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Editor — Melesse Ayalew

Associate Editor — Dessalegn Rahmato

Editorial Advisors — Hagos Gabre Yesus
— Andreas Eshete

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Communications regarding the Journal and articles are to
be sent to

Hagos G. Yesus

23 Huguenot Court

New Paltz, New York

or

Melesse Ayalew

600 W. 113th St.

Apt. 3A9, New York, N.Y.

EDITORIAL:

Beyond an Ideology of Powerlessness

By now it must more or less be generally understood that Ethiopia is no longer a closed, harmonious and smoothly-operating feudal entity. Even if the emperor, the great feudal barons, their associated families, and the church still wield extensive economic and political power, the internal disequilibrium that has afflicted the feudal structure might be the most important factor in determining the future course of Ethiopia. Unless the nature of this change is properly comprehended, even the new oppositionist forces will fall victim to the ideas of regressive forces who propagate and forecast a bleak future for Ethiopia unless the *status quo* remains unchanged. The gap between rhetoric and reality about Ethiopia must not be allowed to remain undisclosed.

For a long time now, the fundamental assumption of both outright reactionaries and "modern reformists" has been the belief that Ethiopia's survival as a nation is intrinsically tied to the feudal mode of distribution of economic, social and political power. From this basic premise, the reactionaries conclude that the prevailing system must not be allowed to change because to do so would automatically mean the end of the organic unity of Ethiopia. The "reformists" agree with this position with a slight modification. The system, they say, is an ongoing one, and its continuance is absolutely necessary for Ethiopia. But in order to deal with unforeseen contingencies, it has to undergo, and can be made to undergo, minor reforms from the inside. They convince the reactionaries that this technique of manipulation, by hiding underlying strains and tensions, strengthens the system rather than weakens it, and that this newly won strength will forestall the possibility of a radical break as has happened in several other countries. Moreover, the general radicalization of the international situation and the effects of revolutionary transformations in Africa and Asia could be stopped at the borders of Ethiopia only if this type of "reformist" scheme is made to modernize the feudal institutions of Ethiopia.

This policy of reformism was inaugurated by the feudal ruling elements in the second half of the 1950's. But its implications have remained elusive to any real radical analysis. Even a decade later, the static and monolithic notion that Ethiopia is still a full-fledged feudal society whose essential

characteristics have remained unaltered throughout Ethiopian history, including the period of Haile Selassie's rule, enjoys a measure of credibility. As a result, many, including several well-meaning and progressive Ethiopians, are constantly trapped by the system's own self-definition that Ethiopia *est moi*. The time has come when this illusion must be discarded once and for all, and decisions about the future course of action must be grounded in a realistic assessment of contemporary Ethiopia. The regime is no longer a spokesman for merely backward and uneducated feudal families. It is much more than that. In this era of neo-colonialism, the feudal oligarchy in Ethiopia serves the interests of imperialist domination by enshrouding itself with a new fawning bureaucracy. In addition, far from being a system of putative harmony and tranquility, it is plagued by crises that are working to hasten its destruction. The most appropriate time for comprehending these internal changes and for drawing the necessary political implications is NOW. Unless these implications are drawn and the corresponding political strategy formulated immediately, the situation will explode and the opportunity for us to choose between alternatives will have been missed.

I

It can safely be stated that, despite the human and material destruction it imposed on the peasant population of Ethiopia who singlehandedly bore the main burden of the resistance struggle, the Italian invasion of Ethiopia benefited the ruling feudal elements. Before the war, internal political struggle between rival households of the feudal establishment was an unceasing concern, the periodic outcome of which determined the relative supremacy of power distribution among the contending forces. The war with Italy caught these contending factions in a state of tension and disarray. But in Italy they all saw a common enemy whose interests, at least in the short run, conflicted with theirs. The internal feuds were more or less pushed into the background, and the war gave the feudal elements a new sense of unity.

By the end of the war the rivalries seemed to reemerge; in fact, the possibility of internecine feud was so real that Haile Selassie could reestablish his authority only with the help of British troops which he kept in Ethiopia for over five years. Even if initially there was sporadic resistance here and there to the reestablishment of the dictatorial hand of the emperor (e.g., the populist resistance led by Belay Zeleke), it was soon understood that the revival of internal contention could only weaken the en-

tire feudal establishment vis-a-vis the masses of the population who had increased their sense of independence under the semi-anarchic conditions of the resistance struggle. During the five years of the people's struggle against fascism, the emperor, rather than actively directing the resistance struggle on the home soil, commuted between comfortable resort areas in Europe. This fact did not pass unheeded by the Ethiopian people. On his return to Ethiopia at the conclusion of the war, the emperor had lost substantial credence among them. Obviously, his loss in prestige engendered a threat to the entire feudal establishment, the survival of which depended on the continuance of the monarchy. Faced with this popular reluctance (and even active resistance) to accept the reinstatement of the hegemony of feudal landlordism, the ruling class rallied together once again and reestablished its political and economic dominance over Ethiopia — this time with the active intervention of British forces.

In the initial phase, this sense of unity gave the feudal elements a new optimism and a feeling of continued prosperity. Feudal landownership was more systematically rationalized; a series of administrative "reforms" (whose theoretical culmination is the so-called Revised Constitution of 1955) to enhance all feudal privileges, was inaugurated. But no sooner were these new arrangements proclaimed than the regime was faced with an entirely new set of problems. In the pre-war period, feudal Ethiopia survived in relative isolation from the rest of the world. Even when circumstances forced Ethiopia to deal with outside powers, its transactions were carried on through and by the colonial powers of the day. It tried to stabilize itself within an international framework in which Africa and Asia would remain under colonial oppression and exploitation. The post-war era, however, suddenly and dramatically altered the international situation. Revolutions began to occur everywhere. Old and archaic regimes were swept away. The colonial order began to break down in one territory after another. In short, the world order in which the feudal regime in Ethiopia hoped to acquire a new lease on life was suddenly changed. In spite of its faltering attempts at innovation, the overwhelming force of circumstances seemed to discredit and sweep away the system of master and slave. With all the resources available to it, the regime found itself incapable of arresting or containing its contradictions.

Just at this critical juncture, a new element was recruited into the (Ethiopian) power structure. It consisted of a group of university educated young men, mostly the offspring of the ruling class itself, which cultivated its intellectual predispositions within the framework of western anti-revolutionary (more correctly, counter-revolutionary) ideology. By the

time these men completed their education in the U.S.A. and Western Europe, they had no illusion that the system which offered them preferential treatment was capable of surviving the second half of the 20th century. Consequently, they began their professional careers with the determination to "modernize" the system, as they were taught to believe was possible, without altering its basic foundations.

The emergence of this new element on the Ethiopian scene coincided with the moment when the old ruling clique itself became aware of its internal inadequacy and needed to employ more sophisticated executioners for its system of exploitation. These carefully chosen and well-groomed mercenaries soon became, as Peter Duval Smith characterized them in the *New Statesman* of 1963, "the voice of the older order, speaking through its new recruits". True to their class origins, these men, despite all their rhetorical pretensions to radicalism and revolutionism, became, to an extent unknown elsewhere, the most faithful servants of a fundamentally archaic and obsolete regime. Even after they were comfortably incorporated into the system, these men continued to preach to gullible observers that they were dead against it. But in reality, they were forging a new and dangerous coalition between the older ruling elements and themselves. We can now briefly sketch what the emergence of this group has meant to the political life of Ethiopia.

II

Unfortunately, the vast majority of the Ethiopian people placed some faith in the educated element and hoped that its emergence would curb the inhumanity of the regime. If not elsewhere, at least in their rumor sessions in the cafes, they continued to pretend that they rejected the feudal distribution of privileges and gratuities even though they themselves were already its newest and major beneficiaries. On the one hand, they contributed to the trend which has made the old feudal groups totally *persona non grata* in the consciousness of the people. On the other hand, the alternatives they seemed to offer had their inherent drawbacks although these escaped closer scrutiny for a long time.

To be sure, these men possessed greater technical knowledge in running state bureaucracy than the older ruling elements. Consequently, as they themselves claimed, and the claims were accepted at face value, it was expected that the elimination of the most outright and outrageous arbitrariness and injustice of the system would result from the apparent

rationalization of the administrative apparatus. The predominant belief was that the old oligarchs would be gradually pushed to the background and a modicum of fairness and equity (at the minimum within the legal pronouncements of the government) would be instituted; a thorough overhauling of the system could thus be postponed indefinitely. In fact, the prospect seemed attractive and realistic for "preserving the unity of Ethiopia". No other alternative was seen on the horizon.

No sooner had these people moved into positions of power than the character of Ethiopian administration assumed a new form. Under these new bureaucrats, the repression by the state, rather than easing, increased. An elaborate state security system, an indispensable instrument of modern reactionary dictatorships, was set in motion extending its ominous arm into every corner of Ethiopian life. The so-called educated group soon gave up the pretension that it was concerned with the improvement of the conditions of the Ethiopian people. It saw as its primary task the strengthening of the oppressive hand of the ruling class by providing the technical and administrative cadres for the emerging neo-fascist regime. Once the internal framework for strengthening the system was laid, they decided to align Ethiopia fully with international imperialism by providing it with a direct military base on Ethiopia's soil and opening virtually every avenue of our national life to its indoctrination and guidance. On the international scene, in alliance with their imperialist mentors, these men, marked by the self-proclaimed label of moderators, became exquisite saboteurs of revolutionary movements everywhere. These steps gave the Ethiopian regime firm alliance with the world's counter-revolutionary forces in their attempt to undermine the growing radicalization of the peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

Even more clearly manifest was the corresponding pseudo-modernization of the economic life of Ethiopia. We have already noted the apparent rationalization of the feudal system. Corresponding with the strengthening of the hands of landowners over the peasant population, many old and new members of the ruling class moved into modern sectors of production. Business of all types began to emerge largely in partnership with international financial interests. Even the church, which is the largest single real estate owner, began to invest large amounts of its land earnings into urban (apartment) housing.

All these changes, in which the so-called intelligentsia was directly involved, strengthened the grip of the ruling class over the people of Ethiopia. The generation upon which great hopes were placed became the

founder of a state machinery hitherto unknown in Ethiopian history. As the impoverishment of the people of Ethiopia increased, these men were exposed as the most obvious beneficiaries. Even though these and their other misdeeds may be executed in the secret corridors of the imperial palace and in their hallowed offices, their outrageous susceptibility to conspicuous consumption has alone discredited their original promise in the eyes of the people.

The *coup d'etat* of December, 1960 is not irrelevant to the history of this generation. A minority within it, utterly disgusted with the breakdown of the promise, staged a not-well-planned military putsch, but only to discover (perhaps too late) that these educated bureaucrats were even more devoted to the preservation of the Haile Selassie regime. The event marked the end of rhetoric and pretension. Their strategy of coalition politics was a total failure. It was simply another form of the same oppressive system.

III

In our view, the ideology of this pretentious generation ought to be openly discredited and condemned in full by the emerging revolutionary forces of Ethiopia. When all is said and done, the survival and continuing enrichment of the majority of the members of this generation remain firmly tied to the ideological and political structure of the neo-fascist regime in Ethiopia and its imperialist overseers. And what should be even more urgently understood is that these people, contrary to their continuing claim, are *not* neutrals in the present and future struggle between the defenders of the *status quo* and those who are determined to hasten its downfall. They are the active agents of the existing system. While they continue to reap the fruits of the people of Ethiopia and enhance their status within the governing hierarchy, these men preach to us an ideology of impotence and powerlessness while in fact they are the major custodians of that same power which continues to strangle the Ethiopian people. Their self-justifying and self-perpetuating rhetoric is qualitatively no different from the propaganda of the Divine Authority of the Ethiopian Emperor, and should be rejected in all its manifestations.

Going further, what we need is not only to expose the falsehoods of all prophets of despair, but to counteract the political hegemony of these ideologues by creating forms of struggle in which the active participation of the betrayed masses of Ethiopia can be coordinated. The propaganda which claims that the problem of backwardness of Ethiopia is due to

certain individuals (for example, the emperor, some of his older ministers, etc.), is a cynical contrivance designed by the new bureaucrats to justify their shameful historical record and to make us believe that the coming and going of individuals in the same social positions would change the system. By confining their gossip to the person of the emperor, or a few other characters, these men have continually sabotaged a deeper comprehension of the system they serve and the crystallization of a disciplined revolutionary opposition to it.

However much these "older students" insist on a record of "youthful radicalism", their history bears no relationship whatsoever with the determined and consistent revolutionary opposition of the present generation which is striving to link itself with the toiling masses of workers and peasants. The early "radicalism" which they constantly invoke in order to discredit and discourage the political work of the present Ethiopian student movement is clearly demonstrated in their exclusive cafes and night clubs in Addis Ababa and elsewhere. We do not wish to ask these cafe critics what the achievements of their college days were. Their record of orgies and parties (which they still faithfully continue) is an indisputable testimony. These men know, as we too know, that they are already a discredited lot. How else could one account for their intensified vilification, in their official stations and in their incessant gossip and doubletalk, of the efforts of the Ethiopian student movement? The explanation might lie in the fact that they are overreacting against the courageous and decent few among themselves who are openly throwing their support to the students and who are thereby exposing the unmitigated opportunism of the majority.

The cause for the backwardness and poverty in Ethiopia is rooted in the entire social system. It is a system which rewards the minority ruling class (be its members stupid or clever, reactionary or pseudo-reformist) at the cost of the great majority of the population. It is inherently incapable of revolutionizing Ethiopia's national life. If certain pseudo-reforms are proclaimed with official pageantry now and then (which the "older students" recite to us as genuine reforms), they are meant only to enhance the dictatorship and the corresponding intensity of the oppression of the people.

The emerging radical forces therefore need to start from this basic truism about the system, and form a new political frame of reference. Every step they take has to be related to this fundamental fact and to a long-range social vision to which immediate goals can be related through

an ongoing program of political education and political action. *The potential for a full-fledged revolutionary political movement exists in Ethiopia today.* That the interests of the ruling classes are unmistakably at odds with the great majority of the people — the students, the urban working class and the broad masses of the population — is clear. Only a few years ago, it was unthinkable that university students could lead an active insurrection with the active participation and support of the people. This is precisely what happened in April on the streets of Addis Ababa.

The task, however, cannot be given full expression until all revolutionary energy is channelled into an independent political organization. Such a political movement is absolutely essential not only to mobilize the energy of the various segments of the society, but also to formulate the vision of the kind of Ethiopian society we will ultimately achieve.

Such a political movement needs to reject the old unfounded fears and misinterpretations about the nature of Ethiopian society. *Ethiopia will not go to pieces when the present regime collapses.* The tensions that periodically recur are inherent in the social structure itself. These periodic and sporadic occurrences have to be properly analyzed; but the conclusions we draw from them do not have to coincide with the conclusions made by the regime and its apologists. The primary concern of the regime is to discredit the attention of the Ethiopian people from the root causes of all these tensions. A revolutionary political movement should correctly understand these developments; and it has to draw its own revolutionary conclusions from them.

Ethiopia is no longer a simple encapsulated feudal society. It is a sophisticated semi-feudal and semi-capitalist dictatorship intimately allied with international imperialism. At the same time, the opposition to the regime has never been more popularly based. In fact, with each measure the government has taken to strengthen its hand, the opposition has increased several fold. On balance, even short-term prospects (both objective and subjective) are decisively in favor of the revolutionary elements. *What is immediately needed is the formation of a united front in opposition to feudalism, capitalism, and imperialism.*

The great historic merit of the active resistance of Ethiopian students is that it has opened the way for just this type of coordinated radical departure for the Ethiopian people. This departure must assume an organizational form immediately.

The Anti-Demonstration Proclamation:

Introductory Remarks

Below we reproduce the relevant parts of a law put into effect by the Ethiopian Government on May 11, 1967 prohibiting virtually all types of peaceful assembly. The measure was announced in *Negarit Gazeta* as Proclamation No. 243 of 1967. It is akin to the *pass laws* of the Fascist regime in South Africa. It is as if it had been directly lifted from the law books of the authors of apartheid. In truth, this affinity between the domination of an Afrikaaner colonialist and the oppression of a “conquering lion” is not a matter of fortuitous circumstance.

A week before the proclamation was put into effect, the National Union of Ethiopian University Students (NUEUS) issued an assessment of the implications of this anti-democratic law, which it circulated “to all Ethiopian students abroad, to all national and international student organizations and to all progressive and justice-loving people”. The Union also staged a week-long massive demonstration in which large sections of the public in Addis Ababa and in the provinces joined the students. More than 400 demonstrators were jailed and dozens were brutally injured by the repressive forces of the regime. Less numerous but equally determined Ethiopians demonstrated in North America, throughout Europe, and elsewhere. Everywhere Ethiopians voiced their support for the heroic struggle of the University students in their determined confrontation with the dictatorship.

The text of the repressive law appears below. It is followed by the assessment made by NUEUS. We are pleased to print this penetrating document. Its significance calls for a brief sketch of the development of the student movement in Ethiopia.

It is important to remember that until a few years ago, Ethiopia, unlike other countries in the “third world”, lacked any significant student movement. It was a mere ten years back (August, 1957, to be precise) that Ethiopian students were, for the first time, introduced to international student gatherings. During that time, and long before, African students were actively engaged in the campaign against colonial oppression and racism. None of this political activity was reflected in Ethiopian student life, however. Student activity in those days never included anything that could in any sense be called political. This absence of political

awareness was largely determined by the self-image of the student — an image that can be summed up as a protected and pampered child under the paternal care of an imperial father presiding over a feudal establishment. Then as now, the establishment attempted to cultivate in its own image a debased version of the Ethiopian student. Any kind of collective student consciousness was thus precluded. The self-pretension that was engendered was, at best, that of a crypto-renaissance pupil, a budding gentleman taught by gentlemen. Not even the liberal credo of academic intellectualism was allowed to filter into the daily diet of the Ethiopian student of a decade ago. Teacher and taught alike were fused in an endless apathetic round of reciting the wonders of medieval schoolmen. All intellectual curiosity was suffused with nursery-like training in the secrets of divine monarchy. Whatever student activity there was was duly confined to the affairs of "campus life" under the ever-present supervision and care of "house masters", sometimes called deans.

It was in 1960 that the beginnings of real political relevance emerged. The events of December of that year took the students by surprise and propelled them to unprecedented political involvement. As far as the student movement was concerned, the ruthless suppression that followed the *coup d'etat* did not succeed in removing the aroused enthusiasm for political change. It could be said that, whatever the nature of the coup itself, it provided an occasion for student agitation which henceforth was to progressively lead the student movement to finally emerge onto a higher plane of militancy.

In the last four years especially, important organizational changes have been taking place among the hitherto disparate associations in the various colleges, culminating in the solidification of the National Union of Ethiopian University Students. At the same time, parallel developments have been occurring among students in Europe, North America, and elsewhere.

A major event which resulted from increased student militancy and which further politicized the students was the cynical measure of closing and destroying boarding facilities in 1962. The Ethiopian student, until then an isolated and protected entity, was suddenly thrown out of his Eden. The bitter message that God Almighty had it in his power to disgrace all those who would flirt with the forbidden fruit of rebellion descended with great force and immediacy. But this retaliatory measure of the government, like all others before it, had the unintended consequence not only of freeing the student from financial blackmail, but also of

forcing him forward to join the people whom he had grown to forget and despise.

This is not to say that the university student is no longer a member of a privileged group, only that his social position and perhaps his destination as well have shifted. The university still remains what it has always been — the almost automatic entrance into an elite professional class. What cannot be gainsaid, however, is the fact that a new political dimension has been added to student goals. This is amply demonstrated by recent events in Addis Ababa. This changed social function of the student is not surprising. It conforms to historical developments of all oppressed peoples and the Ethiopian student was and is oppressed, if not economically, then certainly politically, intellectually, and culturally by the suffocating weight of academic sterility.

And what is the reaction of the regime to all this? Confronted with the failure of its methods to alienate students from the people, the regime has added a new weapon to its arsenal of deceit. It is currently engaged in propagating the lie that the mounting unrest of students, workers and peasants is the work of a "handful of agitators in the pay of [unnamed] foreign powers". This tactic, however, is not succeeding. Like the ones before it, it is producing unintended results. Far from isolating the students from the people, they are being wedded into a common struggle. The historical moment has arrived when petty controversies about superficial rights of this or that group are being transformed into significant issues of national and international substance. It is certain that from this, the consciousness of the students and the people will continue to grow; it is just as certain that their common identity and purpose will continue to coalesce. Finally, the well-known strategy of divide and rule employed by the ruling class will be turned against itself, and it will be isolated and destroyed.

EDITOR

Proclamation No. 243 of 1967

PROCLAMATION TO GOVERN THE HOLDING OF PEACEFUL PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS

2. Definitions

In this Proclamation, unless the context otherwise requires:

- (1) "Minister" and "Ministry" shall mean, respectively, the Minister and Ministry of Interior;
- (2) "person" shall mean, as appropriate, any natural or juridical person;
- (3) "regulate" shall mean the implementation of this Proclamation by the Minister by the issuance of regulations or otherwise;
- (4) "peaceful public demonstration" shall mean any assemblage, procession, gathering or other manifestation of opinion conducted on, in or through any public place, but shall exclude traditional gatherings, religious and marriage ceremonies, funeral processions, official meetings, gatherings held pursuant to law, and similar events;
- (5) "public place" shall mean any highway, public park, garden, bridge, road or other place, area or way freely accessible to the public, whether generally or for the time being, whether on payment of a fee or otherwise; and
- (6) "Supervising Authority" shall mean such authority as the Minister may designate.

3. Permit Required for the Holding of Peaceful Public Demonstrations

A peaceful public demonstration shall be conducted only under and in accordance with the conditions set forth in a Permit therefor issued by the Supervising Authority pursuant to Article 5 hereof.

4. Application for Permit

Application for a permit shall be submitted to the Supervising Authority in two (2) copies, in such form as may be prescribed, not less than seven (7) days, or such shorter period as the Supervising Authority may in any case allow, before the convocation of the demonstration in question. Such application shall set forth:

- (1) the time, date and place of assembly for the demonstration;
- (2) a brief description of the nature and purpose of the demonstration and the manner in which it will be conducted;

- (3) the route, if any, to be followed by the demonstration and the expected period of its duration;
- (4) the number of persons expected to participate;
- (5) a description of any signs and placards to be carried or displayed at the demonstration;
- (6) the names and addresses of all persons, groups, associations or other organizations under whose auspices or by which the demonstration is organized or conducted, and the signature of an authorized person on behalf of each such person, group, association or other organization; and
- (7) the name and address of a person who may be contacted to provide further information in respect of the demonstration where the same is required and to whom all communications from such Authority in respect of such demonstration, including the Permit, shall be sent.

5. Issuance of Permit

- (1) (a) The supervising Authority shall act on each application for a Permit within five (5) days after receipt of application therefor.
(b) Where the Supervising Authority fails to act on an application for a Permit within five (5) days after receipt of application therefor, the Permit shall be deemed to have been issued.
(c) Where the Supervising Authority determines that the carrying on of a peaceful public demonstration would regardless of such conditions as might be imposed under paragraph (2) of this Article 5, endanger the maintenance of public health or public order, or be contrary to law or morality or to the purposes or objectives of any group or association involved or participating therein, it may, within five (5) days after receipt of application for a Permit, issue a written denial of such application setting forth in detail the grounds of such denial.
- (2) A Permit may be issued subject to such conditions as the Supervising Authority may impose with respect to:
 - (a) the prevention and avoidance of interference with the activities of any Ministry, Agency or Public Authority of the Government;
 - (b) the restriction or prohibition of the carrying of inappropriate signs, placards and dangerous articles;

- (c) the observance of traffic regulations and the maintenance of normal circulation of traffic;
- (d) the ensurance of the orderly and proper conduct of the demonstration;
- (e) the maintenance of quiet at night; and
- (f) such changes in the route, place or time of the demonstration as may be necessary to avoid danger to public health or public order.

6. Penal

(1) Any person who undertakes in the conduct of or participates in a peaceful public assembly except pursuant to a Permit and in accordance with the conditions imposed therein shall be guilty of an offense and shall upon conviction be subject to the penalties provided in Article 478 of the Penal Code.

(2) Any person who is not an official of the Government on duty and who has with him any weapon while present at any peaceful public demonstration, or who violates the conditions set forth in a Permit restricting or prohibiting the carrying of dangerous articles, shall be guilty of an offense and shall, upon conviction, be subject to the penalties provided in Article 478 of the Penal Code.

An Assessment of the Proclamation on Peaceful Public Demonstrations

by the NATIONAL UNION OF ETHIOPIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

A Proclamation on peaceful public demonstrations has been published in the *Negarit Gazeta*; the law will be effective in a week's time (April 11, 1967). This law is an eye-opener for blind-folded, unconscious people; it shows them the grim realities obtaining in the political situation in our country. For semi-conscious idealists and wishful-thinkers who entertain illusions, the law throws new light for them to perceive (if they wish to) the truth that lurks behind the facade of constitutional "liberties" and "rights", said to be guaranteed by our paper constitution.

As for those compatriots who have a scientific world outlook, the new law is but another not-so-significant confirmation of their scientific as-

essment concerning the contradictions that prevail in our economic, socio-political structure. To them it only shows that the contradictions are becoming sharper and more acute.

"Ethiopian subjects shall have the right, in accordance with conditions prescribed by law, to assemble peaceably and without arms." So reads Article 45 of the Revised Constitution of Ethiopia. This article on the right to assemble (meaning to demonstrate also), as it reads, is most crystal clear. True, it includes a qualification: "in accordance with conditions prescribed by law". However, even this qualification, when seen in the light of other "democratic" constitutions (e.g., that of India, U.S.A. — which we propose to deal with below) is not meant to be a most serious restriction.

It has been claimed by the Ethiopian Government and some students of the Ethiopian Constitution that this right to peaceful assembly is meant to be in the best spirit and practice of a similar right as understood in "democratic" countries. If we take this as true, then it is right and proper to assume that "conditions prescribed by law" should not be in contradiction with the substance and the basic spirit of this right. Now, let us see what the "conditions prescribed by law" truly are in the Ethiopian context.

The "conditions" are those that have been incorporated in the new proclamation on demonstrations published in the *Negarit Gazeta* on February 11, 1967. (We wonder why it took 11 years to bring forth such a law — the Revised Constitution was "granted" to us in 1956!) The Proclamation requires a permit; a *permit*, without which we cannot enjoy the said constitutional right. The Proclamation states that a demonstration can be conducted "only under and in accordance with the conditions set forth in a permit" to be issued by a Supervising Authority to be appointed by the Minister of Interior. And the request must be tendered a *week* before the proposed date of the demonstration.

Now, what does this mean? It means, according to the proclamation, "conditions" will be attached to the permit in order to prevent "interference with the activities of any ministry, agency or public authority of the Government". What does this "interference" mean, for the People's sake?

The permit can also prohibit "inappropriate signs, placards and dangerous articles. . ." What is a "dangerous" article? What is an "inappropriate" sign? What is an "inappropriate" placard? It is obvious: anything that criticises the Government, anything that exposes the ills and grievances

of the Ethiopian people, anything that expresses the democratic aspirations of those worthy sons and daughters of the motherland who stage meaningful demonstrations, and whatever else the whims and fancies of the "Supervising Authority" does not approve of!

But are such restrictions attached to similar rights guaranteed by other "democratic" constitutions? Absolutely No! For instance, the Indian Constitution guarantees the rights of the people "to assemble peaceably and without arms". An expert on the Indian Constitution, G. N. Joshi, says, "the recognition of the right of assembly is subject to two limitations. First, it is to be exercised peaceably and secondly without arms." As anyone can see these limitations are already specified in Article 45 of the Ethiopian Constitution (quoted above). It means then that if we assume that our right to assemble is meant to be "democratic" (at least, as in India) then the present proclamation which sets so many limitations and restrictions is superfluous and unconstitutional. For it clearly contradicts the very spirit of this basic "democratic" right.

Furthermore, in another "democratic" country, the United States of America, Article I of the Amendments to the Constitution of the United States reads in part, "Congress shall make no law. . . abridging the right of the people to peaceably assemble and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."

As we can see, the right to peaceably assemble as stipulated in the constitutions of the U.S. and India is more or less like that stipulated and said to be guaranteed in Article 45 of our Constitution. But, there the similarity ends. When it comes to practice, we know that the people in these foreign countries enjoy these rights. Who has not heard of the violent demonstrations in India against the Indian Government for not alleviating the people's hunger during the period of food shortage last year? And who has not heard, or does not still hear of the demonstrations by U.S. youth and people for peace in Viet Nam, against the Johnson Administration, and the demonstration of our black brothers there for equality and emancipation?

But, brothers and sisters, who would ever expect the so called Supervising Authority to give us a permit to demonstrate, say, in favour of the principle of *Land to the Tiller*, and against the arbitrary arrests of innocent citizens from the streets and putting them in so-called rehabilitation centers (which are, in reality, concentration camps, e.g., Shola Concentration Camp).

In fairness to the Government, we should mention the fact that

throughout the proceedings in Parliament when the bill on demonstrations was "debated" upon, the Government argued that Article 65 of the Revised Constitution provided for such a restriction. In fairness to the legislators too (especially in the Lower House) it must be said that the deputies argued, and a Committee of the House also said, that the bill, by requiring a *permit*, would clearly contradict the very essence and spirit of Article 45. They suggested that, instead, the bill should only require a *notice*. However, the argument of these democratically-oriented deputies did not materialize for obvious reasons.

In any case, let us now see what Article 65 says. It reads, "Respect for the right and freedom of others and the requirement of public order and the general welfare shall alone justify any limitations upon the rights guaranteed in the foregoing articles of the present chapter". Obviously, no *peaceful* demonstrator would attack peaceful citizens in the street or destroy the property of others; for that would be against the rights and freedoms of others. Nor would any *peaceful* demonstrator attack or assault people who keep public order (unless in self-defence); for that would clearly be against public order. Nor would any *peaceful* demonstrator start running amuck by cutting electric wires or communication lines; for that would be against general welfare. Nor would any *peaceful* demonstrator commit similar acts of lawlessness.

In any event, even if such lawlessness occurs, or whatever legal terminology may be appropriate for the situations we have described, it would be punishable under the relevant articles of the Penal Code which already exist. Now, then, what is the purpose of this latest proclamation?

We can only hope that the present proclamation which claims to base itself on Article 65 of the Constitution is not meant to deliberately abrogate Article 45 of the Revised Constitution, for that would be a mockery. If, however, Article 65 of the Constitution was meant to contradict and abrogate the very spirit and substance of Article 45, then we can only say that the present proclamation on demonstrations is surely overdue, because that would explicitly tell us how far we can go within the given framework of the Constitution.

Let us be rather optimistic and believe that the Revised Constitution which was "granted" to the Ethiopian people was not meant to be a mockery. If so, it is logical to believe that the present proclamation is *unconstitutional*. But how can such an unconstitutional act be legally combatted? In other countries where there is an independent judiciary, it would be challenged in a court of law. In our country too some lawyers

believe there is such a possibility. However, we are rather skeptical in this respect, for we have had a very unsavoury experience already. Last year, as all may remember, Law School students sued the Haile Sellassie I University (a chartered organization of the Ethiopian Government) in the High Court for imposing on them an *ultra-vires* imposition. They won their case at the High Court. But to their dismay and to the dismay of other conscious Ethiopians, their case was quashed in a rather fishy affair at the Supreme Court. It was then said that some of the justices were, in the meantime, suspended.

Finally, how does one explain the action of the Government in having this particular proclamation rubber-stamped by the Parliament at this particular time? One would hazard a guess and say that in the last decade or so since the Revised Constitution was "granted" to the Ethiopian people, the Government hoped that the world would, by reading the Constitution, believe that Ethiopians are enjoying democratic freedoms including the freedom "to assemble peaceably without arms".

However, this technique had within itself the seeds of its own destruction. Conscious Ethiopians, especially we the University students, took advantage of this right and went on staging demonstrations. And this obviously, embarrassed the Government and exposed the oppression, ignorance, disease and want that have been the lot of the Ethiopian people and which have been covered by the window-dressing of the paper Constitution and the glamour of Addis Ababa. This exposure obviously was not in the interest and to the taste of the classes which benefit from such a situation in our country.

So then, the most logical thing to do for such people with vested interests was to resort to new techniques, to new twists of "legalities". But this time the trick does not seem to work; on the contrary, it seems to expose the Government in its true colours. This will eventually breed its own destruction; it will inevitably generate a force to oppose it. If only the ruling classes had a look into history and recognized the scientific laws of historical development. Progress is as inevitable as the rise of the sun in the morning!

When we look back to the five or six years of student struggle, we are surprised that the people with vested interests in the ruling circles were trying by force or deceit, or both, to stop students from demonstrating. And they did not even have the pretension of legislation to justify their action! Even this is not actually surprising. What else should we expect

of such a Government? What is law? What is a constitution if it does not serve the dictatorship of whatever class is in power?

But what is the implication of the present proclamation? It means that for conscious Ethiopians, who are the sworn enemies of the system of exploitation of man by man, the road for a *legal struggle* has been barricaded with strong walls; the widest and most important door is closed — at any rate, will be closed in a week's time. We cannot assemble, not even peaceably, not even without arms. We have been deprived of a most important weapon for a legal struggle, a field for democratic experience, a means of educating and standing for the toiling workers and peasants.

Nevertheless, we shall not despair. We should in fact expect that more doors will be closed in our very face shortly. We should expect, in fact, that more repressive measures will be taken against us as our militancy becomes more and more progressive and as the contradictions become more and more acute in the ruling class itself. And this is natural. For this indeed is engendered in a socio-political system which is outmoded.

Constitutions, laws, the police, the army and all repressive agencies of the State notwithstanding, progress is inevitable; the Ethiopian people are destined to be victorious. We are optimistic, for we have history on our side. The masses of dispossessed millions and their vanguard have a thousand and one ways of struggle. The struggle will be more and more acute as the contradictions in the economic substructure and the socio-political superstructure concentrate and move to their resolution.

Fellow students, it is with all seriousness that we bring this case to your attention. The future trend of the Ethiopian student movement heavily depends on the actions that we are going to take now. The present move of the government is deliberately calculated to insulate the Ethiopian people from progressive ideas that would flow from already conscious citizens. It is meant to curb the growing restlessness of students in this country and the growing demands for freedom and democracy for the Ethiopian people. Our indifference on this issue would mean the blocking of the faintest glimpse of democracy.

Fellow students, let us once more show our solidarity with our people and prove to the world that we stand side by side with the workers and peasants in the struggle for freedom, democracy and social justice.

LONG LIVE PROGRESSIVE AND DEMOCRATIC ETHIOPIA
WHICH IS YET TO BE!

The Futility of Planning in a Feudal Society

by G.B.*

Planning for economic development has nowadays become so fashionable that not to plan, it seems, is to fall out of fashion. Although the idea of planning may be repulsive to certain social systems, scarcely anyone can be found today who would object to development planning, provided one defines the terms to one's own contentions. Countries at various stages of social and political development ranging from feudal or semi-feudal to socialist societies have, as a matter of course, adopted economic planning of one sort or another.

Almost a decade ago, the ruling oligarchy in Ethiopia issued its First Five-Year Plan within a predominantly feudal setting. The second of these plans is now in its final year of operation, and our planners (who regard their job as more of a lucrative vocation than as a meaningful instrument for social and economic development), are now poring over a third masquerade of a plan. How far planning can fit into a feudal structure is a question to which we shall address ourselves in the following brief discussion of the developments in practice of Ethiopia's experience in the field of economic planning over the past decade.

The origin of national economic planning was the period 1957-61, when for the first time an overall plan was established providing aggregate indicators for the evolution of the entire economy. It is a matter of common knowledge that the First Five-Year Plan was prepared in great secrecy and that its failure was, by all indications, a glaring fact.

Each five-year plan had been conceived against a longer perspective, and the Second Plan (1963-67) was set against this background. The plans provide for a scheme of investment designed to achieve basic priority objectives pronounced in the plans. The major aims of the Second Plan, for example, were put in the following terms:

- (a) to increase the productive capacity of the economy and to accelerate the rate of economic growth by a better utilization of available resources;
- (b) to change the existing technology by introducing modern

*G.B. is a pen name of an Ethiopian student residing in Addis Ababa.

- machinery and equipment, and to raise the saving and investment potentials;
- (c) to improve living conditions and to provide improved social services, and
- (d) to create a sound economic basis for national defense and security.

Achieving these purposes was expected to result in a pattern of investment which, with a government investment of Eth. \$1696 million, would be distributed as follows:

Mining, power and manufacturing	26.9
Agriculture	21.4
Transport and communication	18.7
Housing and construction	15.2
Social services	4.7
Other	13.1
Total	100.0

This Second Plan had been drawn up explicitly as the first phase of a twenty-year plan projected into the 1980's. Its implementation has been calculated to produce a 4.3 per cent annual rate of growth in gross domestic product and a 2.5 per cent average annual rate of growth in per capita gross domestic product over the five-year period. At this rate, gross domestic product was projected to rise from Eth. \$2143.8 million at the beginning of the plan to Eth. \$2648.8 million at its close, with the main increases being in such activities as construction and mining, manufacturing and power, or, generally, what the planners would call the "propulsive industries". By the end of the plan agricultural production will have grown by 12 per cent, an average of 2.3 per cent a year. The volume of industrial output, matched by an adequate investment in manufacturing industry, will have trebled, and projections were made for a fourfold increase in the export of manufactured products; labor productivity was to increase by 50 per cent over the plan period.

The pronouncements made in this plan, and the implementation of the goals laid out therein would imply a considerable degree of structural change in the economy. Given appropriate conditions, the targets could indeed have been considered only too modest. However, to anyone familiar with the hostility of the environmental conditions to any planned development under the present system, the possibility of attaining these goals is

beyond the realm of practical politics. The planners were either unconscious of the prevailing conditions — viz., the existing feudal structure of the economy, the reduction of the country to a neocolonial state, the nature and purpose of the political forces at work serving these interests — or were simply foolhardy in setting their goals. It comes as no surprise that they even fail to outline concrete measures by which these targets, such as they are, could be attained. The basic problem of land reform, for example, and the feudalistic nature of subsistence agriculture, wholly incompatible with any system of planning, have been glossed over in four pages of meaningless doubletalk. The end result was a series of shortfalls in plan implementation. The first plan, shrouded in secrecy for apparent reasons, was crowned by an all-round failure; to a large extent this is also true of the second plan. This is reflected in the striking absence of plan evaluation, at least of the progress of expenditures and the current state of implementation of projects.

The implementation of the current plan was doomed from the beginning. First, the plan spells almost complete dependence on foreign sources, chiefly American, providing 62 per cent of planned expenditure in the industrial sector. A planned rate of investment can hardly be sustained in the face of such a heavy reliance on doubtful sources, to say nothing of the all too obvious trappings of foreign capital resulting in the plunder of national resources by foreign capitalists. Although much emphasis has been placed upon extending industrialization, estimates of growth rates are lagging behind the expected rates in many sectors of the economy, and few of the investment projects have ever been carried out. For example, electric power and transport are behind schedule. The aim for power for 1967 was 355 million kilowatt hours (out of an estimated potential in the country of 46 billion kilowatt hours), which means that the average annual increase will be 21 per cent. So far, less than half of the planned annual targets has been achieved. The expansion of steel, metal and chemical industry amounted to less than 4 per cent of the proposed target over the first two years. This industry is the least developed, and it is not only a question of a general lag, but reflects a total absence of an industrial basis. The areas in which these shortfalls have occurred are all the more significant since they represent sectors upon which the expansion of the rest of the economy depends. The four-fold increase in investment expected in this plan with the intention of "forcing the industrial development" can hardly be feasible. Manufacturing industry still accounts for less than 2 per cent of the gross domestic product as against a target of 4.4 per cent at the end of the plan.

Restricting the scope of industrialization is also the obvious failure of the plan in the agricultural sector. Agricultural stagnation has not only been an inhibiting factor upon areas where industrial expansion is possible, but has severely crippled the rate of growth. Evidence of this is seen in the current rate of growth of the gross national product, assumed to be inching along at a snail's pace of between 3.5 and 4 per cent. This compares with the figure of 3.7 per cent at the beginning of the plan, as against a projected 4.6 per cent by plan's end. The economy is more of a dead weight with which the plan can hardly grapple. One may then ask whether Ethiopian plans represent an emulation of planning in other countries and a mockery of it, or whether it is a genuine effort towards national economic and social reconstruction. The contention would be that it is the former.

What, one may ask, has planning contributed to the welfare of the Ethiopian people? Does the record of our history of planning over the past years show success for economic planning? In other words, has planning succeeded in getting more produced and in freeing the people from continued misery? Or, stated simply, has development planning been implemented in conformity with the stated goals of elevating the material and cultural attainment of the Ethiopian people to a higher plane? If not, what purposes do such plans actually serve?

In answer to these questions, it may be said that planning is of little practical value in determining what development takes place in the country. Development planning as it is viewed in Ethiopia has meaning only in so far as it refers to the development of the public sector and the financing of industry from public sources. This is evidenced by an absolute lack of control over the private sector, and the absence in consequence of objectives between the public and private sectors to influence the pattern of development in conformity with the objectives of a plan. The allocation of Government investment seldom follows plan objectives even in those enterprises that are nominally designated as public, and contrary to plan guidelines in the second five-year plan, for example, the major portion of investments were for infrastructural projects, while investments in agriculture and in the "propulsive industries" remained negligible; planned targets have little influence on what takes place in the country.

Ethiopian plans may also be looked upon as mere forecasts of what would happen in five years' time anyway, and contain no element of purposeful direction for a concerted achievement of stated goals. This

has reduced the plans to fanciful, albeit impressive, documents. The complete absence of public power indicates that the guidelines directed to the various ministries and agencies normally pass unheeded. This, coupled with the prevalent apathy on the part of the rulers as regards the welfare of the people, presents a serious obstruction for any plan to achieve its goals.

To answer the question of the improvement in the general welfare of the people, it must be said that the means of alleviating the existing poverty have not been created despite all the pronouncements. The plans have had no impact on Ethiopian society, and the traditionalism of Ethiopian culture, steeped in feudalism, still hangs heavy on the economy. Perhaps the greatest shortfalls are in agriculture which accounts for most of the national income. The main determinant of an economy's growth where agriculture engages over 90 per cent of the labor force is the growth rate of that sector, for in the peasantry lies the main reserve of industrial manpower. Agricultural stagnation has been an inhibiting factor not only upon areas where industrial expansion is possible, but has severely crippled the rate of growth in general. With the pattern of land tenure unchanged from what it had been for centuries, a feudal, subsistence agriculture dominates the economy. Indeed, given a rising population added to a stagnating agriculture, income and output per head of the population have not only been stagnating, but actually have been falling. This is evidenced by the recurrent famine and near-famine conditions prevailing in many parts of the country — a shameful fact for a nation potentially able to feed many others beside itself. No major change has taken place in the Ethiopian economy despite a decade of so-called planning.

What, one may wonder, ails Ethiopian planning? A major force of obstruction militating against any effort towards planned development is the feudal mode of production obtaining in the country and the relationships that such production methods involve. As is the case with such production relations, this factor alone has been responsible for the stagnation of agriculture and has impeded the transformation of the entire economy. The prevailing condition is not one in which planning is supposed to function, since planned measures and actions conflict with the prevailing mode of production. As long as the system exists, and lasts, the economy will remain thwarted; no amount of paper planning, however piously decorated and superimposed upon the system, will have any meaning. Why plan, then? Now planning could be said to be a means

to an end — a truism perhaps — but the question before us is whether in reality a feudal society, however sophisticated, has the will and the capacity to plan the process of a dynamic economic activity without, at the same time, losing its underlying characteristics. In other words, if planning involves, as it does and should, the creation of a progressive and dynamic society, does it not also possess the capacity to undermine and dislodge the very system which arrests the progressive potential of the people? The immediate issue here is not really whether there is a plan which lives up to its pronouncements, but rather the interests and aims at the service of which such plans are placed. Plans that do not elevate the material and cultural well-being of the people serve anti-social ends, because such plans always benefit the privileged classes of established interests, enhancing and lending a new lease on life to the prevailing system of privileges. Indeed, it is most unlikely, in a country retaining the forms of feudal institutions favorable to the survival of the ruling clique which presides over such a system, that an attempt will be made to institute a planned economy in any real sense. The institution of planning is as inconsistent with a feudal hierarchy as it is inimical to its continued survival. Plan implementation under such systems, therefore, is beyond the realm of practical politics; the difficulties in the way of economic planning are political and not economic. A great deal depends upon the political structure of a country into which the system of economic planning is to be introduced. A planned economy involves sweeping changes in the economic and institutional organizations of a society. The socio-political conditions, at present, are such as to make planning inapplicable and impotent, if not harmful. The so-called second plan, for example, while making no mention of the need for abolishing feudal incomes of parasitic vassals, spells ruthless plunder of the people through increased taxes and other devices. The obstacles in the way are clearly very powerful for realistic planning to be instituted, for the instruments of government, as they exist today, present formidable obstacles to the country's progress.

In conducting a plan, the political framework is of decisive importance in determining its ends. The objectives of economic development serve fundamentally political ends and policy decisions based upon them. These decisions are formulated in such a way as to regulate the existing order, and have the capacity to do so. It is well known that the institutional structure of a society regulates the structure of the state, and also its system of planning, the latter being adapted to fit the existing institutions. If a society has a feudal structure, then planning would be such as to

give due consideration to the system and to ensure its existence, or at least to stretch out its life span. Under such conditions, no plan can encroach upon the established order. In this way planning becomes coterminous with existing interests; it is a perversion of planning. It is an attempt to forestall change. The main question then becomes: who has the monopoly of decision-making? It is evident that the formulation of plans, to say nothing of their execution, must conform to the existing institutional set-ups.

A system of planning, one that is spontaneous, expressing and realizing the general will of the people, requires resolute measures such as affect the distribution of income and structural changes in the institutional framework, both economic and political. This process itself, however, depends upon profound transformations in the social and economic basis of a country, and the dissolution of antiquated social orders.

To conclude then, the essential requisite for a rate of capital accumulation, sufficient to raise the degree of productivity of the productive employment of our resources and the increase in our national income, requires a clean sweep of the feudal order that blocks all forces of progress. Where this does not happen, economic progress is a logical as well as an empirical impossibility; for can the aims of national economic planning be reconciled with vested interests? Whatever the degree of planning and whatever its sophistication one must remain convinced that the achievement of a satisfactory rate of growth, or of even a modest one, will not be possible. The economy must, under the conditions obtaining, remain backward pending the emergence of the potentially productive forces of the Ethiopian society. We should have no illusions about the possibility of progress in feudal Ethiopia, and the sooner we wake up to this painful fact, the better.

Ethiopian History: Oppressive Past or Liberating Future

by MENGISTU ABEBE*

History is the instrument by which a people find meaning in the present and direction for the future. The ruling class in Ethiopia has not failed to understand this. It has fabricated a "history" in order to control

*Mengistu Abebe is a pen name of an Ethiopian student in the United States.

the present and to obstruct the possibilities of the future. It has incessantly talked of the glories of the Ethiopian past to cover up its true nature. History as an objective science, as a storehouse of experience to be learned from and to be made use of, is non-existent in Ethiopian thought. History becomes a myth, an idol to be revered and mystified. Through propaganda the Ethiopian regime has attempted to conceal the realities of poverty and illiteracy that are so characteristic of Ethiopia. It misinterprets Ethiopian history to disguise the root causes of the country's underdevelopment. We shall, in this paper, attempt an objective reinterpretation.

It may be said that Menelik II was the first Ethiopian monarch to bring all the provinces under imperial control. Before him, the provinces were autonomous and had little to do with the central government. They were characterized by a primitive stage of civilization in which commerce and handicraft were looked down upon, the nobility was held high, and slavery was in practice. Then, as now, life went on without opposition *and hence* without progress. The official thesis that Ethiopia's past has been a "golden age" is simply not true. Even if it were, men do not live by the glories of their past. Arnold Toynbee in his *A Study of History* says this about our country: "The Monophysite Christian community which has survived in this African fastness has become one of the social curiosities of the world: first, on account of its sheer survival, . . . and secondly on account of its extraordinarily low cultural level."

The Ethiopian social and political setup has repressed the individual and collective consciousness of the people. It does not tolerate dissent and criticism. It is said that one must be respectful and must refrain from criticism and opposition "in order to forge national unity and preserve national pride." In our opinion, this is a false unity and pride which is fostered by the blind force of patriotism that has no rational foundation. It has pacified the masses and intensified the contradictions of the Ethiopian youth. True national pride and unity can only be founded on a just society which recognizes the equality of men and values criticism and opposition. To be sure, the *positive* force of criticism and opposition that has been lacking in Ethiopian society is partly responsible for its present predicament.

The youth of Ethiopia has understandably become restless. The immense contradictions that exist in Ethiopian society have led it to examine and take a critical look at the foundations and functioning of their social structure. In all frankness, we *cannot* embrace the divine rights of the

This, then, is Ethiopia as we know it today. The ruling clique is blind to these problems and draws its strength and justification from its past. For us, not the past, but the future is the reason for our existence. A society in which the contradictions are not tackled, in which criticism and opposition have no place, is heading for an irresistible confrontation. In this respect, the critical outlook of the Ethiopian youth is commendable.

We want to make the past the source of our knowledge and not a manifestation of self-deception. Our culture is at a low stage of development; we admit this to both friends and adversaries. We must realize, however, that our underdevelopment is a *necessary* result of our social relations and not a manifestation of our inherent nature, as some racist "scholars" never fail to remind us. It is in this light, as men of a new beginning who are making the world and whom the world is making, that we need to see the history of our nation in its true perspective and to act accordingly.

Book Review*

by DESSALEGN RAHMATO

KWAME NKRUMAH *Neo-Colonialism — The Last Stage of Imperialism*. New York, International Publishers, 1966.

Very few economists and social critics have examined neo-colonialism in depth. Dr. Nkrumah is perhaps among those few who have devoted valuable time and effort to bring us the full story of the economic, and consequently the political, subjugation of the Third World by the capitalist countries of the West. The paucity of serious work on neo-colonialism may be due, in part, to the fact that neo-colonialism is a relatively new phenomenon. One can, in fact, say that it became the dominant strategy of foreign domination following the end of the Second World War, when the peoples of Asia, Africa and the Middle East began to shake the foundations of the colonial system.

As is well known to all, the old colonial system was an integral

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part of the economies of the imperialist nations of Western Europe. It was in fact the central force in the development of capitalism in the 19th and early 20th centuries; the power of Britain and France was built on the blood and sweat of the colonized peoples. The rich continents of Asia, Africa and Latin America were plundered in order to build the cities and industries, the wealth and pomp of Europe. Slave labor, slave trading, mass slaughter and extermination of peaceful peoples were carried out in this rapacious process of robbery, and Christian Europe justified these crimes against humanity with the claim that it was spreading the blessings of civilization and religion among the barbarians of distant lands.

A system built on imperialism in which survival, not to mention growth, depends on the exploitation of foreign peoples and resources cannot change so long as its fundamental structure remains unaltered. The system that gave birth to colonialism, and sustained it, was capitalism. Capitalism is still in existence and most of its basic features have not changed since the days of Robert Owen. Thus the need for imperialist exploitation is, though on a different level, still as urgent today as it was in the early days of capitalism; hence, neo-colonialism.

In the Introduction of the book, Dr. Nkrumah defines neo-colonialism as follows: "The essence of neo-colonialism is that the state which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside." In other words, imperialism, aware of the militant struggle of the colonized peoples for emancipation, decides to retreat temporarily on the pretence that it ". . . is 'giving' independence to its former subjects, to be followed by 'aid' for development. Under cover of such phrases, however, it devises innumerable ways to accomplish objectives formerly achieved by naked colonialism." (p. 239). It is this perpetuation of colonialism that is known as neo-colonialism.

Dr. Nkrumah does not present or discuss at length a theory of neo-colonialism; he merely analyzes the economic empires built by imperialist domination. The value of his book lies in the fact that it reveals the complex mechanism of neo-colonialism as it operates in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and other areas. The author examines the intricate workings of international monopolies such as Morgan Trust, Standard Oil, Unilever, Krupp, etc. in the less developed countries, and the immense profits that these monopolies draw from their business empires. The overall picture that emerges is that of a vast network of financial and industrial combines, controlled at the top by a few giant monopolies, carrying out systematic

exploitation of the immense wealth of the Third World, and at the same time controlling the political life of the countries in this category.

One of the major points that the author focuses on throughout the book involves the role that the less developed countries play in the economies of the imperialist nations. Dr. Nkrumah notes that the economic empires of imperialist monopolies not only draw huge profits from their operations but they also retard the economic growth of the countries involved.

The explanation for this is not far to seek. The foreign monopolies which control key productive resources in the less developed areas operate for profit. Furthermore, foreign capital is invested in the latter only to create another kind of capital which will subsequently be exported to the advanced capitalist countries to be turned into manufactured commodities. Obviously, this state of affairs precludes the industrialization of the Third World nations. Thus the loss incurred by these nations is twofold: one, their resources and wealth are appropriated by foreign monopolies, and two, they incur losses when they purchase manufactured commodities from the capitalist countries. Needless to say, this loss on the part of the poor becomes a gain for the neo-colonialist forces.

Dr. Nkrumah correctly concludes from this that, as in the days of naked colonialism, it is the ". . . less developed countries that continue to carry the burden of the increasing development of the highly developed" (p. 66). In other words, the force that is today enabling the capitalist countries to develop is the same force that is the root cause of the impoverishment of the Third World.

The other major point of the book deals with the remedy for neo-colonialist subjugation. Dr. Nkrumah explains that neo-colonialism is, today, an international force, and that, unlike former times, imperialist powers operate in concert. In Africa, as well as other less developed areas, neo-colonialism operates on a continent-wide basis. Hence, he argues, neo-colonialism can be eliminated in Africa only through a continent-wide struggle against it. Pan-African unity, that is to say, Africa under one government and economic set-up, is the only answer to foreign exploitation; without such unity neo-colonialism will continue to balkanize Africa and thereby weaken resistance to it.

Dr. Nkrumah has written a well-documented book filled with revealing data and statistical information. In this respect it is highly illuminating. But there is an important element in the history of neo-colonial-

ist domination that he has not dealt with, and herein lies the major weakness of the book. This element concerns the relationship between the ruling classes in the Third World and those in the imperialist countries. This class relationship is the umbilical cord which feeds and sustains neo-colonialism. The ruling class in the less developed country, that is to say, the national bourgeoisie, is not an independent force; it is, on the contrary, tied to the interests and dictates of the imperialist countries. It is this relationship that is at the service of neo-colonialist control and expansion.

Dr. Nkrumah's book, valuable and informative as it is, should nevertheless be read in conjunction with Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, perhaps the most brilliant analysis of the role of the national bourgeoisie in the designs of imperialism/neo-colonialism. For what Dr. Nkrumah lacks is a diagnosis of international class relations. Without this diagnosis one cannot grasp the central unifying element between the exploiting neo-colonialist forces and the exploited peoples of the Third World.

The Role of the Military in Ethiopia*

Future coups may be anticipated in a number of [African] countries. In Ethiopia, military take-over is inscribed in the power system of imperial rule. It might seem that Ethiopia is the one African country where military intervention will have an unambiguous historical role — anti-monarchic, anti-feudal, anti-clerical — and where it will embark on a large-scale expropriation and redistribution of monastic and baronial lands, modernization of the civil service, educational expansion, and demystification of Ethiopia's position in Africa and the world. It will be remembered that the 1960 attempted coup, based on the Imperial Guard and the Police, was inspired by vague and abstract aspirations (constitutional monarchy, etc.); and that even so it was put down with American assistance. Surely, the next military insurrection will have a sharper, more determined revolutionary programme. However, it is necessary to add to the general criticism of the political speciousness of a change of regime based on urban-military groups only, the observation that *since* 1961 the Ethiopian Army — particularly the units involved in the 1961 events — have been subjected to intense retraining. The Emperor, faithful to his

*Reproduced from *New Left Review*, No. 38 (July-August, 1966), "Militarism in Africa" by Roger Murray.

dynastic conception of politics, has of course balanced aid from a number of sources and tried to maintain rivalry between various institutionally separated regiments and units: the Indians were entrusted with the reorganization of the Imperial Guard; W. Germany is creating a distinct mobile *carabinieri* unit; etc. But the dominant fact is the deep penetration of the Ethiopian Army by US advisors. The American ambassador in Addis Ababa is widely reputed to be keeping in touch with young "modernizing" Ethiopians, civilian & military; and it may be assumed that one of the many functions of the Military Advisory Groups is to take out an option on the political future of the Ethiopian state. An "Iranian" prospect seems to suggest itself for Ethiopia.

Letters to the Editor

(The following letter is reproduced verbatim. — The Editor)

DEAR EDITOR,

This letter is mainly addressed to fellow Hagos Gabre-Yesus, and to all readers of his book review. Which to my mind was much more an undue criticism than a review. I am trying to criticize the criticism and not the review.

The application of a socio-anthropological model to array a sociological and historical data is age old. So is the right of a writer to enjoy and feel (specially expressed) his work whatever its nature, be it science or art or a mixture of the two.

Actually there is no such a thing as exclusively scientific, moral or political about the business of living, which the social scientist is at odds trying to prove otherwise. Language (as against other symbols like numerical figures) being the way it is, i.e. a representation of human thought and experience in symbols, the demacration of objective analysis and value judgement should be initially in one's thought and experience. Is this possible? Witness, how Hagos quotes Prof. Levine's penetrating and objective description at large (p. 68-9) subsequently followed by a demand to call the objective description by the value laden words such as "reactionary", "barbaric" etc. (p. 70).

What is more if what Hagos is suggesting is a fully valid and totally true scientific analysis of the most unexplored society (Ethiopia) with the least developed of the science (social sciences), it seems to me that Hagos

have a wrong appraisal of the present status of the social sciences as a science. For that matter, scientific sterility implicitly proposed in his criticism of Wax and Gold is not anticipated in the most developed field of the sciences — pure physics.

Contrary to what Hagos should have us believe, both imperialism and colonialism could be and have been seen as "mixed blessings", leave alone a comparison as to which is harsher or smoother between two kinds of imperialism and colonialism. One can easily contemplate which is better or worse and for what: the direct rule of the French or the indirect rule of the British, though both are two opposite faces of the same evil coin — colonialism.

I think it is more "trifling" and less "profound" to ask of a writer to treat a subject of one's predilection, specially of the common place and popular imperialism and neo-colonialism kind, when the writer is unravelling with hitherto unsurpassed insight the "wax and gold" nature of our dominant culture.

Unless one wishes to be classified as a blind "positivist" or a believer of a Messiah who is going to come and perfect our world, "understanding" of the stubborn past and present world phenomena actually "is inseparable from sympathy for human error and miscalculation." (p. 67.)

Levine, remarks Hagos has been taken fully by "his ideological naïvete" in his classification of the returnee who attempts "both to maintain principles and to be effective in action under the existing political order" as a reformist. I do not know how you would otherwise describe not the rebel Germame of 1960, but Germame of Sidamo and Jigjiga — he did not withdraw nor rebel.

Hagos seems to react most, to the best part and by far the most convincing and original chapter, i.e. the one on the "orality" of Amhara culture. Hagos either lacks basic elementary psychology course to understand the phenomenon of oral fixation (as there is anal fixation) and its implication to personality, or to accept his own suggestion (probably it the subconscious of an overdeveloped superego speaking), his reaction could be paranoid.

Finally Hagos says that it is honest scholarship "to expose tyranny without any compromise." This I think Prof. Levine has left it to you and me and others like us — and rightly so — who feel the deep frustration and short comings of what Hagos elsewhere calls reactionary, feudal, autocratic, undemocratic, corrupt, deceitful and barbaric monstrous ed-

of a "book", *Faith and Hope*, Ato Berhanu has taken upon himself the liberty of issuing an "appeal" to his friends in my name and on behalf of the *Ethiopian Students Association in North America* for urgent financial assistance. In this latest of his works which — like other previous pamphlets he has been issuing in a backwardly fashion in the form of chapters from books he claims to have authored — is filled with pornographic gossip about inconsequential incidents and erstwhile characters, Ato Berhanu makes the allegation that "without [such] assistance he [Hagos] is simply doomed to die from hunger"; and that ESANA is left "in its shadowy existence without life and activity."

It must be said at once that these assertions are both groundless and fictitious. Neither am I starving nor is ESANA without life and activity. If either of these allegations were remotely true, particularly the latter, members of the Ethiopian Students Association would have been the first to know about them.

ESANA (and myself personally) wish to disassociate ourselves totally and without qualification from this so-called appeal, issued without the knowledge and authority of the Association and myself.

Reiterating in my own behalf and as President of the Ethiopian Students Association in North America, I also wish it to be known that I neither accept such assistance nor welcome such appeals no matter what the hardships. I am fully aware that any difficulties my colleagues and I experience are actually infinitely small when compared to the sufferings of the Ethiopian people. Moreover, I have enjoyed and continue to enjoy the genuine assistance of fellow countrymen.

Having had no contact of any kind with the Association and having seen neither my colleagues in the Executive Council nor myself since the days of his resignation nearly two years ago, Ato Berhanu is in no position to know of whatever difficulties we may encounter or of the activities of ESANA, if only because he is in "hiding".

In an obvious attempt to lend credence to his allegations, Ato Berhanu claims that he was alerted by a "friend" to make this rather extraordinary intervention. If so, Ato Berhanu is clearly wallowing in the midst of dubious company. Whatever the case may be, however, ESANA has no such dilettante friends who can gauge its activities, still less who can presume to speak for it. It seems to me that the "shadowy existence" of which he speaks could well be a more accurate reflexion of his own state of existence as well as that of his friends.

It will be recalled that ESANA issued a public statement following Ato Berhanu's resignation (as Haile Selassie's ambassador to the U.S.) in June, 1965. As was clearly spelled out in the statement, ESANA supported the *act* of his resignation *only* in so far as he decried the misgovernment in Ethiopia's national life. Then, as well as now, the action taken by the Executive Council remains an authentic expression of the Association's long-range commitment to the welfare of Ethiopia — an act distinct from and in no way related to the idiosyncrasies and whims of particular individuals and groups. If Ato Berhanu or anyone else has understood it otherwise, it can be surmised only that they are victims of their own illusions. Let it be stated once again that ESANA jealously guards its independence and remains steadfast in its principles.

Instead of allowing himself to tamper with the affairs of this organization in so unorthodox a manner, I suggest that Ato Berhanu apply himself to the yet unfulfilled task of writing about his *real* experiences with His Majesty's government which he served so well and for so long until he startled the world with his resignation two years ago. If the ex-ambassador has forgotten the promise he made to the world at that time, the world has not and is not likely to take too seriously the kind of stories it has been receiving. Tendentious pamphleteering is both a false alternative and a poor substitute for a more serious work in the engagement against tyranny.

HAGOS G. YESUS
President, E S A N A

"MEN OF ETHIOPIA"

Men of England, wherefore plough
For the lords who lay ye low?
Wherefore weave with toil and care
The rich robes your tyrants wear?

Wherefore feed, and clothe, and save,
From the cradle to the grave,
Those ungrateful drones who would
Drain your sweat — nay, drink your blood?

Wherefore, Bees of England, forge
Many a weapon, chain, and scourge
That these stingless drones may spoil
The forced produce of your toil?

Have ye leisure, comfort, calm,
Shelter, food, love's gentle balm?
Or what is it ye buy so dear
With your pain and with your fear?

The seed ye sow, another reaps;
The wealth ye find, another keeps;
The robes ye weave, another wears;
The arms ye forge, another bears.

Sow seed — but let no tyrant reap;
Find wealth — let no imposter heap;
Weave robes — let not the idle wear;
Forge arms — in your defence to bear.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY
(1792 - 1822)