ETHIOPIA IN 1990--THE REVOLUTION UNRAVELING

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I. INTRODUCTION

The visit described in this report--from mid-November to mid-December 1990--was the first I had made to Ethiopia since February-March 1989. Meanwhile I completed a book, *The Horn of Africa--From War to Peace*, in spring 1990 and that summer consolidated proposals developed in it into a Ten-Point Plan for Peace and Reconciliation in Ethiopia. I went to Ethiopia at the end of 1990 primarily to (1) assess the impact of the economic reform program introduced as a result of President Mengistu's speech of March 5, 1990 and (2) judge prospects for a serious peace and reconciliation process. In respect to my first purpose, I found the situation encouraging; in respect to the second, less so, but not without hope.

Thanks to facilitation by Ethiopian officials, I was again able to travel extensively, visiting regions both to the north and south of the capital to observe local conditions and gauge the population's mood. The U.S. charge d'affaires, Ambassador Robert Houdek, and his staff spared no effort to make all my time in the country worthwhile. I also benefited from informative contacts and discussions with officials of several other embassies, international organizations, and private groups in Addis Ababa. I found Ethiopians at all levels of society, inside as well as outside of government, hospitable, talkative, and deeply concerned about the fate of their country.

Although from afar official statements and the content of Ethiopian media might lead one to conclude that neither *glasnost* (openness) nor

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3. Published as the final section of *The United States and the Horn of Africa: History and Current Challenge*, RAND, N-3198-RC, October 1990. This essay was originally written for a Conference on the Horn of Africa sponsored by the International Institute for Strategic Studies and the University of Cairo held in Cairo during the last week of May 1990.
perestroika (restructuring) had taken hold in Ethiopia, in actual fact important processes of change are under way. The Soviet-style system that the military revolutionaries tried to establish is unraveling.

Midway in my visit, I flew to Germany for a meeting at the Foreign Ministry in Bonn to which a small group of area specialists had been invited to consult with German officials on famine, emergency relief, development aid, and peace prospects. On my way home from Ethiopia, I spent two days at the University of Leicester in England at a conference on "Prospects for Federalism in the Horn of Africa." In both the Bonn and Leicester conferences, I had the unusual experience of finding myself the only American present. I discovered no significant differences, however, in perceptions between Americans and Europeans concerned with Ethiopia and the Horn. Responsible people everywhere want to see peace and prosperity restored in the Horn. Even thoughtful Russians recognize the need for new beginnings in all Horn countries.

On my next to last day in Addis Ababa, I met for four hours with President Mengistu, during which time we exchanged views on a wide range of subjects. The meeting is summarized below, in Sec. VII.

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*The conference was organized by the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik of Ebenhausen/Isar. A summary of it has been published as SWP-KB-2681, *Die Aktuelle Lage in Aethiopien*, February 1991.*
II. ECONOMIC REFORM

One has to visit the Ethiopian countryside to see the effect of the limited economic reforms decreed by Mengistu on March 5, 1990. The rural population has quickly taken advantage of them. For the first time since the revolution, it is possible to say that the "broad masses" in whose name and for whose welfare the Derg (Ethiopian military junta) claimed to rule, have taken things into their own hands. Some top members of the party hierarchy are said still to oppose and to slow the reforms, but their prospects of reversing them are poor. Everywhere the producer cooperatives (i.e., collective farms) have disintegrated, and most of the new villages are in the process of breaking up. The state farms are in crisis. The situation of the peasant associations is unclear.¹ Communist intellectuals' and bureaucrats' hopes for regimenting the Ethiopian peasantry into a Soviet-style collective agricultural system lie shattered and the peasants display little fear of curtailment of the new freedom they are enjoying. People are moving back to their old homesteads by the millions, cultivating their land with new enthusiasm and reaping a near-record harvest in most parts of the center and south of the country.

Preliminary estimates by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (UN/FAO) and other international specialists indicate that grain production in all of Ethiopia's 12 regions south of Tigre and Eritrea is going to be substantially higher this season than it has been for some time. Good weather has played a part, but observers attribute the increase primarily to four factors: (1) abolition of the authority of the Agricultural Marketing Corporation (AMC) to levy delivery quotas

¹I was unable to determine what is happening to the peasant associations if, indeed, a common pattern prevails. These were originally supposed to be grass-roots democratically elected organizations through which the rural population could express its desires and serve its interests. As the regime became more coercive and intrusive in its approach to agriculture, most peasant associations became administrative arms of the government and party.
on peasants; (2) the consequent rapid expansion of free grain trade; (3) peasants' confidence in land security, which has caused them to expand cultivation; and (4) the legalization of the hiring of farm labor.

While parts of the country affected by war and drought (the rainfall was insufficient in 1990 in northern Hararge, in much of Tigre, and in most of Eritrea) continue to be threatened by famine, the rapid response of Ethiopian farmers to reforms confirms what most economists have long maintained: With intelligent agricultural policies and unrestricted internal trade Ethiopia can not only meet its food requirements, but can produce enough to supply agroindustry and export markets.

The reforms have also had a rapid and positive effect in the small-scale manufacturing, handicraft, service, and trade sectors. Small towns have come to life with entrepreneurs launching new trading and production ventures. Country markets are lively. There is a modest boom in private construction and expansion of supporting enterprises making cement blocks, building stone, door and window frames, and furniture.

Further aspects of the economic situation and related political considerations are described in the context of regional impressions and the macroeconomic situation are summed up below, in Sec. VI.
III. SOUTHWESTERN SHOA

I spent two days traveling in southern and southwestern Shoa and northern Sidamo (see Figs. 1 and 2), spending a night at Wondo Genet. The main Rift Valley highway is well maintained. Most of the rural villages along it show signs of dissolving and many families have reestablished their individual homesteads. Zway Ketema, the capital of the new South Shoa region, has continued to expand. So has Shashemane, which is rapidly becoming one of the country's larger cities.

Many new brightly painted Oromo tombs are noticeable along the highway. I made several good additions to my collection of photographs of them.¹ At a cemetery south of Shashemane a local woman appeared as we were photographing a new tomb with brightly painted horse and rider and identified herself as the widow of the man buried there. Had he been a local official or prominent farmer? No, she answered, he had been a cattle thief who was a good husband and provided well for his family!

The thickly settled Kambatta, Hadiya, and Gurage regions had for the most part defied the zeal and ingenuity of villagizing bureaucrats during the late 1980s, but on my last trip through this region I sensed fear among the inhabitants of increased government intrusion into their lives.² That fear has now dissipated. The few triumphal arches we still saw at the edge of towns were weather-worn and often collapsing. Most signs with political slogans are gone. The once ubiquitous "Communist Trinity" billboards (with Marx, Engels, and Lenin in profile) are nowhere to be seen.

¹Both Christian religious art and many other forms of folk art and handicrafts have flourished in Ethiopia in recent years. Among the most striking of these developments is the proliferation of colorful Oromo tombs in southern Shoa, Arsi, and Sidamo. Both Rita Pankhurst and I presented papers on them at the Second International Ethiopian Art Conference in Nieborow, Poland, in September 1990, which will eventually be published in the Proceedings of that conference.
Fig. 1--Traditional provinces of Ethiopia
Fig. 2--Administrative regions of Ethiopia as decreed in 1989 (but not entirely implemented)
People in this fertile, well-watered, hilly, extremely attractive region live in single dwellings or in small clusters of well-built thatched *tukuls* (huts) scattered among their fields. New construction is now common. Market towns looked prosperous and busy. We passed frequent groups of men and women carrying produce, new baskets, and long poles hung with pottery to market.

All these southwestern Shoan peoples practice intensive mixed cultivation, often on skillfully terraced hillsides, and keep only moderate numbers of livestock. Crops include *ensete* (false banana), wheat, barley, teff, maize, durra, coffee, sesame, spices, fruits, and vegetables. There are frequent woodlots, and trees are planted along roads and field boundaries. We stopped to photograph teams of peasants singing as they harvested fields heavy with ripe wheat and barley. The streets of Hosaenna were crowded with people, animals, and vehicles. Thousands of people were gathered at the huge Saturday market at Kabul. Officious local party types who came to enquire about our purpose in visiting when I last stopped at Kabul in 1988 were nowhere to be seen.

We encountered no evidence of the party during this entire trip—no blue uniforms, no red flags on party offices. The party cannot have evaporated entirely in such areas, but the situation here was not untypical of what I observed in all other parts of south and central Ethiopia. From the rich grain harvest I saw in fields and the wide variety of produce being offered in markets, it seemed certain that this region is producing a substantial food surplus.
IV. ARSI

COOPERATIVES AND VILLAGES

Arsi\(^1\) is a well-watered rolling plateau region with the most expansive and productive grainlands in Ethiopia. The resemblance of the landscape to the Ukraine or Kazakhstan led Derg enthusiasts to favor it for establishment of huge mechanized sovkhozes (state farms) utilizing Soviet and East German tractors and combines. Along with northern Bale, it was also selected for the Derg's earliest experiments in resettlement and villagization, forerunner of a kolkhoz (collective farm) system. When I visited a few of the southern Arsi resettlement sites in March 1984, I found them in rather depressed condition, but the settlers' lack of enthusiasm for them was not acknowledged by ideologues in Addis Ababa.

Villagization was considered the wave of the future. Along with Hararge, Arsi was singled out for complete villagization in the course of the great campaign undertaken in the latter half of the 1980s. Boastfully labeled "Red Arsi" by party ideologues, the region was publicized as the model for the future communist Ethiopia. But when I traveled across Arsi from south to north in March 1989, the villages along the way were already looking shabby. Few of them had been provided with any of the amenities promised when they were set up.\(^2\)

Now, in late 1990, the process has gone full circle. The peasants have given a clear and resounding "No!" to all forms of collectivization. Arsi may well be a model for the future Ethiopia, but as a region where private farming flourishes and becomes ever more productive.

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\(^1\)The name of this comparatively small but extremely fertile southeastern highland region has been officially changed to Arsi, which is said to approximate the pronunciation of its predominantly Oromo population more closely than the traditional Amharic Arussi, but both names continue to be used.

The high point of my three days in Arsi was a 300-kilometer tour through the eastern part of this region, the former awrajas (subprovinces) of Ticho and Arba Gugu, now divided into several smaller awrajas with the introduction of new administrative subdivisions. The local party officials who accompanied me turned out to be enthusiastic about reform.

Our first stop was a once widely publicized model producers' cooperative, Hiruta Hetosa. Now, its billboard was peeling and almost unreadable. A substantial investment had originally been made to turn the cooperative into a showplace. The members' houses were thick-walled, rectangular, three- and four-room bungalows with hearths, porches, corrugated roofs, and separate storage buildings. Each stood in a small garden. The cooperative's headquarters compound included well-built offices, machine sheds, and storage areas. Now all were empty. Offices looked as if officials had fled from battle. Odds and ends of machinery lay scattered around the yard. Across the street a well-built kindergarten was no longer in operation, but an elementary school in another section of the village was said still to be functioning.

From former members, we learned that the cooperative had dissolved almost as soon as the March reforms were proclaimed. Land had been parceled out among members, peacefully it was said. Some families had already returned to old homesites, but many remained in their comfortable houses and were going out to tend their fields. Given the good quality of the houses, enough people may remain in them for the remnants of this cooperative to evolve into an ordinary country town.

The fate of Hiruta Hetosa has been duplicated everywhere in Arsi and, we later discovered, in almost all other parts of the country.³ Later in the day we talked to farmers who had belonged to other cooperatives. East of Diksis, an energetic Oromo in his early thirties

³Only one cooperative in Arsi was said to be still functional: the Tibila fruit farm in the Awash valley, a former cattle and citrus-growing estate developed by Ras Asrate Kassa before the revolution. I included a brief description of it in my Ethiopian Journeys, 1969-1972, London, Ernest Benn, 1977, p. 108.
who was reaping a bountiful wheat field with his father, a brother, two young sons, and two neighbors, was more articulate than most—and vehement in his detestation of the cooperative from which he said he had happily escaped at the first opportunity. "I like to work hard," he said. It was apparent from the energy he was applying to wheat cutting and tying of sheaves:

I gave all my energy to that cooperative and would work a 12-hour day for it. But I learned it made no sense. A man who worked only four hours got the same work credit I did. If I took a day off to work on my own plot or if I got sick, I got no credit for work at all. A lazy man had to do nothing but show up and he would be credited with a day's work. The whole system was idiotic. I was never so happy as the day I left it.

He went on to recount that from his last harvest he had made 700 birr selling wheat. "This year I will make at least 1500. I plan to buy another mule." He pointed proudly to the neighboring field where he had already cut his fava beans and stacked them in neat piles and observed, "We will have plenty of food until the next harvest." As we moved to leave, he urged us to stay: "We will send for the women to bring food and drink. We have already had lunch, but you must accept our hospitality." We explained we had eaten and drunk coffee an hour earlier at a megeb bet (eating house) in Adelle and could not possibly eat again so soon. We wished this man and his family and friends well and drove on to look at villages.

At each village the story was a variation on the same theme: All were breaking up. People were not rushing away, however, but moving out systematically. The comment of an 18-year old Muslim girl in a village near Bulala was typical: "My father and I are still living here but the rest of the family is up there rebuilding our old home," she said, pointing to a cluster of trees on a mountain 5-6 miles away. "We will move there in two or three months. It will be good to be back next to our fields because we were losing part of our crops to thievery and we could not look after our animals properly."
We asked the girl, who had finished 11 years of school in Robi, if she was sorry to be leaving the village. "No." Had there been any good things about living in it? She reflected for a while and then replied: "Not really. If you got sick it was easier to get help."

A few miles farther west we stopped at another huge village which was visibly collapsing with broken fences and houses leaning sideways. A bright young man of 20 came out to talk and was soon joined by an old red-turbaned gentleman with a bright blue blanket wrapped around him. The young man introduced the old man as his father and said he was 95! A buxom, lively lady of perhaps 35 came up to join us: the young man's mother.4

Several relatives appeared too. What was happening in the village? "About 300 of the 600 families have already gone back to their old homes. Others are leaving all the time." When is your family going to leave? "We are not leaving." Why? "Because the village was built on our land. It is good cropland so we are going to wait until everybody leaves and take it back."

Villagized peasants generally retained land they had farmed before being villagized, though many of them had to walk, carrying their plows, many miles to tend their fields and were forbidden to remain on their land overnight. Wild animals ate crops and thieves sometimes stole them. So people are eager to return to their land.

It is difficult to believe that repossession of old homesites is taking place without occasional friction, but during this tour of rural Arsi no peasants interviewed referred to quarrels with neighbors. There was a great deal of evidence of traditional cooperation among relatives and friends in harvesting and rebuilding of houses. Many farmers pointed out how they were bringing all possible land under cultivation, extending fields to the very edge of roadways; several described their

4The age differences are extreme, but within the range of credibility. Alemneh Dejene reports from a recent survey in Wollo that 68 percent of farmers of age 60 or older had one or two children under five years of age. Environment, Famine and Politics in Ethiopia, a View from the Village, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, Colo., 1990, p. 32.
plans for rotating crops and getting a second crop if Belg (March-April) rains were favorable.

Later in Addis Ababa I was given a remarkable statistic from the general manager of the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia. He told me that the bank, which has 157 branches through the country, had made sizable loans to producer cooperatives and feared losing them all when the cooperatives suddenly disbanded. To date, however, over 60 percent of his loans are active—being paid off by the former members of the cooperatives who have taken collective responsibility for repayment in return for assurance that the bank will grant them credit for their private farming operations.

THE ADELLE STATE FARM

In Addis Ababa, I was told that the government had not yet been able to decide how to reform the state farm system. Though the overwhelming portion of the government's agricultural investment over the past decade and a half has gone to state farms, few have made a profit and few have met production targets. They have indeed provided the government with a dependable supply of grain for feeding the military and the urban population. If it had not been motivated by ideological preconceptions, however, the government could have ensured the availability of the same amount of grain for priority needs by encouraging commercial and individual private production and permitting free trade.

Some officials still argue that some state farms could have shown a profit if they had not been required to sell their produce to the AMC at prices below cost of production. This may be true. While the AMC has been stripped of its authority to levy grain quotas on private farmers, it seems to retain first choice on state farm produce at prices it sets. Various schemes for radical revision of the state farm system are said to be under debate, ranging from offering them for sale to commercial (including foreign) investors to breaking them up and giving the land to private cultivators.⁵

⁵It is far from clear that the farms would be attractive to
Like so many other aspects of the follow-on process to the reforms decreed by Mengistu on March 5, 1990, decisions have been slow in coming and some high officials are dragging their feet. The Adelle State Farm, 139 kilometers east of Assella, where we spent perhaps two hours, exhibited most of the problems of the system, though not in particularly acute form.

Unlike many state farms, Adelle was not a nationalized private commercial undertaking, but was established in 1979 on land expropriated from individual peasants and herders. It controls 6000 hectares of gently rolling terrain of which 90 percent is under mechanized cultivation. The soil is of high quality and rainfall is reasonably dependable, though variable in quantity and erratic as to timing. Prime crops are wheat and barley with some fava beans and rapeseed. Our party was given a fact-filled briefing by the young manager, a native of Wollega and an Alemaya graduate, who had been transferred from another state farm within the past year. Like so many young technocrats in Ethiopia, he impressed me as intelligent, hard-working, and doing his best to carry out his responsibilities for meager pay in an isolated situation that can offer few compensations for the energy he has to put into his job.

The manager's main problem is lack of authority to apply the knowledge he gained at Alemaya as well as his own judgment. The farm is connected to Assella by radio and through Assella with Addis Ababa. No decisions—in respect to plowing, choice of seed varieties, planting, harvesting, hiring and firing of workers—can be taken until the ministry in Addis Ababa gives its approval. How long does it take for approvals? At best a week, sometimes three. As a result, planting seldom takes place at the optimum time, which depends on local rains. Harvesting, which should depend on the ripeness of the grain, cannot begin until the order comes from the capital.

Ethiopian, let alone foreign, private investors except on highly concessional terms because of the poor condition of their predominantly Soviet and East European capital equipment, as well as the burden of excess employees.
Harvesting, under way during our visit, was calculated as 41 percent complete on November 26, with 37 more days of work to go. We drove through vast fields to where 18 huge blue East German Fortschritt combines were at work reaping wheat. The grain was already so ripe that as much as ten percent may have been falling to the ground. All the farm's monster harvesters happened at this point to be operable, thanks to intensive attention to maintenance during the harvest season, but statistics the manager gave us on machinery utilization revealed an appalling lack of serviceability. For example, of the farm's total of 300-odd machines, only 185 were currently operable; 138 were out of action, with perhaps 26 repairable. Of 106 tractors, 66 were working; of 104 plows, 32 were functional.

This year's plan called for production of 23 quintals per hectare of wheat, which the farm's officials recognized as an unattainably high goal. They had realistically hoped to get 18 Q/Ha, but so far were averaging about 15 Q/Ha. We visited the grain storage area, where wheat brought in from the fields was being bagged and stacked in piles under canvas. The farm's enclosed storage capacity is 48,000 quintals. Total production of 96,000 quintals is expected this season, and 10,000 quintals remained in storage from last year. Where does the grain go? To the AMC, the Ethiopian Seed Corporation (ESC), and the new malt factory at Kulumiha. The manager did not know when AMC trucks would start hauling away this year's production. What about prices? The AMC pays 47 birr per quintal, the ESC 55 B/Q. The current free market price in the area is 70 B/Q.

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6During the farm's first year of production, 1979-1980, wheat yield was 13.8 Q/Ha. By 1986 yield rose to 19.15 Q/Ha, but averaged only 13.91 Q/Ha during the next three years. During the same three years, barley yield was 8.99 Q/Ha, rapeseed 2.64 Q/Ha, and fava beans 5.16 Q/Ha. Soil compaction has been a major cause of decline in yields and the problem was compounded by deep plowing, up to 40 centimeters, which resulted in mixing of volcanic ash with the upper layer of black cotton soil.

7Producer cooperatives had formerly been paid 37 B/Q by AMC. Individual farmers were presumably paid the same price—well below cost of production.
The Adelle State Farm has 260 full-time employees, 16 percent with some education beyond high-school level. Temporary workers for weeding and harvesting are obtained from peasant associations in the area. Asked how many employees he would keep if he had authority to hire and fire as he pleased, the manager replied immediately: "I would dismiss more than half of those I now have." We asked him about the situation at other state farms in the region. The situation of the nearby state farm at Diksis, he said, was essentially identical to Adelle.

TOWNS

Going to and from Adelle we passed through a place called Habe, which appeared to be a completely new roadside market town still under construction. Some 60-70 buildings were for the most part framed and roofed, but fewer than half had been completed and were lived in or operating as shops and eating houses. Habe, we were told, was a town that had been "killed" during the villagization campaign because the party aimed to eliminate such centers of private enterprise and free market activity in the countryside. Habe's inhabitants were moved to nearby new villages and the town torn down.

As soon as the reforms were announced, former inhabitants and farmers began a campaign under the slogan, "Habe must be restored." Permission for rebuilding was secured from party headquarters in Assella and work got under way. Within two or three more months, they expected most of the buildings to be occupied. Several private grain traders have already established themselves in the town and a weekly market is being held with 500 quintals of grain being traded each week. Later in the day we passed another town, Bulala, which had also been scheduled for "killing"; it had not been completely annihilated, however, and was again functional.

*Until recently, peasant associations and producer cooperatives often had little choice if neighboring state farms demanded labor from them. This situation is unlikely to continue. Weeders at Adelle were paid 1.92 birr per day, the manager told us. Individual farmers are currently paying up to 4 birr per day for hired labor.

*The animus against private enterprise which led to "town-killing" in Arsi (the only area where I have encountered it but not necessarily
Though I stayed overnight in Assella while in Arsi, I did not have the time to get a complete impression of current life there. What I heard indicated that trade and private enterprise are expanding rapidly. Four hotels are under construction in the town. I visited one that had just opened. Its public rooms were crowded with local people and there were so many patrons in its restaurant that it had run out of food by 7:30 in the evening. The scotch whiskey supply in the bar was ample, however. The contrast to the empty Assella Ras (the nationalized former Assella Abbay, originally opened privately in 1970) was striking. We ate dinner there, alone in a dining room laid out to seat at least 50 people.

Who patronizes all these new hotels being built in Ethiopia? Both local people and travelers. Entrepreneurs would not invest in them if they did not expect return. The hotels serve as local social centers, offering food and drink, but there is a surprising amount of travel in Ethiopia today, with traders and private entrepreneurs exploring business opportunities and attending to their affairs. Government officials still travel extensively. So do foreigners: diplomats, aid workers, and NGO personnel concerned with relief and charitable operations. So there is clearly business and, given a choice, most travelers will choose to stay at private hotels in expectation of better service.

A morning in Dera, located on the southern edge of the Awash valley about 15 miles south of Nazareth, gave me a vivid impression of the way small towns have recently come to life. Once an insignificant roadside market town, Dera is experiencing a boom as the main weekly livestock market of south-central Ethiopia. I visited it on a Tuesday, when thousands of animals (90 percent cattle) are driven into a huge walled compound spread over an acre and offered for sale to men who operate cattle-fattening stations in the vicinity. The animals come from as far...
away as Bale and Sidamo, as well as southern Arsi. Most of them arrive in Dera with ribs and hips sticking out.

There is a great surplus of livestock in much of rural Ethiopia (estimates of present livestock population vary between 70 million and 80 million head) because the authorities, while rigidly regulating trade in products such as grain and coffee, never got around to devising controls over livestock. Farmers kept expanding their herds, taking advantage of all possible feed sources and pasturage, and the expansion has led to overgrazing and serious pasture degradation in many areas. During the 1980s, up to 750,000 head of livestock per year are estimated to have been driven illegally across Ethiopia’s borders into Somalia and Djibouti for local consumption and export to Arab countries. Since the reforms, some of this underground flow has been shifting to legal export channels, creating a greater demand for fattened cattle. Good quality meat animals also sell well on the internal market.

Cattle arriving at the Dera market sell for 300-600 birr. After three months in fattening pens, they gain up to 45 percent in weight and sell for 1200-2000 birr. They are fattened on teff straw and hay laced with molasses from the Awash valley sugar mills and oilseed residue from sesame and noug (safflower) mills. Thirteen private cattle-fattening operations have been established in Dera region during the past year and a half and 11 more applications are under consideration by the local authorities. I was told there are 26 such operations around Nazareth, all private. They require very little capital investment—a small plot of land, a storage building, feeding and watering troughs, fencing, and a bit of shelter under which the animals can escape the midday sun.

I visited two cattle-fattening operations. At one, belonging to an early Alemaya graduate who had worked for eight years for CADU10 and

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10 The highly successful Chilalo Agricultural Development Unit (CADU) based in Assella and supported by Sweden was established in the 1960s. It was expanded after the revolution to cover all of Arsi and eventually part of Bale, but also politicized and bureaucratized. After much controversy Sweden withdrew support several years ago. For an evaluation of the CADU experience see John M. Cohen, *Integrated Rural Development*, Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, Uppsala, 1987.
then served as a state farm chairman for several years, I was given a comprehensive briefing on the economics, potential, and problems of these undertakings. The owner cited detailed statistics from his neatly kept account book. He had only one full-time employee besides himself to operate a fattening station that can take 400 animals at a time. "If this were a state farm, I would have to have at least a dozen employees," he said, and went on to recount the difficulties he had in getting land allocated:

I decided to start this operation even before the reforms were formally proclaimed. It took a great deal of effort to get the 10 hectares I have allocated to me. I would like to grow my own feed and could do so easily if I could secure another 25 hectares, for I could get three crops a year with irrigation from the Awash. I will eventually get what I need, but I have to go through a long process of bureaucratic runaround.

This man brought a great deal of knowledge and professional experience to his operation, but was realistic about marketing problems:

So many people have gone into the cattle-fattening business that there is cutthroat competition in selling the animals once you have them up to weight. Buyers try to play one operator against another. You can take a load of cattle to Addis Ababa and find yourself squeezed on price because the slaughterhouses know you don't want to pay the cost of transporting them back. So I don't ship animals until I have a commitment from a buyer. I would like to have firm relationships with buyers in Addis Ababa and exporters in Diredawa. That is difficult now but will come as the field settles down.

Back in Dera local party officials exerted themselves to show us other new private enterprises: a candy factory ready to operate as soon as its electric current was hooked up; a cement block factory at work; a furniture factory; two hotels under construction; several other small business operations. The huge public market, including a large roofed hall, was crowded with sellers and buyers. Unusual quantities of fresh
vegetables were on sale. Two groups of happy *garriba* (itinerant minstrels) were singing and telling tales to entertain crowds of listeners. Huge piles of empty tin cans and whisky bottles were being offered to buyers along with brown laundry soap, plastic dishes, Chinese teacups, combs, razor blades, and simple clothing.

We finished our visit to Dera with soft drinks on the terrace of one of the new hotels. The local party members were pleased that we were impressed by the hustle and bustle of their town, but here, as elsewhere, the thought kept recurring to me: Why is the party necessary here at all? Does it really have any function to perform?

The answer seems to be that in many places in Ethiopia the party took over most of the functions of local government. This usually occurs in party-led authoritarian systems and poses a major problem in dismantling such systems, for party people are appointed from on high and are the antithesis of locally elected officials. Often they are not from the area where they are assigned. Now where they encounter acute local hostility, they usually leave. In many places in Ethiopia, the party seems simply to have disappeared. In Dera, the party men were trying to identify with local interests and thus, I suppose, prolong their role. I heard of no instances in Ethiopia where, as in Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union, party people are trying to transform themselves into private businessmen by taking advantage of their status—while they still have it—to get control of former state enterprises.¹¹

**LAKE ZWAY**

I drove down to the eastern shore of Lake Zway on a new road that has been built at the expense of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church to facilitate construction of the new monastery church on the island of Tullu Guddo as well as to give the Zay islanders better access to the outer world.¹² We were welcomed by officials on the shore, waded out to

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¹¹ This phenomenon cannot be unknown in Ethiopia but may be rather rare because there are so few profitable nationalized enterprises that can be transformed into productive operations. Instead entrepreneurs prefer to start anew.

¹² The road branches off the Bilalo-Kersa road a short distance south of Assella.
a waiting boat, and crossed the half-mile-wide channel to the island. At the landing site on Tullu Guddo, we were welcomed by a party of priests and Zay elders along with most of the island's inhabitants, including groups of singing schoolchildren and ululating women.

We marched in procession to the new church under construction on the island's southeastern peninsula. It replaces old St. Mary of Zion on the island's eastern summit. I was shown the famous illuminated Book of Saints, which is well cared for and in good condition, as are the other manuscripts and valuables the church possesses.\textsuperscript{13}

During a \textit{talla} (beer) and \textit{tilapia} (fish) luncheon in the meeting house of the church, spokesmen for the fishermen of the lake said they had an important issue to raise with the government officials accompanying me. Were they required to sell their fish to the fishing cooperative which was established on the southwestern shore of the lake several years ago with EEC support? Trucks were coming to Zway Ketema from Addis Ababa and were offering higher prices for \textit{tilapia}, but the cooperative was insisting the fishermen must deliver their fish to it. The answer:

\begin{quote}
Feel free to sell your fish to whomever you wish at the best price they will pay. If the cooperative offers the same price, sell to it if you prefer. It is your choice to make.
\end{quote}

Lake Zway appears to have recovered from the ecological crisis into which it fell three years ago as a result of overfishing and excessive drawing off of water for a new irrigation project to the west of the lake. The lake's level is normal and fish plentiful. Addis Ababa provides a good market for them during the Lenten season.

NORTHERN SHOA

Portions of northern Shoa are inaccessible because they are under the control of what is usually referred to as "The TPLF" (Tigrean Popular Liberation Front) or "The Woyane" in Addis Ababa. The TPLF-sponsored Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (EPDM), and Oromo People's Democratic Movement (OPDM) are seldom referred to and do not seem to have established an image for themselves in popular consciousness. Regions they hold include much of Selale and all of Merhabete, Jirru, and gorge lowlands in between, and much of Manz, but I heard very little talk of active military operations in these areas. Military units could be seen in exercises in the countryside south of Debre Berhan and there were large numbers of troops in the towns between Fiche and the Blue Nile Gorge.

Villages in northwestern Shoa seem to have disintegrated to a lesser extent than those in Arsi, but in northeastern Shoa, in the area east of Debre Berhan, where villagization encountered a good deal of resistance, the population has abandoned them. In the Ankober escarpment region, people have moved back into their individual stone farmsteads and are making extensive improvements to them--new stone walls, new roof frames, fresh thatch, completely new houses in some places. Grain in this high region (10,000-12,000 feet), not yet quite ready for harvesting, looked excellent. The intensely farmed landscape at the foot of the escarpment which slopes off to the Danakil depression looked lush and prosperous, with people living in small clusters of traditional homesteads.

I visited Ankober, the old Shoan capital, on a Sunday with a sizable party from the American Embassy. At all the churches, priests proudly displayed their substantial treasures. One shimagile (elder), a gifted orator, evoked the glories of the old town when Menelik ruled there, vividly describing ceremonies and banquets as he pointed out the
locations of the reception and banquet halls, offices, guardrooms, and kitchens on the palace hill. Shoan Amhara pride remains strong at Ankober, and the escarpment panoramas are among the most spectacular in Ethiopia. Country hospitality is still observed too. A sheep was killed in our honor at Ankober Mikael and turned into tasty tibs (grilled meat) which we ate with fresh injera (bread) and great black goblets of talla in the church's senbet (meeting house) at the end of our visit.

THE GOJJAM COUNTRYSIDE

I visited Gojjam in the course of a five-day northern trip with Gondar as the ultimate destination. My group included U.S. Charge d'Affaires Robert Houdek and several other members of the American Embassy. Driving in a single day from Addis Ababa to Bahr Dar, via Debre Markos and Dangila, I had less opportunity to talk to people in the countryside than in Arsi, but basic impressions were much the same. The harvest was excellent, the farmers busy, the villages breaking up, and security relatively relaxed.

The eastern portion of Gojjam, above the Blue Nile Gorge, is subject to occasional insurgent penetration from rebel-held areas across the river in Shoa and Wollo. However, an American anthropologist and his wife were given a permit to go there for field work during this period, and public buses were said to be running regularly from Bichen via Mota to Bahr Dar.¹

Except in the southern part of the region, where large villages like those in Shoa, Arsi, and Hararge were formed, villagization in Gojjam was undertaken more cautiously. Mindful of Gojjami peasants' reputation for rebelliousness, party officials contented themselves with

¹The peaceful condition of this region in December may have been illusory, for in late February forces of groups allied with the TPLF claimed the capture of Dejen, Bichen, Bahr Dar, and Debra Markos— in effect, all of Gojjam. As of this writing, it is unclear whether government forces will mount a counteroffensive. I observed nothing in Gojjam that gave the impression that the population either strongly supported the government or had a great deal of sympathy for the insurgents.
small villages often located near churches or around existing clusters of dwellings. The upper slopes of Mount Choke appear never to have been fully villagized. Flying low from Gondar back to Addis Ababa in an Ethiopian Airlines (EAL) Twin Otter, we crossed eastern Gojjam and flew over dozens of villages. From the absence of straw piles near houses or other indications of activity, I judged that in most of these villages, half the inhabitants had already departed. It was easy to identify many reestablished individual homesteads scattered around the countryside.

The controversial resettlement site at Pave is still in operation and still receiving Italian support. It is said to have produced a bumper rice crop this season. I did not have time to learn much more about it, however, or talk to Italians in Addis Ababa about it. EPRP guerrillas are said to be still actively harassing the site, but the party chief in Bahr Dar told me that the female guerrilla leader Ayelnesh is temporarily out of action, having recently had a baby.

BAHR DAR

We heard no reports of recent rebel activity near or in Bahr Dar, and there were no unusual security precautions in the city. Our main official activity was visits to two local educational institutions: the Soviet-sponsored Polytechnic Institute and the Pedagogical Institute, which had been supported by East Germany. The sizable contingents of Soviets and East Germans who had been assigned as instructors to these institutions left within the past year, plunging both into a crisis compounded by severe cuts in their operating budgets by the Ministry of Education in Addis Ababa.

The buildings of both institutions are attractive and well suited for their purposes, but the equipment at the Polytechnic is unbelievably archaic, textbooks badly dated, and the libraries of both institutions seriously deficient. At the Polytechnic, chemistry and physics laboratories reminded me of those in my U.S. high school in the 1940s.

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2See *Ethiopia in Early 1989*, pp. 30-34.
The lathes and other wood- and metal-working machines, all antiquated Soviet models, appeared in most cases to be copies of European and American models of 50 years ago. The institute's textile machinery, the director told us, was too old-fashioned to be usable for training workers for the Bahr Dar Textile Mill, which has recently been rehabilitated with Italian machinery.

The Polytechnic offers eight basic technical courses of study and accommodates up to 600 students, who stay for two years and receive the equivalent of a U.S. junior college diploma. Many courses have not been taught since Soviet instructors abruptly departed in December 1989, for it was difficult to find temporary Ethiopian instructors to replace them and until a few weeks before our visit they expected that the Soviets would return. The director was recently notified by the Soviet Embassy in Addis Ababa that no further Soviet support would be possible.

The entrance to the main building of the Polytechnic still features a bust of Lenin on a pedestal from which students have chopped off part of the inscription. The opposite wall was adorned by an intact portrait of Mengistu. The director was not hopeful that the institution could continue without foreign support to replace that of the Soviets and asked us to inform officials and diplomats in Addis Ababa of its critical condition.

At the Pedagogical Institute we heard essentially the same story. The director and his staff described a great demand for teachers and adult education specialists, but shortage of staff, lack of money to operate facilities, and lack of textbooks, reference works, and periodicals. This institute is a branch of Addis Ababa University, but the staff complained that they were not allocated a share of the University's funds for library, publications, and specialized training. East German instructors left abruptly here too, with no prospect of return or indication that united Germany would resume support.

Bahr Dar looked unchanged from my early 1990 visit. The Tana Hotel remains attractive with its lakeshore gardens and friendly staff. It has a good dining room but had barely 10 percent occupancy during the two nights we stayed there. EAL flies regularly to Bahr Dar, but in
contrast to more southerly parts of the country, there was little
evidence of vigorous economic activity in the town, though the textile
mill and oil mill are operating.

The huge open-air market on a nonmarket day had perhaps a thousand
people in attendance with sellers offering grain, vegetables, eggs, and
large quantities of ready-made clothing. Trading was not lively.
Weaving of colorful cotton and acrylic scarves and waistbands has become
a major craft specialty in Bahr Dar. Great quantities of them were hung
up for sale. During an evening on the town after a late afternoon visit
to Tisisat Falls, we had a generous dinner at a national-food eating
house with lively entertainment afterward by traditional *azmari* (satiric
minstrel) singers.

In spring 1990, when TPLF capture was feared, Ethiopian military
forces blew up the northernmost of the four spans of the bridge over the
Nile at the northern edge of Bahr Dar. Since TPLF forces made no effort
to take the town, this action had the effect of hampering both the
government's military operations and local traffic. A Bailey bridge,
built over the blown span, was alive with human, animal, and vehicle
traffic during our visit.

Few military personnel were in evidence. Most troops in the area
were deployed, we were told, along the highway that skirts the eastern
edge of Lake Tana. This highway is open, though occasionally harassed
by insurgents. There is said to be occasional fighting toward Addis
Zemen, which remains in the hands of insurgents.

**LAKE TANA**

We sent our vehicles ahead to meet us at Gorgora and traveled
across the lake by boat to give members of the party who had not seen
them the opportunity to visit some of the lake's famous monasteries. In
a full day we stopped at Ura, Daga, and Narga and arrived at Gorgora at
sundown. The next morning we completed our cultural/historical visits
at the old church of Debra Sina Maryam at Gorgora, renowned for its
splendid early 17th century wall paintings. The island monasteries are
well set up to welcome tourists, though visitors are few and far
between. The churches are all in good repair and their collections of crowns, crosses, vestments, swords, and manuscripts are well preserved. In contrast to the situation I encountered at Tana Cherrnos on the lake's eastern shore in early 1989, the priests reported no thefts.

Renovation of the long stone church with thatched roof atop Daga has been skillfully completed. The mummified bodies of four medieval emperors lie intact in their glass-sided coffins (donated by Haile Selassie) in the eqabet (treasury) on Daga. The monks hold candles for visitors to view them. The 200-odd manuscripts that form the monastery's library are cataloged and neatly arranged in cabinets. The wall paintings of both Narga Selassie and Debra Sina Maryam would benefit from good professional restoration work but are well protected under good roofs.

We stayed overnight in the comfortable guest quarters of the Maritime Administration in Gorgora, where the director hosted a dinner consisting of five meat dishes and unusually good coffee. We rose early the next morning to drive out to visit the cattle-fattening sheds, orchards, and gardens of the Maritime Administration's farm. This farm will soon be producing bananas, mangoes, and citrus far beyond the capacity of Gorgora to consume. We could not determine whether plans exist for marketing it. The cattle-fattening undertaking will also have a large surplus of animals for sale. To date it has been heavily subsidized from state funds. Officials had apparently not yet given thought to whether it could operate profitably on its own accountability.

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3Here, and again in Gondar, one is vividly reminded how much tourist revenue Ethiopia has lost during the past 15 years. Investment in attractive new government-owned hotels during the 1970s and early 1980s has produced no return, while the government has had to bear the expense of operating and maintaining them. So they have been worse than unprofitable; they have resulted in serious losses to the state.
GONDAR

We drove from Gorgora to Gondar via Azezo through the flat, intensively cultivated agricultural landscape of Dembiya. Harvesting was almost complete and the countryside peaceful. Crops had been fair in this area, we were told, and the Gondar region as a whole is producing a surplus this season.

Gondar remains a handsome city in a beautiful setting and the Goha Tsion Hotel, completed in the early 1980s, must qualify as one of the most imaginative and dramatically situated in all Africa. It is in excellent condition because it has had so little use. The arrival of our party of eight more than doubled this hotel's guest contingent. The lobby features photographs and maps showing trekking routes in the High Simien, but this nearby "Roof of Africa" is completely inaccessible, having been controlled by guerrilla groups for more than a decade. The hotel's garden provides a full view over the city with its castles and churches. A big red star carrying the number 12 outlined in lights stands at the outer edge of the garden. The star was erected on the 12th anniversary of the revolution in 1986 and is beginning to show its age.

In other respects, too, Gondar seemed to be frozen in a mid-1980s time warp. In Addis Ababa almost all the arches and signs with communist slogans have been removed or painted over. They are still in place in Gondar. An arch over the highway at the southern end of the city proclaims "Proletarians of the World, Unite!" and another over the highway that leads out of the city to the north--over which travel is possible only for 40 kilometers to the edge of TPLF-held territory--carries the slogan, "The PDRE [People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia] represents the Genuine Will of the Working People."

The city itself was functional but lethargic. There were more beggars on the main street than I have seen anywhere in Ethiopia in recent years. Few shops were open and vehicle traffic was meager. There was none of the commercial bustle that characterizes towns in the central part of the country. I saw only two construction projects under way. A few men were working on a half-finished small stadium. The
Italian Fascist-style government headquarters building was surrounded by scaffolding on which workmen were chipping off the stucco preparatory to giving it a new plaster and paint job--a puzzling example of construction priorities in contemporary Ethiopia.

Gondar's famous historic sites--the imperial castles, the church of Debre Berhan Selassie, the church and castle ruins at Qusquam, Fasil's Bath--were all easily visited, for there was no competition from other visitors. They are all in good condition. The lion cages are inhabited by a single sad and lonely lion, Teferi. The only activity in the Imperial Compound is a public library installed in the basement of Empress Mentuab's castle. Well set up with a good selection of books in English, the reading rooms were filled with young people who spilled over into an outer garden.⁴

Reading is one of the few diversions available to young people in Gondar. I saw the upcoming generation being prepared for reading in the churchyard of Gimjabet Maryam, where a boy was conducting a literacy class for a dozen-odd children. He had a poster of the Ethiopic alphabet pinned up against the stone wall. As he pointed to characters, the group sounded them out in unison.

We noticed that local authorities had taken the precaution of providing unobtrusive security escorts at all the sites we visited. Only three of the region's 12 awrajas are fully under control of the government. The Gondar party chief was in Addis Ababa for a meeting, but the regional administrator invited us to a comprehensive briefing in his headquarters and hosted us to a dinner at the Goha Tsion attended by his staff chiefs for security, economics, and ideology.

Asked why no military officers were present, the regional administrator answered that since our group included no military representatives it was not appropriate to include them. Asked who was the senior authority in the area: military, party or government, the

⁴Most of the books appear to have been supplied in prerevolutionary times by the U.S. Information Agency and the British Council. The modest collection of recent books was augmented during our visit by a donation brought by the American Embassy librarian and arrangements were made for sending more reading material.
administrator replied that they all worked together. Pressed, he said the party had the final word if there was disagreement. Asked if he still believed in Marxism-Leninism, the ideology chief said he thought he did.

The economics chief admitted that all producer cooperatives in the region had dissolved--"except one, and we are trying hard to keep it together." He volunteered they had large numbers of applications for new private businesses and were preparing to approve most of them. The harvest was good, he said, but they were having difficulty controlling surplus grain:

All our excess produce is going into insurgent-held areas. By donkey, horsecart, and truck people are taking it north because prices are so much higher there--300 birr per quintal in Makelle and 600 and more in Asmara. We can't control this movement when the price of teff is only 90 birr here.

He was distressed, but resigned to being unable to do anything about this situation. I found it encouraging evidence that the free market is working in Ethiopia, even across government-insurgent lines.
VI. WAR, FAMINE, AND ECONOMIC CRISIS

THE WARS IN THE NORTH

Though I did not have the opportunity to talk to any military men in Addis Ababa, in northern Shoa, or in northwestern Ethiopia during this tour, I did not get the impression (as I did during February-March 1989) that sustained military operations were under way in the center and north of the country. Nor did the insurgent military activity appear very intense. In some areas, there seems to be something close to a de facto ceasefire. Are both government and insurgent forces experiencing a slacking off of desire to fight? Time will tell.

I gained the impression, from many sources and contacts, that the great majority of the population is fed up with war and would like to see all military operations come to an end. Widespread peasant resentment of central government measures--villagization, agricultural delivery quotas, trade restrictions--and party meddlesomeness partially explain the rapid advance of TPLF and related insurgent forces into the Amhara-inhabited central highlands last year. The insurgents, even if some were still influenced by their own brand of Marxism--had the good sense to tell peasants to dissolve cooperatives and leave villages if they wished. Party officials fled. For the most part, all the insurgent groups seem to be permitting the populace to trade freely. Since the March 5, 1990, reforms, the same has happened in the rest of the country, so the insurgents no longer have the full advantage of freeing the population from the intrusiveness of the government.

I heard of recent hit-and-run attacks by the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and other insurgent organizations in outlying western and eastern regions, but these organizations seem to lack the capacity to take over significant amounts of inhabited territory and administer it. The OLF was able to capture Asosa several months ago with the help of the Eritrean Popular Liberation Front (EPLF), but was not able to prevent regime forces from regaining it. EPLF support of the OLF contrasts with TPLF hostility toward this group because of its separatist stance. The
TPLF has encouraged the formation of a rival Oromo group centered in northern Shoa and Wollo, the Oromo People's Democratic Movement (OPDM).

It is hard to find evidence of profound Oromo alienation in the core areas of the country that are populated predominantly by Oromo. EPLF cooperation with the OLF runs counter to its declared position of noninterference in internal Ethiopian affairs, in keeping with its own separatist position. It maintains that Eritrea is a separate political entity without relationship to another separate political entity, Ethiopia. Some Ethiopians in Addis Ababa see contradictions of this sort as evidence of cross-currents within the EPLF.¹

As always, one meets Eritreans on all sides in Addis Ababa and they seem to have less fear of oppressive measures against them than in many earlier periods. The acting head of Ethiopian Airlines, replacing Captain Mohammed Ahmed (an Adare), who left to accept an appointment as head of the African Air Transport Authority in Nairobi during my visit, is an Eritrean. EAL's daily flights between Addis Ababa and Asmara are full in both directions, in spite of the latter city's beleaguered condition. Many Eritreans have sought refuge in the capital, including people from Asmara, as well as Eritreans who had been working in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf region. Some of the latter are said to have been asked to leave by the Saudis and Gulf governments, who considered them pro-Iraqi. Some were permitted to take considerable sums of money with them which they have invested in housing and, in some instances, in business ventures in Ethiopia.

I encountered no one, Ethiopian or *ferenji* (foreigner), who expected the military stalemate that persists in Eritrea to change soon. At the same time, though there is great interest in peace talks and a

¹The presence of internal tensions—in spite of EPLF insistence to the contrary—seems inevitable. During most of its existence the EPLF has been as authoritarian as the government in Addis Ababa, so factionalism has seldom come to the surface. Everywhere in the world—and most strikingly in the Soviet Union—we have seen in recent years how factions and parties of every political coloration appear as soon as authoritarian control is relaxed. Why should Eritrea be different?
widespread sense of relief in Addis Ababa at what is perceived as American mediation, expectations of rapid progress are also minimal.\(^2\) The opening of Massawa to regular relief shipments is seen by the diplomatic and relief communities as of great political significance. They hope that it could lead to a de facto ceasefire along the Eritrean escarpment and reduce the likelihood that either side would attempt a military "final solution."

Asmara itself was reported by the considerable number of people to whom I talked--people who had been there recently--to be faring less badly than one would expect of a city of half a million under siege. The airlift from Assab sponsored by the UN World Food Program is providing basic food, and food distribution is monitored by both diplomatic--including the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)--personnel and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Ethiopian military forces are supplied by their own airlift. Intermittent EPLF shelling of Asmara's airport has not seriously interfered with airlift operations.

THE THREAT OF FAMINE

Famine remains a real threat in Eritrea and much of Tigre, also in parts of Hararge. The deteriorated situation in Sudan threatens to complicate relief operations in the north and could inhibit the large-scale emergency operations that would become necessary in 1991 if drought persists and fighting again intensifies. For the time being, three factors are mitigating the famine threat: (1) In Eritrea, parts of Serae had a normal harvest, as did Shire in western Tigre. (2) There is steady inflow of grain from the south through local trade channels--the 1990 harvest in both Gondar and Wollo was good enough to provide a marketable surplus.\(^3\) (3) Famine relief operations carried out by

\(^2\)I found little reason to believe that either side has yet reconciled itself to engaging in peace talks with the aim of pursuing them through to a successful end. Instead, both the Addis Ababa government and the EPLF appear to be interested in gaining tactical and propaganda advantages over each other.

\(^3\)See "Gondar," above, re the situation there. This assessment is substantiated by the Famine Early Warning System (FEWS), *Harvest*
insurgent-related relief organizations and several NGOs, including the Eritrean Relief Association (ERA), the Relief Society of Tigre (REST), OXFAM, the Catholic Relief Service (CRS), and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in cooperation with foreign governments and the Ethiopian Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC), are efficient and have not been seriously hampered by military operations or government harassment.¹

Experienced and thoughtful aid and relief officials in Ethiopia are confident that with an adequate flow of food and other supplies from abroad, programs and mechanisms in place can contain the famine threat during 1991. They are giving increasing thought to ways of preventing well-intentioned but short-sighted relief operations from creating permanent dependency, undermining affected groups' traditional means of coping with disaster, and handicapping restoration of normal market activity and recovery of peasant agriculture. They, like many Ethiopians--and above all the rural inhabitants themselves--are looking forward to the time when peace and rationality again prevail in the country.

THE MACROECONOMIC CRISIS

While the dire predictions I made for the 1990s in a paper presented to the 10th International Ethiopian Studies Conference in Paris 2-1/2 years ago need to be modified in respect to agricultural production and food availability in light of the initial success of the reforms of the past year,⁵ Ethiopia's macroeconomic prospects remain cloudy and the country's economic situation was widely believed to be approaching crisis in December 1990. Problems are interlocking.


¹Prospects for future monitoring of the famine threat have recently improved markedly as a result of progress in the techniques applied by the USAID-sponsored Famine Early Warning Service (FEWS), a Tulane University operation that uses satellite photography. At the time of my visit, I was briefed on this impressive activity by a FEWS technician in Ethiopia who was testing conclusions based on photo-interpretation by comparison with ground conditions, including conditions in Eritrea.

Continued civil war has two overwhelmingly negative effects: (1) With over 70 percent of the national budget going for support of the armed forces and security services, most other government services have had to be curtailed severely and there is no end in sight. (2) In a world where competing aid needs and investment opportunities have pushed Africa to the lowest position on most international priority lists, the continued commitment of the Ethiopian regime to dealing with internal rebellion and dissidence by military means has drastically reduced Ethiopia's attractiveness to both donors and investors. Even in famine relief, Ethiopia now faces competition from the disintegrating Soviet Union.

The country's foreign exchange reserves were reported in December to have fallen to a few million dollars. Almost all imports have been suspended with the result that factories are on limited production schedules or closing,\(^6\) causing growing urban unemployment. During the most recent year for which statistics are available--Ethiopian calendar (EC) 1982, i.e., 1989-1990--exports fell to a record low in value (see Table 1).

Ethiopia had especially bad luck during the past year on its most important export, coffee, because of the drastic drop in the world coffee market. While the amount of coffee exported reached a record level, earnings were at a record low (see Table 2).

Astute financial management during the entire revolutionary period has kept the Ethiopian birr one of the strongest currencies in the Third World, but the birr has begun to lose value at an accelerated pace. The unofficial rate in Addis Ababa in December fell to B7/$1 and was expected to fall further, while the official rate remains B2.07/$1, unchanged since 1973, surely now a world record. The government has continued to resist the urging of the international economic community to devalue.\(^7\)

\(^6\)Temporarily closed industries include the Addis Ababa Tire Factory, which supplies much of the country's tires, and several textile factories, which were said in December 1990 to be working at no more than 25 percent capacity.

\(^7\)A circular argument against devaluation commonly heard in Addis Ababa was repeated during discussion following a lecture I gave at the
Table 1
TOTAL EXPORTS IN ETHIOPIAN BIRR\textsuperscript{a}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EC 1978</td>
<td>969,400,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC 1979</td>
<td>820,600,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC 1980</td>
<td>868,600,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC 1981</td>
<td>819,700,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC 1982</td>
<td>779,900,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{a}Statistics in this and the following table are from the Economic Section of the U.S. Embassy, Addis Ababa.

Table 2
ETHIOPIAN COFFEE EXPORTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Amount (tons)</th>
<th>Earnings (birr)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EC 1980</td>
<td>71,667</td>
<td>457,315,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC 1981</td>
<td>77,707</td>
<td>510,800,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC 1982</td>
<td>83,251</td>
<td>362,500,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In many respects Ethiopians have long demonstrated unusual financial discipline. For example, government officials' salaries have not been raised since 1974 and have been subject during the past three years to special levies to support the war in the north. Prices of basic commodities for urban consumers have been held at a very low level. Though the country's overall domestic savings rate has been low, the shortages of consumer goods that have persisted for more than a decade have resulted in a serious monetary overhang problem--far more money in bank savings accounts than banks find customers to loan to--of the kind most command-administrative economies exhibit.

Present prospects are for accelerated financial deterioration. This deterioration could, ironically, be fed by effect of the reforms that have been welcomed and exploited by the farmers, traders in agricultural produce, and small-scale entrepreneurs I have described in

Yekatit '66 Party School: Since Ethiopia exports so little, little gain could be realized from devaluation!
the first sections of this report. Incomplete reform, beneficial as it is to a major segment of the population, can intensify macroeconomic problems. One Ethiopian economist told me he expects inflation this year to rise to a 30 percent annual rate.  

The Ethiopian regime's commitment to fundamental economic reform still appears incomplete. The procedures for implementation of many anticipated reforms have still not been defined. Regulations for the establishment of major new industries and commercial agricultural enterprises and for the privatization of many service functions have not been issued. People interested in setting up new industrial enterprises and large-scale trading, service, and distribution operations complain of bureaucratic harassment and indecision. An experienced entrepreneur preparing to establish a new textile mill described some of his difficulties:

I have been gathering documentation and permits for months, but each time I think I am ready to start operations, they tell me I need a signature from some additional official. I have 26 signatures now, but that is still not enough.

No significant new foreign investment has materialized and none of major size is under serious discussion. The lack of assurance in respect to government policy and procedure is a discouraging factor, but a more important deterrent is the continuing civil war in the north and the threat of political instability in both the eastern and western border regions. Most potential foreign investors—whether correctly or not—rate the risk of governmental deterioration too high.

The hopes of senior regime officials that the March 1990 reforms would pave the way for an economic stabilization program supported by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and major countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation (OECD) have not yet materialized. Agricultural development projects which Western

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The resignation of Finance Minister Tekola Dejene in late December 1990 appears to demonstrate serious strain within the ruling group over basic economic and fiscal policies.
donors are prepared to fund have been held up because ministries continue to refuse data for making decisions on the viability and control of the projects.
VII. ADDIS ABABA

THE MOOD OF THE CAPITAL

Up to a certain level, economic life in the capital is as vigorous as in the country towns. Many small and medium-size businesses have been established. The signs that business establishments had to remove when the party was proclaimed in 1984 are coming back. Twenty hotels, ranging in size from a dozen rooms to a hundred, are reported to be under construction in Addis Ababa. The Mercato (Market) is operating briskly and Gurage and Adare traders, with advance notice, are said to be able to place an order for anything and deliver. If they can find foreign exchange, traders can import vehicles and industrial equipment. Many minibuses are being imported for use as short-distance private transport.

There is more awareness in the capital, however, of the dilemmas confronting the regime and the country itself. While in the countryside and in provincial towns people seem to feel fully liberated from the burden of ideology and bureaucracy with which they had to contend for more than a decade and although fear that the regime could reimpose "socialism" seems to be almost entirely absent, the underlying mood in Addis Ababa is more troubled.

Many of the petty restrictions that the regime imposed during most of the 1980s have, of course, been lifted. People can drive on Sundays, though the gasoline shortage threatens to become severe. They can supplement their food supplies by buying at rural markets, and friends and relatives can bring food from the country. They are no longer pressed to serve the party and its auxiliary organizations. It is easier to resist being mustered for parades and demonstrations. Kebele (urban dwellers association) officials are less officious, and one hears how some of them are trying to gain credit by serving the interests of citizens.
But one also hears of growing corruption among petty officials. By African standards and, indeed, in comparison with conditions in much of the developed world, Addis Ababa is still a relatively orderly and safe city, but muggings and thievery are on the increase. I heard several gruesome accounts of daytime robberies of both Ethiopians and foreigners when victims were locked in or tied up and valuables taken off. The numbers of beggars, homeless, and abandoned children have increased. More and more young men pursue foreigners on the streets offering to change money.

Nevertheless, citizens of the capital express themselves with relative freedom and Ethiopians and foreigners mingle freely in hotels and restaurants. The efficient and highly attractive Hilton remains the prime gathering place for everyone in the capital. Wedding parties, diplomatic and business receptions, art exhibits, and lectures are held there.¹

Ethiopians go without hesitation to diplomats' and foreigners' houses and freely invite visitors to their own homes. On such occasions food is plentiful and the supply of genuine Scotch whisky seems inexhaustible. Local wines remain good and local beers are acceptable. Curfew is at midnight. No one—not even party members or high government officials—pretends not to listen to foreign broadcasts. The latest news of the world is eagerly exchanged. VOA and BBC remain the most popular broadcasting stations. The insurgent stations are widely listened to and their broadcasts discussed and critiqued, often quite discriminately. They do not enjoy a high reputation for accuracy. Exile political activity abroad does not generate a great deal of

¹I gave five formal lectures during this visit. I lectured on perestroika to an international discussion group at the Hilton, describing impressions of recent travels in the USSR, Mongolia, China, and Poland. I gave two lectures on principles of federalism as a possible solution to the problems of Ethiopia and its neighbors: the first to students and faculty of the Political Science and International Relations Departments of Addis Ababa University and the second to the students and faculty of the Yekatit '66 Party School. I gave two identical unpolitical lectures on the High Simien, recalling a trek in 1970, to the Wildlife Society and another international group.
excitement in Addis Ababa. The comments of a regime opponent released from prison only a few years ago are typical of many I heard:

I am fed up with all this exile political arguing and fighting. They put most of their time and energy into denouncing each other. This is no help to Ethiopia. In fact, it helps the regime, for it gives people in the country the feeling that nothing better is possible. Each one of these organizations claims it has all the answers and puts down all the others as stupid. They are all stupid. I don't want to read their publications or hear about them.

Foreign newspapers and magazines are eagerly passed from hand to hand--most come by mail or pouch to diplomats or via Ethiopian airlines, though a few favored government and party offices also regularly receive major European newspapers and have subscriptions to the Economist. Bookstores remain dreary. There is a great dearth of both Amharic and English-language reading material for students and ordinary citizens. The university bookstore had only one foreign periodical on sale in mid-December--several issues of the English edition of the radically reformist Moscow News. Its contents may be more subversive of erstwhile regime orthodoxy than most Western publications. Anyone reading it would be struck by the fact that Ethiopia was far behind the Soviet Union in development of glasnost.

The atmosphere at Addis Ababa University is quiet. Books and paper are in short supply. A young American Fulbright scholar is teaching in the Economics Department. Courses in Marxism-Leninism have been suspended. Students have shown no open rebelliousness since June 1990. There is said to be a great deal of passive resistance to party activity by both students and faculty with the result that party ideologues make little effort to assert themselves. Preparations are well advanced for the 11th International Ethiopian Studies Conference, which will take place during the first week of April 1991. It has been scheduled to

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2 Boarding an EAL Twin Otter for a flight from Gondar to Addis Ababa, I was handed copies of the Financial Times and the International Herald Tribune of two days before.
commemorate the 50th anniversary of the liberation from Fascist Italy in 1941. Large numbers of foreign scholars, including 70 from America, have indicated their intention to attend.

The Yekatit '66 Party School, located on the former property of the Crown Prince opposite the main university campus, is in an unclear status. There is talk of turning it into an institute of social sciences. Many university faculty members would like to see it amalgamated into the university, for it has valuable buildings and equipment and a well-stocked library. I lectured on federalism as a potential solution to the problems of the nations of the Horn to a large audience consisting of the school's entire faculty and student body. The discussion period was lively but revealed a much greater residue of Marxist-Leninist ideology than a discussion following a similar lecture at the university.

MEETING WITH MENGISTU

The day before I left Ethiopia (December 14, 1990), I was invited to a four-hour talk with President Mengistu Haile Mariam.¹ Mengistu had a copy of the proofs of my book on the sofa beside him.² He characterized it as distorted and unfair, expressed strong disagreement with my judgments on the course of the Ethiopian revolution, and said it was unfortunate that I had cited unreliable writers such as David Korn and Dawit Wolde Giorgis. He mentioned John Spencer favorably.

I told Mengistu my book was based on carefully considered judgments, drawing on my own experience and as much additional information as I could obtain. I said that I would be surprised if he agreed with certain portions of it but I hoped he would appreciate the positive spirit of the book and the fact that it was directed toward the

³The meeting took place in the new State Council Building with four other persons present: Foreign Minister Tesfaye Dinka, U.S. Charge d'Affaires Robert Houdek, Central Committee Staff Officer Fisseha Zewde as interpreter, and a secretary.

⁴These had reached him through the American Embassy in Addis Ababa to which I had sent a set of proofs a few weeks earlier. I learned soon after arriving on this visit that a 35-page Amharic summary of the book had been prepared and circulated among high officials of the government.
future, not the past. There were many people in the world who argued that the Horn of Africa was a hopeless region no longer deserving serious attention. That was not my view, I said, and I had been happy to find no one expressing such ideas in the conference at the German Foreign Ministry in Bonn that I had attended two weeks before.

Though Mengistu devoted much of the meeting to explaining and justifying his past actions, I had been urged by Ethiopians, official and otherwise, to avoid lengthy argumentation, concentrate on the present and future, and talk very frankly to him. Rather than giving a chronological summary of the meeting, I will recapitulate the main points Mengistu made, summarize my own comments, and conclude with observations on his mood and current situation, drawing also on insights from both foreign diplomats and Ethiopian officials.

Mengistu went to some length to explain that there had been no initial Russian involvement in the Ethiopian revolution:

I never met a Russian until after the revolution. I had visited the United States, and I knew it was a country where milk and honey came out when you turned a tap. I knew this kind of system was not suitable for Ethiopia. The Soviet Union was powerful under Brezhnev and was moving ahead and this offered a model for Ethiopia. But I didn't make that decision. I relied on the advice of our intellectuals who had a better understanding of these things than I had.

I interjected that his intellectuals had badly misled him, for the Soviet system was already falling into deep crisis in the Brezhnev era, evident from the fact that in the Soviet Union it is now officially termed the period of stagnation. I went on to describe some of the changes I had seen firsthand in visits over the past 2-1/2 years to the USSR, China, Mongolia, and Poland and stressed that much of the reform experience of these countries was relevant in different ways for Ethiopia, for Ethiopians could draw lessons from both the successes and the failures of other communist reform processes. I emphasized the fact that it would be easier for agriculture to recover in Ethiopia because unproductive policies had been followed only for a short time and the
natural skills of the peasantry had not been lost the way they had been in the Soviet Union.

Mengistu listened politely but without comment and concentrated on elaborating a series of themes familiar from his own and other Derg members' past statements:

- Ethiopia was so backward and in need of development that socialism was the only feasible course to follow. There was no alternative, for the country did not have the advantages that colonialism gave other African countries and could not depend on a former colonial power for help and guidance.

- The United States neglected Ethiopia and betrayed the country in its hour of greatest need, when the Somalis attacked, forcing it into dependency on the Soviets.

- Foreign enemies--Arabs especially--were determined to undermine Ethiopia and have never stopped their assault against the country. Self-seeking secessionists have betrayed the country by placing themselves in the service of these enemies.

- Criminally irresponsible domestic forces unleashed violence to try to destroy the revolution--he had no choice but to strike back at them equally violently, but this does not justify the conclusion that he is a lover of violence.

- From 1974 onward, the EPLF systematically rejected every overture he made to achieve peace and understanding in Eritrea, but he kept persisting in efforts to find a solution for the status of Eritrea. It is unfair to blame him for continuing the war there.

- The Worker's Party was necessary to implement the goals of the revolution. Organizing it took a great deal of effort which most outsiders do not properly appreciate. Therefore, it cannot be lightly abandoned. Besides, multiparty democracy has many disadvantages.\(^5\)

\(^5\)To my question about what was happening in respect to his plan, announced March 5, 1990, for dissolving the Workers' Party of Ethiopia (WPE) and replacing it with a broad democratic unity party, or a
Those who now urge reform on Ethiopia are hypocritical because they feel no responsibility to help it secure development assistance and investment.

At the beginning of the meeting I had thanked Mengistu for the opportunity to travel widely and see so much of the country. I said I had been impressed by the effect his reforms were having in the countryside and described what I had seen in Arsi, Shoa, and Gojjam in essentially the same words used in the preceding sections of this report. I went on to say that I had been happy to see Marxist sloganry and iconography replaced by signs with the words "Peace, Democracy, Unity" wherever I had traveled.

I told Mengistu "I have always been a strong supporter of Ethiopia's territorial integrity,"6 "but what strikes me now is that you can restore unity only if you have peace and democracy. That means you must commit yourself to a serious peace process and speed up and consolidate reform." I repeated this theme several times during the meeting. I urged Mengistu to identify himself with reform, go to see regions where change is under way, talk with the people and underscore his commitment to reform. I told him I sensed less assurance in Addis Ababa about reform than I did in the countryside and suggested more enthusiastic endorsement of reform on his part would ease doubts.

In respect to the peace process, I directed his attention to the last two chapters of my book and urged him to pursue peace boldly:

The Ethiopian government should not act as if it feared the EPLF and the TPLF. Why don't you respond to their proposals by making serious counterproposals? Don't let talks get bogged down in procedural wrangling. The insurgent movements have their own fears about you. But they are also worried about the attitudes of some of their followers. Not all Eritreans see things the same way. Not all Eritreans want to

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6I added some reminiscences of my own role in dealing with this question and the advice I had given in the Carter Administration.
abandon association with Ethiopia. The TPLF still has its problems with Marxists, just as you do. They are worried about adjusting to democracy too, and they have to take international opinion into account. A referendum is not a simple issue. Why not talk about it and challenge the EPLF on it? You might have the effect of encouraging the evolution of their own thinking.\(^7\)

If I had entered into debate about many of the points Mengistu made about the past, the meeting might well have lasted double the time it did. I assumed he was familiar with my views from my book and was, in effect, giving his own arguments against them.\(^8\) I challenged him on several of his formulations, however:

- Ethiopia has always had friends as well as enemies among Arab countries. Egypt, the most populous Arab country and probably the most important to Ethiopia, can hardly be considered an enemy at the present time, as he well knew from his recent visit with President Mubarak.\(^9\)

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\(^7\)I told Mengistu I had met leaders of both the EPLF and TPLF and talked frequently to their representatives. I cited the main points of the discussion of referendum procedure from the viewpoint of history and international law presented by Gebre Hiwet Tesfagiorgis of the University of Wisconsin at the International Conference on Eritrea sponsored by Eritreans for Peace and Democracy in Baltimore, Md., November 3-4, 1990. I also cited Colin Legum's thoughtful talk to this conference. The texts of these talks are reproduced in the *Proceedings* published in January 1991 by Eritreans for Peace and Democracy, P.O. Box 21364, Washington, D.C. 20009-0864.

\(^8\)A paper I presented to the Fifth Michigan State University Conference of Northeast African Studies in April 1989, *The Ethiopian Revolution: Mythology and History*, subsequently published as P-7568, RAND, July 1989, is relevant to this discussion. It has circulated widely in Ethiopia.

\(^9\)Mengistu visited Egypt in early November and had a friendly meeting with President Mubarak, resulting in a joint statement in which Mubarak endorsed Ethiopian territorial integrity. Though an interview Mengistu gave the *Jerusalem Post* a few days after his return to Addis Ababa caused a flurry of concern, an Egyptian delegation visited Ethiopia during early December to investigate possibilities of economic and technical cooperation between the two countries. Both countries have long kept able senior diplomats in charge of their embassies in each other's capitals.
• Somalia attacked Ethiopia in 1977 with arms supplied by the Soviet Union. This demonstrated, to say the least, an equivocal attitude on the part of the Soviets toward the Ethiopian revolution.

• No one has ever claimed that multiparty democracy is a perfect system. It is simply, as Sir Winston Churchill argued many years ago, superior to all known alternatives.

• No one could argue that Ethiopia did not need accelerated development. Adopting a communist system was a poor way of working toward this objective. Socialism has only worsened the country's predicament. Reform and adherence to constructive policies can put Ethiopia in the forefront of the development process and quickly bring it to the point where it can not only feed itself but steadily increase exports.

• Misunderstanding of Ethiopia in the United States and elsewhere abroad has fed on his government's hostility toward journalists. Journalists should be invited to come and observe reform and they should be allowed to go to Eritrea. The EPLF has had great success with journalists because the Ethiopian government has left the field open to it.18

I stressed to Mengistu that having been out of the U.S. Government for ten years, I represented no one but myself and spoke as freely to U.S. Government officials as I did to him. The participation of U.S. Charge d'Affaires Robert Houdek in the meeting facilitated constructive official discussion of two current issues: the opening of Massawa for famine relief shipments and the next stage of U.S.-facilitated talks between Addis Ababa and the EPLF, tentatively scheduled at that time for January 1991. Mengistu and Foreign Minister Tesfaye Dinka assured Houdek that the Ethiopian government would be constructive in these negotiations.

18I congratulated Mengistu on his government's accreditation of a resident Washington Post correspondent a few days before.
What conclusions can be drawn from this meeting with Mengistu? He is in an uncomfortable position but still finds it hard to acknowledge the depth of his difficulties or their basic causes. He deeply regrets the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. He finds it hard to commit himself to a full-fledged reform process. He appears still to be under the influence of conservatives in the Derg hierarchy. Some of these men--Alemu Abebe, who was mayor of Addis Ababa during the Red Terror, still wears his blue party suit and is widely regarded as the leader of the Marxist diehards--may be motivated by the desperate hope that somehow the situation in the USSR will turn again in their favor. Does Mengistu share this hope? Can he act freely or do Derg associates have veto power over his actions? Only Mengistu knows. The inner workings of the upper levels of the Ethiopian revolutionary hierarchy remain as obscure as always.

Real democratization and full glasnost would expose the secretive Derg hierarchy and party structure to public scrutiny. A multiparty system would force the party to compete with other political groupings. It appears to be losing, rather than gaining, capacity to do so.  

Mengistu is undoubtedly troubled by this prospect, but appears to have found no solution to the problem. The prevailing view among both Ethiopians and foreign diplomats in Addis Ababa during my visit was that Mengistu was isolated and depressed, under greater influence from party conservatives than from reformers. The Office of the National Commission for Central Planning (ONCCP), which still has a staff of several hundred professionals, is said to have become a center of strong reformist thinking. Officials of ONCCP to whom I talked confirmed this impression but seemed unsure of their influence on Mengistu. My meeting with him left me with the impression that he was attempting to balance

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11The disintegration of the party, which was already apparent in the countryside in 1989, has accelerated. Most remaining WPE regional officials are more interested in ingratiating themselves with the people than in serving Derg conservatives' interests. Many have become--or at least are giving a good appearance of being--enthusiasts of reform and private enterprise. The more thoughtful, both in the capital and in the countryside, question whether the WPE is really necessary at all.
the various forces seeking to influence him without committing himself to one group or another. Time is closing in upon him, however. Ethiopia's critical economic problems cannot be shelved for solution at a time convenient to the country's present leadership.
VIII. FOREIGN RELATIONS

Though many Ethiopians both in the government and outside it tend to overestimate the gains, the country's international position has marginally improved during the past year. The improvement results from the following factors and from interactions between and among them: (1) realization by Derg leaders that the collapse of the East European communist regimes and the crisis of Soviet power make policy adjustments inevitable; (2) the skill of Ethiopia's foreign affairs establishment; (3) release of political prisoners and avoidance of new oppressive measures against the population; (4) partial economic reforms; (5) Ethiopia's positive performance in United Nations debates on the Iraq-Kuwait crisis and strong verbal support for U.S.-led military action against Saddam Hussein's regime; and, finally, (6) the fact that the Addis Ababa government has succeeded in creating the impression in international diplomatic circles that it has been more forthcoming about negotiating with the two major insurgent movements, the EPLF and the TPLF, than the insurgents' leaders.

The EPLF's capture of Massawa in early 1990 demonstrated the insurgents' military prowess, but alienated foreign governments and especially the international famine relief community because it disrupted food and medical shipments. The action created the impression that the EPLF was as unmindful of the needs of the civilian population as the Addis Ababa regime, if not more so.\(^1\) Whether fairly or not, U.S. diplomats attempting to facilitate peace negotiations in late 1990

\(^1\)Regime bombing of Massawa during spring 1990, which reportedly destroyed much of the historic old city (which had survived the fighting in 1977-1978 essentially intact), prolonged the reputation for brutality and disregard of civilized values that the revolutionary regime acquired during the 1970s. This action may, however, have deterred the EPLF from direct assault on Asmara out of desire to avoid loss of life and destruction of that city. The longer what appears to amount to an undeclared cease-fire prevails in all parts of Eritrea, the more awkward it will be—in terms of both international and domestic opinion—for either Addis Ababa or the EPLF to resume fighting on a major scale.
concluded that the Ethiopian government's representatives were more cooperative than the EPLF.

The TPLF continues to have serious image problems in Europe and America. In making these observations, I am not attempting to pass definitive judgment on any of the parties, but merely to describe what seems to me to have happened. The Addis Ababa government has not managed a major breakthrough with European or American opinion. Nor have the major insurgent movements lost much of the sympathy and respect abroad which they already had. All shifts have been subtle and marginal.

Ethiopia's relationship with Israel has been less decisive than advocates in either country seem to have expected. The extent to which Israeli military aid has had a concrete effect on military operations or raised the morale of the armed forces is unclear, because there is almost no meaningful contact between the Ethiopian military and the Addis Ababa diplomatic community and thus little basis for judgment.\(^2\) Israeli aid has not visibly enhanced the Ethiopian army's fighting ability, nor is Israel able to contribute significantly to easing Ethiopia's worsening economic predicament.

Falasha emigration has caused serious strains as the numbers of those desiring to emigrate have swollen steadily. Many people from the northwest who claim to be Falashas, but whose status as Jews is tenuous, have made their way to Addis Ababa. Some claim to be descendants of people forcibly converted in earlier times. Israel has refused to take many of these as immigrants, but Ethiopian authorities have stood aside, not attempting to prevent their emigration. This has gained credit for Addis Ababa with U.S. congressmen concerned about Falasha emigration, some of whom now praise Mengistu for facilitating it.

\(^{2}\)Soviet contacts are thought to have cooled and in part atrophied, but there is widespread belief in Addis Ababa that the Soviets continue to supply military equipment, though perhaps at a reduced level, to Ethiopia. The USSR is said to have delivered at least $750 million worth of military aid to Ethiopia in 1990.
The relationship with Israel has not affected Egypt's inclination to have warmer relations with Ethiopia and to seek Ethiopia's cooperation in developing arrangements for cooperation among Nile basin states.

Absorption of the former East German diplomatic establishment by the West German Embassy in Addis Ababa has proceeded with remarkably little friction, though with obvious regret on the part of regime officials dependent on the East Germans. Very few of the former East German diplomats have been retained, and the West Germans have accepted no blanket responsibility for East German aid programs, though some, after study, may continue. The character of Ethiopian relations with other East European countries which now have democratic governments has also changed drastically. There is little likelihood that any will continue significant aid or advisory programs.

It is thus hardly surprising that professionals in the foreign ministry and elsewhere in the government--most of whom always had misgivings about the regime's pro-Soviet orientation--have been eager to take advantage of the opportunity to warm the country's relations with the democratic world. These people are delighted with Mengistu's support of the Western effort against Iraqi aggression. The argument some of them make that the policy stems not from opportunism but from Ethiopia's long-standing tradition of opposing aggression would be more convincing, however, if the regime had only a few years ago shown less enthusiasm for the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. ³

³Opportunistic or idealistic, the present policy is pragmatic and serves Ethiopia's basic interests. The regime's efforts to present the EPLF as pro-Iraqi have, however, backfired. Forged EPLF documents which seem to have originated in Sweden in August 1990 were quickly publicized and exposed by the EPLF itself. There is little reason to believe that the EPLF has benefited from large-scale recent Iraqi support. EPLF endorsement of the Western effort against Iraq appears genuine. On the other hand, there is little doubt that Eritrean insurgents have in the past received support from almost all Arab governments, both those now sympathetic to Iraq as well as those fighting against Saddam Hussein.
Previous regime policies and concern for human rights will continue to affect the pace at which relations with the United States and other Western countries warm up. The regime continues to be excessively sensitive about expressions of pro-EPLF sentiment by journalists and legislators in democratic countries. Ethiopia's relations with Sweden were strained in late 1990 for this reason. Diplomatic byplay notwithstanding, real and lasting improvements in Ethiopia's relations with most Western countries will be conditioned on the speed of economic reform, movement toward democratization and the opening of Ethiopian society, and the inauguration of a genuine peace process.
IX. CONCLUSIONS

When I left Ethiopia in March 1989 after a visit of five weeks, Addis Ababa was buzzing with talk of an expected coup. Some combination of military officers, it was widely believed, would move to take charge of the government. The attempt came in May 1989 as Mengistu flew to East Berlin to seek support from Erich Honecker.\footnote{He secured a promise of increased military assistance which was kept. A substantial arms sales agreement was worked out and signed as of October 1989—just before the East German regime began to collapse. The text of the agreement, now in possession of the Bonn government, will presumably be publicly released. It is not clear whether all the arms and materiel included in it were delivered.} The coup was a fiasco.

No definitive account of how the coup was organized and why it fell apart has yet appeared and may never be possible, for several of the officers involved in it were killed at the time. A long trial of other officers implicated got under way several months later. There were widespread expectations of relative leniency in the wake of Mengistu's March 5, 1990, speech acknowledging the failures of Ethiopian socialism. The country was shocked when 12 senior officers were summarily executed as soon as the trial ended in mid-May 1990. Senior regime officials hopeful of basic change were saddened and depressed. University students mounted a prolonged boycott of classes and large numbers of citizens demonstrated their sympathy for those executed in gatherings at their homes.

If Mengistu intended these executions to put an end to popular expectations of a military move against him, he appears to have calculated correctly, for during this visit I heard no predictions of another military-led coup in the near future. Not only Addis Ababa, but the country as a whole seems to be in a condition of political stalemate.
During summer 1990, there seems to have been widespread anticipation—in part fear, in part hope—that TPLF-led guerrillas advancing into northern Shoa would reach Addis Ababa. Rumors that Mengistu had acquired a house in Harare, Zimbabwe, to which he was sending his family spread and are still heard. But in December 1990 there was little expectation in Addis Ababa that Mengistu's government would soon fall. Grudgingly, most articulate citizens of the capital give Mengistu credit for two clever diplomatic moves that have prolonged his hold on power: (1) consolidation of a relationship with Israel and (2) supporting the international effort against Iraq.

Almost all Ethiopians recognize Mengistu's "people's democratic republic" as an anachronism in a world where most such regimes have collapsed. Albania's shift to a multiparty system with the announcement of early elections came the last week I was in Addis Ababa and attracted a good deal of wry comment. The notion that the TPLF is still committed to Albanian-style Stalinism—still prevalent in Europe and America in spite of TPLF efforts to counter it—is not widespread in Addis Ababa. Too much is known of conditions in Tigre, for people travel back and forth, and the TPLF is known to have implemented reforms similar to those of the Addis Ababa regime. There is a good deal of apprehension about the residual commitment of some TPLF adherents to Marxism.

The regime's effort to discredit the TPLF and the insurgent organizations associated with it as secessionist lackeys of the Arabs have had little serious effect in the capital. The same is true of regime efforts to link the EPLF to Iraq. Ethiopians (including many Tigreans in the capital) who might otherwise be more sympathetic to the TPLF and its satellite groups frequently express regret that TPLF leaders persist in endorsing the EPLF's separatist stance.

What do Ethiopians in Addis Ababa expect and hope for? Wishful thinking centers on the possibility that Mengistu might step down and

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2Bus travel, which is expensive, is possible with a change, involving several miles of walking, north of Dessie.
3The same applies to other internally less active dissident/insurgent groups such as the EPRP and Meisone.
leave the way open for a provisional government of national reconciliation which could call a constitutional convention and hold elections. This approach is seen, too, as a desirable solution for maintaining order and keeping governmental machinery working in case guerrillas succeed in penetrating into the center of the country. WPE officials and regional leaders, meeting in mid-December, are said to have agreed on a three-part program: (1) continuation and gradual expansion of economic reform; (2) continuation of negotiations with insurgents--i.e., a "peace process"; and (3) gradual movement toward a multiparty system.

The latter commitment appears, however, to be almost entirely theoretical. The regime has made no moves of any kind even to encourage discussion of a multiparty system. The creation of the Democratic Unity Party of Ethiopia (DUPE), which Mengistu announced on March 5, 1990, seems to have been as unhappy an initiative as its English acronym--no move has been made to bring it into being and it is never referred to. Rumors persist that various groups forming in Addis Ababa might be embryonic parties, but they seem to be little more than discussion gatherings. There is a widespread assumption that the omnipresent security services would still nip any genuine political organizational activity in the bud. The press has not been permitted to express the slightest interest in, or tolerance of, concepts of political pluralism.

Ethiopians are acutely conscious of the political deterioration that has occurred in Sudan and Somalia. The situations of those countries--especially the anarchy and violence in Somalia--serve as a strong deterrent to violence in Ethiopia, for memories of the 1975-1978 years are still vivid and all Ethiopians want to avoid a repetition of the acute insecurity and random slaughter that occurred then.

Ethiopians who live in the country accept it as an established state. There is an element of habit in their attitude, but when they reflect on the condition of the country and discuss it among themselves, there is a deeper sense of commitment. The Ethiopians remain very history-conscious. The concept of Ethiopian national unity and territorial integrity continues to have a strong hold on the majority of
the population. The fact that Mengistu remains the visible embodiment of that aspiration is a continued source of residual support—or at least toleration—of his status as head of state. I saw and heard no evidence in Arsi that Oromo separatist aspirations have serious support in this predominantly Oromo region.⁴

The regime's administrative reorganization of the country has generated little enthusiasm and has only been partially implemented. Many Ethiopians deplore the encouragement it has given to ethnic particularism.⁵ In at least one respect, however, it has caused the regime's opponents a serious potential problem. The Afar "autonomous" region, which unifies Afars formerly divided among Hararge, Shoa, Wollo and Eritrea, is said to be generating considerable enthusiasm among Afars of various political orientations. The Afar region includes the Eritrean panhandle and Assab. The EPLF, on the other hand, insists on the territorial integrity of all the territory that formed part of the Italian colony of Eritrea.

So Ethiopia continues to offer a rich panorama of contrasts and contradictions. The musings of an Ethiopian intellectual, humorous but tragic in the frustration they exhibit, sum up the country's current predicament:

We Ethiopians seem to be condemned to be backward, always to be behind developments in the rest of the world. For a thousand years we slept. When we woke up, we kept using a calendar that puts us eight years behind the rest of the world. When we began to modernize we stuck to a political system based on the divine right of kings. Everybody else, even those that kept monarchies, gave up that idea. When we finally had a revolution, it fell into the hands of people who were determined to make the country into a communist paradise, even though intelligent people knew communism was the grand failure of the 20th century. Instead of the divine right of

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⁴Mohammed Hassen's recently published The Oromo of Ethiopia: A History, 1570-1860, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge/New York, 1990, will give no comfort to Oromo separatists, for it demonstrates how deeply enmeshed the Oromo have been in Ethiopian political processes since the 16th century. The book is based on meticulous analysis of both written sources and oral traditions.

⁵See Ethiopia in Early 1989, pp. 54-62.
kings we were expected to recognize the divine right of a self-appointed dictator because he had annointed himself with the oil of Marxism-Leninism. Now when that oil turns out to be rancid and Marxism-Leninism is collapsing everywhere, we are still stuck with this backward stupidity—we can't seem to get out of it. Zhivkov says communism was all a big mistake. Our leaders go on calling themselves comrades and drag their feet on reform. Why don't they step down, let us start anew and begin catching up with the world?

Ethiopia was indeed the last country in the world to espouse communism, set up a Marxist-Leninist vanguard party and declare itself a people's republic. All other "people's republics" were falling into deep crisis when the WPE was proclaimed with so much fanfare and expense in September 1984. Almost all the communist dignitaries who came to Addis Ababa to celebrate the occasion have fallen ignominiously from power or worse--some are imprisoned or dead. In 1987, Ethiopia brought up the rear again when it was proclaimed the world's newest--actually last--"people's democratic republic." A Swazi newspaper editorializing about political change in Africa recently observed: "Doctrinaire and one-party systems are disappearing like night mists at sunrise."6 In Ethiopia, there are increasing bright spots, but the mist has not yet fully lifted.

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6This quotation was sent to me by a former Ethiopian high official now working in Swaziland.