of gently rolling plateaus with excellent soil. Almost all the original forest cover is gone, surviving only in river valleys, in gorges, and in groves around churches, but compared to the more northerly highlands there has been relatively little erosion.
During the past two years the regime has carried out a vast program for planting rows of trees along all main roads in Gojjam and many other parts of the country. A typical socialist enterprise, it has been an embarrassing failure. Since the trees belonged to everyone and thus to no one, they were not watered and almost all have died. The labor of peasants forced to participate in the mass-planting effort has, as in so many other examples of "socialist construction," been wasted. In several of the higher regions of Gojjam, however (Mt. Choqo, Gish Abbai, Mertule Maryam), reforestation projects have been carried out in recent years (usually financed by foreign aid) and appear moderately successful.

Except in high areas where barley was damaged by frost, Gojjam had an excellent harvest in 1988. The evidence was visible everywhere in the countryside--great piles of fresh straw near farmsteads with threshing still in progress in some areas. Spring plowing was also beginning. Grain and food were plentiful in markets. Restrictions on local sale of grain seem largely to have been lifted. Farmers are free to sell privately after they have delivered their quotas to the Agricultural Marketing Corporation (AMC). Officials at the regional planning office in Bahr Dar said they had no idea how large total grain production had been in 1988; they knew only that AMC quotas had been easily and quickly delivered.

Except in the southeastern part of Gojjam, we saw few large villages. In the area between Bichena and Mota and on to Bahr Dar, villagization appeared two-thirds complete but with some very interesting features that offered reason to believe that it had been approached more cautiously than in many other parts of the country.

Villages are small and frequently clustered around preexisting groups of farmsteads. These were often near churches, so, in contrast to most other parts of the country, where new villages have been sited as far from churches as possible, the traditional orientation of the countryside to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has been maintained. Parishes have benefited in some instances. We found that the old church of Weyname Kidane Mehret, which contains some of the finest eighteenth
century paintings in Gojjam, had been renovated. Priests there said that
the new village clustered to the southwest of the church grove had brought
far more people into the congregation than it had had for decades. ¹

PARTY AND CHURCH

We experienced very little WPE presence in rural Gojjam. Signs
with slogans and decorative arches were more often than not rusted and
decrepit, party uniforms rare. The presence of the church, on the other
hand, is evident everywhere. Many country churches are being renovated.
The old monasteries at Dima, Debra Worq, and Mertule Maryam are
flourishing, with fresh paint (usually involving liberal use of the
national colors: red, yellow, and green) and new construction. Young
abbits are in charge at Debra Worq and Mertule Maryam and give the
impression of great vigor in organizing their clergy and their flocks.

Sunday sunrise services at Debra Worq attracted thousands of
parishioners streaming in from the surrounding countryside. In one
corner of the churchyard, priests were conducting christening ceremonies
for young children. Nearby, a monk was displaying ancient manuscripts
for the faithful to admire and kiss, often no doubt with the expectation
that some wish might be fulfilled.

Thanks to a reforestation project, the once almost inaccessible
monastery of Mertule Maryam has been efficiently linked to the outer
world by a new road which makes a visit to this spectacular site only a
3/4-hour detour from the highway that leads to Mota and Bahr Dar. The
local clergy told us that the monastery dated "from the time of Christ."
Best evidence is that it was established, perhaps, in the fourteenth
century.

¹For a description of this church, see Paul B. Henze, Ethiopian
included in a footnote to the effect that all of this church's paintings
had been destroyed or stolen turns out, fortunately, to have been
incorrect. Further stabilization and restoration are needed, but 50
percent of the paintings have survived.
The Mertule Maryam monastery is situated on an outcropping at the very edge of the Blue Nile Gorge system with views extending over a magnificent complex of bluish purple declivities and reddish tan ambas (mesas) to the highlands of Amhara Saynt in Wollo to the east. Late sixteenth or early seventeenth century Portuguese craftsmen are credited with constructing a huge stone church with elaborate carvings at the eastern end of the walled monastery compound. This structure long ago fell into partial decay but arches and walls remain standing to a height of 40 feet. It would be a choice site for archaeologists to probe.

The monks of Mertule Maryam proudly brought out half a dozen illustrated medieval manuscripts for us to admire, as well as the crowns, swords, and robes of several emperors and an enormous blue velvet caftan said to have belonged to the notorious Muslim invader, Ahmad Gagn, who was killed with Portuguese help in Dembea, northeast of Lake Tana, in 1543. After conducting us through the round church built, they said, after the time of Gagn, the abbot and his entourage took us to a new building, not yet entirely finished: a museum for displaying the monastery's treasures to visitors. It was built only two years ago on the basis of contributions from the local population and with the expectation that it will eventually attract considerable numbers of domestic and foreign tourists.

Other famous sites in Gojjam attested to the same kind of religious vigor and the importance of the church in daily life. At Gish Abbai, the source of the Blue Nile, the sills of the church were strewn with fresh red rose petals. The priests pulled open the huge wooden doors to display a remarkable series of new paintings recently completed by an artist from the region. They included all the classical biblical themes, but with amusing anachronisms--the Virgin Mary, e.g., was wearing modern shoes and officials were dressed in blue party suits! The sacred spring where the Nile trickles out of the hillside had recently been enclosed in a new fence and nearby a tree nursery had been established.
On the way into the Metekel to visit the Pawe resettlement site, we stopped at another famous old church, Gimjabet Maryam, and then happened upon a lively, colorful rural religious ceremony at a church called Mangula Kidane Mehret. Several dozen mounted horsemen were leading a procession of hundreds of country people bringing the tabot (holy church tablet) back from a sacred spring. Trumpets punctuated the singing as the procession passed through the gate to the churchyard and the congregation gathered inside to hear a sermon preached by an energetic young priest. Horsemen with their mounts decked out in polished brass and silver harness ornaments and bright colored tassels vied to pose for photographs as we were enthusiastically welcomed to the festivities.

In sum, in Gojjam we saw no outward sign of regime harassment of the church and no evidence of church concessions to the regime. The same applies to the monasteries of Lake Tana. Thanks to an efficient boat and crew provided by the Maritime Administration, we crossed this beautiful inland sea from south to north the first day and then returned the next day to Bahr Dar, stopping on the eastern shore on the way.

We first visited Ura Kidane Mehret on the Zegi Peninsula which was renovated several years ago and is well maintained for visits by tourists. From there we crossed to the high, steep island of Daga. The entire island is off-limits to women and no female animals or domestic fowl are kept on it. The church atop Daga has undergone structural renovation during the past decade. In its treasury building the mummified bodies of four famous medieval emperors are still proudly displayed in glass-fronted coffins donated by Haile Selassie.

Docking at Gorgora, we stayed overnight in the clean and comfortable new Maritime Administration guest quarters and enjoyed a generous dinner in their club hosted by local officials. The next morning we visited the Maritime Administration's farm and orchards and stopped at the historic church at nearby Debra Sina before embarking to go to the peninsula near Mandaba crowned with the ruins of the enormous Portuguese-style palace of Emperor Susenyos. This huge stone building testifies both to the power and sense of style of the Ethiopian monarchy in the 17th century, but it is slowly collapsing. Promise of far more
tourism than Ethiopia is likely to have in the next few years would be needed to justify the heavy investment restoration would require.

Docking at midday at Narga Selassie to see Empress Mentuab's attractive church, whose paintings include a portrait of her as donor, we crossed the lake to reach the remote island monastery of Tana Kerkos on the eastern shore in the late afternoon. The tabot which Menelik I brought from Jerusalem is reputed first to have been kept here for 600 years until it was transferred to Axum.

On the crest of the island above the church at Tana Kerkos is the rock on which the Virgin Mary rested for 100 days en route from Egypt back to the Holy Land. The monks recounted these legends as fact, but they were depressed and agitated by a recent tragedy. Only ten days before our visit armed thieves had come to the island when most of the monks were away at a festival at another church and stole 13 iron and silver objects from the monastery's treasures: censers, chalices, swords, and staffs belonging to medieval emperors. Police had come and the crime was being investigated, they said. Our WPE escorts took down information to report to the authorities in Addis Ababa.

Given the remoteness of historic churches such as these and the little protection their clergy can provide, it is remarkable that more thievery is not occurring. Some church and cultural officials in Addis Ababa argue that historic objects should be removed from remote sites and taken to the capital or to regional museums. The local clergy are strongly opposed to parting with their treasures. Fortunately, the thieves who robbed Tana Kerkos had no interest in manuscripts, for we were shown some splendid ancient books and a huge 30-panel accordion-folded "book" of paintings of saints which has been in the possession of the monastery since the Middle Ages.

The Maritime Administration operates nine large diesel vessels on Lake Tana which transport both passengers and cargo, though firewood is still brought to ports on papyrus rafts. The Zegi Peninsula still produces excellent coffee. Even under current circumstances, and with Gondar coming under siege, local tourism on the lake continued. At Daga, we met a boatload of Ethiopian schoolteachers--men and women--on a spring break tour of the island monasteries.
BAHR DAR

The new lakeside Tana Hotel in Bahr Dar is attractive and was busy with Italians weekending from Pawe, and other foreign aid technicians, including a European group engaged in renovation of the Bahr Dar textile mill. A Belgian technician told me that they had found the mill in surprisingly good condition after 27 years of operation. Though a new airfield has been built at Bahr Dar, there are few other signs of change and the city, planned to grow into a metropolis of 300,000 to 400,000, remains in the doldrums. The power plant at the nearby Blue Nile (Tisisat) Falls generates more electricity than the area can use. Socialism has brought no growth and no prosperity.

I spent an afternoon at the Bahr Dar Regional Planning Office. It was originally set up to oversee economic development for all of Gojjam and Gondar provinces. Officials there, mostly newly arrived, explained that the planning structure was now being decentralized so that each of the five new administrative regions into which these two provinces are being divided would have its own planning office to encourage exploitation of local resources. The Bahr Dar office will henceforth be concerned only with West Gojjam, of which Bahr Dar is the capital. None of these young men seemed to have much enthusiasm for going out to open new offices in Debra Marqos, Addis Zemen, and Pawe. Their briefing, accompanied by colored vugraph slides, was long on geography and elementary statistics which confirmed the well-known agricultural potential of the region. Educational development is lagging: only 30 percent of the grade-school-age children in the region are actually attending school. The aim is to reach 50 percent attendance of this group by 1992. Attendance at higher levels is much lower.

Summing up their approach to their work, these officials explained that development priorities are three: (1) producing a dependable food-grain surplus; (2) creating employment opportunities; and (3) interrelating agriculture with local small-scale industry. It would be difficult to challenge the validity of these goals, but the planners could offer no examples of projects to implement the second and third objectives. Discussion, which included a good deal of Soviet-style
economic jargon, was mostly in terms of central government-initiated programs. They had difficulty thinking in terms of genuine local initiative and the possibility that private entrepreneurs might help implement their plans did not seem to have occurred to them.

I had stayed longer with the planning people than I had intended and arrived a bit late for a 4:30 appointment with the regional WPE secretary. Party headquarters in Bahr Dar is in the former government compound. As we drove through the gate I noticed that the crowns had been rather crudely knocked off the flanking lions. I did not get to talk to the party secretary—he had already left his office for the day. This was the only occasion during this year's travels when a party secretary avoided a meeting.

I will continue discussion of villagization and resettlement in Gojjam under those headings below. Returning southward to Shoa via the main trans-Gojjam highway (with side trips to Pawe, to the source of the Nile at Gish Abbay, and to the new Blue Nile Bridge), we were impressed by the beauty of the landscape and the agricultural richness of the province. But we were also struck by the absence of change in the towns through which we passed: Dangila, Injibara, Fenote Selam, Dembacha, and Debra Marqos. They looked much as they did before the Revolution.

As we had to do on the way north the previous week, we spent a couple of hours threading our way through an armored regiment on its way up to bolster forces defending Gondar. Tanks and APCs, trucks, rocket launchers, and other weaponry were being transported by trailer trucks requisitioned from civil government agencies and private firms—a graphic example of the manner in which the functioning of Ethiopia's civilian economy is constrained by military operations. Troops on the vehicles carried no flags or banners and we saw no civilians in towns or along the highway waving or cheering.

The main highway across Gojjam is deteriorating under heavy military traffic, so it was a relief to turn off before Bure onto the new road to the Blue Nile Bridge construction site which will eventually connect central Gojjam to Wollega and open one of the most inaccessible highland regions of Ethiopia to development. On the Gojjam side the
roadbed is finished, though unasphalted. The much longer section south of the Nile in Wollega still needs a great deal of work.

I realized when we reached the bridge site itself how unrealistic it had been in the spring of 1988 to expect to drive from Nekempe north and try to cross the bridge or be transported by ferry across the river into Gojjam, as we had set out to do. Bridge construction, financed by a World Bank loan, is behind schedule and no crossing is possible except by rubber boat. The steel and reinforced concrete bridge, when finished, will be considerably higher than the Nile bridge at Shafartak. But it will be two years, at a minimum, before it can carry traffic. The gorge here is narrower and steeper than upstream. It was spectacular with distant brush and grass fires at dusk.
III. VILLAGIZATION

I have already noted that villagization in Gojjam often appears to have been carried out with attention to local circumstances and sensitivities and appears, therefore, to have had a less debilitating impact on rural life than in many other parts of Ethiopia. In most other regions, however, villagization has impressed me as leading to doubtful--and increasingly negative--short-term consequences. I am more convinced than ever that its medium- and long-term impact on rural society is likely to be profoundly disruptive and debilitating.

This impression was reinforced by conversations in the course of this visit with several Ethiopian and foreign specialists currently doing research on rural life, including villagization. The PDRE has not given much encouragement to researchers who wish to study attitudes and practices of villagized peasants but neither has it prohibited such research. Government officials close to these situations and conscious of the problems villagization has caused are tacitly encouraging research by specialists. Several research efforts under way by both Ethiopians and foreigners are likely to provide significant data within a year or two.

Regime officials with whom I discussed villagization were more often than not defensive and apologetic, admitting that few of the services promised have been provided or are likely to be forthcoming soon, given the enormous burden continued military operations in the north place upon PDRE's extremely limited resources. Some were at pains to insist that villagization is not to be regarded as a preliminary step to collectivization. That may be the hope of the officials themselves, but it is difficult to reach any other conclusion about the regime's aims on the basis of the ideological pronouncements of top officials. Given the fact that the Marxist-Leninist regime's authority is declining, however, along with its ability to drive party activists and local officials to carry out its programs, regime ideologues lack the will to transform villages into kolkhozes.
ARUSSI\(^1\)

Traveling the full length of Arussi from south to north, I was shocked at the poor condition of the villages I saw along the route. When I last visited Arussi in the spring of 1987, most of the region was newly villagized. The huge, newly established villages did not make an immediately negative impression. A few weeks before that visit, John Cohen and Nils-Ivar Isaksson had made their survey of Arussi villagization in behalf of SIDA, the official Swedish aid organization.\(^2\) They raised a number of basic questions about the impact of villagization on health and production but felt it was too early to attempt answers. Visiting many of the villages they surveyed, I was struck by the absence of promised facilities to raise the standard of life of the villagers (wells, shops, schools, clinics) and by the potential erosion and sanitary problems these large grid-style villages seemed likely to produce; also by the enormous waste of time required of men carrying plows to and from their now distant fields and women carrying water for household use from far-off springs and rivers.

In March 1989 I saw little evidence that the shortcomings in Arussi villages have been remedied. What was most surprising--and depressing--about them was their unkempt appearance--houses with shabbily patched thatch, some standing empty, lack of tree plantings, fences or sod walls and auxiliary structures. Most of the villages looked like temporary camps and their inhabitants now commonly refer to them as camps rather than as villages.

\(^1\)Officially the name of this province has been changed to Arsi. This pronunciation is said to correspond more closely to that of the Oromo subgroup who are its principal inhabitants. I noticed that most Ethiopians still adhere to the older form.

MENINGITIS

I did not have the opportunity to determine whether meningitis has become a serious problem in Arussi. I was told by WPE officials in Bale that there were only a few cases there. Meningitis is difficult to diagnose until the victims (usually children) reach an acute stage. It can then be treated only with antibiotics which, like all basic medicines, are in short supply in Ethiopia. By February 1989, meningitis had reached epidemic proportions in the heavily populated regions of Southwest Shoa and northern Sidamo with as many as 15,000 cases said to have been registered by early March. ³ Both foreign and Ethiopian health workers attributed its rapid spread, in part, to the concentration of so many people in unsanitary conditions in the new villages. Extensive immunization efforts were under way and some foreign aid groups (notably Irish Concern) were assisting the government, but the accomplishment of large-scale immunization is made difficult by the fact that the serum requires refrigeration and many thickly populated regions in southern Shoa, Sidamo, and Gamu Gofa are difficult to reach.⁴

THE SOUTHWEST

I traversed Gurageland from Alemgena via Butajira to Hosaenna and observed no new villagization. So far, at least, the Gurage seem justified in their expectation, expressed when I visited this region in March 1987, that they would not be villagized.⁵ Certain other southwestern nationalities with highly distinctive ways of life have also been exempted from villagization: the Dorze of the Gamu highlands

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⁴I have subsequently learned that by April meningitis had spread northward to Pave in Gojjam where several dozen cases had been reported. Regime media did not acknowledge the seriousness of the meningitis epidemic during the spring, but on June 11, 1989, the Ethiopian Herald carried a short page one news item headlined, "Meningitis Decreasing," in which the epidemic was said to have claimed 1512 lives. Some 40,349 persons were said to have experienced the disease.
⁵See Ethiopia: Contrasts and Contradictions, pp. 18-19.
and the Konso of the far southwest. Like the Gurage, the Dorze practice intensive agriculture centered on cultivation of ensete and vegetables, keep few cattle and care for them well, and live in hilly, well-watered landscape in clusters of houses that form embryonic villages. Dorze houses are really enormous inverted bamboo baskets. Dorze are famous throughout Ethiopia for the high quality cotton cloth they produce. In their spare time, the women spin and the men weave. This work is a dependable source of cash income. By current Ethiopian standards, Dorzeland impressed us as prosperous and the people as untroubled by outside concerns. The Saturday market at Chencha was colorful and busy with 2,000 to 3,000 people buying, selling, and socializing.

The Konso live in hilltop villages and cultivate elaborately terraced hillsides. They have a complex social and political structure and historical traditions that extend back several centuries. The Konso region gave an impression of a stable and satisfactory life. Local people were eager to show us their houses and shrines and young men were hawking handicraft items as if they were accustomed to frequent visitors. We observed new terraces under construction.

En route to Konso we passed an extraordinary complex of new villages where people living in the mountains of Gidole, west of Lake Chamo, have been brought down to the lakeside plain and established in a series of almost continuous new settlements which give the appearance of much more firmly established and organized life than most new villages. This was the only time in Ethiopia where I have actually observed a well-drilling rig in operation. Several wells had been drilled and were being heavily used by villagers.

There are other exceptions to villagization in the southwest, especially in the coffee-growing regions of Sidamo and Kaffa. Of these, I visited only parts of Sidamo but received extensive briefings from U.S. Embassy personnel, EEC officials, and officials of the Ministry of Coffee and Tea on changes that have taken place during the past two years. These are largely the result of sustained EEC pressure for

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policy adjustments to favor small peasant coffee producers and recognition by responsible PDRE officials that the individual peasant farmer offers the best prospects for increasing collection of coffee.

Coffee-producing regions have been taken completely out of the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Agriculture and placed directly under the Ministry of Coffee and Tea. All villagization in major coffee-producing regions has ceased and the population has been assured that there will be none in the immediate future. Coffee seedlings supplied by EEC-supported nurseries are now provided to private farmers at no or nominal cost with no favoritism toward cooperatives and state farms.  

Extension services have been expanded and reoriented toward the small producer.

NORTHERN SHOA

Villagization has proceeded at a forced pace in northern Shoa, especially along main roads. Local officials have been pressed by Addis Ababa to get their districts completely villaged as soon as possible. In more remote areas, off the main roads, both peasants and officials have occasionally been able to resist pressure from the capital. Nevertheless, the highlands of Selale, Merhabete, Jirru, Tegulet, and Manz as seen from the main roads appear to be 40 to 70 percent villaged. The large fieldstone farmsteads so long characteristic of this region, now abandoned and falling into ruin, give the impression of a landscape devastated by war. The same is true of the complexes of homesteads surrounded by huge stockade-like hedges of candelabra euphorbia in Jirru and Merhabete. Both the stone and the euphorbia enclosures used to house several families.

It is very difficult to see what has been gained by moving these people into less adequate housing in grid-patterned camps, but the WPE no doubt now feels more secure about its ability to control both people and production. Very occasionally new villages have incorporated existing homesteads. There is an attractive example—exceptionally

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7See Ethiopia: Contrasts and Contradictions, pp. 17-18.
complete with a new church—at Dalota along the main highway from Addis Ababa to Debra Berhan. In most other places the new rectangular camps sprawl across formerly cultivated fields. 

Throughout northern Shoa the 1988 harvest was good—evident from the stacks of bright yellow straw near threshing floors and beside houses. In February and early March, threshing was still in progress in many places and the quality of the wheat and barley looked high. But here, as in many parts of the center and south, farmers are said to be favoring non-grain crops which do not fall under the compulsory quota system. In other regions, such as Arussi, they are reportedly shifting to livestock—cattle and sheep primarily—which can be sold for ready cash whether brought to cities or driven southeastward across the border into Somalia.

A large country market in Tegulet at a town called Hamus Gebaya gave an unusually prosperous impression, with grain for sale, animals being traded, and a great deal of handwoven cloth, simple factory-made clothing for both men and women, plastic shoes, and elementary consumer goods available. Huge piles of cherry tomatoes (a new crop in this region) as well as other vegetables were being sold.

I have never seen such enormous quantities of the local home-brewed gin, katikala, on sale. Women distill and sell this potent clear grain alcohol, bring it to market in large plastic jugs and dispense it in reused Johnny Walker Red and Black Label Scotch bottles at B4-5 per liter. They laughingly offered capfuls to prospective buyers to sample. Ethiopians have always had a fondness for drink; but the experience of communism appears to be stimulating it further, just as it has intensified interest in religion. Staying overnight in a country

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8In Romania, Ceausescu claims that the bulldozing of traditional villages and moving of peasants into rural apartment blocks has the advantage of freeing more land for cultivation. In Ethiopia, cultivated land has been extensively taken for the new villages. Whatever rationalization communist leaders use for meddling with the peasantry, the basic aim is always the same: to break age-old rural patterns of life and gain more control over people, livestock, and produce.

9The official exchange rate is 2.07 Ethiopian birr to the U.S. dollar.
inn at Enowari in Jirru (B1.75 per bed), we found the place crowded with local farmers happily putting down bottle after bottle of red Guder wine at B3 per liter.

The still enforced but much resented ban on Sunday driving has brought a halt to large-scale Sunday travel by Addis Ababans to the north Shoa countryside to buy butter, eggs, chickens, vegetables, grain, and bundles of firewood. This trade benefited both urban dwellers and peasants. What harm it did the government is hard to understand. Nevertheless, a few years ago regime ideologues, in characteristically meddlesome socialist fashion, set up highway checkpoints to search private vehicles and buses and confiscate purchases. The searches now appear to have ceased and the trade has shifted to Saturdays and weekdays.

In northern Shoa, I gained the impression that villagers along the main highways are occupying themselves as little as possible with joint or communal activities and concentrating on growing and gathering produce that brings immediate monetary return. But is there enough for them to buy with the money they earn? I will comment on this in the section on the economy below.

RESTRICTIONS AND CONTRADICTIONS

In Shoa, unlike Gojjam, villages are almost always sited far from churches. In Shoa, Sidamo, Bale, and Arussi, weekly and biweekly markets are usually not permitted adjacent to new villages. Country people continue to walk enormous distances to attend both church services and markets at traditional locations. Children also have to walk great distances to school. In the new villages, all overt trade and handicraft activity remains proscribed. Openly commercial eating and drinking establishments are not permitted, but a good deal of talla (home-brewed beer) and katikala seem to be sold semi-illicitly. Some housewives sell prepared food in their houses. Cooperative shops in villages which have them continue to be poorly stocked.
If some of the new villages were permitted to acquire simple amenities and serve as centers for services which rural villages all over the world provide, some would no doubt evolve into viable settlements and eventually into towns. A seasoned observer from the European Community mission in Addis Ababa who has watched villagization in Shoa from its inception offered this summary: "As they stand, perhaps one-third of the new villages are viable and may survive. A third are total disasters. The remaining third are problematic."

My net impression from northern Shoa and Arussi as well as Gojjam is that where officials are not zealous, there is considerable erosion of the rules and some slippage of people away from villages. Some peasants may be indulging in the forbidden practice of spending occasional nights in their fields to guard crops or simply to avoid taking animals and plows back and forth each evening and morning. If policy were to change, e.g., if a new government were to announce that the rural population was henceforth free to stay or leave villages according to their desires, many observers believe that the majority of villages would soon dissolve back into the landscape.

The only solid structures that have been built in most villages are WPE offices and meeting halls. There are no buildings that serve the real interests of their inhabitants. Though there are exceptions (especially in central Shoa and Hararge) where tin roofs and other amenities, including—very occasionally—electricity, have been provided for new village houses, most villagized peasants experienced a net degradation of the quality of their housing when they were forced to move; for when they had to carry the components to new sites, they were unable to reconstruct their houses as solidly as before. In northern Shoa, where nighttime temperatures sometimes fall to freezing, people who had to abandon their solidly built stone homes have for the most part been rehoused in flimsier wood and *chiga* (clay-plastered) structures.

Is life in Ethiopia's new villages undiluted misery? Are the villages, in effect, rural concentration camps? While I saw no examples of the happy troupes of well-dressed, smiling, singing peasants engaging
in the kind of joyous collective labor which PDRE propaganda posters depict, there is also little evidence of direct coercion in the new villages. People appear still to go about their daily tasks much as they did when they were scattered across the countryside.

What about the regime's aim of getting peasants to engage spontaneously in communal endeavors? There is evidence of increased joint herding of livestock but little indication of joint agricultural efforts except of the long-practiced traditional kind: e.g., people joining together for threshing, winnowing, and haymaking. Researchers who are studying new villages report development of patterns of closer association among women and some mutual self-help arrangements. Men and women who formerly met only once a week at markets now see each other every day and exchange news and information. People have more immediate access to local officials. Where these are responsive and diligent and have the means to impart information on improved agricultural practices, peasants can benefit and some do. Most peasants, however, appear to regard the gains they experience from villagization as marginal compared to the loss of privacy and sense of no longer being masters of their fate.

Except where aid donors (primarily the World Bank and the EEC) have insisted on nondiscriminatory treatment of individual peasants, the bulk of agricultural investment continues to go to state farms and collective farms. While few of the services promised have materialized or appear to be in the offing, villagers are now more readily coercible into participation in government-sponsored programs (such as roadwork or tree-planting) and few undertake such work with enthusiasm. Young people, in particular, find village life unattractive. They can too easily be coerced into collective labor. Young men resent their greater vulnerability to being drafted for military service. There is a strong tendency for the younger generation to look upon the new villages as temporary homes where their parents may be condemned to stay but which have no appeal to them as a place to spend their lives.
There is a serious danger, therefore, that the cumulative knowledge and lore which have sustained Ethiopian peasant agriculture for centuries will after a generation be lost. Progressively fewer young people will want to follow in their fathers' and mothers' footsteps. Marxist-Leninist ideologues will argue that a prime aim of villagization has been to achieve exactly this result and "improve" the lot of the peasants by turning them into a rural proletariat who can evolve into wage-earners on state farms. They ignore the fact that Soviet, East European, and Chinese experience do not validate this argument.

Sixty years of collectivization in the Soviet Union have produced an almost total distaste among young Russians for agricultural existence with the result that the Russian countryside has suffered a severe decline which partial reforms have not yet been able to reverse. China abandoned peasant communes before the peasants lost the work ethic and forgot how to farm profitably. Thus, while China now produces food in abundance, shortages in the Soviet Union have been worsening. If Ethiopia were to follow the Chinese example and free its peasantry, and shift the support it has given state farms to benefit individual peasants--or even to give individual peasants the opportunity to help themselves by selling freely and hiring labor when they can make good use of it--the country would soon be able to assure its food supply and generate surpluses.
IV. RESETTLEMENT

BACKGROUND

One of my objectives during this visit was to continue assessing the massive resettlement program undertaken by the WPE five years ago. I visited resettlement sites in Arussi and Bale in 1984, in Kaffa in 1987, in Wollega and Hararge in 1988, and in Gojjam in 1989. During this most recent visit I had the opportunity to review a report on the entire resettlement experience prepared by a high-level PDRE committee during the winter of 1987-1988. This remarkably frank evaluation of the resettlement program is a devastating condemnation of the entire experience and provides detailed substantiation for most of the criticisms that have been made of it by foreign observers.¹ Among its summary observations are these:

At present the government has given high priority to the resettlement program. However there is no scientific information that can help in the implementation of the program due to the lack of adequate research. As a result, most settlers have not obtained economic advantage from resettlement. This has created a situation of temporary existence in the resettlement areas [with the settlers] waiting for their chance to run away.²

Statistics included in the report reveal that as of September 1987, 594,190 persons were established in resettlement areas. Of those originally resettled, 32,880 had died and 83,968 had fled. Given the nature of the resettlement program it is impossible to believe that these statistics can be accurate to the last digit or even to the

²PDRE, Committee Established for National Problems, Report of a Study of Problems of Post-Revolutionary Ethiopian Resettlement, Addis Ababa, April 1988, Chapter 3. To date, as far as is known, President Mengistu and the senior PDRE hierarchy have neither accepted nor reacted to this report.
nearest thousand. Nevertheless, my firsthand observations and conversations with Western aid officials in Ethiopia provide no reason to doubt the general validity of the statistics and negative conclusions of the report.

Minimal direct expenditures for resettlement by the PDRE are calculated in the report at B564,400,000 (US$272,657,000 at the official B2.07/$ rate of exchange). To these, to obtain the real cost, would have to be added the continuing contributions of foreign governments and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to the support of resettlement sites. Considering the large Italian expenditure at Pawi, the foreign contribution to resettlement may well total twice as much as the PDRE has spent. The subject needs additional research. I plan shortly to prepare an analysis devoted exclusively to the resettlement issue, so I will deal here only with two sites: Jarso and Pawi.

**JARSO**

When I visited the Jarso resettlement area in western Wollega in March 1988, I was struck by the precariousness of the condition of the approximately 13,000 settlers there, most of them originally highlanders from Tigre and Wollo. Except for vast quantities of field corn (maize) little was being produced. The hard-working party official in charge of the area enumerated his priority problems: poor transportation, meager supply of consumer goods (the settlement's cooperative shop stocked only a few rubber boots and salt), lack of tractors suitable for fieldwork, and problems of oxen dying because of the hot climate and lowland diseases.

The imbalance in the settler population between males and females (more males evaded being rounded up at famine camps when the push for resettlement came) was worsening because men found it easier to flee, leaving women to cope as heads of families. Poor health conditions (alleviated primarily by the efforts of Irish Concern and one young dedicated medical technician from Addis Ababa University) were not bad enough to have affected the reproduction rate of the mostly young population, however. The birthrate was said to be over 4 percent
annually and schools (also in part supported by Irish Concern) were so overcrowded that a system of dismissing poor performers had just been adopted.

There was uneasiness at the site because of threatened attack by the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and a portion of the men at the site had been diverted from productive work to serve as militia patrols. The week after I visited Jarso, the OLF did attack, killed a few settlers, kidnapped two Irish nurses and took them to Sudan.

Talking to Irish Concern administrators in Addis Ababa in February 1989, I learned that the Jarso resettlement area had gone further downhill during the intervening year. Even the corn crop was poor in 1988. Lack of capital has continued to prevent initiation of irrigated agriculture. The party chief, who had been at the site for 2-1/2 years and had told me "I want to stay here, make it my home and make a success of it," had been transferred. Another 10 percent of the settlers had fled, further aggravating the male-female imbalance.

The OLF has continued harassment and Irish Concern personnel were temporarily withdrawn in February 1989 to ensure their safety. Two PDRE coffee projects in the Nejo-Jarso area were suspended in March 1989 because of OLF incursions. The conclusion: Jarso, instead of heading toward self-sufficiency, is deteriorating at an accelerating rate. Some foreign specialists doubt the site can be maintained beyond the present year.

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3This man was unique in my experience of party officials at resettlement sites, most of whom serve little more than a year and long for early transfer. Their attitudes and method of operation are essentially those of colonial administrators. They enjoy living amenities which, though hardly luxurious by Western standards, are far superior to those of the settlers. When I praised the Jarso party chief after visiting the site, an otherwise humane and intelligent WPE escort accompanying me from Addis Ababa commented, "I shall recommend Comrade X's removal when I return to Addis Ababa, for he has been here too long and is identifying too much with the settlers."
PAWE

Officially known as the Tana-Beles Project and a showplace to which foreign visitors are regularly taken, Pawe has been the PDRE's favorite resettlement site since Italy decided in early 1986 to make a massive investment there. Upwards of 100,000 settlers, mostly from the northern highlands (but also including some Kambatta from the southwest) were brought to this lowland region along the Beles River in the Gojjam Metekel in 1985 and, in effect, dumped to fend for themselves in hostile, malarial landscape thickly covered with bamboo forest. The sparse local population consisted of primitive Gumuz tribesmen still leading a hunter-gatherer existence. The PDRE sent platoons of students to the area to build grass huts for the settlers but was able to allocate very few resources to assisting them. Mortality at Pawe during the first year is said to have exceeded 30 percent. If the Italians had not chosen the area for a major investment to see if resettlement could be made to work, Pawe would probably have been an even greater human disaster.

Three years later, the Italian investment totals $270 million, and it has made a remarkable impact on the local environment. Some 75,000 to 80,000 villagers now live in 46 villages scattered through an area of 250,000 hectares. After we had traveled over the dusty new highway down the escarpment and through the heat of the bamboo-forested lowlands to reach Pawe, we appreciated the welcome of the Italian project staff, the sparkling cleanliness of the guest quarters and the simple but excellent cuisine in the dining room. But the question that recurred constantly as we toured this oasis in the jungle was: Can this massive project be sustained without substantial additional—and continuing—investment? Is there any prospect the PDRE could take responsibility for it and find the resources necessary to keep it going?

Pawe has been chosen as the capital of the new Metekel Administrative Region. Our official visit the morning after we arrived began with a call on the recently appointed WPE secretary (a military officer recently transferred from Eritrea) and the regional administrator in their "capital," a group of three thatched tukuls set
among flowerbeds and newly planted trees. They gave us a short briefing on their plans for the region which they admitted were not yet very extensively elaborated.

For all practical purposes, Pawe is administered by the staff of the Italian company which has been engaged by the Italian Aid Fund (FAI) to carry out all development work, Salini Costruttori, S.p.A. (SALCOST), an Italian engineering firm based in Rome, with worldwide experience. At the height of its operations, SALCOST employed 300 Italians at Pawe. They have carried out an extensive Ethiopianization process and SALCOST now employs about 100 Italian nationals along with approximately 1000 Ethiopian citizens.

A great deal of infrastructure has been built: a large airfield with daily service to Addis Ababa, a good all-weather road network, power lines, water systems, and living and working quarters for both Italian and Ethiopian personnel. Industrial installations include a fiberglass pipe factory, a rice processing plant, a soya milk factory, a soya bread bakery and processing and storage facilities for other agricultural products. A fully equipped modern hospital has recently been completed. A concrete high dam on a Beles tributary (the Gilgil Beles) is nearing completion. It will provide water for drinking and irrigation as well as power.

Malaria remains a serious problem, for thatched bamboo housing originally provided for the settlers gave no protection from mosquitos. To remedy this situation all the villages are in the process of being rebuilt with rectangular bamboo-frame houses plastered with clay and roofed with tin. While most villages are laid out in military camp grid style, there has been some experimentation with other layouts, e.g., houses clustered around a central circle.

Enormous areas of black soil have been cleared with heavy earth-moving equipment and large areas have been planted with rice and soybeans, the most successful crops. Almost all agricultural work is done with heavy machinery. The Italians insist that the settlers have been taught to eat rice and enjoy it. Soya milk in half-liter plastic packages is delivered to each village every day. Soya-meal bread is
centrally baked daily and delivered to the settlers. Other crops include sunflowers, maize, sorghum, peanuts, bananas, and vegetables, but experience with them has been mixed, for most of the settlers are unaccustomed to cultivating tropical crops.

There appears to be almost no private agriculture. The project as a whole operates, therefore, as a huge state farm. Individual settlers appear to keep little livestock. The Italians operate a mechanized chicken hatchery and provide chicks to each settler who wants them. Many eat or sell them, it was said, rather than keep them for egg production.

Of the Ethiopian resettlement sites I have visited, Pawe gives the impression of being least oriented toward self-sufficiency on the part of the settlers. It is difficult to escape the conclusion—which the Italian staff themselves tacitly confirmed—that if the elaborate, paternalistic support structure were to cease operating, the development momentum achieved at the site would be impossible to maintain. The PDRE, with ever fewer financial resources at its disposal, could not fund a fraction of the cost. Furthermore, whether the outlay would make sense in comparison with other development priorities, even if funds could be found, is a serious question. The beautifully equipped modern hospital remains inoperative because the severely strapped PDRE Ministry of Health has neither the personnel to staff it nor the money to operate it.

The Italians who manage Pawe as well as the Italian Embassy in Addis Ababa are acutely aware of the precariousness of the site. There has been strong press criticism in Italy of the investment of Italian taxpayers' money there. A parliamentary delegation visited Pawe in September 1988 and probed into all aspects of the undertaking. Some members of parliament urged withdrawal of Italian presence and sharp reduction of funding. The delegation settled on the conclusion that what has been built to date places an obligation on Italy to see the project through for another year or two but does not justify expansion. The original plan to build a tunnel to divert water from Lake Tana into the Beles system for larger-scale irrigation is being shelved.
Intensified guerrilla harassment of Pawe could force an earlier Italian withdrawal. A female guerrilla leader, Ayelnesh, who is said to belong to the EPRP,* has been active in the region during the past three years and has mounted attacks which have resulted in the deaths of several Ethiopians, the destruction of many vehicles, and kidnapping of Italians. A few days before our visit, Ayelnesh had sent a warning that her guerrillas were about to attack again. Her warning was taken seriously at the site and both Italians and Ethiopians were edgy about it. Five outlying villages were evacuated and an Ethiopian military unit based outside the site moved in to patrol the area thought to be under threat. This was regarded by both Italians and Ethiopians at the site as a mixed blessing, for recent PDRE defeats in Tigre and the threatened guerrilla siege of Gondar had reduced confidence in the effectiveness of the regime's military forces while their mere presence inside the boundaries of the site was seen as an enticement to the guerrillas to attack.

Ayelnesh, said to be the daughter of a Tigrean businessman who was killed by the Derg in the early period of the revolution, has reportedly vowed to keep harassing the site until the Italians are forced to depart. She is presumed to have sympathizers among the settlers, many of whom were brought from Tigre under less than voluntary circumstances. A mysterious fire broke out on a Saturday night a few weeks before our visit in the fiberglass pipe factory and destroyed half of it. Piles of twisted girders and debris had not yet been cleaned up. No one in authority wanted to attribute this disaster to sabotage but the suspicion is widespread. The pipe factory is now in the process of being rebuilt. The pipe it produces is essential to completion of the projects connected with the high dam.

*The Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Party, a radical Marxist group which became active in 1975 and challenged the military leadership then consolidating around Mengistu. The party became a major target of the Derg's Red Terror campaign in 1976-1977. Many adherents were killed and others took refuge in the mountainous northwest where they have ever since maintained some armed presence.
More than any other resettlement site I have seen in Ethiopia, Pawe symbolizes the unwisdom of the massive resettlement program Mengistu ordered in 1984. It was originally endorsed by the Russians without whose help transport of the settlers would have been much more difficult and even more costly in lives than it was. The Russians have long since distanced themselves from their original position, have provided no assistance, and have maintained a discreet silence about the problems resettlement has generated. A recent study of the costs of resettlement by a French economist concludes that the entire undertaking offers no promise of becoming self-supporting in the foreseeable future.⁵

NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES

The negative consequences of resettlement include not only the loss of life and waste of money and other resources, but also the fact that resettlement as a concept has been discredited by the coercive manner in which the program was initiated and administered. As with villagization, if the government had confined its efforts to provision of elementary facilities and support for citizens who wished to volunteer to participate, far fewer people would have joined the movement but they would in all likelihood have had some success in establishing a basis for viable settlements.

Ethiopia's extensive lowlands are relatively well watered and represent a great agricultural potential, but development of them requires heavy investment in infrastructure and careful experimentation to learn how soils react to cultivation, what grows best, how diseases can be combatted, and how settlers can best be helped and supported. For thousands of years Ethiopian highlanders have avoided these regions. Mengistu's government has simply dumped people into them. The settlers were not carefully selected. Even well-chosen settlers could not develop skill in coping with a totally new environment in a few years.

Rational calculations of how Ethiopia could best employ its limited resources to achieve more rapid agricultural development and secure its food supply could hardly support reliance on resettlement schemes such as Jarso or Pawe.
V. THE ECONOMY

FOOD

"There is more food in Addis Ababa than there is in Moscow!" a member of a delegation of Ethiopian Shengo (parliament) members who had gone to the USSR at the turn of the year told me with some astonishment. I had seen that for myself in Moscow six months before. The shortage of both meat and vegetables as well as fish and fruit in the Soviet Union shocks Ethiopians who go there.

Urban Ethiopians have become ardent fish eaters during the Lenten fast (which began early in March this year and was widely observed, even by some WPE members). I learned when visiting the EEC-supported Rift Valley fishing project at Lake Zway that 8.8 tons of fresh frozen fish gathered from several Rift Valley lakes were being sent to Addis Ababa every day. The EEC insists that these be made available for sale through private shops as well as government outlets.

Meat on the hoof comes steadily into Addis Ababa from the countryside. A sheep sells for B$0-120; a steer for B$400-850. Meat is much more plentiful than in the USSR. In provincial towns in all the regions I visited, restaurants regularly offered one or more meat dishes. Eggs were available everywhere. Fruit and vegetables are plentiful in shops and streetside stands in Addis Ababa and are also in evidence in most country markets.

The traditional diet of meat and cereals is increasingly recognized by educated Ethiopians as not conducive to the best of health and city dwellers have become much more diet-conscious than they used to be. They are more receptive to fruit and vegetables. Watermelon is a recent popular addition to the Ethiopian diet. Huge piles of them are offered for sale along the Rift Valley and Nazareth highways.

Since the 1988 harvest was good in almost all parts of the country, teff, the grain from which Ethiopians prefer to make injera, is relatively plentiful. Prices ranged from B$60 in rural Gojjam to B$120 in Addis Ababa and, I was told, B$180-200 in Asmara. The food supply in
Asmara was described by recent visitors as good. Even in Tigre famine was not an immediate threat. There are two reasons: a good 1988 harvest and the fact that large quantities of foreign-donated grain have been stockpiled over the past year and a half. In spite of a generally good food situation, some refugee groups are constantly on the verge of food shortage and dependent on NGO emergency assistance. This is true of those from the southern Sudan in the southwest as well as the large number of refugees from northern Somalia (said to total over 300,000) in Hararge.

Long-term food prospects remain as problematic as ever. The good harvest in 1988 has given the regime a breathing spell in which to contemplate the effect of the agricultural policies which it has dogmatically followed to date. There is little to indicate that it has reconciled itself to basic reforms.

Though specialists in ministries, economists at the Institute of Development Studies at Addis Ababa University, and officials of international organizations providing development aid remain hopeful, adjustments which have been made in respect to high-priority export crops such as coffee have so far had no impact on the larger framework of agricultural policies as a whole. I found, regrettably, nothing during my recent visit to justify a revision of the forecast of economic prospects for the 1990s which I originally made in the summer of 1988.¹

COFFEE

I had the impression traveling across Sidamo that some of the regime's controls on transport of coffee have been eased—or, if they have not eased, road checkpoints are simply not being as conscientiously manned as they were a year or two ago. This may be another example of the slackness in exercise of government controls that I experienced time and again during this visit to Ethiopia. Since foreign exchange reserves have remained low during the entire past year (they were said to have fallen below $20 million by March 1989) and since few other

exports have materialized, the government keeps trying to collect more coffee to export. Prospects for reaching its 100,000T goal in 1989 are said, nevertheless, to be poor, and prices in the world coffee market have recently fallen sharply.

There has been no significant change in the Ethiopian regime's internal pricing policy. Coffee is pegged domestically at B12-16 per kilogram which makes it extremely expensive for domestic consumers and encourages peasants who produce coffee and who are paid less than 20 percent of this price even for the highest quality coffee they deliver to the state, to divert production to the unofficial market. Ethiopians are addicted to coffee and it plays an important social role. The determination of the regime to maintain high domestic coffee prices (which appear to have little relationship to the capacity of the country to export) is another example of the stubbornness of socialist bureaucrats in maintaining counterproductive price controls.

I asked a senior official of the Ministry of Coffee and Tea why domestic price controls on coffee were not lifted, for this would give the people the pleasure of an unlimited supply of coffee at a fair price while at the same time assuring the producer a legal and fair profit. "You are absolutely correct," he replied, "but the bureaucrats cannot understand it. There is no rational justification for these controls. They are an example of sheer stupidity."

I gained new insight in Bale into coffee smuggling into Somalia. I was told by a party official that the Oromo peasants of Bale who had not previously collected coffee commercially have taken to harvesting wild coffee on the southern slopes of the Bale mountains where it grows profusely. They transport it across the border to Somalia by whatever means they can employ: camel, donkey or truck. A brisk trade, totaling several thousand tons per year, has developed.

Along with livestock smuggled on the hoof to Somalia (this trade continues at a very high level and sustains Somali meat exports to the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf), the unofficial coffee trade represents a major source of income in Bale. "What do you get in return?" I asked the local official. With a considerable sense of
satisfaction, and no embarrassment, he replied, "We get all kinds of things from Korea, Taiwan and Hong Kong: electronic goods, clothing, appliances. Some goes from here into the center of the country."

THE UNOFFICIAL ECONOMY

In the spring of 1988 I visited Diredawa and Harar. It was evident that the region was doing well economically. I did not have time to revisit eastern Ethiopia this year, but was told that the de facto "Free Trade Area," which includes eastern Ethiopia, Djibouti, and northern Somalia, continues to flourish. "Taiwan," as the great market in Diredawa is called, is said to be booming again in spite of a fire a year ago.

The Addis Ababa Mercato is also thriving. I have never seen it busier and more crowded with goods, people, and vehicles. Walking around it, I found it difficult to believe that I was in a country as economically depressed as official statistics show Ethiopia to be. The conclusion is clear: It is the Marxist-Leninist government's policies that are bankrupt, not the country itself.

Official statistics, even though they are conscientiously collected and published by the Central Statistical Administration, are an increasingly inadequate basis for judging the real state of the Ethiopian economy, so much of it has slipped outside the realm of government control. A senior official of the Ministry of Foreign Trade told me that the actual level of foreign trade may be twice as high as official figures indicate. This means that as much as two-thirds of the country's exports may escape recording in official statistics.

There is trade in both directions over all of Ethiopia's borders, including those with Kenya. Goods move with comparative ease across the borders with Djibouti and northern Somalia, which is now largely outside the control of the Mogadishu government. A sizable quantity of gold is said to be moving into Sudan, and in return a wide variety of consumer goods comes into Ethiopia from this direction, too.
Inside Ethiopia, goods move with relative ease between government-controlled areas and those under the domination of insurgent movements. Eritrean-operated businesses throughout the country are good money-earners for the EPLF, which helps maintain the flow of scarce consumer goods to them and in return receives a share of the profits. Coffee harvested in Wollega and Kaffa reaches EPLF-held territory in Eritrea through various channels and sells for B6-8 per kilo, half the official PDRE price. It is said to be plentiful in EPLF-held areas.

The Ethiopian birr continues to maintain its value and is far ahead of the Sudanese and Somali currencies, which have almost collapsed. In terms of its unofficial street rate vis-a-vis the official exchange rate the birr is far less overvalued than the Russian ruble.² It is widely used in insurgent-held areas inside the country. The regime continues to resist pressure for devaluation. There is a certain logic in its position, for devaluation would have little effect on increasing official exports because so much of what is available for export already goes out through well-established unofficial channels and little else can be found to export legally. Only a radical change in regime economic policies could, over a two- to three-year period, give a solid boost to legal exports.

The restrictive economic policies of the government cost it dearly in both short- and longer-term respects. Merchants and entrepreneurs active in the unofficial economy pay little, if any, tax on most of their earnings. They have little incentive to undertake serious capital investment, and most of their economic calculations are in a two- to three-year time frame at the outside.

The situation favors the least principled operators. And, as always occurs in the distorted world of Soviet-type economies, some

²The Addis Ababa street rate is B4-5/$1. This gives the birr a "real" value of approximately $.22 in comparison to the official rate of $.48. Rubles are exchanged on the street in Moscow at ten for a dollar in comparison to the grossly overvalued official rate of R1/$1.61. This gives the ruble a "real" value of 10 cents. Thus, while the birr is 2.18 times overvalued, the official Soviet rate overvalues the ruble 16-fold.
officials are growing rich from bribes and many entrepreneurs are making good profits. Government and party officials develop a vested interest in their irrational economic policies, for through various "services" to entrepreneurs they are able to make enough to provide themselves and extended families with amenities well beyond those their salaries alone could purchase.

The same, in somewhat different ways, is true of many merchants and entrepreneurs. They have learned how to calculate their risks and pay-offs. The scarcity of consumer goods ensures high profits. They live well. They contribute to church- and mosque-building and renovation projects. They travel abroad and send their children to school in the U.S. or Europe. Some of these men move large amounts of money through international channels.

Ethiopian exiles abroad (including large numbers of Eritreans) remit increasingly large sums to help kin and friends maintain a decent standard of living, to finance students studying abroad, and to pay medical expenses and travel for relatives. Little of this money shows up in official accounts, however, for payments made in the U.S. or Europe are most often compensated in birr at the unofficial rate in Ethiopia. Ethiopians are much too resourceful to fall permanent victim to the regime's efforts to lock them into a financial straitjacket. Party and government officials are among the most active violators of regulations.
VI. EDUCATION, INTELLECTUAL LIFE, YOUTH

SCHOOLS AND LITERACY

Like health and other social services, education is suffering severely from the diversion of resources to support the increasingly ineffective military effort in the north. Desire for education at all levels is as intense as ever, but little is being done to expand educational opportunities for the "broad masses" in whose name and for whose benefit the WPE claims to rule.

There is good reason to question whether the widely publicized accomplishments of the literacy program have turned into permanent gains, for reading material in Amharic and English, let alone other indigenous languages, is extremely scarce and the thirst for publications of any kind everywhere in the country is pathetically intense. Foreign aid programs, including the increasingly active cultural programs of USIS, provide a large proportion of the textbooks and reference books available in libraries and institutions of higher learning.

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

I visited Addis Ababa University (AAU) several times. The main campus is as attractive as ever, the students groomed and disciplined. There had been no student difficulties for nearly a year and half at the time of my visit. Students attempted to demonstrate in the wake of the mid-May coup attempt, however, and several are said to have been killed when the regime, alarmed, moved quickly to quell them.

The quality of instruction in the physical and natural sciences, in engineering and medicine, as well as in literature, geography and history is said to be good. Courses in political science and international relations are taught in conventional Marxist-Leninist terms and are not taken seriously by most students. In all fields instructional materials are in short supply. The AAU Press suffers from a severe shortage of both paper and funds. The university bookstore
avoids the impression of totally empty shelves by spreading out 10- and 15-year-old issues of the Journal of Ethiopian Studies and copies of used textbooks.

I saw little evidence that the Soviets, who a few years ago were flooding the country with Marxist-Leninist classics and Russian novels in both Amharic and English, are taking advantage of the shortage of reading material to increase their distribution. Their publications have never been popular. In libraries all over the country the bound works of Marx and Lenin stand on the shelves unused. Students would be embarrassed to be seen reading them. Soviet propaganda brochures, like those of the regime, attract no enthusiasm among students.

In contrast, students and faculty members alike eagerly seek and exchange American and European publications of all kinds. Issues of Time and Newsweek pass from hand to hand until they fall apart. Articles on Ethiopia from Western newspapers and journals are photocopied and eagerly read.

Ethiopians show a keen interest in developments in the USSR and China, and those who make some effort--both students and faculty--are remarkably well informed on what Gorbachev, the Poles and Hungarians, and the Chinese have been doing. There is much more serious interest in the communist world than there used to be before 1974, when the student vanguard talked Marxism and revolution, but knew little about either and nothing of actual conditions of life in the USSR. Interest is now focused on communist crises and attempts at reform.

High-quality economic research continues to be done in AAU's Institute of Development Studies, though little of its work is endorsed or directly implemented by the government. Much of it is undoubtedly resented by top WPE leaders. The Institute of Ethiopian Studies (IES) has been experiencing something of a renaissance, in part the result of the return of Dr. Richard Pankhurst. He is giving priority attention to completion of the project inaugurated 20 years ago: the compilation of an Ethiopian National Dictionary of Biography. The IES celebrated its 25th anniversary in November 1988 and issued a catalogue of all the work done under its auspices.
Dissertations of students dealing with a wide range of scientific, historical, ethnographic, and literary topics are available to Ethiopian and foreign scholars. Some of this work is of very high quality. During the past four years, American Fulbright and other scholars, as well as Europeans, have been welcomed at the university, given housing in university facilities, and sometimes asked to teach. Visiting foreign researchers have been able to do fieldwork in accessible parts of the country. They have generally been well received. One senior American Ethiopianist was doing research in land tenure records in Gojjam while I was there.

ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Field archaeology, in spite of the country's immense riches, is still at a standstill. New regulations on archaeological fieldwork are supposed to have been drawn up some time ago, but senior officials have delayed issuing them.

The Museum of the IES in the main university building (formerly an imperial palace) has been reorganized and expanded during the past two years. Marxism-Leninism is entirely absent from the ethnographic exhibits. On the fourth floor of the building an impressive hall of Ethiopian art has been set up with the help of donations from European institutions that have provided modern flexible lighting and exhibit cases. Displays include many religious paintings and rare manuscripts—it could not be otherwise, because there was no real art but that inspired by religion in Ethiopia until the late nineteenth century. There are also good examples of art of the past century on nonreligious themes: hunting, country life, and historic battles and events.

The visit this past winter of new UNESCO Secretary General Federico Mayor aroused a good deal of enthusiasm among Ethiopian historians, art specialists, and archaeologists as well as resident foreigners interested in these fields. A UNESCO-endorsed plan for restoration of several sites considered to be of world-historical importance has been drawn up. It includes ambitious schemes for protective and restoration work at Lalibela and a proposal for restoration of the entire walled
city of Harar. A number of problems stand in the way of implementation: e.g., the fact that Lalibela is not under the control of the government and that the sizable sums needed even to begin any of this work are nowhere in sight.

I was surprised, nevertheless, to learn that the government has continued to allocate small amounts of money to the Ministry of Culture to maintain and in some cases restore historic churches, monasteries, and other monuments. This ministry includes serious, qualified specialists on its staff who are stretching their meager funds as far as they can.

Eager to bolster an impression of legitimacy and be seen as a defender of Ethiopian traditions and the country's unity and territorial integrity, the regime has sponsored several scholarly seminars to commemorate significant anniversaries—e.g., the centennial of the founding of Addis Ababa in 1986 and the Battle of Dogali in 1987—and has recently published books of papers delivered at these seminars by both Ethiopian and foreign scholars. During my recent visit the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Metemma, where the Tigrean emperor, Yohannes IV, was killed fighting Sudanese dervishes, was commemorated. Ironically, this commemoration practically coincided with the loss to the TPLF of Adowa, site of the most famous battle in modern Ethiopian history. The loss of Adowa went unmentioned in official media.

PRESSURE TO STUDY AT HOME AND ABROAD

The annual Ethiopian School Leaving Examination (ESLE) was given during my visit. It is a traumatic experience for the ever-increasing multitude of high school students who take it, desperately hoping to gain entry to an institution of higher learning. The thirst for advanced education is greater than ever, the desire to avoid being sent to the USSR or Eastern Europe undiminished, and the longing to find the opportunity to go to Europe or America to study intense.

One of Mengistu's most fundamental failures has been his inability to inspire any enthusiasm in the youth of the country for Marxist-Leninist ideology. While a large portion of prerevolutionary
Ethiopian students aspired to a comfortable position in the state bureaucracy, the prospect of serving as "little blue men" seems less enticing to the present generation. Too many see no future at all for themselves in Ethiopia. They study hard in hopes of acquiring skills and qualifications that will enable them to make their way abroad when they flee or emigrate.

The opportunity for 20,000 U.S. entry visas to be awarded by lottery to applicants worldwide generated enormous crowds at the gate of the U.S. Embassy as soon as the VOA announced it in early March. Embassy Xerox machines were occupied for a week churning out application instructions and a large detail of city police had to be sent to keep order among long lines of applicants. They were overwhelmingly young men and women of student age--bright, attractive, intelligent Ethiopians desperate to find a better future for themselves than Marxism-Leninism offers. Many came from distant parts of the country.

When unprincipled operators began hawking bogus sets of application instructions at B5 each, the regime, which up until then had tried to ignore this demonstration of young people's lack of confidence in it, finally agreed to permit the Embassy to run a newspaper announcement clarifying application procedures. Ethiopians have not lost their sense of humor--the rumor spread around the city during this period that Mengistu had secretly sent his driver up to stand in line and secure an application for him!

THE ARBA MINCH WATER TECHNOLOGY INSTITUTE

Educational opportunities in Ethiopia are expanding, though at a pace much too slow to accommodate demand. On our visit to Gamu Gofa, we spent a morning at the Arba Minch Water Technology Institute (AMWTI). It is the most impressive new institution I have seen in the country. It has the potential to evolve into a full-fledged university. Located a few kilometers north of the sprawling, unfinished looking town, it occupies a tract of land extending from a range of steep hills on the west eastward to the shore of Lake Abbaya. Its campus includes a large expanse of fertile lakeshore which is being developed as a demonstration area for irrigated agriculture.
The AMWTI is funded by the EEC with additional bilateral support from Britain and the German Federal Republic. The AMWTI's extensive experimental hydraulic laboratories and workshops are generously equipped with the latest British and German devices. Its physics and chemistry laboratories would be the envy of many American colleges. Attractive dormitories are in the process of construction and will eventually be sufficient to house 2000 students, though the student body is currently under 400. The Institute has its pick of the very top scorers in the ESLE and has insisted on taking no more students than the faculty believes can be taught as effectively as they would be in a first-class European or American institution.

Faculty members have been chosen from the most qualified Ethiopians who can be found; a few have been persuaded to return from abroad and many are American-educated. The language of instruction is English. We met two Canadian girls who had just been hired to teach English. Courses offered or in preparation include basic science and mathematics, intensive English, and all theoretical and practical aspects of water technology: management of water systems, including rivers and lakes, irrigation, sanitation, urban water supply, industrial use of water, pollution control, etc.

The AMWTI is said to be one of Mengistu's favorites and he has visited it several times. There was, however, very little political slogantry visible on its campus and no mention of Marxism-Leninism by faculty members who gave us a guided tour. The library was well supplied with multiple copies of U.S., Canadian, British, and European scientific books as well as reference works. Even during the spring break it was full of serious students. As we looked through the current magazine section, the librarian told us that *Time* was the most popular current periodical with the students--could we not somehow arrange for more copies to be supplied?
THE AGARFA AGRICULTURAL TRAINING CENTER

The afternoon I spent at the Agarfa Agricultural Training Center (AATC) on the vast high plains of northern Bale was a different kind of experience. I was told the AATC is funded entirely out of Ethiopia's own resources. One enters it along a broad concourse planted with well watered flowers and mounted panels featuring a portrait of Mengistu and Marxist-Leninist slogans. Nothing has been spared to make it a comfortable place to live for its permanent staff of almost 1000, who have attractive living quarters and a large club with an ultra modern cafeteria that had just been outfitted with new stainless steel equipment from Sweden.

Two annual contingents comprising between 1200 and 1500 students each are given a six-month course in the principles of modern socialist agriculture. Students are housed communally in military-type barracks. They are nominated by regional party officials, state farms, and cooperatives and come from all over the country. Each province is assigned a quota but there have understandably been very few coming from the north. The overwhelming majority are Shoans, Hararis, and southerners. They are mostly in their late twenties or early thirties and already working as administrators in agricultural undertakings or officials of peasant associations or cooperatives.

A course had just concluded the week before my visit, the Minister of Agriculture had come down to award diplomas and the graduates had returned to their regular jobs, so I saw the institution with only its staff on hand. I was first taken through a small, attractive museum replete with charts, maps, and handicrafts and then toured classrooms, shops, and fields.

The AATC operates a large state farm with livestock, poultry and every kind of field agriculture that is suitable for this fertile highland region. Students alternate between coursework, practical demonstrations, and participation in farm operations. The institution is largely self-sufficient in food and produces milk, butter, and cheese to sell to other institutions in the region, such as the Goba Ras Hotel.
Students can learn dairy operations, how to manage poultry, cattle, and sheep. There are also workshops specializing in wood- and metal-working and a handicraft center. Here North Koreans were teaching weaving, bamboo furniture making, and basketry. This seemed a bit incongruous in Bale, where the local inhabitants make some of the finest indigenous baskets and wooden utensils that can be found in Ethiopia.

Domestic animals looked well cared for and fields, cultivated mostly by machinery, were well tended and productive, with good storage facilities for hay and grain. The basic purpose of the AATC is clearly to teach Ethiopians how to manage large-scale collective agriculture and state farms. Nothing was oriented toward the individual peasant. The men who come here for training must nevertheless go away with a good deal of new knowledge about agricultural techniques that would be valid under any kind of agricultural system.
VII. CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENT

THE BALE MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

My wife and I had last visited the park in early 1984 (our first visit since 1972) and were thrilled to find that the once extremely scarce mountain nyals had increased at least tenfold. In spite of the vicissitudes of the Somali war and influx of new settlers, the park had been well protected.

In 1984, we had camped beside the park headquarters at Dincho but were depressed to find the old stone mansion, which had been turned into a visitor center by the Peace Corps Volunteers who helped survey and establish the park before the Revolution, a burned-out ruin. A visiting Swede had accidentally set it afire a few months before. But on the plus side we found two wildlife researchers, a couple sponsored by the New York Zoological Society, established in a comfortable cottage nearby. They gave us an informative briefing on their work.

On this most recent visit we had a delightful surprise as we drove up and caught site of the old mansion now completely restored with a new kitchen and bath building, complete with a Finnish sauna, nearby. A modern water system is in the process of installation and a campground has been laid out in an attractive section of the slope above. A Swedish foundation has underwritten all this work.

A friendly young official introduced himself as park warden. He turned out to be an Adare from Harar, not exactly the kind of Ethiopian one would expect to find high in the Bale mountains, but typical in his way of so many dedicated young people of varied ethnic origin who are applying their education to challenging tasks for the good of their country. After proudly showing us the restored mansion and telling about the recent visit of the Minister of Agriculture who had officially opened it again, he directed us to nearby thickets of heather and St. John's Wort among which several nyals were grazing. Climbing higher we had splendid views out over the Middle Earth landscape to the south--the high, treeless moors dotted with escarpments and peaks rising to more than 14,000 feet.
We continued on through Robi to Goba that evening, spotting nyalas and bushbuck along the way, and put up at the Goba Ras, the best new provincial hotel I have experienced in Ethiopia. The next day we made our way up the new road out of Goba to the west, climbing through forests of Kosso hanging thick with reddish bloom, golden St. John's Wort, and giant heather trees. We passed the tree line after 11,000 feet and came out on slopes covered with humps of white helichrysum that looked like sparkling boulders.

Eventually we reached the high plateau. Here blue geese gather around tarns and Semien fox (which are also on the increase) scurry across the landscape. Freshly painted signs admonish visitors to preserve Ethiopia's wildlife. On a spur off the main road we drove to the very top of Tullu Dimtu, where a microwave relay station has recently been established. At 14,360 feet (4,377 m) Tullu Dimtu has been certified in recent surveys to be the highest in Bale and thus the second-highest mountain in Ethiopia.¹ Heavy hail had fallen west of Tullu Dimtu a few hours before we traveled through the area and lay thick as snow in roadside ditches.

As it always has, Bale impressed me as an especially blessed part of Ethiopia. We had felt as we ascended the cedar-covered slopes and crossed the high pass beyond Adaba at 11,975 feet that we were leaving the rest of the troubled country behind. The feeling persisted during the three days we spent there. Our second night in Goba the WPE Secretary (a Shoan) and Provincial Administrator (a native Bale Muslim) hosted our party to a dinner in the course of which we learned a great deal about life in the region. There is now no insurgency problem, they said; all former insurgents are busy smuggling.

There has been no further resettlement in Bale for several years and none is planned. The region is feeding itself and sending out a surplus of grain. The population is staunchly Muslim. Attendance at

¹The highest is Ras Dashan in the Semien in Gondar Province, 14,928 feet, completely inaccessible in recent years because of insurgency in the area. I attempted to climb Tullu Batu in 1972, then thought to be the highest mountain in Bale, but could see now from the top of Tullu Dimtu that both Batu peaks are clearly lower.
observances at Sheikh Hussein this past year broke all previous records.\textsuperscript{2} Under the new administrative arrangement Bale will retain only its northern districts. El Kere in the south goes to the Ogaden. These officials were not unhappy at no longer having to be responsible for it.

THE WILDLIFE AND NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

One of the most remarkable institutions in Ethiopia, which is more active, more effective, and has a much larger membership than before the Revolution, is the Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society (EWNHS). It sponsors frequent lectures in Africa Hall in Addis Ababa and outings into the countryside almost every weekend to lakes and dams, rivers, mountains, areas rich in bird and animal life, and historic sites. The National Tourist Organization (NTO) cooperates in supplying buses.

The EWNHS organizes several-day tours to more distant areas several times a year. \textit{Ferenjis} from the non-Communist world play an important role in this group and thus gain the opportunity to travel to places that would otherwise be practically inaccessible. Soviets and most other East Europeans do not join and seldom, if ever, attend lectures even though they are open to them.

The EWNHS has a large Ethiopian membership, including university and government officials concerned with ecology, and makes special efforts to attract Ethiopian university students who come to lectures in substantial numbers. I attended an informative illustrated talk during my last week in Addis Ababa by a British engineer who described a recently completed survey of the entire Awash Valley from the viewpoint of development potential undertaken by a British consulting firm. If further funding can be found, several similar surveys are planned of other river and lake basins.

\textsuperscript{2}The tomb of this saint along the middle Wabe Shebelle is Ethiopia's most significant Muslim pilgrimage site.
I lectured to this group on the history and culture of the Lake Zway islands in 1987 and was invited to talk this year, so I summed up impressions of the state of conservation, reforestation, and related subjects in light of my travels. In visits to Ethiopia over the past decade I have been consistently heartened at finding little new environmental degradation, a greater awareness of the value of trees and wildlife among rural people, and considerable progress in afforestation. Over and over again I have found reason to question the glib generalizations about erosion and accelerated deforestation which are routine in so much uninformed writing by people who have only recently become familiar with the country as well as in much regime propaganda.³

I also briefed EWNHS members on the work of a group of U.S. scientists on *Vernonia Calamensis*, a remarkable oilseed discovered near Harar by a U.S. Department of Agriculture botanist 25 years ago. Its growth potential as a domestic crop has been extensively field-tested in several other African countries in the last few years. Its oil (which is remarkably pure and nonpolluting in paint, e.g.) has been evaluated at a specialized laboratory in Michigan and is currently under study in several other laboratories in the United States and Europe. Under an appropriate agricultural system, it would be suitable for development as a major cash crop for peasants in marginal areas and a good export-earner for Ethiopia, as well as other African countries. Under present political conditions, however, other African countries are likely to take the lead over Ethiopia in capitalizing on this new crop, even though it originated in Ethiopia.

³On this topic I find Christopher Clapham's observations along similar lines particularly pertinent. Cf. his preface to *Transformation and Continuity in Revolutionary Ethiopia*, Cambridge University Press, 1988, pp. xi-xii.
VIII. ADMINISTRATIVE REORGANIZATION

MENGISTU'S APPROACH

It has been characteristic of Mengistu to react to frustration and difficulties by decreeing sweeping new initiatives. The fact that new initiatives, often poorly thought out, have generated serious new problems has seldom dampened his ardor for more change ordered from on high. It is an essentially Stalinist approach.

Mengistu exploited the Great Famine of 1984-1985 to launch his massive resettlement program and to step up the pace of villagization. When resettlement encountered serious difficulties and movement of additional people had to be suspended, villagization was further accelerated. Economic failures have been met with stubborn adherence to socialist dogma, increased emphasis on state management, and allocation of more money to the state sector. Repeated failure of military offensives against separatists and disaffected groups in the north and west seems only to have sharpened Mengistu's determination to reorganize the country along ethnic lines.

There was a time when Mengistu appeared bent on systematically applying Soviet nationality policy to the entire country, though such an approach had to be tempered by recognition of the fact that Ethiopian ethnic groups are in many areas so intermingled that creation of separate ethnic jurisdictions would be impossible. In this, as in so many other respects, Mengistu's desire to ape the Soviet system in spite of its widely recognized contradictions and failures has still taken precedence over pragmatism.

During the past year, Mengistu decreed a complete administrative reorganization of the country. In characteristic fashion, the action was taken in face of hesitation and doubts among subordinates and without details and practical matters being worked out. A schematic map of the boundaries of the 32 new administrative regions was publicized early in 1988.²

¹This is about the only characteristic he seems to share with Gorbachev.
²At the same time, the Ethiopian Mapping Agency was completing a
Fig. 2—Administrative and autonomous regions of Ethiopia as of early 1989
There was a great deal of uncertainty among officials during my visit about the details of the changes. Foreign Minister Berhanu Bayeh told me during a meeting just before my departure on 18 March that only 12 of the new regions would actually be activated during the current year. Subsequent evidence from the press indicates that Mengistu has accelerated this goal and all are to be operating in at least rudimentary fashion by the end of 1989.

IMPRESSIONS OF CHANGES

In the course of my 1989 travels, I visited several of the new regions which were actually or theoretically in the process of reorganization and came away with mixed impressions. The best able to function is Bale (on which I have already reported above) where the "new Bale" is merely the northern section of the previous region. Officials already in place expected to continue in office and were happy to be relieved of a distant and difficult section of the Ogaden, El Kere, for which they were previously responsible.

In Gamu Gofa a similar situation prevailed, where the previous region is being divided in two to be called North Omo and South Omo. North Omo, which constitutes the most developed and productive part of Gamu Gofa, will continue to be administered from Arba Minch. A new party secretary had just been appointed and arrived in Arba Minch from Shoa a few days before our visit. He invited us to dinner and talked enthusiastically about his new responsibilities. He made a serious impression, though he did not yet seem to have a very clear idea of local priorities.

In Gojjam, which is being divided into three, the process of reorganization seemed barely to have begun and officials in place displayed little enthusiasm for the changes. The previous administrative structure seemed to be disintegrating before the new regional administrations were organized.

large-format atlas of very high quality based entirely on the administrative divisions which had been in existence for more than 40 years. This atlas, which contains no reference to the new division of the country, was placed on sale in the summer of 1988.
In South Shoa, whose capital is to be at Zway Ketema, nothing at all seemed to have happened at the time of my visit in mid-March. Press announcements during the April-June period indicate that new officials are still being appointed for the majority of the new regions.

Each of the 32 new regions is to have a full regional administrative apparatus parallel to what has existed to date in the 14 traditional regions. In addition, each is to have a separate party structure and organizations for women (REWA) and youth (REYA). Each is also to have a separate economic planning office directly answerable to the Central Planning Commission in Addis Ababa.

The regional planning system, which combined two or three of the traditional provinces (Kaffa, Wollega, and Ilubabor; Gojjam and Gondar, e.g.), and which was only beginning to function with even an elementary degree of effectiveness, is now being disbanded and rebuilt on a much more fragmented basis. Not only are new administrative regions being established; in many cases, the subdistricts, the awrajas (provinces), and woredas (counties) are having their boundaries and patterns of subordination changed. Many of these changes are still being debated. No complete new administrative map has yet been issued.

**ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS**

The declared rationale for having a planning office in each of the new administrative regions is that local initiative is to be stimulated and the potential for development of each region better exploited. This sounds good, but as long as the highly bureaucratized system which envisions an economy tightly locked into an etatist straitjacket remains unchanged, prospects for significant local initiative seem minimal.

Private enterprise appears to play no role (or at best a very subsidiary one) in notions of regional economic development. The prevailing attitude toward private trade seems still to be that it will be tolerated until the state is strong enough to take everything over. All of this is at total variance with the principles of perestroika now being implemented in the USSR.
If existing patterns prevail, officials sent for one- or two-year tours of duty from Addis Ababa are barely going to have time to learn the basic facts about their regions before they are transferred. These transfers will affect not only economic activity, but all aspects of administration. Under the system which has existed to date, top regional party and administrative officials have more often been appointees from other parts of the country rather than of local origin. This tendency is likely to be intensified under the new system, for in many of the new regions few local people are available to staff the new structures.

The party apparatus is caught in an insoluble dilemma on personnel policy. It wishes to stimulate local initiative and tap local knowledge, but it cannot trust local officials (even when they can be found) because they may identify with local interests and fail to carry out orders from the center. So it must reserve key positions for men whose loyalty is primarily to the central party apparat and shuffle them around frequently to prevent formation of cliques, regional interest groups, and corrupt practices.

**POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS**

Christopher Clapham's conclusions on the sources of strength of the Ethiopian socialist system remain basically valid. The bureaucratic structure of the state that evolved under Haile Selassie has remained essentially intact in spite of the battering which Mengistu's leadership has given the country. Contrary to attitudes in colonialized countries, Ethiopian civil servants see themselves as representatives of an independent state which has long been in existence and feel a degree of attachment to the state that transcends any particular leadership.³

Mengistu has exploited these attitudes to maintain a reasonably effective administration in core areas of the country. Key central institutions, such as the Ministry of Finance and the National Bank, have continued to manage the Ethiopian monetary and credit system with a

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degree of effectiveness unusual in other African countries. World Bank and EEC officials often comment on the high level of efficiency of governmental institutions in revolutionary Ethiopia in comparison with other developing countries.

Nevertheless, during my recent visit, I sensed that the ability of the WPE to have its directives implemented is eroding. The administrative restructuring now being implemented is likely to accelerate this process. It is puzzling why a regime facing a deteriorating military situation, a steadily declining economy, and failure of its political programs to generate enthusiasm anywhere in the country should want to risk dismantling the country's administrative structure and replacing it with a new system. The problems of recordkeeping and communications alone are going to be formidable. Weakening of Mengistu's ability to control the country seems inevitable.

The practical difference between a "normal" new administrative region and an "autonomous" one is difficult to understand. The difficulty is compounded by the fact that the majority of the "autonomous" regions are barely under the control of the Addis Ababa government, if at all. Officials can be appointed in Addis Ababa to staff them, but many cannot take up their jobs. Shengo members can be "elected" to represent these regions, but they have even less credibility as legislators than the rest of the membership of Mengistu's "parliament," which is a copy of Stalin's Supreme Soviet with no resemblance to Gorbachev's new Congress of Peoples' Deputies.

The Shengo is summoned and used, as Mengistu most recently used it in early June 1989, as an audience to applaud and rubber-stamp his initiatives. It has no power to initiate policy, control expenditure, review governmental performance or investigate failures. In comparison, and with all its shortcomings, Gorbachev's revised Soviet legislature represents a substantial degree of genuine democratic practice and even greater democratic potential.
LONGER-TERM DANGERS TO THE ETHIOPIAN STATE

The 14 major regional divisions of Ethiopia, termed provinces4 before the revolution and more recently called administrative regions, have more historical logic than many African colonial subdivisions imposed by Europeans. Some have long histories as old kingdoms. Others took form as a result of the expansion of Menelik's power in the south, southeast, and southwest in the last nineteenth century, but were also in many instances formed around older polities (Kaffa and Wollega, e.g.).

The boundaries of most of the administrative regions have geographic logic. A few are dominated by particular ethnic groups: e.g., Gondar and Gojjam by highland Amhara; Wollega and Arussi by Oromo; Tigre by Tigreans, the ethnic group with the longest continual history in Ethiopia. Others are agglomerations of many ethnic and religious groups: e.g., Eritrea, Wollo, Ilubabor, Gamu Gofa, and Sidamo and Hararge.

Shoa, modern Ethiopia's core, has a long history as an old kingdom and contains several ethnic groups, among which Amhara and Oromo, frequently inextricably mixed, predominate. Shoa, more than any other Ethiopian region, constitutes a melting pot of nationalities. A majority of its population has both Amhara and Oromo ancestry and there has been mixing with several other nationalities, particularly Gurage, the southernmost of Ethiopia's Semitic peoples. Gurage began migrating to Addis Ababa soon after its founding in 1886 and account for a sizable portion of its population today.

Ethnic exclusiveness has never, even in Tigre, been a primary principle of organization of any Ethiopian region. A quick glance at the map underscores another significant feature of the regional administrative organization of Ethiopia that prevailed since the 1940s to 1988: Each major region (with the partial exception of Shoa and Arussi) includes portions of the central highlands and large expanses of lowland border country where there is often a high degree of ethnic

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4Awrajas, the next lower regional subdivisions, are now generally termed provinces.
diversity.\textsuperscript{5} The regional government structure has thus worked to link the periphery of the country to the center and to de-emphasize ethnicity as an overriding political consideration.

Mengistu's current reorganization will drastically change these arrangements. Border regions, many of them now declared "autonomous," are to gain separate political identity. Ethnicity is elevated to a primary principle of political \textit{and economic} organization. All this may be quite theoretical under the present beleaguered circumstances of the country, but even in the short term, the new administrative arrangements work against the principle of national unity (\textit{Ethiopia Tikdem}), which has been Mengistu's main justification for pursuing his wars in Eritrea and elsewhere in the north with such zeal and at such great cost.

Centuries ago, Ethiopia began a political evolution that has distinguished it from much of the rest of Africa, where tribalism has persisted, in many instances gained strength after independence, and now constitutes a serious threat to the evolution of these former colonies into modern nation states. Tribalism in the conventional African sense hardly exists as a serious problem in modern Ethiopia. Eritreans are not a tribe. They are a regional agglomeration of ethnic groups speaking many different languages and professing several religions. The Oromo are neither a tribe nor, as a whole, a regional group, for they are dispersed over most of Ethiopia. The same can be said of the Amhara.

Ethnic structuralism is ill-suited to Ethiopian circumstances and, in effect, represents a backward step in the process of consolidation of national consciousness and the structure of the state. If, instead of accepting Soviet propaganda, Mengistu had made some effort to study how ethnic structuralism has actually worked in the USSR (or even in Yugoslavia), he could have realized the dangers in trying to apply Soviet nationalities policy to Ethiopia.

\textsuperscript{5}Tigre and Wollo, separated from the Red Sea by the Eritrean panhandle, are only technical exceptions to this statement.
As we see in the Gorbachev era, a governmental system which assigns priority to ethnic considerations as a principle of governance cannot prevent ethnicity from becoming a disruptive factor in economic, cultural, and educational controversies. Every issue that arises in such a state takes ethnic form. Ethnicity introduces an element of irrationality into the process of reconciling strains in a society. We now see examples of such difficulties almost daily in the USSR. But once an ethnic structure is established, it is extremely difficult to modify or abandon.⁶

Some of the scholars and officials assigned to the Institute of Nationalities when it was established in the early 1980s displayed serious understanding of ethnic issues and the country's administrative history.⁷ Their caution delayed the process of administrative restructuring. The Institute of Nationalities no longer seems to enjoy high status in the PRDE governmental structure. It has been assigned no new major tasks and its staff has been reduced to 12 professionals.

POLITICS AND THE FUTURE

During the past several months Soviet Embassy diplomats in Addis Ababa had been talking with increasing frankness to Western diplomats about their problems with Mengistu's regime and their frustrations at the regime's failures to make progress against insurgents. There were differing opinions on whether this was the result of instructions from Moscow or simply spillover of the spreading spirit of glasnost in the USSR. My own impression is that both factors have been present but that Gorbachev has not yet made a comprehensive review of the Ethiopian relationship.


⁷An interesting example of some of the work done in the Institute of Nationalities can be found in Asmelash Beyene, "Some Notes on the Evolution of Regional Administration in Ethiopia," the Ethiopian Journal of Development Research, April 1987, pp. 21-49.
On the day I left Ethiopia, Jane Perlez, New York Times reporter based in Nairobi, was granted an unprecedented interview by a senior Soviet Embassy counselor in Addis Ababa. He was remarkably frank about describing the failures and shortcomings of the regime and Mengistu's stubborn adherence to unsuccessful policies. There has subsequently been more reporting to the same effect.

But in the wake of the attempt by military leaders to oust Mengistu in mid-May there is still no evidence that Gorbachev has ordered a comprehensive review of the relationship to Mengistu. He may still be trying to tough it out, postponing hard decisions in the hope that future developments will make them easier when they have to be faced. I deal at length with the political impasses and challenges that all interested parties face in light of the Ethiopian Marxist-Leninist regime's continuing deterioration in a forthcoming RAND Note.¹⁰

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